Not Just Words: Macro-Level Impact of Microaggressions
Agenda

- Introductions
- Identity, intersectionality, systems of oppression
- Implicit Bias
- Microaggressions
- Recommendations and techniques for reducing microaggressions during assessment and treatment
- Closing Discussion
Learning Objectives

• Understand and openly discuss topics of privilege, oppression, and intersectionality.

• Create awareness surrounding the common occurrences of microaggressions.

• Explore techniques to reduce microaggressions during assessment and treatment.
Anticipated Benefits

- The participant will be able to demonstrate an understanding of privilege, oppression, and intersectionality.

- The participant will be able to become aware of and discuss their own implicit and explicit biases in order to better serve and advocate for clients/students.

- The participant will be able to demonstrate techniques to minimize the occurrence of microaggressions during assessment and treatment, and ways to respond when someone has been microaggressive in order to enhance cultural responsiveness to provide safe academic and clinical spaces.
Introductions

- Monique Sledd, M.A., LPCC (she/her)
- Amy Anderson, M.A. (she/her)
- Icebreaker
What We Do

- Fernbrook Family Center is in southeastern Minnesota.
- Provide services to children and families in a total of 12 counties with 6 county office locations.
Service Area
What We Do

- Outpatient Psychotherapy (individual, family, group)
- Children’s Therapeutic Services and Supports (CTSS)
  - Outpatient Psychotherapy, Skills Services, Day Treatment, and Mental Health Behavioral Aide
  - Primary programs include: home and community, School Linked Mental Health (SLMH), and Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH)
- Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS)
- Mental Health Targeted Case Management
Identity, Intersectionality, and Systems of Oppression
What is “Identity?”

**Identity** – a person’s self-definition as a separate and distinct individual, including behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes; essentially, “who we are.”

**Social Identity** – the part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.

- How we explain “who we are” within the context of our social group and upbringing.
EcoMap Activity
EcoMap Activity

1) How is your identity different from the way people might perceive you?

1) How has it felt to be able to stand up and challenge a stereotype you have encountered?

1) How are stereotypes connected to the kinds of social interactions you encounter on a day-to-day basis, in your personal and/or work life?

1) What do you do to combat stereotypes in your life?
## Cultural Identity Formation

### Stages of cultural identity:
- Unexamined cultural identity
- Cultural identity search
- Cultural identity achievement

### Three components of cultural identity:
- Cultural knowledge
- Category Label
- Social Connections
Intersectionality

- Incorporates the vast array of cultural, structural, sociobiological, economic, and social contexts by which individuals are shaped and with which they identify.
- Individuals are located within a range of social groups whose structural inequalities result in marginalized identities.
- Unlike unidimensional identity models, intersectionality addresses “the vexed dynamics of difference and the solidarity of sameness”.

![Intersecting circles representing Racial identity, Gender, Sexuality, Disability, and Nationality, illustrating the concept of intersectionality.](image-url)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Oppression</th>
<th>Target Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>People of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classism</td>
<td>Impoverished; poor; working class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexism</td>
<td>Women; female-identified individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cissexism/ Cisgenderism</td>
<td>Gender variant, non-binary, and trans* people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexism</td>
<td>LGBTQIA+ people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ableism</td>
<td>People with physical and/or mental disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ageism</td>
<td>People of a certain chronological age</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Others include: sizeism, lookism, colorism, nativism, colonialism...
Privileged Identities

- Young Adult
- Anglo/European Settler
- Upper & Middle Class Wealthy
- English Speaking
- Majority Religion
- Credentialled Literate
- Light Skinned
- White
- Female
- Trans
- LGBTQ+
- Person with Disabilities Neurodiverse
- Chronically ill Mentally Distressed

Oppressed Identities

- Person of Color
- Darker skin tone
- Non-credentialled Illiterate
- Minority Religion
- English as a Second Language
- Indigenous Refugee Immigrant
- Working Class Low Socioeconomic Status
- "Too" Young "Too" Old
- "Too" Young
- "Too" Old
- Mentally Distressed

Intersecting Axis of Privilege and Oppression

- How does your positioning differ from one of your clients/students?
- How might your positioning impact the care you provide to the client/students?
ALL OPPRESSION IS CONNECTED!
Explicit Bias

Attitudes and beliefs (positive or negative) that we **consciously or deliberately** hold and express about a person or group.
Implicit Bias

Attitudes and beliefs (positive or negative) about other people, ideas, issues, or institutions that occur outside of our conscious awareness and control, which affect our opinions and behavior.
Implicit Bias

An Implicit Bias is a preference for OR prejudice against a person or group of people.
Implicit Bias

Operates at the **subconscious level**. We are NOT aware that we have them.
Implicit Bias

Triggered automatically through the rapid association of people/groups/objects and our attitudes AND stereotypes about them.

The human brain takes in 11 million bits of information a second, but is consciously aware of only 40. The brain cannot effectively process 11 million bits of information a second so it takes mental shortcuts.
Development of Implicit Bias

These associations tend to develop at an early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages.

Receive these messages from family/friends, media, institutions, perception of social value, and personal experiences.

Self-reinforcing: our refusal to talk about and confront issues reinforces implicit bias.
Implicit Bias

Can run **contrary to our stated beliefs and attitudes**. We can say that we believe in equity (and truly believe it). But then behave in ways that are biased and discriminatory.
Implicit biases are pervasive. Everyone possesses them. Generally tend to hold implicit biases that favor our own in-group.
Implicit Bias

**Are malleable.** The biases and associations we have formed can be “unlearned” and replaced with new mental associations.
Confirmation bias is our subconscious tendency to seek and interpret information and other evidence in ways that **affirm our existing beliefs**, ideas, expectations, and/or hypotheses. Confirmation bias is both affected by and feeds our implicit biases.
Example of Confirmation Bias

- In 2014, a legal research memo from a hypothetical third year litigation associate that focused on the issue of trade secrets in internet start-ups was sent to 60 partners from 22 different law firms.
- The memo deliberately included different errors, 7 of which were minor spelling/grammar errors, 6 of which were substantive technical writing errors, and 5 of which were errors in fact.
- All of the partners received the same memo, but half received a memo that stated the associate was African American while the other half received a memo that stated the associate was Caucasian.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caucasian Thomas Meyer’s Memo</th>
<th>African American Thomas Meyer’s Memo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Averaged a 4.1 out of 5.0 rating</td>
<td>Averaged a 3.2 out of 5.0 rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average errors identified:</td>
<td>Average errors identified:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2.9 spelling/grammar</td>
<td>- 5.8 spelling/grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 4.1 technical writing</td>
<td>- 4.9 technical writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 3.2 errors in facts</td>
<td>- 3.9 errors in facts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Consequences of Implicit Bias

Provider bias is one documented contributor to health care inequalities.

| Providers may “fill in the gaps,” with beliefs associated with a client’s social group. | Providers tend to be more likely to rely on stereotypes for “out-group members” or people who do not look or act like them. | Providers unconsciously favor those who feel to be similar to themselves, regardless of their conscious beliefs. |
Consequences of Implicit Bias

Implicit bias can affect providers’:

- Client-centered communication
- Question-asking in clinical interview (and thus information gained)
- Diagnostic decision-making
- Symptom management
- Treatment recommendations
- Referral to specialty care
- Interpersonal behavior predictive of patient trust, satisfaction and adherence
- Implicit bias can often lead to engaging in microaggressions.
Cycle of Systematic Oppression

- Stereotype
- Internalized Oppression
- Prejudice
- Oppression
- Discrimination
Impact of Systematic Oppressions

**Internal:**
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Decreased sense of safety
- Decreased self-esteem
- Implications of abnormality
- Internalized guilt, discomfort, confusion, and shame
- Stereotype threat
- Imposter syndrome

**External:**
- Sadness
- Panic attacks
- “Tantrums”
- Defiance/insubordination
- Social isolation
- Self-medication and/or self-harm
- High risk behaviors
Potential Risks in Oppressed Groups

- **Stereotype threat** - situational predicament in which people are or feel themselves to be at risk of confirming negative stereotypes about their social group.
  - Affects stereotyped individuals’ achievement and identity.

- **Imposter Syndrome** - a pervasive feeling of self-doubt, insecurity, or fraudulence despite often overwhelming evidence to the contrary.
  - It strikes smart, successful individuals. It often rears its head after an especially notable accomplishment, like admission to a prestigious university, public acclaim, winning an award, or earning a promotion.
  - Doesn’t discriminate; although minorities and women are hardest-hit.
A Class Divided

• The day after Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated (1968), Jane Elliot, a 3rd grade teacher in a small town in Iowa, began a two-day experiment to teach the students about discrimination, racism, and prejudice.
• This video follows the events of those days and brings back the students in 1985 to recall their experiences.
• Content warning: use of racial slurs, discussion of violence
Microaggressions
What are Microaggressions?

- Microaggressions are the subtle ways in which body language and verbal language convey oppressive ideology about power or privilege against marginalized identities.
What are Microaggressions?

- Brief and commonplace exchanges that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults.
  - Attack, insult, or invalidation
  - Verbal, nonverbal, visual, behavioral, or environmental slights
  - Often automatic and unintentional, but could be intentional
  - The casual degradation of any marginalized group
If Microaggressions Happened to White People

• If Microaggressions Happened to White People

• Reactions to this video?
Common Themes of Race-Based Microaggressions

- Alien in one’s own land
- Ascription of intelligence
- Color blindness
- Denial of individual racism
- Criminality/assumption of criminal status
- Myth of meritocracy
- Second-class status
- Environmental invalidation
- Pathologizing cultural values/communication styles
Theme: Ascription of intelligence

Microaggression: “You are so articulate.”

Message: It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent.
## Examples of Race-Based Microaggressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Microaggression</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alien in own land</td>
<td>“Where are you from?” “Where were you born?”</td>
<td>You are not American. You are a foreigner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascription of Intelligence</td>
<td>“You are a credit to your race.” “You are so articulate.”</td>
<td>It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Blindness</td>
<td>“When I look at you, I don’t see color.”</td>
<td>Denying a person of color’s racial / ethnic experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminality – assumption of criminal status</td>
<td>A person clutching their purse or checking their wallet as a person of color approaches or passes. A store owner following a customer of color in a store.</td>
<td>You are a criminal. You are going to steal / You are poor / You do not belong / You are dangerous.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Examples of Race-Based Microaggressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Microaggression</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denial of individual racism</td>
<td>“I’m not a racist. I have several Black friends.”</td>
<td>I am immune to races because I have friends of color.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth of meritocracy</td>
<td>“I believe the most qualified person should get the job.” “Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough.”</td>
<td>People of color are given extra unfair benefits because of their race. People of color are lazy and / or incompetent and need to work harder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second-class citizen</td>
<td>Person of color mistaken for a service worker. “You people ...”</td>
<td>People of color are servants to Whites. You don’t belong. You are a lesser being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental microaggressions</td>
<td>Television shows and movies without diverse representation of people of color.</td>
<td>You are an outsider / You don’t exist.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Common Themes of Gender-Based Microaggressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Themes</th>
<th>Denial of sexism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Objectification</td>
<td>Denial of sexism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second-class citizenship</td>
<td>Denial of individual sexism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascription of intelligence</td>
<td>Sexist humor/jokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of sexist language</td>
<td>Assumption of inferiority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumption about traditional gender roles</td>
<td>Intrinsic skills &amp; personality types</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme: Restrictive Gender Roles

Microaggression: “How are you going to work full-time and raise children?”

Message: Women’s primary responsibility is child-rearing.
### Examples of Gender-Based Microaggressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Microaggression</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ascription of Intelligence</td>
<td>&quot;Oh, you are a bio major? Are you studying to be a nurse?&quot;</td>
<td>Women are not smart enough to be doctors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Skills &amp; Personality Types</td>
<td>Women in power lead by emotion and are too sensitive!</td>
<td>Women are &quot;genetically&quot; emotional &amp; sensitive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second-class citizen</td>
<td>We can't have a woman president!</td>
<td>Women's leadership abilities do not compare to that of men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Microaggressions</td>
<td>The only options for gender on university forms are &quot;male&quot; and &quot;female&quot;</td>
<td>Transgender individuals do not belong or matter here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumption about traditional gender roles</td>
<td>“How will you be able to work and take care of children?”</td>
<td>Women are primarily responsible for child rearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Themes of Sexuality and LGBTQ Based Microaggressions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use of heterosexist, homophobic, or transphobic terminology and language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assumption of universal LGBTQ experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Endorsement of heteronormative culture and behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assumption of sexual pathology or abnormality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Misgendering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme: Endorsement of Heteronormative Culture and Behaviors

Microaggression: "So, who is the man in the relationship?"

Message: A relationship is only valid when there is a man/masculine figure.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Microaggression</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumption that sexual orientation is the cause of all presenting</td>
<td>“What do you think this issue has to do with your sexuality?”</td>
<td>Your sexual orientation is the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance and minimizing of sexual orientation</td>
<td>When someone comes out and someone responds with, “Good, it’s about time.”</td>
<td>Coming out is not a big deal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempts to over identify with LGBTQ clients</td>
<td>Making frequent references to distant family members who are LGBTQ.</td>
<td>I understand your issues because I know someone who is LGBTQ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making stereotypical assumptions about LGBTQ clients</td>
<td>Telling a lesbian woman, “You don’t look like a lesbian.”</td>
<td>Lesbian women have a certain appearance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Microaggression</td>
<td>Message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressions of heteronormative bias</td>
<td>A LGBTQ client notices that a therapist’s office only displays heterosexual books and pamphlets.</td>
<td>You are abnormal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental microaggressions</td>
<td>The only options for gender on forms are “male” and “female”</td>
<td>Trans and non-binary individuals do not belong or matter here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warnings about the dangers of identifying as LGBQ</td>
<td>“Are you sure you want to enter this lifestyle?” or “Have you really thought this through?”</td>
<td>Any problems you face are your own fault for choosing a LGBTQ identity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Types of Microaggressions

• **Microinsult** (Often Unconscious): Behavioral/verbal remarks or comments that convey rudeness, insensitivity, and demeans a person’s identity.

• **Microassault** (Often Conscious): Explicit, purposeful identity-based derogations characterized primarily by a violent verbal or nonverbal attack.

• **Microinvalidation** (Often Unconscious): Verbal comments or behaviors that exclude, negate, or nullify a person’s thoughts or feelings.
Types of Microaggressions

- **Microinsult** (Often Unconscious):
  - Body language, inserting additional space between yourself and African American patients and not White patients

- **Microassault** (Often Conscious):
  - Refusing to use appropriate pronouns for transgender individuals

- **Microinvalidation** (Often Unconscious):
  - Dismissing perceived discrimination or racism as paranoia or unrealistic
Intersection of Microaggressions

- Individuals who have multiple oppressed identities experience multiple microaggressions, and are receiving constant messages their identity is invalid, invisible, and disposable.
How Microaggressions are Like Mosquito Bites

How Microaggressions are like Mosquito Bites

- Reactions to this video?
Psychological Consequences of Microaggressions

- Diminished cognition
- Diminished confidence
- Sleep difficulties
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Social isolation
- Negative self-schemas
- Helplessness
- Risk-taking behaviors
- Hypertension
- Loss of drive
- Substance use disorders
Should I Respond to a Microaggression?

1. If I respond, could my safety be in danger?
2. If I respond, will the person become defensive and will this lead to an argument?
3. If I respond, how will this affect my relationship with this person (e.g., coworker, family member, etc.)
4. If I don’t respond, will I regret not saying something?
5. If I don't respond, does that convey that I accept the behavior or statement?
6. If I was being microaggressive, would I want someone to call out my behavior?
Ways to Confront Microaggressions

• Take a deep breath!
• Don’t be quick to assume offense was the intent.
  • Focus on the event, not the person.
    • Reframe and educate.
    • Label what has occurred.
• Explain how you interpreted the slight, and how it may be interpreted by others.
  • Humor, when appropriate!
Recommendations for Confronting Microaggressions

- Address microaggressions when they happen.
- Be mindful of your cultural and social positioning:
  - The way you would respond to a child vs. an adult
  - Your relationship and rapport with the microaggressor
- Navigating cultural differences when addressing/confronting microaggressions.
- Be an ally, but always listen to the person who has experienced the microaggression.
Microaggressions – Activity

• We are going to provide you with 2 scenarios. Each group has similar microaggressions, but featured in a different interaction.

• We want to come up with the message that is being sent via the microaggression, and ways you would respond to each microaggression.

• Be specific! If you would confront it head on, what would you say? What would that look like?
**Microaggressions – Activity**

**Scenario:** You overhear a teacher tell a student who has a non-westernized name, “Your name is so hard to pronounce, do you have a nickname I can call you?”

**Scenario:** You overhear a colleague telling a new staff member who has a non-westernized name, “Your name is so hard to pronounce, do you have a nickname I can call you?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Microaggression</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pathologizing cultural values/communication styles</td>
<td>“Your name is so hard to pronounce, do you have a nickname I can call you?”</td>
<td><em>What message do you feel is being communicated via the microaggression?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*How would you respond?*
**Microaggressions – Activity**

**Scenario:** You overhear a student tell another student, “If there is a LGBTQ club, why don’t we have a club for straight people?”

**Scenario:** You overhear a student tell a teacher, “If there is a LGBTQ club, why don’t we have a club for straight people?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Microaggression</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQ experience</td>
<td>“If there is a LGBTQ club, why don’t we have a club for straight people?”</td>
<td>What message do you feel is being communicated via the microaggression?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*How would you respond?*
Microaggressions – Activity

Scenario: You hear an administrator tell a student, “Well, you don’t have to worry about getting into college because you’re a minority.”

Scenario: You hear a student tell another student, “Well, you don’t have to worry about getting into college because you’re a minority.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Microaggression</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meritocracy</td>
<td>“Well, you don’t have to worry about getting into college because you’re a minority.”</td>
<td>What message do you feel is being communicated via the microaggression?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How would you respond?
# Microaggressions – Activity

**Scenario:** You hear an elementary aged-child ask another child, “Are you a girl or a boy?”

**Scenario:** You hear an elementary aged-child ask an adult, “Are you a man or a woman?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Microaggression</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Misgendering</td>
<td>“Are you a girl or a boy?”</td>
<td>What message do you feel is being communicated via the microaggression?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*How would you respond?*
Confronting and Resisting Microaggressions

- When have you observed or experienced a microaggression in real life? How did you handle the situation? Do you wish you would have addressed it differently?

- How do you teach this to people you work with?
Reducing Microaggressions During Assessment and Treatment

- Referral forms
  - Add in pronunciation of name
  - Alter the way you ask demographic questions
    - “Legal Name” and “Preferred Name”
    - “What sex were you assigned at birth? (What does your original birth certificate say?)”
    - “Current gender identity?”
    - “Pronouns”
Reducing Microaggressions During Assessment and Treatment

- At time of intake, ask the hard questions!
  - How to pronounce name
  - Pronouns they use (even introduce yourself with the pronouns you use)
  - Gender identity
  - Sexuality
  - Ask if they have experienced oppression (racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.) and if it has had an impact on their mental health
Reducing Microaggressions During Assessment and Treatment

- During treatment and educational activities:
  - Pronounce their name correctly, use the name they wish to go by
  - Use correct pronouns
  - Be mindful and respectful of scheduling during religious and cultural holidays and celebrations
  - Remove heteronormative metaphors, examples, or assumptions
  - Assigning projects/homework that ignore differences in socioeconomic status and inadvertently penalize clients/students with fewer financial resources.
Reducing Microaggressions During Assessment and Treatment

- Reduce environmental microaggressions
  - Are the pamphlets and promotional materials your agency uses only promoting one type of identity? Do you have diverse individuals represented?
  - Institute gender inclusive restrooms and policies
  - Remove of gender-specific identifiers on job applications
  - Expand where you promote the business and where you recruit staff
  - Add your pronouns to your email signature and business cards

- Other suggestions?
Our behavior is a function of our experience. We act according to the way we see things. If our experience is destroyed, our behavior will be destructive. If our experience is destroyed, we have lost our own selves.

R.D. Laing
Awareness, Acceptance, Advocacy

- Continuing education
- Understanding your own implicit bias
- Begin with a fearless searching of the soul and self-reflection.
- Move beyond tolerance
- Acting out of responsibility and not out of guilt

“We need to be weapons of mass construction, weapons of mass love. It’s not enough just to change the system. We need to change ourselves.” – Assata Shakur
Moving toward Cultural Humility

• Move toward difficult conversations and engage your client in conversations about their cultural identities that are most important to them.
  ➢ This is necessary to develop a strong bond with clients and create an environment where they trust you with all parts of themselves.
  ➢ Avoidance is not an option.
• If you are experiencing cultural anxiety or insecurity you are likely becoming self-focused.
  ➢ Learn to cope effectively with these feelings so they do not impact your ability to attend to the client’s needs and affective experiences.
• When you can regulate your anxiety and maintain an other-oriented stance during cultural discussions, the emotional bond is likely to deepen.
• It is easy to focus on symptom reduction and forget that discussions about cultural identities are important in developing a strong bond between client and therapist, and ultimate success in therapy.
Cultural Humility

- Encourages therapists to approach their work with culturally diverse clients with an attitude of openness, and engage in a dynamic process of growth.
- Acknowledging and owning one’s limitations to understanding a client’s cultural background and experience.
- Striving to express openness and interest in the client’s salient cultural identities.
- Emphasizes there is no end point of competence, but rather continued growth and development over time.
- Cultural humility has been linked to stronger working alliances with diverse clients, achieving higher rates of improvement, and being able to repair relationships with clients following microaggressions in therapy.
Cultural Humility Model
Why do we need these talks?

• Parents and educators as front-line responders
  ➢ Topics of race and racism are typically ignored, done nothing about, or cause paralyzing anxiety and indecision
  ➢ Reactions and (in)ability to speak about tough topics passed down from generation to generation
• Improves the psyche of children on both sides of equation
  ➢ Improves self-esteem, breaks false beliefs and assumptions, making people aware of oppressor roles, etc.
• Differences are noticed and cared for with curiosity, open-mindedness, and compassion
• Determine the curriculum taught to future generations
• Prevention is better than remediation
• Takes personal responsibility for change
• Continue to learn
Harvard University’s “Project Implicit”
References and Resources


“Mental Health Project Implicit.” Harvard University. 2018.


*What is stereotype threat?* Retrieved February 1, 2015 from http://www.reducingstereotypethreat.org/definition.html
