Multicultural Approaches to Crisis Intervention

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"A monkey and a fish were caught in a terrible flood and were being swept downstream amidst the torrents of water and debris. The monkey spied a branch from an overhanging tree and pulled himself to safety from the swirling water. Then, wanting to help his friend the fish, he reached into the water and pulled the fish from the water onto the branch.

The moral of this story is clear: Good intentions are not enough. If you wish to help the fish, you must understand its nature."

(Marsella, Johnson, Watson, & Gryczynski, 2008)

Self Awareness in Practice

- Physiological response to perceived crisis events
  - Cultural interpretation of events
- Social Worker use of self in practice
  - Knowing appropriate practice limits
- Awareness of practitioner's cultural background
  1. Country of origin
  2. Religious beliefs
  3. Life experience & vulnerabilities
- Awareness of practitioner's value system

(Moral Awareness and therapist use of self. Rick Reinkraut)
Culture - Defined

American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language

Culture = “The totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and through characteristic of a community or population.”

We all have our own unique cultural identities.

The Importance of Cultural Competency

After a crisis event, many people don't remember what was said to them, but they do remember how a responder made them feel.

People feel more comfortable if they feel understood.

Cultural Competency in Crisis Response

General Considerations:

– What is the demographics of the student body?
– Is there community support of the school?
– Has the school communicated the crisis plan to parents?
– How is crisis defined within the different cultures in the community?
– Are there vulnerable populations?
– What are "normal" responses to crisis within each population?
– How has the school prepared in advance to accommodate cultural implications in the event of a crisis?
– Is there a preferred gender or age of responder?
Culture Influences

Perceptions of

- Threat
- Stress
- Reactions
- Healing
- The Responders

Major Cultural Groups in the U.S.

- African American
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Middle Eastern

African American

- History
- Response to grief/death/crisis
- View of mental health treatment
- Suggestions for Working with this population
- Discussion
Hispanic

• History

• Response to grief/death/crisis

• View of mental health treatment

• Suggestions for Working with this population

• Discussion


Asian

• History

• Response to grief/death/crisis

• View of mental health treatment

• Suggestions for Working with this population

• Discussion


Middle Eastern

• History

• Response to grief/death/crisis

• View of mental health treatment

• Suggestions for Working with this population

• Discussion
What is your school community cultural Makeup?  Considerations:

- Train staff in crisis plan/model, including parent liaisons
- Establish and maintain an interpreter contact list for necessary communications
- Understand community perceptions of the school
- Determine language needs for documents and other communications
- Team member factors
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Apparel

Contact Information

Pathway Resources

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Resources