

## **Innovations in Counseling (Part 11 Session 14)**

### **Transitioning from Cultural Competency to Cultural Humility in Mental Health Practices**

Webinar Follow-up Question and Answer Session With  
Diomarys Nunez, MA, LPC

**Question from Vosburg, A.:**

What is the best first step to present a positive and progressive starting point in this whole process?

**Answer from Presenter:**

The best first step to present a positive and progressive starting point is by naming and claiming the intentionality. By being intentional, we are taking active steps and recognizing that we won't get it all right all of the time but that we have to start somewhere can help give that initial boost.

**Question from Barnes, G.:**

Do you find it hard to discuss race with older people?

**Answer from Presenter:**

I used to find it difficult to discuss race with older people and then I realized that by giving into this discomfort, I was also playing into the bias that already exists about older people. I began taking the time to listen to perspectives of older people I've worked with, whether as colleagues, clients, and family/friends. Instead of calling out, I made it an effort to invite perspectives they were often not considering. I won't say that this is effective every single time. There are still folks out there whose ideologies are plain racist. But there are more people out there that really do appreciate having these conversations, even when it feels uncomfortable.

**Question from Jimenez, A.:**

Please explain what is/why use pronouns?

**Answer from Presenters:**

Pronouns, such as "he,him; she, her; they,them," are part of one's identity. The use of pronouns helps people get a better sense of another person's gender identity. For example, I am a cysgender woman who uses she/her pronouns. When I meet new individuals, I identify my pronouns so that there is less confusion or questioning about how I present myself. Some individuals may present with more masculine or feminine features but use different pronouns. It can seem confusing, and it can take some time to integrate. It is best to NEVER assume one's pronouns and simply ask what the individual prefers.

**Question from Anonymous:**

From your experience and expertise, is distrust like racism taught? If you believe it is, why do you think it is not until the college level that combating these teachings are encouraged? What about those who do not go to college?

**Answer from Presenters:**

I believe in social learning and learning based on observations. With this being said, I do believe that distrust is taught, and I also believe that one learns to not trust others based on lived experiences. Discussions about racism, distrust of others who look and behave differently than ourselves, and other conversations alike tend not to be discussed until college, and this is part of how privilege and systemic oppression show up. The fact that there aren't spaces outside of college to have such discussions, was well-planned and thought out by those with power and privilege. This results in communities continuing to live within confined boxes, with "survival" mentality. With all of this being said, all hope is not lost. Thanks to social media and BIPOC/LGBTQ+/and other communities, people are starting to feel more empowered to discuss race, distrust, harmful traditions, and other hard topics.

**Question from Anonymous:**

As a white mental health provider, how do I respond when a BIPOC client expresses concerns about trusting me?

**Answer from Presenters:**

The best way to respond is by showing authenticity and genuinity. This includes validating the individual and doing your best to understand where they are coming from. Do your best to not take it personal and instead, help them feel even more empowered by saying something like, "I appreciate you taking the time to name the mistrust. Let's work together to help you move through that, if you would like." Another way of showing authenticity is by reassuring your client that you are willing to remain humble throughout this process, even while in the therapist role.

**Comments:**

"I really like the emphasis on intentionality, in Germany this is just starting and the majority look at you like a Martian."

"In Germany I would welcome anyone presenting on these topics, bc even multicultural education for mental health practitioners is almost non existant, so talking about cultural competency is very much in baby shoes. And cultural humility here probably gonna have to be taught, talked about at the same time as competency. I would be very interested if anyone want to do talk about that in Germany."

"nally & spiritually abusive christian marriages. Cultural competency & humility are interesting topics dealing with christian abuse. Allowing space for allowing the client to process her belief's beliefs while feeling supported and not further abused in a christian setting is critical for her healing. Expecially fighting the christian culture where women are taught, that despite abuse, they are never to divorce."

"Excellent presentation"