



The National Board for Certified Counselors

Take Your Kung-Flu Back to Wuhan: Counseling Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders With Race-Based Trauma Related to COVID-19

Webinar Follow-up Question and Answer Session with Dr. Stacey Diane A. Litam, NCC, CCMHC, LPCC

Question from Clarence Bumpas:

Would self-disclosure as a counselor of color assist in establishing or solidifying the therapeutic alliance?

Answer from Presenter

Great question! I firmly believe that self-disclosure can be a powerful tool to establish a therapeutic alliance, but only when done intentionally. For example, we must be careful not to self-disclose in a way that shifts the attention away from the client and places it onto ourselves. Generally, I avoid sharing personal stories but do recommend the usage of universal “we.” For example, if a client is expressing feelings of frustration regarding the ongoing COVID-19 related racial discrimination towards the Asian diaspora, you may respond with, “Yes, many of us are tired and we share your concern.”

In short – before engaging in more personal self-disclosure, consider the following reflection: “Is this helpful for the client?” and “Is this my attempt to make a connection? If so, what are some other ways I may do this?”

Question from Clarence Bumpas:

In the event a counselor of color encounters another(AAPI), who has prejudices against the counselor. What would be a suitable and effective approach?

Answer from Presenter

If I understand the question correctly, it seems as though you’re asking how to navigate client prejudice. Although it can be tempting, when clients demonstrate prejudice, it is never personal. It just *feels* personal. Chase the feeling. Be curious about which feelings or experiences are driving the client prejudice. I also may ask the client, “What would we discuss today to help you feel more comfortable about our ongoing work together?” Let the client lead.

Question from Daniel Cisnero:

Great microinterventions. In your experience do you think individuals should respond in these ways to social media microaggressions or do the interventions get lost in translation and just make one more upset/angry?

Answer from Presenter

Social media is tricky! It truly depends on whether the person has the emotional resources needed to engage in an ongoing debate with someone who can hide behind a keyboard. Generally speaking, I don't engage in microinterventions on social media as much of the communication, as you mentioned, gets lost in translation. If someone with whom you have a personal relationship has engaged in the microaggression, it may be best to ask to meet in person (at a safe social distance!) or discuss your response over an online video platform or the phone.

Question from Todd Gearheart:

Do Filipinos have distinct differences in how they use pride as a defensive mechanism when they feel mocked or bullied differently from other Asian cultures?

Answer from Presenter

Filipinos are a unique breed because of our colonization history. However, it is impossible to make sweeping generalizations about any AAPI subgroup! The use of pride and its effectiveness as a protective factor in Filipinos will depend on how they feel about their ethnic identity, their acculturation process, their cultural socialization, and whether a community of other Filipinos is accessible.

Question from Oriel Romano :

Do you have any recommendations in how to respond to clients when they express somatic symptoms but do are not aware or receptive to the emotional connection between mind/body?

Answer from Presenter:

Great question! Assess for clinically significant changes in behavior. Ask questions about differences in sleeping, eating, and energy patterns. Be curious about *where* on the body the client may feel pain. Then, solution focused interventions can go a long way! Scaling questions and the miracle question may be helpful to support the client in identifying, specific, objective, and measurable goals to promote wellness behaviors.

Question from Christine Marie Turner:

What advice/suggestions/best practices do you recommend for Asian American counselors who experience racism and prejudice from their clients? In addition, what do you suggest for Asian American counselors whose clients refuse their counseling services out of racist-driven fears?

Answer from Presenter:

Asian American counselors must continue to engage in our own self-care practices to avoid facing compassion fatigue and burnout. Connecting with a group of trusted Asian counselors and/or counselor educators is invaluable. It is important to have a group of colleagues who can understand and validate your experiences as an Asian American *and* as a counselor or counselor educator. If non-mandated clients refuse our counseling services out of racist-driven fears, let them. This is their choice as a client with autonomy.

Question from Allen Vosburg:

How can we as counselors assist in strengthening the AAPI positions in this important cause of actions? The question pertains to AAPI philosophy to promote clients.

Answer from Presenter:

If I understand the question, it seems you are asking how to promote the social positioning of AAPI. This can be done by advocating for policies within your community that explicitly condemn racial discrimination towards AAPI. White counselors must also do their part to challenge their pre-existing notions about AAPI and consider whether their socialized beliefs about Asians affect the way they provide services to AAPI clients.

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