

Innovations in Counseling (Part 12 Session 1)

Mindfulness to Promote Wellness and Coping Among Immigrant Children and Adolescents

Webinar Follow-up Question and Answer Session with Shama Panjwani, PhD, NCC, BC-TMH, CCMHC, ACS, LPC

Question from A. Vosburg:

What would you consider to be a key element to get a client moving in a progressive direction?

Answer from Presenter:

A key element to moving a client in a progressive direction is the therapeutic relationship. If a client feels safe in the counseling relationship while experiencing empathy and acceptance, it will help the client express and open up so that there is an increase in self-awareness and an awareness of their situation, which is progress in itself. As counselors we have to recognize that progress may still be happening even if does not look how we want it to look.

Question from E. Jobbik:

Food is strongly connected to culture. For some kids/adolescents might feel like that leaving those eating habits which are connected to their families they betray them. How would you address that with immigrants?

Answer from Presenter:

Food is a big part of an individual's culture. Healthy eating and nutrition does not always mean that they cannot participate in their food culture and have to leave it behind. It becomes about finding a way to incorporate their culture's food into healthy eating. Whether that means they limit how often they eat those foods or alter the way they are prepared to make healthier ingredient choices. If they decide that cutting those foods out completely is the best decision for them, then we have to empathize with that guilt and help them recognize there are other parts of their culture and family's culture that can be embraced in order to hold on to the values of the culture of their country of origin.

Question from C. Reiche:

How can I support a 15-year old immigrant boy who is receiving very little parental support, but he is quite "protective" of the caregiver's unhelpful even dysfunctional behavior?

Answer from Presenter:

It would be important, first, to determine what type of role the 15-year old immigrant boy is playing within the family system. Individuals who belong to a collectivist culture are generally going to be protective towards their families and caregivers because that's what they are taught and expected to do. We want to understand that from their worldview while helping the client understand and become aware of those dysfunctional

patterns and how they could be impacting the child. Although we cannot change the parent's behavior, we can provide the child with tools and resources to cope with those behaviors.

Question from A. Vossburg:

What art therapy tools or techniques do you find most beneficial to use with immigrant children?

Answer from Presenter:

Art therapy encompasses many different forms of expression. I have used drawing, painting, coloring, poetry, story-writing, music, and to some extent dance as a way for immigrant children to express themselves. There is no one size fits all. Hence, it would be important to explore what the child is interested in and passionate about and scaffold that with emotional expression.

Question from J. Ockershausen:

Hi! Dr. P! one of your Keiser students Jessica!

Do you think mindfulness will be applied in schools for all children, since it's not always available for them to seek help.

Answer from Presenter:

I am unsure if will be applied in schools. However, it is something important to advocate for it to be applied and taught in schools so that all children have this tool and can benefit from its use.

Question from D. Hrabak:

How can schools and educational institutions create a mindful and inclusive environment for immigrant children while fostering their academic success and social well-being?

Answer from Presenter:

For there to be inclusivity for any marginalized group, there must be an initiative to have workshops and trainings to educate the leadership, educators, staff, parents, and other students within that system. This will help create awareness about the immigrant population. Along with creating awareness, we must also have resources to foster their academic success based on the needs that have been identified. Positive social interactions through mentorship programs or by forming groups and activities will also create a sense of belonging and acceptance for this group.

Question from S. Daraio-Rivera:

How might you help clients who are U.S. citizens (such as Puerto Ricans) but who still have a language barrier that face difficulties like prejudices of being seen as an immigrant, being on the main land (continental U.S.)?

Answer from Presenter:

It's frustrating for this group to be identified as immigrants due to being from Puerto Rico and having a language barrier while being U.S. citizens. I think in situations such as these, it helps to advocate for this group and empower them to advocate for themselves. Providing them with a safe space to share their narratives while ensuring they have similar resources available to them is important. Educating them on what's available to them as U.S. citizens while focusing on their cultural identities and providing tools on dealing with the

trauma of discrimination and prejudice as well as strengthening their support systems so that they know they are not alone will be a place to start.