

WORKING WITH HT SURVIVORS: CULTURAL HUMILITY

Overview

Cultural humility affirms that no individual can possibly learn all aspects of any culture, including their own.

Key Principles of Cultural Humility

- Commit to lifelong learning, understanding that gaining insight into a person's culture is an ongoing process.
- Engage in critical self-reflection such as examining unconscious bias to determine how attitudes, perceptions, and values might impact service to others.
- Foster respectful partnerships by recognizing and mitigating power imbalances that are often inherent in provider/client dynamics.
- Encourage organizational accountability through which institutions model these principles.¹

Cultural Humility When Working with Survivors of Human Trafficking

Reflect on how your reality may influence your perception of clients' realities, such as differences in communication style, socioeconomic status, measure of success, spirituality or faith practice, and the degree of cultural formality in interactions. Developing an awareness of how clients identify themselves can provide valuable insight into their internal and external protective and risk factors that are relevant to their situation. Recognize that clients may be hesitant to accept assistance, especially for those who lack secure immigration status or have been involved in the criminal justice system. Building trust and rapport is an essential first step.²

Practicing Cultural Humility with Survivors of Human Trafficking

Assume Nothing and Create Space for Clients to Define Their Own Cultural Identity

- When gathering information from your clients, try to discern how clients interpret their culture.
- Practice differentiating clients' relationships with their culture from over-generalized beliefs and stereotypes.

¹ Tervalon, M. & Murray-Garcia, J. (1998) Cultural humility versus cultural competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education.
https://melanietervalon.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/CulturalHumility_Tervalon-and-Murray-Garcia-Article.pdf

² Collaborating to Help Trafficking Survivors: Emerging Issues and Practice Pointers.
<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/ImmigrantWomen/Collaborating%20to%20Help%20Trafficking%20Survivors%20Final.pdf>



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- Recognize that culture is not limited to values, norms, language, place of origin, race, and ethnicity. Cultural elements may also include class, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, immigration status, generation or other identities and variables affecting an individual's reality.
- Use a strengths-based approach that leverages your clients' resilience and protective factors, both internal and those associated with their culture.³

Explore the Complexities of Language and Culture

- Consider that survivors, especially members of a less dominant culture may not value or benefit from procedural fairness dimensions –respect, voice, neutrality, and trust – vis-à-vis intersecting dynamics of human trafficking such as language, culture, history of oppression, experiences of trauma, and immigration status.
- Appreciate the primacy of language in communication and context and ensure that clients can interact in their preferred language.
- Recognize that survivors, based on cultural or individual beliefs, may not identify as victims and reject such labeling.
- Caveat: If working with a client in a small or marginalized group, it may be necessary to provide an interpreter from a different community to ensure safety and to protect confidentiality.⁴

Resources

To learn more about the practice of cultural humility, watch this documentary featuring Doctors Melanie Tervalon and Jann Murray-Garcia who developed the concept:

Cultural Humility

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaSHLbS1V4w>

³ Collaborating to Help Trafficking Survivors: Emerging Issues and Practice Pointers.

<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/ImmigrantWomen/Collaborating%20to%20Help%20Trafficking%20Survivors%20Final.pdf>

⁴ A Guide to Human Trafficking for State Courts (Chapter 9)

http://www.htcourts.org/wp-content/uploads/Ch-9_140725_NACM_Guide_OnlineV_v04.pdf



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Resources (continued)

To access training modules on Culture, Diversity, and Inclusivity, visit the Victim Assistance Training program from the Office for Victims of Crime Training & Technical Assistance Center:

Core Competencies and Skills

https://www.ovcttac.gov/views/TrainingMaterials/dspOnline_VATOnline.cfm?tab=1#corecomp

This handbook, designed for use by advocates and professionals, serves as a guide to becoming aware of the ways in which culture impacts working with survivors of domestic and sexual violence:

Warrier, S. (2005). Culture handbook. Family Violence Prevention Fund.

<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/ImmigrantWomen/Culture%20Handbook.pdf>

