


Engaging with Children and Families from Asia and the Pacific Islands

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Objectives

- Concrete tips and tools on how to engage API families
- Understand the role of language in mental health conceptualization and engagement
- Understand intersectionality and its role in delivering individualized treatment



Where are you from?

- Why does this question trigger a negative reaction from Asian Pacific Islanders?
- Limitations of Ethnic Identity
 - Within one ethnic identity, there can be multiple factors that influences the shaping of norms and values: education, skin color, caste, immigrant or refugee, city, rural town or villages and spirituality.

I AM FROM MY OWN AND MY FAMILY'S EXPERIENCES

Intersectionality

- Its an overlap of subcultures and its relationship to systems of oppression and discrimination
- To view your client/parent as multiple overlapping identities will help you widen your understanding of their narrative
- Example: AAPI and LGBT
 - Family oriented and collectivist cultures
 - Filial Piety – There is virtue in respect for your parents, elders and ancestors. A person may not disclose their sexual identity to the family for the purpose of maintaining family tranquility
 - Representation/Reputation – Your "choice" is a representation of the family and is not just a matter of individual happiness

AAPI - NOT the Model Minority

- Suicide was the 8th leading cause of death for Asian-Americans, vs. 11th for all racial groups combined.
- Among females from all racial backgrounds between the ages of 65 and 84, Asian-Americans had the highest suicide rate.
- U.S.-born Asian-American women had a higher lifetime rate of suicidal thoughts (15.9 percent) than the general U.S. population (13.5 percent).
- Among Asian-American adults, those aged 18-34 had the highest rates of suicidal thoughts (11.9 percent), intent (4.4 percent) and attempts (3.8 percent) compared to other age groups.
- Asian-Americans college students were more likely than White American students to have had suicidal thoughts and to attempt suicide.

Hijoka, S., & Wong, J. (n.d.). Suicide Among Asian-Americans. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/pi/ocma/resources/ethnicity-health/asian-american/suicide.aspx>

AAPI – NOT the Model Minority

Mental Health, Depression, Suicide

AAPI - NOT the Model Minority

- AAPI Adolescent girls have the highest rates of depressive symptoms across all ethnic and age groups (NAWHC)
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for 15-24 year old AAPI (NAMI, 2011)
- Suicide ideation appears in 18.9% of AAPI high school students versus 15.5% in national average. AAPI students show double the rate of suicide attempt compared to the national average.
- Among male high school students, AA males have the highest rate of considering suicide at 17%

Why is there Mental Illness?

- Families may have their own beliefs of why a person is struggling with mental illness.
 - A consequence of past wrong doing
 - Failure from the parent
 - Possessed by demons or is cursed
 - Failed to fulfill their duty owed to their ancestors

Traditional Beliefs and Behaviors relating to Mental Health

Culture	Beliefs	Coping behaviors and treatments
Chinese	Mental illness caused by lack of harmony of emotions or by evil spirits	Often try traditional herbs and acupuncture first; healers may be used concurrently to get rid of evil spirits
Japanese	Mental illness caused by evil spirits; often thought not to be real illness	Delay or avoid seeking professional help; many will use traditional sources of care
Korean	Mental illness caused by disruption of harmony within individual or by ancestral spirit coming back to haunt patient because of past bad behavior; result of bad luck or misfortune; payback for something done wrong in the past; is considered shameful	May deny problems, resulting in helplessness and depression; not likely to reveal the problem unless asked; may show signs through nonverbal communication and posture; may use shamanism
Vietnamese	Depression is sadness	Not readily acknowledged because of stigma; usually try home remedies, spiritual consultations, or Chinese herbs before seeking Western medical care; some use of exorcists; seek help only when problems become acute or obvious; family members try to cheer up or distract the patient

Examples of Terminology

- How various mental health challenges are termed
 - Cambodia – no word for Depression. Instead it is *thlea tdeuk ceut*, which literally means "the water in my heart has fallen."
 - *Klyul* attacks, or "wind attacks" for Anxiety in Cambodia
 - India and Nepal – Tension
 - Hawaiian – instead of Mental Health, the word "pilikia" is used which means trouble
- Cultural Variations in how you conceptualize the body
 - Cambodia: "Physical Brain" and "Heart-Mind". The heart/mind is less permanent and can be treated. While *maunak ughaut* or "brain shock" to describe PTSD is permanent.
 - Qi – Mood can be influenced on how balanced our body is described as being too "hot" or "Cold". This is not in reference to body temperature but as energy.

The role of Language

- "Linguistic Interaction is a shared journey through a mental landscape" Sweetser 1992
- Never assume that the parent/child and you have a same shared meaning. Meaning is a construct from social context.
- Direct Questioning versus Descriptions
 - "Is there a family member that has a mental health illness?" Versus "Is there any family member that is dependent on another family member that isn't married, doesn't work or seen as irresponsible?"
 - "Has anybody died by suicide?" versus "Are there any mysterious accidents that led to death?"

One animal, different meanings



Western World

Starting from childhood, a dragon is depicted as evil, aggressive, a symbol to fear.

Eastern World

A dragon represents royalty, power, strength and luck.

Engagement

- Engagement begins with how the client believes how you perceive them.
- The role of shame and maintaining "Face"
 - A simple statement about non-judgment is not enough. The language that you adopt throughout your meetings will the child and family is left open to constant interpretation.
 - "Saving Face" is a value that will limit what the family is willing to share with you.
 - Psychoeducation comes from a Western Perspective. There is value in it but it can perpetuate a message of shame if delivered from a role of authority.
 - Note Taking removes engagement and can elicit feelings of shame
 - Miss the non verbal cues of shared glances, facial expressions
 - Thoughts of "Did I say something bad?"

In order for something to be meaningful/valid, it has to make sense in their social context

- Informed Curiosity
 - Do not assume that people view challenges the same way as you
 - Refrain from making your own inferences, deciding what is of value, or recommendations on how to solve a problem.
 - <https://youtu.be/G70qj1DWT8>
- Social Validity Paradigm by Alan Kazdin
 - People believe there has to be a problem
 - Is the Tx socially acceptable
 - Outcome of the Tx has to be valued by that patient
- Example: Laziness versus Depression
 - The term Laziness is based on the value of Productivity. While the term Depression is based on the value of mood and states.

Values to Consider

- Tolerance of Hardship
 - Buddhism – Life is Suffering
 - Hinduism – Karma
 - Taoism – No control over life and focus on achieving flow and acceptance of one's destiny
 - Catholic - *Rahala na* (fatalism or "Leave it up to God") is common in the Filipino culture
- Conflict Avoidance and Humility
 - Confucianism – Social harmony in the 5 relationships: state, parent and child, brothers, marital partners and friends.
- Emotional Regulation
 - Buddhism – Self Control
 - To focus on emotions is to be indulgent

Asian parenting values

- "You can only parent with what you know. Your role is to bestow your knowledge to your children so they don't have to suffer the same challenges you have had." Goal – Your child will lead a better life than you had.
- Love is assumed, not expressed
 - Showing affection through acts of service
- Commands, not questions
- Rules are not explained, just followed
- Strictness as form of protection
- Parental sacrifice leading to high expectations
- High values on education and success

Conflict with children satisfaction of parenting styles occur primarily due to being raised in differing cultural values

- "Training"
 - Educating children in culturally appropriate behaviors
 - Avoid bringing shame and dishonor to the family
 - Discourage displays of anger, aggression and disobedience
- Governing, Caring for, Loving
 - Sacrifice of the Mother
 - Warmth: parental involvement and parental investment
 - Investment in education and success
 - Restriction and Strictness – To protect, not necessarily to inhibit

Storytelling

- The traditional role of storytelling/folk tales is to convey messages, lesson and values for the recipient to absorb and integrate into their daily living
- Stories help to give people a sense of identity and direction
- The story is always in third person form. This minimizes the impact of shame. The Therapist will be able to convey a message, have the client infer the lesson(s) of the story and have a richer discussion without directly shaming the client. The story is in a third person form.
- The stories can also come from the clients/parents. By inviting them to share the story, they will also be disclosing a shared value in their culture that may influence how they perceive their role as a parent, the role of the child, and the purpose of the parent child relationship.

Metaphors

- Metaphors is a process “by which we understand and structure one domain of experience in terms of another domain of a different kind.” – Johnson 1987
- Do not assume that people have a shared meaning of
- Metaphors help with...
 - Expressing a difficult emotion
 - Express abstract concepts concretely
 - Condense a large amount of information
 - Discuss a difficult subject matter

Metaphor Examples

- Medication is like a cast, holding things stable while the inside heals
 - For ADHD: Brains as a computer with too many screens open, or medication helping fix the brakes on a speeding car
- Things get worse before they get better: Like cleaning out a junk closet/drawer you've been ignoring for a long time, you have to take everything out and it looks messier than it did before, so that you can organize and put it back.
- Challenges/symptoms are like roadblocks on the road of life – can't be ignored, nothing wrong with you inherently, just stuck! Therapy helps you find a way around, through, past, etc.

- Kids are like growing plants, they need the right amount of nurturing and water. Every plant needs different things.
- It's often easier to think short-term and ignore the problem like an ostrich sticking their head in the sand, but in the long run you'll still get eaten by the lion.
- When giving consequences, need to be immediate, consistent, and fair. If you were speeding and a cop gave you a warning first, then caught you next week doing nothing wrong and ticketed you instead, that would be unfair. Similarly, if you got a ticket every time you went above speed limit you would stop immediately. Additionally, if you were caught for speeding and you were banned from driving forever, that would be unfair. Kids should have an opportunity to learn from their mistakes too.
- We inherit a parental toolbox from our own parents, but sometimes the tools inside are not the right ones we need for our own kids, or maybe the tools are a little broken and need to be fixed.

- Feelings like a soda bottle, life's stressors will shake you up and then it will explode. Have to find a way to open up slowly and carefully.
- Over time, things build up like dirt building up on a car. Crying is like a car wash that helps wash some of that dirt away.
- Self care: You need to refill your own bottle before you continue to serve others.
- Relationships are like a rubber band, if you stretch them too far and stiffly they will snap. Need to loosen up and give space too.
- Actions cause ripples like a pebble thrown in a pond. They can have far-reaching consequences you didn't realize.

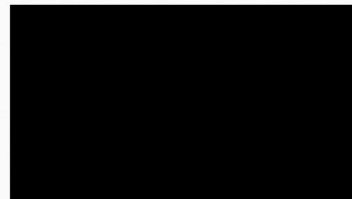
Vignette

Danny is an 11 y/o Chinese boy with a long history of behavioral problems and academic delay. School officials referred him to the emergency department of a local hospital after he ran to a fifth floor window ledge and threatened to jump. Immediately before this episode occurred, Danny had responded to a question from the teacher in his English class by stating, "I don't know. I guess I just must be stupid."

Danny's parents are separated, and he sees his father only once every few months. When his mother, who speaks only Chinese, arrives in the emergency department, she appears tired and tearful as she struggles to hold Danny's 2 year old sister in one arm while trying to make sure that his 5 year old brother does not wander out of her sight. Because no Chinese-speaking interpreters are available, Danny acts as the interpreter for his mother. When asked what might have happened if he had actually jumped from his window at school, he replies, "What difference does it make?"

Source: Depression in Asian American Children, Western Journal of Medicine, Vol 176 Sept 2002

A Family's Cry for Help



Activity

- Based on the previous vignette or video; write down the following:
- 1) Stories or metaphors you would like to share to help engage the families
 - 2) Informed Curiosity questions that will help you have a better understanding of how the family is conceptualizing their problem

Questions?

