

*Building Bridges of Understanding  
with Religion and Culture through  
Intercultural Resiliency*

**JOANNE GINTER, M.A.**  
Brief Therapy Conference  
Treating Anxiety, Depression and Trauma  
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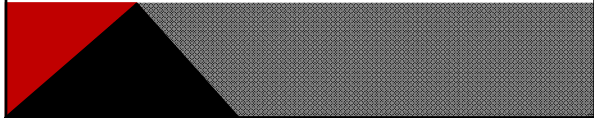
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## LIFE STORIES

People are the creators of stories that give life events connectedness and meaning.

Life stories are woven with successes, challenges and failures; including familial, cultural and religious rituals.

Therapists are asked to understand stories outside their worldviews resulting in a need for more inclusive and diversified dialogues promoting intercultural resiliency and pluralism.



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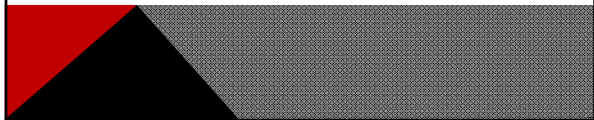
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## GOALS

What are the significant challenges that present for therapists working outside their own worldviews and what are the challenges that clients have with therapists outside their worldview?

How do we understand the role that religion has for a therapist in developing a pluralist lens?

How is understanding between differences built through intercultural resiliency?



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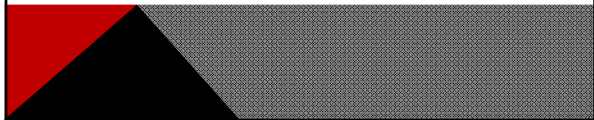
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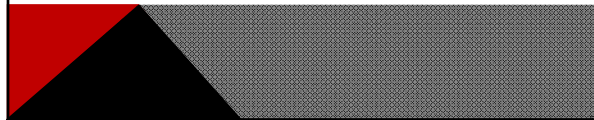
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## WORLDVIEWS ARE .....

*...the looking glass through which one views the world.*

*...a set of assumptions, values, beliefs about how human beings and the world in which we live function that directly affect our responses to the world around us.*

*(Collins and Arthur)*



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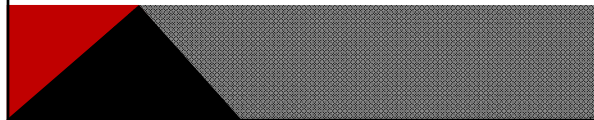
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## SELF IN RELATIONSHIP

the individual sense of self or story is comprised of the sum of stories from all relationships. Therefore the meaning given to stories is created by both the individual and the community, including culture and the many facets that comprise culture

*"it is our capacity for personal relationships that make us human; we act as agents in our own life plays within a matrix of relationships"*

*(Jones)*



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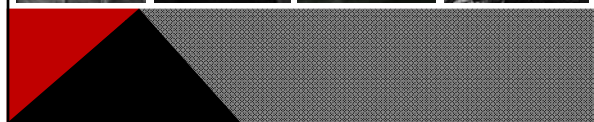
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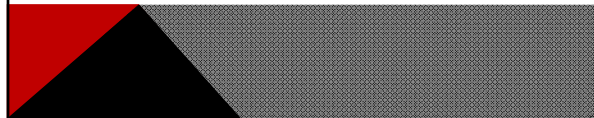
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## RELATIONSHIP RELIGION AND PSYCHOLOGY

Includes all psychologies/therapies providing mental health

Follows a timeline of psychological theories regarding religion from the early 1900's to the current integration of spirituality and non-traditional healing methods (Reiki, mindfulness)



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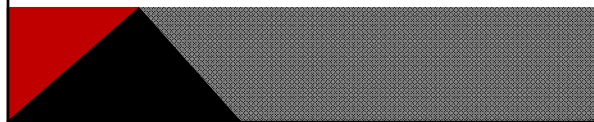
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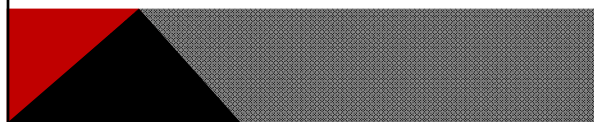
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Rejectionist

Exclusivist

*Constructivist*

*Pluralist*



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## THE FOUR POSITIONS

### REJECTIONIST

Based in Freudian, behavioral and existential theories, defines religious beliefs as immature reactions to life events; no place in therapy.

Religion is a psychological defense

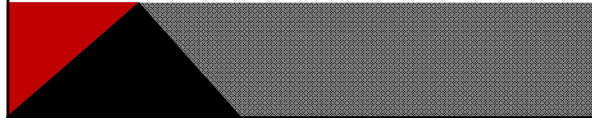
Therapist encourages more ego-oriented and rational approaches to life

### EXCLUSIVIST

Referred to as the "spiritual reality perspective".

Based on fundamental belief in a religious or spiritual dimension.

For therapy to be effective, therapists must have a religious or spiritual worldview and assume on primary path to wholeness.



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## THE FOUR POSITIONS

### CONSTRUCTIVIST

Does not assume the existence of an absolute reality;

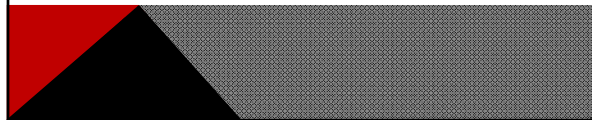
Acknowledges that individuals construct their own personal meanings and realities from their experiences, belief systems, values, fears, and other aspects of their social context

### PLURALIST

Model of cross-cultural therapy

Recognizes each person entering the session (both the client and therapist) comes with their own specific personal and cultural values, ethnic and social characteristics and stories

Belief in absolute/spiritual reality



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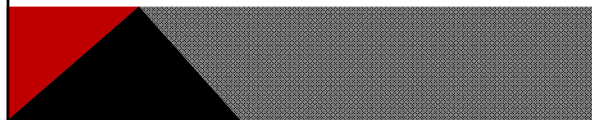
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## MODIFIED PLURALIST



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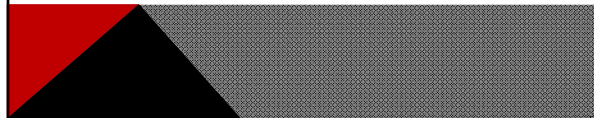
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### MODIFIED PLURALIST

Combines essential features of both the constructivist and pluralist positions with the exception of:

- Belief in absolute reality
- Belief that the client possess all the available resources to solve the problem



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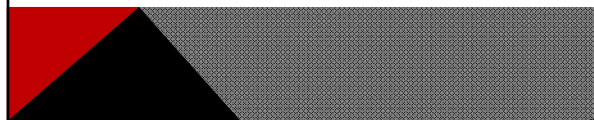
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### MODIFIED PLURALIST

Both the client and the therapist openly acknowledge that each enter the therapeutic relationship with his/her own story, including values, beliefs and experiences; allows for all available meaning making processes, including aspects of the therapist's story to facilitate more creative problem solving

Acceptance of diversity in stories and multiple meanings

Supports the therapist that does not hold a universal belief in the sacred



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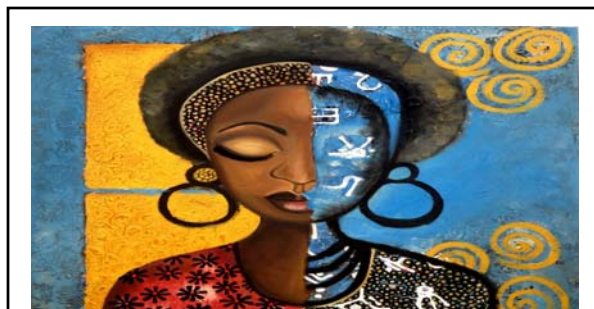
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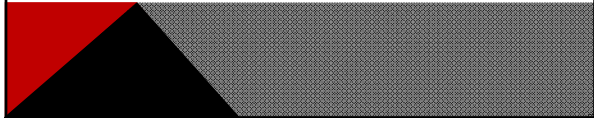
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## PLURALISM

“a universal global community with a common vision and destiny”, “the oneness of humanity in creation and to work toward better understanding among peoples of faith”

(Aldulaz Sachedina)



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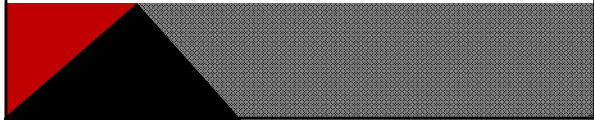
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## PLURALISM

Encourages sensitivity to broader acceptance of institutionalized religions worldwide  
Accepts that religion as it exists in any culture directly or indirectly influences all members of that society

Supports the development of *Resiliency* which offers a language and process to build bridges between differences



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## WORLDVIEW

### Spiritual Platform

“values and philosophical outlook that reflected the spirituality of the clinician”

(Aponte)

### Cultural Self

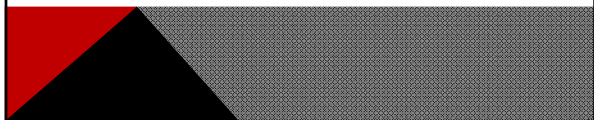
“a fluid entity that reveals who we are at the core” and “who we are becoming culturally in this globalized...age”

(Abi-Hashem)

### Cultural Schemata

“the clusters of beliefs and assumptions formed through social conditioning and experience that act as a kind of cultural filter...including how both counsellor and client behavior is defined and interpreted.”

(Collins and Arthur)



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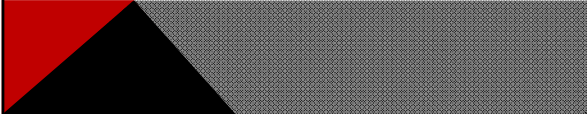
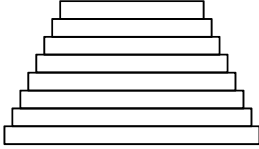
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## YOUR SPIRITUAL PLATFORM/CULTURAL SELF

Following the questions on the worksheet, take time after the workshop to fill in your spiritual platform



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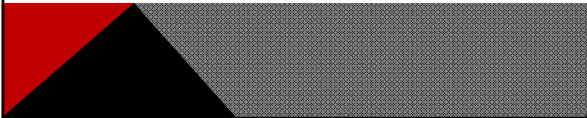
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## RESILIENCY

*“an individual’s ability to reconstruct the meaning of unfortunate life events” or “the capacity to rebound from adversity strengthened and more resourceful”*

(Walsh, 1999c, p. 37)



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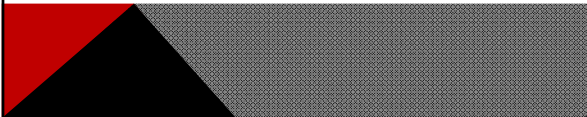
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## RESILIENT TRAITS/CHARACTERISTICS

- insight, independence, the ability to develop relationships, to take initiative, be creative and humorous and hold a sense of morality
- who re-interpreted the events of their childhood and transformed them into life skills that would enable them to continue in positive directions in their adult lives
- visualize and seek a life that encompasses the ongoing need for personal growth amidst an elaborate system of myths, symbols and ideals that promote active self-righting rather than victimization.



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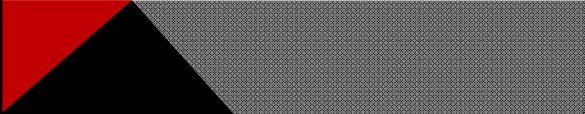
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### RESILIENT RELATIONSHIPS

Resiliency develops within an empathic milieu of relationships from which we can experience ourselves as part of something greater than our individual egos, receive empathic understanding for our thoughts and feelings, and receive support for our ideas and goals. These things are necessary for the development and maintenance of joy, creativity, and resiliency in our lives



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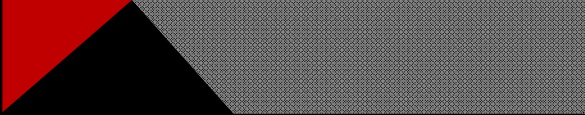
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### RESILIENT SYSTEMS

Creating resiliency within a web of interrelated relationships

The therapeutic relationship therefore becomes more collaborative and empowering of the system's (family) potential so that successful interventions depend on accessing resources within the system



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### RESILIENCY



SELF  
Soul or spirit

RELATIONSHIP  
Mentor, counsellor or caregiver

COMMUNITY OF CARE  
Nurture



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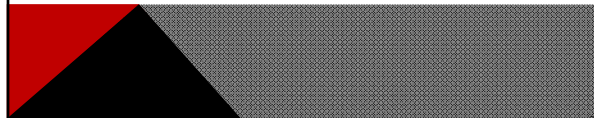
### INTERCULTURAL RESILIENCY

#### PSYCHOLOGY

- *Self*
- *Surrogate Caregiver*
- *Community*

#### RELIGION

- *Soul/Spirit*
- *Mentor/Spiritual Guide*
- *Community of Care*



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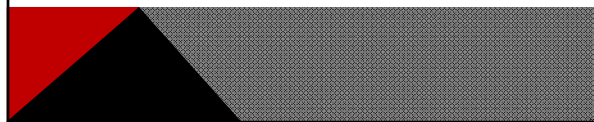
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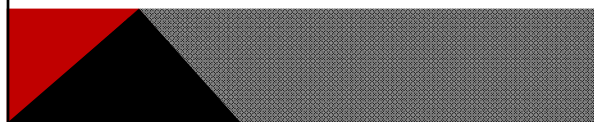
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### RESILIENCY IS....

- A process of self-creation within significant resilient relationships and systems
- Re-visioning and creating new meaning to life stories
- Sense of self created from multiplicity of personal and relational stories
- Within the process of self-creation, each person is either the narrator or reader



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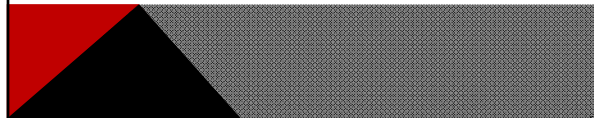
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The key to self-creation is  
*"the sense that something novel is being  
fashioned in the process of living"*  
*(William Randall)*



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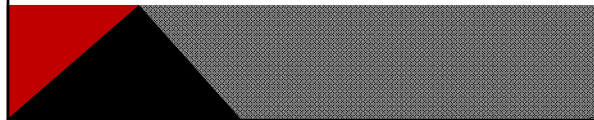
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FOSTERING RESILIENCY

*Fostering resiliency involves understanding the  
relationships that support the development of a  
healthy sense of self*



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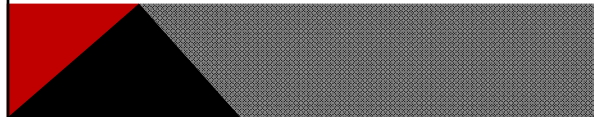

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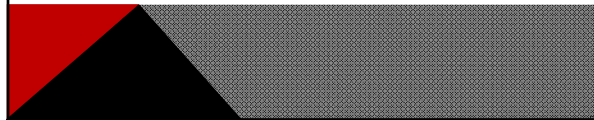
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## INTERCULTURAL RESILIENCY

Recognition of the person in relationship to those individuals who support individual's development and community that provides nurturance and care  
Based on a relational interaction between the person and therapist recognizing the uniqueness of the person  
The relational dance between the client and therapist



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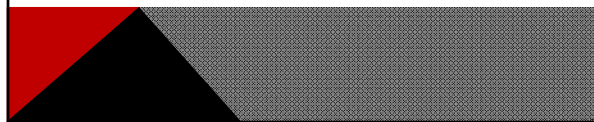
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## INTERCULTURAL RESILIENCY

The energy that holds pluralism in place  
Promotes sharing life stories to create new meanings to life changing events  
Synonymous with Culture-infused counselling (the conscious and purposeful infusion of cultural awareness and sensitivity into all aspect of the counselling process)



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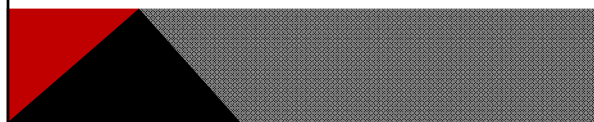
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## CHALLENGES FOR INTERCULTURAL RESILIENCY AND PLURALISM OR CULTURALLY INFUSED COUNSELLING

Learn and practice respectful questioning  
Know and practice an inner framework to understand your client(s)  
Seek to know  
Accept the resurgence of different and new cultures  
Believe that resiliency can be the bridge  
Be present as a member in the active recreation of client(s)' stories



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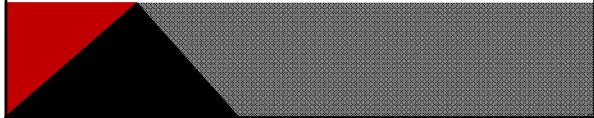
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*"When our clients lose hope, our faith in their potential can restore their faith. When we believe in the work of our clients, they are better able to rise to meet their challenges with confidence and competence. Valuing human connection, we help our clients to seek reconciliation to heal wounded relationships and encourage them to forge more meaningful personal and spiritual bonds"*

(Walah.)

**This is the essence of intercultural resiliency:  
self-created healing**



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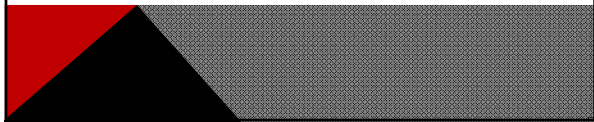
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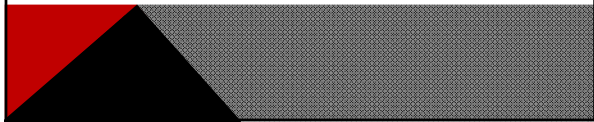
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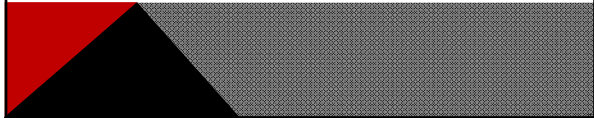
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