

Culturally Sensitive Strength Based Strategic Therapy

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Cultural Issues in Brief Therapy

- All Therapy is Multicultural
- Each Client Brings Unique World
- Enter That Unique World
- See World Through Client's eyes
- Work Within That Unique World



Work Within Client's World

- Empathic acknowledgement of client's experiences
- Demonstrate understanding of client's world
- Work within client's cultural context
- Interventions fit client's cultural context
- When to question cultural constructions & beliefs
- When to suggest couple can create own culture in relationships

Challenging Cultural Constructions

- a. Oppressive cultural & society messages generate problems
- b. These messages dictate how people should view world & relationships
- c. Deconstructing & reconstructing messages - generate more positive, helpful, & effective perceptions of self, others & situations.
- d. Reconstructed meanings assist client to deal more effectively with presenting problem
- e. Goal is “mental liberation”
- f. When to challenge cultural & social constructions & when to work within these constructions



Five Elements of Successful Interventions

1. Strong positive therapeutic relationship
2. Therapist credibility
3. Client's belief in the effectiveness of intervention
4. Client's motivation to carry out intervention
5. Client's capacity to carry out intervention



Joining Client & Activating Strengths Key Elements in Intervention Effectiveness

- Builds therapeutic alliance
- Increases therapist's credibility
- Increases client belief in intervention effectiveness
- Increases motivation to carry out intervention
- Facilitates client's capacity to carry out intervention



Working within Client's World

- Engage client to tell Problem story
- What has special meaning - “Frame of Reference”
 - Understand cultural context of problem story
- Understanding client's message – “content” vs. “process”
- Acknowledge & Validate story
 - “I hear you” & “I understand”
- Identify client's strengths



How Problems Develop

- a. Ineffective coping - mishandled stressful or challenging events
- b. Attempted solutions that do not work and make the problem worse.
- c. Perception and meaning that drives the ineffective attempted solutions

First Order & Second Order Change

- a. **First Order** – change or solutions within the same category, keeps people stuck in repetitive problem cycles

- a. **Second Order** – change or solutions in different category, helps people develop new solutions in different direction and breaks negative ineffective cycles



Types of Attempted Solutions

- a. Trying too hard to control things that require “letting go”, eg. anxiety, sleep, etc.
- b. Over controlling or under controlling events and relationships
- c. Narrow view of possible solutions
 - Confrontation vs avoidance of problem issues
 - a. Pressuring Partner to change
 - b. Gottman’s “Four Horsemen”

Strategic Interventions

- What is Not Working
- Break pattern of attempted solutions.
- New perception/frame leads to new solutions.
- Second order change & 180 degree turn solutions.
- “Thinking out of Box”
- New solutions fit Client’s cultural context.

Changing Perceptions

- Generating new view of Problem Situation
- New view changes Meaning
- Meaning drives attempted solutions
- Reframing & Alternative Meanings

180 Degree Turn Solution

- Not Opposite but Different Direction
- Breaking Problem cycle
- Redirecting Energy - Tai Chi Chaun
- Creativity & “Thinking out of Box”
- Innovative Strategies & Techniques
- New Solutions consistent with Cultural Context



Example

The Critical Oppressive Boss

- Japanese secretary being bullied by Boss.
- Boss criticizes & bullies her, activates her anxiety, increases her mistakes, which escalates his critical bullying behavior.
- Japanese culture secretaries not have open discussions about boss's mistreatment.
- She tries to avoid him, as his assistant it is difficult.
- She feels trapped and stuck.
- Consequently she experiences intense anxiety & depression.

Frame of Reference or Client's Position

- I am victim of my boss's unreasonable, mean, severe criticism.
- He is oppressing me.
- I am powerless and helpless to defend myself.
- Because of his mean severe criticism I doubt my own competence.

Joining Client & Activating Strengths

- It is natural to feel oppressed by boss's behavior.
- It is understandable to feel powerless.
- How have you been able to endure this?
- What are examples of past successes and competencies?
- Are you competent secretary?
- How do you understand what is going on?
- What would help to feel more empowered?
- What are different ways to view problem situation? (needs to fit cultural context)



Interventions

- New Frame: Boss has the problem
- I can deal with his Problem more effectively
- Stop Attempted Solution not working - avoiding contact with boss
- Second order change & 180 degree turn solutions - Engage Boss in different way
- Change Interactional Pattern consistent with new Frame
- New solutions need to fit Client's cultural context.



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