

COUNSELING MEN OF COLOR

***A Manual for Mental Health
Addictions and Criminal Justice
Professionals***

by

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Dedications

This workbook is dedicated to:

Troy Hardin and Benneth Lee, facilitators of my rites of passage group.

Terrance, Mark, Troy, Les, Rod, and all members of my rites of passages group.

My brother, William, whose life growth is a constant source of inspiration.

Jan Gomien, a great source of support and friendship.

My son, Joseph, for providing me the opportunity to be a dad—one of the most awesome responsibilities of manhood.

Introduction to Counseling Men of Color

Males of color are disproportionately represented as clients in criminal justice, chemical dependence, and mental health settings. Many do not see counseling as the solution to their problems, have cultural norms against sharing information with outsiders, and often view the counselor as “a part of the system.” Research reveals that men of color often drop out of counseling after one or two sessions.

In addition, counselors often report difficulty in building a trusting therapeutic relationship with male clients of color and are perplexed as to how to provide appropriate services to this group.

This workbook is a guide to help counselors work more effectively with male clients of color. Information will be provided on topics ranging from core clinical issues for men of color, reasons male clients of color resist therapy, overcoming barriers to mistrust, and ways of approaching resistance with male clients of color.

Writing exercises throughout the workbook will enable readers to gain additional insight into their work with male clients of color.

- 1. What are some general challenges you have faced in counseling men of color?**
- 2. What are your initial thoughts as to why these challenges exist?**
- 3. What are your specific challenges in counseling men from the following groups? Next to each group write your initial thoughts as to why these challenges exist.**

- A) Latino males –**
- B) African American males -**
- C) Asian males**
- D) Bi-racial males**
- E) Gay or bisexual males**
- F) Gay or bisexual, or men of color**

4. **What insight(s) have you gained answering the questions in this chapter?**

Chapter 2

Resilience and Men of Color

Many writings that focus on counseling clients of color begin with a discussion of deficits. In order to feel a sense of hope in our work it is often a good idea to begin with the positive and with strengths. One strength that many men of color possess is resilience, which allows them to deal with stress, ostracism, racism, and oppression. Many of these resilience factors are identified by the work of Wade Nobles (1985).

The resilience factors include:

1. **A sense of “We-ness” – Group identification**

Noted author Joseph Campbell observed that “the circle” represents unity and can be seen in the sacred art of ethnic groups throughout the world (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 1949). It is the sense of groupness that helps men of color survive, thrive, and cope. Examples include: Black men bonding with each other while participating in or watching athletic events; Korean men sharing a meal together; and Mexican males playing an impromptu soccer game with their friends. While these activities may appear insignificant, they can have strong mental health benefits for men of color. In a world where men of color experience a great deal of ostracism, racism, and discrimination, the simple act of coming together can let them know that they are not alone. Coming together can also give

these men informal opportunities to support and empower each other in dealing with oppression.

2. Emphasis on Spirituality

Spirituality is an important aspect of culture. Spirituality allows men of color to strive for balance and connectedness in a world that is often hostile to them. Groups who meditate can find internal peace in an externally non-accepting and pressure-packed world. In the book, *Why Black People Tend to Shout: Cold Facts and Wry Views from a Black Man's World* (1991), Ralph Wiley points out that shouting is a way of the spirit coming out and expressing its joy and pain. This shouting can be observed in church and/or in the spirited way in which males of color play cards together, party, celebrate, or observe athletic events. Shouting can be a great medicine for living in a stress-filled life. Others may get in touch with their spirituality by experiencing oneness with nature. This is especially common among various Native American groups.

3. Humor

Many comics emerge from groups who have experienced a great deal of oppression. For decades there have been numerous Black and Jewish comics. Humor is one way that people are able to soften the pain of oppression. Famed comedian Dick Gregory suggested, "If it were not for a sense of humor, many men of color would lose their minds." It is not uncommon for male groups of color to get together with their peers and simply make each other laugh.

4. A well-developed ability to use affect.

Using hand movements while talking, using hand gestures, demonstrative movements, histrionics and elevated voice while watching television or playing cards, or banter among friends can release a great deal of stress.

5. A flexible concept of time.

At my seminars I ask participants, “If a meeting at work is scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m., what time should everyone arrive?” The group usually shouts in unison, “9:00 a.m.” When asking on an Indian reservation, “What time does a meeting start?” most participants state, “When everyone arrives!” I once heard a Native American speaker say, “We pay a price for having everyone’s body clock on the same time frame. If a meeting starts at 7:00 a.m., everyone must arrive at 7:00 a.m., regardless of whether he or she is a morning, afternoon, or evening person. The price we pay is called caffeine addiction and the use of other stimulant drugs to get our bodies moving, even if we are not yet ready to wake up.”

Historically, Native Americans, Latinos, and African Americans have had cultural norms that allow for more flexible concepts of time (Sue & Sue, 1999). People in territories in which the land is rich in natural resources (i.e., Africa, South America, etc.) automatically find themselves not moving at such frantic paces. This lifestyle automatically engenders a lower level of stress. In fact, as I write this paragraph, I have an image of millions of Americans rushing every

morning to make it to work at 9:00 a.m. and home by 6:00 p.m., exhausted but having to repeat the frantic cycle the next day.

Most men of color are on this same cycle, particularly in the world of work but are able to slow themselves down when they are not working.

6. A general sensitivity to others.

The experience of oppression has the ability to increase one's sensitivity to others. The Aborigines in Australia, Blacks in South Africa, Native Americans, African Americans, Japanese Americans, and Mexican Americans have never been quite as hostile to their oppressors as their oppressors have been to them, nor have they been as retaliatory as might be expected. A sensitivity to others in spite of mistreatment has positive physical, emotional, and mental health benefits (Small, 1990).

7. Strength that comes from oppression.

There is a familiar saying that, "Everything that does not kill you makes you stronger." Indeed, victims of racism, discrimination, and police brutality who survive these experiences become stronger because of these experiences.

Chapter 3

Language, Learned Helplessness, and Mistreatment

In working with men of color as clients, empowerment is often an important part of the work. A review of the language used in professional social service journals to describe clients of color may actually lead us to disempower clients. If we internalize the meanings of some of the terms, we may begin to see male clients of color as “less than” and incapable. Some of the terms include:

- **Marginal – Reviewing the literature, you might discover an article entitled, “Social Work Practice with Marginal Adolescent Males in Spanish Harlem.” The word “marginal” means unnecessary, unimportant, or unessential (Mirriam-Webster’s Dictionary, 10th Edition, 2000).**
- **Deprived – Clients whom we feel are “deprived” are often the ones we feel sorry for. It might be difficult to empower someone for whom you feel sorry (Small, 1990).**
- **Helpless – the dictionary defines helpless as weak, impotent, powerless, and without strength (Mirriam-Webster’s Dictionary, 10th Edition, 2000).**
- **Endangered species – In published articles Black males are commonly referred to as an endangered species. This is the same language used to describe animals that are drugged, captured, and bred for man’s survival.**

- **Lower class** – Webster defines “lower class” as earning less money. It also means being an inferior specimen (Mirriam-Webster’s Dictionary, 10th Edition, 2000).
- **Disadvantaged**
- **Disenfranchised**
- **Underprivileged** – As in “underprivileged men of color who live in substandard housing.” “Underprivileged” means inferior, subservient, less than. One who internalizes these definitions might automatically feel sorry for clients who appear to fall under this category, rather than encouraging empowerment.
- **Culturally deprived** – Does this mean they have no culture?
- **Culturally disadvantaged**
- **Gang-infested** – Sounds similar to common complaints about substandard housing that people often say is “roach or rat infested.” This language has the power to dehumanize. In communities that are considered “gang infested,” the young men in gangs often constitute only 5% of the population (Goldstein, 1993).
- **Drug-infested** – What helper would want to go into a drug-infested neighborhood? Many of us have images of young males of color standing on street corners in urban areas selling drugs. These areas are often referred to as drug-infested, in spite of national statistics that reveal that there are often more drugs used in suburban areas than in the inner city.

- **Minority – In Australia, during periods when the Aborigines represented 90% of the population, they were referred to as minorities. Blacks in South Africa, in spite of their majority status, are seen as minority. “Minority” means “less than.”**

What is the psychological impact of counselors or clients internalizing the concept of minority? Are they seeing the client as less than?

CHAPTER 4

CORE ISSUES FOR MALE CLIENTS OF COLOR

The four main ways in which males of color seek mental health and counseling services, in descending order, are:

- 1. Hospital emergency room**
- 2. Mandated through the criminal justice system**
- 3. Crisis**
- 4. Referral from a significant other**

In short, many men of color are forced into counseling, rarely seeking counseling voluntarily. In this chapter we will discuss core clinical issues that men of color bring with them into the counseling milieu. Keep in mind that not all men present with these issues.

Core Issues for Men Who Seek Counseling

1. Father/son pain – This is a universal pain, which cuts across cultures and race. 50% of white, 60% of Latino, and 69% of Black children are raised without their fathers in the home (Sanders, 2006). For lots of children this is their first major loss. Male clients often experience two types of injury where their fathers are concerned.

A) Father hunger – This occurs when the male never received enough fathering while growing up. As a man he has an emotional hole, a sense of loss that needs to be healed.

B) Father wounds – These occur when the male has been injured by his father. Verbal, physical, and sexual abuse are the kinds of tragedies that can create such wounds. It has been my clinical experience that many men who have been wounded by their fathers prefer female therapists because of a mistrust of men. Father/son pain is so prevalent that counselors should explore this issue with male clients, even if it seems to have nothing to do with the presenting problem.

2. Toxic masculinity – Engaging in dangerous acts in the name of being a man (i.e., playing Russian Roulette, driving fast, drinking and driving, etc.)

- 3. Performance anxiety – While women are treated like sex objects in our society, men are often treated like and socialized to be work objects. Even popular male toys are about work—hammers, nails, building blocks, etc. Older males especially have been socialized to believe that their self worth is determined by their work performances and external accomplishments. 75% of boys who play Little League baseball quit their baseball careers by age 13. A major stressor of the sport is pressure from screaming coaches and fathers for the boys to perform perfectly.**
- 4. Difficulty acknowledging fear – Fear is often not viewed as a masculine emotion, and many men have been socialized to believe that it is not okay to express fear.**
- 5. Anger/Rage – Males across cultures are given permission to express anger and rage. These are often viewed as masculine emotions. Losing control through angry and rageful outbursts is a price males pay for keeping vulnerable emotions such as hurt and fear inside. Hurt is the emotion that most often lies beneath anger (Sanders, 2006).**
- 6. Difficulty with intimacy – Ideally, young males would learn relationship skills from their fathers. Because of the high rate of divorce, many males lack available fathers to teach them relationship skills. If males do not learn these from their fathers, how will they learn them?**

7. Difficulty expressing feelings – Given the message that expressing feelings is not “manly,” many men are uncomfortable doing so. One challenge in engaging men in counseling is the fact that counseling focuses on the open expression of feelings.

Core Issues for Men of Color Who Seek Counseling

- 1. Pain caused by racism – Even if racism is not the presenting problem, it can be a great source of pain for many men of color.**
- 2. Discrimination**
- 3. Feelings of apathy – Caused by racism, discrimination, and oppression.**
- 4. Feelings about their racial identity – Some males of color have negative feelings around their racial identity, which can affect self-esteem and the ability to succeed. Methods of assessing the client’s feelings about his racial identity will be discussed in Chapter 5.**
- 5. Stress in living a multicultural existence – Noted speaker, professor, and author Dr. Eric Michael Dyson encourages adolescent Black males to master three languages:
 - A) King’s English;**
 - B) Slang;**
 - C) A foreign language.****

This proficiency, Dr. Dyson contends, will enable them to interact in a number of cultural milieus. Many men of color have to present themselves in myriad ways as they interact back and forth between

the larger society and their own cultural group, which can be quite stressful.

6. Double consciousness – Many men of color live with two views of themselves—the way they see themselves and the way they believe white Americans see them. A young Latino male is walking down the street. A white woman is walking toward him holding a purse. Two thoughts simultaneously occupy the young Latino’s mind. He sees himself as an honest person and also sees the white woman’s possible perception of him as a thief who might snatch her purse. He may have this double consciousness in this situation even if the woman does nothing, i.e., clutch her purse, cross the street, etc. This example of double consciousness is another source of stress for men of color.

7. Frustration in not receiving all the benefits men receive in a sexist and racist society – Sexism and racism are wrong; yet, many men of color may be frustrated when they observe benefits that white men receive in our sexist and racist society that they do not, such as:

A) Better restaurant service – Many men of color report having to fight feelings of frustration and inferiority when they observe maitre d’s and waitresses in restaurants holding eye contact with, pampering, and conversing with white males as they enter with spouses or partners, while they often ignore males of color and look at and speak only to their spouses or partners, as though they (the males) are invisible. These men often report that watching restaurant owners greeting white

males at their tables with smiles and questions about the quality of service and level of enjoyment can be frustrating, when this type of attention and consideration rarely happens for them.

B) Better cab service – Many men of color report being passed over by cab drivers in favor of white males (or females) even when they (the males of color) are in closer proximity to the cab.

C) Better customer service in department stores, hotels, restaurants, banks, automobile dealerships, etc.

D) Greater rate of loan approval – Men of color are less likely to be approved for bank loans, even when they have the same credit rating as white males who are approved.

E) They generally pay less for large ticket items, including homes, cars, etc. (Hacker, 1992).

F) They receive better treatment by police and the court system in general.

8. Internalized oppression – In his book, *Wretched of the Earth* (1965), Frantz Fanon wrote, “When people are oppressed, they try everything they can to fight the oppression, including using the same methods on the oppressor that the oppressor used on them. Then the oppressor pulls out, and the oppressed continue to oppress themselves.” Internalized oppression is closely akin to self-hate. Examples include Black on Black crime, gang violence in communities of color, substance use, and domestic violence. It should be noted that

there are many communities that have these aforementioned problems. In communities of color, these problems are examples of internalized oppression.

9. Being a “minority within a minority” – This speaks to the pressure and isolation males of color feel when they do not conform to stereotypes or norms expected of them as members of the group. I recently read a newspaper article about DePaul University’s women’s tennis coach, a Black male who grew up on the West Side of Chicago, in an area that has produced thousands of outstanding African American male basketball stars, including Isiah Thomas and Mark Aguirre. The coach revealed that he had to sneak to practice tennis on the West Side to avoid ostracism. Other examples include an Asian male who comes from a family of three generations of men who have gone into technical fields—computers, science, mathematics, etc., who feels pressured because he wants to be an actor; a Latino male with three older brothers who are gang members in a community in which gang activity flourishes, studying to play the violin. One can imagine how many broken dreams have occurred throughout the ages because individuals cannot handle the rejection and pressure of being a minority within a minority.

Many differences exist among various male groups of color, including:

- A) Rates of employment – Latino males have the highest rate of employment in the United States. They are also the lowest paid.**
- B) Income and wealth – Statistics from, *The Millionaire Next Door* (Stanley & Danko, 2003) reveals that recent immigrants are more likely to become millionaires in America than individuals whose families have been in the United States for three to five generations.**
- 3. Image in the larger society – Although all are males of color, Asian Americans seem to have a better image overall in the eyes of white Americans than inner city Blacks and Latinos.**
- 4. Degree to which they are seen as a threat by the larger society – African American males are seen as most threatening. Depicted as criminals throughout the country on late night news, these are the last images many people see of Black males before they go to sleep. There are rarely positive stories on the news about Black males to balance out the negative images.**
- 5. Standardized test scores – Asians score the highest, although within various Asian groups, not all score equally high. Within the group, Chinese and Japanese Americans have the highest scores.**
- 6. Method of migration – Some traveled to America by boat or raft; others tell stories of their ancestors coming to America via Ellis Island. Puerto Ricans flew here; Blacks came on slave ships; recent immigrants from Honduras walked to America after Hurricane Mitch**

destroyed much of the country. Counselors should be aware of the various methods of migration, as these methods can still have profound impacts on clients today.

7. Connection to a homeland – Not all groups are equally connected to a homeland. This type of connection is a good thing, as it can help create balance when individuals and groups feel ostracized in America.

8. Community businesses – compared to other male groups of color, recent immigrants and Asians have the largest number of businesses (Hacker, 1992).

9. Stereotypes – There are uniquely different stereotypes about each group (Sue & Sue, 1999).

10. Method and period of oppression – It may be easy for some people to assume that African Americans are the only group who experiences racism and oppression, as their style of protest involves letting the world know about the oppression, when, in fact, each group has experienced oppression. Many have cultural norms of “suffering in silence” (Sue & Sue, 1999). During World War II, Japanese Americans were placed in concentration camps. Native Americans were massacred and had their land taken away. This was called “Manifest Destiny.” Africans were brought to America as slaves, stripped of their culture, and forced to give nearly three hundred years of free labor (Robinson, 2000). The Chinese migrated to America during the Gold Rush, en route to California. They built

the infrastructure of the Golden Gate Bridge, and, as they prospered in San Francisco, they received a great deal of discrimination (Sowell, 1985). There was a time when California was called Mexico. This is why so many cities in California have Spanish names (i.e., Sandiago, San Francisco, San Bernadino, etc.). This land was taken from the Mexicans, and today they're called aliens when they reenter the state. I heard a group of Korean business owners reveal their pain as Los Angeles police officers stood by and watched Korean-owned stores get looted and burned to the ground following the Rodney King verdict. One storeowner stated, "Every group of color in America has experienced oppression. It is now our turn." It is important for helping professionals to know that, although each group and individuals within the group may not talk about their oppression, it may be a source of pain and make it difficult for some to trust the therapeutic relationship.

11. Degree of invisibility – On a speaking engagement in Europe several citizens in England said to me. "I don't think America has as much immigration as it says it has. When we look at TV programs from America, all we see are white and Black people." This was a striking comment, when you consider the fact that 2/3 of the world's migration is to the United States (Hacker, 1992). It is true that there are groups here who go virtually unnoticed. There is not one Native American, Indian, or Asian star or co-star on a major American TV sitcom. Over 50% of Native Americans live on or near reservations

(Sue & Sue, 1999). The great majority of non-Native Americans have never visited a reservation; most will go through their entire lives without having a conversation with a Native American. There is still a great deal of segregated living throughout the United States and white flight as groups of color move close. During the past decade, in California, each time a recent immigrant moves into the state, an American-born family moves out. The segregation and isolation make it difficult for people to truly know each other. Many therefore communicate with each other based on stereotypes. Therapists are not immune to holding these stereotypes, which makes it difficult to make authentic connections with clients.

There are also many intergroup differences, including:

- A) Culture – There are vast cultural differences among Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Laotians, Cambodians, and Vietnamese, although each group is considered Asian (Sue & Sue, 1999).**
- B) Socioeconomics – As mentioned earlier, as an overall group, Latin Americas are the lowest paid group in America; however, the median income for Cuban America is a great deal higher than Mexicans and Puerto Ricans.**
- C) Skin color can be a source of tension within various groups of color. Among Blacks this source of tension was established during slavery when lighter skinned Blacks were allowed to work in families' kitchens and darker skinned**

Blacks had to work in the fields. Studies today reveal that lighter skinned Blacks earn more money per hour than darker skinned Blacks.

D) Education – Among Asians, Chinese and Japanese Americans currently have more education than Southeast Asians. Cuban Americans have more education than Cubans and Puerto Ricans.

E) Ability to pass the “Are you _____ enough?” test - You can fill in the blank with Black, Asian, Latino, etc. Each group has unwritten rules about appropriate behavior for members of its group, having to do with codes of conduct and perceived allegiance to the group. If members of the group “stray” from the culture and move toward white America, they are labeled; each group has a name for those they feel have strayed away or defected from the race. Among Blacks you are an “Uncle Tom” or an “Oreo”—Black on the outside, white on the inside; Native Americans—an “apple”—red on the outside, white on the inside; Latinos—“Coconut”—brown on the outside, white on the inside; and Asians—“Banana”—Asian on the outside, white on the inside. While the purpose of this may be to ensure group solidarity, it can be quite harmful, in that individuals may not feel free to expand the possibilities for themselves. Those who do explore may suffer psychic damage as a result of the

labeling that accompanies such exploration and may experience a great deal of cultural shame because of the labeling.

F) Degree of acculturation

G) Religion

H) Politics

I) What they want to be called – Not every member of a given group wishes to be identified by the same designation. For instance, some Blacks prefer “African American” over “Black,” and Latinos might wish to be identified by any of the following: Hispanic, Chicano, Mexican, Mexican American, Latin, Latino, Latina, etc.

Core Issues for Bi-racial Men

Studies reveal that there has been an increase in interracial marriages since the 1960s, producing an increase in bi-racial children. Research also indicates that the great majority of bi-racial children have positive self-concepts and lead pro-social lives. There are a number of core issues that some bi-racial men have, which may be important for counselors to be aware of, including:

1. Conflict around racial identity (Who am I?) – A major adolescent developmental task is defining oneself. This may be a challenge for some bi-racial individuals, because they are connected to more than one group. Sometimes bi-racial children and teens are forced by adults to choose their ethnicity. In so doing they may be denying a part of their heritage, which can lead to feelings of shame

and self-hate. Self definition can be further complicated if the bi-racial youth has been cut off from part of his heritage, due to divorce, separation, desertion, or having been disowned by the family because he is bi-racial.

2. Conflict around social marginality (Where do I belong?) – Some bi-racial adults reported having drifted from group to group as teens, feeling that they never fit in. One of my client's who had one African American parent and one white parent reported that as a teen he never felt white enough to be white or Black enough to be Black. He described this as a lifelong stressor.

3. Conflict around educational and career aspirations – A belief that external stereotypes comprise who they are may cause some bi-racial youth to be torn about a career path. A youth who is Asian and Black wonders if he should go into computers or sports. The truth is that a wide range of career possibilities exists for him.

Core Issues for Gay, Bisexual, or Transgendered Men of Color

1. Increased ostracism – Gay, bisexual, and transgendered men of color experience double ostracism. They are ostracized because of the stigma connected to their sexuality and because they are men of color. Increased ostracism can lead to increased shame. Many gay, bisexual, and transgendered men of color report experiencing triple ostracism—that is, ostracism from the heterosexual community because of sexual stigma and ostracism as men of color, as well as ostracism and racism from the white gay community.

- 2. Increased stigma**
- 3. Increased discrimination**
- 4. Fear – The range of fear includes: fear for their physical safety in a homophobic society; existential fear from constantly being told they are going to Hell because of their sexuality; dealing with others' fear that being gay automatically means they are HIV positive.**
- 5. Stress of learning two cultures – Particularly for those who are in the closet, learning gay culture while simultaneously living a heterosexual existence may be quite stressful.**
- 6. Internalized homophobia – The individual internalizes external negative images and begins to despise the self. This can lead to self-destructive behavior, including drug abuse, suicide attempts, etc.**

Reflections

- 1. After reading this chapter on core issues, what have you learned that will help you as a counselor of men of color?**
- 2. Did the information help you see some of your current or former clients in a different light?**
- 3. How will you apply the insight you have acquired?**

Chapter 5

Assessing the Client's Feelings About His Racial Identity

Throughout this workbook we have mentioned the fact that some men of color may have issues with their racial identity, as a result of internalizing negative societal images. This chapter outlines eight (8) critical questions clinicians can ask male clients of color to assess their feelings about their racial identity. Although not identified as the presenting problem, a poor self-concept based upon negative feelings about their racial identity can greatly affect their ability to reach counseling and life goals. The chapter ends with suggestions as to how to help clients develop a positive racial identity.

8 Questions

1. How do you identify yourself ethnically? (Using derogatory terms to identify oneself is a sign of low self-concept.)
2. As a member of your ethnic/cultural group, what are you most proud of?
3. What do you like most about yourself?
4. What do you like least about yourself?
5. If you could change anything about yourself, what would you change? (A focus on changing physical features common among members of their cultural group may be an indication of low self-concept.)

6. Who are some people you admire most in the world?
(Individuals with healthy self-concepts should select some individuals from their own cultural groups whom they admire.)
7. What holidays are most sacred to you? (Choosing the best celebrations of one's cultural group may be a sign of cultural pride.)
8. Have you ever visited or thought about visiting the countries of your parents' and grandparents' origin? Clients answering this question with a disgusted, "Of course not, why would I want to visit China, Puerto Rico, Africa, etc.?" may suffer from low self-concept. Malcolm X was quoted as having said, "You cannot hate the root of the tree and love the fruit that it bears," meaning that the degree to which you hate your origins is the degree to which you hate yourself.

Helping the Client Develop a Positive Racial Identity

1. Explore the origins of self-hate with the client. Sometimes telling one's story out loud can decrease shame.
2. Encourage the client to affirm himself with each statement, beginning with "I am..."—i.e., "I am intelligent"; "I am beautiful," etc.
3. Encourage the client to read autobiographies of successful members of their cultural group who had positive self-concepts.
4. Encourage the client to explore positive contributions members of his group have made to society.
5. Encourage the client to do an inventory of whom they currently spend time with and to identify the impact these contacts have on their self-concept.

- 6. Explore with the client strategies to mentally challenge negative images of his cultural group in the media.**
- 7. Encourage the client to set goals. Setting and achieving goals can help clients move past barriers and restrictions dictated by society for members of his cultural group.**
- 8. Teach the client to challenge stereotypes by noting exceptions to the rule within his own cultural group.**
- 9. Encourage the client to visit the birthplace of his parents, grandparents, and ancestors. Such visits have been instrumental in producing more self-love.**
- 10. Encourage the client to speak up for himself when he is put down or told by others that he is not okay.**
- 11. Encourage the client to explore all parts of his heritage. If he is cut off from a part of his heritage encourage him to make contact with relatives from that side of his family.**

Exercise

You are counseling a bi-racial client who informs you that he hates being bi-racial. How would you help him develop a positive racial identity?

Chapter 6

Reasons Male Clients of Color Resist Therapy

EXERCISE

List reasons why men of color might be resistant to therapy.

- 1.**
- 2.**
- 3.**
- 4.**
- 5.**
- 6.**
- 7.**
- 8.**
- 9.**
- 10.**

List reasons why men of color might be resistant to you as their counselor.

- 1.**
- 2.**
- 3.**
- 4.**

List things you can do to overcome this resistance to you.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

8 Reasons Why Men of Color May Resist Therapy

1. **Current and historic experiences of racism, discrimination, and oppression – Psychologists report that men of color often score high on the “paranoid” section of the MMPI. On this personality test, you are asked questions such as, “Do you ever feel someone is following you or trying to persecute you?” Some Black psychologists suggest that these men are not paranoid; rather, they demonstrate “healthy suspicion” based upon real experiences with racism and oppression. Some may be hesitant or resistant to therapy because they view the counselor and the organization as a part of the system.**
2. **Feeling stereotyped by the therapist.**
3. **The counselor is seen by the client as lacking credibility – In Western culture credibility may be defined solely in the attainment of academic degrees. Many men of color may have criteria for determining credibility that may have nothing to do with the counselor’s academic degrees (Sue & Sue, 1999). More will be said about this in Chapter 8.**

- 4. Fear of deportation – Perhaps a concern of some recent immigrants who may feel they will be deported if they say the wrong thing in counseling.**
- 5. The absence of bilingual and bicultural counselors.**
- 6. The client comes from a culture that has a group norm against sharing information with outsiders.**
- 7. The client's reading of non-verbal messages from the counselor that he is not welcome and valued.**
- 8. The counseling approach does not reflect the client's cultural norms and methods of solving problems. The next chapter will focus on the challenges of using Western therapy with male clients of color.**

Reflections

- 1. What insights have you gained from reading this chapter?**
- 2. How will you apply those insights?**
- 3. List 5 former male clients of color who were resistant to counseling. Next to each name list reasons you think the client was resistant and what you will do in the future if you encounter a similar situation.**

Chapter 7

Challenges of Utilizing Western Therapy with Male Clients of Color

- 1. Therapy may be viewed as another indication that “I’ve failed” – Many men of color are given the message that they won’t succeed. Going to therapy may be viewed by some men of color as proof that they have definitely failed. “I really can’t handle my life. I need therapy!”**
- 2. The therapist and the organization may be viewed as a “part of the system.”**
- 3. The individual therapy approach may differ from the client’s cultural method of dealing with problems – In Western culture the nuclear family is the primary unit, and emphasis is placed upon the individual. Within many groups of color the extended family or tribe is the primary unit; emphasis is placed upon the importance of the entire group (Sue & Sue, 1999). The African Proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child,” is a common belief held by many groups of color. Some clinicians have found group therapy to be more effective with Native American clients than individual therapy, because group therapy mirrors their communal manner of relating to each other and problem solving.**
- 4. The client’s culture was not taken into consideration when the therapy was developed – Freud’s development of psychoanalysis was**

based upon his work with 100 female patients in Vienna (Corey, 1996). He did not have adolescent Puerto Rican males in the Bronx in mind when he developed this approach.

- 5. Emphasis on “talk as cure”— Every cultural group does not use talk as its primary method of problem solving.**
- 6. Insight as a primary goal of many therapists may differ from the needs of the client – Insight is not change! The therapist feels as though the homeless client needs insight. The client feels as though he needs a meal and a place to live. The therapist wonders why they’re struggling to establish rapport.**
- 7. The approach may inadvertently blame the client – Men of color are oppressed by many systems in society and experience a great deal of discrimination. Insight-oriented approaches may inadvertently blame clients who are being oppressed.**
- 8. The approach may ignore indigenous healers already present within the culture.**
- 9. Therapy is often reduced to a series of techniques – What men of color often need most is sincerity and a genuine connection.**
- 10. The therapy may not take into consideration how the biases, assumptions, and stereotypes of the helper may influence the therapeutic process – You can have the greatest techniques in the world and, if the client picks up on your biases, you will fail to make a connection.**

Reflections

What are your thoughts as to how therapy can be altered to meet more of the needs of male clients of color?

Chapter 8

12 Ways of Approaching Resistance with Male Clients of Color

- 1. Examine your feelings about men – Because of stereotypes many people have negative feelings about men of color. Generally, people who have experienced ostracism are hypersensitive to others' negative views of them. Even if one tries to hide these negative views, the men about whom they are held can feel them. Perhaps it would be helpful to move beyond the stereotypes. One way of doing this is by paying attention when a contradiction of the stereotype presents itself.**
- 2. Be warm and genuine – Many men of color have experienced coldness due to racism. Warmth and genuineness from counselors can go a long way toward overcoming resistance and building rapport (Small, 1990).**
- 3. Have credibility – Helpers who are seen as credible by men of color can be instrumental in facilitating rapport. Many counselors believe their diplomas or licenses automatically make them credible. Many men of color will not be impressed with this. Below is a list of factors that male clients of color consider worthy of credibility, in addition to the counselor's academic credentials.**
 - A) Counselor empathy**

- B) Comfort – Many people in society fear men of color. If the counselor is physically comfortable (unafraid) being in the presence of the client, credibility will be increased.**
 - C) Trustworthiness**
 - D) Counselor sincerity**
 - E) The counselor has knowledge about the client’s culture**
 - F) The counselor demonstrates a knowledge of and respect for the role of males in the client’s culture**
 - G) The counselor has a nonjudgmental attitude.**
 - H) The counselor has a positive reputation in the community as being helpful.**
- 4. Bond with the client on an affective level – If the client’s energy level on a 10-point scale is a “1” and the counselor’s energy level is a “10,” they will probably not make a positive connection. The counselor may be perceived as “too happy” or superficial. A counselor energy level of a “3” can be a good affective fit if the client’s energy level is also a “3.”**
- 5. Examine the nature of the resistance – There are primarily three sources of resistance. Clients generally resist:**
- A) The therapeutic approach**
 - B) Change**
 - C) You as their therapist**

If your assessment is that the client is resistant to the therapeutic approach, your goal should be to alter the approach. If your

assessment is that the resistance is to change, the key is to move slower and do not try to force the client to change too quickly (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). If you sense the client is resistant to you, perhaps because of your differences, it may be helpful to talk about those differences, even if the client denies that the differences are an issue. Simply talking about this often reduces resistance because the client senses that you really want to make a connection.

- 6. Do not assume that all men of color entering therapy will be resistant – Sometimes you get what you look for (Sanders, 2006).**
- 7. Decrease resistance in the first session – by:**
 - A) Take time to show the client around the facility prior to the session, where to hang his coat, where to get water or coffee, where the bathrooms are, etc. This “Southern hospitality” can go a long way toward facilitating rapport.**
 - B) Focus on strengths and something he does well early in the first session.**
 - C) Join his humor – Laugh with—not at—the client.**
 - D) Allow him to openly talk about not having any problems and not needing to be there – Joining the resistance can go a long way toward facilitating rapport (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).**
- 8. Be willing to have a sensitive discussion of differences – If you sense that the differences between you are contributing to resistance.**

- 9. Do not assume that silence is resistance – There are a number of reasons other than resistance why men of color may be silent in therapy. These reasons include:**
- A) Shyness**
 - B) Difficulty expressing feelings**
 - C) Fear of disappointing you**
 - D) Fear of institutionalization**
 - E) A need for a more active counseling approach**
 - F) Fear that the counselor will share information about him with others**
- 10. Consider the possibility that there is no such thing as a resistant client – But there are lots of helpers who struggled to accept clients where they're at. Therapy often seems foreign to men of color. If we accept him where he's at, rather than trying to force him to somewhere he's not, the process of building rapport will be much smoother.**
- 11. Self-disclose – If you want him to self-disclose, it is helpful for you, as the counselor, to self-disclose. Self-disclosure begets self-disclosure. However, if the counselor self-discloses too much too soon, some male clients may be frightened by self-disclosing.**
- 12. Change counseling approaches – If you are getting resistance consider altering counseling approaches. Some men will express themselves through drumming, acting, movement,**

theatrics, writing, and drawing. A colleague told me of her struggles while working with Native American men using “talk therapy.” They altered the approach to include drawing. The men drew elaborate pictures and told deep personal stories that were depicted in their artwork.

Final Reflection

I hope you enjoyed this manual! What did you find most useful?

What do you plan to do with the information?

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