

Immigration, Trauma, Resilience and Relationship: What Service Providers Need to Know

45 Minutes

I. **Welcome, hello, introduction: 5 min**

- a. My job/background/clinical disclosure
 - i. I've worked in ECI for over 5 years, but have done work with families in a non-profit setting for about 15 years, and have worked with Latino/Immigrant families throughout that time
 - ii. Clinical disclosure: I don't use the term "Illegal Alien", the organization and program I work for provides services regardless of documentation status
- b. I'll be talking for about 45 min. but will take questions after, and am available and would love to discuss these areas further (and will be doing a longer, more in depth workshop this fall. You guys are my guinea pigs!)

II. **Brief Review/Primer on Trauma/PTSD (5 min)**

- a. See handout for PTSD/DSM-V definitions
- b. Trauma: a deeply and personally unsettling experience. Something that shakes you at the core, and which can then "prime" you to be less resilient or more deeply effected by future negative events----this is my own concept about what trauma does, but is supported by the research we see, both scientifically and anecdotally about trauma response, and is quite important with regard to working with folks who have immigrated here.

III. **Immigration and Trauma (10 min)**

- a. Articles: please see bibliography for specific articles I'm referencing
- b. The immigration stages and the potential for trauma within them (Rosemarie Perez Foster, Yolanda van Ecke, NCTSN), all known as **Perimigration Trauma**

- i. Pre-migration (what's going on in your country of origin)
 - ii. Transit (what your travel to the states was like)
 - iii. Resettlement (what it's like when you get here)
 - iv. Acculturation/Adaptation (how you manage your life once here)
- c. Immigration itself doesn't automatically translate to trauma or a clinically significant issue. BUT, the important thing to begin to unpack is that with each aspect of immigration, there is a level of potential stress and duress that can serve as whittling away of sorts, of that person's resilience.

IV. What it Looks Like: Client Stories (15-20 min)

- a. See attached handout that can make the connections between these immigration stages, and how they might look for a family
- b. When talking about these examples, it's important to note that these are 3 individual stories. They are meant to highlight the breadth of what the immigration experience is for people, and how its impact can look different to different people.
- c. It's also essential to note that how I came about to knowing these stories about these clients was also completely individual to our working relationship, but involved a considerable amount of trust and work on both our ends to create a level of comfort to explore.

V. What Does it Mean: How Service Providers Can Help (5-10min)

- a. Understand the importance of the Immigration Narrative. Don't be scared to broach and continue to bring up these concepts with a client (once you've established trust and mutual respect)
- b. Understand that being here as an immigrant impacts *all levels of life*. For some folks, this means living in a constant state of hypervigilance and fear (like someone constantly being triggered, with no hope of relieving those triggers)
- c. When engaging clients in treatment, don't be afraid to ask questions about their experiences, their stories, what brought them here, and how they've been able to get this far. Be sincere about how coming to a new country, regardless of the reasons,

can be difficult and impactful in someone's life, and can have resounding effects on their ability to cope.

- d. Understand the clinical impact and significance of honoring individual experience, and use a trauma-informed perspective when working with folks that are coming to you.

VI. Questions/Discussion.

Bibliography

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Perez Foster, RoseMarie. (2001). When Immigration Is Trauma: Guidelines for the Individual and Family Clinician. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 71(2), 153-167.

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