



Exploring Race and Culture from a Trauma-Informed Lens Training Tool Kit

Segment 3: Working with People with Different Racial and Cultural Backgrounds

YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/E8lwckSCptg>

Video length: 30:05

Panel participants on video

- Ricky Ferrari Traner (panel facilitator) – Prevention and Early Intervention Section Manager, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families
- Rob Kaminski – Lived Experience Partner, Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health
- Bojana Zorić Martinez – Director of the Bureau of Refugee Programs and Wisconsin State Refugee Coordinator, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families
- Pablo Navarro – Owner/Director/Professional Counselor, Navarro Professional Counseling Services

Discussion questions

After watching the Exploring Race and Culture from a Trauma-Informed Lens – Working with People with Different Racial and Cultural Backgrounds video, discuss the following questions with the group you viewed the training with. If you viewed the training individually, consider these questions.

1. Bojana and Rob both talked about making assumptions about people from different countries/cultures, and a good strategy to avoid doing that is to learn about the other cultures and be curious. What are some specific ways you can do that in your work?
2. When Bojana shared her story of being a new refugee in our country and people asked her if she knew what a toothbrush or toilet were, how did that make you feel? How do you think it would make a new refugee or someone from a different culture feel when assumptions like that are made about them?
3. When you make an incorrect assumption, what is something you can do in the moment to rectify that?
4. Pablo talked about the importance of building safe relationships with clients/people from different cultural backgrounds, that psychologically we are wired to look for safety. How can you build safety in your relationships and look for cues of safety from others?
5. How can our organizations help in this work? How can your teams help each other?

Resources

- [Working With Youth Who Are Immigrants and Refugees](https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/diverse-populations/immigration/youth/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=immigrantrefugeeyouth030922) – Child Welfare Information Gateway. Youth who have recently immigrated to a new country face many challenges related to their new circumstances. The resources on this page are for professionals working with youth who are immigrants or refugees. https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/diverse-populations/immigration/youth/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=immigrantrefugeeyouth030922
- [Harvard University Implicit Association Test](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html). <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
- [Refugee Resettlement – Lutheran Social Services](https://www.lsswis.org/service/refugee-resettlement-2/). Resources. <https://www.lsswis.org/service/refugee-resettlement-2/>
- [Refugee Resettlement – Jewish Social Services of Madison](https://jssmadison.org/services/immigration/refugee/). Resources. <https://jssmadison.org/services/immigration/refugee/>

Notes from video

Q: How do you effectively work with clients that do not speak the same language or have a different culture, religion, or identity?

Bojana:

- Often in America we make assumptions about refugees. Some of these are offensive, like if refugees know what a toilet or tooth brush.
- Start by learning about someone's culture – their traditions, food, religion. That aids in cultural humility, makes us who we are as humans and welcomers. It will help our new neighbors feel welcome.
- We need to have a willingness to listen, learn, be patient, give space, and approach others with an open mind.

Rob:

- When we did our adoptions Poland required us to live there, so we lived there 47 days with one of our children and 42 days with another. We went there with assumptions and quickly learned humility, vulnerability, and anxiety. We didn't speak the language, it was a different culture, and religion. We had to listen and pay attention to body language – we communicate so much through body language, and we were able to bond through that. We were curious to try different things and go to places we typically wouldn't. We had to embrace being uncomfortable and trust. We learned quickly the world is full of good people.

Q: What do we do when we've had a challenge to a relationship with a client to build back trust? How do we avoid perpetuating trauma with a client as we work with them?

Pablo:

- Ideally, relationships should be safe. Psychologically we are wired to look for safety. If we don't feel safe it can cause harm, causing the need for our nervous system to react.
- At the beginning recognize there are differences.

- Get cues of safety.
- Be genuinely interested in the experiences of others. Recognize that we see the world through different lenses depending on our experience. Have these discussions upfront so we can repair the relationship if something disrupts that.

Q: How do you check your own personal beliefs at the door so we don't enter a meeting with a client or others with personal assumptions?

Rob:

- We have to consciously work at this. As a child, I was taught to fear anything that was different from my family, and I have to consciously work at deconstructing that.
- It goes back to being curious about new situations and people. When I think like that I am able to have really great discussions and learning.

Bojana:

- My own personal experience as being a refugee helps me understand how important it is to really examine my own beliefs, call them out, and leave them at the door when I am meeting with clients.
- We put people in buckets that aren't true. My experience as a refugee is different than what other's experience.
- When we assume, it can lead to micro aggression.

Pablo:

- Consciously challenge ourselves to remove judgement.
- Have compassion.
- Be intentional to learn about other cultures. This helps me to catch myself from making those assumptions and avoid re-traumatizing people.

Q: How can our organizations help us in this work?

Bojana:

- Within DCF, we are continuing work on trauma-informed care policy and procedures that are informed by staff who work with clients.
- Provide space for mindfulness and self-care for employees.
- Organizations have to be intentional about building a trauma-informed culture.
- Help service providers be more trauma-informed.

Pablo:

- Collaborate with the people you serve to understand their barriers to success. From that, we advocate with systems so those individuals can get treatment.
- Ask "what can we do as an institution to level the playing field?"
- Continuous training is critical. We carve out 1 ½ hours per week for our providers to share their experience and what they want to learn more about, intentionally bringing in the perspective of the people they serve. This is paid time – we don't ask them to do this training on their own time. This is critical.
- Keep asking "how do we internally build a culture where we support others?" We build small teams so people have someone to go to when they need support.

Rob:

- Organizations can provide positions for peer specialists, incorporating that into their business.
- Provide a community of practice for trained peer specialists, focusing on cultural identity.

Q: What is the number one thing you want people to think about on this topic of working with people that have different racial and cultural backgrounds?

Ricky:

- There is time and there is money for this important work. Need to decide this is important and encourage people to find the time and the money to do the good work.
- Have courage to do what is uncomfortable so services are better and serve people better.

Pablo:

- Relationships are a dance of the nervous system. Historically we have survived because our nervous system has identified differences. We can challenge those notions and build relationship with those who are different, do this with intention.

Rob:

- We don't see the richness of a culture because we have been told things and lies about it. We have to move away from assumptions.
- Ask questions and learn. Make yourself vulnerable, put yourself in uncomfortable positions. It will allow you to learn others' stories.
- You have an opportunity to experience new cultures.

Bojana:

- Just try. That is the first and most basic thing.
- It goes back to not making assumptions. Try and learn first.
- Be respectful and genuine with that.
- Just listen and learn – people appreciate other who want to learn.
- We do more harm if we don't take the time to learn.