

Cultural Awareness and Culture Care Meanings

- How do you know if someone cares about you? How do you show caring?
- Why is it important to learn more about other cultures and subcultures?
- What are your culture care meanings? How can you communicate them?

Your cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and ways of life are vital parts of you

We are influenced by our culture and upbringing, so the way we see health and caring (culture care meanings) are often different

We will also explore cultural similarities and differences in psychiatric illness

Goals and Objectives

- To increase awareness of cultural similarities and differences
- To increase understanding of ways to show caring
- To describe importance of learning about other cultures
- To explore ideas people have about cultures
- To discuss how culture relates to people with psychiatric illness
- To compare your own meaning of health within a culture (culture care meanings), with those of others

What is Culture?

- Learned and shared knowledge of values, beliefs, and ways of life in a group of people
- Culture influences our thinking, decisions, and actions, as passed down through generations – They can be called traditions
- Some people choose to be non-traditional in their culture (not accepting their cultural rules and customs)
- Culture is much more than your race, but ethnic identity or race can be a big part of your culture
- The way you see the world and the social structure around you are also parts of your culture

What are some cultures?

- Arab culture
- Amish culture

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- Anglo-American
- African American culture
- Hispanic (or Latino) culture
- Hmong culture
- Native American culture
- (There are many, many more correct answers)

What is a Subculture?

- Smaller groups of people that are different from their main culture in some ways (a culture within a culture)
- They usually have their own beliefs, rules, values, and lifestyles that are different from their mainstream culture
- People may consider themselves in a subculture if they have:
 - Psychiatric illness
 - Substance abuse
 - Physical disability
 - Alternative beliefs about sexuality, like those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender

What are some other subcultures?

- People who go to your school
- People who work in a hospital
- People who live in your home town
- People who take action to protect the environment
- People who go to your church or believe in the same religion as you
- People who have a lot of money
- People who play in a rock band
- (There are countless correct answers)

Attitudes about Differences

- People who are uneasy about other cultures or subcultures often don't understand the differences (or don't know what to say)
- Negative ideas or assumptions are often made

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- People tend to develop attitudes about race, religion, politics, gender, social status, and health status as they go through life experiences, or by listening to what others say
- While exploring cultures and subcultures, it's easy to "stereotype" by believing those people are all the same (even when they aren't)

Toward Cultural Understanding

- Prejudice, discrimination and stigma can go both ways – Don't assume that:
- We are treated badly because of our culture or subculture – That may not be why
- Other people may or may not think the way we expect them to
- People may have all the beliefs and practices of their culture – or they may be non-traditional
- Cultural awareness is like a journey where you will constantly be discovering interesting things about other people you see or talk to

A Cultural Journey

Moving from Ethnocentrism (the belief that your ways are the best ways to act, believe, or behave) toward:

- Cultural sensitivity—Using politically correct terminology, and saying things that are not offensive to others
- Cultural awareness—Recognizing signs of diversity—foods, skin color, dress, arts, behavior, mannerisms, etc.
- Cultural competence—Having knowledge and skills about other cultures (Communicate effectively and knowing what to ask)
- Optional: Read and discuss Cultural Case Study (see handout) and discuss

Mental Illness Case Study

- Jesse had bipolar disorder but was doing well and attending college.
- Then she missed classes for a few days when she had a setback. When she called her instructor, he didn't call her back.
- She thought the instructor should have extended the assignment deadlines.
- She said, "It's so unfair. He is way too strict and doesn't like me."

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- “If he knew I have a mental illness, it would just make him more prejudiced.”

Q &A:

Do you think Jesse made correct assumptions?

No. The instructor probably has the same rules for all students, no matter what skin color or illness they have.

Do you think her expectations were realistic?

No. Unless her instructor knew she was sick, he wouldn't be flexible. (She doesn't have to say **exactly** what her illness was, if it was uncomfortable for her.)

How could she improve her chances of succeeding?

Repeat calls to make sure they got your message. Try to keep a positive attitude and not jump to conclusions.

People may assume they are being treated unfairly, but many people have similar experiences.

What is Culture Care?

- Culturally appropriate help, support, and caring behaviors toward self or others
- Care that is focused on improving health
- Examples of caring in some cultures may include:
 - Adapting to/accommodating others
 - Being nonassertive or dependent
 - Being watchful/protective
 - Eating the right foods
 - Harmony/wholeness

Optional Learning Activity

Using the Culture Care Meanings Checklist, mark the words that show caring in your culture

Discuss the similarities and differences from person to person

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The biggest reason for differences is a person's culture and upbringing

We should not generalize, form stereotypes, or assume that people of a certain culture or ethnicity are the same

Instead, become more aware of cultural variations and grow to value them

What Are Cultural Variations?

- Environmental Control
- Beliefs of health/illness/spirituality
- Health traditions/folk medicine
- Biological variations
- Physical and genetic differences
- Social organization
- Family and social groups (religious/ethnic)
- Communication (verbal and non-verbal)
- Space (personal space/distance)
- Time (Some cultures don't care about being on time)

Giger, J.N. & Davidhizar, R.E. (1995). *Transcultural nursing assessment and intervention* (2nd ed.). St. Louis: Mosby.

Effects of Culture on Health

- People may use alternative ways of health care based on their culture
- In some cultures, traditional or folk beliefs are used to explain illness
- Treatments and care for illness may be based on cultural beliefs and practices
- Sometimes, people use modern medicine combined with traditional, folk remedies
- Discussion: What are some examples of traditional things you do when you feel sick?

Effects of Culture on Health Decisions

- Social and cultural factors may shape health-related experience, and whether people seek medical treatment:
- People may believe, "It's out of my hands", or "It's in God's hands"

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- In some cultures, health decisions are made by leaders, elders, extended family, head of household, or others (instead of the individual who is ill)
- Discussion: Do you value your independence so much that it is hard for you to ask for help from your family?

Mental Health Case Study

- Lisa had problems at school and at home because of wide mood swings
- She suffered silently with deep depression, and believed that seeking help for a mental health problem was different than seeing the doctor for a physical illness
- Lisa felt “stuck” from fear of stigma and discrimination
- Her culture believed mental illness brought shame on her family, so she resisted getting treatment as long as she could
- Sadly, many people feel that way about mental illness, although negative attitudes may be slowly changing

How Does Culture Influence a Crisis?

- By not seeking help, Lisa was at risk of having a crisis
- Her beliefs affected the way she thought about her situation, perhaps feeling more threatened
- People or groups express their responses differently - Some may downplay their problems or be overly dramatic)
- Personal space can be an issue – Responders need to know cultural beliefs about control, acceptable physical contact and closeness
- Besides language barriers, there may be cultural barriers that can affect the way non-verbal communication is interpreted

Cultural Meaning of Illness

- Cultural caring (how people show that they care) may not be well understood in health care settings
- It can be uncomfortable to seek help if the health care team doesn't value your cultural needs
- Attitudes toward cultural awareness and psychiatric illness in America are slowly changing for the better

Cultural Awareness and Culture Care Meanings

- Psychiatric disorders are part of every culture, but cultural misunderstandings or communication problems can prevent some people from seeking help

Communicating Your Cultural Needs

- It is harder for people to help you if you don't communicate clearly to them
- Ask for what you need, even if it embarrasses you
- Your health care team wants to help you without judging you – Don't think of it as "troubling them"
- They will probably not want to invade your privacy by prying or asking you too many questions about your culture, so you have to "speak up"
- If you don't tell them about your cultural needs, an already upsetting experience can get even worse - You may feel disrespected

Mental Health Care in America

Vision Statement

We envision a future when everyone with a mental illness will recover, a future when mental illnesses can be prevented or cured, a future when mental illnesses are detected early, and a future when everyone with a mental illness at any stage of life has access to effective treatment and supports - essentials for living, working, learning, and participating fully in the community.

- The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2006. (George W. Bush)

Statements from Psychiatric Nurses

Everyone crosses the "fine line" between mental health and illness at times. They cross back when they are able to cope. A person with psychiatric illness can still be healthy.

- By Mary, RN

We believe that recovery from mental illness is possible, but it may take many small steps. People need knowledge, skills, and coping strategies to help relieve symptoms and manage stress to rejoin their unique place in our world.

- By Marla, RN

Cultural Awareness and Culture Care Meanings

Mental health includes biological, psychological, social and cultural factors

Asian Americans and Mental Health

- Many Asian Americans don't understand Western ideas of mental health and illness
- They may experience psychiatric illness by somatic (physical symptoms) rather than psychiatric symptoms
- Mind-body holism (wholeness) connects their psychological and physical problems
- Asians may be uncomfortable examining and discussing inner thoughts and feelings
- They may believe that the best way to deal with mental illness is to avoid gloomy thoughts and hold back emotions

African Americans and Mental Health

- A history of negative treatment has led to mistrust of authorities – They may not be seen as having the best interest of African Americans in mind
- Some African Americans with psychiatric illness may reject treatment – It is important to break down those barriers
- Some black communities are prejudiced against psychiatric care, leading to the use of alternative treatments for mental health problems
- Crime and violence can make people more at risk for psychiatric illness, including Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome

Latinos and Mental Health

- Stigma and embarrassment are barriers to care in Latinos
- Those who don't view psychiatric illness as a medical problem do not seek help
- They may rely on home remedies and prayer during a health crisis instead of seeking medical care
- Treatments can include rituals of purification and penance
- Mental health is often viewed as a balance among one's faith, nutrition and how one has lived his or her life
- Folk concepts of disease include effects of intense negative emotions such as anger, envy and fright

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Native Americans and Mental Health

- Some tribal groups see little difference between physical and psychiatric illness
- Other groups may see psychiatric illness as an imbalance with the natural world - disharmony caused by an external force, person or spirit
- Balance of physical, mental and spiritual relationships are valued more than independence
- Healing comes from identifying stress, then resolving it through community ceremonies and traditional practices

Arab Americans and Mental Health

- Honor is very important in many Arab-American families – They may ignore or hide psychiatric illness if seen as shameful
- Family tradition puts the male in the role of “breadwinner” which can cause further distress during illness
- May have financial problems, language barriers, separation from other family members, and loss of status
- Isolation may lead to mental health crisis, especially for refugees and immigrants

SanJule, J. (n.d). Culture and mental health: Eliciting the big picture during a crisis intervention. Retrieved Powerpoint presentation 6-29-09 from http://mhtransformation.wa.gov/pdf/mhtg/CIT/Unit12_PPT_Cultural.pdf

Optional Learning Activities:

Choose one of the Culture Handouts to read, if you want to understand another culture better.

Share your Culture Care Meanings Checklist with others, discussing things that make you feel cared for.

Examples: Listening, writing notes, giving gifts or favors, spending time, laughing at your jokes, or praying for you?

Do you and the people you care about have the same culture care meanings?

Why is it important to be aware of your attitudes, assumptions, and prejudices, toward people in other cultures and groups?

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Are you as tolerant and respectful of others as you want them to be to you?

Read a Culture Card - How is that culture similar and different from yours?

Are their cultural beliefs right or wrong? (Each culture is right for its people)

Are you traditional or non-traditional in your culture?

Conclusion

Our culture and our care meanings influence so much about us:

- Physical or psychiatric illness and its treatment
- Expressions of mood and pain
- Religious and spiritual beliefs
- Role of family and community
- Sense of power
- By exploring the values and beliefs of other people in your life, you may become more caring, respectful, and tolerant
- Cultural understanding can help your relationships, your health, and your healing journey toward recovery

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