



BIPOC PERSPECTIVE ON INTEGRATIVE THERAPIES AND EXPRESSIVE ARTS

Could you offer a specific example of how some aspect of a client's culture was deeply meaningful or acted as a resource in using integrative therapies and expressive arts?

The answers may have been condensed for clarity and space.

Do you know about Hot Pot? Hot Pot is a traditional Chinese dish made with simmering broth at the center of the table. You choose your ingredients and cook them yourself. This tradition allows you to taste foods that you might not normally try, and it's also an excellent way to understand your preferences and limits. And my client, who is an Asian American teenager, used it as a safe place during EMDR Phase 2.

I use Drama Therapy as part of my approach to supporting clients in their EMDR resourcing process. So

we did more than imagine what we wanted to put in our imaginary hot pot. We pretended to use chopsticks to choose our resources, cook them in the broth, and eat them! The strange combination of choosing exactly what they wanted, then cooking it, and eating it with chopsticks helped my client with recall, examination, and discovery of new resources in a safe way. It's hard to deny that we live in an interconnected and globalized world. As such, our communities are becoming populated increasingly

by people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This diversity has presented a challenge for traditional therapy models based on Western values. To better serve our clients, we must stay curious and learn about their different values, histories, and perspectives. Our curiosity can help better serve our clients and provide a space for them to have meaningful insight into themselves.

—Diana Chu, MFT, RDT (She/Her)
Marriage and Family Therapist
Registered Drama Therapist

The body stores traumatic experiences, and it has a way to show them. A person I worked with was a dancer. She used dance as an expressive art and would narrate stories via her movements and facial expressions. We incorporated art into her therapy sessions. At the beginning of the session, I invited her to express how she was doing using her body movements, facial expressions, and sounds. She loved doing that and asked if I would do the same movement to show her that I understood. I found it to be very profound.

Through movements, I understood her emotions in a way I could not with words. As we dove into EMDR reprocessing, I asked if she would be

willing to use movement as a way of grounding and coming back to present reality before we ended a session. This resonated with her. Sometimes she used movement to summarize her experience of reprocessing. She moved her body to simulate pulling things out of her belly and bringing healing light to her body, feeling calmed and collected as the light brought her healing.

I also used music with another client because he was a drummer. I encouraged him to do alternate tapping using a rhythm that felt right for him. He often would tap in a rhythm of 'left-left-right', then 'right-right-left'. He said it was soothing to tap in that way while he thought about traumatic events. We used this tapping during desensitization phase as dual attention stimuli.

I believe that it is very powerful to incorporate clients' passions and

talents in the process of therapy. This helps integrate material faster because their whole being is involved and invited in the process.

—Mira Patel, LMFT
EMDR Certified Therapist

As a Spanish therapist and English being my second language, I am always aware of its impact on my Caucasian clients. This was especially true when working at a community mental health agency, and clients were assigned without necessarily considering their preferences. I remember the first sessions with a client in his late 50s [being] treated for complex trauma and addiction. It was difficult for him to describe sensations or even identify emotions during the preparation phase. In one of the sessions, I remembered that during the intake, he told me that he played

guitar in a band, and music was his passion. While trying to tell me what he observes in his body, I asked him, "Comfortably Numb" as in the song by Pink Floyd? At that moment, his eyes lit up and quickly filled with tears. We listened to the song several times during that session, and he shared how he connected with the song's lyrics. I can't imagine any other way where the language or cultural differences could disappear as they did. The therapeutic relationship was transformed from that moment, and that song was the one he used as a container during and outside the EMDR sessions. I regret never telling him that the song "Comfortably Numb" was my container, too.

—Irene Rodriguez (she/her) MS, LMHC, REAT, Certified EMDR Therapist/EMDR Approved Consultant Traumatic Incident Reduction Trainer

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