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Dilemmas and Challenges for EMDR Therapy Trainers: Teaching with an Anti-Oppression Lens

Points to consider:

- Trauma and oppression are inherently linked
- Experiencing structural oppression is traumatic
- Acknowledging oppression trauma is crucial for healing
- Ignoring the impact of oppression causes re-traumatization
- Sexual Orientation Change Efforts
- All oppression is linked
- Intent does not equal impact
- This is ongoing work

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Oppression: The systematic, institutionalized, pervasive and routine mistreatment of and discrimination against individuals because of their membership in groups identified by gender, race, religion/faith, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, ability, neurodiversity, body size, language, tribal affiliation, and other differences—groups on the “downside of power.”

Preston, Tiombe, et al. Dismantling Oppression Group California Coalition Against Sexual Assault



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DISCRIMINATION

ABLEISM
Treating non-disabled people as the standard, therefore excluding the disabled

CLASSISM
Discrimination based on class often involving class superiority

CASTE
According to UNICEF, caste discrimination is prevalent in India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Japan. They estimate it affects 250 million people.

SEXISM
The belief or attitude that one gender/sex is inferior, less competent or less valuable than others.

SIZEISM
Discrimination based on body shape, such as disdain toward overweight or underweight people or treating 'normal weight' as the standard

RACISM
Discrimination based on race often involving race superiority

AGEISM
Stereotyping of people based on age

SEXUALISM
Treating heterosexuality as standard, therefore excluding homo-, pan-, asexual etc

CISSEXISM
The belief that transsexuals' identified genders are inferior to, or less authentic than cisgender people (when physical and subconscious genders are the same)

!CHECK YOUR PRIVILEGE!
i-am-the-lighthouse.tumblr.com

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Oppression and Trauma

- Impact on the brain and body
- Ongoing impact
- Microaggressions
- Health consequences
- Multiple intersections

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What is the Trauma of Oppression?

- Psychological injury
- Physical, psychological & emotional pain that results from experiencing or witnessing oppression, discrimination or violence against marginalized groups.
- Ongoing and collective injuries from structural oppression (aggressions, additional labor, exhaustion).
- Experiencing and re-experiencing = chronic stress and hypervigilance.
- Made to feel unsafe, vulnerable, targeted simply for existing.

It is NOT traumatizing to be _____,
it is traumatizing to experience
oppression.

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EXTERNALIZE THE PROBLEM

IN WHAT WAYS ARE SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION AFFECTING MY CURRENT SITUATION?

HOW ARE WHITE SUPREMACY, CAPITALISM, RACISM, HOMOPHOBIA, SEXISM, MISOGNY, TRANSPHOBIA, FATPHOBIA, WEIGHT STIGMA, ABLEISM, XENOPHOBIA, CLASSISM, ELITISM, CASTEISM, ISLAMOPHOBIA, & THE EXPECTATIONS OF THESE SYSTEMS AFFECTING ME AND MY LIFE?

@The_Queer_Counselor

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Trauma, Abuse and Oppression

- Trauma does not occur in a vacuum—it occurs within the personal, social, and political context of the person and their identities: race, class, disability, gender, language, sexual orientation, tribal affiliation, religion, immigration status, body size, etc.
- Both victimization and oppression depend on myth, not fact
- Both are about power and control, “power over”

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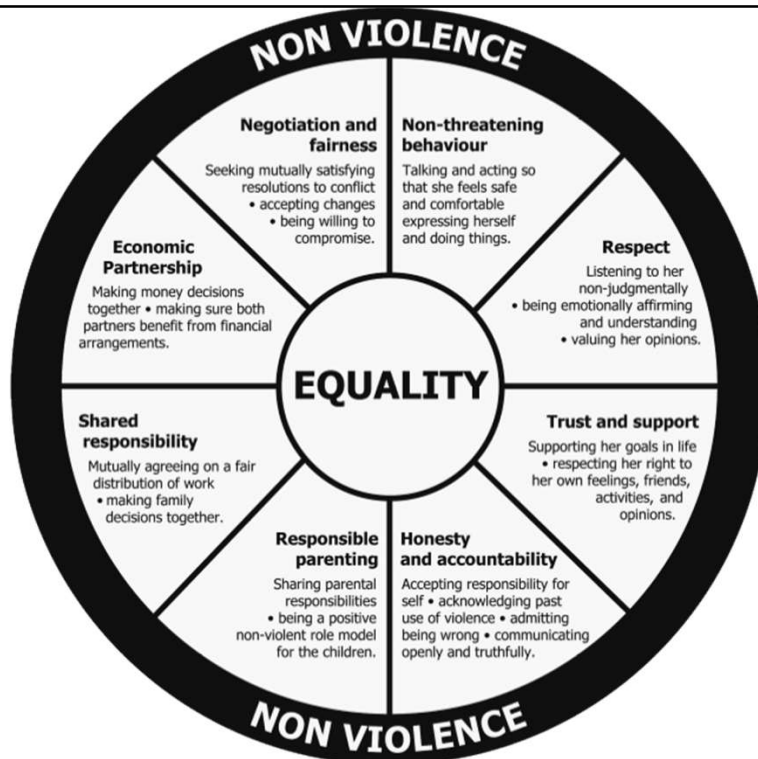
Tactics of Oppression

- Emotional Abuse
- Economic Abuse
- Isolation
- Privilege of Status
- Using Children
- Minimizing, Denying and Blaming
- Intimidation and Threats
- Using Violence

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What is Allyship?

“When a person of privilege works in solidarity and partnership with a marginalized group of people to help take down the systems that challenge that group's basic rights, equal access, and ability to thrive in our society” (Nfonoyim-Hara).

Dickenson, 2021

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Allyship in Action

- “It is not about ‘paving the way’ for new investigators with common goals but rather to walk the walk with them.
- Sharing the lessons learned and developing methodological strengths from bench to bedside to the community and back.
- Trusting in each other to approach difficult conversations despite our differences in lived experiences.
- Sincerity and authenticity in wanting to work towards the common goal of reducing health disparities in Black and brown communities (Wallen).”

Dickenson, 2021

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Using Privilege for Allyship

- “Allyship can be a small action.
- You don't have to make a big, grand gesture to be an ally.
- Anyone can be an ally and leverage their place of privilege.
- An ally can serve as a mentor or a voice for someone who doesn't have a voice.
- An ally can also enhance the culture of inclusion by engaging with their marginalized colleagues and providing support in their daily lived experiences.”

Dickenson, 2021

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Cultural Humility

Incorporates a lifelong commitment to:

- Self-evaluation and critique
- Redressing power imbalances
- Let go of the false sense of security that stereotyping brings
- Say that I don't know when I truly don't know and to search for and access resources

Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998, p. 123

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EMDR Therapy as Integrated and Integrative

- EMDR therapy as an integrated and integrative therapy fosters an anti-oppressive approach.
- Is naturally integrated and inclusive.
- Incorporates treatment concepts from various Eastern, Western, and Indigenous therapies.
- Informed by a network of theories.
- “In actual practice, EMDR therapy may perhaps best be described as a client-centered, interactive, interactional, intrapsychic, cognitive, behavioral, body-oriented therapy” (Shapiro, 2018, p. 50).

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Considerations within Standard Protocol

Help Trainees to understand

- Not one size fits all
- Empower the client right from the very beginning
- Helping client understand they are in control of the process
- Slower pacing
- Visibility - Inquiries regarding identity, racialized experiences and oppression-based trauma
- Psychoeducation and clarification regarding the EMDR process
- Therapist needs knowledge of historical injustices and to have empathy regarding the impact of historical and current inequities for people of color
- Therapist transparency regarding positionality and social location in therapy

Lipscomb and Ashley (2021)

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Thank you!!

Feel free to reach out with any questions
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