

Learning Objective #6: Understand and appreciate the dynamic forces contributing to cultural diversity and their importance in delivering culturally competent disaster intervention services.

Cultural differences of grief and loss occur because the meaning of trauma is culturally specific and culturally defined. Different cultures have different coping mechanisms and healing rituals (DeVries, 1996). Some cultural groups are more susceptible to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than others. For example, Hispanics had the highest rates of PTSD after Hurricane Andrew (Perilla, Norris & Lavizzo, 2002), the terrorist attacks of September 11th (Galea, et al., 2002), and Hurricane Georges (Diaz, 1999). Thus, it is crucial to be aware of the unique trauma responses of cultural groups.

To increase awareness of people from other cultural and diverse groups, one must be aware of between group differences and within group differences. Although there may be general characteristics that describe a certain group, they should be seen as guidelines that are open to change and challenge (Sue and Sue, 2003). Variations and unique responses exist within members of each cultural and diverse group. Thus, disaster responders should ask, "What is the unique response of this particular person in this particular situation at this particular time?"

Guidelines for Delivering Culturally Competent Disaster Interventions:

(Source: DeWolfe, 1993)

- Learn from cultural informants about values, family norms, traditions, community politics, etc.
- Involve staff and community outreach workers who are bilingual and bicultural.
- Establish rapport.
- Gain acceptance.
- Be dependable, non-judgmental, genuine, respectful, well-informed and credible.
- Practice active listening skills.
- Determine the most appropriate ways to introduce yourself and define your program and services.
- Recognize cultural variation in expression of emotions, and the manifestation and description of psychological and physical symptoms.
- Focus on problem-solving and concrete solutions.
- Be action-oriented.
- Empower survivors through education and skill-building.

Culturally Appropriate Intervention Guidelines for Cultural and Diverse Groups

In delivering culturally appropriate interventions to disaster survivors, it is important to consider the general trauma responses of cultural and diverse groups, and the role of family cultural values. The following is a list of cultural values, practices, and general characteristics, and culturally appropriate disaster intervention guidelines by cultural and diverse groups.

African American Family Values and Practices:

(Sources: Forehand and Kotchick, 1996; Parham, White & Ajamu, 1999)

- Respects authority
- Expects obedience
- Emotional vitality
- Interdependence of family and friends
- Collective survival
- Harmonious blending
- Strict discipline
- Communal parenting

African American General Characteristics:

- Immediate and extended family are greatest sources of support.
- Flexibility in family roles is a strength.
- Spirituality and church are sources of strength.
- Trusting decision of wise God.
- Strong reliance on God.
- Singing spiritual songs brings comfort.
- Rituals: Extravagant funerals and post-funeral meals.
- Maintain connection to deceased via conversations, dreams, and keepsakes.
- Values include: groupness, community, cooperation, interdependence, and being one with nature.
- Public behavior may be emotionally intense, dynamic, and demonstrative.

African American General Intervention Guidelines:

- Focus more on interpersonal factors rather than procedures (Gibbs, 1980).
- Use “small talk” and straight-forward talk to develop egalitarian relationship (Sue and Sue, 2003).
- Indirect eye contact while listening and direct eye contact while talking are preferred.
- Provide emotional and concrete support.
- Encourage spirituality, dedication to family, music, and storytelling (Tully, 1999).
- Emphasize self-respect, pride, and community.
- Connect with immediate and extended family.



Asian American Family Values and Practices:

(Sources: Chau and Landreth, 1997; Forehand and Kotchick, 1996)

- Filial piety
- Respect for elders
- Maintenance of harmony
- Negation of conflict
- Parental control
- Obedience
- Strict discipline

Asian American General Characteristics:

- There are 40 distinct subgroups of Asian Americans (Sue and Sue, 2003).
- Expect differences due to acculturation, language, education, socioeconomic status, family experiences, and prior trauma in country of origin.
- Values include deference to authority, emotional restraint, specified roles, hierarchical family structure, gender-specific roles, and extended family orientation.
- Rituals. (Ex.: Elaborate funerals, home altars, and memorial tablets to connect with deceased) (Klass, 1996; Pang and Lam, 2002).
- For traumatic death, Vietnamese must perform spiritual ritual or cannot live in peace (Gerber, Nguyen & Bounkeua, 1999).
- Traditional healers and spiritual leaders perform ceremonies for physical, emotional, and spiritual pain (Gerber, Nguyen & Bounkeua, 1999).
- Hindus find meaning in karma and transmigration. Buddhists find meaning in life transition (Almeida, 1991).
- Preference is for indirect eye contact as sign of respect.
- Touching one's head is absolutely forbidden.
- Public behavior is expected to be modest and emotionally restrained (Gerber, Nguyen & Bounkeua, 1999).

Asian American General Intervention Guidelines:

- Give increased personal space while talking.
- Use tact when gathering information.
- Respect privacy.
- Focus on interpersonal relationship, rather than procedure (Gerber, Nguyen & Bounkeua, 1999).
- Take active, directive role and stance as a teacher.
- Determine acculturation and previous trauma.
- Encourage support from traditional cultural values, community, and family ties.
- Emphasize harmony in relationships.



Hispanic American Family Values and Practices:

(Source: Forehand and Kotchick, 1996)

- Strong attachment and loyalty to nuclear and extended family
- Collectivism
- Mutual respect
- Permissive discipline
- Nurturing
- Responsive
- Communal parenting
- Freedom

Hispanic American General Characteristics:

- Strong nuclear and extended family attachments of confianza (mutual trust).
- Group-oriented (maintain cluster of household network) (Velez-Ibanez & Garcia Parra, 1999).
- Religious (usually Roman Catholic). Priest may be source of strength.
- May visit spiritists or mediums to resolve issues with deceased.
- May seek curandero (curer) to address susto (fear) or males (hexes) (Velez-Ibanez & Garcia Parra, 1999).
- Hispanic men have higher levels of grief than Caucasian men (Sera, 2001).
- Public behavior may be demonstrative and casual.

Hispanic American General Intervention Guidelines:

- Ask if Spanish is preferred for interactions and resource material.
- Develop personal and nurturing relationship. May expect active and concrete assistance.
- Give active and concrete assistance.
- Encourage husband or paternal figure-head involvement.
- Connect with extended family, religious priest, or curandero (Velez-Ibanez & Garcia Parra, 1999). Use "la platica" or small talk. Lengthy greetings and pleasantries are common.
- Touching, closer personal space, interrupting, and avoiding eye contact is okay.
- May be reluctant to ask others for help due to pride or machismo.



Native American Family Values and Practices:

(Sources: Forehand and Kotchick, 1996; Glover and Landreth, 2000)

- Deep respect for individuals
- Involvement of extended family
- Priority of family and friends
- Independence
- Harmony
- Humility
- Permissive discipline
- Communal parenting
- Shame as discipline

Native American General Characteristics:

- Value harmony with nature, cooperation, and holism (Sue and Sue, 2003).
- Concern with the present. Focus is on the here and now.
- Racism and physical and sexual abuse high, especially among males (Weaver and Brave Heart, 1999).
- Culture as treatment through cultural and spiritual rituals (Abadian, 2000).
- Ceremonies “fill the hole in the circle” left by the death of a tribal member (Stone, 1999).
- Cherokee resiliency factors of parental death include: Native American way of life, spirituality, and acceptance of journey and responsibility to survive for self, others, and ancestors (Jeffries, 2002).
- Rely on extended family and spirituality.
- May sense responsibility to survive for self, others, and ancestors.

Native American General Intervention Guidelines:

- Silence and lack of eye contact are seen as respectful.
- General lead statements are helpful.
- "Realness" or genuineness is paramount.
- Active participation of family, community, and traditional healers is needed for healing/helping (Stamm & Stamm, 1999).
- Create atmosphere of social event.
- Involve extended family.
- Expect missed meetings, as family matters take priority over meetings.
- Provide longer training sessions with fewer sessions.
- Practice on site.
- Encourage connection with spirituality.



General Predictors of Adverse Outcomes Post Disaster:

- Female gender
- Low socioeconomic status
- Minority status
- Acute stress disorder
- Bereaved
- Pre-existing psychiatric disorder
- Required medical or surgical attention
- Intense or prolonged exposure to event

Groups at Increased Risk for Adverse Outcomes Post Disaster:

- Children
- Women
- Persons with disabilities
- Minorities
- Refugees
- Immigrants
- Poor
- Mentally ill



General Characteristics and Intervention Guidelines of Groups at Increased Risk

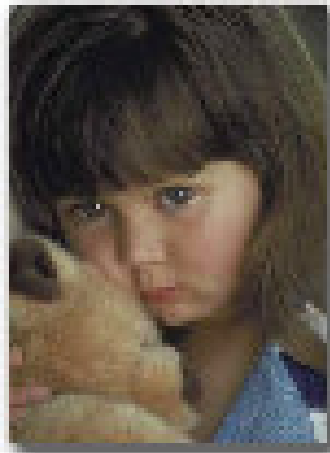
Children's General Trauma Responses:

(Sources: Vernberg, La Greca, Silverman & Prinstein, 1996, and Vincent, 1998)

- Fifty-five percent of children had moderate to very severe symptoms three months after Hurricane Andrew.
- Predictive factors of PTSD in children:
 - Exposure to trauma
 - Female gender
 - Low social support
 - Negative coping (3 months)
 - Ethnic minority
 - More recent life events (44 months)

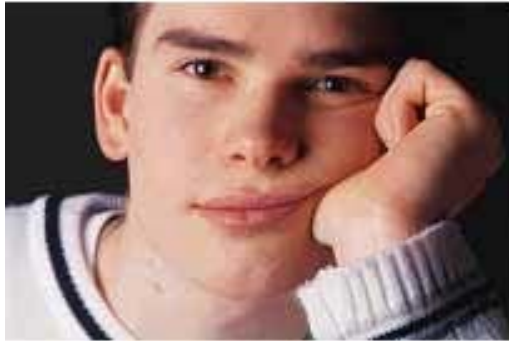
Children's Trauma Responses: (Source: Braden and Duchin, 2002)

- Preschool – 2nd Grade
 - Separation anxiety
 - Avoidance
 - Regressive symptoms
 - Fear of the dark
- 3rd – 6th Grade
 - Re-enactment through traumatic play
 - Withdrawal from friends
 - Aggressive behavior at home or school
 - Hyperactivity that was not present earlier



Adolescents' Trauma Responses: (Source: Braden and Duchin, 2002)

- Increased risk-taking behavior
- Decline in previous responsible behavior
- Social withdrawal
- Apathy
- Rebellion at home or school



Psychological Responses After a Biological Terrorist Attack:

(Source: Braden and Duchin, 2002)

- Magical thinking about microbes and viruses
- Fear of invisible agents and contagion
- Attribution of arousal symptoms to infection
- Panic and paranoia
- Children will be most afraid that:
 - the event will happen again.
 - someone will be injured or killed.
 - they will be separated from the family.
 - they will be left alone.



Risk Factors for Children: (Source: Garbarino and Kapadia, 1986)

- Minority status
- Severe marital discord between parents
- Low socioeconomic status
- Overcrowded home
- Criminality of father
- Psychiatric disorder of mother
- Authoritarian perspective of parents
- High anxiety in maternal figure
- Low employability of father
- Poor quality of mother and child interactions
- Admitting child to care of authorities
- Trauma that occurs before the age of 11 results in a three-times greater chance of traumatic stress reaction in children.
- When four or more risk factors are present, the chance of permanent problems increases 10-fold.

Children's Resiliency Factors:

- High verbal abilities
- One caring or parent figure in immediate surroundings
- Capacity for goal-oriented behavior
- Open, supportive educational climate
- Early identification and intervention
- Trauma is not of human design and does not run in families.

Children's General Intervention Guidelines: (Source: Braden and Duchin, 2002)

- Address perceived concerns of being left alone, harm to family and self, disrupted routine, etc.
- Use developmentally appropriate approaches, such as puppets, toys, stories, and art.
- Provide reassurance.
- Give simple, concrete explanations.
- Review positive coping strategies, such as hugging parents, playing, praying, and singing.
- Talk calmly and openly at child's level.
- Ask what the child thinks about his/her fears.
- Share your own fears and provide reassurance.
- Emphasize the normal routine.
- Limit media re-exposure.
- Allow expression in private ways (ex. playing, drawing).
- Encourage positive coping, not blaming.
- Foster social support from teacher and classmates.

Women's General Characteristics and Intervention Guidelines:

- Depression and physical and sexual victimization are prominent concerns (Humphreys, 2003).
- Women develop self within relationship and because of relationship (Gilligan, 1982).
- High levels of social support predicts better coping (Coker, et al., 2002).
- Cognitive trauma therapy decreases PTSD (Kubany, Hill & Owens, 2003).
- Build relationship with a relational give and take.
- Affection and intimacy desired (Bakken & Roming, 1992).
- Communicate accurate empathy (Sue & Sue, 2003).



Elderly General Characteristics and Intervention Guidelines:

- Loneliness, physical illness, and financial limitations are main concerns (Sue & Sue, 2003).
- Be aware depression and suicidal ideation are prevalent (occurs in 25%).
- Treat with respect.
- Address immediate problems.
- Encourage reminisces about positive and negative experiences.
- Active advocating is needed.



Persons with Disabilities - General Characteristics and Intervention Guidelines:

- Use person-first language. (Ex.: Person with disability, not disabled person) (Sue & Sue, 2003).
- Respectfully assist with physical needs: ex. "May I help you?"
- Be aware that depression and suicidal ideations may be prevalent.
- For persons who are blind: Identify self and others; offer your arm; be specific.
- For persons who are deaf: Find out how s/he communicates best; gain attention; match facial expressions.
- For persons with speech disabilities: Give whole, unhurried attention. Ask short questions.
- For persons who use wheelchairs: Ask what to do before helping; sit whenever possible.



People Living in Poverty - General Characteristics and Intervention Guidelines:

- Be aware of middle-class bias, which blames the victim rather than the social structure (Sue & Sue, 2003).
- Be aware that anxiety and depression may be prevalent.
- Self-efficacy may be low, so extra advocacy is needed.
- Focus on strength of persistence and survival.
- Identify support systems.
- Know community resources.
- Refer to Maslow's Hierarchy of Need.
- Provide short, intensive training.
- Provide manageable verbal information and demonstrations.



Gays and Lesbian - General Characteristics and Intervention Guidelines:

- Prejudice and discrimination may hinder social support from family, churches, and community groups (Sue & Sue, 2003).
- Advocacy and referrals to safe places, community resources and support networks may be needed.
- Be aware that suicide in gay and lesbian youth is three times more likely than in heterosexual youth.
- Assess your own views.
- Remember that sexuality is at the core of people, and is a very personal matter.

