More Than Just Words: Unpacking “Cultural Competence”

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Workshop Aims

• A little bit about us
• Group exercise – Who are you?
• What is “Cultural Competence”?
  – Not seeking certainty or answers
  – Academic vs. Lived Experience
• Re-Examining “Cultural Competence”
• A new understanding of “Cultural Competence”?
• An Invitation to explore and co-develop “Cultural Competence”
Who are we?

Romana Farooq
- Black woman, “South Asian”, Muslim, witnessed & experienced Social Deprivation & Political unrest
- Clinical Psychologist – Privilege & Power
- Marginalised & Oppressed Groups – Children Subject to Sexual Exploitation
- Grappling with and curious about “cultural competence”, what is it? what does it look like?

Helen Williams
- White woman (English, Welsh, Greek, Scottish & Irish ancestry), “World Citizen” (“Let your vision be world-embracing”), Bahá'í (Christian, Muslim, Bahá'í)
- Clinical Psychologist
- Survivor of severe trauma, lived experience of mental health issues
- Passionate about social justice, curious about cross-cultural learning and “cultural competence”
Group Exercise

Using the Handprints and write down 5 things that define you as a person...Share them with the person next to you

(5 Minutes)
What is “Cultural Competence”?  

Voices of Professionals:  
• “Skills & knowledge in engaging and working with people from different cultural backgrounds”  
• “Trained in working with people from different cultures”  

Voices of Services Users:  
• “Awareness of difference”  
• “Knowledge of cultures”  
• “Being sensitive to my individual needs”  
• “Interested in who I am and not judging me”  
• “Not making assumptions”  
• “Asking me about me and listening”
What happens in practice?

Study exploring BME Service users experience of services (Farooq, Agoro & Ahir, 2015)

- “They never asked me about my culture”
- “I told them about my faith but they didn’t seem to listen or see it as important”
- “I don’t feel that they fully understood me”
- “The therapist didn’t seem interested in me as a person”

Evidence of a disconnect between service/professionals’ understanding of “cultural competence” and the lived experience of service users
The Spirituality Gap?

• We tend to see the world from our own perspectives – we make assumptions
• Professionals may be atheist, agnostic, humanist, spiritual or other orientation/s
• How do our own beliefs intersect with those of our clients?
• What are the challenges?
• What are the benefits?
• How can we improve our practice, enhance connection and therapeutic relationships?
The Difference Between Sympathy and Empathy

• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw
Mental Health and Healing: Learning from different spiritual, cultural & faith perspectives

- Set up in LYPFT in 2005
- Links developed with different spiritual, cultural and faith communities
- Educating staff, carers and communities, providing networking and learning opportunities
- Christian (C of E, Catholic, Pentecostal), Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish (Orthodox, Reformed), Bahá'í, Rastafarian, Pagan, African spirituality etc.
- Meetings held in different community locations, e.g. Bangladeshi Centre, Gurdwara, Buddhist Centre etc.
Mental Health and Healing Forum

Aims

• To promote understanding of the importance of spirituality within the healing and recovery process.
• To learn how each faith group approaches healing in the mental health context.
• To promote multi-faith awareness and understanding of different spiritual, cultural and religious groups.
• To educate and challenge stigma.
• To work towards respect and understanding of faith communities creating well-being.
• To work towards spiritual and cultural competence.
• To promote social inclusion for people experiencing mental health issues.
A Humble Attitude of Learning

A wise man never knows all, only fools know everything.

African Proverb

If you understand everything, you must be misinformed.

— Japanese Proverb
The Need for Curiosity and Humility

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

The Danger of a Single Story:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOhL1kGwpfg
Cultural Competence?

- Culturally Curious
- Not Knowing Position
- Power & Privilege
- Non Expert Stance
- Culturally Responsive
- Understanding Misunderstanding

Cultural Competence?
History of the Social GGRRAAACCEEEESSS

• Developed by John Burnham & Alison Roper-Hall
• Mnemonic for aspects of similarity and difference
• (In)visible and (un)voiced matrix of similarity and difference
• Developed as a tool not a theory
• Acknowledges intersectionality
The Social GGRRAAAACCEEEESSS

- Gender
- Geography
- Race
- Religion
- Age
- Ability
- Appearance
- Class
- Culture
- Ethnicity
- Education
- Employment
- Sexuality
- Sexual orientation
- Spirituality
Re-visioning “Cultural Competence”

- Consideration of the impact of similarities and differences of age, religion, culture, class, sexuality, gender etc.
- What is the experience of a Nigerian Christian Survivor of trafficking working with a black/white male/female therapist?
- What is the experience of a Somali Muslim woman living in an all white area?
- What is the experience of a white lower class man seeking employment in academia?
- Taking a Social GGRRAAACCEEEESSSS approach allows us to acknowledge multiple aspects of similarity and difference and their potential impact on lived experience.
Group Exercise

How do you think you could use knowledge of the Social GGRRAAACCEEEESSS in your work? Reflect and discuss with the person next to you

(5 Minutes)
Thank You
Any Questions, Comments or Reflections?

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