

# The Ethics of Cross-Cultural Counseling

Great Lakes RCEP

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# What are Ethics?

Webster's dictionary:

- A set of moral principles or values
- The principles of conduct governing an individual or group

# Values

- The VR Professional and Customer have deeply held values and beliefs that influence both case direction and case decision making
- Cross-cultural counseling often adds to value differences



# Putting Yourself in Someone Else's Shoes



- Is the power equal in a relationship between student and VR professional?
- Why is it important to understand the student's perspective?

# Alan the Atheist

- Alan is a caring and empathetic Counselor who is not at all religious. He meets his new client, who is a recent immigrant to the U.S. and from a devote religious group. The client states, "I will always pray at the start of each visit so that you will be divinely guided. Will you pray with me as we start this session?"

“Never let your sense of morals  
get in the way of doing  
what's right.”

Issac Asimov

# Native American Quiz

## True or False

American Indians:

- Do not like to make eye contact with people they do not know well.
- Treat all persons older than themselves with the respect they give to their elders.
- Give gifts in kind for services or other acts of kindness they receive.
- Treat members of their tribes who live off the reservation with the same honor as those who live on the reservation.
- Treat members of other tribes in the same way they treat members of their own tribes.
- Experience Diabetes and alcoholism at higher rates than the general public.

# Multiple Choice

- There are more than
  - 150
  - 250
  - 350native languages spoken today in the United states.
- There are more than
  - 130
  - 230
  - 330federally recognized tribes in the U.S.
- There are more than
  - 75
  - 125
  - 225federally recognized Native entities in Alaska

# Multiple Choice

- According to a 1997 study, the leading cause of death for American Indians and Alaska Natives was
  - Diabetes
  - Alcoholism
  - Homicide
  - Heart Disease
- The preferred term for Native decedents of the U.S. is
  - Native American
  - American Indian
  - The name of the individual's tribe being referred to such as Navajo, Cheyenne, Chippewa ect.
  - All of the above
  - None of the above



# Hurricane Katrina



# Effective Cross Cultural Communicators

- ❖ Demonstrates RESPECT for individuals from other cultures
- ❖ Makes continued and sincere attempts to understand the world from other points of view
- ❖ Is open to new learning
  - ❖ Knows how to build “toolbox”
- ❖ Has a sense of humor
- ❖ Tolerates ambiguity well



# A Gift from the Heart

- A customer that you have been working with for over a year has just completed 90 days of employment. To show her appreciation, June, who is an American Indian, has brought to her last appointment a woven blanket as a gift of appreciation.

# Terrance

- Terrance is the only black student in his class. While he has a few close friends, Terrance faces frequent attacks, both verbal and physical, because of the color of his skin. These attacks occur both within and outside of school. Today Terrance comes to you requesting he be referred to a doctor for medication to help treat anxiety.

# JohnIsha

- JohnIsha is a young African American woman that you have been working with for just over a year. Recently her grades have been slipping. In a meeting with the family you are taken aback by the apparent cavalier attitude of the family toward the grades. The family takes the stance that this her fate.

# Native Yearnings

- You are working with Charlie. Charlie is a young man with traumatic brain injury. Charlie lives off the reservation but his family maintains a close connection with their tribal community. Lately Charlie has been demonstrating more than average (for him) agitation. His family wants Charlie to see a medicine man and is not interested in pursuing western style care.

# Juanita

- Juanita is a 18-year-old Latino woman moved with her family from Mexico six years ago. Last year, Juanita lost her arm in a factory accident. Juanita lives with her family, currently receives SSI, and has been pre-determined eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation. She attends her first planning session with her family (father, mother, sister, brother, and elderly aunt.) Juanita does not speak English, and has chosen her brother to interpret for her.

- Well into the planning session it becomes evident to you that Juanita is not the person doing the majority of the speaking. The family is having a good deal of discussion in response to each question you ask. You also get the impression that the brother may not be accurately translating disability related information you are providing, and may not be exactly reporting Juanita's comments to you.

- It is very clear that Juanita's choice for interpreter is indeed her brother, the only family English speaker. The choice for interpreter is the only choice you are certain of however. Juanita spends much of the appointment looking toward the ground, being relatively silent, while her family generates much discussion. The brother tells you that Juanita chooses a career in childcare for Latino children, (we will assume there are such positions in your community) and requests your assistance in obtaining a position in this field.

# Juanita Conclusion

- How do you proceed? (There are no multi-lingual counselors in your office, so don't even think of transferring this case...)
- What assumptions might you make about the families behavior?
- How will you handle confidential material?
- How do you assure choice?
- What are the possible cultural considerations?

# Salma

- You are working with Salma, a young woman from Afghanistan who is accompanied by her parents to all meetings. Salma and her mother only speak when spoken to, and often refer to the father to answer for them. The father wants the daughter to become a nurse. During the session Salma agrees with this choice. Between sessions however Salma contacts you and states that she has no interest in becoming a nurse that she would prefer to be a chemist.

- The daughter will not share this information with her father for fear this will be disrespectful. You learn from the client that she comes from a culture where it is not at all unusual for fathers to choose the careers of their daughters and wives. She tells you that she is giving you this information in confidence and does not want it shared with her father.

# Salma Conclusion

- Do you continue working with Salma on a Plan that she has no interest in?
- Do you assist Salma with her interest in becoming an engineer and risk demonstrating disrespect for her father and disregard a cultural practice?
- What are the cultural considerations?
- What are the ethical considerations?
- What if your client had the same issue, but did not have a cultural difference?

# Shing

- Shing, a 17-year-old Chinese woman with asthma and allergies, sought services from a local rehabilitation counselor to acquire training as a computer programmer at a local junior college. She currently lives with her extended family, which includes her parents who came to the United States from Hong Kong 15 years ago, her paternal grandparents who were brought to the United States by her parents 5 years ago, and two younger sisters. Shing and her two younger sisters were brought to the United States 10 years ago by her parents.

- The family owns a Chinese take-out restaurant where Shing has worked full time for 5 years. Shing tells the rehabilitation counselor that working in the restaurant has become difficult for her due to her medical conditions. Her father has been very critical of her during the last few years because she has not been very helpful in the restaurant.

- After assessing Shing's aptitudes, the rehabilitation counselor advised her to apply for admission to a computer science bachelor's degree program at a university 100 miles from her family's home. He also encouraged Shing to acquire assertiveness training in order to confront her father in regard to his frequent criticism of her and to assert her independence about leaving home to go to college.

# Shing Summary

- The rehabilitation counselor saw Shing's employment as a computer software specialist, as well as living independently in her own apartment, as optimal rehabilitation service outcome goals. He felt that continuing to both live at home with her family and work in the family restaurant would aggravate her asthma and allergies.

# Middle Class Values in the U.S.

- Importance of individualism and privacy
- Belief in the equality of all individuals
- Informality in interactions with others
- Emphasis on the future, change, and progress
- Belief in the general goodness of humanity
- Emphasis on the importance of punctuality
- High regard for achievement, action, work, and materialism
- Pride in styles that are direct and assertive

Roessler, Richard T., and Stanford E. Rubin;  
Case Management and Rehabilitation Counseling.  
Pro-Ed publishing, Austin Texas, 1998 (P. 185)