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Intercultural resiliency and pluralism: Building bridges of understanding and healing

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Life stories, cultural myths and legends provide the essential focus of narrative and constructive therapies with an understanding that people are the creators of the stories that give life events connectedness and meaning. Each individual (and family) possesses a life story woven with successes, challenges, and failures, including the rituals of life acquired through family, culture and religion. Yet supporting individuals outside the worldview of the therapist can invite confusion and uncertainty. Due to growing multiculturalism, therapists are being asked to expand their worldviews within the context of pluralism and diversity. Current trends in research and therapy are focusing on more inclusive and diversified dialogues. This conversation favors the processes of intercultural resiliency and pluralism. Intercultural resiliency promotes sharing life stories to create new meanings to life changing events. It offers to therapists a means of exploring the different ways that people find healing through their sense of self, their caregivers and the communities that support them. Intercultural resiliency provides the therapist with ways of understanding differences, starting with the creation of the therapist's own spiritual platform or cultural self. Similar to intercultural resiliency, the pluralist therapist position provides a foundation of respect for all people. It aims at a model of therapy whereby the therapist recognizes each person entering the session (client and therapist) comes with specific personal and cultural values, ethnic and social characteristics and stories. This awareness allows the therapeutic relationship to become a process of collaborative interchanges including the sharing of world orientations in which both the client and therapist bring resources which ultimately both can benefit. Intercultural resiliency and pluralism offer a means of bridging between differences. It incorporates the growing understanding of the benefits of cultural connections, religious and spiritual identities and community to the development of positive mental health..

Biography

Joanne Ginter is a registered Psychologist in Alberta, Canada having over 35 years of clinical experience with individuals and families of all ages. With graduate degrees in both Psychology and Religious studies, she specializes in the area of trauma, family violence, play therapy, culture and religion. In her work, she focuses on the process of the therapeutic relationship integrating narrative, solution-focused, collaborative approaches and hypnosis. In addition to being a practicing therapist, she is actively devoted to training students and front-line therapists through clinical supervision and the development and presentation of workshops professionally. She is a member of the Canadian Psychological Association, American Psychological Association (Associate) and Play Therapy Canada. She is a newly published author with her first book: *"The Fifth Position: A Guide for Developing Intercultural Resiliency and Pluralism"* and is actively presenting her workshop on developing these concepts to other front-line therapists.

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