TIP SHEET

Domestic Violence: Cross-Cultural Considerations

Guilaine F. Kraft, PhD, LGSW

What is Domestic Violence?

*Domestic violence* (& emotional abuse) - are behaviors used by one person in a relationship to control the other

- Partners may be married or not married; heterosexual, gay, or lesbian; living together or dating
- Those involved in a domestic violence situation may be romantically involved or not, e.g., they may be related to each other or simply living in the same house or belong to the same family
- Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation, often including the threat and use of violence
- Domestic violence is a crime that can include physical abuse, emotional abuse, economic abuse, and sexual abuse

Impact on victim’s / survivor’s life:

- **Family/Friends** - becoming isolated from family & friends, losing their support system
- **Mental Health** - being berated, suppressed/oppressed, losing self-esteem or confidence in the self impacts one’s mood and psyche
- **Physical Health** - aside from any physical abuse, bruises, fractures, etc, enduring domestic abuse may cause deterioration in physical health
- **Employment** - may have difficulty retaining employment due to missed days or poor performance leading to consequences
**Finances** - may have their finances controlled by the batterer

What is Culture?

*Culture* - “sum total of life patterns passed on from generation to generation with a group of people and includes institutions, language, religious ideals, habits of thinking, artistic expressions, and patterns of social and interpersonal relationships” (Dewees, 2001, p. 34)

*Self-Determination* - the belief that individuals have the power to reason & should be given the right to determine his or her own actions (Freedberg, 1989)

*Cultural self-determination* - a dynamic, active process, whether conscious or unconscious, in which the client is empowered to utilize his or her culture to make decisions about his or her treatment (Kraft & BrintzenhofeSzoc, n.d.)

What is Cultural Competence?

*Cultural Competence* - a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or amongst professionals and consumers and enables that system, agency

- Cultural competence is a developmental process effecting racial, ethnic, and cultural disparities in health and mental health care (Aponte, 1995; Armour et al., 2004; Boyle & Springer, 2001; Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989)

What is the Culture of Domestic Violence?

Factors that lead to Domestic Violence:

- **Economic**
  - Limited access to employment
  - Limited access to education and
  - Victim’s economic dependence on batterer
  - Limited access to cash & credit

- **Cultural**
  - Values that give men proprietary rights over women
  - Notion of family as the private sphere & under male control
  - Customs of marriage (bride price, dowry) _reinforcing ideas of woman being property of man or owing man due to price he paid for her_
  - Acceptability of violence as a means to resolve conflict or maintain power & control
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- Gender-specific socialization
- Cultural definitions of appropriate sex roles
- Expectations of roles within romantic/domestic relationships

- **Power and Control**
  - Isolation
  - Emotional abuse
    - Calling names, berating, & belittling _ breaking down self-esteem & confidence
    - Lying _ about immigration &/or residency status, finances, employment, anything important or sensitive to victim
    - Intimidating
  - Economic abuse
    - Not allowing employment, activities, or anything outside the home
    - Not allowing victim to go to school or be educated
    - Threatening to report to authorities any “under the table” employment/income
  - Sexual abuse
  - Using children
  - Using citizenship or residency privilege

**What is Cultural Competence in Domestic Violence?**

- Understanding the client’s culture & cultural beliefs
- Understanding the client’s cultural thoughts, ideas, & beliefs about domestic violence
- Understanding the client’s thoughts & expectations for how to handle domestic violence situation
- Using the client’s culture during the treatment / service delivery process
- Allowing cultural self-determination

**Why is Cultural Competence important in Domestic Violence?**

- Culturally competent treatment with domestic violence clients enhances the likelihood of effective service delivery with cross-cultural clients
- Culture influences the experience of domestic violence
- It shapes the response to intervention and responsibility
- It shapes access to other services that may be needed
How do you learn about & use the DV client’s culture?

- Remember: The client is the expert on their culture
- Learn from the client
- Learn how the client defines their culture
- Determine the client’s range of assimilation* & the extent to which the client wants or intends to assimilate (i.e., readjust to living without abuse)
- Research (via internet, triangulation, speaking to others of the culture/ethnicity)
- Discuss with the client how they would like to incorporate aspects of their culture into treatment
- Knowledge of Human Behavior (adapted from Devore & Schlesinger, 1999)