

Ability to work with difference

There are many factors that need to be considered in the development of culturally competent practice, and finding a language that encompasses all of them is a challenge. For example, issues in relation to gender, disability or sexual orientation may vary across cultural groups. Nonetheless, the competences required to work in a culturally competent manner are similar, because they relate to the capacity to value diversity and maintain an active interest in understanding the ways in which people who use services may experience specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles, while considering any implications for the way in which an intervention is carried out.

There are, of course, many ways in which practitioners and the people they work with may vary in beliefs, practices and lifestyles. Some may not be immediately apparent, leading to their erroneous assumption that they do not exist. It is the individual's sense of the impact of specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles that is important (the meaning these have for them) rather than the factors themselves. Almost any encounter requires the practitioner to carefully consider potential issues relating to specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles, and their relevance to the intervention being offered.

Finally, it is worth bearing in mind that (because issues around specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles often relate to power imbalances and to inequalities) practitioners need to be able to reflect on the ways in which power dynamics play out, both in the context of the service they work in and when working with clients and their families/significant others.

Stance

An ability to draw on knowledge that when working with specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles, it is stigmatising and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours that are problematic rather than the beliefs, practices and lifestyles of clients, their significant others and families, and hence:

practitioners should equally value all people for their particular and unique constellation of characteristics and be aware of (and challenge) stigmatising and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in themselves and others

there is no 'normative' state from which people and families may deviate, and hence no implication that a 'normative' state is preferred and other states problematic

Knowledge of the significance for practice of specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles

An ability to draw on knowledge that it is the individualised impact of background, lifestyle, beliefs or religious practices which is critical
An ability to draw on knowledge that the demographic groups included in discussion of 'different' beliefs, practices or lifestyles are usually those who are potentially subject to disadvantage and/or discrimination, and it is this potential for disadvantage that makes it important to focus on this area
An ability to draw on knowledge that users of services will often be a member of more than one 'group' (for example, a gay person from a minority ethnic community); as such the implications of combinations of lifestyle factors needs to be held in mind by practitioners

An ability to maintain an awareness of the potential significance for practice of social and cultural variation across a range of domains, but including:
ethnicity
culture
gender, gender identity and gender diversity
sexual orientation
religion/belief
socioeconomic deprivation
class
age
disability
For all people with whom the practitioner works, an ability to draw on knowledge of the relevance and potential impact of social and cultural factors on the effectiveness and acceptability of an assessment or intervention

Knowledge of social and cultural factors which may impact on access to the service

An ability to draw on knowledge of cultural issues which commonly restrict or reduce access to interventions, e.g.:
language
marginalisation
mistrust of statutory services
lack of knowledge about how to access services
the range of cultural concepts, understanding and attitudes about mental health which affect views about help-seeking, treatment and care
stigma, shame and/or fear associated with mental health problems (which makes it likely that help-seeking is delayed until/unless problems become more severe)
stigma or shame and/or fear associated with being diagnosed with a mental health disorder
preferences for gaining support via community contacts/contexts rather than through 'conventional' referral routes (e.g. their GP)

An ability to draw on knowledge of the potential impact of socioeconomic status on
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access to resources and opportunities
An ability to draw on knowledge of the ways in which social inequalities impact on development and on mental health
An ability to draw on knowledge of the impact of factors such as socioeconomic disadvantage or disability on practical arrangements that impact on attendance and engagement (e.g. transport difficulties, poor health)

Ability to communicate respect and valuing of clients, significant others and families

Where people from a specific sociodemographic group are regularly seen within a service, an ability to draw on knowledge of relevant beliefs, practices and lifestyles
An ability to identify protective factors that may be conferred by membership of a specific sociodemographic group (e.g. the additional support offered by an extended family)
An ability to take an active interest in the social and cultural background of users of services, and therefore to demonstrate a willingness to learn about their socio/cultural perspective(s) and world view

Ability to gain an understanding of the experience of specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles.

An ability to work collaboratively with the users of services and their families/significant others to develop an understanding of their culture and world view, and the implications of any culturally specific customs or expectations for a therapeutic relationship and how problems are described and presented			
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An ability to take an active and explicit interest in the client's experience of the beliefs, practices and lifestyles pertinent to their community:			
<table> <tr> <td>to help them to discuss and reflect on their experience</td></tr> <tr> <td>to identify whether and how this experience has shaped the development and maintenance of their presenting problems</td></tr> <tr> <td>to identify where they locate themselves if they 'straddle' cultures</td></tr> </table>	to help them to discuss and reflect on their experience	to identify whether and how this experience has shaped the development and maintenance of their presenting problems	to identify where they locate themselves if they 'straddle' cultures
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An ability to discuss the ways in which individual and family relationships are represented in the client's culture (e.g. notions of the self, models of individuality and personal or collective responsibility), and to consider the implications for organisation and delivery of any interventions			

Ability to adapt communication

Where the practitioner does not share the same language as the client, an ability to identify appropriate strategies to ensure and enable their full participation in the assessment or intervention, and:
where an interpreter/advocate is employed, an ability to draw on knowledge of the strategies that need to be in place for an interpreter/advocate to work effectively and in the interests of the client
An ability to adapt communication with clients who have a disability (e.g. using communication aides or altering the language, pace and content of sessions)

Ability to employ and interpret standardised assessments and measures

Where standardised assessments or measures are employed in a service, an ability to ensure that they are interpreted in a manner which takes into account the demographic membership of the client and their significant others, e.g.:
if the measure is not available in their first language, an ability to consider the implications of this when interpreting results
if a bespoke translation is attempted, an ability to crosscheck the translation to ensure that the meaning is not inadvertently changed
if standardised data (norms) is not available for the client's demographic group, an ability to explicitly reflect this in the interpretation of results

Ability to adapt psychological interventions

An ability to draw on knowledge of the conceptual and empirical research base that informs thinking about the impact of social and cultural factors on the effectiveness of psychological interventions
Where there is evidence that specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles are likely to impact on the accessibility of an intervention, an ability to make appropriate adjustments to the intervention and/or the manner in which it is delivered, with the aim of maximising its potential benefit
An ability to draw on knowledge that culturally adapted treatments should be judiciously applied, and are warranted:
if evidence exists that a particular clinical problem encountered by a person is influenced by membership of a given community
if there is evidence that people from a given community respond poorly to certain evidence-based approaches

Ability to demonstrate awareness of the effects of the practitioner's own background

An ability for all practitioners to draw on an awareness of their own group membership and values, and how these may influence their perceptions of the client, their problem and the therapeutic relationship
An ability for the practitioner to reflect on power differences between themselves and the client

Ability to identify and to challenge inequality

An ability to identify inequalities in access to services and take steps to overcome these, and:	
	an ability to consider how access to, and use of, services may need to be facilitated for clients with whom the practitioner is working (e.g. home visiting, flexible working, linking families with community resources)
	where it is within the remit/role of the practitioner, an ability to identify groups whose needs are not being met by current service design/procedures, to identify potential reasons for this, and to identify and implement potential solutions