

# Fostering Cultural Humility in Play Therapy with Black & Latinx Children

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# Cultural Identity

- Multiculturalism can be defined as a person's:
  - Ethnic and racial diversities
  - Spirituality
  - Sexual orientation
  - Ability and any disabilities
  - Social class and economics



# Cultural Identity

- Culturally based behaviors are passed on through children's games, storytelling, music and festivals & celebrations that are passed along generations
- Children learn about their culture's rules and norms through play. Also learn cultural differences
- The first step to cultural competence is to develop an understanding of your own ethnic identity and cultural values.
- The goal is to be empathic to one's cultural values, identify and beliefs



# History of BIPOC Communities in the United States

- Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans were incorporated into America against their will
- Linguicism- discrimination based on language use
- Possible difficulty combining traditional culture and dominant culture
- The fight for equal rights among Black Americans
- Segregation in schools & housing; employment discrimination
- Preference for lighter complexions
- Separation of Black families
- “One drop rule” among multiracial individuals



# Stress of COVID-19 & Racial Injustice on Minority Populations

- Thought people acted as if if they were uncomfortable around them
  - 39% Asian Americans, 38% Black, 27% Latinx, 13% White
- Have been subject to slurs or jokes
  - 31% Asian American, 21% African American, 15% Latinx, 13% White
- Feared someone might threatened or physically attack them
  - 26% Asian American, 20% African American, 15% Latinx, 9% White
- Worry others might be suspicious of them if they were a mask in public
  - 42% African American, 36% Asian American, 23% Latinx, 5% White

# Implicit Bias Defined

- “The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner”
- Activated involuntarily and without a person’s awareness or intentional control
- Lies deep in a person’s subconscious



# Factors Contributing to Implicit Bias

- Hardwiring of the brain
- Exposure to direct & indirect messages
- Social & cultural experiences
- Media & news misrepresentations



# Bias in Mental Health Care

- Accessing mental health care
- Short- and long-term treatment
- Crisis care
- Criminal justice



# How Racial Bias Presents In Play Therapy



# How Racial Bias Presents in Play Therapy

Limiting interventions



# How Bias Presents in Play Therapy

## Diagnosis & documentation



# How Bias Presents in Play Therapy

Lack of representation  
in toys & materials



# How Bias Presents in Play Therapy

## Cultural appropriation



# How Bias Presents in Play Therapy

## Adultification bias



# How Bias Presents in Play Therapy

## Hotline calls



# Identifying Implicit Bias

- There are disparities in access and treatment that leave many minority people untreated or improperly treated
- Professionals may make unwarranted judgments about people on the basis of ethnicity or race
- Professionals must be aware of the differences between minority individuals to provide appropriate support
- To ignore ethnic & racial differences reflects a form of bias



# Virginia Axline's 8 Basic Principles

- The therapist must develop rapport and a warm relationship with the child immediately
- **The therapist accepts the child exactly as they are**
- **The therapist establishes a feeling of permissiveness**
- **The therapist recognizes and reflect the child's feelings to help them gain insight into their own behavior**
- The therapist respects the child's ability to solve problems on their own
- The therapist follows the child's lead
- The therapist does not rush the therapeutic process
- The therapist only establishes limitations that are necessary to anchor the child to reality

# Guidelines for Cultural Competence in Play Therapy

- Assess the importance of ethnicity to patients and families
- Validate and strengthen ethnic identity
- Know that there are advantages and disadvantages in being of the same ethnic group as the client
- Don't feel like you have to be the expert of other ethnic groups

# Developing Cultural Humility

- Ways to achieve cultural humility:
  - Lifelong commitment to self-critique and self-evaluation
  - Fix power imbalances
  - Develop relationships with groups & people who advocate for others





# Latinx





# Personal Bias Exploration

How do your biases present in the ways you interact with clients of color?

How do your biases present in the ways you react to behaviors of clients of color?

# Developing Competence

- Building sensitivity
- Obtaining knowledge responsibly
- Knowledge & behavior



# Strategies to Address Bias

- Loving-kindness meditation
- Intergroup contact
- Adjusting your perspective
- Support groups





## Anti-Bias Plan

What are some things you can do to ensure you continue to monitor the way your biases may appear in the playroom with children and families of color? Use the area below to make a plan to further increase your cultural competence

<p>Media</p> 	<p>Books/Websites</p> 
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Issues to Explore

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Plan of Action

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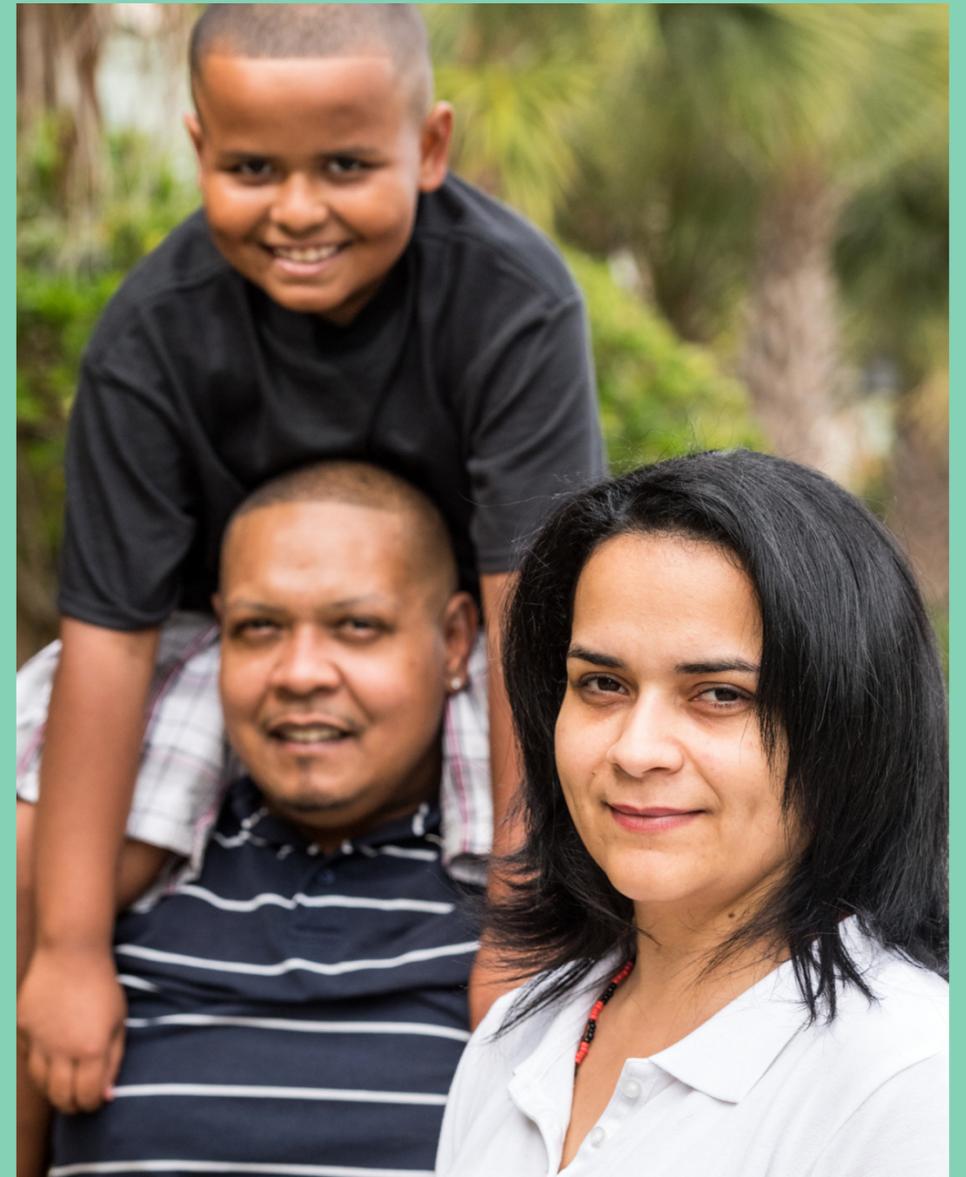
# Making a Plan



**Cultural Humility in Play  
Therapy with Latinx Children &  
Families**

# Latinx Cultural Concepts

- Familism: Huge emphasis on the importance of family
- Personalism: dignidad (dignity) and respecto (respect)
- Sense of hierarchy: gender and generational hierarchies
- Spiritualism: emphasis on spiritual values
- Fatalism: Keen sense of destiny



# Barriers to Mental Health Treatment

- Mental health services often used as a last resort
- Language barriers
- Overuse or misuse of physicians for psychological issues
- Social & cultural class differences between play therapist & client(s)
- Lack of awareness of mental health services
- Use of priests, folk leaders and religious leaders



# Engaging Latinx Children & Families

- Honor family member's privacy
- Empathize with any feelings of shame or guilt
- Understand and respect family hierarchy and structure
- Parental engagement
- Family play therapy may be more appropriate due to high value on family
- Explore expectations and clear up any misconceptions about play therapy





# **Play Activities to Honor Latinx Cultures**

# Activity Processing Questions



## DJ Battle



# Sugar Skulls

# Cultural Humility in Play Therapy with Black Children & Families



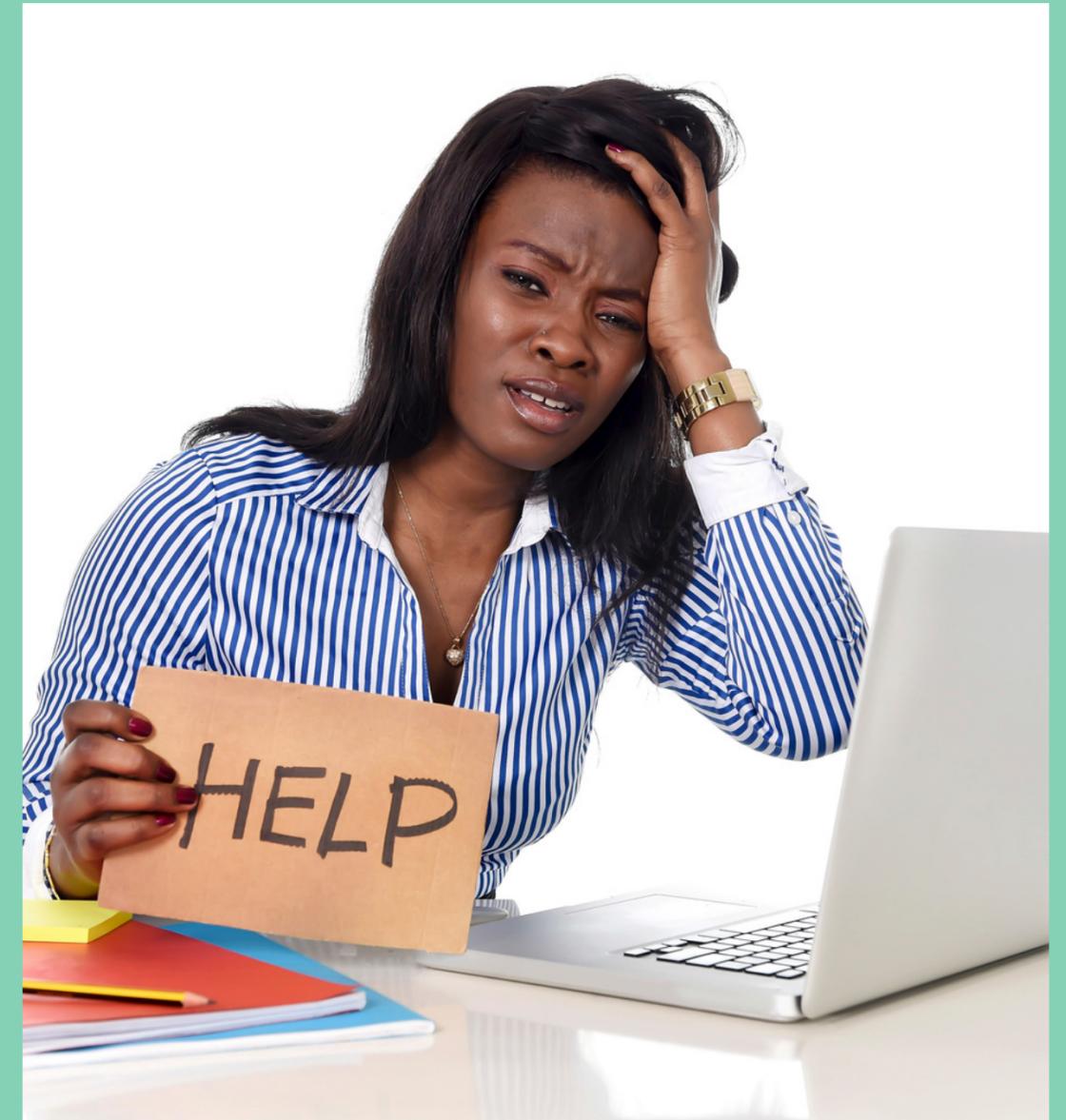
# African American Cultural Concepts

- Strong kinship bonds
- Role flexibility
- Strong work, education and achievement orientation
- Strong commitment to religious values & church orientation
- Humanistic orientation
- Endurance of suffering



# Barriers to Mental Health Treatment in Black Children & Families

- History of maltreatment in the medical community
- Distrust of outsiders due to history and experiences with racism
- Misconceptions about mental health
- Reliance on religion and spirituality to solve issues
- Accessibility issues



# Engaging Black Children & Families

- Sense of racial sensitivity and awareness
- Self-disclosure from play therapist
- Understand the layers of physical and sexual abuse
- Explore any issues around difference in race, if needed
- Be aware of countertransference if same race as client
- Understand how racial dynamics may play out in the playroom





**Play Activities to  
Honor Black Culture**



*I* matter...

BECAUSE MY VOICE IS  
IMPORTANT AND NEEDS TO  
BE HEARD!

This card features a white background with a yellow border. The text 'I matter...' is written in a brown cursive font at the top. Below it, the message 'BECAUSE MY VOICE IS IMPORTANT AND NEEDS TO BE HEARD!' is written in a black, sans-serif font. The card is decorated with several heart-shaped cutouts in light wood, dark wood, and chocolate colors. Two grey speech bubble icons are positioned at the bottom left and right. The logos for 'mylemarks' and 'BMH Connect' are located at the bottom corners.



*I* matter...

EVEN WHEN PEOPLE SAY  
MEAN THINGS ABOUT ME!

This card features a white background with a dark brown border. The text 'I matter...' is written in a brown cursive font at the top. Below it, the message 'EVEN WHEN PEOPLE SAY MEAN THINGS ABOUT ME!' is written in a black, sans-serif font. The card is decorated with several heart-shaped cutouts in light wood, dark wood, and chocolate colors. A grey speech bubble icon is positioned at the bottom left, and a chocolate-colored speech bubble icon is at the bottom right. The logos for 'mylemarks' and 'BMH Connect' are located at the bottom corners.

# I Matter Cards



# Social Justice Posters

# Additional Support



**Black Kids Matter:  
Play-Based Strategies to Support Black  
Youth Experiencing Racial Trauma**

Sponsored by: BMH Connect  
Presenter: Dr. April D. Duncan, DSW, LCSW, RPT-S

## Clinical Tips for Working with Black Children & Families

 **BMH Connect**  
Education. Connection. Empowerment.



# References

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