

Strengths Based Approaches to Supporting Cross Cultural Education for Students with Mental Health Diagnoses

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Learning Goals

- * Learn theory behind implementation of strengths based wellness planning
- * Discuss implementation issues related to strengths based cross cultural education
- * Practice Wellness Planning

Benefits of Cross Cultural Education for Students with MH Issues?

- * Intercultural growth: same as other students
- * Perspective on life, family, problems
- * More independent self care
- * Gaining cultural perspective on wellness
 - * Pace of life and Time
 - * Family meals
 - * Process over product

The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice

Deficit Perspective

- * Medical model that seeks to isolate the smallest component of the problem
- * Can be quite dehumanizing
- * Looking for problems generates more problems
- * Expecting people to be sick is sickening
- * The location of a diagnosis can be problematic

Strengths Perspective

- * Radical perspective that requires us to view the whole person and put their capacities in the foreground.
- * The client is the expert on their experience. The helper is the expert on the process of helping
- * Recognizes and critiques the deficit perspective and recognizes that our systems often work to undermine people's strengths.

Strengths Perspective in Cross Cultural Education

- * All students have strengths: We should be on the lookout for skills and capacities that students have and not undermine them.
- * When students seem helpless or hopeless, a strengths focus can be instrumental in helping them move past difficulties.
- * When students are struggling, there is tremendous opportunity for growth.

Strengths Perspective in Cross Cultural Education

- * Each student can gain from cross cultural experiences, and we can't predict who will gain most. Assessment should be geared towards degree of growth not achieving a standardized goal.
- * Working “with” students who are struggling (as opposed to working “on” students) will help them to feel more motivated, in control and more invested in the outcome.
- * Every environment (family; host family; host culture) is full of resources. Sometimes we have to look hard to find them.

Programmatic implications of a strengths based approach

Susquehanna University Global
Opportunities (GO) Program

A change in focus

- * From 'academic' study abroad...
 - * to cross-cultural experience
- * From experience away from campus...
 - * to reflection on campus after the experience
- * From completing a program...
 - * to working toward learning goals
- * From a privilege...
 - * to a required expectation

Universal Design vs. Universal Access

- * Universal Design: Program designed so that any student can successfully participate
- * Universal Access: All students have access to the same or similar experience – and meet the same learning goals
- * Work to eliminate obstacles for student access to meaningful cross cultural experience
- * Maintain clear policies as a means to address expectations and limit liability
- * Recognize the limits of reasonable accommodations

Advising

- * Screening – are we looking for ways to include students or exclude students?
- * Relationship building with students
- * Coordinating with campus resources
- * Coordinating with on-site resources
- * Focus on student's learning goals

GO Your Own Way

- * A 'self-designed' cross-cultural experience
- * Cross-cultural experience does not have to bear credit
- * Accommodates students with special needs or circumstances
- * Shifts emphasis from what the student cannot do...
 - * to what the student can do
- * Keeps emphasis on the cross-cultural learning goals
- * Puts students in charge of their own learning

Faculty Led Programs

- * Preparing Faculty Leaders
 - * Skills self-assessment
 - * Self care
 - * Model behaviors
- * Risk Management
 - * Student health forms
 - * Insurance
- * Training/Simulations
 - * Teaching a strengths approach
 - * Focus on student strengths
- * On campus support during travel

Wellness Planning

Strengths Assessment

- * Finds out what the person's experience is
 - * Communicates strengths to the person seeking help
 - * Enhances awareness of strengths
 - * Uncovers new strengths (they may be hard to see)
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- * How? Skillfully applied questions lead to greater awareness of strengths

Strength Based Questions

- * How did you deal with this before?
- * Who is on your team?
- * What do you think is going to happen?
- * How do you stay well?
- * What are your goals?
- * What should you be worried about?
- * What would your hero/parent/mentor advise?

Wellness Planning

- * Current treatment
 - * What has worked in the past?
 - * What will you keep doing?
 - * What will you take a break from?

Wellness Planning: Resources

- * Internal

- * Physical
- * Emotional
- * Cognitive
- * Techniques for self care

- * Environmental

- * Culture
- * Family
- * Friends
- * Care professionals

Wellness Planning

- * Planning
 - * Warning signs?
 - * What to do for maintenance?
 - * What to do in an emergency?
 - * What do to in a catastrophe?

Group Work

Report Back

Discussion

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