

Strategies and Interventions to Promote Insight and Healing

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**Live Zoom Webinar** 



### Presenter

Janes Steele, PhD

#### **Licensed Professional Counselor**

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## Presenter

Char Newton, PhD

### **Licensed Psychologist**

Dr. Char Newton is a fully licensed psychologist and in practice at Legacy Mental Health Services, PLLC. Dr. Newton also has over 10 years of experience in clinical, academic, and community settings, including teaching experience at both undergraduate and graduate levels of higher education and is a member of the Michigan Board of Psychology, appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer



## Learning Objectives

O1. Define
Define racialized trauma and its physical,
emotional, and mental impacts

03. Utilize

Utilize body-centric strategies such as breathing, mindfulness, and relaxation exercises to help clients cope with their raw emotions and defensive reactions



02. Implement

Implement approaches designed to produce insights and help clients think differently about their problems using therapies such as culturally adapted CBT

04. Develop

Develop interventions to promote selfand community empowerment

## Something to Think About



### If you are a target of racism

-Be aware of anything that might be triggering or overwhelming
-Use mindfulness and breathing skills when you need to
-Take a break if necessary

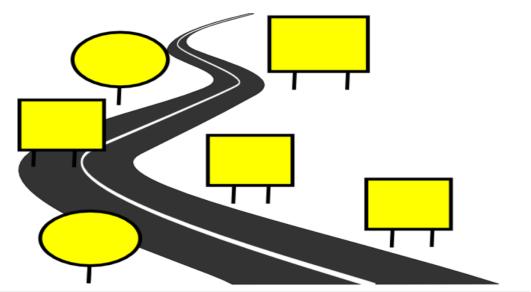


### If you are an ally or a learner

-Work toward maintaining a non-judgmental stance
-Recognize defensiveness
-Seek to understand

# The Signs Along the Road

A road is often used as a metaphor for life. Along the road, we all receive messages about people of color that create the conditions that lead to racialized trauma. Using your own paper, recreate the image below and write down some of the messages you've been exposed to as you've traveled the road of life.



## Defining Racialized Trauma



### won't you celebrate with me

won't you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? i had no model.
born in babylon
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up

here on this bridge between starshine and clay, my one hand holding tight my other hand; come celebrate with me that everyday something has tried to kill me and has failed.

-Lucille Clifton



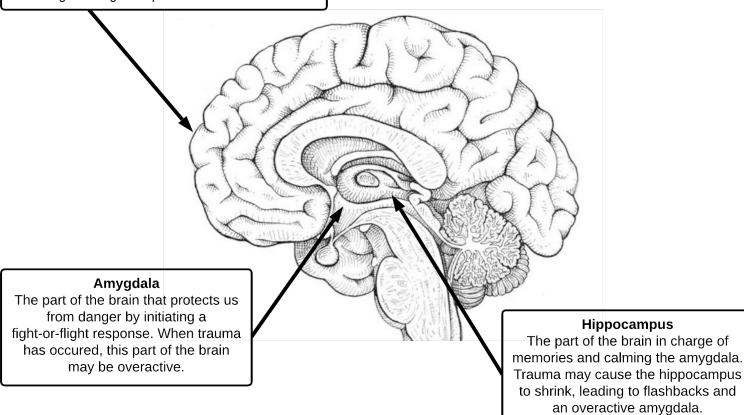
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- Individuals with racialized trauma experience the same emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physiological symptoms as people dealing with other forms of trauma (Carter, 2007)
- Racialized trauma refers to mental and emotional injury caused by repeated encounters with racial bias, hostility, discrimination, or harassment (Carter, 2007)
- Race-based events result in racialized trauma when they are experienced as sudden, out of one's control, and highly negative or emotionally painful (Carter, 2007)
- Race-based events may occur directly between individuals or groups of people across macro, meso-, or micro-levels, or they may happen indirectly (Carter & Kirkinis, 2020)

#### **Prefrontal Cortext**

The part of the brain responsible for managing thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. When trauma has occured, this part of the brain becomes underactive, allowing negative memories and fight-or-flight responses to take over.



+ o ° +

Psychological, Emotional, and Relational Impacts of Racialized Trauma

01

### **Psychological**

Low self-esteem
Anxiety
Depression
Hypervigilance

Flashbacks

02

### **Emotional**

Anger
Hopelessness
Fear
Guilt
Shame
Humiliation

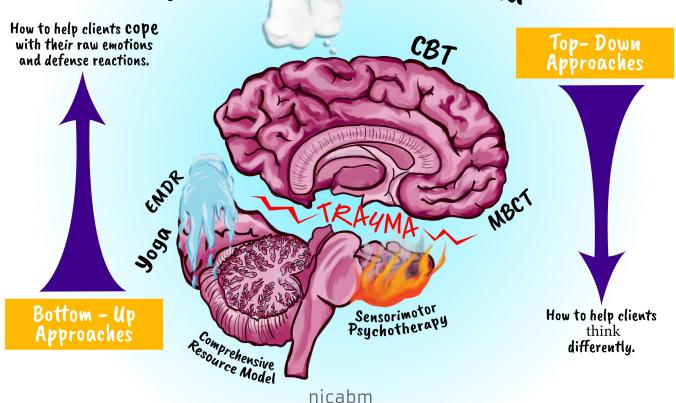
03

### Relational

Exclusion
Aggression
Violence
Family conflict
Less effective
parenting

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## Brain-Based Approaches to Help Clients After Trauma

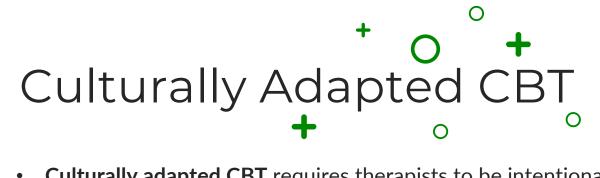


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## Cognitive Strategies

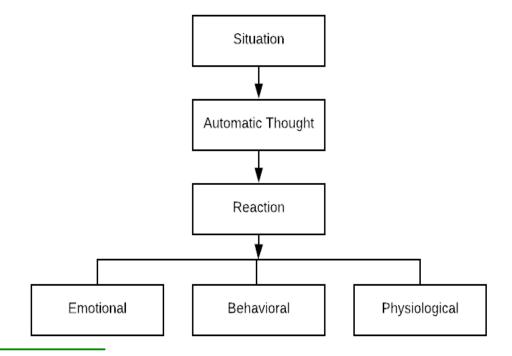




- Culturally adapted CBT requires therapists to be intentional in their exploration of how culture influences client concerns. This involves being mindful of:
  - The impact of culture on the therapeutic alliance
  - The importance of cognitive conceptualization practices that include consideration of individual and societal influences
  - The need to contextualize interventions used during therapy to include relevant aspects
    of the client's cultural worldview

## The Cognitive Model

• CBT from Beck's perspective is based on **the cognitive model**, which states that it is not what happens to us that determines our reactions, but how we think about what happens to us



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### Life events that lead to the development and maintenance of core beliefs. This data may consist of actual events or a child's perceptions of certain aspects of their lives, for example, perceptions of being less than peers or siblings, or not meeting the expectations of parents or other adults. **Core Beliefs** Central ideas about oneself that underlie many automatic thoughts and intermediate beliefs. Core beliefs that are negative, rigid, and overgeneralized tend to result in psychological problems. Core beliefs generally fall into three categories: (1) helplessness, (2) unlovability, and (3) worthlessness Conditional Assumptions/Beliefs/Rules Extreme and absolute rules and attitudes that shape automatic thoughts and are used to cope with negative core beliefs **Compensatory Strategies** Methods clients use to (a) further protect themselves from the activation of their core beliefs and negative emotions, and (b) cope with what they perceive as personal weaknesses Situation #1 Situation #2 Situation #3 **Automatic Thought Automatic Thought Automatic Thought Meaning of Automatic Thought Meaning of Automatic Thought** Meaning of Automatic Thought **Emotion Emotion Emotion Behavior Behavior Behavior**

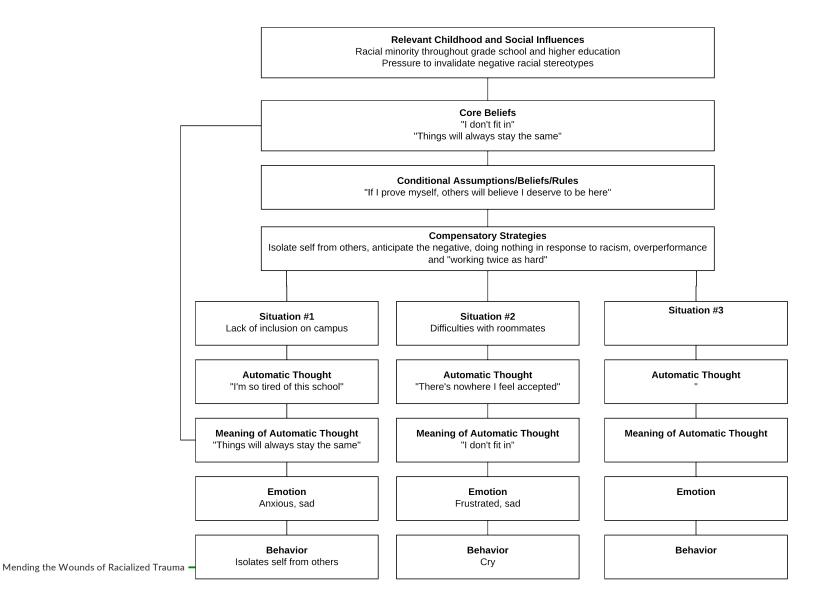
Relevant Childhood and Social Influences

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## t o + O + Common Core Beliefs

Core Beliefs/Schema					
Inferiority	Believing, either consciously or unconsciously, in the supremacy of White culture (Bailey et al., 2014). "Being Black is at times embarrassing or shameful."				
Inadequacy	Ascribing to personal inferiority beliefs surrounding being Black (Bailey et al., 2014). "I'm not good enough." "I can't be successful unless I adopt certain interests, communication styles, and standards of beauty."				
Personal blame	Taking complete responsibility for failures or difficulties even when prejudice and discrimination are factors (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). "All of my difficulties in life are my own fault."				
Powerlessness	Perceiving the inability to initiate change to be greater than the actual limitations of one's social context (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). "Things will always stay the same." "Nothing I do matters."				
Belief in a just world	Believing there must be just reasons for the inequalities among racial groups, such as low morals or inferior intellectual abilities (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). "Everyone gets what they deserve."				
	Compensatory Strategies				
Avoidance	Attempting to cope with feelings of shame, embarrassment, and alienation by distancing oneself from aspects of one's race group membership, for example, concealing the neighborhood one is from or isolating oneself from individuals and social settings perceived to confirm negative stereotypes (Watts-Jones, 2002).				
Conformity	Adjusting one's speech, appearance, and behavior to be more similar to the dominant culture, ranging on a continuum from code-switching to overt stigmatization of one's own cultural norms (Bailey et al., 2014).				
Overperformance	Overperforming in occupational, academic, or social settings to meet real or perceived expectations greater than those held members of the dominant racial group (Palmer & Walker, 2020).				
Learned helplessness	Doing nothing when challenged by racism in response to the belief that one has no control over what happens (Bivens, 2005; Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). (Steele & Newton, 2022)				

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- Enhanced psychoeducation involves connecting concepts discussed during psychoeducation directly to clients' lived experiences as members of marginalized groups
- **Critical consciousness:** "the capacity of oppressed or marginalized people to critically analyze their social and political conditions, endorsement of societal equality, and action to change perceived inequities" (Diemer et al., 2017, p. 461)
- The Case of Stacie:
  - Microintervention Strategies What You Can Do to Disarm and Dismantle Individual and Systemic Racism and Bias (Sue et al., 2021)
  - The Racial Healing Handbook: Practical Activities to Help You Challenge Privilege, Confront Systemic Racism, and Engage in Collective Healing (Singh, 2019)

# Adapted Cognitive Restructuring

- Adapted cognitive restructuring can help clients explore their concerns in a way that is sensitive to their cultural values, life experiences, and context. Traditionally, cognitive restructuring focuses on teaching clients to examine the rationality of their thinking (Matu, 2018)
- Questioning clients' experiences of discrimination and other race-related concerns, however, can be invalidating and may exacerbate their symptoms
- In contrast, adapted cognitive restructuring focuses on:
  - (a) validating the painful emotions that arise in the face of these experiences,
  - (b) acknowledging that we live in a society where these painful experiences occur, and
  - (c) challenging negative thoughts about self that occur in response to these experiences rather than the experiences themselves (Graham et al., 2013, p. 104)

#### **Thought Record**

CBT is based on the idea that it is not what happens to us that determines how we feel, but how we think about what happens to us. When situations occur, we have specific thoughts about the situations called *automatic thoughts*. These thoughts produce the emotions we experience. *Thought records* are a specific type of journaling activity designed to help you become more aware of the connection between your automatic thoughts and feelings. Thought records also help you grow to be more active in challenging and replacing these thoughts. The more you practice, the better you become at thinking in more functional and adaptive ways. Use the chart below to begin replacing your negative automatic thoughts with more positive alternative thoughts.

Situation	Automatic Thought	Emotion	Alternative Thought	Outcome
Lack of inclusion on campus	"I'm so tired of this school"	Anxious (60%)	"This is a common experience for people of	Anxious (30%)
Campus		Sad (75%)	color - it's not me. I might feel powerless in	Sad (30%)
			the situation right now,	Starting tonight, I will
			but I can learn strategies	begin reading a book on
			to help me point out	microaggressions and
			these issues to others.	role-play my ideas with
			Speaking out can help me feel better even if	my therapist at our next session.
			things don't change."	session.
	What was going through		What can you do to maintain an attitude of openness and acceptance in this situation?	
	your mind? Was it words? An image? A memory?	What emotions did you feel during the situation?	What's the worst that could happen? What	How do you rate the intensity of your emotion
What were you doing	What type of cognitive	How would you rate the	could you do then?	now (0-100%)?
when you experienced the	distortion does this	intensity of each emotion	What advice would you	What goal-directed activity
emotion?	thought represent?	from 0-100%?	give to a friend?	can you engage in now?



- **Socratic questioning:** A structured format of questioning to help clients monitor their thoughts and emotions, evaluate their thinking, and respond in an adaptive way
- This intervention should be introduced only after clients have a firm understanding of the cognitive model and that their thinking in specific situations affects their mood and behavior



- Socratic questioning can help clients deconstruct the role of race in their thinking and restructure negative thoughts into more adaptive and functional ways of thinking. Some examples include:
  - When did you first realize yourself as a racial being?
  - What did being [race] mean for you at that time?
  - What are the stereotypes associated with being [race]?
  - How did you learn these stereotypes?
  - Where did these stereotypes come from?
  - How do these stereotypes affect the way you see yourself and people in your racial group?
  - What are some alternative explanations for these stereotypes?
  - What would you like to believe about yourself outside of these stereotypes?
  - What evidence is there to support these beliefs?

## The Downward Arrow Technique + 0 + 0 The Downward Arrow Technique

- While Socratic questioning and thought records typically focus on helping clients identify, challenge, and replace negative automatic thoughts, the downward arrow technique is designed to help uncover the core and intermediate beliefs that lead to negative automatic thoughts in daily situations (Beck, 2020)
- To implement the downward arrow technique, the therapist first listens for automatic thoughts that seem to reflect negative core beliefs. The therapist then asks the client what meaning the automatic thought would have to the client's life if it were true, continuing this process until one or more core beliefs are revealed
- Example questions include: "If that's true, so what?" "What's so bad about..." "What's the
  worst part about..." and "What does that mean about you?" when identifying core beliefs, or
  "What does it mean to you?" when identifying intermediate beliefs (Beck, 2020)

## The Downward Arrow Technique + 0 + 0 Technique

Therapist: So, it sounds like you've been pretty anxious and worried since starting college.

Stacie: Yes. Like I said, I cry just about every night. I haven't been able to do much else.

**Therapist:** I hear that you're very overwhelmed by this situation. Tell me more about the thoughts go through your mind when you think about being at a PWI.

Stacie: I guess I feel helpless. Racism has gone on forever. There's nothing I can do about it.

**Therapist:** And if that were true, that there's nothing you can do about it, what's the worst part about that?

**Stacie:** I guess it means things will always stay the same...

## Historical Review and Reframing of Core Beliefs + °

- Historical review of core beliefs: Used to help clients examine how current behavior may be driven by core beliefs developed during childhood.
  - Consists of the following questions: What made me think the core belief was true? What evidence is there that belief was not true or not completely true? What's another explanation? Looking over the evidence, how do I now view the accuracy of the core belief? (Beck, 2020)
- Modification of core beliefs: The process of helping clients to devise more positive and functional beliefs
  - Typically accomplished by helping clients: (a) examine evidence that contradicts the old core belief and (b) reframe evidence that supports the old core belief

## Breakout Groups: The Case of Daryl



- 47-year-old Black heterosexual male who is married with two sons (ages 14 and 16 years)
- College educated and holds an MBA degree
- · Race-related difficulties at work and in the community



- What relevant cultural experiences define the case of Daryl?
- What specific core beliefs and compensatory strategies are evident in this case?
- Based on Daryl's presenting concerns, what goals and cognitive interventions might be appropriate for his treatment plan?

## Body-centric Strategies





- Kenneth V. Hardy

"Racial oppression is a traumatic form of interpersonal violence which can lacerate the spirit, scar the soul, and puncture the psyche."



- Trauma involves all parts of a person's being- mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical
- The "soul nerve," also known as the vagus nerve, and the lizard brain are responsible for trauma responses, which tell us to rest, fight, flee, or freeze
- Healing racialized trauma entails healing the body
- "All of us need to metabolize the trauma, work through it, and grow up out of it with our bodies, not just our thinking brain. Only in this way will we heal at last, both individually and collectively" (Menaken, 2017)

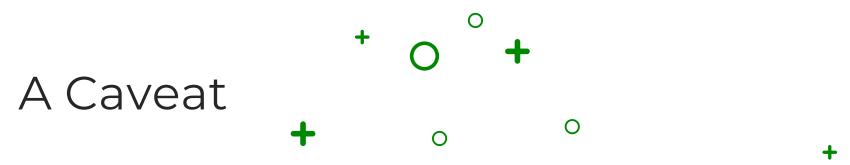
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- Trauma experts believe that since trauma lives in the parts of the brain that activate the body in the face of danger, thinking, or talking about trauma is not enough to promote healing alone (Menakem, 2017)
- Because there is such a strong connection between the body and trauma, the body can be one of the most powerful tools for coping with the pain of racialized trauma



- Specific body-centric/mindfulness techniques include:
  - Body scan
  - Meditation
  - Grounding (e.g., the five senses grounding technique)
  - Breathing and relaxation exercises (e.g., diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation)



- Caution: In some racial/ethnic communities, there has been stigma associated with mindfulness and meditation practices
  - Some people believe meditation involves subscribing to certain religious philosophies or communicating with spirits
  - Other people believe meditation in incompatible with prayer or reliance on God
- Use language to frame mindfulness in a culturally sensitive way, such as describing meditation as awareness or even relaxation focused on non-judgmental attention to your thoughts, emotions, and physiological sensations

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- Research suggests culturally sensitive coping interventions are more effective when working with clients of color (Smith, 2012)
  - Example: Shahid, Nelson, and Cardemil (2017) found as that as Black students
    experienced increased racial tension on their college campus, "participants who used less
    Afrocultural coping reported a greater increase in stress than participants who used more
    Afrocultural coping"

### Activity: Strengthen Yourself in Your Ancestor Roots

- Grounding has been found to have positive impact on mood and psychological wellbeing (Chevalier, 2015)
- Grounding our nervous system allows us to be able to cope with trauma (Menakem, 2017; Van Der Kolk, 2014)
- This activity entails allowing our clients to ground ourselves in our ancestor strength

**Instructions:** Ask your client to close their eyes. Allow them to sit for several seconds and focus on their breathing. Encourage nice slow breathing. Then ask your client to envision their feet grounded to the floor. As their feet are grounded, have them envision their ancestors (e.g., grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) lift their feet up and strengthen their legs, then their arms, then their torso). Encourage them to feel the strengths of being rooted and lifted-up by their ancestors.

## Activity: Reexperience and Release

- This activity is focused on helping clients verbally process microaggressions or race-based experiences that might impact their overall functioning
- Ask your client to get comfortable in their chair and to close their eyes if they feel comfortable. Next, ask them to remember the microaggression or race-based experience. To facilitate a discussion, ask questions like:
  - 1. Tell me what happen on that day
  - 2. What did you remember thinking....feeling.. doing?
  - 3. How did your body feel when the offense happened?
  - 4. How does your body feel now that you are reexperiencing the offense?

# Activity: Reexperience and Release

- Next instruct your client to scan their body for any tenseness they may experience as they
  have recounted what happened. Ask them then to work on relaxing the muscle or part of the
  body that feels tense. For example, if their face is frowning, ask them to gradually relax their
  face perhaps by smiling or opening their mouth to create a relaxed face
- After the client has released tension from their body, ask them to now affirm themselves
  using words of affirmation that counter the microaggression or race-based offense. For
  example, if the microaggression implied they were not good enough then they could affirm
  themselves by saying "I am valid." "I am worthy, I am more than enough"

### Additional Culturally Sensitive Meditative Resources

- Meditation https://www.drcandicenicole.com/post/2016-07-black-lives-matter-meditation
- Loving Kindness mediation https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ra8199F1Vfc&t=275s&pp=2AGTApACAQ%3D%3D

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- Why humming? Somatic clinicians have suggested humming may help with racialized trauma by providing safety and security (Manakem, 2017)
  - Example: Dating back to slavery the slaves would often hum or sing while they worked in the cottonfields as a way of coping
  - Many African Americans may have memories of their grandparents humming or singing as they cooked or worked around the home, so this may be associated with positive memories
- In essence, humming can be used as a way to settle the body into the here and now



Focus your attention on the center of your belly, behind your naval

Breathe in and out deeply and slowly a few times. Feel your belly pull the air all the way down into it

On the fourth or fifth exhalation, hum a low, even tone

Inhale naturally and repeat this a few times, varying your pitch with each new exhalation (p. 140)

# Grounding: the Five Senses of Cultural Grounding Technique



- Ask the client to trace their hand and write one of their five senses in each finger
- Ask them to identify something connected to their cultural identity that grounds them or makes them feel relaxed or at eased through each of the five senses
  - Example: Sight: Seeing a picture of my grandmother
  - Sound: Hearing gospel music
  - Touch: Getting a hug from some who validates and understands my trauma
  - **Smell:** The smell of a candle that reminds me of my home (e.g., peppermint or incense smells)
  - Taste: Eating a cultural food that brings me pleasure

# Facilitating Healing: Affirmation Cards

- Affirmation cards are thoughtful first-person statements that encourage positive thinking and good self-esteem
- Encouraging clients to create affirmation cards can help them create new narratives about themselves and challenge internalized racism
- Affirmation cards should be in the language of the client so that they have meaning and allow the client to connect with the statements
- The use of affirmation can help one feel good about their body and who they are
- Use of scripture can be instrumental for clients whose spiritual faith is important to them
  - Examples: "I come from survivor I am a survivor." "Okay sis./Okay bro. what we not going to do today is quite." "I'm not giving up PERIODT!!!." "You won't steal my joy."



- Questions to help clients process these activities include:
  - How can meditation, grounding, and self-compassion (acceptance, love, kindness, etc.) help you
    deal with your racialized trauma?
  - What else do you need to say or do to express compassion (acceptance, love, kindness, etc.) or affirm yourself?
  - How might affirming yourself help with what brings you in to therapy?
  - What other goal-directed body/behavior can you engage in now? For example, what can you do to feel accomplished or to help someone else?

# Breakout Groups: The Case of Daryl



- What body-centric strategies might you use with Daryl?
- What culturally congruent rationale would you provide Daryl for use of these strategies?

# Breakout Group Reflection Questions

- As a therapist, how comfortable to do you feel implementing body-centric interventions?
- With what aspects of body-centric strategies do you feel not at ease? What might be some
  of your fears or hesitations with implementing these strategies?
- How can you address some of your fears concerning the implementation of body-centric strategies?

Community and Self-Empowerment Strategies



### Belonging and Mattering

- Belongingness can be defined as the extent to which an individual feels personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in their social environment (Goodenow & Grady, 1993, p. 80)
- Mattering can be defined as the experience of feeling significant to others (Tucker et al., 2010)
- When belongingness and mattering are lacking, emotional and psychological reactions to prejudice and discrimination may be intensified, and individuals may experience an adverse impact on their functioning in academic, occupational, or social settings (Adejumo, 2021; Boston & Warren, 2017; Johnson, 2016; Yap et al., 2011)
- Conversely, increasing one's sense of belongingness and mattering can serve as a protective factor, as these constructs result in more positive racial identity (Yap et al., 2011), self-determination, self-definition, self-acceptance, and self-love (Johnson, 2016)



**Instructions:** A tribe can be described as individuals who have your back, offer social-emotional support, help you deal with race-based issues, and encourage you. Your tribe should be an intimate/small group of people.

**Step one**: Identify the characteristics you would like your tribe members to have.

**Step two:** Identify what you hope to take from the tribe and what you can give to members.

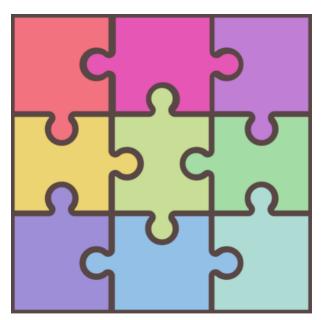
**Step three**: Identify tribe members for the different domains of your life, e.g., work, church, community.

**Step four**: If you're not able to identify people you can include in your tribe, brainstorm ways you can connect with others. Examples include volunteer, join a community group that supports your racial identity, or join a ministry at your house of worship where you can meet others.

**Step five**: Find ways you can nurture the development of your tribe, e.g., monthly in-home meet-ups to check-in with one another about your experiences connected to issues around race and racism.



# Activity: The Things You Do That Complete You



 Being able to connect with people, place, and events in your community can create a sense connectedness and support our overall wellness especially when faced with racialized trauma

**Instructions:** Provide your client with a piece of paper that has puzzle pieces on it (like the one on this PowerPoint). Ask your client to take a moment and write things in the puzzle pieces that you do in your community that give you a sense of belonging and empowering. Some examples might be going to the barber shop or beauty salon and chatting with people of your race or culture. Another example might be going to cultural events like an African festival or Juneteenth event.

**Processing questions:** As you look at your puzzle, what do you notice? Is your puzzle full? Do you have enough things that help you feel good about your REC? If not, what might you add?



• Dealing with racialized trauma can be emotionally draining. People of color needs safe spaces where they can find a reprieve or safety. This activity entails helping your client identify culturally safe spaces in which they can find peace.

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### Becoming Social Change Agents

- George Lakey (2016), an activist, sociologist, and writer proposed four types of social change agents. These roles include:
  - the helper,
  - the advocate,
  - the organizer, and
  - the rebel
- Per Lakey, these four individual play distinct roles in creating social justice
- Furthermore, as proposed by Singh (2019), understanding which role one can play can promote racial healing and serve as a form of empowerment

### Let's look closer at these roles

### 01. THE ADVOCATE

This individual enjoys communicating and likes to work with "powerholders" to change a policy or practice. They are like the lawyer who sues the city for mistreat of people of color by the police. They might work in a policy office and fight to bring about change. They enjoy building coalitions for change.

### 03. THE ORGANIZER

This individual enjoys arranging people and using grassroots strategies, leadership development, consensus and coalition building to create change over a long period of time. They believe there is power in numbers, and they work to collect people together to make an impact.



### 02. THE HELPER

This individual is more interested in direct service to people. This person is like the citizen who provides services or skills to those who are oppressed or without privilege (e.g., they might volunteer to help people learn how to write resumes or they may volunteer at the front desk at a non-profit).

### 04. THE REBEL

This individual enjoys making a commotion (maybe a rally or large public display) to force powerholders to make change. Protest and street activism is the hallmark of this group of people. The use of nonviolent means is also a trait of this group.



# Now Let's Locate Ourselves. What Kind of Change Agent Are You? Let's Chat!

## Activity: What Kind of Change Agent Are You?

Empowering our clients to realize that they can make an impact on their community can be healing,
 as it can give our clients a sense of control

**Instructions:** Talk with you clients about the four types of social change agents that Lakey (2016) proposes. Ask them to think about which one resonant most with them. You may use the following processing questions to help them think about how they can create change

- What is it about that social change agent that resonant with you?
- How have you or how might you start doing something that connects with the social change agent you picked?
- How does it feel to create change? How does it feel to help others?

\*For this activity you might want to highlight that change can be large or small every effort we make to help others and our community counts

### Self-care Strategies for Clients

### Collective coping

- Seek connection and support from family, friends, and one's racial community
- Establish personal and professional networks that support your racial identity (e.g., mentoring)
- Racial microaffirmations: verbal and nonverbal strategies that affirm one's values, integrity, and humanity

### Resistance coping

- Challenge/resist White,
   Eurocentric normative behaviors
   (i.e., individual and systemic)
- Defy stereotypes with authenticity (e.g., wearing one's natural hair)
- Confront perpetrators directly when it feels safe to do so (e.g., calling in, naming microaggressions, education, humor)

### Self-protective coping

- Utilize basic self-care activities
- Engage in culturally relevant practices that reestablish pride in one's racial group and reminds one of their strength
- Organized religion (e.g., church) and spirituality
- Desensitize, avoid, and disengage to minimize stress associated with racial microaggressions
- Avoid negative social media find media that affirms your identity as a person as color

(Spanierman et al., 2021)

### Thank you!



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