The Use of Pop Culture to Foster Rapport and Success with Clients

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• 7 years experience in Residence Life and Residence Services
• 5 years experience emergency psychiatric services, including direct liaison work with both public and private university campuses
• Crisis Intervention Team (C.I.T.) and SWAT trainer
• A.L.i.C.E. Instructor
• Been back at Kent State since Spring 2011 at the largest regional campus
• My fandoms...

A note about slides/handouts

MY HEART CAN'T HANDLE IT

THIS IS TOO MUCH
Objectives:

• Increase understanding of pop culture references for use in counseling

• Increase interest and ability to incorporate pop culture references into counseling work with a variety of populations such as veterans, counseling supervisees, active military, first responders, teens, LGBTQ+ and college students

• Gain techniques and tools to enhance rapport building, clinical success, client self-identity and clinician self-care

Why these objectives?

What’s next:

• Why pop culture/ comic references
• Compassionate Warrior example
• Tools & techniques
• Direct and indirect rapport building
• Incorporation of these things at intake and through counseling process
• Common questions
• Your self-care and FUN!
Why pop culture/ comics?

- General focus—internal and external connections, including compassion for the self
- Pop culture & comics
- Identification, availability
- Any area!
- Examples:

Tools & Techniques

- Historical comparisons
- Fictional Stories
- Symbols (both past and present)
- Quotes, mottos & memes
- Direct/Indirect rapport building
- We always want to return to their personal experience, needs, and goals.
- Examples
• Kung Fu based on Yin (negative) and Yang (positive) – softness and firmness, day and night, man and woman (Lee, 1997)

• “The art of fighting – without fighting” – Bruce Lee

• “Notice that the stiffest tree is most easily cracked, while the bamboo or willow survive by bending with the wind” – Bruce Lee (1997, p.30, as in Chopko, 2011)
Historical Comparisons

Counselors:

• Focus on helping the individual find the historical or pop culture comparison that speaks to them, help them to discover their code and how they are living it today (or how they want to live it more)

• Continually link this to their sense of purpose and intent in life, and how that is linked to their more tangible goals of graduation, academic success, their career path, and relationships

Historical Comparisons – Compassionate Warrior Example

• Keep in mind that comparisons can be more or less concrete... meaning they can be very tangible (rucksacks, duty belts, tools, weapons, uniform worn, rank identification) or more intangible (value structure, behavior model, guiding quotes)

• As you get to know the veteran or first responder you are working with, try to include a mix of these but always default to what the individual connects to the most

Fictional Stories

• Movies
• Books
• Comics
• Video games
• TV Shows
Fictional Stories

• Can be a stand alone story

• Can center around a known character

• There is a connection and “meaning making” from the story

Fictional Stories – Compassionate Warrior Example

An old Grandfather with a long history as a great warrior said to his grandson who came to him with anger at a friend who had done him an injustice, "Let me tell you a story. I too, at times, have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do. But hate wears you down, and does not hurt your enemy. It is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times."...

The Grandfather continued, "It is as if there are two wolves inside me. One is good, does no harm, and is brave, honest, joyful, just, fair, kind, and compassionate. He lives in harmony with all around him, and does not take offense when no offense was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way. But the other wolf, ah! He is full of anger, envy, greed, sorrow, regret, guilt, and arrogance. The littlest thing will set him into a fit of temper. He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is helpless anger, for his anger will change nothing. Sometimes, it is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for both of them try to dominate my spirit." The boy looked intensely into his Grandfather's eyes and asked, "Which one wins, Grandfather?" The Grandfather smiled and quietly said, "The one I feed."
Fandoms and headcannons…

• Impact of social media including DeviantArt, Tumblr, FanFiction.net…

Fictional Stories

• Mental health professionals have identified the use of fictional stories as a creative intervention to invoke insight and meaning with individuals and groups (Burns, 2008, as in Chopko, 2011)

• Stories of the warriors (or other references) can be found by doing basic searches about their history, and can either be completely fictional or not.

• Again, the idea is to help the individual find one that speaks to them – whether through the lesson, language, title character, or maybe even the struggle

Symbols

• Mental health professionals have also identified the use of spiritual symbols as a creative and effective intervention to process beliefs about identity and questions of why they (clients) are on the planet (Evans & Atkins, 2006 as in Chopko, 2011)

• Native Americans often wore eagle feathers to indicate warrior status (Viola, 2008, as in Chopko, 2011)
  • the eagle represents not only courage and bravery but also wisdom and balance (Gottlieb, 1996, as in Chopko, 2011)
Symbols – Connection to Historical Comparisons
Compassionate Warrior Example

- Example: Eagle or eagle feather stickers
- Presented to police officers completing a program, such as graduating from the academy or a training program like CIT
- They place the sticker on their dashboard, clipboard, or in a place they can easily see prior to getting out of their car
- Intention is that the sticker will be a cue to maintain the mindset of a warrior, to remain alert and be ready to fight if necessary but also to be prepared to show compassion to those in need

Symbols – Connection to Personal Story or Identification

- A snowflake story...

Symbols – Connection to Personal Story or Identification

- Helping the client identify a symbol
- Adding meaning to the symbol
- How can they incorporate it?
Symbols – Spirit Animal

- Animals have represented spirituality and warriors for centuries, and we can all identify with a “spirit animal”
- Images can be used as reminders to stay centered, stay on path, or gain insight/inspiration

Symbols - Colors

Quotes and mottos

- Bruce Lee:
  - “A goal is not always meant to be reached, it often serves simply as something to aim at.”
  - “Mistakes are always forgivable, if one has the courage to admit them.”
  - “Be like water making its way through cracks. Do not be assertive, but adjust to the object, and you shall find a way around or through it. If nothing within you stays rigid, outward things will disclose themselves.”
  - “As you think, so shall you become”
Quotes and mottoes

• Build off of historical comparisons and identifications, as well as what the individual tells you he/she is connecting with

• Empower them to find the words that speak to them

• Splinter quote that I use

• I will often challenge them to then write it in their own words, which allows them even more ownership

• Consider how they can keep these words with them – on their phone, in their wallet, on their book bag, etc.

Direct vs. Indirect Rapport Building

• Tendency to focus on direct only

• Utilizing space and environment as part of indirect rapport building

Direct Rapport Building

• Questions on your intake assessment
  • Hobbies and interests
  • How much do you really ask them about this? Consider spending real time on these topics.
  • Gives you an opportunity to explore these issues and find out who and what they connect to, such important information!

• Allowing the client to teach you something
  • Gives the client opportunity to balance the relationship a bit
  • Positive experience of sharing, letting themselves be excited
Direct Rapport Building Examples

Indirect Rapport Building Examples

Incorporating these interventions

- Historical and pop culture references and comparisons
- Symbols
- Stories
- Quotes & Mottos & Memes
- Continued rapport building – both direct and indirect
Common Questions

• Heroes and villains

• Lack of females and cultural diversity at first glance

• How to get comfortable/ get started

• Helpful items
  • That you bring in
  • That clients can bring in

Connecting to our other objectives

• Clinical Success

• Building Client Self-Identity
  • Involving them in each intervention
  • Use of their own words
  • Enhancing ownership

Clinician Self-Care and Fun!

• How this changed my view…
  • Of myself as a therapist and a person
  • Of my clients
  • Of building rapport and using creative interventions
References and Resources

- Brian Chopko, Ph. D., LPC, CRC
  - Kent State University at Stark
  - Departments of Sociology and Justice Studies
  - Former police officer and C.I.T. Trainer
  - Presented together at All Ohio Counselors’ Conference and American Counseling Association (poster presentation)
  - bchopko@kent.edu or 330-244-3396


References and Resources

- Meyers, Laurie (8/20/2015). Taking a creative approach to client change. Counseling Today. (available online)


References and Resources

- http://marvel.com/ This is a good resource to find out more about Marvel based characters, including a section on “The Women of Marvel”.


- http://www.idwpublishing.com/ One of the newer comic publication companies, they feature reboots of several classics including TMNT and Transformers and Disney, they also feature comic versions of many popular shows including Star Trek and Orphan Black.

- Scrubs, Percy Jackson, The Blue Ear
References and Resources

Thank you!!

Contact me for more information or a copy of the PP slides

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