Learning About You

Learning about you and your family helps me be a better support. You can choose what you want me to know today about your…

- Ethnicity or cultural group
- Religion or spiritual beliefs
- Race
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Family history or values
- Other background or parts of who you are?

Discrimination (being treated unfairly because of how you look, or because you belong to a certain group) is common and has an impact on our mental health and well-being. If you are comfortable sharing:

- Is discrimination affecting your family's mental health?
- Does this cause or worsen the problems you are seeking treatment for?

I'm interested in your past experiences with mental health care…

- Have you or people you know had good or bad experiences with counseling?
- I can share how my care might be the same or different from that.

Because my background (like my race, gender, or life experiences) is different from yours…

- I might make a mistake, or say or do something that makes you feel misunderstood.
- If that happens, please tell me so I can fix it, and learn to do better. I am grateful for any feedback you give and appreciate anything you choose to share with me.

← For parents and caregivers who are interested, this QR code leads to online resources for helping youth cope with racism.

FAST & CBT+ 2022

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Learning

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- Ethnicity or cultural group
- Religion or spiritual beliefs
- Race
- Gender

I'd like to spend some time learning more about you and your family today, because this can help me understand and support you better.
Here is a list of some things that might be important for me to know about, things like your cultural background, your religious beliefs, your race or gender, who you're attracted to, or information about your family's history. There might be other parts of who you are that feel important to share with me today. You can choose what you want to share. (Possible response: Thank you for sharing that with me.)

If needed, you could use follow up questions like these:

- Are there cultural or ethnic groups you consider yourself part of?
- Are you part of a religious community that is important to you? Are there spiritual beliefs that are important to you?
- How do you prefer to identify your race?

For the youth (ideally ask or revisit this without parent):

- How do you describe your gender? Are there pronouns you'd like me to use?
- Do you have a sense of who you are attracted to or interested in? Guys, girls, both, neither, or not sure?
- Are there other things you want me to know about your family history, or values that are important to you?
- For all of us, there are many parts to who we are. Are there other parts of who you are that you want me to know about today?
- If time: For some people, what parts of the world their family came from, or health problems or disabilities you might have, or issues with money or housing, might feel important to share.

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  treatment for?

I also like to ask families about discrimination, or being treated unfairly because of how you look or because you are part of a particular group.
I ask because discrimination is common and it can have such a big impact on mental health.
It's up to you what you want to share…but I'm wondering if you think discrimination is affecting your family's mental health?
You mentioned wanting help with ___ and ___, do you think discrimination is contributing to those problems?
I am sorry this has happened to you. Thank you for telling me about it.

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- Have you or people you know had go
  with counseling?
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  that.

I also like to ask about your past experiences with MH care, because those can affect how you feel about being here, and you might be wondering if my care will be like that.
Have you or people you know had a bad experience with mh care or counseling?
I'm so sorry to hear about that. It makes sense you would (insert reaction).
Well, I want you to know that I approach things differently…"

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Because our backgrounds are different, I might make mistakes or say things that make you feel misunderstood.
If that happens, I hope you'll tell me, so I can learn from it and do better.
And if I make a big mistake that feels too difficult to tell me about directly, I would invite you to tell my supervisor (insert contact info) or someone else at this clinic--it is important for me to learn and grow and I would be grateful for any feedback you choose to share.

GUIDE FOR THERAPISTS

- Talking with our clients about race, culture, and identity is important. Discrimination based on identity can impact mental health and may be related to their presenting concerns.

- ASK! It shows that you care and can handle the conversation.

- Not asking about race, culture, and identity in therapy is one of the most commonly noted microaggressions against BIPOC clients. It can communicate that we do not value a person's full identity, we are not comfortable with discussing identity, or that we do not understand that experiences related to one's identity can be related to mental health. Asking can be tricky though. Do not ask where people are from and what they are. Instead, try asking how they identify and what they would be willing to share about their or their family's background.

- Keep in mind these subjects:
  - may be hard to discuss
  - can be loaded
  - could be connected to traumatic experiences
  - have a history of being dismissed and discounted, especially by white people who are not aware of the way race and unconscious bias frequently leads to discriminatory behavior

- It is ESSENTIAL not to question or challenge a client's perspective of discrimination; do not be dismissive. Focus on validating feelings and find out how these experiences might relate to the presenting concerns or treatment plan.

- ALL people can experience bigotry. Discrimination towards white clients can exist as a form of racial bigotry and it is okay to validate feelings related to these experiences. There may be times during the course of treatment when challenging a white client's perspective about racism may be important.

- Negative experiences related to identity can create a lot of emotions and beliefs. LISTEN for current coping, positive self and community identity, and healthy thoughts. Highlight resilience by using opportunities early in treatment to reflect back, validate, and encourage the ongoing use of current coping, positive self and community identity, and healthy thoughts as you continue to work together to learn more skills.

- Critical feedback from our clients is a gift for us AND is given at a risk for them. Saying or doing something racist or biased, or that offends (intended or not) is to be expected. Try not to be defensive. Embrace the opportunity for growth and becoming a more effective provider with diverse families.

- Commit to your own learning and change
  - we all have biases, learn and reflect on your own.
  - attend to your biases by understanding how they impact your own identity formation, relationships with others, power dynamics, and your privilege.
  - increase contact with people who are different than how you identify.
  - counteract your biases by remembering and focusing on individuals who do not fit group stereotypes.

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT:

- Microaggressions
  - Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life (article): how_to_be_an_effective_ally-lessons_learhttps://academic.oup.com/jid/article/220/Supplement_2/S62/5552356ned_microaggressions.pdf
  - If Microaggressions Happened to White People (video): https://youtu.be/KPRA4g-3yEk

- Implicit Bias
  - Harvard Implicit Bias Test: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html
  - How to Reduce Implicit Bias (article): http://www.ihi.org/communities/blogs/how-to-reduce-implicit-bias

- Impact of Provider Bias on Health Outcomes
  - Implicit Bias in Healthcare Professionals (article): A Systematic Review: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5333436
  - The Impact of Unconscious Bias in Healthcare: How to Recognize and Mitigate It (article): https://academic.oup.com/jid/article/220/Supplement_2/S62/5552356