



PRO BONO
TRAINING
INSTITUTE

Pro Bono Training Online, On Your Time.



Working with Survivors of Trauma

Presented by:
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After this learning experience, trainees will:

1. Understand how to use the empowerment model when working with trauma survivors; and
2. Engage with trauma survivors using empathy and cultural humility.

**Credit goes to Emberly Cross from the Cooperative Restraining Order Clinic in San Francisco for the idea to use adorable animal photos in this presentation.*



- Client-centered interviewing and representation
- Empathy and cultural humility in working with survivors with trauma
- You are not alone!

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Client-centered interviewing and representation

Client-centered interviewing and representation

- What does it mean to be client-centered?
 - Client is the expert on their situation!
 - They are the only ones who can decide what's best for themselves
- Why might this guiding principle be hard for us to follow?
 - We help people access justice
 - The law may not* meet all of your client's needs

*probably will not





Client-centered interviewing and representation

Empowerment Model

- The client has a right to access information and options and to make decisions for themselves
- They have done exactly what they needed to do in order to survive

Advocacy

- To do something for someone that they cannot do for themselves. To speak on someone's behalf when they cannot do it for themselves
- When and only when they are unable to do so.



Client-centered interviewing and representation

Advocacy vs. Peer Counseling vs. Crisis Counseling

Advocacy is your comfort zone*

Peer counseling is creating a supportive environment where the survivor can express their feelings and describe their experiences without judgment, criticism or advice.

Crisis counseling is working with someone immediately after or during an emotionally stressful event.

*But remember advocacy for these clients is best conducted using an empowerment model

Counseling skills

- Empathy vs. sympathy
 - “I am so sorry this has happened to you” vs. “I feel so sorry for you”
 - Feeling understood
- Validating and normalizing feelings and experiences
 - The client is the expert on their own experiences
 - Neurobiology of trauma
- Let the client set the pace
 - Take a break, go outside, food/drink
 - Impact of trauma on linear thinking





Client-centered interviewing and representation

Active listening

- Remember empathy vs. sympathy
- Practice non-judgmental responses that encourage clients to continue talking
- Silence is ok – “take your time”
- Be aware of your body language – open vs. closed
- Pay attention to the client’s body language





Client-centered interviewing and representation

Reflective listening

Listen, understand, respond

- Reflect what you hear (“you sound angry”) and restate

Ask questions

- Open ended questions (“What would you like to see happen?”)
- Clarifying questions (“I’m not really clear; could you explain that some more?” “What does that mean to you?”)
- Hypothetical questions (“If that didn’t work, what other ways would you explore?” “Suppose you did it that way – what would happen?”)
- Consensus questions (“Which of these concerns is more important right now?” “Do we agree on what happens next?”)

Listening principles

- Listen more, talk less
- Respond to what is personal rather than to what is impersonal
- Clarify and summarize/paraphrase
- Understand the client's feelings and frame of reference
- Respond with acceptance and empathy



Empathy and cultural humility in working with survivors

What are your clients dealing with?

Reactions to a traumatic event

- Feeling hopeless and/or detached
- Having trouble concentrating – normal activities can be disrupted
- Feeling the need to be constantly alert
- Having flashbacks, dreams
- Other emotional and physical reactions, including PTSD





Empathy and cultural humility in working with survivors

Lived experiences and health issues

Prior trauma

- May experience current trauma more severely

Mental and physical health

- What does your client have the capacity to deal with that day?
- Issues may be diagnosed or undiagnosed

Multiple forms of oppression

- Poverty or income/housing stability
- Lack of trust

Prior experiences with legal services or other non-profits – good or bad



Empathy and cultural humility in working with survivors

Additional issues immigrant clients are dealing with

- Current climate of fear – it's not gone!
- Availability of interpreters

Cultural humility

- Recognize that someone's culture may shape how they perceive a situation – and that perception may be different from yours
- Don't assume that you know
- Empowerment model reminds you – the client is the expert!
- Do the work to acknowledge, be responsible for, and challenge your implicit biases
- Do the work to acknowledge and be responsible for your privilege



You are not alone!

Work in partnership with your local non-legal services

- Housing providers
- Domestic violence and sexual assault organizations
- Mental health providers
- Culturally specific organizations
- Suicide prevention organizations
- Etc.





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Thank you for joining us

Have a nice day!