



Collective Trauma, Historical Trauma, and Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Trauma.

Class 7



Mindful Facilitation

Check- in

- What is one word to describe how you are feeling in this moment and why?





It's Time to Talk About Collective Trauma...

When trauma reaches a level where it negatively impacts entire societies or groups of people, it is called collective trauma. Situations that may lead to collective trauma include war, mass violence, genocide, and pandemics (Aydin, 2017).



Collective Trauma

- Trauma that happens on a collective level was studied by Kai Erikson related to natural disasters. In his assessment of collective trauma, he concluded it represents “**a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality**” (Erikson, 1976).
- Robben, who studied the effects of political violence in Argentina, noted that **...collective trauma is a wound to the social body and its cultural frame** (Robben, 2005, p. 346).

Collective Trauma

- Collective trauma refers to a traumatic event that is shared by a group of people. It may involve a small group, like a family, or it may involve an entire society.
- Traumatic events that affect groups may include plane crashes, natural disasters, mass shootings, famine, war, or pandemics. Well-known collective traumas include American slavery, the Holocaust, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the attack on Pearl Harbor, the September 11 terrorist attacks, and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- People don't necessarily need to have experienced the event first-hand in order to be changed by it. Watching the events unfold on the news can be traumatic, for example.
- [Amy Morin, LCSW](#)

An abstract sculpture composed of large, dark, angular blocks stacked and tilted in various directions. A small, bright white square is visible on one of the blocks, providing a sharp contrast to the dark, textured surfaces. The lighting creates strong shadows, emphasizing the three-dimensional form and the sharp edges of the geometric shapes.

Structural violence

- **Structural Violence** is often rationalized, making it controversial to label as "violence" and difficult to work against it as such
- Theories of structural violence explore how political, economic and cultural structures result in the occurrence of avoidable violence, most commonly seen as the deprivation of basic human needs.
- A concrete example of this: Impoverished Americans are often depicted as being poor "by choice," as a result of their own actions and faults. The structural aspects working against them (such as lack of access to education and basic resources from childhood) is not considered.
- Violence is not a direct act of any decision or action made by a particular person but a result of an unequal distribution of resources

School to Prison Pipeline

[Click here to hear more on the “School to Prison Pipeline”](#)

- An African-American “boy” born in 2001 has a **1 in 3** chance of going to prison in his lifetime
- A Latino “boy” born in 2001 has a **1 in 6** chance of going to prison in his lifetime
- Compared to **1 in 41** for a white “boy”.
- Trauma is an important piece of this picture.
- (Children’s Defense Fund, 2007)

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Political War & Terror

- Political terror and war are likely to have lasting consequences for survivors.
- Anything that threatens the existence, beliefs, well-being, or livelihood of a community is likely to be experienced as traumatic by community members.
- **Whether counselors are working with an immigrant or refugee enclave in the United States or in another country, they should be aware of local events, local history, and the possibility that clients have endured trauma.**
- Terrorism has a variety of results not common to other disasters, such as reminders of the **unpredictability of terrorist acts; increases in security measures for the general population; intensified suspicion about a particular population, ethnicity, or culture; and heightened awareness and/or arousal.**

Refugees and Mental Health

- 15.4 million refugees; a third of these are children and youth (UNHCR, 2013)
- US admits about 70,000 refugees each year.
- Exposed to violence, loss (as well as acculturative and resettlement stressors) that increase risk of poor mental health outcomes.
- Depression(3-30%), PTSD (20-57%)
- compared to 12% and 5% in general US population
- Children in US have poor access to mental health services; situation exacerbated in refugees (Betancourt et al., 2012; de Anstiss et al., 2009)



Click for an example: Voces Inocentes

- Based on a true story. Chava, an 11-year-old boy who lives on the outskirts of San Salvador, remains “the man of the house” once his father abandons the family. Caught between the Army and the guerrillas, who began recruiting at the age of 12, he has only one year left before being mobilized. He is caught up in a dramatic fight for his life as he desperately tries to avoid the war which is raging all around him.



Trauma in Many Contexts

Historical trauma is the cumulative exposure of traumatic events that effects and individual and continues to effects subsequent generations

Intergenerational/Multigenerational trauma occurs when trauma is not resolved, subsequently internalized, and passed from one generation to the next

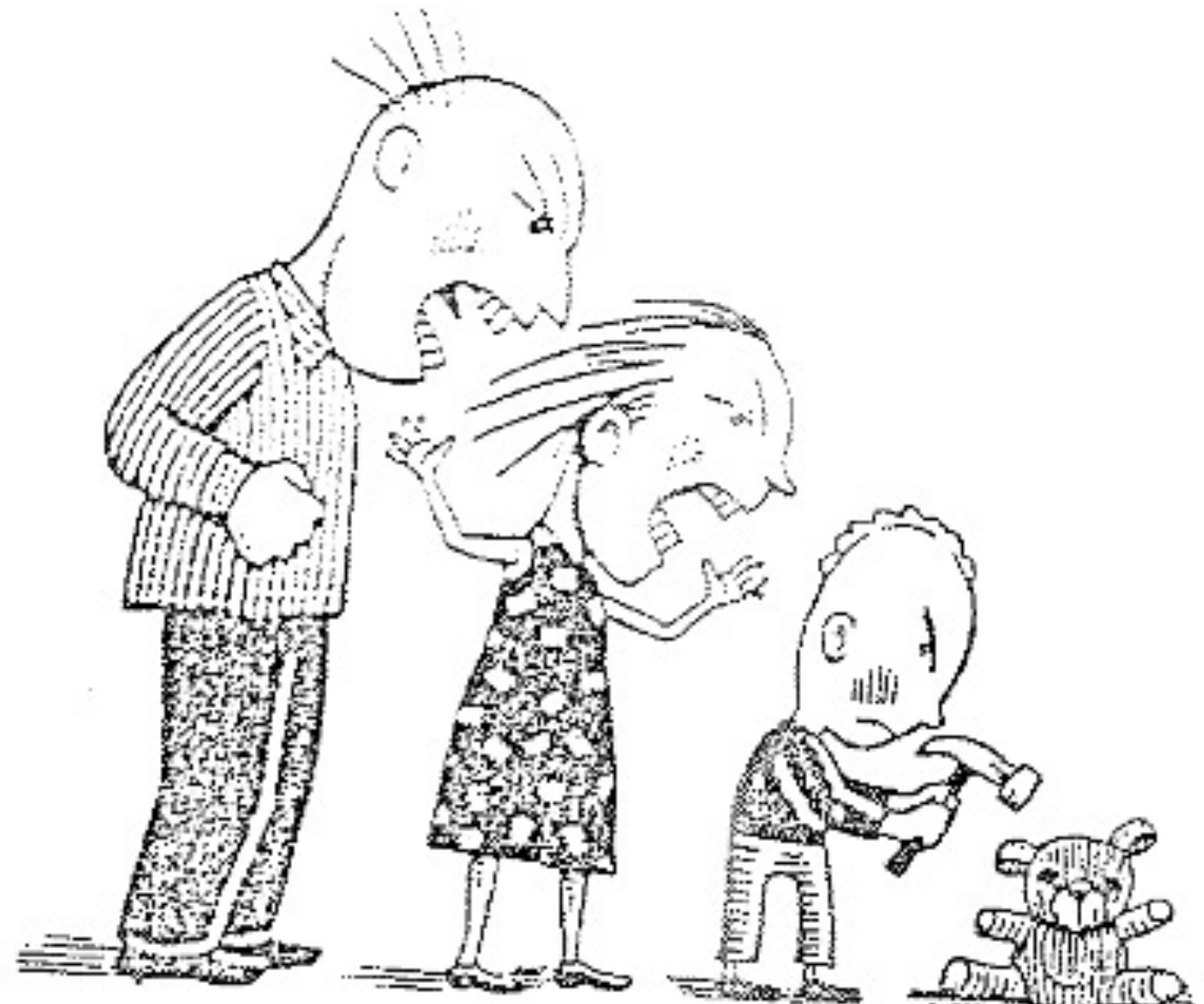
Insidious trauma is characterized by the frequent lower level, deleterious incidences that occur over a lifetime related to ones marginalized status

A second generation of survivors

- Studies show that trauma is collectively transmitted, creating a second generation of survivors.
- The role of silence: There is a message sent by not talking about the trauma
- Example of Holocaust survivors

Multigenerational trauma /Intergenerational trauma

A traumatic event that began years prior to the current generation and has impacted the ways in which individuals within a family cope with, understand, and heal from trauma (Hill, 2017)

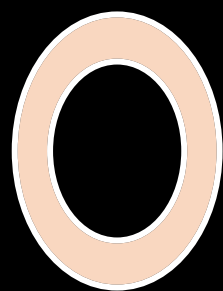




Historical trauma

- The key feature is that the cumulative emotional and psychological consequences of the trauma experience are transmitted to subsequent generations through the physical, environmental and social pathways resulting in an intergenerational cycle of trauma response.
- “lives are lived in specific historical times and places...if historical times and places change, they change the way people live their lives.” – Sotero, 2006





Historical trauma

- The idea that populations that have been historically subjected to long-term, mass trauma exhibit a higher prevalence of disease even generations after the original trauma occurred. Four distinct assumptions;

- 1. Mass trauma is **deliberate and systematically** inflicted on a target population by a dominant population.

- 2. Trauma is not limited to a single catastrophic event; continues over an **extended** period of time.

- 3. Traumatic events reverberate throughout the population, causing a **universal** experience of trauma.

- 4. The magnitude of the trauma **derails** the population, resulting in a legacy of disparities that **persist** across generations.

Sotero, 2006

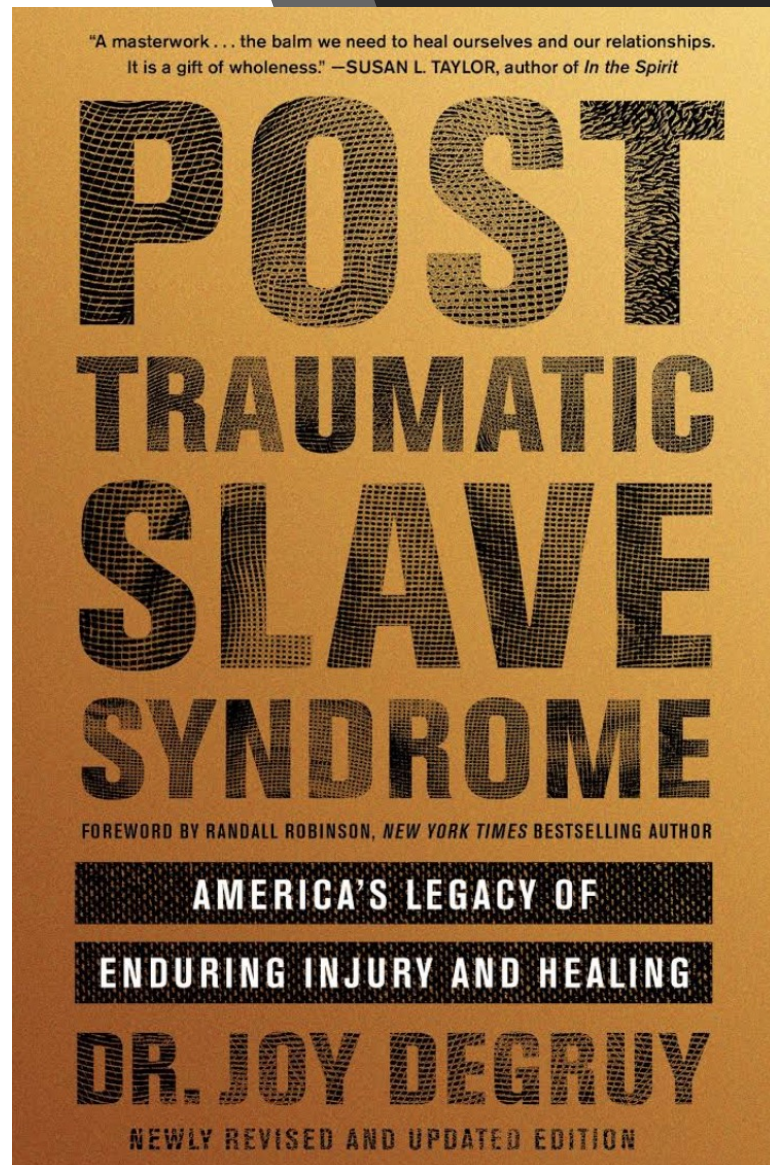


Native Americans

- Multiple acts of violently imposed acts of relocation of Native Americans for the purpose of creating more white settlements
- Indian Residential schools (Termed boarding schools in the United States)
- Acts of oppression resulted in a loss of identity, a sense of cultural shame, and feeling of self hate
- Messages passed down to future generation
- High rates of depression, anger, aggression, and hypervigilance in Native American Communities.



African Americans



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4e_djVSag4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHu6rKX4gRc>

- The trauma endured by this group, has also been passed down among the generations.
- Cultural trauma: involves the dramatic loss of identity and meaning.
- Collective memory: “ Whether or not they directly experienced slavery or even had ancestors who did, Blacks in the United States were identified with and came to identify themselves through the memory and representation of slavery.”



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gical impact of child the US-Mexico border

[Current example:](#)
LatinX immigrants

As you watch this TED talk, please reflect on what we have been learning in terms of trauma and potential impacts of this experience not only on the individual but the community and future generations.

Effects broken down

Primary Generation

- Physical injuries
- Malnutrition
- High rates of infectious diseases
- PTSD
- Depression, Anxiety
- Self-destructive behaviors
- Guilt
- Hostility
- Chronic bereavement

Secondary Generations

- Impairment in parenting
- Impaired genetic function, affecting offspring
- Mental illness; PTSD and Depression
- Malnutrition impact
- In-utero exposure to trauma= negative health outcomes
- Learned perpetuating behavior
- Vicarious traumatization



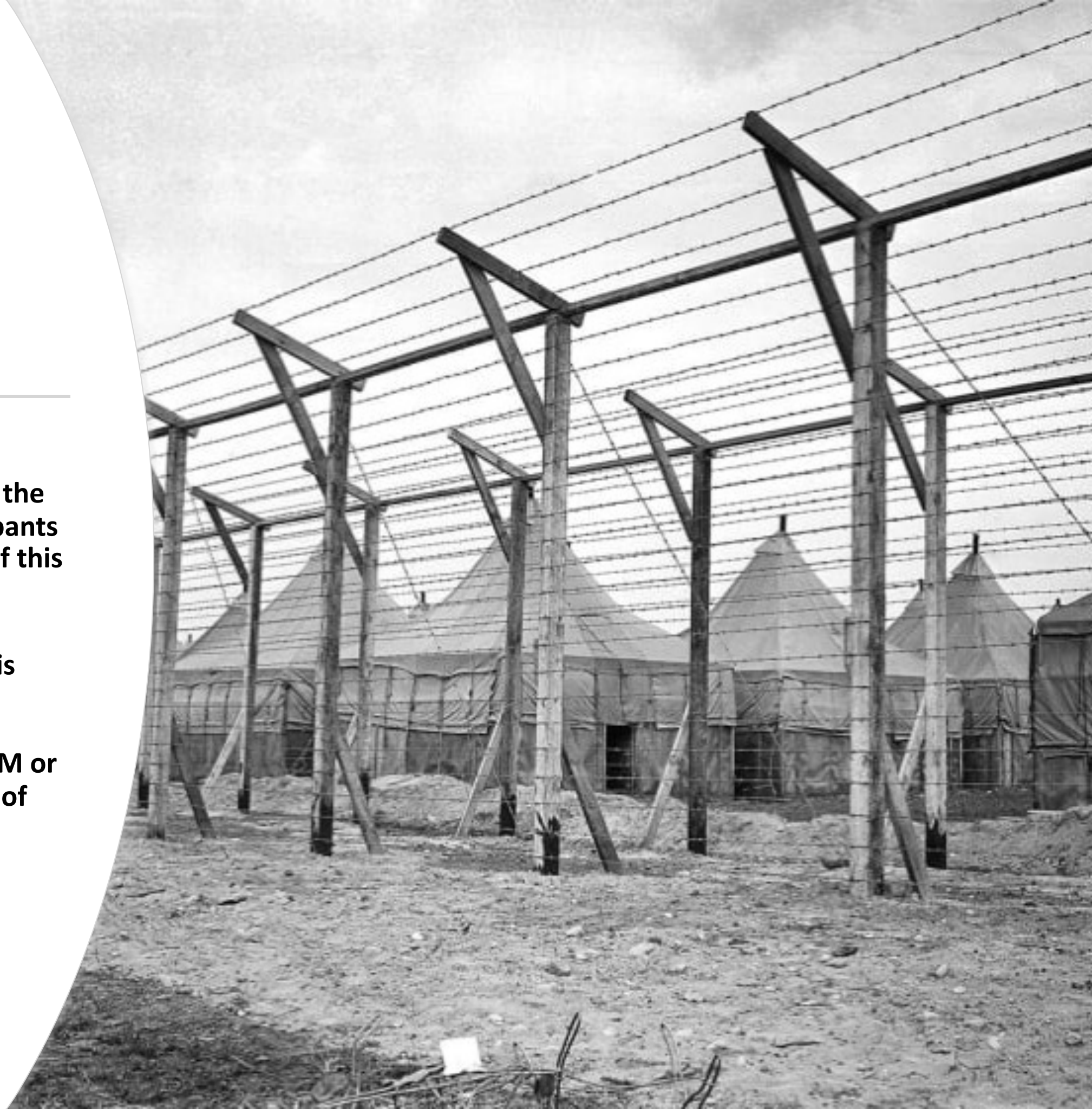
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Japanese Americans

- After the attack on Pearl Harbor, men, women, and children were sent to Japanese internment camps. They were considered a threat to national security in the United States and so they were gathered and forced to relocate in internment camps
- Cultural Loss
- Reintegration back into US society: feelings of shame, attempts to forget

Children of the Camps

- As you watch this documentary, please note the names of different participants and their manifestations of this experience.
- What stories might be considered “trauma” in this video and what might be missed (e.g., harassment, discrimination) per the DSM or per common assumptions of what is trauma?





Small Group Reflection

- What forms of trauma were discussed in this documentary?
- How did this trauma or experience manifest differently in the participants?
- What forms of healing were discussed?
- How do you see community/collective/historical healing/resilience relates to individual healing?
- What traditions are you aware of that people or communities use to recover from or honor collective trauma?

WHAT IS CULTURAL BROKERING?



“Act of bridging, linking, or mediating between groups or persons of different cultural backgrounds for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change”

(Jezewski, 1990). 



Interpreter v Cultural Broker

- Interpreters pass on exact information from one person to the next without making changes or providing context
- Cultural brokers add useful context, background knowledge, and information to facilitate a deeper understanding between both parties.

Cultural Brokers

- Establishing long terms relationships and working with clients relational networks to create rapport, trust, and cultural informed care
- Effective Cultural brokers (Singh et al, 1999)
 - Adequate language skills in each culture
 - Knowledge of mental health by each system
 - Ability to tolerate culturally unacceptable behavior
 - Maintain confidentiality



Clinician Cultural Broker Team for trauma treatment



- Best outcomes = clinician and cultural broker work as a team
- Discuss:
 - The nature of the issues present and clinical needs
 - mental health issues
 - How the cultural broker can assist
 - Sessions will require more time
- (Singh et al., 1999)

Developing a strong therapeutic alliance — Cultural considerations

- Cultural considerations:
- Gather info about cultural & historical backgrounds
- Language Considerations
- Normalizing the barriers to sharing
- Achieved vs Ascribed credibility
- Challenges to shared group membership
- Monitoring cultural transference & countertransference

Comas-Daiz & Jacobson, 1994;
Brown, 2008



A person wearing a blue robe is shown from the chest down, holding a string of white and blue prayer beads. To their right is a small, weathered Buddha statue with a serene expression, wearing a dark, beaded necklace. The statue is placed on a stack of stones. The background is a soft-focus blue and white patterned surface.

Traditional & contemplative healing practices

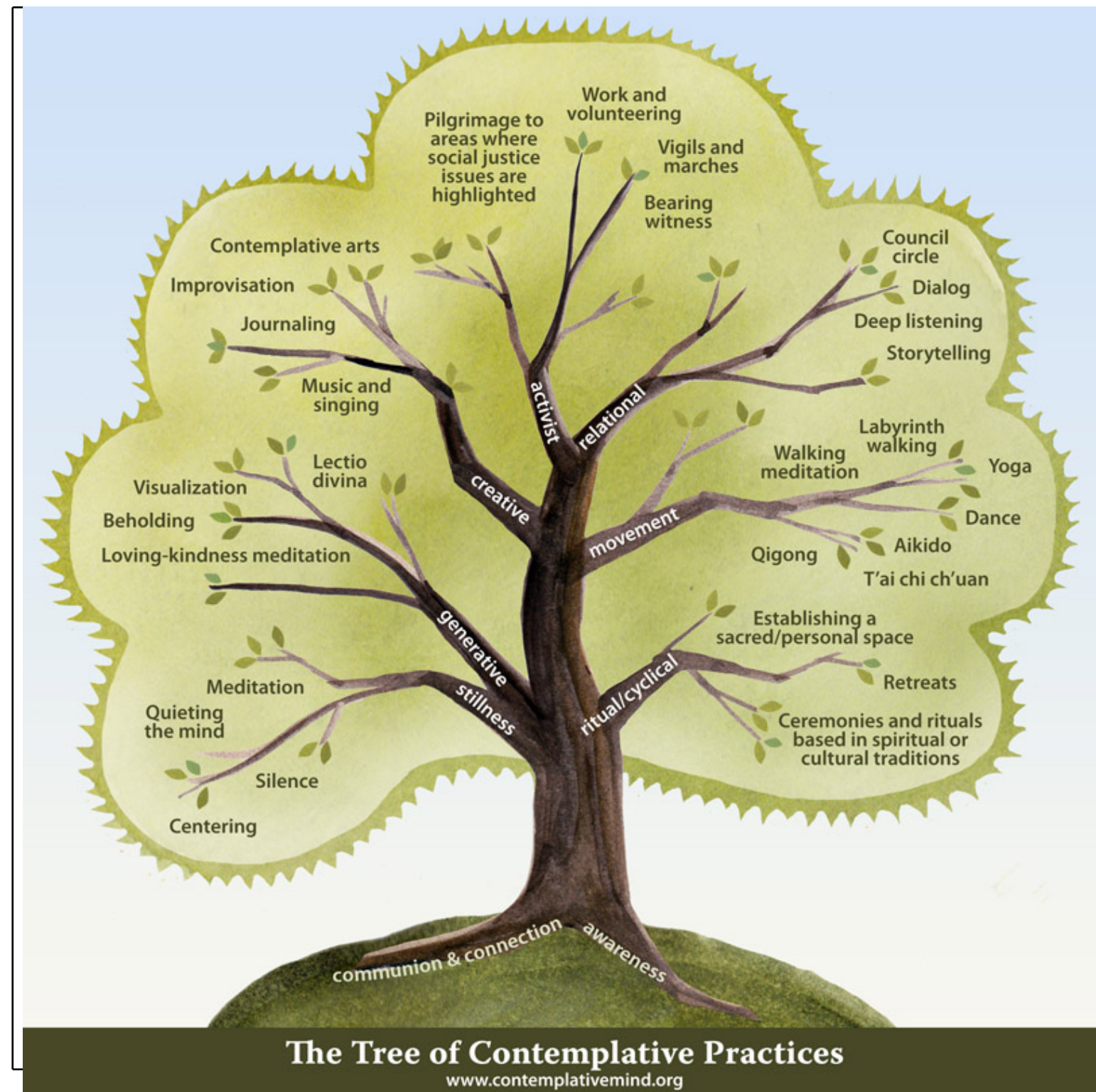
Tree of Contemplative Practice

Incorporates
practices from
other cultures
& traditions

Spirituality

Practices that
improve
relationship
with self,
other, and the
world

Not an
exhaustive list



Activist Practices

Pilgrimage to areas where social justice issues are highlighted
Work and Volunteering
Vigils and Marches
Bearing Witness

Creative Practices

Contemplative Arts
Improvisation
Music and Singing
Journaling

Generative Practices

Lectio Divina
Visualization
Beholding
Loving-Kindness Meditation

Movement Practices

Labyrinth Walking
Walking Meditation
Yoga
Dance
Qigong
Aikido
Tai Chi Chu'an

Relational Practices

Council Circle
Dialog
Deep Listening
Storytelling

Ritual/Cyclical Practices

Ceremonies and Rituals based in Spiritual or Cultural Traditions
Establishing a Sacred/Personal Space
Retreats

Stillness Practices

Meditation
Quieting the Mind
Silence
Centering

Contemplative Practices

Considerations for therapists

- Explore your own racial identity
 - Aware and prevalence of the effect of trauma
 - Study history of varying racial and ethnic groups
 - Ethnopolitical approach
 - Take an anti-racist stance in their therapeutic approach
 - Develop strategies for self-care and resistance.
 - Create an environment that is safe to disclose racist experience.
- *Helms 1990; Hardy 2013; Byrant-Davis & Ocampo, 2014*



Reading and In- class group reflection:



- Reflect the applicability of “languages of distress” to current Western discussions of PTSD and other trauma-related mental health and behavioral outcomes.
- Do you think it is even possible to identify universal dimensions of the human experience?
- How do you think a person’s position on the individualism-collectivism spectrum might impact trauma treatment?
- What type of holistic or culture-based forms of healing are present in your placement?
- Robert’s et al. (2011) posit, “Race/ethnic differences in risk for PTSD can therefore arise from two sources: (1) differences in exposure to a qualifying traumatic event and (2) differences in the risk for developing PTSD among those who are exposed to trauma” (p. 71). Do you agree or disagree? Why? What might be missing in this conceptualization?



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