

Practices for the Sacred Circle:

Cultural Humility for Non-Native Providers

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Who May Benefit from this Information?

People working in healing spaces or approaching sensitive topics with American Indian/Alaska Native parents, grandparents, and family members should practice cultural humility. Cultural humility requires continual self-exploration and self-critique of practices while being open to learning from others. When non-Native providers work with different cultures, it is essential to practice cultural humility.

Practicing Cultural Humility

Get to know the people you are working with on a cultural level. Culture has different meanings and interpretations, so it is important to become familiar with the etāic cultures of your clients. Know the unique family systems and community culture of the people you are servicing.

Remember, Native families still carry the mistrust of non-natives because of historical issues. Do not expect to “save” them from their pasts. Approach each client with the intent to help guide them to their truths.

Respect all belief systems, especially if they don’t align with yours.

Be real, be you. Clients connect with authenticity. Do not expect clients to be awed by your degrees or credentials.

Do not stereotype. Keep an open mind and do not believe the stigma of how society and/or the media portrays Native families.

Helping Profession

Sometimes, in the helping profession, certain topics bring up past personal traumas. If you are not prepared to address heavy topics in this work, it may cause more harm than good when working with clients. It may be helpful to consider the following questions before working with clients:

- Why do I want to do this work?
- What do they expect to get out of this type of work?
- What do I know about trauma?
- What do I know about healing?
- What kind of experience do I have with my own healing?
- Am I willing to work on areas I may need help with?

Education and Support

Working with others on personal topics can be heavy and possibly triggering at times. It is important to have a strong support system and to practice self-awareness and self-care. Being proactive in prioritizing mental well-being is key to a long career of helping others.

What steps will you take if you become triggered by a certain topic? This can look different depending on the severity of trigger responses. These are some examples:

1. Step away and have someone else come to work with the family.
2. Seek someone to help them with the trigger and determine if further services are needed.
3. Identify what further steps are needed.