

Ableism

Speaking up and OUT: Social Justice Leaders
on LGBTQ Issues in Counseling

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Ableism defined:

- Form of discrimination or prejudice against human beings who are afflicted with physical, mental, or developmental disabilities.
- A belief that they need fixing due to their powerlessness to function properly as members of society.
- Commonly scrutinized as abnormal (nonstandard) rather than as a distinct minority population.

Counselor Competence Needed!

- 20% of Americans have some form of a disability
 - Cardiovascular disease
 - Arthritis
 - Dementia
 - Blindness and amputations due to Diabetes
 - War time injuries
 - Post-traumatic brain injury

Affect on Gay Community

- Queer persons experience oppression
 - HIV/AIDS
 - Social Injustices
 - Laws denying queer partners participation in healthcare decisions

PHOBIA VS. PREJUDICE

- Individuals suffering from a phobia are usually self-motivated to change and, therefore, seek treatment from a professional. Conversely, the motivation to reduce prejudice comes from homosexuals, the targets of anti-homosexual oppression (Haaga, 1991; as cited in Logan, 1996).

ETHICAL CODES RELATED TO ETHICAL PRACTICE WITH LGBTQI CLIENTS

- **ACA CODE OF ETHICS**

- **A1. CLIENT WELFARE**

- *a. Primary Responsibility:* The primary responsibility of counselors is to respect the dignity and to promote the welfare of clients.

GUIDELINES FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH LGBTQI CLIENTS

- **ATTITUDES TOWARD LGBTQI**
- **Guideline 3.** Psychologists strive to understand the ways in which social stigmatization (i.e., prejudice, discrimination, and violence) poses risks to the mental health and well-being of lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients.
 - American Psychological Association (2000). *Guidelines for psychotherapy with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients*. Washington, DC: Author.

Decreasing Bias

- Removing Counselors' mental barriers
 - Empathy Exercises
 - Experiential Wheelchair Challenges
- Understanding the effects of invisible disabilities
 - Chronic illness, learning disability, etc.
 - May cause slow progress (not resistance) in therapy

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS

COMPETENT COUNSELORS WILL:

- **acknowledge that heterosexism is a worldview and value-system that may undermine the healthy functioning of the sexual orientations, gender identities, and behaviors of LGBTQI persons.**
- **understand that heterosexism pervades the social and cultural foundations of many institutions and traditions and may foster negative attitudes toward LGBTQI persons.**
- **recognize how internalized prejudice, including ableism, heterosexism, racism, and sexism, may influence the counselor's own attitudes as well as those of their LGBTQI clients.**

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS

COMPETENT COUNSELORS WILL:

- **know that the developmental tasks of LGBTQI women and people of color include the formation and integration of their gender, racial, and sexual identities.**
- **familiarize themselves with the cultural traditions, rituals, and rites of passage specific to LGBTQI populations.**

HELPING RELATIONSHIPS

COMPETENT COUNSELORS WILL:

- **acknowledge the societal prejudice and discrimination experienced by LGBTQI persons and assist them in overcoming internalized negative attitudes toward their sexual orientations and gender identities.**
- **recognize that their own sexual orientations and gender identities are relevant to the helping relationship and influence the counseling process.**

HELPING RELATIONSHIPS

COMPETENT COUNSELORS WILL:

- **seek consultation or supervision to ensure that their own biases or knowledge deficits about LGBTQI persons do not negatively influence the helping relationship.**
- **understand that attempts to alter or change the sexual orientations or gender identities of LGBTQI clients may be detrimental or even life-threatening, and, further, are not supported by the research and therefore should not be undertaken.**

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELORS

- ❖ Many counselors interpret the LGBTQI client's problems as arising from their sexuality instead of the actual presenting issue
- ❖ Don't use the "sickness" model when presented with sexuality issues
- ❖ The need for better education within this population is increasing
- ❖ Evaluate for internalized homophobia
- ❖ Evaluate one's own views regarding LGBTQI clients
- ❖ Know your resources and community liaisons
- ❖ Assure that forms, procedures, and language are free of heterosexist bias
- ❖ Assess spiritual and religious needs
- ❖ Help client establish affirming identity
- ❖ Conduct research and stay on top of current information

DO NOT:

- ❖ Believe being gay is a mental illness or personality disorder
- ❖ Ignore internalized homophobia or its impact
- ❖ Assume your client is *enter sexuality label here*
- ❖ Force your client to come out or label themselves or underestimate the process
- ❖ Demean the LGBTQI community
- ❖ Assume it is all about the sex
- ❖ Use the straight framework inappropriately (e.g., recommend a couples book on straight relationships)
- ❖ Presume you know their feelings about disabilities/politics/marriage/children/any social issue just because they are LGBTQI

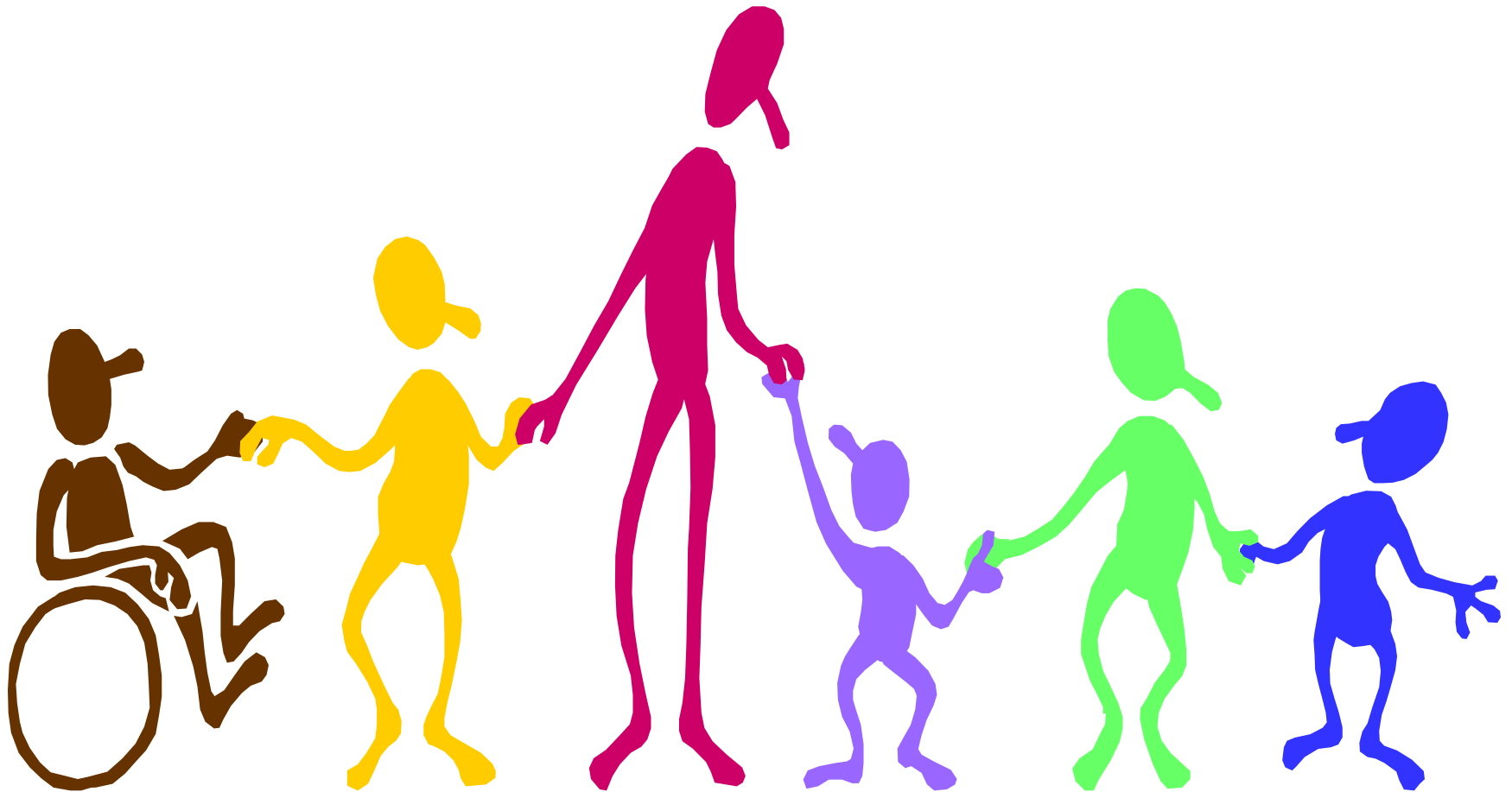
SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Social justice counseling with marginalized groups is enhanced when counselors:
 - can understand how individual and systemic worldviews shape clinical practice and...
 - have organizational and systemic knowledge, expertise, and skills.

CAKE!

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=969XrYeuw4>

Able



REFERENCES

American Psychological Association (2000). *Guidelines for psychotherapy with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients*. Washington, DC: Author.

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