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Characteristics of Culturally Effective Counselors

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L I V I N G W I T H G R I E F



DIVERSITY
AND
END-OF-LIFE CARE

PART OF THE LIVING WITH GRIEF® SERIES



HOSPICE FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

EDITED BY KENNETH J. DOKA
& AMY S. TUCCI

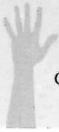
Foreword by Richard Payne, MD
Director, Duke Institute on Care at the End of Life



Characteristics of Culturally Effective Counselors

Kenneth J. Doka

- **SKILLED AND KNOWLEDGEABLE.** Effective counselors serving diverse populations can readily employ a range of theories and techniques, and their practice is evidence-based in that they stay current with research in the field. Because cultural groups can vary so widely, effective counselors must be eclectic, using diverse strategies with different populations.
- **ALWAYS OPEN TO LEARNING.** Counselors who work with culturally diverse populations should be intellectually curious, always seeking more information. They attempt to learn about the populations they serve from research, careful observation, and cultural informants. Ethnic or cultural newspapers, magazines, or other media are often good sources of information—windows to the issues and perceptions of a particular group. While effective counselors are knowledgeable about the groups they work with, they are also careful not to make assumptions about individual clients. Instead, they are ready to observe, listen, and ask. Effective counselors recognize the value of mutual learning.
- **SENSITIVE.** Culturally proficient counselors operate with deep sensitivity. They recognize that identity is more often an issue for those in nondominant groups. Culturally proficient counselors listen for or ask about cultural affiliation and identification rather than assume them. They maintain an open, nonjudgmental attitude. Questions are open-ended and carefully crafted, employing neutral language (such as “partner” rather than “spouse,” “boyfriend,” or “girlfriend”).



- **SELF-AWARE.** Counselors should be aware of their own biases and monitor the potential effects of these biases on their practice. They should be aware of the “culture of counseling”—employing an individualistic emphasis, a future orientation, a bias toward self-disclosure and emotional and verbal expressiveness, a linear orientation toward cause and effect, an assumption of activity and internal locus of control, a belief in the value of insight, a view of the counselor as facilitator, and, often, a nondirective style (Sue & Sue, 2008). Effective counselors are sensitive to the fact that the values and beliefs of the counseling culture are not always congruent with the orientations of clients.
- **WORK AS A CULTURAL BROKER.** Culturally sensitive counselors understand that they sometimes function as “cultural brokers.” This means that, in a nonjudgmental manner, they help clients explore the differences between their cultural practices and those of the dominant society. Such counselors serve as advocates in the larger society, helping clients meet their needs.

REFERENCE

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (2008). *Counseling the culturally diverse: Theory and practice* (5th ed.). New York: John Wiley and Sons.