

## Checklist for working with diversity

- To be wary of a Eurocentric perspective (or any other bias) and inform ourselves about the many ways in which societies structure themselves and express themselves.
- To develop some theoretical knowledge and understanding of a wide range of heritages and cultures, subcultures, life experiences, issues and choices that come up in therapy.
  - Faiths and absence of faith, 'sects' and 'cults', spirituality.
  - Social class, town and rural life, education.
  - Housing and homelessness, living communally, living alone.
  - The world or work (industrial, corporate, trade, self-employed, employer, employee, etc.), unemployment and poverty.
  - Family structures, parenting, adoption, step-families, caring.
  - Life stages, youth subcultures, adulthood, life post-retirement, old age.
  - Genders, sexualities and sexual practice: LGBTI, straight, 'fetishes', 'perversions'.
  - Disabilities: physical and mental.
  - 'Criminality', violence, sexual abuse and rape, substance misuse.
  - Political/ethical attitudes relating to society, the environment and climate change.
  - Being 'indigenous', being immigrant and/or asylum-seeker.
- To have perspectives on institutions and legislation that have power and influence over people's lives: policing and the criminal justice system, social services, the medical services, schooling and education, the media and leisure industry.
- We need to be conscious that both we and the client/s are each 'different/strange' to the other and that there is no 'default' identity.

*continued:*

- To be conscious that whatever understanding a therapist has of the cultural values of a particular group of clients, it is the meanings associated or attached to those values by each individual client that are relevant in therapy.
- To understand the client's problems in reference to those values and also in a manner that is congruent with the client's belief systems within his/her particular groups.
- To be aware as therapists of own Private Logic/bias in respect of diversity.
- We must work through our own assumptions, prejudices and projections to see the client/s as individuals and not 'the sum of their diversity' or identities.
- We should be wondering what they are thinking about the differences, including the power relationship between us.
- The client may not be bringing concerns about any of the above issues to the therapy but [...] whatever they present with, there may indeed be an issue with discrimination, internalised oppression, etc., that can only emerge if trust is established.
- If we work with minimum self-disclosure, and do not ask questions with an informed perspective, how can the client/s know where we stand in relation to differences between us?

Adapted from Colin Lago (2010). *Psychotherapy and Politics International*. 8(73-85).