

Working with Chinese Families

Best Practices

Stepping into the Culture

The following is a list of important themes and topics which should be considered when working with Chinese clients and their families. It is important to remember that the client is the expert, and it is best practice to always ask about their own interpretations of their culture, beliefs, values and experiences.

- **Family**
 - Elders are traditionally treated with enormous respect and dignity, often living with the nuclear family to help raise the young members of the family. Individuals are expected to listen to the one who is older, which provides structure for the hierarchy in the family.
- **Parental Influence**
 - Children are expected to be open to the opinions and guidance of their parents and elders.
- **Friends**
 - Chinese people define a friend as a lifelong relationship with someone and will feel deeply compelled to provide as much help as possible whenever needed.
- **Education**
 - Education and careers are greatly valued and a strong emphasis is placed on this for children from a young age.
 - It is important and understood that youth will surpass their parents or grandparents level of education.
- **Collectivistic Culture**
 - The mentality is that if you achieve something it's because of the team, family, or the company. Everything you do is attributed to the greater whole and celebrated as such.
 - The collectivistic mentality is seen more with the older generations of Chinese immigrants, while the younger generation of Chinese Americans are more likely to have a combination of collectivism and individualism.
- **Styles of Communication**
 - There is a higher need to respect and honor other's opinions than to disagree with others. Being too direct may be perceived as humiliating and the other person may come across as rude.
 - Indirect communication and delivering thoughts and opinions sensitively is the preferred way of communication.
- **Humility**
 - Individuals are expected to show humility when discussing successes, and at times success may not be discussed at all.
- **Relationship Based Culture**

- Chinese people prioritize the relationship building with others, before anything else. This processes usually takes time during which they socialize and get to know each other before making business with others.
- **Gender Roles**
 - Men are more likely to adapt individualistic forms of thinking, especially at the work place.
 - Women are more likely to continue to follow a collectivistic thinking, which is more in line with the ideas of beauty of women in the Chinese culture.
- **Recognition of the Dead**
 - Once a year, all members of the family visit the gravesites of each ancestor and pay their respects. Honoring ancestors is very important in Chinese culture.
- **Negative Perception of Causation of Disability**
 - Some Chinese American families have traditional beliefs that surround disability and the cause of it may be attributed to the mother's failure to follow habits and care during pregnancy, or divine punishment for sins or wrong doings committed by the parents or ancestors.

Resources

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