Building Allies in Deafhood

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Presentation Agenda

- Considering the use of *Allies in Deafhood* applications in your counseling practice
- Understanding the basics of Deafhood
- Reframing our thoughts on what it means to be a Deaf Ally and how this impacts your Deaf client/consumer
- Building strong Allies, using the Deafhood framework, to surround Deaf children/youth and adults
Why Allies in Deafhood?
Discussion Groupwork

How or to what extent does Deafhood contribute to the state of positive mental health? With this in mind, what can Allies do to help with this?
Why Deafhood is important...

* Deals openly and truthfully with reality of the "environment" (the System) affecting language and social development, self-esteem and self-worth, and quality of family relationships. Affect on language development, typically leads to **Deprived Language** and its’ aftermath on literacy skills, cognitive learning, and “receiving an education”.

* Highlights a wholesome path/ worldview for ALL to see about Deaf individuals’s place in the world
Deafhood helps with...

🌟 Moving AWAY from attitude/belief that being Deaf causes delayed language and mental health conditions

🌟 Moving TOWARDS framework that Deaf is not at fault for deprived language and oppression

🌟 Improving understanding of how social conditioning impacts a Deaf person's worldview and life journey

🌟 Promoting healthy identity development

🌟 Celebrating Deaf as a subcultural group and recognizing importance of "collectivist culture" in influencing positive well-being in Deaf people
Where Allies come in...

- Reinforces positive attitudes about Deaf people’s place in the world as equals
- Creates natural conditions for Deaf people to feel they are normal and to grow and be all that he/she can be
- Does not put Deaf people in a vigilant state where they have to question, defend, or fight for their place in world
- Helps Deaf people feel supported internally, which they draw strength from, as they constantly deal with issues caused by non-Allies
Basics of Deafhood
A Counter-Narrative

- Medical condition
- Abnormal
- Pathological branch
- Individualism
- Diagnosed
- Handicap

- A process, not a state
- Cultural and Linguistic
- Normal/Natural
- Collectivism
- Recognized
- Belief and values
Deafhood

- A lifelong process/journey in exploration and raising of our consciousness about being Deaf.
- This is not a form of measurement on how Deaf we are.
- The goal is to expand and unite **Deaf Humanity** through the decolonization of the mind, body, and spirit.
- Coined by British Dr. Paddy Ladd in *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood*
Deafhood is a constant process

- Struggle to explain and defend our existence
- Internal and external dialogue
- Becoming and maintaining Deaf
- Processing interpretations of Deafhood
- Being a Deaf person in a Deaf Community as compared to being a Deaf person in a Hearing Community
Colonialism

- The destruction and replacement of indigenous cultures by powerful cultures, affecting:
  - Language
  - Way of Thinking
  - Conception of world and society
  - Values
Colonialism is a form of economic and cultural control
Pre-colonialism of Deaf

- Turkish Ottoman Court
- The Paris Deaf
- By the 1870’s... in USA

“(Sign Language) easily wins out over all the separate limited languages of speaking humanity... our language encompasses all nations, the entire globe.”

-Jean-Ferdinand Berthier
Audism

- The notion that one is superior based on one’s ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears.
  - Dr. Tom Humphries

- An attitude based on pathological thinking, judgement, labeling and limiting which results in negative stigma toward Deaf.
How Audism affects everyone

* If not challenged, sends a message that Audism can be tolerated and degrades the potential for a respectful and equal environment for all Deaf people

* Leads to oppression of Deaf people in all settings

* Makes it hard for Deaf and hearing to trust one another, thus straining community relationship

* Lack of recognition of true diversity and uniqueness of all cultural backgrounds
**Deficit Thinking**

- The practice of holding lower expectations about a group of people
- Viewed as “missing something”
  - Hearing Loss
  - Abnormal
  - Silent World
  - Impaired thinking
  - No Language

- Deficit Thinking by nonAllies has conditioned Deaf to obsess on details than on Big Picture
Effect of Colonialism, Audism & Deficit Thinking

- Fragmentation
- Differing languages and bastardation of ASL
- Differing attitudes and Crab Theory
- Deafness vs Deafhood
- Oralization of Deaf Education
- Eradication of our community- Push for Cochlear Implants and Stem Cell Research
- High Unemployment and Underemployment rates
- High Mental Health Issues and Drug/Aлcohol abuse
Deaf Resurgence

- Map our reality
- Identify
- Agitate
- Heal
- Create a vision
- Take a stand
- Build then rebuild
- With hard work
We need to let go who we should be so we can be who we are.

-Dr. Brene Brown, Vulnerability & Shame Researcher
What is a Deaf Ally?
Definition of a Deafhood Ally

Someone who supports and stands up for the rights and dignity of Deaf people in charge of their own destinies; their language, culture and identities; and, importantly, the right to exist.
Before becoming an Ally

Important to understand:

- Effect of Colonialism and Audism on Deaf individuals and Deaf community
- Effect of your privileges on Deaf individuals and Deaf community
- Why the Deafhood journey is crucial to the Deaf person’s identity and wellness
- Accepting that becoming an Ally takes work, hard work!
Becoming an Ally

- Listening and reflecting very important skills to develop
- Accepting that everyone in oppressor group is part of the oppression
- Supporting the process of unlearning oppression
- Not usurping the role of communicating the experience of the oppression, instead sharing the journey of becoming an Ally
Be yourself. Be honest. Express your feelings.

Recognizing the different ISMs and the privileges exercised within each oppressor-group

Not defending your internalized oppression attitudes; but being willing to acknowledge and process them.

Not sitting on doubts; ask others or someone you trust at an appropriate time.

Accept yourself as a learner. Good learners are always open.
Characteristics of Being a Deaf Ally

- Supports the right of Deaf people to exist
- Supports Deaf people right to signed languages
- Expressively advocates for removing Audism and any forms of oppression in the lives of Deaf people
- Emphasizes the need for economic and social justice for all Deaf people
- Understanding or finding empathy in the Deaf experience
- Consistently maintains a "Deaf-centered" environment
- Re-framing of thoughts about Deaf people and Deafness
Five Dimensions

Level of consciousness, existence, or reality
Building Allies in Deafhood
Organize discussion groups or training/education opportunities

Bring up issues of discrimination against the Deaf

Interrupt any anti-Deaf jokes, comments, or any other behaviors that causes prejudice

Put up anti-Audism posters on the walls

Showcase De’Via Deaf Art

Recognize and call out on anyone who exercises “hearing privileges” that affected a Deaf person

Prevent decision making about Deaf people by non-Deaf

Support Deaf owned/operated organizations and businesses
Help members of your own group understand patterns and effects of oppression by making links with other forms of oppression.
Establish a Deafhood Framework

- Get more Deafhood Training
- Conceptualize what issues affect healthy Identity and Self-Esteem Development in Deaf people
- Be guided by a Model of Healthy Deaf People
- Advocate Human and Language Rights for Deaf people
- Creation and role-modeling of a Deaf-Centered Environment
- Understanding what it means to be an Ally
Establish rules for a Deaf-Centered Environment

- Respecting Deaf people as visual beings who value a visual language and whom are part of a culture;

- Being conscious of how Deaf people’s lives are shaped by their identities and experiences as members of an oppressed cultural and linguistic minority;

- Being mindful of each individual’s uniqueness in family and background in schooling and life experiences; and

- Showcasing and advocating for the space to be free of prejudices, oppression and barriers.
Discussion Groupwork

As an Ally, give examples on how you can work with the Deaf community to end Audism and colonialism
Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim.

-Elie Wiesel