1. Review last lesson main points, 2. Review action steps from last lesson, 3. Review knowledge and experience with today's topic, 4. Why important, 5. Overview of the agenda

HOW YOUR CULTURAL AND FAMILY BACKGROUND AFFECTS THE DECISIONS YOU MAKE ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT

LESSON 13

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

What is meant by the term "culture"?

Culture is a way of describing the thoughts, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs and traditions of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group.

People often see themselves as belonging to a number of different cultures. For example, a person may have an African background (race), grow up in Haiti (ethnicity), follow the Catholic faith (religion) and be a recent immigrant to the United States (social).

Some parts of your culture may be easy to recognize, such as skin color or the language that you speak. Other parts of your cultural background are hard for others to know about unless you choose to tell them or they ask you. This includes one or more of the following:

- Spiritual practices
- Healing practices
- Family customs, including the roles expected of mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, grandparents, etc.
- Types of foods and drinks you like
- Holiday celebrations
- Values related to privacy and disclosing of personal information
- Customs related to marriage and intimate relationships
- Music and art preferences
- Preferred ways of leisure or recreational activities
- Sexual orientation (this is an example of a social group).

Most people learn cultural beliefs, attitudes, values and traditions from parents, other family members and people in their local community. For many people, religious and cultural traditions influence their ideas about many parts of life. This is also true for beliefs and attitudes about mental health and mental illness.

Why is understanding your cultural/ religious background important?

The connection to your cultural background will often influence:

- Your decisions about treatment for mental health problems
- How you feel about your mental health problems
- Your comfort with the people you meet in mental health programs
- Your interest in seeking help for your mental health problems.

Being aware of your cultural and religious beliefs and values may support recovery by helping you:

- Find community connections and build a sense of belonging that matches your cultural beliefs and values
- Make other people, including mental health professionals, aware of your beliefs about mental health problems and treatment so you can form a helpful relationship
- Find ways to improve your mental health that respects your cultural beliefs and values
- Better understand the sometimes confusing messages that you may get from family, friends, or other community members AND the messages you may get from mental health professionals.

Discussion Points:

What ideas do people in your community (family, friends, neighbors, people in your religious community) have about the questions below?

Are some of their ideas different from ideas you get from your doctor, therapist, mental health professional, or this Workbook?

- ***What is mental illness?***
- ***What causes mental health problems?***
- ***What is the best way to help someone with mental health problems?***

PERSONALIZED WORKSHEET:
Understanding your cultural background

Below is a list of YES or NO statements designed to increase your awareness of the connection between your cultural, family and religious background AND mental health decisions. Consider each statement and circle YES or NO.

My religious beliefs affect:

1. The decisions I make about taking medication and receiving treatment for my mental health problems YES NO
2. How I feel about my mental health problems YES NO

My preferred language affects:

1. Who I want to help me with my mental health problems YES NO
2. How I get along with the staff and clients in the mental health program YES NO

The customs and beliefs of my family affect:

1. The decisions I make about taking medication and receiving treatment for my mental health problems YES NO
2. How I feel about my mental health problems YES NO
3. Who I want to help me with my mental health problems YES NO

My sexual orientation affects:

1. Who I want to help me with my mental health problems YES NO
2. How I feel about my mental health problems YES NO
3. How I get along with the staff and clients in the mental health program YES NO

My gender affects:

1. Who I want to help me with my mental health problems YES NO
   (Do you have a preference for a male or female mental health provider?) YES NO

My racial or ethnic background affects:

1. Who I want to help me with my mental health problems YES NO
   (Do you have a preference to work with a mental health provider who shares your racial/ethnic background?) YES NO

If you answered YES to any of these questions you may choose to complete an Action Step to learn more about how your cultural background affects the decisions you make about mental health treatment.

ACTION STEP:
Learn more about how my cultural background affects my decisions

Choose one of your YES responses and learn more about it by talking to someone or getting more information about how this aspect of your cultural, religious and family background affects the decisions you make.

I want to learn more about:_____

What will be your first step? _____

When? _____

Where? _____

How will you remind yourself to do it?_____

_____

Who could help you complete your Action Step? _____

What might get in the way of completing your Action Step?_____

_____

1. Summary of main points of this lesson, 2. Leader provides specific positive feedback, 3. Invite participants to share feedback, 4. Ask participants to complete the Lesson by Lesson Helpfulness Scale.