



WELCOME!

Learned Helplessness and Intercultural Dynamics: Fostering Change

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PSA Behavioral Health Agency
PSA = People-Service-Action

PSA Behavioral Health Agency

PSA is a private, nonprofit behavioral health agency dedicated to the treatment and recovery of individuals with psychiatric illnesses who may also have challenges related to substance abuse, trauma, and/or other behavioral health issues.

PSA promotes
Hope, Recovery, Diversity & Wellness

Intercultural Dynamics: Fostering Change

- ❖ ***1. Learners will increase knowledge of learned helplessness and its debilitating effects;***
- ❖ ***2. Learners will increase knowledge of cultural dynamics leading to learned helplessness;***
- ❖ ***3. Learners will be provided antidotes to combat learned helplessness;***

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Questions to Consider . . .

- ✓ 1. What do you think learned helplessness is?
- ✓ 2. Can you see a relationship between learned helplessness and trauma?
- ✓ 3. Can you see a relationship between learned helplessness and intercultural dynamics today? (intergenerational trauma)
- ✓ 4. Can a person or group overcome learned helplessness? What are some ways of doing this?
- ✓ 5. Is there a connection between learned helplessness and stigma?

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❖ **What is Learned Helplessness?**

❖ **How do we “Learn” Learned Helplessness?**

Examples of Learned Helplessness?

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What is Learned Helplessness? . . .

“Learned Helplessness is a **mental state** where people feel **completely powerless to improve their own situation in life.**” [Learned Helplessness in Recovery, DARA Drug & Alcohol Rehab Asia, 2013.]

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How do we Learn “Learned Helplessness?”

Basic research shows that when we are repeatedly given circumstances where we have **no control** over the outcome, **no matter what we do** in an aversive situation, **we give up**.

***Depression, Anxiety, and Stress are often the result. ***

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- ❖ **Some Behaviors Associated with Learned Helplessness Are:**
 - ❖ *Tendency to give up easily when faced with a problem;*
 - ❖ *Belief that things will turn out badly no matter what we do;*
 - ❖ *Belief that there is no way to control things that are going to happen in the future.*

❖ **Some Examples?**

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❖ What is Culture?

Culture is a set of customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group [with] characteristic features of an everyday **shared existence.**

Culture is a set of **shared values, conventions, and social practices in a field or activity.**

Culture is a set of **shared values passed down in families, generations.**

Examples of [a] CULTURE?

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Cultural Trauma

Cultural Trauma defined, “as the culturally defined and interpreted shock to the cultural tissue of a society,”

©2000, Piotr Sztompka: The Other Face of Social Change

Some Contributing Factors: Dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric affecting a group of people that had achieved some degree of cohesion. . . will be played over and over again in individual consciousness [becoming] ingrained in collective memory,”

© 2002, Ron Eyerman, Cultural Trauma

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Two Intertwined Types of Cultural Trauma That Can Lead to Learned Helplessness

❖ *Historical Trauma*

❖ *Intergenerational Trauma*

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- **Epigenetics**

- The study of heritable changes that occur without changing the DNA sequence.
- Term coined by Conrad H. Waddington in 1942
- Consensus definition developed at a Cold Spring Harbor meeting in 2008: stably heritable phenotype resulting from changes in a chromosome without alterations to the DNA sequence.
- Heritable traits(heredity) can be affected by environment

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Historical Trauma

Historical Trauma “Is a constellation of characteristics associated with cumulative group trauma across [many] generations,”

(Brave Heart, 1999).

Some Contributing Factors: Being Displaced, Exiled, Uprooted, Incarcerated . . . ACCENT is on the EMBEDDED HISTORY of a culture.

Some Examples: Trail of Tears; Slavery; The Long Walk; Holocaust

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The Long Walk of the Navajo to Bosque Redondo Hweeldi

Gen. James H.
Carleton – 1862
Colonel Kit
Carson -1864



1863-64 Start of
“forced march”
1868 Start of
homeward
journey; The
signing of the
Treaty of
1868

18 Days (duration of walk)

- 300 Miles over 200 Navajo died on the “Walk”; at the “reservation” 8,000-9,000 people settled in a 40 square mile tract called Bosque Redondo

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Bosque Redondo (Hweedli)

- **Some Navajo managed to escape the Walk. These survived in Navajo Mountain, the Grand Canyon, Utah, or in Chiricahua Apache Territory.**
- **Hailed as a “miserable failure”**
 - **Poor planning**
 - **Disease**
 - **Crop failure and poor conditions for agriculture**
 - **Trying to convert people’s way of life: Navajos were not farmers. The government felt that making them into farmers would subdue them.**

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- The Long Walk of the Navajo (Hweeldi)

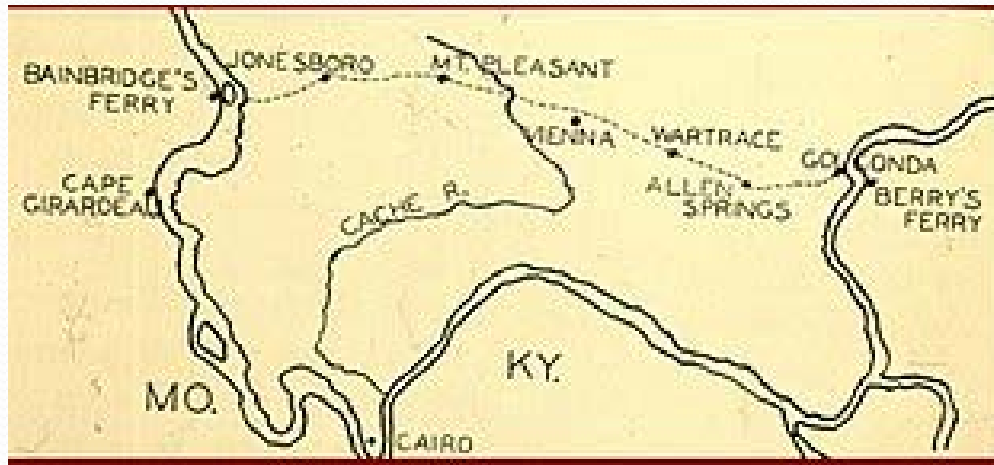


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- **Cherokee Trail of Tears – nu na da ul tsun yi**
 - **DATE:** 1838
 - **CAUSE:** Indian Removal Act of 1830 signed by and supported by President Andrew Jackson
 - **PURPOSE:** To clear former Native Americans (Cherokee) lands for white settlement and the gold “rush” in Georgia.
 - **STATISTICS:**
 - **NUMBER** forced to relocate: >16,000
who died along the way– 2000-6000

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The Cherokee Trail of Tears



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- Reflection - Written by a Navajo in 1865

“Cage the badger and he will try to break away from his prison and regain his native hole. Chain the eagle to the ground – he will strive to gain his freedom, and though he fails, he will lift his head and look up at the sky which is home – and we want to return to our mountains and plains, where we used to plant corn, wheat and beans.”

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Intergenerational Trauma

Intergenerational Trauma is a “cumulative and psychological wounding across generations resulting from massive tragedies,”

(Archibald, 2006).

Some Contributing Factors: Changes in Family Dynamics; ACCENT is on passing down trauma from GENERATION TO GENERATION.

Examples: Family members can still feel repercussions generations later; Generations passing down Child Abuse; Substance Abuse; Domestic Violence.

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What do these Cultural Trauma Types Have to do with Stigma?

❖ *Historical Trauma and Stigma?*

❖ *Intergenerational Trauma and Stigma?*

❖ *So, Is Cultural Trauma Stigmatizing or Vice Versa? ?*

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Where do Cultural Trauma, Learned Helplessness, and Stigma Intersect?

-Sometimes Suggested: Cultures Need to Raise Profile of their Suffering, so They Can Get Help.

-However, Concerns: “Raising Profile of Suffering Perpetuates Stereotypes , such that [Indigenous] Peoples are Considered Drains on the Health Care System,”

(2013) Ungar, Michael.

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Let's Look at Native American Traditional Culture today, for example:

- ❖ *Events (e.g., Dancing) can be Sacred or Social, or a Mixture of Both;*
- ❖ *Elders hold a High Position for Wisdom, Knowledge, Oral History;*
- ❖ *Spiritual Leaders Men or Women Ceremonial Leaders &/or Healers;*
- ❖ *Deep Respect for the Stages of Life and Death.*

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Let's Look at Hispanic/Latino Traditional Culture, for example:

- ❖ *Strong Family Values toward Nuclear and Extended Members;*
- ❖ *Respect Shown as Self Worth, & to Others, Community, Elders ;*
- ❖ *Politeness over Assertiveness, Confrontation, Direct Criticism;*
- ❖ *Family Hierarchy such that:*
 - ❖ *Father is Gallant , Honor Protector*
 - ❖ *Mother is Obedient , Spiritual Advisor.*

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“ We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope. ”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

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HOPE AND CHANGE

- ❖ Hope is necessary for those who struggle in the face of adversity.
- ❖ We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.
- ❖ Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness.
- ❖ Optimism is faith leading to achievement.

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As Practitioners in the Behavioral Health field:

- ✓ **Do We Believe that Hope is Possible?**
 - ✓ **Do We Believe that Change is Possible?**
- ✓ **Do We Believe that Recovery is Possible?**

- ✓ **Is Being Hopeless the Same as Being Helpless?**
 - ✓ **How Can We Instill Hope in Another?**

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HOW MAY WE HELP OTHERS INSTILL HOPE?

- ✓ **Later Research (1990s) by Martin Seligman . . .**
- ✓ **Studies Show Affirmations / Positive Self Talk May Create Hope and Healthy Optimism.**

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Learned Helplessness

- ✓ **Blames self when things go wrong**
- ✓ **Sees failure as evidence of worthlessness**
- ✓ **Devalues attributes and accomplishments**
- ✓ **Focuses on weakness and mistakes**
- ✓ **Loses motivation in the face of obstacles**
- ✓ **Increases stress and avoidance**
- ✓ **Feels overwhelmed and shut down**

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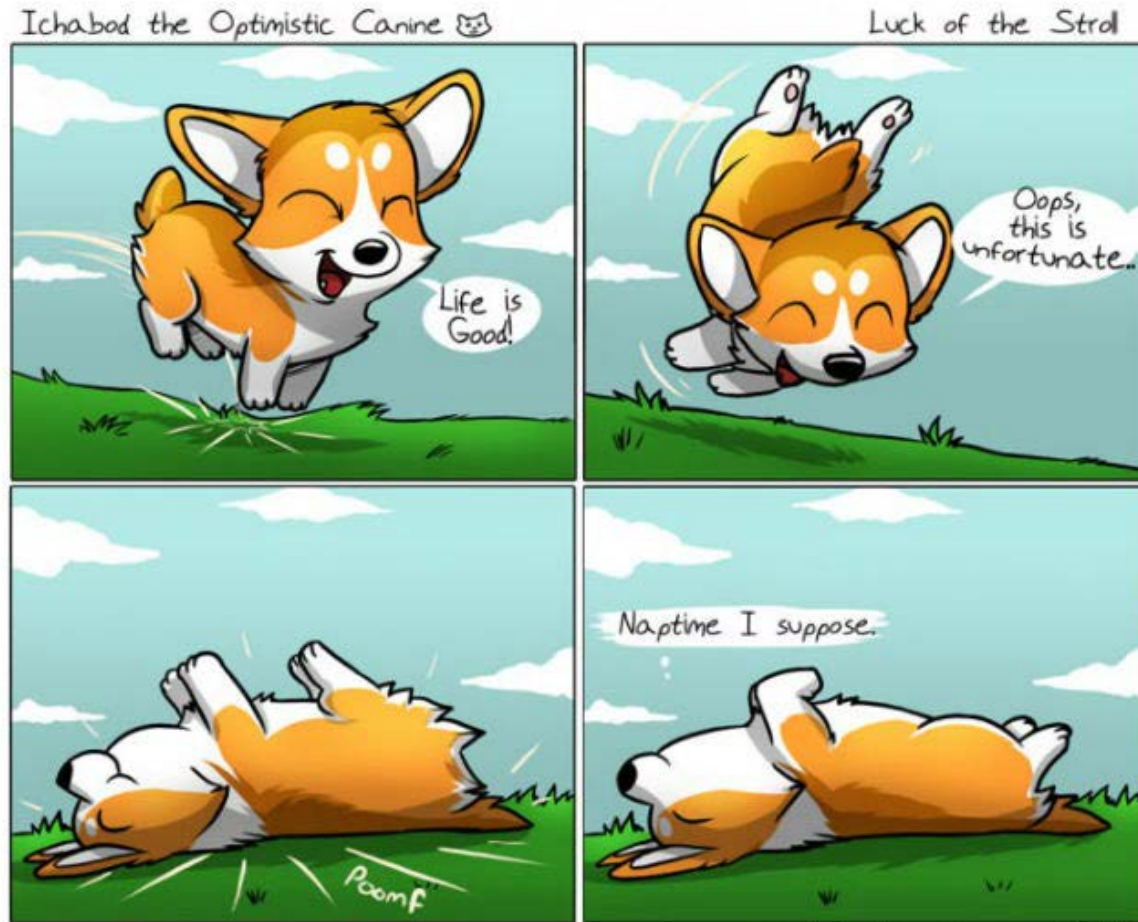


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Learned Optimism

- ✓ **Sees bad events as unlucky, unfortunate**
- ✓ **Sees failure as part of life**
- ✓ **Gives credit for attributes and accomplishments**
- ✓ **Focuses on strengths**
- ✓ **Maintains motivation to overcome obstacles**
- ✓ **Uses stress to push towards goals**
- ✓ **Works harder to find a solution**

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Example of Pessimist Belief:

Winning a game of racquetball:
“Today was just my lucky day.”

[Temporary, Not Permanent]

Getting a promotion:

“I worked hard on that project.”

[Specific, Not Pervasive]

Getting an “A” on a paper:

“The teacher was being lenient.”

[Personal; External]

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Example of Optimist Belief:

Winning a game:

“I play racquetball well.” **[Permanent; Positive]**

Getting a promotion:

“I am a valuable employee.” **[Pervasive; Universal]**

Getting an “A” on a paper:

“I did a good job on it.” **[Personal; Internal]**

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Thank You!

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