

Key Principle: Considering Culture

Family and child/youth's culture should be considered prior to establishing the action levels.



We should consider how cultural factors influence the understanding and expression of an individual's needs and strengths.

Learning about the person and family's culture begins with curiosity through asking questions, observing, and listening. These basic skills will help us to better serve the individual and family by understanding and learning from them.

Our own cultural lens is shaped by unique life experiences and events. We often think of race or ethnicity as defining one's culture or cultural group. However, each person's lived experience is personally unique. Keep in mind the complex multiple layers of life influence as well as the many variables that are part of someone's identity.

Cultural Humility, Responsivity, and Equity in our work

There is a power imbalance in our role as professional helpers because we are perceived as an expert on family and services. Helping professionals have a responsibility to understand and learn about how the child/youth and family's cultural diversity affects their experiences in life. **Cultural humility** encourages us to understand the value of different viewpoints that come with individuals and their family's different experiences. Once we understand who individuals and families are from a cultural perspective, we can be **culturally responsive** in our practice.

How can "Principle 4: Considering Culture" influence our ratings in the TCOM tools?

As we are creating relationships with children, youth, and families, we have to make sure we understand their stories and assess for needs and strengths in a culturally humble way. But relationships take time, and as we offer a comfortable space for families to trust us, we might receive new information or get a better understanding that can change our ratings.

This is important to remember as we are rating: Principle 4 helps us to better understand people and the meaning of their behavior; knowing the cultural context helps us to determine whether or not there is a need that could benefit from support or strength that could be useful if developed or built. We want to make sure we don't rate needs that aren't there, or that we omit strengths just because we're not familiarized with them in their cultural context.

Let's see one practice example:

Vignette: *Mabel is a 19-year-old who lives with her mother and two older brothers. She recently found out that her father, who lived in a different country, passed away a week ago. She has expressed an immense amount of grief and sadness as she couldn't say goodbye to him. Mabel has been going to therapy for a few years, and in her last session, she shared with her therapist that she has set up an altar to communicate with him every night. She is now reporting to her family and her therapist that last night, during the talk with her father, she could feel his presence in her room close to her.*

Question: How would you rate the item of psychosis?

Now, let's learn more about Mabel and her family

Vignette Continues: *As you get to know Mabel better, you learn that her family moved from Mexico City to the USA when she was 5 years old and she never met her father, who stayed in Mexico. You learn that in her family, there's a tradition that involves creating an altar called an "ofrenda," which honors dear people who have passed away by placing their belongings and preferred objects in a dedicated place in the home. Mabel understands her conversations with her dead father as prayers. As she grieves, this practice brings her peace and closure on the death of her father.*

Question: How would you rate her now, knowing this new information?

Summary



The path from cultural humility to cultural responsiveness is not always linear. It is marked by growth, setbacks, and ongoing self-assessment. Be open to feedback from your clients, peers, and supervisors, and embrace it as an opportunity for growth and improvement. Strive to create an environment where clients feel safe to express their cultural values and beliefs and empower them to actively participate in their own care.

As you continue your professional journey, let cultural humility and responsiveness be an integral part of your practice. Approach each child, youth, and family with an open heart, recognizing and honoring their unique cultural identities. Embrace the challenges and joys that come with cultural diversity, knowing that your commitment to cultural humility will improve outcomes for those you serve.

By incorporating this principle into your practice, you are contributing to a more inclusive and compassionate field for children, youth, and families!

Learn more: [Considering Culture Schoox Course.](#)