

The assigned reading for week 1 was chapter 1-2 from Journey across the life span by Elaine U. Polan & Daphne R. Taylor. The three points in these chapters that I believe will help me most in my career are anxiety (ch 1), incongruence (Ch2), and communication blockers and enhancers (ch2) such as giving advice or clarifying.

The word anxiety is thrown around so much in our culture that it was good to learn and understand another usage for it. The text defines anxiety as “the response to a stressful situation.” This definition seems to be more in line with the common usage for anxiety vs. the mental health definition that defines it more closely to fear and worry. The other important point for anxiety was one’s anxiety level (mild, moderate, or severe) can alter one’s momentary perceptions. While mild anxiety can sharpen perception, increased anxiety can decrease it causing someone to tune out what they consider less relevant. This is helpful to understand clients as they try to communicate. Having a sense of their level of anxiety can give clues to what is really going on for them.

Another important point was congruence and incongruence. Understanding that one’s non-verbal communication should match (or be congruent) with one’s verbal communication can give a therapist insight to the client thus prompting further clarification. For example if a client describes something as “fine” but their body language does not indicate that they agree with that statement, an intuitive therapist can ask clarifying questions to draw out the client’s true feelings.

The last important point was that “giving advice” is a communication blocker. As the oldest of nine, I tend to give advice a lot. Understanding that this makes it difficult for the client will be a helpful point to remember in the future.