MFT 603 Week 7 Three Points Tiffany Elliott

MCA Ch 4

Three points from this week's reading on clinical practice with clients to build their resilience through coping abilities as an intervention to process and live with ambiguous loss. Of particular interest to me was the author's use of a metaphor and example of trees miraculously surviving natural disasters are akin to a person surviving and even thriving following ambiguous loss. The author presents three examples of the trees that withstood terrible tragedies of ambiguous loss: the tree near the World Trade Center that survived the 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City, the Japanese bonsai that withstood the atomic bomb and was given to the United States' National Arboretum and the tree on the shores of Japan that withstood the tsunami in 2011. Working with clients in similar situations, and seeking the "ordinary magic" children often have of noticing an unusual way to see survival may provide a first step to a client suffering from ambiguous loss.

People have varying abilities and flexibility to bounce back and grow stronger and achieve an even higher level functioning following an increase of intense pressure and stress. Counselors need to be attuned to patterns of good, and bad, resiliency occurring in their patients to indicate if this behavior is helping or hindering the client's overall well-being. The author points to being cautious in noting reasons for resilient families such as being confronted by adversity and surviving due to racism or oppression, turning a blind eye rather than address a root cause requiring resilience such as spousal abuse or substance abuse, understanding some issues like homelessness

need to be extinct rather than be faced by resiliency, and understanding that people who suffer ambiguous losses like a natural disaster cope better with more concrete certainty and immediate answers and line of sight rather than resiliency. Counselors need to understand family and community sources and barriers of resilience such as a rebellious teen may be acting out because her mother is abusive which is also not a healthy resilient response.

In designing interventions with clients to build resiliency, the goal is to focus on ways that build hope to carry on. Some people, including children taught early on, have internal wiring and an ability to cope. People's resiliency is as diverse as their beliefs. For example, some people may gain strength and hope through Bible reading while others may find it through exercise such as ballet or hip hop which requires an active mind to perform the choreography.

A person who has suffered ambiguous loss does not predict the person will not be resilient. The book, Journey Across the Life Span noted temperament may have something to do with adjustment. A child who suffers ambiguous losses because of not having a nurturing family of origin does not predict the child will become a victim, depressed or anxious.

Clients can learn to build "good" resilience in many ways - by planning, organizing and accomplishing household and childcare tasks each day helps build the ability to do more each day, and staying on top of accomplishments does build confidence which is

clearly a significant parenting skill to use with children as they learn to develop and master their own goals and results. They need to fail sometimes to learn the lessons of life experience.

Clients can think about and be sure to build their community of support, whether near or far, in the same profession or industry or religious community, those groups in a crisis and recovery form supportive and reciprocal bonds that allow one another to carry each other through the difficult times.

Lastly, asking clients to draw a “family tree” of people who provide them psychological support is one of the best ways to encourage thinking about relationships and a circle of love in one’s life - past and present. Who they will call, or pray to or think about as they work to carry on through the loss of a multitude of ambiguous losses such as traditions, the deceased, careers, jobs, the rites of passage such as graduations. These are people in your life who live near, may not be a blood relative or not, a stepfamily or divorced or biological family member or not, and might be passed or alive. Bottom line, it’s who you feel loved and supported by and holds a deep presence in the client’s life who can help carry them through this difficult time.