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Abstract

Currently, we are living in very emotionally charged, politically correct times. Clients bring some emotional issues and concerns seeking reassurance. This paper will address a few of these issues in an attempt to clarify concerns and to validate the emotional concerns that clients often have.

Clients often present with some major issues, and what initially appear to be minor issues, but nevertheless, these issues are of concern to clients and may cause some apprehension, fear, guilt, anxiety and related emotional feelings. Often counselors will help to rationally, logically reasonably investigate these issues and concerns and provide some reassurance.

This paper will review a few of these concerns, although there are probably many more.

Are you a “deplorable”? Some clients may feel guilt that they have been summarily lumped into a group of people that were recently referred to as “deplorable”. This may have impacted their self-worth, self-concept, self-esteem and the like. Clients need to be reassured that this term was simply a scathing political term, used as a generalization and that it perhaps was uttered in a political rally and has no real meaning or relevance to the client who lives in either Hawaii or Alaska and is far removed from mainstream America. Indeed, the client may be a church going, deeply religious, spiritual individual and this needs to be related to them.

This person may be active in their community, they may coach a little league team or volunteer at the local hospital and this person is a genuinely honest, sincere person who is doing their best to be a father or mother or parent to their children.

Are you “responsible for slavery”? The client may have been born in 1950 or in the year 2000 and they were born into a culture that was in existence at that time. They are not responsible for what happened in 1750 or before they were born. They are not responsible for what their parents may have done, or their grandparents or great grandparents may have done. The individuals who fostered slavery, bought and sold and owned slaves have been dead now for centuries. Certainly, we honor those who fought in the Civil War, and those who have fought slavery both in this country and in other countries around the world (Wilburforce in England for example). But someone born in the year 2000 has not promoted what was transpiring in the time of Abraham Lincoln and before Lincoln’s time.

The COVID-19 crisis or pandemic was a virus that swept the

world. We have all been impacted by it- and there is no real apparent purpose of being angry toward the Chinese or the Chinese people, who probably had little if anything to do with the spread of the virus. Certainly, we all want to recover and get on with our lives and return to some sense of normalcy. But to persevere on perceived injustice is not a fruitful use of one’s time. In therapy, there is such a thing as catharsis, and we may want to discuss the exasperations and frustrations that we have felt. But at some point, we have to look to the future- to our goals and objectives or whatever we want to focus on and accomplish in the future. People need to find meaning and purpose in their lives- perhaps to help others, to work on a cause, to volunteer or mentor others, but for mental health practitioners, the search for meaning and purpose in life is a relevant one [1].

Radical highly charged emotional rantings are, well difficult to digest, especially in this pandemic where there is already much too much stress. We have all seen these individuals on television or on some You Tube channel ranting and raving about things that many of us have no control over. These individuals will always be with us, ranting and raving about space aliens, or taxes, or “the establishment” or marriage or some other topic. They sometimes have a soapbox to refer to- but at other times they are simply spewing their venom. Critical thinking is important here in this we need to help clients discern what is important to listen to and what is irrelevant trivial, insipid drivel.

Self- analysis- Each and every person knows what has transpired during the COVID-19 crisis. For some it has been the ending of a marriage, the loss of a job, or the frustration, exasperation and anger at having to wear a mask upon each

and every venture out of their homes and into a store. For others, they lost the ability to eat out and share a good meal with friends. For others, they were thrust into church services online and did not get to see their church family. Therapists need to listen, validate, be aware and also hypothesize what that client has been missing. For some- it may have been going shopping or to the movies- or a trip to their favorite coffee shop.

Anger- For some people the past year or so has been extremely frustrating, exasperating and downright difficult. The quarantine has given people a lot of extra time to watch the news and view politics- and exasperating event in an of itself. Many people are angry about the slanted or biased or fake or the selective news that is being portrayed on the airwaves. Certainly, censorship is another issues and terminology are an additional concern. Language also has resulted in anger as some individuals have changed terminology to confuse the general public. One example is “undocumented individuals” which is a fancy way of saying, “illegal immigrants”. Changing words and terms and constructs is problematic and, in a sense, a type of manipulation. We can call a hot dog a “boneless tubesteak” or a frankfurter- but this does not change what the object is in the long run.

Time lost, memories lost, good times with friends lost and all the emotional baggage that comes with all of this. Being home bound or on quarantine, or even worse ill with COVID-takes an emotional toll. Even worse, this is something that we have minimal control over. Life has been put on hold for some people and others have witnessed the loss of their jobs or business. For many people, their lives were empty already, and the COVID virus has taken yet another toll on their already threadbare lives.

Emotionality- During the past few months- emotions have been felt, feelings have been experienced, as some of us have lost loved ones, some have been separated from loved ones, and friends, and some have experienced a myriad of affective challenges, never before experienced and many have had difficulty coping with grief, loss and the overall challenges of Covid.

Pervasive Anxiety----In the current climate, there are on-going fears related to COVID. Some states still require a mask. Some planes mandate a mask. Some flights may require vaccination. Some people are still concerned about side effects of the vaccination. One hears about other countries and deaths from COVID and the newspapers talk about variants of the SARS-Corona-Covid virus and wonder what is on the horizon. Some people have recovered from the virus but hear about COVID-brain and the memory and cognitive problems that stem from it- forgetfulness, difficulty with retrieval. A good source for assistance here is an e-book done by the Amen Clinic (<https://www.amenclinics.com/ebook-covid-brain/>)

For others there is simply free-floating anxiety stemming from lost time and lost opportunities and for others the worry and

fear about catching up with lost wages. We seem to live in an age of anxiety, and it has gotten worse [3].

Suicide has become also increasingly prevalent. While we hope that as the crisis lessens and things return to what may be called “ normal” all, mental health practitioners need to be sensitive to the possibility of suicide. While some individuals indicate sadness and depression, there is always concern about suicidal attempts, “suicide by cop”, passive suicide via pills and overdose and a more active self-destructive suicide by driving one’s car into a tree at 100 miles an hour or self-mutilation or self- injurious behavior [2].

Summary and Conclusions

This paper has cursorily attempted to highlight some of the main social, emotional, and mental health issues that we currently face and will encounter in the near future as we return to some semblance of normalcy. Mental health and social workers need to be aware of these issues as well as other issues that may come to the fore in these tumultuous times.

References

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