

Chapter 56

Developing a Culture of Nonviolence Through Cultural Humility Professional Development: Cultural Humility Professional Development for Nonviolence

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ABSTRACT

Nonviolence is a way of being, one we should begin building in early childhood. Early childhood development centers and schools can and should play a critical role in cultivating the spirit of nonviolence through curriculum, program design, parent-teacher interactions, peer-to-peer role modeling, and every interaction with children. Early childhood education (ECE) can play a pivotal role in supporting attributional development of both teachers and families in cultivating the spirit of nonviolence. This intrapersonal and interpersonal development is essential for the creation and sustainability of a culture of nonviolence in ECE programs. In this chapter, the author examines nonviolent attributes at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and institutional level to create a culture of nonviolence from the inside out. Special attention is paid to the attribute of humility and how cultural humility principles and practices foster the skills of and commitment to nonviolence. Recommendations for promising practices and professional development are provided.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-7464-8.ch056

INTRODUCTION

Cultural humility can be described as a lifelong process of self-reflection; self-critique; and commitment to understanding and respecting different cultural points of view, and engaging with others humbly, authentically, and from a place of learning (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Tervalon and Murray-Garcia developed this concept while addressing disparities and institutional inequities in the field of public health care. Hunt (2001) captured the essence of this framework as follows: cultural humility does not require mastery of specific beliefs and behaviors supposedly associated with certain groups of people; rather, in the case of early childhood education (ECE), a respectful partnership should be developed with each child and their caregivers through the process of inquiry, encouraging the exploration of similarities as well as differences, and of goals and capacities. Hunt suggested that in Tervalon and Murray-Garcia's model, the most serious barrier to culturally appropriate engagement is not a lack of knowledge pertaining to any cultural orientation but the practitioners' inability to develop self-awareness or respect for diverse points of view. In the case of ECE, this is also most certainly true. In short, cultural humility is a stance—or a way of being in the world and in relationships—that encourages, supports, and helps facilitate the transformational possibilities of others.

This chapter draws on research grounded in a conceptual understanding of cultural humility and five fundamental literacy abilities that can jumpstart or maintain the transformational journeys guiding culturally humble practitioners (Neal, 2010). These five literacy abilities have been conceptualized variously in the literature (Kellett & Dalton, 2001, Neal, 2010; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998) but are presented here as conflict, dialogue, negotiation, inquiry, and reflection. They must be viewed as situated in the larger context of practitioners' personal histories, or life narratives, and influence how these individuals move toward deeper cultural humility. The five processes are used to support earlier life experiences of inclusion and nonviolence, and over time are integrated into a way of interacting with others and oneself. The primary objective of this chapter is to discuss these five processes and how related collective experiences, skills, and literacy abilities can inform ECE practitioners' approach to their practice in the early childhood field, with the families they support, as well as their life in general. Thus, while this chapter centers on the work of early childhood educators, ECE program administrators, and related support staff, it also is applicable to parents, caregivers, ECE faculty, and others.

BACKGROUND

First, it is important to distinguish between cultural humility and cultural competence as two approaches to ECE professional development that aim to create nonviolent-centered teaching and learning spaces through anti-bias and inclusive education. Cultural competency focuses on providing practitioners with culturally specific information about racial and ethnic minorities and includes the following four stages: cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, and cultural pre-competence (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). Cultural humility is a way of being with self, others, and the institutions we navigate. It asks not only that we assess our environments and engage them in a nonviolent and unbiased manner but also that we reflect deeply on who we are and how we show up, and the conditions we co-create that result in harm or reduce social harm, including both symbolic/structural and interpersonal violence (Blanchard, Yeh, Johnson, Schlierf, Dixon-Washington, & Lee, 2018; Vesely, Brown, & Mehta, 2017).

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