

Caron Gan

Well, I am of Chinese heritage and I was born in Canada, so I have a blend of two cultures, which I call, you know, I'm a Chinadian, so I've incorporated the values that I grew up with from my Chinese heritage, but growing up here I've adopted very western attitudes as well, but at the same time to people I look Chinese or I'm a visible minority and so people make assumptions just based on the way that I look and I use that to my advantage actually, when I'm trying to engage clients from other ethnocultural groups because often people from other groups will say to me, you know, the white people or people from western culture they don't think of family as the same, and I say yes, I know what you mean. And my guess is in your culture family is very important and maintaining family honor and saving face and respect for elders is something that you cherish in your family.

And these are values that are similar in my culture so when I say things like that I'm automatically engaging them in a different way of thinking so I use my culture to my advantage because the values that I share from my background are often very compatible with families from other cultures who have different ways of viewing illness, who have different ways of viewing disability, whose notion of family is very different, and whose sense of having to fix and do and the mastery over nature, mastery over our situations is very different.

So I use this to my advantage and I have not found my ethnicity to be a barrier actually. The only time it has been a barrier is working with somebody from the same culture. So sometimes we make assumptions that families will engage more with somebody from their own culture, but if there is a lot of shame, embarrassment, and stigma involved around having a family member with a disability they may prefer to work with somebody who is outside of their culture. So that's the only time that I've experienced some barriers it's when I've been working with somebody from the same culture versus other cultures, which is quite interesting.