“Consciousness raising” as a tool in domestic violence work

The personal is still political
Introductions

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And you....
What is Liberation Health?

Most basic idea

Personal troubles reflect cultural/political/social issues; therefore, individual problems are also collective problems.
Critical consciousness changes people’s perspective on their own pain/suffering/trouble; e.g. awareness of being part of a larger group, ability to see the larger issues shaping their own trouble.

Second big idea
Third big idea:

Action to change the world is “therapeutic;” individual change and social change are intrinsically connected.
Roots in Latin America and in feminist psychology and radical social work.

- Each sees individual suffering as shaped by oppression in a hierarchical social structure (social structures inevitably hierarchical).
- Each emphasizes three levels of change: personal, interpersonal and social/cultural.
- Each works against the assumption of micro OR macro; social action OR clinical practice.
Alyce

- 59 yr old Jamaican woman, came to US at age 12
- Formal education ended at grade 9, low literacy level
- Married at age 18 to Black US born man
- Describes entirety of marriage as abusive
“Traditional”
Interventions and Support

- Individual education and information
- Concept of internalized abuse
- Power and Control Wheels
- Attention to power differential in Advocate-Client relationship
"One look tells me he could hurt me again."

- Scared me all the time.
- Sometimes it's because he's physical, but it doesn't have to be.
- I'm always ready for him to come at me.
- Isolates me.
- Accuses me of having affairs with any man I come into contact with.
- "I am the man, you are just a woman."
- "I told him to get his head on straight."
- "I'm not as pretty or as smart."
- "I'm less of a person."
- "He makes me feel like a burden."
- "Always frustrated with me."

"He makes me feel like he hates me, but that I could never leave."

- Always walking on eggshells.
- I have to check what I say is before even speaking.
- Anything can set him off.
- "I'm short-tempered."
- "I'm not as angry as I used to be."
- "I'm not as easy to get angry."
- Always in my control.
- "I'm just not as angry."
- "I'm not as quick to do anything I don't like."

"No Respect"

"Fear & Shame"
Influence of Liberation Health

- Potency of group modality
- Collection of Writings - *Passages*
- Importance of action-taking
  *Courtroom Experience*
- Value of addressing whatever cultural and social forces the client finds important
Alyce’s Triangle

Personal:
- Years of marital abuse
- Low literacy & education
- Accented English
- Minimal employment
- Isolation

Institutional:
- No respect, fear and shame

Cultural:
- Anti-immigrant prejudices in school and courts
- Police response to calls for help
- Church and hospital as positive
- Traditional gender roles
- Domestic abuse seen as private matter
- Bounded nuclear families
- High value on literacy and earnings
- Racism
In your own advocacy work...

- Think of a client you have worked with experiencing oppression (racial, gender...)
- How could the triangle be helpful in identifying the social and cultural forces at play in your client’s life?
Your Client’s Triangle

- personal
- institutional
- cultural
Discussion

Questions?

Thoughts?

Reflections?
References

