

## **Staying Informed: The Key to Effective Multicultural Counseling**

**By Eleanor McCabe**

In a time where the news bombards us with a seemingly endless stream of bad news, a desire to disengage from it all is the most tempting solution. One could argue that as budding clinicians we are exposed to enough heavy, and at times, draining stories that keeping up with the toxic news cycle can simply be too much to handle. While on one hand I agree that obsessing over the news and the state of our planet, society, government, etc. has the potential to exacerbate graduate student's notoriously poor mental health, I argue that it is a necessary evil.

There are a multitude of reasons why it is important that graduate students actively seek to be informed about what is going on in the world outside of their programs. Firstly, though the light at the end of the graduate student tunnel seems far away, there will come a time when we are released back into the world outside. This mythical land has not stopped changing, adapting, struggling, etc. over the course of our programs, and if we have no idea of what has happened the last five years, it will be nearly impossible to be an active member of society. As clinicians it will be our role to advocate for our clients and understand how the world events are affecting their day to day lives, both of which will not be feasible without a working understanding of the bigger picture. In fact, our ability to disengage from the events happening around us during our programs is a reflection of privilege; our clients will not always have the option to ignore sweeping policy changes, events, and societal realities while focusing on their educations. Thus, our ability to provide real empathy and connect with our clients becomes compromised when we lose sight of what is affecting them in the global environment.

There will also come a time when we are the new leaders of psychology, APA, and beyond. We will be expected to continue the momentum of the field into social justice and advocacy for all members of society, regardless of identity. If we choose to ignore the events that have adverse effects on our clients, then we essentially ignore our ethical responsibility to improve their social conditions. Again, though it may seem far off to hold such positions of power, we must remain accountable on the day to day in both our professional and personal lives. At the end of the day we are citizens before we are clinicians, and it is our civic responsibility to care enough to be informed and to make our society a better place for all. We have the power to accomplish this goal through voting, advocacy, spreading awareness, and a variety of other pathways; we must accept such responsibility for the betterment of ourselves, our fellow citizens, and our clients.

That being said, engaging with the world events going outside of our programs does not need to be an "all or nothing" endeavor. It also does not need to be at the detriment to personal mental health. However, committing to a few articles a week, signing a petition here or there, a daily email highlighting the big news, and other attainable actions seems like a reasonable compromise. Personally, I enjoy getting my news from reliable, yet entertaining sources such as "the skimm" or late night talk show hosts. When the news becomes too upsetting I allow myself the space to disengage for a week or two to re-center myself until I am ready to dive back in. I hope that you reading this will commit to something similar, no matter how seemingly

“small”. I promise you it will improve your work as a clinician, and as an agent of change for society at large.

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