Cross cultural family assessment interview template

The following information provides a semi structured interview to be used when assessing families of NESB backgrounds. This allows a semi structured interview format ensuring you cover aspects of a culturally appropriate family assessment.

1. **Introductions**
   - Introduce yourself including professional background
   - Procedure for the interview, and time for the interview etc.,
   - Introduce the interpreter if present (including procedure for interpreting).

2. **Genogram**
   - Obtain a cultural genogram (Attachment 1)
   - Migration history (Attachment 2 provides additional questions)
   - Social/Ecogram (including community supports; religious affiliation/church supports)

3. **Reason for referral**
   - Obtain the each family members understanding for referral (why seek treatment now). Ask of those not present at interview as well (If X was here, what they would say were the reasons that......?)
   - What other professional resources have they sought (what are the outcomes of previous interventions)? Implications for current assessment/intervention
   - Goals/expectations for current intervention? (Are they the same or different for the different family members present and absent)?

4. **Background Information**

   Try to uncover any relevant background information that will help you to understand the **context and development of the problem**. Obtain information about the following:

   - Family structure, including extended family (local and overseas)
   - Impact of age (generational differences including values, beliefs, adherence to traditions)
   - Impact of social status (change from migration)
   - Gender differences
   - Religious affiliation (strengths and restraints for the individuals within the family); same or different for each family member
   - Areas of strengths and dysfunction
   - Motivation for change – check within the family
   - Capacity for change
   - Rigidity/flexibility of system and power structure
   - Organisation of the family

---

Copyright © 2014 by Clinical Supervision Services. All rights reserved. Permission granted to copy.
• Prejudices/stereotypes (within and outside the family)
• Coalitions, alliances and boundaries and hierarchy within the nuclear and extended family
• Family rules (explicit and implicit)
• Coping mechanisms
• Possible restraints to change (e.g., health, finances, legal)

Obtain the following

• Medical History
• Social History
• Current and past mental state
• Interpersonal/familial history (family history of health/mental illness)
• Cultural interpretation of the problem – expand and explore
• Level of impairment of functioning and intensity of distress within an interactional framework

5. Hypothesis

• Develop a hypothesis (therapeutic hunches) to help guide questioning (this may come from prior information given on referral) and/or from your past experience
• Why is the family presenting at this time? What might the ‘presenting problem’ be masking in terms of other problems the family may be experiencing?
• What is the ‘dominant story’ that has influenced the development and maintenance of this problem experienced by the family
• What specific questions might you ask that will help uncover influencing factors impacting on this family

6. Formulation

• Develop a conceptual understanding of the presenting concerns
• Formulate your understanding/diagnosis within an interactional context, considering the presenting client within their current family structure
• Note your formulation in a ‘working model’ that will guide intervention

7. Summary and Recommendations (reporting)

• This last section should be a brief summary of your therapeutic findings that will guide the referring person/agency to continue working with the individual and family
• It should offer a new frame of reference for understanding the presenting problem and what has lead to the development and maintenance of the problem for all those involved.
• Clearly articulate your clinical understanding of the current referral
• Clearly state your recommendations for future treatment
Attachment 1

Cultural Genogram

Template

The following questions should be considered when conducting a cultural genogram to aid your understanding of past, present and future influences on the family.

1. What was the migration pattern for this family?
2. Nature of immigration (political refugee, choice)?
3. Expression of oppression (do different family members internalise or externalise their feelings)
4. Relationship between group’s identity and ancestry?
5. Significance of race, skill colour etc.,
6. What is the role in this family for religion and spirituality?
7. Gender roles and how these are expressed implicitly and explicitly?
8. Prejudices/Stereotypes (within the family, outside of the family)
9. Role of names (do family members ‘carry the family name’? What expectations do this place on the person?)
10. Occupational roles (valued/devalued). Have the occupational roles changed due to migration?
11. How is the family defined in their cultural group?
12. How are outsiders in general and mental health professionals defined?
13. How are the organizing principles of this group shaped by the family?
14. What expectations do the family have on you?
15. Is there more than one culture of origin with thin family?
16. What impact does the entire above have on you as a therapist working with this family/couple?
Attachment 2

Immigration and Acculturation

While a number of these issues will be covered in the cultural genogram questioning under the heading ‘migration history’, these additional questions can aid your understanding of the influences on the family’s immigration and acculturation.

1. How relevant is the sociocultural context for the members of the family? Does it differ between members of the family?

2. Are some of the family members more comfortable with their migration than other members? What are the influences that make this difference?

3. Was all the family involved in planning its immigration? Did any member make particular sacrifices in their move? Who was in favour? Who was against? Who was left behind? Whom did the family bring?

4. Are any members ‘frozen in time’ which impact on belief systems (of country of origin and those of the adoptive country)?

5. Does the host country meet their expectations?

6. How much did they know about the adoptive country?

7. How successful was the family in their country of origin? Any experienced economic loss?

8. Are the members of the family at all phases on acculturation?

9. Are there any ‘polarizations’ within the family: old country/new country? How does the family deal with these differences?

10. How have the family members been able to mourn the loss of country?

11. What is the ethnic allegiance of the members of the family? (Identity and loyalty)

12. How does the family discuss differences among them?

13. What can be seen as the strengths and constraints of immigration for the family?