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Wk 4(31) discussion I have always done best in an environment that was friendly and feels safe. The friendliness of a space depends on the way it looks. If there are plants and books around, it feels cozy and it looks inviting, then it makes me feel safer than if it is a cold and austere environment. The therapist or job interviewer is also friendly. This individual smiles, builds rapport by asking about me, listens well and makes sure that they understand by asking questions if necessary. Beyond plants and books, I agree with Pressly and Heesacker (2001) in that the counseling environment should include warm colors so that it carries the warmth throughout the time that you spend in counseling. They also suggest that the furniture in the room should be inviting, which I agree.

I think that the office of a therapist should reflect their own personality in some way and that books and paintings on the wall will give the client a "first impression" that will either make them want to stay or leave immediately. Carl Rogers said that listening was the most important skill that a counselor could have and I believe that listening can build instant rapport. Many times people who come to counseling have not been listened to and by listening; the therapist has brought them immediately into the space. Rogers linked listening with empathy, according to *Intentional Interviewing and Counseling*, and I feel that this does show empathy to the client. When I have been interviewed for anything, a person who listens intently makes me feel as though they understand me and want to get to know me better. This is a skill that I believe makes up a majority of the counseling profession. I think that when the environment matches the counselors attitude and personality that it is easier for a client to stay focused and be at peace to share what they need to share in the counseling relationship.

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Although most counselors would want to believe that they do not have biases, I know that we all have them. I think that much of my bias comes from people that I do not know well or who go against my moral code. One of the groups that I have had to learn more about is those who are from the Middle East. Because they have been so much a part of the challenges that we face with the War in Iraq and because they have been accused of being terrorists, it is difficult to work with this client because I am never sure what they are really thinking. I am always hesitant to approach an individual who looks like they are from the Middle East because of this bias. If I felt extremely uncomfortable I would refer this person to someone else, especially in the event that I thought I could not be of service to them appropriately. In order to get past this bias, I would want to remember that each client is different and that it is important to "examine the information from the perspective of a counselor endorsing a different theoretical orientation (Morrow and Deidan, 1992, p. 572).

Another bias I have is with those people who are very religious and who think that their religion is the only one that is "right." I feel that everyone is entitled to their beliefs and when someone is pushing only one belief system, this is wrong. I have a challenge with these types because of past experience with them and this always comes up in the face of talking with this type of person. I think that fundamental attribution error may be a part of this bias for me. In order to it, I would make sure that I had others around me who I could talk to in order to get through working with this person.

The environment can be a problem if there are colors that are "bad" colors to some cultures or if it appears to be too flowery for some. It could also be

difficult for people if there were certain smells that were offensive (like some incense).

References

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Pressly, P. K., & Heesacker, M. (2001). The physical environment and counseling: A review of theory and research. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 79(2), 148-160. Retrieved September 27, 2009, from Academic Search Premier database. (AN 4351144).