CHAPTER

16

Strengthening Family Relationships (Session 11 of the Treatment Manual)

Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage. ***Lao Tzu (Philosopher and Poet, Founder of Philosophical Taoism and author of Tao Te Ching; 5th–6th Century BCE)***

This session focuses on strengthening family relationships. This particular topic was included in the adapting CBT for Chinese Americans treatment manual because many clients from Asian heritage backgrounds seek help for parent–child relationship difficulties. These problems are particularly salient among immigrants because in addition to normative developmentally related issues that family members typically must work through, acculturative forces and immigrant-related stressors shape and influence family relationships and dynamics. Inclusion of this topic is an important cultural adaptation.

However, because many clients do not have children or did not come into treatment to work on parent–child difficulties, some clients can skip Session 11 and revisit one of the previous sessions that may be more pertinent to their help-seeking goals and where they may benefit from additional practice. The treatment manual provides the following notification: This is a flexible family-focused parent–child module. If you are having difficulties with your child(ren)/parent(s), then you should complete this session immediately after Session 5. If you are not facing difficult parent–child family issues, then skip this module and tell your therapist what you would like to work on during Session 11. You can also reflect upon what you have learned in some of the previous sessions and try to apply it to the current problems you are facing.

For those with significant parent–child difficulties, this session should be implemented earlier in the treatment program. For example, if parent–child problems are one of the primary stressors in the clients' life, therapists should incorporate Session 11 directly after Session 5 (Practicing Behavioral Strengthening: Improving Your Communication Skills). The rationale for this flexible implementation is that Session 5 focuses on improving communication, and much of this session also focuses on practicing communication skills to resolve disagreements in family relationships. Assuming a 12-session treatment model, when Session 11 is implemented directly after Session 5, all other sessions are then pushed back one session.

Outside of a clinical trial treatment program, which has more strictures because of research requirements, Session 11 can also be utilized separately from the rest of the treatment manual and as a targeted psychoeducational session that focuses on parent–child relations. Specifically, this session can be used as a standalone supplement for parents and children when they are in family therapy, or the session can be used with parents or children separately when they are in individual therapy. This session can also be used with children or adolescents during their developmental years or after the children become adults. Specifically, many adult children of immigrant parents continue to have difficulties communicating with and having positive relations with their parents and could benefit from this session. For those clients who do not have children and where continued practicing of communication skills may not be a particularly salient issue in treatment, then spending more time on therapy closure may be beneficial. This is especially important for clients with abandonment issues,

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codependency, separation anxiety, and other clinical issues where spending multiple sessions addressing the end of the treatment program may be needed. The goals of Session 11 include:

- Weekly check-in and review of take-home exercises;
- Understand immigration's impact on parent–child relations;
- Understand acculturative family distancing (AFD) and how it relates to your family;
- Understand how to be a better parent or child;
- Learn to get along despite differences in cultural values;
- Strengthen your family communication;
- Practice communication skills to resolve disagreements;
- Complete family strengthening exercises before next session.

These session goals fall within the following chapter goals:

- Continue to consolidate gains (weekly take-home exercises and practice)
  - Weekly check-in and review of take-home exercises
- Provide psychoeducation and address culture-specific phenomena
  - Understand immigration's impact on parent–child relations
  - Understand AFD and how it relates to your family
  - Understand how to be a better parent or child
- Skills development and improving family functioning
  - Strengthen your family communication
  - Learn to get along despite differences in cultural values
  - Practice communication skills to resolve disagreements
- Complete family strengthening exercises before next session.

CHAPTER GOAL #1: CONTINUE TO CONSOLIDATE GAINS (WEEKLY TAKE-HOME EXERCISES AND PRACTICE)

Weekly Check-In and Review of Take-Home Exercises

Similar to previous sessions, clients are asked to talk about their week with their therapist and to review their take-home exercises. Therapists should ask clients whether they were able to complete their emotional strengthening "climbing the mountain" exercise while focusing on the principles of everyday healthy living. They should discuss whether the exercise was beneficial, and if it was not, they should discuss the reasons and troubleshoot the barriers. In addition, therapists query the clients on what would help them feel better and help the clients problem solve and develop concrete therapeutic skills. If the exercise was beneficial, therapists discuss these benefits to help reinforce utilization of emotional and cognitive strengthening practices and exercises.

CHAPTER GOAL #2: PROVIDING PSYCHOEDUCATION AND ADDRESSING CULTURE-SPECIFIC PHENOMENA

Chapter 3 of this book discusses the differences between etic and emic phenomena. Etic phenomena are culture-universal (eg, people of all cultures typically celebrate holidays, have some type of writing system, and mourn the passing of loved ones). Emic refer to culture-specific methods in which culture-universal phenomena are expressed, experienced, and conducted. There may be culture-specific emics that are not necessarily culture-universal, or that may affect different cultures and different proportions. For example, the culture of immigration for a particular ethnic immigrant group is very different from the culture of that same group in their country of origin. Immigrants also experience acculturative and linguistic stressors that nonimmigrants do not experience. Domain 6 of the Psychotherapy Adaptation and Modification Framework (PAMF) addresses these culture-specific issues that are prominent in immigrant and ethnic minority groups.

For therapists to be culturally competent, they must learn about culture-specific issues that may be affecting the populations that they work with. Understanding and addressing these issues in treatment is essential to culturally adapting therapy. If therapists are not aware of these issues, they may lose the opportunity to earn the

client's trust, and clients could also disengage from therapy if they feel that the therapist does not understand the problems they face. This is a common complaint among ethnic minorities and immigrants seeking help. Moreover, for clients who are unaware of culture-specific issues that may be affecting their lives, these issues may never be addressed in therapy if the therapist is not conscientiously aware of them. Specifically, clients may not know what issues are affecting them, and increasing their awareness is an essential goal of culturally adapted treatments. As treatment providers, we cannot expect clients to understand all of the issues that are affecting their mental health. It is not their responsibility to teach us about the culture-universal and culture-specific issues that are affecting them. Many of them simply do not know and are counting on the therapist to learn what factors are impacting their lives.

One of the goals of Session 11 is to help therapists and clients understand some of the culture-specific stressors that may affect immigrant family relationships. There are a multitude of culture-specific factors that affect ethnic minority individuals and families. For example, different kinds of racism (ie, overt, covert, and internalized) are culture-specific issues that impact many people of color in the United States. When working with low-income African American communities, understanding how poverty, drugs, gangs, and single-parent households affect family relations can be an important target for intervention. When working with American Indians, understanding genocide, postwar colonization, and the intergenerational transmission of trauma are important areas that need to be addressed. When working with Asian American and Latino immigrants, understanding how acculturative and linguistic stressors affect family relations is critical to improving their emotional well-being.

Understand Immigration's Impact on Parent–Child Relations

In this section, the manual discusses culture-specific challenges that immigrant families face. Although immigrants may experience similar stressors as those experienced by Asians in Asia or by more acculturated Asian Americans, they may also experience challenges and stressors that are specific to recent immigrants. Some of these challenges are individual and related to personal adjustment. Others are family-related and affect family relationships and the overall mental and physical health of the family. The manual begins with the discussion of AFD, or the distancing that occurs between parents and children as a result of (1) communication and linguistic difficulties and (2) cultural value differences and incongruences (Fujimoto & Hwang, 2014; Hwang, 2006a, 2006b; Hwang & Wood, 2009; Hwang, Wood, & Fujimoto, 2010). Highlighting culture-specific issues such as AFD is an important cultural adaptation and is part of Domain 6 of the PAMF.

AFD is a more proximal and problem-focused conceptualization of parent–child acculturation-related challenges than general measures of the acculturation gap, which tend to be overly broad, offering little insight into areas to target for clinical intervention. AFD and its core domains are hypothesized to increase over time and lead to distancing between parents and youth, thereby increasing risk for family conflict. Family conflict, in turn, increases risk for depression and other mental health problems. The degree to which AFD influences the family is expected to vary depending on the characteristics and circumstances of the family (eg, age, generational status, linguistic fluencies, and conditions of immigration).

For example, parents and children who were born outside of the United States and have spent significant time in their country of origin might evidence fewer cultural differences, and may also be able to better communicate because they are capable of fluently speaking their language of origin. For families whose parents were born outside of the United States and whose youth were born and raised in the United States, there may be greater differences in English and Asian heritage language fluencies, which ultimately affect family members' ability to communicate and develop a strong emotional connection. Moreover, given the differential context in which parents and children were raised, they are also likely to possess differences in cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes toward a variety of important topics. Cultural value differences can also affect communication styles and expectations. These differences can set the stage for increased family conflict, which in turn increases risk for mental health problems such as depression.

Research on AFD has found that AFD is related to higher psychological distress and greater risk for clinical depression among Asian American and Latino college students, with family conflict mediating this relationship (Hwang & Wood, 2009). Specifically, AFD increases risk for family conflict, which in turn increases risk for mental health problems. In addition, research has found that greater AFD is associated with higher depressive symptoms and risk for clinical depression for Chinese American high school students and their mothers, which is also mediated through family conflict (Hwang et al. 2010). Greater mother–child heritage enculturation discrepancies have been found to be associated with greater mother and child AFD. Mainstream acculturation discrepancies

and language gaps between mothers and youths were not significantly associated with mental health outcomes. This underscores that it is not the acculturation gap itself that is the primary problem. Specifically, every immigrant family experiences an acculturation gap, but not every immigrant family has problems. It is important to understand that the more proximal factors, such as those identified by AFD, are the real culprit and can be targeted for intervention (ie, reducing family conflict by learning how to negotiate cultural value differences and communicate more effectively). For case study illustrations of these cultural-clinical issues, please see Hwang (2006a).

When introducing AFD to the client, the manual attempts to use less of an academic and more or a lay person's voice. For example, when discussing cultural value differences, parents and children growing up in different cultural environments is normalized and introduced as a factor that contributes to misunderstanding and family conflict. Differences in beliefs regarding what a person should study, when they can date, and even what it means to be a good child or parent can lead to disagreements. Therefore, learning how to effectively communicate and negotiate these discrepancies are important for good family relations.

The manual also provides a brief description of how communication problems can lead to parent–child relationship problems. These problems can be the result of differences in primary and secondary language fluency. For example, many immigrant parents speak their Asian heritage languages better than English. Children who are born in the United States or who immigrate at an early age eventually become more fluent in English, and may encounter some difficulty in expressing themselves in their Asian heritage languages due to less frequent ethnic language usage and less formal linguistic schooling. This leads to problems in parent–child language fluency mismatch. These issues are influenced by how old parents and children are when they immigrated.

The manual also discusses how difficult it is for immigrant parents and their children to communicate due to other communication difficulties that may or may not be influenced by language fluency. For example, there may be culturally different strategies in the usage of guilt to induce behavioral change, differences in how much each culture focuses on pragmatic advice versus emotional support, and how direct and indirect people from different cultures are in giving guidance and providing suggestions. Not being able to communicate effectively increases risk for misunderstanding and family conflict. Moreover, it also decreases the sharing of experiences and weakens emotional bonding.

Finally, this session of the manual also discusses how AFD is a real phenomenon and points out that its impact has been documented through empirical research. Families should not focus on blaming each other for not understanding or not agreeing with each other's cultural beliefs and value systems, especially since these differences are natural and a product of growing up in different cultural environments. Instead, families should make attempts to develop empathy and understanding for why family members think, feel, and act in the ways that they do. Practicing effective communication is the key to improving family relations and clients are asked to focus on learning how to communicate effectively and flexibly to strengthen emotional bonds and understanding, while reducing emotional distance and conflict.

Understand AFD and Your Family

In this in-session discussion, therapists and clients discuss how AFD has influenced their family relationships. Clients are asked to discuss differences in parent–child cultural values and how growing up in different cultural environments has influenced their thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and values. Clients are asked about how growing up in American culture is different from being raised Chinese. Clients are also asked whether there are differences in the way Asians and Americans communicate.

Parents are provided with the opportunity to discuss whether or not they are having difficulties communicating with their children. Conversely, children of immigrant parents who are now older are also asked whether or not they have communication breakdowns with their parents. Clients are asked whether different fluencies in English and their Asian heritage language have affected their ability to communicate with family members. Specifically, immigrant parents may be more fluent and feel more comfortable speaking in their Asian language; whereas, children who grew up in the United States may be more fluent in expressing themselves in English. Although basic and instrumental concepts may be easier to express when a person is less linguistically fluent, deeper emotional communication is much more difficult and requires greater linguistic fluency. Specifically, discussing feelings, developing an emotional bond, and avoiding miscommunications can be much more difficult when a person is not formally educated and fluent in a particular language. Many Asian heritage children compensate for their lack of ethnic language fluency by mixing languages, also known as Chinglish

(Chinese–English mix), Japlish (Japanese–English mix), and Konglish (Korean–English mix). Clients are asked how they might address the impact that AFD has on their family. Therapists and clients work together to brainstorm solutions.

Understand How to Be a Better Parent or Child

This in-session discussion is a cultural adaptation of therapy because it attempts to address an issue that pertains to immigrant Asian heritage groups. Specifically, there may be cultural differences in what it means to be a good child or parent across cultures. These discrepancies are related to differences between Western and Asian concepts of filial piety (eg, the duty and obligation to respect, honor, sacrifice, and take care of one's parents). Understanding differences in cultural beliefs is part of Domain 3 of the PAMF.

Depending on whether you are working with the parent or the child, the in-session discussion can start by first asking clients about what they believe are the characteristics of a good parent or child in their culture of origin. They can then discuss what the characteristics of a good child or parent are in US culture. Clients also are asked what parent and child behaviors are inappropriate in various cultures. In addition, they are asked how they might need to adjust their parenting style or how they might better treat their parents in order to improve family relations. This section also provides a listing of the top five mistakes made by immigrant parents, as well as the top five mistakes made by children growing up in the United States.

The top five mistakes made by immigrant parents include:

1. Not understanding how immigration has an impact on their family.
2. Criticizing their children too much, overusing guilt-inducing parenting techniques, and comparing their children to other children.
3. Not being verbally and physically affectionate enough toward their children who are growing up in the United States.
4. Focusing too much on academics, work, and finances, while neglecting developmental and social needs of the family.
5. Being too controlling or overprotective.

The top five mistakes made by children growing up in the United States include:

1. Not understanding how immigration has an impact on their family.
2. Not showing their parents that they appreciate and respect them.
3. Not understanding cultural differences in how parents express caring.
4. Not learning enough about their culture of origin.
5. Focusing too much on their individual needs and not enough on family roles and responsibilities. Not taking care of their parents when they get older.

Clients are asked to reflect on whether or not they identify with any of these mistakes, think about the individual and cultural reasons for falling into these traps, and discuss why these mistakes can potentially have a negative impact on family relationships. They are also asked to engage in a discussion about how to address these specific issues so that they can strengthen their family relationships. Therapists also discuss with clients normative parent–child conflict, as well as conflicts that may be influenced by cultural, immigration, and contextual issues. They are reminded that understanding these issues will help them more effectively navigate and resolve family problems. Therapists can also integrate Asian quotes that may resonate with the client. For example, Gautama Buddha stated, "True love is born from understanding." Clients feel more equipped and hopeful that change will come when they feel more educated and understand the issues involved.

CHAPTER GOAL #3: SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVING FAMILY FUNCTIONING

The next section of the manual focuses on several strategies to improve communication skills training and strengthen family relationships. Although understanding normative development issues that impact family relationships is important, consideration of cultural and linguistic issues related to immigration is also crucial. However, understanding alone is not enough, and clients need to focus on developing concrete skills in order to

make significant changes in their lives. Clients can also be reminded that learning these skills is very important because they need to be able to role model healthy and effective communication. Many different cultures have quotes that are similar to the American quote "The apple doesn't fall too far from the tree." They all focus on the fact that children are likely to take on the characteristics and behaviors of their parents. For example, Koreans have a proverb, "Beans come out from where beans are planted, and padd (red beans) come out from where red beans are planted." (pronounced Kong simeundae kongnago, pat simeundae pat nanda in Korean "콩 심은데 콩 나고, 팥 심은데 팥난다").

Strengthen Your Family Communication

In this section, clients focus on understanding and practicing different methods and skill sets for strengthening their communication skills. This section reviews many of the skills that were taught in previous sessions and discusses additional strategies that may be beneficial to improving relationships and breaking conflictual cycles. Therapists and clients should review all of the techniques below before practicing this skill set so that they can choose the strategy that resonates with them the most. Communication skills techniques presented are described below.

Practicing Good Communication Skills

Clients are reminded of various communication skills and techniques that they learned in Session 5 and other areas of the manual. These techniques include using the "climbing the mountain" technique to productively improve communication, using "nonverbal communication with supportive actions" to help others feel understood, utilizing "active listening and reflective empathy," and engaging in "frame switching" or "putting oneself in other people's shoes." These strategies help increase emotional understanding and reduce social conflict, which in turn helps people feel more understood and become less defensive.

Using Healthy Communication Styles

Therapists and clients review the characteristics of healthy communication styles. They also discuss the negative consequences of utilizing passive, aggressive, or passive-aggressive communication techniques. They discuss how and why their emotions drive these maladaptive communication strategies (eg, defense mechanisms), and underscore how healthy communication can increase relationship effectiveness and prevent problem development.

Being More Affectionate and Expressive Toward Your Child

Being more affectionate and expressive toward children who grew up in the United States is an important adaptation that immigrant parents need to learn in order to help their children feel more loved and cared about. This is not to say that instrumental methods of showing support and love (eg, cooking meals, asking them to remember their jacket, and providing financial support) are not important. Rather, because children growing up in United States are exposed to Western ways of receiving affection, parents may need to make some compromises to better meet their children's needs, especially when problems develop. Conversely, children of immigrant parents also need to understand cultural differences in expression when trying to improve their relationships with their immigrant parents when conflicts and differences in expectations arise.

Both parties may benefit from culturally adapted therapeutic strategies. For example, I developed a metaphor called the "cultural-linguistic interpretation box" when translating and deciphering the meaning of various actions across cultural and linguistic contexts (see Hwang, 2011, for further discussion). This clinical tool can help clients understand the motivational issues behind different methods of communication, but also to interpret it in a less critical and less judgmental manner. For example, when parents make a nutritious traditional meal for their children, children who feel unloved may benefit from using the "cultural-linguistic interpretation box" to understand that the preparation of the food itself is an instrumental method of communicating "I love you" in many Asian heritage cultures. Helping youth reframe why their parents don't say that they love them verbally and understanding other expressions of care is an important focus of culturally adapted therapies.

In addition, parents may also need to engage in language switching (ie, switching to English rather than using their Asian heritage language) when telling their children that they love them, because the word "love" in many Asian heritage languages is not expressed in parent–child relationships, only in romantic relationships. This is what I call the "I love you" problem. For example, in Mandarin Chinese, the words "Wo Ai Ni" or "I love you"

is not typically said to children; otherwise, it would sound odd or perhaps even incestuous. These linguistic issues are important for the therapists to comprehend because lack of understanding can potentially fracture the therapist–client working alliance. Understanding linguistic issues is important in tailoring treatments for Asian heritage populations.

For example, if therapists suggest that their immigrant parent clients tell their children they love them, without highlighting this linguistic incongruency, it may make clients feel uncomfortable or undermine the therapist's credibility. Some parents may feel like the therapist is telling them to do something inappropriate, become confused because linguistically it doesn't make sense, and/or feel like the therapist lacks cultural understanding or is culturally incompetent. Teaching clients to language switch can be especially beneficial because it makes it possible to make these statements without sounding linguistically off. It also helps youth get their needs met. Many Asian heritage clients do not have a good understanding of these cross-cultural linguistic and cultural nuances, and are relying on the therapist to educate them about these processes. Therefore, it is the job of the culturally competent therapist to implement these cultural adaptations, not the responsibility of the client to educate the therapists when they are the ones seeking help and trying to understand what is affecting their families.

Doing Something Different

This is a critical concept in problem-solving and solution-focused therapies. If we are not getting the desired results from repeatedly engaging in the same behaviors, we need to break the vicious cycle and do something different. In the West, Albert Einstein stated, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." The ability to do something different to break negative cycles and improve outcomes is very important. Clients are asked not to do the same thing over and over again because it is not likely to lead to different results. They are asked to try thinking, speaking, and behaving in different ways. For example, instead of criticizing somebody for not doing something correctly or taking too long, letting the person know that it is okay and to take their time may help reduce defensiveness and better support them in completing the task.

Otherwise, too much criticism may increase the likelihood that they will shut down or become emotionally paralyzed. Instead of not saying anything when something bothers you, respectfully letting people know how you feel could help you get your needs met. This is especially important because saying nothing is not likely to help you achieve the desired outcome. Instead of frowning all the time in the hopes that other people will care about you more, try smiling more and being happy in order to get the emotional love that you need from others. That is, sometimes we have to do the opposite of what we instinctually feel because those behaviors repeatedly lead us to the same outcome and are likely to be unproductive defense mechanisms. For those who would like to read more about this topic, a great book for breaking these cycles is called *Do One Thing Different: And Other Uncommonly Sensible Solutions to Life's Persistent Problems* (O'Hanlon, 1999).

Going Home and Telling the People You Care About How Much You Appreciate Them

Helping people feel cared about and appreciated is an important part of strengthening emotional connections and trust. Clients are asked to show caring and appreciation toward others to improve relationships, decrease conflict, and increase the likelihood that their own needs will be met. It is essential for a culturally competent therapist to understand how appreciation and communication of caring can vary across cultures. Many Asian heritage cultures focus on nonverbal methods such as cooking a meal or giving a gift to show care and appreciation. Moreover, although the word "appreciation" exists in many Asian heritage languages, it is not utilized in the same manner as in many Western languages. People do not say "I appreciate you" in the same way that it is expressed in the West. Appreciation is often shown through action and buying gifts or doing favors such as bringing over food. This is what I call the "I appreciate you" problem, which can also benefit from the cultural-linguistic interpretation box.

Because of these cultural and linguistic differences, therapists may need to work with children to help them understand these linguistic nuances. Therapists can help children of immigrant parents comprehend Asian cultural concepts of caring. At the same time, therapists can also help reduce family conflict and increase emotional bonds by helping parents be more flexible in their parenting practices and methods of showing caring (ie, language switching to English and verbally saying, "I appreciate you" or "I care about you"). Therapist can have a discussion with the client about retaining cultural values and methods of expression, while utilizing cross-cultural and cross-linguistic methods for doing something different. A focus on flexibility and effectiveness can better help them achieve their goals.

Learn to Get Along Despite Differences in Cultural Values

It is normative for children and parents to possess differences in cultural beliefs and values. Specifically, parent–child disagreements are normal and expected, and naturally occur during identity development and maturation. However, immigration and ethnic identity issues set the stage for more profound differences, thus increasing the risk for problem development. When parents and children exhibit such differences, rather than focusing on what is right and wrong, helping clients negotiate and become more accepting of these differences is important. Moreover, a primary emphasis on relationship effectiveness, flexibility, understanding, and being respectful of each other's beliefs is vital to healthy family relationships.

Many parents want their children to learn about and retain their ethnic heritage beliefs and values. However, because immigrant children grow up in a different cultural context, trying too hard to force them to change can sometimes lead to adverse reactions and outcomes that are opposite from what is desired. Bicultural children often have many opposing forces that push and pull on them, and where they have to make difficult decisions on what to retain and what to compromise on. In these situations, it may be more effective to focus on trying to express your thoughts and feelings, explaining why you want your children to practice these traditions, and not forcibly criticizing and imposing judgments to help preserve family relations. It is important to understand that people are more amenable to changing their positions when they are treated in a respectful manner.

Many Asian heritage families encounter these immigration-related problems, and many children feel as if they cannot relate to their parents or become intensely angry and disconnect from their parents, resulting in little to no contact because these difficulties are not worked out. Clients are asked to "respond" to each other and to engage in "healthy communication." When pertinent, they are also asked to examine verbal and nonverbal aspects of their passive, aggressive, or passive-aggressive communication styles, and to think about more effective communication strategies. During times of disagreement, clients are asked whether they want to respond to their children in a way that is beneficial or in a manner that makes relationships worse. This cultural adaptation helps clients weigh the advantages and disadvantages, and underscores their goals, as well as the consequences for continuing to be inflexible in the way they handle various situations. They are asked to brainstorm strategies and ways of dealing with disagreements that would be most effective and relationship-saving for them and for their families. They are also asked what the implicit and explicit rules are in their families, and which are the most important to adhere to. Making sure that these rules are clear to everyone, and that they are reasonable, fair, and culturally balanced according to the cultural values of both parties is essential to navigating these acculturation-related problems. Clients can also be reminded of quotes that reflect Asian cultural values. For example, there is a Chinese proverb that states, "A family in harmony will prosper in everything." Moreover, there is also a Chinese saying that states that one hand can't clap and still make sounds (pronounced yī gè bāzhang pāi bù xiǎng in Mandarin Chinese "一個巴掌拍不響"). They are asked to work together and understand that cooperation and teamwork will help them achieve their goals.

Practice Communication Skills to Resolve Disagreements

In this in-session discussion, clients are asked to continue practicing communication skills to help improve family relationships. They are asked to utilize the skills and issues discussed in the "Strengthening your family communication" and the "Learning to get along despite differences in cultural values or beliefs" sections. Therapists work with the client and spend time practicing and role-playing to improve communication effectiveness. Responding to other people's feelings and letting them know that you understand and care about them can be extremely beneficial and can reduce escalation of arguments. In addition, educating parents and children about cultural differences in communication styles and expression of caring can also be an important cultural adaptation to therapy. Clients are asked to practice with the therapist "nonverbal communication with supportive actions" and "active listening and reflective empathy."

CHAPTER GOAL #4: COMPLETE TAKE-HOME FAMILY-STRENGTHENING EXERCISES BEFORE NEXT SESSION

In this section, therapist and clients review the take-home exercise for the week, which focuses on implementing some of the communication skills that they learned about in this and previous sessions to strengthen family

relations. Clients are asked to choose three different skill sets that they will practice, and to write them down in the space provided in the manual. They are then asked to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of how they think, talk, communicate, and act in response to different situations. They are asked not to blame others for differences in beliefs and opinions, especially if they are influenced by cross-cultural differences and/or by immigration processes. Instead, they are asked to focus on understanding the viewpoints and opinions of other family members, and to focus on developing compassion and empathy. Letting go of negative emotions and unhealthy reactions are highlighted because they can be very damaging to relationships and can reinforce cycles of maladaptive communication and conflict. Therapists also discuss with the client the importance of setting appropriate boundaries and communicating in effective and healthy ways. During the next session, clients are asked to be prepared to discuss their experiences communicating in different ways with the therapist.

In addition, part of culturally adapting therapy is to highlight that many immigrants make sacrifices coming to this country and while trying to provide better lives and opportunities for their children. Both the parents and the children make sacrifices in their own unique ways. Therapists empathize with these sacrifices and ask clients to reflect on why they came to this country. Sacrificing family relationships and not learning how to communicate and understand each other's perspective is detrimental and counterproductive to their original goals of immigrating here. Clients are asked to cognitively reframe, especially when they are in the heat of the moment and have trouble controlling their tempers. Clients are reminded that improving family relationships is not easy, and that it takes time and practice. However, it is important to note that with education, practice, and care, relationships can improve. Therapists may need to review this and other communication-related sessions and practice communication skills building several times before clients can successfully change their communication styles and strategies.

Clients can be reminded of important philosophical and cultural concepts that are also related to therapeutic concepts. For example, clients are reminded to temper their anger and focus on kindness and compassion. The Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu stated, "Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love." They are also asked to focus on effectiveness of letting go of anger and using softer strategies to achieve their goals. Lao Tzu also noted, "Water is the softest thing, yet it can penetrate mountains and earth. This shows clearly the principle of softness overcoming hardness."

Many of these communication problems and family fights have continued for years, especially since many Asian heritage populations are reluctant to seek help and delay treatment. As a result, these problems become more ingrained and are much more difficult to change. Therefore, it is important to help clients be realistic about their goals and expectations. Therapists also need to be realistic about how quickly their clients can improve and not become frustrated, especially since there are general and culture-specific issues that clients need to work through. Therapists should provide optimism and reinforce that changes can occur through dedication and practice. Therapists also need to understand that immigration and acculturation can have a significant impact on intergenerational transmission of family problems, where many psychological issues are transmitted from one generation to the next. Therapy needs to address the culture-universal issue of intergenerational transmission of problems, and also address how immigration influences this process. Session 11 concludes with a culturally adapted picture of an Asian family playing badminton together, symbolizing emotional bonding through sharing a traditional Asian sport.

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