### COMMON CULTURAL MISTAKES ABOUT TRAUMA | MORE CULTURALLY SENSITIVE APPROACH
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Assuming everyone who has experienced violence needs professional help | Assuming people are resilient and giving them many opportunities to tell you if they need help
Focusing on the most extreme instances of violence as the most damaging | Allowing the individual to define what aspects of their experience have been most traumatic and recognizing that this may change over time
Assuming that violence is unusual, an aberration, and generally perpetrated by individuals | Recognizing that violence is perpetrated by groups and institutions, not only individuals, and may be so common that people become desensitized to it
Applying norms and standards of behavior without considering political and social context | Recognizing that political and social oppression may affect priorities and values; allowing the individual to define the meaning of what they have experienced
Relying on DSM diagnoses or lists of trauma “symptoms” | Recognizing that trauma responses are varied and that different cultures express grief and loss and understand trauma differently; learning how this person and their culture expresses distress
Assuming that one person’s story represents the “typical” story for the group | Recognizing that “one person’s story is just one person’s story”
Inadvertently highlighting the stories of people that fit cultural stereotypes | Providing opportunities for many people to share their stories, and noticing what is unique; making sure many points of view are represented
Assuming that if people speak English, you don’t have to worry about an interpreter or translated documents | Recognizing that some topics are very difficult to talk about in anything other than your first language; knowing and acting within the law about provision of language assistance services
Assuming that people always (or never) want to tell their stories and that if people want help they will ask for it | Being aware that self-disclosure and help-seeking vary widely across cultures and may be dependent upon whether a person feels safe with you; learning from each person what their cultural norms and expectations are

Adapted from National Center for Mental Health Services, National Center for Trauma-Informed Care, 2012.