Who Am I? A Journey of Self Discovery through the lenses of Culture

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Sara’s Story
Age: 21 yr old, Female
Marital status: Single
Ethnicity: Afghan, Hazara
Religion: Shia Muslim
Occupation: Student
DOA: 2014
Referral: December 2016
BACKGROUND

Afghanistan

Pakistan

22  21  21  18  25

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BALANCE OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND COMPLEX INTERACTION OF STRESS FACTORS

International event stressors

Protective factors (internal and external)

Exile, migration, resettlement stressors, cultural transition

Trauma reactions

Normal life cycle stressors

Recovery environment stressors

Cultural / Religious Aspects

Socio-Political Background

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Aroche and Coello, 1994

Restore balance and a sense of control
ASSESSMENT

- Neurofeedback Arousal Model Questionnaire
- Analysis of EEG results
- Hopkins Checklist
- Harvard Trauma Questionnaire and Events Questionnaire
- Test of Variables of Attention (TOVA)
**CLINICAL PRESENTATION**

**Psychological:**
- Sleeping disturbances
- Panic attacks
- Memory and concentration issues
- Anger outbursts
- Flashbacks
- Depressed mood
- Social isolation
- Difficulty making new friends
- Low motivation and energy levels
- Assertiveness issues
- Grief and loss issues

**Physical:**
- Fainting episodes
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Tired and exhausted
- Issues with appetite
- Racing heart rate

**Cultural:**
- Unfamiliarity with concepts of counselling
- Fear of stigmatisation of MH
- Somatic manifestation of trauma symptoms
- Importance of family
- Culture shock
- Manifestation of culturally appropriate grief
- Cultural and family expectations
- Identity issues
Treatment goals included:
- Increase daily functioning
- Improve memory and concentration
- Address identity issues
TREATMENT

- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
- Emotion focused therapy - focus on attachment and reprocessing emotional experiences
- Biofeedback and Heart Rate Variability
- Neurofeedback treatment
- Empathic exploration of Cultural issues
  - Explored self/identity
  - Challenges with suppression of personal distress to maintain harmony with others
  - Trauma memories
  - Help seeking behaviour from others
  - Transference and counter-transference issues

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PRE neurofeedback training

The Hopkins Checklist:
Anxiety = 1.9
Depression = 2.7

The Harvard Trauma Questionnaire
PTSD = 2.37

EEG Analysis
Profound drowsiness and inability to maintain a fully awake state-stage 2 sleep
Attention and affect regulatory issues

POST 30 neurofeedback sessions

The Hopkins Checklist:
Anxiety = 1.2
Depression = 2

The Harvard Trauma Questionnaire
PTSD = 2

EEG Analysis
Increase in arousal level indicating brain brightening and reduced drowsiness
OUTCOME

TOVA Results Pre/Post

- **RT Variability**
- **Response Time**
- **Commission Errors**
- **Omission Errors**

Pre Nfb Treatment | Post 20 Sessions | Post 30 Sessions

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Sara Reported:

- Significant reduction in psychosomatic symptoms
- Improved ability to regulate emotions, less reactivity
- Easier to make friends
- Improved ability to manage own response to stress
- Improved mood
- Improved sleep pattern
- Improved relationship with family
- Contact with twin sister
- Better understanding of counselling and mental illness from a cultural point of view
Tashakor
Thank You