

define themselves, find out what they want, what goals they want to set up for themselves and how to, realistically for them, go about realizing them. The role of the therapist, on the other hand, is to help, that is, to facilitate this process the immigrant women have decided to undertake. The therapist should not define the client or set up goals for the client, independent of the client. 2) To do this, it is important to remember that, as therapists, we should stop seeing ourselves as 'experts,' who by virtue of our scientific based training possess the ultimate truth. We have to begin to see ourselves as people who are involved in a continuous learning process. We have to keep in mind that we can learn from our own experience as well as that of our clients. 3) Therefore, we should be able to move from creating a power difference between ourselves and our clients to having a more egalitarian relationship. 4) One step toward this egalitarian relationship is the establishment of trust which, in my experience with immigrant women, is difficult. It is important for these women to know that the therapist is trying to understand their everyday life experience, the way in which it differs from the experience of the mainstream Canadians, the difficulties they are having and above all, the way in which they interpret their everyday life experience and their difficulties, an interpretation clearly influenced by their own culture. It is sensitive to their specific needs and to the fact that the way in which they live their culture is very different from the way in which mainstream Canadian culture is lived. 5) One of the best ways to understand their culture is by encouraging them to share those everyday life experiences as well as their history in

their home country and in Canada. The immigrant women, like all women, have a voice, and they should be given the opportunity to use it.

Some immigrant women may feel comfortable sharing their experiences in a one to one therapy situation, while others may feel comfortable sharing these experiences in a group setting with others of a similar background. Although I agree that the "personal is political" and that women should be encouraged to share their experiences, by working with immigrant women I have learned that they each, as we all do, have a different pace at which they reach the point of wanting or needing to share their experiences with others. It is important, therefore, to take it one step at a time and facilitate what they are able to do at a given moment in time. If the therapist pushes too hard, she creates a situation for these women which is as oppressive as others the women find themselves in and the immigrant women may never come back to see the therapist again, even though they may benefit from the help of a mental health professional.

In conclusion I would like to emphasize that immigrant women are the experts of their own lives. They have voices of their own and they appreciate sharing the experiences of their lives, if they are given the appropriate opportunity to use those voices. I hope that we who are working with immigrant women can give them that appropriate space in which to use their voices.

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