

The **CATINA** Method

Culture check: The Black community suffers from an increased rate of mental health concerns, including anxiety and depression. Use Person Centered Therapy as the method of engagement. A Black person on the spectrum is most likely to be different from their cultural upbringing. This person will have a deeper sense of not belonging. The need to be seen, heard, and validated is pivotal.

Ask yourself a few simple questions: “Do you feel competent to ask about, respond to, and support clients regarding their experiences of racism, oppression, and intersectionality? Are you willing to address racial differences with clients early in therapy? Can you talk about White privilege and what it means to be White? If you identify as White, identify several areas of privilege you did not realize were a privilege of being White until you learned about White privilege.” Black and Hispanic children continued to be less likely to be identified with ASD than white children.

Test your EQ: Have an honest understanding of your strengths and limitations before seeing a client of color. White fragility and microaggressions are detrimental to the therapeutic process. Awareness of your privileges and biases, understanding systems of oppression, and creating a safe and understanding space for clients is hard, daily, and ongoing work. It can bring up guilt, shame, and defensiveness. Practice self-compassion and patience, lean into the tension, and as Dr. Chandy put it, “move through it towards connection and engagement” with clients. When dealing with emotionally sensitive issues such as race, it is important to be your best self.

Investigate: Investigate the latest journals, peer reviewed articles and government websites about Black people on the Autism Spectrum. Question the equality in research. Understand that until there are research studies and organizations that focus on people of color on the Autism Spectrum, there will always be a lack of representation, medical assistance and services.

Nine-point check: Refer to the list of common descriptions made by black caregivers describing their child's behavior. Your active listening skills can make all the difference for a black person to get early treatment and services. Talk to Black people who are adults on the spectrum and let them educate you on their experiences growing up. This can give valuable insight to identifying black children. The basis of Autism symptoms are that of white males and the culture which surrounds him. For instance, eye contact has different meanings for different cultures. Indirect eye contact is a sign of respect and humility in some cultures.

Ally: Be an ally and take a stance. Use your privilege and your power to bring attention to the lack of research and intervention for people of color on the spectrum. People of color lack basic security and safety needs such as the policing in our communities. Being an ally can help to bring change in areas that people of color cannot reach.