

I wrote STOP HESITATING in 2020 as a way to do my part in unraveling the threads of white supremacy and systemic oppression. It needed an update, as the world continues to change and my expectations of mental health therapists continue to rise. The need for culturally-informed mental health care is urgent. Culturally-informed mental health care saves lives. I'm committed to supporting and elevating the needs of vulnerable people, and I hope you are, too. The resistance is alive and well, y'all! Enjoy this update.

1. Want to talk about Racism but not sure how to start? First, do some honest reflection with yourself about your relationship with your client. The question isn't, "How do I start a conversation about Race?" it's, "what about **my** relationship with Race/systemic oppression has prevented me from bringing it up in the first place?" Really reflect on that. Sometimes your Black clients don't want to talk about Race with you because their experiences with the Mental Health Industrial Complex have been dehumanizing. Maybe their experience with *you* has been traumatizing. Bring this up in supervision. Then, pick a phrase, any phrase, and tailor to your liking:
  - a. **"We don't usually talk about Race in our sessions, but I've been wondering how the news has been impacting you lately."** If you're a White therapist and you've never named the impact of race and systemic oppression in your sessions, you cannot possibly be doing enough of your own work. Period. If me saying that made you feel mad or sad, bring it up with your supervisor.
  - b. **"I've been thinking about you lately with everything that has been going on in the world and the Racial trauma you might be experiencing. Would you like some space to process?"** They may tell you no. Own your discomfort. Sit with it. Schedule an appointment with your therapist and/or supervisor.
  - c. **"I know that I am white/not of your race and can't possibly understand what you might be going through. I want you to know that I am open to hearing anything you need to process right now."** Their answer to this might be, "I don't want to talk about this with you, and I'm irritated that you brought it up." Thank them for saying that. Bring this up in supervision.
  - d. **"Would you like to talk about what's going on in [insert site of protest/murder/injustice here]? Please feel free to say no."** This might feel shocking for your client if you've never talked about race before. They might feel flustered. You might feel flustered. Take time outside of your sessions to learn how to tolerate these feelings.
2. Whether or not you agree with what they say about **their** Racial trauma is not relevant. If you have a reaction, take it to supervision. Say these things:
  - a. "I hear you." ; "I see you." ; "I'm so sorry." ; **"thank you for telling me."**
  - b. "I can't begin to understand what this must be like for you."
  - c. "Would you like for me to bring this up again in future sessions? It's ok to say no."
  - d. "Here are some options for how I can show up for you/support you. Let's brainstorm together what that might look like, and add to that list."
3. Validate, validate, validate. Do not talk about your own personal experiences with Racism unless invited or unless you have asked permission and you're 200% sure it's relevant. And if I didn't drive this point home clearly enough, seek supervision from a supervisor that is **actively** engaged in antiracism work, and who will **willingly and voluntarily** discuss systemic oppression with their supervisees. If your supervisor does not willingly and voluntarily bring up topics related to systemic oppression and Racism, they are not qualified to provide supervision. I truly mean that.