



Culture & Person-Centered Care Practices – “The Importance of Intersecting Cultural Identities in Person-Centered Practices”

SPEAKER:

Miso Kwak

My name is Miso Kwak. I use she/her pronouns. I am a blind, Korean American woman. And my experience with person-centered practices and my thoughts on that have been informed both by my personal lived experience as a disabled person; and also professionally, having worked as a Project Coordinator for the National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems, also known as NCAPPS, as well as my experience of teaching blind youth.

I think my culture is certainly an important part of who I am. One, as a Korean American, I think I hold on to many parts of what my experience has been like growing up in a Korean household and also certainly shaped by the experience of moving to the United States in my early adolescence. Also, I would argue that disability is a part of my culture. And so, having been blind since birth, the blind community has been a big part of my life growing up and thinking about my own identity and just my place in the world.

So, I think, when we think of culture, there are multiple facets, you know. In my case, ethnicity, immigration experience, disability experience; and so on. In terms of person-centered practices, I think this was not very apparent to me until I started working at NCAPPS; in large part because this was not a jargon or vocabulary that was introduced to me until then. And I think part of that is because in Korean language and culture, it is rather awkward to say it.

Having conversations with my parents about my job, I had to do some studying to explain that. But I think it was very, initially, unnatural to talk about this with my family in Korean language; and I think it's somehow almost counterintuitive. Korean culture and just ways of being is more collectivistic and more family-oriented, more community-oriented than Western or American ways of life and thinking.

Once I learned about it through my job and learned the kind of lingos that are often used in person-centered practice circles; it made sense. Because I think my parents emphasized being able to have a self-determined life. To kind of merge this together, I think there is almost a clash between my cultural norms and this notion of person-centered practices. One, because of the language, going back to that; and two, just ways of thinking. And I think even for my family, trying to navigate, you know, my life and for my parents trying to navigate their life as parents of a disabled child; this is something we had to learn - this concept of self-determination, advocacy. And I think we're trying to make sense of how to merge these



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somehow seemingly contrasting things.

So, honoring the person, while at the same time, holding onto the values of honoring family, honoring community and bringing those things together. And also, I think there is a layer of, you know, societal expectation of fitting into the society, but at the same time trying to recognize the importance of putting the person at the center.

And I think this is something that I have been trying to figure out and make sense of: how to find the parts that are working well and merging the two in a way that is easy to understand and easy to follow through for people and their families.