



Five Questions Every Practitioner Can Ask When Working with Marginalized Couples.

In therapy, marginalized couples often face unique challenges stemming from systemic oppression. As therapists, it's crucial to move beyond traditional approaches and create a space that acknowledges their lived realities. To truly support these couples, we must ask the right questions – questions that promote self-awareness, validate their experiences, and empower them to build stronger connections.

Here are five questions every practitioner can ask when working with marginalized couples:

1. How does your client keep themselves safe during direct experiences of racism and/or homophobia? (Exploring Habits of Survival): This question helps you to understand the client's coping mechanisms in the face of systemic oppression. It acknowledges the need for self-protection and provides insight into potential relational patterns that may stem from these survival strategies.
2. How does your client define intimacy? (Exploring the client's intimacy story): This question is crucial for understanding the client's personal and cultural background. It helps you as the practitioner to not impose your own assumptions about intimacy and instead, appreciate the client's unique perspective and experiences.
3. What are the unique protective factors that your client's relationship form provides to them? (Exploring Individual and Relational Resilience): This question focuses on the strengths and resources that the couple brings to the table. It acknowledges that marginalized couples often develop unique ways of coping and thriving in the face of adversity, and it helps you as the practitioner to build on these existing strengths.
4. What ways of knowing the world are being ignored here? (Practicing Epistemic Embracing): This question challenges you as the practitioner to consider your own biases and assumptions. It encourages you to listen deeply to the client's perspective and to validate their experiences, even if they differ from your own.
5. How do I know when something in my process might be harmful to marginalized clients? (Practicing Critical Consciousness): This question promotes self-reflection and accountability. It encourages you as the practitioner to be aware of your own power and privilege and to be open to feedback from clients about potential harm.

These are just a few of the essential questions that can guide our work with marginalized couples. By embracing critical consciousness, practicing empathy, and honouring their unique strengths, we can create a therapeutic space that fosters healing and liberation.

From my upcoming book entitled "Marginalized Couples in Therapy: Interventions for Healing from Systemic Trauma".

