

Sample Activities/Assessments for LO-4

Activity Culture-Case Comparison & Contrast Instruction: Provide students with two case vignettes: (1) A client whose culture encourages highly emotional expression (e.g., *ataque de nervios*). (2) A client whose culture mandates stoicism/somatic complaints (e.g., unexplained chronic pain).

Task: Have students identify the link between the cultural factor and the stress expression.

Assessment: Evaluation is based on the student's ability to accurately identify the role of culture and propose two non-judgmental questions to ask the client.

Vignette 1: Rosa – Expressive Cultural Style

Background:

Rosa is a 28-year-old woman from Puerto Rico who was recently brought to the university counseling center by her roommate after experiencing what she described as an “emotional attack” following a stressful phone call with her mother. Rosa reports that she felt “out of control,” screamed, cried intensely, and temporarily felt faint and disoriented. She describes similar past episodes, especially during family conflict, and says that her mother and aunts also experience this type of “ataque de nervios.” Rosa is not concerned about the episode itself but feels frustrated that others (especially non-Latino classmates) see her reaction as “too much.”

Key Features:

- Culturally normative emotional intensity
- Familial pattern of “ataque de nervios”
- Conflict between cultural expression and external judgment

Vignette 2: Wei – Stoic/Somatic Cultural Style

Background:

Wei is a 24-year-old international student from China who presents to the campus health clinic with chronic headaches and fatigue. He has been medically cleared of any underlying conditions but continues to experience somatic discomfort. When gently asked about stress or emotions, Wei insists that “everything is fine” and shifts focus back to physical symptoms. In conversation, he expresses concern about “losing face” and not

wanting to burden others with his problems. He maintains high academic standards but has started missing deadlines and skipping meals.

Key Features:

- Emphasis on emotional restraint
- Somatization of psychological distress
- Cultural stigma around emotional disclosure

Student Task:

For each case:

1. Identify how the client's **cultural background influences their expression of stress**.
2. Write **two non-judgmental, culturally aware questions** you could ask to better understand the client's experience.

Model Student Responses:

Rosa – Cultural Link + Questions

Cultural Factor:

In Rosa's cultural context (Latinx, particularly Caribbean), emotionally expressive responses to stress—such as **ataques de nervios**—are common and socially understood within the family/community. These episodes can serve as a **culturally sanctioned outlet** for overwhelming stress.

Two Non-Judgmental Questions:

- “Can you tell me more about what an ataque de nervios means to you or your family?”
- “When you're feeling overwhelmed like this, what helps you feel supported or understood?”

Wei – Cultural Link + Questions

Cultural Factor:

In many East Asian cultures, emotional restraint is valued, and psychological distress may be expressed **somatically** (e.g., physical pain, fatigue). Concerns about **saving face** and avoiding shame may limit direct emotional disclosure.

Two Non-Judgmental Questions:

- “Sometimes stress can show up in the body. Have you noticed any connection between how you’ve been feeling physically and what’s happening around you?”
- “In your culture or family, how do people usually deal with stress or emotional struggles?”