

Inside Voice

The purpose of this learning activity is to invite reflection on the thoughts and feelings that arise when confronted with ethical tension between a client’s cultural values and the ethical values associated with your profession.

Counsellor–Client Dialogue	Inside Voice (Counsellor or Client)
<p>Otrun: <i>I think the school is making too big of a deal about this whole thing. When they say he is aggressive, he is just defending himself from the white boys who call him names. When they say he is defiant, he is just refusing to follow the teacher’s punishments, because the teachers always side with the white boys. They do nothing about the name-calling, then give him trouble when he stands up for himself.</i></p>	
<p>Pat: <i>It sounds like you see Chak as a victim, rather than the person causing the problems.</i></p>	
<p>Otrun: <i>Damn right he is a victim. Which is why I told him, “Don’t put up with the white kids bullshit. Hit them where it hurts, then they will fear you, and when they fear you, they will leave you alone.”</i></p>	
<p>Pat: <i>I understand that you want Chak to protect himself, though I worry that you are giving him the message that violence is the answer.</i></p>	
<p>Otrun: <i>You call it violence, I call it honour. In my culture you act in honour when you show force.</i></p>	
<p>Pat: <i>My worry is that force doesn’t always work and, in fact, that it might lead to other problems.</i></p>	
<p>Otrun: <i>I have used force my entire life. It is why I have an obedient wife and obedient children.</i></p>	
<p>Pat: <i>Can you say more about how your use of force has led to obedient family members?</i></p>	

<p>Otrun: <i>Here is an example. Both Chak and Shonnal know that if they do not honour my wishes, they will be hit, across the face for disrespectful words, and on the bottom with a cane, for disrespectful actions. As you can see Chak and Shonnal are both very well behaved.</i></p>	
<p>Pat: <i>Otrun, I need to stop you here and remind you of the laws in Canada and my ethical obligations as a counsellor. The bottom line is that hitting in the face or using an object to hit your children is against the law in Canada, and my ethical and legal obligation requires me to report this to the Ministry of Children and Family Services.</i></p>	
<p>Otrun: <i>What you call ethics are just rules. And the rules of your culture are different from the rules of my culture. Does that make your rules better? Who says they are better? Your rules are the reason why white kids do not respect authority, and why white kids think they can do whatever they want.</i></p>	
<p>Pat: <i>It doesn't matter what country you live in, or what culture you embrace, harming a child is wrong.</i></p>	
<p>Otrun: <i>But what does it mean to harm a child? I say the greatest harm is not teaching children honour and respect! I teach this to my children. Your culture is the one that needs to change.</i></p>	
<p>Pat: <i>I'm sorry, Otrun, but there are certain things in this world that are just wrong, and hitting your children, like you do, is one of them. You can't blame your culture for something that is clearly wrong. I'm going to have to call the ministry. We can do it now or I will do it after you leave.</i></p>	
<p>Otrun: <i>Now you are being a racist and you are trying to punish me for not believing the same things you believe in your culture. I wish I never came here today.</i></p>	