

Maaym Binben Reflective Workbook

Honest reflection is essential to understanding one's own biases, take the time to answer the following questions honestly. The goal of this workbook is not to prove that you don't have any biases but to help you discover and understand the biases you do have and to get you thinking about what steps you can take moving forward to reduce the harm caused by these biases. Focus on your emotional response to the questions and try to limit the energy you put into figuring out what the 'right' answer is, or what you think your answer should be. We all have biases, this does not make us morally good or bad people, but people on a journey of growth. Taking the time for self-reflection can be uncomfortable but it is an important practice for anybody that wishes to lead a life of continued personal growth.

Section 1

Short answer. 2-3 sentence answers.

- a. How did it feel listening to the Sm'algyax language?
- b. How did the language sound different from English?
- c. Do you know the name of the language indigenous to the territory you reside on? If so, what is it and what is your experience with it? If not, do you see value in seeking out this information, why or why not?

A true short story.

A woman's grandson goes to visit her at her house. He notices she has a bad cough and asks if she needs a ride to see a doctor. She waves him off saying that doctors never understand her and that she will get better in a couple days. Worried, he comes back the next day with his mother, she insists on taking her mother to the doctor. The elderly woman refuses as she does not trust doctors due to negative experiences with the doctors working on her reservation when she was young. She complained that doctors don't understand her "thick Indian accent". Her daughter, knowing many of the things that happened to her as a young woman, sat with her and explained that doctors were different these days and that she would go with her to speak on her behalf. Her mother protested that it didn't matter because they wouldn't take her seriously and that they only treat her daughter and grandchildren better because they are half white. She believes that the doctor will laugh at her because of her brown skin.

Eventually she goes with her daughter to the new on reserve medical clinic. When she arrives, a woman at the front desk greets her in her traditional language and

looking around she notices that the posters all have indigenous people on them and what she assumes must be her own traditional language written on them. She begins to relax. As she walks into the doctor's room her back stiffens as she sees that the doctor is a white male, she begins counting the seconds for the appointment to end. He greets her in her language and she looks into her daughter's eager eyes and is suddenly unsure of how to feel. He introduces himself in her language and then seamlessly switching to English he asks her how he can help her. Her daughter explains that she has a nasty cough and looks a bit thinner than usual. The doctor listens closely and asks the woman if there is anything else bothering her. Feeling a bit overwhelmed and surprised she explains all the ways her body isn't feeling quite right. Still not feeling comfortable with him touching her, he sends her for some tests and makes a follow-up appointment, as he wishes her well in her language she thinks to herself, "I will come to that next appointment".

Journaling questions. 2-3 paragraphs.

- d. What is your emotional response to this story?
- e. Do you often see patients old or young that are hesitant or anxious to communicate with you?
- f. What actions can you take to help your patients feel more validated and empowered to communicate?

Section 2

Short answer. 2-3 sentence answers.

- a. Did engaging with Maaym Binben feel like a valuable use of your time? Why or why not?
- b. What do you think you learned from this story?
- c. What do you think someone else might learn from this story?

A true short story.

An elder went to his doctor complaining that his medication is making him feel fuzzy and sleepy throughout the day. The elder spent a lot of time telling him about his day. The doctor explained to him that some side effects are to be expected when starting a new medication and asked if the elder was drinking enough water. The elder again answered with a long story explaining that he drinks one liter of Indian tea every morning and night to stay strong and healthy. The doctor sent him home stating that it is

better to drink smaller amounts of water spaced out throughout the day and that he should take it easy on the black tea.

A couple days later the elder was in the pharmacy complaining to the pharmacist that he was having diarrhea, no energy and feeling very unwell. He explained this to the pharmacist in the form of long stories that occasionally got a little off track. The pharmacist being pressed for time recommended he talk to his doctor about his medication, avoid caffeine for the time being and sip water throughout the day to stay hydrated. Exhausted, the elder took a seat in the waiting room beside a young woman from his community. To her he explained his whole story again, afterwards she asked what kind of tea he was drinking. He didn't know the English name of the tea but after some time it was determined to be Labrador tea. This tea is commonly drunk in their community when someone is feeling unwell but the young women recalled learning that it could interfere with many medications, and that drinking too much could result in dizziness, drowsiness, diarrhea, kidney failure and worse. The elder thought on it and decided to switch to another type of healing tea. The young woman suggested that he be very careful mixing indigenous medicine with western medicine and that he makes sure his doctor knows what plants he is using.

Journaling questions. 2-3 paragraphs.

- d. Do you feel impatient when patients answer questions with long stories that seem irrelevant? Why or why not?
- e. Are you aware of any traditional medicinal practices of the indigenous peoples from the territory you reside on? Why or why not?
- f. How might you respectively learn more about traditional medicinal practices in your area? How would you ask a patient about their traditional medicines? Keep in mind that some practices may be sacred or secret.

Section 3

Short answer, 2-3 sentence answers.

- a. What would you have done with the berries in the patch?
- b. What do you think the berries represent?
- c. How would your actions affect the greater community?

A true short story

A young indigenous woman arrives at the hospital to give birth to her second child. She is with her husband, mother and sister. She lives far from her community, but

the traumatic delivery of her first child left her feeling alone and isolated, so she has called upon her mother and sister to support and advocate for her during her second delivery. She wishes her other sisters, grandmother and aunts could be there with her but she worries that the hospital staff would treat her differently if they feel her family is in the way. She grew up spending countless hours in hospitals witnessing births, deaths and sickness. She is familiar with the impatient and annoyed comments given by hospital staff when there are too many “natives” loitering in the hospital. She hopes for a better delivery experience and doesn't want her child and her care to be affected by annoyed or possibly racist staff. Still though she is comforted that her mother and sister have been staying in town awaiting for the arrival of her son.

She arrives in the middle of the night and the maternity ward is empty, she is given a bed immediately as the staff know there were many complications with her first delivery. She is deflated to find out that while she waits she is only allowed to have one other person in the room. Her sister waits in the hallway by the door when her mother speaks to the hospital staff asking if there are any larger rooms available. A couple hours pass and she is moved to a large delivery room, where she is allowed two people with her. So now her sister and her mother rotate spending time with her. When the doctor arrives her sister is waiting outside the door. After checking on the young woman and chatting with the family he decides it would be beneficial for all three of the woman's family to be in the room and that there was plenty of room to accommodate them. The young woman was able to relax knowing her family was there taking care of her. She had her husband's love and support, her mother's knowledge and lived experiences and she had her sister's nurturing and calming presence and she knew that her baby and her were safe.

Ts'msyen people consider times of death and birth to be sacred and relevant to the entire community. While limited space within specific hospital rooms do not allow for a person's community to be in their room during these sacred events, hospital staff's attitude towards large groups of indigenous peoples filling hallways and waiting rooms can greatly affect the patients and communities' shared experience.

Journaling questions. 2-3 paragraphs.

- a. Think of a culture that is different than your own, does their family structure look different than yours? What do you think is different and what do you think is similar?
- b. How do you feel when you see large groups in hospitals? Where do these feelings come from?
- c. How have you supported families in times of birth, sickness and/or death?

Section 4.

Final journal question, one page.

Pick one bias of yours that you have identified during these reflective exercises. If you struggle to identify a personal bias, try to identify any bias you think has been addressed with these questions. Reflect on what in your life has supported this bias, who this bias might affect and three things that you can do to help mitigate the negative effects of this bias.

Suggested material for further learning.

 **Dr. Robin DiAngelo discusses 'White Fragility'**



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