

Compassionate Herbalism & Health Justice Student Notes

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Why is Compassionate Herbalism and Health Justice important?

*Because we want to make herbalism accessible to everyone - that's part of our tradition and culture as herbalists to be accessible and available to our communities to support health, healing and the connection to plant medicine.

*Our current healthcare system is so full of "isms"; creating safe space within Herbalism will lead people to herbs, empowered health and a healthier medical system.

*Corporatized healthcare and the power of pharmaceutical industry is so incredibly strong. Capitalism is driving who gets access to care and what kind of care is available to individuals. This creates and maintains an unjust and unhealthy system. Herbalism is, and can be, available to all and prioritizes the whole person (physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc.) and preventive care, which is absent in our current healthcare system.

*Why do you think they are important?:

(use this space for note taking)

Health Justice Principles:

- Create access to all types of healthcare regardless of a person's race, class, gender identity, age, ability level, culture or religious or spiritual beliefs.
- Do no harm. These principles create a health care system that does not pollute the planet or our bodies, while acknowledging and preventing environmental racism.
- These principles work towards creating a healthcare system that is not based on profits, biased clinical trials, animal testing, trademarking of traditions and cultural mis-appropriation.
- Health Justice principles incorporate preventive healthcare measures (access to non-toxic food), historical/cultural evidence based medicine and a wholeistic view of the body (non-symptom based).
- Allows for individual empowerment in health and healing through education, access and community support.

Health Justice Classroom Guidelines:

These guidelines create a shared understanding of how to participate in a classroom setting based on respect and equality. Have them present in your classroom, in your class materials, present them to teachers entering into the space for the first time and go over them with students as a group so all are on the same page. Allow for open engagement and questions about these guidelines, using them as a learning tool without judgments.

Please try to avoid labeling these guidelines as “Politically Correct”. We prefer to think about these guidelines as “Pretty Compassionate”. We are working towards creating a classroom culture that is inclusive, safe and anti-oppressive. These guidelines do not give anyone the right to be the PC police; they are there to encourage communication about each others’ experiences and build mutual respect.

These guidelines are not meant to stifle opinions, thoughts or statements. They are a tool for clear communication. Changing language to be “PC” (pretty compassionate) can make a hard discussion easier for everyone involved.

- a. We are committed to non-violence, anti-oppression, and compassion with all communication that takes place within our classroom.
- b. Use language that is non-offensive! Avoid using language that may be potentially racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic.
- c. Please speak from experience. Starting sentences with, “from my experience.....” adds validity and builds trust within the group. We all have answers and valid experiences.

Before opening up the discussion, it can be helpful to remind people that they don't have to have the "right" answers in the discussion, and that one of the main objectives is learning together, not already knowing the "answers".

- d. Consider prefacing potentially triggering comments about trauma or sexual abuse with a warning. We all need to speak our minds, and understand that this can be potentially triggering when speaking about our own experiences regarding things like sexual abuse and trauma. A warning may sound like: "I am going to talk about sexual abuse and understand this may be traumatic / hard / triggering for some folks to hear." We also acknowledge that we are not responsible for others' emotions or experiences, so there is a balance here. Being a compassionate herbalist means being open and flexible with communication and aware of potential triggers when sharing space with others.
- e. Move Up, Move Back: People who often talk a lot, challenge yourselves to listen more. People who don't talk that much, we want to hear what you have to say!
- f. Be Aware of Time: We have a limited amount of time together. Lets try to be on time and stay on topic.

Pretty Compassionate VS. Politically Correct

Goal is to bring awareness, not to shame or correct anyone, and to introduce resources with the intention of creating safe spaces, classrooms, consultations and communities.

Potential Language Triggers	Alternatives
<p>Misgendering</p> <p>Example: A teacher states upon beginning an herb class with folks they've never met, with a majority of what appears to be female bodied people present, says "Good morning ladies..."</p>	<p>The teacher has assumed that everyone with a presumed female body identifies as a woman. The teacher can state instead, "Good morning class / everyone / students". Using non-gendered language to address and include everyone creates a safer space. Also asking, "let's go around and state our names and preferred gender pronouns before we get started" is a great way to create a safe and inclusive space.</p>
<p>Race assumptions</p>	

<p>example: A white herbalist walks into a space and introduces himself as a “Chinese Herbalist”.</p>	<p>This means being aware of your language regarding culture and race. This does not mean a person of a different culture cannot practice or teach Chinese or Ayurvedic medicine, it means that in practicing these types of Herbalism, the compassionate herbalist will do what they can to avoid offending people and not make sweeping statements about race.</p>
<p>Class Awareness example : Herbalists wanting to continue their education but cannot afford full conference price often have to do work trade to help pay for conference, yet then have to work and skip out on certain classes. Accessibility at conferences could be broadened by offering certain number of sliding scale spots. This way conference budget needs are met while also making it more accessible to more people.</p> <p>example: A sick person needs an herbal consult. The practitioner in their area prices are \$150 an hour. The sick person cannot afford this and cannot access the care they desire.</p>	<p>Accessibility at conferences could be broadened by offering certain number of sliding scale spots. This way, conference budget needs are met while also making it more accessible to more people. Sliding scale also means that if a person makes more they pay more. Often times, this balances out any attendees that are on the lower side of the scale.</p> <p>Practitioners could consider offering a sliding scale one day a week or one day a month based on income level. Offering these lower cost consultations allows folks of varying economic backgrounds to access the support they desire. Practitioner balances out full payment consultations with sliding scale so they can meet their own financial needs.</p>
<p>What triggers have you seen in receiving care or giving care or as a student?</p>	

Common Herbal themes in Health Justice and addressing “isms”

- Gender Identities : Opening up language, definitions and revising intake forms.
- Class Awareness : How do we support accessibility in Herbalism?
- Cultural sensitivity: Be aware of appropriating from oppressed cultures and broad, sweeping statements about a race or culture.
- Ableism/ body abilities /type: Expanding awareness around disability justice movement, sensitivity around sickness, chronic illness, mobility, size and age. How accessible are your classes? As a student, how can you be an ally to your classmates? What does this look like in consultations, seating, stairs, etc.?
- Mental Health: How can we expand our resources around radical mental health support?

Resources:

Class:

www.classism.org

definitions and understanding of Class

www.wortsandcunning.com/blog/sliding-scale

an article, “The Sliding Scale : A Tool of Economic Justice”

Rad Herbalists & their writings and doings:

<http://dandelionessherbals.blogspot.com>

<http://fellowworkersfarm.com>

<http://www.crazyherbalist.com>

<http://herbalistswithoutborders.weebly.com>

www.herbalaide.blogspot.net

<http://www.shootingstarbotanicals.org>

Health & Healing Justice:

www.curethis.org

Cure This is an online space for storytelling, discussion, reflection and building around healing justice.

www.kindredhealingjustice.org

www.harrietsapothecary.com

Harriet's Apothecary is an intergenerational, seasonal, healing village led by the brilliance and wisdom of Black Cis Women, Queer and Trans healers, artists, health professionals, magicians, activists and ancestors. We are committed to co-creating accessible, affordable, liberatory, all-body loving, all-gender honoring, community healing spaces that recognize, inspire, and deepen the healing genius of people who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of color and the allies that love us.

Mental Health:

www.freedom-center.org

Freedom Center is a support and activism community run by and for people labeled with severe 'mental disorders.' We call for compassion, human rights, self-determination, and holistic options. We create alternatives to the mental health system's widespread despair, abuse, fraudulent science and dangerous treatments.

www.theicarusproject.net

The Icarus Project envisions a new culture and language that resonates with our actual experiences of 'mental illness' rather than trying to fit our lives into a conventional framework.

Disability Justice:

www.sinsinvalid.org / blog

Sins Invalid is committed to social and economic justice for all people with disabilities – in lockdowns, in shelters, on the streets, visibly disabled, invisibly disabled, sensory minority, environmentally injured, psychiatric survivors – moving beyond individual legal rights to collective human rights. Our stories, embedded in analysis, offer paths from identity politics to unity amongst all oppressed people, laying a foundation for a collective claim of liberation and beauty.