



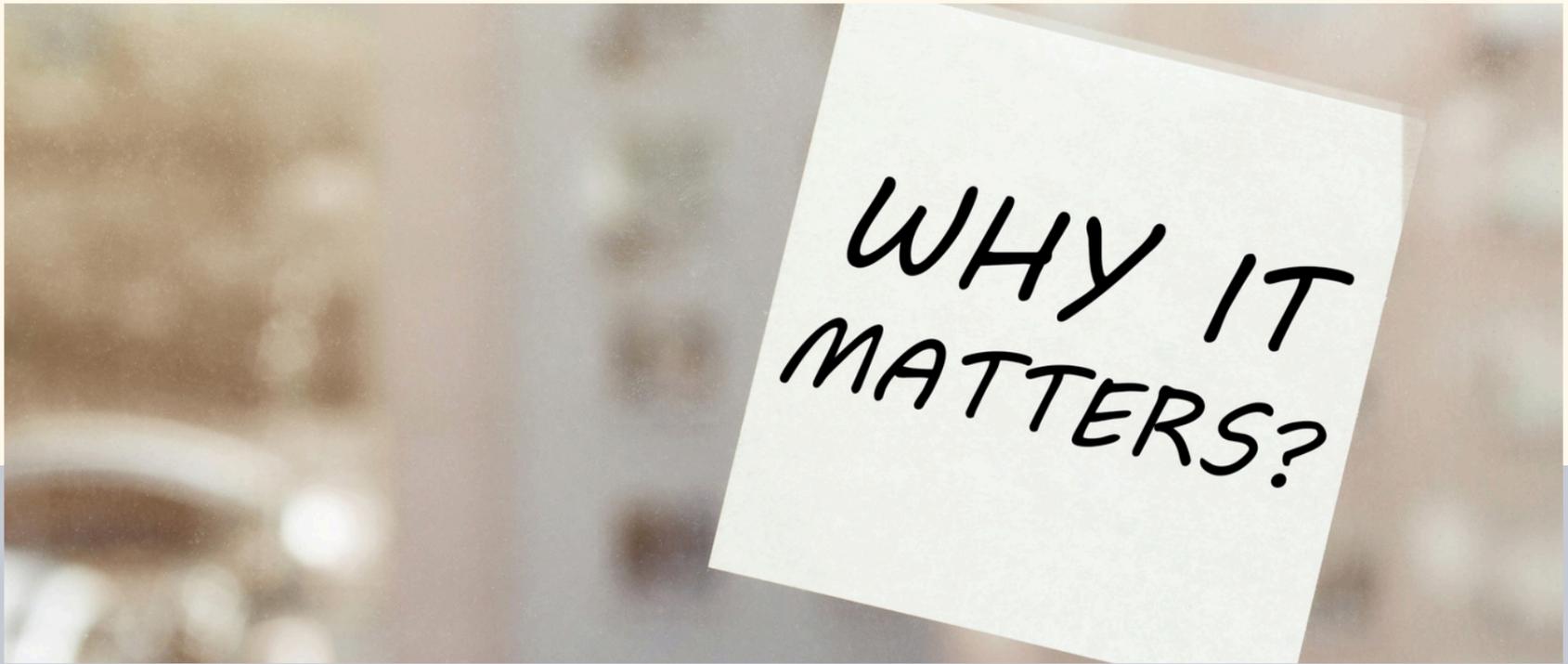
HOW TO HOLD

# Clients

IN A WORLD ON  
FIRE

A culturally responsive guide for navigating war, political violence, and collective grief.

Written by  
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# Why This Matters

Ongoing violence in the Middle East.  
Racial and political strife in the United States.  
Rising hate crimes.  
Immigration instability.  
Religious targeting.  
Online exposure to graphic violence.

For many clients, this is not abstract news.

It is identity-linked stress.  
It is collective trauma.  
It is nervous system activation layered on top of personal trauma histories.

And it is in the therapy room whether we name it or not.

Cultural responsiveness in this climate is not optional. It is clinical competence.



# PART I

## Clinical Anchors for This Moment

1. Regulate Before You Intervene
- Before you explore your client's fear or grief, assess yourself:
- What is being activated in me?
  - Which of my identities are present?
  - Am I minimizing this to soothe my own discomfort?

If you are disregulated, you cannot co-regulate.  
Ground first. Then proceed.

2. Validate Without Politicizing the Room
- You are not required to debate geopolitics.  
You are ethically required to validate emotional impact.

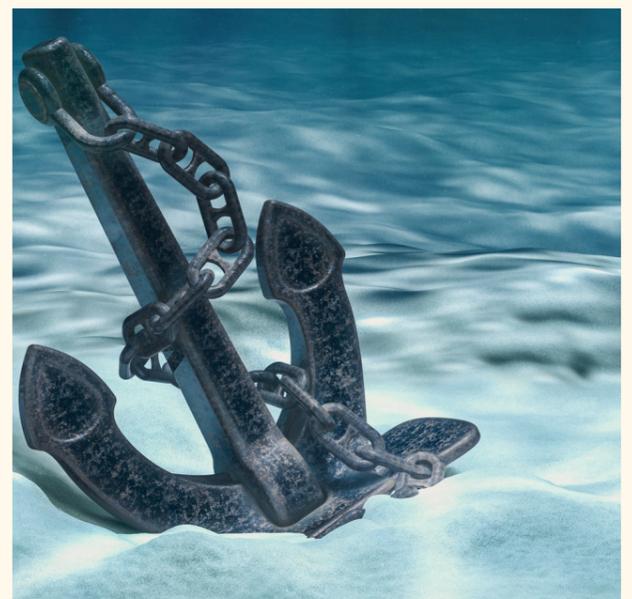
Examples:

- "Of course this feels overwhelming."
- "It makes sense your body feels on edge."
- "Watching this unfold would impact anyone connected to it."

Validation is not activism. It is attunement.

3. Assess for Collective & Racialized Trauma
- Explore:
- Is this connecting to prior experiences of discrimination?
  - Are there safety concerns in their family or community?
  - Is media exposure intensifying symptoms?
  - Are they experiencing identity-based fear?

Collective trauma accumulates over time. Do not treat this as an isolated stressor.



*“A just society is that society in which ascending sense of reverence and descending sense of contempt is dissolved into the creation of a compassionate society”*

- DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR,  
ANNIHILATION OF  
CASTE



# PART I

## Clinical Anchors for This Moment

4. Support Media & News Boundaries
- Offer containment strategies:
- Scheduled news windows
  - No scrolling before bed
  - Replace passive consumption with intentional action
  - Curated information source

Restoring agency reduces helplessness.

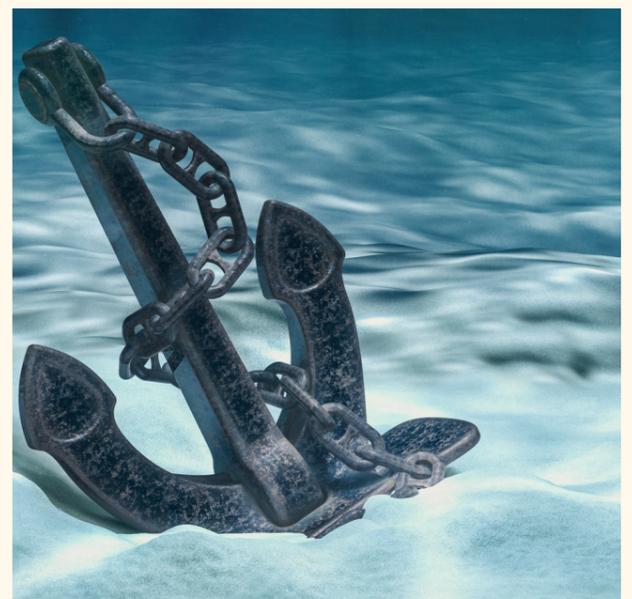
5. Make Space for Grief and Anger
- Clients may present with:
- Helplessness
  - Rage
  - Survivor's guilt
  - Numbness
  - Hypervigilance

Do not rush coping skills.

Witness first.

6. Seek Consultation When Needed
- Consult if you notice:
- Avoidance of the topic
  - Strong countertransference
  - Limited cultural understanding
  - Over-identification

This work requires community. Not isolation.



*“There must exist a paradigm, a practical model for social change that includes an understanding of ways to transform consciousness that are linked to efforts to transform structures.”*

*- BELL HOOKS,  
KILLING RACE:  
ENDING RACISM*



# PART I

## Clinical Anchors for This Moment

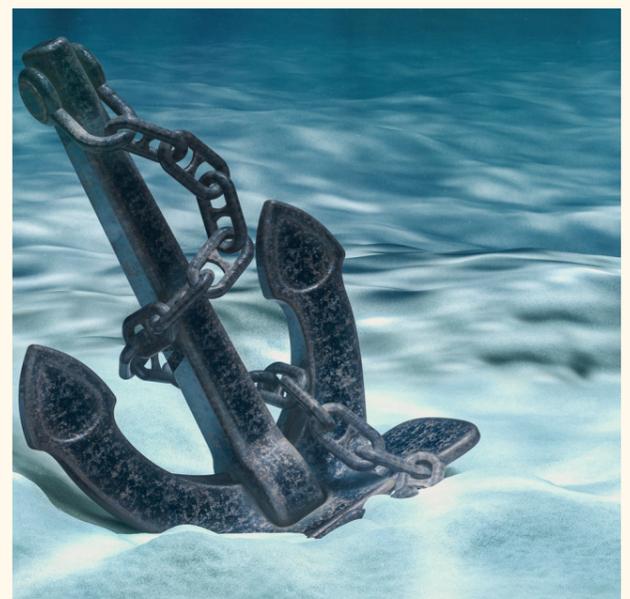
### 7. Protect Therapists from Impacted Communities

Therapists who are:

- Arab
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Black
- Palestinian
- Israeli
- Immigrant
- Or otherwise directly impacted

...are carrying double exposure.

You are not required to be invulnerable. That is unrealistic. Prioritize supervision, peer consultation, and personal support.



*“When we identify where our privilege intersects with somebody else's oppression, we'll find our opportunities to make real change.”*

- IJEOMA OLUO,  
SO YOU WANT TO TALK  
ABOUT RACE



## PART II

# Clinical Tools & Frameworks

Below are evidence-informed approaches and resources that support this work.

### TRAUMA & COLLECTIVE TRAUMA FRAMEWORKS

- My Grandmother's Hands — Resmaa Menakem
- Trauma and Recovery — Judith Herman
- What Happened to You? — Bruce Perry & Oprah Winfrey
- But what will People say? - Sahaj Kaur Kohli

### RACIAL TRAUMA & IDENTITY-BASED STRESS

- Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome — Joy DeGruy
- The Racial Healing Handbook — Anneliese A. Singh
- Arab American Institute — Research & advocacy resources
- ADL (Anti-Defamation League) — Data on antisemitism & hate trends



## PART II

# Clinical Tools & Frameworks

Below are evidence-informed approaches and resources that support this work.

### CLINICAL CONSULTATION & CULTURAL COMPETENCE

- Muslim Wellness Foundation
- Therapy for Black Girls
- [Dr. Abi Weissman](#)
- Latinx Therapy
- [Dr. Raquel Martin](#)

- Please note that this list is not meant to be exhaustive.





# Closing and Connection

We cannot control global conflict.  
We cannot control political instability.  
But we are accountable for how we hold  
suffering in the therapy room.  
If you are seeking structured  
consultation, culturally responsive  
supervision, or team training for your  
practice, I am here for you.  
Let's build clinician community instead of  
clinician isolation.

*Thank you!*

Connect with Dr. Phebe Brako

