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Liz Zhou is a holistic trauma therapist based in Colorado. She's an MA, LPCC. Her work draws from psychology, neurobiology, multicultural awareness, social justice, and spirituality. Trained in EMDR and transpersonal psychology, Liz helps highly sensitive people heal from the past and connect with themselves. She has spent 3 years in the therapy field and 9 years in the mental health and holistic healing fields.

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Alright, let's get into it, Liz!

Allison Puryear (she/her): Welcome back to Not Boring CEs.

I'm here with Liz Zhou. We are going to be talking about the AAPI community, and how we can better

support them as clinicians. Thank you so much for being here. I appreciate it.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Thank you so much. I'm happy to be here.

Allison Puryear (she/her): so we can we talk about. Maybe some of the places that trip up, particularly the Non AAPI clinicians when working with

Allison Puryear (she/her): AAPI clients.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah. Great place to start. So I'll I'll start to by just defining AAPI. Just so it's clear what what population we're talking about. So for those who aren't familiar, it stands for Asian American Pacific Islander. And it's this umbrella like term that we in the AAPI community use to really speak to community and the Asian experience.

Liz Zhou (she/her): and I'll I'll just say to within this presentation I'll be referring to like Asian American experience, I might say AAPI, and just know it's talking about the same general identity. I also wanna know that for myself as a Chinese American person, that a lot of my perspectives are gonna be coming from that East Asian space. So I just wanted to put that out there as well that I can't speak for an entire community or continent. Oh.

Liz Zhou (she/her): speaking to themes? So to the question, Where Where do? Where do we tend to trip up as clinicians? I think it's good to start with noticing, like, what are the automatic assumptions that we have about any population, so that I like to do for myself and for others is like, when you hear the words Asian American, what do you notice?

Liz Zhou (she/her): And then, having a bit of a mindful experience of Oh, I noticed this image comes to mind. I noticed I have this belief or this story in my mind, that oh, they are all this. They're all that, and just noticing the thought, we don't need to believe every thought. We don't need to act on it. And like, make a treatment plan around. It's just like, okay, that is a story that my brain has, and that is like a memory network that my brain has formed. So noticing our images, beliefs, even like emotions and sensations in the body when we

have any encounter with difference, or any encounter with a like a representation of another community, so any assumptions that we might have, like stereotypes or like story lines. Replacing that with a bit of curiosity. So basically, it's like, okay, this is a story my mind has. Is that actually true for that person sitting in front of me? And then embodying that sense of curiosity.

Liz Zhou (she/her): So I feel that as sort of like a leaning forward like being super open, open to being wrong. About, I have and open to learning about someone's world and what it's like to be them, and also just seeing them as a unique individual. So as much as we can like, study up and do research on. Oh, okay, here's here's what I know about these communities and and these like presenting issues, like, ultimately, we are working with the individual in front of us. So making space.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah, absolutely. And I can imagine that the majority of people who are willing to examine

Allison Puryear (she/her): their assumptions and come with those with curiosity are probably a group of people who are most likely to also feel some shame, for, like noticing that they had those assumptions or stereotypes, and like curiosity, is great there, too.

Liz Zhou (she/her): It's it would be easy to like.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Judge yourself.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And I think especially people who are really trying to make this world a more equitable place would feel a a sense of shame. But if you can just get curious of like, you know, you didn't make up

Allison Puryear (she/her): your assumption there. It was fed to you. Where did it? Where did this feeding come from? Was that a reliable source of information? Did you know that at the time, you know, like there's

Allison Puryear (she/her): there's a lot of space to to have some self-compassion if you realize, like, I hate that. I thought that I hate that. That was my assumption. Yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yes, absolutely. Yeah. And I think that's such an important point about the inner work that we have to do in order to be culturally sensitive counselors. The inner work of like realizing. Oh, wow! Yeah, my brain did absorb that and of course none of us chose to grow up in a society that is so biased and inequitable, and so filled with harmful stereotype. None of us chose that. So it's but it is each of our work to unlearn the things that are

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah, and shame doesn't help us unlearn that it never has. And so, but coming with curiosity, gives us like a way to make good out of something that might not have been good inside us.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yes, So

Allison Puryear (she/her): I'm thinking about stereotypes versus like cultural themes.

Liz Zhou (she/her): And I'd love to talk about some cultural themes that do impact Asian Americans, and how this shows up in their world.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yes, yes. So I noticed, I wanna like give a definition of culture here, cause thing where it's like, what? What is culture, this nebulous concept? So that to really make it

more concrete for people. Culture can include a language that we speak our mannerisms and our body language. The amount of physical space that we leave between us and another person when we approach them. Even how we greet someone is a reflection of culture.

how we dress, the foods we eat like festivals and holidays. Those are the more obvious components, and then sort of beneath the tip of the iceberg there. Beliefs and world views like, how does this culture conceptualize mental health is that even a concept in that culture, a relationship to authority, social structures and systems, how our families organized a work ethic sense of humor. What is considered funny? That is a reflection

culture as well as beauty standards and definition of success. So I wanna put that out there, and then and then answer the question, what are cultural themes that Asian Americans might might be navigating? And I really do think of culture as like the water that we swim in. So we're not always aware of. Like, you know, I'm doing that because of my culture, like those are not regular thoughts I have. It's more just like it's kind of in our bones.

Liz Zhou (she/her): And it's sort of the energy that we feel around us, and that we feel inside of us, which means that every interaction is a multi-cultural interaction like this is a multiple multi-culture interaction.

Liz Zhou (she/her): and for Asian Americans there might be a bit of a friction internally between the individualism of Western American culture. This, like, let's be great individuals and pull ourselves up by the bootstraps. That kind of individualism versus the collectivism of a lot of Asian cultures. So the collectivism of we are all an interconnected web.

What one person does has a ripple effect on everyone else in their family system and social system. Another part of Collectivism. Again, this is not everyone's experience, but a common question that can be asked in Asian culture is, what will others think? In a sort of like, survive from a place of like survival fear, and needing to protect the represent, the reputation of the collective, whether it's the family, collective

or something else. So I just wanna name that that might be a point of internal friction and a cultural theme that Asian Americans are sort of dancing around with, like what? Where? What like sense of self and sense of community. And how can all that coexist in the same internal space?

Other cultural themes might be a pressure to succeed and a a very specific definition of success where?

Liz Zhou (she/her): again, emphasizing safety and survival. What is a safe career path? What is the safe life plan? And something that might be seen as more alternative. Just as an example like a more creative endeavor like becoming an artist. Maybe that's not as supported or encouraged, or even seen as a possibility in Asian cultures, because it's not seen as as safe as becoming

Liz Zhou (she/her): like a a doctor or a lawyer which has a more established path. So those are just a couple of things. Yeah, I'm I'm curious about either the like historical underpinnings or

Allison Puryear (she/her): cultural movements that make that that pressure for safety.

Liz Zhou (she/her): So prevalent and Asian American culture.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah. And it it opens up a whole like all the doors to history. Yeah. Gosh! Oh, I'm aware of that. I am. Yeah, I wanna not speak to. I guess the historical stuff that I'm not

as much an expert on, but I can speak to sort of the the intergenerational dynamics, and especially the threat of immigration right? Just that. The term Asian American suggest a history of immigration and all immigrants in some way. But I mean, like recent immigration within the last 1, 2, 3, 4 generations.

Liz Zhou (she/her): In the sense of oh, we are members of the the ancient diaspora, like the home that my ancestors called home. The land they lived on is not is not the land that I'm growing up on. So there's that felt sense.

Liz Zhou (she/her): and I think, yeah, that threat of safety and survival is just like embedded it. It is in the bones of the the immigrant story, across lots of communities and cultures, not just Asian where it it truly feels like a life or death thing of like, how are we gonna make it to the next day? How are we gonna make sure that our family survives. How are we going to like of

Liz Zhou (she/her): how are we gonna make it right in this? In this country? With has totally new systems, a new language to learn, having to re, maybe rebuild a support network from the ground up. These are the experiences that that first generation that immigrated from Asia to you know the the States, or wherever they ended up. Th. That was the felt sense that the energy that they were in. How do we make it? And that might have filtered down that probably filtered down

Liz Zhou (she/her): to the next generation and the next generation, even as maybe their financial situation change or their level of resourcing changed. And maybe they aren't quite in that same life or death safety, survival situation as the first generation. It can still be this like this nervous system response in the family of oh, like, if we like right it, it can be seen as like scarcity, mindset or like, we need to save

Liz Zhou (she/her): a lot. A lot of money. We can't spend. We can. We always plan for emergencies? That's the only thing we plan for right. That can be a story line that travels across the generations.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I wonder if that answers the the question? It does. It does. And I think about like I'm I'm wondering if, as within families, if

Allison Puryear (she/her): it's

Allison Puryear (she/her): gets diluted through the generations like, if the youngest generation has less of a firm hold on that need for safety and security, partly because their ancestors and the generations before them have insured it for them in some ways.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yes, I mean that. That's a brilliant reflection. Cause right? Like the circumstances in which the original coping mechanisms came to light emerged. Are not the circumstances that, like the later generations, are living in so that can actually lead to confusion and and messiness where it's like, Oh, I hear, just as I'm saying. I hear my grandparents and my parents talking about this, and we need to think this way, and we don't take that risk cause that's

Liz Zhou (she/her): not safe. But it doesn't match the world that maybe the the youngest generation is living in, and it can create this incongruence of well, my mom raised me this way, but actually the world I look around and like isn't as scary and filled with danger and filled a threat as the way she raised me to believe that mismatch and that can cause intergenerational friction as well.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah, absolutely.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I'm thinking, too, about

Allison Puryear (she/her): Immigrants who come and find a job versus immigrants who come and create a job, who become entrepreneurs cause that is so much more inherently risky in so many ways. And yet there's such a rich history of immigrants coming and creating their own businesses in this country? Is there a different way of looking at that risk

Allison Puryear (she/her): like? Does that?

Allison Puryear (she/her): Does that entrepreneurship get reframed into like this is how we survive as a family, or is it

Allison Puryear (she/her): seen as as risky as maybe. like the way I think of starting businesses like that. There's inherent risk. It maybe isn't for the risk oaverse person.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Hmm! This is so interesting cause it is for me as an entrepreneur and a business owner. It's like, Oh, well, this is the things, themes. I would navigate it as well, right like. What are the degrees of risk from that immigrant perspective, from that Asian cultural perspective like different degrees of safety. Yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Gosh, I mean, that's such a rich question. I'm just like pausing to think what direction to go with it.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Hmm.

have.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah. What's coming to mind right now is like an image of like, okay, like, literally a crossroads right? And one is a very well paved path, and everyone knows where it ends, and it ends with a great view. And it's like, yeah, that's the hiking trail. Everyone goes on. And then the other one was like, it's a little bit less trimmed and like it's a little murky. Know what they're like, is it 5 miles, is it? 10 miles? And and yeah, again, in that embodied felt sense of that

Liz Zhou (she/her): immigrant Asian American experience, it's like the automatic somatic impulses to go for that. That first trail right? Oh, that's a clear path. I know I'll get there in 5 years. And then the the other path. That's a little more murky. It it feels like somatically a little scarier.

Liz Zhou (she/her): and I imagine that the motivation or the curiosity about what they could find at the end of that path needs to be greater than their perceived level of risk in their nervous system. For that second path to be worth it. Personal? Emotional, mental physical calculation for each person of like am I at a place in my life where I can be resource enough where that level of risk is something my nervous

Liz Zhou (she/her): system can absorb, and that the nervous system of my family can absorb, because a lot of these individual right career decisions do our in consultation right with the whole family system, we we keep in mind, how how will this impact my ability to support my parents as they age. How will this break be perceived? Will I be even be supported? But within family system?

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah. Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Hmm.

Allison Puryear (she/her): There's so many questions I wanna make sure we get to all of our learning objectives. But I'm gonna table some of the questions hopefully. I'll be able to come back to them within some of what we're gonna talk about.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I'm wondering about like

Allison Puryear (she/her): patterns in our Asian American clients that.

Allison Puryear (she/her): aside from what we've talked about like I, the fear piece is so interesting to me.

Allison Puryear (she/her): but are there some other patterns that we may see in our individual clients that are either rooted in the collective experience of their families that

Allison Puryear (she/her): just might not be on our radar. And we're really missing out on providing great care if we don't ask about it or come in with some awareness.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah, yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): I love that question. And I'm gonna respond to it with more questions that questions. I want clinicians to be holding in their minds while they sit with their clients. And if they have these questions in their minds from the perspective of their clients. Then that'll spontaneously generate really great questions. It'll make sense once I get to it. So the questions to hold in our awareness.

As if we were in the shoes of our Asian American client, is

Liz Zhou (she/her): the first question is, Do do I exist? So this comes down to sense of being seen for for Asians where often as a community, we have been made invisible. We, we get left out of conversations, big conversations we get left out of, you know, political spaces, legal spaces. You know, even in the therapy field. Right? I know most of the theories I learned. Clinical orientations, I learned, did not

Liz Zhou (she/her): seem to have been made with Asian American clients in mind or with diversity in mind in general, right where there's so many white male voices in our field. Right? So there's that right of these, the feeling of being invisible, and of not being able to take up space. That might be an archetype for for a lot of Asian Americans, not for everyone, but but for for many feeling like right? Like, even if they look on TV or watch movies or try to buy a a toy at the toy store that there's they're not seeing themselves represented in that. They're seeing

Liz Zhou (she/her): mostly white faces, I know as a child, one of my core memories growing up was trying to buy dolls right trying to get a barbie, but not be able to find a barbie of my race that do I exist. And I I'm not suggesting that therapists ask their clients that do exist. No, I'm suggesting they hold that question in their hearts, and had tried to imagine what it feels like to grow up in a world where

Liz Zhou (she/her): where where one doesn't feel they belong, where they don't feel welcomed or seen. The second question to hold in mind is, am I safe? So again, from that Asian American perspective, there's the whole immigrant history. Safety, meaning, you know, physical safety.

Do I have a roof over my head, but also just emotional safety financial safety. Even like spiritual safety like, do I even feel safe in my body to exist. And right?

Liz Zhou (she/her): So there's that and we can't talk about safety, of course, without acknowledging all of the Asian hate and violence of the past the post, the the covid years, and the post covid right like the the numbers, the numbers speak for themselves of the rise in hate crimes so it makes total sense that a lot of Asian Americans do not feel safe in their bodies, maybe in public spaces

Liz Zhou (she/her): as well as just the history of marginalization and discrimination, and, like the Chinese Exclusion Act and the the Japanese internment camps right like that. That's those are just 2 of many examples. That is the safety piece. So keep kind of that social justice lens as counselors of like. Okay. Having some awareness of the histories that are linked to the clients the identities of the client in front of me.

The whole therapy doesn't need to be about that unless the client is is working through that but just having that in mind. And then a third question to consider is, Who am I? From the Asian American perspective? And how complex, that is, when we think about all the stereotypes about Asian Americans. The model minority method which we can get into more as well as the expectations, expectations within Asian culture

Liz Zhou (she/her): itself, all of which can cloud a person's access to their true self, their sense of self. They're they're maybe they're so busy trying to fulfill expectations, trying to stay, kind of trying to stay within, like the acceptable bounds of how they're allowed to exist within American society as a marginalized person. Right? The question, Who am I? Can be actually incredibly stressful for

Liz Zhou (she/her): the answer. So those would be 3 entry points for clinicians to start doing their inner reflection. And then they can come into the client space really with that curiosity. And that open like that openness, and also that empathy which every client can feel, even if you know we haven't had the same life experiences. I know that I can feel when someone, someone's heart is empathizing with mine.

Liz Zhou (she/her): hmm

Allison Puryear (she/her): i'm thinking about that that kind of dichotomy of, do I exist and feeling invisible. And then all of a sudden, with Covid.

Allison Puryear (she/her): you're visible in a way that isn't safe, and triggers all the fear that goes down your ancestral line and how

Allison Puryear (she/her): stark a difference that is, from being overlooked to being looked at as if you've done something wrong when you've done nothing.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean it is so. It is so chilling like how the waves are. The tides of history can turn so quickly. And then we realize just how fragile like social power, is right where at any moment someone right go from being the model minority to being the disease, the the thing that everyone's running away from that thing that people are attacking. This is a it's a very broad way to put it. It's not like it was

Liz Zhou (she/her): only this and then that. But just like things can change so quickly. It's like this whiplash of being invisible to hyper visible, and both of those experiences signal danger to the like. Both of those experiences can feel really unsafe cause. If we're invisible, then we're

not being seen, and then our rights aren't being protected. And then we don't get to have a voice and really important conversation.

Liz Zhou (she/her): If we're hyper visible, then then we feel the need to hide or to not go out in public because of the fear of being attacked physically or verbally. So it's I mean you captured. It's incredibly overwhelming to to exist in that space. And it's not like, it's something we can just take off. And it's like, let me just not be agent like, no, that's it's like, yeah, it's it's it's who it's who we are. Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): absolutely. Can we talk some about the model minority myth and the impact of that on

Allison Puryear (she/her): Asian American folks.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah, yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): I feel like, any. Yeah. Any conversation in Asian mental health isn't complete for me without talking about the model minority myth. And I wonder if it's it's one of those things that people have in their memory networks like one of their implicit associations. When they hear Asian American, do they right? Do they have a story in their head that Asian Americans are really good at math and science? Is it a story in their head that Asian Americans are doctors and lawyers, and they work really hard. Right? Or

Liz Zhou (she/her): those are the main ones, right? Work ethics. Smart. Yeah, like. yeah. Accomplished. Highly educated right out the yeah. And it's so messy cause on on the surface model minority myth can feel like

Liz Zhou (she/her): a compliment like, oh, right it it's it's a very backhanded compliment. As as we know right cause. First of all, it's it's it's suggesting that all Asians are fit into this box. When that is not everyone's experience, not everyone has the privilege to access higher education. Not everyone goes down that path. Not not everyone even wants to become a doctor or lawyer. How boring would that be if everyone became a doctor and lawyer?

Liz Zhou (she/her): so there's that it's just limiting. It's an inaccurate myth, and then it. It's so harmful because it pits minorities against each other. Just the phrase model minority suggests that there is a model to aspire to and that there's a box that everyone should try to jump into, to be approved, to be acceptable to the dominant culture. Right? American culture.

Liz Zhou (she/her): So there's that it. It's it's divisive. It suggests that, you know. Here here are those good minorities who do that, and they follow the rules, and they stay in line, and they're quiet, and they they obey oath, authority, and then they're successful. That is like the really gross story attached to that it creates this. Yeah, possibly inner conflict. If someone doesn't fulfill that myth

and then external conflict division intention because it's it's not allowing for solidarity. It's not allowing for us to say there are many different ways to be in this community. There are many. The every single way that a person can be is

Liz Zhou (she/her): right? It should be acceptable. It shouldn't be like, you have to do this. Considered a model minority. Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I'm just thinking about

Allison Puryear (she/her): people who just naturally suck at math right? Like all of a sudden, you haven't met the expectations of the white kids in class next to you who were gonna ask you for tutoring.

Allison Puryear (she/her): So then, that was the only way they were looking at you as

Allison Puryear (she/her): really a person to them, maybe. And now, all of a sudden, like you're useless to them. So there's another layer of not fitting in when you don't fit, what people are expecting of you.

Allison Puryear (she/her): and you already don't fit, because you're not like

Allison Puryear (she/her): the same as everybody else in America, which is allegedly white. So it's like there's a default, apparently, and to it and if you're not even like fulfilling what you're supposed to, because you're Asian American by being exceptional at math and science and engineering. Then let's

Allison Puryear (she/her): what are you even doing?

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah. And it's so transactional, right? Like utility as a human being, which is a horrible phrase, is attached to what product or service or value they can provide to another person. It's incredibly, I mean, it's very capitalistic. It just right. It's all about like, yeah, the the broken systems that we live in here.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Where does the model minority myths come from?

Allison Puryear (she/her): Like? What? How did that get started and disseminated so thoroughly?

Liz Zhou (she/her): Oh.

Liz Zhou (she/her): I actually wish that I could have a clear answer to that. I'm I'm actually not sure like in in this moment. yeah, it's it's like, just so in the air that it's one of those things where? Up until this point I haven't like question like wha? Oh, that it came? Well, of course it came from somewhere, but it's like, Oh, but from where? Where? Right? So that that's something I'll have to like, sit with and kinda reflect on. Yeah, cause I feel like there's an assumption that I have

Allison Puryear (she/her): that

Allison Puryear (she/her): schooling is more rigorous in Asian countries than it is here. So I think I've got that

Allison Puryear (she/her): part that I assume plays into that

Allison Puryear (she/her): and I don't even know if that's true. It's just an assumption. I have gotta get curious about it and see and I do know that something I feel like I grew up with in the Reagan era is like.

Allison Puryear (she/her): you know, the Asian American countries, kids are smarter than me, like they're being taught better. They're in school for longer hours. All these things. They're gonna surpass us economically. Watch out like that kind of stuff. It's a threat.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah. Oh, my gosh, that gives me chills. Cause that's the felt sense. Yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): wow! Great again.

Liz Zhou (she/her): course it's a whole continent, like there are places where that's not true at all, and and from my lived experiences of having family in China, III? It can. It's certainly a pattern of a lot of emphasis on the value of education on

Liz Zhou (she/her): again, the the story and the value being like, yeah, we we have to commit to our studies in order to have other opportunities to succeed in life and eventually be able to provide for ourselves and our families. This whole series of mental calculations, as well as those implicit rules and a lot of Asian cultures. Where, again, pressure to succeed failure is not an option.

another story is, you know, if you don't work hard and succeed, it means you're lazy, and it's bad to be lazy right? That whole chunk is a story.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah. So there, there is certainly a a, a cultural value of education in a lot of Asian communities. Which can certainly serve to like, re emphasize the model minority myth within the cultures and communities themselves. So whether or not the myth came from within the cultures or from outside of the cultures as sort of a story that, like th the system, the man to kind of create obedience and

Liz Zhou (she/her): assimilation among merchants. Populations like II don't know at this point in time. But it's certainly there's a lot of things that sort of end up reemphasizing each other. Both within and externally of the culture

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah it's really interesting, how

Allison Puryear (she/her): ideas

Allison Puryear (she/her): get formed

Allison Puryear (she/her): in multiple cultures, right because Asian American or Asian cultures. There are many different cultures within Asian culture combine it with like American culture of different times in history, and how

Allison Puryear (she/her): we land on this thing that so many people believe in, that this is an assumption that's so shared that, then ends up.

Allison Puryear (she/her): leaking into our clients daily lives, and making their lives harder.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Comes to mind from that is like the microaggressions that a lot of Asian Americans face right? Cause what is just as an idea, right? The idea is, Asians are good at math starts as an idea becomes a story in someone's head, becomes filtered into the way that they perceive someone, and then the way that they treat someone. And then maybe words start coming out of this person's mouth of like.

Liz Zhou (she/her): where are you really from? Or oh, are you good at? Like right, like the assumptions? These the questions based on assumptions very close ended questions. That are already assuming an answer, instead of being curious about

Liz Zhou (she/her): what the other person might say. So yes, so that can show up in people's lives as dealing with microaggressions. And there's this great analogy about microaggressions, this Youtube video. About how microaggressions are like mosquito bites. Where? Yeah, like one. It doesn't mosquito bites. Not a huge deal. It's like, Okay, annoying. If you get 9 or 10 or a dozen, and then you get those every week, and then it never actually

Liz Zhou (she/her): stops. Then suddenly your whole body is covered in mosquito bites. It's so irritating something that started off as just a pesky little thing becomes a source of like rage and anger and extreme physical distress and discomfort. So I use that analogy so that people yeah. So we can all have an embodied experience of why, a microaggression is more than just like Oh, a few words that slipped out of someone's mouth.

Liz Zhou (she/her): The the term micro seems sort of softens. It's like it's it's but it is, though it's a it's a subtle act of exclusion. That can add up to be like a macro aggression. And

Liz Zhou (she/her): oh.

Liz Zhou (she/her): and I'm just like positive thing about like, Oh, my God! A 100 mosquito bites right? That is painful.

Liz Zhou (she/her): And then.

Liz Zhou (she/her): you know, there can be this awkward dance where maybe someone asked like, Where are you from? And and if my real answer to that is, I'm from Michigan. I grew up in Michigan. I was born there. But then it could be followed up with no where are you really from? And then that starts the whole like.

Liz Zhou (she/her): okay, are you asking where my parents are from? Are you asking my ethnicity, and also what gives you a right to ask me that here now, often people are asking that before they've asked my name before they've asked. Yeah, just in random encounters. Yeah, I know right? Cringe it's so cringe because there's this assumption of Oh, this person doesn't belong here. Let me figure out. Let me figure out what box to put them in

so absorbing those types of interactions and that awkward dance of like, okay, do I? Do I make, do I? How do I respond? Here? Do I just say, Okay, my family is from China. Can we end the conversation now, or do? Or is it a moment where I have the resources in me to pause and let them know how that impacted me to educate them on. Why, that is a question I'm not comfortable asking because of the way that they asked it. I don't usually have that level of resourcing in me.

Liz Zhou (she/her): on, you know, like on my walk, like I'm just out on the town. And I have a random interaction like

Liz Zhou (she/her): I don't have that space in me. So what ends up happening instead is an interaction where I'm trying to end the micro aggression and encounter as quickly as possible. I leave. I flee like my nervous system, is literally trying to flee and escape, and then I had to like kinda release all of that later. So that has a lot emotional and somatic labor for me to deal with that. And I know every Asian American has had an experience like that. Something like that

Liz Zhou (she/her): multiply that by 90 or 100, and then multiply that as, and also add that this never actually ends, really.

Liz Zhou (she/her): And then that is again, the felt sense of kind of what it's like to be in a body that is marginalized and stereotyped.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah. I'm thinking about this kind of interaction, too. And like, you know, you saying like, if I'm if I'm perfectly resourced, essentially, I can explain the impact of this question. But.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Why would you owe that to them, you know, like this is a person who clearly hasn't done an ounce of work

Liz Zhou (she/her): around

Allison Puryear (she/her): anti racism like not even a drop if they're like. I don't care your name. I'm just curious where you belong.

You know, like.

Allison Puryear (she/her): why spend the emotional energy with somebody who also is setting off your. This person isn't safe alarm. I think it's a good a good example of why

Allison Puryear (she/her): white people need to be the ones having these conversations with other white people like somebody like a bystander, even just being like, hey? I noticed this woman just left. And you asked her this question in this way. And I think.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah, this might have been the impact of that. I don't want to speak for her. But this is like

I'm not emotionally hurt, aside from just like, Oh, God! Did you just do that, you know, like I don't have the same

Allison Puryear (she/her): internal experience, witnessing that that you have experiencing that, and

Allison Puryear (she/her): we can't rely on the person who is being harmed

Liz Zhou (she/her): to do all this work.

Allison Puryear (she/her): We just can't. It's not fair.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yes, exactly, exactly. And it's like weird to think that that's like a radical idea in some spaces like cause to me and you. That's perfectly reasonable. It's like, of course. Why would we put the burden on the person who is being harmed to then educate their the person who harm them on. Why, that's so many levels of like, not reasonable like comp like absurd. So I'm I'm

glad you just name that cause this is the. You know this. This is what

Liz Zhou (she/her): this is, what like. The work looks like it. It. It seems like distributing the level of discomfort so that it's not all falling onto the shoulders of the people who are being harmed the most. You know the BIPOC right, or any other community, right? And really leveraging

privilege leveraging one's comfort in the world, to be able to be a voice for those who do not have the resources in that moment to

Liz Zhou (she/her): to do that level of education, because this is stuff people get paid to do DEI work for. This is stuff should be getting paid for consultation, for this is not the type of work that people should be doing unpaid on the street, just on their walks through the neighborhood. It's that is

Allison Puryear (she/her): frankly like priceless it is, it is, and it's

Allison Puryear (she/her): I think there might be a sense amongst a lot of white folks of like. Well. like it's it's not my place to speak for her like I don't wanna speak out of turn. I don't wanna

Allison Puryear (she/her): say the wrong thing.

Allison Puryear (she/her): but I, personally would rather risk saying the wrong thing.

and

Allison Puryear (she/her): have done my best

Allison Puryear (she/her): to help this person, who, I can assume maybe didn't mean to be rude like I can give them the benefit of that, the doubt in that part of the conversation and assume maybe, like they just didn't know, you know, in the same way.

Allison Puryear (she/her): a lot of people, just they're ignorant to something, and they're not trying to be hurtful, but if they knew better they would do it differently. I would rather kind of be clumsy in that conversation with that person, but it potentially helped than

Allison Puryear (she/her): have you in the moment feel like, well, if I don't say something. This person is gonna do this to the next Asian person. They see, you know.

Liz Zhou (she/her): I see.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): the only way this stuff stops is if we talk to people talk to the people doing the harm.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Right? Right? Yeah. And that, yeah, that kind of education that calls them in that like, stay where people can stay in contact with each other and like. And the only way that happens is, yeah, like, if people are willing to hear each other, even acknowledge, like hear what the intention is, but prioritize what the impact was. Cause. Obviously, intention does not erase impact. Yeah, and have those bridging conversations and absolutely like

Liz Zhou (she/her): awkwardly done, is better than not done at all. Like the only way that we get good at these types of things and these encounters and these uncomfortable, confrontational type things is by doing it kinda awkwardly at first, and then like finding our own voice and words for. And I appreciate you know, hearing? Yeah, just that perspective of like, how can we? Yeah, not put the burden on the the people who are being harmed

Liz Zhou (she/her): and into the counseling space I will add to like, for in the therapist, see if there's a client coming in. Wanting to process a microaggression like the therapist's job is truly to first and foremost, empathize, acknowledge, impact, acknowledge, impact like, okay, makes

sense. You're feeling angry. Oh, wow! That is awful. Right? Like empathize, empathize empathize I just wanna be careful that therapists are not trying to

Liz Zhou (she/her): explain away like the intention. I don't wanna hear therapists saying, well, they didn't mean it like that? Or have you considered their intention? It's like, No.

Liz Zhou (she/her): say that to your client who is experiencing racial trauma. Do not say that, so I just wanna put all that out there like, right? You and I are having this conversation about intention, impact, and like in the counseling room, meet your client exactly where they're at. Yes, it's also not a great place to be like. This sounded like a really good opportunity for you to work on that. The like a certain like. Not the time

Liz Zhou (she/her): exactly, exactly, and also like that that would not land well for me coming, you know, if I had a white therapist, right? Like, no, exactly. It's like, yeah. Yeah. So

yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah. And and I think for people for white folks who might not have experienced

Allison Puryear (she/her): racial trauma, just just trust the experience as your client is telling you about it like.

Liz Zhou (she/her): believe them around how it feels.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yes, yes, yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): true. If I could just take that bold it. Capitalize that. Let me just keep that like people of color are tired of having to explain their experiences to people, to white people. To people in general. Right? So just let's just believe people that exactly as they say it is. And there are so many more white therapists than there are therapists of color that

Allison Puryear (she/her): a lot of our clients come to white therapists because there's not another option. They would prefer to see someone of their race in many cases, but there just isn't anybody, or they're full. And so they come to us, and if we do all the things that they feared we would do.

Allison Puryear (she/her): They may not

Allison Puryear (she/her): trust therapy anymore.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Hi.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah, that is a big one. That is, yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah. And like so many things to say about this that you know, therapy as as we know it in our our kind of Western field was, was not built originally with people of color in mind; was not built originally for a lot of bodies and a lot of a lot of identities. It was built in a really limiting way, and a lot of the theories that we learn a lot of the diagnoses that we use or that we are.

you know, using to refer to people. We were not created with diverse populations in mind. So absolutely to your point, you know.

Liz Zhou (she/her): we wanna be giving people therapy experiences that are personalized to their needs that are sensitive to their cultures, sensitive to their identities, not pretending to be an expert on their roles, but really committing to being curious, and also committing to

Liz Zhou (she/her): being willing to rupture and repair as well in the therapeutic relationship cause, it can actually be really healing. If a client feels safe enough to say, Oh, Hi! Therapist like what you just said doesn't actually resonate with me. This is actually my experience. Ideally. What we don't want them doing, that every single session like 5 times a session. That might be a sign we need to like attune a little better, but like

Liz Zhou (she/her): every once in a while, I thought, there, if a client is saying, actually, I disagree with with, and that's not my experience. You missed me there. That is rupture and repair, and that is profoundly healing as well.

Liz Zhou (she/her): go out of contact with each other, re establish connection, and actually deepen the connection as a result of having heard each other more fully.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah. And that requires a certain safety in the relationship. It also requires a person who has worked towards some assertiveness.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Cause. I know, like I have a lot of clients that in general, that

Allison Puryear (she/her): my my folks all have a hard time saying anything that isn't pleasing and

Allison Puryear (she/her): to especially if they really like you. They don't want to say anything that's gonna make you feel like they don't like you, and that's something we work on in therapy. So I think there's there's also just a lot of being

Allison Puryear (she/her): alert and really watching for those signs that you've lost someone or that you've said something that is, that's not landing.

Allison Puryear (she/her): and often you can ask, and people will tell you. But it might be a big ask, especially with a new therapy client for them to speak up on their own without any sort of

Allison Puryear (she/her): check in so being willing to check in and be wrong as a therapist.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yes, yes, yeah, I mean snaps to all of that. And yes, those check-ins. That those check-ins are the difference between

Liz Zhou (she/her): a therapy space that is actually recreating the trauma that people are experiencing daily lives and a therapy space that is providing a corrective experience.

Liz Zhou (she/her): right where it's like in in the daily world. People are not getting checked in on. They're not being asked like, How did that land for you does not resonate like I get that wrong. Does that match right? So to have an attuned therapist ask that, and to give that person an opportunity to use their voice, which Asian Americans like again, that's a theme. They don't often get to do that because of all the things we discuss that is like Whoa, that is like a spiritual breakthrough

For some I will add to speaking of safety a way that I like to build it from day from minute. One of therapy is broaching identities with clients. So that first intake session right where we're asking them about their life history their family history any medications they're on also building in a piece here, really, intentionally, about like what identities are important to you. What do you like me to know about you.

Liz Zhou (she/her): and and I even offer a few examples to folks, because some people haven't really used that language before, or they haven't been asked that. So I'll say such as like, if there's something you want me to know about your gender identity or sexual orientation, race ethnicity, culture, religion, any anything you want me to know, and leaving it super open ended, and then based on how they respond. Even that is information, you know. If they only think

Liz Zhou (she/her): my name is Liz. And I really thought, like, it's like, Okay, that's where they are right now. Great. Or if they're saying, Oh, yeah, I'm Chinese American. I'm a second generation immigrant. My parents were. They like, it's like, Okay, and that is their level of awareness. And how they want me to know them from from, you know, just based on the first session. And then what I love here is after they share about their identities naming. Okay, I'm hearing this. And I wonder would it be helpful for you to know about my

identities as well, and how that might impact our work together? And even if if you wanna name explicitly like, I'm aware that there are some identities we share and some that are different. And I just wanna check how how you feel that'll impact the work that we do. Leaving it super open-ended, you know. We're not saying like, I won't be able to help you, because we're different in this way, or and it's not saying, Oh, I'll I'm totally your therapist, cause we're both Chinese American like.

Liz Zhou (she/her): just because I'm Chinese American doesn't mean I'm every Chinese American persons best fit therapist. So, anyway, having that broaching conversation, the client then, has the choice to say, Oh, yeah, I would actually like to know about like your identities, or they could say, No, I don't. I don't need to know that. And then, based on their answer, you know, the therapist follows their lead, and and then, you know, I will choose to thoughtfully disclose some I some identities in mind just to

Liz Zhou (she/her): help the client know kind of what parts of their world I can relate to directly, and what other parts I don't have direct experience in, but have curiosity and a commitment to learning about and then and then we go from there, and that I find build safety. It builds transparency into the therapeutic relationship. From day one. It also acknowledges that we are not just these blank robot slates like we're not just like Chatgpt, like

Liz Zhou (she/her): right like if we are. If, if, as therapists, we are comfortable, having that kind of identity approaching conversation, it really creates a space where we can be real humans together. Still, in our roles like we're not. We're not friends. We're right. We're still in this professional agreement.

Liz Zhou (she/her): but it's like almost the side relief like, oh, no, I don't have to like. Wonder my mind like, what if my therapist is like from my culture or not? Where's the space?

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah, yeah. I like that. It clear like that idea of it clearing the space. Because if

Allison Puryear (she/her): they feel like they're not allowed to ask you, you know, or they're not like they're not sure if that's appropriate to ask, and then it's preoccupying them because they're really curious. Then, like that's time spent in session in their mind where they're not getting what they came for.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): And I know, like, you've you've talked about different stages of Asian American identity development. Can we talk some about that. And what that looks like for folks.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah, yeah, for sure.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah. So

Liz Zhou (she/her): oh, I always wanna start with the caveat it's not gonna be everyone's path, not everyone's experience. But again, General templates to be aware of right that

Liz Zhou (she/her): Asian Americans might start off in a space of like, not not really being aware of their identities in in any like, in any direction like it's just like they they just are, or they just exist in the water just swimming in the water right? And and you. That's where you know. If if you were to ask them like, how do you identify? Maybe they're just like I'm Liz. What do you mean? Right? And and they might start out. And then, so they might start out there. That's a place they might pass through. And then there's an inevitable point,

Liz Zhou (she/her): where, Asian American in that Asian American experience, they they might become very aware that they are Asian, and also specifically that they are not white, right? This sort of moment, or us, or series of moments, or just a phase of their life where they're

Liz Zhou (she/her): kind of realizing. Okay, there are faces and bodies around me that people are calling white. I'm seeing a lot of this in my books and my TV shows and my textbooks. I read as well, whatever ha! The ways that we consume culture, right? Social media, hey? All the magazines? Okay, there's white model. And then there's maybe this this sense of like, and I'm not that I look different than that. That might be a developmental stage. They passed

Liz Zhou (she/her): through. And with that comes this really thorny experience of possibly internalized racism. So that can show up as it can be really subtle. It's it's not like someone is going around saying, I have internal racism. It's more just like it gets embedded in their memory networks where they their brain starts to associate like white beauty standards as the ideal standard cause. That's all we see. That's most of what we see, unless we are very thoughtfully

Liz Zhou (she/her): curating our feeds and our content, which I think a lot of people start off not knowing how to do. So there's that right, the internalized racism and and that's reinforced by the external racism right? Just blatant comments about like maybe Asian features, or like the right like Asians are this and right, just the stories that are so limiting, so constricting of a person's sense of self.

Liz Zhou (she/her): So there is that phase, and a lot of people might just be in that space for a while for it. It it might not even have a clear endpoint, just like having to sort of unlearn the negative associations that the big system, the big society associates between their race and like their sense of goodness as a human being, it's all really gross, right, it's disturbing

Liz Zhou (she/her): And then there might be a point developmentally where As Asian Americans, maybe we're starting to become aware of like, truly, the the negative impact of racism, maybe starting to put language around it. Maybe starting to find communities who can who are bringing language to our experiences. We are starting to understand what internalized

racism is. We're starting to understand what white supremacy is and how that impacts us. And even our placement within, like the BIPOC community and other marginalized identity.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Oh, also, this is happening at the intersection of like, maybe they're also exploring their sexual orientation. And they're generally like the socio economic status, right? None of this is happening in a vacuum. It's all just like one thing stacking onto the other. Intense identity development. And again, this unfolds for people in a lot of ways. It might show up as having to have conversations with their families or not, because it's not safe to do so

Liz Zhou (she/her): common conversations with their peers. Create like having chosen family where they feel accepted. Navigating, how? How are they introducing themselves? What are they choosing to disclose on those work employment forms what they're asking about like your ethnicity and race. Right?

Liz Zhou (she/her): so there's that and then, you know, some people might move into a phase of really wanting to challenge the internalized constructs. That they have absorbed. So

Liz Zhou (she/her): so this might look like kind of having. Maybe I'm more like activism leaning. And this can look all sorts of ways. having more of a language around social justice and like kinda like liberation and equity. Diversity inclusion, etc.

And then it can also move into a space where people are feeling more safe within their communities within the AAPI communities, and not feeling super safe or or safe at all in in more white dominated spaces. So there might be like a discernment process here of like, where? Who I wanna be surrounding myself? By? Where am I choosing to be? Based on like where I am in my personal process of like my identity, and also like

what's going on politically in the world around me. And then eventually again, this might not even be linear. I'm talking like it's linear, but it's not there might be a space they pass through where it's like

Liz Zhou (she/her): more of an integrated awareness of like, okay, I am this. And I am that like, I can feel safe in my community. And I can feel safe in spaces where, like those aspects of my community aren't present like right having more like a fluid sense of self, maybe more integrated where it's now like, Oh, I, this is where I get to be Asian. This is where I like conform, and I mask. And I right. It's more like

Liz Zhou (she/her): this is why I am, and I bring aspects of that to different spaces and interactions based on how I feel in that moment. So that is, you know, maybe a true sense of autonomy and personal power of like I get to choose how I show up. And if, right, and it's like, if there's an interaction for this person's asked me, where am I really from? I choose whether I educate in that moment, which I usually actually don't do, or I choose whether to walk away and like.

Liz Zhou (she/her): have my head held up high, right or I choose whether to walk away and like notice my freeze response and then find a space to regulate later. That can be another version of this developmental journey. There's yeah, there's no point at which I would say, yeah. And that is the maximum highest ideal right wherever someone is, is where they are. And there's like no rush to get anywhere. It's it's where they are.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I'm I love your point of like this is all going on well, all like all the developmental experiences, every adolescent or every child is experiencing like their hormones are going, you add politics and like what's going on in the world to the whole mix like it's

Allison Puryear (she/her): it's a lot more than

Allison Puryear (she/her): what I experienced as a cis het white kid, you know, like, it's just a lot more. And like my adolescence was hard enough like, I would not want to add

Allison Puryear (she/her): identity development around race around any like sexuality gender any like

Allison Puryear (she/her): it was hard enough. I don't know how it would have managed. I would have managed, because it's we do. But I just want to acknowledge. There's there's a lot of privilege in falling into what our culture in America calls default.

Allison Puryear (she/her): There's a lot of hardness you don't have to go through when you are.

Allison Puryear (she/her): you know, white cis and het like. So just thinking about our clients

Allison Puryear (she/her): and the intersections of these identities along with

Allison Puryear (she/her): all the normal, like pubescent or most pubescent, or Menopausal, or just like all the all the wild things we go through

Allison Puryear (she/her): physically. That kind of jack us up some.

Liz Zhou (she/her): It's a lot.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yes, yes, yeah. And the fact that it's not linear. How much nicer would it be if all of it was linear? Right?

Liz Zhou (she/her): Yeah, what do we know? So we just take a course. 6 week. Course. No, it's all

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah. It's it's it's so like, that movie, Everything Everywhere All at Once, which age with age and like I find myself quoting that phrase, Look, because it's true. It's like it's every

it's all at once and it's it's uncomfy to say it nicely. And I and I do think you know, even that level of acknowledgement of like, yeah, it is a privilege to not have to engage with that. And if if things I'm saying here like to the audience, if it's like, wait, what what is this talking about. If it's like not resonating, or it's like not even making sense, like, you know, maybe that is a reflection like, Oh, like, what a

Liz Zhou (she/her): well, yeah, like, what a what a privilege it is to not have to engage in all these levels of work, which, while fulfilling in some ways, and it adds like this richness to the tapestry of life. It's also exhausting, right? No one signs up for this. It's it's sort of the

Liz Zhou (she/her): it's this experience of being in a body that's like inherently racialized right where? You know, I noticed how just often in the way that news articles write about people where, if it's, you know sometimes, if it's like a white person, it's just sort of assume like Jane, right? But if it's not any other race. It's like sort of this thing of like the Asian woman. And the it's like, what is the default? Why is it? If nothing.

Liz Zhou (she/her): as mentioned at all. It's assumed to be white. But right? So again, the awkward dance.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): right?

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah. And just thinking, too, about like your community where you live.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I lived in a community that was mostly white for a while, and we had a handful of Asian kids and a couple of kids of other races and ethnicities, but it was very. There wasn't an Asian community where, you know, there might be one Asian kid in each class.

Liz Zhou (she/her): They didn't have

Allison Puryear (she/her): peers of their race with them, and how versus maybe a bigger city where there is an actual community. And you see people who

Allison Puryear (she/her): look like you and know your culture and can support you in that identity development.

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah, just the importance of having

Allison Puryear (she/her): also, like people older than you, that you're looking up to within your race who you can talk to. Some of them, talk to them about like some of this developmental stuff that's coming up for you. It's not necessarily an adult, if you're a kid, you know. Cause the adults are all wrong, anyway.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yes, yes, yeah. Yeah. How I'm assuming that having that as a kid

Allison Puryear (she/her): makes it easier when you're an adult

Liz Zhou (she/her): to.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I guess it like maybe builds

Allison Puryear (she/her): the resources so that when you're an adult, you've got easier access to those you've had a community, your whole life of people like you who get it.

Allison Puryear (she/her): You don't have to explain yourself, too.

Liz Zhou (she/her): Umhm, yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah. I mean, community is everything. Yeah. Yeah. A couple a couple of thoughts here. Yeah. When you mentioned kinda like, yeah, a a few Asian kids. But kind of majority white. It made me think about yeah, some some other. Another like thing that Asian Americans navigate like be mistaken for one another.

Liz Zhou (she/her): where it's like. And it can happen we're in communities where it's really saturated with a lot of Asian Americans or not at all where? I remember growing up like teachers would call me by name of another Asian girl in the class. Or yeah, I mean just that. Or and it's it's really painful cause. It's it's one of those things that's like, oh.

Liz Zhou (she/her): you thought I was her, and I don't really see you doing that with the other kids of different races. And then it happens repeatedly. And then suddenly, it's like this isn't just a coincidence. It's like it's repeated. And what's happening in our collective memory networks that why, why do our brains?

Liz Zhou (she/her): This is that, and she's the same as her. So there's one thing, just another pain, I wanna acknowledge, and that might come up in the therapy room. So again, validating that for folks.

Liz Zhou (she/her): And then yes, community community being like so integral to like, just the way like, what? What are we without community? It's just right. Especially in these cultures where, you know, we really do see in in our a lot of our Asian cultures like we're all an interconnected web. Like who who we are is an extension of who our families were. You know one of the first questions people

Asians might ask each other when they meet. A new person is like, Who where is your family? From? Like, what's your family's name? Fun fact. In in the Chinese language.

Liz Zhou (she/her): the way that names are structured. So in in English, my name is structured. Liz Zhou first name, then last name. In Chinese it's Zhou Liz like it be Zhou and me is the way you'd say it. So everyone's last name is the first part of their name. But it sounds weird. Yeah. So there's that. And then, even within, this is within my family, a lot of other families do it, where

Liz Zhou (she/her): the names of all the cousins of the same generation, they start with the same sound. So just as an analogy, if, like all the cousins in a family are called like Mary Jane, Mary, Kate, Mary Ann, that's the same for all the cousins and in my Chinese family, where it's like Zhou and Zhou, and then the third letter is different. It's not a letter. It's a character, right? Like we're all coordinating our names with each other. And we're getting yeah, so

Liz Zhou (she/her): that that that community piece is so key. And I think again, this is another bias I've noticed within the Western mental health field, where we're often talking about self care. And it's kind of this buzz with self care, self care, and and self care is not complete for me without community care.

Liz Zhou (she/her): I wanna just be really careful about not like us as a field, not getting into an echo chamber of like you're feeling stressed about systemic oppression. Just do self care. No, let's literally saying that. But sometimes that does seem to be the messaging of some of the more like kinda toxic positivity.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah, those voices. Yeah, where it's like, yeah. Maybe we don't get all of our needs met by an individual therapy session, or by venting to that one friend or by journaling to ourselves. It's like we get our needs met by being in a space where, when we look around our nervous systems can regulate the people who look like us who breathe like us, who's who have a felt sense of what it's like to be in a world, and we don't have to explain.

Thanks. Cause it. It. There can be a phenomenon of kind of explaining Asian parenting to people not in Asian culture, and a lot of caveats of like. No, this. It's just how it is and like, and and there's such a difference between explaining it to someone who gets it in their bones because they have lived it versus someone who's like, wait! Oh, that's so different, right? And it's not bad right? Of course we have these bridging conversations all the time

about. Oh, like this is different like, oh, your experience is different. Those are really rich conversations. But I'm just saying it's really relieving to have community spaces where

Liz Zhou (she/her): we can jump over. We can fast forward through the parts where we explain it all. And just get to the part like feeling it together. Yeah, yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah. I will say, too. Harm can happen within communities as we know. So I don't wanna paint it as like, yeah, just go to your community space and everything. Will we begin to be healed. It's like, yeah, there's also rupture and repair that happens, you know, between generations, between peers and and that that needs to be acknowledged as well if that is present for that particular client.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah, when I think I can think about how, for an Asian American client, if there has been a rupture, but no repair with community. How much more of a loss that might be.

Allison Puryear (she/her): and for somebody whose communities, like they see people like them all around them, you know, like it's it's a bigger loss until they either rebuild a new community or there happens to be a repair. And

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah, the importance of that. like the Collectivist.

Allison Puryear (she/her): ideology being

Allison Puryear (she/her): in your ancestry, in your like, it's just what's valued in the culture along with. We all need community.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And when both of those things are taken like both of those are ripped out, it can just be so hard.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah, there can be immense grief there, like that level of loss. It is like a soul loss, to lose community or to never have had it. In the first place

Allison Puryear (she/her): just thinking about like the way therapists might respond to.

Allison Puryear (she/her): You know, like a a white woman who's

Allison Puryear (she/her): lost her group of friends or something, you know, like.

Allison Puryear (she/her): like, Okay, well, we can like, how can you make new friends? You know, it'd be almost more problem solving maybe in a way that could be really detrimental to somebody who really needs to process like this soul loss. Yeah.

Liz Zhou (she/her): yeah, Liz, thank you so much for all of this. I really appreciate it. I'm I'm hopeful that the therapists who are

Allison Puryear (she/her): who are tuning in are able to implement a lot of what you've talked about so that they can take great care of their Asian American clients. Yes, yes. Well, thank you so much for your thoughtful questions and reflections, and this was such a very soul opening conversation. Oh, good! I love that! Thank you.

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