Poverty is not a lack of character. It is a lack of money. A lack of opportunity. A lack of investment. It is when society turns its back and makes you invisible.

POVERTY: “A Walk In My Shoes”

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BARRIERS TO CHANGE: GENERATED BY POVERTY

- Crisis Living – safety
- Tyranny of the Moment – no future story, choice, or power
- Lack of Resources
- Distrust of Institutions – psychological reactance
- Polarized Thinking – “fatedness”
- Not Knowing How to Plan
- Coexisting Problems
- Not Knowing Hidden Rules of Economic Class
- Giving Up Self-Image – identity is threatening
WHAT DO YOU THINK POVERTY IS?

How do you define it for yourself?
POVERTY

- Deprives people of their security and well-being
- Limited/inadequate access to healthy food, clothing and shelter, including education and healthcare
- Lack of opportunity
- Loss of hope (poverty of spirit)
- Takes away people’s rights, and their freedom, DIGNITY and peace of mind
- Puts people's lives in danger and robs them of their future
- Contributes to stress-related illness
Considerations

• Point-in-time research indicates that children with disabilities, both physical and mental, are significantly more likely to live in families in poverty than are children without disabilities. (Porterfield, 2002; Halfon & Newacheck, 1999; Bowe, 1995)

• Lower levels of cognitive development (generally measured by IQ scores) and higher risks of mental health problems and behavioral problems are found among children who live in economically disadvantaged families and/or high-risk (low-income) neighborhoods. (Newacheck, Hung & Wright, 2002; Newacheck, Stein, Bauman, & Hung, 2003)

• Anecdotal evidence suggests that many families with children with disabilities purposely keep their incomes low in order for their child to qualify for health insurance coverage under either the Medicaid program or one of the State Children’s Health Insurance programs. (Bazelon Center, 2002).
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POVERTY

Situational Poverty

- When a person’s/family’s income and support is decreased due to a specific change – job loss, divorce, death, etc.
- While there can be a domino effect caused by this one significant change, families experiencing Situational Poverty tend to remain hopeful, knowing that this is a temporary setback.
POVERTY

Generational Poverty

- A family having been in poverty for at least two generations.
- Hopelessness is the key factor in creating the cycle – one generation to the next. Without hope and the belief that life can be better, the motivation and energy needed to break the cycle is very low.
- Focused on surviving
- Centered on short-term outcomes
MENTAL MODELS on POVERTY
MENTAL MODEL
A Definition...

BELIEFS, IDEAS, IMAGES, AND VERBAL DESCRIPTIONS
that we consciously or unconsciously form from our experiences and which, when formed
GUIDE OUR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS
within narrow channels.
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MENTAL MODEL FOR POVERTY

RELATIONSHIPS

ILLNESS
AGENCY TIME
JOBS & MONEY
CRIME & SAFETY
FAMILY & FRIENDS

HOUSEHOLD NEEDS
ENTERTAINMENT
HOUSING
CHILD CARE
TRANSPORTATION
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Mental Model for Poverty

- Social Services
- Churches
- Police

Businesses

- Pawn Shop
- Liquor Store
- Corner Store
- Rent-to-Own
- Laundromat
- Fast Food
- Check Cashing
- Labor Services
- Used Car Lots
- Dollar Store
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Achievement

- Children
- Education
- Family & Friends
- Hobbies & Interests
- Housing & Assets
- Clubs & Civic Groups
- Prevention
- Careers
- Vacation
- Retirement

MENTAL MODEL FOR MIDDLE CLASS
Mental Model for Middle Class

- Bookstores
- Banks
- Fitness Centers
- Shopping/Strip Malls
- Vet Clinics

Businesses

- Office Complexes
- Coffee Shops
- Restaurants/Bars
- Gold Courses
MENTAL MODEL

Although mental models provide internal stability in a world of continuous change...

They also blind us to facts and ideas that challenge or defy our deeply held beliefs.
MENTAL MODEL
Unfortunate Effects…

BIAS: An inclination of temperament or outlook; especially a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment.

STEREOTYPES: Overall impressions based on the assumption that all members of a group possess similar attributes.

➢ the cognitive precursors of prejudice
➢ the unconscious beginnings of unintentional discrimination

PREJUDICE: A negative feeling toward a group based on a faulty generalization
ENGAGING FAMILIES
A Professional’s Approach...

CULTURAL HUMILITY IS ABOUT ACCEPTING OUR LIMITATIONS

We are limited because we have unconscious stereotypes of others and tend to use stereotypes as a “safety net” to help explain behavior.

The families we serve are comprised of complex humans who intersect in a variety of cultures, be they race, gender, class, age, work status, disability status, etc.

(Ortega & Coulborn Faller, 2011)
Your cultural communication is influenced by expectations, values, beliefs, language, communication styles—and may influence your perception of what you see and experience.

- What are my family’s expectations about responsibility, dependability, and getting the job right the first time?
- What are my family’s expectations around time and punctuality?
- What are my family’s language use – tone, loudness, words?
- What are my family’s non-verbal communication – closeness, eye contact, hands?
- What are my family’s ways of acting/acceptance of others who are different?
- What are my family’s beliefs and/or expectations based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, levels of ability, age and/or gender?
POVERTY IMPOSES A KIND OF TAX ON THE BRAIN

It sucks up so much bandwidth – capacity spent wrestling with financial tradeoffs, scarce resources, the gap between bills and income – that the poor have fewer cognitive resources left over to succeed at parenting, education, or work.

Experiencing poverty is like knocking 13 points off your IQ as you try to navigate everything else.

THAT’S LIKE LIVING, PERPETUALLY, ON A MISSED NIGHT OF SLEEP.

From the book: Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much
ENGAGING FAMILIES

“Before I can walk in another’s shoes, I must first remove my own”.

– Unknown