

Training in mental health practice and theory, rooted as it is in a monolingual culture, has largely ignored multilingualism – both the challenges it poses and the opportunities it offers. This resource illustrates the findings from research in applied linguistics, psychology, neuroscience and psychotherapy that psychotherapy that multilingual people feel they have a different identity in each of their languages; they express different emotions in their different languages; they make more rational/utilitarian decisions in their later-learned languages; they can process trauma more effectively in one or other of their languages; and they may only remember early memories in the language in which they were encoded. Moreover, clients appreciate when psychological therapists create a linguistically empathic space where all of their languages are welcome, where a foreign accent is not regarded as a barrier and where multilingualism is viewed as a potential therapeutic asset rather than a problem or something to be ignored.

The resource applies a multilingual therapeutic frame – a multilingual filter for the therapeutic frame – to the training exercises. The multilingual frame enables multilingual anxieties to be contained and explored actively, relationally and constructively in the clinical encounter – by clients as well as by practitioners in training and supervision.

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