

Case Conceptualization Card Instructions

There are a lot of different factors that influence a person's mental health. The case conceptualization cards represent a few identity categories that “intersect” with one another to make up a picture, or conceptualization, of a client. For each of the identities consider how the item might apply to a given client and then consider how that item interacts and is influenced by each of the other items. For example, a client might be 21 years of age, however, that age might interact with career as the client is preparing to graduate from college and might be straddling different developmental life stages while also struggling to take action based on realizing the privilege that comes with identifying as a straight cisgender female.

When considering different identities think about how they converged to create the presenting problem, or the initial concern that got the client into your office. Once you have a working hypothesis of the presenting concern, then you have created a case conceptualization, which can help you decide what theories, interventions, or techniques to use with a client. Remember, case conceptualizations, like people, are constantly changing, growing, and developing.

The identities are not presented in any particular order, as the importance or salience of a given item will vary between clients as well as within a single client. For example, a client might consider age to be of primary importance in the counseling session one week and sexual orientation to be more pressing the next week.

Different agencies and programs have different case conceptualization formats, requirements, and considerations depending on the clients they serve.

This identities in this activity don't come close to representing everything that influences a given person. What other factors can you think of? What identity intersections in your life are most important to you right now? Which of your own intersections impact your professional work with clients?