

3.4 Introduction to cultural considerations

Our society includes a wide variety of cultures and religions, and our clients bring with them their own beliefs and expectations. Assumptions based on skin colour and appearances can be deceiving so don't make assumptions about a client's culture. As spiritual healers, we need to treat everyone with soul-love and respect. Much of the information in this training manual is about how to give spiritual healing with respect. We are unlikely to know the cultural expectations of every client, however we try to do spiritual healing in a universal way that won't cause the client any distress. When we need clarification or confirmation, we ask the client for their input.

Different venues (e.g. a church or a marae) can also have different rules and traditions so when visiting other places, be mindful and respectful of them and their customs. Note that they will also carry different energies and those in spirit working with you may adjust for that too.

The following are basic procedures you can follow to help keep yourself culturally safe.

- Don't assume every client deserves to be greeted with a hug or a handshake. For example, in Arabic culture, hugging only occurs between close friends. In Islamic cultures, people are generally greeted by someone of the same sex only, and visiting women will often just smile, nod and not touch in any way. When a new client arrives, take your lead from them.
- If the client is new, check that they know what spiritual healing is or explain it to them. In some cultures and religions, receiving spiritual healing from "outsiders" may be forbidden. Check that they are comfortable to continue.
- Often female clients prefer being healed by a female healer, at least initially, so check if they have any healer preferences. Men may have a similar preference to be healed by a male. This is common especially if the client is from an Arabic and Islamic culture where interactions between the opposite sexes are strictly controlled.
- If both hands-on and hand-off healing is allowed in the healing environment, explain that healers can work by lightly touching the client or work a few inches /centimetres off the client's body in their energies and check if they have a preference. In Arabic and Islamic cultures, any physical contact between members of the opposite sex outside the family is usually forbidden.



SPIRITUALISM NEW ZEALAND HEALING MANUAL

- Once you have explained how the spiritual healing session will work (see 3.7.1.1 Introductions), check if there is anything in that healing plan that the client would like changed. That gives the client the opportunity to tailor the healing to fit with their cultural or religious beliefs.
- Don't be afraid to ask clients about their ethnic background. Asking the question demonstrates not only respect for their individual heritage, but provides an opportunity to discuss their cultural preferences.
- When starting the healing, if planning to touch the client, always ask for permission first. Always ask permission before touching the head, which is sacred in many Polynesian cultures – and perhaps for any lady who has just been to the hairdressers! (Regardless, never touch the genital area of clients nor the breast area on females.) The healing can be done off the body if permission to touch is not given.
- Let the client lead any general conversation that occurs after the healing. They may or may not be open to discussing their reaction to the healing further, as culturally they may consider such conversations private to be kept between family members or close friends only.

Once you have got to know the client and their cultural preferences, you will be able to follow the procedures and precedents you have agreed, in subsequent healing sessions.