MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY and THERAPY

Summary and Application of Jonathan Haidt's *The Righteous Mind*

Main principle: "intuitions come first."

Moral judgments happen quickly and are influenced heavily by emotion. Therapy, of course, is a venue for the exploration of all kinds of emotions and intuitions.

Moral intuitions are heavily influenced by culture because we are social animals.

The following moral intuitions have been found in all cultures studied thus far, although they play out differently in different cultures.

- **Care/harm,** our ability to feel and dislike the pain of others.

  Client's responsibilities for caregiving and for managing relationship where there is attachment and vulnerability.

- **Fairness/cheating,** ideas of justice, rights, and autonomy.

  Clients' lying, secret keeping, sexual infidelity.

- **Loyalty/betrayal,** connected our history in tribes and coalition building.

  Obligations to spouse versus family of origin, divided loyalties in stepfamilies, and differences in group allegiances (e.g., religious, political)

- **Authority/subversion,** connected to our human history with hierarchy and respect for traditions.

  Parenting differences in discipline, conflict over respect for family elders and traditions, and family differences over following religious and political leaders.

- **Purity/degradation,** which relates to disgust and contamination.

  Issues related to sexuality and religion.

UTILITY FOR THERAPY

1. A map for listening to and respecting a client's moral intuitions and the tensions among them.
2. Help us identify moral/ethical dimensions of clients' issues.
3. Beyond our blinders: in a culture of expressive individualism, they can help us avoid the temptation to ignore or devalue moral emotions and intuitions that are more community oriented and important for many clients in a pluralistic society.

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