

Humanidad Therapy and Education Services: *Convivencias*



HUMANIDAD
Therapy & Education Services

LOCATION

Sonoma County, CA



GROUPS SERVED

- Latinx folks who are monolingual Spanish speaking and bilingual, English and Spanish
- Adults ages 18 and over

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OVERVIEW

Humanidad Therapy and Education Services (HTES) is a multicultural community mental health agency, and an MFT & LCSW training program, that offers bilingual/bicultural, low-fee psychological services for underserved, diverse populations in Sonoma County with a primary focus on providing culturally sensitive Latinx mental health care. Humanidad's mission is to strengthen lives by increasing access and utilization of culturally proficient community mental health resources. We transcend barriers and reduce stigma by providing bicultural therapist training, community education, and culturally sensitive therapy services.

Humanidad addresses the stigma associated with seeking mental health services through its use of *Convivencia model*; a space of familismo (family), respeto (respect), and personalismo (relationships), where community members feel safe to engage in storytelling and share life experiences while learning from others. The strategies being integrated include culturally relevant community events (*Community Convivencias*) and group counseling (*Group Convivencias*), both with the main purpose to increase a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and a quality of life.



Community Convivencia- A two hour community gathering...

- Where community members learn about Humanidad and emotional health.
- To break the silence and stigma around mental health.
- Where families with similar backgrounds receive mutual support and talk about their health and experiences.
- Celebration of cultures, food and raffles are offered.

Group Convivencia- An 8-week support group where participants...

- Reflect on their life experiences and important relationships in their lives.
- Meet others who are going through similar life struggles.
- Receive mutual support from others.
- Learn about themselves and get support.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

In the Latinx culture, there is a strong value to socializing, as well as a more relaxed sense of time. There is a different lifestyle in the American culture, where individuals are more individualized and everything is on a schedule. Latinx individuals usually find themselves in isolation when living in the United States. Through connecting and relating is how therapists are able to reach out to the Latinx Community. Within this community, there is resistance to mental health, which has been a barrier for recruitment for *Convivencias*. However, we are noticing that Humanidad as well as *Convivencias* are beginning to be known in the community. Through word of mouth- by sharing experiences of past *Convivencia* participants, and hearing from trusted professionals about *Convivencias*- we have been able to reduce stigma and recruit more participants. There have been other barriers involved where participants haven't been able to commit to *Convivencias*, such as a lack of transportation or child-care, work schedules, and financial barriers. By being aware of this, Humanidad has been able to build relationships with community partners, in order to provide an accessible space for participants.



Convivencia Model As a Mental Health Intervention

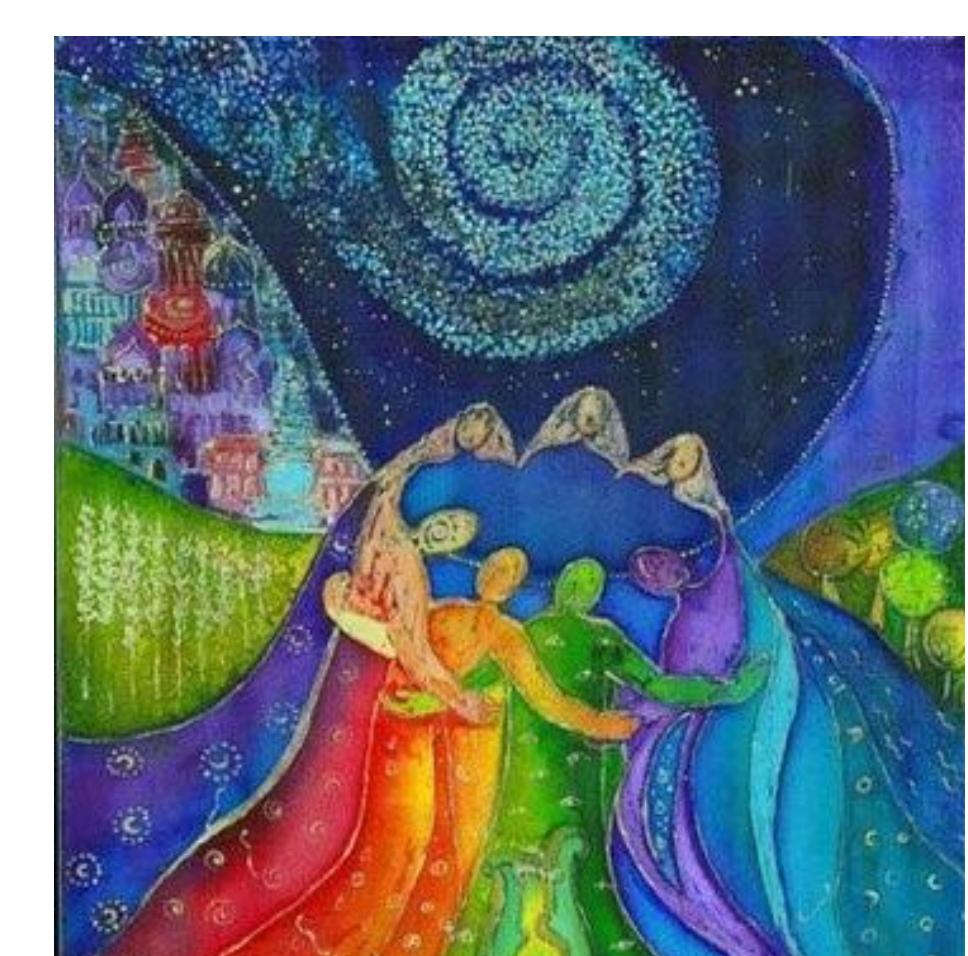
The *Convivencia model* is culturally relevant because it is a practice that has embraced for generations, as a way to come together.

Convivencia model as a therapeutic practice:

- It encourages peer-to-peer support.
- Promotes inclusion and access to mental health by engaging Latinx individuals, families, school communities and other community members in a non-threatening practice that is culturally understood and accepted.
- The *Convivencia model* is unique within HTES because it allows the conversation about mental health to emerge without fear or judgment.
- This process of coming together with those who have garnered trust and respect and who support, challenge, understand, empathize and show compassion, is experienced in the quality of connection, community, dialogue, inclusivity, and engagement. We see these attributes of *Conviviendo* as opportunities for depth-oriented individual and family therapy, and as a way to bring together both humanistic and traditional indigenous practices as critical components of this intervention.



OUTCOMES & TESTIMONIES



Data from local evaluations show:

- 51% of participants report *Convivencias* helped them understand themselves through hearing and sharing stories.
- 74% of participants feel safe and welcomed when participating in *Convivencias*.
- 53% of participants feel comfortable talking about their problems with members of *Convivencias*.
- 70% of participants feel great after participating in *Convivencias*.
- 67% of participants feel like they have a voice and members of HTES understand them.
- 70% of participants feel their point of view as Latinx is understood in *Convivencias*.
- 65% of participants feel respected by their mental health beliefs and their preference in types of treatment.

Through the *Convivencia model*, participants have reported in the local evaluation:

- Connection, community building, support, shared experiences, and resilience.
- Participants have decided to begin individual therapy after being a part of *Convivencias*.

NEXT STEPS

- Continue to reach out to the community, and connect with and build relationships with partners who share our same mission and who can assist us in providing spaces for healing that are accessible to participants.
- Continue to decrease stigma and increase mental health awareness.
- Continue to build capacity to grow and develop within the organization.