

Refugee Readiness Project

Landing and Settling: A Group Therapy Program for Refugees in British Columbia



Therapist
Manual

Produced by the
Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture
for the Province of British Columbia

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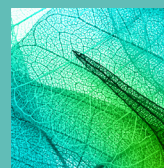
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Introduction

This manual is designed to provide mental health practitioners with a structured, yet flexible approach to early intervention with refugee populations who have recently arrived in British Columbia. The approach described within this therapist manual aims to assist refugees to cope with common stress reactions and to differentiate these from more serious mental health problems, as well as to support the personal resilience and problem-solving capacities needed to overcome the challenges of daily living that refugees commonly face. Because barriers to settlement can increase distress and exacerbate mental health symptoms, this program integrates psychosocial and settlement support, with a focus on group-based problem solving. It is recommended that clinicians work in collaboration with settlement service providers to ensure that participants are accomplishing their settlement goals.

The group therapy program is comprised of 6 sessions, integrating psycho-education, somatic practices to reduce autonomic arousal, and group process. It addresses themes specific to the recent arrival stage of refugee resettlement, including stress and coping, settlement goals, common mental health concerns, children and families, and employment readiness. Each session is designed to be two hours long, including a short break. The program is designed as a closed group in which the sessions are presented in order. It is not intended to be offered as a drop-in group. The manual is presented as a structured guide to group process, but can also be used with individuals with minimal alterations.

The **objectives** of the group are:

- 1) Increase mental health awareness and self-care skills in refugees:
 - By teaching refugees about common mild to moderate emotional experiences that occur after resettlement
 - By teaching simple and effective coping strategies for these kinds of feelings and reactions

- By assisting refugees to differentiate mild/moderate symptoms from more serious mental health distress and dysfunction
- By providing information about available treatment options and normalizing the experience of going to a counsellor or taking psychotropic medication
- By screening participants for serious mental health distress and dysfunction and providing appropriate referral and support

2) Increase understanding of settlement goals:

- By providing information about meeting basic settlement needs
- By describing common settlement experiences, reactions and challenges
- By offering orientation to programs, services and supports to assist the settlement process

THE COMPLEXITY OF REFUGEE MENTAL HEALTH

The refugee experience is characterized by danger, loss, and uncertainty. Most refugees will have had potentially traumatizing experiences in their home country and will have lived in precarious conditions, often for lengthy periods of time. Pre-migration experiences, such as exposure to war and violence, perilous journeys, time spent in hiding or in refugee camps, loss of family members and prolonged separation, can increase the risk for mental health problems. These can be mitigated or exacerbated by post-migration conditions. Mental health outcomes tend to be better when the resettlement environment is safe and legal status is secure, when settlement challenges are met, when education and employment opportunities exist, and when individuals are able to maintain or regain their social identity and a network of social support. However, even after resettlement, refugees in Canada may experience on-going threats to security, precarious material conditions and inadequate social connection and these can jeopardize recovery processes.

Stressors of Resettlement

There are widely varying responses to trauma and massive change, ranging from common and expectable stress reactions to severe, chronic and life-threatening symptoms and disorders. Depression, anxiety and panic, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and somatic complaints are the most commonly experienced clinical disorders in refugee populations.

Refugees report that much of their distress relates to exile-related stressors.

- Loss of community and social network
- Loss of important life projects
- Concerns about economic survival
- Loss of meaningful structure and activity
- Loss of meaningful social roles

The priority tends to be on “here and now” concerns, with a focus on (re)establishing meaningful and familiar roles, activities, and routines.

Goals for Early Intervention

Early intervention, in the initial stage of refugee resettlement, is a very brief therapy with focused attention to screening, psychological education, support and containment. It is not “trauma therapy.” Therapists must be highly attuned and sensitive to trauma, but with the objective of assisting refugee clients to attain their immediate safety and settlement goals. It is not the goal at this stage to assess or work with the trauma history. The focus is mostly on “here and now”, attending to whatever issues emerge as barriers to settlement. This is a period in which refugees are in “survival mode” and the therapeutic focus is on coping and containment, not on “processing.”

The main therapeutic tasks at this stage are:

- 1) Safety and Stabilization
- 2) Acknowledging loss and change
- 3) Understanding common responses
- 4) Assessing for more serious concerns
- 5) Enhancing personal sources of support, resilience, mental health self-care
- 6) Strengthening relationships and building new connections
- 7) Invitation and orientation to future care

Safety and Stabilization

For most refugees, there has not been a single stress or traumatic event, but a prolonged series of traumas and losses. Stress can affect all areas of life and lead to psychological distress and dysfunction, physical symptoms, behavioural changes and problems in relationship. People may not always recognize the connection between their stressful experiences and the symptoms or functional difficulties they are currently experiencing.

Prolonged and complicated exposure to trauma can result in a state of chronic hyper arousal. As hyper-arousal a survival function in response to danger, it is not easily extinguished. Re-establishing autonomic equilibrium requires time, predictability, and stability in order to develop a deep level of trust. Refugees have extraordinary challenges to overcome in their first years of resettlement. The resettlement environment, while generally free of violence and egregious human rights abuses, is not necessarily as calm, predictable, and stable as is needed for healing to occur at the deep physiological and emotional level. Stressful experiences in the host country can reactivate symptoms even years later.

Screening

The importance of making this group accessible to all recent refugees, and effectively screening participants for more serious distress and dysfunction, cannot be overstated. In a context of limited individual therapeutic resources, clinicians must direct the most intensive supports to the most vulnerable refugees. Therefore, it is critically important to be able to identify and respond to vulnerable refugees quickly and efficiently, while providing appropriate information and supports to all refugees who present for services. This group program is thus designed to provide important information and self-care practices that will assist all refugees to manage their emotional health, so they may stay as calm and focused as possible throughout the resettlement process, while also providing an opportunity for counsellors to make appropriate referrals to individual therapy for those who require more intensive assistance. Given what we know about the chronic course of severe and complex PTSD, the longer term psycho-educational objectives of this group are to teach participants about the potential long-term impact of trauma, inform them about the effectiveness of counselling, and to instill hope that healing and wellness is possible (and can be assisted by experienced and knowledgeable therapists). We also aim to decrease help-seeking stigma, so that participants who find themselves in distress after the initial resettlement period feel more confident to seek help in the future.

Initial Assessment

Prior to commencing the group, clinicians should perform an initial intake assessment screening of each potential member to determine that they are “group ready”. A brief conversation introducing the objective and format of the group, asking if the potential participant has any questions or concerns, and completing the **Refugee Readiness Project Vulnerability Screening Tool** will help a clinician determine the participant’s “group readiness”.

- “Group Ready” participants are those who appear fairly stable and are able to connect and communicate with the clinician during the intake. Participants should not be disqualified for having complex issues or suffering significant distress. As long as they are able to regulate on their own (or with minimal support) if they do become distressed or emotional, they will benefit from the group.
- A person is not “group ready” if she or he is highly emotional, unable to self-regulate, talks at length about traumatic past events and does not respond to attempts to re-direct or contain, is at moderate to high risk of suicide, is disoriented or dissociative, or showing any break from reality. **These participants should be referred directly to individual counselling, without delay.**

During group sessions, facilitators should be observing the group members for signs that individual counseling is indicated. Things to watch for include:

- Participant becomes emotionally dysregulated and cannot regulate on his/her own, or with minimal support.

- Participant talks at length about traumatic past events and does not respond to attempts to re-direct or contain, is disoriented or dissociative, or showing any break from reality
- Participant discloses that she or he is experiencing severe distress or dysfunction, or discloses or shows signs that he or she is at moderate to high risk of suicide

Helpful tips for facilitators:

- As a guide to group process, each session guide provides suggested questions for discussion, and then follows with bullet points containing information relevant to the topic. It is not intended that these be read, verbatim, rather that the facilitator ensures that the information is imparted throughout the course of the discussion.
- **Speak slowly and simply.** Even if participants are English speakers, most will be fairly new to the language. If you are working with an interpreter make especially sure to speak in small chunks and leave time for interpretation
- **Stay focused.** At this stage of early intervention, the therapeutic emphasis of the group is on resource building and emotional regulation, not on processing traumatic content. The challenge for the therapist is to make space for participants to feel included and supported, and to build a sense of group cohesion, while maintaining a clear focus on content and emotional containment.
- **Observe participants for vulnerability and refer if necessary.** If a claimant appears particularly vulnerable you may need to make a facilitated referral to individual therapy. It is important to discuss this with the participant privately, with the help of the interpreter.
- **Build relationship.** This group is an opportunity for clinicians to build trust between the mental health professions and individual group members and the refugee population as a whole. Word of mouth referrals among this population are an important way that people find help.
- **Regarding flipchart usage:** If you like to work with flip charts to note down information for visual learners, and you are working in translation, you may work with the interpreter to prepare bi-lingual flip chart notes in advance. For brainstorming and process based activities the interpreter can write directly in the translated language.
- **Regarding handouts:** Handouts are provided in English and Arabic. If participants do not read either language, you may wish to read out the main points and allow time for participants to make brief notes so they have something to refer to between sessions.

Session One: LANDING

Objectives

- To introduce the group and its members
- To establish ground rules
- To increase mental health awareness, focusing on stress and coping
- To introduce self-care practices to promote 'grounding' and relaxation of the autonomic nervous response

Suggested Materials:

- Colored pipe cleaners (optional, for introductory activity)
- Flip chart pages or individual handout pages with body outline drawn
- Packet of colored circle stickers and/or colored markers
- Session handouts

Orientation to the group (20 minutes)

1. Introduction to the facilitator and overview of group program

Facilitators introduce themselves and provide a brief over-view of the program. Emphasize the importance of attending all sessions.

(Note to therapist: if you are working with an interpreter, it may be useful to have this person note down the main topics for each session on a flip chart page, and then post this page each session to remind participants of the agenda for the whole program)

- Session One
 - Today, after we finish the introductions, we will talk about stress and come up with a lot of ideas to help you cope with the stresses of arriving here in Canada
- Session Two
 - We will talk about what it means to “settle”, we will come up with ideas about how to meet your basic needs, and we will talk about immediate and short-term goals that will help you feel more settled
- Session Three
 - We will talk about how to distinguish between normal stress reactions and more serious health concerns
 - We will talk about what you might do if you or someone you know has these kinds of feelings
- Session Four
 - We will talk about how to support our children through a major transition, and how to find support for ourselves as parents
- Session Five
 - We will talk about getting ready to find a job, and help you feel hopeful and confident
- Session Six
 - We will review the whole group and answer any questions you might still have
- In every session
 - We will learn stress-relief activities that you can practice at home
 - We will remind you of your strength and resources
 - We will listen to each other and help find solutions to common problems
 - You should leave the group feeling stronger, more confident and more connected to others than when you came in

2. Activity: Expressive Arts Introduction

Invite participants to choose a pipe cleaner of any colour. Ask them to take just a few minutes to create a shape with it. Ask them to give a word, name or title to their art piece. Participants can share their work as they introduce themselves.

As you go around the group, invite group members to share their art object, as well as their name and one or two things they would like group members to know about them (for example, where are they from, who did they arrive in Canada with, how long have they been here)

3. Group norms

Collaborate on developing guiding principles for the group

- Personal matters discussed in the group are **confidential**. Please do not speak about what other group members have said and done during our sessions. This will help us feel more comfortable and open.
- If we are working with an **interpreter** we must be aware of the pacing of our communication. It is really important to speak in short phrases, and then pause to give time for interpretation. This may take a little practice!
- What **other group rules** would help you feel more comfortable to participate? *(Make a list of group norms and ask if everyone is willing to commit to these)*

- o For example: start and end on time; participate as much or as little as you are comfortable; make sure everyone has a chance to speak if they want; communicate tolerance and acceptance for everyone’s experiences, values and beliefs, turn off cell phones or put them on silent mode
- Other issues to clarify in advance?

LANDING: Coping with Common Emotional Experiences (40 minutes)

Discussion:

- Now that we are finished with the introductions, we will begin to talk about “landing” and how to cope with common emotional experiences
- What does it mean to you “to land”?
- If you wish, share an image that comes to your mind when you think about “landing”
- What kinds of feelings are associated with the idea of landing?

It is common for people to have a lot of strong emotions after they arrive in Canada. Since arriving in Canada you may have felt a lot of different, and even contradictory emotions, such as:

- Feeling happy or elated to have reached a safe place
- Being afraid or worried about what will happen next
- Feeling very sad or angry
- Feeling grief and loss for people, places and dreams
- Feeling determined to build a new life and hopeful for new opportunities
- Feeling curious and excited to learn about a new place and culture
- Feeling lonely and out of place, like no one understands you

Other common experiences at times of intense stress:

- Having bad dreams at night or have trouble sleeping
- Being forgetful or not able to pay attention
- Having a lot of troubling thoughts and memories
- Losing or gaining weight or having problems eating
- Having headaches, stomach aches, or pain in your body
- You might also feel numb – not have much feelings about anything at all

What is stress?

- Stress is a normal response to physical or emotional challenges and we feel stressed when the challenges we face are bigger than our resources for coping. We can feel overwhelmed for a moment, or for a long time. We can take care of ourselves by noticing when we are feeling overwhelmed and doing something to increase our capacity to cope.
- It is normal to have strong emotions and physical sensations during times of stress.

Activity: Locating our body's responses to stress

How do you experience stress? Where do you feel stress in your body?

- Facilitator posts a large flip chart page on the wall with an outline of a human body and participants are invited to place a circle sticker, write words, or draw a symbol on places in the body where they notice stress or tension
- OR each person is given a sheet of paper with a body outline and asked to use stickers, draw, or write words that represent how they experience stress on the body
- For groups with more than 6 participants, you may wish to use individual sheets or divide into smaller groups using multiple wall posters
- The objective is to encourage self-awareness and a contained sharing in which participants interact and notice commonalities of experience

Debrief:

- Important messages to share:
 - Notice how many things you have in common.
 - You are not alone in this experience – people here in this room and all over the world have left their homes looking for a safe place to live.
 - It is very difficult to leave home and live as a refugee, and anyone in your situation would be having uncomfortable and painful feelings at times.
 - If you are feeling sad or depressed or scared, or you get confused easily, or if sometimes you aren't sure if you can make it - it doesn't mean you are weak.
 - You are a survivor and will get through this.

BREAK (10 minutes)

Suggestions for taking care of yourself (20 minutes)

Discussion:

What have you been doing to cope with all of these uncomfortable and painful feelings? How are you surviving? What do you do to help yourself feel better?

- Make a list of coping strategies that group members are using
- Are any of these new to you? Any ideas that look interesting? Any new things that you could try?

While we may not be able to control the things that cause us stress or bad feelings during the refugee claim process, we can find ways to calm down and stay focused. These are some activities that can help you feel better:

- **Get enough sleep.** When you are tired it's harder to be healthy.
- **Breathe slowly and deeply.** Focusing on your breath can help you relax.
- **Remember that you are a survivor.** Thinking positive thoughts about yourself can be helpful. Remind yourself that you are strong and brave. If you start to feel worried or overwhelmed, tell yourself, "I'm a strong person" or "I will get through this".

- **Try to do some things that make you feel good, and get some exercise.** Spending an hour or two doing something relaxing can make you feel better. For example, even if the weather is bad, it can make you feel better if you get outside for a walk.
- **Limit or avoid using alcohol or drugs.** Alcohol and drugs can be a way of coping with intense feelings, but they can make our problems worse over time. Try to take care of yourself by finding other activities that make you feel good.
- **Limit watching the news.** Wanting to know what is happening in your home country is understandable. But too much watching, reading or listening to the news can increase stress levels.
- Remind the participants of some of the good ideas that they generated earlier in the session

Even though the refugee resettlement process can be very stressful, there are many things you can do to help yourself calm down and stay focused. During every group session we will teach you some ways to feel a little bit better, which you can use whenever you feel overwhelmed.

First, it is important to notice when you are getting emotionally overwhelmed. When you get overwhelmed with emotion you might start to cry, you might start feeling afraid as if bad experiences from the past are happening to you again, or you might feel kind of spaced out and have a hard time concentrating. It is good to notice when this is happening and do something to help yourself calm down and get focused.

What kinds of things do you do to take care of yourself when you feel overwhelmed?

You can always:

- Take a break, stand up and move around a little bit, get a glass of water, stretch, leave the room and get some fresh air
- Do some relaxation exercises (we will teach you some)
- Do some grounding exercises (we will teach you some)
- Meditate, pray, sit quietly – remember the helpful things you may have done back home to get calm and focused

Relaxation exercise: grounding and relaxation (10 minutes)

Let's all try a **grounding exercise** together:

- Standing, stretching from finger tips to toes three times
- Pay attention to the sensations in your body as you stand and stretch
- Circling shoulders, arms, wrists
- Notice what it feels like to circle your shoulders, arms, wrists
- As you continue standing, notice your feet on the ground, root your heels, the ball of the foot and your toes on the ground, sense the ground through your feet, sense the four corners of your feet on the ground. Pay attention to your whole body standing here, in this moment.

- Now please sit back down in your chair. Uncross your legs and place both feet firmly on the ground. You may move your feet a bit, pressing your feet onto the floor, and really pay attention to the feeling of your feet on the ground.
- Now notice the feeling of sitting in the chair. Shift a little to find the most comfortable position. As you sit, notice the feeling of being fully supported in the chair.
- As you sit, notice if there are places in your body that feel tense and move them a little, shake out or stretch away the tension.
- As you sit solidly in the chair, with your feet firmly on the ground in front of you, turn your attention to your breath. Allow yourself to take a few deep breaths, in and out.
- As you are sitting solidly here in this room, with your feet firmly on the ground, breathing deeply, notice that you are here. Feeling your body in the chair and your feet on the ground, as you inhale and exhale, notice that you are here, and just notice what it feels like to be aware that you are here.
- If you notice any changes in your sense of relaxation, take a few deep breaths, and remind yourself that it is ok to be calm and focused right here in this room. Just breathing in and out, slowly and deeply, feeling calm and focused right here in your chair, with your feet on the ground. Remember that you can feel grounded in your body, with your feet firmly on the ground, breathing deeply and calmly, anytime you wish. Enjoy this feeling of being grounded and calm right here in this room.

Closure (10 minutes)

Thank you all for your bravery in coming to this group today. It is not easy to attend a program like this for the first time. I hope you have a good sense of what will be offered in this group and how it will benefit you. If you have any further questions, please feel free to stay behind at the end and talk with me a little bit.

Preview: Next week we will be talking about what it is like to get settled here in Canada. We will think together about how to cope with some of the common challenges people face in their first year, and we will practice a few more stress-relief exercises.

Go around: Before we all leave today, each of you may take a turn to share one thing you would like to try this week to take care of yourself. (For example, this week I will try to go for a short walk every day.)

Recommended Resources

Remember to provide each group participant with a copy of the program handout, included in English and Arabic in the Appendix of this manual.

Session Two: Settlement Goals

Objectives

- To introduce settlement goals and tasks
- To provide information about resources and supports

Suggested Materials:

- Flip charts paper
- Large sheets of blank paper
- Coloured markers/ pencils
- List of settlement resources in your area

Opening (10 minutes)

- Welcome and introduction to this week's topic:
Welcome back to our group! Today we'll be talking about tasks and goals to help you feel more settled here in Canada.
- Quick go-round:
Please remind us of your name and tell us if there is anything you'd like to share with the group about the past week.

OR

Activity: Expressive Arts Introduction

Invite participants to stand up and form a circle. Taking turns, each person says her name and does a simple movement (ideally everybody stands up but if it is a small space you can stay

seated and use arms or head or even face expression). After each participant's turn, the whole group repeats that person's name and movement. The activity ends when everybody has had a turn.

• **Recap:**

Last week we talked about "landing" and some common emotions that people have when they first arrive in Canada. We also talked about stress, and some simple things we can do to feel more calm and focused.

- o When you had time to think about it, what were your reactions to our last session?
- o Does anyone have any questions from last week?

(If there are many questions, or questions that need long answers you can write them on a flip chart page and return to them at the end)

Settlement Needs and Tasks (30 minutes)

Discussion:

- What does it mean to you "to settle"?
- If you wish, share an image that comes to you related to the idea of "settling"
- What kinds of feelings are associated with the idea of settling?
- What do you need in order to feel well settled?

Basic material needs include: Food, clothing and shelter.

Each of these is a basic need, but they are also emotional needs. These each have a lot of personal and cultural meaning as well. You are starting out in a new place where it might be hard to find food you are familiar with, where the climate and clothing styles are different, and where it can be hard to find a good place to live.

What kinds of thoughts and feelings come up for you when you think about the meaning of food, clothing and shelter?

Does anyone have ideas about how to use the resources you have in ways that help you feel more settled, and that gives you a greater sense of home?

What other settlement needs do you have? (Generate a list, which may include:)

- Building Relationships
- Schooling for children
- Financial Assistance
- Language learning
- Employment supports
- Training or Certification
- Community building

Which of these is the most challenging for you right now?

- Does anyone have ideas about how to solve some of these problems?

What questions do you have about meeting your settlement needs?

- Write down the questions and see if the participants have answers. Clarify, inform, and suggest resources.

How are you coping? What are you doing to get through this stressful time?

- Make a list of participant coping strategies. Remind them of the simple list from last week.

BREAK (10 minutes)

Expressive Relaxation exercise: sitting with hope (30 minutes)

Hand out large sheets of paper and colored markers.

When you came to Canada, you had a dream of finding a safe place to live. During the settlement process, you can sometimes lose sight of your hopes and dreams. This exercise is to give you a few moments to remind yourself of your dream of a better life. Using colors you can draw, write words, or find some way to represent your feelings of hope on the page.

So... take a moment to find a comfortable position in your chair. Lower your gaze or close your eyes and just take some time to relax and notice your breathing. Breathing in... and out... slowing your breath... and allowing yourself to become a little bit more relaxed. Allow the idea of hope to come to your mind. What are the possible sources of hope that people might have? What kinds of objects or images represent hope for you?

Now, I'd like you to open your eyes and begin drawing or writing on your paper. Without thinking too much, draw something that represents hope for you.

As you draw or write, remember to breathe and relax, think about the things that give you strength and courage.... Breathing in... and out... If you notice yourself becoming tense or nervous, just concentrate on your breath and focus on the possible sources of hope that people might have. Keep breathing.

Debrief: If you feel comfortable, please share your picture or writing with us and tell us what makes you feel strong and hopeful?

Activity: Settlement goals (20 minutes)

Ask the participants to break into groups of 2 or 3, for a small group discussion.

Keeping in mind your images of hope and safety, talk with your group about what you need to do to feel more settled here in Canada.

- What are some immediate and short-term goals that will help you feel more settled?
- What are some of the strengths that you have that will help you meet these goals?
- What resources could help you meet your goals?
 - o Think of people, places, activities, things, beliefs

Debrief – is there anything anyone would like to share about your goals? Are there any questions you have that the larger group might be able to help you with?

Closure (10 minutes)

Thank you all for your participation today. I noticed...

As always, if you have any further questions, please feel free to stay behind at the end and talk with me a little bit.

Preview: Next week we will be talking about how to distinguish between normal stress reactions and more serious health concerns. We will come up with ideas about what you can do if you or someone you know has these kinds of feelings. We will also be practicing a few more stress-relief exercises.

For next week, if you wish, please bring in a small object that you can use to help you feel calm and “grounded.” Any object that comforts you, that helps you to remember who you are and what is important to you can be a grounding object. Some examples are:

- o A smooth stone that you’ve found on the beach
- o A bell that, when you ring it, has a soothing sound
- o A photograph of a beautiful scene or of loved ones
- o A small bottle of a pleasant smell
- o A piece of jewelry, like a ring or bracelet
- o A picture that you’ve drawn

Go around:

Before we all leave today, each of you may take a turn to share one thing you will do this week to stay focused on your settlement goals?

Recommended Resources

In collaboration with your local settlement service partners, you may wish to hand out a list of useful referral resources, which may include:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1. Refugee orientation materials or links | 4. Housing resources |
| 2. Refugee serving organizations in your region | 5. ESL resources |
| 3. Financial assistance resources | 6. Cultural community spaces |

Session Three: The Past in the Present

Objectives

- Provide psychological education to help participants distinguish between normal stress reactions and more serious mental health concerns
- Reduce stigma around seeking professional help for mental health concerns

Suggested Materials:

- Flip charts
- List of referral sources for free and low cost counselling in your region.

Opening (10 minutes)

- Last week we talked about the settlement process. We also talked about some simple things we can do to feel more calm and focused as you work towards meeting your settlement goals. Does anyone have any questions from last week?
- Introduction to this week's topic: this week we will be talking about depression, anxiety and trauma
- Did anyone remember to bring a "grounding object" to the group today? If you did, would like to show it to the group and explain why it is important to you? (You can also choose to keep it private)
- As we discuss common problems refugees face, you may find yourself having uncomfortable feelings. If you brought a grounding object with you today, you may find comfort in holding it and looking at it while we are talking. This is the idea of having a grounding object, so please do use it to help yourself feel better today if you need it.
- Group facilitator may also provide a few simple objects for those who did not bring a personal object of their own. Small stones and round lumps of beeswax are excellent materials, as they will warm in the hand.

Common Problems for Refugees (60 minutes)

It is normal to feel stressed out, worried and sad after leaving home and resettling as a refugee in a new country. Most of the time these feelings will come and go. We have been talking about a lot of different ways you can help yourself to feel as well and strong as you can during this difficult time.

Sometimes people can become depressed or develop problems with anxiety. Some people who have experienced violence may also have more severe stress reactions. The important thing to remember is that if you experience these more serious reactions it doesn't mean you are weak and it doesn't mean you are going crazy. It just means you have been hurt and you are suffering.

Today we will talk about depression, anxiety and trauma so you can think about whether you or your family members might be experiencing any of these problems. We will also talk about ways to help you begin to heal.

Signs of Depression

- Feeling sad, empty, hopeless or tearful for most of the day, nearly every day
- Not feeling interested in most activities. Unable to feel pleasure.
- Change in appetite, change in weight. (Unable to eat, not hungry, eating from sadness, eating to pass time)
- Not sleeping well (unable to get to sleep, waking in the middle of the night) or sleeping too much
- Feeling restless, agitated
- Feeling extremely tired, loss of energy
- Feeling worthless, guilty, hopeless, helpless
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating, or making decisions
- Thinking about death, dying, suicide

Many people feel some of these things for a period of time at some point in their lives – these are common human experience, especially when we are in a situation that we don't have a lot of power to control or change. It feels really bad, but most people are able to carry on and do the things they need to do to survive until they start feeling better. If you feel like this most of the time (not just occasionally) then you might be suffering from depression.

Anxiety and Trauma Reactions

If you have suffered from violence or abuse, you may also find yourself feeling:

- Anxious, afraid, easily startled, constantly alert
- Unable to stop thinking all the time about painful experiences from the past
- Having bad dreams, nightmares

- Feeling confused, disoriented, numb
- Feeling detached from others, or irritable and angry
- Having stomach or digestion problems, headaches or body aches, tension in back or neck

The emotional distress from having had hurtful and frightening experiences can be very painful. We may be bothered by memories and fears for a long time. We may begin to doubt ourselves, lose our trust in others, find it hard to relate to people, begin to feel that life is meaningless and the world is not a good place. If you, or someone you care about, has been having quite a few of these experiences for more than a few months, it is a good idea to seek help.

Discussion

- What do people normally do when they have these kinds of emotional problems back home? Do they talk to their friends, older family members, or religious leaders? Do they go to the doctor? Are there any special treatments that are commonly offered? Do they keep these feelings secret?
- Have you ever been to a counsellor? Do you know what a counsellor does?
- **Explain:** What is “counseling”?
 - A counselor is a person you can meet in private to talk about your problems and try to find solutions. There are effective treatments for depression, anxiety, and traumatic reactions. Counsellors respect your privacy. Everything you say will be kept confidential.
 - It is a good idea to talk to a counselor if you are having trouble meeting your daily needs. (For example, if you are crying all the time, can't think straight, don't want to leave your room).
 - Refugees sometimes start to feel really bad long after they have settled in Canada. They may face another stressful situation, and then all the fear and sadness from the past comes back to them. This can happen. If it does happen you can always go to see a counselor and they can help you get through that hard time.
 - When people have survived violence, torture or war, sometimes it hurts them for a long time. There are many things that counsellors can do to help you heal from these problems. Many people think they are damaged forever, but this is not true. The body, mind and spirit can heal and get stronger. Sometimes it just takes the right kind of help.
 - Provide a list of referral sources for free and low cost counselling resources in your region. Explain how to access a counsellor and what to expect.

What you can do to take care of yourself right now:

- Take care of your **sleep!** Sleep is very important for staying healthy. If you are unable to regulate your sleep on your own, go to the doctor and get some medication to help you sleep. Medication can also help reduce nightmares.
- Try to do some **exercise** every day. If you had a usual exercise routine at home, try to get back into it. If you never thought much about exercise before try to get your body moving for at least 20 minutes everyday (walking, stretching, swinging your arms and legs – anything to get moving more)

- **Stay organized** and on-track with your settlement goals. Use a calendar to mark your appointments, make lists of what you need to do, set tasks for every day. If you have a friend or family member here, you can help each other meet your goals.
- You might want to **see a counselor** one-to-one. It might not be the time to talk a lot about your past problems, but a counselor who is familiar with the refugee resettlement process may be able to help you stay calm and focused, and help you meet your immediate settlement goals.
- You may want to **see a doctor** about medical treatment for depression. Some people worry about taking medication. If a doctor says that medication may help you, you can ask the doctor or a counsellor any questions you have.
- If you are sleeping better, have more energy, are thinking clearly and are feeling more relaxed you will feel better, have stronger relationships, and be able to move ahead with your settlement goals.

BREAK (10 minutes)

Introduction to Calming and Grounding Exercises (30 minutes)

Sometimes when we are feeling scared or anxious we can get easily caught up thinking about the past and worrying about the future. We can also feel “spaced out”, lost or disoriented, or become disconnected from our bodies and our surroundings. “Grounding” techniques can help you regain a sense of safety and control. They can help you ‘stay present’ in the here and now and keep you from getting lost in memories, or overwhelming thoughts and feelings.

One of these techniques is likely to suit you better than the others. Choose the technique that works best for you and practice it regularly.

(Demonstrate and get group members to practice walking, tapping, and visual grounding techniques)

Mindful Walking: Walk carefully, mindfully around the room. Mindful walking can be slow or brisk. The goal is to be fully present with each step as you take it. Bring your attention to the actual sensations of walking. Notice how the heel, then the ball of your foot makes contact with the floor as you walk. Notice the bend in your knees, the flex in your toes, the shift in your weight with each step you take. When your attention wanders, bring it back to your walking. Center yourself in your body and be present in the moment. Count ten steps, and ten more, and ten more, until you feel calmed.

Writing / Saying Grounding Statements: Develop several grounding statements that remind you that you are safe and provide you with comfort. You may want to write the statements on a small piece of paper or “flashcard” and carry them around in your wallet. You may want to write the statement on a larger piece of paper that you will hang on a wall in your home. Write your statements in a color that represents safety and strength to you. You can say the statements out

loud, or simply read or think them. Examples of grounding statements include:

- **“This feeling will soon pass.”**
- **“You are strong; you are safe now.”**

Grounding Through Breathing: The breath serves wonderfully as a focus for your attention. Think of it as an anchor that holds you in the present moment and guides you back to the here and now when your mind wanders to the past. By bringing awareness to your breathing, you are reminding yourself that you are here now. Breathe in and attend to the feeling of breathing in; breathe out and attend to the feeling of breathing out. You may want to focus on the air coming in and out of your nostrils or on your abdomen expanding and contracting as you breathe.

Other Grounding Techniques

- Dance to and/or sing a song that makes you feel good.
- Stamp your feet. Feel the power in your legs.
- Tap your chest or arms and concentrate on the sensation
- Look around you: Pay attention to all the objects in the room to remind yourself that you are right here, right now and you are safe. Don't direct your gaze downward: Look up, look out, look around.
- Hold, look at, listen to and/or smell a grounding object. Any object that comforts you, that helps you to remember that you are in the present, rather than the past, can be a grounding object. Some examples are:
 - A smooth stone that you've found on the beach
 - A bell that, when you ring it, has a soothing sound
 - A piece of sandpaper with a course texture
 - An elastic band around your wrist to snap from time to time
 - A photograph of a beautiful scene or of loved ones
 - A small bottle of a pleasant smell
 - A piece of jewelry, like a ring or bracelet
 - A picture that you've drawn of a scene that represents safety and comfort.

Relaxation Exercise (15 minutes) 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

This is a simple exercise called the “5-4-3-2-1 game” that we can practice together. Many people find that when they practice it often, it helps to relax or get through a difficult moment. You can also use it to help you get to sleep at night.

1. Name 5 things you see in the room.
2. Name 4 things you can feel right now (“my feet on the floor”)
3. Name 3 things you hear right now (“traffic outside”)
4. Name 2 things you can smell right now
5. Name 1 thing you can taste right now

Closure (5 minutes)

Preview: Next week we will be talking about how to support our children through a major transition, and how to find support for ourselves as parents. If you wish, please bring in a photograph of your children so that you can introduce them to us.

Go-around:

Before we all leave today, each of you may take a turn to share one grounding activities would you like to try next week?

Recommended Resources

You may wish to prepare and hand out a list of free and low cost counselling resources available in your community.

Session Four: Supporting our Children and Families

Objectives

- Provide information on the effects of stress and trauma on children
- Help parents understand their children's behaviour and their own reactions
- Increase parent confidence to support their children's settlement process
- Provide local resources to assist parents to support children

Suggested Materials:

- Facilitators may wish to generate a list of resources for parents in their area
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script (a link is provided at the end of the session notes, for your reference)

Opening (5 minutes)

- Last week we talked about depression and trauma reactions. Does anyone have any thoughts or questions from last week?
- Introduction to this week's topic: this week we will be talking about supporting your children and yourselves as parents
- Before we begin, let's go around and each of you can tell us a little bit about your children, such as their names, how old they are, and what they are doing (such as what grade they are in school, or what activities they like). You may show us a picture, if you brought one along.

Stress and Trauma Reactions in Children (50 minutes)

Though you may feel relieved to be in a safer place and optimistic about a new future for your children, the transition period can feel very disruptive for a family. We've been talking about the kinds of reactions that adults can have to trauma, intense stress and massive change, but children's reactions can appear quite different. Today we will talk about the kinds of reactions that children of different ages can have, to help you understand their behaviour and support them as well as you can.

Question for discussion:

What kinds of changes might we expect to see in children who have suffered a shock, or who are in the midst of a significant transition?

General reactions in children to traumatic events and massive change:

- Re-experiencing: Children may re-experience traumatic events through intrusive memories, nightmares and flashbacks. These experiences often leave children feeling very anxious.
- Anxiety: Commonly children can be afraid to leave care-givers and afraid to go to bed. Physical anxiety, fatigue and restlessness/agitation can cause concentration problems, irritability and anger, hyperactivity
- Post-traumatic play: The capacity for verbal expression is limited in children. They use play and drawing to express what has happened to them. Post-traumatic play often represents traumatic experiences and can be very repetitive.
- Avoidance: After a traumatic experience, children tend to limit their emotions. They may create the impression that they are doing well, but they may slowly withdraw and begin to feel detached and lonely.
- Children's reactions to traumatic events and major upheaval depend on their developmental stage.

Infants, toddlers and Preschoolers (0-5 years)

- Infants, toddlers and preschoolers are highly dependent on the coping abilities of their caregivers
- When the family is under stress, very young children may regress to earlier stages of development (e.g. Bedwetting, thumb sucking, night terrors, clinging, tantrums)
- Caregivers who are stressed can benefit from extra care and support, to maintain the energy and patience needed to care for very young children
- Caregivers should try to avoid becoming socially isolated

School-aged children (6-12 years)

- School-aged refugee children may struggle in school for many reasons, such as being distracted by worries and bad memories, as well as struggling to fit into a new school, learn a new language and make new friends
- They are often worried about and protective of their parents, and may keep their distress a secret so that they do not add to their parent's burdens

- Children may re-enact traumatic experiences with peers, in post-traumatic play they can take the role of the victim or the aggressor

Teenagers (12-18 years)

- For all children, adolescence is a time of major biological, physical and social change
- Expectations of roles and responsibilities for teenagers may be very different in Canada than what you are used to at home
- Most teenagers experience some tension between fitting in with their peer and school culture, and fitting in with family culture and expectations
- In general, teenagers have extremely strong emotions and can be very self-critical
- When families experience trauma, teens can react by becoming anxious, afraid and dependent on parents. With some adolescents feelings of shame, guilt, or 'weakness' can translate into aggressive or self-harming behaviours

Question for discussion: How can we support our children to land and to settle?

- Physical support
 - Children must be protected and have their material needs met.
 - Adequate food, shelter, warm clothing, appropriate medicine
 - Daily routines can be very important to give structure
 - Activities can help children distract themselves
- Psychological support
 - Children need to understand what has happened to the family and to them, age appropriate information
 - Playing and drawing can help them reconstruct the events and regain a sense of personal control and safety (This can happen naturally, or with the support of a parent or counsellor)
 - Help children manage fears and intense emotions
- Social support
 - Activate social networks (school, religious communities, cultural communities, neighbourhood relationships)
 - Inform caregivers and teachers about what is going on for the child and explain what they can do to help

BREAK (10 minutes)

Supporting our children, supporting ourselves (30 minutes)

Question for discussion: What ideas can we generate about supporting ourselves and being supported as parents?

Important messages:

- Everyone finds parenting challenging at times.

- Being a parent during traumatic and stressful times can sometimes feel overwhelming.
- Refugee parents often report feeling disempowered, frustrated and saddened by the growing independence and rapid acculturation of their children
- Parents also find that their children give them a sense of purpose and hope that helps them survive difficult times.
- Families can be strengthened by sharing and overcoming difficult experiences together.
- Caregivers can become isolated and depressed when they are alone in the house all day with young children or while children are at school
- There is no shame in asking for help if you have concerns about your kids or if you are needing support as a parent
- There are lots of resources, supports and free activities available in every community, for all people.

Relaxation Activity: Progressive Muscle Relaxation (20 minutes)

This is an activity that can help you experience a state of deep physical and mental relaxation. If you are able to practice regularly, every day if possible, it will be even more effective. You can practice this exercise with children as well.

As sample PMR script is available on the Anxiety BC Website:

<http://www.anxietybc.com/sites/default/files/MuscleRelaxation.pdf>

Closure (10 minutes)

Preview: Next week we will be thinking about how to get ready to start working again. We will and help you feel hopeful and confident about rebuilding your livelihood here in Canada.

Go-around:

Today, before we leave, what are some ways you might try to connect with your children this week?

Recommended Resources

In collaboration with your local settlement organizations, you may wish to compile a list of resources for new immigrant families that are available in your community or region, such as:

- Family Places
- Parenting Support Programs
- Public library family programs
- Community Centres
- School counsellors, Settlement workers in the schools

Session Five: Rebuilding a Livelihood

Objectives

- Provide information on the livelihood building process for refugees
- Increase participant hope and confidence about re-building livelihood
- Provide local resources to assist the employment process

Suggested Materials:

- Flip chart paper and marker
- Up to date resources for employment services for refugees

Opening (10 minutes)

- Does anyone have any thoughts or questions from last week?
- Introduction to this week's topic: we will be talking about work, what it means to you, and how you might begin to rebuild your working life here in Canada

Rebuilding livelihood after forced migration (40 minutes)

As refugees, your first priority in coming to Canada was to find a safer place to live. With the experience of migration, people often experience dramatic changes in the way they think about their working life. Over time, your priorities will probably shift from a focus on finding a safe place to live, to imagining what kind of life you can build for yourself here. As you start to understand Canada better, you will naturally be thinking about how you will earn a living, and how you will participate in this society as fully as you desire.

What kinds of strategies have you been trying or have you been thinking about to rebuild your livelihood?

Refugees report that in the first five years after they arrive, they have the following work-related goals:

- Establishing safety for themselves and their families
 - This includes migrating and becoming recognized as a refugee, and also includes meeting basic settlement needs
- Improving English language fluency
 - Refugees report greater work satisfaction, feeling more empowered and more settled when they achieve greater English language fluency
 - Remember – learning and feeling “at home” in a new language can be a lifelong process, but you don’t ever need to be “perfect” (there is no such thing as perfect in English!)
- Building a social support network
 - Social support is critical!
 - Helping each other meet your employment goals, word of mouth job opportunities and sharing childcare...
 - Important to know your rights when you take a job that is suggested by a friend
- Using social services
 - A lot of supports are available for job seekers, not all are familiar with the unique experiences of refugees
 - There is no shame in accessing resources – that is what they are there for
- Seeking initial Canadian employment
 - Refugees often report difficulty finding their first Canadian job
 - Job hunting can be very hard and discouraging
 - It is important to take good care of yourself while you are looking for work so that you do not lose hope – make sure you use all the good self-care skills we have been talking about in this group
- Increasing job satisfaction
 - It takes time but after they gain “Canadian experience” refugees are generally able to find jobs that give them more satisfaction
 - The first 5 years may be mostly about landing and settling
 - It may take 10 years before you are feeling really settled in your Canadian career path
- Accessing training and further education
 - You may have to re-train in your field or a related field
 - This can bring up feelings of frustration and even grief
 - There are many opportunities for adults in Canada to train for careers at different stages in life – you do not have to be a young person to go back to school

What are some personal coping strategies you might use?

Key messages:

- Maintaining your sense of dignity and self-confidence is very important, no matter what

job you are doing. All work is dignified work and everyone deserves respect.

- Knowing that you are a role model to others, especially the children in your life
- Viewing migration as an opportunity to explore identity and personal growth
- This can include being proud of your refugee identity, knowing that you are part of a community in exile and an international community of people who have overcome incredible challenges and have a lot to teach about survival
- Social engagement – believing you have the right to get involved and share what you know

BREAK (10 minutes)

Relaxation Exercise: Breathing with awareness (10 minutes)

The breath can be a focus for your attention that holds you in the present moment and guides you back when your mind wanders to the past. By bringing awareness to your breathing, you are reminding yourself that you are here now. Breathe in and attend to the feeling of breathing in; breathe out and attend to the feeling of breathing out. You may want to focus on the air coming in and out of your nostrils or on your abdomen expanding and contracting as you breathe. If you find it hard to concentrate, you can try counting your breaths. Let's try together:

- Sit in a comfortable position, back straight and eyes closed.
- Relax the body. Release all tensions in the body and mind (you may use a relaxation exercise).
- Next take an initial deep inhalation and exhalation and see where you feel the sensations of breathing the most. This could be in the nose, throat, or belly.
- Focus your attention on this area of the body and observe the sensation of breathing occurring at this area.
- Be aware of your natural breath. Initially, just be aware of the inhalation and exhalation.
- Whatever the breath is like in the present moment, you are aware.
- Just breathe, and focus your attention on your breath
- If your attention moves away from the breath, then recognize that your attention has moved. Then gently return your attention to the breath.
- Continue breathing with awareness for a few more moments on your own.
- Finish after a set time.

ACTIVITY: Circle of Strength (40 Minutes)

Break the group into small groups of 3 participants for the following activity.

As you are beginning to reflect on rebuilding your livelihood, it can be helpful to remember what you have accomplished and what sources of strength and support you have. Each person in the group will take a turn describing something they have done in their life that they are really proud of, and the other two members will listen carefully and note down the strengths that they hear.

Listeners can ask questions, like: how did you do that? Did you get any help at the time? Then they can share what kinds of strength and resources that person demonstrated. Then you can exchange roles.

Facilitator may wish to provide a very brief example, such as: "I might tell a short story about the time I organized a big party for my whole community. There were 200 people there, with a big meal, music and dancing." And the listeners might ask, "How did you do that?" And I might say, "well, I had to plan for months in advance and save a lot of money. I had to ask around to all my neighbours for help with the cooking. And I had to remember who lent me different things so that I could give everything back in good condition to the right people." And the listeners could then say, "so, it sounds like you know how to be really organized, and you are good at planning and getting other people to participate in your plans."

Remind participants to exchange roles after each has had a 10-minute turn.

Debrief: What did you learn about each other's strengths? How might this help you as you are contemplating new livelihood plans?

Closure (10 minutes)

Preview: Next week will be our last session. We will review the main themes that we covered over the past 6 weeks and we will practice a few more self-care activities.

Go-around:

Today, before we leave, please remind the group of one strength that you have.

Recommended Resources

In collaboration with your local settlement organizations, you may wish to compile a list of employment resources for new immigrants that are available in your community or region.

Session Six: Summary and Closure

Objectives

- To cover any unfinished material and review main themes from previous sessions
- To provide closure for group members

Suggested Materials:

- Flip charts

Opening (10 minutes)

- Welcome participants back, introduction to this week's topic: this is our final week together and we will be finishing up any material we didn't have time for, practicing more self-care activities, and saying goodbye to our group
- Does anyone have any questions about anything we have discussed, or things you would like us to address in this last session.

Review of main themes (60 minutes)

Session One

- We began by talking about "landing" and the common feelings people have when they are forced to leave their homes and resettle in a new place as refugees
- We talked about how you are experiencing stress and thought about ways to cope
- We started learning about "grounding" exercises

What thoughts do you have about “landing” and “grounding” now that a month or more has passed since you began the group? Do you remember how you felt at the beginning of the group? Do you feel different now (like you have really landed, more grounded?)

Session Two

- We talked about what it means to “settle”
- Basic material needs, and how these have important emotional meanings
- We discussed immediate and short-term goals that will help you feel more settled
- We also talked about the strengths and resources that you have that will help you meet these goals

What do you remember most from this session?

Session Three

- We talked about how to distinguish between normal stress reactions and more serious health concerns
- Signs of depression, including for example: feeling sad or empty, changes in appetite and sleep, physical pain or discomfort, changes in sexual feelings, difficulties with concentration and memory (having many of these feelings for most of the day, nearly every day)
- Other common experiences you may also find yourself feeling:
 - Anxious, afraid, easily startled, constantly alert
 - Unable to stop thinking all the time about painful experiences from the past
 - Having bad dreams, nightmares
 - Feeling confused, disoriented, numb
 - Feeling detached from others, or irritable and angry
 - Having stomach or digestion problems, headaches or body aches, tension in back or neck
- We talked about what you might do if you had these kinds of feelings, including how counselling or medication can help

How do you feel about looking for help if you or someone you know might need it?

Session Four

- We talked about the effects of stress and trauma on children at different ages
- We worked on understanding our children’s behaviour
- Re-experiencing: Intrusive memories, nightmares and flashbacks.
- Anxiety: Separation anxiety, physical anxiety, fatigue and restlessness/agitation can cause concentration problems, irritability and anger, hyperactivity
- Post-traumatic play: using repetitive play and drawing to express what has happened to them.
- Supporting ourselves and being supported as parents

What did you learn about being able to support your children through a difficult transition?

Session Five

- We talked about the livelihood building process for refugees
- We generated ideas about your strengths and available supports, to increase your sense of hope and confidence about re-building your livelihood

What were the most useful things about this session?

Go Around:

As we look back over the whole program, each person can take a turn to share, what are some of the things that have impressed you most about the group?

BREAK (10 minutes)

Relaxation Exercise: Group to decide (20 minutes)

Ask group members which of the relaxation exercises they have learned that they would like to practice together again?

For example:

- Sitting, standing, walking with awareness
- Sitting with hope
- 5-4-3-2-1 exercise
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Breathing with awareness

Debrief: What have you learned about yourself while doing these exercises?

Closure activity: “I appreciate...” (10 minutes)

As we prepare to close our group, we will go around the circle, asking each person to share some thoughts about what he or she appreciates most about the group member sitting next to him or her. (Move in the opposite direction, so that the member being spoken about can listen fully, and is not distracted by what they plan to say for their turn)

- Group leader should be the last to speak and can share reflections and observations about what impresses you most about the whole group, such as generosity among members, courage to share with each other, openness to new experience, willingness to listen...

Group facilitators may choose to allow some time at the end for informal conversation with/ among members.

END OF SESSION NOTES

THERAPIST Resources For Further Reading

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APPENDIX: Handouts in English and Arabic

Please note:

The following pages are included for English-speaking participants and therapist reference.

Handouts in Arabic are included in this resource package and can be copied and distributed to Arabic-speaking participants.

For participants speaking languages other than English or Arabic, handouts must be translated in advance.

Handout for Group Participants (English)

We cannot always control stressful events, but we can do things every day to help ourselves feel better.

Sleep

When you are tired it is hard to be healthy. Try to get 8 hours of sleep a night so you are well rested. If you are unable to regulate your sleep on your own, you may wish to consult a doctor.

- Avoid coffee or tea in the evening
- Do not read, listen to the radio, watch TV, or surf the Internet late into the night.
- Try to establish a regular sleep routine. Do not sleep during the day. Go to bed at the same time and get up at the same time every day.

Exercise

Try to do some exercise every day. A little bit of exercise every day can improve your mood. Try to get your body moving for at least 20 minutes everyday (walking, stretching, swinging your arms and legs – anything to get moving more)

Limit or avoid using alcohol or drugs

Alcohol and drugs can be a way of coping with feelings, but they can make problems worse over time. Try to find other activities that make you feel calm and focused.

Limit watching the news


You may want to know what is happening in your home country, but too much watching, reading or listening to the news can make you feel worse.

Connect with others

It can help to spend time with others in your community. You can share information and support each other.

Stay organized

Stay organized and on-track with your settlement goals. Use a calendar to mark your appointments, make lists of what you need to do, set tasks for every day. If you have a friend or family member here you can help each other meet your goals.



Grounding and Calming techniques

- Mindful Walking: Walk carefully, mindfully around the room or outside. Mindful walking can be slow or brisk. The goal is to be fully present with each step as you take it.
- Writing / Saying Grounding Statements: Develop several grounding statements that remind you that you are safe and provide you with comfort. Examples of grounding statements include:
 - I am a survivor.
 - This feeling will soon pass.
 - I am safe now.
- Breathing: The breath serves as a focus for your attention, holds you in the present moment, and guides you back when your mind wanders to the past.

Other Grounding Techniques

- Dance and/or sing to a song that makes you feel good.
- Stamp your feet. Feel the power in your legs.
- Tap your chest or arms and concentrate on the sensation
- Look around you: Pay attention to all the objects in the room to remind yourself that you are right here, right now and you are safe.
- Hold, look at, listen to and/or smell a grounding object. Any object that comforts you, that helps you to remember that you are in the present, rather than the past, can be a grounding object.

Counselling

You might want to see a counsellor for a one-one session. It might not be the time to talk a lot about your past problems, but a counsellor who is familiar with the refugee resettlement process will be able to help you stay calm and focused.

Medication

If you feel sad and hopeless for weeks on end, you may want to see a doctor about medication for depression. Some people worry about taking anti-depressant medication. But if you can get some help to feel better and stronger, you will get settled more quickly.

Try to do simple things everyday that make you feel better

Even though it is a very stressful time, it is important to take care of yourself. For example, it can make you feel better if you get outside for a walk, visit a friend or spend some time at the library.

Remember, you can always:

- Take a break, stand up and move around a little bit, get a glass of water, stretch, leave the room and get some fresh air

- Do some relaxation exercises
- Do some grounding exercises
- Meditate, pray, sit quietly, breathe deeply

Helping our children to land and to settle

- Physical support
 - Children must be protected and have their material needs met
 - Daily routines can be very important to give structure
 - Physical activities with family and friends can help children release tension and distract themselves from worries
- Psychological support
 - Children need to understand what has happened to the family and to them, age appropriate information
 - Playing and drawing can help them reconstruct the events and regain a sense of personal control and safety
 - Help children manage fears and intense emotions
- Social support
 - Activate social networks (school, religious communities, cultural communities, neighbourhood relationships)
 - Inform caregivers and teachers about what is going on for the child and explain what they can do to help

Important messages for parents:

- Everyone finds parenting challenging at times.
- Being a parent during traumatic and stressful times can sometimes feel overwhelming.
- Refugee parents often report feeling disempowered, frustrated and saddened by the growing independence and rapid acculturation of their children
- Parents also find that their children give them a sense of purpose and hope that helps them survive difficult times.
- Families can be strengthened by sharing and overcoming difficult experiences together.
- When caregivers are isolated and alone in the house all day with young children or while children are at school, this can be very difficult
- There is no shame in asking for help if you have concerns about your kids.
- There are lots of resources, supports and free activities available in every community, for all people.

Handout for Group Participants (Arabic)

الهبوط والاستقرار: منشور لمجموعات اللاجئين

لا يمكننا دائما التحكم في الأحداث المؤلمة، لكننا نستطيع أن نعمل في كل يوم أشياء تساعدنا في الشعور بالتحسن.

Sleep

النوم

عندما تكون متعبا، فمن الصعب أن تكون بصحة جيدة. حاول النوم لمدة 8 ساعات ليلا لكي تستريح. إذا لم تكن قادرا على تنظيم نومك بمفردك، فمن المستحسن أن تستشير الطبيب.

- تجنب تناول القهوة أو الشاي في المساء
- لا تقم بالقراءة، أو مشاهدة التلفاز، أو تصفح الإنترنت في وقت متأخر من الليل.
- حاول وضع جدول منتظم للنوم. لا تخلد إلى النوم أثناء النهار. اخلد إلى النوم في نفس الوقت، واستيقظ في نفس الوقت من اليوم كل يوم.

Exercise

مارس الرياضة

حاول ممارسة بعض التمارين الرياضية يوميا. من شأن ممارسة قليل من الرياضة يوميا أن يحسن من حالتك المزاجية. حاول تمرين جسمك لمدة 20 دقيقة يوميا (المشي، التمديد، أرجحة ذراعيك وساقيك أو أية تمارين تساعدك على الحركة أكثر)

Limit or avoid using alcohol or drugs

قلل أو امتنع عن تعاطي الكحول أو المخدرات

قد يعتبر البعض أن الكحول والمخدرات وسيلة لتكفيف المشاعر، لكنها قد تزيد المشاكل تفاقمًا بمرور الوقت. حاول أن تجد أنشطة أخرى تساعدك على الحفاظ على هدوئك وتركيزك.

Limit watching the news

قلل من مشاهدتك للأخبار

قد ترغب في معرفة ما يجري في وطنك الأم، لكن الإفراط في مشاهدة الأخبار، وقراءتها، والاستماع إليها قد يزيد من شعورك بالضيق.

Connect with others

تواصل مع الآخرين

قد يكون من المفيد أن تقضي بعض الوقت مع أشخاص آخرين من مجتمعك المحلي. فبوسعكم تشارك المعلومات ودعم بعضكم البعض.

Stay organized

ابق منظما

ابق منظما وعلى الطريق الصحيح لتنفيذ أهدافك المتعلقة بالاستقرار. استخدم رोजनाة لتحديد مواعيدك، وأعدّ قوائم بما تريد عمله، وحدد مهاما لكل يوم. إذا كان لديك صديق أو قريب هنا، يمكنك مساعدة أحدكما الآخر في تلبية أهدافكما.

Grounding and Calming techniques

تقنيات الارتكاز والتهدئة

- المشي المتأمل: قم بالسير بعناية، وبتأمل في أرجاء الغرفة أو في الخارج. يمكن أن يكون السير المتأمل بطيئا أو سريعا. يتمثل الهدف في أن تحس بالكامل بكل خطوة تخطوها.
- كتابة/ نطق بيانات الارتكاز: قم بإعداد العديد من بيانات الارتكاز التي تدرك بأنك في مأمن والتي تزودك بالراحة. تتضمن أمثلة بيانات الارتكاز ما يلي:
إنني ناج
سيزول هذا الشعور سريعا .
إنني في أمان الآن.
- التنفس: يعمل التنفس كمرکز لانتباهك، وبييقك في اللحظة الراهنة، ويرشدك إلى طريق العودة كلما عادت مخيلتك إلى الماضي.
- تقنيات ارتكاز أخرى
ارقص و/أو غنّ أغنية تجعلك تشعل بحال أفضل.
ادفع برجلك على الأرض.
اشعر بقوة رجليك. اطرق صدرك أو ذراعيك وركز على هذا الشعور.

انظر حولك: انتبه لكافة الأشياء الموجودة في الغرفة لتذكير نفسك بأنك هنا، الآن، وأنت في مأمن. أمسك، أو انظر إلى و/أو شم رائحة شيء يساعدك على الارتكاز. إن أي شيء يريحك، أو يساعدك على تذكر أنك تعيش في الحاضر، وليس في الماضي، قد يعتبر شيئاً مساعداً على الارتكاز.

Counselling

المشورة

قد ترغب في الالتقاء بمستشار في جلسة فردية. قد لا يكون الوقت مناسباً للتحدث كثيراً عن مشكلاتك الماضية، لكن من شأن المستشار الملم بمشكلات الاستقرار التي يواجهها اللاجئون مساعدتك على البقاء هادئاً والحفاظ على تركيزك.

Medication

الأدوية

إذا شعرت بالحزن أو اليأس لمدة أسابيع، فمن المستحسن أن تراجع طبيباً ليرى إن كنت بحاجة لدواء مضاد للاكتئاب. يشعر البعض بالخوف من تناول الأدوية المضادة للاكتئاب. لكن إذا حصلت على بعض المساعدة لجعلك تشعر بحال أفضل وأقوى، فستتمكن من الاستقرار في وقت أسرع.

Everyday, try to do simple things that make you feel better.

حاول في كل يوم أن تفعل أشياء بسيطة تجعلك تشعل بحال أفضل.

برغم أن هذه ازمئة عصبية، فمن المهم أن تعتني بنفسك. وعلى سبيل المثال، فقد تشعر بحال أفضل إذا خرجت للمشى، أو زيارة صديق، أو قضاء بعض الوقت في المكتبة.

تذكر أنك تستطيع دائماً فعل ما يلي:

- إيقاف ما تفعله، والنهوض والتجول في الأنحاء قليلاً، وشرب كوب من الماء، أو مغادرة الغرفة لاستنشاق بعض الهواء النقي.
- مارس بعض تمارين الاسترخاء
- مارس بعض تمارين الارتكاز
- تأمل، صلّ، اجلس في هدوء، تنفّس بعمق

Helping our children to land and to settle

مساعدة أطفالنا على الهبوط والاستقرار

- الدعم المادي
 - يجب حماية الأطفال وتلبية احتياجاتهم المادية
 - تكتسب المهام الروتينية اليومية أهمية بالغة في تنظيم جدولك
 - من الممكن للأنشطة البدنية مع الأسرة والأصدقاء أن تساعد الأطفال على تفريغ التوتر وإلهاء أنفسهم عن مخاوفهم
- الدعم النفسي
 - يحتاج الأطفال إلى فهم ما حدث لأسرهم ولأنفسهم، مع تزويدهم بمعلومات تتلاءم مع أعمارهم
 - من شأن اللعب والرسم أن يساعدهم على إعادة تصوّر الأحداث واستعادة الشعور بالتحكم الذاتي والأمان
 - ساعد الأطفال على تدبير المخاوف والمشاعر الحادة
- الدعم الاجتماعي
 - قم بتفعيل الشبكات الاجتماعية (المدرسة، المجتمعات الدينية، المجتمعات الثقافية، علاقات الجوار)
 - أبلغ مقدمي الرعاية والمعلمين بما يجري في حياة الطفل وشرح لهم ماذا يمكنهم عمله للمساعدة

رسائل مهمة للوالدين:

- كلنا نشعر بصعوبة أن نكون آباء وأمّهات في بعض الأحيان.
- أن يكون المرء والدا خلال الأوقات التي تتطوي على توترات ومأس قد يكون أمرا مُربكا للغاية
- كثيرا ما يشعر الآباء المهاجرون بالعجز، والإحباط والحزن بسبب تنامي شعور أبنائهم بالاستقلالية والتأقلم السريع على الثقافة المحلية
- وكثيرا ما يجد الآباء أيضا أن أبنائهم يمنحونهم شعورا بالمغزى الحياتي والأمل، مما يساعدهم على تجاوز الأوقات الصعبة.
- من الممكن تقوية الأسر عن طريق مشاركة التجارب القاسية، ومن ثم التغلب عليها معا.
- عندما يكون مقدمو الرعاية منعزلين وجالسين بمفردهم في المنزل طوال اليوم مع أطفالهم الصغار أو أثناء وجود الأطفال في المدرسة، فقد يكون هذا شديد الصعوبة عليهم
- ليس هناك ما يدعو للخجل في أن تطلب المساعدة إذا كانت لديك مخاوف بشأن أطفالك.
- هناك العديد من المصادر ، ووسائل الدعم والأنشطة المجانية المتاحة في كافة المجتمعات المحلية، لكل الناس.