Advanced Techniques in Mental Health Care for Newcomers

Part 1: Assessment – Engaging and Building Trust

April 9, 2025

Minnesota Center of Excellence in Newcomer Health

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Acknowledgment

The Minnesota Center for Excellence in Newcomer Health is supported by *1 NU50CK000563* from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Minnesota Medical Association facilitated the CMEs.

No financial conflicts of interest.

DENVER HEALTH est. 1860 FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY

HealthPartners Institute

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Jefferson Health

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

UC San Diego School of Medicine Department of Pediatrics

Refugee HEALTH UNIT UC SAN DIEGO CENTER FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH MINNESOTA

Introductory Trainings

ECHO Colorado/Minnesota Center of Excellence:

Assessing Refugee Mental Health and Coordinating Care in Public Health and Primary Care

(https://drive.google.com/file/d/1p3d_x4WN-UqZkFkX3DJPlwKa4NBUIbZf/view)

Minnesota Department of Health:

Best Practices for Making Mental Health Referrals of Refugees

(https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Kh6b_3weQLbqo969SEecLnY6aB683Pfm/view)

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH MINNESOTA

This is Part 1 of a 2-Part Series

Part 2: In-Depth Treatment Considerations

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

1 – 2:30 p.m. ET | 12 – 1:30 p.m. CT |11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. MT | 10 – 11:30 a.m. PT

REGISTER NOW FOR PART 2

Advanced Techniques in Mental Health Care for Newcomers Part 2: In-Depth Treatment Considerations
(https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/444697f5-3e55-473d-acf2-cf8e77a521ea@eb14b046-24c4-4519-8f26-b89c2159828c)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe how to design culturally aware treatment plans through collaboration
- Discuss how to respond to socio-environmental contributors to trauma and stress
- Identify at least three strategies for provider sustainability

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Learning Objectives

- Describe strategies to build trust and establish safety
- Identify at least two methods of normalization and psychoeducation
- Recognize barriers in cross-cultural engagement and ways to reduce it

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Agenda

- Introduce Salim’s story
- Background on newcomers and displaced communities
- *Before session*: Building trust and establishing safety
- *Beginning session*: Assessment
- *During session*: Psychoeducation and normalization
- Barriers and difficulties with cross cultural interaction, engagement, and cultural humility
- *Ending session*: Creating a plan together
- *After session*

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Today's Speakers

Amy Kamel, MSW, LICSW
The National Capacity Building
The Center for Victims of Torture

Shruti Dasgupta, PhD, LP
The National Capacity Building
The Center for Victims of Torture

Patricia Shannon, PhD, LP
University of Minnesota
School of Social Work

(Moderator)

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Wellbeing & Sustainability

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

"Receiving kindness, gentleness, warmth and compassion tells the brain that the world is safe and other people are helpful rather than harmful…improves our immune system and reduces the levels of stress hormones…[it]helps us to feel soothed and settled and is conducive to good sleep. Kindness, gentleness, warmth and compassion are like basic vitamins for our minds"

-Paul Gilbert

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH MINNESOTA

Salim's Story

Salim is a 20-year-old Pashto man, who asked his PCP for a psychotherapy referral because he was experiencing "anger issues". He fled Afghanistan after the fall of Kabul, with his elderly parents, older brother and younger sister.

Salim's family does not know he is seeking psychotherapy. He reports that he often feels upset because his father does not understand U.S. culture but still tells Salim what to do and how to behave. He feels his older brother is not taking up his position as the eldest son, and many responsibilities fall on Salim. When probed, he also mentioned that he experiences chronic suicidal ideation.

Salim has limited English fluency. However, he is distrustful of professional interpreters from the community.

Who are “Newcomers”?

Immigrants	Migrants	Expats
Refugee	Asylum Seeker	Asylee
Visa Holder/Special Immigrant Status	Undocumented Immigrant	Economic Migrant

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Why work with Displaced Communities

- **117.3 million** displaced people worldwide in 2023
- **Less than 1%** of the world's refugees are ever resettled
- UNHCR refers refugees for resettlement based on vulnerability
- Countries then choose which refugees to take
- Many people spend **10+ years** in camps waiting to resettle (**50% children**)
- **71%** are resettled in **low- and middle-income** countries
- **69%** are hosted in neighboring countries
- A tiny fraction are resettled in U.S. (**1.02%** in 2023)
  - A report published by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2024 measured the fiscal impact of refugees and asylees at the federal, state and local levels from 2005-2019: Nearly $124 billion positive fiscal impact

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

UNHCR: Global Trends Report 2023 (https://www.unhcr.org/us/global-trends-report-2023)

How clients engage in treatment

Self-refer, or are referred by another provider or community member

Initial screening done to ensure client qualifies as a torture survivor

If qualified, will be scheduled for a diagnostic assessment with a psychotherapist

If not qualified, will be referred to external services

May choose to engage in a variety of services including psychotherapy, social work/case management, psychiatry

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH MINNESOTA

Before Session

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Trust building begins before your initial appointments

- Familiarize self with common newcomer experience
  - Be curious about their culture specific experiences and worldview

Newcomer Health Profiles: Minnesota Center of Excellence in Newcomer Health (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/rih/coe/profiles/index.html)

NEWCOMER HEALTH PROFILES

These profiles help clinicians, public health providers, and resettlement agencies facilitate medical screening and determine appropriate interventions and services for newcomers.

- Afghan Refugees and Humanitarian Parolees
- Bhutanese Refugees
- Burmese Refugees
- Central American (Guatemalan, Honduran, Salvadoran) Minor Refugees
- Congolese Refugees
- Iraqi Refugees
- Somali Refugees
- Syrian Refugees

ITER OF EXCELLENCE
NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Triple Trauma Paradigm

Pre-Flight

- Harassment/intimidation/threats
- Fear of unexpected arrest
- Loss of job/livelihood
- Loss of home and possessions
- Disruption of studies, life dreams
- Repeated relocation
- Living in hiding/underground
- Societal chaos/breakdown
- Prohibition of traditional practices
- Lack of medical care
- Separation, isolation of family
- Malnutrition
- Need for secrecy, silence, distrust
- Brief arrests
- Being followed or monitored
- Imprisonment
- Torture
- Other forms of violence
- Witnessing violence
- Disappearances/ deaths

Flight

- Fear of being caught or returned
- Living in hiding/underground
- Detention at checkpoints / borders
- Loss of home/possessions
- Loss of job/schooling
- Illness
- Robbery
- Exploitation: Bribes, falsification
- Physical assault, rape, or injury
- Witnessing violence
- Lack of medical care
- Separation, isolation of family
- Malnutrition
- Crowded, unsanitary conditions
- Long waits in refugee camps
- Great uncertainty about future

Post-Flight

- Low social and economic status
- Lack of legal status
- Language barriers
- Transportation, service barriers
- Loss of identity, roles
- Bad news from home
- Unmet expectations
- Unemployment/underemployment
- Racial/ ethnic discrimination
- Inadequate, dangerous housing
- Repeated relocation/ migration
- Social and cultural isolation
- Family separation/ reunification
- Unresolved losses/ disappearances
- Conflict: internal, marital, generational, community
- Unrealistic expectations from home
- Shock of new climate, geography
- Symptoms often worsen

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Questions to reflect on

- Is there anything about you or others who will be present in the room with your patient that may pose any barrier to rapport/trust?
  - Gender, age, position of authority, ethnic group, language
- Are there ways you can make the person more comfortable during your appointment?
  - Virtual/In person space safety, privacy, sitting arrangements
  - Recording/documenting information
  - Tissues, refreshments, tea/coffee
- Are the screening tools cross-culturally applicable?

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Working with interpreters

- Establishing roles
- Confidentiality - TRUST
- Word-for-word vs. summarizing
- Technical vocabulary
- Idioms of distress
- Redirecting the conversation or “getting back on track”

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Working with Interpreters

The interpreter in the room has a lot of power
Provide clear instruction about the interpreter's role **in front of the interpreter and the client**
If possible, provide client with means to communicate problems with the interpreter (card)
An interpreter might not feel safe to the client (confidentiality, trust issues, interpreters can be triggered by client stories)
Client/patient may know interpreter in the community

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

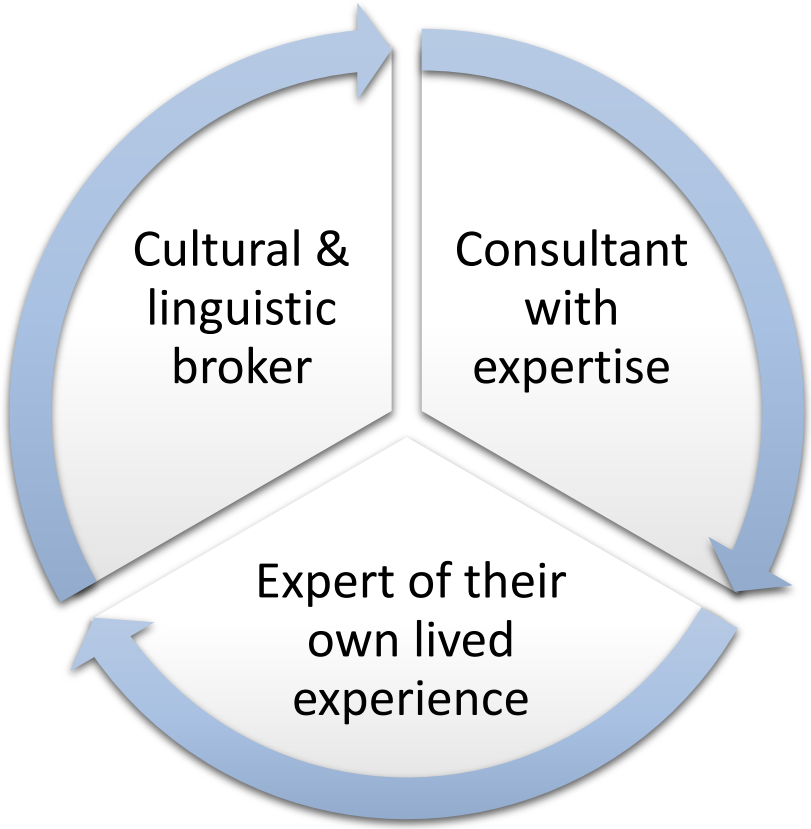
Outside of the box activity

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Beginning Session

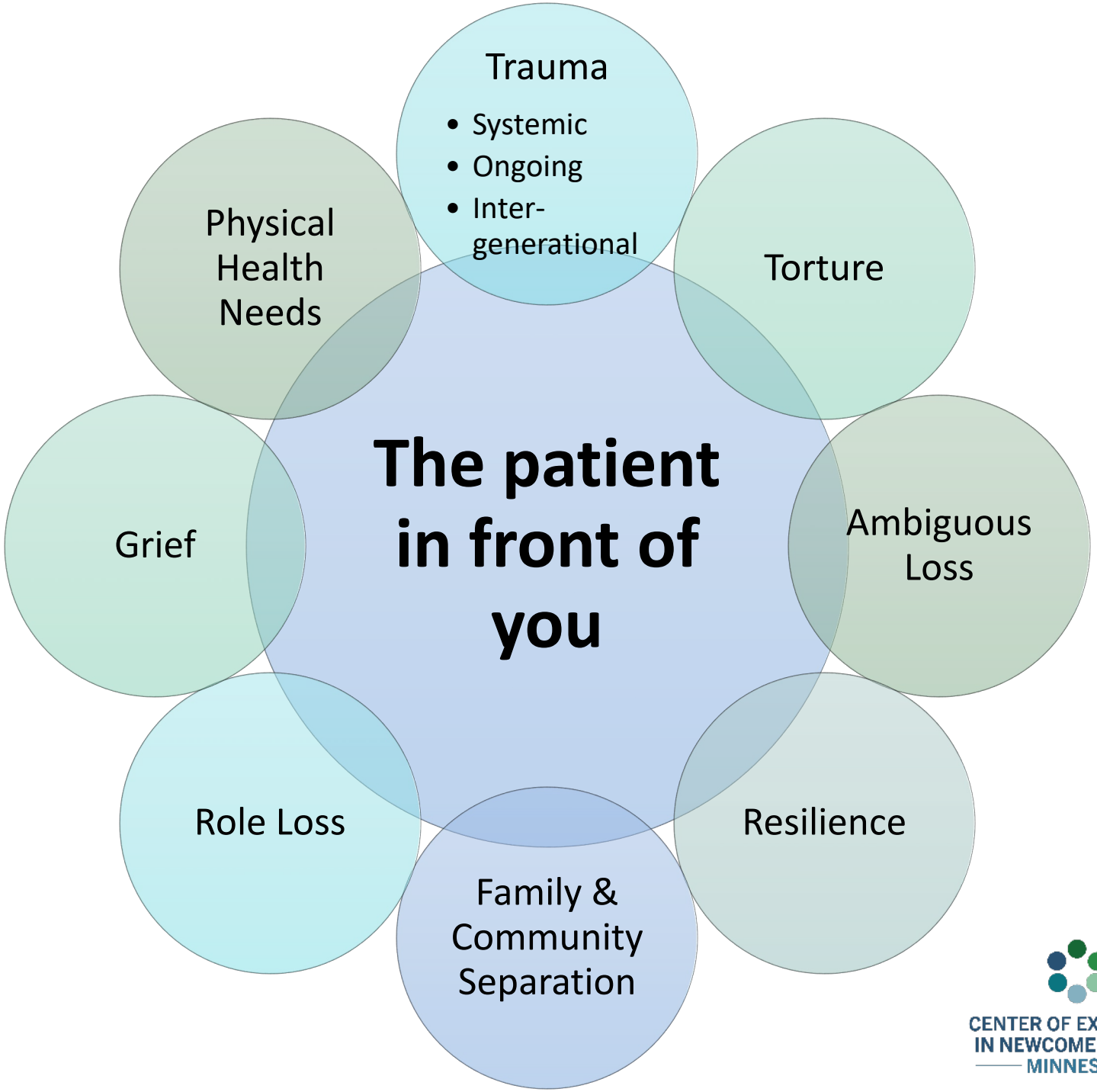
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

- Orient clients to the physical/virtual space
- Explain your and their role (as well as interpreter's role)
  - As well as the bounds of your profession
  - Don't be shy about repeating yourself
- If applicable, discuss if/how you are connected to or funded by government agencies
- Privacy & Confidentiality:
  - Fears related to confidentiality concerns within community
  - Clinically useful disclosure
  - Ongoing process of Informed Consent
  - Limits of confidentiality
    - Mandatory reporting requirements
      - Cultural differences in child rearing practices
      - Involving clients in the process



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Building Rapport and Trust



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Revisiting Salim's Story

Salim demonstrates that he is a great candidate for psychotherapy. He attends sessions regularly, and while he has difficulty engaging with interventions, he expresses interest. He often refers to the psychotherapist as a 'teacher' and despite multiple norm-setting conversations, he often wants psychotherapist to teach him how to be a male adult in U.S. society.

About 6 months in, Salim comes into session, tearful, stating that his marriage has been decided by his family. He anticipated that his days in psychotherapy is numbered because now he will have a new role as the head of family and cannot bring shame to his new wife's name.

During Session

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Safety and Emotional Regulation

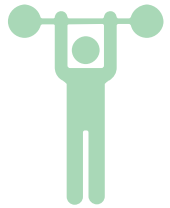
Our bodies are designed to protect us

When we feel unsafe, we are in a constant state of fear and threat – survival mode

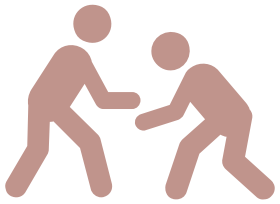
Our body holds our experiences and works hard to protect us by continuing a stress response even when we are out of physical danger

We can get stuck in defensive patterns of activation or deactivation that impact us over time

Regulation: A state of being balanced



Dysregulation: A state of being overwhelmed



Coregulation: When you help each other to regulate

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Window of Tolerance/Capacity

First Aid Toolkit (https://www.firstaidarts.org/)

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Assessment: Description & comprehension

- Determine Patient Understanding of the Problem
  - Encourages self-efficacy
  - Helps them feel supported (rapport & safety!)
  - Enhances engagement
- Determine Health Literacy
- Validate
  - Patients may often feel resigned, confused, frustrated
- Holistic approach
  - Additional info from loved ones
  - Determine Basic Needs
  - Avoid diagnostic overshadowing
  - Dynamic Sizing

Assessment: Description & comprehension

Strategies

Utilize APA's Cultural Formulation Interview or Kleinman's 8 questions

Explicit descriptions and definitions using appropriate metaphors and terminology keeping context of trauma and acculturation in mind

Avoid jargon

Provide distinctions between acute vs chronic conditions, severity

Avoiding the allure of making decisions for patients

Consult with cultural brokers when using screening tools developed in Western countries to appropriately adapt the language

Emphasize Choice & Consent

Your understanding of patient's problems

Collaborating to identify and evaluate benchmarks of healing and treatment

Referral and Treatment Choices

- Description of what to expect with each choice
- If you are placing a referral for a major and/or invasive procedure, try to utilize culturally attuned health educators to describe purpose and steps

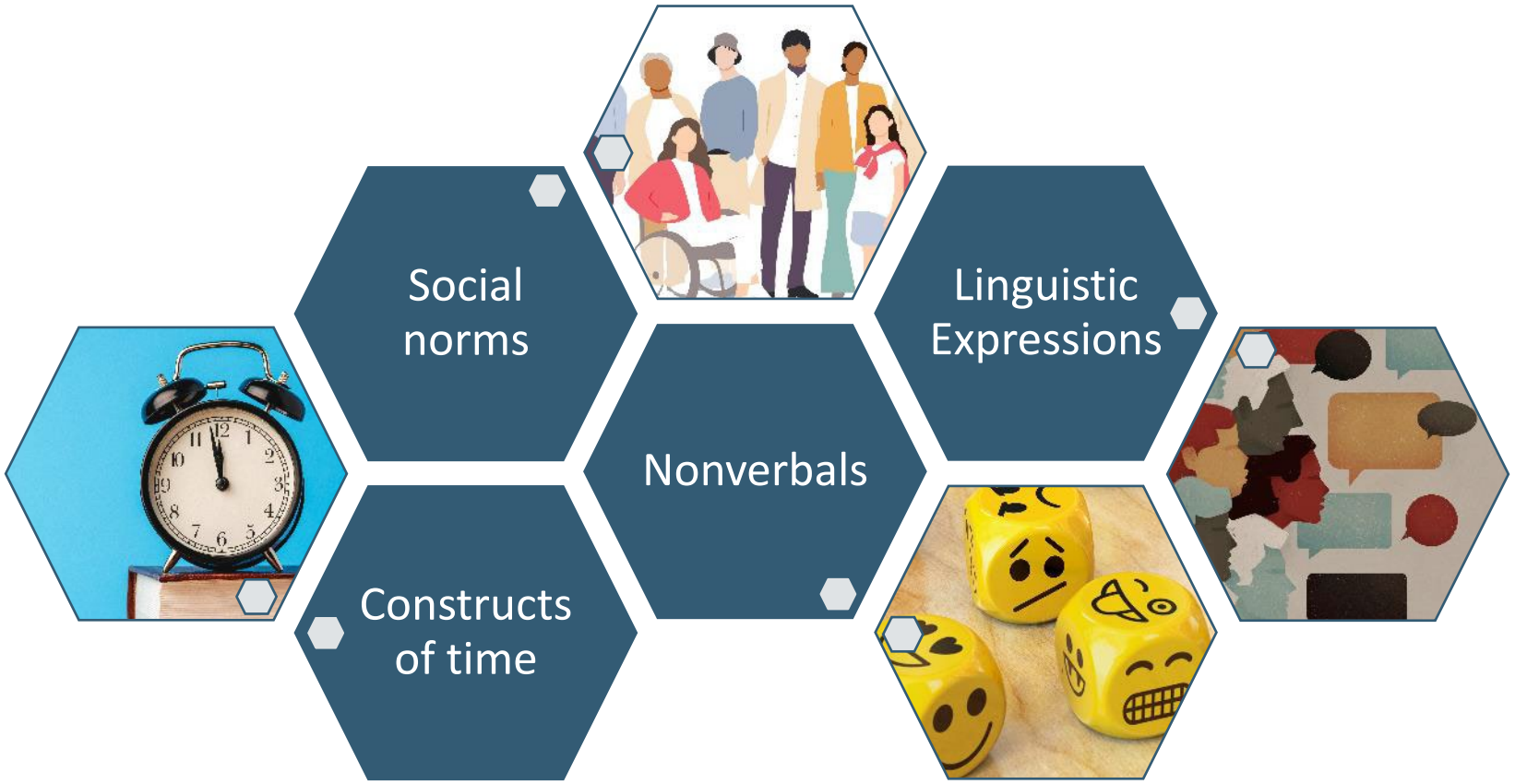
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH MINNESOTA

Measures & Screening Tools

	Not at all	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Taking more risks or doing things that might cause you or others harm *Prompts*: Example, crossing the road without looking or caring that cars are coming. Knowing that something is dangerous, but just not caring about the risk involved.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Loss of sexual interest or pleasure *Prompts*: We ask all clients this question, but it can sometimes make people feel uncomfortable and you don't have to answer if it makes you feel that way. Sometimes people lose interest in sex when they feel down or sad. Have you had this experience in the past week? *NOTE*: Some clients may respond with statements about not having sexual interest due to advanced age or having a spouse/partner who does not live near/is deceased and "not thinking about sex at all." Include in notes section and score as "not at all" if client does not identify this as a symptom of depression. Other clients might share they are not sexually active and that they don't think about sex. This can be included in notes and scored as "not at all."	☐	☐	☐	☐

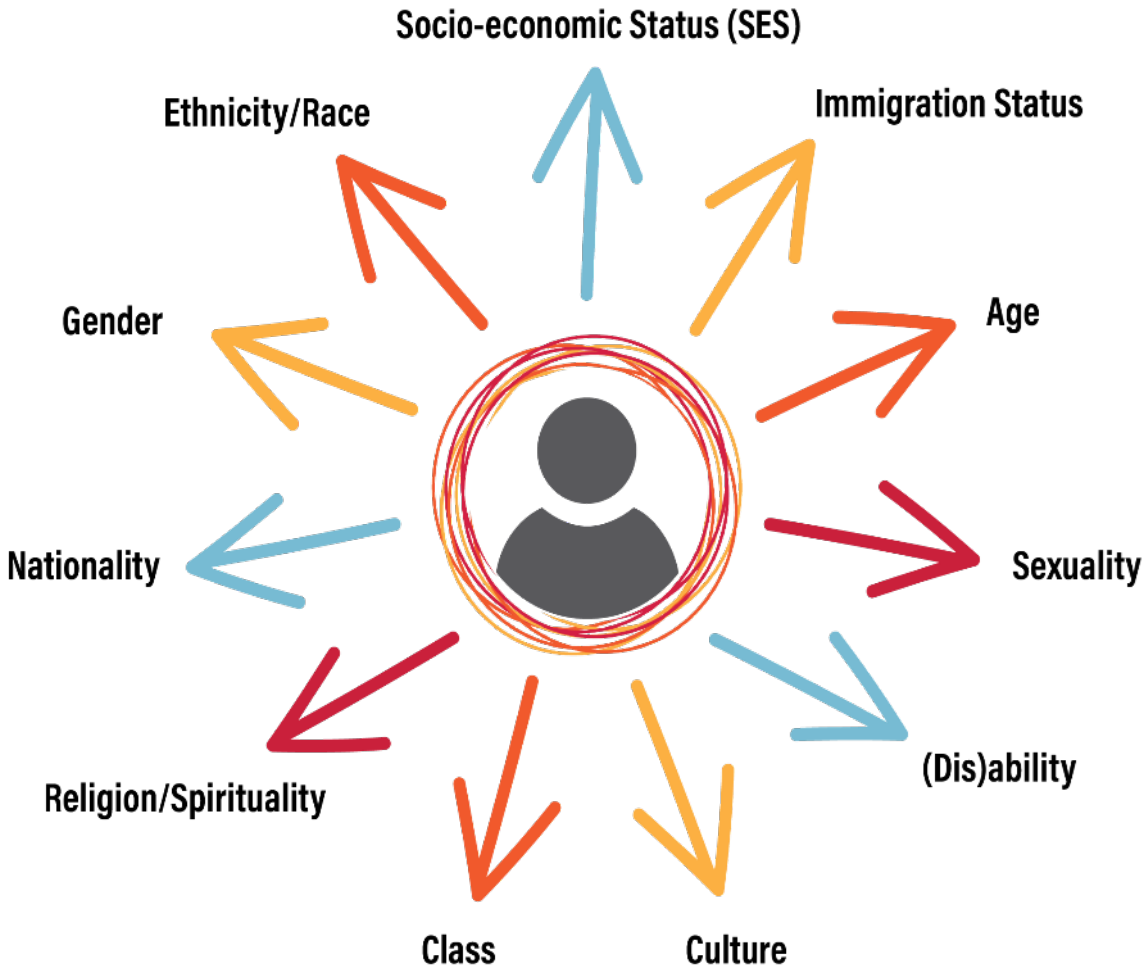
Adapted Posttraumatic Diagnostic Scale:

Foa, E. B., McLean, C. P., Zang, Y., Zhong, J., Powers, M. B., Kauffman, B. Y., ... Knowles, K. (2016). Psychometric properties of the Posttraumatic Diagnostic Scale for *DSM-5* (PDS-5). *Psychological Assessment, 28*, 1166-1171. doi:10.1037/pas0000258



Culture specific considerations

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA



Culture specific considerations: Intersectionality

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Butterflies in my stomach

My [body part] isn't mine

High pressure

Weight on my shoulders

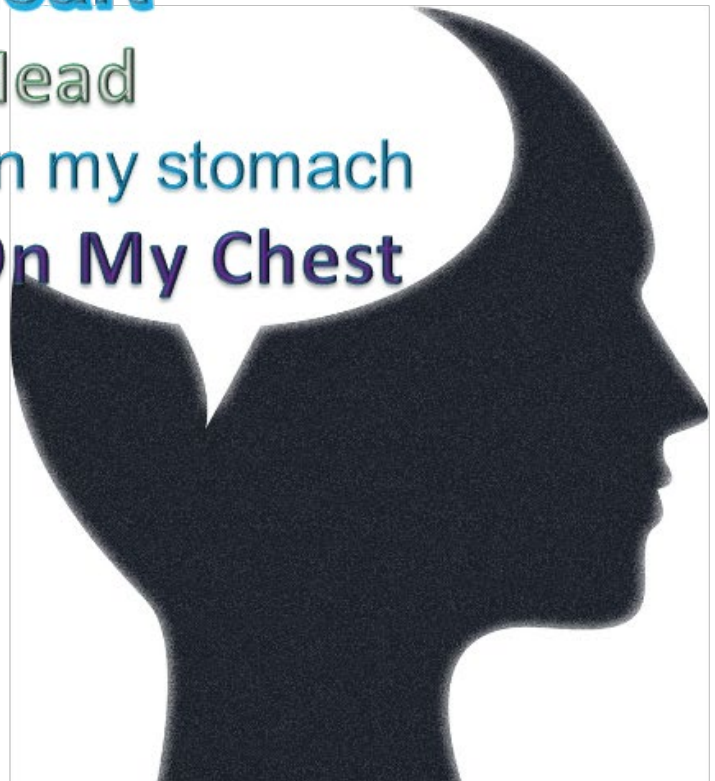
Not myself

Heavy Heart

Buzzing Head

Burning sensation in my stomach

The World Fell On My Chest

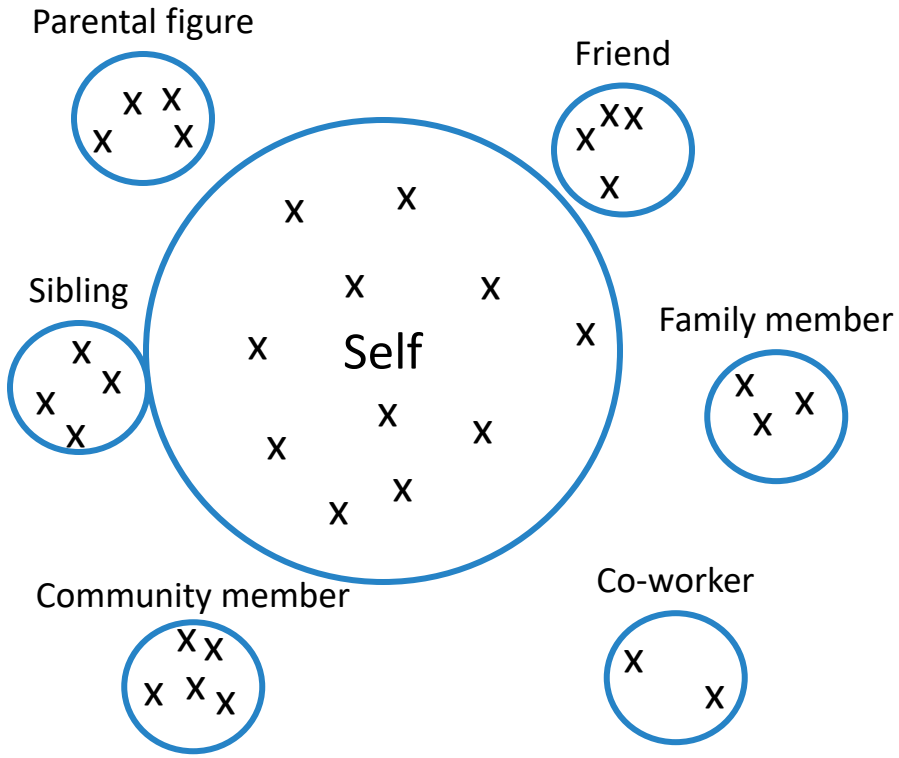


Culture specific considerations: Idioms of Distress

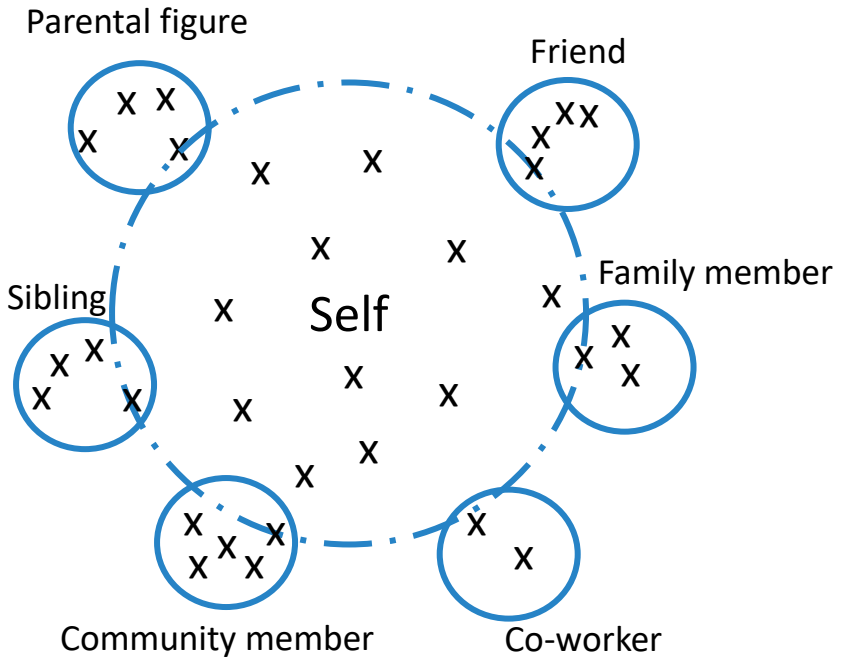
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Collective Response to Trauma

Independent Construal of Self



Interdependent Construal of Self



Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. Psychological Review, 98(2), 224–253. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.98.2.224

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH MINNESOTA

Active Listening Skills
Attunement
Containment

- Psychological Safety
- Empowers client to agency
- Strengthens trust and provider credibility
- Builds resilience

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

End of Session

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

- Give ample notice before ending the interview so the patient has time to add anything they wish and can prepare emotionally.
- Acknowledge again that it can be difficult to talk about traumatic events because of stigma & shame
- Allow time and ask patients explicitly if they have questions
- Check the emotional state of the patient and inform them about possible reactions to the interview
- Ask about social support the survivor has to help him or her cope with any reactions he or she is having or other type of support that may be needed (e.g., legal aid or health care)
- Use external memory aid tools to ensure adherence to plans made in appointment
- As needed, offer information about local resources that provide support

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

After the Session

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Ensure there is space for the patient to sit and compose themselves outside of your office

Follow up by activating referral pathways and connecting with health navigators, cultural brokers etc.

Jot down communication/knowledge gaps you noted in your interaction with patient, so you can learn more

Take time to reflect on the impact of the appointment on you

- Debrief/Connect with a supervisor or colleague as needed

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN NEWCOMER HEALTH MINNESOTA

3 Breaths

First Breath for Yourself

Second Breath for your Community

Third Breath for the Work

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Session 2 is coming soon!

Part 2: In-Depth Treatment Considerations

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

1 – 2:30 p.m. ET | 12 – 1:30 p.m. CT |11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. MT | 10 – 11:30 a.m. PT

REGISTER NOW FOR PART 2

Advanced Techniques in Mental Health Care for Newcomers Part 2: In-Depth Treatment Considerations
(https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/444697f5-3e55-473d-acf2-cf8e77a521ea@eb14b046-24c4-4519-8f26-b89c2159828c)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe how to design culturally aware treatment plans through collaboration
- Discuss how to respond to socio-environmental contributors to trauma and stress
- Identify at least three strategies for provider sustainability

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Thank you!

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Questions?

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Center of Excellence Reminders!

Subscribe to Center of Excellence in Newcomer Health Updates (https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNMDH/subscriber/new?topic_id=MNMDH_463) for training announcements and other guidance and resources.

Upcoming trainings at
Trainings: Minnesota Center of Excellence in Newcomer Health (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/rih/coe/webinars.html)

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA

Thank You!

Please remember to complete your evaluation

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
IN NEWCOMER HEALTH
MINNESOTA