

**“The worst thing that can
happen is to lose your voice”**

Rosa M., Torture Survivor

Several Slides adapted from Dina Birman

Refugee Mental Health Issues:

- Migration Stress
- Acculturative Stress (culture shock)

Migration Stress:

- Moving
- Worse when unexpected or not by choice
- Loss of family and friends
- Loss of familiar possessions and surroundings
- Disruptions on family arrangements
- Changes in loved ones as a result of stress

Case Study 1

Ways to help children cope with moving:

- re-establish routines
- anticipatory guidance
- support from peer group
- support from important adults

Acculturation

- Length of time outside country of origin
- Reasons for immigration
- Conditions of immigration
- Level of social and family support
- Degree of religious affiliation

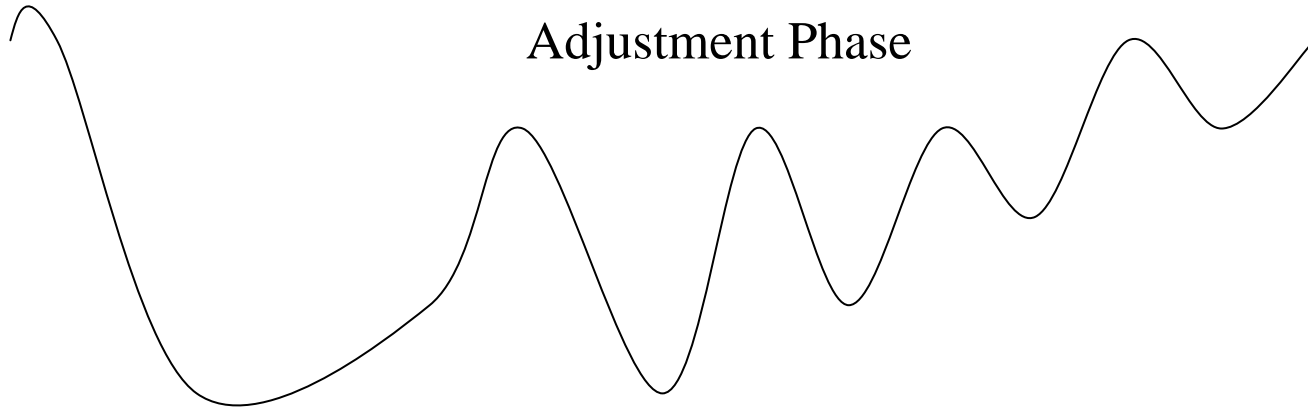
Cultural Adjustment Process

Honeymoon

Integration

Adjustment Phase

Culture Shock



Acculturation and Acculturative Stress

- Children acculturate to the U.S. culture and learn English faster than parents
 - Children's English language skills surpass native language in 2/3 yrs for younger children, 5/7 for older children
- Parents maintain their native culture whereas children may forget it, or never learn it

Acculturation Gap

- Parents don't know about their children's lives outside the home
- Diminishes parents' capacity to help their children
- Undermines their authority
- Children feel parents can't understand or help them

Case Study 2

Ways to reduce acculturative stress

- Learning and practice, anticipatory guidance
- Helping children retain their native language
- Not asking children to serve as brokers
- Helping parents learn about the lives of their children (for e.g. at school)

Points to remember about Acculturation - Adolescents

- Children learn language more quickly as compared to parents.
- Other aspects of acculturation can take a long time
- Children may appear to be acculturated when in fact they misunderstand many aspects of U.S. culture
- Adolescents need a combination of new and old cultural skills for positive psychological and family adjustment
- Native language is important to maintain for children

Clinical Assessment

- Client's country of origin
- Language spoken
- Education background
- Immigration status
- Arrival Date
- Degree of integration
- Religious beliefs
- Loss
- Family structure
- Family rules/boundaries
- Gender roles
- Parenting attitudes
- Cross Generational Issues
- World view
- Attitudes towards Illness/health

Cultural Characteristics

Western

- Independence
- Responsibility for Self
- Individualism
- Nuclear family
- Self-Esteem
- Egalitarian
- Youth

Non-western Cultures

- Interdependence
- Responsibility for Others
- Collectivism
- Extended family
- Respect for Others
- Hierarchical
- Age

Client's view about clinical services

- Mental Health is a new concept for most of Refugees.
- Non-existence of clinical services in their countries.
- Social work is community oriented (AIDS prevention, sanitation programs, community development programs, human rights advocacy)
- Confusion between clinical and psychiatric services(if you see a clinician you are crazy!)

Clients view of the problem

- What do you think is the cause of the problem?
- What is your view of the problem
- Under what circumstances does the problem get better?

Arthur Kleineman

Somatization of Affective Disorders

Emotions may be described through physical symptoms

- Fear: my heart fell down
- Depression: I think too much
- Suicide lethality – what to ask

Few Last Thoughts

Involve Refugees:

- Ask if they are satisfied – get feedback
- Involve family members and cultural experts where possible
- Don't assume, ask questions

Learn more about culture

- Read about customs and culture of clients you see often.
- Explain procedures and treatment-it builds trust

Don't assume,
ask questions

Available Resources

- Mental Health Interventions for Refugee Children in Resettlement and Review of Child and Adolescent Refugee Mental Health
http://www.nctsnet.org/nccts/nav.do?pid=ctr_rsch_prod2
- www.springinstitute.org
- www.cal.org
- <http://www.brycs.org/>
- www.somalibantu.com