
Professional Certificate in Addiction and Refugee Health

Mental Health and Trauma in Refugees

Mental Health and Trauma in Refugees Glossary

Acculturation: The process by which individuals from one culture adopt the beliefs, values, and customs of a new culture. Refugees often experience acculturation as they adapt to their new environment.

Acute Stress Disorder (ASD): A psychological condition that can occur in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event. Symptoms may include dissociation, intrusive thoughts, and avoidance behaviors.

Anxiety: A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about a future event or uncertain outcome. Anxiety disorders are common among refugees due to the stressors they face.

Depression: A mood disorder characterized by feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and loss of interest in activities. Refugees may experience depression as a result of trauma or adjustment difficulties.

Complex Trauma: Exposure to multiple traumatic events over an extended period of time. Refugees often experience complex trauma due to the challenges they face before, during, and after migration.

Cultural Competence: The ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people from different cultures. Cultural competence is essential when working with refugees to address mental health and trauma.

Displacement: The forced movement of individuals from their homes or countries due to conflict, persecution, or disaster. Displacement can contribute to mental health challenges and trauma in refugees.

Dissociation: A coping mechanism in which individuals mentally detach from their surroundings or emotions. Refugees may experience dissociation as a response to trauma.

Emotional Regulation: The ability to manage and respond to emotions in a healthy and adaptive way. Refugees may struggle with emotional regulation due to the impact of trauma on their mental health.

Empowerment: The process of helping individuals gain control over their lives and make informed decisions. Empowerment is important in supporting refugees to overcome trauma and build resilience.

Exposure Therapy: A type of therapy that involves gradually exposing individuals to traumatic memories or situations in a safe and controlled environment. Exposure therapy can help refugees process trauma and reduce symptoms of PTSD.

Forced Migration: The movement of individuals who are compelled to leave their homes or countries due to external factors beyond their control. Forced migration can lead to mental health challenges and trauma in refugees.

Interpreters: Individuals who facilitate communication between speakers of different languages. Interpreters play a crucial role in mental health interventions for refugees to ensure accurate and culturally sensitive communication.

Mental Health: The state of well-being in which individuals can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their communities. Mental health is a key aspect of overall health for refugees.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): A mental health condition that can develop after exposure to a traumatic event. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares, and hypervigilance. Refugees are at increased risk of PTSD due to their experiences.

Psychoeducation: The process of providing information and education about mental health conditions, treatments, and coping strategies. Psychoeducation is important in supporting refugees to understand and manage trauma.

Resilience: The ability to adapt and bounce back from adversity. Resilience is a key factor in promoting mental health and well-being among refugees who have experienced trauma.

Secondary Trauma: The emotional and psychological distress experienced by individuals who are indirectly exposed to trauma through their work or relationships. Healthcare providers working with refugees may experience secondary trauma.

Self-Care: Activities and practices that individuals engage in to maintain their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Self-care is important for refugees to manage the effects of trauma and promote healing.

Social Support: Emotional, instrumental, or informational assistance provided by family, friends, or communities. Social support is crucial for refugees in coping with trauma and promoting mental health.

Stigma: Negative attitudes or beliefs that lead to discrimination against individuals with mental health conditions. Stigma can prevent refugees from seeking help for trauma and mental health issues.

Therapeutic Alliance: The relationship between a therapist and a client based on trust, collaboration, and mutual respect. Building a therapeutic alliance is essential in mental health interventions for refugees.

Transgenerational Trauma: The transmission of trauma from one generation to the next through familial and cultural processes. Refugees may experience transgenerational trauma as a result of their own trauma history.

Trauma: An emotional response to a distressing or life-threatening event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope. Refugees often experience trauma due to their exposure to violence, persecution, or displacement.

Validation: Acknowledging and affirming the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of others. Validation is important in supporting refugees to process trauma and build trust in therapeutic relationships.

Vicarious Trauma: The emotional and psychological impact experienced by individuals who are exposed to the trauma of others. Healthcare providers working with refugees may experience vicarious trauma.

Wellness: An overall state of health and well-being that encompasses physical, mental, and social aspects. Promoting wellness is important in supporting refugees to recover from trauma and build resilience.

Work-Life Balance: The equilibrium between work responsibilities and personal life that allows individuals to fulfill their professional and personal goals. Maintaining work-life balance is crucial for healthcare providers working with refugees to prevent burnout.