

March 21, 2024

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

Foundations for Resettlement Caseworkers

switchboard
connecting resettlement experts





Zoom Webinar Quick Tips



Chat is disabled due to the large number of participants today

Q&A

Use the **Q&A box** to type a question. Questions will become visible as they are answered.



This webinar is being **recorded** and will be shared with you within 24 hours



Complete the webinar satisfaction **survey**, following this learning experience



Today's Speaker



**Megan Rafferty,
MA, LPC**

Training Officer, Mental
Health and Wellness,
Switchboard

Learning Objectives



By the end of this session, you will be able to:

1

Recognize

common signs and symptoms of emotional distress in refugee populations

2

Summarize

practical approaches to support newcomer clients with various mental health needs

3

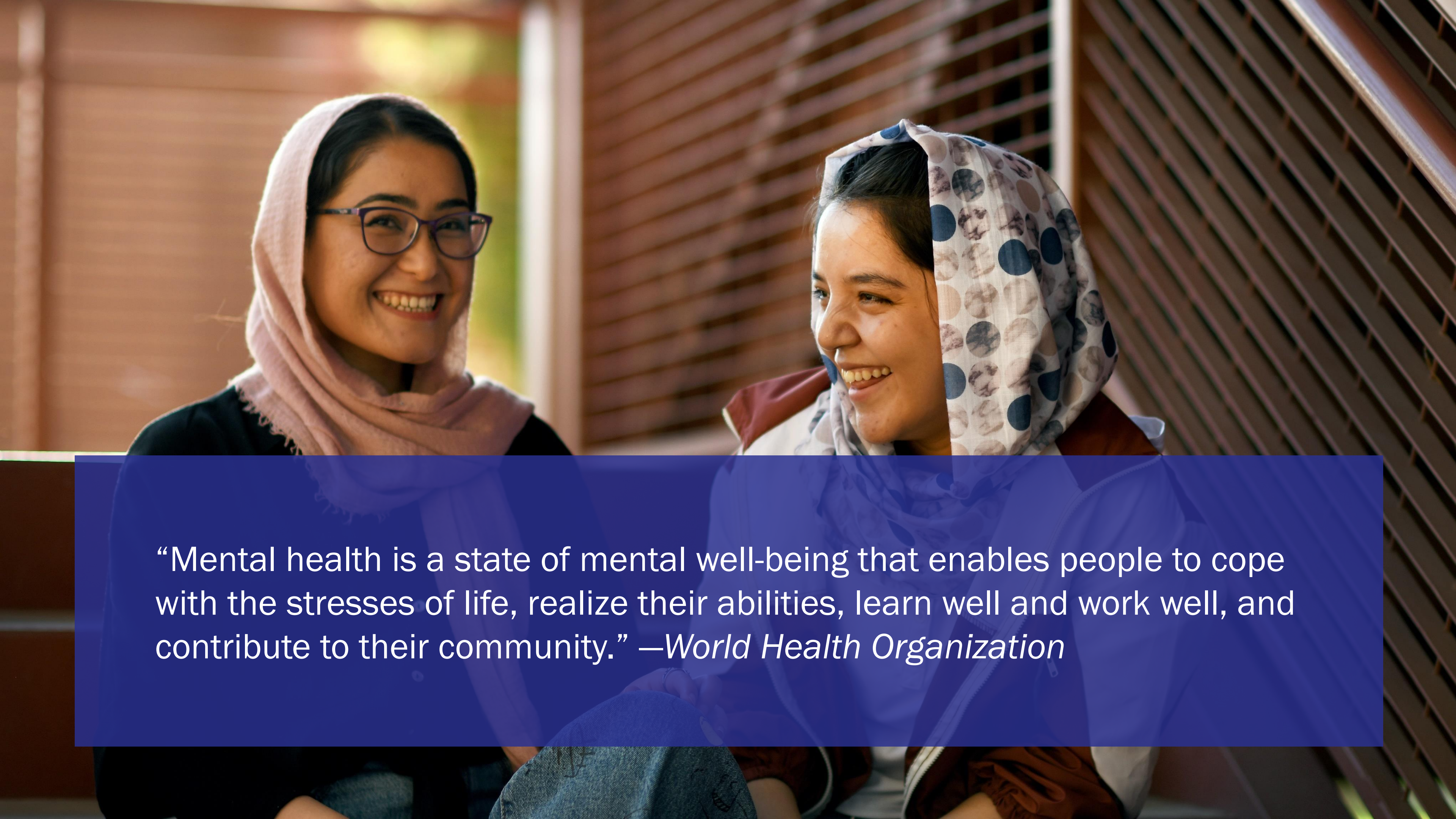
Apply

strategies for appropriate community referrals, addressing common barriers to treatment for refugee and newcomer clients



1

Recognizing Emotional Distress



“Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.” —*World Health Organization*

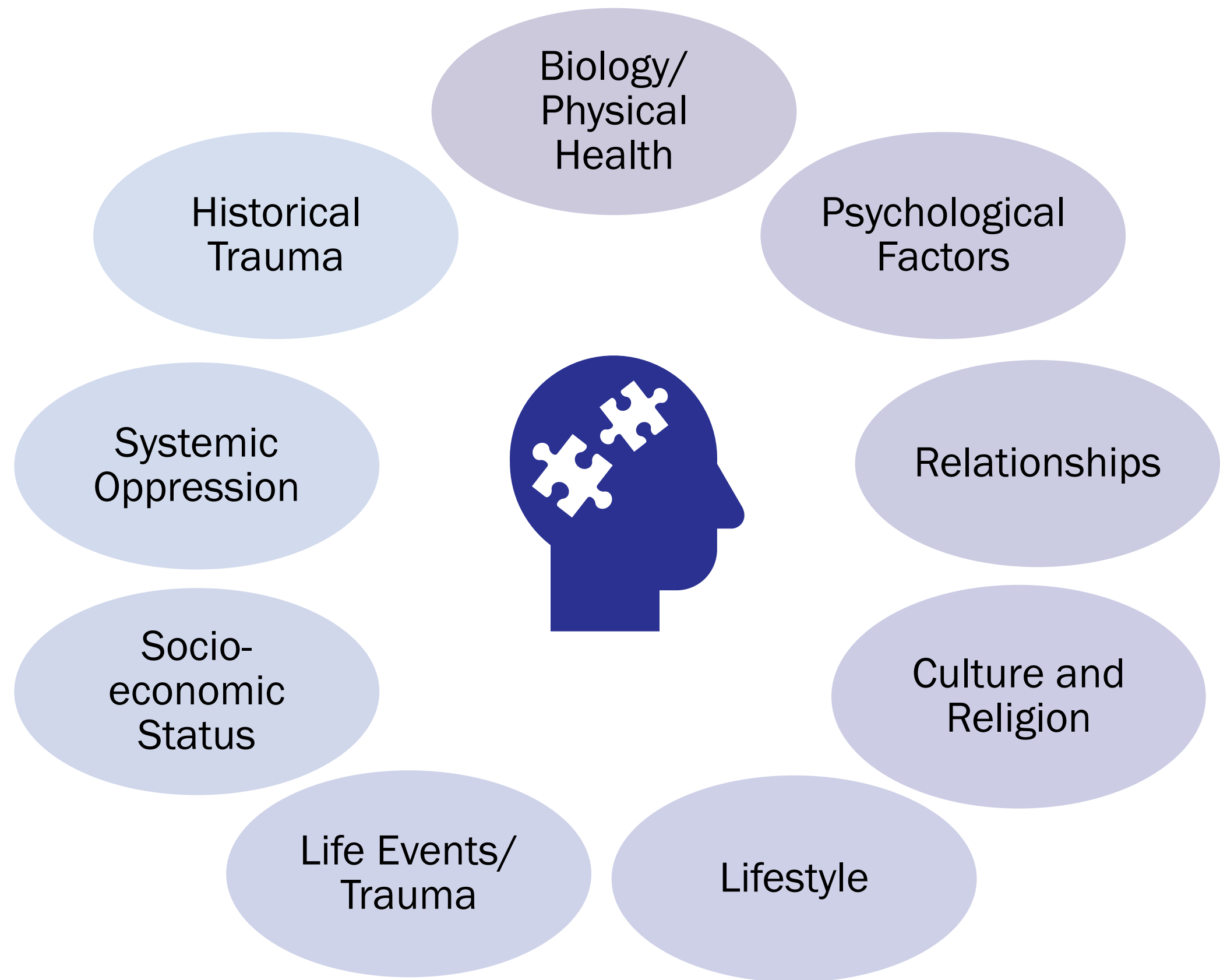
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What factors contribute to a person's mental health?



What Factors Influence Mental Health?





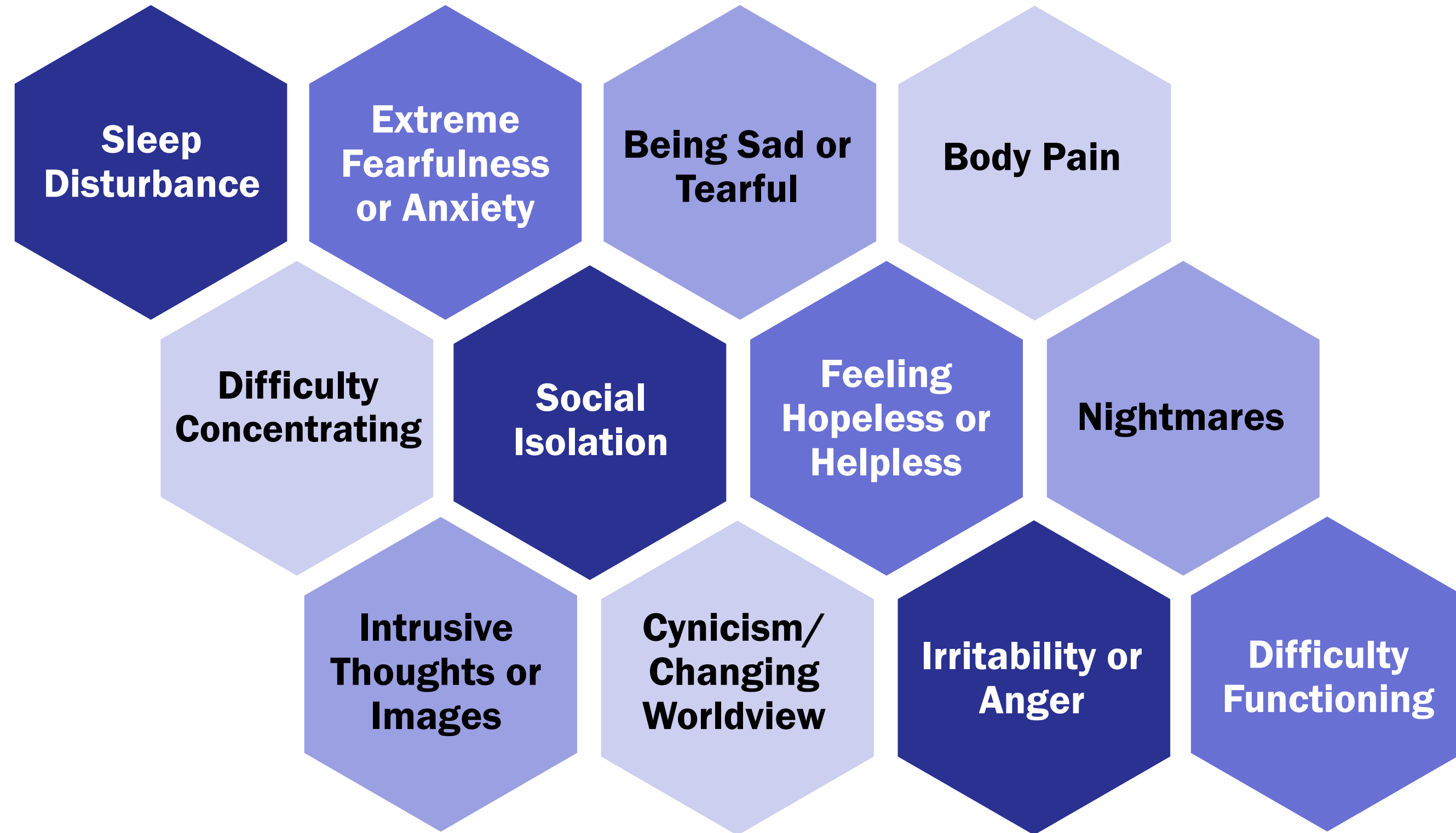
- Traumatic experiences of forced displacement
- Grief and loss
- Gender-based violence
- Limited resources
- Disrupted social networks

Risk Factors

Protective Factors

- Community ties
- Faith and beliefs
- Family support
- Access to education/work
- Health
- Hope and determination

Signs of Emotional Distress



More Serious and Rare Reactions



Cultural Expressions of Mental Health

- Describing distress through somatic (physical) symptoms
- Limited language that describes mental health or traumatic experiences
- High-context (indirect) communication styles



A close-up photograph of a woman wearing a black hijab, smiling broadly and looking towards the right. The background is a blurred landscape with trees and buildings under a warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. A dark blue semi-transparent box is overlaid on the bottom left of the image, containing white text.

Newcomers are Resilient!

Just because someone has experienced hardships in life does not mean they will experience mental health concerns!



Meet Sylvie

Sylvie, a 33-year-old woman, fled with her family from violence in their home country, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). They then lived in a refugee camp in Uganda for seven years.

While living in the camp, Sylvie's husband died from illness, leaving her with four young children. Sylvie and her children were resettled in the U.S. nine months ago.

During your routine home visits, Sylvie complains about frequent headaches and exhaustion. She also shares that she avoids going to church, an activity she used to enjoy. Her children tell you that their mother "feels different" and doesn't sing or laugh like she used to.

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What signs and symptoms of emotional distress do you notice?

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What are some of Sylvie's potential protective factors?



2

Providing Support

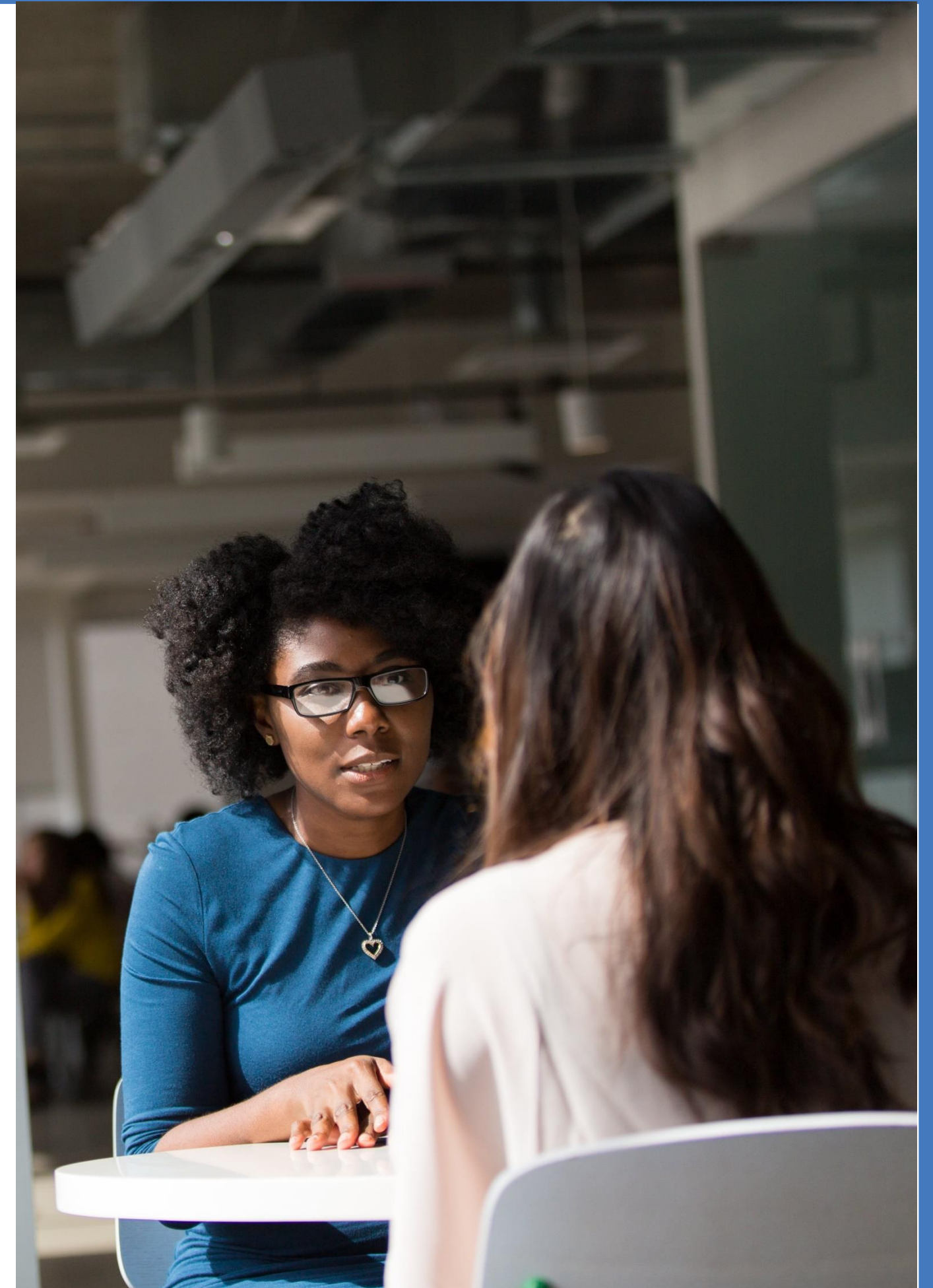
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What helps you when you're going through a difficult time?

Developing Trust

- **Normalize** the client's lived experience
- **Validate** the emotion behind the behavior
- **Reserve judgment**, and meet clients where they're at
- Offer **practical assistance** and, when possible, **provide choices**
- **Follow through** on what you say you'll do



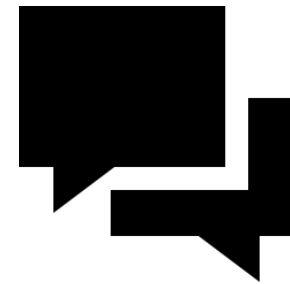


Safety & Stabilization



- Prioritize meeting clients' **basic needs**
- **Assess for safety** and complete safety planning as needed
- **Continue to screen** for mental health concerns beyond initial 90 days

Psychoeducation

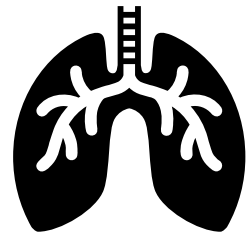


“It’s expected that you’ll have a lot of worries as you start your new life here. But sometimes **worrying too much can make it harder to sleep, relax, or connect with your family.** Let’s talk about some ways that you can better control your worries.”

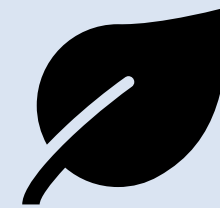
“Managing stress is important for your well-being. **What sorts of things help you feel more calm?**”

“**Things that happen to us in the past can still affect us in the present.** It can be helpful to talk about the past to heal from it.”

Teach Coping Skills



Breathing



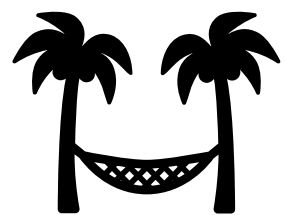
Mindfulness



Grounding



Progressive Muscle
Relaxation



Visualization



Sleep Hygiene



Sylvie, Continued

At your recent routine meeting, Sylvie is tearful and mentions having trouble sleeping due to nightmares. She says she feels exhausted every day and points out the increasing mistakes she has been making at work as a result. She also shares about getting her children to school late on several occasions.

Sylvie talks at length about how things would be different if her husband were here. You often must redirect her to stay on track and remind her about appointments and meetings.

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How would you support Sylvie's mental health needs?



3

Making Referrals & Addressing Barriers



Levels of Support in Resettlement



How to Discuss a Referral with a Client



1

This is a normal reaction to an abnormal event.

2

Leaving your home to come to a new country is so hard! You are so strong to have made it here.

3

What ideas do you have about what might help you?

4

In our community, we have a counselor available who may be able to help.

5

It is your choice if you want to meet with them.

6

Would you like me to make a referral?

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What barriers prevent newcomers from accessing mental health services?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

Barriers to Accessing Care



Physical

Access to technology, transportation, child care

Provider Limitations

Lack of culturally aware providers, limited interpretation

Mental & Emotional

Not emotionally ready



Lack of Time

Busy work and education schedules; family commitments

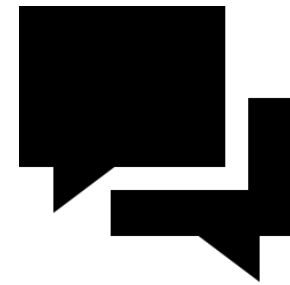
Financial

Lack of medical insurance or funds for copays

Stigma

Personal, family, and community perceptions

What Stigma Sounds Like



“I am the head of the household. No one can know I’m feeling this way, or they will **think I’m weak.**”

“People will **think I’m crazy** if I tell them about the thoughts I’ve been having.”

“If anyone finds out I am seeing a counselor, **rumors could spread**, and people will think poorly of **me and my family.**”



How to Help Reduce Stigma



Acknowledge varying **cultural beliefs** about mental health



Use simple, goal-centered language



Emphasize confidentiality of services



Normalize seeking counseling services and **affirm client strengths**

A close-up photograph of a woman wearing a vibrant, patterned dress with yellow, orange, and green colors. She is holding a child, whose head is visible in the foreground. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the woman's dress and the child's head.

Recall Sylvie

At your recent routine meeting, Sylvie is tearful and mentions having trouble sleeping due to nightmares. She says she feels exhausted every day and points out the increasing mistakes she has been making at work as a result. She also shares about getting her children to school late on several occasions.

Sylvie talks at length about how things would be different if her husband were here. You often must redirect her to stay on track and remind her about appointments and meetings.

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How might you begin to talk with Sylvie about seeking additional mental health and psychosocial support?

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How confident do you feel supporting clients with their mental health needs?



Questions?

Type your question in the **Q&A**

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Help us help you!

Scan the QR code or click the link in the chat to access our feedback survey!

- Five questions
- 60 seconds to complete
- Helps us improve future training and technical assistance



Recommended Resources



Trauma-Informed Care

- Switchboard
 - Guide: [Trauma-Informed Care: A Primer for Refugee Service Providers](#) (2023)
 - Webinar: [Trauma-Informed Care in Case Management](#) (2022)

Service Mapping and Referrals

- Switchboard
 - Tool: [Mental Health Referral and New Provider Inquiry Forms](#) (2019)
- Center for Adjustment, Recovery and Resilience (CARRE)
 - Guide: [Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Service Mapping](#) (2023)

Practical Skills

- Switchboard
 - Webinar: [Psychological First Aid to Support Clients Affected by the Crisis in Afghanistan](#) (2021)
 - Guide: [Facilitating Discussions about Mental Health with Afghan Newcomer Communities](#) (2023)
 - Guide: [Building a Culturally Informed Network of Refugee Mental Healthcare Providers](#) (2019)
- Center for Victims of Torture (CVT)
 - Tool: [Self Care Tools: Core Concepts](#) (2021)
 - Tool: [Self-Care Tools: Fundamental Skills for Self-Care](#) (2021)



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