


How to work with Middle Eastern Families




Introduction

- **Learning about the Refugee and Immigrant communities**
- **Cultural norms of Middle Eastern communities**




Mission about License to Freedom


- License to Freedom (L2F) is a nonprofit community-based organization that promotes:
 - nonviolence through community education
 - self-sufficiency programs
 - advocacy for refugee
 - immigrant survivors of domestic and relationship abuse
 - those at risk for such violence, in the San Diego region
- We believe that every person has a right to live without fear
- We believe that abused refugee and immigrant women and children must be able to seek and to receive the services and support they require in a manner that is respectful of their languages, cultures, race, age, sexual orientation, disabilities and religious beliefs



License to Freedom Services



Following are services provided by L2F:

- Community Dialogue for Change
- Mental Health Counseling Services under the supervision of Clinical Psychologist for Domestic Violence Survivors
- SAVE Sexual Assault Victim Empowerment Program
- 52 Week Domestic Violence Offender Group
- Preventing Child Sexual Violence Program
- Victim Advocacy
- **Free Legal Services**
- Addressing issue of Domestic Violence and providing therapeutic healing sessions to sexually abused women in Iraq


Ice Breaker

If you are obligated to leave your home and you only have five minutes. Please share what three important things will you pack or take with you.

Refugees

- By definition, **refugees** are people who have had to leave their country of origin due to extenuating circumstances. These circumstances include war, persecution, and political instability.
- Those who relocate to the US struggle with unemployment and high rates of food insecurity
- San Diego has been home to nearly 86,000 refugees resettled since 1975. 2,400 each year since 2010. 1 in 38 San Diagan arrived as a refugee.



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Stages of Migration & Related Stressors

- *Pre-migration:* Stressors may include events that directly precipitate displacement including war, torture, separations, extreme poverty, exposure to violence, natural disasters, forced labor, starvation, or forced combat
- *Migration:* Stressors include family separations, loss of loved ones, loss of possessions, fear, and lack of food
- *Resettlement:* Stressors include those related to acculturation such as discrimination, loss of cultural connection and identity, loss of community, social isolation, language barriers, poverty, substandard living conditions, and homelessness

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Continuation


- Stressful experiences may affect them as they arrive to the US, resulting from spending long periods of time in refugee camps and/or experiencing loss and separation from family members
- These experiences may hinder their ability to reach their full potential in their host country. Agencies have been designed to meet short-term needs of refugees upon arrival, but most are often insufficient to help them reach long-term goals
- Compared to the general population, the psychosocial and economic needs of refugees are considered to be much higher

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Heavy Backpack




Sharing pain is the beginning of healing


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Culture

What is your definition of Culture?

- Refers to a group or community which shares common experiences that shape the way its members understand the world
- It includes groups that we are born into, such as race, national origin, gender, class, or religion
- Customs
- Beliefs
- Values



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- Culture Gives Context and Meaning
- It is a filter through which people process their experiences and events of their lives.
- It influences people's values, actions, and expectations of themselves.
- It impacts people's perceptions and expectations of others

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General information about the Middle Eastern culture

The Middle Eastern countries include but not limited to: Jordan, Qatar, Iraq, Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Oman.





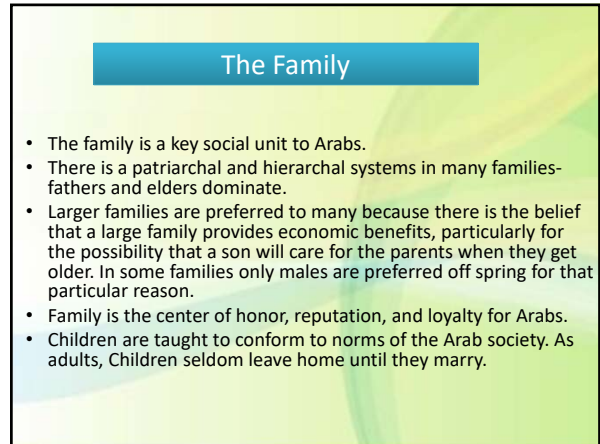
General information about the Middle Eastern cultures

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Every country has varied cultural practices and beliefs. There are various religions including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and other religions.

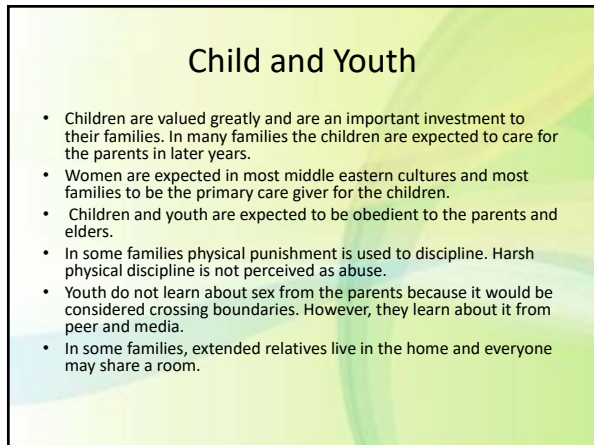
It is important to distinguish between culture and religion as they are different. Asking for clarification is the best way!
Strength of religious beliefs/practices and varying regional differences impact the behaviors of different families from the same country differently.

There are rural people and city people in different countries

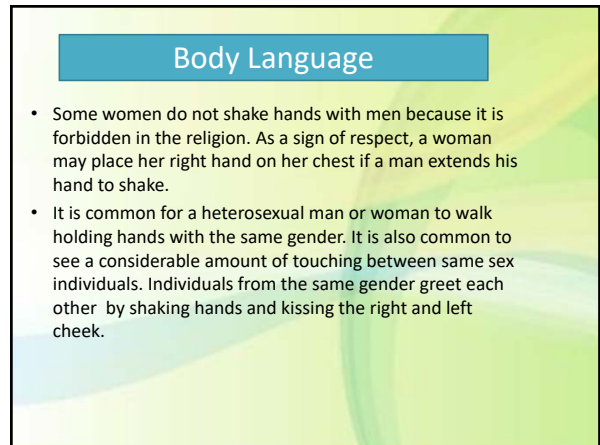
The Family

- The family is a key social unit to Arabs.
- There is a patriarchal and hierarchal systems in many families- fathers and elders dominate.
- Larger families are preferred to many because there is the belief that a large family provides economic benefits, particularly for the possibility that a son will care for the parents when they get older. In some families only males are preferred off spring for that particular reason.
- Family is the center of honor, reputation, and loyalty for Arabs.
- Children are taught to conform to norms of the Arab society. As adults, Children seldom leave home until they marry.



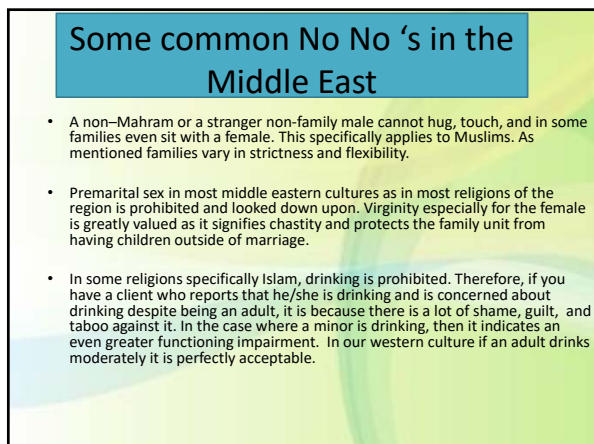
Child and Youth

- Children are valued greatly and are an important investment to their families. In many families the children are expected to care for the parents in later years.
- Women are expected in most middle eastern cultures and most families to be the primary care giver for the children.
- Children and youth are expected to be obedient to the parents and elders.
- In some families physical punishment is used to discipline. Harsh physical discipline is not perceived as abuse.
- Youth do not learn about sex from the parents because it would be considered crossing boundaries. However, they learn about it from peer and media.
- In some families, extended relatives live in the home and everyone may share a room.



Body Language

- Some women do not shake hands with men because it is forbidden in the religion. As a sign of respect, a woman may place her right hand on her chest if a man extends his hand to shake.
- It is common for a heterosexual man or woman to walk holding hands with the same gender. It is also common to see a considerable amount of touching between same sex individuals. Individuals from the same gender greet each other by shaking hands and kissing the right and left cheek.



Some common No No 's in the Middle East

- A non-Mahram or a stranger non-family male cannot hug, touch, and in some families even sit with a female. This specifically applies to Muslims. As mentioned families vary in strictness and flexibility.
- Premarital sex in most middle eastern cultures as in most religions of the region is prohibited and looked down upon. Virginity especially for the female is greatly valued as it signifies chastity and protects the family unit from having children outside of marriage.
- In some religions specifically Islam, drinking is prohibited. Therefore, if you have a client who reports that he/she is drinking and is concerned about drinking despite being an adult, it is because there is a lot of shame, guilt, and taboo against it. In the case where a minor is drinking, then it indicates an even greater functioning impairment. In our western culture if an adult drinks moderately it is perfectly acceptable.




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Activity

What is your perception of Refugees and Immigrants


- Iraqi man and woman
- Women with hijab
- Man with beard
- Syrian refugees
- Afghan men or women
- Refugee who uses food stamps
- Saudi woman with seven children
- Arabic men entering your plane or walking at night near your house

Challenges License to Freedom




- *Domestic violence- is considered taboo in the middle eastern community.
- *The only way to address DV is to go to elders or faith leaders that the family respects.
- *Language- Not being proficient in the English language is a barrier.


It's a male dominated culture




Challenges License to Freedom



- Shame and blame
- Transportation
- Lack of knowledge about the Justice system
- They are afraid of not being taken serious




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- Afraid that their kids will be taken away from them
- No privacy
- They depend on their husbands financially
- Immigration status

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Culture Matters



- Culture Matters when culture ignored.
- Families are at risk of not getting the support they need.
- Receiving assistance that is more harmful than helpful.

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Cultural Norms



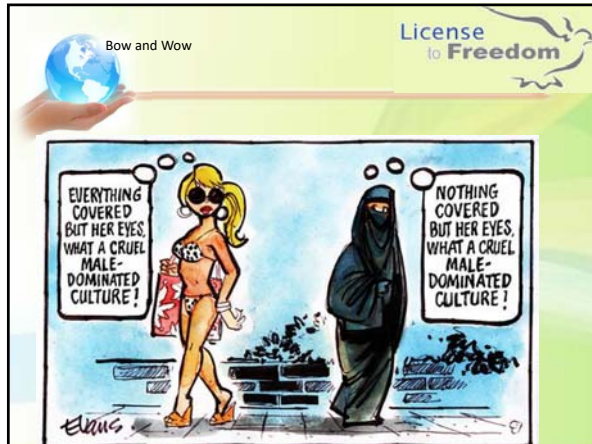
- **Cultural Dos**
 - Minimal eye contact
 - Respectful, courteous and polite
 - Use your right hand for shaking hands
 - When a client is a woman do your best to send a woman to handle the case
- **Cultural Don'ts**
 - Don't initiate shaking hands with opposite sex
 - Don't initiate any political conversations or religious conversations.
 - Don't use left hand to handing something as it is seen as being rude

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Western Perspective Vs Arab Perspective



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family- very important but not as central to the individual. • Honor and Shame- generally not as important. • Time- structure is valued and deadlines must be met. • Society- individual rights are highly regarded. • Religion- varies by individual and not typically discussed in polite conversation. • Youth and Beauty are praised • Education- Highly valued in many but not all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family- center of everything. • Honor- extremely important and is usually protected and defended. • Shame- Especially against a family is avoided. • Time- more flexible and less rigid. • Society- Collectivist/togetherness. • Religion- Central to all things. • Age and wisdom are honored. • Education- highly valued in many but not all families.
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License to Freedom Value Diversity

- *Create an environment in which people feel safe to express culturally based values, perceptions, and experiences.
- *Host social events at which music, food, & entertainment reflect cultures represented.
- *Hire staff and leaders who reflect the community's cultural diversity.
- *Partner with cultural organizations.

Cultural Competency License to Freedom

What is your definition of Culture Competency?

- Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that agency to work effectively in cross-cultural situations
- **Five essential elements:**
 - Valuing diversity
 - Having the capacity for cultural self-assessment
 - Being conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact
 - Having institutionalized culture knowledge
 - Having developed adaptations to service delivery reflecting an understanding of cultural diversity

License to Freedom Conclusion

Lets work together towards alleviating misconceptions and understand the refugees and immigrants and bring a social change at a community level.

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"If I had 60 minutes to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes defining it, and 5 minutes solving it." – Albert Einstein.

License to Freedom Questions

Thank you for your generous listening and participation

What did you learn and how will you share this information in your community