



# REFUGEE FAMILIES: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND PROVIDING SERVICES NEEDED

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**LIVE WELL**  
SAN DIEGO

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES



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## AT THE END OF THIS SESSION THE PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Define asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants
- Identify the refugee experiences and their challenges living in the US.
- Explore barriers to acculturation.
- Explore patterns of abuse and neglect while working with Middle Eastern refugees.
- Identify common misconceptions about child development in refugee children.
- Create tools to engage refugee parents and children.

# ASYLUM SEEKER



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- According to the Cambridge Dictionary, someone who leaves their own country, often for political reasons or because of war, and who travels to another country hoping that the government will protect them and allow them to live there.

# IMMIGRANT



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- Someone who takes up permanent residence in a country other than his or her original homeland (UNHCR)
- An immigrant is someone who has come into a foreign country in order to live there and with hopes of having a better life.
- Immigrants come voluntarily under various visas, example DV Lottery, Work Visas, Business/Trade Visas

# REFUGEE



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- People who are outside their country of nationality or habitual residence, and have a well founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. (UNHCR)
- Majority of refugees prefer to and do return home as soon as the conditions improve
- UNHCR encourages voluntary repatriation
- Agency provides transportation and a start-up package; cash grants, farm tools and seeds
- Some refugees cannot return home and are therefore resettled in other countries

# CAN YOU TELL THEIR STATUS?



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# REFUGEE JOURNEY TO THE US



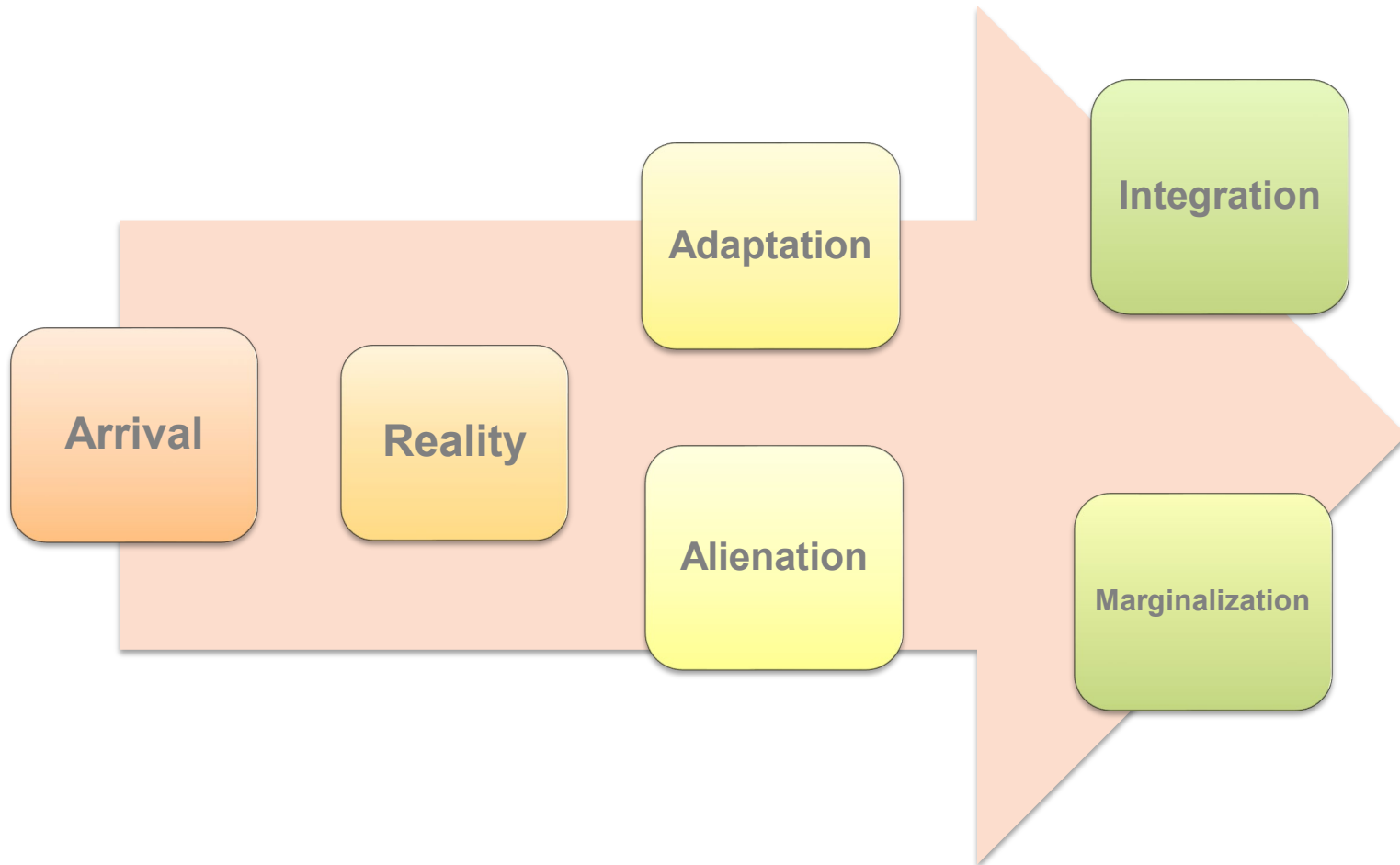
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- Forced to flee their home
  - Imprisonment, torture, extreme fear, loss of property & livelihood
- During flight
  - Separation from family members, harsh environmental conditions
- Camps
  - Unsanitary conditions, food & housing insecurity, lack of safety

# PHASE OF NEWCOMER ADJUSTMENT



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# BARRIERS TO ACCULTURATION



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- Decision to come to the US based on a “better life” for their children
- Generation gap as children tend to adapt faster
- Yearning to return home
- Gender roles and family dynamics change



# BARRIERS TO ACCULTURATION



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- History of negative perception of government.
- Body language (using their hands when they speak).
- Multiple issues to address, therefore feeling overwhelmed.
- Pride: not wanting to receive services or let go of their own cultural practices.
- Discrimination based on religion, accents, and volume of their voices.
- Body odors –due to their living conditions.

# REFUGEE CHILDREN



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- Poor Access to Education
  - A recent study shows that 800,000 children remain out of school in hosting countries.
    - Bullied and ridiculed
- Mental Health Challenges
  - Witnessed wars in their country of origin
  - Separated from their caregivers
  - Difficulty attending school in a new language
  - Experience social exclusion and discrimination

# DIAGNOSIS AND INJURIES



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# TREATING MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSIS



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- Many families do not seek counseling services for their children
  - Shame
  - Fear of judgment
  
- Adults seek counseling for themselves
  - In trouble with the law and CWS
  - Other motives....

# COMMON CHALLENGES FOR CLIENTS AND PROVIDERS



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- Lack of cultural competency
  - Language
  - Lack of understanding family dynamics
  - Stereotyping
- Generalizing



“We may feel that we're not accepted here, but in our parent's home we're also regarded as foreign. So we don't have a clear identity of who we are. This can be really troublesome for our mental health.”



# TREATMENT MODALITIES



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- Cognitive Behavioral Approaches
- Narrative Therapy
- Intergenerational Approaches
- Feminist Therapy



# DISCIPLINE



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- Slapping
- Hitting
- Burning
- Biting
- Pulling hair
- Hitting the head on the wall
- Punching and pinching
- Pulling ears
- Shaking babies



# SEXUAL ABUSE



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- Incest
- Untreated sexual abuse victims
- Shame and Guilt
- Early marriage
- CSEC

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE



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- In many countries domestic violence is not a criminal act
- Reporting causes fear of husband being deported – loss of head of household, fear of being ashamed by the “community”
- Male dominance at any age is common
- Changing family dynamics and high levels of stress contributing to increased domestic violence (both in Africa & US)
- Immigrant Power & Control Wheel
- Expression of emotion results in use of violent terms that may not necessarily mean what they meant.

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL ISOLATION



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- The sense of cultural isolation reinforce the power of the abuser
- Through migration, women become more dependent on their racial communities, families, employers, and husbands
- Studies have indicated that immigrant and refugee women experience high rates of domestic violence, between 30 percent and 50 percent
- As a result of these repeated trauma and abuse, women lose their sense of themselves and feel they do not deserve to be treated with love and respect.
- Men have reversal roles in the US.

***Domestic violence against women has been identified to be a higher risk for refugee women***

# MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CHILD DEVELOPMENT



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- Children are over diagnosed with autism and speech impairment.
  - Shy
  - Many languages
  - Avoiding eye contact
- Children are over diagnosed with separation anxiety.
  - They were raised by only one parent.
- Children and adults are over diagnosed with social anxiety.
  - Shy
  - Bullied
  - Cultural shock
  - Introverted

# FAMILY DYNAMICS



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- The husband is the head of the household.
- Opposing marriages to different religions may not be common.
- Marriage to cousins is acceptable.
- Older people and adults in the family are respected and honored. Intergenerational families are very common.
- Respect is very important. Respect for elders including a reference to anyone older as Aunt, Uncle or Cousin.

# CULTURAL SENSITIVITY WHILE INTERACTING WITH CLIENTS



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- Boundaries: understand, discuss, respect, and set
- Allegation of mistreating older adults and children can insult the family
- Recognize the abusive language and link it to the abusive behavior
- Explain the laws and the effect of child abuse and on future behaviors of their children
- Highlight their action of protection

# RESOURCES



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- ☐ UN Refugee Agency [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)
- ☐ International Organization of Migration [www.iom.org](http://www.iom.org)
- ☐ International Rescue Committee [www.theirc.org](http://www.theirc.org)
- ☐ International Domestic Violence Information in over 70 languages  
[www.hotpeachpages.net](http://www.hotpeachpages.net)
- ☐ Family Violence Prevention Fund [www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org)
- ☐ Newcomer Resources in San Diego and El Cajon [www.elcajonresources.org/](http://www.elcajonresources.org/)
- ☐ 2-1-1 San Diego [www.211sandiego.org](http://www.211sandiego.org)
- ☐ [County of San Diego Refugee Health Programs](#)
- ☐ *California Refugee Programs* [www.dss.cahwnet.gov/refugeeprogram](http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/refugeeprogram)
- ☐ International Research Foundation [www.irfd.org](http://www.irfd.org)
- ☐ Welcome Back Center <http://welcomebackcenter.org/>

# THANK YOU!



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Please reach out to us if you have any further questions.

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