

A Guide to Working with Young People who are Refugees



*Strategies for Providing
Individual Counselling and Group Work*

GUIDE TO WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE REFUGEES

**Written and Published by
Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc.**

Funded through the Victorian Department of Human Service's Innovative Health Services for Homeless Youth Program, a joint program of the Federal Department of Health and Family Services and the Victorian Department of Human Services.

First printed December 1996

Reprinted June 2000

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ISBN: 0 646 30171 3

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS PAGE

The Foundation would like to thank the many people who have been involved in this project, in particular:

- The young people who took part in the groups, for their enthusiasm and preparedness to share their experiences and take risks.
- The four schools who hosted the groups: Collingwood Secondary College, Elwood Secondary College, Maribyrnong Secondary College and Noble Park Language Centre and the teachers who provided support and co-ordination to ensure the success of the groups in schools.
- Staff from the VFST, David Corlett, David Fox, Ida Kaplan, Sue Liddelow, Monika Naslund, Susie Strehlow, and Maria Tucci who ran the six groups and reflected on their learning.
- Kate Eversteyn and Brett Steel who assisted with the camps.

Finally our appreciation to the Victorian Department of Human Services who provided the funding for this project through the Innovative Health Services for Homeless Youth.

INTRODUCTION

The hope for a future that yields a higher quality of life, justice and compassion for all people lies in the ground we lay for our children and young people to tread. This guide has been developed by the VFST as a contribution towards bringing such hopes and aspirations to fruition. Its goal is to assist workers in the field to understand the issues which confront young people who are survivors of torture and trauma and to provide a guide for assisting them to re-establish a life which they believe will be meaningful and worthwhile.

It is often said that the first casualty of war is truth, but perhaps the most tragic and enduring casualty lies in the shattering of childhood innocence and adolescence. In the madness of war and armed conflict, morality is sacrificed and, instead of laying the foundations upon which a young person's experience of hope and prosperity can be built, a culture of devastation, loss, grief and hopelessness is fostered.

In our work at the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture we have born witness to the graphic effects of human rights violations on the self esteem, confidence and sense of future for many young people who have sought refuge in Australia. Persecutory regimes use all means at their disposal to instil fear and suffering in communities, for the express purpose of maintaining control. Adults who represent a current threat are targeted for direct persecution. Children are used as a means of accentuating their suffering and are targeted for the purpose of eliminating future resistance. To achieve this, many young people have directly experienced torture and abuse, have witnessed the torture and killing of family and friends, or have lived in harsh, unsafe conditions often having been separated from parents for long periods of time. The effects of such experiences are frequently overlooked in young people, consequently they continue to suffer the effects of trauma long after the direct threat has been removed.

While the larger struggle is to work towards the eradication of any form of human rights violations, there are immediate consequences for survivors of such violations to which we can provide effective responses.

As workers in a position to assist young survivors of torture and trauma, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and powerless to help. Their suffering can seem insurmountable and the solutions often feel out of reach. However, this is not the case. In the first instance, young people themselves have demonstrated resourcefulness and resilience in their ability to survive and this provides the base upon which positive intervention strategies can be built. Additionally, the experience which workers develop in other health and community service areas remains relevant and can contribute to meaningful interventions and support. The challenge which confronts us all is to find the courage to try, to make the effort to understand and to build the bridges between ourselves and young survivors, which create options for a brighter future.

Paris Aristotle
Director

THE VICTORIAN FOUNDATION FOR SURVIVORS OF TORTURE INC.

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST) was established in 1987. The VFST provides psychological counselling and community support services to survivors of torture and trauma now residing in Victoria. The service focuses on the provision of assistance to people entering Australia via the refugee and humanitarian migration program. Since its inception, the VFST has developed a holistic approach to service provision, thereby ensuring that the psychological, physical and social needs of people receiving assistance are fully addressed.

The Service Principles upon which the VFST is based are:

- Services must respect cultural dimensions, and be sensitive to the client's struggle in the broader international, national, and local context.
- Services should be provided in a context where the therapeutic benefits are derived from understanding the relationship between the social, physical and psychological worlds of the client.
- The provision of services must be guided by the expressed needs of the client and the capacity to heal or to recover is recognised as being predominantly in their hands. The role of the VFST is to provide practical assistance and support through crisis intervention, therapeutic assistance and the facilitation of access to services required to meet the total needs of clients.

Services Offered by the VFST

Psychological Services:

These include stress management and relaxation techniques, individual psychotherapy, and child, adolescent and family therapy and group work programs.

Medical and Complementary Therapies Services:

The VFST has developed a network of health professionals including GP's, medical and surgical specialists, masseurs , homoeopaths and other complementary therapists.

Community and Social Work Services:

The provision of community and social support in areas such as housing, social security, language development and employment.

Community Education and Consultancy Services:

The VFST aims to create greater awareness and sensitivity in the community about the needs of survivors of torture. The VFST provides a library and information service, and runs training seminars for professionals in education and community health.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This document is designed to assist those working with young people who are refugees and have experienced trauma or torture. While some sections comment specifically on working within schools, the material is equally relevant to a range of settings. The material can be used by workers, for example, in supported accommodation, community centres, and recreational programs.

- The first section provides a framework to understand the impact of trauma and torture. For anyone who plans to use sections two or three as a guide to individual and group interventions, section one provides the basis upon which this can be done.
- The second section discusses key approaches to intervening with individuals and families.
- The third section provides an overview and guide to running groups with young refugees, based on three groups piloted by the Foundation.
- The final section gives a program outline to each of these groups.
- Within the appendices there are a number of useful resources including a detailed bibliography should you wish to read more extensively.
- Each section includes case examples and extracts from the annual report for Innovative Health Services for Homeless Youth program, and VFST case studies. This material is presented in italics.

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child defines three basic rights - the right to survival, the right to protection and the right to develop (1). The aim of this guide is to describe how to work with young refugees who are survivors of torture and refugee-related trauma to ensure the fulfilment of these rights.

It is estimated that one and a half million children have been killed in wars in the last decade and four million have been physically disabled (2). “Five million children are in refugee camps because of war, a further twelve million have lost their homes. Countless others have been captured and forced to become slaves and porters: In over thirty countries, children as young as nine years of age have been used as soldiers.” (p.329) In the same period, ten million children are estimated to have suffered psychological trauma as a result of civil and international wars and there is now increasing recognition of the need to deal with psychological effects as well as provide for physical survival and education.

UNICEF and the international community have taken steps in the last decade to increase awareness of the developmental and emotional effects of war related events. Awareness can not be taken for granted because there is a myth that children have an ability to forget and “spring back undamaged from their worst experiences” (3, p.312).

There are many causes of war related trauma - removal of physical and emotional safety, displacement, separation from family, physical injury, abuse, exploitation, torture, violence, rape, being forced to witness or participate in killing and deprivation of education, nutrition and the opportunity to play. Most refugee young people have spent time in refugee camps. Unaccompanied minors are frequently not seen as a high priority for resettlement and therefore often spend many years languishing in camps. The young people growing up in refugee camps continue to be denied secure, safe accommodation, safety from abuse, education and health care.

Even where children have not been directly targeted for abuse or have not witnessed assaults and deaths of family members, they are exposed



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to the disruption of family and community. With internal conflict, families are divided by ethnic alliances, if not outrightly betrayed by neighbours and relatives. Conditions in refugee camps often render adults incapable of adequately providing food, shelter and protection.

The purpose of this guide is to promote an understanding of the causes and effects of trauma associated with war, state sanctioned violence and the refugee experience, so that recovery and restoration is achieved for its survivors and the communities they are part of.

The focus is on the young refugee, aged between 12 and 25. The age range is wide including those that might be regarded as young adults. As a result of war, violence and protracted periods in refugee camps, progression through the developmental stages of childhood and adolescence is usually delayed. Young refugees aged 20 to 25 therefore still face the developmental tasks of adolescence. Interventions suitable for working with children under the age of 12 will not be covered in Section 2 although virtually all the principles described will apply to working with this younger age group. References to children will be made in this section, which describes the psychological and social impact of trauma, because many of the young refugees entering Australia have been traumatised as young children.

The importance of working with the young is underscored by research which shows the long-term effects on the psychological and physical health of survivors of trauma (4,5), including second generation effects (6,7,8). Tragically, one of the reasons the young are targeted is because perpetrators also recognise the long-lasting damaging effects on a community of destroying its younger members.

1.2 THE FRAMEWORK

The framework for understanding the effects of trauma and how to work with young refugees is a systemic and holistic one.

War and state sanctioned violence are planned, systematic ways of destroying, not just individuals and families, but whole communities and races, who represent a threat to the government or group seeking control. Over the last few years, the term 'ethnic cleansing' has become a familiar one. Whereas some people protest its use as a euphemism for murder, it indeed captures the purpose of mass killing and displacement of people - as a form of control to be perpetuated over generations.

The word 'torture' is usually associated with the detention and brutal abuse of the individual. However, torture is also a strategy used by governments to destroy communities. "The phenomenon of torture often follows a predictable chain of events: a violent raid on a house or meeting-place by members of the security forces, illegal arrests, lengthy incommunicado detention without charge or trial. Even without the unique brutality of the torture that so often follows, these events in themselves are very traumatic for the individual, family and community concerned" (9). Consequently, the trauma created as a result of torture and other forms of human rights violations, is a powerful tool for assisting oppressive regimes to maintain influence, both over the individual and community, long after the violence has taken place.

Understanding the impact of trauma on a refugee of any age is therefore limited unless one views the individual as part of a family and community system and understands the strategies which oppressive governments rely upon.

The reaction to trauma and its causes can be conceptualised in different ways. In this guide, the core causal components of the trauma reaction are analysed in terms of the main social and psychological experiences which impact on the individual and family to destroy the community of which they are part. This approach leads to an understanding of the multiple ways in which the trauma reaction is manifested and is a basis for understanding recovery.



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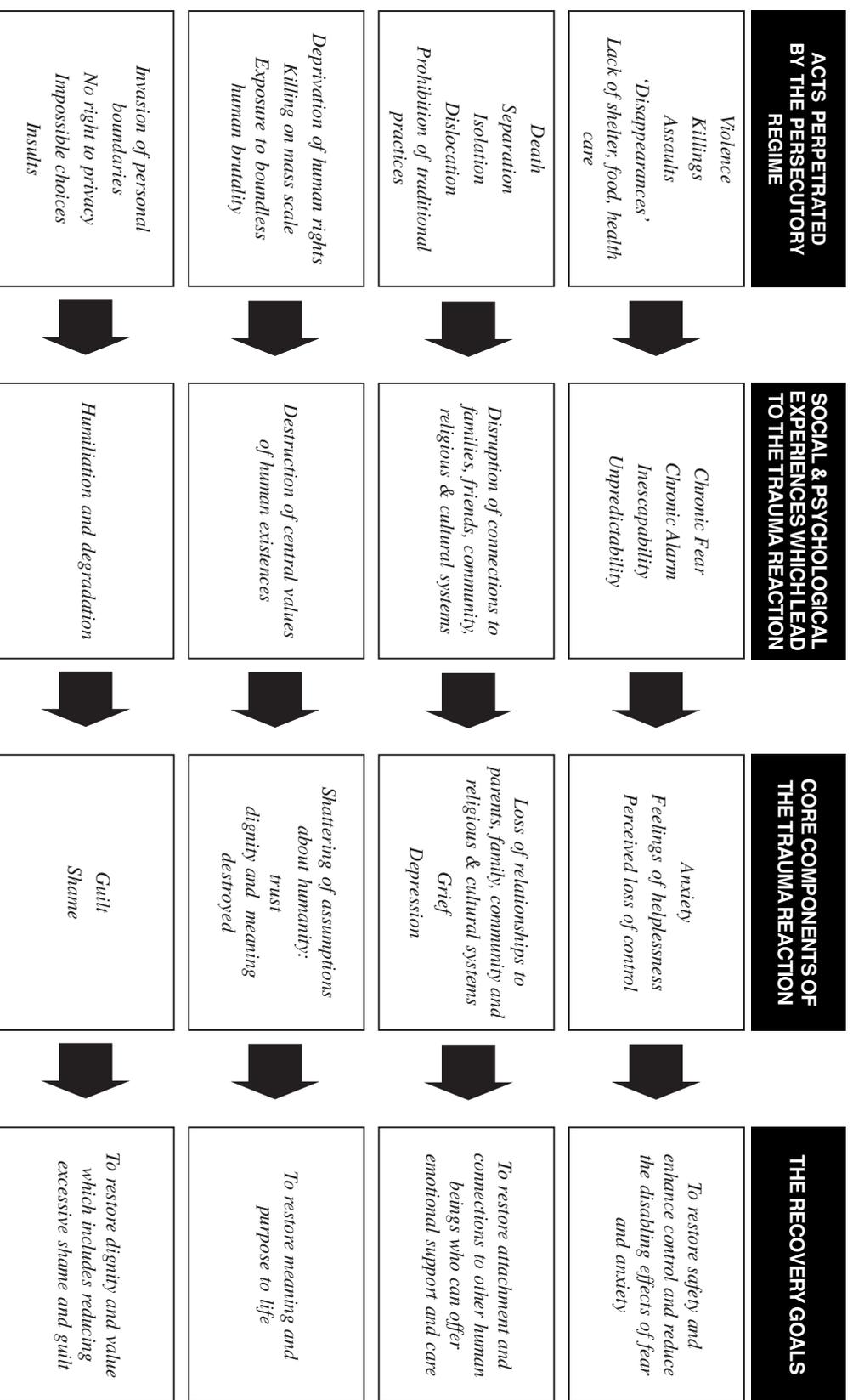


Figure 1

Causes of the Trauma Reaction, its Core Components and Recovery Goals

1.2.1 ACTS PERPETRATED BY THE PERSECUTORY REGIME AND THEIR SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Figure 1, column one, indicates that there are four key ways that persecutory regimes destroy individuals, families and communities. The following two pages discuss these in some detail.

1. The first way in which the breakdown of communities and political opposition is achieved, is by **creating a state of terror and chronic alarm**. Individuals are assaulted in ways which lead to the permeation of an individual's torment through the family and community as a whole. The assault on the young is an especially powerful way of spreading fear and debilitating families. Helplessness to change the situation is maximised. The elements of inescapability and unpredictability combine to instil and maintain a state of extreme fear.

Uncertainty about safety maintains fear at extreme levels. Uncertainty is manipulated to the extreme in torture, which is not spared on the young. "Torture is fear ... it's the not knowing, the uncertainty of menace, that drives you to panic. Not just what they do to you, but what they may do to you next, what they have the power to do to you, at any moment, at every moment ... and if the world keeps silent afterward, torture is not only victorious but permanent, eternal, continuous" (10, p.300). Paralleling the victim's necessary submission to his or her torturer, a community's safety is made dependent upon submission to the oppressor.

2. The second key trauma-inducing element is **the systematic disruption of basic and core attachments to families, friends, religious and cultural systems**.

This creates a deep sense of loss designed to shatter the sense of self, continuity and identity. There are various ways in which this is achieved - through killing, dislocation and prohibition of traditional practices. In the community a climate of suspicion and mistrust is fostered to break



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down social cohesion and foster extreme vulnerability. Deprivation of basic human rights such as the right to work, education and health further disrupt a sense of belonging. As a result of such losses, people can become passive, depressed and withdrawn.

Lasting feelings of condemnation to isolation can continue for years. Under conditions of torture, indefinite isolation from family is utilised as a major threat. The torturer's famous boast is that, "No-one will ever know, no-one will ever hear you, no-one will ever find out" (10, p.300). Oppressive regimes also disrupt continuity in the community by banning commemoration ceremonies. Where this ban, implicit or explicit, is breached, further punishment is implemented.

3. The third cause of enduring trauma is **the destruction of central values of human existence**. The refugee, of whatever age, who has experienced imprisonment, torture, the witnessing of death and destruction, has born witness to the very darkest side of human nature. As Simpson (11, p.153) poignantly wrote of the torture victim, he or she "confronts the world's loneliness, mercilessness, and nothingness." Trust, dignity and the value of life itself are questioned by those who have been victims of organised violence. Shattering previous assumptions of the self and the world lead the victim to more readily accept a submissive position in relation to an oppressor. Even death can lose its meaning. The survivor is a witness to "absurd death", the ultimate act of destruction - to see people die as if they were worth nothing.

4. The fourth main cause of trauma is **the creation of shame** following brutal acts such as rape. Physical boundaries are invaded, the right to privacy is deliberately violated, family members are cursed, degraded and violated. These acts taint the individual as worthless and bad and even inhuman. Guilt is induced by confronting the individual with impossible choices such as choosing who should die or who should be left behind.

Both guilt and shame weaken the individual's capacity to fight back long after the act of assault. Even though it may have been impossible to have acted differently, many survivors retain the belief that they could have done something to help others and themselves. This is not necessarily a tangible action but a stand against cruelty. As Lifton points out, the sense of "failed enactment" or helplessness becomes a source of inadequacy, self-blame and maintains passivity (12).

Each of these causes brings about effects including symptoms and behaviours which perpetuate the impact of traumatic events. They are detailed in the following sections.



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1.3 THE TRAUMA REACTION IN YOUNG REFUGEES

The impact of war and human rights violations on a young survivor depends on the nature and extent of the trauma, the age of the child and on the quality of the care and support available. Arrival in a safe country represents the end of brutal circumstances, but restoration of security and safety which are essential to recovery, cannot be assumed.

There have been many myths which have prevented help being available to young people, such as the belief that they are too young to recognise what is going on around them, that they will forget about the experience, that the effects are short-lived and that they are naturally resilient. The consequences of trauma are, in fact, far reaching. They affect all domains of the young person's life - their feelings, their capacity to form relationships, their ability to learn, their future moral development and adjustment to life as adults.

The psychological effects of trauma have been written about since World War I, but it is only since the Vietnam war that a great deal of attention has been devoted to understanding the impact of trauma. This interest reflected the fact that many Vietnam veterans were presenting with severe psychological difficulties many years after the war. Due to the initiatives of the World Health Organisation and Amnesty International, the effects of torture also began to receive much needed attention in the late 1970's and publications began to appear documenting both the physical and psychological impact of torture. As evidence accumulated about the psychological effects of trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder became included as a diagnostic category in the psychiatric classification system (13). Basically, post-traumatic stress disorder is the name given to a number of symptoms which have come to be recognised as often following exposure to horrific, usually life-threatening events. The list of symptoms is presented in Appendix 1. Most of the signs and symptoms listed are caused by the intense levels of anxiety which are associated with trauma.

But the psychological effects are far more extensive than those captured by post-traumatic stress disorder. Horrific events which instil fear and overwhelming helplessness, do not occur in isolation from extensive

loss of loved ones, and loss which occurs under violent circumstances is known to lead to depression and prolonged grieving. Furthermore, the circumstances of events is such that fundamental aspects of human existence which are central to survival and at least some quality of life are shattered. **The most basic unit of human civilisation - trust - is often destroyed** (14). Identity, religious and cultural values, political ideologies can also undergo enormous change. Guilt and shame which can persist for years are part of the legacy of trauma.

The traumatic reactions arising from various social and psychological experiences are illustrated in Figure 1. These four core components of trauma are explained below.

1.3.1 ANXIETY, HELPLESSNESS AND LOSS OF CONTROL

Intense anxiety, fear and sheer terror can persist for a long time after a traumatic event or events. The anxiety is the result of having been exposed to life-threatening situations or intolerable danger, where the victim has been helpless to act.

There are many ways in which anxiety manifests itself. They are important to recognise because where they are persistent, a referral for specialist counselling is indicated. Where the occurrence of anxiety is less frequent and when the intensity of the anxiety interferes less with daily functioning, specialist counselling is not so critical, Methods to assist a young person experiencing low or mild levels of anxiety, resulting from war and refugee related trauma are suggested in Section 2 of this guide.

The experience of trauma for young refugees is rarely a single horrific event but a number of events occurring in a climate of continual threat.

One 14 year old girl had witnessed her brother being executed by the military for imputed anti-government activities. The family were then dispossessed of their home and all belongings. They fled to a neighbouring country where they subsisted for years by begging. This young girl and her siblings had received no education or health care for five years before arrival in Australia.



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SUMMARY OF EFFECTS ASSOCIATED WITH ANXIETY

- **Intrusive and recurrent distressing recollections of the traumatic event**
 - * recurrent memories, images and nightmares of trauma
- **Impairment in ability to think, concentrate and remember**
- **Conditioned fear response to reminders, places, things and people's behaviour, leading to**
 - * avoiding fearful situations
 - * restriction of imaginative play
 - * emotional withdrawal
- **Generalised fear not directly related to trauma**
 - * fear of strangers
 - * fear of being alone
 - * fear of dark places
- **Hypervigilance or watchfulness**
 - * "being on guard for danger"
- **Startle responses**
 - * reacting with startle to sudden changes in environment such as noise
- **Capacity to manage tension and frustration is reduced**
 - * reduced control over impulsive behaviour
- **Emotional numbing**
 - * denial, detachment, reduced interest in activities and people
- **Re-enactments of traumatic events in play**
- **Psychosomatic complaints eg headaches**
- **Regressive behaviour eg tantrums**

Re-experiencing the traumatic event is a characteristic feature of the trauma reaction. The re-experiencing of the event most often occurs at night in the form of nightmares and during the day in the form of flashbacks and intrusive memories. The following example applies to young people of any age.

Almir was afraid to close his eyes. Every time he did, the scene replayed itself upon the screen of his mind's eye; his mother and sister, Amina, are raped by soldiers while he stands by, helplessly. During the day, he tried desperately not to blink, for even a flash of darkness would bear the nightmare imprint. At night while others slept, he stared out into the darkness until exhaustion pulled him into uneasy slumber.

(2, p.327)

Re-experiencing the event threatens to overwhelm a young person with anxiety and as a result he or she often copes by “shutting down”. This occurs in several ways - through the unconscious mechanisms of denial and numbing and through restricting the amount of information from the outside world. Detachment from people and things also serves to reduce the intensity of emotions. “Shutting down” manifests as withdrawal from social participation, avoiding stimulation, looking blank and limited imaginative activity. These mechanisms are a way for the mind to cope with intense levels of fear.

Under extremely traumatic situations such as being raped or having a gun put to their head, some young people as well as adults “dissociate”. This term refers to escaping the external reality to an internal fantasy. For example, a child in a dangerous situation, such as being searched for by the military, may imagine themselves as “shrunk to an imperceivable dot” (15). With this fantasy the child can feel that they cannot be found. This way of coping can re-emerge when reminders of the trauma re-evoked frightening memories. To an observer, the young person will appear to be “somewhere else” or they may re-enact their behaviour at the time of the trauma by, for example, diving for cover. **It is quite typical for periods of intense anxiety to alternate with periods of withdrawal and emotional numbing.**

Reminders of the traumatic event act as triggers to cause extreme anxiety and fear long after the trauma. Stimuli in the environment and everyday situations commonly act as reminders of the traumatic incident, re-evoking fear. Some stimuli have a fairly obvious connection with traumatic events. For example, the sight of a policeman can remind



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Other stimuli can only be identified as triggers for anxiety once details of the personal history are known. Young male adolescents who have been tortured with cigarette burns report memories of their torture being triggered by certain smells. Job interview situations commonly re-evoked traumatic memories of interrogations. Authoritarian and threatening behaviour of any kind can act as powerful triggers for anxiety.

A young boy attending a medical clinic had an anxiety attack on seeing the doctor. The doctor's white coat reminded him of the people who came to remove dead bodies during the war.

An adolescent, after several years in Australia, decided to experience for the first time a fireworks display. As soon as sounds of exploding fireworks started, she began having a panic attack, feelings of nausea and anxiety overcame her. She understood the connection between the sound of the fireworks and the sound of gunfire, but was devastated that seven years later, she still had such a strong reaction.

When a young person experiences intense anxiety, it is common that **childhood fears re-emerge with greater intensity than ever before**. Examples of such fears include a fear of strangers, fear of being alone, fear of the dark, and fear of animals.

When thirteen year old Elsed arrived to live with her brother and sister, she displayed fears consistent with being a young child. She was unable to sleep alone at night, to go anywhere outside of the house alone, or stay inside the house alone. Her fear paralysed her, and her siblings were not prepared for the level of dependency her fears created on them.

With the pressure of anxiety and tension which the young person cannot manage, he or she may become highly irritable, be unable to tolerate frustration of any kind and thereby show reduced control over impulsive behaviour and aggressive behaviour.

Symptoms of **increased arousal** accompany high levels of anxiety. That is, the threshold for reacting to stimuli is lower than usual and the person is jumpy and nervous. The other signs are **inability to concentrate, hypervigilance (watching out for danger) and an exaggerated startle response**. Teachers commonly observe students' startle

responses to loud noises, whereby they may hide under tables when hearing sirens. Some children do not experience anxiety and the fear or sense of alarm is outside their awareness. Nevertheless the unconscious fear can affect the body and the fear is expressed as **psychosomatic symptoms** such as stomach aches and headaches.

1.3.2 LOSS OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

The connection with others and the world is usually dramatically altered as a result of trauma. Loss of others and/or prolonged isolation and separation from important figures such as parents or other important caregivers are the fundamental causes.

SUMMARY OF EFFECTS CAUSED BY LOSS OF RELATIONSHIPS

- **Grief**
 - * numbness, denial
 - * pining, yearning
 - * preoccupation with lost person
 - * anxiety
 - * emptiness, apathy, despair
- **Attachment behaviour in relationships altered**
 - * increased dependency, clinging behaviour
 - * fierce self-sufficiency
 - * compulsive care-giving
 - * guardedness, suspiciousness
- **Depression**
 - * pessimism
 - * loss of interest
 - * sleep disturbance
 - * appetite disturbance
 - * poor concentration
 - * self degradation
 - * self blame
 - * hopelessness
 - * suicidal thoughts and plans



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The age of a child at the time of loss greatly influences the effects of loss. “In general, younger children seem to suffer the most adverse effects, while older children (especially those who had a previous history of family warmth and affection) often possess internal resources which help them better cope with the stress of family separation” (16, p.153).

Prolonged separation from parents at a young age interferes with the future development of relationships. A fundamental internal sense of security is destroyed unless a new relationship is fostered with a protective adult. Without such a new relationship, the child is at high risk of serious difficulties throughout life.

The Grief Reaction

Grief is the normal reaction to loss. The length of the grieving process depends on a number of factors:

- whether the death is anticipated or not
- the degree of violence associated with the death
- the availability of community support
- the quality of the relationship with surviving family members or caregivers
- the extent of other associated losses.

The grieving process can continue, sometimes for years, and not necessarily with resolution. In Western psychology, grief is understood to occur in stages which are described below. It is not known to what extent the responses characterising these stages are universal. Bowlby (17), one of the best known contributors to this field, believes that whereas customs and mourning rituals vary enormously, the emotional response is not culture specific.

In the **first phase** numbness and denial are usual. There can be partial disbelief that the loss has occurred, denial of feelings and an avoidance of reminders. Denial can alternate with anger and anxiety.

The **second stage** is characterised by yearning or intense longing for the lost person. Pangs of grief, pining, crying, preoccupation with the

lost person, believing the person is close and hallucinations are all part of this phase. It has also been described as the protest stage. The grieving person experiences an alarm reaction, and it includes anxiety, restlessness and physiological complaints. It is essentially a response to the threat of loss of safety.

The **third stage** is one of disorganisation and despair. Emptiness, apathy and depression predominate. Anger and guilt also occur. Sometimes traits of the deceased are adopted or another person is treated as a substitute for the dead person.

In the **final phase** acceptance and resolution occur. There is an attempt to make sense of the loss, to fit it into a new life. The view of the world is changed and new roles are adopted. This stage is often not reached after extensive loss.

Impact on Relationships

There are profound consequences for the capacity to form new relationships when grief is unresolved. The following patterns of attachment behaviour can develop at any time of life after loss.

Attachment behaviour refers to the bonding between a significant adult and their child. It is the basis for the development of trust in other people and affects the ability to form intimate relationships.

In **anxious attachment**, the individual is constantly fearful of losing attachment figures. This can manifest as clinging behaviour and jealousy. When these behaviours are extreme, they disrupt relationships and perpetuate loss. Anger is harboured when the attachment figure is unavailable. This anger is often not expressed for fear of rejection.

Compulsive self reliance is another reaction to unresolved grief. Such individuals have lost hope of finding an adequate attachment and avoid close relationships. Such independence, when developed early in life, can interfere with the capacity to form mature relationships later in life. It can easily be misunderstood as a healthy reaction because the young person appears self sufficient.



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In **compulsive care giving** personal needs are denied to fulfil others. Again, this can appear as a healthy reaction because the young person appears so helpful and accommodating but this is at the expense of their own needs being met. It is also a form of relating which can easily be taken advantage of by others. In its extreme form, relationships are sustained by fostering gratitude.

Depression

Depression is part of the grief reaction and persists when grief is unresolved. In the absence of loss of close family figures, depression will still occur in response to other profound losses. Because refugee youth have faced losses of many kinds - their friends, their homes and place of safety, their homeland and part of themselves, they are at risk of developing ongoing depression. The features of depression in children and adolescents are very similar to that of adult depression. The characteristics are:

- pessimistic mood
- loss of interest in things and activities which previously would have been pleasurable
- sleep disturbances - sleeping too much or sleeping too little, difficulty falling asleep
- appetite disturbance - eating too much or eating too little
- poor concentration
- difficulty making decisions
- feelings of worthlessness and expressions of self degradation
- feelings of hopelessness
- suicidal thoughts, plans or actions.

The young person may also be withdrawn or irritable and aggressive. Feelings of hopelessness and sadness are not usually expressed directly and the depression can be masked by misbehaviour, poor learning ability, drug and alcohol abuse and promiscuity.

Adolescents who show many symptoms of depression require a referral to an agency which can provide ongoing support and counselling.

Ali, a 13 year old boy from the Middle East, slept for large periods of the day. He did not eat, he was not interested in social activities, in school or other day to day activities. He had no or very low motivation. He cried a lot and he showed great anxiety when he had to separate from his mother. The teacher noticed how his moods changed dramatically from quiet to restless and expected behavioural problems to emerge. Ali who was depressed at home was placing a strain on the family too.

1.3.3 SHATTERING OF ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT HUMAN EXISTENCE

The effect of trauma is also known to dramatically change at an existential level, how a person sees themselves, other people and the world at large. For the young especially, notions of good and bad, trust in others and the future can be irrevocably changed, affecting fundamental values about self worth and life itself.



SUMMARY OF SHATTERED CORE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT HUMAN EXISTENCE

- **Loss of meaning and purpose**
- **Capacity to trust damaged, sense of betrayal intense**
- **Future outlook changed**
- **Adolescents alert to issue of human accountability**
- **Very sensitive to injustice**
- **Moral concepts affected. Behaviour is either overly regulated by considerations of what is good or bad or alternatively amoral**
- **Loss in faith of adult's ability to protect**
- **Loss of continuity of the self**

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Loss of Safety

One of the most fundamental changes is the destruction of the belief that the home or community is a safe place. “The essence of psychological trauma is the loss of faith that there is order and continuity in life. Trauma occurs when one loses the sense of having a safe place to retreat within or outside oneself to deal with frightening emotions or experiences” (18, p.31). Closely associated with the loss of safety is the loss of future. It is typical for adolescents, years after a trauma to express thoughts such as “I live one day at a time” and “you cannot count on the future”.

Loss of Trust

Trust and security are closely intertwined. Loss of safety also means a loss of trust in others to provide protection. For adolescents who have been victims of and witnesses to civil war, the pain of recognition that people have been at war with others who were previously friends and neighbours is especially difficult. Once the world and its adults are perceived as untrustworthy, the maintenance of specific fears such as a sensitivity to reminders of the original trauma or traumas is far more likely and more general fears begin to dominate the person’s life.

Changed Notions of Good and Bad

Notions of good and bad are altered with the exposure to violent trauma and there is evidence that moral development is truncated (19). Field’s studies of Northern Ireland, Lebanon, the West Bank and South Africa found that children felt helpless, felt that violence was inescapable and that as a result their moral development was fixed at the vendetta level of retributive justice (20). This refers to their belief that revenge was the best way to obtain justice.

Exposure to violence at a young age can also lead to identification with the aggressor as a way of countering the helplessness associated with being a victim. This is useful in the short term but can cause the child to be aggressive, antisocial and violent in later years. It is painful to recognise that young people including children have been detained and

tortured, but it is known that this is the case in many countries. As Simpson (21) points out, it is some of these young people who are prone to act in antisocial ways because of their inability to control their feelings and behaviour. This is the long term result of the violations committed against them.

The adolescent is especially susceptible to adopting a political ideology to comprehend the meaning of violent trauma. In some cases this produces further moral development and a social conscience. In some settings it is fertile ground for the development of extremist activity.

Impact on Identity

Cultural dislocation attendant to trauma also affects the development of the self and the sense of place in the world. One's system of meanings and values is radically overturned with a new language and a new cultural system.

Identity formation involves modelling oneself on others - parents, teachers and peers and integrating their values. For young people who have undergone the abrupt changes of dislocation, have lost family members and have learnt to distrust the adult world, the task of achieving a sense of knowing who they are is a difficult one. Adolescents are open to change, but the conflict between old and new, heightened by intergenerational conflict, can produce various reactions.

Two adolescent brothers who were the only surviving family members from the war were reunited with relations in Australia. Both witnessed the killing of their mother and sister. After six months in Australia, the brothers had a major breakdown in their relationship. One brother became entirely committed to a religious life and the ways of his culture, and critical of the Australian way of life. His brother, on the other hand, revelled in the popular culture of fashion, friends, music and language.

As Eisenbruch (22) points out, some young people idealise the values of the lost culture and cling to it, others idealise the host society and readily discard the past. In adolescence this can lead to the development of a firm identity or identity confusion.



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The struggle for identity is particularly complicated if the young person is also suffering from a high level of post-traumatic anxiety. In such cases, there is no confidence in searching within oneself to find answers and the feeling of lacking in coherence is intensified. Some adolescents cope by adopting a fake self who pretends to cope. This may even extend to feelings of grandiosity.

1.3.4 GUILT AND SHAME

Guilt and shame are common consequences for the survivors of torture and trauma, and guilt is known to be associated with the maintenance of post traumatic anxiety. **Even when nothing could have been done to change a situation, adolescents (and children) imagine that they should have been able to do something. This is preferable to facing sheer helplessness.**

SUMMARY OF EFFECTS OF GUILT AND SHAME

- Preoccupation with feelings of having failed to do something more to avert violence
- Use of fantasy to exact revenge and repair damage done during traumatic event
- Self-destructive behaviour
- Avoidance of others due to shame
- Experience of pleasure inhibited

a young person of the time their home was raided by military officers. It has been found that even school age children report “feeling bad” for a number of things: for being unable to provide help for others, for being safe when others were harmed, and for believing their activities endangered others (23).

Young people do express self-blame, self-criticism and self-degradation but it is usually difficult to know the source of these feelings. **Adolescents, like adults, need to alleviate guilt. Often this occurs through fantasy.** Children frequently re-enact trauma in their play and art. By imagining different endings where they are able to destroy the perpetrator of violence they can feel they have done something. Adolescents cannot use play in this way but they also entertain revenge fantasies as a way of doing something toward reparation. The use of revenge fantasies is helpful to the traumatised adolescent in reducing both helplessness and guilt. Such fantasies should only be a matter of concern when other behaviours such as aggressive behaviour indicate the need for further attention.

Some adolescents who are plagued with intense levels of guilt resort to **self-destructive behaviours** to expiate guilt. Self-destruction of this kind, appears highly irrational to an observer, but sometimes self-punishment is the only source of relief for the adolescent. It is not unusual for young people to have been forced into situations where whatever they would have done, would have been wrong.

Two sisters watched as their youngest sister tried to intervene when soldiers killed their father. The youngest sister received blows to the head with a rifle butt and as a result has remained permanently brain damaged. The older sisters do everything they can to help the younger one but the feeling that they can never do enough persists.

Shame shows itself as feelings of unworthiness, anxiety about self disclosure and embarrassment. It is also a response to feelings of inner weakness.

Young people separated from their families experience guilt for having left family members behind. One study looked at the adjustment of Vietnamese minors living in France by comparing minors living in French foster families with 15 minors living in institutions and 13 minors who settled in France with their own families. The investigators reported that the minors in foster homes experienced the most guilt and depression (24). Knowledge of foster placements highlights the plight



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of unaccompanied children or children who come from families which have broken down and led to homelessness. The allegiance to the family of origin is expected to be strong despite separation or breakdown and the ensuing guilt and grief need to be accommodated.

To control a sense of shame, contact with peers is often avoided.

The adolescent does not want to be seen because they have the feeling that others can “see through them”. This is the result of having had their personal boundaries invaded. Shame can also lead to aggression, whereby aggression towards others can disguise feelings of aggression towards oneself. Defiance is also a typical defence against shame.

Shame is the result of humiliation and the effects can be difficult to detect. Girls and young women who have been raped usually are plagued by feelings of guilt and shame. Markovitz cited in Ressler et al (24) worked with Vietnamese girls and adolescents who were raped on boats, during their flight from Vietnam. She described many of them as having suicidal thoughts (some of whom attempted suicide) and a strong sense of shame about having brought dishonour to their families.

Reports from Bosnia, indicate that girls and women who were raped suffered shame and disgust of their bodies. The degree of violation was horrendous. The majority were raped by more than one person and on several occasions. Humiliating treatment, including degrading comments about their cultural group, was the norm. Many of these young women, also experienced or witnessed sexual torture, involving the insertion of objects into body openings (25).

One of the most profound effects of guilt is that it can inhibit the experience of pleasure of any kind. This is another form of self-punishment to deal with painful feelings.

1.4 IMPACT OF TORTURE AND TRAUMA ON THE FAMILY

Describing in detail the impact of torture and trauma on families and communities is beyond the scope of this guide. However some understanding of the way families and communities are affected by trauma is important, because it is the degree of integrity of these systems which largely influence the recovery of its members.

SUMMARY OF IMPACT OF TORTURE AND TRAUMA ON THE FAMILY

- 1. Roles within the family and responsibilities are often dramatically altered.**
- 2. Traumatized parents often have their capacity for emotionally supporting and protecting children reduced.**
- 3. Extreme disturbances in parents such as violence become new traumas for young people.**
- 4. Financial difficulties and generational conflict produce extra burdens on all family members.**
- 5. Traumatization for the family continues with bad news from country of origin. People from the same country of origin can be perceived as a threat.**
- 6. Dislocation from culture and tradition and the language barriers add enormous pressure.**
- 7. Children are often taught not to trust anyone.**
- 8. Guilt associated with leaving family behind disrupts emotional recovery for all family members.**



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Often several members of a family have been victims of, or witnesses to, torture and trauma. The trauma experiences of the family changes the family system and quality of care giving, profoundly affecting the development of the young person and their capacity to deal with trauma.

It is also critical to recognise that many young refugees in Australia are unaccompanied. Some have been separated from their parents involuntarily due to the death or illness of those parents, or they have become lost. Other separations are voluntary, where the parent has entrusted the child in the care of another adult, or given up their parental rights, or consented to the child living apart. A significant number of young clients at the VFST (25%) have “no fixed address” as a result of family breakdown.

“There seemed to be two main contributing factors to this breakdown. Firstly, the issue of already fragile communication between family members was broken down completely. Due to the impact of torture and trauma experience on either one or more members of a household, the existing structures seemed unable to support individual members in need of additional support as a result of unresolved trauma. Certainly in the case of family members being reunited after a long period of separation, the reality of living together proved to be very different to the imagined or fantasised expectation. In the majority of these situations, it was the young person who left the household. Secondly, lack of privacy and personal space for household members meant there was little opportunity to develop identity and independence” (26).

The impact of torture and trauma interacts with the effects of settlement to bring about many changes in the family system.

1. Roles within the family are commonly drastically altered. For example, the father may no longer be the bread-winner. Patterns of responsibility shift. Children may carry the burden of communicating with institutions and service providers in the new country. They may also carry primary responsibility for caring for younger children and their parents.

2. Parents may lose their protective and nurturing roles due to current dysfunctioning and due to parents’ reduced capacity for intimacy. Parents who are traumatised may become aggressive, perpetrating a lack of safety. They may also become more authoritarian and restrictive (27). Surviving children may be neglected or over-protected particularly when parents are grieving over children who have died.

3. Extreme disturbances in family members in the form of suicidal behaviour and psychotic breakdown constitute new traumatic situations for the family. Violence can be a major problem. Anger toward perpetrators cannot be expressed. As a result, family members can be subjected to outbursts of violence and aggression by a person within the family in response to conflict and frustration.

4. Loss of employment, financial and social status add enormous burdens. Not only is there a struggle to provide material needs but the self esteem of parents suffers enormously with the loss of their previous role and family position.

5. The exposure to new values can produce generational conflict. Parents and children usually adapt to the new culture at different rates and to different extents.

6. In the majority of cases, refugees arriving in Australia were forced to leave their family members behind in what were often perilous conditions. Consequently, parents face renewed traumatisation when serious threats persist such as family members exposed to danger in the country of origin. The political complexities inherent in such situations mean that representatives from opposing sides of the conflict may have also settled in Australia. This is usually perceived as an ongoing threat as potential informers or perpetrators of atrocities may be present.

7. The possibility of a new life can restore a sense of purpose and meaning, but exposure to encounters with people who have no or little understanding of their background maintains distrust of others and isolation. Injustice and lack of awareness of human rights violations act as insults to values of human dignity.

The sense of distrust of others can be directly conveyed to children and they may be taught not to trust anyone.



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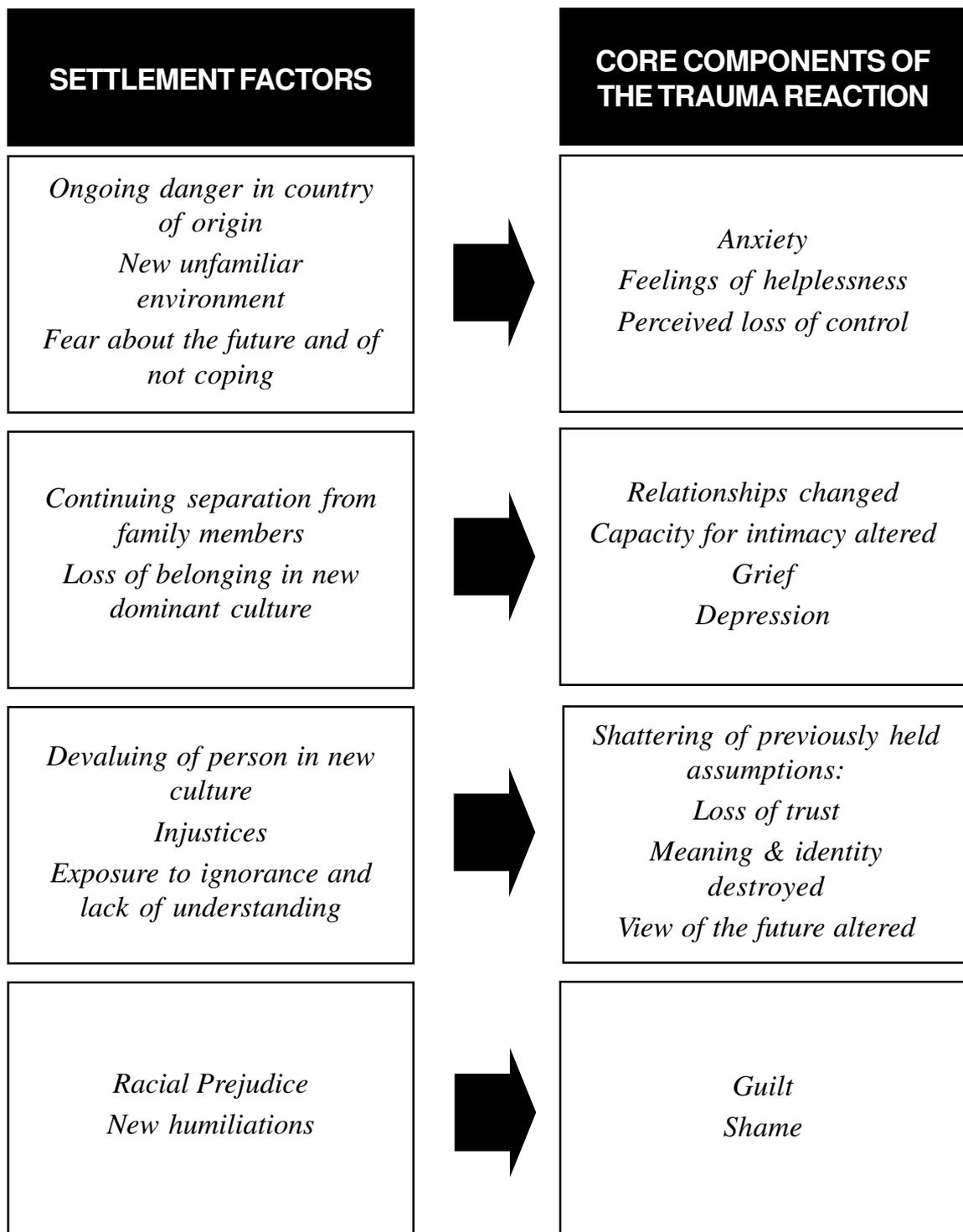


Figure 2

The Way Settlement Exacerbates and Maintains the Trauma Reaction

1.5 THE SETTLEMENT PROCESS AND ITS EFFECT ON THE TRAUMA REACTION

In the country of settlement many circumstances and encounters can maintain and exacerbate the trauma reaction, as shown in Figure 2.

1. As was previously described, serious threats can persist, particularly when family members remain exposed to danger in the country of origin. Countries from which refugees come, often continue to be war zones. For young refugees, other significant family members and friends have been left behind. Anxiety about their welfare continues and maintains a sense of helplessness and powerlessness. Other refugees from the same culture can provide support but they also can remind the person of earlier trauma as well as represent an ongoing threat if they are perceived as being linked to perpetrators. An unfamiliar environment, and the disruptive effect of symptoms create anxiety about ever gaining control and engenders great uncertainty about the future.

2. Disrupted attachments continue after arrival. Apart from family members who may have remained behind, dislocation from culture and tradition persists. Cultural beliefs are often challenged as young refugees settle in a new country and they are no longer part of the dominant culture. Consequently, the sense of belonging is seriously affected. The language barrier compounds social isolation. Contact with refugees from the same country does not necessarily restore connections if they are viewed with suspicion or fear.

3. The possibility of a new life can restore a sense of purpose and meaning but exposure to encounters with people who have no or little understanding of their background maintains distrust and isolation. Injustice, lack of awareness of human rights violations act as insults to values of human dignity.

4. Guilt and trauma are carried within but humiliations can persist with exposure to racial prejudice. Their country of origin may be perceived as backward or uncivilised (28). Guilt can persist as a result of having left family members behind and can act to prevent a young person from taking advantage of new opportunities. A successful step toward resettlement can be experienced as a betrayal of loyalty to family members left behind.



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Young refugees face the difficulty of migrants in general. There are many demands - to have secure accommodation, to adjust to a new educational system, to obtain employment for those who have left school, and to bridge two cultures. But unlike the migrant, they have been forced to leave their country and they generally forego the possibility of returning to their country.

1.6 CONCLUSION

This section has provided a framework for professionals who may work with young people who are refugees. It has considered the social and psychological impact of trauma which may result from the refugee experience, and the ways in which the trauma may impact on the behaviour and development of the young person. A summary of effects is shown in the box below.

SUMMARY OF OBSERVABLE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

School Age and Early Adolescence

- Obvious deterioration in school performance due to
 - (a) intrusion of memories which causes distractability
 - (b) development of a coping style of inhibiting spontaneous thought to dispel reminders of trauma
 - (c) depressed mood and irritability which interfere with learning
- Fantasies of rescue common or of being a hero
- Inordinate discussions of trauma with emotions detached from content
- Inconsistencies in behaviour such as outbursts of aggression oscillating with avoidance of conflict
- Psychosomatic complaints
- Withdrawal from play and social activity
- Disruptive behaviour
- Restlessness
- Clinging behaviour

Later Adolescence

- Adoption of adult responsibilities
- Acting out -
 - (a) truancy
 - (b) precocious sexual activity
 - (c) substance abuse
 - (d) obstinacy
 - (e) rebelliousness
- Poor impulse control
- Interpersonal difficulties apparent
- Uncooperative
- Attraction to danger and risk taking behaviour
- Depression and withdrawal
- Fierce self-sufficiency, rejection of help

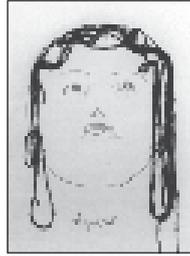


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The effects shown are those which are observable. The previous summaries included psychological and social consequences which were not necessarily observable. The effects listed are not specific to the experience of trauma and in themselves do not reveal the nature of the underlying problem that a young person is experiencing.

The following sections suggests the role a professional may play in influencing the individual, the family and the community to contribute to recovery of trauma and provide specific examples of intervention in an individual and group context.

2



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2.1 CONTEXT FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVENTIONS

Under Australia's Humanitarian and Refugee Program, 19,421 refugees under the age of 25 arrived in Victoria in the period August 1991 to June 2000. Over two thousand of these arrivals came from the Former Yugoslavia, Iraq and China. More than one thousand young people arrived from the following countries: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia and Vietnam. A breakdown of countries and the number of refugees in each of the age groups less than 6 years, 6-11 years, 12-15 years, 16-17 years and 18-24 years can be found in Appendix 2. Based on the size of the Humanitarian Program over the 12 years prior to 1991, similar if not larger numbers of young people arrived in Victoria during that period. There are many young people entering Australia from zones of war and countries where state sanctioned violence is commonplace, who have been exposed to trauma either in recent months or over a longer time frame. The opportunity to assist them should be maximised.

Investigators who have studied the impact of trauma on young people are unanimous in their emphasis on the importance of early intervention in ameliorating problems which might otherwise develop or persist. Early intervention programs have been developed for children to be used in schools after natural disasters, kidnappings, hostage taking and murders and they are put into effect within days of a traumatic event. This is clearly not possible in the case of young refugees who have arrived in Australia. The experience of a single traumatic event is rare in the history of refugee young people. Months or years may have elapsed between the traumatic experiences and the young person receiving assistance.

In cases where trauma is prolonged and young people are at high risk of further deterioration, or suffer persistent disabling symptoms, interventions are required to overcome the effects of trauma. These may vary in terms of being short, medium or long-term. Methods which are applicable for use in long-term approaches are not the focus of this guide but signs which indicate a need for long-term work are presented.



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Unlike adults, young people do not present themselves for help. Parents do not necessarily notice the signs or if they do, they do not necessarily act to assist. Anyone working with an adolescent is in a position to identify young people at risk and contribute to their recovery.

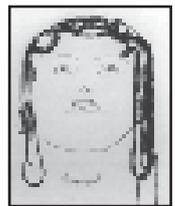
Interventions, both short-term and long-term, need to be applied at the individual, family, organisational and community level, whatever the discipline of the worker. Examples of interventions which can be applied at these levels can be found in Appendix 3. Workers involved with young refugees in community based agencies, primary health care services, schools and accommodation services, are well placed to identify young people at risk of developing persistent problems which will interfere with their personal growth. They can also enhance recovery directly by reducing the effects of trauma and by promoting learning, emotional and social development.

Individual, family and group approaches are complementary and should not be considered in isolation. They are most effective when the worker is part of a service and community which upholds the rights of the child to comprehensive care. The community includes schools, community support services, local government programs, accommodation, health and legal services. The ethos of the agency, the attitude of workers, the approach to acknowledging and accommodating the specific needs of young refugees, contribute to the recovery process and the building of every young person's self value.

The principles upon which such an approach are based have been described by Aristotle (29):

- Services must respect and reinforce the concept of human rights as expressed in various international charters and agreements.
- Services must strive to be culturally relevant, sensitive and understanding of the history and struggle of the service user.
- Any particular community needs to address both the internal and external needs of the individuals, groups and agencies which coexist within it, while promoting access, equity, and participation.

Whilst recognising that intervention should involve strategies that range from the individual to community level, this document focuses particularly on interventions with the individual and family.



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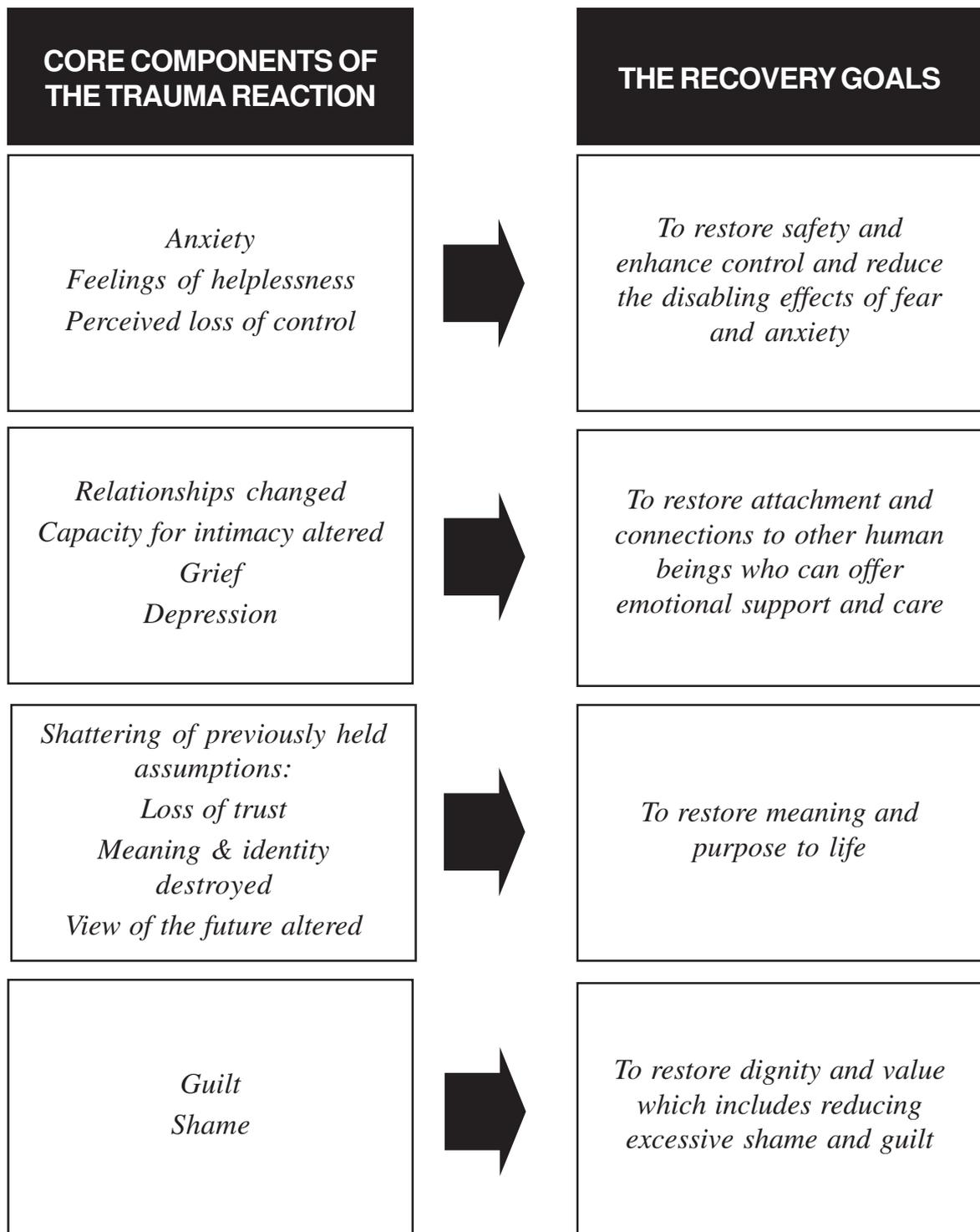


Figure 3
The Four Recovery Goals

2.2 RECOVERY GOALS

The goals of recovery and the aspects of the reaction to trauma they address are shown in Figure 3. This section describes the ways in which the goals can be achieved by working with adolescents face to face and with their families. Section 3 describes how groups can be used to achieve these goals.

2.2.1 RECOVERY GOAL 1: RESTORING SAFETY, ENHANCING CONTROL AND REDUCING FEAR AND ANXIETY

Provision of Basic Needs - Health, Welfare, Education and Accommodation

A secure environment with adequate provision and access to health, welfare, education and accommodation are amongst the most basic rights of young people. All young refugees have been subject to deprivation in these areas and it is the worker's responsibility to facilitate access to these systems of care. Their availability is central to the experience of safety, predictability, protection and control. Often workers believe therapeutic intervention only derives from a counselling process, however, resolution of practical issues generates substantial therapeutic benefits.

The worker as advocate needs to promote the young person's skill and confidence to use services themselves. For the younger age group, the family is the point of intervention for developing such skills.

Where young people have been tortured, assistance with ensuring sensitive health care is vital. This usually requires accompanying the young person to initial appointments. Invasive medical procedures are expected to create enormous fear and often require the presence of a worker. The experience of torture will rarely be revealed, but it is important to be aware that avoidance of medical treatment situations, when accompanied by very high levels of anxiety, suggests a background of severe trauma. In such cases, a referral to a counsellor is necessary.



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Whenever in a position to do so, the worker must brief the referral source about the experiences of the young person. This always requires the young person's permission and when done well can promote confidence in the young person, as the medical treatment can then be offered with greater sensitivity.

Identifying Causes of Anxiety

Anxiety is sometimes visible and is readily observed when a young person is tense, restless, looks worried or fearful. More often, there are behaviours which, although observable, only suggest anxiety as a possible cause. They include poor concentration, memory difficulties, lack of participation, blank spells and incessant talking.

Anxiety can also be quite invisible. Psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches may not be accompanied by feelings of anxiety. In other cases, strong feelings of fear, worry and apprehension are experienced but are completely masked.

Causes of anxiety can lie in the past and in the present. Past traumatic experiences often lead to the spontaneous occurrence of memories and intrusive images of frightening events. Stimuli in the present environment can evoke fearful memories. Commonly, such stimuli include smells, sounds and sights, such as people in uniforms. Other stimuli, which act as triggers in this way, include people's behaviour such as an authoritarian manner. Feelings of failure can also remind an adolescent of helplessness and associated terror.

Living in a new country also evokes anxiety. Crises and war in the country of origin can cause enormous fear, as can stress related to settlement and home life. Often a young refugee in Australia has been separated from other family members who have been left behind in the midst of ongoing conflict. Constant images of this in the media can perpetuate the anxiety related to such issues.

Biologically, trauma effects the sensitivity of the brain to changes in the environment, and it reacts with greater than normal arousal to mildly threatening stimuli.

It is important to recognise that little can be done directly to alter causes. For example, it is very hard to do anything about causes when memories are spontaneously occurring, or when there is trouble at home or a parent is ill. One can also do little to prevent certain triggers occurring because they are beyond one's control to manipulate. But one can do something about likely and predictable triggers such as an authoritarian manner or harsh discipline.

Accommodating the Effects of Anxiety

The other way workers can make a difference is to accommodate the effects of anxiety and the different ways in which anxiety is handled by the young person. The worker needs to stay close to the young person's method of coping. Should there be an emotional release, offering comfort is important. Remind the young person that they are in a safe place now, that they can't help being scared, even if things happened a while ago.

Restoring Safety

Restoring safety is crucial. It can be achieved in different ways and depends on the setting in which one works. In a school setting for example, strategies for nurturing safety include:

- providing a predictable environment
- explaining the purpose of activities
- setting realistic expectations for performance
- acknowledging and accommodating the blocks to learning
- creating opportunities to set individually appropriate goals which are attainable
- providing a quiet place as an alternative to the playground
- providing information regarding common problems for recently arrived young people.



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Gradual Exposure to Fear Producing Situations

Of the methods which can be used to reduce anxiety and promote control, an important one is the method of gradual exposure to fear-evoking situations. If a young person, for example, is afraid of being with other people, it is important to allow them to deal with social situations gradually. Other children and adolescents are afraid of the learning situation, because failure is fear provoking. Carefully graduated tasks can reduce their fear. Taking risks and placing young people in situations that are beyond the level at which they can cope, can be dangerous and counter productive.

Providing Information

For young refugees, providing information about the trauma reaction so that the symptoms themselves do not evoke excessive anxiety is invaluable. This allays fears of losing one's mind. Youth counsellors at the VFST have reported that young people know very little, if anything, about the effects of trauma.

In the course of counselling, it was said by a number of young people, "I really think I am going crazy; I'm not the same person that I used to be." To provide a young person with an understanding of why they were experiencing difficulties and inform them that with time, information and support, they could expect these symptoms to dissipate was an effective method of reducing distress and fear associated with their experiences of post trauma reaction. Often, informing the young person that they were experiencing 'normal' trauma reactions, very quickly negated the distress and fear experienced as a result of not understanding what was going on. This, in turn, had a positive effect on the symptoms as well, and assisted in leading to a young person's recovery. (26)

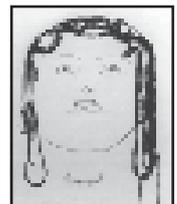
The additional benefits of providing information and understanding are that it is an effective way to validate emotions and serves to establish trust between a young person and an adult.

The Body Under Stress

Describing the effects of anxiety on the body is also invaluable. Simple explanations of the way the mind sends signals to the body to prepare it for danger are very helpful. One can illustrate this by using the example of a tiger suddenly coming into the room. The mind quickly sees the tiger as dangerous and as a threat to one's life. It sends signals to the body to prepare it for "fight or flight". Messages are sent to the heart so that it can beat faster, to the lungs so that breathing is faster, to the guts so that they slow down and not waste the body's energy. Muscles become more tense to prepare for fight or flight. One can indicate to the young person that the body reacts this way whenever the mind notices danger and danger can include any frightening situation or reminder of a frightening situation.

Relaxation exercises to deal with the effects on the body can easily be taught. However, it is important to be aware that some young people are too afraid to relax because traumatic memories may intrude. It is best to present relaxation techniques as something which might help the body to feel calmer rather than as something which will alleviate anxiety. Massage and other tactile therapies can be extremely useful in this regard.

Fatima, a young woman from Somalia, was referred for relaxation massage by her counsellor. At the time, Fatima was experiencing headaches and difficulty sleeping. She was extremely anxious and having difficulty coping with her school work. The experience of massage enabled her to relax and to release muscle tension. She said that the massage "made (her) feel light and peaceful inside."



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Dealing with the Disclosure of Traumatic Material

“Sharing the story of pain and loss and suffering continues to be the key counselling mode in this work with young people with a torture and trauma background. It seems that when the story has been shared, and they feel that they have been heard, and very importantly, believed, the experience is relief. The relief seems to be the result of no longer being the sole carrier of such horrific, and seemingly unbelievable knowledge. The level of sensitivity required when the client is disclosing their story is acute: the young person’s level of trauma in re-telling the story and feeling of trust and safety in the worker must be a constant consideration during the session. It is the worker’s responsibility to ensure that the young person is feeling safe and supported and is not being retraumatised.” (26)

Talking about the traumatic event and/or working through it with the use of stories and drawings is essential in long-term counselling with severely traumatised young people. Engaging them in this process requires the emotional support of family members or other emotionally significant figures. Counselling with young people requires specialist expertise in order to use play, fantasy and metaphor to permit the expression of traumatic material (30).

In settings outside of counselling, young people may disclose traumatic material even without encouragement to do so. In dealing with such disclosures the following guidelines apply.

Guidelines for dealing with disclosure:

1. When intense emotion is expressed, the worker acts as a buffer against a young person being overwhelmed and must act with offers of comfort and support. Remind them that they can get support now. This provides the opportunity for the young person to learn that expression of emotions does not result in a complete loss of control. As Straker points out, once the adolescent is confident of not losing control, he or she can move toward thinking about what happened and working through it (31).

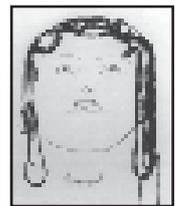
2. Disclosure can alternate with numbing and denial and then it may not be possible to talk again about what happened. It is appropriate in such cases to shift the focus to current situations which may be causing difficulties such as coping with school, learning a new language and making friends. Generally, it is important to stay close to the young person's method of coping and not challenge it.

3. Not all aspects of a traumatic event or series of events are equally horrific. **The worst part of the experience can never be assumed** and one needs to be sensitive to the young person's sense of what was most frightening or overwhelming for them. For example, helplessness in the face of witnessing violence to others, is often particularly disturbing and more distressing than violence perpetrated against their physical person.

A 15 year old refugee boy from East Bosnia came to see us (25) because of anorexia. We learned the he was in a detention camp with his family for four months. He described many horrible events but the one that had the most stressful effect on him was when an old woman was killed by a camp guard when she tried to get a piece of bread from the garbage. She was left lying there on the ground in a pool of blood, while her hand still clutched a piece of stale bread. The boy always had that scene in front of his eyes and remembered a bloody piece of bread when he tried to eat (p.78).

4. Closing a discussion when traumatic material has been expressed requires sensitivity. The recommendations of Pynoos and Eth (23), for terminating initial interviews, apply to any encounter. They are summarised below:

- Emphasise that the young person's responses are understandable and that other young people in their situation respond similarly. This conveys that they are not alone.
- Affirm that it is all right to have felt helpless or afraid, sad or angry.



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- State that you anticipate that they will again feel sad, angry or worried at home or at school. Suggest that when they feel this way they **share their reactions with someone**. (The availability of another trusted adult is vital for this purpose). Indicate if they can come to you when they are especially worried, troubled, sad or cannot concentrate.
- Acknowledge the young person's bravery in talking about his or her feelings.

5. Where disclosures occur, acknowledgment is sufficient. Acknowledgment involves saying for example, "that it is a terrible experience you have been through." It is tempting for a worker to 'undo' traumatic events and make up for what happened, but experiences need validation first.

6. It is not a straightforward task to interpret the stories and drawings of young people who disclose traumatic material in these ways. In many instances one can detect elements of hope, coping and mastery in their art products or play re-enactments. At other times, games and drawings are repetitive and sterile. Where there are elements of empowerment, such as elements of potential mastery or escape, there is more an indication of the tentative development of coping. Play which provides no relief "re-enacts central elements of the trauma, without progress toward resolution" (22, p.611). Interpretations are not required in contexts outside of counselling. One can ask the child or adolescent to write a sentence as a title to a picture. Acknowledgment of what is written and drawn can then be provided.

2.2.2 RECOVERY GOAL 2: RESTORING ATTACHMENT AND CONNECTIONS AND OVERCOMING GRIEF AND LOSS

The degree of loss associated with torture and war-related trauma is immense and inextricably linked with the exposure to violence.

The consequences of loss and disconnection were previously described in Section 1, as leading to the grief reaction, changes in interpersonal relations and depression. There are many secondary effects which depend on the age of the young person. Age related effects associated with loss are shown in the following table. Effects for the age group 6-12 years have also been included because adolescents can show them as well.

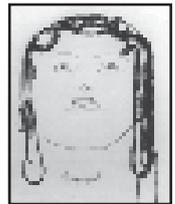
AGE RELATED EFFECTS ASSOCIATED WITH LOSS

6-12 YEARS:

- difficulty concentrating due to affect
- learning disorder
- conduct disturbances
- re-enactments of loss in play, stories
- guilt
- passivity, lack of spontaneity
- aggression, demandingness
- social isolation headaches, stomach aches
- death anxiety

ADOLESCENCE:

- premature adult role
- premature identity formation/identity confusion
- use of self destructive behaviours to distract from sadness
- acting out: truancy, promiscuity, substance abuse, antisocial acts
- guilt
- shame and isolation
- pessimism about future
- disturbances in self-image



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Recovery from grief is a long process, and a long grieving period of up to several years, must be allowed for.

Risk Factors for Prolonged Grieving

Many of the risk factors which are known to increase the likelihood of a long grieving process are:

- unanticipated death
- violent death
- lack of adequate family and social support
- the surviving parent's psychological vulnerability
- excessive parental dependence on the child
- an unstable, inconsistent physical environment.

Most of the above risk factors characterise the lives of refugee young people. Interventions for loss must accordingly encompass these factors as far as possible.

The process of grieving is also complicated by factors which are not apparent. Firstly, older adolescents as well as adults resist being plunged into grief and sadness. This is in part due to the fear of being overwhelmed by such emotions but for some, such emotions represent a victory to the perpetrator and an admission of utter helplessness (34). In other cases, remembrance of those who have died and loyalty to their memories, inhibits the resolution of grief. This is similar to the experience of guilt for having survived.

The Importance of the Relationship with a Worker

As a worker, learning about and facing the grief of others is a demanding process evoking many reactions - horror, despair, helplessness and anger. Consequently one of the most important things to realise when interacting with a young survivor of trauma is that every encounter has the potential to promote the restoration of a meaningful connection with another human being. It is the willingness of adults to accept the responsibility for a young person's welfare, which is communicated to the child or adolescent, that is therapeutic.

Amuna, a ten year old girl from Somalia was referred for her grief over the separation from her mother. She had arrived in Australia with her father and stepmother. In the first session, the counsellor asked Amuna how she felt and explained what the counsellor was there for. "I explained that feelings like sadness occurred because children sometimes went through very difficult things, other children here told me how sad they felt not to see someone they loved ... I said that we could talk and draw. I asked her whom she would have talked to in Somalia and she said her mum. I explained that her mum was not here at the moment but I could listen and that I would be here each week."

Fostering Connections

Multiple sources of support should be fostered - amongst peers, the school system, the host community and in some cases, through the therapeutic relationship.

The importance of peer support cannot be overstated especially when there is no family support. It is crucial to identity formation as well as to the reduction of isolation and feelings of alienation which develop as a result of trauma and dislocation.

Programs which make social contact with peers their central aim need to consider the multiple effects of trauma described earlier. It is normal for the young survivor of torture and trauma to have difficulty forming relationships for a number of reasons. High levels of anxiety are often managed by reducing new input from the environment which can also include needing to avoid social stimulation. Relationships can also be avoided for fear of renewed loss. Distrust of others, suspiciousness, feelings of anger and shame all interfere with the capacity to be close to another person. To accommodate these effects, social contact should be structured so that there is room for withdrawal as well as opportunities for the gradual development of trust.



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WAYS TO FOSTER RECONNECTION

- **A trusting continuing connection with an available caring adult.**
- **Group participation to reduce social isolation.**
- **Promoting belonging by overcoming problems of settlement.**
- **Linking with supportive groups, agencies.**
- **Reconstructing a valued purpose such as social/political action.**

Co-ordinating interventions with the school is usually essential.

Vesna, a 13 year old girl from Bosnia, had seen her brother killed and was referred to the Foundation because she appeared very depressed. She was trying to achieve high marks at school but was having difficulty concentrating. After consulting with the counsellor the teacher developed tasks and assignments which were achievable. The importance of acknowledging her situation and giving her 'special consideration' in the full sense of the term, reduced the pressure to perform and enabled her to begin facing her grief.

Eisenbruch (22) recommends a “moratorium during which uprooted refugee children can consolidate their own cultural identity and retrieve a little of what they have lost. Without such a moratorium, the benefits of acculturation can be offset by the risks of increased alienation and uncompleted grieving (p.293).”

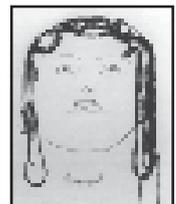
Mourning Rituals

Engaging in mourning rituals which are culturally appropriate is invaluable in contributing to the resolution of grief. Further, establishing a place or means to 'speak with' parents, relatives and friends who have died is very helpful. Planting a tree for example, to commemorate the dead can provide a meaningful solace. Religious ceremonies performed by traditional healers and spiritual leaders to honour the death of loved ones is extremely helpful. For Cambodian children it has been found that putting 'troubled spirits' to rest is of great benefit to them.

Accommodation Support

The nature of accommodation support, which should be given to young people no longer able to live with their families or who are unaccompanied, has been the subject of a long debate. Some favour foster placements while others favour group placements with peers and 'house parents'. It is advisable to consider the needs of each individual young person. Ressler et al. (24) emphasises that it is the quality of the placement which is important and that both types of placement should allow for ongoing peer and adult relationships with members of the child's cultural group. The support of the surrounding community should also be utilised. Certainly the age of the child is critical.

Younger adolescents do need the opportunity to form a stable attachment which is available in a family setting. On the other hand, the older adolescent may find it easier to develop his/her connections through peer relationships in a group setting, rather than through a relationship with substitute parents. For an adolescent who needs independence and emotional distance and shows loyalty to family who are still 'back home', the group setting can be preferable.



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2.2.3 RECOVERY GOAL 3: RESTORING IDENTITY, MEANING AND PURPOSE

The restoration of identity, meaning and purpose is the third core recovery goal and is fundamental to the development of young refugees following the experience of torture and trauma.

STRATEGIES TO RESTORE IDENTITY, MEANING AND PURPOSE

- **Group programs for promoting communication, reducing isolation and enhancing self esteem.**
- **Integrating past, present and future through activities such as art, story telling and drama.**
- **Creation of new opportunities for view of future.**
- **Exploring concepts of self, other and the community.**
- **Validation of the trauma experienced.**
- **Validation of profound cultural differences in values between country of origin and Australia and potential for conflict.**
- **Education in human rights and the political background to violence.**

Identity

Understanding normal adolescent development highlights the impact of trauma. It is a period of identity formation. Questions of who one is and a sense of knowing where one is going are critical. Anticipated recognition from those who count, ('mattering') is a vital source of emotional sustenance. It is a time of continuing development of self esteem. Sensitivity to disapproval from others and self consciousness is at its height.

Sexual maturity is a universal task of adolescence which requires dealing with sexual urges and integrating sexuality and intimacy. It is also a period of cognitive and moral development. In Western culture, adolescents are expected to increase their responsibilities, prepare for a vocation, develop interpersonal relationships and independence from parents. For adolescents who have been traumatised, achievement of these tasks is compromised. They can be assisted to cope with all these developmental tasks through educational and group programs which focus on identity formation. The group programs described in Section 3 of this guide aim to promote the development of identity.

Claiming the Past

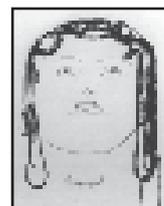
Activities such as story telling, drama and art, which provide an opportunity to tell of the past and family history before the trauma, are to be encouraged. Not all difficulties are trauma related, but are the result of relationships with parents, friends and community. Reclaiming and remembering the earlier history restores continuity. Further, explaining the role of trauma in disrupting the life cycle of a person, family and community is helpful.

Restoring a Sense of Future

Recovery requires the restoration of hope and a sense of future. Belief in the future is often shattered after trauma.

One young client expressed how the war had changed his life from one of peace and safety to one of utter destruction. He said that he could not wake up in the morning and be confident that he would see the end of the day. This was despite the reasonably safe environment in which he now lived.

Young people may express a view of the future which appears overly determined by the traumatic event. As Pynoos and Eth (23) point out, some youngsters are burdened by an awareness of an unfortunate legacy. They expect things to go wrong or deem themselves unlucky and destined to misfortune. Acknowledgment is again a useful response - "When something terrible has happened you think it will happen again."



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The meaning of the future needs to be reconstructed. This can be very difficult when there are learning difficulties, limited opportunities for employment and is especially the case when other family members have been left behind in the country of origin. A future without those family members is usually unthinkable and a lot of effort is typically devoted by workers to assist in the sponsoring of family members. In existential terms, this striving is a struggle to reinstate continuity and a larger human connectedness (12).

Understanding Human Rights Violations

Understanding the political background of violence and human rights violations through education can also assist in the restoration of purpose. Educational exercises can be found in two publications by J. Rutter produced for the British Refugee Council (32, 33). The educational exercises cover: understanding the meaning of a refugee, why people move, the development of international human rights law, oral history, war and the media, the arms trade, personal responsibilities and conflict resolution. Background material on countries around the world that have led to refugee movements is also presented.

Providing a “political-cognitive” frame of reference has been used by teachers in Mozambique to engage children in putting an end to war constructively and in building realistic hopes and expectations of the future (34).

Restoring Meaning

Counselling sessions are often used by young people to explore issues of meaning.

The types of questions people explored included existential issues such as “why me”, and “why my family, my community, my country, my race, my religion?”. The worker did not offer answers to these questions, but was able to validate the young person’s desire for this information, and to indicate to the young person the value of the process and its role in recovery. Some of the procedures used in this exploratory approach included documenting and analysing dream content, using drawings as a means of expression and encouraging journalling of thoughts and ideas (26).

The restoration of meaning to life and the formation of a comprehensible picture of the world are core recovery processes. As indicated in Section 1, restoration of meaning through an ideology can be for better or for worse. It is worse when sense is made of the experience through dehumanisation and demonisation of enemies (19). These processes, when cultivated, are the very basis for the training of perpetrators.

Ideology can serve the survivor to cope, but at the risk of perpetuating violence. Religious fundamentalism (from which no religion is immune) and political ideology can portray revenge and death to enemies as a noble mission. Adolescents are especially susceptible to ideology. Conflict and wars throughout the world have testified to the use of children and adolescents as willing bearers of arms. On the other hand, other children and adolescents who have been exposed to war and trauma develop enhanced moral sensibility. “This can happen if adults help them process their experiences, heal their pain, and help put those painful experiences in a humanistic framework, that refuses to dehumanise the enemy and instead encourages the development of empathy” (19, p.27).



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A young person needs to be listened to in their struggle to understand their experiences. Therefore opportunities to discuss relationships, racism, history, politics and moral dilemmas is to be encouraged in the structured setting of educational programs.

Some young survivors find meaning through bearing witness to their experiences and by writing about them. This endeavour should be supported and encouraged where possible. Opportunities for other constructive activities such as social political action, youth leadership roles and community projects should also be fostered.

2.2.4 RECOVERY GOAL 4: RESTORING DIGNITY AND VALUE

All the interventions described thus far contribute to restoring dignity and value. However dealing with guilt and shame requires particular attention, without which recovery can be limited.

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE GUILT AND SHAME

- **Allow the expression of guilt and shame.**
- **Reflect to the young person that it is a normal wish that they could have done more to have prevented others being harmed.**
- **Events and stories need to be told and retold to reduce guilt. Counselling is the appropriate setting for this.**
- **Assist with developing ways in which the young person can actually do something to reduce guilt.**
- **Alleviating shame and guilt requires community acknowledgment of human rights violations and the need for redress.**

Acknowledging Guilt

“In trauma, the guilt hides a sense of helplessness so profound that the guilty torment is needed, clung to ... in order to re-establish some sense of personal control” (35, p.420). Feeling guilty for having failed to do something in the face of brutality perpetrated by others, appears highly irrational. But as Terr points out, to know that one could have done nothing is to be utterly helpless and at the mercy of another’s control. To take some responsibility for what happened, even if it results in painful self blame, is to retain some control.

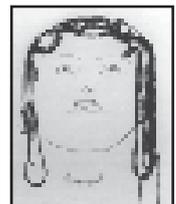
Therefore, it is usual for young people who have experienced or witnessed violence, to blame themselves for a part of what happened, or blame themselves for having failed to do something which would have prevented harm coming to others.

Feelings of guilt are usually not disclosed directly. Should they be expressed, validation of the emotion is suggested rather than dismissal with a rational explanation of why they should not feel guilty. To illustrate, one could respond by saying “when something terrible has happened to someone, you think you could have done more to have stopped it”, or “you wish you could have done something to stop the terrible things which happened”.

To inform the young person that there is nothing they could have done is not helpful for overcoming guilt. They need to arrive at this conclusion themselves, after having thoroughly explored what did happen, the possible actions they could have taken and why they did not. This type of exploration is only possible in a long-term relationship such as that provided by counselling.

Rape

Overcoming shame and guilt is a major focus in work with rape victims. A World War II report by Meerloo, cited in Ressler et al. pointed to the importance of dealing with the guilt and shame of rape victims. “... the main problem which arises is ... the depth and usually unrecognised problem of guilt and shame in the individual. In other words, however



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unreasonable it sounds, the problem is to ... help the victims of such assaults to forgive themselves in relation to the very real but unreasonable sense of guilt which they possess over the incidents concerned ..." (24, p.166).

It can be difficult as a worker to accept the guilt and shame of a rape victim, but it is important to stay close to the experience of the victim and understand the meaning they have given to the event. Cultural factors deeply influence the meaning given to rape.

A young woman who as an adolescent was raped whilst in detention in Sri Lanka felt very strongly that she must have done something wrong for this to have happened. She would re-examine her life and find the causes for her rape in the mistakes she had made. It was only after many counselling sessions, that she saw her rape as a planned act by the military, to terrorise and eliminate a political party and that many women had been targeted for this purpose.

No assumptions can be made about the reaction of women and girls to rape. Thousands of young women were raped in Bosnia in camps dedicated to sexual abuse. For many of them, rape has meant a life sentence of shame and disgrace and condemnation to isolation. This is particularly so for girls coming from traditional, religious and patriarchal families. Other women have felt less shame, seeing themselves as part of "thousands" who have been similarly victimised (36). Tragically, although some women are better "protected" from the experience of shame than others, they suffer the enormous pain of having experienced and witnessed the ruthless and brutal rape of other women and girls, many of whom died as a result.

Recovery here does not involve expiation of personal guilt, but wide recognition of the trauma which has been experienced and appropriate retribution and justice. The denouncement and prosecution of rape as a war crime needs to be part of the response to assisting young women overcome their humiliation and ostracisation. An International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has been established by the United Nations Security Council. Rape and sexual torture are being included in war crimes to be prosecuted.

“The Tribunal can provide a platform for the telling of people’s stories, so that there is a world-wide witnessing process for the victims ... However since the Tribunal is a criminal justice system, the stories of survivors may get buried in the concern for the rights of the accused. This is critical to the issues of women’s (and children’s) rights as human rights. Will there be a satisfactory vindication, affirmation of the suffering of the victim, and compensation provided?” (37). An affirmative answer to this question is required to achieve recovery for women and girls who have been victims of rape.

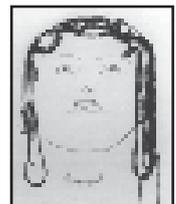
Confidentiality is a major issue for survivors of sexual assault. The sense of shame usually precludes disclosure and it will not occur unless the young person is extremely sure of the worker’s sensitivity and regard for protecting privacy. The young person’s fear of ostracisation, fear of being permanently tainted, and feeling that others can see that they were raped by merely looking at them, need to be anticipated.

Guilt About Family Members

Another major source of guilt for young survivors, concerns members of the family which have been left behind in the country of origin. This guilt can only be resolved, if some form of ongoing contact is maintained where possible. Some means of restitution also needs to be found whereby the child or adolescent feels that she or he is doing something to help the family left behind.

Young people will also blame themselves for current separations and imagine that something they did, such as being naughty, was the cause. Counselling is the best method for providing the opportunity to address such misconceptions.

Pedro felt that his bad behaviour had caused his mother to leave his father. The situation was complicated by the fact that he was naughty, locking people out of the house and disconnecting the electricity. It was important for his father to be involved when explaining the causes of this behaviour - that it arose out of guilt and loss and that he needed understanding. The father’s understanding enabled Pedro to feel less guilty and led to a dramatic improvement in his behaviour.



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At the VFST, counsellors have worked with a number of young people whose guilt and worry about family members left behind, has been the dominant focus of the counselling sessions.

One young boy from the Horn of Africa was detained for four months and tortured. On his release, he described his father as having aged 10 years in his absence. Within weeks, the young boy was on a plane to Australia, leaving his father behind. Planning sponsorship for his father and the expectation of a reunion has become the sole basis for this young boy's purpose in living.

Indira was eleven years old when she fled her home town with her two younger sisters, to escape civil war. Her parents and other siblings were believed to have been killed in a bomb blast which destroyed the family home. Whilst on route to a refugee camp in a neighbouring country, the youngest sister Sumita, who was then five, died from dehydration. Indira had left Sumita in the care of someone else while she searched for her other sister, who had become separated from them. Indira returned with the other sister to find Sumita dead and alone. During counselling sessions, Indira who was then 17, returned repeatedly to the story of Sumita's death. Each time she would add details to the story. Her trust in the older woman with whom she had left Sumita had been betrayed. She would return to 'if only I had not gone'. At the same time she acknowledged that she had no choice but to look for the other sister. After a number of sessions, Indira produced a photo of Sumita as a baby. She said 'what could I do?.. nothing'. The counsellor was able to affirm her in her expression of helplessness and grief. In following sessions, it was evident that her guilt had subsided.

2.3 ISSUES IN INTERVENTION

Whilst working towards these four recovery goals a number of important issues need to be kept in mind. These issues include strategies for dealing with anger, the role of the family and community, the relationship between the worker and the young person, cultural issues, signs which indicate the need for counselling and the emotional responses of workers themselves. The following sections discuss these issues.

2.3.1 STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH ANGER

Anger is the normal response to the deliberate perpetration of violence. It is part of the psychological response to traumatic events and is also a secondary reaction to the experience of anxiety, helplessness, loss, injustice and shame. For some young people, anger is suppressed because it is culturally unacceptable. This can create conflict and inner turmoil when feelings of anger are aroused. For other young people, anger is expressed all too readily.



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STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH ANGER AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

- 1. Allow the experience of anger, recognising that it is a normal reaction to torture and trauma.**
- 2. Explore the causes of anger. Different causes will require different responses.**
- 3. Expect hostility to be attributed to you as a worker.**
- 4. Limits to aggressive behaviour need to be set and made explicit.**
- 5. Aggressive behaviour, which is perceived as legitimate by young people, usually needs sustained long-term intervention.**

Allowing Aggressive Fantasies

Aggressive material can emerge in stories/pictures which represent wishes rather than fact or intent. For instance, revenge fantasies are very common. A poignant example is offered by Yuri who witnessed all the male members of his family being shot. He had revenge fantasies but quickly added after describing them, that he would not carry them out. It is therefore important to allow fantasies to be expressed as wishes. If for some reason you think somebody is at risk of being harmed, then this intent should be directly explored by asking the young person about their plans.

Young people, if they have witnessed violence, may be scared of their anger and poor impulse control, especially if they are entertaining revenge fantasies. One can often help here, namely offering reassurance if you know it is the last thing a young person would do.

Exploring the Causes of Anger

Making sense of anger as the appropriate emotional reaction to violation and injustice is important. If this is recognised, the child or adolescent will be more motivated to express anger in a way which is not destructive to self and others.

Exploring the cause of anger toward others is to be encouraged. It can be achieved by asking what it was that another person did to make them angry. This can be followed by checking with the young person if it really was a bad thing that was done to them. If they believe it was “really bad”, pursue an understanding of what was bad.

If they seem to recognise that they have over-reacted to a minor provocation ask if there is anything else which is making them angry. If so, then this is the issue to deal with.

For older adolescents, their expression of anger can feel justified and appropriate, but violence or aggression is not regarded as legitimate. This often represents an attempt by adolescents to make others “see” what is really happening in the world. This pursuit of truth and its public

acknowledgment can become a highly adaptive and meaningful purpose but can easily be misconstrued by others, when associated with an overly hostile attitude.

Aggression which is Legitimised

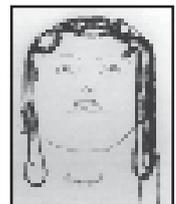
Some adolescents readily interpret the behaviour of others as constituting a violation. A taunt, or a minor physical incursion is seen as an act of aggression and retaliation is regarded as legitimate. In such instances, when violent behaviour is perceived as legitimate, the task of assisting such young people is a different one. Considerable time needs to be devoted to understanding the basis for the violence and challenging it as a strategy for dealing with conflict. This issue is not in any way peculiar to survivors of torture and trauma. It applies to any young person who uses aggression to bolster self-esteem and overcome feelings of helplessness and lack of control.

Promoting Self Control

Poor control over aggressive impulses can occur for a number of reasons: having seen adults failing to control themselves, the desire for retaliation and the suppression of re-experiencing phenomena such as intrusive memories which can produce tension and irritability.

Methods of self control can be taught to young people. For example, one can develop self-statements to be used in situations where anger is aroused. Examples of self-statements to counter anger (these must be tailored to the individual) are:

- ***“That was accidental, they didn’t mean to hurt me.”***
- ***“What might be another reason for their behaviour?”***
- ***“It doesn’t have to be an eye for an eye.”***
- ***“What else can I do when this happens?”***



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Beliefs Predisposing to Aggressive Behaviour

Beliefs which are deeply held by some adolescents and which increase the likelihood of aggressive and violent behaviour are listed below.

BELIEFS PREDISPOSING TO AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

- **Aggression and retaliation are the best way to respond to injustice, insults etc.**
- **Other people should know what it is like to be hurt.**
- **Dominance over others is better than affiliation.**
- **Victim suffering, victim retaliation and peer rejection do not matter.**
- **Expectation that aggressive behaviour will produce tangible rewards.**
- **Belief that others are hostile and deserve punishment.**

Such beliefs develop as a result of the young person having themselves been the victim of violence and brutality, but clearly only some children respond in this way. The work of Macksoud et al. (38) is very important in this regard. They report that children who were passive recipients of war (that is, unexpectedly caught in the firing line) did not portray feelings of hate, violence or revenge. They did not identify any specific enemy but saw war as the enemy. On the other hand, children who actively participated in the war (in Uganda and Mozambique), portrayed more aggressive themes of vindictiveness and brutality in their art and stories.

The importance of identifying young people who are at risk of developing violent behaviour, as a result of their experience of trauma, cannot be overstated. The ability to assess them requires intervention as soon as

possible after their experience of trauma, before maladaptive violent patterns of behaviour are integrated as part of the personality. Successful programs have been conducted for changing aggressive behaviours and promoting empathy (39).

Common Defenses

When interacting with young people who are angry, it is important to be prepared for the fact that sometimes everything you do is wrong in their eyes. Permitting their anger, while setting limits on unacceptable behaviour is desirable. Adults, like other children, become the object of psychological defenses such as projection, displacement and projective identification.

In projection, an inner feeling of badness or anger toward oneself is externalised and attributed to another. In this way, a young person who projects hostility, experiences other people as angry or hostile, regardless of how they may actually behave.

Projective identification is a complex process whereby the person who is the recipient of the projected anger actually begins to feel bad or hostile. Therefore, the adult who feels angry when dealing with young people may be accepting an attribution of hostility coming from them. For example, an adolescent who is unaware of their own anger may constantly provoke a parent and incite their anger. The parent then feels angry, lashes out at the adolescent who reacts with surprised indignation.

In displacement, anger is not directed to the violator but towards another person, to whom it is safer to direct the anger. As a result, family members are often the recipients of intense anger which was actually incited by someone outside the family.

An understanding of these mechanisms can assist in more accurately interpreting young people's behaviour and one's own reactions.



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2.3.2 THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

The Influence of the Family

It is the young who are most vulnerable to developing persistent problems, unless the impact of trauma is countered by an environment which promotes recovery. Young people are resilient, but it is an error to imagine that they can recover from the cumulative trauma, which characterises the lives of many refugee children and adolescents, without assistance. Studies which show long-term damaging effects are disturbing in their implications but equally there is a growing body of work which shows that harmful effects are lessened by the continuing supportive relationships provided by the family and community.

The family is one of the most important sources of influence over the young person's reaction to trauma in the short and long term. Parents who are emotionally available to a young person and model coping are critical protective factors. Conversely, parental inadequacy is the biggest risk factor. Many studies have shown that children who stay with their families after trauma fare better than those who are separated and that the quality and extent of the network of caregivers predicts recovery (30, 40).

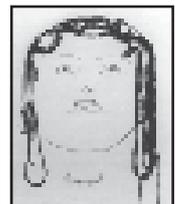
Research by Kinzie (41), who followed up young Cambodian refugees who arrived in USA unaccompanied, found that those who lived in a stable supportive family environment recovered much more than adolescents who did not. Such findings are borne out in studies focusing on bereavement, which occurs in nonviolent circumstances. It has been found that the quality of emotional support in the family following the death of a parent, affects the severity of psychological symptoms later in life, more than the loss itself (42).

Persistence of symptoms in young people has been found by researchers (33), to be associated with:

- parent's excessive dependence on their children for support
- over-protectiveness by parents
- a prohibitive attitude by parents toward regressive behaviour or toward open expression about the experience
- parents who themselves show symptoms resulting from trauma or torture.

GOALS FOR FAMILY WORK

- **Establish physical security**
- **Give children the experience of being supported**
- **Validate rather than dismiss emotions**
- **Accept renewed anxiety to fearful reminders of earlier trauma**
- **Have open communication**
- **Minimise unnecessary separations**



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Consequently, parents or other significant figures need information, support, guidance and sometimes therapeutic intervention to minimise these factors. The family is the key place where a sense of security for the young person can be restored. The goals proposed for family work parallel the goals of individual interventions.

Traumatised young people need to:

- **feel that their parents or significant others understand them**
- **see that their current behaviours may be connected to their past ordeal**
- **know that their parent or other significant adult has enough emotional stamina to focus directly on them.**

Linking a young person's current problem behaviour with the previous experience of trauma has enabled families to change their pattern of behaviour towards their child.

A 12 year old girl was behaving rebelliously at home, and at the same time demanding that she be treated like a baby. She would insist on being helped with dressing and eating and constantly wanted gifts. The parents would usually respond with anger to such demands and the situation was deteriorating. Once the full history was obtained, it emerged that a grandmother who was very close to the child had died in the country of origin. She was very loving and had always showered gifts on her grandchild. It was also learned, that during flight from the war, the young girl had spent days at a time being hungry. Now, as she watched her baby sister being fed, she too wanted to be fed like that. Once the young girl's grief and meaning of food for her, was pointed out to the parents, their behaviour became more genuinely caring and led to more appropriate responses to the child's behaviour.

There are various ways in which programs for parents can be provided. One way is through induction programs in schools which introduce parents to educational aims in Australia. Another way is to offer a series of sessions in schools or community centres which offer information on the effects of settlement, the influence of previous trauma on learning, methods of attending to their children's needs, ways to establish a predictable routine and ways to discuss their children's fears and experiences.

While aiming to involve parents, it is important to be aware that they may not yet be ready to accept that their child needs help. Parents commonly express the desire to put the traumatic events behind them and begin again. As Schwartz and Perry (40) point out, “fearing re-experiencing, caregivers can be quite hostile to interventions they perceive as reminders of the trauma.” Because such resistance often results from displaced anger, cautiousness or denial, educational efforts may have limited success in the early stage of settlement.

Family therapy and/or individual therapy for family members is required if the family is highly dysfunctional and particularly where violence within the family is perpetuating trauma. It may take some time to achieve an intervention at the family level and this should be allowed for, except in the case of children assessed as being at risk of immediate harm.

A Task Force was established in the USA to provide guidelines for parents and teachers in dealing with children who had been traumatised. The guidelines are reproduced below, and even though they make children their focus, they are applicable to young people of any age living with their families.



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Recommendations by Task Force on War-Related Stress

Parents and teachers should be encouraged to listen in a non-judgmental fashion to children's thoughts, concerns, and ideas about war and trauma.

Adults should provide warmth and reassurance to children, without minimising their concerns. Children need to feel that there is a safe haven provided by strong adults.

Adults should not impose their fears or burdens on children. Parental difficulties need to be worked out without burdening children. This does not mean that children should be entirely sheltered from family difficulties, but neither should they be made to feel that it is up to them to shoulder responsibilities that are beyond their developmental capability.

Just as we said that most adults will cope effectively, even if there are rough roads to travel in the process of adjustment, children too need to be given this positive expectation. Because of their limited experience and the length of stressors such as separation from parents, it is vital that children gain this perspective.

Children's reactions will often mirror the reactions of their parents. This is a double-edged sword, however. If their parents are combating stressors effectively, the children will gain a sense that they too can overcome their difficulties. If, however, their parents are not adjusting successfully, children develop a sense that problems are insurmountable.

Children need accurate information about what has happened and why, but information that is appropriate to their developmental stage. This information should be provided before, during, and after stressful events. They also need to know why certain behaviours are required of them and usually need behavioural examples and sometimes rehearsal of behaviours that are not expected to be in their repertoire. It should not be assumed that children do not know the "dark side" of current events. Given that they have seen horrible events, it is incumbent on us to help them work through the meaning and significance of these events through discussion, support, and in cases in which a child is traumatised, professional treatment.

As with adults, children should be involved in helpful behaviours. By being part of the solution in their own classrooms, families, and communities, children will develop an enhanced sense of mastery and control over their lives and cope more effectively with war and other severe stressful events. (43)

Children who do not have Support from Families

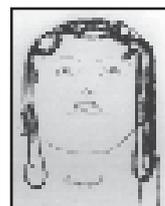
Since not all young refugees arrive in Australia as members of families or if they do, these families can break down, it is crucial to establish an emotionally supportive environment for the young person in ways other than through the family. The wider community, especially organisations, agencies and schools which have regular contact with the young person is ideally placed to provide a supportive environment.

They can undertake intervention programs and workers can be trained to attend to the needs of young refugees. Garbarino et al. (30) have extensively reported on the role of the community in enhancing the resilience of the young. They point out that social networks maintain a young person's belief that they are secure and cared for. These authors also highlight the role of the community in fostering moral development. Schools particularly can provide a democratic milieu and include discussions of moral issues in their curricula. The curriculum can also be a source to foster pride, identity and belonging. "Schools are the one system operating in the lives of all children. They are an essential part of the social environment of families and communities. Schools are critical in promoting resilience and coping" (30, p.229).

A comprehensive school in London which has 35% refugee students developed policies to support refugee children. The philosophy and procedures they have adopted can be found in Appendix 4.

Some principal considerations for community based organisations in improving responsiveness to young refugees are summarised below:

- **Identifying children at risk for ongoing problems.**
- **Considering strategies which can accommodate the interference to development caused by emotions associated with trauma such as anxiety, sadness and anger.**



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- **Normalising reactions to social and learning situations caused by previous experience of trauma and resettlement.**
- **Facilitating recovery directly by enhancing control, providing models of care, rekindling trust, and promoting moral development.**

2.3.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKER AND THE YOUNG PERSON

Establishing the Relationship

The quality of the relationship with a young survivor of trauma is the foundation upon which the effectiveness of any intervention rests. A consistent predictable relationship where the worker is caring, genuine and warm provides the basis for allowing the young person's sense of security, value and trust in others to grow.

Whether contact is brief or long, genuine interest in the well-being of the young person conveys respect and helps restore dignity. It is usual for the young survivor of trauma to have experienced first hand the failure of the adult world to protect him or her. The witnessing of violence instils in a child the sense that the world is unsafe. Encountering an adult who offers assistance and seems to understand their feelings can rekindle a belief in a safe world.

Fear of the Relationship

The young person's reaction to the worker can range from one of caution and suspicion to one of clinging and extreme dependency. Caution is often necessary as a self-protective mechanism because intense fear is evoked by the prospect of a new attachment. Renewed loss and rejection are feared. The young person may also fear being overwhelmed by distressing emotions, if longing for people resurfaces.

With the self disclosure of painful, shameful and guilt-ridden experience, some level of dependence inevitably develops. Dependence and trust can alternate with distrust, anger and disappointment. Closeness is often followed by distance and failure to attend appointments. The capacity for the worker to tolerate such changes, understand them and discuss why they are occurring is necessary (44).

Testing of the Relationship

Adolescents, in particular, test adults for their sense of fair play and genuineness. After experiencing and witnessing violence and atrocities perpetrated by adults, the adolescent readily holds people as highly accountable for their behaviour. They want to know if an adult is good or bad, fair or unfair, as well as whether they are genuinely caring. This examination of the 'adult world' occurs in all adolescents with the development of the ability to see adults as people with foibles. It is a time when parents who may have been seen as ideal become normal. In fact, faults tend to be exaggerated. At the VFST, counsellors report adolescent sensitivity to the behaviour of the worker and it is important to be prepared for, and be accepting of scrutiny, whether contact is short-term or long-term.

Communicating the Capacity to Understand

Saying what your role is as a worker, explaining the purpose of your contact and indicating your availability are vital. Letting the young person know that you have worked with other children who have experienced terrible events and had to settle in a new country conveys your capacity to understand and not be hurt by what they may choose to reveal.

Their experience of other adults including their parents is likely to be one of having been told that it is best to forget and "just get on". Other young people have correctly assumed that their parents will become disturbed if they are faced with a child who is distressed or behaving "badly". Such factors clearly contribute to the young person not expecting to be understood.



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Validating rather than Dismissing Emotions

Central to the counselling process is the exploration of emotions and their meaning, so that they can be assimilated and controlled when excessively intense. Straker (31) uses the idea of “woundedness” to explain to South African adolescents the purpose of talking about trauma. “... just as people are physically wounded by township violence, so too are they wounded in their emotions and feelings. Failure to treat these wounds can lead to a diminishing ability to pursue self-appointed goals and to operate effectively in the world” (p49). In most settings where extensive exploration and working through are not possible, it is nevertheless extremely valuable to not stifle the expression of emotions.

Expression of emotions is commonly avoided for fear that the feelings will get out of control. This is a fear for both the young person and the worker. Where sadness, anxiety, anger and shame are persistent and intense and cannot be managed by the young person, consultation with the family and/or counselling are required. Otherwise, emotional expression provides relief, and opportunities to express feelings through story-telling, art, drama and other special activities are to be encouraged.

Specific guidelines for dealing with the disclosure of traumatic material have been described and activities which can be used to promote the expression of feelings in a safe structured group setting are included in Section 3.

Availability and Predictability

The older adolescent is old enough to choose the extent of their involvement with the worker. Younger adolescents, however, have less control in this respect and it is the responsibility of the adult to convey the nature of their availability and not promise more than can be delivered. In any context, the worker needs to be clear about the period of time that they will be available to a young person. It is harmful to begin a process which engages a young person’s trust and then end it prematurely.

Periods of separation which occur due to planned absences such as leave are important to prepare for. Explaining the effects of separation communicates to the young person that their welfare is important.

Maximising Control and Setting Limits

Whatever the context, allowing the young person as much control as possible in the relationship is important. They should be able to say as little as they like, have a role in saying how much contact they want and importantly, they need to have control over the depth of the relationship. However, maximising their control whilst setting appropriate limits on behaviour such as coming late or missing appointments is delicate. One should be explicit about the expectations you have, give reasons for them and ask the young person you are seeing for their response to your expectations.

Gender Sensitivity

The gender of the worker is an important factor influencing a young person's perception of the worker's trustworthiness and capability to be genuinely supportive. In some situations, though, gender is not the paramount issue for the young person compared with the ethnic or political background of the worker.

In a counselling setting, the young person should be given the choice of a male or female worker. In other settings such as a school classroom situation, this is not possible. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware that a young person's reluctance to trust a worker could be the result of them having been sexually assaulted and this needs to be allowed for. Having recognised this potential barrier, the principles for forming a quality relationship, which were outlined above, apply.



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However, where there has been a history of sexual assault, gender is a critical consideration. Both males and females can be victims of sexual assault, although the majority are females. In virtually all reported cases, males are the perpetrators.

Generally, young women who have been victims of sexual assaults avoid men out of fear. However, other young women, especially those who are homeless, may become involved in relationships with men out of a need to avoid isolation. These relationships can be characterised by violence and other forms of abuse. Young women in this situation have eventually revealed to their counsellors at the VFST that this is the only type of relationship they deserve. Their deep sense of self-hate as a result of earlier rape, lies behind this predicament.

Another traumatic consequence for women is the bearing of unwanted babies as a result of rape. This has led to suicide and certainly shame and stigmatisation.

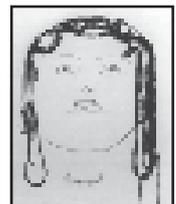
Trauma is also heightened by the second-class status accorded to females in some cultures and societies and they are more likely to have received less education and less food. Women and girls are particularly at risk of gender based discrimination in regard to delivery of goods and services, exploitation and violence during flight and in refugee camps.

Gender-based considerations are also vital in the domain of service provision. Refugee young women often have a reduced capacity to access support. It has already been mentioned that because of fears of ostracisation, young women are unlikely to disclose experiences of sexual assault.

Consideration needs to be given as to how each culture understands gender roles. There may be quite diverse expectations between and within cultures around young women and the education levels they are expected to reach, the type of employment they aim for, their responsibilities as mothers and home-makers, how they dress and relate to others in public settings. Equally there may be quite different expectations for young male refugee roles. It needs to be recognised that those cultural expectations are likely to be in contrast with those expected in mainstream Australian culture. This forces the young person to straddle the expectations of two cultures.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP

- **Consistency and predictability of the relationship.**
- **The worker shows a caring attitude, genuineness and warmth.**
- **Accepting fluctuations in the young person's behaviour which may include caution, suspicion, clinginess, dependency, 'testing' the worker and anger.**
- **Conveying knowledge of the refugee experience.**
- **Preparing for separations.**
- **Maximising the young person's control.**
- **Limit setting.**
- **Gender Sensitivity.**



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2.3.4 CULTURAL CONTEXT

People from ethnic communities are often assumed to be from monocultural or homogenous societies. However, this is obviously not the case as issues of class, gender, ethnicity and religious backgrounds interact to produce cultural identity and diversity in any community. It is very important to develop an understanding of the cultural context from which a young person has come and how that may differ from the one in which they are currently engaged. Stereotyping communities and individuals from those communities needs to be avoided. For example the cultural framework for understanding of an illiterate peasant farmer from rural Cambodia may be very different to that of an educated middle class professional from Phnom Penh. Consequently an intervention which may be appropriate for one of these people will be different to that required for the other even though they are both Cambodian.

Sensitivity to the cultural context when working with young refugees is necessary to any form of intervention undertaken. Culture is the frame of reference from which the world, life and relationships are encountered. Every person carries with them a cultural reality which includes their linguistic position, spiritual or religious involvement and their basic beliefs about self, community, health and illness.

Cultural reality determines:

- the subjective meaning of violence or trauma
- the way in which the distress associated with violence is experienced and reported
- the type and extent of general support available to the individual
- the types of appropriate intervention. (45)

Subjective meaning of trauma

The impact of violence and traumatic events depends on the meaning given to the event rather than on its ostensible horrific nature. The infliction of suffering, for example, can be given a less destructive meaning in the context of certain religious and spiritual beliefs. On the other hand, suffering can be intensified. For example the sense of loss can be compounded by not being able to carry out certain mourning rites which put the dead person to rest.

The existence of a political analysis or active involvement in a political movement will often provide a survivor with a framework for understanding why they have suffered. In most circumstances where the survivor has not been politically active or has no political analysis, questions such as why me and what have I done to deserve such treatment, etc, confound and limit them finding meaning in their experience. Given that many young refugees were only children when they first experienced trauma, they are more likely to fall within the latter group.

The experience of distress

In some cultures, distress is experienced primarily as somatic complaints such as headaches, constipation and eczema. Therefore interventions have to consider such complaints as the initial if not primary focus. It is useful to ask the young person what they think is wrong, what they think the cause is and whether they have found anything which helps. Some young people may be reluctant to reveal traditional beliefs for fear of being ridiculed. It is also helpful to be aware that asking too many questions may seem puzzling to a young person because they may expect you to know what the problem is and what would help. In a study of Cambodian young people's attitude toward mental health problems, it was found that explanations included the religious or spiritual, the supernatural, social-political causes and the medical. Expectations of helpful treatments expressed by young people included - following Buddhist ways - getting married, using a traditional healer to intervene with supernatural forces and having willpower and a strong mind (46).



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Availability of Support

Commonly, cohesiveness and political solidarity determine how the traumas of war are experienced and coped with. This is particularly relevant for young refugees who remain close to and identify with their country of origin.

One of the biggest problems for young survivors of rape is that, as a result of social stigmatisation, they are alienated from the community and left without support.

Type of appropriate intervention

“When it comes to responding to the effects of violence, western style psychotherapy can have the effect of individualising the suffering of the person involved. Psychotherapy of this mode might be inappropriate and indeed harmful in more sociocentric societies where the individual’s recovery is intimately bound up with the recovery of the main community” (39).

With increasing awareness of the inappropriateness of psychotherapeutic interventions, it is equally important not to succumb to a prejudice against such approaches. Counselling is not restricted to talking and can and should take account of any young person’s cultural reality.

Culture-specific healing practices can be the most appropriate form of intervention.

An East Timorese boy aged 13 was terrified that the spirit of his aunt, who had been killed under violent circumstances in East Timor, kept visiting the house at night. The family would leave food and drink for the aunt at night and they would be gone in the morning. His fear was so intense he would not get up at night to go to the toilet or be alone in the house at all, even in daylight. The family called in a Catholic priest who blessed the house and the family prayed for the soul of the departed aunt. The young boy’s fears were alleviated immediately with the belief that his aunt was at rest.

Understanding the cultural reality of young people requires knowledge of their views and awareness of the possible ways in which cultural differences can be expressed. Understanding is complicated by the fact that young refugees are bridging two cultures and are likely to be struggling with this to a much greater extent than adults or young children. The worker can engage with the young person in the task of resolving where he or she belongs and in discovering their cultural identity.

Cross-cultural interactions also entail informing the young person of the worker's culture - at individual, institutional and societal levels. This gives the young person more control over the choices they make, which is critical, given their developmental stage.

2.3.5 INDICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

It can be difficult to know if a young person needs a referral for counselling. Normally, it is necessary to have observed a young person's behaviour over time to know if they are having difficulties which do not seem to improve. Where a worker believes that there is a persistent problem, they should be discussed with the young person first. A successful referral always requires the agreement of the young person, except in the following circumstances:

- where the young person is at imminent risk of doing serious harm to themselves
- where the young person is at imminent risk of doing serious harm to others
- when the young person is psychotic.

Protocols for handling these situations, which are not peculiar to young survivors of torture and trauma, should be developed at an organisational level.

(Adolescent Mental Health Services are listed in Appendix 5)



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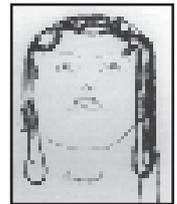
Any of the symptoms described in Section I suggest the need for a referral for counselling if they are persistent. Some of the symptoms are listed in the box below.

The following, where persistent, suggest the need for a referral:

- **uncontrolled or frequent crying or other extreme reactions to mildly stressful events**
- **sleep problems - too much or too little**
- **depression**
- **anxiety**
- **anger**
- **stress-related physical illness: headaches, stomach aches**
- **inability to forget traumatic scenes**
- **excessive ruminating or preoccupation with one idea**
- **blunting of emotions**
- **suicidal thoughts/plans**
- **extreme dependency and clinging**
- **nightmares**
- **excessive physiological startle**

The following, where persistent, strongly suggest the need for a referral:

- **Fear or threats of harm to self or others**
- **Extreme withdrawal, no emotional response**
- **Self destructive despair**
- **Marked agitation**
- **Frequent retelling of a traumatic event**
- **Uncontrolled activity**
- **Inability to care for oneself hygienically**
- **Marked irritability**
- **Fits of temper**
- **Auditory hallucinations (hearing voices)**
- **Bizarre, irrational beliefs**



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In making a referral for counselling, the following guidelines are recommended. Although as a worker you may see the need for a referral, it may not be possible to achieve one for some time. Where it cannot be achieved immediately, plan future meetings to discuss the situation again.

For young people older than fifteen, approach them individually in private and express what you have noticed in the way of a difficulty and how this has led you to wonder if they think they are having a problem with the current situation.

- Ask what might make things easier and whether you can help in any way.

- Let them know that it is not unusual for young people to feel that way, particularly if they have experienced hardships and violence before coming to Australia.
- Ask if they have had any bad experiences, prior to arrival or since arrival, which they may not want to talk about but they think might be affecting them.
- Ask if they are having problems which have to do with not being able to concentrate or if they are having difficulty sleeping or if they are crying a lot when alone.
- Ask if they would like some help with their problems.
- Discuss possibilities for help. Options will depend on the context in which you work.

For young people under the age of fifteen consultation with parents or another carer is needed.

- Inform them about what you have noticed in the way of a difficulty.
- Ask if they have noticed any difficulties at home - sleeplessness, irritability, anger, withdrawal, or crying a lot.
- Ask them if they think these difficulties are connected to any bad experiences they or their child may have had before coming to Australia and/or since arriving in Australia.
- Discuss the possibility of getting additional help.
- If they are receptive, discuss the possibility of a referral to an appropriate agency. If a service specialising in torture and trauma is the most suitable referral point, tell them about the VFST. Ask if they would like to be assisted in making the referral. Other state torture and trauma services are listed in Appendix 5.
- If it seems unlikely that they will pursue a referral with your assistance, plan another meeting with them in the future to discuss what is happening.

2.3.6 EMOTIONAL RESPONSES OF WORKERS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

It is recognised that there is a range of feelings evoked by working with young torture and trauma survivors which can powerfully influence ways of responding to them, as well as affecting the worker's personal life. Understanding these reactions and how to deal with them is vital in effective work with young people.

Emotional Responses

Helplessness

Feelings of helplessness can arise when confronted with another person's helplessness and with the awareness of torture practices, other forms of state sanctioned violence and war atrocities. The sense of helplessness can lead to a loss of confidence in one's skills and knowledge and in the power of any intervention. It can also lead to an underestimation of the child or adolescent's resources (44).

Herman (44), writing about adult psychotherapeutic encounters, points out that the therapist can adopt the role of a rescuer as a defence against intense feelings of helplessness.

"As a defence against the unbearable feeling of helplessness, the therapist may take on more and more of an advocacy role for the patient. By so doing, she implies that the patient is not capable of acting for herself. The more the therapist accepts the idea that the patient is helpless, the more she disempowers the patient.

Many seasoned and experienced therapists, who are ordinarily scrupulously observant of the limits of the therapy relationship, find themselves violating the bounds of therapy and assuming the role of a rescuer. The therapist may feel obliged to extend the limits of therapy sessions or to allow frequent emergency contacts between sessions. She may find herself answering phone calls late at night, on weekends, or even vacation" (pp.142-143).



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Judgements about helping too much or “rescuing” can be difficult to make. If for example, one considers the aid worker who enters a war zone, is this rescuing or is it a responsible act? Judgements about whether one is taking too much responsibility are also difficult to make in the case of the very young because they are helpless to understand their feelings without assistance and certainly helpless to significantly change their environment.

Nevertheless, awareness of one’s limits is vital. Where an overprotective attitude or a need to solve everything dominates, one may simply become exhausted from doing everything. It can lead to a reluctance to let others do anything because they cannot do it as well. This can also develop into an intolerance of outsiders and of alternative approaches (41).

Awareness of a young person’s helplessness can be particularly difficult because it threatens adult’s power and need to protect.

Guilt

Guilt about being exempt from trauma and suffering and guilt about not taking enough action against the violation of others, can be experienced by workers. Danieli (47) refers to this as ‘bystander guilt’ and describes the effects on one’s work. It can lead to viewing the survivor as being extremely fragile and vulnerable, overlooking what they have done in order to survive. Therefore, one can try to do too much for them and take excessive responsibility, or one might avoid painful topics for fear of inducing more hurt. The worker’s reactions can mirror the client’s, in that it is easier to feel guilty rather than helpless.

Herman’s comments about therapists apply to other professionals. “The therapist may feel that her own actions are faulty or inadequate. She may judge herself harshly for insufficient therapeutic zeal or social commitment and come to feel that only a limitless dedication can compensate for her shortcomings” (44, p.145).

Guilt as a problem for workers, comes to the fore for those involved in refugee aid. In the field they are allocated food and shelter and offered protection from infectious diseases while refugees are in receipt of less. In such a situation, eating can be a source of discomfort and guilt when others are hungry (48). Even in the absence of such stark contrasts, enjoyment of life can be impaired by this awareness of what others do not have.

Another source of guilt can stem from compromises one has to make, such as not being able to provide the same level of attention for all in need. Compromises also have to be made in accommodating the effects of government policy or in the ways one can influence government policy.

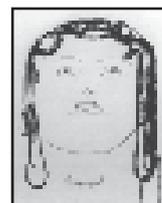
Anger

Anger is also part of the worker's response to traumatic material - anger at the perpetrator, anger at bystanders, anger at society's lack of responsiveness and anger at the young person's family for their failure to protect.

Anger can readily be followed by dismay. Initially some workers angrily ask how people, who appeared to have been bystanders could let atrocities occur.

For others there is the shock of realisation as they begin to understand (in human terms) why people watched or overcomplied with orders - out of obedience, fear, or a need for power. This is in some ways similar to the distress experienced by workers who are able to "enter the mind of the perpetrator". McCarroll et al (49) report the case of a historian working on Holocaust archival material, who in attempting to understand the historical event, felt that he had succeeded in getting into the mind of the perpetrator. The ability to identify was traumatic.

Anger can also be provoked by the young person's aggressive behaviour, non-compliance or disobedience. Anger at a child or adolescent is the hardest to admit to but it can be evoked when they make excessive demands or when they reveal their prejudices. This can particularly apply to parents. Some workers believe that individuals who have suffered



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so much at the hands of prejudice, hate and oppression should transcend such feelings in their relationships with others. There can be an expectancy that survivors be morally superior. A survivor with normal foibles can be difficult to accept.

A sense of mild hostility and alienation can also develop as a sense of disappointment with friends and colleagues who do not seem to understand. Social activity can come to look trivial and be declined. A lack of trust in others and cynicism regarding their motives is not unusual (47).

Dread and Horror

Dread and horror are common reactions, as are sadness, disgust, shame and revulsion. There can be fear of being overwhelmed by such feelings and as workers can fear being drawn into blackness and despair. "The survivor's eyes have actually seen what is described. To look into eyes with that knowledge is not easy" (47).

Other forms of dread can be evoked by a young person's anger, fear of not being able to help and fears of having personal painful memories brought back - memories of being humiliated or memories of regretted actions against others.

Idealisation

On occasions, there is a tendency of helpers to view survivors as heroic, superhuman figures to be held in awe. This can lead to a feeling of inadequacy in the worker, because they do not know the true secrets of survival. It can lead to neglecting and minimising their own pain and suffering. Idealisation can alternate with devaluing and anger.

"Life is no longer the same. If beatings, starvation, torture and mass killings can happen to our patients, they can happen to us. There is an increased awareness of the dangers of hatred and brutality that lie behind the mask of civilisation we all wear, a sense of being more vulnerable to life's dangers" (53, p.257). Intolerance to violence can develop. It has been reported that amongst psychiatrists at a psychiatric clinic for South-

east Asian refugees in Oregon, USA, news reports of violence produced such distress that they had to be avoided (53).

Avoidance Reactions

Helpers also can react to potentially overwhelming emotions associated with trauma by distancing themselves from people who are victims. Denial, detachment and withdrawal are characteristic responses. All workers are detached at times. Counsellors report noticing how they do not seem to feel anything at times. McCarroll et al. (49) report that many of the workers involved in establishing the Holocaust Museum in Washington reported a lack of feeling in response to their work. This resulted in guilt and fear over a loss of sensitivity.

In the therapeutic context, detachment can be enacted by avoiding traumatic material and by being excessively professional and intellectual (50).

Reichenberg and Friedman (3) understand the tendency of workers to encourage children to bury, hide or forget experiences as being a way of allowing one's own denial.

Fulfilment

Growth, a deeper awareness of the human condition, a valuing of closeness, increased sensitivity and the capacity for sharing and living fully, can be the benefits of being exposed to survival amidst the horror of war and trauma. As a worker one also experiences the privilege of witnessing the power of courage and the strength of compassion and renewed hope. Being able to do something is immensely satisfying.

Implications for Practice

In work which is emotionally intense and where personal commitment is strong, it is crucial that workers develop a third eye or "observer ego", to see and understand what is happening between themselves and their client. Such awareness necessitates a degree of detachment which ultimately enables one to act in the best interests of a young person.



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Taking excessive responsibility is probably the most common pitfall. Considering the above there are many reasons for it: needing to do something to overcome feelings of helplessness, protecting the survivor from further abuse and the need to restore hope and faith in humanity. Awareness of the circumstances of the newly arrived young refugee who has survived torture and trauma, tempts anyone in a helping capacity to extend their efforts to improving systems they are part of and to increase community awareness. This is clearly desirable but one has to constantly examine the limits of personal responsibility.

Risk Factors for Burnout

At times, despair and disillusionment can outweigh spirited efforts and lead to 'burnout'.

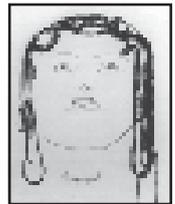
RISK FACTORS FOR BURNOUT

- **Too high demands from self**
- **Too high demands from others and the situation**
- **Lack of resources, personnel and time**
- **Lack of control over the situation**
- **Lack of support from leaders, organisations, colleagues**
- **Unrealistic expectations**
- **Lack of acceptance and acknowledgment from others**

To deal with emotional reactions to traumatic events, the following recommendations apply (48).

1. To recognise one's reactions by developing awareness of the signals of distress and by trying to find words to articulate one's inner experiences and feelings.
2. To contain one's reactions by identifying one's personal level of comfort and by understanding that reactions are normal and unlikely to be overwhelming if their phasic nature is recognised.
3. To grow, accepting that being influenced is to be expected and to share trauma-related work with others. Allowing for relaxing self-expression is important.

In addition to the above, dealing with one's reactions involves recognising that it is an ongoing process of thoughtfulness and acknowledgment of conflict.



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2.3.7 CONCLUSION

The intervention strategies described in this section enable the recovery of young refugees who have experienced torture or trauma. They apply when working with individuals in settings which include supported accommodation, community centres, recreational programs and schools. Certain principles of care need to be emphasised. They parallel those recommended for establishing a quality relationship.

PRINCIPLES OF CARE

- **Predictability**
- **Continuity of support**
- **Genuine interest in the welfare of the young person**
- **Understanding the causes of behaviour based on knowledge of the reaction to trauma**
- **Maximising the young person's control**
- **Setting attainable goals**
- **Validating emotions**
- **Working with the family where appropriate**
- **Tailoring specific interventions to the nature of the problem**
- **Being aware of one's own reactions and adhering to principles of responsibility and appropriate levels of professional involvement**

In the next section, group programs are outlined which aim to promote recovery. They are also applicable for use in a range of settings.

3



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3.1 INTRODUCTION

The multiple and far reaching effects of torture, trauma and other refugee related experiences have been described in detail in the framework. In essence, fear continues long after the apparent cessation of trauma, due to the shock caused by experiencing and witnessing horrific events. This shock has social, psychological and physiological impact. Enormous loss is normally part of the trauma. Parents and family members can be killed, violently assaulted or become incapable of looking after children emotionally. Provision of basic needs essential for survival cannot always be counted on during flight and temporary settlement in refugee camps. Notions of justice, rights and questions of what is good and bad, safe or unsafe are challenged at the deepest level.

It is a fallacy to believe that children are relatively unaffected because of their age or natural resilience. The young are most susceptible to internalising the way they are treated. A young person who is abused believes that they are worthless and that the world is not a safe place. Such inner devaluing has long term consequences. It produces expectations of failure, which become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Feelings of inadequacy are compensated for by an overly aggressive stand toward others. Helplessness is such a distressing experience that young people are driven to protect themselves from such feelings. Sometimes the protection is useful and manifests itself as a striving toward success, excellence and commitment to others at personal and community levels. At other times, the protection amounts to avoidance of any situation which requires risk. This is most striking in the case of young people who need to learn, but cannot, because it is too frightening to fail.

Inner worth and the meaning of one's place in the community, are essential for long-term recovery. This is best achieved through communication and interaction with other people. Sometimes the level of distrust in others, or intensity of grief, is such that participation in groups such as a classroom situation is frightening. For children who are so frightened it may be necessary to rekindle their trust, by first fostering a relationship with a caring adult. Section Two indicates ways that this might be done.



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For many young people this is not necessary, but they need the opportunity to discover what they are capable of and what they can expect of themselves, others and the community at large. This is best achieved in a safe group setting, where the sense of isolation and alienation can be reduced and inter-personal and personal resources explored.

To this end, the VFST undertook running a number of groups for young refugees aged between 14-24. Some groups were designed to be conducted with current clients who were receiving individual counselling. The objectives of these groups were to promote communication, interpersonal trust and self identity. Other groups were designed to be conducted in schools, to reach young refugees who would not necessarily be expected to be referred to the VFST. The group objectives were the same, but the aim was to contribute to the prevention of problems developing, as well as to enhance recovery processes.

3.2 REFLECTING ABOUT GROUPS

The Foundation embarked on running six groups, in order to learn about the effectiveness of groups with young refugees who had experienced trauma or torture. Rather than having a formal evaluation structure, an action reflection framework was chosen. Such a process demands honesty and risk taking by facilitators. It requires of them an ability to critique their own practice, to share that analysis, and to be able to change direction if required. This way of working was not without its difficulties. Facilitators keenly felt the ups and downs of group work. They learnt that much preparation and communication needed to occur, for them to effectively co-facilitate and that at times they had to deal with differences of opinion or style. Overall, Foundation workers showed enormous commitment, not only to running the groups using their best practice, but also being committed to helping the Foundation and others learn.

From these experiences it appears that groups can be a most effective way of intervening with young people who have experienced trauma or torture. However, while the experiences can be shared, there is also a wariness to over-generalise. Sometimes what was concluded after running one group was then contradicted in the next.

The Foundation learnt that the effectiveness of a group could be influenced by a range of variables relating to facilitators and their style, the different experiences of participants, the nature of the content and the group setting. Each group needed to be run with its special characteristics in mind. We also realised that the session outlines may be suitable for young people who have not come as refugees but would be assisted by a process of self exploration.



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3.2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE GROUPS

The Foundation began by running three separate groups as a pilot. Workers reflected on their work, made changes to the groups and then ran them again.

- **‘About Us; Our Past, Present and Future’**

It was established as an opportunity for young refugee women who already had contact with the Foundation. It offered them a way to get support from peers, address issues related to coping with their past trauma experiences, and build self identity and a sense of the future. It was first structured as a four day camp. The group was run the second time within a school. There were four sessions, then a three day camp and a final brief closing session.

- **‘Kaleidoscope: Cultures and Identity’**

This group initially included material from a program called ‘Juggling Cultures’ developed in Canada. (51) It was adapted by the Foundation to be used with a mixed gender group of young refugees attending school. Working alongside the teacher, the group was run for six weeks. With further adaptations the second group was also set in a language centre, with a similar group of participants.

- **Talking’s Tough** was an eight week structured group for young men of refugee background. The first group comprised young men known to the counselling and support staff of the Foundation. The repeat running of the group was set in a school, with a two night camp included before the last session.

The outline of these groups appears in Section 4.

3.2.2 AIM OF THE GROUPS

As each of the three groups is designed for young people who are likely to have experienced traumatic life experiences associated with being a refugee, their aims are very similar.

- One aim is to **break down social isolation resulting from previous trauma experiences and compounded by cultural dislocation and resettlement**. The restoration of trust and building of communication skills is integral to this process. The group setting helps participants realise that they are not alone and that others share some of their beliefs and feelings. This discovery assists with normalising their experiences and difficulties.

- A second and related aim is the **development of self identity, which involves the integration of past experiences, an understanding of their influence on the present and helping the young person explore their view of the future**. The past includes reviewing previous expectations of the future, and their role in family and community. The present helps participants explore self perceptions and their belief about how they are perceived. The future looks at how they see their lives becoming - exploring such issues as work/study options, and family/marriage roles.

The group content also includes looking at cross cultural experiences, racism and the shifting of roles and expectations since arriving in Australia. Young people normally have little opportunity to take time to consider these major issues. In the case of young refugees the dislocated nature of their lives as children makes such reflections even more difficult.

- The third aim is to **identify emotions which influence everyday behaviour** and to look at ways to deal with them as well as to enhance those which promote well being.



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3.2.3 RATIONALE FOR GROUP WORK

GROUP WORK IS A POWERFUL INTERVENTION STRATEGY TO ASSIST YOUNG REFUGEES TO:

- **share their experiences with others**
- **be in control of the degree of self disclosure they wish to make**
- **generate ways of affirming their sense of self**
- **normalise experiences they have had**
- **have an opportunity to trust others**
- **encourage self exploration**

Group work is a powerful intervention strategy to assist young refugees in coping and adjusting to their lives in Australia. An affirming and trusting group environment creates an opportunity where young people who have experienced refugee related trauma can share their experiences with others, be in control of the degree of self disclosure they wish to make and, with the aid of the group leaders, generate ways of affirming their sense of self.

By sharing their stories with others facing similar problems, the group process can be used to normalise experiences participants had, either in their country of origin, during their journey to Australia and/or since arriving in Australia. Taking part in the group can provide participants with the opportunity to trust others and to value the process of self exploration as a way of achieving change. Trust in oneself can also be enhanced.

The groups are felt to be unsuitable for extremely vulnerable young people who, because of their torture and trauma experience, are too afraid to risk disclosing anything about themselves, or are extremely suspicious of others. Young refugees who are very depressed may also be unable to participate. These people need to be offered the opportunity of working individually with a counsellor advocate.

It is recognised that for asylum seekers who do not know whether they will be given permission to stay in Australia, it is often difficult for them to contemplate the future. Facilitators need to openly acknowledge this source of anxiety and uncertainty.

3.2.4 ONE GENDER AND MIXED GENDER GROUPS

The choice whether a group is one gender or mixed gender depends largely on the rationale of the group.

Of the three different groups run by the Foundation, one is for young women, one for young men and the third of mixed gender. **There are a number of reasons for gender specific groups.** Some young women may have been sexually abused by male perpetrators. For others, religious or cultural factors mean that adolescent females are forbidden to mix with young males. Consequently a female focus is essential. For the all male group, having only males attending creates an environment where young men feel comfortable expressing themselves, without the added complication of having to do so in front of young women. It also allows the young men to express vulnerability around emotions, such as fear, and to have space to discuss more personal issues such as sexuality.

The **mixed gender group** is specifically designed to build on the strengths of having young men and women together. It offers opportunities for participants to build their confidence in relating to the other sex and opens up possibilities for broader discussion.



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3.2.5 GENDER AND FACILITATORS

The gender of the facilitators also needs to be thought about carefully and depends substantially on the rationale for the group.

With the six groups, same sex group leaders facilitated each group. This was done for the purposes of role modelling, sharing gender experience and ensuring safety. Opportunities to bring in opposite sex leaders as interpreters, recreational leaders or in other roles, nevertheless should not be ruled out. Cross gender leadership could well be used in some groups, particularly as a role model for good relationships. It may be appropriate, for example in the mixed gender group, to have facilitators of different genders, but unsuitable for a young women's residential camp.

3.2.6 AGE

The content of the three groups is most suited to older adolescents who are often more interested in indepth reflection. Never-the-less the material can be adapted to suit younger teenagers.

Adapting the material for younger participants can be done by placing greater emphasis on activities which require less intense reflection and concentration. It is also best to avoid having participants with a broad range of ages together. The needs of nineteen year olds are very different to those of fourteen year olds. They are more likely to be wanting to explore adult issues, such as sex and marriage, and less concerned about issues which appeal to fourteen year olds.



Different activities appeal to different age groups.
Groups function best if they do not span a broad age range.

Involving young people in groups requires the recognition that they are less predictable in attendance and behaviour than other age groups. This needs to be accommodated within the program in a range of ways.

- The group format needs to be structured so that it is accepting of people who may attend erratically and enables them to fit into the group without having taken part in a previous session.
- This process is assisted by being welcoming and non judgemental, giving an overview of earlier sessions, and structuring the format so that it enables less regular attenders to get to know other participants.
- Facilitators must also be mindful that young people attending regularly must be given the opportunity to express their frustration, if people who say they will come, do not arrive.
- Where the building of group cohesion is undermined by irregular attendance, facilitators need to consider whether picking up participants and bringing them to the group would assist. This does involve, however, considerable use of resources.
- Facilitators may also wish to set group rules which require regular attendance and do not permit new participants joining the group after the first few weeks.

3.2.7 ETHNICITY

Working with young people who are refugees means that it is very likely the group will have participants from a range of ethnic backgrounds.

Young people are usually enthusiastic to learn about each other's culture and experiences. Sessions can be structured to give opportunities for this learning. Two groups, 'Kaleidoscope' and 'About Us' use a world map so that each person can point out their homeland and the route they took to come to Australia. Participants are also asked to bring something from their country to share. These might be items such as



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clothing, a piece of art or some other memorabilia. The discussion that results is animated as people enjoy telling others about their homelands. Sometimes discussion about culture arises quite spontaneously. Facilitators need to be open to changing the session format on the spur of the moment, to make the most of the learning opportunity. In the 'Kaleidoscope' group, facilitators noticed at the end of a session that when saying goodbye some participants used gestures traditional to their culture. The following session diverted from the planned format, to explore with participants the many different traditional ways of saying goodbye. This activity was fun and energised the group, as each person had something to contribute and differences were celebrated. In subsequent sessions participants placed special emphasis on their goodbyes, a theme which helped build cohesion in the group.

While sessions are planned to explore and celebrate cultural differences, facilitators should be prepared for the possibility of tension between different cultures.

They need an understanding as to why this tension might be happening and therefore the most effective way to intervene. Racial tension was evident in one residential camp. Insufficient time had gone into the early planning stages. Consequently, there had been little opportunity for participants to get to know each other beforehand and the rather cramped camp-setting contributed to tense relationships between participants. The second running of the group avoided this problem. Facilitators structured in a number of sessions before the camp, which gave people the opportunity to learn about each other in a less intense environment. They also made sure that the camp was held at a site where there was plenty of physical recreation and living space.

3.2.8 INTERPRETERS

Any group that involves participants who have been refugees is likely to include people from a variety of cultures and with a range of English language skills.

Facilitators should decide before the group begins whether they need to arrange for interpreters. Interpreters were used in the 'Talking's Tough' group where the level of language competency of participants was quite varied. The interpreter was particularly important in helping the facilitators give everyone a more equal opportunity to participate and to give feedback about how participants were going.

Using an interpreter in a group setting is not without major difficulties

The interpreting process can significantly hold up conversation, stifle spontaneity and inhibit group dynamics. It is also almost impossible to have more than one interpreter working within a discussion group at the same time. Where the format requires the big group splitting into small groups, this may restrict the interpreter from interpreting for all who need them.

Given these complexities, interpreters should only be used with a group of refugee young people where there appears to be no alternative.

Where participants' English skills are sufficient for them to understand what is being communicated, it is better for facilitators to speak slowly and pace their presentations accordingly, rather than bring in interpreters.



Groups Function best where there is compatibility around language skills. Where the skills are relatively even facilitators are more likely to get by with simpler language and slower pacing.

Facilitators need to appreciate that interpreters who have had similar experiences to participants may also feel vulnerable during the group process.



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It is important that the interpreter does not become a participant. They need to be well briefed before hand about the aim of the group. There also needs to be very specific discussion about what is expected of their role. At the end of the session they must be offered the opportunity to debrief with facilitators.

Where interpreters will be used throughout the life of the group it is best to have the same interpreter attend each session. This helps create continuity and increases the possibility of a sense of safety and trust being built within the group.

3.3 RUNNING A GROUP

3.3.1 PREPARATION FOR THE GROUP

One of the most important things in preparing for a group is the importance of investing sufficient time in the preparation phase.

Many issues need to be thought through, including those relating to the preparation of any group, irrespective of who it is designed for. These range from being clear about what the aim of the group is, who it is for, the structure to be used, where it will be located, who will be the facilitators and how they will work together. A checklist indicating general issues that need to be thought about in setting up a group for young people who are refugees can be found in Appendix 6.

Resource Implications of Running Groups

Groups are not a way for organisations to provide a cheaper service than providing individual counselling. When good practice principles are used, they are in fact resource intensive. As much time needs to go into the preparation and finishing of the group as it does into running the groups. Groups should be used because they are seen to produce a different and perhaps more appropriate intervention, particularly a preventative one, but not because they are cost effective. Consequently any organisation contemplating running a group needs to be aware of the resource implications.

There are a range of issues which specifically relate to working with a group of young people who have had trauma or torture experiences. The following section addresses these.



As much time needs to be set aside to prepare and finish up a group as there is allocated to actually run the group.



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3.3.2 GROUP WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA OR TORTURE

SOME PREPARATORY TASKS ARE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT WHEN WORKING WITH PARTICIPANTS WHO HAVE HAD TRAUMA OR TORTURE EXPERIENCES

- **Facilitators need to have knowledge about participants before the group begins.**
- **Time needs to be spent briefing the young person about what to expect.**
- **It is important to understand participants' fears and assess how challenging or supportive the facilitators need to be.**
- **Building trust and a sense of safety is quite crucial.**
- **Facilitators must take into consideration that people work through the experience of trauma differently.**

It is important for facilitators to either know or at least have knowledge about participants before the group begins. Where participants are already clients, time needs to be spent briefing the young person about what to expect, making sure they feel comfortable about attending, as well as building a picture for the facilitators about the needs of each of the prospective participants. It is particularly important to understand their fears and therefore assess how challenging or supportive facilitators need to be. Where facilitators are not able to get to know participants before the group, such as where they are working with a school class, it is essential that they are well briefed by someone who does know each participant.

Building trust and a sense of safety is quite crucial to effectively supporting participants as they move into the group experience.



The intense, overwhelming nature of torture and trauma means that fear for participants is more palpable and building the level of trust more essential.

In preparing for the group, facilitators must take into consideration that people work through the experience of trauma differently. Their ability to do so depends on many factors, including when the experience began, how long it continued for, where the young person was up to in their own development, and the nature of the experience. There needs to be sufficient flexibility and sensitivity about how the group is paced to cope with people's differences in relating to the material.

The activities today really allowed for different degrees of participation. One of the participants did not participate to the extent that others did. Yet at the end of the session he initiated shaking everyone's hand. We realised that he had been very involved even though he had said little.
(Facilitator)

In the 'Talking's Tough' group it was also recognised that people who were involved in high risk behaviours had probably been behaving in this way for some time. With the chronic nature of the abuse they have been subjected to, it was very difficult to cut across this behaviour. Further, participants who are behaving in this way are more likely to be erratic in their attendance, making it difficult for facilitators to address these issues. Facilitators need to have realistic goals about what they can achieve.



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3.3.3 DISCLOSURE

FACILITATORS MUST PROVIDE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE AND EXPLORE EXPERIENCES WITHOUT HAVING TO SAY TOO MUCH:

- The more personal the material, the more useful for discussion to be in small groups.
- Generally, facilitators should not try to encourage a great deal of disclosure.
- Should participants disclose painful or distressing feelings, facilitators need to be prepared to manage the disclosure or intervene if necessary.
- When disclosure occurs in groups it may cause flashbacks, intrusive memories or the recalling of blocked experiences for another participant.
- Facilitators should have a plan in case someone is distressed and needs immediate support or leaves the group in anger.
- The end of sessions is often a significant time for disclosure.
- At the end of the group facilitators must follow up participants who have disclosed, to see if they need immediate support or later referral to a counsellor.
- Debriefing for facilitators, particularly after disclosure, is an essential part of the group process.

The more personal the material likely to be covered, the more useful it is to structure discussion in small groups or pairs where participants are more likely to feel safe to explore emotions. It is best to use big groups for setting the ground rules and having discussion where the level of disclosure is safe, and to use small groups for more reflective times.

Generally facilitators should not be trying to encourage a great deal of disclosure. Where people do talk about painful experiences, acknowledgment of their feelings or experiences is important.



The therapeutic assistance for participants comes not from “getting their feelings out” but rather arriving at a fuller understanding of their emotions which then allows them more control.

Should participants disclose feelings which are either intensely painful or distressing the facilitators need to be prepared to manage the disclosure or intervene if necessary. The person’s story is heard with respect and one of the facilitators acknowledges that pain. It may be sufficient to say something like: “that’s a terrible thing that has happened”. When the story is heard, facilitators should continue with the planned activity. Facilitators must make sure that they follow up the participant at the end of the group to see if they need any immediate support or later referral to a counsellor. Appendix 5 indicates counselling services available for young people.

Facilitators need to be mindful that **when disclosure occurs within a group it may have the effect of causing flashbacks, intrusive memories or the recalling of blocked experiences for another participant.** The way this experience should be handled depends on the nature of the reaction. Where the person withdraws, the facilitator should allow this to happen. Where someone expresses anger, the facilitator should allow these feelings to be expressed while limiting any aggressive behaviour.

Facilitators should have ready a plan in case someone is distressed and needs immediate support or leaves the group in anger. One facilitator should take responsibility for the distressed participant. They may wish to take the person to a quiet place, stay with them and allow



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them space to express the emotions that are distressing them. The other facilitator should remain with the group, acknowledging the person's distress, and if appropriate talking about it with participants. Once the issue has been sufficiently dealt with, they should keep the group focused and move on with the planned activity or if necessary an adapted version.

The end of sessions are often a significant time for disclosure.

Facilitators need to keep this in mind when pacing the final stages of a session, so that there is space if someone does decide to reveal some very personal or painful experiences. In particular they need to be able to say goodbye to each participant and not to rush away so that people have the opportunity of speaking to them. Where someone who has become distressed is already working with a counsellor, facilitators should ask permission from the participant to let the counsellor know, so that they can give extra support. It is important to suggest to participants that between sessions they may wish to initiate contact with their counsellor (if they have one) or get access to support if the need arises.

Disclosure is not just about participants choosing to disclose but also how facilitators handle their own disclosure. Facilitators may wish to disclose something of their own background, interests, job and desire to learn about participants and their experiences. However, they are not there to discuss their own experiences extensively or focus on their personal reactions.

Debriefing for facilitators is an essential part of the group process.

Facilitators need the opportunity at the end of each session to reflect together on what has happened, how the next session needs to be adapted and how the content has impacted on them. This is particularly important where participants may have disclosed distressing experiences that have also caused the facilitator to feel upset.

More detailed information on guidelines for dealing with disclosure can be found in Section 2, under Intervention Strategies.

3.3.4 FACILITATORS

Skills of Facilitators

Each group needs two facilitators who have a range of skills in running groups.

While there are no strict rules around group size, it is recognised that a group is more difficult to work with once it gets beyond fifteen participants. Sophisticated skills are needed to help participants feel safe, as well as ensure a successful group process. It is essential that at least one facilitator is quite experienced in basic group work skills. This means that they have run a number of 'therapeutic' type groups where emotions are being explored in some depth. They need to feel confident to be able to handle the normal interactions that occur in a group, as well as situations where a participant may become distressed.

Facilitators also need knowledge about working with people who have had torture or trauma experiences.

Where group leaders have not worked directly in this area, they need to read or consult around the area before running the group. While this document will provide assistance, they may wish to read more extensively. The bibliography offers suggestions.

Where the group format covers a range of activities, such as reflective, creative and recreational sessions, it is helpful for facilitators themselves to have a variety of skills.

Where this is not possible, people with the missing skills may need to be employed to assist with particular sessions. For example, in two groups, facilitators skilled in recreational activities were brought in to run an outdoor ropes course, and in others, people came to assist with running activities and interpreting. It was essential to invest sufficient time to brief these people about how the group would be run.



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Any person brought in to assist with running a session, whether recreation trained, interpreter or teacher, needs to be thoroughly prepared about the aims of the group, the rules that have been established, the experiences of the participants and what their own role should be.

Relationship Between Facilitators

The relationship between facilitators is important and requires a level of confidence in each other's process and content skills.

Sharing the presentation of group sessions means styles need to be compatible. Thought also needs to be given to how teaching, facilitating, observing and problem solving roles should be carried out. Being able to think on one's feet is essential. This is particularly the case where the facilitator leading the activity is not sure how to proceed or handle a difficult moment. The other facilitator needs to be able to quickly assist.

The nature of group work with young people who are refugees can be intense. One of the main aims of facilitators is to gain the trust of participants. Change of facilitators during the course of the group should be avoided at all costs. In one of the pilot groups a facilitator had to be replaced when she suddenly became ill. Despite another leader quickly being found, this change had a significant destabilising effect and made handling the ongoing group processes very difficult for the continuing facilitators.

3.3.5 GROUP STRUCTURE

The effectiveness of a group is partly influenced by the structure that is built within the group.

Structure relates to a whole range of issues. It describes the setting and degree of flexibility this gives, the way the facilitators run the group, the nature of the program and the group rules and expectations built within the group. It influences significantly the degree of spontaneity, the extent to which the group feel they control what is happening and the level of safety they experience.

Getting the Balance Right

**FACILITATORS AND PARTICIPANTS NEED
A BALANCE AROUND STRUCTURE:**

- **Group leaders need structure to get direction, whilst leaving room for spontaneity.**
- **Participants need structure to help them feel safe, but not be too confined by the group process.**

Group leaders need to feel that there is sufficient structure for them to feel confident about what they are doing, and to provide balance so that there is room for spontaneity while at the same time being confident that the group maintains its focus and aims.

Participants need structure to help them feel that they will be safe, and therefore able to talk about their emotions, whilst not feeling too confined by the process. If this balance around structure is not right, there is a risk that the young person may feel either constrained, so that their every move is programmed, or so unsupported that they do not trust what is happening. Where the young person's expectations are not met, they are more likely to stop attending than feel confident enough to renegotiate what is needed.



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Issues around structure are quite complex and demand sophisticated skills from group leaders.

The second 'Talking's Tough' group found that while they had a core group of participants who attended regularly, they also had a number of participants who normally arrived late or often truanted from school. While at times this was quite dispiriting for facilitators and regular participants, it was accepted that this attendance pattern was quite typical of some teenagers. To make the group work effectively, facilitators built in clear expectations around the group's boundaries. They set group rules around when the group would start, the need for people to remain within the group and not wander off without sufficient reason, and attendance expectations if participants were going to be part of the camp at the end. This reinforcing of structure helped the group draw sufficient regular membership for it to develop a sense of cohesion. In the school setting, the support of teachers to reinforce these boundaries is very important.

The erratic attendance pattern at the start of the group may have been because participant criteria was not sufficiently identified for the school, whose selection included the most 'difficult kids' who regularly truanted. This experience does not mean that such young people should not be included in a group. Rather there needs to be a large enough core of regular attenders to help keep the momentum of the group, with room for some participants to be more on the periphery.



When working with young people whose lives are particularly stressed, you cannot assume a consistent composition of the group from week to week. The session plan needs to be flexible enough to accommodate this unpredictability of attendance.

Group Rules

People who have been in trauma and torture situations need to be able to trust the facilitators, have some choice about direction and not be faced with too much uncertainty within the group. A key way to ensure this is for the group to set its own rules.

Following initial introductions and explanations about the group, facilitators need to spend time helping the group establish a set of ground rules. Facilitators may wish to make suggestions about what these might be, with participants being free to add to the list.

RULES THAT ARE COMMONLY MENTIONED ARE:

- **Confidentiality (keeping it to ourselves)**
- **Respect (constructive comments only)**
- **Listening**
- **Only participating in activities where one feels confident to do so.**



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Time needs to be invested in making sure that people understand what is meant by these words.

The early establishment of rules is also an important safeguard for facilitators. On one occasion where conversation strayed into a threatening topic which unsettled participants, the facilitators were able to help rebuild safety, by returning to the group rules and reframing what was happening in the light of those rules.

3.3.6 PLANNING SESSIONS

A detailed plan for how the group will be run is essential, but the format must have room for flexibility.

The plan provides clarity around the purpose of each session and activity, and defines how sessions will be integrated into the whole. It also requires that facilitators develop a common understanding of the way they intend to work together. The plan should also be given to any teachers involved in attending sessions. Plans for each of the groups follow in Section 4.

Flexibility and Ownership

While emphasising the importance of having a plan, this format must have flexibility and generate confidence to go with the flow. Facilitators can not be too prescriptive about what should happen. To some extent the more the process is working well, the more the direction can be fluid. If the activity is a success, it is not essential to proceed with other activities for the sake of sticking with the session plan. Rather, the reason for each activity and what is working needs to be weighed up, so that a decision can be made as to what is most constructive. At the end of each day/session, facilitators should evaluate whether the proposed session plan needs amending.

The pacing was good. We were happy to do less rather than rush, but we also had an understanding that we would not spend too long on an area. (Facilitator)



Facilitators need to make the material their own. It may have been written with impressive style by someone else, but unless they can make it reflect their style and be able to add, delete or totally change the plan, their sense of control and commitment to the material will be less.

Facilitators need to use their skills to read the ongoing process and identify how to adapt their original plan, both from hour to hour and week to week. This process not only allows them the opportunity to adapt their material to the participants but it also means that they feel that they own the material.

Variety

Group activities need to be varied. Small or large group discussions are by themselves soon repetitive. Activities such as participants taking photos of each other, drawing around their bodies or writing a parable of one's life are more creative ways of helping young people think about their lives. As well as giving a variety of pace and expression, this also provides opportunities for people who do not feel confident talking in front of others, to express themselves in another way.

Variety is especially important when participants do not have strong English language skills. Concentrating on speaking or writing in a second language for significant periods can be quite exhausting. Reflective/ thinking activity also needs to be balanced with other activities such as soccer, basketball, art, music, and mime.

One of the most critical issues is that facilitators not be so preoccupied with outcomes that the content becomes inflexible.



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You are creating an experience: the struggle is about what matters for that person. While the content is important, there are lots of choices about what could be included. More important is the way you use process to enhance that experience.

3.3.7 SKILLS TO ENGAGE PARTICIPANTS

A key aim is to encourage participants to want to come to each session and to leave them feeling that they have experienced, or expressed something, which is not too confronting:

- If participants do not feel involved from the start of the group they can easily turn off.
- Skills used to engage participants range from how people are greeted, the use of support, praise, and fun, whether participants have a say about how the group runs, through to how the facilitators say goodbye to each participant.
- Icebreakers assist people getting to know each other, before encouraging them into activities which require greater risk taking.
- In building trust it is important for the facilitator to acknowledge to participants that their experiences and how they feel is understood.
- Workers also have to be conscious of and work with group dynamics.
- The more that people feel they are an important part of the group, and that they feel safe, the more cohesion grows.

Engaging participants in a successful group process begins from the first moments of the group. If participants do not feel involved from this early point, they can easily turn off and never re-engage.

The beginning of a group was always hard. There were some silences but I liked the way we didn't try too hard to fill them. We acknowledged that it was awkward for new people to encounter one another in a somewhat contrived environment. (Facilitator)

The skills used to engage participants are numerous. They range from how people are greeted, the message that their involvement is highly valued, the use of support, praise, and fun, the degree to which they have a say about how the group runs, through to how the facilitators say goodbye to each participant.

Ice-breakers

Ice-breakers are important tools to begin the process of people getting to know each other, before edging them into activities which require greater risk taking. They can take the form of physical activities or be a short structured activity, which encourages the sharing of non-threatening information, such as names or favourite activities. Group facilitators for 'Talking's Tough' realised that it was important to begin sessions with a game of basketball or soccer. This allowed stragglers to wander in late, without interrupting the session and helped bond the group. For the 'Kaleidoscope' group entwining participants in a large ball of wool created much fun and helped encourage people to talk to each other.

In building trust **it is important to acknowledge early on to participants that their experiences and how they feel is understood by the facilitator**, particularly because they have some knowledge of the trauma/torture area.

Acknowledging at the beginning that we were aware that they had painful experiences in their background helped them feel confident to be more open. (Facilitator)

Building Group Cohesion

The skills used to engage participants are closely related to those of helping the group bond. **Cohesion comes from the group identifying that each person in the group matters, that they feel safe to talk about what concerns them and they feel sufficiently involved to go on the journey of exploration together.** This cohesion may be expressed in many different ways: it may be in the way the group



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struggles to make decisions which include each person's perspective, the encouragement by group participants of less confident members, or disappointment when a participant is not able to attend a session.

Cohesion often develops slowly over the life of the group, but particular activities are sometimes very important in building that bond. Someone taking a great risk and disclosing very personal information, the group doing an exciting activity such as the high ropes course, or going for a trip in the country are shared experiences that help bonding. The more that is shared, the more that people feel they are an important part of the group, and that they feel safe in the group, the more cohesion grows.

People were first intimidated in seeing the high ropes course, but later all participants took up the challenge of climbing the telephone pole and jumping off. Participants appeared quite euphoric about having conquered a fear. This helped bond the group.

(Facilitator)

Sometimes facilitators need to work hard to engage a participant who is having difficulty feeling part of what is happening. This may involve making a special point of welcoming them when they arrive, being especially encouraging, asking for their opinion, or finding activities that particularly appeal to them. The facilitator needs to maintain a balance between focusing on the person's needs without being seen to make them stand out from other participants.

One participant gave up the task, saying something to his mates, and wandered off. A little later he came back to his chair and began drawing. The facilitator provided encouragement and praise without pressuring him to do the task. Soon he was asking for instructions and assistance to spell out his example.

(Facilitator)

Workers also have to be aware of the different roles that people play in groups. They need to be creative in addressing group dynamics, being conscious of the behaviours that need to be encouraged or minimised.

Workers can assess how participants are managing sessions by their level of engagement in the activity. Are participants highly involved and animated and do they have energy for the activities? How did they say goodbye, for example do they rush off, or linger in conversation, and what is the level of disclosure that has occurred?

3.3.8 ENDINGS

Endings can be a time for review and evaluation, and a time when emotions are expressed.

Facilitators need to allow this to happen in a range of ways. Participants may be asked to talk of what the group has meant for them and remember its high and low points. **It is important to ask participants to reflect on what has been successful and what would need to be changed another time.** This reflection serves as an important source of evaluation, as well as bringing the experience to an end. Where participants have been disappointed with what has happened in the group, their experiences need to be heard and acknowledged.

Discussion also needs to occur before the final session as to how participants wish to celebrate the group's ending. They may want to write poems and thankyou's or celebrate with dancing, music, singing, or the sharing of food. In the groups run by the Foundation, some young people were so moved by being part of the groups that it was painful for them to say goodbye. They did not want the experience to end. Facilitators need to make time to say goodbye to each participant, to affirm their involvement and to make it clear that the group has finished.

3.3.9 FOLLOW UP

Groups are run primarily to offer young people an experience that helps them deal with stressful life events. Occasionally the group helps the young person identify that they need some further support or counselling. In these situations, referral is best to come from another person such as teacher or welfare co-ordinator who knows the young



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person and may be able to provide background support. In turn, support also needs to be available for teachers in order for them to feel confident to provide students with ongoing assistance and know when it is appropriate to refer. A guide to when to refer is included in Section 2.

3.4 RUNNING THE GROUP IN A SCHOOL SETTING

Four of the six groups that the Foundation ran were based in a school. Schools offer access to newly arriving refugee young people who are generally regular attenders, eager to learn and explore within a school setting. Teachers have the potential to provide ongoing support for students who have been part of groups, and even to integrate some of the group activities into their own teaching curriculum. In this way the Foundation saw the schools as a focus for preventative strategies.

3.4.1 NEGOTIATING WITH THE SCHOOL

Where the school hosts a group, its success is dependent on hosts and facilitators reaching a common level of understanding and commitment.

Facilitators should allow a two to three month lead time between initially discussing the proposal and getting it up and running.



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The school principal, teachers and council must be given a clear understanding of who the group is designed for, and what is involved in running it in the school. This information allows them to make a choice about their participation, what they need to contribute and whether their students will be suitable participants. Their informed support is essential in making the group an effective experience for their students.

It is particularly important that the legal requirements around working in the school and taking students on a camp are sorted out at an early stage, so that the group is not put at risk by insurance or parental permission forms being incomplete. Discussion around who should be in the group is also important. Schools may choose participants from existing classes, students who already came together for specific tasks, such as language classes, or students scattered across the school who have a refugee background in common. Where people already knew each other, an early sense of group cohesion is more likely to be established. Because students of an existing class might not all be refugees, however, this may require the class material to focus more generally on cross cultural issues and adolescence.

An earlier section refers to the need for schools and facilitators to discuss the criteria for selecting participants, and to make sure that there are sufficient numbers of potential participants who will form a core of regular attenders. Using written referral forms assists in this process. Appendix 8 provides an example of a referral form.

Schools may not have sufficiently close relationships with pupils to know in detail their past experiences. In addition, pupils may risk labelling if peers know that they are coming out of class to attend a group for young people who have experienced trauma or torture. The public focus of the group is best to be on young people's recent refugee status.

It is essential that a school or any organisation that is thinking of running a group has proper back up. There should be at least one person who is available to see students who need extra time, or who can organise contact with families or referral when needed. The organisation needs to have an understanding of the principles required in dealing with young people with special needs.

3.4.2 THE RELATIONSHIP WITH TEACHERS

The relationship between facilitators and teachers is important, particularly where the teacher chooses who should be in the group, sits in as an observer or participates in sessions.

While it is not essential to have a teacher involved, when this relationship works well they can play an important role. They are able to give facilitators valuable advice on how to pitch the material in terms of maturity, skills and language. They are also able to prepare the class for the first session, monitoring between sessions, and feeding back how students are feeling. Later they may use appropriate material from the group outline in their own teaching. They are also able to follow up when the group finishes, making sure that where needed there is ongoing support or referral. They can provide continuity into the future.



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3.4.3 FEEDBACK FROM SCHOOLS

The feedback from schools hosting groups was overwhelmingly positive.

The teacher of one group wrote:

All the students felt part of a very special group as they shared their experiences and dealt with some very important emotions, and in so doing developed trust and respect for themselves and one another. I was able to see a different side to my students, which is sometimes difficult in a normal classroom situation. (Teacher)

Another teacher in evaluating how the group had gone said:

With the sessions taking place in the school, the young women were able to work well as a group both in the sessions as well as out of them. New friendships were formed and existing ones strengthened. For most of the young women it was the first time they had openly talked about their feelings. (Teacher)

The principal of another school wrote:

The boys spoke about the group in the most positive terms, and were delighted with the camp. It was an experience that they will surely remember. (Principal)

3.5 RUNNING THE GROUP AT A CAMP

Camps allow a concentrated time to further build trust and relationships, are a relaxing time out from normal living, and introduce young people to places they may not normally experience.

Camps can further consolidate trust, communication, self validation and self awareness developed during the school based group sessions. Residential settings can also provide opportunities for focusing on non-language based activities. This may be especially important in allowing some of the shyer group members to express themselves.

3.5.1 LINKING WEEKLY SESSIONS WITH CAMPS

Two of the three groups run by the Foundation had a residential component ('About Us' and 'Talking's Tough'). These experiences indicated that it is unwise to base the whole group experience within a camp. The live-in structure and the fact that there is minimal time between sessions to integrate sometimes quite emotional feelings, makes it too intense an experience. Weekly sessions over five or six weeks followed by a two night camp was found to be a far more effective way to structure the sessions.

This linking of weekly sessions with a camp allows a level of trust to be built between participants, before asking them to participate in the camp structure. It also means that greater emphasis at the camp can be placed on physical and relaxing activities, ensuring that people are not burnt out by the intensity of the content. A session following the camp can be built in, if participants wish to meet again and evaluate the whole group experience.



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3.5.2 MAKING THE CAMP WORK

Just as the success of the group's weekly sessions depends on detailed preparation, the same can be said for camps.

A site needs to be chosen well ahead so that facilitators can visit, check its suitability, and potential for activities. Thought needs to be given to the content of the program, making sure there are plenty of opportunities for a variety of activities, but especially time for fun, challenge and co-operation.

The idea of the camp first needs to be introduced in the weekly sessions. Discussion around getting parental permission to attend, what activities people would like and where the camp will be held can be decided in these early weeks. Encouraging participation in the decision making means the young people will be better prepared for the experience and more likely to feel that the camp is theirs.

Once at the camp, participants may initially feel anxious. This may be the first time they have been away from family and they may not feel safe. To help reinforce trust and safety, it is important for facilitators to outline what will happen at the camp and to restate group rules. These link the camp experience to earlier sessions, and remind people of the care each participant needs to extend to others. Additional rules around physical safety, such as letting people know if you are going for a walk, or expectations around group living such as washing dishes, will also need to be canvassed.

At the camp a lot of time and effort can go into cooking and cleaning and while they can be important opportunities for sharing and fun, they also cut into the time available for other more focused activities. It can be helpful to include an additional adult to take major responsibility for preparing food. This allows more time for other activities. Individual likes and dislikes in food may be an important issue for participants. Early sessions can be used to plan with participants how best to handle food preferences related to cultural and personal differences.

When involving younger participants in residential camps it may be necessary for facilitators to take on more of a supervisory role, such as setting limits, overseeing cooking and making sure people are warm at night. It is important to find a camp site that offers sufficient space for people to have fun without falling over each other, to have private space to where they can retreat for quiet time, and sufficient toilet and shower facilities that involve people not having to wait.

When working with young people who have not been in Australia for long it is important to check whether they own warm clothes and bedding and have a plan if extra clothing is needed. Appendix 7 gives a list of things that participants may need to take on a camp.



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3.6 SUMMARY

This section has summarised important elements in the running of groups for young people who are refugees, based on six pilot groups organised by the Foundation. The following section outlines more detailed content of each of the three groups. There are many similarities in the content of the three groups, but separating the outlines enables facilitators to refer to the one which best represents their needs, depending on the gender of participants and the aim of the group.

4



Group Outlines

ABOUT US; OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE	127
KALEIDOSCOPE: CULTURES AND IDENTITY	153
TALKING'S TOUGH	175

**ABOUT US; OUR PAST,
PRESENT AND FUTURE**

Duration

4 weeks x 3 hours plus

3 day camp

1 hour follow up session

Venue

Secondary College and Camp

Aims

- Build self esteem and identity
- Address issues related to the response to trauma
- Build trust, bonding and sense of others
- Help find a sense of future
- Identify emotions which influence everyday behaviour and look at ways of dealing with distressing emotions.

Rationale for Camp

- Time out from 'normal' living situation
- Introduction to a new place that may not normally be visited
- Opportunity to build new relationships

Suitable Participants

- Young women refugees or asylum seekers
- Basic ability to communicate in English is essential, and comparable language skills between group participants is necessary if an interpreter is not to be required.
- Age range 15+, though best not to span too broad an age range
- Trauma or torture experiences
- Length of time in Australia, 1 or 2 years.

AIMS OF GROUP

A key aim of the 'About Us' group is to break down social isolation which is the result of previous trauma experiences and which is compounded by cultural dislocation and resettlement. The restoration of trust and acquisition of communication skills are integral to this process. A second aim is to develop self identity. This involves the integration of past experiences, an understanding of their influence on the present and on the young women's view of the future. The third aim is to identify emotions which influence everyday behaviour and to look at ways to deal with distressing emotions as well as ways to enhance emotions which promote well-being.

RATIONALE FOR GROUP

"About Us" is a structured group program which has been developed by Foundation House as an innovative way of working with young women from refugee backgrounds.

The group work is seen as a way of providing a setting in which trust can develop and communication can be enhanced. It is considered a particularly useful way for participants to discover that they are not alone and that others share some of their beliefs and feelings. Each participant is provided with the opportunity to express in a variety of ways their past experiences, their present concerns and their view of the future. The level of self-disclosure is at all times in the participants' control. The group work seeks to explore with participants where they have come from, what their experiences have been and what this means for them in Australia.

PREPARATORY SESSION WITH STUDENTS

If the group is to be run within a school, it is useful for the teacher to prepare participants beforehand for being part of the group. The teacher should explain that the group aims:

- To increase the participant's awareness of their background and how it makes them unique.
- To look at their reactions to the new culture in Australia and how it affects their feelings, their reactions to others and their aims for the future.
- To be a learning experience and an opportunity to consolidate language and communication skills.

The teacher could then lead a discussion around:

- who will be running the group
- how long the group will go for
- how it will be structured
- why participants have been chosen to take part
- what participants' expectations are
- any fears they may have.

The teacher should ask students to bring something from their culture to the first group (eg clothes, craft).

SESSION 1

Aim

This session allows the participants and facilitators to become familiar with each other. The focus of the session is speaking of one's background and one's self as a means of establishing rapport and respect between participants and affirming one's own identity.

Session Plan

1. Introduction	5 minutes
2. Explanation of group purpose	10 minutes
3. Setting group conduct guidelines	20 minutes
4. Getting to know each other	30 minutes
5. Break	15 minutes
6. Polaroid exercise	60 minutes
7. Closure	10 minutes

1. Introduction

Facilitators introduce themselves and the work of Foundation House. The group schedule is also outlined. (ie. four school based sessions over four weeks, a three day camp and a follow up session)
(5 minutes)

2. Explanation of group purpose

Facilitator explains the purpose of the group as follows:

- To spend time focussing on ourselves and on what is important to us
- To look at what it is like to live in two or more cultures at one time, how this affects us, our family, school, work and friendships
- To recognise emotions and how they affect us.

The facilitators explain that the focus of the group is “**us**”; who we are, where we have come from, what it is like to live in a culture that differs from that into which we were born and in which we spent our early life, the emotions we experience and how these affect us.

The point is made that these are not the kinds of questions that we usually find time to ponder in the normal course of each day, nor are they easily included in the school curriculum. The purpose of the “about us” group is essentially to allow the time and space to think about such issues, to learn from each other and to share what is important for us with others who will listen to and respect what we have to say.

Facilitators emphasise that the process of learning about ourselves is not the same as researching a topic for a school assignment or studying to pass exams. There are no “right or “wrong” answers, no formulas to follow which ensure the results we want. The process for learning about ourselves that we will follow in the group involves talking, listening, reflecting together and learning from each other. *(10 minutes)*

3. Setting group conduct guidelines

The facilitators initiate discussion regarding; “How we want to be with each other as a group”.

'ABOUT US' OUR PAST PRESENT & FUTURE

Facilitators ask participants for suggestions. Prompts such as “If you had something important to tell a friend, how would you hope or expect that they would behave while you were sharing your news and afterwards?”, can be used to encourage discussion.

Discuss group conduct guidelines as suggested by participants and include confidentiality, listening, choice and respect. Write key words on board. Check that participants are familiar with these terms and their meaning.

Explain that we are here to listen and learn from one another. Point out that all we say and hear will remain confidential and is not to be talked about to people outside the group. Facilitator can give an example of how confidentiality is kept, how it is broken and the consequences.

- Explain any ground rules eg. not talking over the top of each other.
- Explain that each participant is free to choose how much or how little to say at any time.
- Explain that each participant’s level of involvement must be respected.
- Constructive comments in response to others’ input are the most useful and welcome. Such comments demonstrate listening respectfully to and valuing what others say, even if you disagree.
- Explain that essentially, all our group conduct “rules” are about respecting one another. Respect is treating others as we would like to be treated.

(20 minutes)

4. Getting to know each other

Participants introduce themselves, their name, country of origin and where they now live. The use of a world map is helpful here, so that each participant can describe the means of arrival and route taken to Australia. Non-confronting questions can be asked by facilitators as appropriate.

Participants are asked to share an object from their culture with the group and say something about its use or meaning. Follow with discussion of "culture". Facilitators assist in exploring and defining the concept of "culture" by discussing the role of language, religion, food, customs, traditions, beliefs, way of life, attitude to "family" etc.

(30 minutes)

5. Break

(15 minutes)

6. Polaroid exercise

Facilitators introduce this exercise as; "We have talked about who we are in one way (country of origin etc). Now we will look at who we are in another way and make a poster about ourselves." Participants take each other's photo with a polaroid camera. The facilitators can encourage creative use of the camera. Participants choose the setting for the photograph. Where appropriate, group may move outdoors.

The portraits are then mounted on coloured paper. Ask students to trace each others hands in pencil on posters with fingers spread wide apart. Students write in fingers of one hand information about themselves including:

- age
- name
- a personal interest
- a good thing about living in Australia
- a difficult thing about living in Australia.

Participants can then begin to decorate these personal posters.

If there is insufficient time, a break in this exercise can be taken after mounting the photograph, tracing hands and adding name and age in two fingers of one hand.

(60 minutes)

(This activity is adapted from Juggling Cultures)

7. Closure

Closures can be adapted to suit each session. The essential aim is to assess how the session has gone and ensure that participants are given the opportunity to comment on any issues that may have arisen for them. Inform participants that next week will begin with continuing to work on personal posters and that planning for the camp will also commence.

(10 minutes)

Materials:

Polaroid camera and film

Coloured A3 paper or poster paper

Coloured pencils/grey lead pencils/erasers/felt-tip pens/crayons

Blu-tack

World map

SESSION 2

Aim

The aim is to further explore the concept of discovering one's own uniqueness and self identity by looking at what is important to participants about others.

Session Plan

1. Introduction/revisit previous session	10 minutes
2. Personal poster	60 minutes
3. Break	15 minutes
4. Discussion	30 minutes
5. Camp planning	30 minutes
6. Closure	5 minutes

1. Introduction/revisit previous session

Ask if there are any questions from last week. Also revise purpose of the group and group conduct guidelines. Ask participants if they told anyone about last session. If yes, who did they tell and what did they tell them? This is a useful way to gauge the participant's level of engagement and understanding of the group process.

(10 minutes)

2. Personal poster

The large group is divided into small groups of not more than five. Each group requires one facilitator to guide and assist in the process involved in completing the task. It is useful to set the room up with the required sets of work tables for each small group.

'ABOUT US' OUR PAST PRESENT & FUTURE

Posters will have fingers of one hand completed from the last session. Facilitators assist participants to complete details about themselves in fingers of the other hand.

In fingers of the other hand students are requested to complete:

- a) Two things they would like to know about others when thinking about commencing a friendship
- b) Two things they would like others to know about them when commencing a friendship
- c) If it were possible to change something about their life, what would they change.

Put a), b) and c) on board for participants to think about, using the words below.

- a) What is something you would like to know about another person if you were thinking they could be a friend? Anything else?
- b) If you were making a friend what would you like them to know about you? Anything else?
- c) If you could have a wish to change something about your life, what would it be?

This activity is designed to provoke thoughtfulness about oneself and others.

Facilitators need to allow sufficient time for reflection and encourage creative decoration of posters. (Collage can be an effective and decorative means of expression on posters.)

(60 minutes) (This activity is adapted from Juggling Cultures)

3. Break

(15 minutes)

4. Discussion

If participants feel sufficiently comfortable and depending on the size of the group and time available, it may be possible for each participant to present their poster to the whole group. If this is not possible, then a compilation of responses from participants can be listed on the board by the facilitators.

'ABOUT US' OUR PAST PRESENT & FUTURE

Reform large group. Arrange seating in circle. Ask if any participant would like to present their poster to the group. This can be done from where they are seated in the circle, if preferred. Continue process, allowing all participants who wish to present their posters, to do so.

Put on the board the things they wanted to know about others and the things they wanted to tell others about themselves in commencing a friendship. Discuss. These questions are designed to provoke thoughtfulness regarding the qualities they value in significant relationships, how they view themselves and what is important to them.

Put on board the things they wanted to change about themselves. Discuss. This question about change allows the opportunity to consider the past and hopes for the future in a non-threatening way.

Facilitators acknowledge and validate personal information presented by participants.

(30 minutes)

5. Camp planning

This involves preliminary planning for the camp. It is important that the participants are involved from the outset in planning camp activities and content as far as is feasible. It is useful to be able to present to participants a range of options regarding activities from which to choose and then work in subsequent sessions on refining and finalising these. The camp is presented to participants as an opportunity to spend time together in a different way to school based group sessions. Explain that it is an opportunity to experience new activities, to see new sights away from the city and to have fun together.

(30 minutes)

6. Closure

Two questions to ask to close the session are:

How are you feeling right now? (one word is sufficient)

What were the high points and low points of the session?

(5 minutes)

Materials:

Magazines for collage material

Scissors/glue etc.

Blu-tack

Drawing materials/glitter for poster decoration

SESSION 3

Aim

The aim of this session is to identify emotions, the experiences associated with them and how they affect people.

Session Plan

1. Body Tangle Ice-breaker	15 minutes
2. Emotions	45 minutes
3. Break	15 minutes
4. Emotions (continued)	45 minutes
5. Camp planning	20 minutes
6. Closure	10 minutes

1. Body Tangle Ice-breaker

Participants stand in a large circle. Each participant reaches across the room and takes the hand of one person. Then each participant takes the hand of another person. The group is now in a tangle. The group's task is to untangle themselves, without letting go of anyone's hand

If this cannot be completed with one large group (usually difficult when the group is larger than eight), then break into two smaller groups and complete.

This is a good ice-breaker as it provides an immediate focus and it brings the group physically together. Much laughter also usually abounds. The solution requires communication and co-operation.

(15 minutes)

2. Emotions

Introduce this activity by defining the word “emotion”. Describe emotion as ‘the way we feel about different things’. Ask for examples from the group and write them up on the board. Examples may include anger, sadness, shyness, love, fear, happiness, guilt and embarrassment. Encourage participants to write down any unfamiliar words as a way of broadening their vocabulary.

As group members suggest different types of emotions, explore with them briefly how they experience such feelings and in what kinds of situations they experience them. Ensure that a range of emotions are included and that all emotions are validated equally.

Suggest to the group that by sharing how we experience our feelings we can learn more about ourselves and about how to handle our feelings in a positive way. Explain that the aim of the next two sessions is to explore how we experience and react to our feelings in more depth.

(45 minutes)

Drawing Faces

Ask participants to sit in a circle near a whiteboard. Facilitator draws four circles representing faces on four sheets of A3 paper. These are attached to the whiteboard.

Under each circle write the name of an emotion. Emotions to include are: “Happy”, “Sad”, “Hopeful” and “Afraid”.

Sitting in a large group, invite participants to choose an emotion to begin the activity and then ask someone to volunteer to draw the facial expression of that emotion in the circle. (Coloured wool pasted on to the circle can be used for hair.)

Following the depiction of each emotion the questions below are asked as a means of facilitating discussion.

'ABOUT US' OUR PAST PRESENT & FUTURE

- How do we know when someone is ...?
- How does it feel? Where do we feel it in our body?
- When do we feel this emotion? Ask for examples.
- How does it affect us - in our mind, in our body?
- How often do we feel this emotion?
- What are some of the things we do when we feel ...?

Participants choose the next emotion they wish to depict and discussion about how they experience that particular emotion then follows.

(Time plan allows for two emotions to be depicted before break).
(45 minutes)

3. Break (15 minutes)

4. Emotions (Continued)

The drawing of faces activity continues until portraits of the four emotions are completed. The more complex and sensitive the emotion, the longer the discussion time required. This activity aims to identify how emotions are experienced as well as discuss the positive and negative coping strategies employed in dealing with them and their respective consequences.

5. Camp planning and update

Facilitators report back to group regarding the feasibility of options for the camp put forward at the previous session. Activities from which participants may choose should ideally incorporate a mix of physically challenging as well as relaxation/fun based activities. Participants need to be advised that the camp program based on their preferences will be finalised by next session and will be made available to them.

(20 minutes)

6. Closure

Ask participants if they were surprised by anything discussed in the session - for better or for worse.

(10 minutes)

Materials:

A3 paper

Wool

Pencils /crayons/felt tip pens

Blu-tack

SESSION 4

Aim

The aim of this session is to continue with identifying emotions, how they are experienced, their impact on the body and how they can be dealt with positively.

Session Plan

1. Ice-breaker	15 minutes
2. Emotions	30 minutes
3. Body poster	40 minutes
4. Break	15 minutes
5. Camp program	30 minutes
6. Closure	20 minutes

1. Ice-breaker

This game is used to illustrate connections.

Group members are asked to stand in a circle.

Facilitator begins by holding a very large ball of wool and explains that only the person holding the ball of wool can talk.

Facilitator throws the ball of wool to another group member keeping the end of the wool around his/her finger. On receipt of the ball of wool the person shares one thing and winds the wool around their finger.

The person now holding the wool repeats the process.

When a cycle is completed it is repeated with a different statement.

Some examples of statements include:

- What is something good that happened during the past week?
- What is something difficult that happened over the past week?
- A word for how you are feeling today.

A web will be formed. Facilitators ask participants what the web reminds them of or looks like. Facilitator opens discussion regarding our connections with others.

(15 minutes)

(This activity is adapted from 'Counselling Skills for the People of Bosnia Handbook') (52)

2. Emotions

Complete identifying emotions activity.

Continue process followed in previous session for emotions "anger" and "love".

Facilitators normalise and validate the emotion of anger. Draw distinction between anger and aggression. Discuss difference between assertive behaviour and aggression, the appropriateness of assertive behaviour and the inappropriateness of aggressive behaviour. Discuss strategies participants use for dealing with anger.

Assist participants to identify different kinds of love eg. romantic, family, friendship, love for one's homeland.

(30 minutes)

3. Body poster

Ask one participant to lie down on a large piece of paper. Ask remaining participants to trace the body outline.

Once the outline is completed, participants are asked to locate inside the body outline where in the body they experience the six emotions covered in the preceding exercise.

'ABOUT US' OUR PAST PRESENT & FUTURE

The name of the emotion may be written in the body outline in a colour which participants identify as reflecting the feelings associated with a particular emotion.

(40 minutes) (This activity is adapted from Juggling Cultures)

4. Break

(15 minutes)

5. Camp program

The camp program is distributed and discussed. Any queries are addressed and final arrangements completed.

(30 minutes)

6. Closure

Acknowledge that this is the last formal school based session. Make arrangements for informal follow-up session at school in weeks following the camp.

Talk about endings and the feelings they bring.

Ask the following questions:

- What is the one thing you have learnt in these sessions?
- What do you want from the camp?

End session with a group photograph which can be copied and distributed to participants.

(20 minutes)

Materials:

Paper roll sufficient to trace body outline

Drawing materials/colour felt tip pens

Blu-tack

A3 poster paper

Large ball of wool

Camera

“ABOUT US” YOUNG WOMEN’S GROUP CAMP

The aim of the residential program is to further consolidate the trust, communication, self validation and self awareness developed during the school based group sessions, as well as to have fun together!

Group participants may have had limited opportunities to spend time out of the city since their arrival in Australia and a trip to “the country” may provide a valued break from the reality and pressures of city life.

The more physically exerting and challenging activities of the program are intended to be counterbalanced by the inclusion of structured relaxation sessions. The residential camp program is also seen as providing an opportunity for the learning processes initiated during school based sessions to continue in an informal setting.

Below is an example of a residential schedule as planned by a group of young women who participated in the “About Us” program.

The “About Us” participants chose the specific activities contained in the schedule from a variety of options presented to the group. Planning for the activities was introduced in the first school based session with the group.

The Day One activities were designed to “ease” participants into the camp experience. Fishing was identified by all the young women as an activity they had never experienced but which they were keen to try. The activity was engaged in with great enthusiasm by all participants and each catch was accompanied by obvious pride and delight. The day’s catch then provided the basis for the first dinner together as a group.

Day One ended with a structured relaxation session centred around aroma therapy. The facilitators presented the properties of a selection of essential oils to the group. The oils chosen related to a variety of physical and emotional states. Ensuing discussion regarding emotions

and their corresponding effects on the body was able to be linked to as well as extended beyond school based sessions on this theme. The participants were provided with oils and bottles to create their personal mixture to take home based on their identified individual needs and inclinations.

Day Two activities were organised by outdoor recreation facilitators who had been well briefed about the aims and background of the "About Us" group as part of the camp program planning. The primary aim of the second day was to provide opportunities for confidence building, self esteem, co-operation and trust to be enhanced. The early part of the day focussed on fun activities as well as initiative and trust building exercises as a preparation for the more challenging low ropes course which followed. The low ropes course provided participants with the possibility to experiment as well as to experience challenges in a setting of trust, co-operation and safety. The activity also provided a powerful opportunity for non-language based self-expression. This proved to be a liberating experience for all participants. Day Two ended with a celebratory dinner and party.

Day Three was focussed around a visit to Healesville Sanctuary and a session at the Sanctuary Education Centre prepared particularly for the "About Us" group. Many participants had never seen Australian animals in a natural setting. The Education Centre session provided the young women with the chance to touch, hold and learn about Australian reptiles, amphibians, crustaceans and marsupials. All participants were totally enthralled.

Comments on the Camp

Comments regarding the camp from the teacher and participants involved were overwhelmingly positive. The following comments were submitted as part of a written evaluation of the camp and relate to specific activities included in the program:

"The camp provided the time for some members to begin to come to terms with some of the dilemmas in their lives and build new strengths

to face the challenges in their lives. Activities such as the low ropes course, the fishing, aroma-therapy and the lesson at Healesville not only provided fun but also broke down many fears.”

Other comments related to the camp process in general:

“The camp provided the young women with opportunities to do new and exciting things. Many of them had never spent time in the country in Australia. It provided them with the opportunity to take some time out. It also helped them to strengthen their trust in each other as well as to build up confidence. ... it proved to be an exciting and rewarding experience for the group.”

CAMP PROGRAM

Participants:

- 10 young women
- 2 Foundation House Counsellor/Advocates
- 1 teacher
- 1 cook
- 2 Outdoors Inc. instructors (one day only)

Location:

Tapestry Centre
Guides Association of Victoria, Kinglake.

Program:

Day One

10.30 am

Depart from College

Morning:

- Travel to "Australian Rainbow Trout Farm" Narre Warren
- Picnic lunch at farm
- Fishing

Afternoon:

- Depart Trout Farm and travel to Tapestry Centre
- Unpack
- Explore Centre and surrounds

Evening:

- Dinner - Trout
- Relaxation Session - Aroma Therapy
- Free time

Day Two

Morning:

Activities organised by Outdoors Inc. Instructors

- Fun games
- Initiative games
- Low ropes course

Lunch:

- Bush Walk and packed lunch

Afternoon:

- Continue low ropes course
- Outdoors instructors depart

Evening:

- Dinner
- Party

Day Three

Morning:

- Pack up and leave Tapestry Centre
- Travel to Healesville Sanctuary

Lunch:

- Healesville Sanctuary
- Free Time

Afternoon:

- Healesville Sanctuary Education Centre - Session for "About Us" group
- Depart Healesville
- Travel back to Melbourne
- Goodbyes and time set for follow up session

FOLLOW-UP SESSION

Aim

This session is left open as an opportunity to explore and review issues as suggested by group members.

Session Plan

1. Reflecting on group experience	20 minutes
2. Support and referral resources	20 minutes
3. Camp photos	10 minutes
4. Closure	10 minutes

1. Reflecting on group experience

Provide an opportunity for participants, facilitators and teacher to talk about what they have liked, gained, enjoyed or found difficult about the group. Ask if there is anything they would change about the group. Invite them to use a later school class to write a letter about their experience of the group. If appropriate these letters can be sent to the facilitators. They provide both an important form of evaluation and an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their personal experience of the group process.

(20 minutes)

2. Support and referral resources

Facilitators provide information about support or counselling services available, if participants feel that they would benefit from some individual counselling sessions in relation to issues which have arisen through the group process.

(20 minutes)

3. Camp Photographs

Share the camp photographs and provide copies for participants. It is an important way to revisit the camp experience and affirm participants.
(10 minutes)

4. Closure

Individual goodbyes from each facilitator to each participant emphasises the respect and sentiment of being highly valued in the process of the group. Emotions of sadness and sentimentality (if expressed) should be validated as a normal emotion, and reframed in a way that emphasises change.

(10 minutes)

**KALEIDOSCOPE:
CULTURES AND IDENTITY**

KALEIDOSCOPE

Duration

6 x 1 3/4 hr sessions

Venue

Secondary School

Aims

- Exploring the impact of living in a new culture
- Help participants rediscover a sense of meaning and continuity in their lives
- Break down social isolation, alienation and dislocation
- Build trust, bonding and an understanding of others
- Promote self esteem and identity
- Integrate past experiences and build a vision of the future.

Participants

- Young males and females with a refugee background
- Torture or trauma experiences
- Ages 14-24 years, but best to limit the age range to 12-15, 16-20, or 21-24

AIM OF THE GROUP

One of the aims of the Kaleidoscope group is to break down social isolation, which is the result of previous trauma experiences and which is compounded by cultural dislocation and resettlement. The restoration of trust and acquisition of communication skills are integral to this process.

Related to this aim is the development of self identity which involves the integration of past experiences, an understanding of their influence on the present and on young people's views of the future. The program will look at experiences of living in two cultures and the changes which arise from moving to a new country.

The third aim is to identify emotions which influence everyday behaviour and to look at ways to deal with distressing emotions as well as to enhance emotions which promote well being.

The group is seen as a way of providing a setting in which trust and communication can develop. It is a particularly useful way for participants to discover that they are not alone and that others share some of their beliefs and feelings. Each individual will have the opportunity to express in a variety of ways their past experiences, their present concerns and their view of the future. The level of self disclosure will be in the student's control.

The content of the Kaleidoscope group has come primarily from work of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture and includes material adapted from a Canadian group manual 'Juggling Cultures'.

PREPARATORY SESSION WITH STUDENTS

If the group is to be run within a school, it is useful for the teacher to prepare participants beforehand for being part of the group. The teacher should explain that the group aims:

- To increase the participants' awareness of their background and how it makes them unique.
- To look at their reactions to the new culture in Australia and how it affects their feelings, their reactions to others and their aims for the future.
- To be a learning experience and an opportunity to consolidate language and communication skills.

The teacher could then lead a discussion around:

- who will be running the group
- how long the group will go for
- how it will be structured
- why participants have been chosen to take part
- what participants' expectations are
- any fears they may have.

The teacher should ask students to bring something from their culture to the first group (eg clothes, craft).

SESSION 1

Aim

This session allows the participants and facilitators to become familiar with each other. It is important to set up the environment so that it is suitable for the session. The focus of the session is speaking of one's background and one's self.

Session Plan

1. Introduction	10 minutes
2. Explanation of group	15 minutes
3. Setting group rules	15 minutes
4. Introducing participants	30 minutes
5. Polaroid exercise and poster	30 minutes
6. Closure	5 minutes

1. Facilitators introduce themselves and the work of Foundation House.

(10 minutes)

2. Explanation of the Group

The facilitators explain what the group is about - to look at similarities and differences between the cultures and what has to be given up to live in another. It is important to validate and normalise the emotional effects of leaving one's culture and entering a new one. Emphasise that participants are 'special' because of their involvement in two cultures.

Facilitators need to show insight and understanding by emphasising that some people leave their country by choice, and others do so without choice; that is, by necessity or force.

Facilitators also need to emphasise that the group process is a different style of learning to usual classroom methods, that it is a process of talking, sharing and exploring who we are and that there are no 'right' and 'wrong' answers. It is useful to highlight this difference by changing the seating arrangements in the room to what it normally is in classroom learning. It is recommended that for group discussions, the students and facilitators sit in chairs in a circle and do not sit behind desks or have books, pens etc. in their hands. This is more conducive to sharing and establishing group intimacy.

Discussion of 'culture'. Explore and define concept of culture. Put words on whiteboard eg language, religion, food, clothing, traditions.

(It can be helpful here for the facilitators and teacher to relate some personal experience of being confronted with a different culture, to assist in establishing rapport. These stories should be told as a positive learning experience).

(15 minutes)

3. Setting Group Rules

Discussion of confidentiality, listening, respect and choice. Put words on whiteboard. Ask if students are familiar with these terms and what they mean for them? Ask students to say what these words are in their own language.

- Explain that we are here to listen and learn from one another. All we say and hear will remain confidential and not be talked about to people outside the group. Facilitator can give example of how confidentiality is kept.
- Explain any ground rules eg talking over the top of each other.

- Each participant has a choice about how much to say.
- Each participant's level of involvement must be respected.
- Indicate that in the group people need to speak for themselves.
- Indicate that listening is valuing what others say even if you disagree.
- Indicate that respect is treating others as we would like to be treated.

(15 minutes)

4. Participants introduce themselves

Participants introduce themselves, their name, their age, country of origin and where they now live. The use of a world map is helpful here, to describe means of arrival and route taken. Non-confronting questions can be asked, such as how long their journey took. When the level of self disclosure is high, and traumatic events and experiences are spoken of, acknowledgment and validation of the information is required. Thank each participant for speaking.

Participants can be asked to show an object from their culture and say something about its use or meaning. Some examples are money, photos, jewellery, music. These can be passed around the group.

(30 minutes)

5. Polaroid exercise and poster

Introduce this exercise by reflecting on the previous one, explaining that we have talked about who we are in one way (country of origin etc). Now we will look at who we are in another way and make a poster for ourselves, about ourselves.

Participants are asked to take each other's photo with a polaroid. The facilitators can encourage creative use of the camera and need to be sensitive to individual's reactions and needs in regards to photo taking.

The portraits are then mounted on some coloured paper chosen by students.

KALEIDOSCOPE

Ask students to trace each other's hands and, in each finger, put information about themselves:

- age
- name
- one interest
- a good thing about living here and
- a difficult thing about living here.

Encourage participants to begin some decoration of their poster.

If there is insufficient time, a break in this exercise can be taken after mounting the photograph, tracing hands and adding name and age.

(30 minutes)

(This exercise is adapted from 'Juggling Cultures')

6. Closure

Closures can be adapted to each session, but the key issue is to evaluate how the session has gone and make sure that no one leaves without having the opportunity to comment on any issue that may have come up for them.

Questions that might be asked:

- How are you feeling right now?
- What were the high points and low points of the session?

(5 minutes)

Materials:

World Map

Polaroid camera and film

A3 paper or coloured poster paper

Pencils/crayons/textas

Blu-tack

SESSION 2

Aim

The aim of this session is to further explore the concept of discovering one's own uniqueness and self identity. The first step is awareness of one's self. The group also begins to look at what is important about others.

Session Plan

1. Recap last session	15 minutes
2. Poster	40 minutes
3. Discussion	40 minutes
4. Closure	10 minutes

1. Recap last session

Review last week, revisiting purpose of group and ground rules. Ask participants if they told anyone about last session. If they did, who did they tell and what did they tell them? This is a useful way to gauge the participant's level of engagement and understanding of the group.

(15 minutes)

2. Poster

Completion of poster occurs in small groups. The large group is divided according to what the teacher and facilitators believe would be most conducive to small group discussion. Each group requires one facilitator as a guide.

KALEIDOSCOPE

Each student is asked to trace around the hands of another student on the poster begun last session.

Students are asked to fill in:

- Two things they would like to know about others, if they were thinking they could be a friend.
- If they were making a friend, two things they would like them to know about themselves.
- Something about their life which they would like to change.

This activity is designed to provoke thoughtfulness about oneself and others. Allow time and encourage creative decoration of posters, for example, etching and pastelling over words.

(40 minutes) (This exercise is adapted from 'Juggling Cultures')

3. Discussion

Bring the group back and put on the board the things participants wanted to know about others and the things they wanted to tell about themselves. Discuss.

Put on the board the things they wanted to change. Discuss.

(40 minutes)

4. Closure

Ask the group:

- How are you feeling right now?
- What were the high points and low points of the session?

(10 minutes)

Materials

A3 paper or coloured poster paper

Pencils/crayons/textas

Blu-tack

SESSION 3

Aim

The aim of this session is to identify emotions and facilitate awareness of how they affect people.

Session Plan

1. Greeting Activity	20 minutes
2. Emotions:	
Introduction	25 minutes
Planning Role Play	25 minutes
Role Play	25 minutes
3. Closure	10 minutes

1. Greeting Activity (Ice-breaker)

Introduce this exercise as a continuation of the cultural theme. Indicate that different cultures have different ways of greeting each other. Ask participants to share and show to the group what is the normal way to greet people in their own culture. Ask if there are gender differences, age differences and effects due to context (ie. addressing religious people, teachers, etc).

Ask participants how it was to learn about another form of greeting on arriving in a new country. The facilitator's role is to reflect back and emphasise the similarities and differences across the cultures.

(20 minutes)

2. Emotions

Introduction

Introduce this activity by defining the word 'emotion'. Describe 'emotions' as the way we feel about different things. Ask for examples from the group and write them up on the board. Examples include anger, sadness, shyness, frustration, love, fear, excitement, happiness, joy, guilt, embarrassment and tiredness. Encourage students to write down any unfamiliar words as a way of broadening their vocabulary.

As group members offer different types of emotions, explore briefly with them where and how they show these feelings and what types of situations lead to that particular feeling. Ensure that a range of emotions are included, and that positive and negative emotions are validated equally. Inform the group that by sharing and understanding some of their feelings, they can learn to feel a little more in control of them, and that the aim of the next two sessions is to explore feelings in more depth.

Divide the group into small groups ensuring that no more than 5 people are in any one group. Each group will require one facilitator to assist with the task. Provide each group with a sealed envelope which contains one emotion written on a piece of paper. It is advisable that the emotions vary. The three emotions recommended to begin with are anger, fear and hopefulness.

(25 minutes)

Planning Role Play

Ask the small groups to spend 25 minutes constructing a mini play which goes for 2-4 minutes which will highlight the 'secret' emotion inside the envelope. They will be asked to perform this in front of the large group who will be required to guess the emotion.

Provide props (hats, scarves, ties and sunglasses) which students can use for the performances. Props can enhance confidence and provide fun for participants.

Examples of themes for mini plays are:

- Anger
 - * sporting field and clash over rules
 - * students arriving late to class
- Fear
 - * burglar/intruder
- Hopefulness
 - * being accepted into high school
 - * getting driver's licence

Roleplay

End session with the performances. The performances provide an opportunity for fun, laughter and sharing in an active and participatory way. Taking photos can enhance the energy and fun during this activity.
(25 minutes)

3. Closure

- Ask participants to describe how they found the session (one word is sufficient).
- Ask participants what was the best part and what was the hardest part of the session.

(10 minutes)

Materials:

Envelope

A3 paper or coloured poster paper

Pencils/crayons/textas

Blu-tack

Props for role play

SESSION 4

Aim

The aim is to continue with identifying emotions and exploring positive and negative ways of handling them.

Session Plan

1. Recap last session	15 minutes
2. Ice-breaker	20 minutes
3. Emotions	60 minutes
4. Closure	10 minutes

1. Recap last session

Indicate that we will be looking at emotions again.
(15 minutes)

2. Ice-breaker

This game is used to illustrate connections and also serves as a warm-up activity.

- Group members to stand in a circle.
- Facilitator begins holding a very large ball of wool and explains that only the person holding the ball of wool can talk.
- Facilitator throws the ball of wool to another group member keeping the end of the wool around their finger. On receipt of the ball of wool the person shares one thing about themselves and winds the wool around their finger.

- The person now holding the wool repeats the process.
- When a cycle is completed it is repeated using a different statement eg. something they don't like. Some examples of statements include:
 - * What is something good that happened during the past week
 - * What is something difficult that happened over the week
 - * A word for how you are feeling today.
- A web will be formed. The facilitator asks participants to explore what it reminds them of. Examples may include that the shape looks like a net, a web, map of a country, a star, the roof of a tent. Move the shape up high and low to the ground to stimulate ideas from participants.
- Facilitator then opens discussion around connections and indicates how everybody's participation is needed for this shape to work.

To conclude this exercise, cut the wool and give each person three pieces of wool. By braiding these pieces of wool, participants can make a friendship bracelet, shoe laces, hair ties or hair attachments, book mark etc. The participants should be invited to continue the braiding as the next exercise begins.

(20 minutes)

(This activity has been taken from 'Counselling Skills for the People of Bosnia Handbook') (52)

3. Emotions

Complete identifying emotions, using drawings of faces.

Drawing Faces

The facilitator draws 6 circles on 6 pieces of A3 paper. Under each circle, they write the name of an emotion and pin it up. It is recommended that one uses emotions from the list created in the previous session and to include at least two positive emotions. Examples of emotions that could be used in this session are: anger, fear, hope, sadness, love, happiness, and shyness.

KALEIDOSCOPE

In a large group, sitting in a circle, invite participants to choose one emotion, and ask someone to volunteer to draw the facial expression of that emotion in the circle on the paper. Hair can also be included in the drawing, using cut up pieces from the icebreaker. **Happy**, is often chosen first, probably because it is safe.

If braiding from previous activity continues to occur, this can be a useful device for the group participants. It can allow participants to be occupied. It also allows for silences, listening and thinking. It enables a gentle entry into a potentially confronting and difficult exercise.

Discussion

Questions that can be asked are:

- How do we know when someone is happy?
- How does it feel? Where do we feel it in our body?
- When do we feel this emotion? Examples?
- How does it affect us - our mind and our body?
- How often do we feel this emotion?

Follow this format for the remaining 5 emotions. This is likely to take up the remaining time in session 4 and most of session 5. Continue to allow participants to choose the emotions. The more complex and sensitive the emotion, the longer the discussion.

Some important issues which can be raised for anger and sadness are:

Anger: Explore the physical reaction in detail and talk about the fight/flight response. Inform the participants about the reasons behind the heart beating faster and the shaking. Normalise and validate the emotion of anger, and draw the distinction between feeling angry and behaving aggressively. Inform participants about the appropriateness of assertive behaviour and the inappropriateness of aggressive behaviour.

Sadness: Ask what helps them when they are feeling sad (identify coping strategies). Ask what are positive ways they know of and what are the negative ways they know of? Ask participants what are the consequences of both types of coping. (This can lead to identifying risk taking behaviours and their consequences).

KALEIDOSCOPE

Note: If participants volunteer their own experiences, that ought to be commended, but facilitators should not demand this of participants.

The aim of this task is to encourage participants to personally explore the issues being presented. This may occur more effectively if the large group breaks into small group or pairs for discussion, than to report back to the larger group. If participants feel inhibited to speak in large group, or there are one or two dominant speakers, it is advised that small group discussions occur.

(60 minutes)

4. Closure

Two questions to ask are:

- How are you feeling right now? (One word is sufficient)
- What were the high points and low points of the session?

(10 minutes)

Materials:

A3 paper or coloured poster paper

Wool

Pencils/crayons/textas

Blu-tack

SESSION 5

Aim

This aim of this session is as for session 4.

Session Plan

1. Body Tangle Ice-breaker	15 minutes
2. Recap on last week	10 minutes
3. Discussion: Emotions	40 minutes
4. Body Poster	20 minutes
5. Closure	20 minutes

1. Body Tangle Ice-breaker

Participants are asked to stand in one large circle. Each participant takes the hand of one person. Then each participant takes the hand of another person. Group is now in a tangle. The group's task is to untangle themselves, without letting go of anyone's hand.

If this does not work with one large group (usually difficult when group is over 8) then break into two smaller groups.

This is a good ice breaker as it provides an immediate internal, problem solving focus, and brings the group physically together. The solution requires communication and cooperation.

(15 minutes)

2. Recap on last week

Continue with detailed discussion of emotions while sitting in a circle. Revisit three emotions from the previous session. Ask participants to contribute what they remembered from the previous week's discussions. This overview serves to re-focus the group on the task of identifying and exploring the remaining emotions. Ask a volunteer to choose an emotion, and to draw the matching face.

(10 minutes)

3. Discussion: Emotions

Explore emotions not covered in the previous week.

Shyness: Aim to normalise the emotion. Ask - 'Who has never felt shy?' Talk about what it is (lack of confidence, difficulty with language, unfamiliarity, negative thoughts about self worth). Talk about strategies to assist with feelings of shyness, eg. deep breathing, talking to oneself. Ask participants for ideas on strategies too.

Love: Discuss different types of love - romantic, family, friendship, country etc. Avoid, if possible, discussion of sex here as this topic tends to take discussion off the track. It is important that facilitators acknowledge and expect some comments about sex but that they feel confident enough to move on with discussion.

Fear: This is often the most confronting emotion for young refugees. Suggest that people break into pairs and allow as much time as necessary. No participant should be denied the opportunity to speak about their experience of fear. Facilitators are required to summarise the experiences contributed. It is important to explore with the large group ways of overcoming fear.

Ask participants for strategies which work for them. This can be a difficult process for key facilitator because the emotion of fear can be intense. Use the board to write up the different suggestions for overcoming fear.

(40 minutes)

4. Body Poster

Ask one participant to lie down on a large piece of paper. Provide textas to remaining participants and ask them to trace around the body. Once the body outline is complete, ask participants to write inside the body outline, using different colours, the different emotions which have been discussed and where in the body the feelings occur.

This exercise requires that participants rearrange furniture (to allow for space) and provides for much movement and participation. This concluding exercise defuses any intense emotions evoked by the previous exercise.

(20 minutes) (This exercise is adapted from 'Juggling Cultures')

5. Closure

Indicate that next week is the last session. Talk about endings and the feelings which this brings. Discuss how people would like to celebrate the end of the group.

(20 minutes)

Materials:

A3 paper or coloured poster paper

Wool

Pencils/crayons/textas

Blu-tack

SESSION 6

Aim

This session is left open as an opportunity to explore and review issues suggested by group members. It is also an opportunity to have some fun and ritualise an ending.

Session Plan

1. Reflecting on group experience	20 minutes
2. Support and referral resources	10 minutes
3. Group photo	10 minutes
4. Celebration	65 minutes

1. Reflecting on group experience

Participants, facilitators and teacher have an opportunity to talk about what they have liked, gained and enjoyed about the group. Offer an opportunity for participants to describe what they found difficult.
(20 minutes)

2. Support and referral resources

Facilitators provide information about support or counselling services available, if participants feel that they would benefit from some individual counselling sessions in relation to issues which have arisen through the group process.
(10 minutes)

3. Group Photograph

Take a group photograph. Each participant can be contacted later to receive a copy of the group photo.

(10 minutes)

4. Celebration

End with some dancing, food and drinks, fun photos and a general celebration. If props were successfully used in earlier session, these can assist in removing the shyness and inhibition about dancing.

Individual goodbyes from each facilitator to each participant emphasises the respect and sentiment of being highly valued in the process of the group. The customary greeting (from previous session) can be also used to emphasise the respect towards their individuality and to their contributions during the group. Emotions of sadness and sentimentality (if expressed) should be validated as a normal emotion, and reframed in a way that emphasises change.

(65 minutes)

Materials:

Camera

Food

Music

Props

TALKING'S TOUGH

Duration

- 5 x 3 hour sessions
- 1 day session
- 2 night camp
- 1 x 3 hour follow-up session

Venue

Secondary School and Camp

Aims

- Help participants rediscover a sense of meaning and continuity in their lives
- Break down social isolation, alienation and dislocation
- Build trust, bonding and an understanding of others
- Promote self esteem and identity
- Integrate past experiences and build a vision of the future
- If high risk behaviour is identified, encourage alternative ways of dealing with them.

Participants

- Young males with a refugee background
- Torture or trauma experiences
- Possibly displaying at risk behaviour
- Ages 14-24 years, but best to limit the age range to 14-18, or 19-24.

Rationale for Camp

- Time out from normal living situation, an adventure
- Introduction to a new place they may not visit
- Opportunity to build new relationships and trust

AIM OF THE GROUP

The overall aim of the group is to help participants rediscover a sense of meaning and continuity in their lives. This is achieved by exploring issues of identity, relationships and past traumatic experiences and their impact on the individual. This goal is based on an understanding of the impact of torture and war trauma on the lives of young refugees.

Goals are pursued which develop communication skills, begin to break down isolation and provide an opportunity for young men to reflect on how their past experiences have had an impact on their self identity.

The aim is also to create an affirming and trusting group environment where young men who have experienced refugee-related trauma can share their experiences with others, be affirmed and begin to move beyond them to trust again.

The group setting is used to normalise the experiences and difficulties that the participants have experienced, either in their country of origin, or during their journey to Australia, and/or since arriving in Australia.

The program is called 'Talking's Tough' because for many young men talking is difficult and confronting. For the particular target group of young men who have experienced horrific events and witnessed and survived acts of extreme brutality, talking is even more difficult. Young people can be reluctant to talk of unpleasant experiences, but failure to talk often becomes an impediment to further growth. Taking the risk of talking in an environment that is supportive and uncritical can give participants the knowledge that they are not alone in their experiences and give them the courage to come to terms with their experiences.

SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION - LIVING WITH THE PAST

Rationale for Session 1

The rationale for Session 1 is to break down isolation, by building trust and commitment to being part of a group. The exercises require self-reflection and self-disclosure to highlight and value similarities and differences within the group, to build trust and to have some fun.

Session Plan

1. Introduction and ground rules	30 minutes
2. Introduce participants to each other	45 minutes
3. Ice-breaker	15 minutes
4. Break	20 minutes
5. Drawing activity	50 minutes
6. Closure	20 minutes

1. Introduce Group Format

- Introduce facilitators

- **Nature of Group**

Indicate why participants have been chosen, emphasising general similarities. Provide a brief overview as to the purpose and aims of the group and an outline of the group content. Mention that facilitators would like to hear what activities participants like and do not like.

- **Practicalities**

Explain where toilets are, smoking rules, time lines of the session. Inquire about transport problems, time constraints, school obligations, including requirements for attendance.

- **Ground Rules**

Emphasise the importance of confidentiality, respect, listening and choice. It is advised that facilitators ask the participants to brainstorm the meaning of these key words. Write these on a whiteboard. Facilitators can add to the list if necessary.

(30 minutes)

2. Getting to Know Group Participants

- **Talking Exercise:** Sharing information about yourself with one other person.

The facilitator introduces the session by asking participants to pair up with someone they do not know. The facilitator might then say: spend five minutes each telling the other person about yourself. This can include information such as: name, age, country of origin, arrival in Australia, favourite interest or hobby, what makes you mad, favourite food, what you would like to get out of the group. Write down these things if that will help to remember them. Come back as a large group and ask the other person to introduce you to the rest of the group.

- **Sharing information about country of origin**

Have on display a map of the world. Ask each participant to mark on the map their country of origin and describe their route to Australia. This activity usually creates considerable interest and discussion amongst group members. If the group is older, facilitators may ask about politics as this is often something young people are very passionate about.

(45 minutes)

3. Ice-breaker

This game is to assist participants in getting to know each other. Have the participants stand in a circle and throw a ball to each other. As they catch the ball they call out their name. Once this has been done, continue throwing the ball around, this time with the person who is throwing the ball calling out the name of the catcher and the catcher saying 'thank you and the name of the thrower'.

Now get the group to try to throw the ball in the same order, again with the thrower calling out the name of the catcher, and the catcher thanking the thrower. Once a pattern has been established, try to get the group to increase the speed that it takes to throw the ball to each member of the group. After a couple of attempts at increasing speed, throw into the group more objects such as rubber toys, shoes, other balls, so that there are a number of objects being thrown around the circle all in the same pattern.

(15 minutes)

(Source: Outdoors Inc.)

4. Break

(20 minutes)

5. Drawing The Past

Provide participants with large paper, pencils and crayons and space. Introduce the activity as another way to think about the past. Ask participants to draw a place they lived in when young. Participants should be encouraged to show whatever they like and be given the option to not draw, but write some words or sentences instead.

When completed, participants can attach their work to the walls. It may then be useful to break into two smaller groups. Facilitators are encouraged to ask participants questions about what they have drawn. The participants should be free to offer as much or as little personal information as they are comfortable with.

(50 minutes)

6. Closure

It is important to end the session together in the whole group. Facilitators should not expect too much feedback from participants, as the group is still new and developing trust. Invite questions and summarise the proposed future direction of the group. Ask participants for any thoughts.

If session two is to be the ropes course, explain what this is, hand out permission forms for them to return next week and advise them to wear old clothes.

(20 minutes if discussing ropes course)

Materials:

Whiteboard & Markers

Map of the World

Drawing paper

Blu-tack

Crayons/textas/pencils

SESSION 2: LIVING IN THE WORLD

Rationale for Session 2

The rationale for session 2 is to facilitate further reflection on the participants' past and their place in the world and to develop group identity and cohesion. This session shares common experiences and differences and gives participants a chance to speak of human rights and of the 'refugee experience'.

The ropes course, a trust and initiative activity, fits in to this session as preparation for the camp, as well as being an important part of the development of trust and co-operation within the group. Facilitated by an adventure group such as Outdoor Inc, this group employs qualified outdoor education instructors who run high and low ropes courses. A half day is needed for this activity. Alternative challenging recreational activities can be substituted here. This activity makes the day very long. Facilitators need to assess the energy level of the group to see whether all activities should be included.

Session Plan

1. Physical game	30 minutes
2. Recapping ground rules	10 minutes
3. Discussion and activity on human rights	50 minutes
4. Break	20 minutes
5. Discussion on being a refugee	50minutes
6. Preparation for ropes course	25 minutes
7. Lunch break	60 minutes
8. Ropes course	165 minutes
9. Closure	20 minutes

1. Physical game

Begin with a game to loosen people up, have fun and build cohesion. Basketball, soccer, or another active game such as juggling or an obstacle course are suitable.

(30 minutes)

2. Recapping on ground rules

Before beginning new exercises, it is important to recap on the ground rules from the previous session. Write these words on the whiteboard and ask participants to explain what they remember them to mean.

(10 minutes)

3. Discussion on human rights

The facilitator may introduce this session by saying: last week we looked at our past. One thing the group has in common is the experience of coming to Australia as refugees - leaving the countries in which you were born for reasons such as war and political repression. This week we will look at what the world believes are rights for all people, what happens when these rights are violated, and what happens when people must leave their homelands, because of human rights violations. Ensure that last week's artwork is up for the group to see.

Some questions to ask are:

- What is a right? What might some rights be?
- Are we born with rights?
- Do some people have more rights than others?

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- The facilitator can begin by saying: many countries around the world have signed this international law, saying that they will agree to protect the rights of their people.

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The Universal Declaration came about after the Second World War after many millions of people were killed because of their ethnicity, colour and beliefs.

- Photocopy eight to twelve of the most pertinent articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. **See Appendix 10.** Write these articles in simple language on separate pieces of paper and have participants put them on the walls. Ask the group to walk around the room, stopping at each article, and work out what each article means. Ask if there is anything else that people think should be added to this list of rights?

Hand out a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in simple language to each person and ask them to draw or write something of their own experience which relates to one or more of the articles. This drawing could be generally about their countries of origin or more specifically about participants' own experiences. Presentation and discussion of these drawings in the one group should follow.

(45 minutes)

4. Break

(20 minutes)

5. The Refugee experience

Introduce this subject by saying that terrible things happen in some countries to make people feel they have to leave.

- Discussion should focus around what is a refugee? Some questions could include: What choices do refugees have about leaving their countries? What sorts of things might happen if they stayed? What sorts of things might happen to refugees after they have left their countries? From which countries do refugees come?
- If these questions do not stimulate enough discussion, pass around a copy of the UN Convention on Refugees. **See Appendix 9.** This is how countries in the United Nations have understood what a

refugee is. Ask if anyone wants to read it out? Some questions to ask are: Does anyone have an idea as to what it might mean? Do you think it is a good understanding of what makes a refugee? Is there anything it misses?

- This discussion can be extended by having a list of the countries which have signed the Convention. Questions that can be raised include: Do you think that all these countries are doing their jobs properly? Why not? Is Australia doing its share? What is it like for refugees in Australia?
- This exercise provides a structure for a discussion about being a refugee. It is used by participants in many ways to discuss other related issues. The discussion need not be confined to talking about the proposed topic.

(45 minutes)

6. Preparation for Ropes Course

Preparation involves discussion about what is involved in doing the course and discussion about any fears that participants might have. Permission forms need to be collected.

(25 minutes)

7. Lunch

(60 minutes)

8. Ropes Course

External instructors were briefed by the Foundation about the group and issues about which they may need to be aware.

It is helpful if facilitators participate in the ropes course, however it is important that they allow participants to solve the ropes problems presented.

(2 hours 40 minutes)

9. Closure

If the ropes leaders have not spent time reflecting on the experience facilitators should include time to do this. Discuss the high points and low points and ask if this experience is similar to life. Congratulate all participants. Discuss plans for next week.

(20 minutes)

Materials:

Whiteboard + Markers

Key articles of the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' and the UN Definition of a Refugee written in simple language

Blu-tack

Drawing paper

Colour Pencils, textas, paints

Camera

SESSION 3: LIVING IN THE PRESENT

Rationale for Session 3

The rationale of this session is to enable participants to reflect on self identity and cultural identity; to recognise the energy and effort required to span two cultures and to develop group identity.

Session Plan

1. Physical Activity	30 minutes
2. Reflection on previous week	10 minutes
3. Who are we: polaroids and discussion	50 minutes
4. Break	20 minutes
5. Drawing Hands activity	60 minutes
6. Closure	10 minutes

1. Physical Activity

(30 minutes)

2. Reflections on last week

Ask participants what it was that they enjoyed about the ropes course, what they learnt about themselves and working with each other. Photos from the ropes course can be used as a way of stimulating discussion.

(10 minutes)

3. "Thinking about who we are"

- Introduce the theme for today's group by indicating that people may look at us and think they know who we are, but their ideas on

TALKING'S TOUGH

who we are, might be very different from the way we see ourselves. It is easy for people to see us from the outside and think they know us, but do they really know us?

- Get participants to take polaroid photos of the group and of individuals. Encourage them to be creative and adventurous. Indicate to the group that what we look like is only one part of who we are and that there is a lot more to us than our outward appearance.
- Ask students to mount their photographs on coloured cardboard. *(35 minutes) (This activity is adapted from 'Juggling Cultures')*

4. Talking about culture

Begin this discussion by asking participants what culture is. Additional questions can include:

- Are you born with it?
- Do you learn it?

(15 minutes)

5. Drawing hands activity

Participants are asked to trace each others hands on the coloured cardboard on which their photos have been mounted. In small groups they are to fill in the fingers on one hand the answers to the following questions:

- Something you have learnt from your culture of origin
- Something you have learnt from Australian culture since coming to Australia
- Something you would like to do in the future
- Something good about living in two cultures
- Something difficult about living in two cultures

Ask participants to read out what they have written in each of the fingers. Encourage discussion by asking if they had written anything which surprised them.

(60 minutes) (This activity is adapted from 'Juggling Cultures')

6. Closure

End the session with the following questions:

How are you feeling right now? (One word is sufficient)

What was the best part of the session and what was the worst part of the session?

(10 minutes)

Materials:

Whiteboard + markers

Paper - poster sized and coloured

Crayons/textas/pencils

Blu-tack

Polaroid camera

SESSION 4: LIVING WITH OTHER PEOPLE No.1

Rationale for Session 4

This session builds on previous sessions which have explored self identity and values and focuses on building relationships.

Session Plan

1. Physical Activity	30 minutes
2. Recapping last session	10 minutes
3. Coloured paper activity	30 minutes
4. Break	20 minutes
5. Discussion	30 minutes
6. Drumming	50 minutes
7. Closure	10 minutes

1. Physical Game

(30 minutes)

2. Introduction to session

Recap on last week and introduce this week's plan to look at who we are and what it means to be in relationships with other people.

(10 minutes)

3. Activity

Strips of coloured paper are provided, and participants are asked to write the answers to the following (one answer to each strip):

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- Two things you'd like to know about others when you are getting to know them.
- Two things you'd like to share with others when they're getting to know you.

Suggest that they include things such as facts about themselves, feelings, thoughts and beliefs. Say that when you are getting to know someone, there are some things that you will be happy to share straight away and others that you will only share later if at all.

Participants are then asked to place the strips of paper on a ladder. The facilitator needs to explain that at the bottom of the ladder is the start of a relationship, when one first meets another.

One might say: You don't know the other person very well and they don't know you. Some relationships never go beyond this stage. The top of the ladder represents relationships where people know each other very well. It represents intimate relationships. Within relationships at the top of the ladder, you might share more personal feelings and thoughts .

Participants are then asked to place the strips of paper on the ladder where they think they fit. It can be helpful to say: Think about when in a relationship you would want to share particular things about yourself and when you would like others to share the information you have written down. On one side of the ladder include the things you would like to know about others as you are getting to know them, and on the other side of the ladder things you'd like others to know about yourself.

(30 minutes)

4. Break

(20 minutes)

5. Discussion

After participants have placed their strips of paper on the ladder the following questions can be asked to stimulate discussion:

TALKING'S TOUGH

- Does everybody agree with where the cards are placed on the ladder or would anybody have put them in a different place?
- What sorts of things make you trust someone?
- What sorts of things take your trust away from someone?
- Has anybody had personal experiences of trust being confirmed or betrayed that they would like to talk about?

(30 minutes)

6. Drumming

Drumming teaches team building and is fun. A person skilled in drumming needs to facilitate this session. Alternative creative activities could be included instead of drumming.

(50 minutes)

7. Closure

Close the session by asking:

Were they surprised by anything that happened today - for better or for worse?

(10 minutes)

Materials:

Whiteboard + markers

Paper - poster sized and coloured

Crayons/textas/pencils

Blu-tack

Ladder

SESSION 5: LIVING WITH OTHER PEOPLE**Rationale for Session 5**

This session continues with the exploration of self identity and values and focuses particularly on issues that arise from living in two cultures

Session Plan

1. Physical Activity	30 minutes
2. Introduction to session	15 minutes
3. The Cultural Broker	55 minutes
4. Break	20 minutes
5. Discussion	50 minutes
6. Closure	10 minutes

1. Physical Activity

(30 minutes)

2. Introduction to session

Start by bringing the ladder from last week and recap on session four. Introduce this session by indicating that the group will be looking more at the way in which their relationships may have changed in Australia. Say to participants that it is often difficult trying to work out the ways in which people relate to each other in Australia: coming to this country may have changed the way in which participants relate to their families, friends, women, girls and other men and that this can often be confusing.

(15 minutes)

3. 'The Cultural Broker'

Talk briefly about the different roles people have in their lives as brother, student, cousin, friend, worker, lover, father or interpreter. Say that: roles help us understand how to relate to each other and what is expected of each person. These often change when people come to a new country.

- Get each participant to fold a piece of paper into four equal segments. In the left two sections ask participants to draw a picture or write something about the roles they had in their country of origin in relation to (1) their family and (2) their community.
- On the other side of the paper ask the participants to draw their role within their family and community now that they are here in Australia.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	AUSTRALIA
<p>Family</p>	<p>Family</p>
<p>Community</p>	<p>Community</p>

This task leads participants to discuss issues about roles which may be unclear or unresolved as a result of living in two cultures. It is an opportunity for participants to seek clarification in relation to their identity in Australia. The task can also highlight some possible triggers for frustration and anger which may, in the past, have resulted in risk taking behaviour.

(55 minutes)

4. Break

(20 minutes)

5. Discussion

Discussion of the previous activity needs to be conducted in relaxed surroundings with the facilitator encouraging the exploration of this new, and very personal material.

Some key questions can include:

- What have you noticed about your new/different role in family/community?
- How has your responsibility within the family/community changed?
- What do you miss about your previous role within the family/community?
- What do you like about your new role within the family/community?
- With whom do you feel more comfortable now that you are living in Australia - family, friends or girlfriend and why?
- Explore concept of 'freedom' and ask participants to define what this means to them.
- How has your experience as a refugee changed you?

(50 minutes)

6. Closure

Close by asking:

- What was it like talking about different roles?
- What were the highpoints and low points of the session?

(10 minutes)

Materials:

Whiteboard + markers
Paper - poster sized and coloured
Crayons/textas/pencils
Blu-tack
Ladder

SESSION 6: LIVING WITH OURSELVES

Rationale for Session 6

This session focuses on preparing participants to go away on camp. Because of the refugee experiences of participants it is essential that they are well prepared. Reiteration of ground rules for safety is important.

Discussion needs to cover practical and psychosocial considerations.

- The practical considerations enable group members to become familiar with the structure of the trip, to clarify expectations and to prepare for the actual physical environment.
- The second part of the session involves participants identifying and expressing material relating to emotional and psychological experiences which may have an impact on the camp experience.

Session Plan

1. Physical activity	30 minutes
2. Introduction to session	5 minutes
3. Preparation for camp: practical considerations	55 minutes
4. Break	15 minutes
5. 'This is my life so far'	65 minutes
6. Closure	10 minutes

1. Physical Activity

(30 minutes)

2. Introduction to session

Facilitators briefly recap on the previous session, check to see if there are any comments and indicate how they may link to this session.

(5 minutes)

3. Preparation for the Camp

Practical issues

The camp related issues fall into two broad categories: the practical considerations and a reiteration and discussion of the ground rules.

Discussion can begin with a consideration of the following:

- where they will be going
- what to bring
- what food they want to eat
- what the activities will be
- organisation of cooking and cleaning
- permission forms.

Questions also need to include:

- Who has been to camp before? When? What was it like? (Identify expectations and clarify any misconceptions they might have about this experience)
- What is their experience of tents? Do they have prior experience of living in tents, particularly in refugee camps; (notice possible negative experiences which, if unidentified, could trigger emotional reactions).
- Who likes/dislikes physical activity and what ones do they like/dislike? (This question enables one to become familiar with the individual and group interests, their similarities and dissimilarities, the fears and excitement of individual group members. It is also relevant for the Camp Leader's planning, and for group members to become sensitised to each other's preferences and needs).

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- Who would like to prepare what? (Involve group members by assigning responsibility of a practical nature. For example, bringing items for recreation (music, balls, cards, games, camera) and for planned activities).

(30minutes)

Ground Rules

Facilitators need to go over the ground rules decided upon by the group in session one, emphasising that they will have to be particularly mindful of these on the camp as there is a greater potential for danger and accidents.

A brief discussion of the following issues follows with facilitators asking participants to imagine how these might relate to the camp situation, and asking them to imagine some situations which might occur on the camp when people would need to be mindful of each issue.

- Responsibility
- Safety
- Trust
- Fears
- Expectations.

Some questions to ask are: What might be a time when people need to be responsible? What do you think are some things that people will need to do in order to make sure we are safe? How would you know if you can trust someone while doing the ropes course or talking about something that is very private? What might be some of the fears they have about going on a camp or about talking in a group?

(25 minutes)

4. Break

(15 minutes)

5. This is my life, so far!

Introduce the activity by talking about the importance of people's stories. The facilitator can say : It should be recognised that there are some things in their stories over which they had some control and other things that happened without their wanting them to. Despite this, their stories are important because they give them a way of learning about their lives, discovering what is important, what they want to remember, the way they want to live, and what they want to do in the future.

Emphasize that this is their story so far; their future may very well be different to their past and that they have a choice about how they want to see their future turn out.

Instructions:

Give each participant a large blank piece of paper. Ask them to write their names somewhere on the page and to write on top "This is My Story, So Far". Show them the pile of magazine pictures, paste and drawing materials (pencils, textas, and paint). Tell the participants that the idea is to choose different magazine pictures that can be used to represent parts of their lives. Give people freedom to create whatever part of their story they wish, but encourage them to include the following parts: themselves at an early age, the events that led them to flee their homes and how they came to Australia.

It could be helpful for facilitators to do their own life story drawing, focussing on at least some of the difficult and distressing times of their own.

(45 minutes)

Discussion and Debriefing

When the stories are completed, each participant is asked to describe what they depicted. Facilitators should not present their story first unless it is clear that none of the participants want to begin. As their stories may well be extremely personal, there should not be

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any pressure to show stories to the rest of the group.

Given the possibility of distressing material coming up in the stories and discussion, it is crucial that at the completion of the discussion the facilitators spend time talking about the pain that many people experience in their lives and other feelings such as sadness, fear, anger and shame. Facilitators should also emphasise the strength needed to explore and share these stories. It may be necessary for facilitators to spend extra time with any participants who become distressed.

Facilitators can also monitor the group's energy for discussing their stories further, as this might form the basis for a discussion on the camp.

(65 minutes)

6. Closure

Ask participants how they found the session and whether they would like to continue with any issues arising from it on the camp.

(10 minutes)

Materials:

A large collection of magazine pictures depicting different countries, types of houses, happy occasions, forms of transport, as well as pictures of war, famine, weapons, bodies etc.

Large pieces of cardboard

Drawing materials and paste.

SESSION 7: CAMP

Rationale

The camp setting offers an intense, challenging experience, which gives opportunities for putting into action things the group has explored in terms of relationships, life skills, new experiences and having fun. The camp provides an environment for a deeper level of discussion and reflection.

Possible Activities

The degree to which the camp is structured needs to be assessed by facilitators in terms of how the group has been developing. Decisions must be made about whether the group needs structured sessions or not. One may follow up previous topics of interest and what ever spontaneously arises at the camp.

Topics which participants may have shown a high level of interest in during previous sessions include: relationships with parents and relatives in a new culture/country; relationships with girls in a new culture/country; trouble with the police, teachers or other adults in positions of authority; sex and sexuality; human rights and what it is to be a refugee.

The following are activities that may be included.

Activity 1

The Future:

- Looking at what things, beliefs, values, experiences give people hope in times of doubt, struggle and destruction.
- Drawing/writing something about how they see the future.
- Discussion about how difficult it is for participants to think about the future because of past experiences of disruption and dislocation and because of the unpredictability in life.

Activity 2

Relaxation Exercise:

Allow 10 minutes to introduce and explain the process of relaxation. Follow this with a 15 minute relaxation exercise. Allow 10 minutes for discussion.

Explain the process of the relaxation exercise - what it is and the benefits. Indicate how long it goes for and how they may feel afterwards. Some young people are afraid to relax because it may lead to worrying thoughts intruding. The facilitator should indicate that it is not necessary to have an 'empty mind' and that any worries can be talked about afterwards if they wish. For participants who do not wish to do the exercise, ask them to sit quietly in the room.

Activity 3

Emotions:

Introduce this activity by defining the word "emotion". Describe emotion as 'the way we feel about different things'. Ask for examples from the group. Examples may include anger, sadness, shyness, love, fear, happiness, guilt and embarrassment.

As group members suggest different types of emotions, explore with them briefly how they experience such feelings and in what kinds of situations they experience them. Ensure that a range of emotions are included and that all emotions are validated equally.

Suggest to the group that by sharing how we experience our feelings we can learn more about ourselves and about how to handle our feelings in a positive way.

Drawing Faces:

Ask participants to sit in a circle near a whiteboard or near a wall. Facilitator draws four circles representing faces on four sheets of A3 paper. These are attached to the whiteboard or wall. Under each circle write the name of an emotion. Emotions to include are: "Happy", "Sad", "Hopeful" and "Afraid".

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Sitting in a large group, invite participants to choose an emotion to begin the activity and then ask someone to volunteer to draw the facial expression of that emotion in the circle. (Coloured wool pasted on to the circle can be used for hair.)

Following the depiction of each emotion the questions below are asked as a means of facilitating discussion.

- How do we know when someone is?
- How does it feel? Where do we feel it in our body?
- When do we feel this emotion? Ask for examples.
- How does it affect us - in our mind, in our body?
- How often do we feel this emotion?
- What are some of the things we do when we feel?

Participants choose the next emotion they wish to depict and discussion about how they experience that particular emotion then follows.

The drawing of faces activity continues until portraits of the four emotions are completed. The more complex and sensitive the emotion, the longer the discussion time required. This activity aims to identify how emotions are experienced as well as discuss the positive and negative coping strategies employed in dealing with them and their respective consequences.

Activity 4

Time needs to be spent talking about how to celebrate the end of the group at the next session. Ask participants what they would like to do.

See Section 3, Part 5 and Appendix 6 for further details on running a camp.

SESSION 8: CLOSURE

Rationale

The aim of this session is to close the group by reflecting on the future, thinking about what the group has been about and what has been learnt.

Session Plan

1. Physical Activity	30 minutes
2. Thoughts and stories about the camp	30 minutes
3. Reflections	30 minutes
4. Bead making	20 minutes
5. Discussion	10 minutes
6. Celebration	60 minutes

1. Physical Activity

(30 minutes)

2. Thoughts and stories about the Camp

Participants are given the chance to look at photos of the camp.

(30 minutes)

3. Reflections on the life of the group

Place work from all previous sessions around the room for the group to look at. Ask participants to talk about what has been done over the past weeks. Some possible questions are:

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- What do people feel about what they have done in the group?
- What was easy/hard?
- Did they find it challenging to say some things in the group?
- Did it get easier as the group continued or not?
- Do they feel that they learnt anything in the group - about themselves, and their relationships?
- Which activities were good to do and which were not?
- What issues were people interested in discussing?
- Are there any issues or activities they would have liked to have been included?

(30 minutes)

4. **Bead Making**

Introduce the notion that closing can be a let down after being with people, like going on a camp and then going home. Ask if anyone is familiar with this feeling.

Facilitators can affirm that people have been generous in their sharing of themselves, and that this can be risky as it means exposing something of themselves to others. Ask if anyone feels this.

The facilitator can say that sometimes we are prepared to take these risks, because if the people we expose ourselves to are caring, the rewards in terms of intimacy, communication and relationships are great. Thank them for their involvement.

Continue by saying that we have sometimes talked about difficult things - about being a refugee, about war and about struggles of being in Australia. We have also had lots of fun, been on a camp, learnt about trusting each other. We have some gifts to you to remind you of your involvement in the group. When you are feeling like there are lots of things on your mind, these gifts can remind you that you are not alone.

Pass around beads and put them on strings of leather.

(20 minutes) (This activity is adapted from 'Juggling Cultures')

5. Discussion

If the discussion in the group has brought up any issues for participants which they would like to talk further about, indicate that there are people who are part of organisations who are available to spend time with them. If participants would like any information about these places, pass on the relevant information.

(10 minutes)

6. Celebration

Divide up the photos from the camp and from the earlier ropes day. Finish with music and food.

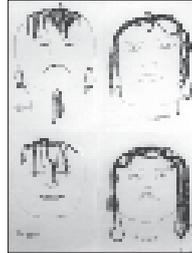
(60 minutes)

Materials:

Photos

Beads and leather.

5



References & Appendices

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APPENDIX 1

Criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Diagnostic Statistical Manual, APA, Edition 4)

A. The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:

(1) the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to physical integrity of self or others;

(2) the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror. **Note:** In children, this may be expressed by disorganised behaviour.

B. The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in at least one (or more) of the following ways

(1) recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts or perceptions. **Note:** In young children, repetitive play may occur in which themes or aspects of the trauma are expressed;

(2) recurrent distressing dreams of the event. **Note:** In children there may be frightening dreams without recognisable content;

(3) acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (includes a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes, including those that occur on awakening or when intoxicated). **Note:** In young children, trauma-specific re-enactment may occur;

(4) intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolise or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event;

(5) physiological re-activity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolise or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.

C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (not present before the trauma), as indicated by three (or more) of the following:

- (1) efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma;
- (2) efforts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma;
- (3) inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma;
- (4) markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities;
- (5) feeling of detachment or estrangement from others;
- (6) restricted range of affect (eg unable to have loving feelings);
- (7) sense of a foreshortened future (eg Does not expect to have a career, marriage, children, or a normal life span).

D. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal (not present before trauma), as indicated by two (or more) of the following:

- (1) difficulty falling or staying asleep;
- (2) irritability or outbursts of anger;
- (3) difficulty concentrating;
- (4) hypervigilance;
- (5) exaggerated startle response.

E. Duration of the disturbance (symptoms in Criteria B, C, and D) is more than 1 month.

F. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

APPENDIX 2

NUMBER OF YOUNG ARRIVALS IN THE PERIOD AUGUST 1991 - JUNE 2000 FOR VICTORIA

COUNTRY	<6	6-11	12-15	16-17	18-24	TOTAL
AFGHANISTAN	213	284	149	95	211	952
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA	389	510	328	156	465	1848
CHINA (Peoples Rep)	449	746	157	53	1177	2582
CAMBODIA	94	165	113	36	110	518
CROATIA	130	151	100	57	162	600
EL SALVADOR	49	49	43	20	44	205
ERITREA	10	36	43	32	107	228
ETHIOPIA	61	86	62	68	370	647
INDONESIA	104	62	36	23	127	352
IRAN	55	78	59	18	76	286
IRAQ	548	575	308	165	769	2365
KUWAIT	39	49	44	19	47	198
PAKISTAN	54	21	4	5	77	161
SOMALIA	199	321	241	116	349	1226
SRI LANKA	132	118	56	34	277	617
SUDAN	123	138	66	15	55	397
UKRAINE	38	56	37	24	63	218
FORMER USSR	72	91	79	41	106	389
VIETNAM	230	327	182	92	604	1435
FORMER YUGOSLAVIA	557	710	420	150	585	2422

Countries listed refer to those from which at least 150 new arrivals came.

**Source: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
Settlement Database
(For up to date figures visit
www.dimia.gov.au/statistics/statistics/statistics_menu_main.htm)**

APPENDIX 3

LEVEL OF INTERVENTION	EXAMPLE OF INTERVENTION
The Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertaking additional professional development to ensure a further understanding of the social, psychological and political environment • setting learning and social goals which accommodate the blocks to learning and interference to the formation of relationships which are caused by trauma • identifying children and adolescents who require counselling. • providing a model of a caring adult • use of play, drawing and story-telling to validate experiences
The Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing opportunities for families to participate in activities as a family group • wherever possible facilitating communication between the young person and other family members to enhance family relationships (regardless of whether they reside together) • forums for meeting parents, information provision eg induction for parents at schools, parent-teacher meetings for student review (school settings) • parent education nights - information provision on educational and social practices in Australia, learning difficulties faced by children, effects of settlement including effects of previous exposure to trauma.
The Organisational Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of safe and comfortable settings which promote trust and interpersonal communication • recreational and indoor areas which provide options for expanding communication and forming friendships. • organisational support for workers including training and professional development for teachers, welfare co-ordinators, youth workers, ethnic community workers, etc • community centre programs, drop in centres, after school and school holiday programs, outdoor adventure activities, general activities which expand the daily recreational opportunities of the young person
The Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forming partnerships between agencies such as schools, community centres, health services, religious communities, ethnic community workers and community based youth workers. • public education and disseminating information about the issues confronting refugees. In particular ensuring that racism is challenged both at an interpersonal and community level.

APPENDIX 4

Procedure developed by George Orwell School in London¹ to support their refugee students

- Ensures that all parents receive information about their entitlements to free meals, transport and clothing grants and other services.
- Gives all new students a yellow introduction card which says 'my name is, my class teacher is
- Provides all teachers with information about newcomers including their country of origin and first language.
- Has a 'buddying' scheme whereby new students are befriended by another member of their tutor group (a speaker of the same language if possible).
- Has developed special induction work in each subject. This intends to support speedy language acquisition.
- Monitors the progress of each student.
- Runs peer group counselling.
- Has good contact with other agencies including social services, housing department, immigration lawyers and refugee support groups.
- Uses interpreters to ensure that all parents know about school events and parents' evenings.
- Ensures that refugee issues are examined in the school curriculum.
- Gives all teachers training about the needs of refugee children.
- Examines issues such as bereavement and loss in the pastoral curriculum.
- Has produced an exhibition and video about refugees.

¹ Rutter, J. (1994) *Refugee Children in the Classroom*, Trentham, London.

APPENDIX 5

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES - VICTORIA

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are located throughout Victoria. For a list of services in your area visit www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/services/child/

SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF TORTURE AND TRAUMA THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA

The Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT) is a coalition of agencies that respond to the needs of survivors of torture and trauma who have come to Australia from overseas. There is an agency in each state and territory of Australia for contact details visit www.fasstt.org.au/contact/default.html.

APPENDIX 6

CHECKLIST FOR ORGANISING A GROUP 1

1. **What is the purpose of the group? What are its aims?**
2. **Membership. Who is for it?**
 - Refugee young people
 - Age range
 - What language will be used
 - Gender balance
3. **Planned duration of group**
 - Time-limited, for example, eight sessions
 - Open-ended
 - Can new participants enter anytime - or will the group be “closed” to help create trust after the first few weeks
 - How long will each session last
4. **Time of group**
 - What is most convenient for young people
 - Will it be within or outside school hours
 - Will it overlap school holidays
5. **Location of group**
 - A quiet place
 - Sufficient space
 - Access to public transport
 - Space for outside physical activities
 - Suitable camp site
6. **How will participants be recruited**
 - From own clients
 - From existing group eg. school
 - Through advertisement to potential referrers of group participants or directly to potential participants
7. **Content of the Group**
 - What session format will be used
 - How flexible will it be

- Given language issues - how full should the content be
- What will be the balance between thinking, creating and recreation activities
- Will there be a camp

8. Negotiations with host (if to be held by another organisation eg school)

- Agreement on hosting
- Negotiations around legal expectations, physical space and resources
- Negotiations around role of teacher/staff

9. Resources

- Are interpreters needed
- Is transport needed
- Materials
- Are outside resource people needed

10. Facilitator arrangements

- Two people for group sessions
- Extra assistance for particular sessions
- Extra assistance for a camp - cook, recreation, artists

11. Planning to evaluate the group

- Prepare from the beginning
- Decide how you will evaluate
- Evaluate in relation to the aims
- Involve group members in planning the evaluation

12. Ground rules

- Invite the members to establish the ground rules
- Confidentiality
- Respect
- Listening to each other
- Freedom not to participate

13. Evaluation and feedback

1. Adapted from checklist for setting up a group, D.V.I.R.C., 1994.

APPENDIX 7

WHAT TO TAKE TO A CAMP

These suggestions may also be appropriate for outdoor activities. Suggestions about what to bring:

Warm Weather

- Broad rim sun hat
- Cotton shirt, T shirt or long sleeved, collared shirt for sun protection
- Shorts or long cotton pants for sun protection
- Jumper
- Sturdy shoes
- Sun screen SPF 15+
- Sun glasses
- Water bottle (at least one litre)
- Small bag, ie such as a day pack to put things in if walking
- Sleeping bag
- Towel
- Toiletries

Cold Weather

- Warm hat
- Nylon or woollen shirt, not cotton
- Two jumpers, at least one warm woollen, not cotton
- Long trousers
- Warm socks - wool or combination nylon wool
- Sturdy shoes
- Gloves if appropriate
- Waterproof jacket
- Water bottle
- Snack food
- Day pack or small bag
- Sleeping bag
- Towel
- Toiletries

For activities such as canoeing, rafting, or caving a complete change of clothes is required in hot or cold weather.

APPENDIX 8
CAMP REFERRAL FORM

Participant Details

Name:

Address:

Contact No:

Age:

Year Level:

Teacher:

Country of Origin:

First Language:

Date of Arrival in Australia:

Family in Australia:

Immigration Status:

(eg refugee, asylum seeker, permanent resident)

This section to be completed by referring person

Reason for selection as participant:

Other Relevant Details:

APPENDIX 9

DEFINITION OF A REFUGEE

Article 1 of the 1951 Convention defines the term *refugee* and is one of the most important articles in the Convention.

The 1951 UN Convention states that a refugee is someone who:

‘owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country;

or

who not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such a fear, is unwilling to return to it.’

APPENDIX 10

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SIMPLE LANGUAGE

ARTICLE 1

All people are born free and equal, and should behave with respect to each other

ARTICLE 2

Everyone should have the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration regardless of their race, colour, sex, nationality, religion, political opinion or social origin.

ARTICLE 3

Everyone has a right to live in freedom and safety.

ARTICLE 4

No-one has a right to make people slaves.

ARTICLE 5

No-one should be tortured or punished in a cruel way.

ARTICLE 6

The law must treat everyone as people, not objects.

ARTICLE 7

Laws must not treat people differently because of their race, sex or way of life.

ARTICLE 8

Everyone has a right to legal protection if their rights are ignored

ARTICLE 9

Nobody should be arrested, nor kept in prison or sent away from their country, without a just reason.

ARTICLE 10

Everyone is entitled to a fair and public trial if charged with an offence.

ARTICLE 11

If charged with an offence, a person should be considered innocent until it is proved that he or she is guilty.

ARTICLE 12

A person has a right to privacy. No-one has a right to say untrue and damaging things against another person.

ARTICLE 13

Everyone has a right to travel and live anywhere in their home country. A person also has the right to leave any country, including his or her own, and to return to it.

ARTICLE 14

People have the right to ask for asylum in another country, if they fear persecution. A person loses the right to ask for asylum if he or she has committed a serious non-political crime, and has not respected the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

ARTICLE 15

Everyone has a right to a nationality

ARTICLE 16

Every adult person has the right to marry and have children. Men and women have equal rights in marriage, and if they divorce. No-one should be forced to marry against his or her will.

ARTICLE 17

Everyone has the right to own property. No-one can take people's possessions without a fair reason.

ARTICLE 18

Everyone has the right to think and believe in what they want, this includes the right to practice a religion.

ARTICLE 19

Everyone has the right to express their thoughts, whether by speaking or in writing.

ARTICLE 20

Everyone has the right to organise peaceful meetings, and to form groups. But no-one can be forced to join an organisation.

ARTICLE 21

Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his or her country, whether by voting or being an elected member of parliament. Fair elections should be held regularly, and everyone's vote is equal.

ARTICLE 22

Everyone has the right to social security. This includes shelter, health care and enough money with which to live.

ARTICLE 23

Everyone has the right to work. Wages should be fair and enable a family to live decently. Men and women should receive the same pay for doing the same work. A person has the right to join a trade union.

ARTICLE 24

Everyone has the right to reasonable working hours, rest and paid holidays.

ARTICLE 25

Everyone has the right to a decent standard of living. Those who cannot work should receive special help. All children, whether born outside marriage or not, have the same rights.

ARTICLE 26

Everyone has the right to education. Primary education should be free and compulsory. A person should be able to continue his or her studies as far as he or she is able. Education should help people live with and respect other people. Parents have the right to choose the kind of education that will be given to their child.

ARTICLE 27

Everyone has the right to join in cultural activities, and enjoy the arts. Anything that a person writes or invents should be protected and the person should be able to benefit from its creation.

ARTICLE 28

For human rights to be protected there must be order and justice in the world.

ARTICLE 29

A person has responsibilities to other people. A person's rights and freedoms should be limited only so far as to protect the rights of other people.

ARTICLE 30

No government, group of person may ignore the right set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.