

Approaches & Clinical Experiences in Treating Iraqi Torture Survivors

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Objectives

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- Review approaches to mental health treatment with Iraqi clients and the importance of tailoring the approach to the particular client.

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- **Identify guidelines for working with Iraqis in Group Therapy settings.**

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- Identify guidelines for working with Iraqis in Group Therapy settings.
- **Identify guidelines for interpreters and for providers when working together in sessions on behalf of the client.**

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity within Treatment

In providing mental health services to Iraqi clients, we think it's important to assess the client to understand where they fall on a cultural continuum

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity within Treatment

Two dimensions need to be considered:

Dimension 1

Un-aculturated

Bi Cultural

Westernized

Dimension 2

Ego Strength

Cultural Identity

Family Strictness

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity within Treatment

Dimension One

Assess whether the client is:

- **Un-aculturated:** Holds strong to their traditional values
- **Bi-cultural:** Adopts the best of the two cultures
- **Westernized:** Completely identified with new western individualistic style

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity within Treatment

The few clients, who have completely adopted the Western way of living, should be given a chance to self-actualize through insight-oriented therapy.

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity within Treatment

The traditional clients who are acculturated across all levels will need to have their families involved, and their traditional values should not be challenged by the therapist

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity within Treatment

For clients who are bicultural, the therapist has to assess the three factors (ego strength, cultural identity, and family strictness) and determine whether or not the client will welcome self-actualization, and if so, to adopt insight oriented therapy

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity within Treatment

Dimension Two

Assess the client's:

- Ego strength
- cultural identity
- family strictness

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity within Treatment

- When individual has a weak ego, strong cultural identity and strict family, it would be unwise to use insight-oriented therapy
- Use direct, short term, and goal oriented

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity within Treatment

- Clients who have a strong ego and Westernized style of thinking, and liberal family
- Use insight – oriented therapy such as Psychoanalysis and Gestalt

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity within Treatment

- How do we deal with these unacculturated clients?
- There have been several approaches to treat refugee torture survivors who come from the traditional background...

Suggested Treatment Modalities

1. Biopsychosocial Model
2. Wrap Around Approach
3. Metaphor Approach
4. Pharmacotherapy
5. Hope Theory
6. Group Work Modality

Biopsychosocial Model

Considers the connections between the mind, body and socio-cultural factors

Dwairy, M. (1998). *Cross-cultural counselling: The Arab-Palestinian case*. NY: Haworth Press.

Wrap Around Approach

Wrap Around Approach for un-aculturated clients:

- This is integrating the combination of ecological systems, macro systems and field systems theories
- Wrap Around is multi-systemic and ecologically valid
- Conducted by community treatment teams
- Feasible alternative model for torture treatment
- Holistic comprehensive and flexible approach

Kira, I. (2001, October 2001). Wraparound approach for the treatment of torture survivors. *Torture*, 11(3), 75-76.
Kira, I. A. (2002). Torture assessment and treatment: The wraparound approach. *Traumatology*, 8, 23-51.

Components of Wrap Around

1. Development of community teams that build a system of collaboration
2. Need identification, linkage with resources and referrals through therapeutic case management
3. Flexible approach in planning and implementation
4. There is emphasis on private confidentiality and normalization
5. Comprehensive examinations and treatment are provided by medical, psychological including individual and family, and psychiatric

Metaphor Approach

Metaphor therapy allows communication on an imaginative level that is more efficient because it represents a subjective personal experience

- Examples such as:

 - (Qalbi maqbooth = I feel a tightness in my heart)

 - (Mith el asfoor fil kafas = I feel like a caged bird)

- Thinking in pictures is closer to the unconscious than thinking in words (Freud 1923)
- Metaphors are a big component in the Arabic language

Pharmacotherapy

- PTSD patients exhibit abnormalities in several key neurobiological systems (Foa, E 2000)
- Drug treatment is one of the popular methods for symptom reduction
- It is generally accepted by most patients especially with the Iraqi population
- **Arab clients expect instantaneous cures, and feel the more intrusive the treatment is (such as injections as opposed to pills) the more effective the treatment will be in curing their illness.** (Timimi, 1995)

Foa, E., Keane, T. (2000) . Effective Treatments for PTSD, Practice Guidelines from the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (pp. 84-105). New York, London, The Guilford Press.
Timimi, S. B. (1995, Spring 1995). Adolescence in Immigrant Arab Families. *Psychotherapy*, 32, 141-149.

Hope Theory

“Hope and Fostering the Well-Being of Refugees from Iraq”

- Purpose of study was to examine links between refugees’ feelings of hope and their symptoms of trauma
- Hope operationalized as “a way of thinking about your goals in which you have the perceived capacity to come up with the pathways to those goals, along with the mental energy to use those pathways”

Hope Theory

Findings of the Study:

1. As It was expected that self-reports of hope would be negatively related to symptoms of Depression and Anxiety (Hopkins Symptom Checklist-25), HSCL-25 and posttraumatic stress disorder Symptom Severity scale
 2. The results of this study imply that clinicians may want to target increasing feelings of hope as an antidote to despair and the aftereffects of trauma such as anxiety and depression
- Solution rather than problem focus
 - Emphasis on self worth and dignity
 - Improved rapport
 - Build sense of safety and security
 - Eliminate self-blame feelings

Group Work Modality

- Homogeneous membership
- Same gender, this helps with group cohesiveness (cultural factors)
- Normalization of traumatic responses
- Arts and Crafts groups proved successful
- Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Educational Group

Recommendation

The aim is to use **whatever therapy and techniques most suitable to the client**, rather than the therapist's orientation and practice style. Flexibility and proper assessment are key to successful therapy with Iraqi Clients.

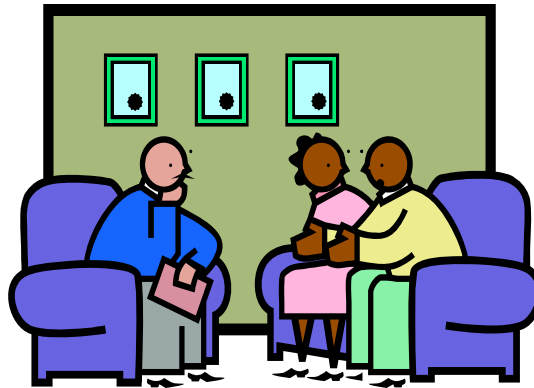
Question and Response Time



Send your questions and/or
comments using the **chat**
feature on your computer

Working with Interpreters

- Best: Bilingual Professional and Support Staff
- Better: Interpreters



ACCESS Experience with Interpreters

- Confidentiality
 - Basic explanation of the rules and regulations governing confidentiality
 - Role of the family members and impact on potential issues related to traditional confidentiality matters
- Importance of not translating word for word only; Clients often use metaphors or imagery to express feelings
- Conveying Cultural Frameworks

What do you do before the Interpreter works with clients?

- Recruit
- Screen
- Orient
- Develop Skills Match
- Explain the Role

What does Clinician Need to do?

- Use interpreter as cultural liaison
(good for focus group exercise and community liaison work including with religious leadership)
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication
- Watch for distress
- Watch for metaphor language

What does Clinician Need to Avoid?

Do not:

- Use word for word format
- Talk louder than normal
- Talk about survivors in their presence

Question and Response Time



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Next Webinar

- August 27th (2PM ET, 1PM CT, 12PM MT, 11AM PT)
- Main Topics Covered:
 - Case Study
 - Assessments:
 - ACCESS' PTSD Scale
 - HCL - 25 Arabic Version
 - Harvard Trauma Questionnaire