Alternative Approaches to Refugee Mental Health

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Tweet us your questions and thoughts during the webinar!
@NPCT_Refugee
Lowell Community Health Center’s (LCHC) Metta Health Center

• LCHC was founded in 1970 to provide caring, quality and culturally competent services to the Greater Lowell Community

• Departments include (Primary Care, Health Promotions, Teen BLOCK, Carino, OB/GYN, Family Planning, Access, Pharmacy, Behavioral Health Services, Health Benefits, and School Based Health Centers)
  • Fall 2016 – Mammography and X-Ray through Lowell General Hospital
  • Expansion into 101 Building will include dental and vision services

• Facts and Figures
  • 90% of the patients live below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level
  • 46% of patients are best serviced in a language other than English
  • 28 different languages are spoken by LCHC employees
  • LCHC provides Primary Care to 1 in 2 residents of the City of Lowell
  • 72% of the income is through fees and reimbursable services through health insurance and the remaining 28% is from grants and the Wrap-Around-Fund

• 2014 At a Glance
  • 26,085 Medical Visits
  • Over 3,000 BHS Visits
  • 15,500 Youth Program visits
  • 12,224 Health and Education Outreach Visits
  • 3,130 HIV Services Visits
Metta

• Metta means “Loving Kindness”

• Lowell has the 2nd largest Cambodian population in the United States

• Metta was created in 2000 to provide a “West meets East” framework
  • Community members were in need of healthcare for a number of medical issues, but mistrustful of and/or uneducated about the healthcare system
  • Cambodian population, due to the war, did not have access to preventative care through immunizations or prenatal care

• Services that Metta provided at it’s creation included:
  • Primary Care
  • Behavioral Health Services co-located
  • Nutrition
  • Massage
  • Acupuncture, Cupping and Coining
  • Meditation
  • Traditional Healing consultation (at the current time do not have this as the healer passed away)

• Providing services to the community meant understanding the community including the history, challenges, and presenting issues
  • Trust built among the community members as many of the staff at Metta are also Cambodian and came to the United States as refugees
  • Emphasis on helping the community
    • May not be a model that may be effective for some communities
Metta Behavioral Health Services (BHS)

- Behavioral Health Services are provided with a Co-Counseling model with the use of a Bi-Cultural Mental Health Specialist
  - As part of the BHS Individual Therapy Sessions we use the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire and the Hopkins Symptom Checklist at initial, 6 month and annual intervals
  - Co-location occurred to provide education and intervention as a support to the medical healthcare due to the experience of trauma and torture that nearly all clients experienced
  - Currently 2 Khmer speaking staff who provide cultural brokering and education as well as the “interpretation”
  - Initially BHS Services were provided in the home to provide support to clients

- At the current time BHS offers individual counseling for adults and children, family therapy, group therapy, and psychopharmacology management

- 2002 Metta BHS Began receiving grant funds to provide services to Survivors of Torture

- Beginning in 2002 the Refugee Health Assessment Program was moved to Metta from another LCHC Department
  - Beginning in July 2015, two Metta BHS Clinicians began completing the RHS-15 Screenings with all newly arriving refugees ages 14+ while also providing an introduction to ways that “stress” can present and availability of BHS
    - Normalize that resettlement is challenging, that there are some aspects of stress reaction that may be “normal” and to introduce the support that is available
Who are the team members?

- Small staff: 2 full time clinicians who are LICSW, 2 part time clinicians who are both psychologists, 1 full time Bi-Cultural Mental Health Specialist, 1 part time Bi-Cultural Mental Health Specialist, and 1 part time contracted Arabic Interpreter that functions as a Bi-Cultural Mental Health Specialist
  - It would be helpful to have an Arabic speaking Bi-Cultural Mental Health Specialist, however, this has proven a challenge

- Staff have an interest in working with different cultures and understanding the social, political, economic, and historical issues that the client’s come with as refugees

- Providing education to area agencies and services regarding the refugee experience and background
  - Schools
  - Crisis
  - DTA/Community Service Agencies
Alternative Treatment

- Alternative treatment modalities and their meaning to clients depends on where the client is from
  - Southeast Asian clients don’t view the treatments as “alternative”
    - Providers needed to be educated about traditional healing, presentation and culture
  - Process of gaining trust and buy-in regarding how United States healthcare system can provide prevention, intervention, education, and support while continuing to honor the beliefs and traditions that the client has
  - Education about the use of traditional healing remedies and combination of the medications used in the United States

- Journey to Healing — through the Teen Block Program initially for Southeast Asian youth who may have family members who experienced trauma during the war
  - Target the potential intergenerational impact of violence and trauma through workshops including: Cambodian history and culture, healthy coping skill development, building healthy and strong relationships with elder family members, and what PTSD can look like and how to manage it
    - JTH is available to any teen that wants to be a part of the workshop
BHS and Alternative Therapy

• In BHS Sessions we are regularly reinforcing medical providers instructions including talking about why medication is important, why it is important to take the medication as prescribed and that medications from one provider don’t mean that you don’t have to take medications from another

• Reinforcing the understanding of the mind/body connection through education about the neurobiology of trauma, the effects of stress on the body including the risk of hypertension, cardiac episodes, diabetes, and emotional health

• BHS Clinicians use the Meditation Room for sessions, encourage the use of massage, acupuncture and attending the meditation on Sunday mornings
Healthcare and Alternative Therapies

- Majority of clients receive Mass Health
  - Acupuncture, massage, meditation – not reimbursed by Mass Health
  - Services covered by the Wrap-Around-Fund
    - Income verification – so if clients can pay then they may pay a small fee

- Services also open to staff - $25

- Also reinforcing, for some, the belief that coming to the United States does NOT mean that everything is going to be cured/healed
  - For some this also means that BHS is not a method that can help them and the client prefers to utilize traditional remedies
  - BHS clinician providing education and support to the providers regarding referrals

- The most significant piece of treatment for the clients we see is continued education of the United States Healthcare system
  - Hard enough for us to understand and we speak the same language (referrals, multiple appointments etc.)
  - Challenges with language and understanding are common

- However, the battle of alternative treatment is also across generational lines
  - Younger generation and knowledge/respect of older generation
  - Understanding of importance of treatment
Staff Experience?

• Reading, asking questions, trying to understand, and how to share/provide information in culturally competent ways
  • Just because you provide the language doesn’t mean you are culturally competent, it is important to look at the community and the dynamics in the community

• Trying the alternative therapy yourself – understand the benefit
  • Acupuncture
  • Massage
  • Meditation

• Learn about additional treatments
  • Nutrition and Health
  • Certifications

• New Programs? (fingers crossed)
  • Trauma sensitive Yoga group
  • Arabic Women’s Acupuncture Group
  • Cooking group
Defining the Field

- Alternative Therapies
- Expressive Arts Therapies
- Creative Arts Therapies
- Somatic Therapies

- The arts as healing, expression, exposure
- The body as minefield and as refuge
- Human development and being-ness as an embodied, relational, creative process

- “The artist is a kind of warrior. It takes courage to have people enter your secret chamber and see what is going on there. The creative spirit really needs to be fostered and tended to... The creative spirit is what saves us.”—Emilie Conrad
Questions & Assumptions

• Why are the somatic & creative arts therapies fundamental to the healing or restorative process?
  • The human process is a creative process
  • Injury, wounding, dis-ease, trauma all disrupt organizational and spontaneous processes and capacities
  • The Creative Arts Therapies acknowledge the role of the physical, sensorial, emotional, mental & transpersonal body(s) in healing.
  • To restore creativity, we must engage creatively
  • To restore embodiment, we must engage our bodies
  • To restore humanity, we must engage relationally
  • Where’s the evidence?
Some of the Theories and Science that Support Creative Arts Therapies

• Theories of Human Development
  • Bruce Perry
  • Daniel Siegel
  • Stephen Porges
  • Bessel van der Kolk
  • Alan Schore
  • Daniel Stern
  • Rudolph Steiner
Is there really an alternative?
Summary of The Creative Arts Therapies (“CATS”)

• Art, Dance/Movement (DMT), Drama and Music Therapy are all degreed and license-able therapeutic approaches
• Poetry Therapy is credentialed
• DMT at the crossroads of Somatics and CATS
Movement

• Develops sensori-motor awareness and skills;
• reconnects with developmental progression of physical and human expression.
• First or primary language.
Dance

• An ancient form of physical expression and creativity; release (catharsis)

• The psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process which furthers the emotional, cognitive, physical and spiritual integration of the person (ADTA).
Music

• “The universal language”

• Music Therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program.
Rhythm (Music)

• The most fundamental experience of life
• Restores internal and external connections
Art

- Giving form to internal chaos.
- Non-verbal expression can be less threatening.

- Art therapy is a mental health profession that uses the creative process of art making to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. It is based on the belief that the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behavior, reduce stress, increase self-esteem and self-awareness, and achieve insight. -AATA, 2009
• Creative & social communication; social discourse; transformation; collective expression

• Drama therapy is defined by the National Association for Drama Therapy as "the systematic and intentional use of drama/theater processes, products, and associations to achieve the therapeutic goals of symptom relief, emotional and physical integration and personal growth." Drama therapy is an active approach that helps the client tell his or her story to solve a problem, achieve a catharsis, extend the depth and breadth of inner experience, understand the meaning of images, and strengthen the ability to observe personal roles while increasing flexibility between roles. NDTA, 2010
Poetry Therapy, or poetry which is used for healing and personal growth, may be traced back to primitive man, who used religious rites in which shamans and witchdoctors chanted poetry for the well-being of the tribe or individual.

NAPT, 2010

**REFLECTION**

- In the stillness of the nature,
- In the blowing of the wind,
- In the water ripples,
- In the interval of the birds winged,
- I saw a change
- When sun sets
- I leave all uncertainty
- Meeting the darkness and little change
- Darkness in the heart
- Darkness in the nature
- Darkness in the soul
- Darkness in feelings
- Dark and dark....
- When will lights be?
- Who knows.... Or perhaps..
- I will wait with a hope
- in a reflection...
Games & Activities

- Teamwork
- Cohesion
- Community
- An opportunity to renegotiate and succeed
Integrating “Alternative” Approaches into Treatment Programs

• Colorado: Somatic and Movement-based Clinical Program
  • Primary form of treatment = Somatic Psychology and Dance Movement Therapy
  • “Mainstream” therapies as “alternative”
  • Collaboration with Boulder College of Massage Therapy & local acupuncture master
  • Outcomes: survival-function-thriving timeline
  • Offered groups in:
    • DMT for adults (men, women, children); Contemplative/Somatic Therapies; Dream-work, Creative Arts Therapies (Children), Sleep hygiene, Support and trauma Processing.
Integrating “Alternative” Approaches into Treatment Programs

• New Mexico
• Collaborations with
  • Southwest College of Acupuncture
  • The NM School of Natural Therapeutics
  • Casa de Salud
• Wellness Class
  • Refugee inspired
  • Refugee and facilitator lead
  • Empowering and skill building
The RMSC Children’s DMT Group

- Mixed: Ages, gender, country of origin
- Common thread = war, age range, displacement, and the creative process
- Modeled after a traditional Chacian DMT group
- Beginning/Warm up
- Middle/process/theme identification and development
- Closure/Cool down
“The Stranger”
Human Behavior, Human Being: Adjusting the Framework for Culture, Context and The Body

Belonging, Meaning-Making

The Continuum of Affective Experience

Cognition, Beliefs

History (Trauma)

CULTURE: Biology, sensori-motoric Information, the basis of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors/ action

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Resources

• [www.restorativeresources.net](http://www.restorativeresources.net)
  • Restorative Movement Psychotherapy
  • Polyvagal informed DMT

• [www.kintinstitute.org](http://www.kintinstitute.org)
  • Certificate Program in Arts & Trauma

Falling into Wonderland: Creativity & Healing in Refugee Populations

Julie Kuck, Ph.D. Licensed Psychologist & Contracted Clinician at Survivors of Torture International
'It was much pleasanter at home,' thought poor Alice, when one wasn't always growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits. I almost wish I hadn't gone down that rabbit-hole — and yet — and yet — it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life!'—Lewis Carroll

- Alternative approaches in the Healing Arts may be a necessary going down the rabbit hole for refugee clients and therapists alike. How do we fit in this unknown place?

- In many ways, immigration and its healing odyssey requires curiosity, trust, and bravery to step into a land of new cultures and learn new practices shared between clients and clinicians.

- One way to do the shared task of acculturation is through exploration of universal themes; most easily found in image, color, and word/art forms. Those themes invite growth and expansion—the opposite of constriction and loss.
Introducing....
Creativity in Healing

THE TALK’S GOALS!

• Creativity as an Alternative Modality of Engagement, Stress Reduction, & Therapeutic Intervention
• Inspirational Words & Imagery: Finding Unique and Universal Connections
• Applied Techniques & Resources
• Collage as a Group Process
• Lessons Learned in Cross Cultural Group Process
• Finding Refuge: Know Your Self Care

YOUR GOALS?

• As an Agency, Therapist, Case Manager, Program Director, et. al, What is needed in our populations?
• How do we connect with our clientele? What are our and their passions and interests? How do they match up?
• What types of techniques might work?
• Experiential Learning: What did I see or hear that I want to know more about?
• Where do I find refuge & self care?
The Formula: Start with Heart, Support Depth, & End in Wisdom

“He who works with his hands is a laborer. He who works with his hands and his head is a craftsman. He who works with his hands, head, and heart is an artist.” – Francis of Assisi

But, who works with their hands and hearts? How about YOU and your colleagues, your clients, and your agencies?

Applied Creativity Definition: The ones who work with their hands and hearts are artisans. Touché, Francis!

Process: Turns the big “A” of Art into a little “a” of artisanship using our hearts and hands to create with minimal knowledge but a great deal of curiosity and sensitivity.

The Heart is the First Brain-COMPASSION – how to create in uniquely individual and universal ways. Requires your own passion and vision with a belief that you will find resources and help to carry your healing project forward.

The Gut is the Second Brain-SURVIVAL – how to construct and craft. Requires patience and perseverance.

The Mind is the Third Brain-KNOWING – how to do the work. Requires instruction, teaching, inventing, perception.

Goal: Allows creativity to emerge in the individual, in groups, and in the broader community to foster connections within and between individuals and cultures.

Result: Enhances understanding between cultures and helps foster peaceful unity.

**Universal Sayings, Idioms on Tags** – This Too Shall Pass, It Is WHAT It is, It Touches My Heart.

**Writing to Heal**– James Pennebaker, 15-30 minutes, 3-5 days a week.

**Morning Pages “Brain Drain”**– Julia Cameron, Artist’s Way; Writing without stopping, 3 pages daily, of anything.

**Family Wisdom & Personal Mottos**– The Shade Always Passes to the Other Side of the Tree; Not My Circus, Not My Monkeys; I Am the One Who...fill in the blank with image (Soul Collage-Seena Frost) or writing (Incomplete Sentence Blanks).

**Dreams**– Dream Group Leadership Trainings, Dream and Book Art, & Book: “I Had the Craziest Dream Last Night” -Victoria Rabinowe (dream art at left).

**Expressive Arts Facilitators**– Kat Kirby (2katstudios.com) soul collage/studio/book arts, mosaic, mixed media; Pamela Underwood (pamelaunderwood.com) body writing; Stede Barber (StedeBarber.com) soul art journeys.
“We are all on a journey: physical, social, spiritual....

The women in this group have journeyed far to get Here.

We are forging a path together as a group, with twists and turns.

Each of us individually is on our own unique path.

It intersects with others along the way, but, ultimately, it is ours alone.”

- Penny Dublin, LCSW, unexpected poet
Collage as a Hands On Cross-Cultural Group Process: Love, Blessings, Journeys, & Connections

Thank you Nonprofit Management Solutions and Survivors Staff!
Women’s Healing Arts Group
Survivors of Torture International
www.notorture.org
The Butterfly Effect
Be the Change You Want to See
butterflyeffectbethechange.com

Lessons Learned in Group Process

- Trust the flow; the creative process will take over.
- Silence is golden; rapt attention in creation is more healing for the brain than mindful meditation, as it engages more of our unique neural integrity with our issues.
- Notice & expand the positive, notice and hurry along the negative, befriend the negative in word/image.
- Music is magic. Thank you Michael Stillwater at InnerHarmony.com
- More time than you think (90-120 minutes).
- More hands than you know.
- Lifeline, who they know, in group.
- Prescreen for ability to attend and participate. Consider childcare.
- Plan for extensive prep time and documentation time.
- Interns/Volunteers/Transportation
- Structured to Less Structured Activities
Finding Refuge: Where do you find your self-care?
THANK YOU!!!
Contact Information

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