

SURVIVING WAR, SURVIVING PEACE SESSION 5

WORKING WITH REFUGEE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Suggested time – 180 minutes

Session content

The importance of the resettlement environment
Making schools a place of recovery
Early intervention strategies
Making early intervention culturally appropriate
4 recovery goals
Links to refugee resettlement services
Caring for ourselves

Session outcomes

At the end of the session, participants will be able to :

- demonstrate an understanding of the importance of the resettlement environment
- realise that their support can have an enormously positive influence on refugee students and the resettlement process
- demonstrate an understanding of the importance of effective early intervention strategies
- demonstrate an understanding of the need for cultural sensitivity
- explore ways in which to implement the 4 recovery goals in their own work environment
- identify referral pathways to specialist services and appropriate settlement services
- demonstrate an understanding of the importance of self care when working with traumatised communities.



Refugee Boy – Kakuma Camp

Participant handouts

- Copies of PowerPoint slides for Session 5, printed as handouts
- Copies of background readings for Session 5

Materials needed

- DVD *Surviving War, Surviving Peace*
- PowerPoint presentation for Session 5
- Data projector and laptop with external speakers or DVD player, TV monitor and OHP
- Plain flipchart and marker pens
- Butchers paper and coloured pens

Session Structure

Display slide 1 – Session 5

Use the following notes to describe previous sessions of this course and the purpose and content of session 5:

- Sessions 1-3 of this resource provided participants with crucial background information for working with refugee students.
- Session 4 presented resources for understanding and identifying trauma and reactions to trauma in refugee students.
- In this session, participants are introduced to some resources designed to practically help and assist refugee students.
- Participants are also given the opportunity to explore creative ways in which to use them in their work.
- Refugee students require a supportive resettlement environment, an encouraging school environment, and appropriate early intervention strategies to help them recover from their traumatic experiences.
- The '*4 Recovery Goals*' is a strategy that aims to holistically address refugee students' mental health and resettlement needs.
- When the needs of refugee students are met effectively and with the right kind of support, they are able to successfully adapt to their new lives and begin the process of recovery.
Stress the importance of good cross cultural communication.
- Culture is a determining factor in how refugee children and young people experience and react to trauma.
- Cross-cultural understanding is crucial in order to understand the ways that problems can manifest and the most effective early intervention strategies.

Play Surviving War, Surviving Peace Session 5

- Discuss the suggestions made by the young people.
- Share examples of these things happening in schools.
- List them on the butchers paper.

Display slide 2 – Making the Dreams Come True

Summarise work covered so far:

- With a little help, refugees can build new lives very quickly.
- Many refugee families in Australia have adapted happily and successfully into their new countries and communities and are doing very well.
- Children in particular are resilient, and with appropriate support they can achieve well in school and lead very successful lives.
- Teachers and school counsellors play a really important role in this process, especially in the early months and years of resettlement.

Display slide 3 – The Importance of School

(This slide is referenced to Session 5 background readings, Section a.)

Use the following notes to indicate the importance of school in resettlement:

- School is often the first place that newly arrived refugees have the opportunity to interact with other Australians.
- For many refugees it is the only time that they have the opportunity to mix with other Australians.
- Many things can stop refugee families interacting with others in the broader Australian community. These include:
 - Language barriers
 - Cultural issues
 - Pride
 - Shame
 - Fear
 - Trauma

Display slide 4 – Schools as places of security and healing

(This slide is referenced to Session 5 background readings, Section b.)

Use the following notes to present this slide:

- The school setting is an ideal place for the coordination of early intervention strategies.
- Early intervention for refugee children includes strategies which ‘break the chain’ of traumatising factors by:
 - promoting the mental health of refugee children
 - addressing the trauma they have already experienced, and
 - preventing the intensification of trauma due to problems in resettlement.

Display slide 5

(This slide is referenced to Session 5 background readings, Section b.)

- Acknowledge that school is only one aspect of the resettlement experience, and that there are many other variables which impact on refugee families on arrival and while settling into Australia.
- Summarise the important role that schools and school staff can make in the successful settlement and integration of refugee children and young people.

Display slide 6 – Respecting Cultures

(This slide is referenced to Session 5 background readings, Section c.)

Use the following notes to present this slide:

- The ways in which refugee children and youth react to their traumatic experiences will be very influenced by their culture.
- Some of the ways trauma is dealt with in our own culture, such as counselling, may not be appropriate for refugees.
- It is necessary to consult with refugee communities and learn from them the sorts of strategies that will assist refugees to settle successfully into Australian society.

Display slide 7 – How to Help

(This slide is referenced to Session 5 background readings, Section d.)

Use the following notes to indicate how schools can help refugee students:

Ways to foster a supportive and encouraging environment:

- assisting refugee children to integrate into school life
- teaching them about Australia and its culture
- providing opportunities for refugee children to share their culture and some of their experiences
- teaching the other children about the refugee experience and what it means to be a refugee
- allowing refugee children to express their feelings and experiences through drawing and play
- fostering relationships of trust and support with refugee children
- linking the child and their family into support systems, e.g. school counsellors, refugee services provided by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship through Migrant Resource Centres

Display slide 8 – How to Help

(This slide is referenced to Session 5 background readings, Section e.)

Use the following notes to introduce the “Recovery Goals”:

- The “Recovery Goals” are critical to the successful integration and development of refugee children and youth who have experienced trauma.
- It is important to identify which of these can be addressed in the school environment and the referral networks for those who need specialist treatment.
- This will have to be developed at a local level.
- More information and references are included in the background readings.

Display slide 9 – Recovery Goal 1

(This slide is referenced to Session 5 background readings, Section e.)

- Reveal each of the strategies listed on this slide, expanding or exemplifying where appropriate.
- It is not suggested that it is the role of the teacher or the school counsellor to address all of these issues.
- It is, however, important to know the sorts of things that can help students from a refugee background.
- At a local level, it is important to identify the range of services which are available to which students can be referred. Teachers and counsellors could assist in starting an interagency network if one does not exist.
- Identify activities which could take place at your school or in your region.
- Identify actions which can be taken by individual teachers and counsellors, and the support they would need to do this.

Display slide 10 – Recovery Goal 2

(This slide is referenced to Session 5 background readings, Section e.)

- Reveal each of the strategies listed on this slide, expanding or exemplifying where appropriate.

Display slide 11 – Recovery Goal 3

(This slide is referenced to Session 5 background readings, Section e.)

- Reveal each of the strategies listed on this slide, expanding or exemplifying where appropriate.

Display slide 12 – Recovery Goal 4

(This slide is referenced to Session 5 background readings, Section e.)

- Reveal each of the strategies listed on this slide, expanding or exemplifying where appropriate.

Display slide 13 - Conclusion

(This slide is referenced to Session 5 background readings, Section g.)

Use the following notes to present this slide:

Caring for the workers

- While it is important that we build good support systems for our students, it is equally important that we build support systems for ourselves and other staff.
- This is perhaps the area of settlement services which receives least attention, and yet is essential to all workers in contact with refugees communities.
- Provision must be made for staff to regularly debrief.
- Professional supervision should be available both to identify and assist with cases of vicarious traumatisation. This can range from regular formal supervision, to dedicated staff debriefing sessions, or to sharing a drink at the end of the week.

- Good and ongoing staff training is essential.
- The important thing is that there is a structure in place, and that staff should never feel that they are carrying the burden of their students' trauma on their own shoulders.
- It is important that we have a safe space where we can explore our own prejudices, biases and assumptions, anger and frustrations with peers and supervisors who are able to help us to move forward and offer the best possible services to our clients.
- Staff who do not get this level of support are likely to burn out and leave, or become cynical and bitter. It is just as important to look after ourselves as it is to look after our students. We can not nurture resilience in others if we have used up our own!!

Workshop

- Divide the participants into four groups.
- Give each group one of the recovery goals, butchers paper and coloured pens.
- Refer them to all of the work done over the previous sessions, and the discussion points and suggestions listed on the walls.
- Ask them to work through the recovery goals they have been given and suggest ways in which they could be addressed within the school community.
- If they can not be addressed there, where would they refer the student and how would they involve the family.
- Encourage them to be creative and to “think outside the square”.
- Ask each group to prepare a five minute presentation to the larger group, using butchers paper.
- As participants listen to each of the presentations, ask them to use the lists they prepared in Session 4 and see if they can match activities suggested in this exercise with the needs that they identified then.

Display slides 14 and 15 – GOOD LUCK