

 The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE *with*  Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma

**Therapy for Refugees and Torture Survivors:
New H.E.A.R.T.
(Healing Environment and Restorative Therapy)**

Case Studies 

May 15, 2019

.....
National Capacity Building Project

Objectives

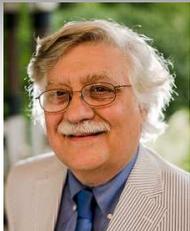
1. Understand the magnitude of mental health problems for refugees
2. Describe Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and how it relates to working with survivors of torture
3. Articulate the basic principles of hearing the trauma story
4. Identify the key components of the H.E.A.R.T. model for therapy

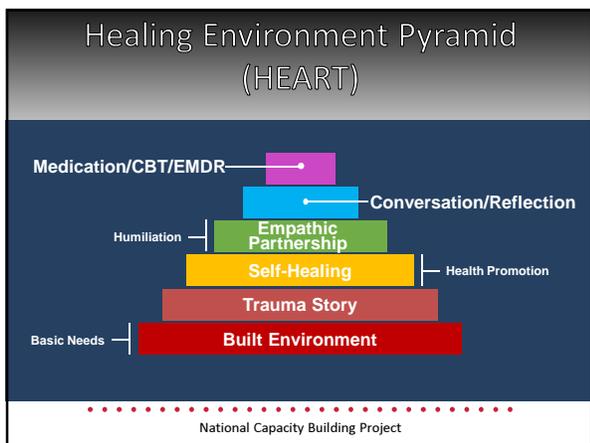
Today's session will illustrate how these concepts may work in a clinical setting.

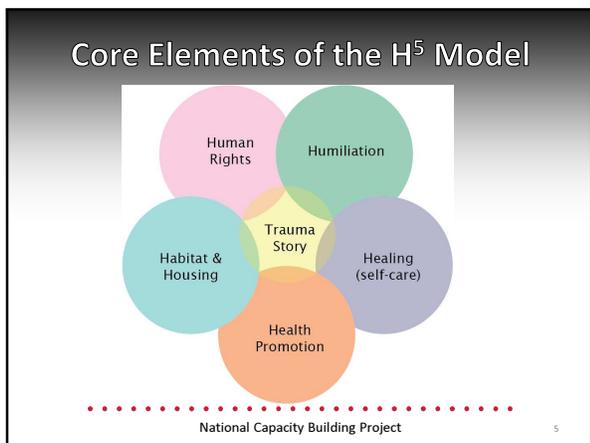
.....
National Capacity Building Project

Richard F. Mollica, MD, MAR

Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma
Cambridge, MA







Presenters

Laura Morrisette
Harvard Program in
Refugee Trauma
Cambridge, MA

Sebastian Sempija
Sebastian Family Psychology
Practice, LLC
Glendale, WI

National Capacity Building Project

Case Study:
A trauma sensitive
meditation instruction
approach.



Laura Morrissette
Harvard Program in
Refugee Trauma
Cambridge, MA

.....
National Capacity Building Project

Client Background

- 70 year old single male “Leandro”
- From Dominican Republic
- Middle school education

.....
National Capacity Building Project 8

Presenting symptoms

- PTSD- nightmares, sleep disturbance, vigilance, auditory hallucinations, severe anxiety
- Depression- anhedonia, pattern of isolation, depressed mood, poor memory

.....
National Capacity Building Project 9

Trauma History

- Survived bombing of his school by Trujillo regime as a youth
- Witnessed massacres by DR army in the streets
- Accosted at gunpoint as an adult



National Capacity Building Project

10

Effect of trauma on client

- Never returned to school following bombing
- Spent years homebound in the Dominican Republic with symptoms of PTSD and agoraphobia
- Abused alcohol for several years



National Capacity Building Project

11

Course of treatment

- 3 years in individual therapy
- 2 years in meditation group
- Several cycles of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) translated and adapted into Spanish
- Several cycles of a 4 week curriculum from UMASS Medical School
- Ongoing: Laura Morrisette's curriculum-including mantra based meditation



National Capacity Building Project

12

Meditation: My Role

My experience facilitating meditation in group therapy with survivors of torture.

- Emphasize choice and comfort
- Invitational language - no commands
- Create an environment where patient feels a sense of agency
- Option for eyes open or closed

.....
National Capacity Building Project

Individual practice and group participation

- Highly disciplined with individual practice
- Consistent attendance at group
- Used Spanish language guided meditations from UMass center for mindfulness on a daily basis for several months.
- Graduated to practicing independently without guided meditations
- Created personal meditation and yoga practice integrating and adopting practices that he learned in meditation group

.....
National Capacity Building Project 14

Physical Benefits

- No hypertension, no medication for HBP despite being overweight
- Prostate cancer is stable- numbers are low
- Father died from prostate cancer
- Pt has serene accepting attitude toward cancer diagnosis

.....
National Capacity Building Project 15

Benefits - Emotional

- Emotional regulation
- Calm - not anxious
- No longer depressed
- Positive attitude
- Incorporating attitudes of acceptance, patience, and compassion into daily life

.....

National Capacity Building Project 16

Questions? Discussion?

.....

National Capacity Building Project 17

Resources

Centers

- Center for Mindfulness in Medicine Healthcare, and Society, UMass Medical School
– <https://www.umassmed.edu/cfm>
- The John Main Center for Meditation and Inter-religious Dialogue, Georgetown University
– <https://johnmaincenter.org>

Books

- Hanh Nhat, T. (2011). *The long road turns to joy: A guide to walking meditation*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.
- Kabat-Zinn, J., & University of Massachusetts Medical Center/Worcester. (1991). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York, NY: Dell Pub., a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Pub.
- Main, J.(2006). *Word into silence: A manual for Christian meditation*. London: Canterbury Press Norwich.
- Salzberg,S. (1995). *Loving kindness: The revolutionary art of happiness*. Boston, MA: Shambala.
- Treleavan, D. (2018). *Trauma sensitive mindfulness: Practices for safe and transformative healing*. NYC, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

.....

National Capacity Building Project

Case Analysis

Via the H.E.A.R.T. model



Sebastian Ssempijja
Sebastian Family
Psychology Practice
Glendale, WI

.....
National Capacity Building Project

Highlights of the Case via the Healing/Home Perspective

- Loss of home and loss of country = Loss of identity/loss of purpose.
- Loss of husband via violent means, (plus subsequent torture and victimization) = Humiliation and deprivation of home and meaning.
- Multiple forced migrations intensify sense of annihilation and disruption of what is known = Sense of loss of all that is known to forced oblivion.
- The healing process is complicated by multiple physical illnesses that are real but initially difficult to diagnose causality.
- Healing has to be comprehensive of all these features.

.....
National Capacity Building Project

Environment

- Life prior to the war
 - Pristine, organized, high-class
 - Disrupted by the significance of the war in the home country,
 - Surrounded by distraction and abuse of the existential context.
- With onset of war
 - Deprived of beauty and meaning
 - Laden with death, violence and intentional negation of familiar grounds and context
 - Abduction and subsequent murder of husband
 - Purposeful assault to the mother, family, and all that belongs to her
 - Meant to annihilate and totally destroy, hence the mighty impact of intentional injury and its intended consequences.
- The environment continues to remain ugly, unpredictable until resettled in the US

.....
National Capacity Building Project

Environment (cont'd)

- New living circumstances
 - lack of control on housing resettlement, neighborhood context, and sense of safety
 - having to learn the new context rapidly so as to re-establish sense of stability for self is seen as an active sense of agency and efficacy in managing the new environment.
- Onset of symptoms reverses the momentum and direction of rehabilitation and restores sense of helplessness made worse by the reality of the medical facts.
- A sense of shame and embarrassment, worsened by the incapacity to be one's agent in all things, from basic needs to caring for her family, further damages the environmental context of her existence.
- Existential annihilation becomes a reality

.....
National Capacity Building Project

Questions? Discussion?

.....
National Capacity Building Project

23

Thank you for attending this webinar by

Laura Morrissette,
Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma
Email: lmorrissettecounseling@gmail.com
Phone: 781-205-9681
<http://hpert-cambridge.org/>

Sebastian Ssempijja
Sebastian Family Psychology Practice, LLC
Email: sssempijja@sebastianfpp.com
Phone: 414 247-0801

.....
National Capacity Building Project

Thank you for attending this webinar by
Laura Morrissette, Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma
Sebastian Schempff, Sebastian Family Psychology Practice

on
May 15, 2019

The National Capacity Building Project is a project of the Center for Victims of Torture:
www.cvt.org

More resources are available at: www.HealTorture.org

.....
National Capacity Building Project
