



Trauma Approach

- People that have suffered from Trauma during their lifetime face a number of challenges and problems that may alter their well-being and their abilities to learn and interact socially in a positive way. The aim of this module is to refresh and remind course participants of the most important aspects of Trauma in order to provide guidance for those who want to provide specific attention to users with a history of Trauma such as Ukrainian refugees and to empower their inclusion. The consequences of Trauma vary depending on many factors including the age at which it is experienced and its characteristics.

Recognizing signs and symptoms of Trauma

o Behavioural signs

o Emotional signs

o Physical signs

Behavioural/Emotional Signs



- Irritability
- Aggression
- Withdrawal
- Dissociation
- Poor concentration
- Risk-taking
- Substance use

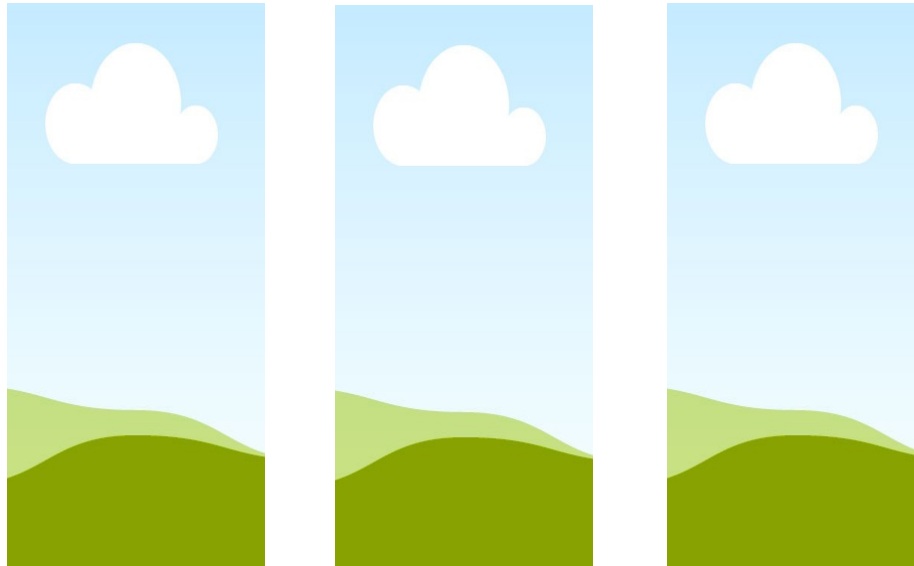
Physical Signs



- Bruises
- Burns
- Unexplained injuries
- Chronic pain
- Fatigue



Migration Trauma



Trauma and Adaptation



- Ukrainian refugees may be dealing with psychological trauma, loss, and adapting to a new country . Migration, in its many forms, is a constant in human history. However, in contemporary societies, it takes on unprecedented complexity, especially when it is not the result of free choice but of necessity imposed by war, persecution, poverty, or environmental disasters. In these cases, the migratory experience is seen not only as an event of geographical and cultural change, but as a potentially traumatic process, capable of profoundly impacting the migrant's identity, psychological balance, and quality of life.

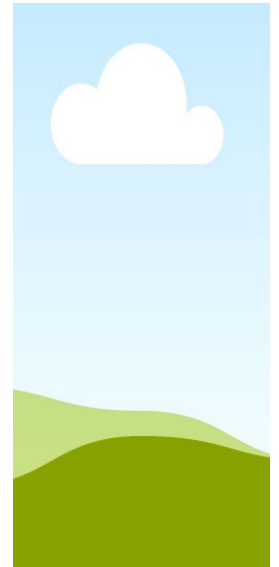
- Migration Trauma is not an isolated event, but rather a complex set of experiences involving multiple phases of the migration process: departure, the journey, and settling into a new context. Departure is often accompanied by a rupture with one's homeland, culture, and emotional ties. This separation can generate feelings of guilt, nostalgia, and unresolved grief. The journey, especially for forced migrants, can be marked by violence, abuse, deprivation, and situations of extreme danger. Finally, arrival in a foreign land requires a redefinition of identity: the migrant confronts linguistic, cultural, and social diversity, often in a context marked by discrimination, marginalization, and precariousness.
- Migration processes occur across three distinct but interconnected phases: pre-migration, migration, and post-migration.



Pre Migration Trauma



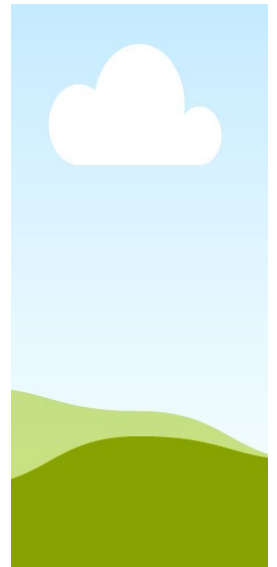
- Exposure to war
- Persecution
- Violence
- Loss
- High risks of anxiety, depression, PTSD, identity crisis



Migration Trauma



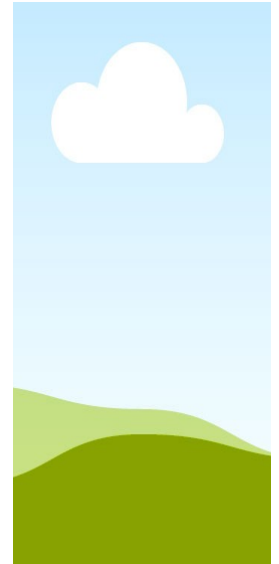
- Dangerous journeys
- Abuse
- Deprivation
- Uncertainty
- Stress and dissociation may develop as coping mechanisms



Post Migration Trauma



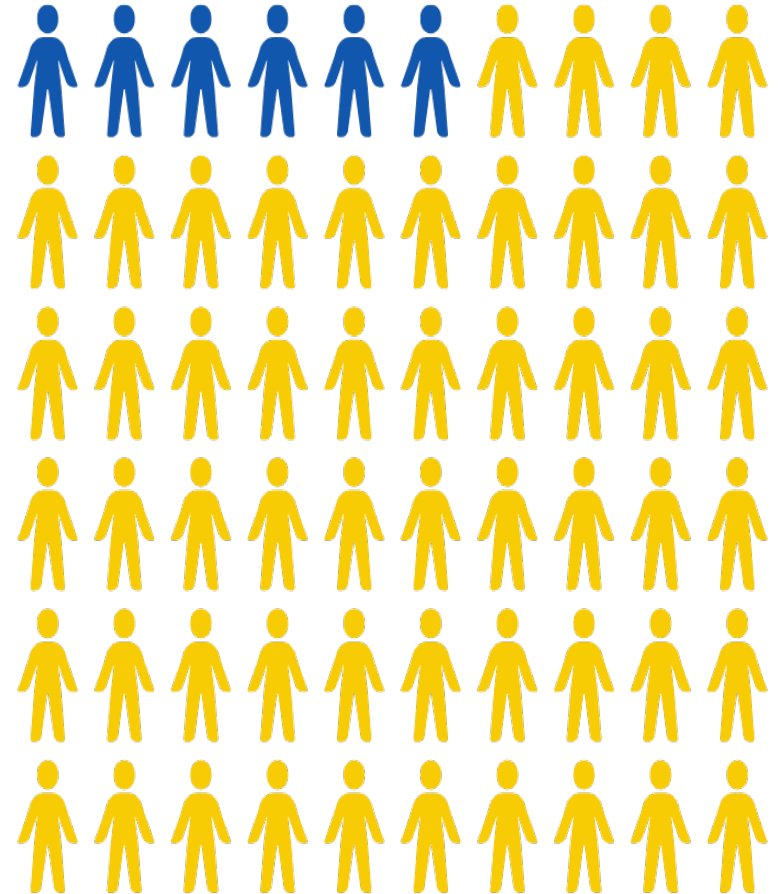
- New barriers (language, legal systems, housing, discrimination)
- “Ulysses syndrome”



Impact on Learning & Adaptation

Trauma affects attention, memory, motivation, behaviour, and social integration — particularly in children and adolescents.

Schools must avoid punitive interpretations of distress and instead adopt trauma-informed, culturally sensitive practices.



Key Inclusive Strategies



- Train staff in trauma-informed education.
- Create safe and predictable environments.
- Provide psychological support and mediation.
- Promote socio-emotional learning and peer support.
- Engage families.

Assessment & Screening



- The assessment, or initial evaluation, is a systematic process aimed at gathering essential information about the refugee's health, psychological condition, legal status, and social and educational profile. This process must be initiated in the initial phases of reception, ideally within the first 48-72 hours of arrival at the designated facilities, and be conducted by an interdisciplinary team made up of healthcare professionals, social workers, cultural mediators, psychologists, and, where appropriate, legal experts.

The primary purpose is to:

- Identify vulnerable conditions (such as pregnancy, disability, psychological trauma, unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking);
- Detect any active pathologies;
- Recognize psychosocial risk factors and cultural or linguistic barriers;
- Promote inclusion in protection programs and personalized care.

Health Screening

- General medical history and vaccination status
- General medical examination
- Screening for infectious diseases with a high public health impact (e.g., tuberculosis, HIV, viral hepatitis, scabies, pediculosis)
- Assessment of nutritional status and any chronic conditions (diabetes, hypertension, asthma)
- Laboratory tests (where possible), including for silent conditions
- Sexual and reproductive health assessment, especially for women and adolescents.

These screenings must be administered with respect for the individual's dignity, with informed consent, and in the presence, where necessary, of staff of the same sex, especially in cases of vulnerability related to sexual violence or female genital mutilation.

Psychological Screening



- Clinical observation
- Psychological interviews
- Validated and culturally adapted questionnaires easily available on line (e.g., Harvard Trauma Questionnaire, Refugee Health Screener; RUDAS - Rowland Universal Dementia Assessment Scale);
- Identification of signs of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), dissociation, insomnia, irritability, or selective mutism in minors.

If warning signs are present, the individual should be promptly referred to mental health services or, in severe cases, to specialized centers. The constant presence of linguistic and cultural mediators experienced in trauma treatment is essential.

Social and Educational Screening

- Family composition
- Previous housing and working conditions
- Education level and professional skills
- Existence of formal or informal social networks
- Any experience of trafficking, labour exploitation, or domestic violence.

This data collection must be accompanied by a referral plan for local services (schools, employment centres, language training, legal assistance), facilitating the rebuilding of individual autonomy.

Recovery Strategies



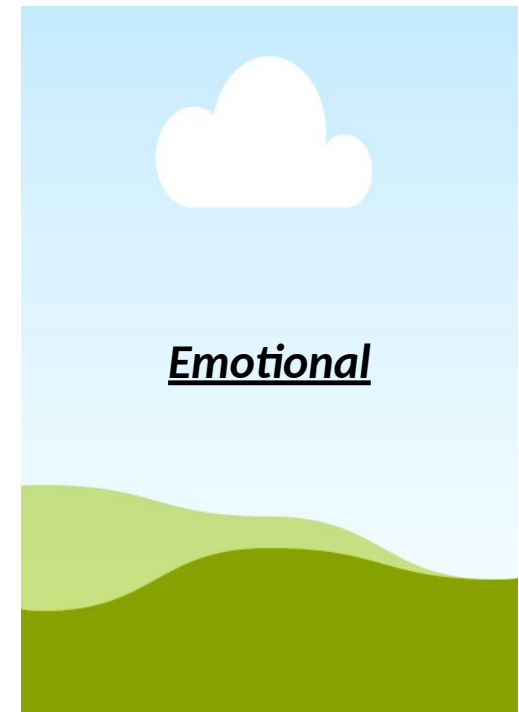
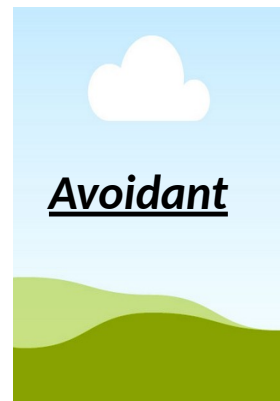
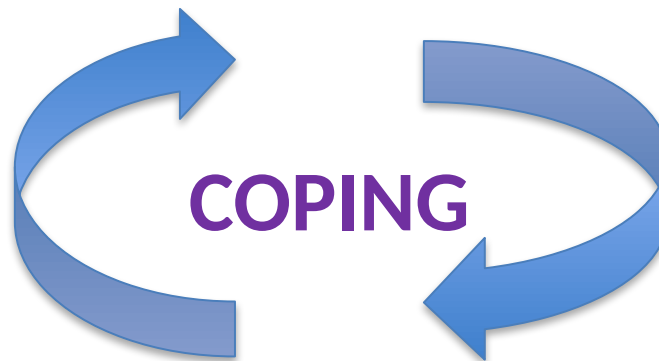
- The term "coping" refers to the set of thoughts and behaviors a person adopts to manage internal or external demands perceived as stressful. Lazarus and Folkman (1984), among the leading coping theorists, distinguish two broad categories: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The former aims to modify the stressful situation, while the latter seeks to regulate the negative emotions associated with it. Other categories were subsequently added, such as avoidant coping and meaning-focused coping, which is particularly relevant in contexts of forced migration, where the sense of loss and disorientation can be profound.

Final recommendations



To ensure the effectiveness of assessment and screening, we recommend:

- Mandatory and ongoing training for professionals involved, focusing on trauma, human rights, intercultural communication, and global health
- Adoption of shared national protocols, adaptable to local circumstances, that integrate clear indicators, validated tools, and referral procedures
- Centralization of cultural mediation, considered an integral part of the operational team
- Use of secure and protected IT tools for managing sensitive data, in compliance with privacy regulations (GDPR and national legislation)
- Involvement of migrant communities and associations in the co-design and monitoring of assessment practices



Recovery Strategies



- Coping strategies for trauma in refugees can be particularly effective when integrated with relaxation and mindfulness techniques, which help manage anxiety, dissociation, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Here is an overview of the main strategies used with the goals to reduce symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, and depression, promote a sense of safety, restore control over body and mind, strengthen internal resources, promote adaptation to the new reality

Recovery Strategies



Conscious Breathing Techniques:

Method: 4-4-6 Breathing (inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4, exhale for 6).

Objectives: Reduce activation of the sympathetic nervous system.

Body Scan:

Method: Guide attention to different parts of the body, noticing sensations without judging them.

Objectives: Promotes mind-body connection, useful for dissociation.

Guided Visualizations:

Method: "Safe Place" – imagine an environment where the person feels protected.

Objectives: Reduces the sense of threat and can be an anchor in times of crisis.

Recovery Strategies



Grounding:

Method: Basic techniques: counting objects, touching surfaces, listing colors around you.

Objectives: Helps with flashbacks or dissociation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) exercises:

Method: Alternating muscle tension and relaxation.

Objectives: Helps recognize and modulate trauma-related bodily tension.

Non-Judgmental Mindfulness:

Method: Pay attention to the present moment with openness and acceptance.

Objectives: "Notice and let go" of intrusive thoughts without fighting them.

CULTURAL ADAPTATION TIPS



- Use simple language and culturally appropriate translations
- Include symbols, metaphors, or spiritual practices relevant to the refugee group
- Offer options that respect gender sensitivity and traumatic experiences
- Short, scalable interventions (e.g., 10-20 minutes) are more sustainable
- Use cultural mediators if possible



LAST BUT NOT LEAST

The coping strategies adopted by refugees are varied and complex, influenced by a multitude of individual, cultural, and structural factors. Some responses are adaptive and allow them to face suffering with resilience; others, dysfunctional, amplify the trauma and impede adaptation. The challenge is twofold: to understand these strategies without judgment and to offer support that respects the refugee's dignity and individuality. Only in this way can we contribute to true integration and the construction of more inclusive and supportive societies.



**thank
you!**
