Live, learn and settle

Gillian Kerr
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The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc. (VSFT) was established in 1987 to meet the needs of people in Victoria who have experienced torture or other traumatic events in their country of origin or when fleeing these countries.

VFST model brings together direct services, working with communities, research & systemic advocacy.
Training Objectives:

- To understand the impact of the refugee experience and trauma on young people’s learning, wellbeing, development, pathways and social connectedness.
- To identify the value of a social inclusion framework.
- To introduce a program that promotes social inclusion to support young people with refugee backgrounds.
A refugee is a person who "owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”…

*The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*

An asylum seeker is a person who has applied for refugee protection and is awaiting a decision.
A Framework for Recovery

**Violence and persecution**
- Killings, assaults
- Life threats, threats of harm to family, friends
- ‘Disappearances’
- Death
- Separation
- Isolation, dislocation
- Prohibition of traditional practices
- Deprivation of human rights
- Killing on mass scale
- Boundless human brutality on mass scale
- Invasion of personal boundaries
- No right to privacy
- Impossible choices
- Insults

**Social & Psychological Effects**
- Chronic fear and alarm
- Disruption of connections to family, friends, community, and cultural beliefs
- Destruction of central values of human existence
- Humiliation and degradation

**Core Components of the Trauma Reaction**
- Anxiety
- Feelings of helplessness
- Loss of control
- Relationships changed
- Grief
- Depression
- Shattering of previously held assumptions: Loss of trust
- Meaning, identity & future
- Guilt
- Shame

**The Recovery Goals**
- Restore safety
- Enhance control
- Reduce the disabling effects of fear and anxiety
- Restore attachment and connections to others who can offer emotional support and care
- Restore meaning and purpose to life
- Restore dignity and value
- Reduce excessive shame and guilt

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Educational Pathways

Uninterrupted Pathway

- 5 yrs old
- 6 - 12 yrs old
- 13 - 18 yrs old

Pre-School/Kindergarten ➔ Primary School ➔ Secondary School

- Raising Family
- University ➔ Employment
- Employment
- Vocational Training ➔ Employment
Difficult Transitions

Pathway informed by the Refugee Experience

| War, oppression & flight | Displacement | English Language |

University → Employment

Employment

Vocational Training → Employment

Secondary Education

Raising Family
Newly arrived young people of refugee background

What have refugee background young people learnt along the way?

How have they learnt?
Education and Integration

Markers and Means
- Employment
- Housing
- Education
- Health

Social Connection
- Social Bridges
- Social Bonds
- Social Links

Facilitators
- Language & Cultural Knowledge
- Safety & Stability
- Rights and Citizenship

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(Ager & Strang: 2008)
Social inclusion and recovery from trauma

Markers and Means
- Employment
- Housing
- Education
- Health

Social Connection
- Social Bridges
- Social Bonds
- Social Links

Facilitators
- Language & Cultural Knowledge
- Safety & Stability
- Rights & Citizenship

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Recovery
- Restore dignity and value
- Reduce excessive shame and guilt
- Restore attachment and connections to others
- Offer emotional support and care
- Restore meaning and purpose to life
- Restore safety
- Enhance control
- Reduce fear and anxiety
Helplessness and isolation are the core experiences of psychological trauma

Empowerment and reconnection are the core experiences of recovery

Judith Herman
*Trauma and Recovery*
Timetable for Ucan2 Day

Intro, sign in, badges

Curriculum – skills for part-time work

Circle time – psycho-education group work

Volunteers- social connections, experiential learning

Alternate weeks:
- Case Coordination Meeting/
- Catch-up meetings with former group
Documented examples of good practice

- **Finding the Right Time and Place**

- **The Social Network**

- **Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People**
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