



Understanding Trauma and Fostering Resilience When Working with Afghan Refugee Students and Their Families



Session 2: Understanding Trauma and Resilience

Thursday, November 9, 2023, 3:00 – 4:00 PM



Brandon Stratford, M.S.W., Ph.D.
Deputy Program Area Director, Education
Child Trends



Cassidy Guros, BA
Policy Analyst, Education
Child Trends



<https://www.childtrends.org/>

School Learning Conditions

Our research work spans the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies, programs, and practices that contribute to inclusive and positive learning environments for all students.

We also provide technical assistance at the national, state, local, and individual levels to improve student well-being, school safety, and instructional environments. We also help educators understand, identify, and address student and family needs.

School Health

We conduct program evaluations and provide technical assistance to support policies, programs, and practices that prioritize equity and whole child development. Our work:

- Analyzes and disseminates information related to school health policies;
- Helps K-12 leaders make informed decisions;
- Promotes expansion of school-based services; and,
- Encourages cross-sector collaboration to support student outcomes.

School Discipline

Through literature reviews, analyses of primary and secondary data, and technical assistance, we support prevention efforts and positive approaches to school discipline. This work:

- Shines a light on disparities in the administration of school discipline
- Emphasizes supportive environments as key to reducing reliance on exclusionary discipline; and,
- Aims to understand how policy changes impact school-level disciplinary practices.

Scan for more information:



School Mental Health

We identify and support policies, programs, and practices that bolster students' mental and emotional well-being. Our work:

- Improves coordinated mental health services at schools;
- Expands the availability of school-based mental health services in all 50 states;
- Improves services for LGBTQ+ youth; and,
- Identifies evidence-based solutions to address COVID-19-related mental health emergencies in youth.

School Employee Wellness

Our school employee wellness work expands the field's understanding beyond the physical and mental wellness of instructional staff, to emphasize the importance of ameliorating workplace stressors while also supporting wellness-enhancing habits among all types and levels of staff.

Child Trends has developed a framework and set of research-based tools to help education and health leaders engage in an inclusive, data-driven process to advance equitable school employee wellness.

Higher Education

We focus on understanding the learning and life experiences of those students for whom many of our nation's colleges and universities were not designed. Our work:

- Centers and uplifts the experiences of parenting students; and
- Creates learning conditions that are supportive of the needs and strengths of diverse college students.



Series Overview

This three-part series is intended to equip school and school district staff with knowledge and skills related to stress, trauma, and resilience



1

Describe how trauma, adversity, and resilience influence refugee students

2

Recognize how our own identities and experiences can influence our work with refugee students and their families

3

Identify ways schools can support positive mental health for refugee students



Applying Trauma-Informed Principles to Group Commitments

1

Be present and participate as much as you are able.

2

Respect the diverse experiences and opinions of others.



1. Safety



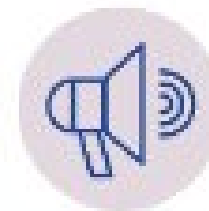
2. Trustworthiness
& Transparency



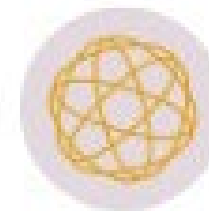
3. Peer Support



4. Collaboration
& Mutuality



5. Empowerment,
Voice, & Choice



6. Cultural,
Historical, &
Gender Issues



Session 2 Learning Objectives

- 1** Recognize ways in which participants' own identities and experiences may influence their work with refugee students and families.
- 2** Describe the concept of secondary traumatic stress and identify strategies to manage secondary traumatic stress.
- 3** Describe ways in which refugee students' and families' identities may be influenced by their refugee experience.



A quick review from the last session

trauma

Trauma is...



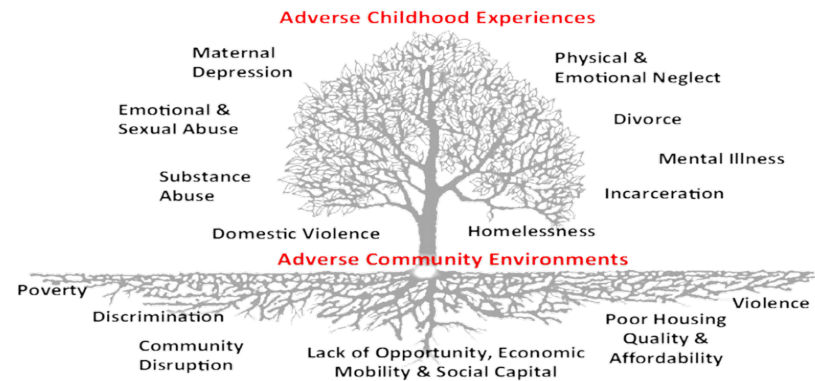
an event, or series of events,

experienced as physically or emotionally harmful



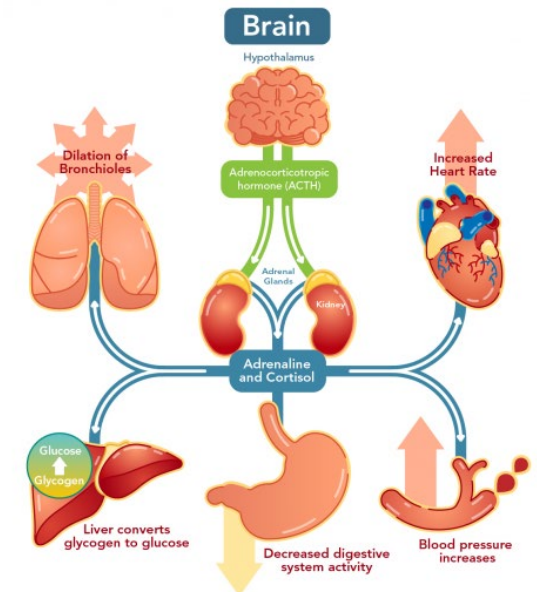
that has lasting effects.

adversity



stress response

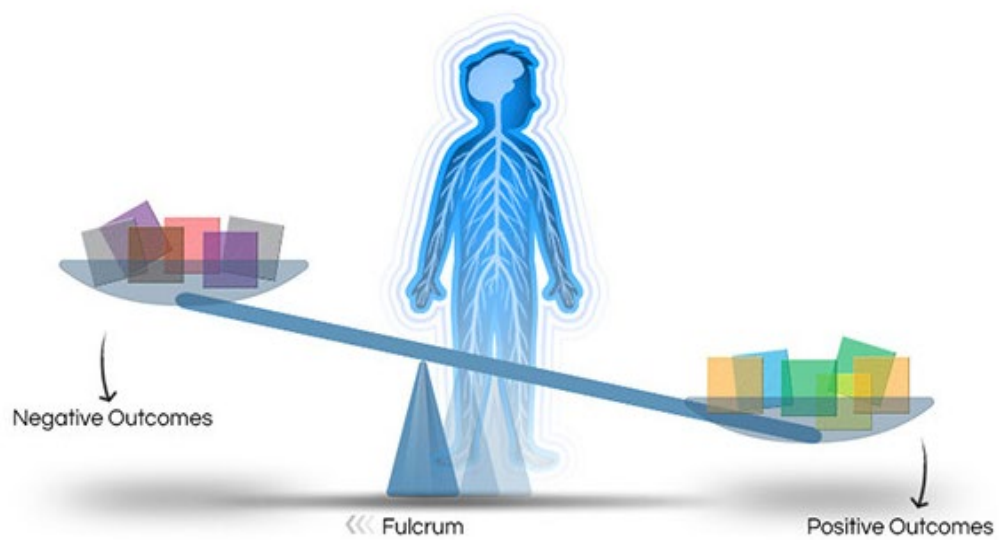
STRESS RESPONSE SYSTEM





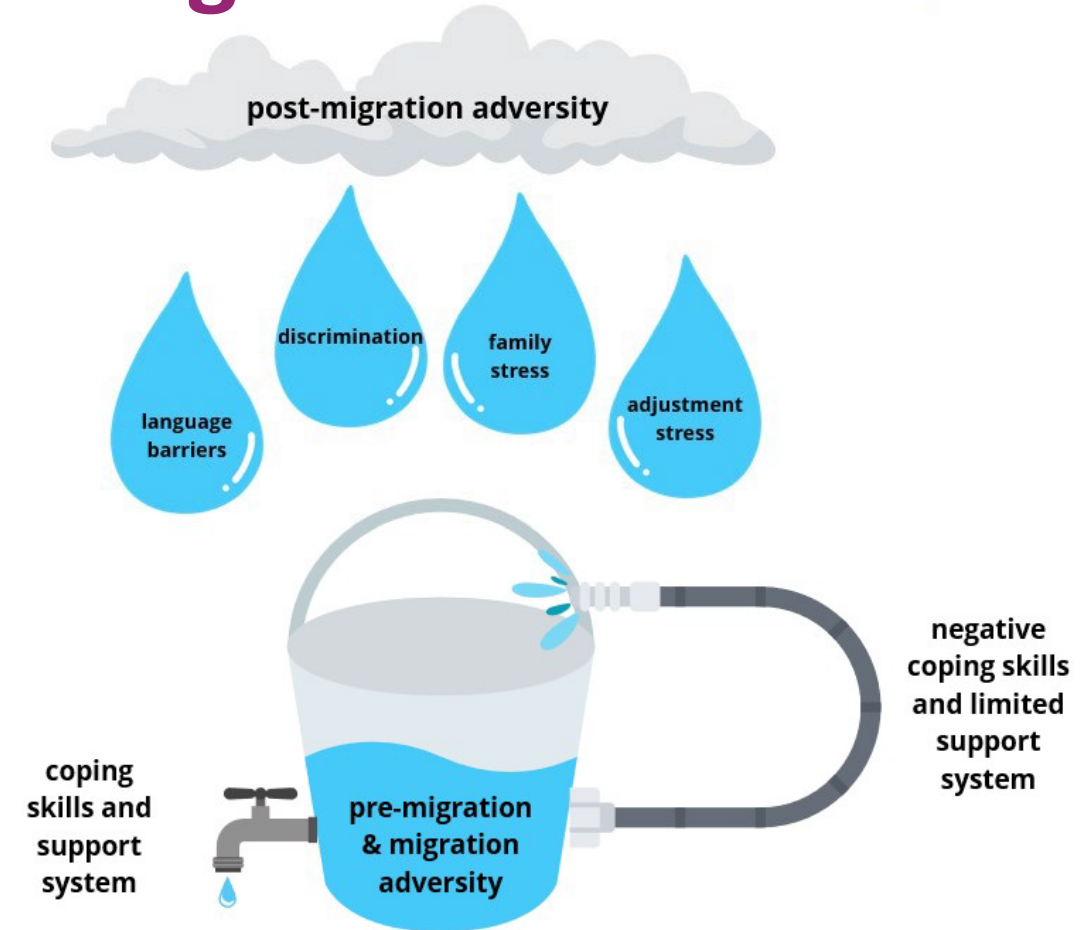
A quick review from the last session

resilience



Over time, the cumulative impact of positive life experiences and coping skills can shift the fulcrum's position, making it easier to achieve positive outcomes. Play Tipping the Scales: The Resilience Game to learn more.

refugee stress bucket





This is Samira.





Samira is...





Samira is...

social identity



personal identity



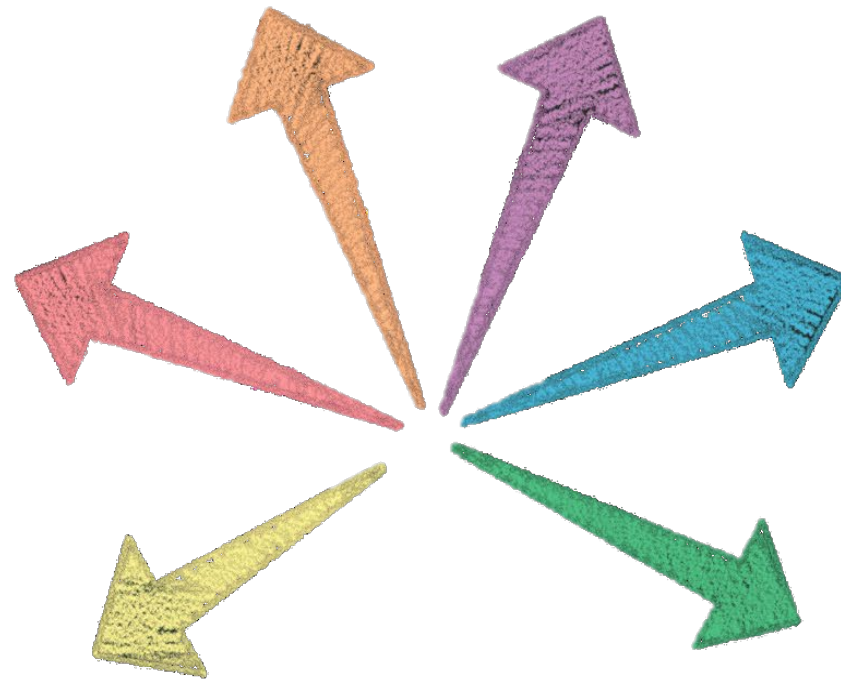


Identities can change over time





The centrality of identities can shift in different situations





Refugee youth and identity formation





Identity formation in the midst of migration stress

While typical youth are faced with the developmental task of forming a coherent identity during adolescence, *a resettled refugee adolescent frequently must reconstruct their sense of self while simultaneously responding to the adaptive demands of adjusting to life in their host country*, which may result in a great degree of distress and impairment.



Identity formation in the context of migration stress





Protective factors



Balance old & new. Strong connections to prior cultural identities are linked to better outcomes for refugee students. Feeling a sense of belonging in their new community and school is also linked to better outcomes. It's a balancing act!



Positive relationships. Positive relationships can buffer stressors and give youth safety to explore their identities. Peer relationships are particularly critical since they play a big role in social identity formation.



Risk factors



Adult roles. Youth often integrate into their new communities more quickly than their parents. As a result, they can get called on to play the role of language and culture broker, which can complicate identity formation.



Identity-based harassment. When youth are harassed or bullied for their cultural identity, it can lead them to want to distance themselves from those identities. However, strong cultural identities can serve as important protective factors.



Remember, we all have multiple identities!



Identity salience refers to how central a particular identity is for a young person relative to other identities they hold. As adults, it is important to recognize that we may not always accurately guess which identities are most central for youth in a specific situation.



Identity coherence refers to whether a young person feels like their various identities are integrated so that they feel like their authentic self. This can be complicated for refugee youth who may be adapting to new cultural norms at a different pace than their parents.



In the chat, please share...



- What strategies have you used to learn more about refugee students' identities?



How do our identities influence our work with refugee students and families?





Implicit bias

EDUCATING

QUESTIONING

TAKING A STAND

THE BEGINNING

FIRST SOCIALIZATION

CORE

INSTITUTIONAL / SOCIETAL SOCIALIZATION

ENFORCEMENTS

RESULTS

TAKE ACTIONS FOR CHANGE!

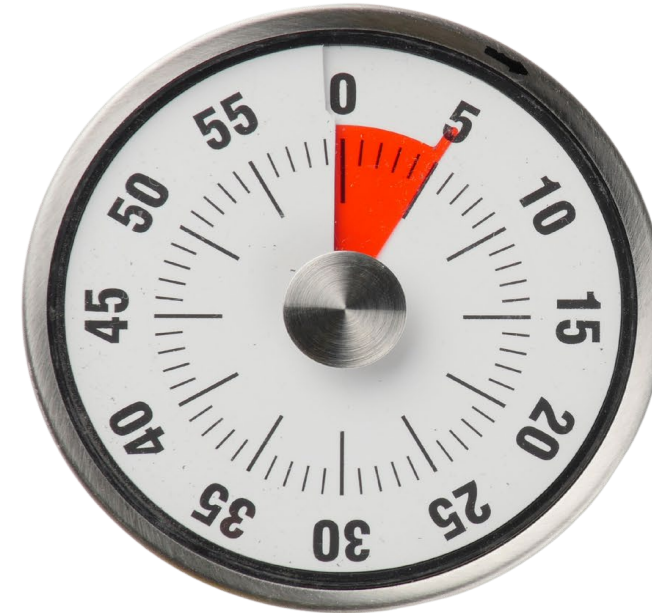
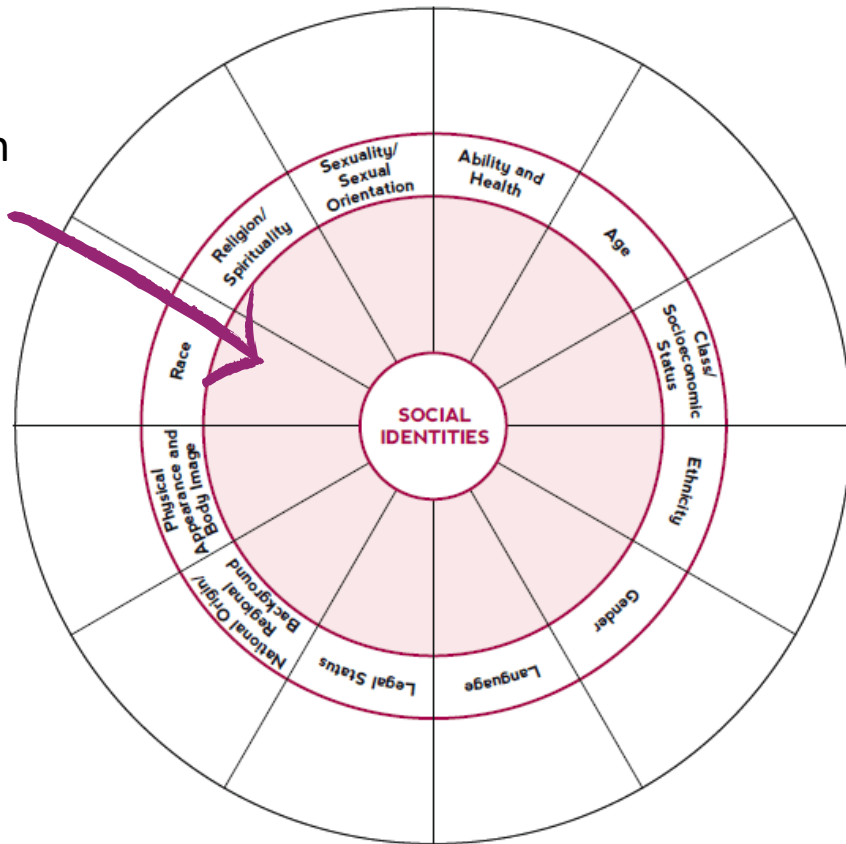
CYCLE OF SOCIALIZATION

2:28 / 2:44



Let's use the social identity wheel to start confronting our biases.

Primary identities in red circle



Take 5 minutes to complete your personal identity wheel.



Questions to consider

- Which of your identities are you the most proud of?
- Which identity is the most important to you?
- Which identity is the least important to you?
- Which identity do you struggle the most with?
- For which identity do you feel that you receive power the most often?
- For which identity do you feel that you experience oppression the most often?
- Which identity do you tend to notice first about other people?
- Which of your identities do you think is the most important to the refugee students and families you know?



Power and privilege

- Social identities are often associated with different levels of power and privilege.
- While privilege can vary depending on context/setting, the image on the right is generally true in the United States.

WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



Adapted from ccrweb.ca

@sylviaaduckworth



In the chat, please share...



- What is one thing that you will take away from this discussion today?



Secondary traumatic stress: individuals

All staff handout

3. SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS AND SELF-CARE PACKET

Educators, counselors, and other support staff who work with students exposed to trauma are at risk of being indirectly traumatized as a result of hearing about their students' experiences and witnessing the negative effects. In the first section of this packet, learn about secondary traumatic stress and related conditions; in the second section, use the tools and strategies provided to help you create individual and schoolwide plans to promote staff self-care and resilience.

Secondary Traumatic Stress and Related Conditions

Secondary traumatic stress (STS) is the emotional distress that results when an individual hears about the traumatic experiences of another individual. Distress may result from hearing someone's trauma stories, seeing high levels of distress in the aftermath of a traumatic event, needing to retell a student's story, and/or seeing photos or images related to the trauma. Individuals with symptoms severe enough could be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Common symptoms of STS include the following:

- Increased anxiety and concern about safety
- Intrusive, negative thoughts and images related to their students' traumatic stories
- Fatigue and physical complaints
- Feeling numb or detached from students
- Feeling powerless or hopeless about students and the work

https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/Building_TSS_Handout_3secondary_trauma.pdf



Secondary traumatic stress: individuals

https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/Building_TSS_Handout_3secondary_trauma.pdf

Support and supervision

	The school offers an employee assistance program.
	Employee job descriptions and responsibilities are clearly defined.
	All staff members have access to regular supervision or support by administrators or peers.
	Staff members have access to ongoing support for managing workload and time needed to complete tasks.
	Staff members are encouraged to understand their own stress reactions and take appropriate steps to develop their own self-care plans.
	Staff members are regularly supported in practicing self-care strategies.
	Staff members are welcome to discuss concerns about the school or their jobs with administrators without negative consequences (e.g., being treated differently, feeling like their jobs are in jeopardy, or having their concerns affect their positions on the team).
	Staff members are encouraged to take breaks, including lunch and vacation time.
	The school fosters team-based support and mentoring for staff.



Personal Commitment

What is one thing you plan to do differently as a result of what you learned today?

Understanding trauma session 1 wrap up

My personal commitment

The screenshot shows a Google Jamboard interface. At the top, the title bar reads "Understanding trauma session 1 wrap up". Below the title bar, there are navigation icons (back, forward, search) and options for "Set background" and "Clear frame". The main workspace contains the text "My personal commitment" at the top center. Below the text, there are four colored sticky notes arranged horizontally: a yellow one on the left, a green one in the middle-left, a blue one in the middle-right, and an orange one on the right. A vertical toolbar on the left side of the workspace contains various editing tools like a pencil, eraser, and selection tools.



Resources

https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/Building_TSS_Handout_3secondary_trauma.pdf

https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/Building_TSS_Handout_3secondary_trauma.pdf

<https://sites.northwestern.edu/msaatnu/2020/07/09/the-i-in-identity-series-identity-wheel-self-reflection/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSguud-t1kc>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31479893/>

Questions? Feel free to reach out!

bstratford@childtrends.org

cguos@childtrends.org