



NEW FUTURE

# BETTER MENTAL WELLBEING FOR THE REFUGEES IN THEIR NEW FUTURE

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### MODULE 4 - PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID



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# INTRODUCTION

This module on Psychological First Aid (PFA) is designed for VET professionals working with refugees in VET-settings

## Objectives

- Understand the principles of providing immediate psychological support in crises.
- Promote mental health during emergencies.
- Build strategies to help participants manage stress during emergencies.

## Topics:

- How to provide immediate psychological support
- Recognizing signs of distress and trauma reaction
- Practical strategies for psychological first aid and trauma-informed stabilisation
- How to teach techniques to manage stress
- How to teach basic intervention techniques for participants to be able help each other in stress situation

# UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID (PFA)

Key elements:

- Listening Carefully
- Ensuring Safety
- Stabilization
- Information on Coping
- Connection to Services

# RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF DISTRESS AND TRAUMA

- Emotional, physical, cognitive, and behavioral signs
- Cultural Expressions of Distress and Language Barriers and Distress
- Importance of early recognition in effective intervention

# PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR PFA AND STABILIZATION


- Creating a calm environment
- Empowering individuals by focusing on strengths
- Importance of non-verbal communication in multi-lingual and multi-cultural settings
- Linking individuals with community and psychological resources

# TECHNIQUES TO MANAGE STRESS

- Breathing exercises and their benefits
- Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)
- Introduction to mindfulness practices
- Effective utilization in training and everyday stress management

# TEACHING BASIC INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES



- Active Listening Skills
- Effective Questioning Techniques
- Recognizing Non-verbal Cues
- Emotional Support Techniques
- Stress Reduction Methods: Practical exercises



**Empathetic Listening Scenario:** You work with a refugee who is hesitant to speak about their experiences. They pause often and search for the right words. How do you proceed?


- Prompt them to continue with questions about their experiences.
- Sit quietly, maintain eye contact, and wait for them to continue when they're ready.
- Change the subject to something less sensitive.





**Cultural Sensitivity Scenario:** A refugee from a culture that values indirect communication is showing signs of distress but minimizes their feelings when asked directly. What approach respects their cultural background while addressing their distress?

- Continue asking direct questions about their feelings.
- Use indirect questions and observe non-verbal cues for signs of distress.
- Avoid discussing feelings to prevent discomfort.



**Non-Verbal Communication Scenario:** You notice a refugee making minimal eye contact and folding their arms tightly across chest. How might you interpret and respond?

- They are disinterested in the session. Continue without addressing it.
- They may be feeling defensive/uncomfortable. Use open body language to convey safety.
- They are simply cold. Offer to adjust the room temperature.

# SCENARIO BUILDING FOR PFA APPLICATION

- Engage participants in creating their own PFA scenarios through a collaborative storytelling approach where one participant starts a scenario, and others add elements or challenges related to language and cultural diversity. Start with a basic scenario, such as a refugee feeling anxious about an upcoming exam. Participants take turns adding details that complicate the scenario (e.g., language barriers, cultural misunderstandings), then discuss possible PFA approaches.

# REFLECTION THROUGH ART

- Facilitate an art-based reflection activity where participants express their feelings, learnings, or plans for applying PFA through singing, drawing, painting, or collage-making. This method allows for non-verbal processing of the material and encourages creative expression. Offer creative materials (art supplies, music, clay, digital art apps) to express their feelings through art. They can also use visual aids for non-verbal communication

# ANIMATED VIDEOS EXPERIENCE

- Incorporate the animated videos developed in the frame of the NewFuture simulating the perspectives of refugees in distress. Following the video experience, set a discussion where participants share their reflections and their approach to supporting refugees.

# ANIMAL-ASSISTED STRESS RELIEF

- Include animals to support emotional well-being.
- Incorporate short, calming videos featuring animals, such as cats purring or wildlife in nature. Watching them can reduce stress and serve as a conversation starter on the calming effect of animals and the importance of taking mental health breaks.
- Participants can bring their pets or share pictures and stories about their pets.
- As part of the activity, participants can create toys for shelter animals