

Hearing Seniors' Diverse Voices

London InterCommunity Health Centre

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London InterCommunity Health Centre

- A Community Health Centre
- Medical, social, health promotion and community development programs
- Client centered
- Consider whole person within the environment
- Focus on clients with diverse social and cultural backgrounds

Working With Multicultural Seniors

- Working with clients with culturally diverse backgrounds and histories
- Barriers to care individual and systemic ✓
- Approaches to care to reduce barriers ✓
- Sensitivity to needs of multicultural seniors
- Creative approaches in working with clients to enhance capacity
- Health promotion and educational programs
- Concepts of transcultural health

What is Culture

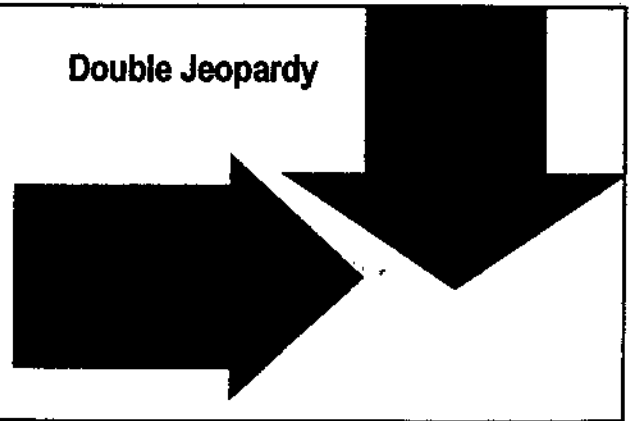
- Way of life of particular groups of people
- Includes learned, shared and transmitted values, beliefs, norms and lifestyle practices
- Guides thinking, decisions and actions in patterned ways
- Learned, shared and transmitted to following generations
- Blueprint for survival

Immigration Trends

- Many share immigration experience
- Changing trends from European to Asia and Middle East
- Increasing visible minorities
- Come to Canada for many reasons
- 72,000 immigrants in London

98 London

Double Jeopardy



Barriers to Care

- Language
- Isolation
 - ◆ Sponsorship & dependence
 - ◆ Limited access to services
- Multiple Losses
 - ◆ Trauma of leaving homeland
 - ◆ Loss of past and future
 - ◆ Post traumatic stress disorder

Barriers to Care

- Family and Social Patterns
 - ◆ Life cycle conflicts
 - ◆ Status of elders
- Concepts of Health and Healing
 - ◆ Limited experience with western medicine
 - ◆ Folk and spiritual beliefs
 - ◆ Solve problems within family
 - ◆ Attitude toward mental illness

When We Listen We Learn

- Survival skills
- Dedicated to family
- Strong spiritual faith
- Creative spirit
- Generous with time, energy and love
- Committed to community
- Wisdom through experience
- Very appreciative

Program Highlights

- Seniors' Drop In
- Senior Volunteers in Service
- Polish Women's Soup Groups
- Latin American Women's Group
- Spanish speaking Men's Group
- Art Therapy Program with Seniors
- Latin American Diabetes Program
- Transcultural Health in a Medical Setting
- Social work and counseling with seniors

Approaches to Care

- Explore values of your cultural group
- Don't assume values are relevant
- Expand knowledge of cultures
- Differences between and within cultures
- View each elder as an individual
- Ask them to tell you about their culture
- Attend to practical issues
- Build trust

Building Programs

- Involve community leaders
 - Have multicultural seniors on boards and planning committees
 - Ensure access by cultural groups
 - Offer programs in community centres
 - Ensure funding for cultural interpreters
- Aspirational Example*

AGING AND CULTURE

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INTRODUCTION

- will speak on own work experience - immigrants & refugees
- your text gives a good summary of issues; this presentation will enlarge on details
- logic models: linear vs. "organic" - patience please!

LIHC Slides: Neighbourhood, LIHC, Program Highlights
Working with.., Barriers to Care

CULTURE:

What is it? Why is it important?

Story of Rosemary: break into groups of five and come up with the "best" and the "worst" character

OVERHEADS: The Value of Culture, We Follow Culture.., We Fear a Break....

A CHANGE IN CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT:

Who am I now? No reference points, history, future

No medium of description: language, activity/work, material goods....

Changing roles: "elder/teacher" to "student"; loss of leadership in family; male/female

**Lack of other elder role models; "I am the first in this predicament"
"What do I do now?"**

Responsibility of maintaining culture in foreign environment

THE VALUE OF CULTURE

- **HELPS TO PLACE US IN HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY**
- **GIVES A SENSE OF BELONGING**
- **FORMS BASIS FOR RELATIONSHIP**
- **SENSE OF PERSONAL, COMMUNAL & NATIONAL IDENTITY**
- **SENSE OF VALUES; RULES FOR "GOOD" & "BAD"**
- **ORDER IN SOCIETY**
- **A BLUEPRINT FOR PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL**

WE FOLLOW CULTURE IN ORDER TO:

- **BELONG**
- **RECEIVE PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL BENEFITS**
- **MAKE A CONTRIBUTION (FEEL NEEDED)**
- **BE REMEMBERED BY PASSING ON WHAT WE KNOW AND WHO WE ARE**

WE WANT:

- **TO BE KNOWN AND APPRECIATED**
- **TO APPRECIATE THOSE AROUND US**
- **TO BE WITH LOVED ONES FOREVER**

**WE FEAR A BREAK IN CULTURAL TRADITION
BECAUSE:**

- **IT COULD SEVER US FROM OUR PAST, OUR FAMILIES,
OUR IDENTITY**

- **IT COULD LEAVE US FEELING ALONE IN THE WORLD**

- **IT WOULD AFFECT OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS:
WILL THEY BE LOST?
WILL THEY FIT IN ANYWHERE?
WILL THEY BECOME "BAD"?
WILL THEY SURVIVE?**

- **IT COULD MEAN WE WILL NOT BE REUNITED WITH
OUR LOVED ONES AFTER DEATH**

REINVENTING THE SELF IN A NEW LANGUAGE

To re-create an image/sense of oneself which will fit into the reality of one's new environment.

A complicated task for elders due to:

- **decrease in learning skills/ability (esp. as perceived by self)**
- **decrease in ability to work/be productive**
- **perceived loss of future**
- **isolation due to physical, linguistic, financial and social barriers**

TO "RELOCATE" MEANS TO "DISAPPEAR" - The Long Walk - Navajo

DOUBLE JEOPARDY OF IMMIGRANT SENIORS:

- **Aging: isolation, loss, increased illness & morbidity**
- **Immigration: Language, customs, multiple losses, trauma, poverty**

BUT! MIGRATION CAN ALSO OFFER A NEW CHANCE AT LIFE:

- **to learn**
- **to change bad habits**
- **to experience freedom from hard work, poverty, political and social upheaval**
- **to experience freedom to enjoy life, to "play"**
- **to see younger family members achieve educational and work goals**
- **to find/make meaning of life**

THE GIFTS OF JUGGLING CULTURES:**OBJECTIVITY****PATIENCE****CREATIVITY****RICHNESS OF RELATIONSHIP****COMPASSION****HUMOUR****A WIDER CIRCLE OF FRIENDS****FEELING COMFORTABLE IN A VARIETY OF SETTINGS****INCREASE IN SELF-ESTEEM****STRONGER AWARENESS
OF
THE DEEPER MEANING
OF
LIFE**

ISSUES RELATED TO PHYSICAL HEALTH AND TREATMENT:

Aging: loss of mental and physical function
 aches and pains
 fatigue

Scars: Physical
 Emotional

Medications: language and cultural barriers
 compliance difficulties

Relationship with physicians and clinicians:

- language barriers
- personal history/privacy
- trust re: kinds of medications; gender; ethnicity

Difficulty accessing traditional healing: herbs, healers, etc.

Racism and Prejudice

Poverty: Nutrition, clothing, living conditions, materials for care,
 transportation

Sense of time: late/missed appointments; family visits; acute need
 "Home time"

Spiritual beliefs: illness as an act of God or karma
 illness as a sign of imbalance in one's life

Folklore: illness as caused by "wind", evil eye, etc.
 Magical thinking

ISSUES RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH:

- **Ignorance of mental health supports e.g. counseling**
- **"It's too late for me"**
- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (quotes from article in Toronto Star)**
- **Chronic Stress and anxiety: cause of stress is ongoing e.g. war**
- **Depression: diagnosis more easily accepted via physical symptoms**
- **Grief: (OVERHEAD on Types of Losses)**

ADDITIONAL ASPECTS OF GRIEF FOR IMMIGRANT ELDERS:

- **Anticipation of impending illness, death, trauma due to aging and/or situation left behind**
- **childhood traumas resurfacing in old age**
- **loss of traditional means of expression of grief: burial, mourning - for self or others**
- **loss of supports: family, community, traditional healers**
- **loss of possibility of "return to normal": no going home**
- **expectation by North Americans of "don't worry; be happy"**
- **survivor guilt, especially in death of children and grandchildren**
- **grandparents cry twice; immigrant grandparents cry...?**

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

(Quotes from The Toronto Star, Sunday Sept.24, 2000)

Dr. Kardiner, now credited with defining PTSD for the remainder of the 20th century characterized chronic irritability, startle reactions, explosive aggression and an atypical dream life as war-related trauma...

"The subject acts as if the original traumatic situation were still in existence and engages in protective devices which failed on the original occasion", Kardiner writes. "This means in effect that his conception of the outer world and his conception of himself have been permanently altered."

Sexual abuse victims often don't experience symptoms until the third or fourth decade of life, Dr. Herman says, and the United States now is seeing a flare-up of PTSD in Korean War veterans nearing retirement and facing illness or experiencing the death of a spouse. The heightened physiological response may be set off by any physical stress, not just by traumatic reminders.

ON KEEPING GOING:

Lt.-Gen. Romeo Dallaire:

"When I was there in the field, and I was alone as the commander in that mess, and having negotiated with the devil himself, it became for me a reality that there was another being above all else. What hit me was reinforcing the values and the faith I had over the years."

"What you absolutely also need is an *ame soeur* - a 'sister soul' - someone who doesn't give you all the platitudes and so on that just make you more mad. They just listen. They cry with you. They stay with you. And they don't run away when you start into some of the horrific stuff"

GRIEF AND THE IMMIGRANT FAMILY

TYPES OF LOSSES:

- **DEATHS OF FAMILY MEMBERS OR FRIENDS**
- **SEPARATION FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS**
- **INCOMPLETE LOSSES:**
 - DISAPPEARANCE OF LOVED ONES, UNRESOLVED
IDENTITY OF BODIES OR LOCATIONS OF GRAVES**
 - NO TIME TO SAY GOODBYE OR TO MOURN**
 - LOSS OF VITAL YEARS IN REFUGEE CAMPS**
- **NO INVOLVEMENT IN DECISIONS MADE**
- **TRAUMATIC LOSSES:**
 - TORTURE, NATURAL DISASTERS, WAR**
- **LOSS OF HOME, FAMILIAR SURROUNDINGS,
COMMUNITY**
- **INABILITY TO COMMUNICATE IN LANGUAGE OF NEW
COUNTRY OR TO INTEGRATE INTO ITS CULTURE**
- **PROFESSIONAL ROLES, ECONOMIC & LEGAL STATUS**
- **PETS AND LINKING OBJECTS**
- **PERSONAL LIFE SCHEMA**
- **SUPPORTS**

- **RESTRICTIONS...FREEDOM CAN BE SCARY**
- **MACHISMO**
- **PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH**
- **SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION**
- **ROLES WITHIN THE FAMILY**
- **PERSONAL IDENTITY**
- **CONTINUITY:**
NOTHING WILL EVER BE THE SAME
THERE IS NO GOING BACK
THE FUTURE IS UNKNOWN AND UNPREDICTABLE

EFFECT ON ADULTS:

- **LOSS OF THE PAST**
- **UNCERTAIN FUTURE**

EFFECT ON THE CHILDREN:

- **LOSS OF THE FUTURE**
- **UNCERTAIN PAST**

MULTIGENERATIONAL GRIEF:

- **PERSONAL, COMMUNAL, NATIONAL, POLITICAL**
- **WARS PERPETUATED FOR HISTORICAL REASONS**
- **RACISM, PREJUDICE**
- **LOSS OF GRANDPARENTS, PARENTS, EXTENDED FAMILIES**
- **LOSS OF ROLE MODELS IN FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES**
- **EFFECTS OF OPPRESSIVE REGIMES ON PERSONAL AND FAMILY LIVES**
- **PARENTS WHO WERE IMPRISONED, PERSECUTED, ETC.**
- **PARENTS WHO WERE PERPETRATORS OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS**
- **GRIEF OF THE PARENTS AFFECTS THE EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN**

DIFFICULT COPING:

- **SILENCE**
- **CRYING**
- **AGGRESSION**
- **WITHDRAWAL**
- **CHANGE IN SLEEPING AND/OR EATING HABITS**
- **EMOTIONAL REGRESSION**
- **BUSYNESS**
- **INACTIVITY**

POSITIVE COPING:

- **MOURNING CEREMONY**
- **SHARING FEELINGS WITH AND SEEKING HELP FROM FAMILY, OR PROFESSIONALS**
- **EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS VIA WORDS, MUSIC, ART**
- **LEARNING ABOUT NEW LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**
- **INVESTING EMOTIONALLY AND ACTIVELY IN THE NEW ENVIRONMENT**

ISSUES RELATED TO SPIRITUAL HEALTH:

- **searching for meaning in life: how, when life schema is overturned?**
- **connection to others: how, with barriers?**
- **connection to nature: it's all new...plants, snow...**
- **connection to the Creator: but how could He let this happen?**
- **connection to the sacred : what is sacred, anymore?**
- **Religion? Changes elicit conflict in self, family, community**
- **Doubts: How could I have lived that way for 75 years? Was I bad? Stupid? Am I bad now?**
- **Searching: What do I do now? How can I change my ways without letting my family and my culture down?**
- **Preparing for Death - or not: of family, friends, self**
- **Fear of Death**
- **Longing for Death: "If I could only just fall asleep, and have it all over with...I'm so tired"**
- **Trying to find meaning in the last remaining years: can I be useful if my body is useless? Why am I living so long? What can I do to help anyone?**

(OVERHEAD - WHO IS THE ANGEL?)

We can discover meaning in life in three different ways:

- ***By creating a work or doing a deed;***
- ***By experiencing something or encountering someone;***
- ***By the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering***

- Viktor Frankl

APPROACHES TO CARE:

- **Explore values of each cultural group**
- **Don't assume values are relevant**
- **Be aware of differences within and between cultures**
- **View each person as an individual**
- **Ask the person about their wellness/illness, their culture**
- **Bearing witness**
- **Cultural interpretation vs. translation**
- **Attend to practical issues**
- **Occupation/activity/diversion**
- **Education; providing information**
- **Know your own values, culture, and be ready to share**
- **Build trust**
- **Patience, objectivity and creativity**
- **Literacy levels**
- **Meet the client/group where they are at**
- **Involve community leaders**
- **Multi-Disciplinary and Inter-Disciplinary approaches**

PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS AT LIHC:

- **SPANISH-SPEAKING MEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP**
- **POLISH WOMEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP**

METHODOLOGY:

- **FOOD**
- **DISCUSSION IN FIRST LANGUAGE**
- **INTRODUCE TOPICS THAT "MATTER"**
- **ART THERAPY**
- **INTRODUCE CONCEPTS OF MENTAL HEALTH**

**FRIDAY ART GROUP: ART INSTRUCTION AND PRACTICE
SOCIALIZATION
REFERRAL TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**SENIORS' DROP-IN: FOOD, SOCIALIZATION
ACTIVITIES, OUTINGS
HEALTH PROMOTION
ART THERAPY
REFERRAL TO MEDICAL, SOCIAL, AND MENTAL
HEALTH SERVICES**

**HEALING TOUCH: FOR GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS
PRESENTED WITHIN CONTEXT OF
INTERDISCIPLINARY CARE
ACCEPTED AS A LINK BETWEEN TRADITIONAL
AND WESTERN MEDICINE**

SLIDES: ACTIVITIES AT LIHC