MENTAL HEALTH & PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT GROUPS WITH AFGHANS

The three spheres are interdependent and influence each other in defining the needs and resources of Afghan refugees, as well as appropriate and required responses.

Outer circle represents the various experiences and influential factors related to each phase of migration that impact the psychosocial well-being of the Afghans you work with.

Cultural Idioms of Distress
- Asabi = nervous agitation
- Gham = unexplained sadness
- Afsurdagi = depression
- Jigar khun = expression used to describe grief after the loss of family members or friends
- Fishar-e-bala or fishar-e-payin = state of emotional pressure/agitation or low energy
- Goshagary = self-isolation
- Depression often described as ‘thinking too much’ (ruminative sadness), ‘inability to perform daily tasks’, ‘abdominal pain’, ‘going crazy’, and ‘dementia’

Afghan Proverbs
- There is a path to the top of even the highest mountain (Koh har qadar beland baashad, sar-e khod raah daarad).
- One flower doesn’t bring spring (Ba yak gul, bahnar ne-meysha).
- The world is alive with hope (Doonya baa omeed zenda ast).
- Seek knowledge from cradle to grave (Ze gahwaara taa guhr, daanesh bejoye).
- Respect to others is respect to oneself (Ehteraam ba digaraan, ehteraam ba khod ast).
- When you take a fish from the water, it is always fresh (Maahee-raa har waqi az aab begiri, taaza ast; Meaning: it is never too late to begin something new. When you begin something, it always is a fresh start.)
- The sun can’t be hidden by two fingers (Aftaa ba du angusht put nemsha).
- Patience is bitter, but it has a sweet fruit (Sabr talkh as, laken bar-e shireen dara).
- A real friend is one who takes the hand of his friend in times of distress and helplessness (Dost amus ke dest-e dosta da pereshan (h)all o dar mandegih bigira).
- No pain no gain (Be zahmat rahat nest).
- Laughter is the salt of life (Khanda namak e zindagi ast).
- God help those who help themselves (Himat e mandha madad e khuda).

Attendance, Participation, & Engagement
- Assess needs, wants, concerns, and interests.
- Build and establish trust.
- Community outreach & engagement with key community gatekeepers.
- Pre-screen potential group participants for suitability, motivation, and readiness.
- Effective messaging about the group.
- Group logistics: timing, location, transportation, size of group, and space.
- Impact of post-migration/resettlement stressors and/or social determinants of health on mental health and functioning.

Elements of Effective Groups with Afghans
- Gender-specific, regardless of age
- Group structure with flexibility.
- Regular preparation and collaboration with interpreters.
- Build trust, group cohesion, and emotional support & normalize experiences.
- Relevance, engagement and maintaining attention is key.
  - Holistic view of health/mind-body connection
  - Use culturally appropriate examples, metaphors, or proverbs.
  - Cultural idioms of distress, causes, and healing practices
- Culturally adapted interventions
  - Practical information/support and meet concrete needs.
  - Psychoeducation to increase mental health literacy, decrease stigma, and promote self-awareness, & overcome challenges.
  - Somatic sensation and somatic-focused techniques (i.e., stretching, yoga, etc.)
  - Emotion regulation techniques
  - Use non-traditional approaches: serve to modulate intensity of talking about painful materials & promote different levels of self-expression.