



CO Topic: Cultural Adjustment

Lesson Topic	Common Stressors in Early Resettlement
Objective	Through discussion and writing or drawing exercises, refugees will show knowledge of stressors in early resettlement and ways to cope with them.
Lesson Time	45 minutes
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poster paper• Pencils, pens, and crayons
Discussion Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What kinds of stress did you have in your home country?• What new stresses do you have in this country?• What old stresses have you left behind?• What do you know about coping with stress? How do you usually cope with stress?• How is stress in the United States different from stress in your home country?• How do you feel about asking others for help?
Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. While asking “What kinds of stress did you have in your home country?” and “What new stresses do you have in this country?” the trainer will make notes on paper or board, grouping different types of stressors together (e.g., money problems, identity issues, separation from loved ones, language issues). These sets of issues will vary depending on the refugee group.2. The trainer can cross out answers to the question, “What old stresses have you left behind?” Examples of answers that can be crossed out are persecution by the government, friends spying on me, and attacks by crocodiles. The purpose of the activity is to show relationships between old stressors and new ones.3. Discuss the questions “What do you know about coping with stress?” and “How do you usually cope with stress?” (Possible answers: Talk to a friend or family member, suffer in silence, pray) The purpose is to find out how refugees currently deal with stress.4. Next the trainer can ask the refugee or group how stress in the United States is different from stress in the home country. (Possible answers: I have to work harder; I don’t have friends or family to talk to; I can’t talk yet to others in English; there aren’t any of my countrymen around.) The purpose is to get refugees to realize that different or new stresses may require different or new strategies.5. Discuss the final question: “How do you feel about asking others for help?” Some refugees may show reluctance to ask others for help; others may find it easy. The purpose of this question is to encourage refugees to think about how willing they are to ask for assistance from others. Help refugees understand that the resettlement agency, while unable to answer every question, is available to refer them to those who can help.6. Distribute paper and pens, pencils, markers, and crayons. Ask refugees to write or draw one or more stressors that they currently are experiencing or expect to experience. Then, next to each stressor (perhaps using an arrow linking stressor and solution), ask them to write or draw what they could do to address each stressor listed. Have refugees share what they have written or drawn, highlighting those solutions that the trainer finds adequate. Ask follow-up questions when more exploration is needed.
Cultural Notes	Attitudes regarding asking others for help may vary depending on culture and gender. In some cultures, refugees may feel that it is only acceptable to ask an elder for advice and therefore will not ask a younger case worker for help, preferring to rely instead on an older but possibly less-informed person from their own ethnic group.