

Topic: Cultural Adjustment for Seniors

Activity: Facing the Future: A Lesson Plan for Use with Refugee Seniors

Objective

- ✓ Participants will be able to identify positive outcomes of having moved to the United States
- ✓ Participants will be able to identify challenges and fears about having moved to the United States
- ✓ Participants will be able to identify ways to address these challenges and resources to help them do so

Lesson Time

30 minutes

Materials

- Refugee Seniors in the United States* video, online at _____
- Projector or some other way to show video to group
- Interpretation assistance and/or scripts of the video (for literate participants)
Note: You can download the script for refugees literate in Arabic, Burmese, English, Karen, Nepali, or Somali at [__webpage__](#). Refugees literate in English may also read the video's subtitles. All other refugees will require interpretation. Alternatively, you may choose to show participants only the portions of the video in their own language. For a chart of the times various languages are used, see _____.
- Handout for each participant with worries/challenges written in English, and accompanied by a drawing or photo (for list, see number 2 below)
- Critical incident/problem solving activity (see sample included)
- Reflection Questions (see samples included)
- List of challenges, fears, and suggestions to overcome them, pre-prepared on flip chart (see samples included)
- Flipchart and markers

Practice

Warm up: Needs assessment

The purpose of this activity is to find out seniors' current outlook on living in the United States.

1. Ask participants to discuss in pairs what they like about living in the United States. How is their life better now than it was before they came here? Then ask each pair to share the information. Write on a flip chart what they say. If there are repetitions, do not write the information again, but rather just put a check mark after it.
2. Now ask the participants, again in pairs, to discuss what are their challenges and fears now and in the future for living in the United States. Then, in a full group, ask each pair to share the information. Write on a flip chart what they say. If there are repetitions, do not write the information again, but rather just put a check mark after it. The list will probably include things such as money, speaking English, staying healthy, getting a job, getting lost in the city, being alone, or maybe just a fear of the future in general.

Note: If there are many literacy level learners in the room, or if the group is mixed, the facilitator may want to have a prepared list such as the above with a little drawing beside each of the worries. The participants could then circle the worry/fear they have. If they have another worry that is not covered by the eight drawings above, they could either draw it or write it (if they have literacy skills).

Presentation Activity: The Video

1. Show the video. Ask the participants to watch, listen, and note what the fears are for each speaker in the video. They can use the handout with the drawings to note who has this fear or challenge. For example, they can just check the money photo and note that the Bhutanese woman has this worry.
2. Discuss the worries of the people in the video with the whole group. Are these the same worries the participants have?
3. What advice did the refugee seniors give on overcoming challenges in the United States?
4. Leads a full-group discussion on what the challenges and suggestions are from the senior refugees (possibly adding some information from the following facilitator's aid if the participants do not identify these items themselves)

Application

1. Remind the group that they are survivors. Review with them the organizations and people who are here in your community to help them. If appropriate, give them a list of these entities and review it with them.
2. Ask each participant to choose one of the challenges and say one thing they will do before the next week/meeting/session to help resolve that challenge for them.

Variation #1

Working with a Chart

1. For a literate group, show a flip chart that has been divided into two sections. Work with the group to fill in the challenges side on the left, then fill in suggestions on how to handle those challenges on the right. (See a sample flipchart below, after being completed. The items on this flipchart are from the video, the case study, and from what the participants may contribute during the lesson.)

Sample Flipchart:

Challenge	Suggestions
Learning English	Practice with many people, take classes, watch TV in English, make friends with people who speak English
Being alone	Be open to living with others who are not your own family or even part of your own ethnic group
Working	Stay healthy and active; keep working on your English!
Getting lost/can't read signs	Practice English whenever you can; rely on family and friends at first if you have to
Staying healthy	Take medications prescribed for you, stay active, walk, interact with younger family members, share your knowledge of your culture and language with them
Money	Stay healthy, practice your English, work

The future in general	Learn the system, call upon the organizations that are here to help you, take things step by step, remember that you are strong and have already survived many challenges to be here, remember that it is normal to be concerned about the future, be aware that most seniors (refugees or not) have some worries, volunteer if you don't have a job right away, be patient
Other?	

Variation #2

Case Study and Discussion

1. Tell participants they are now going to learn about an actual refugee senior who has found ways to overcome his challenges and to handle his present and his future. Put participants into small groups of 2 to 4 and distribute case studies (for a literate group) or read the case study aloud slowly. Have participants discuss the questions presented in the case study in their small group.
2. Bring the large group together and ask for a spokesperson to share the highlights and important elements from the small group discussions. Discuss further as necessary. Make sure the reflection questions are addressed:
 - a. What are the main challenges presented in this case study? How did Luke* handle these challenges? How would you handle these challenges?
 - b. What are some of the resources or supports Luke used? How did he use them? What other resources or supports might be available?

Sample Case Study

Luke* is a Karen man in his mid-70s. He arrived in the United States three years ago, to join his daughter and her family.

Luke worked as a handyman in the refugee camp. He enjoyed helping his neighbors while earning a little money. Luke wants to work in the U.S. He wants to work to be healthy and happy, as well as to earn money. But Luke feels that he is too old to work, and many younger refugees are searching for jobs.

So Luke keeps busy volunteering. Luke teaches choir to children at a local Karen community church. He volunteered three times a week while the children were learning new songs. Now he volunteers once a week. He will teach three times a week when teaching new songs again.

Luke also helps around the house and studies English. When Luke came to the U.S., he spoke no English. He knew that he needed to learn English to talk to people. Luke enrolled in an English language class through his resettlement agency. He also studied at home by reading, watching television, and listening to the radio. Luke also practices English with people as he walks to the church and his classes. Luke studies religion in English, and he now teaches some English to other refugees in his community. Luke also joins English speaking practice offered weekly through his resettlement agency.

Luke is very active and engaged in a variety of ways within his new environment. He is also very healthy. Luke feels that he does not get sick because he walks regularly, and because he keeps learning new things and teaching others.

* This critical incident is based on the real-life experience of a man who resettled to the United States several years ago. All identifying information has been changed to protect privacy.