

Self-Help Low Cost Post Traumatic Stress Psycho-Social Intervention (SHLCPTS)

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Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
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Support and Encouragement to Refugees on the Move

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Background

- Numbers of Eritreans fleeing the country is high
- In Ethiopia, the UNHCR registered 163,281 Eritrean refugees as of September 2017 → includes those officially registered only
- In Europe, IOM reports that in the first quarter of 2018, 25% out of a total of around 19.000 arrivals were Eritrean
- Traumatized refugees in search of protection and prospects are taking immense risks and deterrents against the risks of human trafficking don't seem to be making an impact
- Providing trauma support is key to providing protection for traumatized refugees
- however the scale of the refugee crisis and the availability of resources is a huge challenge
- Most refugees rely on cheap smartphones for crucial information and contact with their family and kin networks along their migratory routes
- Self Help Low Cost Post Traumatic Stress Program (SHLCPTS) provided on smart phones might help overcome the challenges of providing trauma support to refugees on the move



Objectives SHLCPTS on 24Comms Application

- Providing trauma support in a context where qualified human resources is severely limited to meet the high prevalence of trauma
- Providing trauma support to a community that is suffering from individual and collective trauma where gaining and maintaining trust might be challenging, hence the use of a medium that is already trusted and used by the community
- To provide trauma support using techniques that don't require re-telling of painful memories to another person (as you do in talk therapy) and hence reducing the risk of re-traumatisation
- To provide trauma support through a medium (an App on smart phones) that is less likely to stigmatise trauma victims for accessing trauma support

Privacy and Security

- ✓ The page is secure and only people who are approved by designated administrators can access it following a request to be members
- ✓ All members are known to the Administrators and can choose to participate in discussions using a nickname protecting their identity
- ✓ Participants can withdraw from the group and delete the Application whenever they want
- ✓ All videos are password locked and only participants who are on track for receiving subsequent session are sent the password for the relevant video



Pre-Session Assessment

- Once individuals are admitted onto the program they are sent a trauma assessment questionnaire
- The assessment is based on the Impact of Events Scale Revised (IES-R), with a shorter version (IES-Short) adapted for use on ICT
- IES-S scores are used to give an insight into current levels of traumatic stress (and will also be used to measure improvements in post intervention measures)
- Those with concerning levels of trauma can be identified at this point and be offered additional support where they live
- Following completion of IES-short participants are sent the first two videos

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Group Support and Encouragement >

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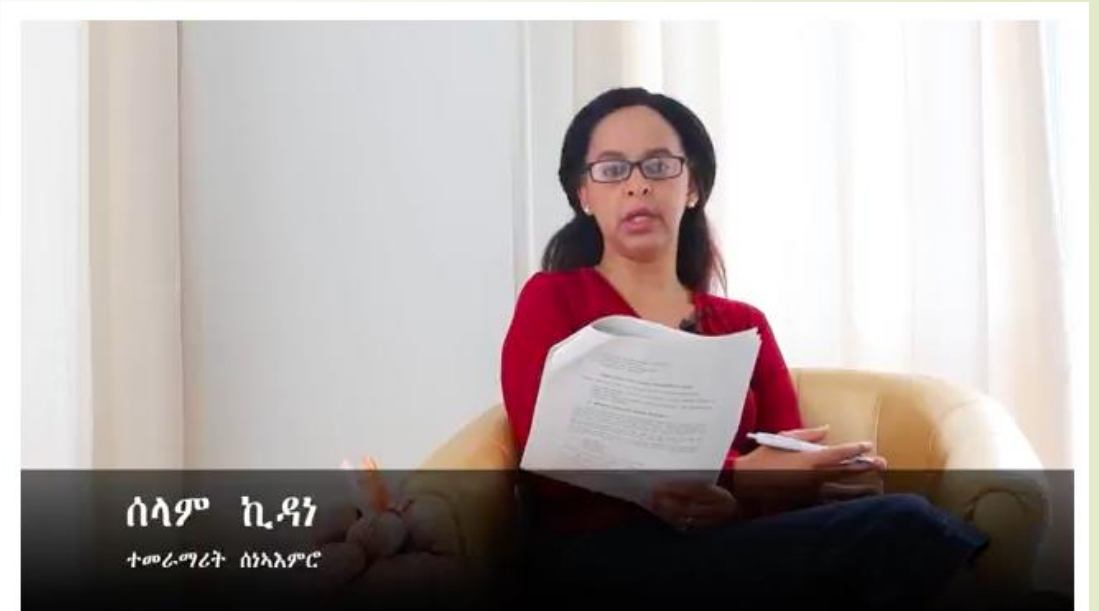
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Introduction to trauma and traumatic stress

- The first two videos give participants an insight into trauma and its implications for the individual.
- The main objective here is to show participants that traumatic stress is a reaction to an extremely difficult experience
- In particular the impact of trauma on the human brain is described using a life-size brain model
- The impact of widespread trauma on communities and the society at large is also describes
- The sessions are also used to introduce some concepts of Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reordering Therapy (EMDR) and particularly bilateral stimulations using the 'butterfly hug' as well as breathing exercises that are used throughout the sessions to bring levels of stress down



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Providing resources for coping

- The main objective of session 3 is to provide participants with techniques that they can use to help them cope with the impact of trauma or calming techniques
- Finding a 'safe calm place' and creating a shortcut for accessing and embedding this calming technique
- The session is also a coaching and encouraging session that recognises the unfamiliarity of the approach and encourages participants to have a go at trying the exercises

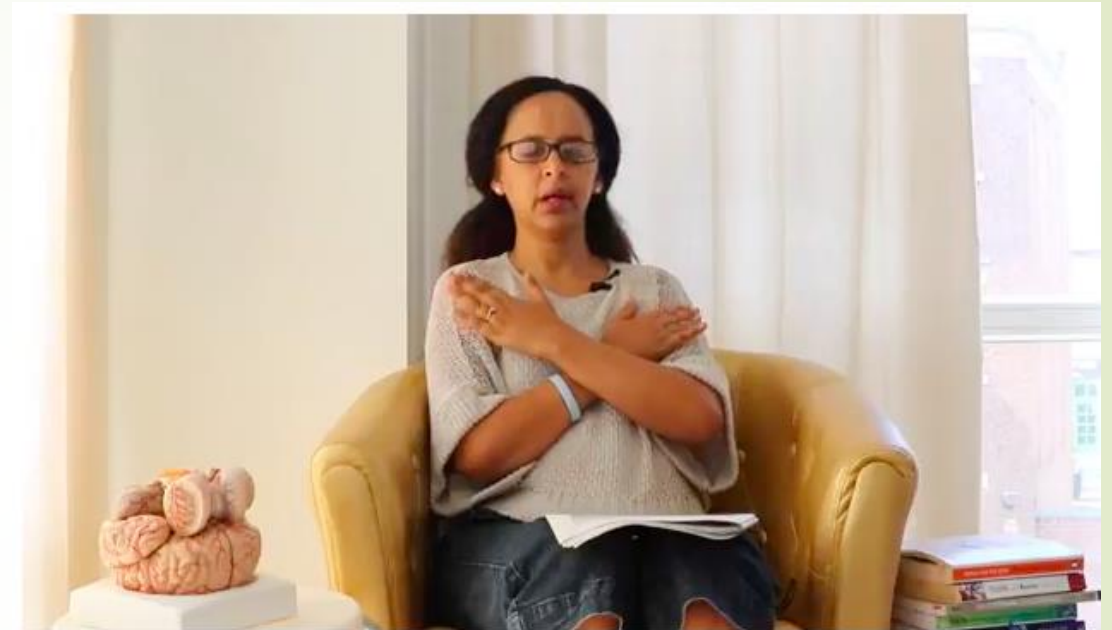


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Recovering from trauma

- The fourth session coaches participants on bringing previous trauma and negative emotions associated with it so they can rank it and also decide to work on processing it so they will eventually cope better
- They will then be coached on how to measure their levels of distress using Subjective Units of Distress (SUD) and use this in conjunction with the butterfly hug to deal with the particularly distressing memory identified
- As with previous session people are not just coached but actively encouraged to give the techniques a try and rank their starting levels of distress and their levels of distress following the techniques introduced
- In addition they are also encouraged to use their 'safe calm placed' and breathing exercises to manage distress both during the session and later



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Dealing with forthcoming potentially stressful situation

- Session 5 is a continuation of using 'butterfly hugs' to cope with either past or present situation. In addition this time participants are also encouraged to envisage forthcoming situations that could be potentially stressful (or distressing) and then encouraged to use their bilateral stimulation (or 'butterfly hugs') to reduce anxiety
- Using the SUD ranking people are encouraged to use butterfly hugs until the level of distress is at a manageable level
- Participants are also encouraged to use a combination of their techniques to help cope with distress e.g. butterfly hugs with breathing or safe calm place



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Trauma Recovery

- In recognition of the forthcoming end of the intervention this session begins to give people responsibility for practicing the techniques and applying them concertedly. Participants are also prompted to use the discussion boards if they haven't started using these already
- Knee taps are also introduced as an alternative to butterfly hugs for bilateral stimulation
- This session is the third session dealing with processing of traumatic memories and by this point participants are encouraged to tray the techniques without the videos



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Maintenance of a calmer state of mind

- In this session participants are really encouraged to look into the future and think about how to put together their understanding of trauma and the self help techniques.
- Additional simple techniques are also added to their repertoire.
- 1. **Earth:** Sitting firmly on the floor or on a chair and stimulating the brain to prevent freezing in the face of danger
- 2. **Air:** Using deep breathing to help with relaxation and calming oneself
- 3. **Water:** Swallowing hard to prevent the brain from shutting out other functions such as the digestive system (hence freezing)
- 4. **Fire:** Firing imagination and entering the 'Safe Calm Place'
- At this point participants are also invited and encouraged to share these techniques with others and help others to cope better



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Celebration of Healing

- After completing all seven sessions, participants are invited to a community event when they are given opportunities to share their experiences with others and also get a certificate acknowledging their achievements in dealing with their traumatic experiences
- Following this they are then invited to do the IES-Short again and this will give an indication of their current status of traumatic stress



Does SHLCPTS Psycho-Social Intervention work?

Our research on the effectiveness of the intervention found SHILPS:

- ✓ Lowered trauma levels
- ✓ Enhanced perceptions of capacity to improve socio-economic status
- ✓ Enhanced empowerment levels
- ✓ Improved perceptions of income levels
- ✓ Improved social capital
- ✓ The full version of the intervention, rather than a shortened two introductory videos version, was more effective

