RESTART PROGRAM
UCD Refugee Forum

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Context

- Pilot project (From SAFE to HPRT to BHC)
- Official start date: July 5\textsuperscript{th} 2018
- Directors: Caroline Giroux & Andrés Sciolla
- 3-rd year resident: Dr. Rebecca Short
RESTART stands for…

- Resilience
- Education and
- Supportive
- Tools for
- Adults
- Recovering from
- Trauma
Philosophy of care

- Trauma-informed: standard
- Trauma-centered psychotherapy
- ACEs Overcomers Program
- Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)
- Resilience-based model
- Social justice
Modalities

- Comprehensive trauma history (including ACEs, migration trauma, natural disaster, IPV, iatrogenic, accidents etc)
- Identify the persons’ resiliency factors (internal and external)
- Formulate a trans-diagnostic narrative
- Implement a holistic treatment plan including psychoeducation, lifestyle hygiene, imaginal exposure through narrative therapy, mindfulness techniques for self-regulation
Modalities

- Individual, trauma-centered psychotherapy
- Group psychotherapy (4-6 participants) with MBSR
- Themes (1 per session):
  - ACEs study
  - Self-care toolkit
  - Trauma schemas, triggers
  - Identity, gender-related themes
  - Boundaries
  - Attachment, intimacy
  - Shame/guilt
  - Re-enactments
  - Transformation/transcendence (gratitude, art, life of meaning…)
  - Grief
Group: general structure

- Intro: Check-ins, agenda, announcements (3-5 min)
- Mindfulness exercise (3 min)
- Topic of the day: video, mini didactic (10-15 min)
- Discussion/reflections (60 min)
- Closing quotation/mindfulness (by facilitators or participants: vary each time) (2 min)
Welcome to this first edition of the RESTART program leaflet! Short chronicles about resources and tools for recovery will appear quarterly.

People who have suffered trauma or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) often close themselves from the world because it is no longer perceived as safe to them. Their universe shrinks and their bodies and minds are tense, vigil, guarded against threat but also closed to joy. I chose the lotus as a name to symbolize openness inherent to letting go but also welcome transformation. To paraphrase my yoga teacher, amazing things can emerge from life struggles, just like beauty (the lotus) can grow on murky waters.

The ACE study is 20 years old

Healthy diet and mindful eating

- Exercise: global health (to counteract weight gain and diabetes; to reduce anxiety, risks of depression, dementia)
- Sense of purpose: work, studies, volunteering can give a meaning to life and helps transcend difficult experiences
- Socialization: a sense of belonging provides validation, helps with mood and gives meaning
- Gratitude list: enumerate what you have and what is going well in your life; be thankful for who you are, and for past mistakes as they provide invaluable lessons.

Depending on medical and psychosocial history (type and severity of trauma), strategies might take place more frequently. If you have a chronic condition like arthritis, migraines, hypertension, it is important to identify the exacerbating and relieving factors early on to prevent deterioration and maximize wellness.

Once you have listed the strategies to implement self-care, it is also important to address the barriers to all those elements.

Mindfulness practices: it can be on the form of meditation, but it is generally an approach to life (noticing your experience as it is occurring, and do only one thing at the time; be fully attentive to live in the present, the only time that exists)

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Stress response systems

Stress is essential to our survival. It allows us to stay alert to adapt to changing or threatening situations. However, when stress reaches toxic levels (like in childhood abuse or neglect), our fight, flight or freeze mechanisms become overly active and sensitized, making the person react intensely to triggers. Even though ACEs profoundly affect the brain development, it is never too late to engage in therapy and lifestyle hygiene to recalibrate those systems. Psychotherapy allows for the development of more balanced interpersonal templates and a sense of emotional security.

A study of long-term meditators has shown a decrease in the size of the amygdala, the so-called alarm system of the brain.

Dr. Andres Sicilia’s educational video

How ACEs affect the development of executive functions and what we can do about it:

https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/video-building-core-capabilities-life/
Tools and references

11-Point Toolkit: Clinical Vignettes
Healing the Wounds of Mass Violence, Torture and Disaster

Trauma Story Assessment and Therapy
Therapist Journal for Field and Clinic
Questions?

Thank you for your attention!