

# Building Educational Bridges

Competently dealing with intercultural and psychosocial challenges in the classroom with return-interested refugees

**Teaching and learning materials for training instructors and coaches**



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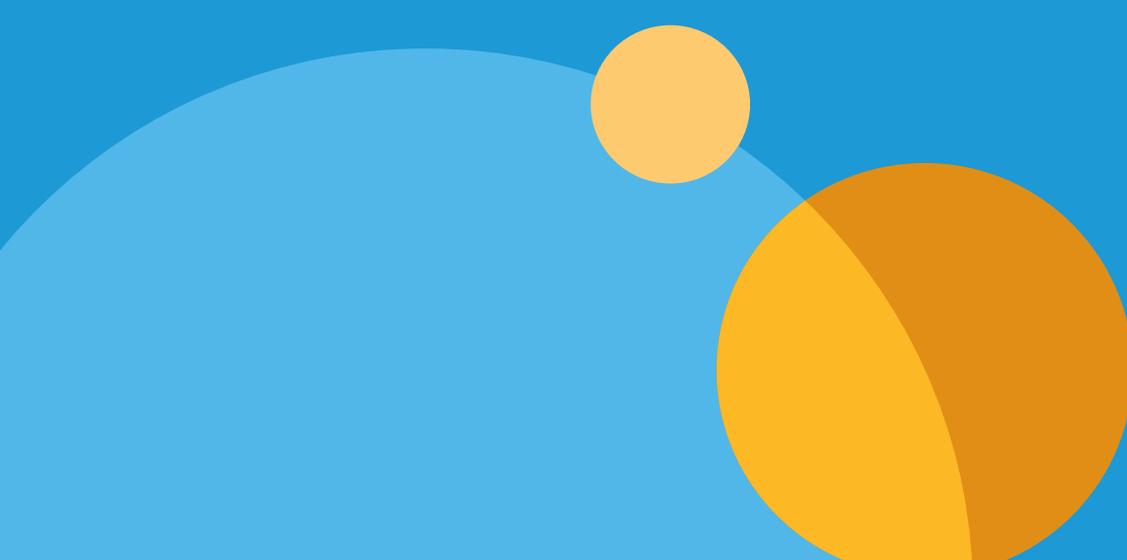
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## A Brief Portrait of the Training Concept

“Building Educational Bridges – Competently dealing with intercultural and psychosocial challenges in the classroom with return-interested refugees” is a tailor-made training course for instructors and coaches working with refugees who are interested in returning to their home country on a voluntary basis<sup>1</sup>. Increasing diversity in the classroom, language barriers, differences in educational backgrounds and coping with distress are just some of the challenges that adult educators face when working with the highly diverse and vulnerable group of return-interested refugees. This training course opens up a space where instructors and coaches can reflect on their role as adult educators and where they can acquire methods for teaching in a participatory and integrative way. Instructors and coaches will learn more about the impact of cultural backgrounds and their limitations, dealing with power imbalances, stereotypes and prejudices in the classroom, and the role of language and language habits. In addition, how to deal with traumas and psychosocial problems in class – which might be triggered or enhanced by a potential return – will be discussed. The focus is on creating a shared classroom culture and group identity as well as on empowering learners for the emotionally challenging phase of return and reintegration.



Photo: © Nola Bunke



Photo: © Prasch

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<sup>1</sup> Voluntary return refers to either an assisted return, e.g. by IOM, or a self-organised return. The course is not directed at participants whose application for asylum has been turned down and who have to leave the country. More information on voluntary return is available in the dossier in Module 1 [Voluntary Return](#).

The course consists of four Modules, comprising:

**Module 1:**

What does education mean in the context of migration?  
Understanding circumstances of (return-interested) refugees and the potential of education

**Module 2:**

Who am I and who are my students? Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

**Module 3:**

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?  
Building resilience in yourself and in learners

**Module 4:**

How can we learn together? Implementing lessons with interactive, participatory methods

## Development Process

The training course is the outcome of an international exchange of expertise in adult education in the context of displacement and migration. The concept for the course was developed by DVV International, the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association, in cooperation with an international team of experts from Jordan, Palestine, Turkey and Germany. This further training measure is based on best practices drawn from empowerment education programmes with refugees in different countries where DVV International has regional offices and a strong network of partners with extensive experience in that field. The aim is to help master challenges in multicultural learning groups and in the process of return and reintegration of refugees by exploring diverse perspectives on education after forced displacement, on intercultural learning and on coping with distress. The course provides impulses for adopting an attitude of appreciative inquiry. Instead of prescribing ready-made solutions for working with learning groups from specific countries of origin, it fosters the ability to select learner- and situation-oriented learning and teaching strategies for creating an appreciative and safe learning atmosphere.

In 2019, DVV International conceptualised and piloted the further training course “Building Educational Bridges – Competently dealing with intercultural and psychosocial challenges in the classroom with return-interested refugees”. It builds on the experience gained in the previous project “Curriculum interculturALE”, which provided intercultural-didactic qualification for adult educators working with refugees in low-threshold German courses.

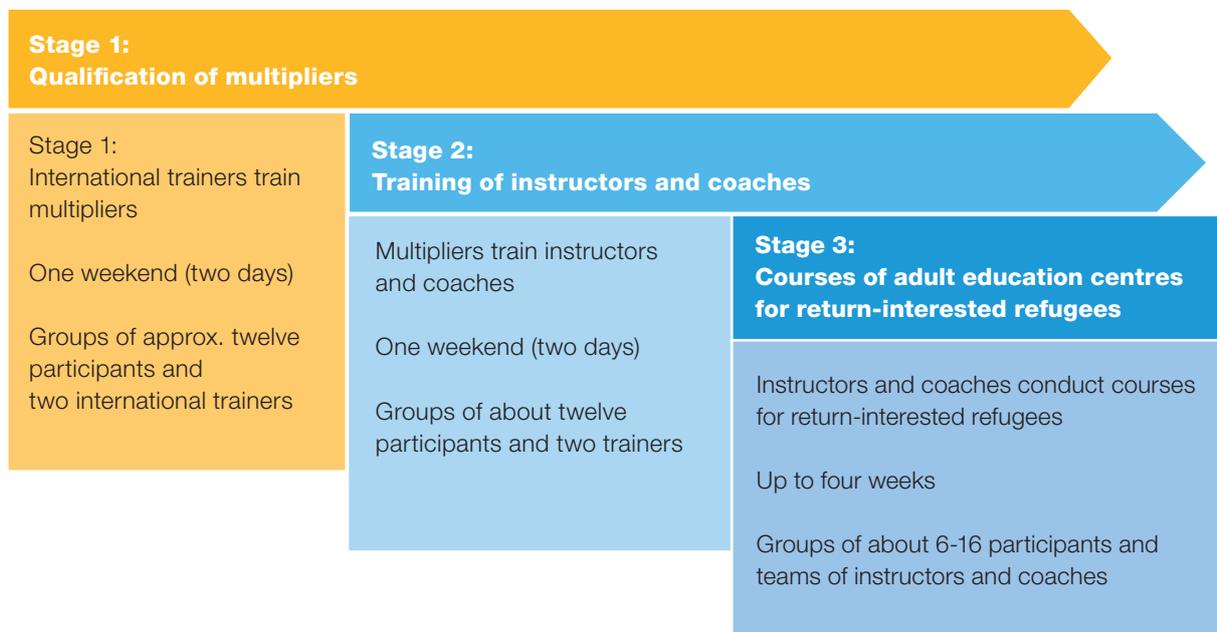
Both the conceptualisation and the piloting of the further training in German adult education centres (vhs) were funded by GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) as part of the project “Building Educational Bridges – Training for Returnees”.

## Implementation

The training is aimed at different target groups. Within the first stage, the international trainers who developed the training course qualify multipliers in a train-the-trainer workshop. In the second stage, the multipliers qualified in this process offer two-day weekend workshops to instructors and coaches of the project “Building Educational Bridges” and to other interested adult educators working with refugees. The multipliers as well as the international trainers run their training courses in tandem teams. Once they have completed their training, the instructors and coaches then apply the skills they have learned to hold the courses for return-interested refugees.

**Figure 1**

The Implementation Stages of the Training Course



The teaching and learning materials presented in this handout can be used in the first two implementation stages, that is, for the further training of multipliers, instructors and coaches. Some materials are also suitable for use in the courses of adult education centres for return-interested refugees.

Furthermore, the **Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches**, an insert booklet at the end of the folder, contains additional participatory methods that can be used by instructors and coaches in classes with return-interested refugees.

# Linkages to DVV Project “Building Educational Bridges – Training for Returnees”

The DVV pilot project “Building Educational Bridges – Training for Returnees” implements courses at various German adult education centres (vhs) for refugees who are interested in a voluntary return to their countries of origin. The courses have a duration of up to four weeks and impart basic general education as well as social and vocational skills. These courses aim at enabling refugees to achieve a sustainable social and economic reintegration if they decide to return to their home country. In addition, they are to be empowered to build new prospects for themselves and their families when they return home. Furthermore, returnees are supported to further their education in their countries of origin by using partner structures of DVV International, among other options.

The target group of the training courses is refugees who think about or are preparing for a voluntary return to their country of origin. The participants in the adult education courses that are part of the project “Building Educational Bridges – Training for Returnees” originate from different countries, mostly Afghanistan, Ghana, Nigeria, Albania, Senegal and Tunisia. They have a rather low level of formal education and in many cases little or no access to educational opportunities – neither in their country of origin nor in Germany.



Diversity in the classroom: refugees completing the “Strengths Atlas” – a tool for skill assessments.  
Photo: vhs Meppen ©

*“Refugees [...] are the key actors in the reintegration process. Particular efforts will therefore be made to identify their skills, capacities, aspirations and needs.”*

*(UNHCR 2008: 35)*

The further training courses are implemented in a need-oriented manner. Before or at the beginning of the course, instructors or coaches make an individual skill assessment using the newly developed tool *Strengths Atlas*<sup>1</sup>. This provides the basis for tailoring the course contents to the interests of the refugees (e.g. crafts, textile processing, computer or financial skills, cosmetics/beauty, business start-up, German for tourism, etc.). Furthermore, the contents are geared to the regional labour markets in the refugees' countries of origin in order to facilitate the process of economic reintegration.

Nevertheless, the training courses for returnees convey more than basic education and vocational skills. Participants get to know their skills better and find out how to develop them in the future. In addition, they can receive support – among each other and from instructors and coaches – for dealing with the psychosocial challenges associated with return and reintegration into their country of origin.



Photo: vhs Meppen©

<sup>1</sup> The Strengths Atlas was developed by DVV in collaboration with German adult education centres (vhs) and partners of DVV International. The Strengths Atlas is available in different languages at: [https://www.volkshochschule.de/verbandswelt/projekte/weiterbildung\\_fuer\\_rueckkehrerinnen/Staerkenatlas.php](https://www.volkshochschule.de/verbandswelt/projekte/weiterbildung_fuer_rueckkehrerinnen/Staerkenatlas.php)

The course offers the opportunity to establish new personal relationships and friendships. New prospects can be developed together to make use of the knowledge and skills acquired in Germany for a new start in their country of origin.

Moreover, the course, especially the skill assessment, helps participants to strengthen their self-esteem and to perceive themselves in a more positive and self-confident way despite their difficult life circumstances.

Instructors and coaches<sup>2</sup> who work with returnees have a crucial role to play in that process. They can support the participants by creating an appreciative, shared group atmosphere that fosters self-empowerment and agency. The learning environment is supposed to be a safe place where learners feel that they are listened to and their needs are addressed. It should provide support to learners in their process of learning and adapting to their new reality, which might not include having a future prospect in Germany. The safe learning setting is ensured by the continuity of courses, repeating routines in the process, having a separate space, which is particularly important for women, and connecting personally with other learners.

Furthermore, the following questions are essential for creating a safe environment: How are participants welcomed into the class? What kind of relationship do they have with their instructor or coach? How are their questions and needs addressed? The way these issues are dealt with in the course will also affect their thinking and acting outside the learning environment.

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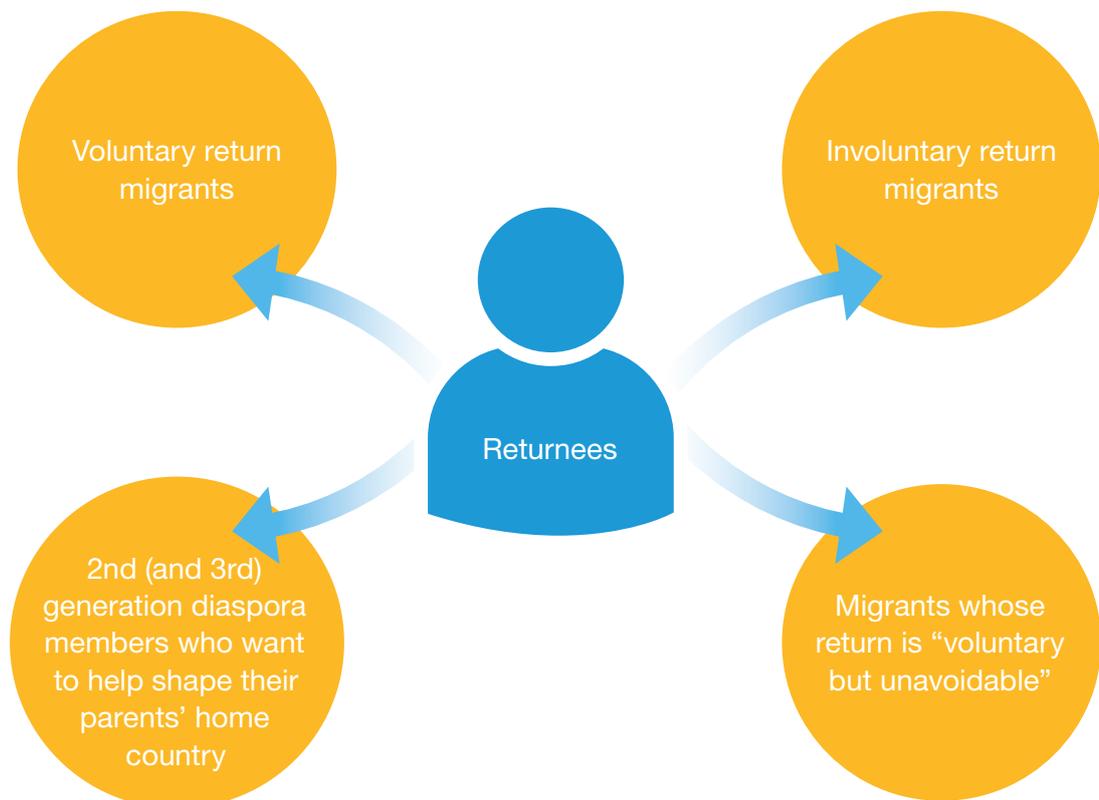
<sup>2</sup> Role of instructors and coaches: instructors implement the contents of the courses for refugees; coaches conduct the skill assessment via the Strengths Atlas and support with psychosocial problems in the classroom. Beyond that, coaches have an important role in acquiring interested participants at the beginning of each course and in establishing a relationship of mutual trust and confidence. In some areas, coaches support instructors in teaching classes.



# Understanding Circumstances of Return-Interested Refugees

For refugees in precarious living situations, return and reintegration are complex processes that are linked with instability and insecurity. Just as refugees are not a homogeneous group, returnees differ in their initial situation and motivation. The decision to return can be based on very different reasons coupled with varying degrees of voluntary action: such as lack of prospects for staying in Germany (temporary suspension of deportation or deportation), difficult access to labour market, lengthy educational paths, homesickness for family and friends, stabilised living conditions in the country of origin, or willingness to help rebuild and develop the home country.

Voluntary return has the advantage that it can be planned and gives those concerned relative scope for action. Therefore, “return with dignity” is always given priority over deportation in asylum law.



Why do migrants return? Return and reintegration from a migrant perspective.  
Infographic produced by Meike Woller (adapted from Haase/Honerath, 2016: 6)

However, return migration does not end with departure, but is rather the starting point of a longer (re)integration process that continues in the country of origin<sup>1</sup>. When deciding whether to leave Germany as a host country either involuntarily or voluntarily, refugees face a number of challenges. They have to organise their return, gather information about the living conditions and current situation in their home country, find accommodation, secure sources of income, care for their children, and reactivate their social network, among other issues. In addition, both the country of origin and the refugees themselves will have changed. Return is not a simple reversal of displacement but a dynamic process. Reintegration does not consist of “anchoring” or “re-rooting” returnees in either their places of origin or their previous social and economic roles (cf. UNHCR 2008). Preparing returnees for these challenges requires their personal, professional and social skills to be strengthened.

*We should “harness the potential of migrants and displaced people. Migrants and refugees possess skills that can help transform not only their and their family’s lives, but also both host and home economies and societies, whether they return or support from a distance.”*

*(UNESCO 2019: 62)*

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<sup>1</sup> Migratory movements are not only to be viewed one-dimensionally. Many different “directions of movement” are possible, including integration, return, as well as circular and seasonal migration. A return migration may be followed by a renewed departure from the country, for example, if the living conditions in the country of origin that prompted the displacement persist.

# Potential Impact of Training in Return and Reintegration Process

*“Yet both durable solutions – local integration and return – are still often regarded as completely disconnected while, in effect, one can support and complement the other. The more skills (e.g. vocational) displaced persons have learned in their host regions, the more likely they are to better adapt to conditions in the return region. Promoting local integration measures and supporting education and work opportunities for the displaced in the host region thus might also facilitate the return process and make reintegration more sustainable.”*

*(Bohnet/Rudolf, 2015: 5)*

During the reintegration process, returnees need support through training opportunities for coaching and reflection in a trusted setting. Negative refugee experiences and unclear future prospects lead to considerable distress, which in many cases reinforces existing traumatisation. Return-interested refugees therefore find themselves in a phase of great vulnerability. For this reason, they must be strengthened in their capacity to act and make decisions, in their resilience and their opportunities to participate actively in society.

Yet in Germany and Europe, it is often precisely those people who have “poor prospects of staying” or who come from “safe countries of origin”, such as the Western Balkans or West African states, who do not have access to regular education and integration opportunities. A large number of these refugees were left with few educational opportunities in their country of origin, and are therefore often low-skilled, have a low (formal) level of education and hence a greater need for education.

Both those who seek refuge in a country and want to integrate themselves there and those who return to their country of origin for various reasons have a human right to education. The adult education centres (vhs) implement this educational mandate – summarised by the slogan “Further education for all” – precisely for those people who face precarious living conditions. This applies in particular to the issues of migration. Courses that prepare returnees and internally displaced persons for this process and equip them with additional skills are indispensable for bridging the educational gap between preparatory reintegration measures and support services in Germany and abroad.



Instructor and course participants working together.  
Photo: vhs Meppen©

Needs-based qualification opportunities, especially in low-threshold basic education and vocational training, have the potential to enhance the employability of returnees while at the same time enabling them to play an active part in their country of origin. Preparatory programmes for return migration should start at the place of refuge and be continued in the countries of origin. The measures offered focus primarily on teaching practical and manual skills but also on literacy and language training and on financial education, which are all key elements in preparing and supporting reintegration.

Courses for returnees must be a safe space where they can actively participate and their expectations and interests are being heard. This requires the use of strategies in order to deal with distress and trauma in class and to strengthen the learners' resilience. By using participatory methods and establishing an appreciative and safe classroom culture, refugees are transformed from passive observers to active participants. Such classroom experiences encourage them to continue shaping and directing their lives – even in the difficult context of return and reintegration.

# Targeted Core Competences

Displacement, migration and return have a profound impact on education systems by changing and shaping societies. The professionalisation of educators in formal and non-formal education systems has gained more importance than ever before in addressing the growing challenges posed by working with increasingly diverse and emotionally demanding learning groups.

In this light, the training course “Building Educational Bridges – Competently dealing with intercultural and psychosocial challenges in the classroom with return-interested refugees” intends to support adult educators working in the context of return and reintegration. Participation in the training is expected to bring about a change of perspective among instructors on the course they teach and their professional role in this context. The training opens a space where they can explore deeper the process of return as well as the needs, life situations and emotional state of their participants. They also learn to design their lessons in a participative and integrative format to enable all learners to participate actively, regardless of their (cultural) background.

The training is geared to achieve the following **four core competences**:

Upon completion of the training, instructors and coaches are able to:

- understand and explain the context of forced displacement, return and reintegration and its effect on learners;
- reflect on their role as adult educators and on learners’ experiences and backgrounds in a multicultural learning environment;
- identify signs of distress and provide basic strategies for psychosocial support in the classroom;
- create a safe and appreciative, shared classroom culture that fosters empowerment and agency.

The application-oriented training is based on the idea of **learning by doing** or the notion of **walk the talk**. This means that each content and topic is introduced via a learning method which in turn can be seen as independent learning content. This enables instructors and coaches to experience the practical application of a variety of methods and techniques, which in turn can enhance their ability to guide the learning processes of their participants. In this way, the notions “practice what you teach” and “feel how you feel when using a method” will support an integrated methodological learning process of the target groups.

## Literature

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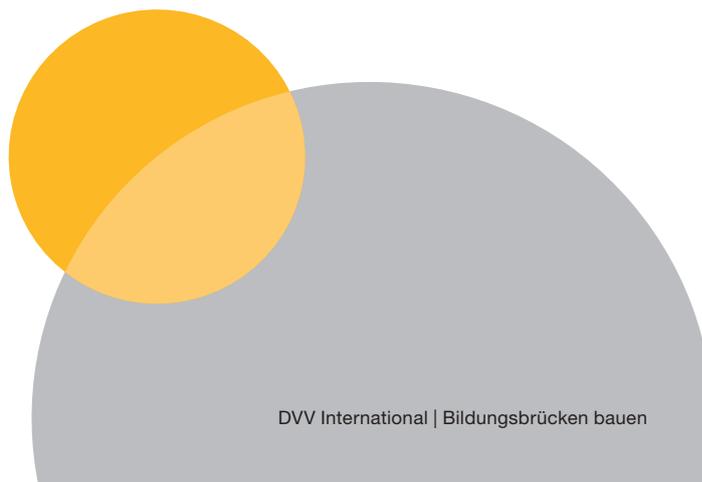
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# Teaching and Learning Materials

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## Notes on the Target Groups

The teaching and learning materials in this handout – consisting of methods, films and dossiers – have been developed for multipliers who train instructors and coaches within the DVV project “Building Educational Bridges – Training for Returnees”. The materials can also be used by all trainers who conduct training courses for instructors or volunteers working with refugees in adult education.

The participants of the training course “Building Educational Bridges – Competently dealing with intercultural and psychosocial challenges in the classroom with return-interested refugees”, that is, the instructors and coaches themselves, can also make use of various materials in this folder. The dossiers as well as some methods that can be applied directly in working with refugees are of particular interest.

Furthermore, the **Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches** is an insert booklet at the end of the folder, which contains methods that are intended for direct use in lessons with return-interested refugees.



Photo: © Prasch

**Note:** The overview of teaching and learning materials at the beginning of each Module indicates the target groups to which the materials are addressed.

### **Further teaching and learning media for instructors working with refugees in adult education**

DVV International (2018). Curriculum interculturALE: Interkulturell-didaktische Lehr- und Lernmaterialien zur Fortbildung von Kursleitenden und ehrenamtlich Tätigen in der Erwachsenenbildung mit Geflüchteten 2018. DVV International. Bonn. Available at: <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/materials/teaching-and-learning-materials/curriculum-interculturale/> (Accessed 31 August 2020).

# Educational Approaches Used in the Training

Regarding its concept and the methods selected, the training course is based on the following three approaches:

## 1. The participatory education approach

## 2. The approach of diversity and multicollectivity

## 3. The trauma-sensitive classroom approach

All three approaches strive to foster empowerment and agency of refugees and their participatory citizenship – in and outside the classroom. These approaches were also selected as each reflects the values and attitudes that the training intends to impart. They empower the individual, encourage open-mindedness, sympathy and respect for human dignity, and are aligned in pursuit of human well-being. Furthermore, all three approaches work towards creating a safe, appreciative and diverse learning atmosphere while promoting a sense of mutual ownership towards the learning process through increasing learners' engagement and contribution. These approaches are reflected in active, relevant and lively lessons, which benefit learners as well as instructors and coaches.

The approaches originated from different parts of the world. They have each evolved to address different realities and emphasise different aspects of the actualities of human life. The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire developed the **participatory education approach** in Latin America as a tool for empowering illiterate peasants who suffered oppression and marginalisation. He enabled them to change their reality and participate in decisions that affected their lives. This approach places learners at the centre of the learning process as competent, active and respected human beings. **Diversity and multicollectivity** explore the notion of identity in increasingly diverse societies, where growing global migration leads to considerable tensions among different cultural groups. The multicollectivity approach offers an alternative to outdated cultural paradigms. The trauma-sensitive classroom approach responds to the increasing number of participants in educational courses who are confronted with trauma and distress. This development has an impact on the progress of courses and the learning atmosphere and changes the demands placed on instructors. By teaching a trauma-sensitive attitude and using trauma-sensitive methods and principles in the classroom, learners and instructors alike can build up their resilience.

Brief portraits of these approaches are presented in the following.

## Participatory Education Approach

The participatory approach to education is **learner-centred** and aims to enable learners to shift from a passive to an active perception and participation in the learning process. This is of particular importance when working with return-interested refugees, as they often find themselves in a passive state of waiting, uncertainty and instability caused by precarious prospects. In participatory education, learning experiences and learning activities are designed to take learners' needs and interests into account and to encourage mutual dialogue. The lecture format, where the teacher talks and the students passively receive information, is replaced by the **“culture circle”** where teachers and students face one another and discuss **issues of concern in their own lives** (Freire, 1970).

Paulo Freire laid the foundation for the development of the participatory education concept described above. He took the view that traditional education systems are dominated by specific didactic teaching methods. These systems assume that learners are empty vessels that are to be filled with information and that the teacher is the transmitter of knowledge who deposits this information in the minds of the learners, who in return “cash it back” at examination time. He called this process the **banking concept of education**.

By contrast, the participatory approach to education focuses on **skills and potential**. The value of learning can thus improve the learner's capacity to better cope with life's challenges and demands while getting a better understanding of their own environment. These basic aspects provide an opportunity, in particular for return-interested refugees, to actively deal with their concerns, needs and aspirations and to communicate them. By using participative methods and creating an appreciative and safe classroom culture, refugees are motivated to open up and share their thoughts. These classroom experiences encourage them to take control of their lives even in the difficult process of return and reintegration.

For more information, see dossier [Participatory Education Approaches](#).

## Diversity and Multicollectivity

Globalisation, migration and demographic change influence the plurality of modern societies. The notion of diversity emphasises the point that the **plurality of modern societies** is a fact and is regarded as an advantage. This notion guides the work of German adult education centres not only in the field of displacement and migration but also as a cross-cutting principle in terms of both organisational structure and all educational issues (DVV 2015, 2017). Diversity embraces many layers of human identity, such as gender, age, physical and mental abilities, ethnicity, religion or other faiths and worldviews as well as sexual orientation and socio-economic background.

Against this background, the concept of **multicollectivity** (see Rathje 2014) questions views that emphasise cultural differences and critically illuminates our conception of human identity. Cultures represent meaning and orientation systems consisting of rules, values and norms, which form the basis of every community. Stefanie Rathje argues that the notion of culture, as traditionally defined, is not applicable to reality as it “contradicts the simple but momentous observation that each individual is part of numerous collectives, and thus cultural contexts, at the same time” (Rathje 2014: 44).

Rathje conceives collectives, in principle, as diverse social groups. Some of the groups in which people are involved are more important, others are less important. Group/Collective memberships can also change, but all these groups shape an individual and provide social orientation. Accordingly, collectives can be based on different foundations, such as religion, gender, political orientation, parental origin, language, hobbies, professions, place of residence, appearance, among many others. Multicollectivity is founded on the recognition that the numerous memberships of a single person are not the exception but the rule. Every single human being is unique because he or she belongs to numerous diverse groups. Consequently, this approach opposes views that overemphasise differences and equate identity with belonging to a particular cultural region.

For more information, see dossier [Culture and Identity](#).

## The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom

*“Teachers in displacement contexts also need to be sensitive to the particular difficulties displaced students [...] face [...]. While teachers are not counsellors, they can be trained to recognise stress and trauma and refer those in need to specialists. Teachers of refugees [...] suffer additional stress themselves.”*

*(UNESCO 2019: 62)*

Refugees who are facing imminent return and reintegration have to cope with major challenges. Negative, sometimes traumatising experiences before and while fleeing their home country, problems when arriving in a different, unfamiliar society and unclear future prospects lead to considerable distress. Hence, return-interested refugees find themselves in a phase of great uncertainty and instability, also having consequences on their participation in educational programmes. Training courses for returnees have to provide a safe, appreciative space to help relieve distress. The concept of the **trauma-sensitive classroom** was originally conceived in the educational context of schools and in classes for children with traumatic experiences. It was developed in response to the increasing number of children that have already experienced one or more traumatic events in their lives. The aim of the concept is for instructors to understand the effects of trauma on brain development and on a person's behaviour. The focus of successful trauma-informed classes is on teaching and encouraging self-regulation and building relationships with people affected by trauma.

In the context of the increased influx of refugees, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) introduced the “Healing Classrooms” approach in 2018 to assist teachers in creating a safe learning environment for displaced children and young people. Civil society actors and government agencies working with refugees worldwide and in Germany are adapting concepts of the trauma-sensitive classroom to the target group of adult refugees. These concepts are based on a trauma-sensitive attitude on the part of the instructor and the use of trauma-sensitive methods and principles in the classroom to facilitate empowering work with refugees. Trauma-sensitive work requires avoiding any triggering features in implementing activities that could lead to a traumatic experience and re-traumatisation: to feel threatened and at the mercy of others, to experience extreme fear and helplessness, to lose trust and control. Therefore, the focus is on creating a learning atmosphere that provides the maximum level of security, predictability and trust in order to enable the persons concerned to achieve control and self-determination regarding each step.

For more information, see dossiers [The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom](#) and [Participatory Education Approaches](#).

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# MODULE 1

What does education mean in the context of migration?

Understanding circumstances of (return-interested) refugees and the potential of education

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# Module 1: What does education mean in the context of migration?

## Understanding circumstances of (return-interested) refugees and the potential of education

### Brief Description

Module 1 provides an introduction and framework for the entire training course. Attention is given to return and reintegration as part of the migration cycle. By presenting an overview of the global history of inequality, participants will understand the living conditions and challenges of refugees dealing with the issue of return. They will gain an insight into the reasons and motivations of why people leave their home countries in the first place and why they decide to return home. Furthermore, discussions will cover the role of education in the migration cycle and how further training programmes can help to support and empower refugees.

### Learning Objectives

Participants are able:

- M 1.1** to understand the global context of forced displacement (M 1.1),
- M 1.2** to gain a critical understanding of the conditions and the process of reverse migration as part of the migration cycle (M 1.2),
- M 1.3** to build empathy towards participants in situations of vulnerability as a result of forced displacement and potential reverse migration (M 1.3),
- M 1.4** to recognise and reinforce the positive effects of educational opportunities for (return-interested) refugees (M 1.4).

### Topics

- Return and reintegration as part of the migration cycle
- Reasons for displacement, migration and voluntary return
- Living conditions and challenges of return-interested refugees (“Waithood”)
- Role and potential of further training opportunities in the migration process

### Recommended Scope

1.5 hours/two lesson units





# Overview of Teaching and Learning Materials

## Module 1:

What does education mean in the context of migration?

Understanding circumstances of (return-interested) refugees and the potential of education

## Method Descriptions

Exercise instructions for use in classes/workshops.

Nr.	Title	Topic area	Use in training of instructors and coaches	Page
1	<b>People Come, People Go</b> Understanding migration	Introduction to the topic of migration	x	29
2	<b>Migration</b> An overview	Displacement and migration, unequal power relations	x	33
3	<b>A Blank Sheet of Paper</b> Understanding and empowering vulnerable people	Circumstances of refugees, empowerment	x	35
4	<b>Understanding Voluntary Return</b> Return and reintegration as part of the migration cycle	Return and reintegration	x	37

## Dossiers

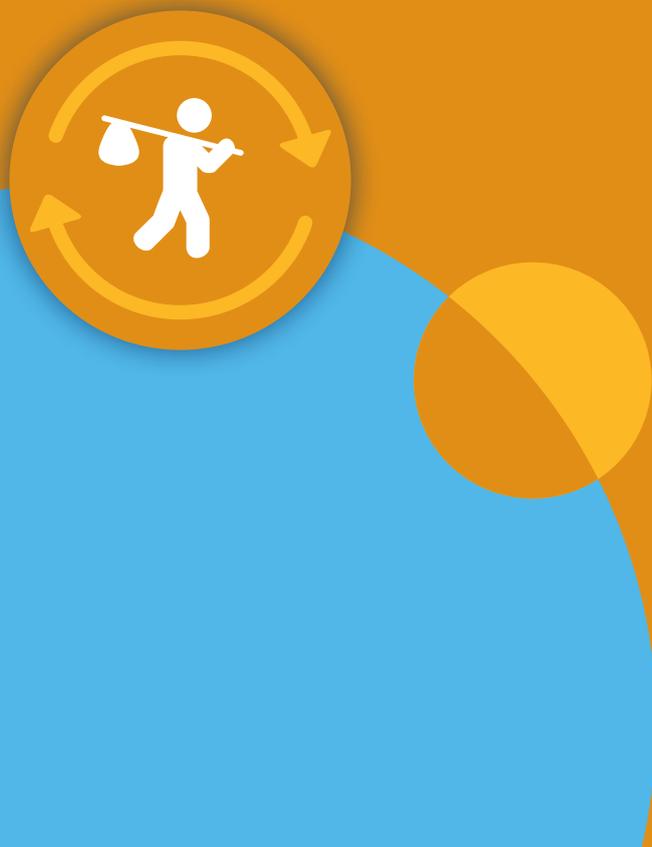
Background information for trainers, instructors and coaches.

Title	Page
<b>Migration</b> Overview: About coming and going	39
<b>Voluntary Return</b> Return and reintegration as part of the migration cycle	43



# MODULE 1

Methods



Methods

Dossiers

**Module 2**

Methods

Videos

Dossiers





# People Come, People Go

## Understanding migration

### Module 1:

What does education mean in the context of migration?

Understanding circumstances of (return-interested) refugees and the potential of education

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to understand the global context of forced displacement (M 1.1).
2. Participants are able to gain a critical understanding of the conditions and the process of reverse migration as part of the migration cycle (M 1.2).
3. Participants are able to build empathy towards participants in situations of vulnerability as a result of forced displacement and potential reverse migration (M 1.3).

### Instructions

#### Part 1

The trainer hands out moderation cards (of one colour, e.g. red) to the participants (small groups), and asks them to write down push factors for migration (“Reasons for migration/ displacement: Why do people leave their home country” – one reason per card). After ten minutes (maximum), all participants form a chair circle. One group places their cards on the floor with a brief explanation of each card if necessary. Then the other groups follow and arrange their cards accordingly, if possible (match cards with the same/similar aspects; “war” to “war”, etc.).

The trainer gives the participants the chance to comment on the cards, and if need be, more reasons can be added by the group/trainer. Participants discuss briefly, to which countries these reasons primarily apply. The cards are left in place for part 2.

### Part 2

The trainer hands out moderation cards of another colour (e.g. white) to the same small groups, and asks them to write down pull factors (“What do you need for a good life?” – one factor per card). After 10 minutes (maximum), they form a chair circle again. Then the first group puts their cards on the floor, briefly explaining them if necessary. If possible, the cards should be arranged in opposite combinations with the previous cards that state the reasons for migration (e.g. “peace” or “security” versus “war”).

The trainer asks the following questions:

- What do you think when you see those cards - “reasons for migration” and “things you need for a good life” – together?
- Which of the living conditions is most important?
- Can you arrange these cards according to their importance?
- Is it possible to rearrange the cards with conditions for a good life under new headings (basic human rights, basic needs, etc.)?
- In which regions in the world can you find those conditions?

**The key message here (empathy) should be that all participants would flee for the same reasons as refugees from Syria do, for example.**

### Part 3

The trainer introduces the next aspect as follows: “In recent years, many people have come to places such as Germany, fleeing from one of these issues (Part 1) and searching for other conditions (Part 2). Why should these people now want to go back to their countries of origin?” The reasons are gathered in plenary and noted on a flipchart, and the trainer adds any necessary points. If possible, the reasons can again be divided into push and pull factors (“Can’t find work” vs. “Missing family” – Attention: Do not forget to indicate denied family reunion!)

Once completed, the trainer engages the participants in a discussion on the questions below:

- What does voluntary return mean to you?
- What are the challenges that return-interested refugees face?

### Timeframe

Part 1	Part 2	Part 3
10–15 min	10–20 min	10 min

### Materials

- Moderation cards in two colours
- Felt-tip pens
- Flipchart

### Remarks

- In preparation for the concluding discussion, read the dossiers [Migration](#) and [Voluntary Return](#).
- The concluding discussion requires focused facilitation. The intention is not to exchange different political positions on the topic of return migration but to look closer at the target group of return-interested refugees and their circumstances.

### Authorship

Jannik Veenhuis

Adapted from: Informationsbüro Nicaragua e.V. (2015). Menschen kommen und gehen. In: Fokuscafé Lateinamerika: Warum migrieren Menschen?; Educational material in German, booklet entitled “Migration”.





# Migration

## An overview

### Module 1:

What does education mean in the context of migration?

Understanding circumstances of (return-interested) refugees and the potential of education

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Instructors and coaches are able to understand the global context of forced displacement (M 1.1).
2. Instructors and coaches are able to gain a critical understanding of the conditions and the process of reverse migration as part of the migration cycle (M 1.2).
3. Instructors and coaches are able to recognise and reinforce the positive effects of educational opportunities for (return-interested) refugees (M 1.4).

### Instructions

The trainer provides input on migration (for background information, see dossier [Migration](#)) and explores with the participants to what extent and why this detailed information is relevant, especially in working with (return-interested) refugees. The aim is to understand return and reintegration as part of the migration cycle but also as a consequence of a history of inequality that results in (re)migration. The input is to follow on from the method [People Come, People Go](#) and incorporate the outcome of this method.

### Timeframe

40 min

Phase 1: Presentation	Phase 2: Discussion
20 Min	20 min

### Material

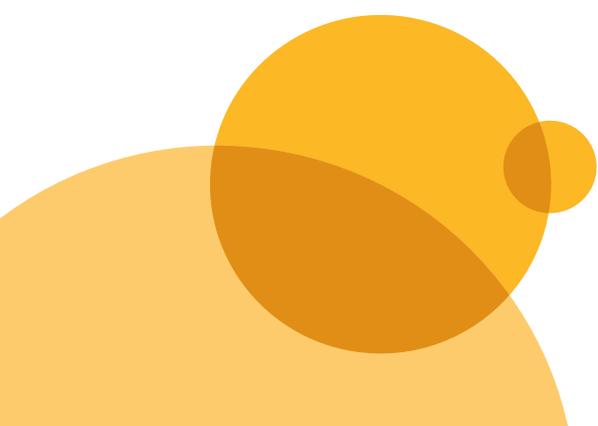
- 1 Projector
- Laptop
- Outcome of the method [People Come, People Go](#)

**Remarks**

- In preparation of the input, read the dossier [Migration](#).
- The input on voluntary return is to follow on (see method [Understanding Voluntary Return](#)).

**Authorship**

Jannik Vennhuis





# A Blank Sheet of Paper

## Understanding and empowering individuals in situations of vulnerability

### Module 1:

What does education mean in the context of migration?

Understanding circumstances of (return-interested) refugees and the potential of education

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to build empathy towards participants in situations of vulnerability as a result of forced displacement and potential reverse migration (M 1.3).
2. Participants are able to explain the emotional and psychological impact of forced displacements and return on refugees (M 3.1).

### Instructions

The participants are given a sheet of white paper and are asked to look at it and to feel how clear and smooth it is. Then the trainer changes his voice (stronger), asking the participants to crumple up the sheet of paper with all their strength, with anger and without care but without tearing it to pieces. After a short time, the participants are requested to stop and to smooth out the paper again.

Then the trainer asks (with an innocent face):

- Why did you do this?

The trainer observes the reactions of the participants in order to involve them in the subsequent discussion. The next question could be:

- What does the paper look like now?
- What has changed?

The trainer then asks the participants to make something nice or useful out of the crumpled paper. After everyone has made something out of the paper, each participant is invited to answer the following questions in front of the group:

- What did you make out of it?
- What did you think during this process?
- How did you feel?

After all the objects have been presented, the trainer leads a plenary discussion with the following suggested questions:

- What were your thoughts when I gave you the first instruction to crumple up the paper, after realizing how pure and smooth it was?
- How did you feel when you crumpled it up?
- How did you feel and what did you think when I asked you why you did this?
- Thinking about working with refugees: What does this crumpled piece of paper, and the nice and useful things you made from the paper, remind you of?
- What can be triggered in refugees through displacement and return to their country of origin?
- What image do you have of your course participants, and what approach do you want to work with?

The trainer should lead the discussion to the understanding that in working with (return-interested) refugees, it is important to strengthen their active citizenship, empowerment and agency, and to focus on skills and potential rather than deficits.

### Timeframe

30 min

### Materials

A blank sheet of paper for each participant

### Remarks

- This exercise can introduce an in-depth discussion that enables participants to better understand the issues of displacement, migration and return as well as the circumstances of return-interested refugees (see methods [Migration](#) and [Understanding Voluntary Return](#)). A key concern in this respect is how to deal with refugees in a learning context.
- Alternatively, the method can also be used in Module 3 on the topic of dealing with trauma and distress.
- In preparation for the discussion, read the dossiers [Voluntary Return](#), [Understanding Distress](#) and [Trauma and The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom](#).

### Authorship

Jawad al Gousous



# Understanding Voluntary Return

## Return and reintegration as part of the migration cycle

### Module 1:

What does education mean in the context of migration?

Understanding circumstances of (return-interested) refugees and the potential of education

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Instructors and coaches are able to gain a critical understanding of the conditions and the process of reverse migration as part of the migration cycle (M 1.2).
2. Instructors and coaches are able to build empathy towards participants in situations of vulnerability as a result of forced displacement and potential reverse migration (M 1.3).
3. Instructors and coaches are able to recognise and reinforce the positive effects of educational opportunities for (return-interested) refugees (M 1.4).

### Instructions

The trainer provides input on voluntary return (for background information, see dossier [Voluntary Return](#)). In this context, return and reintegration as part of worldwide, circular migration processes are examined in detail, the concept of voluntary return will be explained, and circumstances of refugees and support options will be discussed.

The input follows on from the method [People Come, People Go](#) and from the input on [Migration](#), completing the outcome gained from that method. Participants can then ask questions to help them better understand the topic of voluntary return.

Afterwards, the questions below are discussed:

- Which competences do refugees need in the process of return and reintegration?  
To what extent are they able to benefit from educational opportunities, both in Germany and in their country of origin?
- What is your role as instructors and coaches? Moreover, what challenges do you face in teaching return-interested refugees?

### Timeframe

Phase 1: Presentation	Phase 2: Questions for comprehension	Phase 3: Discussion
10 min	5 min	15 min

### Material

- Projector
- Laptop

### Remarks

- In preparation of the input, read the dossier [Voluntary Return](#).
- The method [A Blank Sheet of Paper](#) can serve as an introduction to this method.

### Authorship

Katja Littmann

# MODULE 1

Dossiers







# Migration

## Overview: About coming and going

Author: Jannik Veenhuis

### Module 1:

What does education mean in the context of migration?

Understanding circumstances of (return-interested) refugees and the potential of education

People have been migrating for as long as there have been people. To migrate is to move the centre of one's life permanently or on a long-term basis – for example from the countryside to the city or to another country. A distinction can be made between immigration and emigration, depending on the perspective. Modern infrastructure and air traffic today allow many people to migrate in a very direct and easy way. For others, (in)surmountable obstacles arise from closed borders, deserts or seas, often connected with violent conflicts or other crises. Entry policy in particular (who gets a visa and when) plays a major role here.

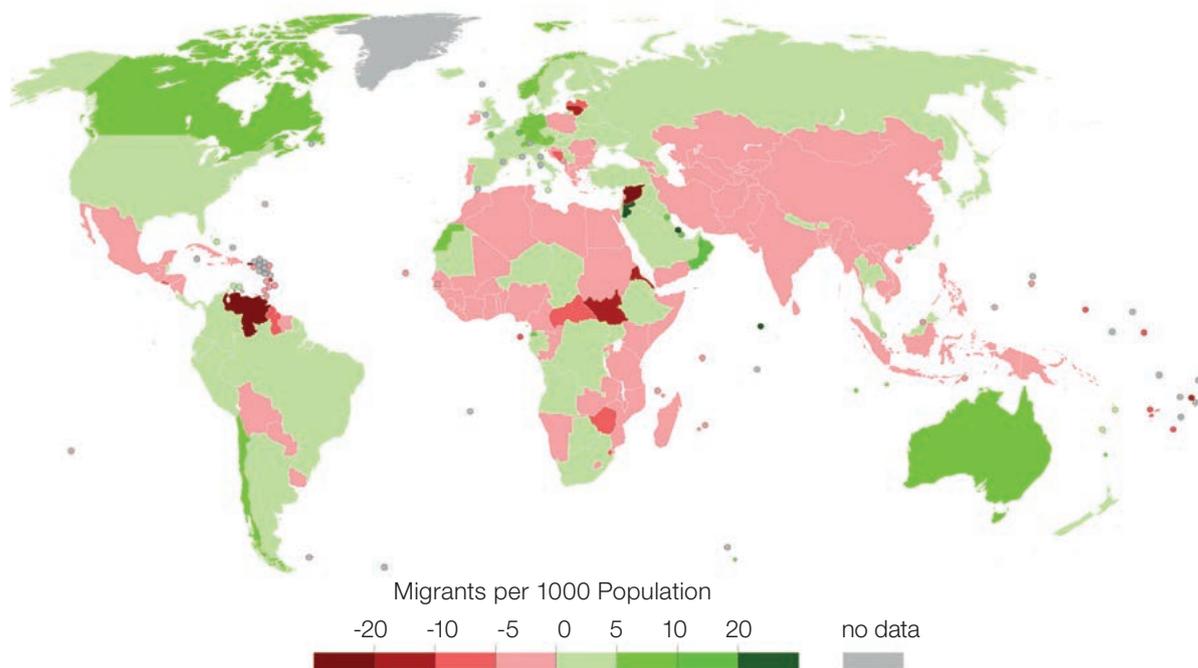
### Who Migrates – and Why?

There are over 258 million transnational migrants worldwide (International Organization for Migration 2018: 9) for a variety of reasons. They can be divided into so-called push factors (reasons for emigration) and pull factors (reasons for immigration). Push factors include war, authoritarian regimes and lack of political freedom. But far more people migrate for socio-economic reasons: The share of labour migration stands at around 58 percent (164 million people, see International Labour Organization 2018). Among the reasons behind these figures are the often substantial differences in the labour market or economy of the respective countries, which are mainly rooted in the colonialism of the past 500 years. Even today, former colonies generally have a much weaker economy than former colonial powers; these, in turn, continue to secure or even expand their influence politically. This leads to the pull factors: successful economies, stable governments, peace and prosperity attract people. Migration therefore occurs primarily from the so-called Global South<sup>1</sup> to the so-called Global North.

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1 Since the end of the 1980s, the term "Global South" has increasingly been used as an alternative to outdated categories such as "developing or emerging countries". It pairs with the "Global North", which covers the wealthy, highly industrialised countries. The term "Global South" is not to be understood geographically but refers to the disadvantaged status of the regions and countries in the global system associated herewith. While this concept is preferable to older terminology, it is not without controversy. On the one hand, it still seems to reflect the view of the North on the South, making it an external notion; on the other hand, it embraces huge, socially and economically extremely diverse regions and nations under one label.

## Annual Net Migration Rate 2015-2020



Infographic: Annual Net Migration Rate 2015-2020

Source: United Nations, Department of Social and Economic Affairs, Population Division 2019

## Displacement as One Type of Migration

Whether someone is considered a refugee or not depends on why the person leaves his/her home country. According to the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, a person is defined as refugee, if he/she is persecuted for reasons of “race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” and therefore leaves his/her home. This means that more than 70 million people are considered refugees, although about 41 million thereof do not leave their country (see UNHCR Germany 2019).

“Politically persecuted persons” or also people fleeing from war or civil war are normally granted permission to stay – as in Germany – since their displacement is regarded as being without alternative. Yet there are some other reasons for displacement that have no alternative, but are not recognised. Therefore, medico international’s infographic “Displacement reasons in numbers” also shows environmental destruction and climate change as well as commodity trade and land-grabbing as reasons for displacement. Industrialised countries also contribute significantly to these causes. Long after colonialism officially ended, their economic policies are still a leading cause of global migration – be it through the destruction of economic sectors or through direct or indirect influence on nature and the environment. Another obvious fact is that migration due to climate change will rise massively in the future.

## Return – (How) Does That Work?

Not all migration is for eternity. There are a number of reasons for people to leave their new home after shorter or longer periods. The reasons behind this are as manifold as the reasons for primary migration. Perhaps the political situation in their home country has stabilised, they miss their family or the integration in the destination country is not successful. It may be misleading to call it a return, since very often little has remained the same as it used to be when they left their home country. In many cases, people do not move back to the same house, the same neighbourhood or even the same place. Friends and family members are no longer there, they have to find a new job and rebuild their lives. Many factors determine the success of this process.

### Displacement reasons in numbers



Source: medico international;  
Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft 2018: 7 (Original Source in German).

For example, major factors are how well people have prepared for their return and whether they leave voluntarily. While around three million people worldwide are considered returnees, in Germany, around 30,000 people returned to their countries of origin in 2017 and around 15,000 in 2018 as part of the REAG/GARP programme (see Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2019).

For detailed information, see dossier [Voluntary Return](#).

## A Question of Perspective

The debate on migration and displacement is characterised by widely differing positions. They frequently differ on the questions of whether a displacement is considered legitimate and whether the role of European states or the Global North in the emergence or persistence of causes of displacement and migration is reflected. Equally controversial are views on the question of whether, how and when it can be appropriate for migrants to return to their countries of origin. In this context, it helps to consult studies and statistics while at the same time taking the perspectives of those concerned into serious consideration.

## References and Literature

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- United Nations, Department of Social and Economic Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Population Prospects 2019. Available at: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Annual\\_Net\\_Migration\\_Rate\\_2015%E2%80%932020.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Annual_Net_Migration_Rate_2015%E2%80%932020.svg) (Accessed 11 November 2020).

## Further Reading

- Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (2019). Atlas der Migration: Daten und Fakten über Menschen in Bewegung. Available at: [https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/ris\\_uploads/pdfs/sonst\\_publicationen/atlasofmigration2019\\_II\\_web\\_191023.pdf](https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/ris_uploads/pdfs/sonst_publicationen/atlasofmigration2019_II_web_191023.pdf) (Accessed: 31 August 2020).



# Voluntary Return

## Return and reintegration as part of the migration cycle

Author: Katja Littmann

### Module 1:

What does education mean in the context of migration?

Understanding circumstances of (return-interested) refugees and the potential of education

### What Is Voluntary Return?

“Return” and “remigration” refer to one segment of worldwide migration processes. The term “return” or “reverse migration” is used when people return to their country of origin after a longer period of absence. In this context, a distinction is made between permanent migration (according to the United Nations’ definition, starting with a one-year stay) and temporary migration (stay of less than one year; see Currle 2006). In times of globalisation and associated networking and mobility, migration movements are on the rise, including temporary migration – e.g. for reasons of training or seasonal employment – and circular migration movements, i.e. multiple migrations between two or more states.

Migrants who have left their country of origin have the right to voluntary return and readmission to their country of origin in accordance with the provisions of international law.

“Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country” (UN 1948, Art.13 (2)). This right is defined independently of a possible residence status in the respective host country, as is the case in Germany. “Returning voluntarily is a possibility for migrants who are considering going back to their country of origin. For example, people whose asylum application has been rejected in Germany, who have been granted a residence permit, or whose asylum procedure has not been concluded yet can return voluntarily” (BAMF homepage n.d.).

The reduction of voluntary return to the group of refugees, which is frequently undertaken in the political and public discourse in Germany, is a shortened description of the dimension of circular migration movements. In addition, the management of immigration is increasingly taking precedence over a political commitment to developing solutions to the displacement causes (see Grawert 2018).

### Voluntary Return vs. Deportation?

In Germany, three groups of people return to their countries of origin:

- Persons who organise their return on their own;
- Persons who organise their return with the support of return programmes;
- Persons who are deported.

The concept of “voluntary return” is not defined by law. A general definition of voluntary return is difficult to establish, especially given the lack of consensus on the conditions under which return is considered voluntary.

“Anyone who has not left the country under the use of coercive measures is considered a voluntary returnee. This covers the spectrum ranging from persons with a secure residence status to persons already in detention pending deportation and who agree to voluntary return there” (Kreienbrink 2007). In most cases, “voluntary” return means that the persons concerned agree to be repatriated out of necessity and lack of alternatives (see medico international 2018).

Nevertheless, a voluntary return has the advantage that it can be planned, supported and prepared by various measures.



Photo: cloverphoto/Getty Images

## Voluntary Return and Deportations From Germany

	Voluntary returnees (including federal state programmes)	Deportations
<b>2015</b>	48,531	20,888
<b>2016</b>	68,148	25,375
<b>2017</b>	36,671	23,966
<b>2018</b> (until June 30th)	10,669	12,261

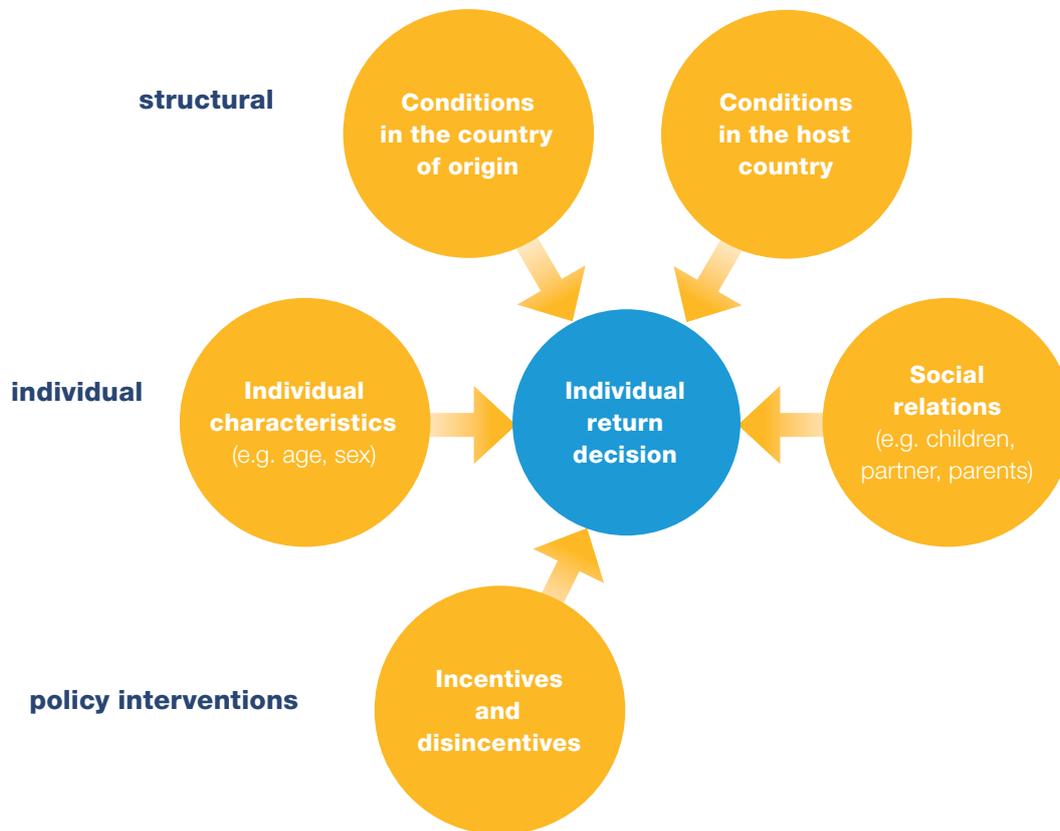
Source: Prössl/von Mallinckrodt 2018 (Original source in German).

### What Are the Reasons for Voluntary Return?

Returnees can be differentiated according to their return reasons (cf. Brecht 1995: 67ff). Just as refugees are not a homogeneous group, returnees differ in their initial situation and motivation. The decision to return can be based on very different reasons coupled with varying degrees of voluntary action. Among the reasons are lack of prospects for staying in Germany (temporary suspension of deportation or deportation), difficult access to labour market, lengthy educational paths as well as homesickness for family and friends, stabilised living conditions in the country of origin, or willingness to help rebuild and develop the home country.

Studies on the importance of return motives show that pull factors (being “attracted” by another location) generally have a larger impact on the decision to return than push factors (being “pushed away” from an original location). In addition, social and family-related personal reasons had a stronger influence on the decision than the economic situation (see Lersner 2008).

## Factors Determining the Return Decision

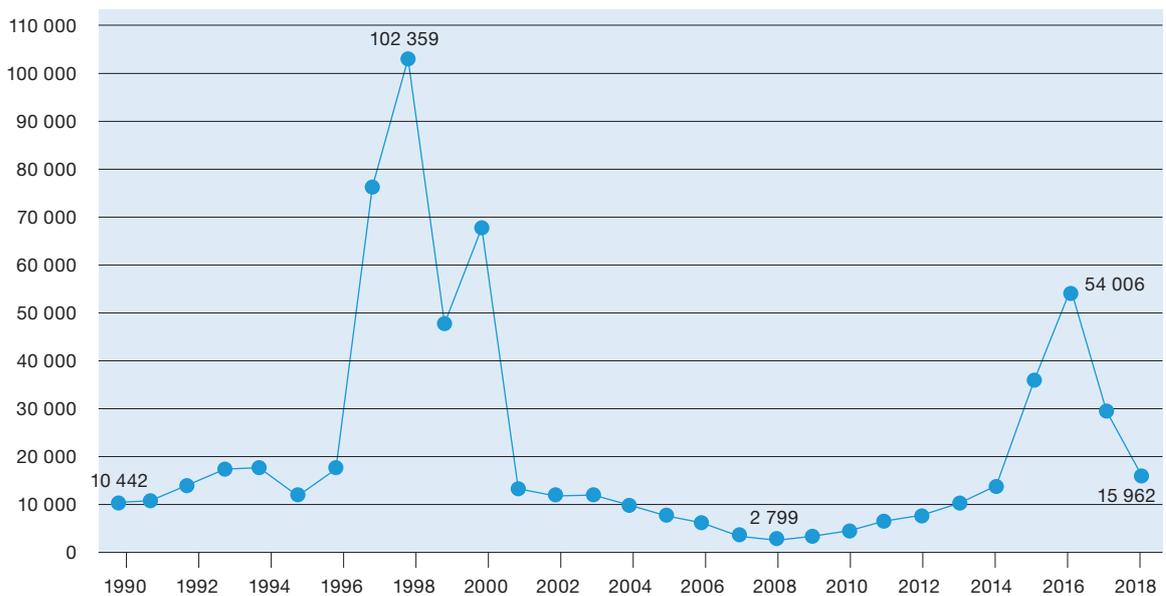


Source: Infographic produced by Katja Littmann (adapted from Black 2004).

### Facts and Figures on Return Migration

The diagram below shows the number of voluntary departures from Germany which have been promoted via the REAG/GARP Programme of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) since 1990.

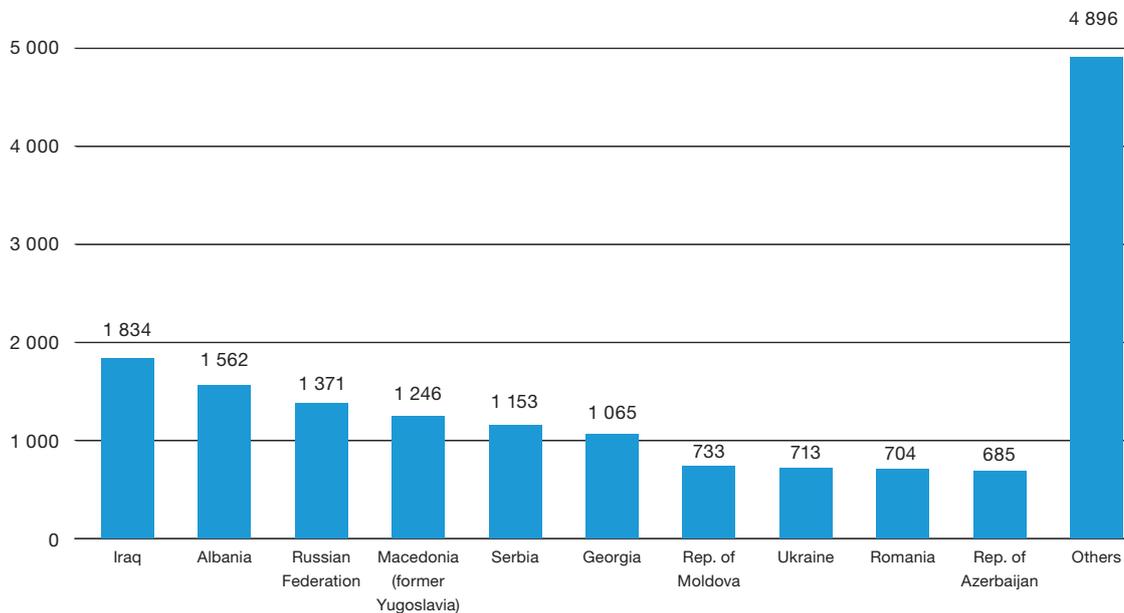
#### Voluntary departures with REAG/GARP from 1990 up to 31 Dezember 2018



Source: © Figure: BAMF | Figures: IOM 2019

In 2018, 15,941 persons were supported to leave Germany through the assisted return programme run by the Federal Government and the German federal states (Länder), while 29,522 persons benefitted in the entire previous year 2017. The large numbers of departures from 1997 to 2000 can be attributed to the end of the Balkan conflicts (collapse of Yugoslavia; BAMF 2019).

The diagram below shows the return countries (also known as destination countries) and the number of persons who returned to these countries by the end of 2018.

**The ten most frequent REAG/GARP return countries in 2018\***

Source: © Diagram: BAMF | Figures: IOM.

These official figures only include returnees who departed via the assisted return programme jointly financed by the Federal Government and the German federal states. In addition, in recent years, a large number of immigrants have returned to their home countries voluntarily either through other support programmes or on a self-organised basis.

According to tagesschau.de, at least 36,671 persons left for their home countries in 2017, and 10,669 in the first half of 2018 (see Prössl/von Mallinckrodt 2018), owing to additional, self-financed support programmes in many federal states (see Stalinski 2019).

### “Waithood” – Living Conditions of Refugees and the Role of Education

*“He just wants to leave. Back to Baghdad. To a country where fighting is still going on, where rival ethnic groups are settling old scores. But everything seems better to Omar Al-Dulaimi than spending years of uncertainty in German refugee homes, he tells the Bavarian radio station ‘Bayerischer Rundfunk’. For two years, Omar had lived with his wife and two small daughters in different accommodations in Berlin waiting for the decision on asylum. Two years – and then the rejection. They had appealed against it, but in view of the uncertain outcome and the years without prospects, they decided more than half a year ago to return voluntarily to Iraq.”*

*(Stalinski 2019)*

In the refugee context, waithood<sup>1</sup> refers to the situation of refugees who are trapped in a “waiting loop”, defined as a longer period of waiting for their lives to resume (see Alcinda Howana 2016). In Germany, many refugees are only granted an unsecured residence status, undergo a long asylum procedure or are unable to leave the country due to various obstacles to deportation, but are also unable to ensure their long-term security. After having suffered mostly harrowing experiences in their country of origin as well as along their displacement route, they are now in a waiting position, cannot build up future career perspectives and have no security (again). Especially for traumatised individuals, the situation of being at the mercy of others, where other people decide on essential matters in their lives, lasts for a long time and can lead to re-traumatisation (see dossier [Understanding Distress and Trauma of Refugees](#)).

Furthermore, the majority of these people do not have access to regular education and integration services in Germany. This often affects refugees with “poor prospects of remaining in Germany” and from “safe countries of origin” such as the Western Balkans or various West African states. In many cases, concerned persons also did not have adequate access to education in their countries of origin, and are therefore often low-skilled, have a low (formal) level of education and hence a greater need for education. It is important to ensure that this target group has access to educational opportunities in order to guarantee their human right to education – regardless of whether they stay in the host country or return to their country of origin. Educational opportunities should already start at the place of refuge and be continued in the countries of origin in case of return.

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<sup>1</sup> Waithood was originally defined as a period of stagnation in the lives of young, unemployed university graduates in various developed and developing countries or regions, particularly in the Middle East, North Africa and India, where their expertise is not yet widely spread or applied.

## What Are the Support Options for Voluntary Return?

The Federal Programme for Voluntary Returnees REAG/GARP<sup>2</sup> has been running since 1979. It is implemented by the IOM on behalf of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and the responsible offices of the German federal states.

Return counselling is a central programme component: “Return counselling is (...) an individual, comprehensive, qualified counselling on all questions related to the return and reintegration in the country of origin of the person concerned, which can be provided by governmental or non-governmental agencies” (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Freiwillige Rückkehr 2015). Return counselling is always conducted as a voluntary and open-ended process. It has no influence on pending asylum procedures.

Moreover, support is offered in organising the return trip, covering travel expenses, health care costs and financial start-up assistance for reintegration. Nationality and residence status are among the criteria determining if and what financial support can be granted. In the case of voluntary return, applicants can choose the date of departure themselves, thus plan, and prepare their return.

Pre-return measures such as the vocational training and basic education courses offered by the “Building Educational Bridges” project of the German Adult Education Association (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V.) also contribute towards getting return-interested refugees prepared and strengthened. In some countries of origin, other reintegration projects are available that can help people make a fresh start after returning home.

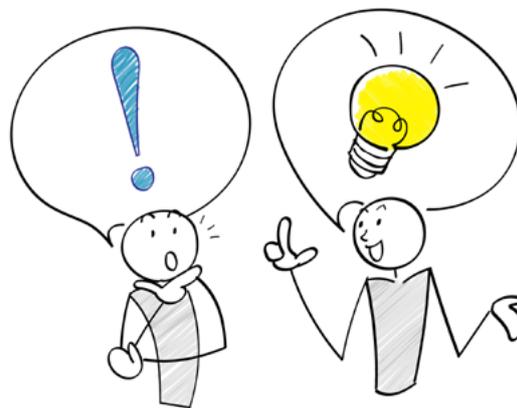


Image: DragonTiger/Getty Images

Further information on return and reintegration is available at:

<https://www.startfinder.de/en>; <https://www.returningfromgermany.de/en/> and <https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/Rueckkehr/rueckkehr-node.html>

The following video explains the process of voluntary return (nine languages):

<https://handbookgermany.de/en/rights-laws/asylum/voluntary-return.html>

<sup>2</sup> Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum-Seekers in Germany (REAG) and Government Assisted Repatriation Programme (GARP)

### “Returning” to Where?

The use of the term “return” should be viewed critically. It implies that refugees would return to the same place of origin. Return is not a simple reversal of displacement but a dynamic process. Reintegration does not consist of “anchoring” or “re-rooting” returnees in either their places of origin or their previous social and economic roles (UNHCR 2008). Taking a differentiated view on the term appears to make sense under the following aspects:

- **Changes in the country of origin:** Especially over extended periods of time, the place of origin has usually changed significantly in terms of social networks, family composition, job opportunities, destruction through war and reconstruction, urbanisation processes and mobility, language habits, etc.
- **Return to an unknown country:** It is quite common for migrants and their families to have emigrated or fled to another country at a very young age and to live there in the second or third generation. In these countries, they frequently remain for many years or decades in an unresolved, tolerated or temporary residence status. When they are to return to their country of origin, they do not know the country or the language and have no relatives or friends there. Against this background, a “return” is extremely difficult and can only be defined as the beginning of a long process of (re)integration.
- **Safe countries of origin:** When it comes to return programmes and decisions on deportations, host countries rate authorities’ assessments of the security situation in countries of origin higher than those given by refugees, although the latter are usually in a better position to understand the dangers of return (see Grawert 2018). A realistic assessment should be based on an objective and independent evaluation drawn from the widest possible range of international and local sources.

The following conditions need to be met before return is feasible (UNHCR 2004):

- **Physical safety:** no risk of physical attack or intimidation and safe return routes.
- **Legal safety:** no risk of discrimination or persecution.
- **Material safety:** having a livelihood and access to basic services.
- **Reconciliation:** promoting justice between displaced persons and local residents.

### How can Sustainable Return be achieved?

The return process is associated with various challenges. Returnees are often confronted with ignorance regarding their needs, marginalisation, stigmatisation and (ethnic) discrimination. At the same time, they themselves may be accompanied by feelings of shame, failure and lack of success. In the country of origin, the situation of return can lead to inequalities between – possibly sponsored – returnees and those who have stayed, and to jealousy or new conflicts. A lack of opportunities for social and economic (re)integration as well as new conflicts and wars often result in renewed flight and displacement, in a process of circular migration.

The following aspects support voluntary return:

- open-ended and individual counselling,
- informed decision based on a secure residence status,
- own decision on the right time,
- possibility of “go and see” visits,
- protection of the returnees,
- organisational and financial support for departure,
- educational opportunities before/after return, and
- sustainable reintegration assistance.

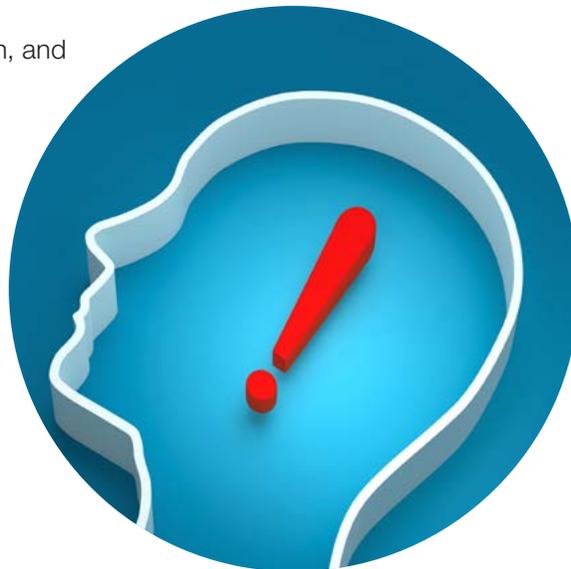


Image: syolacan/Getty Images

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# MODULE 2

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

Introduction . . . . .	55
Overview of Teaching and Learning Materials . . . . .	57







## Module 2: Who am I and who are my students? Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Brief Description

Module 2 supports self-reflection and self-positioning with the aim of exploring your own role as instructor or coach. It includes a critical analysis of your own perception and shows how perception generates prejudices and stereotypes. Furthermore, participants explore the diversity of cultures and learn that culture is only one factor in explaining behaviour. Special emphasis is placed on reflecting stereotypes, prejudices and power imbalances, and how these influence one's own work with refugees. In addition, the module introduces the importance of language for interpersonal dialogue.

### Learning Objectives

Participants are able:

**M 2.1** to recognise unequal power relations in order to become aware of their own position and to strengthen the agency of their participants,

**M 2.2** to understand their different roles and functions in the classroom and become aware of their own limitations,

**M 2.3** to explain that each person can belong to different groups or communities and that cultures are not uniform but diverse,

**M 2.4** to reflect that people are first made into “others” and that this has far-reaching consequences,

**M 2.5** to recognise how language shapes our thinking and acting and how discrimination can speak from words.

### Topics

- Self-reflection on one's own role and self-positioning
- Human perception and its role in the formation of stereotypes and prejudices
- Impact and limitations of the role of culture
- Questioning of power relations and own privileges
- Importance of language and language habits

### Recommended Scope

4.5 hours/six lesson units





# Overview of Teaching and Learning Materials

## Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students? Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

## Methods

Exercise instructions for use in classes/workshops.

Nr.	Title	Topic area	Use in training of instructors and coaches	Use in classes for refugees	Page
1	<b>Reflection on Roles</b> Exploring your own roles, responsibilities and limitations	Self-reflection on the role as instructor	x		59
2	<b>Sun of Associations</b> Identifying and reflecting on one's role	Self-reflection on the role as instructor	x	x	61
3	<b>Yes to... /No to...</b> Actively taking on or creating new roles for oneself	Self-reflection on the role as instructor	x	x	63
4	<b>Trees and Bears</b> A role-play on otherness	Dealing with experiences of otherness	x		65
5	<b>All culture?!</b> Correctly classifying unfamiliar behaviour	Behaviour in intercultural situations	x		67
6	<b>The Albatross Culture</b> Reflecting culturally shaped interpretations	Perception, prejudices and stereotypes	x		73
7	<b>People Have Many Cultures</b> Understanding membership of various social groups	Understanding of culture, multicollectivity	x	x	81
8	<b>Critical Reflection on <i>whiteness</i></b> <i>White</i> is also a colour	Self-reflection on privileges, unequal power relations	x		83
9	<b>Questioning Language and Language Use</b> How language shapes thinking	Language habits, discrimination	x		91

## Videos

Instructions for classroom use of videos.

Title	Topic area	Page
<b>All that we share</b> Discover common ground	Prejudices and stereotypes, perception	101
<b>The Danger of a Single Story</b> Questioning stereotypes and prejudices	Prejudices and stereotypes, unequal power relations	103
<b>The Doll Test</b> <i>Being white</i> as a norm	Critical Whiteness, perception	107

## Dossiers

Background information for trainers, instructors and coaches.

Title	Page
<b>Culture and Identity</b> Why we are part of multiple collectives	109
<b>Unpacking <i>white</i> Privileges</b> Critical <i>whiteness</i>	115
<b>Orientalism</b> About our relationship to the “Orient” and to ourselves	121
<b>How People Are Made Into “Others”</b> Stereotypes, clichés, prejudices and “othering”	125

# MODULE 2

Methods



Methods

Videos

Dossiers





# Reflection on Roles

## Exploring your own roles, responsibilities and limitations

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students? Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to describe their responsibilities as an instructor and as a coach in a classroom context.
2. Participants are able to understand their different roles and functions in the classroom and become aware of their own limitations (M 2.2).

### Instructions

Participants are asked to divide into coaches and instructors. Then small groups of about four persons each are formed (among coaches and instructors). All small groups are now given the assignment to discuss and define their roles and responsibilities in the course context within ten minutes. In addition, they should clarify what can and what cannot be achieved as instructors/coaches. Key points should be noted down.

Two poster papers or flipcharts are needed for the discussion that follows. The groups shall note the roles and responsibilities of the instructors on one poster and those of the coaches on the other.

Each small group now presents its results to the whole group. Participants decide together on which responsibilities are to be noted down and whether they are correctly placed in the column with the instructors or the coaches. There may also be overlaps that should be marked. At the end, the chart shows the responsibilities of the coaches and those of the instructors in two columns facing one other.

By reflecting on one's own role, especially in contrast to the respective other role, self-confidence in one's own position will be enhanced and differences made clear. In addition, this listing and discussion of the results also reveals what exceeds the respective responsibilities and consequently where the limits are.

The questions below can then be discussed in plenary:

- Which – conscious and unconscious – rules apply to your classes/work with refugees?
- What is negotiable and what is not? And why?
- What are your own limits?

### **Timeframe**

30 min

### **Materials**

- Flipchart paper
- Markers

### **Remarks**

- When it comes to consolidating the results, discussions could lead to minor issues. In this case, the trainer should motivate the participants to focus on the essentials and keep an eye on securing the outcome.
- In addition, it is also possible that the roles and responsibilities of instructors and coaches are defined differently depending on the location, which needs to be identified.

### **Authorship**

Anna Rein



# Sun of Associations

## Identifying and reflecting on one's role

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)
- (return-interested) refugees

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to recognise unequal power relations in order to become aware of their own position and to strengthen the agency of their participants (M 2.1).
2. Participants are able to understand their different roles and functions in the classroom and become aware of their own limitations (M 2.2).

### Instructions

Each participant is given pen and paper. The trainer asks everyone to draw a mind map. The inner circle represents themselves and the added lines/“rays of sunshine” represent the different roles the participants assume in relation to their work. Each participant writes their name in the circle and the roles they identify themselves with at the end of each line. Participants are given ten minutes to create their own sun of associations. Then the participants share their results within small groups of four persons.

### Timeframe

20–30 min

### Material

Pens and paper

### Remarks

- In courses with (return-interested) refugees, this exercise can be used to introduce yourself and others. The participants can enter roles and reference groups (family, profession, refugee community, leisure and hobbies, etc.) that are important to them and share this information in groups. Thereby, the participants learn that there are common roles and affiliations beyond their respective nationalities. The concept of roles is partly determined by culture. This must be taken into account when questions arise from participants and when introducing this exercise.
- Variation: Role models can also be added in circles at the end of each line. These circles can vary in size, depending on the degree to which a person identifies himself/herself with a particular role.
- In order to prepare for the [Yes to ... /No to ...](#) method, the trainer should listen to the small groups and make notes on the different roles that the participants take.

### Authorship

DVV International (2018). Curriculum interculturALE: Interkulturell-didaktische Lehr- und Lernmaterialien zur Fortbildung von Kursleitenden und ehrenamtlich Tätigen in der Erwachsenenbildung mit Geflüchteten 2018, DVV International, Bonn.



## Yes to... /No to...

### Actively taking on or creating new roles for oneself

#### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

#### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)
- (return-interested) refugees

#### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to recognise unequal power relations in order to become aware of their own position and to strengthen the agency of their participants (M 2.1).
2. Participants are able to understand their different roles and functions in the classroom and become aware of their own limitations (M 2.2).

#### Instructions

In this method, the participants position themselves according to the roles that are introduced in the course of the exercise. For this purpose, the trainer makes a line on the floor with masking tape. The ends of the line represent the degree of agreement, ranging from “Yes, I identify myself strongly” to “No, I do not identify myself at all”. You may also agree with what has been stated to a limited extent only by standing in the middle. Based on the roles that the trainer has noted down in the preceding [Sun of Associations](#) exercise, the participants can actively take on or reject certain roles. When the trainer is reading a role aloud, the participants are requested to position themselves on the line according to their perception of the role. The trainer then has the option of asking some participants about their reasons for positioning themselves at a particular point. Once all the roles have been read aloud, the group gets together again for a short discussion round. The questions below can serve as a starting point for this discussion:

- How did it feel to actively take on or reject a role?
- Are there roles that you would rather not take on?
- If so, which ones? And why?
- Did anything surprise you?

#### Timeframe

20–30 min

### Materials

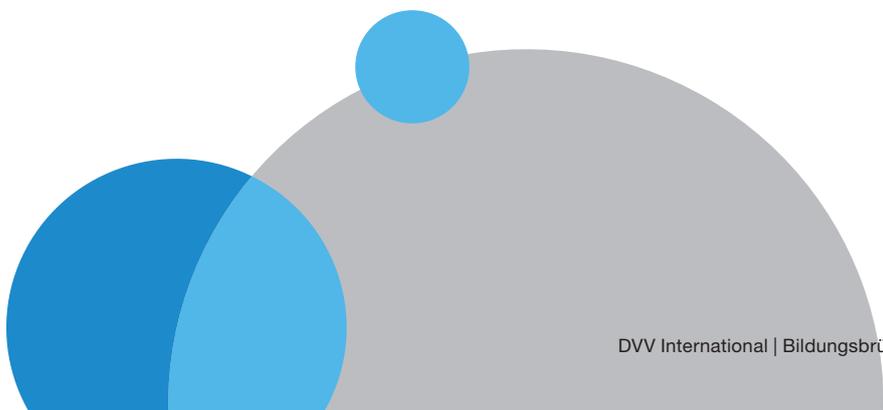
List of roles noted down by the trainer during the [Sun of Associations](#) method

### Remarks

- In case the [Sun of Associations](#) method was not implemented prior to this, the trainer can hand out pen and paper to the participants and ask them to write down three different roles related to their professional context. These notes would then replace the list of roles collected with the other method. Refugees can write down their different roles in their family, their community, their professional context, etc.

### Authorship

DVV International (2018). Curriculum interculturALE: Interkulturell-didaktische Lehr- und Lernmaterialien zur Fortbildung von Kursleitenden und ehrenamtlich Tätigen in der Erwachsenenbildung mit Geflüchteten 2018, DVV International, Bonn.





# Trees and Bears

## A role-play on otherness

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to identify what effect unfamiliar behaviour can have on us and how we react to it.
2. Participants are able to explain that views and actions are culturally shaped.
3. Participants are able to explain that each person can belong to different groups or communities and that cultures are not uniform but diverse (M 2.3).

### Instructions

The participants are divided into two groups. One group will be asked to leave the room.

The trainer now instructs the first group in the room to play trees. The participants shall raise their arms, remain firmly anchored in one place and not speak.

Afterwards, the other group, which is outside the room, is asked to play bears. The bears shall make loud noises, move around in the room, gesture with their claws and scratch their backs on the trees.

After each group has received their instructions, the bears go back into the room and start behaving as instructed. The bears are noisy, move quickly and rub their backs against the trees. The trees do not move and have no idea what the others represent.

This is followed by a discussion about the role-play based on the following key questions:

- How did the trees feel during the role-play? And how did the bears feel?
- Why did you feel like this? How did you react?
- Why do you think the trees or the bears behaved like this?
- Can you transfer the role-play to situations related to the intercultural context?

The trainer moderates the discussion and deals with reactions to the unknown, cultural differences and commonalities, the topic of otherness between curiosity and rejection, and intercultural communication.

### Timeframe

30 min

### Note

- Since the role of the bears is more difficult than the role of the trees, it is advisable for the trainer to lead the group of the bears, which makes it easier for the participants to act accordingly.
- In preparation for the discussion, read the dossier [How People Are Made Into "Others"](#).

### Authorship

The exercise was implemented at a workshop on "Intercultural Competence in Adult Education" by Dr. Gregor Sterzenbach, Intercultural Communication Department at the LMU Munich.

### References

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# All culture?!

## Correctly classifying unfamiliar behaviour

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to explain that each person can belong to different groups or communities and that cultures are not uniform but diverse (M 2.3).
2. Participants are able to use various possible explanations for divergent behaviour.

### Instructions

#### Phase 1

Participants are requested to share their experiences gained in the intercultural context by asking the following question:

Remember situations related to an intercultural context in which...

- you did not understand certain situations,
- behaviour was unfamiliar to you, or
- there were misunderstandings.

The participants should briefly describe the examples they have given. Make sure that the examples are not interpreted but are described as objectively and briefly as possible. This exercise requires three to four facts to be presented. Put a title for each example/fact on a card.

Next, draw the Culture-Person-Situation-Triangle and briefly explain it (see [Handout: The Culture-Person-Situation-Triangle](#)). It is sufficient to describe the three sides in brief. In the concluding discussion at the end of the third phase, the triangle can be explored once again in more detail.

**Phase 2**

Afterwards, small groups are formed. The example-giving persons are distributed among the groups so that each group has one example to work on. Now, the groups take a closer look at the examples and formulate assumptions as to how the behaviour described in each case can be justified as being:

- a. culture-dependent,
- b. situation-dependent,
- c. person-dependent.

The results gained by the groups are noted on a flipchart.

**Phase 3**

Next, the groups briefly present their suggested explanations for the examples, one after the other. In conclusion, participants are asked to discuss how unknown or incomprehensible behaviour is quickly attributed to culture, and hence people fall into the “culturalist trap”.

The Culture-Person-Situation-Triangle is a tool to demonstrate the different motives of behaviour and the fact that behaviour cannot (always) be explained in one dimension.

**Timeframe**

35-40 min

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
10–15 min	15 min	10 min

**Materials**

- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- Moderation cards
- [Handout: The Culture-Person-Situation-Triangle](#)

**Remarks**

If the participants are unable to come up with examples spontaneously, the trainer can motivate them to talk by bringing in his/her own example. The examples provided in the handout can be used for this purpose.

**Authorship**

Anna Rein



# Handout: The Culture-Person-Situation-Triangle

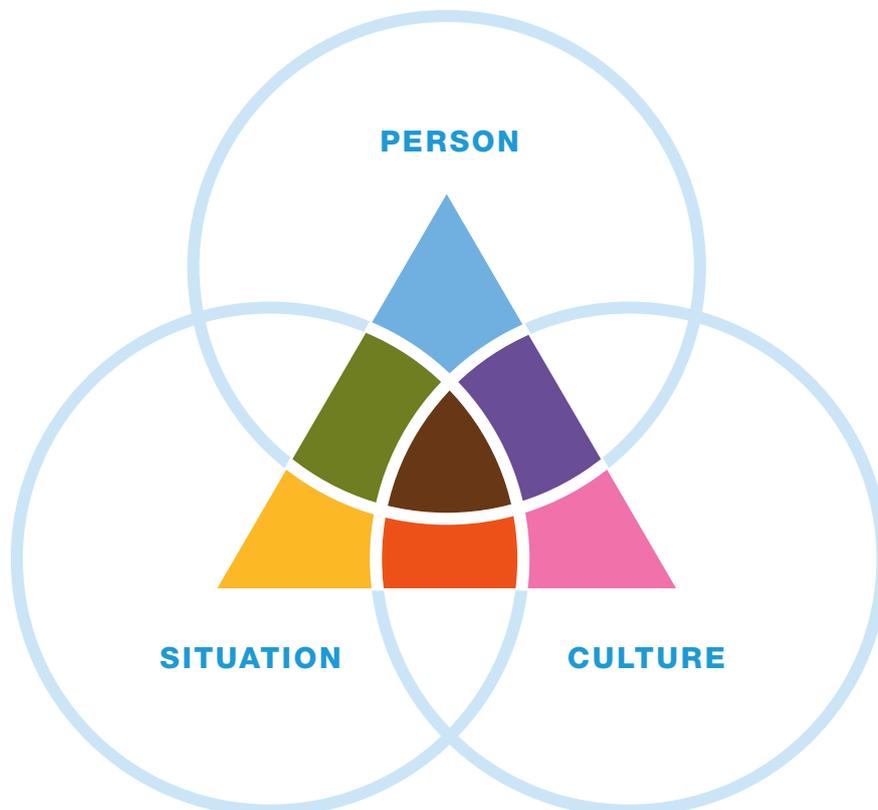
## Correctly classifying unfamiliar behaviour

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### The Culture-Person-Situation-Triangle



The Culture-Person-Situation-Triangle serves as a tool for explaining unfamiliar behaviour. In case of irritating, surprising and/or unfamiliar behaviour, cultural differences are brought up quickly as an explanation, which is also known as the “culturalist trap”. The triangle offers a differentiated description of how behaviour can be justified as being:

- a.** culture-dependent,
- b.** situation-dependent,
- c.** person-dependent.

Certainly, behaviour can also be shaped by several aspects, thus being the result of two influences or even of all three sides of the triangle. The explanation for unfamiliar behaviour is therefore to be found somewhere within the triangle.

### Example

Classes start at 9:00 a.m. and Aliaa is repeatedly late.

- a. Based on her Arabic background, Aliaa is used to the fact that a start at 9:00 a.m. implies that she can appear starting from 9:00 a.m. (and not on time at 9:00 a.m.). Therefore, she sets off at 9:00 a.m. and depending on whatever she has to do on the way or if she meets a friend; she usually arrives around 9:15 to 9:30 a.m.
- b. Aliaa lives in an apartment in a small village. Before she can come to class, she has to take her little daughter to childcare located on the other side of town, far away from Aliaa's class. Since she can only drop off her daughter at 8:30 a.m., she takes the bus from there at 8:48 a.m. and arrives at the bus stop at 9:04 a.m. It takes her about 10 minutes to walk from there to reach the classroom at 9:15 a.m.
- c. After her beginners' course, Aliaa has taught herself German extensively through textbooks and a volunteer learning guide. The new course is mainly repetition for her at the moment. She still wants to take the course in order to show commitment and to establish connections. However, being there at 9:00 a.m. is not really important to her, as lessons start mainly with a repetition of topics usually boring her.

## Case Scenarios

### “She won’t shake my hand”

Mr. Ahmadi is looking for an apartment for himself and his family. So far, he has been living in a shared accommodation. Today, he has an appointment with his case manager from the job centre, Mr. Friedrich, to find out about the options. He is bringing his wife to the appointment. They both arrive punctually for the appointment and wait for their turn in the waiting area. Mr. Friedrich opens the door and invites them in. Mr. Friedrich greets Mrs. Ahmadi, who is standing behind her husband, by shaking hands. For the time being, he does not pay attention to Mr. Ahmadi but instead focuses on his wife. She reacts embarrassed and looks at the floor, not responding to Mr. Friedrich. Mr. Ahmadi turns swiftly towards Mr. Friedrich and shakes his hand in return. Mr. Friedrich is annoyed that Mrs. Ahmadi did not want to shake his hand. Mr. Friedrich also finds it very irritating that Mr. Ahmadi intervened that quickly.

### “Late again”

Mrs. Nowak is a volunteer in her parish and runs a German course for refugees every Wednesday. For the past few weeks, three refugee women from Syria have also been taking part in her training course. Jalila, Mina and Samira live in the initial accommodation centre near the parish. They come regularly to the course but are often at least 20 minutes late. Mrs. Nowak finds the late arrival of the course participants disturbing, as it causes much agitation in class, leading to delays in the course progress, and making it impossible for her to complete the subject matters she had scheduled.

### “She came for dinner only”

At university, Kate met a student from China, Li-Ming, with whom she gets along very well. Kate has invited her for dinner on Friday evening. She asked Li-Ming beforehand what she likes to eat and decides to cook noodles with tomato sauce. Li-Ming is really looking forward to the evening and arrives on time. Kate serves up and Li-Ming enjoys the food very much. Kate offers her a second helping, and Li-Ming gladly accepts it as well but barely manages to finish it. She gets up quickly and says goodbye to Kate. When Li-Ming has left the apartment, Kate is confused as to why Li-Ming has left so fast wondering if she came just for a free meal.





# The Albatross Culture

## Reflecting culturally shaped interpretations

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to reflect to what extent their perception of “others” is shaped by their own “cultural lenses”.
2. Participants are able to distinguish between description and interpretation of actions and behaviour.
3. Participants are able to describe the reasons why behaviour and habits of “otherness” are often misunderstood.
4. Participants are able to reflect that people are first made into “others” and that this has far-reaching consequences (M 2.4).

### Instructions

The participants observe the behaviour of a woman and a man representing the imaginary Albatross culture. They describe their observations in the group, interpret what they have seen and jointly analyse their interpretations. At the end, the participants receive information about the Albatross culture, which can finally be compared with their own interpretations.

### Preparation

Before starting this exercise, a woman and a man selected from the group of participants are introduced to the role of the man/woman from the imaginary Albatross culture in the absence of the whole group (for role-play description see [Handout 1: Role-Play Instructions for Albatross Exercise](#)).

Alternatively, the trainers or a couple consisting of participant and trainer can also take on these roles.

The participants sit in a semicircle of chairs with a single chair in front of them, under which the trainer has placed a bowl of peanuts.

The group is getting prepared for a woman and a man from the Albatross culture to enter the room soon. The participants are asked to observe the behaviour of the two persons and take notes.

### Evaluation

The participants are asked to reflect on what they have seen with the help of some key questions (write keywords on flipchart or blackboard):

1. What did you observe? What did the man from the Albatross culture do? What did the woman do? (The participants are instructed to disregard their own feelings and reactions for the time being and to describe only what they have seen).
2. What did you feel as participants in this exercise?
3. What do you think is the role of women in Albatross culture, what is the role of men? Why?
4. Do you see parallels between the Albatross culture and your own? What are the differences?

After the interpretation of what they have seen, the participants receive information about the Albatross culture:

The goddess of the earth is the highest deity in the Albatross culture. The earth is considered sacred. Women enjoy a high reputation in society for giving birth to life like Mother Earth does. For that reason, they have special privileges. Only they are allowed to touch the ground barefoot when walking and to sit on the ground. Men, on the other hand, must wear shoes and sit on chairs some distance away from the earth.



Everything that has to do with the earth has a high value in the Albatross culture. For this reason, their favourite food is peanuts, which also hold a high ritual significance as being fruits of the earth. Only women are entitled to prepare and offer the fruits of the earth. Having big feet is a God-given gift, because it allows you to be in close contact with the earth goddess. Therefore, for example, it is important to have both feet on the ground when sitting and to avoid crossing your legs. Establishing contact with the earth is a gesture of respect to visitors, allowing them to absorb much of the earth's energy. Men have the duty to taste all food before women eat it and to walk in front of them to avert dangers. The only way for men to establish closer contact with the earth goddess is through a ritual. They are allowed to put their hand on the neck of the woman sitting next to them on the floor, while she receives the cosmic energy from the earth by touching it with her forehead. Part of the energy then flows over the man's hand onto himself. This ritual represents a special honour. Apart from this ritual, it is forbidden for Albatross men to touch other women without their prior permission.

### Concluding discussion

At the end, the participants discuss the presuppositions and assessments that have led to specific misinterpretations and identify their root causes. Key questions for the discussion may include:

1. How do our own "cultural lenses" influence our interpretation of what we see?
2. How do our presuppositions and prejudices impact on our perception of other cultures?

### Timeframe

30–45 min

Phase 1: Preparation	Phase 2: Role-play	Phase 3: Description, Interpretation	Phase 4: Concluding discussion
5–10 min	5–10 min	10–15 min	10–15 min

### Materials

- Semicircle of chairs and single chair
- Paper und pens for participants
- Flipchart or blackboard
- Bowl of peanuts
- [Handout 1: Role-Play Instructions for Albatross Exercise](#)
- [Handout 2: The Awareness Wheel](#)

### Remarks

- Variation: In addition to the questions, the awareness wheel of intercultural communication can be presented (see [Handout 2: The Awareness Wheel](#)) to illustrate how our human perception functions and why it encourages prejudices and stereotyping.
- It is advisable to continue with a break to allow the participants to continue talking about their experiences with the exercise.
- The exercise can be a good introduction to the topic “How People Are Made Into ‘Others’” and is linked to the methods and the dossier [How People Are Made Into “Others”](#). As the exercise also deals with developing clichés and stereotypes, it can be used as an entry method for these topics.

### Authorship

See The Albatross, developed by Theodore Gochenour and published in: Gochenour, Theodore (Ed., 1993). Beyond Experience: The Experiential Approach to Cross-Cultural Education, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth/USA, pp. 119-127.

The method has been varied, reformulated and adapted to the respective contexts in many different ways.



# Handout 1: Role-Play Instructions for Albatross Exercise

## Reflecting culturally shaped interpretations

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Role-Play Instructions for Albatross Exercise

The man and the woman enter the room in silence with a friendly look on their faces. The woman walks behind the man at a clear distance. The man is wearing shoes and the woman is barefoot. The couple remains in a circle for a short time while looking at the group with a friendly glance. Both of them will then approach participants, one by one. Crossed legs of the participants are gently but firmly placed on the floor, and with those who cross their legs again even several times. The woman only touches other women and the man only male participants.

Afterwards, the man sits down on the single chair; the woman kneels on the floor next to him. The woman picks up the bowl with the peanuts. Before she can eat the peanuts, the man takes them and eats a few peanuts with pleasure. After that, he hands the bowl over to the woman, who now eats some nuts as well and then puts the bowl aside.

After the meal, the man puts his hand on the neck of the woman. She bends forward touching the ground three times with her forehead. Then the couple stands up, passes the round of participants smiling for a last farewell, whilst leaving the room with the woman following the man again.





# Handout 2: The Awareness Wheel

## Reflecting culturally shaped interpretations

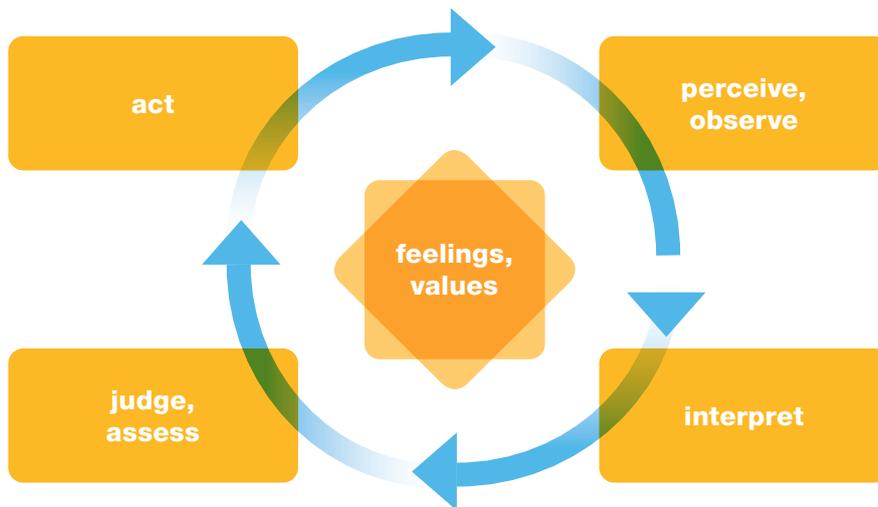
### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Supplementary Explanations to the Albatross Method

The “Awareness wheel of intercultural communication” can be used to explain how human perception works and how stereotypes and prejudices can arise as a result:



The Wheel of Awareness shows how our perception works. We see something, while at the same time we interpret what we see, we form a judgement about it and then act (act can also mean to do nothing). All four steps happen simultaneously. For what reason?

- This cycle of perception relieves our everyday awareness. We would not be able to process the wealth of information that flows into us every day if we had to constantly reinterpret and reassess people and situations.
- Our brain functions like a sorting machine. We sort information into existing drawers and schemes (we see a moving object with four tyres and place it in the “car” drawer). This is another way of generating stereotypes and prejudices.
- Our perception is not purely rational but influenced by feelings. In particular, when we encounter unfamiliar, different behaviour, our emotions and personal values have a major impact on our interpretation and evaluation (What is normal? What is common?). They guide the sorting process into categories and drawers and may lead to false assumptions about the motives of our counterpart.

## Reference

vhs Ehrenamtsportal (2018): Themenwelt Interkulturelle Kommunikation: Wie nehme ich Geflüchtete wahr? Über den Umgang mit Stereotypen und Vorurteilen. Available at: <https://vhs-ehrenamtsportal.de/themenwelten/interkulturelle-kommunikation/wie-nehme-ich-gefuechtete-wahr> (Accessed 19 July 2019).



# People Have Many Cultures

## Understanding membership in various social groups

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)
- (return-interested) refugees

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to name various collectives that people feel affiliated to.
2. Participants are able to explain that each person can belong to different groups or communities and that cultures are not uniform but diverse (M 2.3).

### Instructions

The participants are divided into two groups. Each group gets a stack of moderation cards and markers. Then the participants are asked to name as many types of groups/collectives as they can within ten minutes. Make sure that the names are not too specific but generic terms of collectives (e.g. “religion” instead of “Christian” or “sport” instead of “football”).

The trainer can use the following assignment: “Within your group, list as many different collectives/groups a person can belong to as possible. Note just one collective on each card.”

Afterwards, the first group presents their listed options for collectives and pins them on the wall. Then the second group adds their cards.

Finally, the questions below can be discussed:

- Was it difficult to find many different collectives?
- Did you find collectives that are more important or less important than others?
- Who decides by which collectives we define ourselves as human beings?

**Timeframe**

20 min

**Material**

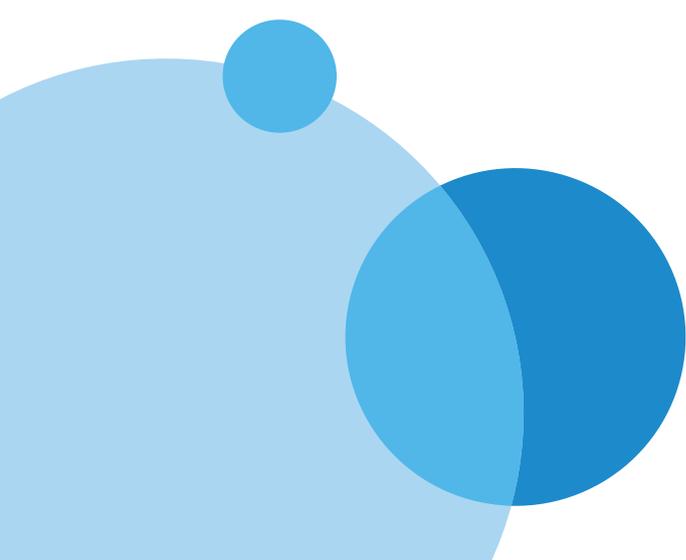
- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- Presentation cards
- Pinboard

**Remarks**

- Before starting this exercise, the concept of multicollectivity should be introduced. Compact information on this topic is available in the dossier Culture and Identity and in the included literature references.
- Variation: This exercise can also be played as a game. For that purpose, each group receives a different colour of moderation cards, and the trainer stops the exercise at a precise time. Then the number of cards is counted, and the group that has come up with the highest number of different options for collectives wins.
- When working with return-interested refugees, the different social groups identified through brainstorming provide a basis for discussing the extent to which membership of certain groups may assist the reintegration process.

**Authorship**

Anna Rein





# Critical Reflection on *whiteness*<sup>1</sup>

## ***white* is also a colour**

### **Module 2:**

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### **Target Group**

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### **Learning Objectives**

1. Participants are able to recognise unequal power relations in order to become aware of their own position and to strengthen the agency of their participants (M 2.1).
2. Participants are able to reflect that people are first made into “others” and that this has far-reaching consequences (M 2.4).
3. Participants are able to reflect on what being *white* (being Black/ being of Colour) means in our society.
4. Participants are able to describe the extent to which being *white* in our society is associated with certain benefits and privileges and its impact on the daily lives of non-*white* people.

### **Instructions**

Most *white* people have never thought about being *white* and the impact of being white on their daily lives. The fact that their skin colour is of no importance when they are looking for an apartment or a job, for example, is a matter of course for them. In contrast, many Black or People of Colour<sup>2</sup> have to deal with the consequences of their “otherness” almost daily.

Before starting the exercise, it is important to give an input about the fact that *white*/Black/of Colour do not correspond to biological categories. There is a wide range of views on who is considered *white*/Black/of Colour in a society. Moreover, there can be differences in how people see themselves or how they are seen by others. The questionnaire and the list of topics shall encourage reflection on being white and the privileges that go with it.

---

1 The terms Black and white are not based on “biological” properties in the sense of skin colouring but rather on socio-political affiliations. Initiatives of Black people advocate capitalizing the attribute of Black, whereas white is supposed to be written in small letters and italics.

2 “People of Colour” is a self-designation of non-white people, which does not refer to skin colour but to the common experience of discrimination, exclusion and/or racism in a white majority society.

The questionnaire serves as an introduction, and since non-*white* people may also be among the participants, it should be prepared in two versions (for questionnaire see [Handout 1 Questionnaire: Critical Reflection on \*whiteness\*](#)). The only differences are in the first two questions. The questionnaire can be laid out in both versions (for *white* people and for Black/Persons of Colour) with the participants deciding for themselves which version they take. The participants should be given time to reflect at least deeper on the first two questions and to take notes. The three questions that follow are likely to cause irritation with *white* people. Nevertheless, they demonstrate that being *white* does not simply disappear even in a purely *white* personal or public environment.

### Evaluation

The participants are asked to discuss the questionnaire following a series of key questions:

1. What was your first reaction to the questionnaire?
2. Did you have difficulties completing it?
3. Did you become aware of being *white* (Black/of Colour) at some point in your life?  
If so, when or how?
4. What comes to your mind in response to the second question?
5. Which of these five questions did you find most appealing, irritating, annoying or thought-provoking?

Following the discussion of the questionnaire, the list of theses (see [Handout 2: List of Theses: Critical Reflection on \*whiteness\*](#)) shall be handed out, which draws attention to *white* privileges in many different areas of life. As next step, all participants are asked to go through the list and discuss it in plenary.

### Evaluation

The participants are asked to discuss the list of theses following a series of key questions:

1. What was your first reaction to the theses?
2. Which are the theses that you find most appealing? Why?
3. In view of the privileges listed, do you sense a certain resistance or more of an eye-opener effect given that the theses have opened up new perspectives?

### Timeframe

35–45 min

Phase 1:	Phase 2:	Phase 3:
Read and complete the questionnaire	Discussion of questions and answers	Go through and discuss the list of theses
10 min	15–20 min	10–15 min

## Materials

- Handout 1 Questionnaire: Critical Reflection on *whiteness*
- Handout 2 List of Theses: Critical Reflection on *whiteness*

## Remarks

It is not unusual to observe a certain defensive reaction in *white* participants. This reaction is understandable partly by the fact that not all *white* people consider themselves privileged, and partly as it is not always easy to question or even give up a privileged position. In case there are Black People or People of Colour among the participants, old wounds and painful experiences might open up and need to be addressed. This helps the *white* people in the group, for example, to understand and reflect the everyday relevance of the theses on a personal level. Nevertheless, this has the potential to turn into a completely negative experience for non-*white* people, if the group does not pay attention to respectful communication. Individual non-*white* persons must not be forced into the role of representatives of a “skin colour” or even “race”.

The questionnaire can also be used without the following list of theses; instead, the group may watch and discuss the video [The Doll Test](#).

For background knowledge on the method, see the dossiers [Unpacking white Privileges](#), [How People Are Made into “Others”](#) and [Orientalism](#).

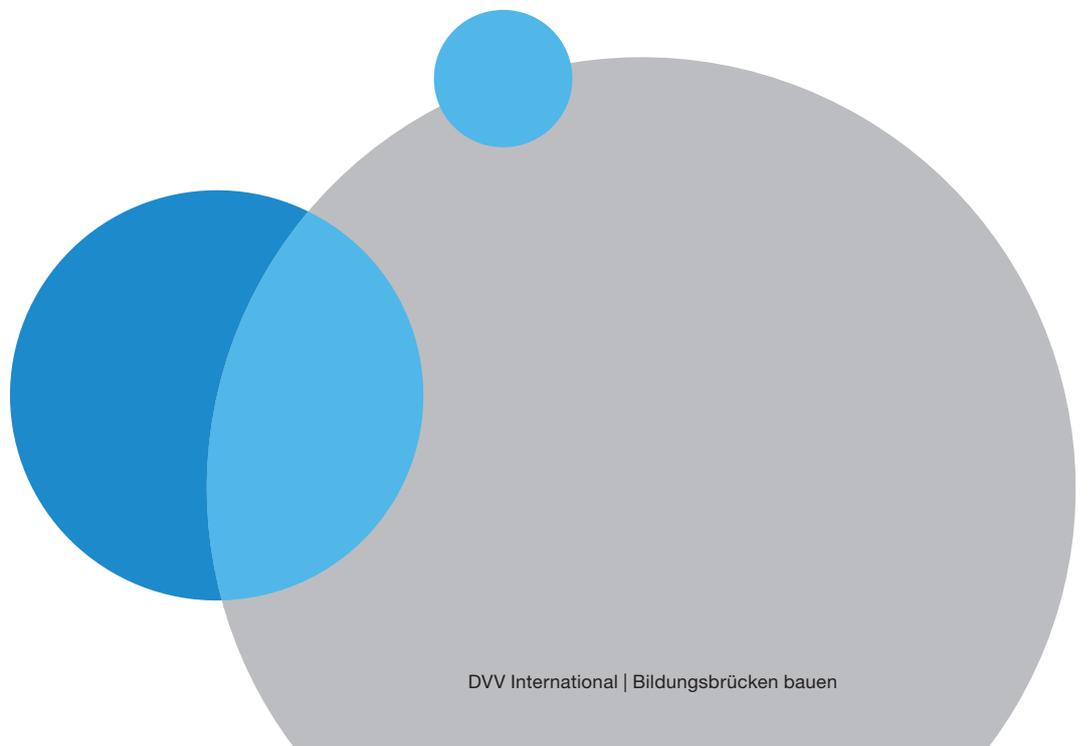
## Authorship

Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst

## Reference

List of theses adapted from: Peggy McIntosh (1997). White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies. In: Delgado, Richard/ Stefanic, Jean (Eds., 1997). Looking behind the Mirror: Critical White Studies, Philadelphia, pp. 291-299. Available at: <https://www.collegeart.org/pdf/diversity/white-privilege-and-male-privilege.pdf>

Questionnaire cf. Wollrad, Eske (2005). Weißsein im Widerspruch, Königstein/Taunus, p. 192.





# Handout 1 Questionnaire: Critical Reflection on *whiteness*

## ***white* is also a colour**

### **Module 2:**

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### **Text excerpt**

© Eske Wollrad 2005. *Weißsein im Widerspruch, Königstein/Taunus*, p. 192.

### **Questionnaire for *white* Persons**

**1.** When did you first notice you were *white*?

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**2.** How does being *white* affect your everyday life?

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**3.** Do you have closer contact with *white* persons? If so, with how many?

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**4.** Would you enter into a love relationship with a *white* person? If you have/had a love affair with a *white* person – what role does the *whiteness* of your partner play in your relationship?

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**5.** Do you live in a predominantly or exclusively *white* neighbourhood? If so, why?

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# Handout 1 Questionnaire: Critical Reflection on *whiteness*

## ***white is also a colour***

### **Module 2:**

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### **Text excerpt**

© Eske Wollrad 2005: *Weißsein im Widerspruch, Königstein/Taunus*, p. 192.

### **Questionnaire for Black People/People of Colour**

**1.** When did you first notice you were Black/of Colour?

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**2.** How does being Black/of Colour affect your everyday life?

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**3.** Do you have closer contact with *white* persons? If so, with how many?

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---

**4.** Would you enter into a love relationship with a *white* person?

If you have/had a love affair with a *white* person – what role does the *whiteness* of your partner play in your relationship?

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**5.** Do you live in a predominantly or exclusively *white* neighbourhood? If so, why?

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# Handout 1 List of Theses: Critical Reflection on *whiteness*

***white* is also a colour**

## **Module 2:**

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### **List of Theses**

*List of theses based on Peggy McIntosh 1997. White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies, in: Richard Delgado, Jean Stefanic (Eds.) 1997. Looking behind the Mirror: Critical White Studies, Philadelphia, pp. 291-299.*

- 1.** If I wish, I can arrange to spend most of my time in the company of people of my own colour.
- 2.** When I move into a new apartment, I can be pretty sure that my new neighbours will be friendly or neutral to me.
- 3.** I can go shopping without the store detective following me suspiciously.
- 4.** I can turn on the TV or open the newspaper and see people of my skin colour represented everywhere.
- 5.** When it comes to the history of my country and “civilization”, I am told that people of my skin colour have made it to what it is now.
- 6.** I can assume that my voice is taken seriously in a group where I am the only person of a different skin colour.
- 7.** I can be sure that every hairdressing salon has staff who can do my hair.

8. I can speak with my mouth full without anyone claiming that this was typical for people of my skin colour.
9. I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my “racial” group.
10. When I first meet people, nobody is surprised about my knowledge of German.
11. If police officers stop me on the street, I can be sure that my skin colour is not the reason.
12. If I buy makeup labelled “natural” or plasters, I can be sure that it more or less matches my skin colour.
- 13. I have the choice to deal with racism or not.**



# Questioning Language and Language Use

## How language shapes thinking

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to recognise how language shapes our thinking and acting and how discrimination can speak from words (M 2.5).
2. Participants are able to reflect that people are first made into “others” and that this has far-reaching consequences (M 2.4).
3. Participants are able to reflect that unequal power relations can also manifest themselves in terms of language and that the important role they play in this context is to strengthen the agency of their participants through the sensitive use of language.

### Instructions

Our language is inseparably connected with our thoughts and actions. This connection requires us to think about the meaning and content of our expressions. Language can hurt and discriminate, but language can also comfort and strengthen. Suggestions for sensitive language regulations often trigger heated discussions. People easily speak of censorship and a ban on thinking, or complain about the allegedly prevailing political correctness<sup>1</sup>.

Finally, they argue that the language is being “ruined”. Whenever a given use of language is criticised, a large number of people react defensively, frequently asking the question: “What is allowed to be said at all?”

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<sup>1</sup> Political correctness denotes agreement with the idea to avoid language that could be offensive or insulting to (groups of) people (e.g. relating to sex or skin colour).

**Part 1: The Impact of Language**

*“Words can be like tiny doses of arsenic; they are swallowed unnoticed, appear to have no effect, and then after a little time the toxic reaction sets in after all.”*

*(Victor Klemperer 2013: 15-16)*

The trainer presents the quote (on a flipchart). The participants are then asked to discuss the following question:

What is the first thing that comes to your mind about Klemperer’s quote?

**Background information:**

Klemperer not only describes how specific Nazi slogans (e.g. final victory, Aryanization or protective custody) constructed new realities. He also writes about the power of language in general and explores how many terms that were created back then are in our minds to this day. In the context of people from the “Global South”<sup>2</sup>, there are still numerous terms that date back far beyond the Nazi regime to the colonial era of our history. They were used to devalue people – often based on their skin colour – and to portray them as inferior.

Based on Klemperer’s quote, the significance of language and language use shall be reflected upon and discussed at this point. Finally, the participants are given two handouts with text excerpts from relevant books and use them in the following discussion.

**Part 2: Reading texts and discussion**

The participants are given one text each (see [Handouts 1 and 2](#)) and work through it individually.

Afterwards, the participants are asked to discuss the key questions below in plenary:

1. What experiences did you have with problematic terms that disturbed you or others in your environment?
2. Who, in your opinion, should decide which terms are problematic?
3. Do you think it is important to avoid certain terms, or would that mean censorship or “ruining” the language?
4. How can sensitive language use help you to create a trusting atmosphere in class?

<sup>2</sup> Since the end of the 1980s, the term “Global South” has increasingly been used as an alternative to outdated categories such as “developing or emerging countries”. It pairs with the “Global North”, which covers the wealthy, highly industrialised countries. The term “Global South” is not to be understood geographically but refers to the disadvantaged status of the regions and countries in the global system associated herewith. While this concept is preferable to older terminology, it is not without controversy. On the one hand, it still seems to reflect the view of the “North” on the South, making it an external notion; on the other hand, it embraces huge, socially and economically extremely diverse regions and nations under one label.

## Timeframe

40 min

<b>Phase 1:</b> Introductory input on the topic (Klemperer quote) and initial discussion based on the first key question	<b>Phase 2:</b> Reading texts and discussion based on the key questions
10 min	30 min

## Materials

- **Handout 1:** Text excerpt from Noah Sow “Deutschland Schwarz Weiß” entitled “Our Daily Word – Racist Language” ([Unser täglich Wort: Rassistische Sprache](#))
- **Handout 2:** Text excerpt from Susan Arndt & Antje Hornscheid (Eds.): “Afrika und die deutsche Sprache: Ein kritisches Nachschlagewerk” entitled “[When is Language racist?](#)” ([Wann ist Sprache rassistisch?](#))

## Remarks

In case, there are Black<sup>3</sup> People or People of Colour among the participants, the trainer has to request a sensitive use of language before starting the exercise. This topic in particular requires a trusting and fear-free atmosphere.

## Authorship

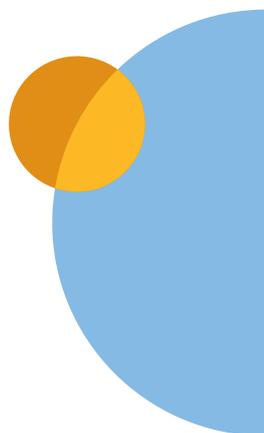
Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst

## References

Klemperer, Victor 2013 (1957): *The Language of the Third Reich*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, pp. 15-16

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<sup>3</sup> The terms Black and *white* are not based on “biological” properties in the sense of skin colouring but rather on socio-political affiliations. Initiatives of Black people advocate capitalizing the attribute of Black, whereas *white* is supposed to be written in small letters and italics.







# Handout 1: Our Daily Word – Racist Language

## How language shapes thinking

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Text excerpt

© Noah Sow (2018). *Deutschland Schwarz Weiß*, BoD Norderstedt, pp. 117-121

[...]

### Our Daily Word – Racist Language

(Original title „Unser täglich Wort: Rassistische Sprache“)

Let us do a linguistic experiment: Create a list of words with “black” and of associated words with the term “black”. Do the same with “white”.

My list looks like this:

*Words with "black":* black sheep, look on the black side, black bloc, black hole, black market, black magic, black book, black widow, black beast, blackball, blackmailing, black mark, black death, blacklist, blackguard, blackhander, black-hearted, black Friday (no, Black Forest is not included here, that is a proper name).

Associations and meanings of “black”: shadow, dark, eerie, oppressive, strange, evil, devil, unknown, dark, immoral, cave, dishonest, inscrutable, narrow, sin, to avoid, menacing/ threatening, nature, night, mystery

*Linguistic continuations:* “dark”, “underexposed”.

*Words with "white":* to whitewash something, to tell a white lie, white paper.

Associations and meanings of “white”: light, purity, cleanliness, spotless, blank, immaculate, innocent, virtuous, beautiful, moral, angel, purification, good, elf, fairy, desirable, harmless, friendly, clear, noble, valuable, worthy of protection, fragile, accessible

*Linguistic continuations:* “to be bright,” “to shine,” “fair”.

This is our language and how we use it.

Children internalize these associations as they are used all the time. In particular, when this is never discussed or explained or put into perspective, children must naturally assume that "white = good, black = evil" are *natural facts* and not merely invented or, in relation to humans, completely wrong.

However, our language is not a natural construct but rooted in *traditions* articulating social values. Language conveys and consolidates culture and power relations leading us to continue the status quo as adults – not only through our language but also through images in the most powerful way.

"Spiderman 3" has a black alter ego, into which he transforms when getting angry and going beyond moral boundaries. Black Spiderman is vengeful, malicious, unrestrained, and out of control.

In the Grimm fairy tale All-Kinds-of-Fur (Allerleirauh) the king's daughter blackens her face and hands to look ugly and inconspicuous and in the further course of the tale, is even mistaken for a "whimsical animal" (sic) due to this blackness. This can only be considered irrelevant and far-fetched by those who are not "dark", and who have not been treated as suspicious, insincere or unsightly for this reason alone.

No school teaches us that our way of handling the terms and interpretations of "black" and "white" in language is not "normal" but the result of various constructions: The demonisation of everything "black" and "dark" – applied to people and their characteristics and actions – was partly caused by the church. At the time of Europe's first colonial activities, "aethiops" was even used as a synonym for the devil.

[..]

You may think that Germany has meanwhile achieved a level of linguistic non-violence and political correctness. Your friends might have stopped using traditional racist names for particular bakery and sweets and you may not have heard explicitly racist words being casually used on the news for some time. If you think so, be aware of the "it-is-enough-now" trap. This trap snaps shut as soon as the mainstream has accepted that a given racist tradition is dispensable. And immediately a backlash starts: violent words and contents are *on the rise* again while simultaneously being played down, with the excuse that "we know by now that we shouldn't actually say this, but by the way, it's just a joke". This is how some "white" people justify saying ni\*\*\*\* loudly in front of each other and everyone around, and so we regularly experience a renaissance of public racist language.

[..]

Racist content and expressions are never okay, especially when coming from "white" people. You and your friends may know this, but the German media coverage happily ignores it, as we will discuss later.



# Handout 2: When is Language racist?

## How language shapes thinking

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Excerpt from

© Arndt, Susan; Hornscheid, Antje (Hrsg.) 2004: *Afrika und die deutsche Sprache: Ein kritisches Nachschlagewerk*, Münster, p. 30–33.

[...]

### 5. When Is Language Racist?

Questions such as the following are among the initial criteria used to determine racist connotations of terms: What factors, characteristics and elements determine the naming and marking of something and why? What are the boundaries created by the terms, what differences are named or established? Which sides of these differences are named, which are not? Which side of a dichotomy serves as a generic term? Which value judgements are made with these designations? And in which contexts, situations and media do they occur?

Starting from these reflections, a word can be characterised as racist if, in the process of naming based on racist stereotyping concepts, black people and their cultural spaces are conceived as a homogeneous unit and thereby being labelled as the “others” in a fundamental way. Differences between Blacks and *whites* are (re-)constructed, generalised, absolutised and judged in and through using language in order to legitimise *white* hegemony, violence and privileges (...). Building and naming differences and authorising them through textbooks, dictionaries and encyclopaedias, for example, occurs in the context of power and in the interests of the ruling class. In order to recognise the racist content of words, it is generally useful to apply one of the following strategies.

1. It can be instructive to look at the genesis of a word and ask the questions: How and when did the term emerge? What or who was denoted by it? Who used it and what value judgements were given to it?

The term → “mulatto”, for example, can be derived etymologically from the Spanish-Portuguese *mulato* from *mulo*, “mule”, a cross between horse and donkey that cannot have any offspring. This derivation does not only imply that the parents of a “mulatto” belong to two different “races” but also leads to derogatory conceptualisations. On the one hand, this is manifested in the fact that a term originating from the animal world is transferred to humans – a typical strategy of colonialism according to Frantz Fanon, which also fits into the structure of a dichotomy of Africa = nature and Europe = culture (...). On the other hand, the word “mulatto” implicitly refers to the myth that children from Black and white relationships are infertile.

2. It is essential to consider the pragmatics of the term, i.e. the (actual) use of a term, and raise the following questions: Which parts of the original meaning have been preserved, which are still reproduced today, resonate in use, and which new or additional connotations does the word have?

The term → “person of colour (UK)/color (US)”, for example, only implicates a specific colour spectrum (brown tones). It alludes to the colour of a person’s skin, building on the concept that there are “races” that link physical features with mental and cultural characteristics without any justification. Furthermore, the term “person of colour” suggests that whites do not have any skin colour. After all, if some are marked as “of colour”, the assumption that the others are “of no colour” goes along with it. This is where the connotation that “of colour” implies “colourful” comes into play. The term “skin-coloured”, on the other hand, refers to “the skin colour” of “white Europeans”, while negating the fact that all shades of skin are skin colours. Ultimately, both concepts are two sides of the same coin. Both are based on setting standards for the skin colour of white as being constructed “white”.

3. It is revealing to look at the combinations of words and phrases, sayings and idioms in which the term occurs. On the one hand, this perspective can help to make us aware of pejorative connotations of a word. On the other hand, it can show how discriminatory words are used without reflection in supposedly value-neutral formulations while consistently being reproduced.

The phrase “I am not your Negro”, for example, conveys and consolidates the idea that this person is a “second-class human being”, who has to render help to others, to whites. And whenever bad coffee is called “Negro sweat” in German, it is obvious that the “N-word” has a negative connotation.

Moreover, these examples illustrate the extent to which such terms have become omnipresent in very different contexts under the condition of their alleged value neutrality.

4. In many cases, it is also helpful to ask yourself and others for spontaneous associations to certain words and sentences, thereby creating awareness of these associations that are linked with a term.

If you close your eyes and imagine a “chieftain”, what do you see? And how do you evaluate these images in the Western context?

5. The question can be raised whether the word could also be transferred to the German/ European context or to white people, for example, by testing how white Germans would perceive the term in relation to themselves.

Why, for example, do you not refer to Germans and Scots as “tribes” or “natives”? Why do you call a black German but not a child from a white French-German relationship a “half-breed”? Why do you not refer to wooden crosses in classrooms as a → “fetish”?

6. It can be examined whether the terms are used symmetrically or asymmetrically.

Concerning terms that consist of two words with the first component specifying the second, the question can be raised as to whether a counterpart exists or whether it is a one-sided specification, so that a normative conception remains unnamed. Why, for example, do we talk about a “banana republic” but not about a “potato republic”?



# MODULE 2

Videos







# All That We Share

## Discover commonalities

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to explain that each person can belong to different groups or communities and that cultures are not uniform but diverse (M 2.3).
2. Participants are able to reflect that people are first made into “others” and that this has far-reaching consequences (M 2.4).
3. Participants are able to reflect on differences and commonalities in diverse learning groups.
4. Participants are able to understand that they have more in common with their peers than they might initially realise.

### Type of Media

Video

### Total Length

3:10 min (+ 20 min discussion)

### Short Description

This video is based on the premise that we all have much more in common than we first think. At the beginning of the video, people silently enter a stage and line up in marked areas – areas that are supposed to define them. “The High Earners” versus “Those Just Getting By”, “Those We Trust” versus “Those We Try To Avoid”, “Those Who Have Always Lived Here” versus “Those Who Are New”. One finds these divisions in any country on earth. But then a man starts asking questions:

- “Who in this room was the class clown?”
- “Which of you is a stepmother or stepfather?”
- “How many of you love to dance?”

Quickly, the “Us versus Them” narrative falls apart. People begin to step out of their so-called defining boxes.

**Authorship**

TV-2 Denmark

**Available at**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jD8tjhVO1Tc>

**Licence**

Standard YouTube licence

**Language**

English

**Didactic Use**

Here is an example of how to use the video:

1. Watch the video together.
2. Discuss the following questions:
  - In your opinion, what is the quintessence of the video?
  - Related to working with refugees: Which commonalities and differences did you discover?
  - What may happen when you think in terms of “We” and the “Others” in and outside the classroom?
  - How can we structure our training/lesson in order to achieve a common ground and a group feeling instead of focusing on differences?

**More Information on the Topic**

In preparation for the discussion, read the dossiers [Culture and Identity](#) and [How People Are Made Into “Others”](#).



# The Danger of a Single Story

## Questioning stereotypes and prejudices

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to recognise unequal power relations in order to become aware of their own position and to strengthen the agency of their participants (M 2.1).
2. Participants are able to reflect that people are first made into “others” and that this has far-reaching consequences (M 2.4).

### Type of Media

Video

### Total Length

18:40 min (45 min incl. group work and discussion)

### Short Description

In this TED Talk, author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie talks about her own childhood in Nigeria, her time in the USA, and her experiences with what she calls the “Danger of a Single Story”. Using impressive examples from her biography, she demonstrates in a very low-threshold way how an incomplete perspective on people (nations, cultures, political discourse, etc.) overshadows crucial aspects of their identity, and how these people suffer serious damage as a consequence. She also reflects on how global relations of power and wealth are linked to the narrative of these stories. Moreover, she makes it easy to understand the role of the individual in this context.

### Authorship

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009); TED-Talk

**Available at**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story#t-10444](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story#t-10444)

**Licence**

BY-NC-ND

**Language**

English with subtitles (subtitles in 47 languages are available online)

**Didactic Use**

Here is an example of how to use the video:

1. Watch the video together.
2. Hand out the moderation cards and the transcript (available in 47 languages online at: [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story/transcript?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?language=en)) to the groups (of three to six persons each). Ask the participants to note down the sentences/statements they consider most important. Finally, the groups present their cards in plenary (spread the cards in the middle of the room, participants sit in a circle around them) and open a discussion about the lecture.
3. Examples of reflection questions:
  - Are there any statements that each group has noted? What are probably the most important statements? Why do you think these were chosen most frequently?
  - Do you find one statement that is considered more important than the others? And one statement that summarises the lecture pretty well?
  - Which of the statements are new to you?
  - Can you relate the lecture to a concrete situation that you have experienced?
  - Have you ever experienced a situation in which there was only one story about you?
  - Do you recall a situation that involved a single story about another person?
  - What does Adichie say about power? What is the point of it?
  - Who tells the majority of the stories that dominate the world/our society?
  - Can you think of something that you can do to prevent the “danger of a single story”?

### Tags

Examples of important statements including time code (the most important ones in the author's view are in bold print):

- 5:21** "I must say that before I went to the U.S., I didn't consciously identify myself as African. But in the U.S., whenever Africa came up, people turned to me. Never mind that I knew nothing about places like Namibia. But I did come to embrace this new identity, and in many ways I now think of myself as African."
- 6:35** "This single story of Africa ultimately comes, I think, from Western literature."
- 7:32** "In fact, I did not know what African authenticity was. The professor told me that my characters were too much like him, an educated middle-class man. My characters drove cars. They were not starving. Therefore they were not authentically African."
- 9:26** "So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become."
- 9:37** "It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power."
- 10:12** "Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person."
- 12:57** "The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."
- 13:45** "The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasises how we are different rather than how we are similar."
- 17:36** "Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity."





# The Doll Test

## Being *white* as a norm

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to reflect and discuss what it means to be white/not white in our society.
2. Participants are able to recognise unequal power relations in order to become aware of their own position and to strengthen the agency of their participants (M 2.1).
3. Participants are able to reflect that people are first made into “others” and that this has far-reaching consequences (M 2.4).
4. Participants are able to discuss the impact this may have on the self-image and self-awareness of non-white people.

### Type of Media

Video

### Total Length

ca. 3 min (+ 20 min discussion)<sup>1</sup>

### Short Description

The “Doll Test” is a psychological experiment that was developed in the U.S. in the 1940s by Kenneth Bancroft Clark and Mamie Phipps Clark and has since been replicated in various countries. In this test, white and Black children of pre-school age were asked to choose between two dolls: one doll was white and the other black. No matter what colour the child’s skin was, the child chose the white doll. The white doll was considered beautiful, clean, smart and obedient by the children, whereas the black doll was considered ugly, dirty, stupid and evil. At the same time, many black children identified themselves with the black doll. Recent replications of the test have shown similar or equal results.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms Black and white are not based on “biological” properties in the sense of skin colouring but rather on socio-political affiliations. Initiatives of Black people advocate capitalising the attribute of Black, whereas white is supposed to be written in small letters and italics.

On the one hand, the test shows how early in life humans are shaped by racist and stereotypical ideas. Racist ideas are not only acquired by the presumed white majority group of a society, but they also determine the self-image of the non-white minority group. On the other hand, the test reveals how much of being white is seen as the positive norm and how anything non-white is perceived as a negative deviation from it.

### Note

Watching very young Black children describe themselves as ugly, dirty, stupid and evil by identifying themselves with the black doll may trigger strong emotional reactions in participants and be an upsetting experience for Black People and People of Colour.

### Authorship

Fanpage.it (Video produced by Luca Lavarone and Raffaello Durso)

### Available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRZPw-9sJtQ>

### Licence

Standard-YouTube licence

### Language

English

### Didactic Use

Watch the video together (+ 2-3 min, reflect in silence on the video).

Following the video, various questions for reflection are suggested to be discussed in plenary:

1. What is your spontaneous reaction to what you have seen?
2. What do you believe are the benefits of white people in our society?
3. Do you see a connection between the video and the life of non-white people in Germany?

### More Information on the Topic

The “Doll Test” can supplement the method [Critical Reflection on whiteness – white is also a colour](#). See also the corresponding dossier [Unpacking white Privileges](#).

# MODULE 2

Dossiers







# Culture and Identity

## Why we are part of multiple collectives

Author: Anna Rein

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### The Traditional Notion of Culture

In an attempt to approach the concept of multicollectivity, the first step is to explain the term “culture”. Culture is a complex, widely used term, and a variety of different definitions exist, but none of them is generally accepted.

Alexander Thomas describes culture as an orientation system that prevails in the respective society, that shapes perceptions, values and actions of all its members, which in turn structures their affiliation to a society (cf. Thomas 2003: 279). The orientation system comprises specific symbols such as language, gestures, facial expressions, clothes, etc., and is passed down from generation to generation within the social fabric. While culture creates scope for activities, it also determines the conditions and limits for such activities.

Common definitions of culture imply that culture does not only refer to its origin, but also to a society, organisation or group. However, it should be noted that the term is predominantly equated with culture of origin. Even when talking about youth culture, work culture or hip-hop culture, for example, these concepts are always subordinated to national culture. When people speak of “culture”, they therefore mostly refer to culture of origin, ethnic group or nationality.



Photo: visualsplace/Getty Images

### Traditional vs. Dynamic Concept of Culture

*“By what right do people decide all the time that I’m Turkish or German?  
Why should I choose? I am both.”*

*Aishe, 22 years (West 2013: 219)*

It is problematic to standardise and focus on the culture of origin, as this view reduces the individual to their nationality, ignoring other important experiences, characteristics and influences. As a result of this one-sided perspective, identity is strongly linked to a culture of origin. People and societies are quickly perceived as “foreign” or as supposedly not “compatible”, which makes social interaction in a society much more difficult (see Kulturshaker 2019).

The dynamic concept of culture, on the other hand, assumes that cultures are not closed containers but are interrelated and changeable. People of one culture certainly share many commonalities, but belonging to a particular culture does not determine who we are as human beings. We are members of various cultural groups, and we are shaped by them.

More on the diversity of the concept of culture:

[https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/48150\\_ch\\_1.pdf](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/48150_ch_1.pdf)

### The Origins of Multicollectivity

The affiliation of human beings to multiple groups or collectives is not a new concept but has been a well-known theoretical approach in social psychology to explain identity starting from the 20th century. The concept of multicollectivity in relation to the definition of culture was notably coined by Klaus P. Hansen (2000) and Stefanie Rathje (2009b).

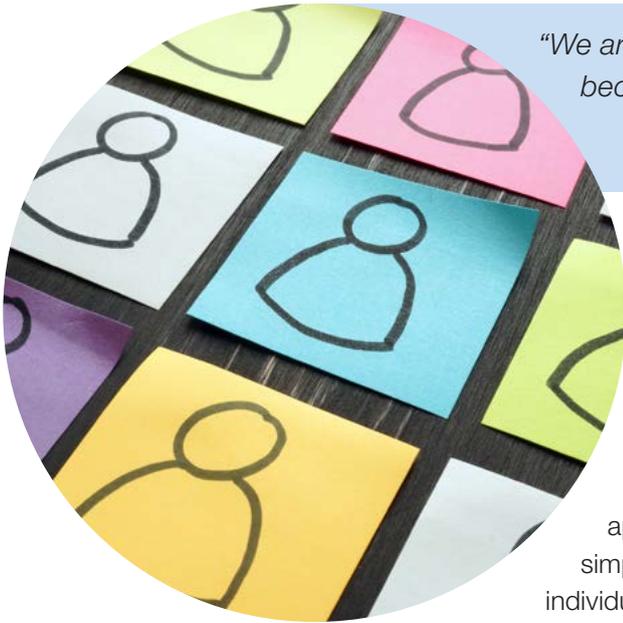
Rathje (2014: 40) explains that multicollectivity has only recently been included in the comprehension of culture owing to the generation-defining experiences of conflicts, struggles and wars between clearly distinguishable groups. “It is only by experiencing the complexity of a communicatively networked, transnational world that we are prompted to consider the individual not primarily as a member of a group but as an independent entity” (Rathje 2014: 40).



Photo: Orbon Alija/Getty Images

### Multicollectivity as a New Concept of Culture(s)

Cultures are systems of meaning and orientation consisting of rules, values and norms, which form the basis of every community. “Even the smallest communities and collectives, e.g. a partnership, a flat-sharing community, a family or a circle of friends, shape their own cultures and orientation systems” (Kulturshaker 2019).



*“We are individuals not in spite of but because of human collectivity.”*

*(Rathje 2014: 41)*

Stefanie Rathje argues that the notion of culture as traditionally defined is not applicable to reality, as it “contradicts the simple but momentous observation that each individual is part of numerous collective and thus cultural contexts at the same time” (Rathje 2014: 44).

Thus, multicollectivity is founded on the recognition that the multiple memberships of a single person are not the exception but the rule. The attribution to a single culture, such as “the German” or “the Italian”, recedes into the background and joins other group memberships. Hence, the concept of multicollectivity shifts the perspective on the unique individuality of the individual. “The diagnosis of difference and multicollectivity leads to radical individuality” (Rathje 2009a: 97).

Photo: designer491/Getty Images

## Human Beings Belong to Multiple Collectives

Every person belongs to numerous collectives, which are in principle different social groups. Some groups that we are part of are more important, some are less important.

However, all these groups shape an individual and provide social orientation without any need of being independent of each other. We can be part of diverse and overlapping collectives (see method [People Have Many Cultures](#)). Collectives can therefore be based on different foundations, such as religion, gender, political orientation, parental origin, language, hobbies, professions, place of residence, appearance, among many others.

### Multicollectivity

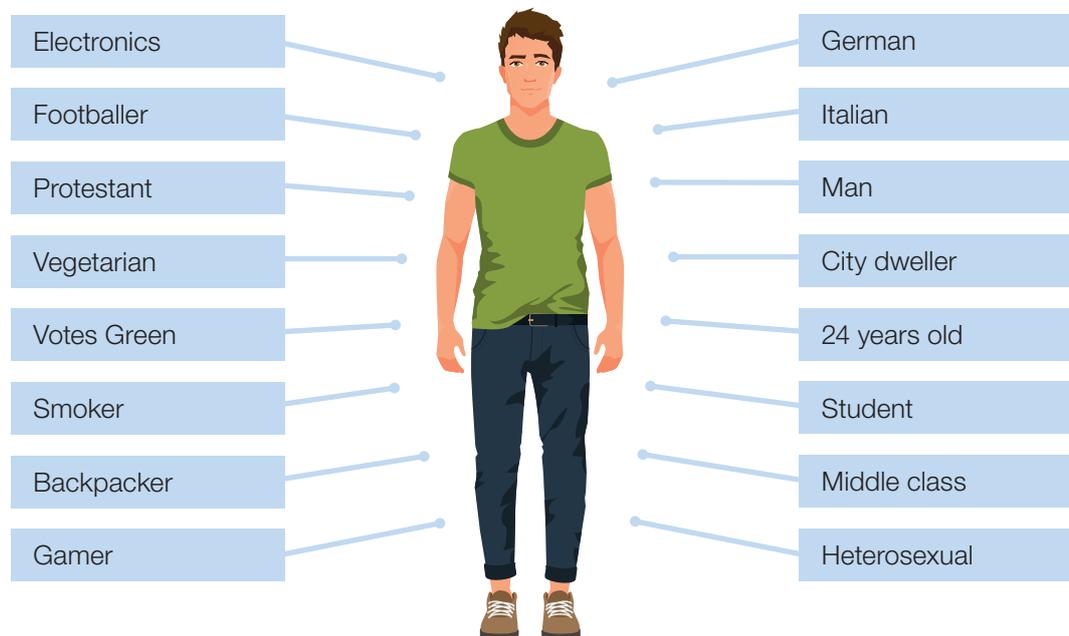


Illustration: Kulturshaker 2019 (Original source in German).

“This way I can be part of a Christian culture that overlaps with my German culture. My family culture may also be influenced by German and Christian culture but is still a culture of its own that stands apart from both” (Kulturshaker 2019). The individual is part of every single collective. But this does not mean that collectives consist of individuals but rather of their commonality, which represents only one part in relation to the individual. This part is the only factor that makes up the collective (see Marschelke 2017: 62).

Hence, multicollectivity indicates that each individual person is unique because he or she belongs to numerous diverse groups. Consequently, this approach opposes views that overemphasise differences and equate identity with belonging to a particular cultural region.

**Teaching Tip:**

When working with multicultural groups, it is important to see each learner's uniqueness and potential, while at the same time finding and emphasising commonalities within the group. Participative methods that create a common group identity are available in the [Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches](#).

Image: VanReeel/Getty Images

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**Further Reading**

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# Unpacking *white*<sup>1</sup> Privileges

## Critical Whiteness

Author: Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

*“I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless backpack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks.”*

*(McIntosh 1988: 291)<sup>2</sup>*

### What Does It Mean to Be *white*?

Most people who define themselves as white would respond to the question “What does it mean to be white?” with a spontaneous “nothing”. Yet the majority of white people have never thought about their whiteness, because whiteness is implicitly defined as the norm from which all constructed as non-white departs. There are considerable privileges, and above all power, associated with being white. But since these privileges are taken for granted, we are not aware of them. Moreover, this power influences, for example, our interactions with people who are perceived and constructed as the “others” (see topic dossier [How People Are Made Into “Others”](#)).

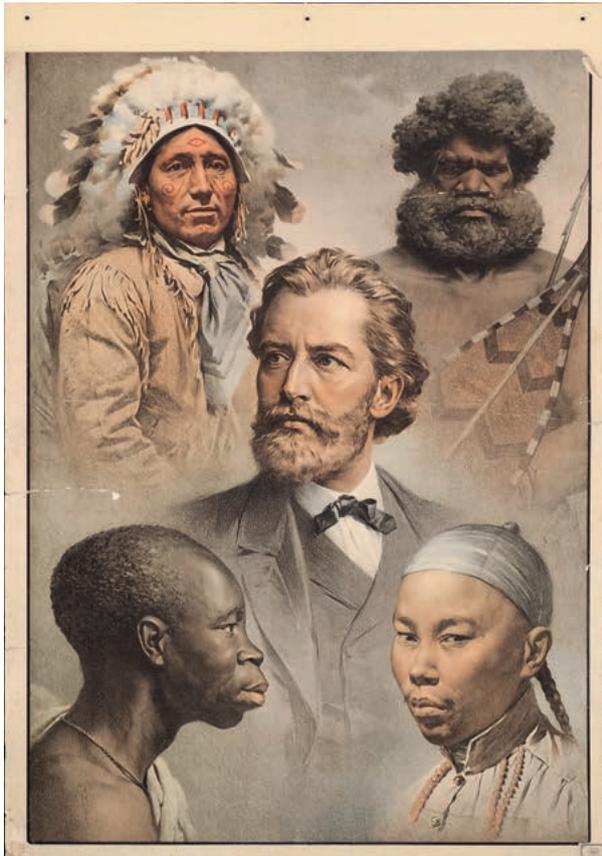
1 The terms Black and white are not based on “biological” properties in the sense of skin colouring but rather on socio-political affiliations. Initiatives of Black people advocate capitalizing the attribute of Black, whereas white is supposed to be written in small letters and italics.

2 See <http://www.interpretereducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/white-privilege-by-Peggy-McIntosh.compressed.pdf>.

### A Brief History of *whiteness*

Since the onset of the Age of Enlightenment in the 18th century, Western European – white – philosophers, anthropologists and anatomists have divided human beings around the world into “we” and “the others”. In the course of the emerging sciences not only the “races” were invented, but also the “Orient” and “Africa” with their allegedly very different people (see also dossier [Orientalism](#)). Scientists related character and intellect to physical characteristics such as skin colour or the width of the nose. People were classified into a hierarchical system, with the white European at the top. Thus, one can make a provocative statement: the Enlightenment had a skin colour.

Even at the time of their emergence, sciences were not independent of economic and political events. For example, the trade with enslaved Africans became an essential part of the Atlantic economy in the 18th century. Attempts were made to justify this trade by constructing Africans as the opposite of white Europeans and classifying them as subhuman. “Whiteness,” writes Tupoka Ogette (2018: 53), “was invented to divide and rule.”



The white man stands in the centre of the universe, around him people from the perceived four world regions: Chinese, Africans, “Indians” and Australians. Image source: G.Ellka, [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rasse#/media/Datei:Ellka\\_Five\\_Races.jpg](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rasse#/media/Datei:Ellka_Five_Races.jpg)

## How It All Began

The historical roots of the critical examination of *whiteness* in the U.S. can be traced back to the time of slavery. It was the practice of enslaved people from Africa who were shipped to America to observe *white* people and *white* behaviour patterns and then to pass on their knowledge, first orally and later in writing. This knowledge about *whiteness* helped many enslaved Black people to get along better in everyday life. It was from these relatively unknown Black knowledge archives that the Critical Whiteness Studies, the academic debate on *whiteness*, finally developed.

The starting signal for what is known as “Critical *Whiteness*” was given by the African American author and Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison. In her essay *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992), she called for research into the impact of racism on those who nurture and perpetuate it, rather than focusing on the victims alone. This entailed a shift in perspective that pulled *whiteness* out of the invisibility perceived by *whites*.

## Definitions of *whiteness*

It is important to note at the outset that *whiteness* in this context refers not to a biological but to a social category. The US-American sociologist Ruth Frankenberg (1993: 1) defines *whiteness* as follows:

1. *whiteness* is seen as a location of structural advantages and privileges (see list of privileges in the method Critical Reflection on whiteness).
2. *whiteness* is a “standpoint”, a location from where *white* people perceive themselves, others and society.
3. *whiteness* usually remains invisible, unnamed and unmarked but is normative and omnipresent.

The last point in particular requires some clarification. Ursula Wachendorfer (2001) gives a simple example illustrating that whiteness is invisible and unmarked: “In Germany, if you ask a white person how he or she would describe himself/herself, all sorts of attributions will normally be given. These include national or even regional affiliations, gender, profession, marital status, age, religious affiliation, sexual orientation or disability. [...] whiteness will most likely not appear as a characteristic. In contrast to white people, Black people will usually also raise the issue of their Blackness” (Wachendorfer 2001: 88). In addition, when white people describe Black people, the first thing they refer to is often their skin colour. When reporting racist attacks, reference is usually made to the victims’ Blackness, while the perpetrators’ whiteness remains unnamed and unmarked.



Photo: Universität Basel, Christiane Büttner ©,

<https://www.unibas.ch/de/Aktuell/Mediendatenbank.html?category=&month=&year=&query=b%C3%BCttner/Büttner>

*White* people mostly do not perceive that relationships between white and Black were and are characterised by power. They usually have little or no motivation to reflect their dominance in society, or do not want to admit that they have power at all (Wachendorfer 2001: 95). Tupoka Ogette (2018: 21ff.) refers to the “Happyland” where *white* people have been living before dealing with racism and their *white* privileges.

By establishing themselves as the norm, *white* people have the power to define or interpret in society, i.e. they determine, for example, who lives up to this norm, who belongs to the *white* majority society and who does not. “Whiteness,” as Wachendorfer (2001: 87) writes, “is not something objectively predetermined that only needs to be explored long enough to be understood but is instead primarily produced by the different social practices.”

One of these practices is the construction of *whiteness* in popular and everyday cultures. Richard Dyer (1997), for example, shows how *whiteness* in the media is linked to modernity, reason, order and stability through language, images or lighting techniques, while blackness serves as a foil for contrast and represents itself through chaos, irrationality, underdevelopment and violence. He points out that whiteness cannot simply be analysed in isolation from other categories such as gender or class.

According to Dyer (2000: 541), in order to unpack *white* privileges, it is essential that the awareness of *whiteness* is raised and that its status as a norm is removed.

## Color Blindness

“Critical *Whiteness*” also deals with the mechanism of “colour blindness”. The term refers to white people’s denial of the significance of being Black or being of Colour. This is reflected, for example, in statements such as “I find my *whiteness* insignificant” or “We are all the same”. While the intention behind such statements is certainly good, it does not consider that Black People and People of Color have real experiences of exclusion and discrimination by *white* people. The impression that such experiences are not taken seriously can easily arise. It is precisely through such statements that mechanisms of exclusion and discrimination are not abolished; on the contrary, they can persist and will be perpetuated.

### A Critical Review of “Critical *Whiteness*”

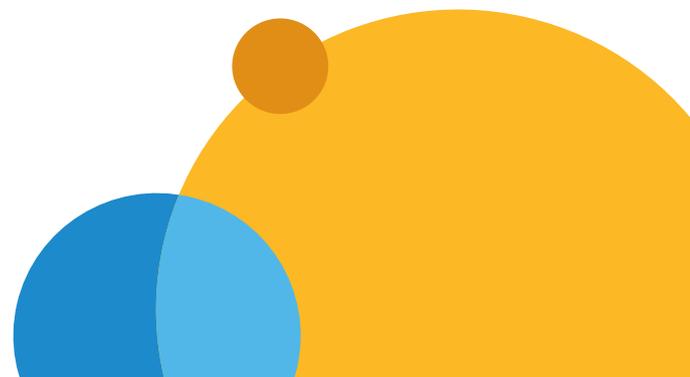
Right from its inception, “Critical *Whiteness*” has been criticised from various quarters.

Dyer (1997: 10) draws attention to the danger that “Critical *Whiteness*” studies enable white people to do what they have always preferred to do: talk and write about themselves.

Repeatedly, fears have also been expressed that “Critical *Whiteness*” could re-establish concepts of “race” or at least simplify very complex social relationships by contrasting white and Black/of Colour.

Finally, critics argue that “Critical *Whiteness*” is a far too theoretical or academic concept that pays insufficient attention to the realities of power in society.

Nevertheless, while the critical discourse on *whiteness* has meanwhile established itself in Germany as well, in and outside the universities, the need for this kind of debate and reflection has become evident in many current contexts. Workshops on “Critical *Whiteness*” are well received and positively evaluated. By making “*whiteness*” and the associated privileges visible and conscious, *white* people become aware of partially hidden structures. Especially in classes with refugees, this awareness helps to better recognise certain processes and dynamics and thus creates a trustful classroom atmosphere.



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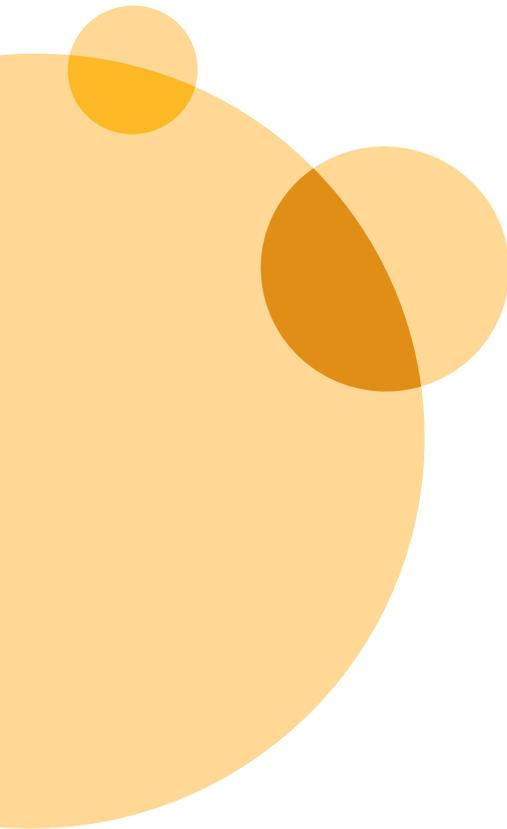
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# Orientalism

## About our relationship to the “Orient” and to ourselves

Author: Jannik Veenhuis

### Module 2:

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### What Exactly Is “Orientalism”?

“Orientalism” is the title of a book published in 1978 by Edward Said (died 2003). Said, who had Palestinian roots and was teaching literary studies in the U.S., argues that “our” image of the “Orient” does not correspond to reality: this contrast – “we” and “the others” – already exposes Said’s thesis. Said says that **“our” image is a “Eurocentric” image emerging from a very specific perspective – namely the Western, European.** Even the word “Orient” (Latin for “East”) or the often used “Middle East” indicates the direction of the perspective: the “Orient” can only be in the east on a map where Europe is in the centre. Furthermore, the question arises: What is the “Orient” at all? It cannot be defined geographically in a simple way: it usually refers to the region of West Asia but also to North Africa – roughly from Morocco to Pakistan. However, these countries differ so much that they have little in common, except that they are referred to as the “Orient” from a “Western” perspective. And this is exactly what Said’s thesis says: the Western states – through their politics, science, media, literature, etc. – have created the “Orient”, in other words, they have invented it in a sense. What Said is trying to explain is how the perception of the others works.

### “Our” Image of the “Orient”

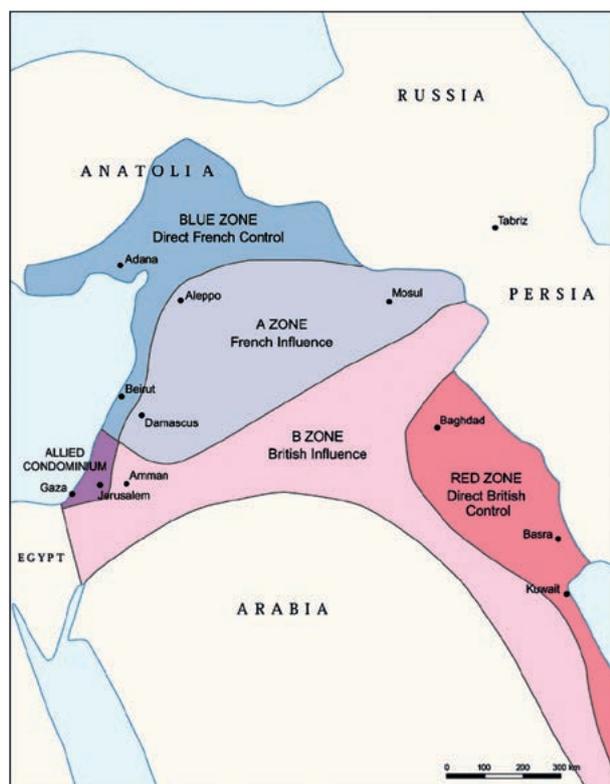
Studies based on Said’s theses have shown that a particular pattern recurs frequently: from a Western perspective, “oriental” societies are mostly religious, traditional, collectivist and emotional. This is contrasted by a self-image of the “West” as being secular or enlightened, modern, individualistic and rational (e.g. Haj 2009). This mirror-image thinking is not only relevant with regard to the “Orient”. Even within society, perception frequently functions in this way: the “others” are always that which “we” are not – or do not want to be. This statement has importance insofar as it indicates that the image of the “Orient” is not the only problem. Said writes: “[Orientalism] has less to do with the Orient than it does with ‘our’ world” (Said 2003: 12). He thereby criticises above all the way in which Western societies produce knowledge. Therefore, at second glance, Said’s theses also refer to self-perception and identity.

## The Danger of a Single Story

The lecture by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie entitled “The Danger of a Single Story” (see video [The Danger of a Single Story](#)) helps in understanding “Orientalism”. Adichie says, “So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become” (Adichie 2009). “Orientalism” thus refers to a kind of recurring narrative about the “Orient”, which has the power not only to perceive and describe the “Otherness” but also to influence it: the narrative creates reality.

## What Makes the “Western” Image So Powerful?

Adichie links the narration of the single story with the question: Who is actually narrating? Who is speaking? She says, “It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power” (Adichie 2009: 9:29). This sentence also plays an important role in understanding Orientalism: Orientalism has been developing approximately since the start of the 18th century, according to Said. This period also marks – and this is no coincidence – the beginning of the colonial rule exerted by European powers over West Asia and North Africa. In 1798, Napoleon occupied Egypt and was soon replaced by Great Britain. Many of these colonies only regained their independence long after the Second World War – in some cases after bloody civil wars, such as the 1967 war in Algeria. This colonial rule left deep traces in the colonies as well as in the so-called “mother countries”, and in particular, it created an imbalance of power that persists to this day. When these conditions are renewed today through, for example, economic dependencies, we speak of neo-colonialism. This dependence and the power that comes with it – then as now – have been and still are



During World War I in 1916, an agreement was reached between two diplomats – the Frenchman Picot and the Englishman Sykes. They decided on the division of the territory for the period after the war. Borders of this kind were also drawn in (North) Africa and to some extent, are still responsible for regional conflicts today.

Source: Ian Pitchford/  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sykes-Picot-1916.gif>

crucial to the understanding of Orientalism, for only this power enables the “Western” states and societies to bend the “Orient” into their desired shape, so to speak. On the one hand, this is accomplished in a very practical or material way, through economic, political and military means. On the other hand, it goes along with an immaterial level, that is, the way “Arabs” or “Muslims” are seen in “our” eyes.

### **Where Can “Orientalism” Lead Us in Our Thinking?**

Many references are made here: Said and especially his work “Orientalism” has become a kind of cornerstone of so-called “postcolonial studies”. Their basic thesis states that the dependency created by colonialism not only persists economically and politically, but that, in addition, the so-called “cultural hegemony” has a great impact on the identity of all those who live in former colonies (or have their roots there). This cultural power of the “West” unfolds, for example, through the film industry, through advertising reproduced all over the world according to Western European standards, through media and, in general, through language.

### **Why is the concept of “Orientalism” relevant when working with refugees?**

In recent years, a large share of the people taking refuge in Germany come from countries that belong to what is often called the “Orient” – from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and others. Thus, they come from countries that were in various forms of colonial dependence on European powers and/or were the scene of so-called “proxy wars”<sup>2</sup>.

An understanding of what Said means can help us to question our view of what is supposedly “otherness”. It is advisable to pause and reflect, for example, in class before drawing any conclusions: On which basis do I draw which conclusions? How do I position myself in that case? Which of my presuppositions are unambiguous, which of them are more of an assumption or interpretation? It may also help us realise that the reason behind all this is probably not simply our own (mis)assessment – not everyone is to be blamed for their prejudices. Instead, it is part of “Western” culture to picture the “Orient” in a specific way, because this picture is part of the Western cultural self-image – that is Said’s thesis. Questioning these stereotypes time and again is in many cases not easy, often exhausting and sometimes confusing but always profitable.

Read more in the dossier [How People Are Made Into “Others”](#).

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<sup>2</sup> A proxy war is an armed conflict between smaller states that belong to the respective spheres of influence of various superpowers and conduct the conflict on their behalf (cf. Duden 2018).

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# How People Are Made Into “Others”

## **Stereotypes, clichés, prejudices and “othering”**

Author: Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst

### **Module 2:**

Who am I and who are my students?

Reflecting on my role as instructor and my view on refugees

### **Introduction**

People are often divided into groups – based on their culture, their faith, their origin or on external characteristics such as skin colour, height, hairstyle or clothing. These classifications are frequently coupled with attributed characteristics. It seems to make interaction with the supposed stranger – at times being frightening – easier. Most of all, however, they serve to simplify and generalise, thus obstructing an unbiased view of the “others”.

### **Classifying the “Others”**

Stereotypes, clichés and prejudices are widespread in all societies around the world. They help overcome the fear of the actual or supposed stranger by classifying and thus mastering it. At the same time, they serve to establish a detachment from the “others” and to construct or preserve one’s own identity often leading to exclusion, discrimination and stigmatisation. All three terms are frequently used synonymously, even in reference books, making a distinction difficult.



Photo: kokouu/Getty Images

## Stereotyping and Clichés

Stereotypes and clichés are rigid notions about particular external features, personal or behavioural characteristics of other people or groups. They are characterised by simplified generalisations and judgements about these (“strange”) persons, social or ethnic groups perceived as the “others”. Such stereotypical and clichéd ideas also exist about the Germans: For example, they are regarded as very punctual and efficient but also as being humourless and brooding. Simplification in particular reveals their orientation function. Stereotypes and clichés can be neutral but are often pejorative. They are easy to spread, especially to people who have not yet developed their own opinion about something and therefore tend to embrace rigid ideas, which often prevents them from gaining new experiences.



Stereotypes or stereotyped ideas tend to generate prejudices. People hold an opinion or make a judgement about a person or a group without actually knowing them. Usually, such images and notions do not correspond to reality and are mostly of a negative nature, too.

Photo: alekseiglu/Getty Images

## Prejudices

Prejudices are preconceived opinions about persons, population groups, countries or facts that are not based on personal experience. You adopt a prejudice from someone whose judgment you respect, for example from the media, a television report or newspaper article. The prejudice is then generalised and often accompanied by strong feelings of rejection or contempt. One example of a prejudice would be when people claim, “Refugees do not want to learn German at all...” in order to prove their generalising view that these people do not want to integrate.

### What About Positive Stereotypes and Clichés?

Claiming, for example, that Africans can run fast and are musical is often called a positive stereotype. These attributions are often cited as counter-examples to the many negative stereotypes about African countries, but even in this case millions of people are being lumped together.

Whenever people talk about musicality in connection with Africans, they only refer to drumming and dancing. This kind of alleged gift together with the alleged sportiness falls into the realm of “natural” talents, which have been attributed to Africans for centuries. As such, they were constructed as a counter-concept to the “culturally gifted” European. Where “the African” shows strength and speed, “the European” shows intellect and perseverance. Such attributions ultimately legitimised the colonial appropriation of the African continent by the European colonial powers.

### What Is the Impact of Stereotypes, Clichés and Prejudices?

Clichés and stereotypes have become an integral part of everyday culture and human coexistence. They create a simpler and clearly arranged world. At the same time, however, they deprive other people of the opportunity to show who they are and what they are able to do. In the interaction with refugees in particular, clichés and stereotypes, e.g. with regard to origin, religion or social structure, stand in the way of an open approach.

Prejudices are offensive, especially if used to discriminate against other people. Some people hold on to their prejudices without knowing anybody to whom these negative images apply. In the worst case, clichés, stereotypes and prejudices also provide the material for racist<sup>1</sup> ideologies.

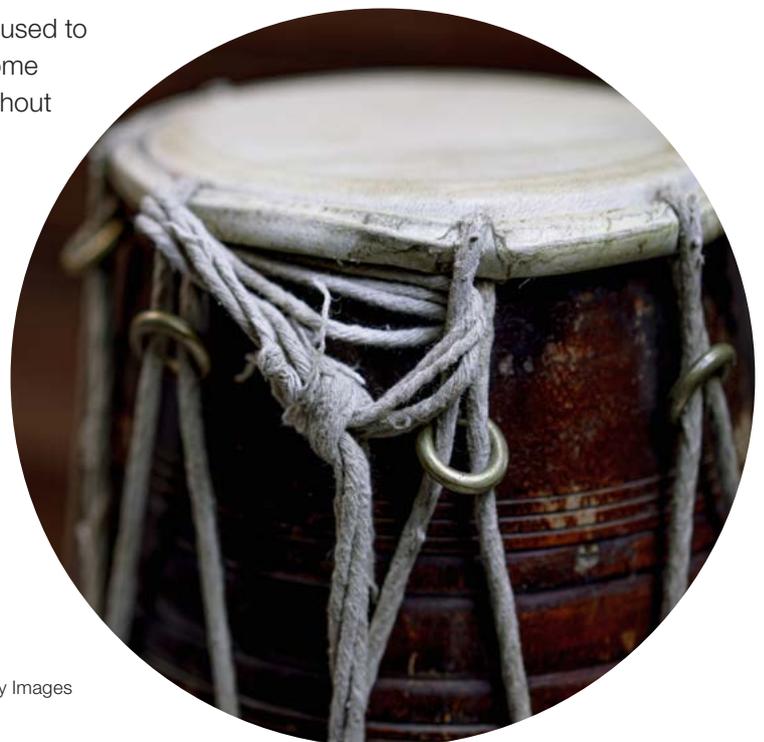


Photo: Nariman Safarov/Getty Images

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1 There is a wide range of definitions for racism including one that is not too broad and therefore useful: “In the strict sense, racism can be understood as a social practice of discriminating against groups of people in word and deed based on their origin or skin colour” (Clausen 1994: 1).

### Tips for a More Conscious Approach to Refugees Regarding Prejudices:

- We do not perceive others objectively but against the background of our own life experience and (cultural) lenses.
- Human perception works in a way that encourages the development of prejudices and stereotypes.
- We all have prejudices and stereotypes. The point is not to go through the world without prejudice but to be aware of prejudice.
- We have to question our own and society's images of refugees. As an instructor, you can promote the perception of refugees as proactive individuals with diverse resources and life stories.



Image: SaskiaAcht/Getty Images

### Othering

The concept of “othering” was primarily shaped by postcolonial thinkers. The Indian literary scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1985), for example, analysed diaries of British colonial masters in India and described the process by which the “others” were first created in the colonial discourse for excluding them from power. Edward Said dealt with “othering” in the texts of European orientalists and their “invention” of the Orient (1978; see dossier [Orientalism](#)).

“Othering” describes a process in which people are constructed as “others” and thereby distinguished from “we”. At the same time, it is a practice whereby people are separated from one another by language and actions as well as by social discourses. People are made into “others”, “strangers” in order to create a distancing effect. This process is usually associated with power imbalance and entails discrimination against the “others” (see video [The Danger of a Single Story](#)).

Tupoka Ogette (2018: 59) has put the principles of “othering” into a simple formula:

1. I make myself the norm and thereby become the standard.
2. I make everybody else “the others”.

“Othering” is thus also an important process of self-affirmation and self-assertion.

“I need the others who deviate from this norm so that I can be and remain to be the norm” (Ogette 2018: 59). To put it in a nutshell, we would not know who we are without the “others”.

Processes of “othering” may concern a person’s social position in society, such as class affiliation and belief, sexuality, gender, nationality or “race”<sup>2</sup>. While evidence that “races” do not exist has long been established, notions of biological and thus unchangeable differences between people still play a quite significant role in processes of “othering”.

### Consequences of “Othering”

“Othering” can produce enemy concepts or lead to xenophobia and racism when influences from supposedly “others” are seen as a threat to “one’s own” culture. The discussion on the question of whether Islam belongs to Germany can be cited here as an example (see, for example, Saba-Nur 2017). Concepts of “pure” cultures that should not be “mixed” with others are still frequently voiced.

At worst, such notions are mixed with ideas of “pure races”, which leads to racist exclusion. At best, “othering” groups people according to certain characteristics for excluding them after. A good example is the persistent questioning of “real” origin, which non-white Germans are often confronted with.



Photo: Tero Vesalainen/Getty Images

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<sup>2</sup> While modern genetics has long since proved that “races” do not exist, notions of clearly distinguishable biological units persist, and for some, these are accompanied by certain characteristics. For the purpose of distinction from such ideas, the term is always put in quotation marks here.

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# MODULE 3

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

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# Module 3: How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

## Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Brief Description

This module provides an overview of the psychological effects of refugeeeness and returning as well as their impact on teaching. The module highlights the most important signs and symptoms of mental suffering including their culture-specific expressions. It conveys basic skills to the participants for communicating and dealing with individuals of vulnerability and helps them to create a trauma-sensitive classroom atmosphere. With the aim of building the mental resilience of the learners, the participants receive guidance on how to implement strategies for coping with stress. Refugees will be supported in transforming stories of loss and despair into stories of hope, thus enhancing their agency. In this module, participants will acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to enable return-interested refugees to make informed decisions about return and other relevant areas of their lives.

### Learning Objectives

Participants are able ...

- M 3.1** to explain the emotional and psychological impact of forced displacements and return on refugees,
- M 3.2** to understand and apply the basic guiding principles of working with individuals of vulnerability,
- M 3.3** to apply stress-coping mechanisms and build upon the resiliency of the students,
- M 3.4** to identify and communicate decision-making mechanisms in situations of ambiguous reality.

## Topics

- Trauma and distress as a result of migration processes
- Identifying signs and symptoms and their culture-specific manifestations
- Communication and basic guiding principles for dealing with individuals of vulnerability
- Stress relief mechanisms and self-care techniques
- Deconstructing negative narratives and reconstructing narratives of strength and hope
- Tips for a trauma-sensitive classroom
- Decision-making in difficult/ambiguous situations

## Recommended Scope

4.5 hours/6 lesson units





# Overview of Teaching and Learning Materials

## Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?  
Building resilience in yourself and in learners

## Methods

Exercise instructions for use in classes/workshops.

Nr.	Title	Topic area	Use in further training of instructors and coaches	Use in classes for refugees	Page
1	<b>Distress Reactions</b> How people react in response to crisis	Psychosocial stress and traumata	x	x	135
2	<b>Guiding Principles for Dealing With Vulnerable People</b> Brainstorming on working with refugees	Communication with refugees	x		143
3	<b>How to Communicate With Vulnerable Individuals</b> Role-play on communication dos & don'ts	Communication, dealing with distress in a learning context	x		147
4	<b>The Power of Story-Telling</b> Reconstructing painful stories into stories of strength and hope	Story-telling, empowerment	x	x	155
5	<b>The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom</b> Creating a safe learning atmosphere	Dealing with distress in a learning context	x		161
6	<b>How Do I Cope?</b> Discuss and share stress-coping mechanisms	Stress relief	x	x	163
7	<b>What Is Your Coping Style?</b> Different reactions to stress	Stress relief	x	x	165
8	<b>Guided Imagination</b> How stress can be managed through guided imagination	Stress relief, relaxation	x	x	167
9	<b>Stretch and Relax</b> Stress relief with progressive muscle relaxation	Stress management, relaxation	x	x	171
10	<b>Leader and Follower</b> How to handle uncertain situations	Decision-making, trust, communication	x	x	173
11	<b>Ask Your Body Wisdom</b> Making intuitive decisions	Decision-making, intuition	x	x	175
12	<b>The Rubber Band Model</b> Decision between two alternative options	Decision-making, intuition	x	x	179

## Videos

Didactic instructions for classroom use of videos.

Title	Topic area	Page
<b>Displacement and Trauma</b> Mental and physical effects	Displacement and trauma	181
<b>The Power of Stories</b> Facilitating mental health support to refugees	Story-telling, empowerment	185

## Dossiers

Background information for trainers, instructors and coaches.

Title	Page
<b>Understanding Distress and Trauma of Refugees</b> Sources, triggers and symptoms	187
<b>Understanding Emotions</b> Dealing with emotions in the classroom	201
<b>The Power of "Story-Telling"</b> Reinterpreting life stories in a new and positive way	209
<b>Coping Strategies for Dealing with Stress</b> The healing power of relaxation techniques	215
<b>The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom</b> Creating a safe learning atmosphere for refugees	221
<b>Decision-Making Under Stress and Uncertainty</b> Making decisions in difficult times	233

# MODULE 3

Methods



Methods

Videos

Dossiers

**Module 4**

Methods

Videos

Dossiers

**III.**  
**Brief Portraits**

**Toolbox**





# Distress Reactions

## How people react in response to crisis

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)
- (return-interested) refugees

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to explain the emotional and psychological impact of forced displacements and return on refugees (M 3.1).
2. Participants are able to create a participatory, constructive and safe learning atmosphere to enable empowerment (M 4.3).
3. Participants are able to identify signs of distress and describe how differently people react to crisis situations.
4. Participants are able to describe factors that may influence distress reactions.

### Instructions

Participants are provided with coloured post-it notes or coloured cards. The trainer asks them to reflect individually on a distressful situation that either they or someone they know have experienced, and then to write down how they reacted at that time. The trainer asks them to note down each reaction to the distressful situation on a separate coloured card or coloured post-it note.

Once they are done, the trainer invites the participants to stick their coloured cards on the flipchart. The trainer then filters the cards and puts aside any repeated statements while noting how often a certain reaction was given. Next, the trainer raises the following questions to be discussed:

- What was it like going through that situation?
- Can you describe how you felt?
- Have you already experienced other people in distress? How did they react?

The trainer explains to the participants that people can have different psychological reactions to crises or stressful situations. Then, the trainer walks the participants through some common signs of distress (see [Handout 1: Signs of Distress](#)) adding to the coloured cards on the flipchart those signs not yet mentioned.

The trainer then asks all participants to come up with some factors (see [Handout 2: Distress Reactions](#)) that may influence how a person responds to distress.

### Timeframe

35 min

Phase 1: Introduction	Phase 2: Reflection	Phase 3: Discussion
5 min	10 min	20 min

### Materials

- Coloured cards or coloured post-it notes
- Markers
- Flipchart
- Handouts:
  - ▶ [Handout 1: Signs of Distress](#)
  - ▶ [Handout 2: Distress Reactions](#)

## Notes

- Specifics regarding the target group: some participants may be very conscious about their distress reactions or may blame themselves for what has happened to them. As such, trainers should emphasise that what they are going through is oftentimes a normal reaction to abnormal circumstances and that individuals may react differently to the same situation. At all times, trainers should avoid “why” questions that may carry a blame connotation.
- Connection to other methods or dossiers: this method sets the tone for the upcoming methods and sessions. It provides an introduction to distress reactions including some common signs and contributing factors. Further information about the subject is available in the dossier [Understanding Distress and Trauma of Refugees](#), and therefore, it is recommended to read the dossier before applying this method.

## Authorship

Tania Hussein

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<http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/system/files/resource/files/Building%20Capacity%20in%20Mental%20Health%20and%20Psychosocial%20Care%20A%20training%20manual%20for%20health%20care%20workers%20%26%20community%20workers%20in%20refugee%20settings%20in%20the%20African%20Great%20Lake%20Area.pdf> (Accessed 29 June 2019).

WHO, WTF & WV (2013). Psychological First Aid. Available at:

<https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/49286/Psychological+First+Aid/123d5824-f2a2-4d77-99fd-89fabcf5b787> (Accessed 29 June 2019).





# Handout 1: Signs of Distress

## How people react in response to crisis

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Signs of Distress

People may react differently to crises. The following list of reactions is not complete but presents some of the most common reactions seen in distressed individuals.

#### Physical Symptoms

Shaking

Headaches

Feeling very tired

Loss of appetite

Aches and pains

Excessive sweating

Muscular spasms

Sleep problems (either not having enough sleep or falling asleep in unexpected situations)

Continual episodes of illness (for example, cold & flu)

#### Behavioural Symptoms

Avoiding tasks

Withdrawing socially or verbally

Poor self-care and personal hygiene

Being excessively demanding of others

Increases in impulsive behaviour

Violent acts towards self and/or others

### Emotional and Psychological Symptoms

Being tearful or sighing frequently

Feeling confused

Experiencing high levels of anxiety or fear

Irritability or unpredictable outbursts of anger

Displaying agitation

Frequent use of negative expressions

Weeping, crying, sadness, grief, or depressed mood

Feeling jumpy or getting startled easily

Nightmares

Worrying that something bad is going to happen

Feelings of guilt and/or shame

Feeling emotionally numb

Feeling disoriented (for example, not knowing their name, where they are from, or what happened)

Appearing withdrawn

Not responding to others, not speaking at all

Unable to make simple decisions or care for oneself or children

Talk of suicide

### References

Brock University (n.d.). Signs of Distress. Available at:

<https://brocku.ca/mental-health/signs-of-distress/#physical> (Accessed 2 November 2020)

HealthNet TPO (2011). Building Capacity in Mental Health and Psychosocial Care: A Training Manual for Health Care Workers & Community Workers in Refugee Settings in the African Great Lake Area. Available at:

<http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/system/files/resource/files/Building%20Capacity%20in%20Mental%20Health%20and%20Psychosocial%20Care%20A%20training%20manual%20for%20health%20care%20workers%20%26%20community%20workers%20in%20refugee%20settings%20in%20the%20African%20Great%20Lake%20Area.pdf> (Accessed 29 June 2019).

WHO, WTF & WV (2013). Psychological First Aid. Available at:

<https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/49286/Psychological+First+Aid/123d5824-f2a2-4d77-99fd-89fabcf5b787> (Accessed 29 June 2019).



# Handout 2: Distress Reactions

## How people react in response to crisis

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?  
Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Factors Influencing Distress Reactions:

People may have different psychological reactions to an event. There are also different factors that may influence how someone responds to distress. The points below provide just a few examples of such factors:

- The nature and severity of the event or situation they went through,
- The support they have in their life, if any,
- Personal and family history of mental health problems,
- Their physical health (whether or not they suffer from any ailments),
- Their age,
- Their cultural background and traditions (including values and perceptions),
- Challenging living conditions in host countries,
- Financial problems,
- Family violence.

### References

Hansen, Ane Kristine/Askgaard, Rune/Abou-Diab, Diam (2018). Needs and Barriers for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Among Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Perspectives for Future Intervention, Danish Refugee Council.

WHO, WTF & WV (2013). Psychological First Aid. Available at:  
<https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/49286/Psychological+First+Aid/123d5824-f2a2-4d77-99fd-89fabcf5b787> (Accessed 29 June 2019).





# Guiding Principles for Dealing With Vulnerable People

## Brainstorming on working with refugees

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to understand and apply the basic guiding principles of working with vulnerable people (M 3.2).
2. Participants are able to create a participatory, constructive and safe learning atmosphere to enable empowerment (M 4.3).
3. Participants are able to reflect on the risks of not abiding by the guiding principles when dealing with vulnerable people.

### Instructions

The trainer explains that those working with vulnerable people should make every effort to adhere to a set of basic guiding principles. The trainer brainstorms with the participants guided by the following questions:

- What do you think would be important to keep in mind when working with vulnerable people?
- Can you give some examples?
- Why do vulnerable people need a different type of communication?
- What should be avoided at all costs when dealing with vulnerable people?

The trainer writes participants' responses on a flipchart and then presents the guiding principles (see [Handout: Guiding Principles for Dealing with Vulnerable people](#)). The trainer can write the guiding principles in boxes or tables on the flipchart prior to the session. Following the trainer's presentation of the basic principles, the trainer can go back to the participants' responses and place them in the relevant box(es).

At the end, the questions below shall be discussed:

- What do you think might happen (in the classroom) if we did not abide by these principles?
- What positive effects can be achieved in the classroom by adapting one's own communication to the needs of vulnerable people?

### Timeframe

20–30 min

### Materials

- Markers
- Flipchart
- Handout: [Guiding Principles for Dealing With Vulnerable people](#)

### Notes

- Specifics regarding the target group: The guiding principles set out the ethical responsibilities and behaviours of instructors or other individuals interacting with vulnerable groups. Therefore, understanding and adhering to these principles is necessary; otherwise, unintentional harm can be the consequence.
- Connection to other methods or dossiers: This method provides an overview of the basic guiding principles that instructors or other people working with vulnerable groups should adhere to. Further information about the subject is available in the dossier [Understanding Distress and Trauma of Refugees](#). It is recommended to read the dossier before applying this method.

### Authorship

Tania Hussein

### References

Interagency Standing Committee (2007). Guidelines on Mental Health & Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings. Available at:  
[https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/emergencies/guidelines\\_iasc\\_mental\\_health\\_psychosocial\\_june\\_2007.pdf](https://www.who.int/mental_health/emergencies/guidelines_iasc_mental_health_psychosocial_june_2007.pdf) (Accessed 30 June 2019).

IRC, UNICEF (2012). Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Guidelines for Health and Psychosocial Service Providers in Humanitarian Settings. Available at:  
<https://www.refworld.org/docid/532aa6834.html> (Accessed 1 July 2019).



# Handout: Guiding Principles for Dealing With Vulnerable People

## Brainstorming on working with refugees

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

## Guiding Principles

### Listening and establishing rapport

Many refugees have gone through great ordeals, and some through traumatic experiences. Listening and establishing rapport provides a supportive and safe environment in which they can begin to heal (cf. SOP Task Force 2013).

### Do no harm

Work done in the area of mental health and psychosocial support can result in harm as it deals with very sensitive issues. However, the risk of harm can be reduced in various ways. This can be achieved, for example, by exploring and reflecting on human rights issues, by rethinking the balance of power between instructor and participants (see method [Critical Reflection on whiteness](#)) and by applying participatory approaches (Interagency Standing Committee 2007; see dossier [Participatory Education Approaches](#) and the methods of the [Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches](#)).

### Provide information

In order for refugee participants to make informed choices and decisions, they need to be provided with information and options (cf. SOP Task Force 2013). For more information, see dossier [Decision-Making Under Stress and Uncertainty](#).

### Respect the wishes, choices, rights and dignity of refugee participants

This contributes to restoring students' empowerment and agency (cf. SOP Task Force 2013).

### Informed consent

Informed consent (cf. SOP Task Force 2013) is usually sought prior to sharing information provided by the participant. For example, if a participant discloses sensitive information or information about being tortured or abused, whether now or in the past, the instructor needs to obtain the participant's informed consent if he or she believes this information should be shared.

**Ensure confidentiality**

Confidentiality of the sensitive information disclosed by a participant (for example, being a survivor of abuse) should be collected, stored and used in a confidential manner as this is critical to protecting the safety of refugee participants (cf. SOP Task Force 2013).

**Ensure non-discrimination in all interactions with vulnerable individuals**

This generally includes treating each and every individual in a dignified manner, regardless of his or her gender, background, origin, ethnicity or circumstances (cf. Interagency Standing Committee 2007).

**Participation**

To promote the psychosocial well-being of vulnerable groups affected by difficult circumstances, it is important to build their capacities, support self-help, strengthen resources already present, and strengthen the skills and capacities of individuals, families and communities (cf. Interagency Standing Committee 2007). While this principle is applied in the broader humanitarian action, instructors can use it additionally to enhance their participants' capacities (see dossier [Participatory Education Approaches](#)).

**References**

- Interagency Standing Committee (2007). IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings. Available at: [https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/emergencies/guidelines\\_iasc\\_mental\\_health\\_psychosocial\\_june\\_2007.pdf](https://www.who.int/mental_health/emergencies/guidelines_iasc_mental_health_psychosocial_june_2007.pdf) (Accessed 30 June 2019).
- SOP Task Force (2013). Interagency Emergency Standard Operating Procedures for the Prevention of and Response to Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection in Jordan. Available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/38427> (Accessed 1 July 2019).



# How to Communicate With Vulnerable Individuals

## Role-play on communication dos & don'ts

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?  
Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to understand and apply the basic guiding principles of working with vulnerable people (M 3.2).
2. Participants are able to create a participatory, constructive and safe learning atmosphere to enable empowerment (M 4.3).
3. Participants are able to adapt their communication style to meet the needs of vulnerable learners.

### Instructions

The trainer asks for volunteers for a role-play based on case scenarios (see [Handout 1: Case Scenarios](#)). One or two role-plays can be performed in plenary. At least two participants should take part in each role-play: one person to play the role of a distressed person and another person exhibiting inappropriate ways of communication (e.g. playing on the phone or interrupting the speaker) when trying to help the distressed person. Volunteers should be instructed in the role-playing activities outside the door. The person who uses inappropriate ways of communication can be given the list of “don'ts” for preparation (see [Handout 2: Communication Recommendations](#)). All other participants are in the role of observers. For the role-plays and the discussion that follows, the trainer asks the participants to consider and apply the guiding principles they learned in the preceding session (see method description [Guiding Principles for Dealing With Vulnerable People](#)).

Once the role-play is over, the trainer asks participants to comment on the scenes presented and asks the questions below in plenary:

- What did you see?
- How did it feel to be in the different roles (distressed person or person exhibiting inappropriate ways of communication)?

The trainer then follows up with the participants on some aspects that should be avoided when communicating with distressed and/or vulnerable people (see [Handout 2: Communication Recommendations](#)). Next, the trainer asks the participants to role-play another scenario but this time using appropriate communication approaches (e.g. listening well, making eye contact and showing empathy). Again, the trainer asks the participants to comment on the role-play they have seen and then presents good practice in communicating with distressed and/or vulnerable individuals (see [Handout 2: Communication Recommendations](#)).

At the end, the trainer leads a brief discussion by asking:

- What significance does adequate communication have for your classroom activities?

### Timeframe

40–50 min

Phase 1: Introduction	Phase 2: Role-play 1	Phase 3: Role-play 2	Phase 4: Discussion
5 min	15 min	15 min	15 min

### Materials

- Markers
- Flipchart
- Handouts:
  - ▶ [Handout 1: Case Scenarios](#)
  - ▶ [Handout 2: Communication Recommendations](#)

## Notes

- **Variation:** Not everybody feels comfortable with role-playing, although this exercise is potentially very entertaining and raises many important communication issues that need to be addressed. However, if participants feel uncomfortable performing a role-play, an alternative approach would be to form groups and give them the case scenarios. Next, the groups are given the assignment to jointly reflect on how to communicate inappropriately and appropriately in a specific case. The trainer writes down the responses of each group on a flipchart, guides the participants through the [Handout 2: Communication Recommendations](#) and opens room for questions.
- **Variation:** For time-efficient work, the trainer may ask two groups to role-play an appropriate communication and two other groups to role-play an inappropriate communication. Thus, not every group plays both roles.
- **Link to other methods or dossiers:** This method helps participants learn the basics for communicating with vulnerable groups and provides room for skills enhancement through role-playing. This method follows on from the previous method on [Guiding Principles for Dealing With Vulnerable People](#). Further information on this topic is available in the dossier Understanding Distress and Trauma of Refugees. It is recommended to read the dossier before applying this method.

## Authorship

Tania Hussein

## Reference

WHO, WTF & WV (2013). Psychological First Aid. Available at:

<https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/49286/Psychological+First+Aid/123d5824-f2a2-4d77-99fd-89fabcf5b787> (Accessed 29 June 2019).





# Handout 1: Case Scenarios

## Role-play on communication dos & don'ts

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Case Scenarios

#### Case Scenario 1: Natural Disaster<sup>1</sup>

At night, you feel the ground shaking and later in the morning, you hear in the news that a large earthquake has hit the centre of the city, which left casualties and property damage. The extent of the damage is yet unknown and the organisation you work for has asked you and your colleagues to assist survivors. Many of the survivors you meet are in shock and some are still looking for missing family members.

#### Case Scenario 2: Distressed Participant in an Adult Education Class

During one of your adult education classes, you notice a refugee student in distress. After class, the student approaches you and tells you that he needs to talk to you privately. The student starts telling you about some very distressful situations that he has gone through both when he was in his home country and when he arrived in the host country. He shares very sensitive information about the torture he endured in his country and expresses deep grief for the loss of his family members. He continues disclosing painful details of his suffering, and his emotions fluctuate between crying while telling his story and bursting into fits of anger.

#### Case Scenario 3: Accident<sup>2</sup>

While you and your colleague are travelling to visit one of your organisation's projects in one of the villages you see an accident. A speeding car hit a woman and her daughter. The woman is bleeding heavily. The daughter is not hurt but is in shock and standing motionless and silently at the scene. She is frightened and confused. Villagers rush to the scene of the accident and ask you and your colleague for help.

### Reference

WHO, WTF & WV (2013). Psychological First Aid. Available at:

<https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/49286/Psychological+First+Aid/123d5824-f2a2-4d77-99fd-89fabcf5b787> (Accessed 29 June 2019).

<sup>1</sup> Example is adapted from WHO, WTF & WV (2013).

<sup>2</sup> This example is also adapted from WHO, WTF & WV (2013).





# Handout 2: Communication Recommendations

## Role-play on communication dos & don'ts

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Communication Recommendations – Dos & Don'ts

Things Not to Say or Do	Things to Say and Do
Do not pressure someone to tell his or her story.	Try to find a quiet place to talk and minimise outside distractions.
Do not interrupt or rush someone's story (for example, do not look at your watch or speak too rapidly).	Respect privacy and keep the person's story confidential, if this is appropriate.
Do not touch the person if you are not sure it is appropriate to do so.	Stay near the person but keep an appropriate distance depending on their age, gender and culture.
Do not judge what they have or have not done, or how they are feeling. Do not say, "You should not feel that way," or "You should feel lucky you survived."	Let the person know you are listening; for example, nod your head or say "Hm..."
Do not make up things you do not know.	Be patient and calm.
Do not use terms that are too technical.	Provide factual information, <b>if</b> you have it. Be honest about what you know and do not know. "I don't know, but I will try to find out about that for you."
Do not tell them someone else's story.	Give information in a way the person can understand – keep it simple.

Things Not to Say or Do	Things to Say and Do
Do not talk about your own troubles.	Acknowledge how the person is feeling, and any losses or important events he/she tells you about, such as loss of his/her home or death of a loved one. "I'm so sorry. I can imagine this is very sad for you."
Do not give false promises or false reassurances.	Acknowledge the person's strengths and how he/she has helped himself/herself.
Do not think and act as if you must solve all the person's problems for them.	Allow for silence.
Do not take away the person's strength and sense of being able to care for themselves.	
Do not talk about people in negative terms (for example, do not call them "crazy" or "mad").	

## Reference

WHO, WTF & WV (2013). Psychological First Aid. Available at:  
<https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/49286/Psychological+First+Aid/123d5824-f2a2-4d77-99fd-89fabcf5b787> (Accessed 29 June 2019).



# The Power of Story-Telling

## Reconstructing painful stories into stories of strength and hope

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)
- (return-interested) refugees

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to apply stress-coping mechanisms and build upon the resiliency of the students (M 3.3).
2. Participants are able to create a participatory, constructive and safe learning atmosphere to enable empowerment (M 4.3).
3. Participants are able to externalise their problems and reflect on their strengths for healing.

### Instructions

The trainer asks the participants if anyone wants to tell his/her own story, including the difficult circumstances and crises situations he/she has experienced. Before starting, it is important for the trainer to familiarise himself/herself with the guiding principles for dealing with vulnerable people (see method of the same name). This exercise requires one or two volunteers (depending on the time available) to share their stories in front of the larger group. Alternatively, the case scenario (see [Handout 1: Case Scenario](#)) can be used. After the volunteers have shared their stories, the trainer asks the questions below:

- Are you able to pinpoint the problem?
- How do you believe it has affected your life or the lives of others?
- How did you feel when this happened?
- What did you think of yourself?

The trainer acknowledges the problem and demonstrates good listening, empathy and respect. At the same time, he/she helps participants to understand that they themselves are not the problem. In other words, the trainer helps participants to externalise the problem rather than internalise it. A quick exercise asking participants to change negative statements about themselves into positive ones can also be helpful. For example:

Negative Statement	Positive Statement
I am a loser.	I have gone through difficult times, but I know I can make it.
The whole world is turning in on me.	I am fortunate I have people who love me and care for me.

The trainer can think of many other examples to include. This exercise can be fun and can be done in plenary with all participants taking part. It would be helpful to have a similar table on a flipchart with negative statements prepared in advance. The trainer then writes down the positive alternative statements suggested by the participants under the corresponding column.

Now, it is time to challenge feelings of hopelessness and despair. The trainer asks participants to reflect on their strengths and the resources they have. It is important to keep in mind that participants are often not able to see their strengths, support systems or resources, but this exercise helps them reflect on that. The trainer asks the participants to think beyond their present time and describe their hopes for the future.

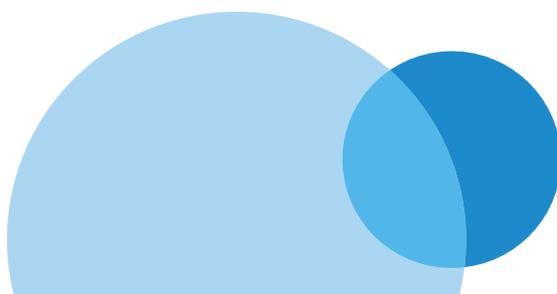
The trainer can then draw a tree on a flipchart. For example, the roots of the tree may represent things like family, friends, church or Mosque, values and beliefs. The trunk includes skills and qualities that participants can build on and other resources they have. The branches stand for things like dreams, hopes, aspirations and ambitions. After completion, the trainer asks the volunteers to retell their story with these strengths in mind.

In the end, it can be discussed how this method can be implemented in courses with (return-interested) refugees.

### Total Length

60 min

Phase 1: Introduction	Phase 2: Sharing 1st Story	Phase 3: Discussion	Phase 4: Retelling Story
5 min	20 min	15 min	20 min



### Materials

- Markers
- Flipchart
- Handout 1: Case Scenario

### Notes

- **Variation** Telling one's own story may require overcoming inner resistance and can stir up negative feelings. The exercise can also be done in small groups and not in plenary. Another alternative is taking a given example story instead of personal reports and running the exercise with that story (see Handout 1: Case Scenario).
- **Specifics regarding the target group:** This method guides participants towards healing and personal development. It helps them make sense of their life experiences by telling their stories and then reconstructing harmful/painful stories into stories of hope. It also helps them process difficult emotions. It is important to note that this method is applied at a basic level and not in a professional therapeutic sense. Narrative (story-telling) therapy is carried out by specialised individuals and requires more than one session. The most the trainer can do is use this tool to help participants vent and reflect on their strengths. Most importantly, if any participant telling their story in class becomes distressed or agitated, the trainer should tell them to stop at any time. Then, the trainer should ask them if they want to have a break or leave the room for a while. The exercise should not be implemented at the beginning of a course but after establishing a certain level of familiarity in the group.
- The trainer also needs to stress the importance of respect and confidentiality within the group, which is a point to be agreed on from the outset when setting ground rules for the class. For example, it is important that no participant judges the person telling his/her story, tells him/her what they should have done or how they should have reacted, or blame that person for what happened.
- **Connection to other methods or dossiers:** For more information see the dossier [The Power of Story-Telling](#). This method follows on from the previous methods on [Distress Reactions](#), [Guiding Principles for Dealing with Vulnerable People](#) and [How to Communicate With Vulnerable Individuals](#). Background information is available in the dossiers [Understanding Distress and Trauma of Refugees](#) and [Coping Strategies for Dealing with Stress](#). It is recommended to read these dossiers before applying this method.

### Authorship

Tania Hussein

The method is based on different specialised sources:

Dickinson, C. et al. (2016). Learning from Intercultural Storytelling: the LISTEN manual. Available at:  
[https://listen.bupnet.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/LISTEN\\_IO3\\_Training\\_Manual\\_EN.pdf](https://listen.bupnet.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/LISTEN_IO3_Training_Manual_EN.pdf)  
(Accessed 15 August 2019).

Johnstone, Lucy/Dallos, Rudi (2006). Formulation in Psychology and Psychotherapy: Making Sense of People's Problems, New York.

Jones, Camilla (2014). Child Protection Case Management Training Manual for Caseworkers, Supervisors and Managers, the Case Management Task Force. Available at:  
[http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/\\_assets/files/field\\_protection\\_clusters/Somalia/files/Child\\_Protection/CM%20training\\_manual\\_ENG\\_.pdf](http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/_assets/files/field_protection_clusters/Somalia/files/Child_Protection/CM%20training_manual_ENG_.pdf) (Accessed 15 August 2019).

McLeod, John (1997). Narrative and Psychotherapy, London.





# Handout 1: Case Scenario

## Reconstructing painful stories into stories of strength and hope

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?  
Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Text excerpt

Kerkhof, Kim Nicolai (2017). *Die Geschichte einer Flucht*. Available at:  
<https://www.caritas-international.de/hilfeweltweit/europa/griechenland/reportage-die-geschichte-einer-flucht> (Accessed 26 August 2019).

### Case Scenario

#### A refugee's story

*“There is no one in the world whom I would wish to go through what I have gone through,” says Asnaa.*

#### Walking to Turkey – with twelve children

Asnaa comes from the vicinity of Aleppo, and her background is humble. “We are a farming family, all my life I have worked with my hands. We were so happy about the life we had.” But this life belongs to the past. When the fighting around Aleppo escalated and the impacts approached the family home, she decided to leave. On 13 October 2015, she packed a few things and took her twelve children to flee in the direction of Turkey. Her husband and her eldest son were already in Germany by then – they had gone ahead to make the family come to Germany later. At least that was the plan. “It seemed to us the only possibility we had. We would not have been able to cross the sea with the children.”

Asnaa led her 12 children on a four-day walk along narrow paths through the mountains before they made it across the border into Turkey. In safety, she thought! In the meantime, her husband in Germany had gathered all the necessary documents for a family reunion and had submitted the application. “I went to the German embassy, they accepted all the documents and I gave them our passports,” Asnaa says. She was told that in about ten days, she would get the passports back and then she could fly to Germany with her children to reunite with her husband and eldest son.

At that point, Asnaa thought they had made it.

**“I could have never left them behind”**

Six weeks later, the world collapses for her again: The authorities in Germany tell her husband that she can only take eight of her twelve children with her, since four of her children are not her biological children but the children of her husband’s first marriage.

“They told me I had to submit a DNA analysis to prove that the children were indeed the children of my husband. How was I supposed to do that and pay for it? There is no way I could have left those four behind. I have raised them; they are my children like the others, too.”

Asnaa’s application got withdrawn. Suddenly, there was only one way left for her to get to Europe, “I always thought that I would never get on a rubber boat like that, especially not with the children. The crossing to Chios with 52 people on a narrow boat, storm and waves – I have never been so scared in my life. This sea looked like death to me, but we escaped it.”

**Days that change a life**

Asnaa and her children made it to Greece. She arrived in Athens on 25 February 2016 and shortly afterwards at the Caritas Centre Neos-Kosmos, more precisely on 27 March 2016, “I know all the dates by heart, because behind each date there is a story. And each of these stories has changed our lives.” Asnaa and her children will soon be allowed to go to Germany on a legal basis. She does not know the exact date yet, but it will change their lives again. [...]



# The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom

## Creating a safe learning atmosphere

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to discuss and apply the trauma-sensitive classroom approach.
2. Participants are able to understand and apply the basic guiding principles of working with vulnerable people (M 3.2).
3. Participants are able to create a participatory, constructive and safe learning atmosphere to enable empowerment (M 4.3).

### Instructions

The trainer will give an input on the trauma-sensitive classroom approach (for background information see dossier [The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom](#)) and will clearly point out how and why this approach can be applied in a meaningful way, especially when working with (return-interested) refugees.

The trainer will then lead a discussion in plenary on the questions below:

1. Why is it important for courses with refugees to be trauma-sensitive?
2. How exactly can I integrate the presented approach into my lessons?

### Timeframe

40 min

Presentation	Discussion
20 min	20 min

**Materials**

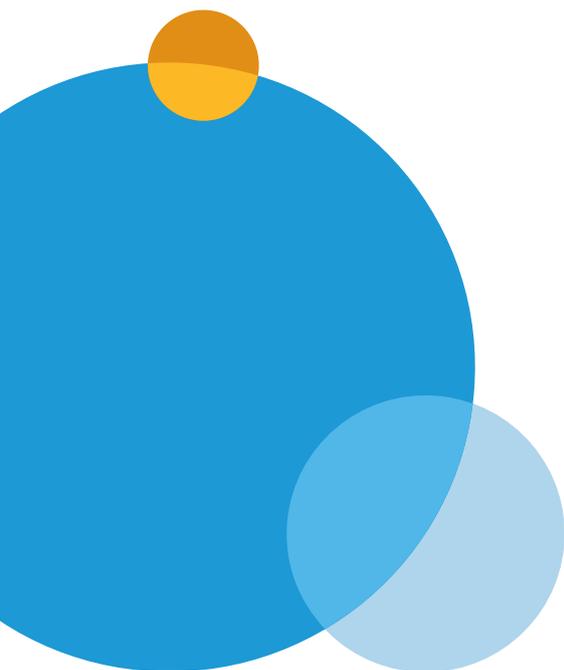
- Projector
- Laptop
- PowerPoint presentation

**Remarks**

In preparation of the input, read the dossiers The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom and Participatory Education Approaches.

**Authorship**

Katja Littmann





# How Do I Cope?

## Discuss and share stress coping mechanisms

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)
- (return-interested) refugees

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to apply stress-coping mechanisms and build upon the resiliency of the students (M 3.3).
2. Participants are able to understand and apply the basic guiding principles of working with vulnerable people (M 3.2).

### Instructions

The trainer asks the participants to complete the following sentence on a sheet of paper, “When I’m stressed, I usually ...” The trainer invites the participants to go back in their memory to different occasions and issues in their life, such as work, family, study, parenthood and relationships, and reflect on stressful points and crises. They should think about how they coped with those challenging events.

Then, several small groups are formed. The groups should discuss their different coping mechanisms and see if they can find common responses.

All groups share their outcomes in plenary. The trainer guides the discussion with the following questions:

- Which coping mechanisms were helpful?
- Which coping mechanisms were harmful?
- Did you try something else?
- Did you get to know a new way of coping with stress from the group members that you think might suit you and be constructive?
- What are situations in the classroom that make you feel stressed?

During the discussion, the trainer writes the descriptions of the coping mechanisms on the board dividing them into different categories:

Thinking	Behaviour	Psycho-physical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reorientation, reframing</li> <li>● Positive thinking</li> <li>● Denial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Confronting</li> <li>● Getting organised, start thinking about steps to solve it</li> <li>● Ventilation</li> <li>● Humour</li> <li>● Avoidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Food/Diet</li> <li>● Exercise</li> <li>● Drinking</li> <li>● Meditation</li> <li>● Deep breathing</li> <li>● Nature walks and sports</li> <li>● Sleep</li> </ul>

### Timeframe

35–45 min

Phase 1: Introduction	Phase 2: Group work	Phase 3: Group work presentation and discussion
10 min	10–15 min	15–20 min

### Materials

- White paper
- Pen

### Notes

- It is important to mention that we use more than one coping mechanism, sometimes even several simultaneously. In addition, different coping mechanisms are used in different phases of the crisis. Coping with stress can start, for example, with denial, followed by avoidance and then sport.
- In preparation, it is recommended to read the dossier Coping Strategies for Dealing with Stress.

### Authorship

Mohanad Berekdar



# What Is Your Coping Style?

## Different reactions to stress

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)
- (return-interested) refugees

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to apply stress-coping mechanisms and build upon the resiliency of the students (M 3.3).
2. Participants are able to understand and apply the basic guiding principles of working with vulnerable people (M 3.2).

### Instructions

The trainer asks the group to divide into pairs. Each pair is asked to talk about a stressful event/ situation they have experienced recently or are still going through, and how they cope with it. The pairs are given 20 minutes, to be used for the following steps: each participant shares his/her experience and how he/she dealt with the situation. Afterwards, the listener reflects what he/she heard (NO judgments, just mirroring what he/she heard and saw), then they change roles. Later the pairs are asked to present only the coping mechanisms they discussed. The trainer notes the mechanisms described by the group classifying them into categories, and presents the different styles of coping with stress.

After presenting the group work and other inputs (preparation based on the dossier [Coping Strategies for Dealing with Stress](#)), the trainer asks the group to form the original pairs again and to take another 15 minutes for discussing the questions below:

1. Which coping mechanisms do you want to keep?
2. Which mechanisms would you rather get rid of?
3. Which mechanism would you like to try out or take over?

The suggested categories the trainer can use for coping mechanisms are:

Thinking	Behaviour	Psychophysical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reorientation, reframing</li> <li>● Positive thinking</li> <li>● Denial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Confronting</li> <li>● Getting organised, start thinking about steps to solve it</li> <li>● Ventilation</li> <li>● Humour</li> <li>● Avoidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Food/Diet</li> <li>● Exercise</li> <li>● Drinking</li> <li>● Meditation</li> <li>● Deep breathing</li> <li>● Nature walks and sports</li> <li>● Sleep</li> </ul>

### Timeframe

40–50 min

### Materials

No material needed

### Notes

The following points can encourage discussion:

1. Some coping mechanisms are harder to change than others, while some are easier to adopt.
2. Now, we know about constructive coping mechanisms. How can you ensure you will start using them?
3. What did you learn about yourself today?
  - It is important to mention that we use more than one coping mechanism, sometimes even several simultaneously. In addition, different coping mechanisms are used in different phases of the crisis. Coping with stress can start, for example, with denial, followed by avoidance and then sport.
  - In preparation, it is recommended to read the dossier Coping Strategies for Dealing with Stress.

### Authorship

Mohanad Berekdar



# Guided Imagination

## How stress can be managed through guided imagination

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)
- (return-interested) refugees

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to apply stress-coping mechanisms and build upon the resiliency of the students (M 3.3).
2. Participants are able to create a participatory, constructive and safe learning atmosphere to enable empowerment (M 4.3).

### Instructions

Guided imagination, or what is sometimes referred to as “visualisation” or “fantasy journey”, is one of many traditional meditation techniques that requires participants to use all their senses (sight, taste, touch, smell and hearing). This technique helps participants feel at peace and able to let go of all the tension and anxiety.

The trainer may dim the lights in the room and make sure the place is quiet and relaxing. In addition, soothing music can be played, if possible. For example, the trainer can choose music or sounds that match the scene participants decided on. Then the trainer asks participants to imagine a scene in which they feel at peace, which can be, for example, a beach, or a quiet garden, or a place from childhood, or any other place that makes them feel good. This exercise can be done in a group and individually when participants are back home.

As sometimes beginners may fall asleep during this type of meditation or guided imagery, the trainer can let them do the exercise standing or sitting up. Assuming that all participants imagine a beach, the trainer takes them on a fantasy journey following these steps:

- Close your eyes and let your worries and fears drift away.
- Imagine the place you chose as vividly as you possibly can.
- Listen to the sound of birds and waves.
- Smell the trees and flowers.
- Watch the sun setting over the sea.
- Feel the breeze caressing your skin.
- Walk slowly around the dock and observe the boats in the water.
- Now walk slowly towards the sandy beach.
- Go with your feet into the water and feel the cool waves flowing around you.
- Breathe deeply and enjoy the clean air.
- Enjoy the feeling of deep relaxation as you wander about your imagined restful place.
- Feel the stress leaving your body.
- Picture your problems, worries and stresses being washed away by the waves.
- Are you ready to leave the scene?
- Open your eyes now, gently and slowly.

At the end, the trainer asks the participants if they enjoyed the exercise and if they felt relaxed and de-stressed.

### **Timeframe**

10 min

### **Materials**

- Optional: soft music or sounds matching the imagined scene can be downloaded from a mobile phone or laptop.

### Notes

- Specifics regarding the target group: To ensure that this exercise works effectively, the trainer should allow participants to freely choose the scene that appeals to them most and not what appeals to the majority. Each participant may select a different scene that he/she feels most comfortable with. In this case, the trainer can follow the instructions above by modifying them to suit multiple situations. The beach scene may be appealing to some participants, but others may prefer the desert or perhaps had difficult experiences on a beach. If, however, the trainer decided to ask the entire group to imagine the same scene, it is necessary to point out that this short exercise is not only intended to help them de-stress in class but also to learn how to help themselves at home.
- One important thing the trainer needs to keep in mind is that sometimes participants may feel distracted or lose track during the exercise. Furthermore, some may experience feelings of stiffness or heaviness in their limbs or may yawn, which are all normal responses.
- Connection to other methods or dossiers: This method is connected to the method Stretch and Relax. Further information about the topic is available in the dossier Coping Strategies for Dealing with Stress. It is recommended to read the dossier before implementing this method.

### Authorship

Tania Hussein

### Reference

UNHCR (n.d.). Relaxation Techniques for Stress Relief: Finding the Relaxation Exercises that Work for You.

Available at:

<https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/34619/Relaxation+Techniques+for+Stress+Relief/3b3ae17a-2dbf-4cc4-b2b8-569c805bd379> (Accessed 6 July 2019).





# Stretch and Relax

## Stress relief with progressive muscle relaxation

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)
- (return-interested) refugees

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to apply stress-coping mechanisms and build upon the resiliency of the students (M 3.3).
2. Participants are able to create a participatory, constructive and safe learning atmosphere to enable empowerment (M 4.3).

### Instructions

This quick and helpful stress management tool helps participants become more aware of the tensions in their bodies and to release those tensions. To prepare for this exercise, the trainer dims the lights in the room and tries to minimise noise or distractions. The trainer asks the participants to sit on their chairs, close their eyes, put their feet flat on the floor and relax their hands in their laps. As they breathe in, the trainer asks them to tense and tighten certain muscles in their bodies (see example below). When participants tense their muscles, they should hold their breath for a count of three and then relax completely while breathing out.

For example, the trainer gives the following instructions:

- Let us begin with our toes. Curl your toes tightly until it hurts slightly. As you curl your toes, inhale and hold your breath for a count of three. Now, exhale and relax your toes.

- Let us now tense other muscles in order:
  - ▶ Tense and tighten your thigh and leg muscles....
  - ▶ Tense your hands by making fists....
  - ▶ Tense your arms by bending your elbows and then stretching them to the front...
  - ▶ Tense your facial muscles...
  - ▶ Rotate your head slowly and carefully in a circle. Inhale as you rotate to the right and exhale when you turn your head to the left. Then do the same thing again. Now simply repeat the exercise in the other direction.
  - ▶ So how does it feel now? Did you feel the tension decrease and leave your body?

### Timeframe

5–10 min

### Materials

- Soft music

### Notes

- **Variation of method:** The literature on stress management techniques is full of helpful exercises for trainers to choose from. The progressive muscle relaxation technique can be replaced, for example, by a deep breathing exercise. Our breathing is often shallow, and therefore, learning how to breathe deeply from the stomach helps release our tension. The trainer can ask the participants to inhale deeply and feel their stomachs expand. Then the trainer asks them to hold their breath for a few seconds and then exhale slowly. As they breathe out, participants need to imagine the tension leaving their body.
- **Connection to other methods or dossiers:** This exercise is connected to the method [Guided Imagination](#). Further information on this topic is available in the dossier [Coping Strategies for Dealing with Stress](#). It is recommended to read the dossier before implementing this method.

### Authorship

Tania Hussein

### References

UNHCR o. J.: Relaxation Techniques for Stress Relief: Finding the Relaxation Exercises that Work for You.

Available at: <https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/34619/Relaxation+Techniques+-+for+Stress+Relief/3b3ae17a-2dbf-4cc4-b2b8-569c805bd379> (Accessed 6 July 2019).

WHO (2013). Psychological First Aid. Available at:

<https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/49286/Psychological+-+First+Aid/123d5824-f2a2-4d77-99fd-89fabcf5b787> (Accessed 29 July 2019).



# Leader and Follower

## How to handle uncertain situations

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)
- (return-interested) refugees

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to identify and communicate decision-making mechanisms in situations of ambiguous reality (M 3.4).
2. Participants are able to understand and apply the basic guiding principles of working with vulnerable people (M 3.2).

### Instructions

The trainer asks the participants to form pairs. Each couple needs to have a blindfold, which can be a scarf, for example. Before blindfolding one person of each pair, the trainer explains the rules. Each participant is blindfolded once for ten minutes. The respective partner guides the “blind” person through an area inside or outside the building. Once the time is over, the partners switch roles. It is up to the couples themselves to decide how they guide each other. While the partners are doing the exercise, the trainer observes their behaviour in preparation for the upcoming discussion. Afterwards, the group gets together for a guided discussion based on the leadoff questions below:

- How did you experience the exercise? Was it difficult?
- How did you choose your partner? Did you choose your partner or were you chosen?
- How did you hold each other? How did you decide the way to do the exercise?
- What was the decisive factor in choosing your route? To what extent did the blindfolded partner participate in that decision?
- When you were blindfolded, how did you perceive your surroundings (questions, sounds, movements, other signals)?

- What thoughts did you have about the exercise? Safety? Challenges? Explore new things? Have a nice chat with your partner? Did you share these considerations with your partner?
- Would you do it differently next time?
- How do you engage others in decision-making?
- How sensitive are you to the needs of others?
- To what extent do you express your needs despite being in a subordinate position?
- How does this exercise relate to your teaching activities with refugees?

### Timeframe

30–45 min

### Materials

Blindfolds for each pair (participants can use scarves or similar)

### Notes

- Walking blindfolded puts those concerned in an ambiguous situation that requires new ways of gathering information in order to orientate themselves with more confidence. Nevertheless, you can proactively seek information by clarifying your concerns and needs and by paying more attention to new details.
- Blindly following an almost unknown partner requires a great deal of trust and may take a major effort. Nobody should be forced to participate in this method. The trainer should make it clear to everyone that the person who leads holds a great responsibility and should act accordingly.
- In preparation of the method, it is recommended to read the dossier Decision-Making Under Stress and Uncertainty.

### Authorship

Mohanad Berekdar, based on the “Blindenführung” method of the German Federal Agency for Civic Education. Available at:

<http://www.bpb.de/lernen/formate/methoden/62269/methodenkoffer-detailansicht?mid=23>

(Accessed 15 August 2019).



# Ask Your Body Wisdom

## Making intuitive decisions

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)
- (return-interested) refugees

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to identify and communicate decision-making mechanisms in situations of ambiguous reality (M 3.4).
2. Participants are able to select and apply appropriate methods and tools to create an enabling, empowering classroom culture (M 4.4).
3. Participants are able to try out decision-making techniques based on emotions and physical sensations.

### General Target

This method is used to gain emotional access to decisions. Many people do not pay attention to the messages from their body. But each body has its own wisdom that exists independently of the rational level. Emotional decision-making techniques, in contrast to so-called deficit concepts<sup>1</sup>, assume that a person has all the resources necessary to solve a problem within himself/herself.

The method is supposed to guide us away from the purely mental, rational level. Sometimes, it is not helpful to repeatedly weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of a decision. Therefore, it is important to listen to emotional signals. Participants are encouraged to tune into their bodies in order to understand which decision is right for them and to involve the emotional level even in difficult decisions. Experiencing bodily impulses, such as damp palms, restless or calm breathing, safe or unsafe standing, usually give strong clues and produce clear decisions<sup>2</sup>. The application of this technique is useful when participants report that all kinds of options have been thought through and discussed with others several times, but they still cannot make a decision.

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1 The focus of the orientation is on the deficits of the participant and not on his/her competences and resources.

2 The Portuguese-American brain researcher António Damásio called these signals “somatic markers” and proved in several studies that they are an important component of good decisions. According to Damásio, the so-called emotional memory of experience communicates via a physical signal system that responds almost automatically and sends out clear signals about “right” or “wrong”. The Zurich Resource Model® also works with the concept of somatic markers.

## Instructions

Depending on the size of the group, it is advisable for the trainer to divide the participants into several subgroups so that the exercise can be performed simultaneously. Each group will be assigned at least three roles: a volunteer (who has to make a decision), a questioner and a process observer. Several participants can also take on the role of observers and later express their impressions.

The trainer asks one volunteer per group who is facing a difficult decision to come to the centre of the group and then coordinates the other roles. The volunteer in the middle describes his/her problem and the different options for making a decision. Each group is now following this procedure: The volunteer is given four identical slips of paper. The first option is written down on the first slip, the alternative on slip two. The questioner asks for the essential information and makes sure that the two alternatives are described clearly and unambiguously, and that they are two genuine alternatives. The text “neither – nor” is written on slip three. The fourth slip of paper remains empty. Now, the questioner takes the three slips of paper with written information and mixes them. All notes are spread on the floor. The point is then to feel the sensation while standing on each slip of paper. The questioner puts the empty, neutral slip on the floor in a slightly separate place. Attention: The scenario needs some space. There should be enough space around the paper slips to avoid the participant feeling constricted.

In the next step, the participant is asked to stand in a very relaxed position on one of the slips of paper with the written information, let his/her arms hang at their side, close his/her eyes and sense inside himself/herself how his/her body feels when standing on this slip of paper. The questioner can ask the following supportive questions:

- How do you feel standing on that slip of paper? Do you feel well or rather unwell?
- How are you standing on that slip of paper? Are you standing totally firm or swaying?
- How is your breathing? Calm, relaxed, tense, hesitant?
- What reactions do you perceive in your body?

The questioner and the observer pay close attention to the participant: What is the person's posture? Does he/she straighten up a bit, collapse slightly or start to move from one foot to the other, sway slightly, breathe a sigh of relief or stop breathing? Do the eyelids start to flutter? Does the body stiffen up or relax?

The questioner does not inquire along the lines of, “I see you're swaying just a little.” It is up to the participant to delve into himself/herself and describe what exactly he/she feels, which impulses arise. This tracing should not take too long (one to three minutes), as this could lead to an uncertainty and dilution of the impulses and the danger that “thinking” takes over.

Now, the questioner asks the participant to open his/her eyes again and stand on the neutral paper slip for one minute. Afterwards, the participant stands on the second slip and senses his/her inner self again accompanied by supporting questions from the questioner. After one to three minutes, the participant steps back on the neutral slip of paper and one minute later senses his/her standing position and feelings while standing on the third slip. Once the participant has gone through all the positions, the exercise is finished.

The questioner asks the participants to leave the setting. A joint evaluation can follow. First of all, the person presenting the problem can express how he/she feels about the solution of the paper slip options, and whether the exercise has enabled him/her to make or facilitate a decision. If the note with the text “neither – nor” was perceived to be the most pleasant option, the alternatives for the decision might not have been clearly or sufficiently defined. In this case, new perspectives can be opened up by asking the question: “Which other possibilities exist?”

The observers also express their impressions.

### Timeframe

35 min

Phase 1: Introduction and grouping	Phase 2: Group work	Phase 3: Feedback and evaluation within the group
10 min	10 min	15 min

### Materials

- Four identical slips of paper (per group)
- Markers
- Notepad/index card with supporting questions (1x per group)

## Remarks

- Application: for all decision-making situations between two alternatives, when both have already been thoroughly reflected on. This is particularly useful for refugees who may have to decide on the question of “return yes/no”.
- The number of paper slips can be increased if there are other decision options.
- It is useful to read the dossiers [Understanding Emotions](#) and [Coping Strategies for Dealing with Stress](#) as well as [Voluntary Return](#).

## Authorship

Katja Littmann

The method is based on the anchoring method from Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and the constellation method according to Bert Hellinger. It is similar to the “tetralemma” exercise, which originates from systemic constellation work, and was developed by Insa Sparrer and Matthias Varga von Kibéd.

## Further Reading

Damasio, Antonio (2018). *The Strange Order of Things: Life, Feeling, and the Making of Cultures*. New York.

Gendlin, Eugene T. (1998). *Focusing-orientierte Psychotherapie: Ein Handbuch der erlebensbezogenen Methode*. Munich.

Landsiedel, Stephan (2017). *NLP für Lehrer: Strategien für das Klassenzimmer und das Selbstmanagement*. Germany.

Sparrer, Insa/ Varga von Kibéd, Matthias (2009). *Ganz im Gegenteil, Tetralemmaarbeit und andere Grundformen Systemischer Strukturaufstellungen – für Querdenker und solche, die es werden wollen*. Heidelberg.

Storch, Maja/Krause, Frank (2007). *Selbstmanagement – ressourcenorientiert: Grundlagen und Trainingsmanual für die Arbeit mit dem Zürcher Ressourcen Modell (ZRM)*. Berne.

Ulsamer, Bertold (2001). *Das Handwerk des Familien-Stellens: Eine Einführung in die Praxis der systemischen HELLINGER-THERAPIE*.



# The Rubber Band Model

## Decision between two alternative options

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)
- (return-interested) refugees

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to identify and communicate decision-making mechanisms in situations of ambiguous reality (M 3.4).
2. Participants are also able to access their emotions and physical sensations in the course of decision-making processes.

### Instructions

The trainer requires rubber bands, which he hands out to the participants with the request to pull them over thumb and index finger. This symbolises two options that a person considers and wavers between (when working with return-interested refugees, for example, voluntary return can be an issue). The trainer asks the participants to pull their thumbs and index fingers apart and feel the tension that arises. Now, participants are requested to address the following two questions:

- What is holding me?
- What is pulling me?

The participants silently reflect on their responses for themselves. After that, the trainer collects the responses and writes them down. If participants are stuck in answering the questions, the trainer can help with supporting questions:

- What do you lose? / What do you gain?
- What makes you afraid? / What gives you courage?
- What burdens you? / What makes you relieved?

The trainer will note down everything that comes to the participants' minds concerning these questions. The list will include considerations other than pro/contra arguments. Both questions ("What is holding me?", "What is pulling me?") are positively phrased and help on the emotional level to decide between two options.

### Timeframe

10–15 min

### Materials

- Rubber bands for all participants
- Notepad/index cards
- Pen/felt-tip pen

### Remarks

- This method helps to decide between two alternative options. The rubber band method involves more than just a pro and contra list. It addresses not only the rational but also the emotional level of a decision.
- This method implies the aspect of voluntary action (e.g. "leaving" or "staying", only if both options are possible).
- The method is connected to the dossier Decision-Making Under Stress and Uncertainty, which is recommended for preparation.

### Authorship

Katja Littmann, adapted from:

Hartmann GmbH, Competence Center für Systemische Führung (n.d.). Entscheidung: So verhalten Sie sich bei innerer Zerrissenheit. Available at: [http://www.ccsf.de/entscheidung\\_gummibandmodell.html](http://www.ccsf.de/entscheidung_gummibandmodell.html) (Accessed 6 July 2019).

Moje, Petra (n.d.). Gehen oder bleiben? Die Gummiband-Methode gibt den Ausschlag. Available at: <https://petramoje.de/4-tafel-felder-methode-gummiband-methode> (Accessed 6 July 2019).

# MODULE 3

Videos



Videos

Dossiers

**Module 4**

Methods

Videos

Dossiers

**III.**  
**Brief Portraits**

**Toolbox**





# Displacement and Trauma

## Mental and physical effects

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)
- (return-interested) refugees

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to explain the emotional and psychological impact of forced displacements and return on refugees (M 3.1).
2. Participants are able to build empathy towards people in situations of vulnerability as a result of forced displacement and potential reverse migration (M 1.3).

### Type of Media

Video clip

### Total Length

2:04 min (+ 20 min discussion)

### Short Description

This short video clip uses illustrations to raise awareness of potential post-traumatic disorders among refugees and shows some characteristic symptoms.

### Authorship

Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry

### Available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFN8MsONC2U>

### Licence

Standard YouTube licence

## Language

English (available in 13 different languages)

## Didactic Use

Here is an example of how to use the video:

1. Watch this video together.
2. Discuss the following questions:
  - What is the main message of the video?
  - Did your participants/friends tell you about their displacement experiences?
  - Did you notice any behaviour (in and outside classes) that could indicate a traumatic experience?
  - Are you aware of the effects of traumatisation, and if so, what are these effects?
  - What is your role as an instructor in dealing with traumatised refugees?

After watching the video, the following background information can be given: A study of Syrian refugees in Turkey carried out in 2015 shows that two thirds of these refugees had observed death, or experienced torture or abduction of close friends or a family member (cf. Alpak et al. 2015). As a result, 20 to 30 percent of the refugees suffer from severe depression or a profound post-traumatic stress disorder (cf. Steel et al. 2009). Traumatic experiences arising after forced displacement from war zones can lead to distressing symptoms, which impair everyday life. The symptoms (see also the method and handouts on Distress Reactions) often subside with time but sometimes persist. People who exhibit symptoms from traumatic experiences should seek medical or therapeutic help.

### Further information

- The two-minute film is easily comprehensible, available in 13 languages, and can thus be used in lessons with refugees to raise awareness of the topic and individual symptoms. Trainers should consider that some of their participants might feel concerned and may require professional support. The trainer should be prepared to be approached by participants, including for a follow-up conversation. It is neither necessary nor helpful to intervene with psychotherapeutic support. It is important to communicate to those affected that these symptoms are normal reactions to abnormal situations, and to indicate options for counselling or therapy.
- This video clip is aimed directly at those individuals affected, but can also be a good introduction to the topic of trauma and working with traumatised persons in an educational context, especially in connection with the method [A Blank Sheet of Paper](#). For more information on how to deal with traumatised persons in class, see the dossier [The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom](#).
- The Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry has produced another video clip that provides information about self-help options. Available at: <https://www.psych.mpg.de/refpsych-engl>
- The Stiftung Deutsche Depressionshilfe (German Depression Relief Foundation) has had its online self-management programme for individuals suffering from mild depression translated into Arabic: iFightDepression Tool. Available at: <https://ifightdepression.com/en/>

### Further Reading

Alpak, Gokay/Unal, Ahmet et al (2015). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Syrian Refugees in Turkey: A Cross-Sectional Study. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25195765> (Accessed 6 July 2019).

Steel, Zachary/Chey, Tien et al. (2009). Association of Torture and Other Potentially Traumatic Events with Mental Health Outcomes Among Populations Exposed to Mass Conflict and Displacement: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19654388> (Accessed 6 July 2019).





# The Power of Stories

## Facilitating mental health support to refugees

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to explain the emotional and psychological impact of forced displacements and return on refugees (M 3.1).
2. Participants are able to understand the importance of building new narratives for the mental health of refugees.

### Type of Media

Video

### Total Length

5:19 min (+ 20 min discussion)

### Short Description

In this video, Arab child psychiatrist, Essam Daod explains why the global refugee crisis is a mental health disaster for those affected. Millions of people are in need of psychological support to overcome the traumas of displacement and conflict. He emphasises the importance of story-telling (narratives) as an approach for helping refugees trapped in destructive or harmful narratives to transform their stories into a positive picture by focusing on their resilience. Building constructive narratives enhances self-esteem and empowers people in vulnerable situations to cope with life's challenges and refocus their lives.

Essam Daod is co-director of Humanity Crew, an organisation that rescues refugee boats on the shorelines of Greece and the Mediterranean Sea. Their aim is to help refugees (a quarter of whom are children) to reframe their experiences through short, powerful psychological interventions.

**Authorship**

TED Talk

**Available at**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/essam\\_daod\\_how\\_we\\_can\\_bring\\_mental\\_health\\_support\\_to\\_refugees/discussion?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/essam_daod_how_we_can_bring_mental_health_support_to_refugees/discussion?language=en)

**Licence**

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International

**Language**

English (with subtitles in 34 languages)

**Didactic Use (20 min)**

This video can be used in the theme of building a new narrative (story-telling) to cope with negative feelings like failure, disappointment, fear and blame that come with the experience of being a refugee and then returning.

First, the group watches the video together. Afterwards, there are the following reflection questions that can be discussed in plenary:

- According to you, what does Essam Daod mean by building new narratives?
- Where do you see the bravery in the stories of the refugees?
- What traits do you appreciate in your participants?
- How do you think you can assist your participants in reconstructing their narratives and in telling a new, brighter story about their journey or their current situation?

This approach of “story-telling” can be applied practically in the method [The Power of Story-Telling](#).

**Further Information**

Further information on this topic is available in the dossiers [The Power of “Story-Telling”](#), [Understanding Distress and Trauma of Refugees](#) and [Coping Strategies for Dealing with Stress](#).

# MODULE 3

Dossiers



Dossiers

Module 4

Methods

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Toolbox





# Understanding Distress and Trauma of Refugees

## Sources, triggers and symptoms

Author: Tania Hussein

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

Many refugees have experienced distress and/or trauma as a result of crises and disasters in their home countries, during their displacement and migration or on their return. Life in the host country may also entail experiences that add to refugees' distress and trauma. In the classroom, trainers are likely to find distressed participants or participants affected by trauma. While the trainer is not expected to provide specialised and focused interventions, he/she nevertheless, is expected to have a basic understanding of the triggers and signs of distress and/or trauma. Furthermore, the trainer should be aware of the different reactions of people to crises situations and the influence of cultural variables on these reactions. Learning about distress and trauma can help trainers empathise with their participants and provide them with tools that enable learners to build on their strengths and resources. This dossier provides trainers with key information about the subject and lays the foundation for dealing with vulnerable individuals.

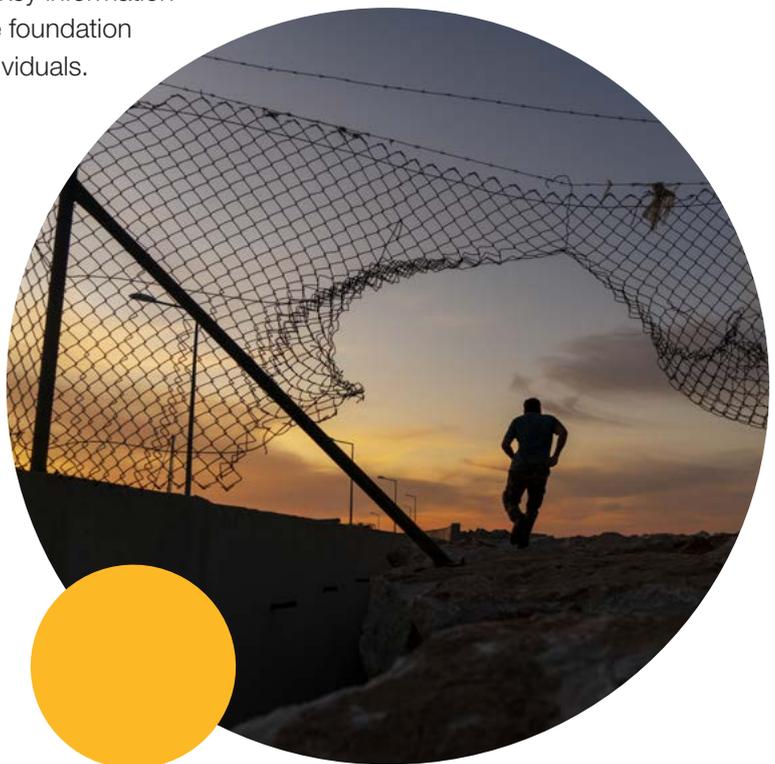


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## Difference Between Distress and Trauma

People may experience diverse psychosocial problems, among them distress and trauma, but also other mental health issues (IASC, 2007). Oftentimes, the words “stress” and “distress” are used interchangeably in the literature and this causes confusion. Everyone experiences stress at various points in their lives. Stressors can be minor such as being late for an appointment, or major such as the loss of a loved one, serious injury or illness (APA 2019). Stress induces emotional, cognitive and physical changes in the individual to varying degrees depending on the person in question and the level of stress (APA 2019). Distress, on the other hand, is defined by the IOM as “mental or physical hardship or suffering caused by a negative situation. A condition of desperate need” (IOM 2009: 117). Distress occurs when an individual experiences intense stress that is unresolved and is often difficult to manage (APA 2019).

The word “trauma” is originally Greek and means “wound” (Catherall 2004). Trauma is defined as “a disordered mental or emotional state due to mental, emotional or physical shock or stress” (IOM 2009: 117). A traumatic event may consist of one single incident or may include repeated or multiple incidents that render an individual unable to cope or process the emotions involved in that experience (Klinik 2013).

### **Examples of Events That May Lead to Trauma**

Combat, war, violence, assaults, rape; accidents, injuries, natural disasters; physical, emotional, sexual abuse; cruelty, exploitation, neglect; life-threatening illness or disability; witnessing or being threatened by violent acts; surgeries, painful treatments; cultural or intergenerational distress; the sudden death of someone close; and humiliating events (AMHCA n.d.)

Regardless of their sources, three main elements (Klinik, 2013) underpin trauma:

- the incident was unexpected;
- the person was unprepared; and
- there was nothing the person could do to stop it from happening.

Traumatising events can have a serious emotional toll on the individuals involved and may negatively affect their identity, mind, body, and soul (Klinik 2013). In refugee contexts, psychological trauma is often defined by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder/PTSD (Schininà n.d.). PTSD entails a series of long-term emotional manifestations that are linked to the traumatic event. Threats to refugees' identity are brought forth by all phases of the migration process such as pre-departure, movement, arrival in host country, resettlement, integration, and return (Schininà n.d.). This means that trauma may not only have been experienced when refugees were still in their home countries but also during all phases of the migration cycle.

Everyone processes a traumatic event differently. However, exposure to prolonged or acute stress may alter an individual's biochemistry (Catherall 2004). Also, when an individual affected by trauma displays acute stress reactions for more than 30 days, he or she may go on to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can render them unable to carry out their daily functions or maintain relationships (Spasojevic et al. 2000). When individuals exhibit any of the following signs, they need to be referred to specialised mental health services (Schininà n.d):

- When they are suicidal or self-harming;
- When they are violent against others;
- When they are not able to function in their everyday life; and
- When they ask to be referred to specialised services for help.

## Major Sources and Triggers of Distress During Displacement and During Return Migration

A study conducted by Hassan et al. (2015) found that the major sources of distress for Syrian refugees were related to loss and grief. Loss in this case includes the death of family members, material and emotional losses. Ongoing concerns about the safety of family members are reported as being a major source of stress (cf. Hassan et al. 2016). Post-migration factors such as income, employment status and language barriers can all result in or add to the distress of individuals (Hyman et al. 2000).

Refugees fleeing their home countries may be subjected to imprisonment, torture, loss of property, rape, physical assault, hunger, and loss of livelihood (Refugee Health n.d.). During flight, refugees are often separated from other family members and may face multiple dangers throughout the process, such as being robbed, forced to kill, witness the torture and/or killing of a family member or friend, and endure other harsh conditions (Refugee Health n.d.). All these factors have an impact on refugees' health and their ability to develop trusting interpersonal relationships, an issue that is critical to their healing.

Also, when refugees arrive in a host country, they are faced with new challenges such as the need to adapt to a new place and language under uncertain circumstances and with uncertain futures (Refugee Health n.d.).

Earlier studies suggest that post-migration stress contributes to poor mental health of refugees, significantly influences their emotional wellbeing, and often presents a risk similar to or greater than the war-related trauma which they had experienced in their home countries (Refugee Health n.d.). It is important to keep in mind that distress may also result when refugees are trying to make a decision about returning to their home countries.

However, it is normal for returnees to feel somewhat

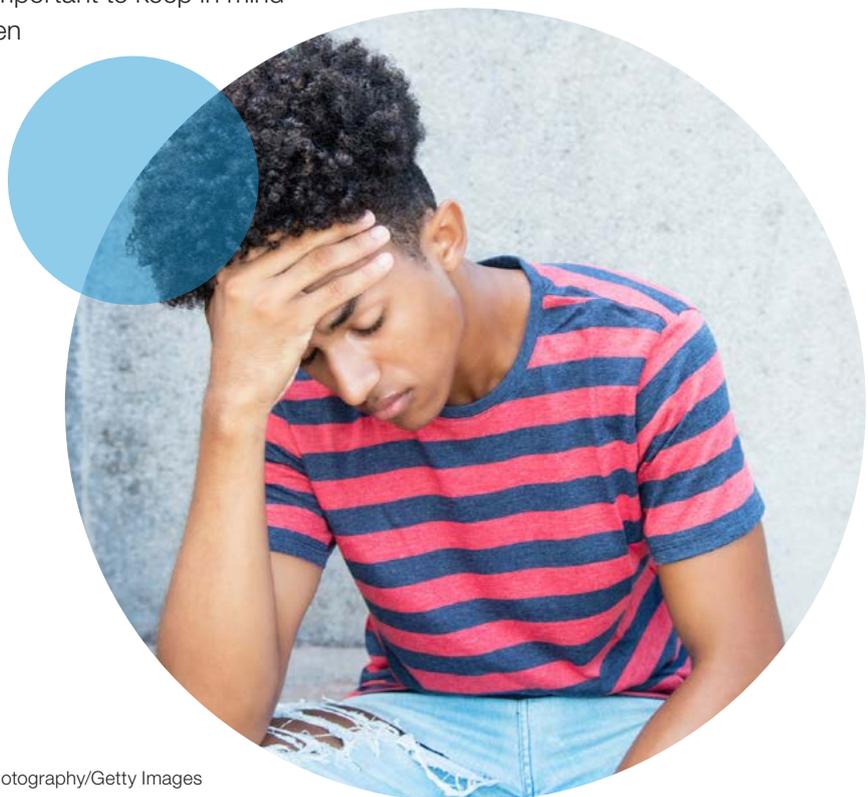


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ambiguous about their home country given the traumatic events they had endured back home before their displacement. Return also entails a number of challenges such as the ability of returnees to retrieve property and land; insecurity; feeling rejected by those who stayed during the war; price rises, etc. (Grawert 2019). Therefore, such challenges may trigger further distress.

### Common Signs of Distress and Trauma in General and in Class

Some of the common reactions and responses to disaster as reported by the American Psychological Association (APA) include feeling stunned, disoriented or unable to process distressing information. When these initial reactions to disaster subside, people then can experience a variety of thoughts and behaviours. Likewise, psychological and social distress among refugees is manifested in a wide range of issues such as emotional, cognitive, physical, and behavioural problems (Hassan et al. 2015). Emotions and behaviours that have been widely reported among refugees (Hassan et al. 2015) are highlighted below:

#### Emotional problems

Sadness, grief, fear, frustration, anxiety, anger and despair

#### Cognitive Problems

Loss of control, helplessness, worry, ruminations, boredom and hopelessness

#### Physical problems

Fatigue, sleeping problems, loss of appetite, and medically unexplained physical complaints

#### Social and Behavioural Problems

Withdrawal, aggression and interpersonal difficulties

Most of these symptoms are common among refugees who experienced and/or still endure very difficult circumstances. These phenomena are the result of ongoing violence, displacement, harsh circumstances (Hassan et al. 2015) and post-migration living conditions (e.g. Hyman et al. 2000). When someone displays any of these problems, this does not necessarily indicate the existence of a mental disorder as hardships often result in feelings of hopelessness and demoralisation (Hassan et al. 2015). It is a common misconception to assume that just because someone has suffered difficult circumstances he or she has a mental disorder or needs medical treatment. In other words, these problems can be normal reactions to abnormal circumstances. Nevertheless, it is important to note that when distress starts to affect and impair daily functioning and the individual starts to exhibit certain symptoms then that person may have a mental disorder (Hassan et al. 2015).

**Note:**

It is not the role of the trainer to make a diagnosis, as this is the role of mental health professionals. The trainer should only be able to recognise the basic signs and symptoms of distress and trauma in their participants so that they can provide empathic support in the classroom (see [Guiding Principles for Dealing with Vulnerable People](#)).

When someone goes through a traumatic experience, he or she may exhibit certain reactions, which may include (Gillihan 2016):

- **Replaying the memory:**

Many people who have been through a traumatic experience relive that horrible experience repeatedly as their minds return over and over again to that upsetting memory. Reliving the traumatic experience can be extremely distressing.

- **Nightmares:**

It is common for individuals to have nightmares after a crisis or traumatic incident. Basically, their nervous system has taken a big shock and the brain continues to process the experience during sleep. Nightmares result in poor sleep, which is common after a traumatic event.

- **Flashbacks:**

A flashback is a vivid experience in which the person feels as if the traumatic experience is happening all over again. Flashbacks can be very upsetting because they flood the individual with very powerful emotions and vivid memories of the traumatic incident.

- **Fear and anxiety:**

One of the most common reactions to trauma is feeling fearful or anxious. It is normal that we would feel afraid after experiencing a traumatic event. When something triggers a reminder of the trauma, the individual may feel intense fear, but with most people and most other reactions, such feelings decrease over time.

- **Anger:**

This is also a common response to trauma. Sometimes, this anger is directed towards the person or situation that is responsible for the traumatic incident, but many times, we are also angry with ourselves. People who have endured a traumatic experience may blame themselves for what happened. This causes people to become irritable, snapping at their partners and/or their children. Again, like all other trauma-related reactions, it is normal to feel angry after the incident.

- **Sadness:**

People often feel sad after a traumatic event. They also often cry, which can be one way for their nervous system to calm down. Sadness and grief are also common when the traumatic experience involved the loss of a loved one. Sadness can also result when someone feels the world is such a threatening place to live in.

- **Guilt:**

When the traumatic experience resulted in a loved one or close person being hurt or killed, many people often feel guilty and start blaming themselves for having failed to prevent what happened and protect the victim(s). At times, people may feel their mischief is a result of something they did.

- **Feeling numb:**

Some people may feel strong emotions as a result of the trauma while other people may feel numb. Feeling numb is basically a state in which the person concerned almost shuts down his/her emotions. Numbing is one of the mind's self-protective mechanisms when faced with overwhelming emotions.

- **Feeling constantly on guard:**

When people go through a traumatic experience, their nervous system becomes on guard to alert the person of any possible future danger. People who are constantly on guard keep scanning their surroundings in an attempt to detect possible threats. In other words, the brain is trying to protect that person. However, it is not pleasant to be in this state of constant alert.

- **Being easily startled:**

When the nervous system is blocked at “high activity”, any minor incident, such as a slamming door, may startle the person. These people often find themselves jumpier than usual.

It is very likely that some of the refugees participating in the course have experienced a traumatic event. As a trainer, you can offer the following support:

- Make sure not to blame or judge them.
- Avoid “why” questions that carry a blaming connotation.
- Listen and allow time to talk.
- Do not undermine their feelings in an attempt to make them feel better (e.g. asking them not to cry or telling them that others have gone through worse situations).

The last section of this dossier provides some guidelines on how to deal with vulnerable people.



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## Culture-Specific Expressions of Distress

In explaining their mental illness or psychosocial problems, people draw on their cultural systems of knowledge, beliefs and practices which can provide them with ideas about causality and may help them cope or seek help (Hassan et al. 2015). Cultural differences can also exist regarding the way people explain and make sense of their symptoms or illness, how they view the causes, or what they anticipate the outcome of their problem will be, and what they believe might be an appropriate treatment or solution to their problem (Hassan et al. 2015).

Using psychiatric or psychological labelling can be alienating and stigmatising for many refugees, particularly for survivors of violence and injustice (Hassan et al. 2015). In Syria, for example, oftentimes terms such as “psychological state”, “mental health”, or “psychological wellbeing” may carry negative connotations, given that suffering is perceived as a normal part of life (Hassan et al. 2015). Some distressed people may use the words “I am tired” when asked about their wellbeing and these words may indicate a general state of not feeling well and may stand for a wide range of emotional symptoms (Hassan et al. 2015). Therefore, understanding the different expressions of distress is key for communicating with and supporting refugees and returnees. Some of the most common concepts of distress among Syrians, for example, are highlighted below (see Hassan et al. 2015 for the full range of examples of common expressions and idioms of distress).

### Literal translation of expressions from Arabic:

- I am very annoyed these days.
- My psyche is suffocating.
- I feel my soul is going out.
- Squeezed heart / blindness got to my heart.
- By God, I can't see in front of me.

### Emotions, thoughts and physical symptoms that may be conveyed through these expressions:

- Rumination, tiredness, physical aches, constriction in the chest, repeated sighing
- Unpleasant feelings in the chest, hopelessness, boredom
- Dysphoric mood, sadness, inability to cope, being fed up, worry, pessimism
- Dysphoria, sadness, worry, pessimism
- General state of stress, feelings of loss of options, loss of ability to project into the future, confusion, hopelessness.

If we consider Syrian refugees, for example, historical, religious, ethnic and social dynamics all play a part in shaping their views of themselves, other people, and the relationship of the person to the world at large (Hassan et al. 2015). Religion in countries like Syria and the Arab world is of paramount importance. The person is perceived in Islamic belief to be linked to other creatures created by God including angels and spirits, and the notion of “fate” is central to this perception (Hassan et al. 2015). Druze, on the other hand, believe in reincarnation and the transmigration of the soul, and individuals may interpret their suffering and/or mental illness as punishment for their misdeeds in a previous life (Hassan et al. 2015). Against this background, understanding how participants from different cultures express their feelings of distress can help the trainer better communicate with and support the participants. In addition, developing an understanding of the cultural practices that may be crucial to refugees’ recovery is important (Hassan et al. 2015). It may be worthwhile for the trainer to attempt to identify some of the most common culturally-based expressions of distress among his or her participants. This can be achieved as follows (see Klinik 2013 for further details):

- Strive to be culturally appropriate and informed (Klinik 2013).
- Learn about the individual’s culture by asking them about it, learn skills to deal with them, and understand how your cultural background may influence your interactions with that individual (Elliot et al. 2005).
- Understand the meaning the individual attaches to the trauma drawing on his/her own cultural perspective (Klinik 2013).
- Understand what healing means to the individual drawing on their cultural context (Klinik 2013).

### What Do Traumatized and Distressed Persons Need?

#### Basic Guiding Principles for Working With Vulnerable People

Research shows that most people are resilient, and with time, they are able to bounce back from their traumatic experiences (APA n.d.). More specifically, in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event, it is common for people to experience distress, but within a few months, most people are able to resume functioning (APA n.d.). Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that **resilience** and **recovery** are the norm, not prolonged distress (APA n.d.), and that resilience factors differ between communities, age groups, and gender (Schininà n.d.).

When dealing with individuals affected by trauma, it is important to understand their needs. Nevertheless, it is also important to remember that people process their feelings and experiences differently, and as such, have different needs. If we make an effort to understand people who have experienced trauma from their perspectives and understand their cultural explanation of the incident, then we may be able to work with them and help them (Hassan et al. 2015). While this dossier is not designed to address every specific need that individuals experiencing distress or trauma may have, it does provide an overview on the most common needs and means of showing a supportive and caring attitude (also see the method and connected [Handout: Guiding Principles for Dealing with Vulnerable People](#)).

Creating an atmosphere of security is particularly important, as traumatised refugees often feel anxious and are unable to trust other people. Therefore, they have first and foremost the following needs (Clinic 2013):

- **Empathy:** People who have experienced trauma need empathy not sympathy. Empathy entails feeling supported and understood while sympathy is about pity. Pity generates feelings of shame while empathy and compassion create connection. A compassionate person is someone who feels the pain and suffering of others.
- **Ability to talk openly:** In order to help individuals who have experienced trauma, it is important to be able to talk openly about problems, feelings and experiences related to the trauma. Of course, the person who has experienced the trauma can decide whether or not to disclose these things. Healing begins to occur when we are able to engage with individuals' suffering.
- **Connecting with individuals' experiences of trauma:** In order to make a meaningful connection with individuals who have experienced trauma, it is important for that connection to be beyond facts and symptoms. Feelings and emotions are key in our efforts to help distressed or traumatised individuals. This shows them that they are accepted, understood and cared for.



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- **Treating the individual affected by trauma as an equal collaborator:** It is important to treat individuals who have been affected by trauma as equals, not as weaker or less resourceful individuals. When these individuals are treated as equals, they can start to draw on their strengths and resources.
- **Listening:** Active listening demonstrates that the listener is focusing on what is being said and shows genuine interest. As a result, this will encourage the individual to open up and share feelings and information, which contributes to their healing and recovery. Being a good listener also means that we are comfortable with silence.

For further information about communicating with vulnerable individuals, see the method and connected [Handout: Communication Recommendations – Dos & Don'ts](#).

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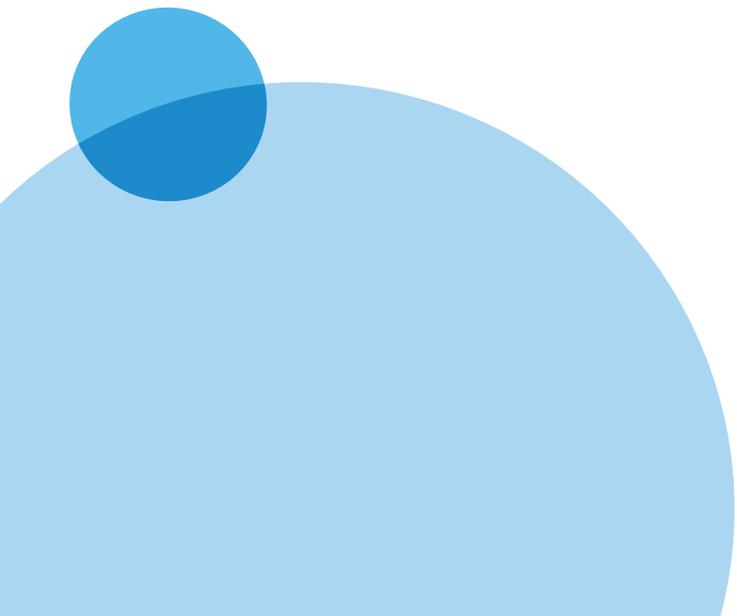
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# Understanding Emotions

## Dealing with emotions in the classroom

Author: Tania Hussein

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

Refugees did not choose to become refugees for the sake of it. In their home country, they had a job, kept a house and had a circle of friends and nice neighbours. They had dreams and aspirations for a better future. Then, suddenly everything is gone. Many have lost loved ones, saw them being tortured, or they themselves survived torture, violence or sexual assault. While refugees still try to understand what has happened to them and to process their emotions, they are hit by another challenging reality. They find themselves in a host country of a vastly different culture. They do not speak the language of the host country, they have no source of income, their children perhaps are unable to attend school, they are worried about other family members left behind, and they are overwhelmed with fear, grief, and a great sense of loss.

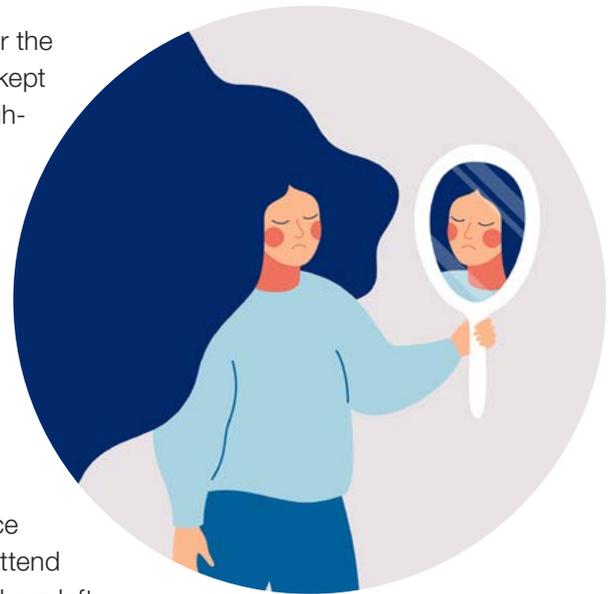


Bild: Ponomariova\_Maria/Getty Images

Traumatic experiences flood the individual with a wide range of difficult emotions. Adults affected by trauma, who struggle to adopt ways of coping with distress, often resort to simple, “primitive” defence mechanisms, which are not helpful. Therefore, in their work with refugees, trainers need to understand and be able to identify these emotions. Moreover, it is necessary that trainers understand how emotions influence actions, and learn about the different defence mechanisms individuals use to cope with traumatic experiences. This type of knowledge prepares trainers to respond effectively and empathetically to the needs of their students who have been affected by trauma.

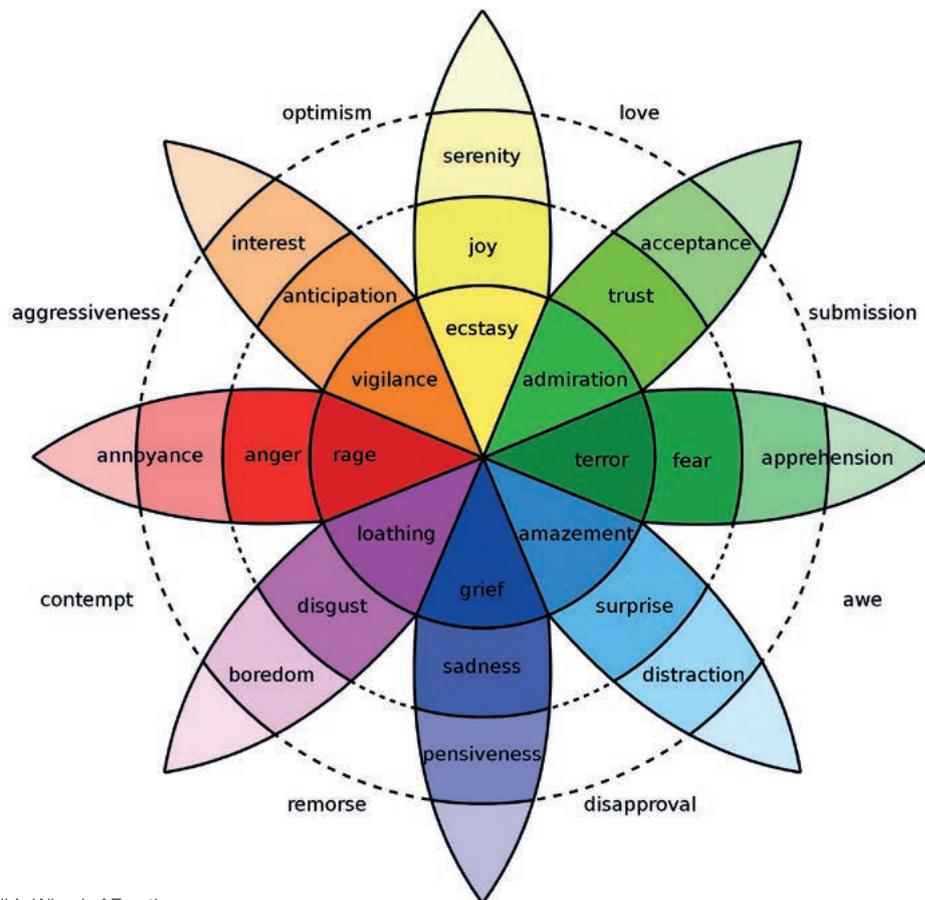
## Identifying Emotions

In our attempt to express individual and/or collective identities, we tend to create differences. However, we need to remember that we are all bound by shared experiences of common humanity (DVV International, 2018).

*“Although people’s stories may sometimes differ, and can be even overwhelming, particularly in the context of displacement, beneath them there still lie emotions to which we can relate – emotions of love and despair, longing and excitement, happiness and sadness, among other emotions. These are all common emotions that unite us as humans, with which we can sympathise and upon which we can build bridges of communication” (DVV International 2018: 11).*

Humans experience around 34,000 emotions (Karimova 2017). With so many emotions, navigating and understanding feelings becomes a very difficult task. To tackle this problem, Dr. Robert Plutchik, American psychologist, proposed eight primary emotions as the foundation for all other emotional actions: joy, sadness, acceptance, disgust, fear, anger, surprise and anticipation (cf. Karimova 2017). This way, we can learn how to identify the primary emotions without the need to understand all 34,000 emotions. Taking a look at Plutchik’s wheel of emotions (see image below), we notice that it has three main characteristics (Karimova 2017):

- **Colours:** The eight emotions are arranged by colours that result in a set of similar emotions. Primary emotions can be found in the second circle and emotions with a softer colour are basically a mix of two primary emotions.
- **Layers:** As we move towards the centre of the circle, emotions begin to intensify and accordingly the colours intensify as well. For example, at the heart of the wheel, the primary emotions change from anger to rage; anticipation to vigilance; joy to ecstasy; sadness to grief and so on. When moving to the outer layers, we notice that the colours are less saturated and emotions are lower in intensity.
- **Relations:** Polar opposite emotions are across from each other and the spaces between the emotions show combinations when primary emotions mix. So, here we notice the emergence of emotions such as love, submission, aggressiveness, optimism, remorse, and so on.



Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions  
Source [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Plutchik](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Plutchik)

We process emotions at a subconscious level, which makes it hard to identify and articulate our needs. It is here where the emotions wheel becomes handy. It helps us visualise our emotions and understand which combinations of emotions created the feelings we are experiencing now (Karimova 2017). The wheel also helps us to understand how emotions combine to create secondary emotions such as aggression, optimism, remorse, and so on, as it also helps us see the emotional intensity of both primary and secondary emotions (Roeckelein 2006).

To understand our emotions, it is important to take interest in them; be curious about and patient with our emotions; articulate our emotions; learn to accept having different emotions; and learn to change our emotions with other emotions (Karimova 2017). Trainers can use these points along with the emotions wheel to help students better identify, understand and articulate how they feel. This can make a meaningful contribution to helping refugees cope better with their lives.

## How Do Emotions Influence Our Actions?

Emotions influence our actions and behaviours in five primary ways (Karimova 2017):

- **Emotional component:** This is where an individual simply experiences and recognises his/her feelings.
- **Action tendency component:** After emotions are identified, the body moves into action mode. Emotions confer certain actions instead of others. This means that some actions are beyond our control (e.g. pulling your hand away from a hot pot), while other actions are within our control (e.g. facing the fear to make a speech or a presentation).
- **Appraisal component:** When an individual is cognitively able to analyse emotions, he/she becomes able to pinpoint the sources causing the emotion, such as individuals, situations, actions, and so on.
- **Motor component:** This is when we express what we are experiencing, which is often communicated through facial expressions, body movements, hand gestures, etc.
- **Psychological component:** This component supports all other components and is basically the chemical reaction that goes on in our bodies, e.g. when blood flows to the hands when we are angry.

The above components of emotions are present in all individuals. However, we each experience these emotions differently in terms of intensity and expression, and also factors like gender, culture, and family background influence that people experience emotions differently in similar situations (Pekrun/Linnenbrink-Garica 2014).

## Defence Mechanisms

Trainers are confronted with learners' emotions in the classroom on a daily basis, and they need to be able to deal with that. In order to respond more effectively to participants' emotions, the trainer needs to understand the different defence mechanisms individuals display when dealing with their emotions. In psychology, defence mechanisms are ways in which individuals behave or think in order to protect or defend their inner selves (Grohol 2019). Psychologists have categorised defence mechanisms based on their level of primitiveness, wherein the more primitive a defence mechanism is, the less effective it is in the long-run (Grohol 2019). Most defence mechanisms are unconscious processes. The following different defence mechanisms<sup>1</sup> exist:



Photo: GoodLifeStudio/Getty Images

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<sup>1</sup> Not all defence mechanisms are explained for purposes of this training (for further details, see Groho 2019).

**Primitive defence mechanisms (Grohol 2019)**

- **Denial:** is one of the most primitive defence mechanisms. It is refusal to accept a certain reality and the individual acts as if the painful situation, thought or feeling did not exist.
- **Regression:** this is when an individual reverts to an earlier stage of development in the face of difficult or unacceptable thoughts or impulses. For example, an adult may regress by refusing to leave their bed and carry out normal day-to-day activities, and an adolescent overwhelmed with fear or anger may exhibit earlier childhood behaviours such as bedwetting.
- **Acting out:** this is when an individual performs extreme behaviour to express thoughts or feelings, such as throwing a book at someone or punching a hole in the wall. This defence mechanism serves as pressure release, after which, the individual may feel calmer (but obviously, this is a dysfunctional way of releasing stress).
- **Dissociation:** this is when someone loses track of time or themselves or their memories. They find another representation of themselves and often have a disconnected view of themselves. They basically disconnect from the real world for some time and live in a different world that is more bearable. People with a history of child abuse often suffer from some dissociation.
- **Projection:** is lack of awareness and acknowledgement of one's own motivations and feelings. It is when a person misattributes his/her thoughts, feelings, or impulses onto another person. For example, a husband may be angry with his wife for not listening when in reality he is the one not listening.

### Less primitive, more mature defence mechanisms (Grohol 2019)

- **Repression:** this is the unconscious blocking of unbearable or unacceptable thoughts, feelings and impulses. Being an unconscious process means that people have very little control over it. “Repressed memories” are those that have been unconsciously blocked from access.
- **Displacement:** this is the redirecting of thoughts, feelings and impulses at someone else or an object. People use displacement when they are unable to express their feelings in a safe manner to the person they are directed at. For example, a man who is angry but cannot express his anger to his boss for fear of being fired, takes out his anger on his wife or children.
- **Rationalisation:** this is basically when an individual attempts to make sense out of an experience by offering a different explanation of one’s perceptions or behaviours.

### Mature defence mechanism (Grohol 2019)

- **Sublimation:** it is channelling unacceptable impulses, thoughts and emotions into more acceptable ones. For example, when someone has sexual impulses he/she does not want to act upon, they may focus on rigorous exercise instead.
- **Compensation:** this is a psychological process of compensating perceived weaknesses by focusing on strengths in other areas. For example, someone might say, “I don’t know how to cook, but I surely can wash the dishes.” This can be a helpful defence mechanism if done appropriately without trying to overcompensate.
- **Assertiveness:** this is when an individual asserts his/her needs or thoughts in a respectful, direct and firm manner. It is one of the most desired communication skills and a helpful defence mechanism.

As mentioned earlier, adults affected by trauma often resort to primitive defence mechanisms as means of coping with distress, and therefore, it is important for trainers to have an understanding of these defence mechanisms. It is also equally important that trainers are emotionally competent. This means that they are able to understand their own emotions and those of others and that they are able to empathise with their students. More information on how to deal respectfully and empathetically with participants is available in the dossiers [Understanding Psychosocial Stress](#) and [Trauma of Refugees and The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom](#). Furthermore, there are two methods [What Is Your Coping Style?](#) and [How Do I Cope?](#) that can be used in the classroom.

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# The Power of “Story-Telling”

## Reinterpreting life stories in a new and positive way

Author: Tania Hussein

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

*“Human beings are storytellers by nature. In the multitude of guises, as folktale, legend, myth, fairy tale, history, epic, opera, motion picture, television situation comedy, novel, biography, joke, and personal anecdote, the story appears in every known human culture. We expect much from stories. We expect them to entertain, educate, inspire, and persuade us; to keep us awake and put us to sleep; to make us feel joy, sadness, anger, excitement, horror, shame, guilt, and virtually any other emotion we can name. We also expect stories to tell us who we are.”*

*(McAdams 2006: 76)*

This dossier introduces story-telling (narratives) as an approach for helping individuals trapped in destructive or harmful narratives to change their life stories into good ones by focusing on their resilience.

### What Is a Narrative and Why Do People Construct Narratives?

A narrative is an internal story an individual develops whereby he or she is the main character or hero, which helps them make sense of their lives and experiences (McAdams 1988; Baumeister/Newman 1994; Polkinghorne 1996). The interest in understanding life stories (narratives) dates back to more than 2000 years. However, it is only in the last two decades that the study of narratives gained momentum in multiple disciplines including psychology and criminology.

Narratives involve psychological elements (Bruner 1990) and can help scientists understand what shapes human behaviour (Polkinghorne 1996). The life stories individuals construct may be “ill-formed” or “well-formed” (McAdams 1988). By constructing narratives, individuals are trying to justify and rationalise their actions and make sense of their experiences. Basically, stories give us our identities (McAdams 2006).



Photo: yul38885 yul38885/Getty Images



Photo: Artem Peretiako/Getty Images

### III-Formed vs. Well-Formed Narratives

Narratives become a form of identity and shape who we are and how we view ourselves. Let us take for example individuals who construct narratives of shame. Shame is incapacitating and hinders both growth and change (Rose 2019). Shame narratives sound like saying, “this is just who I am, how I am, or what I am” (Rose 2019). Such narratives labelling a person make us feel unworthy and incapable. The narrative approach can help individuals change the “I am unworthy” narrative into the “I am lovable” narrative or the “I am weak” narrative into the “I am strong or capable” narrative, and so on.

A common shame narrative is “I am unlovable,” which can stem from other core narratives such as “I am not good enough”, etc. (Rose 2019). If an individual believes, he/she is not deserving of love because they are not good enough then this means that this individual’s relationships are going to be dysfunctional to a certain extent (Rose 2019). In working towards deconstructing a harmful narrative such as this one, the therapist asks a number of questions that challenge the individual’s perceptions. For example, when someone says, “I am not lovable”, questions to ask that person can be (Rose 2019):

- What are the facts to support your claim that you are unlovable?
- Is this something that has been told to you, or that you have been telling yourself, or both?
- What evidence backs this up?

Trainers can carry out simple exercises with their students in an attempt to change negative statements into positive ones. They can also challenge their students’ perceptions of themselves by asking them questions similar to those mentioned above and tailored to their specific context and needs. The following section provides further detail on the narrative therapy approach.



Remember, the trainer is not a therapist and cannot perform narrative therapy per se. However, the trainer can equip his/her students with basic skills that can help them re-write their stories. It is also important that the trainer does not view his/her students as poor and broken victims of displacement but as individuals with competences and strengths.

### The Narrative Therapy Approach

*“We are not the sole authors of our stories.”*

*(Winslade/Monk 1999: 3)*

What this quotation means is that “storying” is based on our experiences but is also based on how the individual interprets and constructs meaning from social, political and personal contexts (Countryman-Roswurm/DiLollo 2017). When self-narratives are generated based on social, political and cultural contexts, one consequence is that, at times, personal narratives can be unfulfilling to the narrator and can dominate how they view themselves (Countryman-Roswurm/DiLollo 2017). Stereotypes used in certain cultures, for example, can affect the formation of dominant narratives. The individual then becomes so identified with the dominant narrative that they lose their sense of agency (White/Epston 1990).

Thinking of prejudices and stereotypes towards certain cultural settings, in particular the stereotypes used to describe refugees, raise the question: How might these stereotypes have shaped a refugee’s perception of himself/herself and become a dominant aspect of their life story? Sometimes the narratives we tell about refugees are dominated by disturbing images and endless challenges and we often neglect to focus on their resilience – how they have survived the harsh journey and made it through. Therefore, the stories we tell about ourselves (or about others) can be either empowering or disempowering. Recognising people’s tendency to remain stuck in dominant narratives that limit and disempower them, White and Epston (1990) developed narrative therapy to address the effects of culturally-based stories on how people view themselves and their world (cf. Russell/Carey 2003).

Narrative therapy places people as the experts of their own lives (Countryman-Roswurm/DiLollo 2017). It views the problem as external to the person and assumes that individuals have values, competencies, skills, abilities and beliefs that can help them change how they view and interact with the problems affecting their lives (Countryman-Roswurm/DiLollo 2017). The narrative therapy approach follows a logical sequence, which Payne (2006) describes. However, for purposes of this training, only some aspects of the narrative therapy approach are highlighted below to give a basic understanding of how it works:

- **The “problem-saturated” account counselling:** this typically starts with the individual’s description of his/her current “problem-saturated story” (White 1989), which extends from the individual’s dominant self-narrative that reflects limiting and disempowering roles imposed by personal, cultural and political stereotypes (Payne 2006).
- **Naming the problem:** here the individual is encouraged by the therapist to expand on their initial story and name the problem using a single word or short phrase. Naming the problem encourages focus and gives the individual a sense of control (White/Epston 1990).
- **Externalising the problem:** here the therapist asks questions that serve to promote the assumption that the person is not the problem or that the problem does not exist within the person but that the problem is external to the person (Countryman-Roswurm/DiLollo 2017).
- **Unique outcomes:** the therapist listens to the individual as they give a detailed account of how the problem has impacted their life, and then tries to listen to instances when the individual overcame the influence of the problem, such as creatively dealing with the problem or even forgetting for a brief moment that it existed (Countryman-Roswurm/DiLollo 2017). White (2007) coined these events “unique outcomes” and sees them as an opportunity to represent potential alternative story lines (Countryman-Roswurm/DiLollo 2017).
- **Deconstruction of unique outcomes:** once the unique outcomes are identified, the individual is encouraged to elaborate on the nature of his/her recollections. The therapist asks questions that focus attention on how these experiences do not fit with the story as previously narrated, and here, a richer story of the person’s life may emerge (Countryman-Roswurm/DiLollo 2017).
- **Unique account questions:** these are questions that can contribute to the construction of an alternative story centred on the unique outcomes previously identified (Countryman-Roswurm/DiLollo 2017).

Whilst refugees have endured many hardships, and some have been affected by trauma, it is important to help them focus on their strengths and resources, and therefore, attempt to deconstruct stories of pain, loss, and failure, etc., and reconstruct stories of hope and resilience (see the method [The Power of Story-Telling](#) and the video [The Power of Stories](#)).

*“When narrators derive redemptive meanings from suffering and adversity in their lives, they tend to enjoy correspondingly higher levels of psychological well-being, generativity, and other indices of successful adaptation to life.”*

*(McAdams & McLean, 2013)*

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# Coping Strategies for Dealing with Stress

## The healing power of relaxation techniques

Author: Tania Hussein

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?  
Building resilience in yourself and in learners

We all experience stress, and in fact, it has become endemic worldwide. Because stress is inevitable, it is, therefore, important that we learn how to manage it. This dossier provides trainers with information on some of the common effects of stress on the mind and body, tips on how to perform relaxation techniques, and how to find the relaxation technique that best works for you. For more information on the causes and effects of stress, see the dossier [Understanding Distress and Trauma of Refugees](#).

Learning how to brush stress away, whether through performing simple or more complex relaxation techniques, can be an invaluable skill for refugees and trainers alike. For refugees affected by traumatic events and fears (of the future), it can help to learn how to relax and relieve stress despite unclear perspectives. Relaxation techniques are not only useful for students but for trainers as well. Many trainers, especially those working with individuals affected by trauma, need to implement self-care strategies. They hear painful stories all the time, which may result in them experiencing secondary trauma.

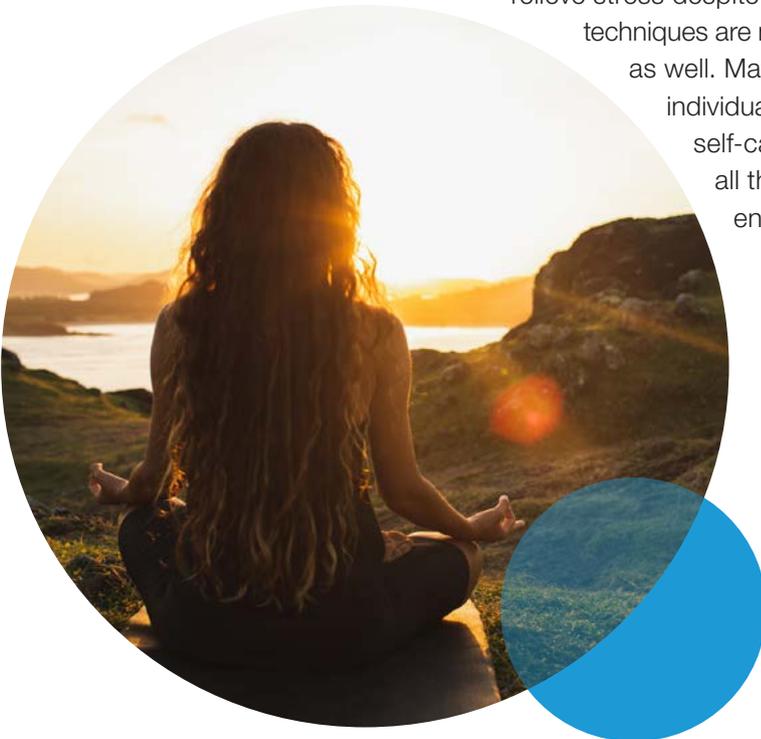


Photo: olegbreslavtsev/Getty Images

## What Does Stress Relief Mean?

Many of us consider relaxation to be a few hours of extra sleep or some time spent with friends or family. While this is important, it certainly is not enough to mitigate the harmful effects of stress on both body and mind. For a successful stress management, we need to adopt some effective relaxation techniques. To bust stress effectively, it is important for the body's natural relaxation response to become activated (UNHCR n.d.). This can be achieved through a number of relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, visualisation, meditation, yoga, running, cycling, or mindful walking. All such techniques can help reduce the negative impact of stress, enhance your mood and energy, and help you stay calm in difficult or unexpected events (UNHCR n.d.). Applying relaxation techniques on a daily basis can yield numerous positive effects.

## Common Effects of Stress

Oftentimes, people suffering from severe headaches, fatigue, or insomnia keep going from one medical doctor to another to try to find out what is wrong. Many times, these symptoms can be the result of stress. This is not to suggest that one should ignore these symptoms. On the contrary, it is important to check with your doctor to find out the causes of your symptoms. Stress symptoms can affect the body, mind, emotions, and behaviour (Mayo Clinic 2019). Understanding the common stress symptoms and being able to recognise them can help in managing them. If left unchecked, stress can lead to many health problems, such as hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and obesity. Mayo Clinic (2019) highlights the effects of stress on the body, mood and behaviour as shown in the table below:

### Effects of Stress...

On the Body	On the Mood	On Behaviour
Headache	Anxiety	Overeating or undereating
Muscle tension or pain	Restlessness	Angry outbursts
Chest pain	Lack of motivation or focus	Drug or alcohol misuse
Fatigue	Feeling overwhelmed	Tobacco use
Change in sex drive	Irritability or anger	Social withdrawal
Upset stomach	Sadness or depression	Exercising less often
Sleep problems		

## The Relaxation Response

When stress overwhelms the nervous system, the body becomes flooded with chemicals, which prepare the individual for the “fight or flight” mode (Robinson et al. 2019). This is not always a bad thing, and in fact, it can be lifesaving in emergency situations when we need to act quickly (Robinson et al. 2019). However, when someone is constantly under stress and the body is continuously flooded with chemicals, this can have a toll on the individual’s emotional and physical health. We all experience stress. It is unavoidable, but we can counteract its harmful effects on body and mind by learning techniques that can help us generate a relaxation response – a state of deep rest (Robinson et al. 2019).

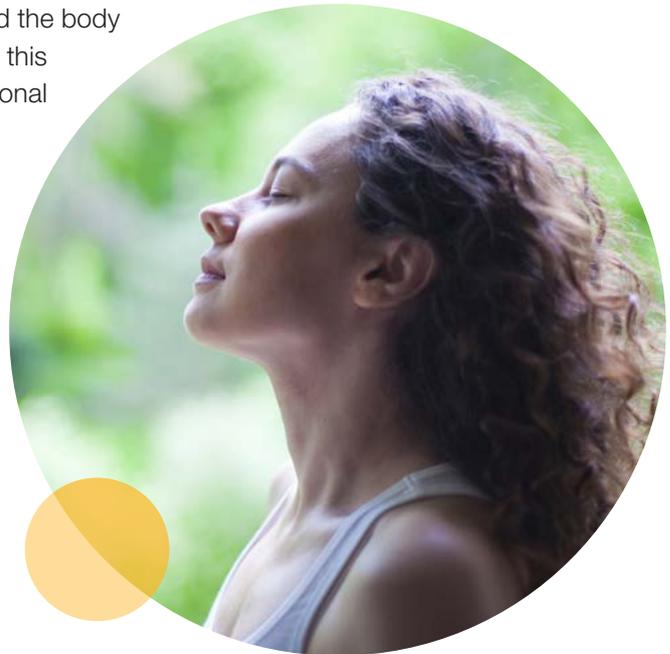


Photo: eternalcreative/Getty Images



### What Is the Relaxation Response?

The term “relaxation response” was created by Dr. Herbert Benson, professor, cardiologist, and founder of Harvard Body/Mind Medical Institute. Relaxation response is defined as, “your personal ability to encourage your body to release chemicals and brain signals that make your muscles and organs slow down and increase blood flow to the brain” (Mitchell, 2013).

Photo: MicroStockHub/Getty Images

The “relaxation response” helps to turn off the “fight or flight” mode and brings the body back to its pre-stress levels as it also can improve health issues caused or made worse by chronic stress (Mitchell 2013). There is a wide variety of techniques that elicit a relaxation response, such as guided imagination/fantasy journey, progressive muscle relaxation, repetitive prayer or repetition of a word or sound, mindfulness meditation, repetitive physical exercises, breath focus (Mind Body Medical Institute 2018), acupuncture, massage, tai chi, qi gong, and yoga (Mitchell 2013).

What happens when the relaxation response is activated (Robinson et al. 2019):

- the heart rate slows down;
- breathing becomes slower and deeper;
- blood pressure drops or stabilises;
- muscles relax; and
- blood flow to the brain increases.

Benefits of the relaxation response include calming physical effects, increase in energy and focus, fighting illness, relieving aches and pains, enhancing problem-solving abilities, and boosting motivation and productivity (Robinson et al. 2019).

### Finding the Relaxation Technique That Is Best for You

There is no single relaxation technique that works best for everyone. You may want to try a number of relaxation techniques to decide which one works most effectively for you. Also, you may realise that altering or combining different techniques gives the best results (Robinson et al. 2019). Learning basic relaxation techniques is not difficult, but it does take practice and commitment of approximately twenty minutes per day (UNHCR n.d.).

Your reaction to stress may also influence the relaxation technique that works best for you (Robinson et al. 2019):

- **The “fight” response:** individuals who often become angry or agitated under stress respond best to stress relief activities that help them calm down. Such activities include meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, or guided imagination/fantasy journey.
- **The “flight” response:** individuals who tend to become depressed or withdrawn due to stress will respond best to stress relief activities that stimulate and energise their nervous system. Relevant activities include massage, mindfulness, rhythmic exercise, or power yoga.

- **The immobilisation response:** some individuals who experienced trauma may tend to “freeze” or become “stuck” under stress. In this case, the first thing to do would be to activate the nervous system to a fight or flight response so that it becomes possible to apply stress relief techniques. Typically, this would entail selecting a physical activity that involves both the arms and legs, such as running, dancing, or Tai chi. These exercises need to be performed mindfully while the individual focuses on his/her limbs as they move.

**Note:** Some individuals prefer to carry out solo relaxation techniques such as meditation and progressive muscle relaxation. However, other individuals crave social interaction, and in this case, joining a group or class may give the stimulation needed (Robinson et al. 2019).

### Tips for Performing Relaxation Techniques

Many stress experts recommend devoting 10 to 20 minutes per day for relaxation exercises, and to maximise benefit, 30 minutes to one hour would be optimal (Robinson et al. 2019). Even if your schedule is rather tight, many relaxation techniques can be performed while doing other tasks (e.g. meditating while on the bus, or practicing mindful walking while walking your dog, etc.). Some points to keep in mind when practicing relaxation techniques include (Robinson et al. 2019):

- Don't practice when you are sleepy.
- Avoid practicing close to bedtime, after a heavy meal, or after drinking alcohol.
- Expect ups and downs as it takes time to start seeing the benefits of relaxation.
- Don't get discouraged if you skip a few days or a few weeks, but get started again.

Some examples on how to integrate relaxation techniques into your classroom are available in the methods [Guided Imagination](#) and [Stretch and Relax](#).

Furthermore, there are two methods [What Is Your Coping Style?](#) and [How Do I Cope?](#) that help tackling emotional challenges in the classroom.

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# The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom

## Creating a safe learning atmosphere for refugees

Author: Katja Littmann

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?

Building resilience in yourself and in learners

### What Does the Trauma-Sensitive Classroom Concept Imply and Where Does It Come From?

The concept of the trauma-sensitive classroom was originally conceived in the educational context of schools and in classes for children with traumatic experiences. It was developed in response to the increasing number of children that have already experienced one or more traumatic events in their lives. The aim of the concept is for instructors to understand the effects of trauma on brain development and on a person's behaviour. The focus of successful trauma-informed classes is on teaching and encouraging self-regulation and building relationships with individuals affected by trauma.

In the context of the increased influx of refugees, the International Rescue Committee (IRC)<sup>1</sup> introduced the "Healing Classrooms" approach in 2018 to assist teachers in creating a safe and supportive learning environment for displaced children and young people. Civil society actors and government agencies working with refugees worldwide and in Germany are adapting concepts of the trauma-sensitive classroom to the target group of adult refugees.

These concepts are based on a trauma-sensitive attitude on the part of the instructor and the use of trauma-sensitive methods and principles in the classroom to facilitate empowering work with refugees.

This is of particular importance in the context of return and reintegration. Refugees who are dealing with a forthcoming return to their home countries face great challenges, and are therefore often exposed to increased distress (see dossier [Understanding Distress and Trauma of Refugees](#)).

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<sup>1</sup> As a non-profit humanitarian organisation, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) supports the education of children and young people in emergency situations in more than 20 countries worldwide. In over 30 years of practical work and scientific research, IRC has come up with concepts to alleviate the consequences of so-called toxic stress on the development of children and adolescents and to facilitate a successful school career for them (see International Rescue Committee 2018).

## How Can Instructors and Coaches Create a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom and Support Traumatized Individuals?

Trauma-informed work involves understanding how violence, victimisation and other traumatic experiences can impact on the lives of those affected. The reactions of people to traumatic events and the course of traumatic reactions differ widely from person to person. The support options that can be provided are just as wide-ranging and individual. It is important to know that psychotherapeutic help cannot be delivered in the context of teaching and learning guidance. The aim is rather to develop a trauma-sensitive attitude and to implement recommendations for action within the teaching context.

Trauma-sensitive work or organising activities in a trauma-sensitive manner requires avoiding any triggering features in implementing activities that could lead to a traumatic experience and re-traumatisation: to feel threatened and at the mercy of others, to experience extreme fear and helplessness, to lose trust and control. Therefore, the focus is on creating framework conditions that provide the maximum level of security, predictability and trust in order to enable the persons concerned to achieve control and self-determination regarding each step (GIZ 2018: 5).



Photo: Nola Bunke ©

## What Exactly Is a Trauma-Sensitive Attitude?

A “trauma-sensitive attitude” does not comprise specific activities that have to be provided for post-traumatic problems. It rather means that the trainer is familiar with the essential principles of dealing with traumatised individuals and integrates those principles into his/her teaching. On the one hand, this requires his/her understanding of the effects of traumatic experiences. On the other hand, it is essential for him/her to realise the shaping impact that traumatic experiences may have on later life decisions, developing coping strategies and present experiences. A trauma-sensitive attitude implies that the trainer considers traumatic experiences and tries to establish the greatest possible contrast to the traumatic situation, which includes:

- **Being sensitive** to possible traumatisation that may exist in the background. The concept of “good reason” (Ebel 2003) states that each and every form of behaviour is an expression of a (possibly postponed) need. In order to survive traumas, people develop certain behavioural patterns that are often geared towards protecting themselves against new dangers or avoiding grief and pain. The sensitive approach towards attributing trauma to a person is of equal importance. Many people see trauma as a blemish, stigmatisation or as “being crazy”. Therefore, it is essential to clarify that this is a normal reaction to abnormal circumstances.

Concept of “good reason”: Every form of behaviour has a good reason.  
If not in the present, then in the past!

- **“Meet the person wherever he/she stands” (in their present life situation):** Concentration difficulties and severe forgetfulness in class may not be an expression of lack of interest but a typical symptom of trauma. Avoidance and other reactions that refugees exhibit can be individual attempts to cope with their situation (see dossier [Understanding Emotions](#)).
- **To recognise and deal with distressing topics:** When working with potentially traumatised refugees, it is recommended to focus on the present and future rather than on the past. While it is a good approach to offer talks, it is up to the person concerned to decide whether, when and with whom he/she wants to talk and about what. If participants are flooded with emotions or dissociate, the instructor should restore security, tranquillity and orientation: “Everything is fine right here and now”. When concerned students talk about their experiences, it is important to listen actively; to keep the space<sup>2</sup>; and to know and respect one’s own limits. In case the situation exceeds the instructor’s personal or professional competences, it is helpful to refer the persons concerned to specialised institutions and networks.

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<sup>2</sup> “Containing” means that the counselling person serves as a “container” and stores in the conversation situation everything that the person concerned has often kept with him/her for months and years (cf. BAfF 2017: 51).

- **Ability to self-reflect:** A trauma-sensitive attitude includes the willingness to question one's own patterns of thought, behaviour and power, an open, culturally sensitive attitude and the ability to change perspectives. It is recommended to reflect on one's own cultural reference system and "knowledge" of other reference systems, to support those concerned by taking their side and showing acceptance, and not to blame the respective person for their condition.
- **Be patient:** In contact with traumatised individuals, it is advisable to reserve sufficient time, to be prepared for a slow relationship building and for repeated relationship tests. Traumatized individuals often require a great deal of time and attention in order to regain confidence, develop their own abilities and achieve their future visions.
- **See traumatised individuals not just as victims but also as survivors:** These persons have managed to organise their flight, to repeatedly survive extreme threats and attacks and to bring themselves to a situation of greater safety. Participants are far more than just traumatised individuals and should be perceived with all their skills and resources.
- **To be prepared for contradictory and changing feelings and opinions:** Refugees, who have uncertain prospects, who may not be able to stay or may have to return, have ambivalent feelings, worries and fears. Refugees can be re-traumatized by an insecure residence status, an uncertain life perspective, a compulsive housing situation and a possibly announced deportation.

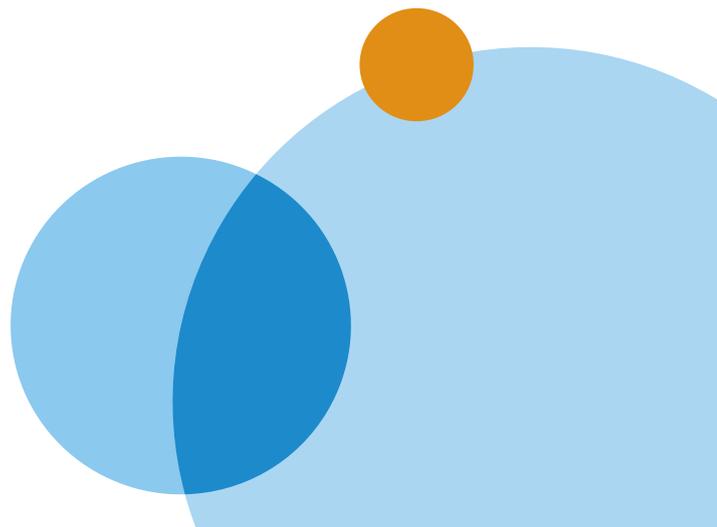


Photo: supersizer/Getty Images

## What Do Traumatized Participants Need in Class?

Trauma education is based on an appreciative and understanding attitude of the educators. Trauma pedagogy focuses on the resources and resilience of those concerned and thus establishes a basis for working with refugees. According to trauma pedagogy, all those who work with refugees should be informed about the basic patterns of traumatization processes and their symptoms. For example, educators should be aware of triggering factors that can cause post-traumatic disorders. The concept of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) aims to maintain and improve the psychosocial well-being of individuals and to counteract mental disorders (see dossier [Understanding Distress and Trauma of Refugees](#)). There are five recommendations that can be derived for classes with refugees:

- 1. The classroom as a “safe place”:** First of all, traumatized participants need to be physically and emotionally safe. The prerequisite for them to feel and develop inner self-security again is to establish real external safety, which includes a secure residence status, a safe living environment and absence of violence as basic securities. In lessons with potentially traumatized participants, this implies to arrange for a predictable environment with structural clarity, binding rules, clear responsibilities, continuity of caregivers, binding agreements, time structures and routines such as daily schedules, timetables, location information, personal greeting or positive feedback at the end. It is also very important to communicate non-violently and to involve the participants in decisions. Traumatized individuals feel a strong need for a predictable and controllable environment, since they have experienced unpredictable events and loss of control.
- 2. Appreciation and reliability:** The trauma-pedagogical approach intends to create a safe framework in which the participants can develop a positive image of themselves. Many refugees have repeatedly and intensively experienced loss of power, helplessness and arbitrary acts leaving them unable to see any meaning or value in themselves or their actions. Time and again, they transfer feelings, thoughts and relationship topics originating from traumatizing situations to current realities. Supporting positive self-perceptions, experiencing oneself as valuable, promoting existing strengths, praise, recognition and communication at eye level help traumatized participants to appreciate themselves again and step out of the victim role.



- 3. Participation and empowerment:** In order to counteract low expectations of self-efficacy and the feeling of control loss, it is essential to boost self-efficacy by giving responsibilities that can be mastered; dividing goals into small, achievable steps; praising commitment and effort; demonstrating progress made and teaching in a resource-orientated manner. When refugee students experience autonomy, competence and belonging, their fears and insecurities are reduced and their motivation to achieve a positive self-esteem is enhanced.
- 4. Transparency:** Persons with distressing life experiences have often been exposed to misuse of power and hierarchy and to an arbitrary handling of safeguarding structures. It is thus of great importance that the participants experience a transparent and responsible handling of hierarchies, structures and power relations. This can be achieved by developing common rules for behaviour in the classroom, by defining and implementing consequences in the event of violations, by creating transparency about requirements and guidelines (e.g. for successful completion of the training or language course), and by explaining hierarchies. The safe place should be a predictable place.
- 5. Fun and joy:** Psychological trauma is accompanied by extreme feelings of fear, helplessness, shame, sadness, anger and disgust (see dossier [Understanding Emotions](#)), creating a considerable imbalance in terms of positive and negative emotions. Therefore, it is vital for balancing emotions and resilience to stimulate and focus on the positive side of emotions such as joy, fun and lightness. Music, movement, stretching, stress management, relaxation, room for humour and laughter should be part of the curriculum, because laughter reduces traumatic responses in the brain. This salutogenic approach to health as a process brings about positive experiences for body and mind, which supports learning and personal development in a sustainable way. Moreover, fun and laughter stimulate the release of serotonin, which provides a counter-balance to the elevated adrenalin production caused by increased stress levels that traumatised people encounter (see BAG 2011).

For counteracting stress and feelings like fear and shame, it is vital to promote happiness and fun in everyday life and in class. The intention here is to strengthen existing resources and jointly discover new ones.

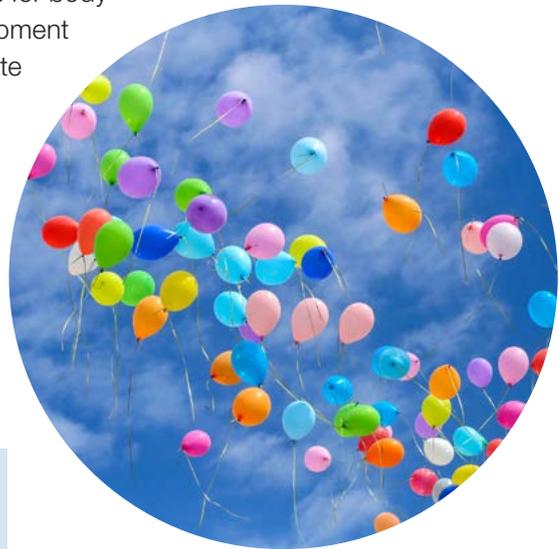


Photo: baronvsp/Getty Images

## How Can I Protect Myself as an Instructor? Recommendations for Self-Care Activities

Working with traumatised individuals may be overwhelming. It is often difficult to set limits, to switch off, and to take care of one's own well-being. Overload, excessive demands and exhaustion can be the consequences. Therefore, self-care is not an egoistic concern but an indispensable prerequisite for working with distressed participants. Responsible support includes taking care of your own health, safety and well-being. Here are some suggestions for good self-care:

- **Balance between closeness and distance:** get involved and come back to yourself; pay attention to (physical) distance in a specific conversation situation; show sufficient closeness and empathy so that people feel welcome and accepted, but also enough professional distance to avoid being drawn into the problem.
- **Set limits:** become aware of what is possible and where the limits are in terms of subject matters and time; dare to stop in an appropriate manner; communicate limits in an appreciative way; arrange for support from specialised institutions.
- **Transparent time structure:** be clear and transparent about the beginning, end, time and place for a conversation; do not raise expectations too high; do not set your own ambitions too high.
- **Leave responsibility** for the fate and suffering of the participant with the responsible bodies.
- **Take a time out:** take a conscious decision to leave work; use the way home from work; do sport; eat healthy food; pursue hobbies; take a holiday, take some time off; create a health-consistent structure in your personal life.
- **Seek support:** network with others; seek professional or peer advice; activate personal and institutional support networks.
- **Heal your own wounds:** become aware that your own wounds and traumas can be affected by working with traumatised people; know and care for your own wounds; seek professional guidance or therapy if necessary.
- **Improve your understanding of trauma and secondary traumatisation:** know the danger of cumulative impact through secondary traumas, take signs seriously and protect yourself.

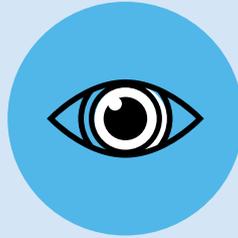
### What to Do in Crises Situations? Emergency Tips for the Classroom

When a participant finds himself/herself in a crisis or in a “dissociative state” (see dossier [Understanding Distress and Trauma of Refugees](#)), it is helpful to use strategies that establish a connection to the current reality, the “here and now”:

- First, introduce yourself: name, function, place;
- Make eye contact; offer a chair, a glass of water (“grounding”);
- Ask whether the person can see and perceive the instructor/coach;
- Restrain physical contact; always ask for prior consent;
- Ask the person to perceive their own body: to move, touch themselves, breathe deeply, shake himself/herself out, massage with hedgehog ball or tapping;
- Ask questions about the present: date, day of the week, place, season.

**Method Tip:**

“Intervention with the 5-4-3-2-1 method” (cf. Huber 2003) to bring people back into the present.  
Look around, identify and name:



**5 things** things you see.



**One thing** you can taste.



**4 things** you can feel.



**2 things** you can smell.



**3 things** things you can hear.

## References and Literature

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## Further Reading

Bundesweite Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Psychosozialen Zentren für Flüchtlinge und Folteropfer e. V./BAfF (2018).

Suggested literature (in German and English) available at:

<http://www.baff-zentren.org/veroeffentlichungen-der-baff/literaturempfehlungen/>

Helpful page on trauma/refugees (in several languages). Available at: <http://www.refugee-trauma.help/>

National Association for the Education (Naeyc, 2018). Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjG3xNxtU1E>

The Mental Health & Psychosocial Support Network available at: <https://mhpss.net/>

UNHCR, IOM, MHPSS provide useful information on the type of assistance that can be provided to traumatised people. Available at:

<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/community-based-approaches-mhpss-programmes-guidance-note>

Videos and exercises on the Healing Classroom concept are available (in different languages) at:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/HealingClassrooms/playlists>





# Decision-Making Under Stress and Uncertainty

## Making decisions in difficult times

Author: Mohanad Berekdar

### Module 3:

How do I deal with psychosocial problems and stress in the classroom?  
Building resilience in yourself and in learners

The haunting questions for a refugee “Where will I live? Where will my family be safe? What is best for us?” are excruciating, they are continuous, mentally exhausting and can be paralyzing in times of uncertainty. Taking the decision to flee the country in the first place, to an unknown future, is one of the most difficult decisions. Considering returning to the home country is equally stressful, particularly if we consider the amount of ambiguity that limits one’s ability to formulate an informed decision.

Naturally, uncertainty is uncomfortable. People do not want to feel uncomfortable. People do not fear the decision-making as much as they fear the possibility of having made mistakes with the outcome. The more uncertainty there is, the greater the chance of making a mistake. As a result, uncertainty about a decision, especially important decisions, adds stress when a person is already stressed.



Bild: marchmeena29/Getty Images

To improve our capacity to manage decision-making under stress and uncertainty, we will focus on two dimensions:

- We try to understand how stress and uncertainty affects human decision-making processes, dynamics and biases.
- We will present ideas and ways that can improve dealing with stress and uncertainty.

### Understanding Stress, Uncertainty and Decision-Making

Emotions of fear and anxiety arise whenever we are separated from things that make us feel secure. At many stages during life, people experience these emotions, particularly separation anxiety, when they move away or are forced to move from homes and loved ones. It should be expected, and acknowledged, that we will have fear of failure, loss, or rejection when we take on risk or uncertainty. Losing a sense of control over your life can be unsettling, and taking decisions in the midst of these times becomes more complicated:

1. During crisis, the ability of a person to handle difficult, complex tasks requiring intensely focused attention is decreased;



Bild: Aleksei Morozov/Getty Images

2. The greater the stress, the less likely that individuals can tolerate “ambiguity”;
3. In a stressful situation (whether real or perceived stress), only immediate survival goals are considered. Long-term considerations are sacrificed for short-term goals.
4. The greater the stress, the greater the distortion in the perception of threat, and poor judgment often occurs.
5. People have the tendency to emphasise positive aspects occurring in times of conflicts, as a coping mechanism, resulting in the overlooking of difficult ones.
6. Hurried decision-making. Stress reduces the likelihood of considering all the options. The less thought put into a decision, the greater is the likelihood of a mistake.

Rarely, decisions are made with absolute certainty because complete knowledge of consequences and facts is not possible or practical. What we can do is seek further knowledge, and manage ourselves with the ambiguity of the situation. Part of how we manage ourselves is increasing our awareness in how we are handling the situation and what strategies we are adopting, deliberately or not.

### How to Make Decisions in Times of High Uncertainty

1. **Clarify the uncertainty.** Ask, search and share information. Estimate the negative and positive consequences of the risk or uncertainty. Knowledge of the potential gains and losses can encourage taking risks for good opportunities.
2. **Try to break up the big decision into smaller ones.** Build a bridge to the future by taking smaller steps, keeping something familiar and secure with each step.
3. **Avoid unneeded risk.** When the environment is providing lots of uncertainty, defer risks that are in your control. For example, when there is economic uncertainty, postpone taking on debt for buying new things that are not essential for the moment.
4. **Take one risk at a time when feasible.** Combining risks from multiple decisions (e.g. choosing to move to a new country and have big family events at the same time) can create confusion, increase stress, and make it difficult to learn from unsuccessful outcomes.
5. **Determine the worst-case scenario.** Fear of loss is higher when it is unstated or unknown. Trying to draw what is the worst thing that can happen, helps you to better weigh the risk.

- 6. Know and prioritise what is really important for you.** The underlying notion of effective decision-making is that the decision-maker knows his/her needs and desires. Think of safety, work, social network, status, financial situation – reflect on them and be honest with yourself.
- 7. Share and consult.** Do not spend too much time worrying by yourself. Discussing the risk with family members, friends, social workers, people who are affected by the same situation and professionals can help on both levels, psychologically and with practical information to decrease uncertainty.

For dealing with the topic of making decisions under stress and uncertainty, it is recommended to read the methods [Ask Your Body Wisdom](#) and [The Rubber Band Model](#).

## References

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Photo: baona/Getty Images

# MODULE 4

How can we learn together?  
Implementing lessons with interactive,  
participatory methods

Introduction . . . . .	237
Overview of Teaching and Learning Materials . . . . .	239







# Module 4: How can we learn together? Implementing lessons with interactive, participatory methods

## Brief Description

The module focuses on reflecting the teaching situation with return-interested refugees: How can the teaching process be implemented in a participative and integrative manner? Why is feedback important? And how can group dynamics be influenced? The module intends to enable the participants to create an appreciative and safe learning atmosphere in the courses they conduct, which strengthens empowerment and agency of return-interested refugees. Furthermore, the Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches with teaching methods is introduced.

## Learning Objectives

Participants are able to ...

- M 4.1** to create a common ground in the classroom by creating a group identity,
- M 4.2** to develop and set common group goals,
- M 4.3** to create a participatory, constructive and safe learning atmosphere to enable empowerment,
- M 4.4** to select and apply appropriate methods and tools to create an enabling, empowering classroom culture.

## Topics

- Participatory approaches for classes with refugees
- The importance of group dynamics
- Give and receive feedback
- Creating a common classroom culture and group identity
- Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches

## Recommended Scope

1.5 hours/2 lesson units





# Overview of Teaching and Learning Materials

## Module 4:

How can we learn together?

Implementing lessons with interactive, participatory methods

## Methods

Exercise instructions for use in classes/workshops.

No.	Title	Topic area	Use in further training of instructors and coaches	Page
1	<b>Meta Hat and Meta Pinboard</b> Enhancing the transfer of acquired knowledge	Transfer, participatory methods	x	241
2	<b>Participatory Education Approaches</b> REFLECT and Healing Classrooms	Participatory methods, empowerment	x	243
3	<b>Group Dynamics</b> Supporting group formation as instructor	Group Dynamics	x	245
4	<b>Feedback! What For?</b> Giving and receiving feedback and using it	Feedback	x	247

Further methods for creating a participative, safe and appreciative learning atmosphere are available in the Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches insert booklet.

## Videos

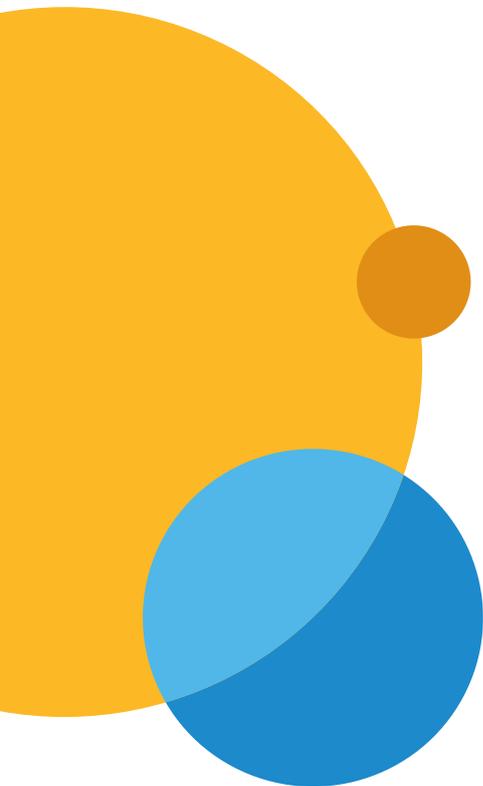
Didactic instructions for classroom use of videos.

Title	Topic area	Page
<b>Ask Questions and Get Answers</b> How to involve all participants	Participatory methods, empowerment	249
<b>How Routine Helps</b> Creating a safe learning atmosphere	Trauma-sensitive teaching	251

## Dossiers

Background information for trainers, instructors and coaches.

Title	Page
<b>Participatory Education Approaches</b> Creating an empowering and safe learning atmosphere	255
<b>Group Dynamics in Adult Education</b> Cooperative learning in the context of diversity	263
<b>Feedback! What For?</b> Giving and receiving feedback and using it	273



# MODULE 4

Methods



Methods

Videos

Dossiers

III.  
Brief Portraits

Toolbox





# Meta Hat and Meta Pinboard

## Enhancing the transfer of acquired knowledge

### Module 4:

How can we learn together?

Implementing lessons with interactive, participatory methods

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to ensure the transfer of acquired knowledge into the classroom.
2. Participants are able to select and apply appropriate methods and tools to create an enabling, empowering classroom culture (M 4.4).

### Instructions

As the training is application-oriented and based on the ideas of **“learning by doing”** or **“walk the talk”**, regular discussions should be held throughout the seminar on the impact of the introduced methods not only on the participants themselves but also on the work with their target group, i.e. the return-interested refugees.

For the participants to understand that the trainer or participants are talking about the meta level, that is, the level of transfer, he/she can put on a hat. By wearing the hat, the trainer indicates that the respective comments, recommendations, etc., refer to the target group of return-interested refugees. The participants are encouraged to transfer and adapt the acquired knowledge and experiences to their work with the target group.

Comments and outcomes of discussions made while wearing the meta hat should be written down on cards and pinned onto the meta pinboard, which should be visible throughout the entire seminar.

**Example:** The participants do the exercise [Guided Imagination](#) (see module 3). During the evaluation of this exercise, participants also discuss how it can be used in class and adapted for refugees, and which aspects need to be considered in the process. The trainer puts on the meta hat and writes the results of the discussion on the meta pinboard.

### Timeframe

Depending on the number of methods to be reflected

### Materials

- Hat (could also be made of paper)
- Pinboards
- Moderation cards
- Markers

### Remarks

- The meta hat as well as the meta pinboard should be introduced at the beginning of the unit.
- The meta pinboard can also be used as a final résumé of a training day to summarise all the methods and training elements implemented with reference to the different target groups. A hat is not needed in this case.

### Authorship

DVV International (2018). Curriculum interculturALE: Interkulturell-didaktische Lehr- und Lernmaterialien zur Fortbildung von Kursleitenden und ehrenamtlich Tätigen in der Erwachsenenbildung mit Geflüchteten 2018. DVV International, Bonn.



# Participatory Education Approaches

## REFLECT and Healing Classrooms

### Module 4:

How can we learn together?

Implementing lessons with interactive, participatory methods

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to discuss and apply participatory education approaches.
2. Participants are able to create a participatory, constructive and safe learning atmosphere to enable empowerment (M 4.3).
3. Participants are able to select and apply appropriate methods and tools to create an enabling, empowering classroom culture (M 4.4).

### Instructions

The trainer provides input on the participatory education approaches REFLECT and Healing Classrooms (for background information, see dossier [Participatory Education Approaches](#)) and points out clearly how and why these approaches can be applied effectively, especially in the work with (return-interested) refugees.

The methods below can be used to give practical examples of participatory education approaches:

- For REFLECT: the methods Venn Diagram or Mood Barometer (see [Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches](#))
- For Healing Classrooms: the method [Friendship Network](#) (see [Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches](#)) or the video [How Routine Helps](#)

The trainer will then conduct a discussion in plenary on the following questions:

1. Why is it important to implement courses with refugees in a participative, safe and appreciative atmosphere?
2. How can you apply the introduced approaches and methods practically in your teaching?

**Timeframe**

40 min

Presentation	Discussion	Optional: Apply method
20 min	20 min	20 min

**Materials**

- Projector
- Laptop

**Remarks**

- In preparation of the input, read the dossiers Participatory Education Approaches and The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom. The Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches includes various participative methods based on REFLECT and Healing Classrooms.

**Authorship**

Martti Zeyer

**References and Literature**

DVV International (2018). Curriculum interculturALE: Interkulturell-didaktische Lehr- und Lernmaterialien zur Fortbildung von Kursleitenden und ehrenamtlich Tätigen in der Erwachsenenbildung mit Geflüchteten 2018, DVV International, Bonn.

IRC Deutschland gGmbH (2018). Healing Classrooms: Die Schule als stabilisierendes Umfeld für geflüchtete Kinder und Jugendliche. Praxishandbuch für pädagogische Fachkräfte 2018, International Rescue Committee, Berlin.



# Group Dynamics

## Supporting group formation as instructor

### Module 4:

How can we learn together?

Implementing lessons with interactive, participatory methods

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to create a common ground in the classroom by creating a group identity (M 4.1).
2. Participants are able to develop and set common group goals (M 4.2).
3. Participants are able to create a participatory, constructive and safe learning atmosphere to enable empowerment (M 4.3).
4. Participants are able to select and apply appropriate methods and tools to create an enabling, empowering classroom culture (M 4.4).

### Instructions

The trainer gives an interactive input on the topic of Group Dynamics (for background information, see dossier [Group Dynamics](#)) and elaborates with the participants the different phases of group formation and ways to accompany and support these phases as an instructor. The presentation should include the introduction and integration of the [Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches](#). Individual methods can be presented and tested while focusing on the question: To what extent is the method suitable to be used in courses with return-interested refugees?

### Timeframe

40 min

<b>Phase 1:</b> Interactive input	<b>Phase 2:</b> Presentation and discussion of the toolbox
20 min	20 min

**Materials**

- Projector
- Laptop
- Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches

**Remarks**

In preparation of the input, read the dossier [Group Dynamics](#).

**Authorship**

Maria del Mar Logroño Narbona



# Feedback! What For?

## Giving and receiving feedback and using it

### Module 4:

How can we learn together?

Implementing lessons with interactive, participatory methods

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to create a participatory, constructive and safe learning atmosphere to enable empowerment (M 4.3).
2. Participants are able to select and apply appropriate feedback methods to create an enabling, empowering teaching culture.

### Instructions

The trainer provides interactive input on feedback in the learning context (for background information, see the dossier [Feedback! What For?](#)) and elaborates with the participants in which way and why it is useful to create a constructive feedback atmosphere, especially when working with (return-interested) refugees. The presentation should include the introduction and integration of the feedback methods listed in the [Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches](#) (see for example the methods [Any Energy Left?](#) or [5 Finger Feedback](#)).

The trainer will then conduct a discussion in plenary on the questions below:

1. Why is it important to get regular feedback from the participants?
2. Which feedback methods can I use in my lessons? Which positive effects can be achieved?
3. Which particular features have to be considered when working with (return-interested) refugees and applying feedback (methods)?

## Timeframe

40 min

<b>Phase 1:</b> Interactive Input	<b>Phase 2:</b> Discussion
20 min	20 min

## Materials

- Projector
- Laptop
- Toolbox
- Material of selected feedback methods from the [Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches](#)

## Remarks

In preparation of the input, read the dossier [Feedback! What For?](#)

## Authorship

Jannik Veenhuis

# MODULE 4

Videos



Videos

Dossiers

III.  
Brief Portraits

Toolbox





# Ask Questions and Get Answers

## How to involve all participants

### Module 4:

How can we learn together?

Implementing lessons with interactive, participatory methods

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

1. Participants are able to create a common ground in the classroom by creating a group identity (M 4.1).
2. Participants are able to develop and set common group goals (M 4.2).
3. Participants are able to create a participatory, constructive and safe learning atmosphere to enable empowerment (M 4.3).
4. Participants are able to select and apply appropriate methods and tools to create an enabling, empowering classroom culture (M 4.4).

### Type of Media

Video

### Total Length

3:42 min (+15 min discussion)

### Short Description

The video shows instructors at work teaching refugees in crisis regions. It demonstrates different routines and methods in the teaching process that are intended to create an appreciative and safe learning atmosphere. The video explains how questions can be presented to a group in a way that the largest possible number of participants takes part. The video is part of the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) Healing Classrooms concept, which works with young people who have experienced displacement in crisis regions. However, it can be largely applied to the work with refugees in Germany.

### Note

Further information on creating a safe, appreciative learning atmosphere is available in the dossiers [Participatory Education Approaches](#) and [The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom](#).

**Authorship**

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

**Available at**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljF\\_8aRDF-4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljF_8aRDF-4)

**Licence**

Standard YouTube licence

**Language**

English

**Didactic Use (ca. 10–15 min):**

The group watches the entire video once. The trainer then asks about the different questioning techniques used in the video. If the participants have difficulties in telling the techniques, watch the video again, and stop after each technique. For each technique mentioned, the trainer leads a short discussion whether and if so, why it is suitable for working with refugees in the corresponding context.

The video shows the following questioning techniques:

**0:20** The whole group is questioned, three possible answers are given; the participants reply by lifting one, two or three fingers, depending on which answer they consider correct.

**1:13/2:43** The teacher asks questions that the students respond to in pairs.

**1:54** The teacher writes cloze texts on the blackboard and the students come forward and fill the cloze.

**2:55** The teacher puts a question in the round (at the end of the lesson), and then chooses a person to respond to the question.

**Further Information**

International Rescue Committee (IRC, 2011). Creating Healing Classrooms: A Multimedia Teacher Training Resource. Available at:

<https://www.edu-links.org/resources/creating-healing-classrooms>

More information on the Healing Classrooms concept is available at:

<https://www.rescue-uk.org/article/healing-classrooms-helping-children-cope-after-crisis>



# How Routine Helps

## Creating a safe learning atmosphere

### Module 4:

How can we learn together?

Implementing lessons with interactive, participatory methods

### Target Group

- Instructors and coaches who work with refugees (that are interested in returning home)

### Learning Objectives

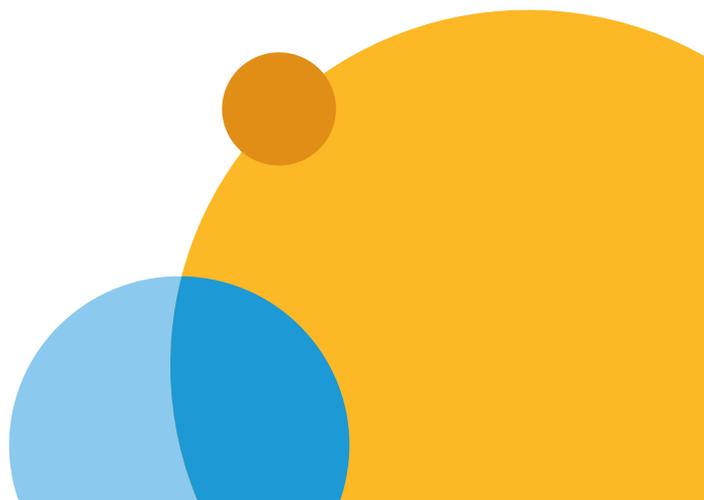
1. Participants are able to create a common ground in the classroom by creating a group identity (M 4.1).
2. Participants are able to develop and set common group goals (M 4.2).
3. Participants are able to create a participatory, constructive and safe learning atmosphere to enable empowerment (M 4.3).
4. Participants are able to select and apply appropriate methods and tools to create an enabling, empowering classroom culture (M 4.4).

### Type of Media

Video

### Total Length

2:57 min (+15 min discussion)



### Short Description

The video shows instructors at work teaching refugees in crisis regions. It demonstrates different routines and methods in the teaching process that are intended to create an appreciative and safe learning atmosphere. The video briefly explains which methods are used for which purpose. The video is part of the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) Healing Classrooms concept, which works with young people who have experienced displacement in crisis regions. Nevertheless, it can be largely applied to the work with refugees in Germany.

### Note

Further information on creating a safe, appreciative learning atmosphere is available in the dossiers [Participatory Education Approaches](#) and [The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom](#).

### Authorship

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

### Available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRgocAQWSO0&t=2s>

### Licence

Standard YouTube licence

### Language

English

### Didactic Use (10–15 min)

The group watches the entire video once. The trainer then asks about the different techniques used in the video. If the participants have difficulties in recognising the techniques, watch the video again, and stop after each technique. For each technique mentioned, the trainer leads a short discussion: whether and if so, why it is suitable for working with refugees in the corresponding context.

The video shows the techniques below:

**0:10** The teacher shakes hands with all students at the door to welcome them.

**0:28** The teacher gives to all the students a task to be done as soon as they come into the classroom.

**0:30** The teacher inquires how all the students are doing.

**0:54** One student selects a song, which all sing together at the beginning of the lesson.

**1:26** The teacher reads out all the goals for the day, which she has previously written on the blackboard for all to see. These goals can be repeatedly referred to in the course of the lesson.

**2:28** At the end of the lesson, the teacher asks individual students what they liked in the lesson before saying goodbye to each student individually.

### Further Information

International Rescue Committee (IRC, 2011). Creating Healing Classrooms: A Multimedia Teacher Training Resource. Available at:

<https://www.edu-links.org/resources/creating-healing-classrooms>

More information on the Healing Classrooms concept is available at:

<https://www.rescue-uk.org/article/healing-classrooms-helping-children-cope-after-crisis>



# MODULE 4

Dossiers







# Participatory Education Approaches

## Creating an empowering and safe learning atmosphere

Author: Martti Zeyer

### Module 4:

How can we learn together?

Implementing lessons with interactive, participatory methods

The participatory approach to education is learner-centred and aims to enable learners to shift from a passive to an active perception and participation in the learning process. This is of particular importance when working with return-interested refugees, as they often find themselves in a passive state of waiting, uncertainty and instability caused by uncertain future prospects (see dossier [Voluntary Return](#)).

In this context, adult education institutions are in particular demand to open up perspectives for return-interested refugees by offering participatory educational opportunities, which focus on strengthening the participants' empowerment, agency and options for active citizenship. Courses for returnees have to provide a safe space in which they can actively participate and their expectations and interests are heard.



Image: Tetiana Garkusha/Getty Images

## What Makes Teaching Participatory?

In participatory approaches to education, learning experiences and learning activities are designed to take learners' needs and interests into account and to encourage mutual dialogue. The teaching format, where the teacher talks and the students passively receive information, is replaced by the so-called "culture circle" where teachers and students face one another and discuss issues of concern in their own lives (Freire, 1970).

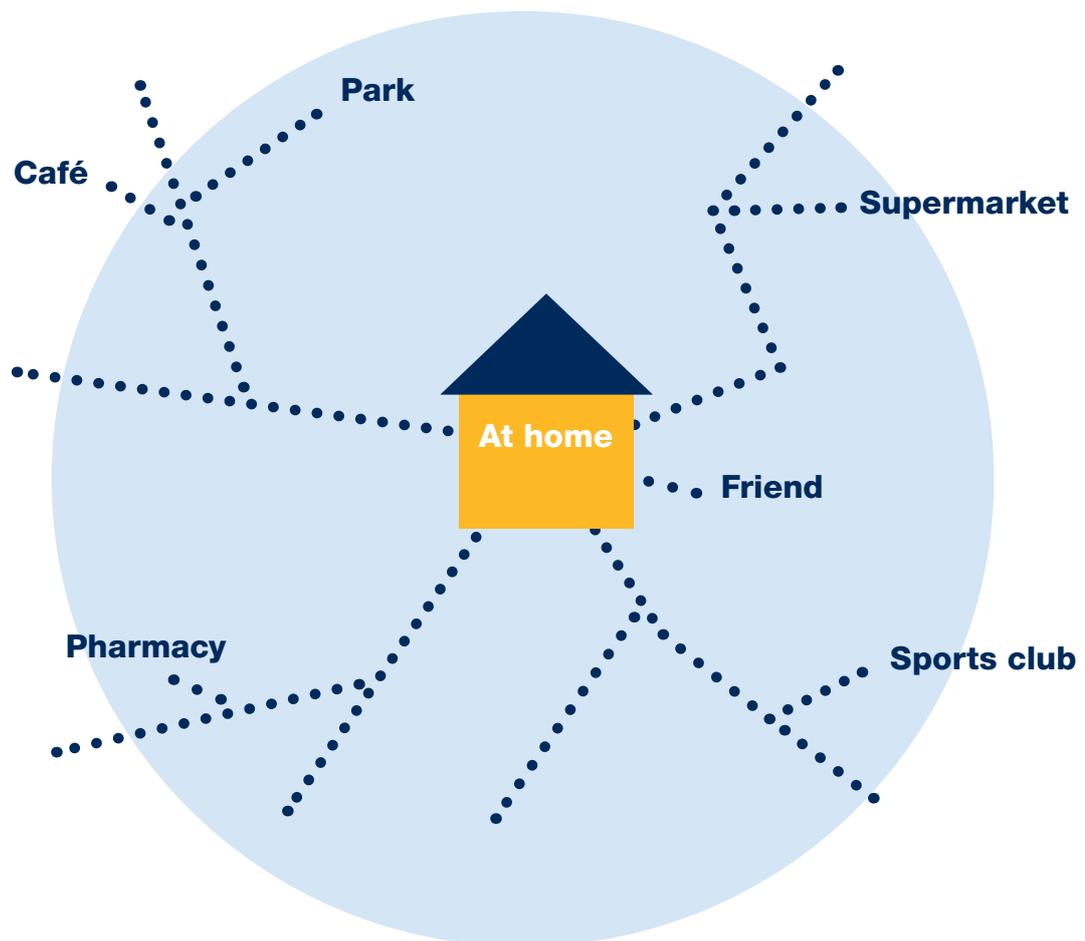
Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator and activist, laid the foundation for the development of the participatory education approach described above. He considered that traditional educational systems are dominated by rather one-sided didactic teaching methods. These assume that the learner is an empty vessel to be filled with information and that the teacher is the transmitter of knowledge who "deposits" this information in the minds of students, who in return "cash it back in" when exam time comes around. Freire called this process critically the banking concept of education. In contrast, the participatory education approach is geared towards promoting skills and capacities. Thereby, the active learning process is intended to increase the learner's capacities from within to cope with life's challenges and demands with confidence, and to better understand the world around.

These basic principles offer return-interested refugees in particular the opportunity to actively communicate their needs and wishes, for example, with regard to their personal qualification. By applying participative methods and establishing an appreciative, safe teaching culture, refugees are enabled to progress from passive wait-and-see to active participants. These classroom experiences encourage them to shape and manage their lives, especially in the difficult process of return and reintegration.

Two different participatory approaches – REFLECT and Healing Classrooms – aiming to create a safe, appreciative and healing course atmosphere are introduced below. Their political objective is to empower marginalised population groups, whereby education is seen as a tool to promote empowerment, self-efficacy, reflection and critical faculties of individuals. Freire assumes that poor and oppressed people are creative and certainly capable of describing their life situation themselves, analysing their problems and needs to try and find solutions.

## What Is REFLECT<sup>1</sup>?

The empowerment method REFLECT is originally an innovative literacy teaching methodology, which fuses the theories of Freire with Robert Chambers' participatory research tools (Chambers 1983, 1993). The featured graphics (e.g. calendars, maps, matrixes, rivers and trees) enable participants to communicate their knowledge, experience and feelings without being restricted, for example, by literacy and language barriers. The method enables learners to develop their own text<sup>2</sup> based on their experience and needs, which will serve to achieve the learning objectives without causing anxiety to the learners.



Infographic produced by Meike Woller

1 REFLECT stands for "Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques" and is an innovative approach to adult education aimed to bring about social change. Since its initial use in 1985 by the NGO ActionAid, the approach has been successfully applied worldwide. REFLECT is based on the theories of the humanist and pedagogue Paulo Freire on the one hand and the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach that is used in development cooperation on the other.

2 According to Clifford Geertz, a text is not necessarily seen here as a written communicative expression but as a social practice (see Bachmann-Medick 2004).

## REFLECT Approach

Freire replaces paternalism practiced by know-it-all elites with dialogue and equality between learners and teachers. Teachers do not just pass on knowledge, but they also moderate, share, empower and support. The learners identify their own topics and interests, create and use their own materials.

REFLECT works along the following basic principles (see Cardiff et al. n.d.):

### REFLECT

- wants to encourage learners to reflect and be active, and to help them fight for their place in society;
- emphasises the responsibility and the right of everyone to have a say – teachers as well as learners are responsible for shaping the learning process;
- relies on participative rather than traditional, hierarchical teaching methods to create an open, democratic learning environment;
- works with learners' experience and knowledge rather than rigid curricula and textbooks;
- initiates reflection on power relations in teaching and in society;
- promotes independence and self-organisation.

### Practical Application

REFLECT is suitable for use with marginalised population groups as it is based on principles such as empowerment, participation and questioning of power relations. Thanks to its participative methods, REFLECT conveys learning contents using other means than oral and written expression alone. This allows especially target groups such as return-interested refugees to benefit from REFLECT, as some of them are marginally literate or have language barriers. The focus is not only on learning the respective skills but also on the opportunity to enhance the returnees' empowerment and agency, their resilience and their options for active citizenship in the host country as well as in their country of origin. The use of visualisation methods is a central aspect of this approach – see for example the methods [Venn Diagram](#) or [Mood Barometer](#) in the [Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches](#).

### Healing Classrooms Approach

Crises and conflicts have a direct and profound impact on the physical integrity, well-being and learning ability of individuals. Neurological studies have shown that people who have been exposed to the adversities of conflict can be subject to a physiological toxic stress response. This affects brain functions, physical and mental health, cognitive abilities, behaviour and social relationships. Nevertheless, this effect can be reversed. The educational concept of IRC<sup>3</sup> aims to transform these negative effects of traumatic experiences into positive social attitudes, behaviour and learning outcomes. The concept is based on insights from brain research and focuses on the following interrelated principles:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment (Healing Classrooms)
- supporting social-emotional learning (SEL);
- helping course participants to relax and concentrate (mindfulness);
- supporting instructors in their own stress management (teacher well-being).

Hence, the Healing Classrooms concept (see IRC 2018: 8) intends to enhance the participants' feeling of control and self-esteem, to build a sense of belonging and to foster positive bonds with the instructor and within the group. Beyond that, it is an inspiring approach related to power relations in knowledge transfer: adult educators from crisis countries become experts for their colleagues from the Global North.



Image Ukususha/Getty Images

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3 The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people whose lives and livelihoods have been destroyed by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and regain control of their future. Founded in 1933 at the suggestion of Albert Einstein to help refugees from the Third Reich, IRC has been firmly rooted in Europe ever since. Over the past 80 years, IRC has grown into a worldwide humanitarian aid organisation with programmes in over 40 countries.

## Classroom Tips

The section below introduces the principles mentioned above, which allow building a safe, appreciative learning atmosphere.

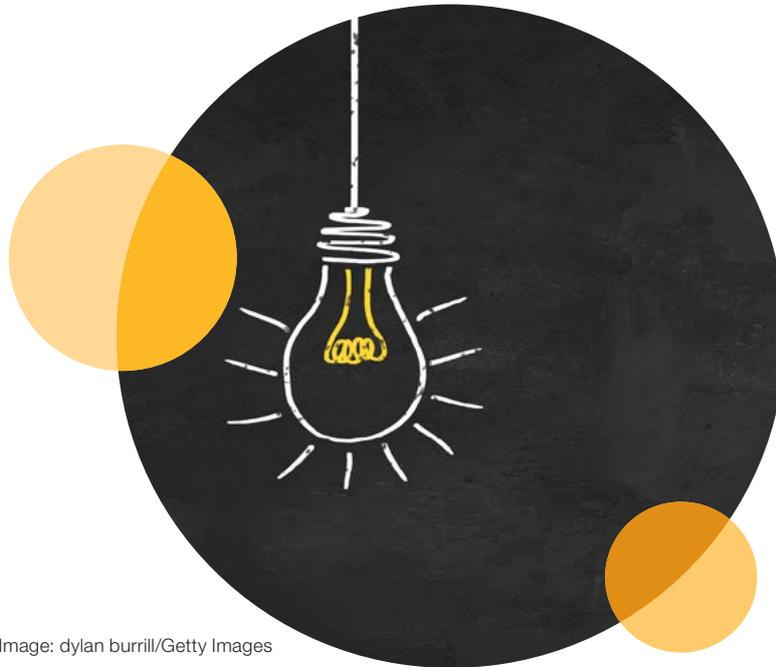


Image: dylan burrill/Getty Images

## Sense of Control

When participants have a sense of control, they feel a sense of stability and reliability.

They feel safe as well as secure in the classroom and know that nothing frightening will happen. They feel that their day in class is predictable, and they know and understand what to expect and what is expected from them, which includes:

- **Developing routines** by: welcoming participants by name and in person at the classroom; discussing the timetable, subjects and topics; and always starting and ending the course the same way (see the video [How Routine Helps](#)).
- **Setting up rules:** jointly develop clearly defined classroom rules that indicate possibilities and define limits (see the method [Venn Diagram](#)).

## Creating a Sense of Belonging and Positive Relationships

A sense of belonging to the educational institution and the course group makes participants feel involved, accepted and welcome at the place of learning. They feel like being part of a group and no longer alone. The sense of belonging is particularly important for individuals affected by crises, as they can regain trust and develop positive relationships with social groups and their environment.

- **Involve** the entire class: involve and support each and every learner through specific questioning techniques (see the video Ask Questions and Get Answers).
- Assign **tasks** in the classroom: assigning fixed roles and responsibilities.
- Foster **positive relationships** with the instructor and other course participants: one sub-aspect of bonding that should not be underestimated is that of touching, for example, which can help traumatised people to rebuild trust in other people.
- **Effective group work:** group work in changing compositions (see the method Grouping in the Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches) is an excellent way to foster positive bonds between participants and thus create a good learning environment. Active learning in small groups works better than absorbing information on an individual and passive basis.

### Stimulate the Intellect

When we experience pleasure and intellectual stimulation while learning, we feel a strong sense of pride and self-confidence. Research has shown that in particular people in conflict situations believe that they can build a better future for themselves through intellectual advancement.

- Apply **differentiated learning strategies**: each participant gathers and processes information in different ways and thus learns best through diverse methods and media<sup>4</sup>. Each type of learner requires different teaching methods. Therefore, stimulating environments should include diverse teaching concepts and activities to serve a wide range of learning styles.
- Express **appreciation** and have **goals** set: strategic praising improves how participants perceive their own intelligence, motivation and self-esteem (see dossier Feedback! What For?). Enabling them to set realistic goals promotes their self-confidence, which in turn increases their motivation to take on demanding responsibilities (see for example the method Who has the last word?).

Further information and methods concerning “Healing Classrooms” are available at:  
<https://www.rescue-uk.org/article/healing-classrooms-helping-children-cope-after-crisis>

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<sup>4</sup> Howard Gardner (cf. Gardner, 1993) developed the concept of multiple intelligences, which includes linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial-visual, bodily-kinaesthetic and personal intelligence.



# Group Dynamics in Adult Education

## Cooperative learning in the context of diversity

Author: Maria del Mar Logroño Narbona

### Module 4:

How can we learn together?

Implementing lessons with interactive, participatory methods

This dossier introduces an essential aspect of group formation, namely: group dynamics in adult education. Whenever a new course for return-interested refugees begins, a new group is formed.

Whether the course runs well or not largely depends on how well participants come together and work as a group.

Defining the concept of “group” is not an easy task. Not only do social scientists use different definitions, but also according to some, the concept of “group” does not even exist. These social scientists argue that only individuals make up a group, and thus, only “attributes, cognitions and personalities of the group members” deserve analysis (Allport 1924). However, there is ample evidence that “groups evoke stronger reactions than an individual engaging in the same behaviour” (Johnson/Johnson 2018).



Photo: Prostock-Studio/Getty Images

Summarising the different definitions of “groups”, Johnson and Johnson have highlighted up to seven common definitions of groups (Johnson/Johnson 2018), each of which focuses on one particular characteristic:

- **Goal:** a number of individuals who join together to achieve a goal.
- **Interdependence:** a collection of individuals who are interdependent in some significant way, in the sense that an event that affects one member is likely to affect all.
- **Interaction:** a number of individuals who interact with one another often over a span of time, in a way that each person is able to communicate with all other persons.
- **Membership:** a social unit where individuals perceive themselves to belong to the same unit.
- **Structured relationship:** a collection of individuals whose interactions are structured by a set of roles and norms in matters of consequence to the group.
- **Mutual influence:** a group of individuals who influence each other, that is, that are affecting and are affected by each other.
- **Motivation:** a collection of individuals who are trying to satisfy some personal need through their joint association.

Group dynamics is the area of social science that focuses on advancing knowledge about the nature of group life. It has the potential to change the way we think about groups and, consequentially, the way we function in groups. Within the field of adult education, current teaching paradigms have moved from teacher-centred approaches to student-centred approaches that encourage cooperative group-based work, as “cooperative learning has been shown to produce higher achievement, more positive relationships, and greater psychological health than individualistic learning” (Johnson/Johnson 1989).

## Norms and Roles in Groups

There are two key components that structure groups, roles and norms. While roles differentiate the responsibilities of group members, norms integrate members' efforts into a unified whole (Johnson/Johnson 2018). Roles are usually complementary (i.e. teacher and students) and include both rights and obligations. Role conflicts arise when conflicting expectations about obligations exist or when the demands of one role are incompatible with the demands of other roles. Norms, on the other hand, are implicit or explicit rules established in a formal or informal manner to regulate the behaviour of all members. Norms cannot be imposed on a group, but rather, they develop out of the interaction among group members. Therefore, it is useful to take some time to define common ground rules when starting a course and when forming a new group (see method [Venn Diagram](#) from the [Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches](#)).

## What Are the Key Features of Effective Working Groups?

Most likely, everyone has had, at least once, the feeling that you are wasting your time while working in a group. A term has even been coined for those who do not like to work in dysfunctional groups: “group hate”. But with some luck, you can also feel inspired by working in a group and discover that the goal could have only been achieved through teamwork. This reflects the two sides of groups: ineffective and effective.

According to scholars in the field of group dynamics, an effective group has a number of defining characteristics (Karaxha 2010), which include:

- clear purpose,
- shared leadership,
- open communication,
- high levels of inclusion,
- acceptance,
- support, and
- trust.

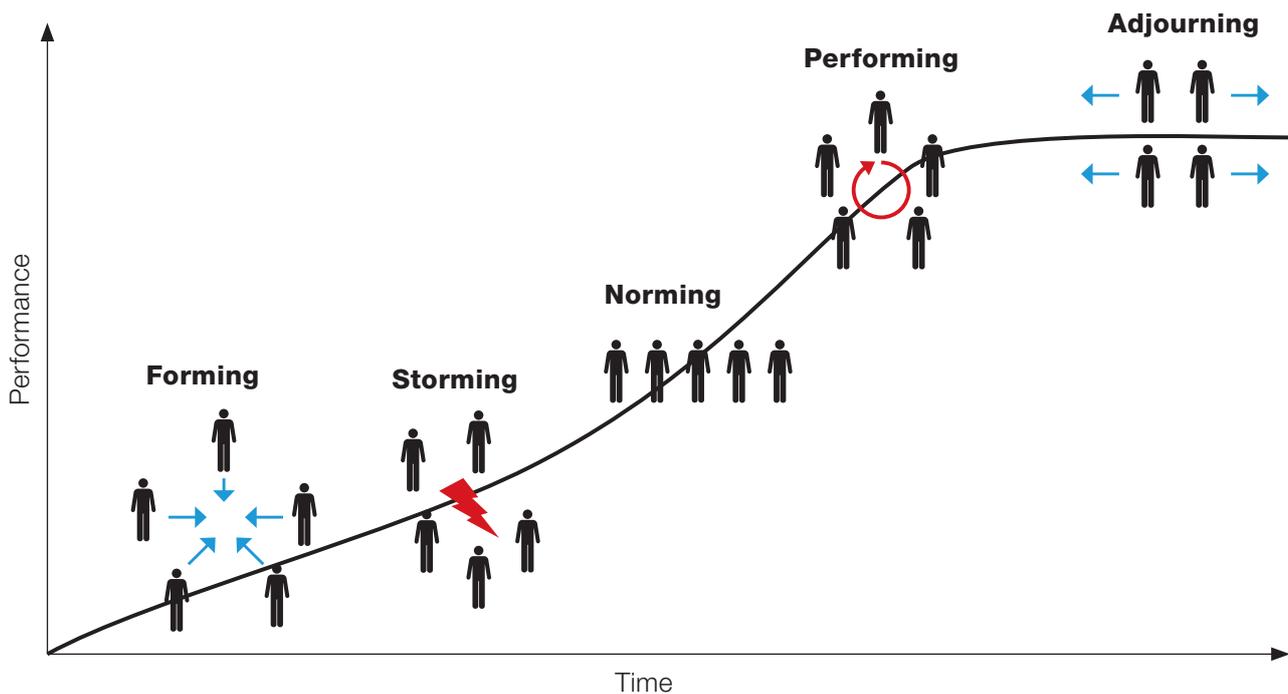
Effective groups also feature a decision-making process that allows group members to challenge one another's information and reasoning and to resolve conflicts constructively (Johnson/Johnson 2018).



Photo: scyuther5/Getty Images

## Development Stages of Groups

A course consists of diverse participants, who usually do not know each other at the beginning of a course. Whenever a course begins, a new group is formed and needs time to get together. Among the most famous theories explaining how group formation works is that of Bruce W. Tuckman (1965) consisting of five stages:



Stage model of group development according to Tuckmann (1965)

- Forming,
- Storming,
- Norming,
- Performing,
- Adjourning.

In the forming stage, members struggle to determine their place in the group and the ways of work and rules of the group. In the storming stage, as members may resist the influence of the group and rebel against accomplishing the task, conflicts may arise. During the norming stage, cohesion and commitment increase as members agree on roles and group norms. The group then moves into performing stage, in which members learn how to work together efficiently. Finally, the group disbands in the adjourning stage.



The [Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches](#) provides methods for different phases of group formation, which support getting to know each other, building a common group identity and giving constructive feedback.

Image: MicroStockHub/Getty Images

### How Can You Support the Group Formation Process?

The trainer takes a central role in supporting and accompanying the process of group formation. Below you will find some assistance (Johnson/Johnson 2018):

- 1.** Introduce, define, and structure the group. This requires a great deal of time to get to know each other and to use appropriate methods.
- 2.** Elaborate rules and procedures jointly with the group, support members in observing and getting to know them.
- 3.** Emphasise and clarify the interaction and the positive interdependence among group members, and encourage them to engage in both trusting and trustworthy behaviours.
- 4.** Accept the rebellion by and differentiation among group members as a normal process. Use integrative negotiations to help members establish their independence from one another and from the prescribed procedures.
- 5.** Help members commit themselves to and take ownership of the group's goals and procedures.
- 6.** Be a consultant to the group, providing resources for the group to function effectively.
- 7.** Signal completion of group work, and help members move on to future groups.

## Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is an educational approach developed in the 1970s. It goes beyond collaborative learning in that cooperative learning involves two critical principles: “positive interdependence” (members share a goal and are not in competition with one another) and “individual accountability” (group success relies on the work of every member).

Working with mixed abilities within a classroom is a common challenge shared by many education professionals. In the context of cooperative learning, building on the guidelines developed earlier, the following strategies are suggested to make cooperative learning a successful approach:



Photo: cienpies/Getty Images

**1. Form small “home or base groups” for classroom work**

(ideally four, as it allows for work in pairs). They will work together throughout the course. These groups can perform:

- Academic support tasks: participants encourage one another to master course content.
- Personal support tasks: participants help each other with non-academic issues.
- Routine tasks: the group provides a structure for managing course procedures such as taking attendance and homework.

**2. Prevent one member from dominating the group:** Jason Anderson provides an interesting strategy named “pass the pen”, in which each group member can only write a maximum of one sentence (or one answer) before they must pass the pen to the next member of the group. The others can give suggestions, even dictate the answer, but they cannot touch the pen. This encourages more peer-tuition (peers as co-teachers for learners) and more communication (Anderson 2019). This approach can also be transferred to “Talking time” – you are only allowed to talk when holding the pen.

**3. Try different grouping strategies to cope with mixed abilities within groups:**

- Make each small group to be as varied as possible in terms of age, gender and skills. When mixing skills, rank each of the four participants according to their learning skills and make sure to place in each pair a combination of high achieving participant with a low achiever participant. But make sure that the performance gap is not too high, as to not frustrate the high achiever. This strategy fosters peer-tutoring. For more ideas on grouping, see the method [Group Formation](#) in the [Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches](#).
- Form small “same-ability” groups for some specific activities. Ask different groups to undertake different tasks of an exercise according to their skills.

### Diversity in Cooperative Learning

Diversity in cooperative learning can have either negative or positive effects. Johnson and Johnson (2017) argue that the outcomes of diversity depend largely on the instructor's abilities and among the points, they suggest for positive outcomes are:

1. Recognise diversity and consider it a valuable resource. This can be emphasised by the use of specific methods aimed at building a shared group identity and culture (see Toolbox for instructors and Coaches).
2. Build a coherent personal identity that includes your cultural heritage and a view of yourself as an individual who respects and values diversity.
3. Minimise cognitive barriers in the classroom such as prejudice and stereotyping (i.e. "students are late because of their national/cultural background" vs. "students are late due to personal or situational circumstances") – see also the method All Culture? Correctly classifying unfamiliar behaviour in module 2.
4. Manage conflict in constructive ways (controversies can be positive).
5. Diversity should be used as a resource to strengthen the positive interdependence within the group: clarify miscommunications as much as possible.
6. Foster a "group member" identity that transcends differences among members, while encouraging participants to appreciate their own identities as well as the identities of other group participants (see the methods Friendship Network and What We Have in Common in the Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches)



Photo: cstar55/Getty Images

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## Further reading

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(Accessed 22 July 2019).





# Feedback! What For?

## Giving and receiving feedback and using it

Author: Jannik Veenhuis

### Module 4:

How can we learn together?

Implementing lessons with interactive, participatory methods

“Feedback is the breakfast of champions,” as US entrepreneur and author Ken Blanchard phrased it. With this slogan, he emphasises the importance of feedback on the way to success – and this applies to the classroom context as well. But giving feedback is not just about telling a person what was good and bad. There are a few simple things to keep in mind to gain real benefit from feedback.



Photo: Sefa kart/Getty Images

### Feedback – What For?

There are two reasons for feedback to be given:

1. To improve a behaviour, a job, a responsibility, or the like;
2. To encourage someone to carry on their work or responsibility as well as before.

Of course, it can also help you to tell others that you disagree with their work or manner – which might be necessary in some situations. However, feedback given with this intention runs the risk of not turning productive. If it is really about, for example, disrespectful behaviour in class, a different kind of feedback is needed. This dossier is primarily intended to provide feedback for coping with tasks, that is, for participants to do better or keep doing well!

### Who Gives Feedback to Whom?

When assigning tasks to learners, instructors also take responsibility for assessing whether a task has been successfully completed, and if not, they must state what caused it and how it can be improved.

The best time to start giving feedback to the learner is not upon completion of the task but when assigning the task. Prior to each learning unit (possibly at the beginning of each lesson), it is helpful to clarify which task is currently being worked on and which concrete goal is being aimed at or which result (or sub-result) is expected to be achieved at the end of the unit. This allows learners to check whether they have reached the goal, even without providing active feedback. In addition, the instructor can refer directly to these goals in their feedback while considering three questions (cf. Black/Wiliam 1998):

1. Where is the learner now?
2. Where is he or she heading?
3. How can he or she succeed? What is needed for him/her to succeed?

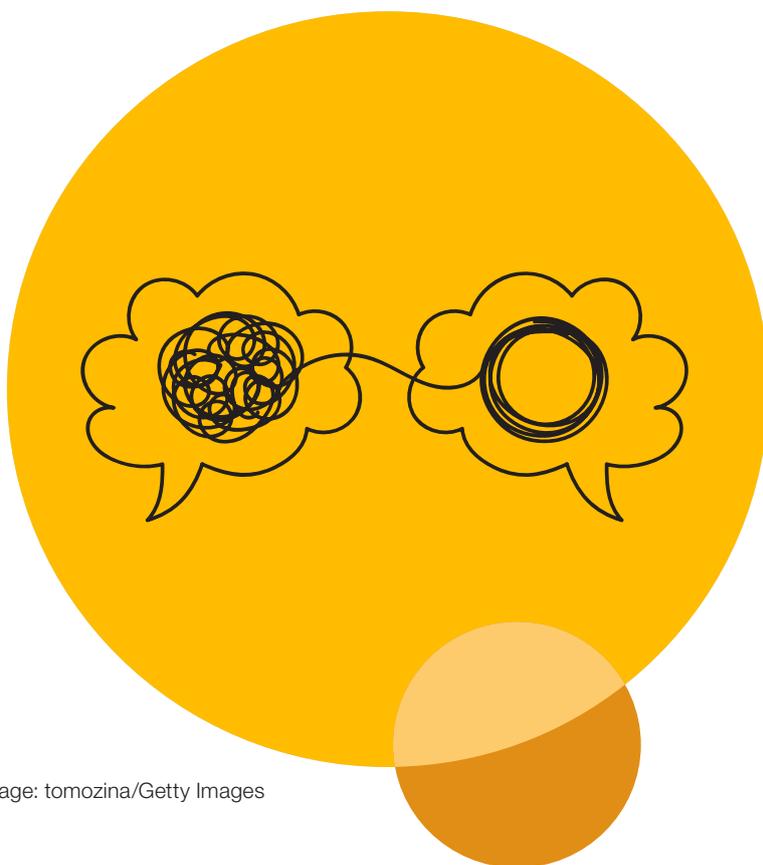


Image: tomozina/Getty Images

## How Do We Give Feedback?

Gavan Watson (2013) outlines basic rules to be followed when instructors give feedback to learners:

- 1. Specific:** Feedback should be **as concrete as possible**, especially if something needs to be changed. A general “Well done!” is helpful for a good learning atmosphere but does not give the learner any idea of what exactly is well done. Therefore, it is useful to act according to the question: “What exactly is good and why, or what is less good and why?” Nevertheless, it is important not to mention **every single aspect**, or else the learner can easily be overwhelmed. A more constructive approach is to clearly name two or three points while also mentioning what already works well. In order to define the points that are of particular importance, it helps to ask the question: Which change would bring about the greatest improvement?
- 2. Practicable:** As an instructor, you are trained to see the reasons why a particular task fails or where exactly the potential is. The best way to involve learners in this process is for the criticism to focus less on the problems and more on **concrete suggestions for improvement**.
- 3. Timely and regular:** Doing something wrong for a long time means, in the worst case, wasting time. Therefore, feedback should not be given at the end of each task only, but early on during the process – and **as a rule close in time to the activity itself**. In addition, feedback should be established as a regular step in order to check, whether (1) the advice really contributes to improvement and (2) the learners, in turn, are able to deal with the feedback and learn to benefit from it. Only then, feedback can be successful.
- 4. Respectful:** To get a message across, it is **just as much about the tone as the content itself**. Learners find it much easier to accept criticism that is given in a respectful way. This includes not criticising a learner as a person but always his or her work. “I-messages” can (!) be useful. Instead of saying, “You didn’t explain that properly!”, an “I haven’t quite understood that yet. What exactly do you mean?” often works much better – even though, of course, it is the learners’ skills that matter in the end.

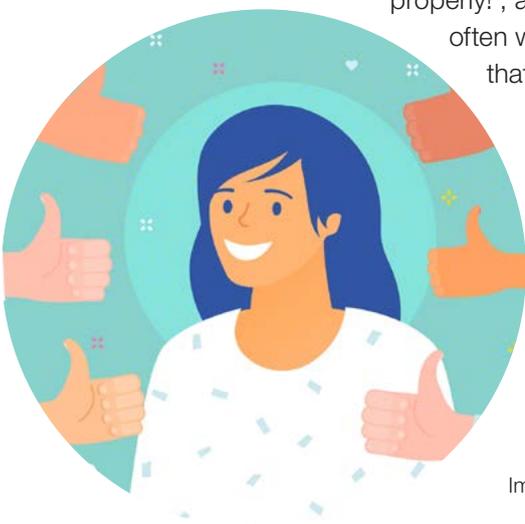


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### Feedback for Instructors

Giving feedback to learners by taking a close look at their earlier work also means getting feedback yourself. If it turns out that most learners have great difficulty with the given task, it may indeed be too difficult. If everybody manages to complete their respective task in less time than expected, the group may well be more advanced than expected. Do the skills of the learners perhaps differ significantly?

### Methods Are Helpful!

Getting active learner feedback can provide a better understanding of the classroom situation. Rather than just talking about the actual tasks, using concrete methods (see [Toolbox for Instructors and Coaches](#)) can be helpful in this process. For example, asking about the current mood in the group, finding out when a break is necessary, or if there is anything standing in the way of a successful learning process as a group (such as specific problems in the participants' lives outside the classroom, which are likely to occur among the target group of return-interested refugees).

#### Note:

If and how we exchange feedback is influenced (also) by our cultural background.

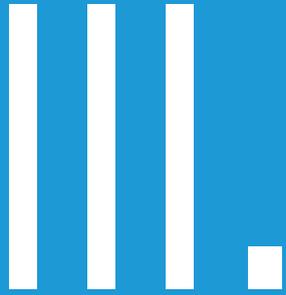
This applies even more to intercultural learning contexts: Diverse participants may receive and understand criticism or feedback in very different ways!

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## DVV International Overview

DVV International is the Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV), the German Adult Education Association. DVV represents the interests of the approximately 900 adult education centres (Volkshochschulen) and their state associations, the largest further education providers in Germany.

As the leading professional organisation in the field of adult education and development cooperation, DVV International has committed itself to supporting lifelong learning for 50 years. DVV International provides worldwide support for the establishment and development of sustainable structures for Youth and Adult Education.

We are a professional partner in dialogue with the local people. To achieve this, we cooperate with more than 200 civil society, government and academic partners in more than 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. Our country and regional offices build local and regional cooperation and ensure the quality and effectiveness of our action in our partner countries. Our work focuses on literacy and basic education, vocational training, global and intercultural learning, environmental education and sustainable development, migration and integration, refugee work, health education, conflict prevention and democracy education.

DVV International finances its work through funds from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German Federal Foreign Office, the European Union, as well as other donors. In concert with national, regional and global adult education associations, DVV International promotes lobby work and advocacy for the human right to education and for lifelong learning. To achieve this, we orient ourselves on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the global education agenda Education 2030 and the UNESCO World Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA). DVV International supports the European and global exchange of information and expertise through conferences, seminars and publications.

# Our Vision

We fight poverty through education and support development. As a globally acting professional organisation for adult education, we build a sustainable system for further education along with citizens, educational organisations and governments. Together with the people in our partner countries, we establish places for lifelong learning.



Education for Everyone. Worldwide.  
Lifelong.

# Contributing Experts and Authors

The members of the international team of experts who conceived the training and developed the teaching and learning materials are briefly introduced below to provide an insight into their views and professional expertise.

## Contributors

## Brief presentation of professional expertise

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Jawad Al Gousous worked for ten years with the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development in the field of community development. He has vast experience in social development, non-formal and informal education and participatory approaches, mainly in the REFLECT approach. He worked as a consultant with UNESCO's Iraq Office in literacy and adult education, has also provided a number of consultations on social development and social education in the Arab region and has been working since 2012 as International Country Director of DVV International's Jordan Office. He holds a Master's degree in Social Work.

### Prof. Dr. Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst



Prof. Dr. Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst has been actively involved in the fields of intercultural communication and education for many years. She offers anti-racism and Critical Whiteness training programmes, holds a degree in African Studies and Cultural Studies and her research and publications focus on the history of people of African origin in Germany, German colonial history, colonialism in the Rhineland and the history of German-African encounters. As a curator, she has set up and supervised exhibitions on the colonial past of the cities Cologne and Aachen as well as on clichés and prejudices in our society, and on constructions of Africa in our everyday culture.

### Mohanad Berekdar



Mohanad Berekdar is currently Co-Director of Asasat – Organisational Consultancy and Social Development Centre (Palestine/Germany). He collected work experience as an organisational consultant and capacity-building specialist in several NGOs in Palestine, Jordan, Turkey and Germany. For the past ten years, he has worked as a consultant and trainer with instructors and policy makers involved in formal and informal systems in adult education and lifelong learning. He believes in mission-led organisations that practice their purpose and values in their daily work and holds a Master's degree in Organisational Analysis and a Bachelor's degree in Psychology.

## Contributors

## Brief presentation of professional expertise

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Tania Hussein is a partner and managing director of Premiere Development Consulting in Jordan. She has over 25 years of professional experience in the fields of psychosocial support, non-formal education, child protection, gender-based violence, and humanitarian response in emergency situations. Tania has worked extensively as an expert consultant for multiple national and International NGOs and UN agencies, such as UNICEF, UNHCR, DVV International, IRC, Save the Children, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), among others. She has a Master's degree in Psychological and Educational Counselling from Jordan; a Master's degree in Investigative Psychology from the University of Huddersfield in the UK; and is currently a PhD candidate in Criminology at the University of Leicester in the UK.

**Katja Littmann**

Katja Littmann is currently responsible for migration counselling and organising integration courses at an integration centre in Hamburg. Previously, she was the project manager of a bridging programme aimed at qualifying migrant economists within the nationwide network "Integration through Qualification (IQ)". She also headed a regional education agency as well as a vocational training centre and established the "Immigration and Social Urban Development" department with the Representative for Integration of Immigrants and Foreigners in the city of Hamburg. While working with refugees, she was responsible for project management and carried out skills assessments, career and return counselling in terms of access to training, qualification and employment. She also authored a handbook on counselling for refugees. She is a graduate sociologist with additional studies in urban development/urban planning, adult education and university didactics.

**Dr. Maria del Mar Logroño Narbona**

Dr. Maria del Mar Logroño Narbona is an experienced internationally active development consultant. She has served as Assistant Professor at different universities in the United States, and has been awarded two Social Science Research Council (SSRC) grants to conduct research and dissemination work under their "Islam in World Contexts" programme (2010-2012). Her expert consultancy work includes gender analysis among Palestinian refugees in the Middle East with UNRWA, citizenship education in the context of MENA region (Middle East and North Africa) with UNICEF, and research on local governance for the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID; EU MADAD Fund). For the past few years, she has advised a legal aid NGO in Jordan (ARDD-Legal Aid) on their programme development and research regarding humanitarian and development work with refugees, migrants, and marginalised communities in Jordan and the region.

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Anna Rein is currently working as an educational coordinator for immigrants in the administrative district of Kassel, Germany. She gained experience in a German adult education centre, especially in cultural projects for equal education opportunities among adolescents and young adults (talentCAMPus), as well as being a social worker and manager in a home for unaccompanied minor refugees. Furthermore, she brings in skills in project management and e-learning from diverse EU projects. She holds a Master's degree in Educational Sciences and additional qualifications in intercultural communication.

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Jannik Veenhuis works throughout Germany as a speaker, moderator and consultant on the topics of Islam, migration, integration and social debates. His cooperation partners include adult education centres, associations, church congregations and schools, among many others. In 2011, he founded the LIQA (Arabic: encounter) initiative, arranging and supervising political study trips to Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan (since 2019: dis:orient e.V.). He holds a Master's degree in Islamic Studies.

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Martti Zeyer has sound experience in teaching German at universities and in integration courses. He worked at Rhein-Erft Adult Education Centre as section head for languages, integration and intercultural projects. In addition, he was a project coordinator for global learning at the Catholic Adult Education Centre in Bonn, and did research on migration with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ecuador. His interests are in the fields of ethnicity and cultural memory. He currently works as a lecturer for German as a foreign language and regional studies at the Bosphorus University in Istanbul, Turkey. He holds a Master's degree in Social Anthropology.



# Toolbox





# Imprint

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