



SELF- AWARENESS

MODULE 1

FOR PRACTITIONERS WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH FLIGHT EXPERIENCE

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1

SELF-



Identity

Values

Hope and future

AWARENESS

An understanding of the complexity of shaping and developing identities and values, the person as a part of a group or community. What is at stake, what influences the perception of one self and how does that affect the view of the future and hopes for the individual person?

Highlighting bias, internalized bias and understanding of life altering incidents' effect on the individual person.

Knowledge about the themes as an off-set for practitioners in their daily work.

The module of self-awareness focuses on the mechanisms in individuals' creation of identity, values and hope for the future. When contextualizing these themes for people with a refugee background it will give practitioners working with these people an understanding of the effect, meaning and consequences of adaptation for them. When keeping that knowledge in mind, practitioners might find it easier to support and understand the dilemmas, identity crisis or depressions caused by discrepancy between previous and present society norms and expectations.

Theoretical descriptions of identity shaping, values and hope will be supplemented by case stories letting people with a refugee background narrate their own experiences.

The module offers activities to give the practitioners hands-on experience of defining one's identity and to investigate representation as a means to support multicultural identities.

IDENTITY

Theoretical framework for understanding behindlying mechanisms

SUPPORTING BY UNDERSTANDING

For practitioners, it is essential to have a dynamic understanding of identity formation. Only in this way can we support people with a refugee background in developing a strong and meaningful new identity that is not predetermined by stereotypical assumptions.

DYNAMIC IDENTITY

Identity is dynamic and is created and reshaped through interaction with others. It is important for practitioners to be aware of this, as they might otherwise perceive certain cultural practices as fixed and unchangeable markers of identity and thereby limit the individual's scope for action.

SELF-UNDERSTANDING

If the individual is granted constitutive power over practice and identity, they are able to choose and combine cultural elements themselves, allowing a bicultural affiliation to become a resource. Identity thus becomes changeable and can develop over time, enabling the individual to actively create change in their own life and in society.

With a dynamic perspective, the individual becomes aware of how they live, act, and participate in society. The other – that is, people with different experiences and backgrounds – becomes an important tool in the development of self-understanding. Through encounters with the other, reflection and shifts in perspective emerge, allowing the individual to mirror themselves and relate to themselves in a critical and conscious way.



POSITIVE MULTI-IDENTITY

The ethnic other thus becomes a positive contribution to identity formation and functions as a tool for self-reflection. Through the gaze of the other, the individual can reconstruct and strengthen their identity in an ongoing, self-analytical process.

Moudi: “Generally speaking, I think sport is a fantastic way to integrate and build relationships, make new friends and teammates. But I couldn’t have predicted that it would help me so much with integration and finding my new self and being accepted.”



IDENTITY AS LIVED VALUES

In this context, it becomes essential to direct attention towards the values that help shape the individual's identity and actions.

Identity and values are closely connected. Values function as an internal compass that guides your choices, actions, and self-understanding, while your identity is the result of how you live out these values, your experiences, and how you relate to others. When your actions reflect your values, you experience meaning and authenticity, whereas inconsistencies create inner tension.

Conversely, a static view of identity, where identity is tied to specific and unchangeable social and cultural groups, leads to exclusion. The individual will never be able to meet the expectations of “correct” cultural behaviour and therefore does not achieve full recognition – neither in the original nor in the new ethnic identity category. The two identities come to exclude each other and stand in conflict.

Here bicultural affiliation becomes associated with an incomplete identity, which can lead to a sense of identity-related homelessness. The individual does not experience belonging anywhere and will feel culturally misplaced, regardless of where they are. This experience of not belonging becomes constant and pervasive.

1 SELF-AWARENESS

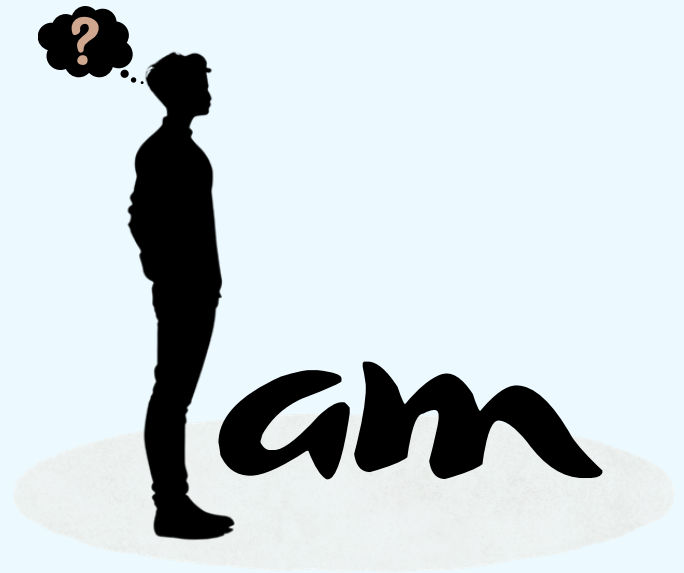
Road to Resilience

ACTIVITY 'I AM'

PURPOSE

01.

The purpose of this exercise is to encourage participants to reflect on the various social identities they hold, why certain identities are more prominent to them than others, and whether some are imposed by society.



BACKGROUND

02.

This exercise is designed to make people reflect about our social identities, the different traits or categories we use to describe ourselves, and how others might see us. Identities like gender, ethnicity, abilities, and interests can be shaped by our own experiences and what society expects from us. An individual's identity is socially constructed from early childhood. People often define themselves by what sets them apart from what is seen as "normal." When being a white European man is highlighted as normal, people from minority backgrounds will identify themselves with what makes them different.

CREATE SAFE SPACE

03.

Some identities may feel really important to who we are, while others might be less central or even feel like they have been imposed on us by others. It is important to create a respectful and supportive space for this activity, as some participants may reflect on sensitive or personal aspects of themselves. Let participants know they do not have to share anything they are not comfortable with, and give them time to reflect privately if needed.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

04.



Participants are given 2 minutes to write as many sentences as they can starting with "I am... ". They should write whatever comes to mind, reflecting any aspect of their identity. Encourage participants not to overthink or filter their responses - just write what naturally comes up.

QUESTIONS

05.



After the writing session, ask participants to take a few moments to reflect on what they wrote. You can ask the participants the following questions:

- Raise your hand if you wrote down your gender within the first three sentences
- Raise your hand if you wrote your religion within the first three sentences
- Raise your hand if you wrote down nationality
- Raise your hand if you wrote down ethnicity
- Do you see any patterns
- Which were the first descriptions that came to your mind? Which categories do they belong to (e.g., gender, family status, job, hobbies, ethnicity, etc.)?
- In what order did you list them, and why?
- Why do certain identities feel more 'visible' than others in different contexts?
- Why did certain identities come up first?
- Do you change the identities you highlight depending on where you are or who you're with?
- Are there aspects of yourself you didn't think about at all? Why might that be?
- Did you write something down that you don't strongly identify with?
- Did you write anything only because others often describe you that way?

After the question ask participant to circle the three most meaningful, the three that the participants see themselves as or that is most valuable for them

SHARE REFLECTIONS

06.



Ask the participants how it was to do this exercise? What did they learn?

Some participants may feel vulnerable about sharing their identities, particularly if they wrote about aspects of themselves they are still exploring or that are less accepted by society. Respect participants' boundaries and allow them the option to keep their reflections private. You may also consider modifying the exercise based on the group's comfort level.

VALUES

Theoretical framework for deeper understanding

UNDERSTANDING DYNAMICS THROUGH CHANGING LIFE

In order to understand the shaping of values, we draw from different perspectives and focus on the aspects relevant for our target group. Values are not fixed, but are continuously shaped and reshaped through life experiences, relations, and social contexts.

CIRCUMSTANCES SHAPE VALUES

Different circumstances have an impact on defining and shaping a person's values, among others: childhood and youth, generational context, social life in communities, and life-changing events. These early and repeated experiences contribute to the formation of what are often understood as "core values". From a dynamic perspective, these values are not static, but rather relatively stable patterns that have been reinforced over time through belonging, recognition, and a sense of safety.

UNDERSTANDING CHANGE CAN LEAD TO SHIFTS

The experience of reinventing or establishing oneself in a foreign country and an unknown society often involves questioning or shifting one's values. It is common to experience guilt or confusion when priorities change, as this can be perceived as inconsistency or failure. However, when individuals insist on holding on to values shaped by a previous life context that no longer fit their present situation, it can lead to mental health challenges.



Moussa: "What I want people to understand is: They could also become refugees or migrants tomorrow. If they understand that, they'll have a different view and a different approach toward people who come seeking asylum and protection."

COMPLEXITY AND CONFUSION

At the same time, this process is not only internal but also relational and shaped by external expectations. Individuals may experience pressure from their community of origin to maintain certain values, while the new society may simultaneously expect them to change and adapt. This can create a double tension, where the individual is both encouraged to transform and constrained by stereotypical or stigmatizing understandings of who they are. In this situation, value change becomes a complex negotiation between personal needs, social belonging, and external recognition.

CHANGE AS A NATURAL ADAPTION

By accepting that values evolve throughout life and are shaped by changing circumstances, individuals can reflect on transitions and navigate their values more intentionally in relation to their current needs and situation. In this sense, values are closely connected to both identity and adaptation, and can be understood as a means of ensuring safety and meaningful orientation in a given context.

When a person lives in alignment with their values, they experience meaning, integrity, and authenticity. Conversely, living in contradiction with one's values can lead to dissatisfaction, shame, or inner tension. Such discrepancies often result in either a change in behaviour or a gradual transformation of values.

SUPPORTIVE PRACTITIONERS



For practitioners, it is important to recognise this potential discrepancy and the social pressures surrounding it, and to support individuals in exploring and reflecting on their values without framing change as instability or weakness. Instead, shifts in values can be understood as a natural and necessary adaptation to new life circumstances, even when they occur within complex and sometimes conflicting social expectations.



ASISTING IN THE TRANSITION OF VALUES

One way to support this process is to explore values through both desired and undesired feelings and qualities. Identifying what one wants to move towards, as well as what one wants to move away from, can provide a starting point for reflection (see appendix for exercise). The same values may hold different meanings for different individuals, and their relevance may shift across life situations.

Research shows that values are influenced by both individual life experiences and broader social patterns, including generational context and significant life events. While some values may appear stable over time, they remain open to change, particularly in periods of transition. Recognising this ongoing process can help normalise the discomfort associated with change and support individuals in creating coherence between their past experiences and present lives.

BASING THE FUTURE ON VALUES AND HOPE

Understanding values as dynamic and shaped through changing life circumstances also points towards the importance of how individuals relate to their future. When values are disrupted, challenged, or in transition, it can become difficult to maintain a sense of direction and meaning. In this context, the ability to imagine a future and to hold on to hope becomes central. Hope is closely connected to both identity and values, as it enables individuals to reorient themselves, reconstruct meaning, and engage with new possibilities despite uncertainty.



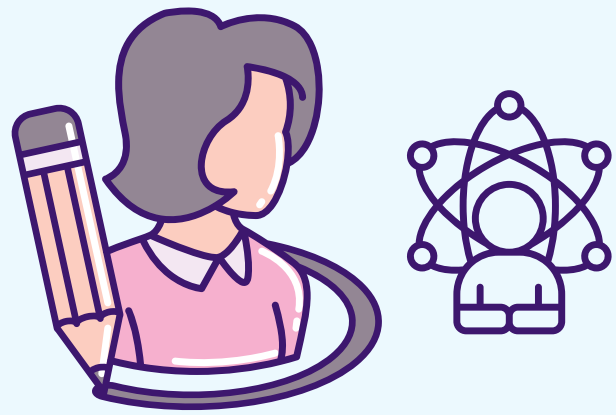
Elisha: "I always feel that I belong wherever I am. When I'm in Denmark, I feel almost 100% Danish. When I'm in Congo, I feel 100% Congolese. When I'm in Uganda, I feel 100% Ugandan. It's obviously about the culture I find myself in. I think that at the moment I really do behave very much like a Danish person. I get the humour. I know the food. I understand the cultural vibe. I don't know exactly what percentage Danish I am, as I'm not a Danish citizen. If I'm forced to move, I'll have to start over again. I learnt to stop feeling sorry for myself a long time ago."

ACTIVITY 'CAPTURE YOUR VALUES'

PURPOSE

01.

This exercise will support the practitioners in identifying their values from their life today and then get a mini experience in radical change in life circumstances and how that can impact one's personal values.



BACKGROUND

02.



When talking about personal values they are often regarded as somehow stationary and unchangeable throughout a person's life. That perception can cause distress and confusion as a result of discrepancy between their own + other's expectations and a different life situation. This exercise will illustrate how changes in life circumstances might affect a person's priorities and thereby their values.

This helps us to get a sense of how ground breaking this must be for a person in an actual situation of facing radical and fundamental changes in their lives. The change can also occur in other forms like severe illness, loss, divorce or an accident affecting a person's life circumstances.

CREATE SAFE SPACE

03.



All results are for the individual only. No one is encouraged to share their choices or descriptions as the information is very personal. The activity can even be executed alone as the last step can be converted to inner reflections. The last step of sharing reflections with other participants must be done in a respectful and non-judgemental space in order to learn from each other and to care for each other.

ACTIVITY

‘CAPTURE YOUR VALUES’

Road to Resilience

INDIVIDUAL CHOICE OF ‘AWAY FROM’

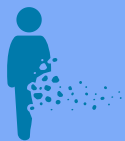
04.



1. Listing **5 of the ‘AWAY FROM’-indicators** the participants will get a picture of what they want **to avoid the most**. The full lists are in the Appendix.
2. Then they identify the opposites of their chosen 5 to identify the **5 most important values** or aspects of life for them. The *list of personal values* can be used or they can choose other values on their own.
3. The participants are given a few minutes to explore and **formulate their own explanation of the 3 most important of their chosen values**.

SECOND ROUND - DISRUPTION

05.



The second round we disrupt the life circumstances of the participants: *You live in a country, far away from your home country. You have lost 4 persons that were very close to you, name them. In the new country you are together with 2 family members and you are struggling learning the language. The official system is very different from what you are used to and you are overwhelmed by navigating the unspoken rules among the native people. You live in a small apartment with a scarce interior and your financial situation is bad as your subsidies can barely cover the basics. Your residency is up for renewal every second year with the uncertainty whether you can stay or have to leave the country.*



Ask the participants to imagine their life with the mentioned changes. Then do the procedure again;

1. Identify 5 ‘away from’-indicators as the most important aspects to avoid.
2. After that choose the 5 opposites as *your core values*, and then elaborate 3 values with your own words and explanations.

REFLECTIONS

06.



Ask the participants how it was to do this exercise? What did they learn? How can the reflections benefit them in their professional life?

Respect participants' boundaries and allow them the option to keep their reflections private. You may also consider modifying the exercise based on the group's comfort level.

ACTIVITY

‘CAPTURE YOUR VALUES’



Extra materials for the ‘Capture your values’ activity

- **To be printed x 2 or available 2 times per participant.**
- **Provide each participant with a piece of paper and a pen.**

‘AWAY FROM’-INDICATORS

01.



Choose 5 anti-values that you would distance yourself the most from:

Shame	Worrying
Vulnerability	Discomfort
Disappointment	Disgust
Anger	Hatred
Rage	Hopelessness
Dishonesty	Discouragement
Negativity	Irritation
Uncertainty	Insecurity
Stress	Being stuck
Pressure	Boredom
Depression	Incompetence
Loneliness	Lost
Anxiety	Poverty
Fear	Lack of energy
Irrationality	Exhausted
Frustration	Empty
Ignored	Stupid
Nervousness	Outside
Sadness	Rejected
Irresponsibility	Worthless

ACTIVITY

‘CAPTURE YOUR VALUES’

Road to Resilience

PERSONAL VALUES

02.



Choose 5 personal values that you find contradict your 5 ‘away from’-indicators the most. The chosen personal values represent the most important aspects for you. The list serves as inspiration, feel free to use your own words.

Love

Calmness

Development

Balance

Recognition

Ambitious

Advocacy

Thoughtful

Loyalty

Adventurous

Authenticity

Responsibility

Security

Kindness

Presence

Gratitude

Cohesion

Resilience

Meaning

Relationships

Spirituality

Generosity

Stability

Empathy

Helpfulness

Trust

Curiosity

Honesty

Positivity

Fairness

Respect

Determination

Belonging

Fun

Health

Self-acceptance

Creativity

Decency

Wisdom

Success

Credibility

Accountability

HOPE AND FUTURE



How we can help others to face the future with hope.

LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES SHAPES HOPE

It is essential for human beings to have future-oriented thoughts connected to hope. Hope that things can improve, and a sense that it is legitimate to have wishes for life – and that these wishes can be fulfilled. Without hope, it becomes difficult both to cope with and to change one's situation.

For many people with a refugee background, the future is marked by uncertainty. This may be due to growing up in unpredictable life conditions, or because their future prospects have suddenly been disrupted. At the same time, their current living situation may be temporary and unclear, for example in the case of temporary residence permits. As a result, both the present and the future can be experienced as unstable and lacking clear direction.

This uncertainty can lead to a reluctance to dream. The fear of being disappointed again may cause individuals to hold back their wishes and expectations for life. It can also make it difficult to sense what one truly wants and who one is. As a result, the future may appear anxiety-provoking, fragile, and out of reach.

CARE FOR THEIR HOPE

As practitioners, it is important not to take dreams away from individuals – even when they seem large or unrealistic. Instead, the task is to support individuals in maintaining and developing hope, and in gradually forming new visions of the future that make sense within their current life situation.

HOPE AND FUTURE

SPACE FOR JOY

A central task is to support individuals in daring to dream again. This also involves directing attention towards what is working in everyday life and creating space for small experiences of joy and meaning – even in a life marked by uncertainty. It takes time for the nervous system to settle, and it requires a conscious effort to rebuild the capacity for hope and future orientation.



One way to support this process is to help individuals notice and hold on to positive everyday experiences. This can be done, for example, by writing down small moments – in a notebook or on a phone – where something feels good. It might be the sun shining, a cup of coffee tasting good, or a moment of joy when thinking about family. Over time, these small experiences can contribute to rebuilding a sense of meaning and hope.

A VOICE ABOUT HOPE

Moudi is aware that his dreams have changed due to circumstances:
“Now I dream of a successful career so that my family and I can have a good life – if I start a family soon, that is. We’ll have to see. Ten years ago, I only dreamed of becoming a professional basketball player. But that’s no longer possible. Perhaps I can coach top-level clubs in the future.”

GET INSPIRED



ITIRE PROJECT

Webinars for practisitoners

ITIRE project - for professionals working with refugees (families, children, students):
www.youtube.com/@itireerasmusproject7747



MUSIC

Refugees writes lyrics

Music colab between refugees and musicians in Denmark:
<https://flygtningestemmer.dk>



LITERATURE

Authors: Amina Elmi, Sofie Jama and Mohammed Ayoub

Danish authors and poets with refugee backgrounds. They are exploring concepts of identity and multicultural persons living in Denmark.

7

CURRICULUM



Links, references and further investigation

On **core values**:

<https://thegrowtheq.com/our-identity-is-more-powerful-than-our-core-values/>

On **personal values and anti-values**:

<https://charlottegade.dk/personlige-vaerdier-liste/>

and

<https://reflection.ed.ac.uk/reflectors-toolkit/self-awareness/values>

On **value change over time**:

<https://www.araratwellness.com.au/article/evolving-values-why-they-change-over-time/>

On **defining values**:

<https://i2insights.org/2022/05/10/schwartz-theory-of-basic-values/>

On **refugee empowerment**:

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/podcasts/podcast-i-am-not-your-refugee/>

THEIR OWN VOICES

A variety of podcasts

Eight young people with multi ethnic background reflect on music, memories and sense of belonging (in Danish):

<https://immigrantmuseet.dk/migrationshistorien/mere-migrationshistorie/podcasts/>

LIFE STORIES

10 years later

The stories of five individuals who have gone on to become a crucial part of their new communities and are giving back in countless ways:

<https://www.rescue.org/eu/article/10-years-later-refugees-their-new-lives-europe>





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