Chronic Pain Group
‘Reconnections’
2015-2016
Intro- overview

• Background why we did this group
• Setting it up how it worked
• Process involved
• Evaluation - findings
STTARS: What is the issue?
Is there a gap?

- Prevalence of chronic pain experienced by clients
- Impact of chronic pain on daily life
- Common challenges clients faced
- Dual challenge: Chronic pain & refugee experience
- STTARS: discussion & strategies to address this
Chronic pain:
The elephant in the room
Chronic pain in T&T survivors. What does the evidence say?

- Limited research in refugee populations
- Limitations of treating chronic pain in this client group using medical models
  - Mutual maintenance model (Teodorescu et al, 2015)
  - Perpetual avoidance model (Teodorescu et al, 2015)
  - Limitations of pharmaco-therapeutic approach
  - Limitations of diagnostic labeling (Papa 2010)
- “Lack of recognition of collective culture in experiences of trauma-related chronic pain” (Beth 2013)
Collective experiences of trauma and healing

- Collective response vs individual response
- Concept of ‘collective identity trauma’
- Concept of healing collectively. The role of groups
- High prevalence of clients from collective cultures at STTARS
Chronic Pain Group: Planning

• Drew on current evidence
• Drew on evaluation from pilot project of 2015
• Determined therapeutic approach & design
• Determined group frequency
• Determined eligibility
• Determined evaluation tools
What therapeutic approach was used?

• Key principles included:
  – Safety, trust, empowerment, inclusivity
  – Flexibility, creativity and interactive

• Approach:
  – Wrap around psycho-social approach
  – Multi-modal
    • Narrative
    • Mindfulness & breathing
    • Relaxation techniques
    • Lifestyle and diet
    • Medication compliance & education
Narrative

• “The narrative of torture survivors is powerful, but the survivors have been silenced by the perpetrators. Group rehabilitation helps them regain their dignity and humanity and helps them speak up again”

Dr Boris Droždek
Narrative story telling exercise
Group exercise – Coping strategies
Evaluation

- Chronic Pain thoughts and feeling index
- Pain indicator tool
- Pre and post group work sheet
- Use of both quantitative and qualitative tools
I can't get the pain out of my mind
My life feels controlled by pain
I am limited because of my pain
I am afraid my pain will get worse
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Some quotes from clients

• ‘great to come to the group and talk about how we really feel inside’
• ‘I learnt that I’m not the only one with these problems and that helps me get better’
• ‘I learnt more about where my pain comes from’
• ‘really enjoyed socialising and meeting new friends who have suffered like me’
• I now know how to breathe better so that may own pain is less’
Living with chronic pain
Lessons learned

• What worked
• What didn’t
• What are the recommendations for future groups
• Yes! We’ll do this again!
References: