

REFUGEE HEALTH & CARE OF SURVIVORS OF TORTURE

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15 November 2012

Aims:

- To consider the contexts from which refugees may arrive and approach health care services
- To raise awareness about “host society” discourses concerning refugees
- To raise awareness about early identification of survivors of torture
- To consider ‘good practice’ in relation to interviewing survivors of torture.

Medsin Vision

"A fair and just world, in which equity in health is a reality for all"

(Medsin is an independent student organization that raises awareness of and takes action on humanitarian and global health issues at a local, national and international level)



Freedom from Torture

Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

World Health Organisation

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

Right to rehabilitation

Convention Against Torture, article 14 -
States are to:

- ensure in their legal system that victims of torture obtain redress and have an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation
- **including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible.**

Right to rehabilitation

Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2004/41 stresses that:

- national legal systems should ensure that victims of torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading punishment ... **receive appropriate socio-medical rehabilitation**
- **STATE DUTY: Establish & support torture rehabilitation services**



Refugee

A person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.

1951 Refugee Convention

UNHCR figures (2011)

- 42.5 million Forcibly Displaced People
 - Refugees of concern – 10.4 million. Further 4.8 million registered refugees looked after “United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees”
 - 895,000 asylum seekers
 - Internally Displaced People – 26.4 million
- Stateless people – approx 12 million

Major refugee hosting countries end-2010

- Pakistan – 1.9 million +
- Iran – 1 million +
- Syria – 1 million +

Refugees

Developing countries hosted four-fifths of the world's refugees. The 49 Least Developed Countries provided asylum to almost 2 million refugees.

Pakistan hosted the largest number of refugees in relation to the size of its economy with 710 refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (475) and Kenya (247) were second and third respectively.

Women & girls / Children

Women and girls represented, on average, 49 per cent of persons of concern to UNHCR. They constituted 47 per cent of refugees, and half of all IDPs and returnees (former refugees).

Forty-four per cent of refugees and 31 per cent of asylum-seekers were children below 18 years of age.

Asylum claims

More than 845,800 people submitted an individual application for asylum or refugee status in 2010 ...

With more than 180,600 asylum claims - one fifth of applications globally - **South Africa** was the world's largest recipient of individual applications, followed by the **United States of America** (54,300) and **France** (48,100).

The **United Kingdom** was the sixth largest recipient of new asylum-seekers in 2010 with 22,100 claims. This was the lowest level since 1989.

Refugee Discourses

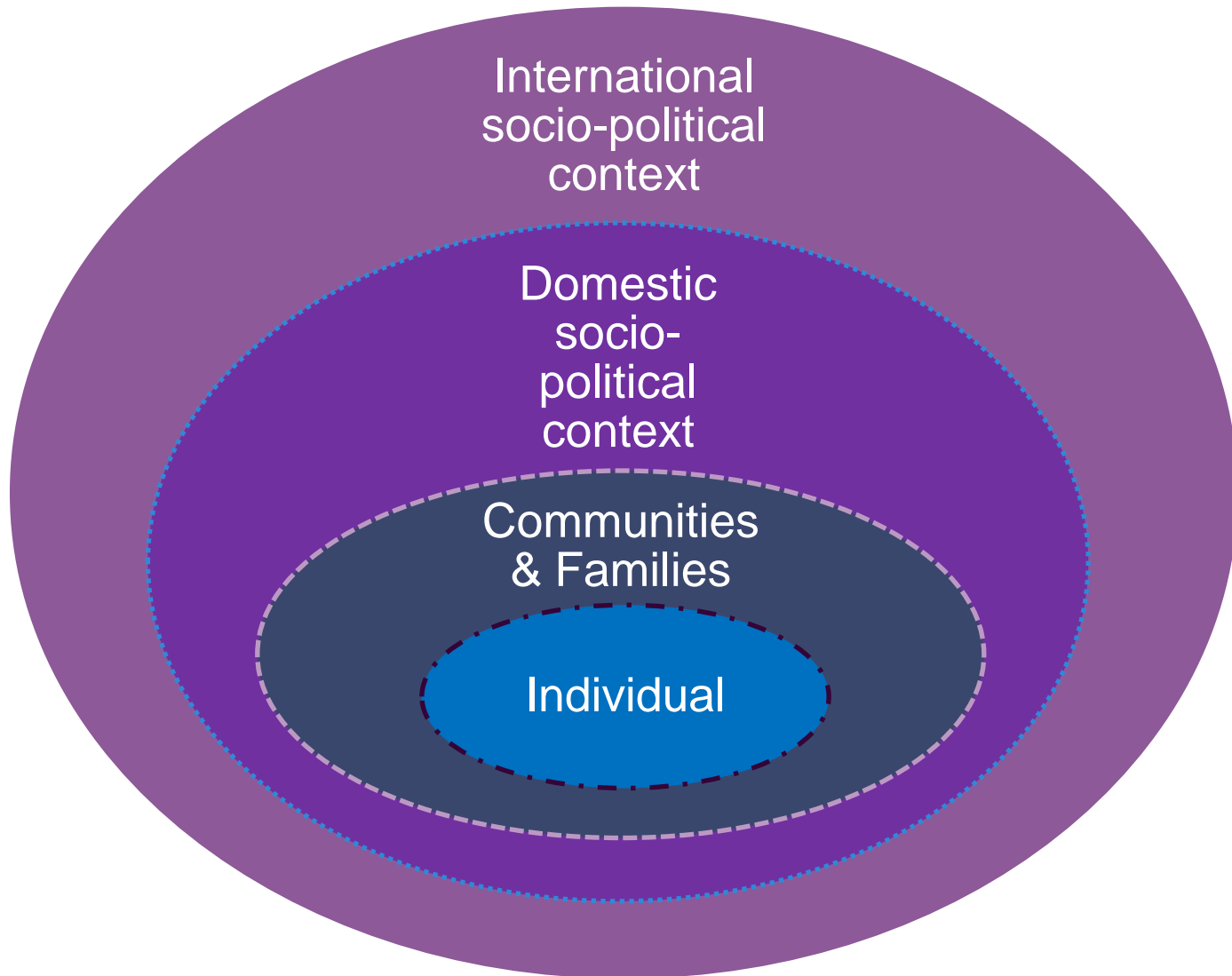
- Trauma: “Loss of home is the only condition that all refugees share, not trauma”

(Papadopoulos, 2002:p9)

- Human Rights framework
- “Bogus asylum seekers”
- Economic migration
- Stories of leaving and arriving

Before - Anticipation - Devastating events - Survival – Adjustment – After

Layers of Context



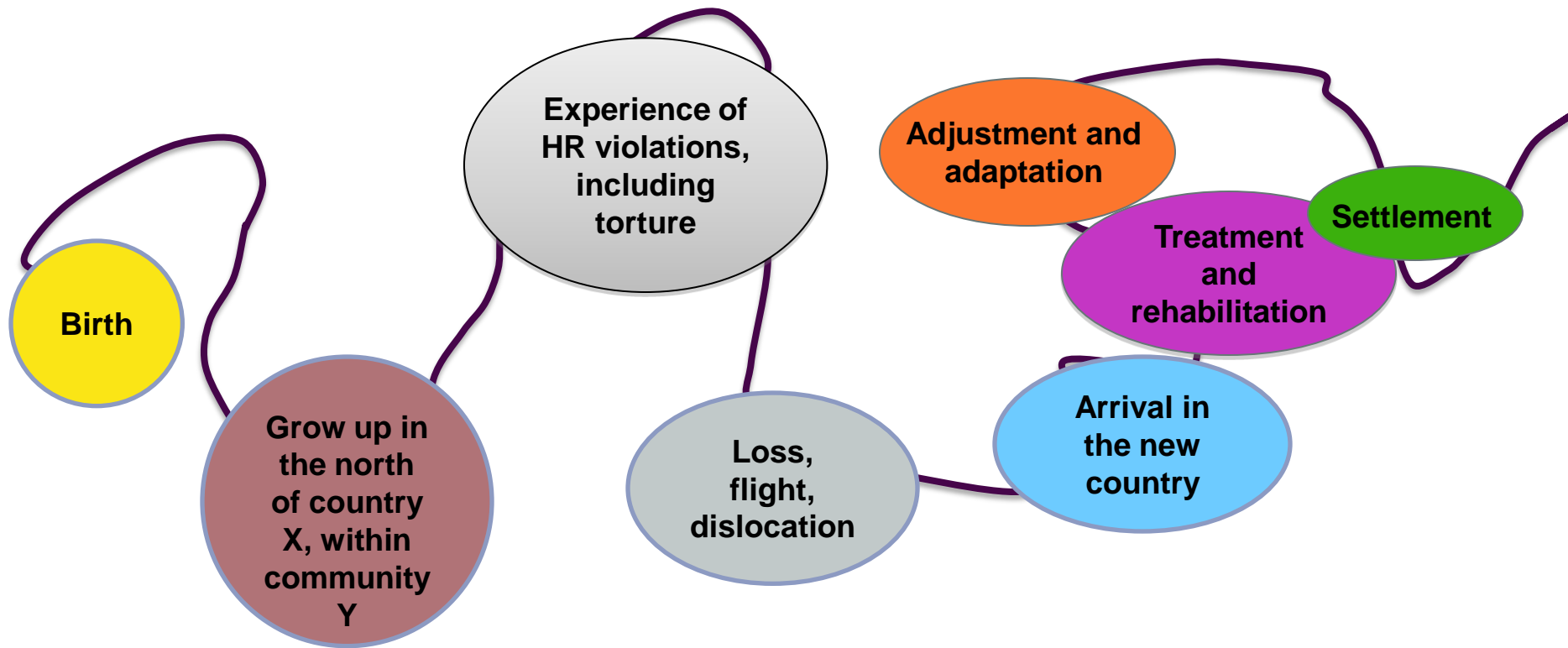
Social

GRRAACCESS – gender, race, religion, age, ability, class, culture, ethnicity, education, sexuality, spirituality



A survivor of torture's journey

Human Rights (including freedom from torture, right to health) →



Social

GRRAACCEESS – gender, race, religion, age, ability, class, culture, ethnicity, education, sexuality, →

spirituality



Freedom from Torture

Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

Torture and trauma

“The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others”

Judith Herman, 1992

Defining torture

"... 'torture' means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions."

United Nations Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment:



Freedom from Torture

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Torture

- Torture is the intentional infliction of severe mental or physical pain or suffering for a specific purpose.
- Torture is often used to punish, obtain information or a confession, take revenge on a person, or create terror and fear within a population.

Torture

- Torture is carried out by state agents, such as police, security forces, military and paramilitary units (directly, at the instigation of state officials)
- Torture is also carried out by organised non-state agents, often with the consent or acquiescence of the state or other person acting in an official capacity.

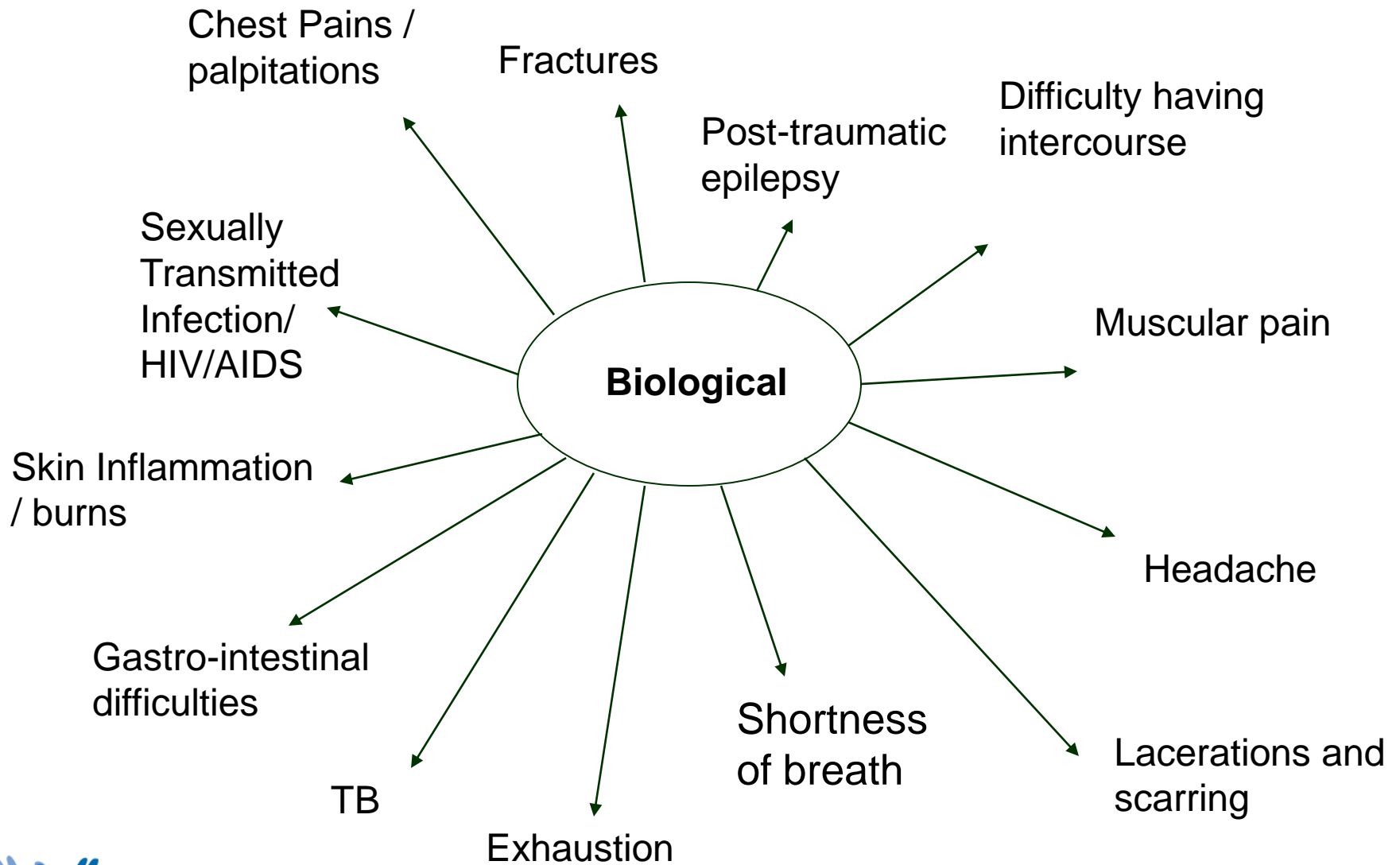
Torture

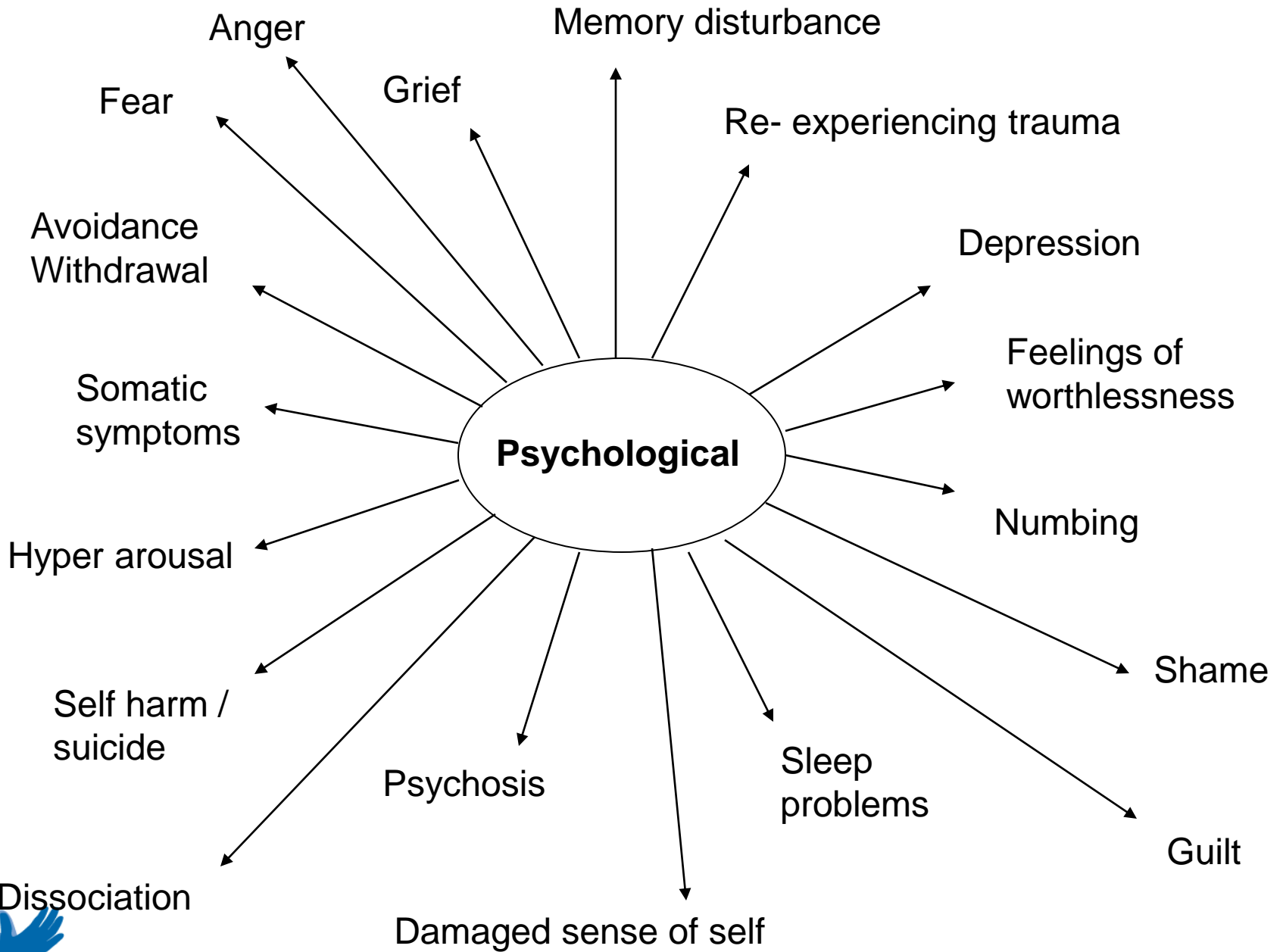
Torture has been described as the act of killing a person without their dying

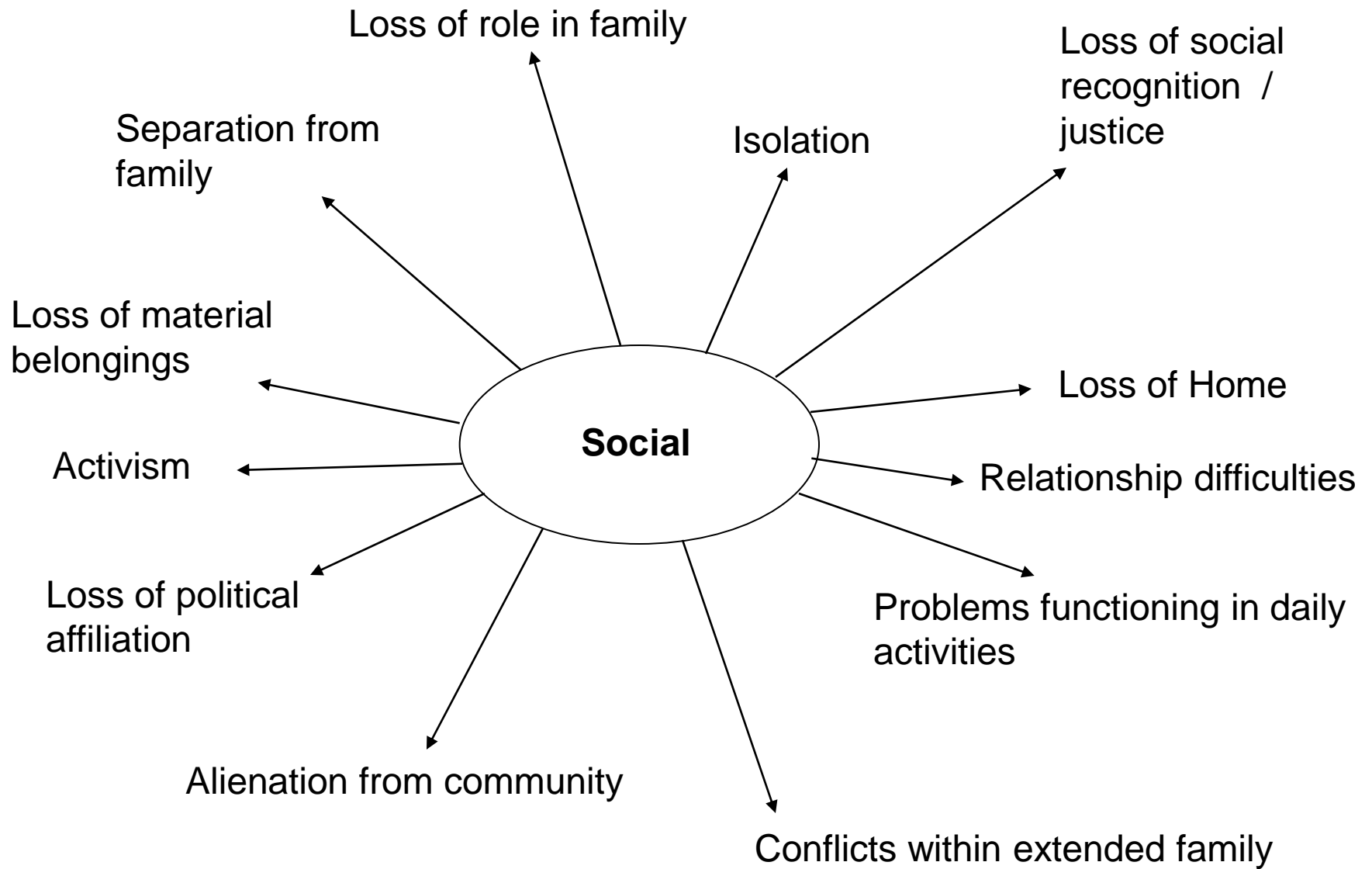
It is an attempt to destroy a person's physical and psychological integrity

It is an attempt to dehumanise the 'other'

It is used as a means of suppressing communities and 'peoples'







Common Responses to Trauma

- Headaches, palpitations, sweating, breathlessness, choking sensation
- Muscle pains, feeling weak and easily tired
- Sleep difficulties
- Loss of concentration / memory difficulties
- Negative thoughts - self blame / guilt
- Shame / humiliation
- Anger and irritability
- Obsessive thoughts and behaviours (e.g. obsessive washing)
- Loss of hope; sense of foreshortened future
- Damaged sense of self
- Why me?



Common Responses to Trauma (PTSD)

- Hyperarousal
 - Jumpiness, easily startled
- Intrusion
 - Recurrent distressing nightmares
 - Recurrent vivid memories during the day which may be distressing
 - Flashbacks – reliving traumatic experiences
- Avoidance
 - Inability to recall parts of the trauma
 - Emotional numbing
 - Dissociation / detachment from others
 - Avoidance of thoughts and reminders of trauma



Trauma

- There is often no single event.
- What may be traumatic for one person, is not for another.
- How trauma is experienced and interpreted is not always the same.
- Culture can determine how trauma is understood and responded to.
- People cope in different ways-there is no set response.
- Symptoms as normal responses to painful experiences / stressful circumstances.

What survivors tell us they want?

- Rehabilitation
- **Overall Justice Imperative:**
 1. To stop harm from happening to others
 2. Redress
- Acknowledgement
- Support, compensation
- Be heard, have a say

Interdisciplinary work = practical rehabilitation

- Medical, psychological, social assistance
- Legal assistance across all rights - from secure housing to securing a legal status
- Group work & building communities
- Enabling voice through survivor activism

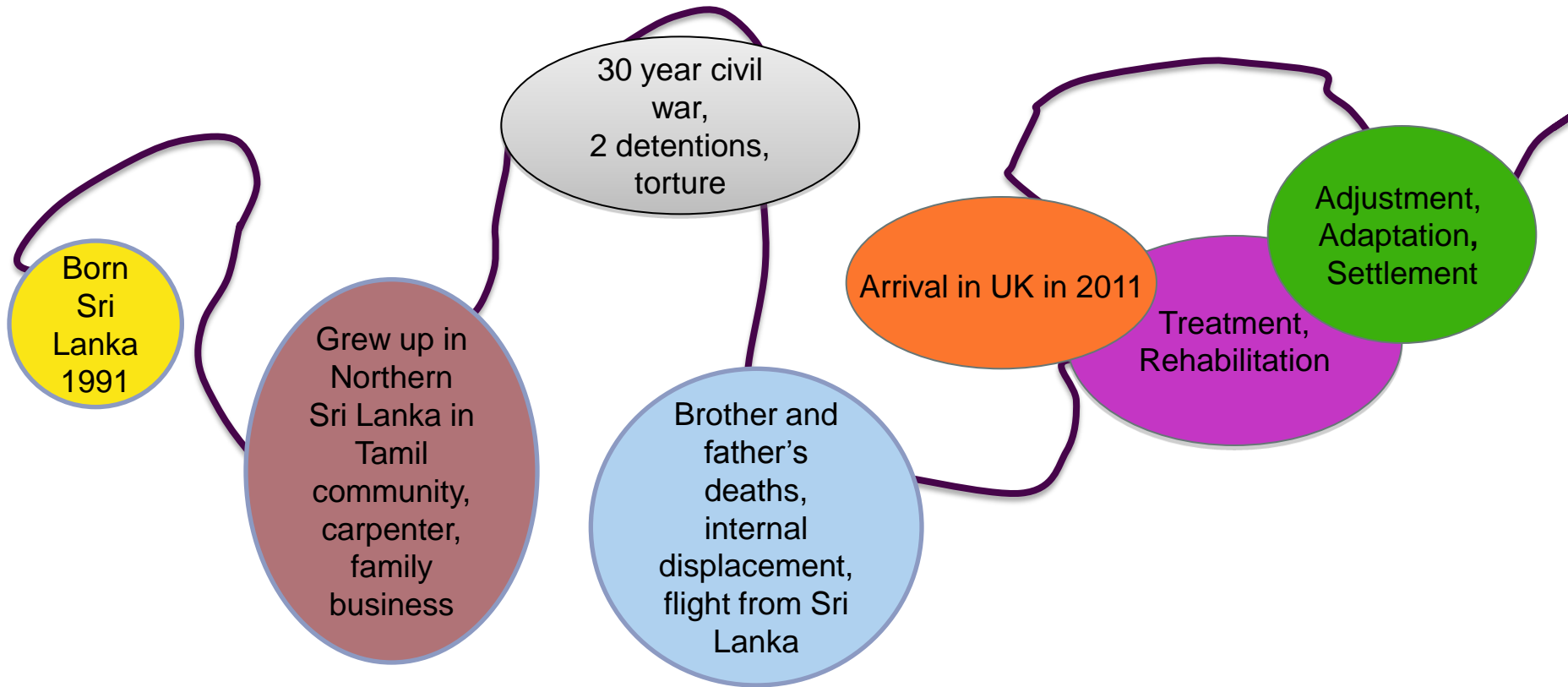
Clinical Services at FFT

Complexity

- Stages of arrival, adjustment, integration
- Holistic (multi-disciplinary) service
- Bio-psycho-social model
- Human rights practitioner model
 - Protection
 - Rehabilitation

Vije's journey

Human Rights (including freedom from torture, right to health) →



GRRAACCEESS – gender, race, religion, age, ability, class, culture, ethnicity, education, sexuality, spirituality →

Case study

- In what ways might this survivor be impacted by their experiences of torture and human rights violations?
- What issues might this survivor face regarding their rehabilitation in the UK?

References

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