



HEALTH LITERACY AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLES PROGRAM FOR ROMA IN ROMA SETTLEMENTS

for local Roma educators and mediators

- **Module 4: Mental health**
- **Chapter 4: The Relationship Between Culture and Mental Health**

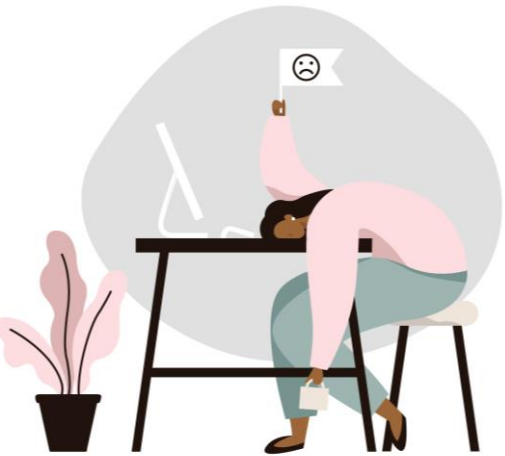
SUMMARY:

Key considerations that lie at the intersection of cultural diversity and mental health. Cultural diversity's impacts on the aspects of mental health: ways in which health and illness are perceived, health seeking behavior, patient attitudes and practitioners and mental health systems. Destigmatisation of mental health problems.



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OVERVIEW of Module IV: The Relationship Between Culture and Mental Health



- **Chapter 1: Mental health concepts**

Exploring the concept and definitions of mental health. What is mental health and why it is important for overall health? Determinants of mental health. Does mental health change over time?

- **Chapter 2: Mental Illnesses and Disorders**

Addictions How common are mental illnesses and disorders? Causes of mental illness and disorders. Main types of mental disorders. Mental health promotion and prevention. Addictions and addictive practices. What causes addiction? Types of addictions. Addressing addictions: prevention and treatment.

- **Chapter 3: Mental Disabilities.**

General types of mental disabilities. Links to physical disabilities and chronic conditions. Rights and protection of people with mental disabilities. Challenges to inclusion.

- **Chapter 4: The Relationship Between Culture and Mental Health**

Key considerations that lie at the intersection of cultural diversity and mental health. Cultural diversity's impacts on the aspects of mental health: ways in which health and illness are perceived, health seeking behavior, patient attitudes and practitioners and mental health systems. Destigmatisation of mental health problems.

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MODULE IV

Chapter 4: The Relationship Between Culture and Mental Health





The Relationship Between Culture and Mental Health



Mental health is a complex issue that can be affected by many different factors. While science has made progress in understanding the role of genes and biology in mental health, culture still plays a significant role in shaping how people think and feel about their mental health.

It is important to understand culture's role in mental health to create an inclusive environment that supports people of all backgrounds.

Culture and Mental Health: What's the Connection?

Culture can either be a source of strength or a source of stress. It can provide us with a sense of belonging and support. It can also be a source of conflict and misunderstanding. When it comes to mental health, culture can have both positive and negative impacts.

Global Perspectives

Diverse Views: Diverse cultures shape a wide range of different perspectives on mental health worldwide.

It delves into variations in beliefs, practices, and attitudes about mental well-being across continents and regions, offering insights into the global tapestry of cultural perspectives on mental health.



Defining Culture

Culture is the set of beliefs, values, practices, and norms that characterize a group or society. It shapes our perceptions, behaviors, and ways of interacting with others.



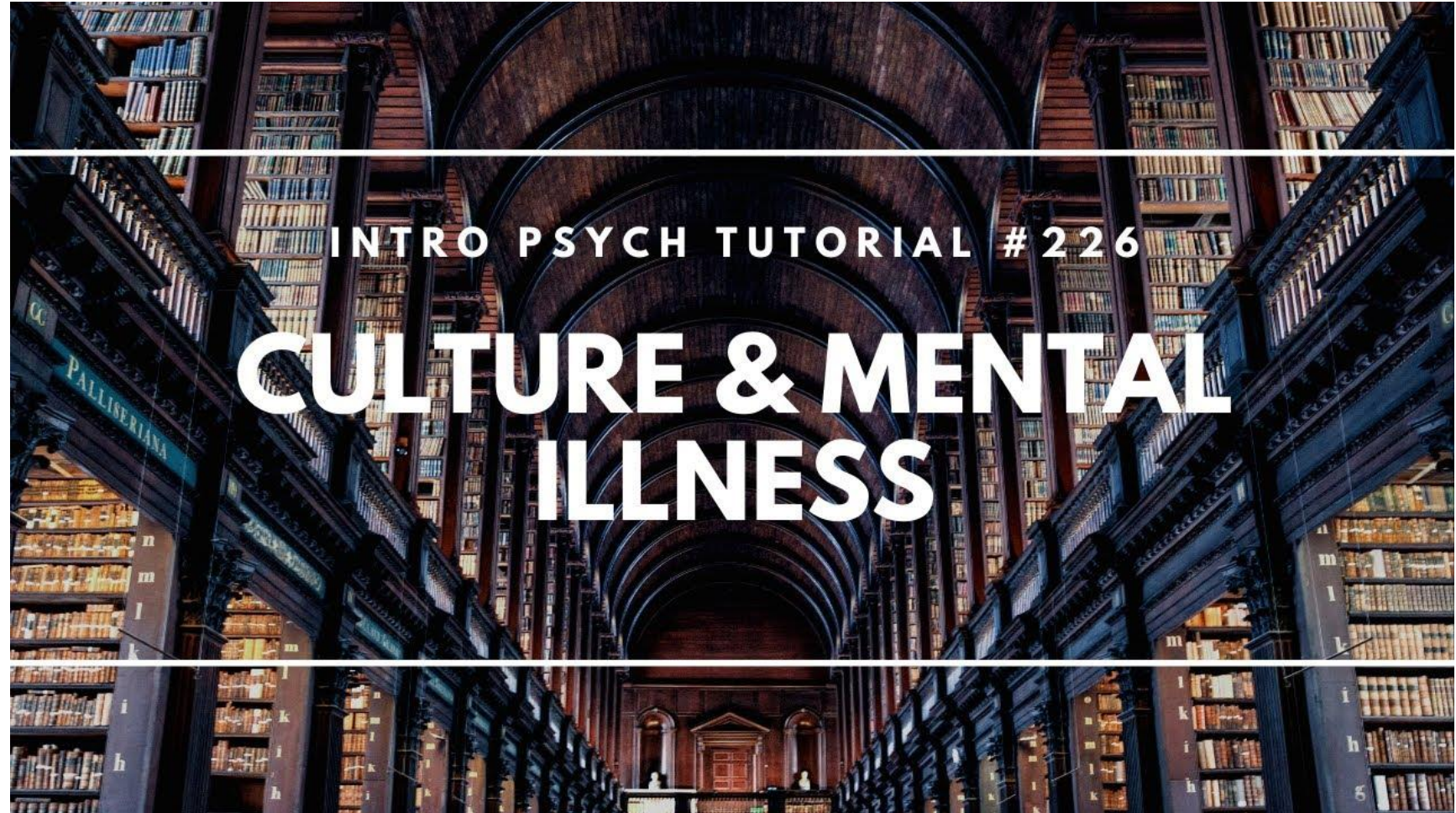
Culture influences how we see ourselves and the world around us. It can either be a source of strength or a source of stress. When it comes to mental health, culture can play a significant role.

Mental health is shaped by our cultural beliefs, values, and norms. Our culture can impact the way we understand and cope with mental illness. It can also affect how we seek help and support.



Culture and Mental Illness

Educational video



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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SR3jI6NK0Jw>

Our cultural beliefs and values can affect how we see ourselves and the world around us – hence – they affect our mental health



- Our worldview is essentially the lens through which we view the world.
- It is shaped by our cultural beliefs and values, and it can majorly impact our mental health.
- If we have a negative or distorted view of the world, it can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, and isolation. On the other hand, having a positive or realistic worldview can help us cope with life's challenges and appreciate the beauty around us.



Our cultural traditions can impact mental health



Some traditions, such as those around gender roles or marriage, may be harmful to mental health.

For example, women who are expected to be submissive to their husbands may be at risk for domestic violence. People who are not allowed to marry the person they love may experience intense feelings of sadness and isolation.

Other traditions, such as those around grief and loss, can be helpful to mental health.

In many cultures, it is tradition to take time off from work or school to mourn the death of a loved one. This can give people the space they need to grieve in a healthy way.



Our social norms can impact mental health

The way we are expected to behave in our culture can impact our mental health. In collectivist cultures, people are often expected to put the needs of their community or family above their own.

This can lead to a sense of self-sacrifice that can be detrimental to mental health.

People who always put others first may find it difficult to take care of themselves, and this can lead to feelings of resentment or burnout.

In individualistic cultures, people are often expected to be self-reliant and independent. This can be a source of stress for people who feel they cannot meet these expectations.



Cultural factors can affect the prevalence and presentation of mental disorders



Studies have shown that depression is more common in cultures that value individualism and achievement than in collectivist cultures.

And while anxiety disorders are found across all cultures, they tend to be expressed differently in different cultures.

In Western cultures, anxiety is often experienced as fear or dread.

In contrast, in Eastern cultures, it may be more likely to be experienced as physical symptoms such as heart palpitations or dizziness.



Culture can influence how mental health problems are diagnosed and treated



In the West, mental disorders are often seen as medical conditions that need to be treated with medication or other medical interventions.

But in many traditional cultures, mental health problems are seen as spiritual issues that need to be addressed through religious or shamanic rituals.



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Culture can affect our willingness to seek help for mental health problems

In some cultures, mental health problems are seen as a sign of weakness, and people may be reluctant to seek help for fear of stigma or discrimination.

In other cultures, mental health problems may be seen as a normal part of life, and people may be more likely to seek help from family, friends, or community members.



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About mental health and culture

Educational video



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- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyNRU_C-wGg



Cultural Syndromes: These are specific expressions of mental health issues tied to particular cultures, involving physical, psychological, or behavioral symptoms within a cultural context. Examples include "Koro" and "Ataque de Nervios."

Cultural Interpretation: Cultural syndromes may be viewed differently within their cultural contexts, making it vital for mental health professionals to recognize and understand these variations for effective care.



Traditional Healing Practices and Holistic Approached to Mental Health

Traditional Healing Methods: There are diverse traditional mental health healing practices rooted in cultural traditions.

Traditional healing oftentimes uses integrative approaches: Research highlights the potential for combining traditional healing with modern mental health care, creating holistic approaches that provide more holistic and culturally relevant support.

Stigma and Mental Health (I)



For many years, seeking mental health care has been stigmatized in many societies around the world. People who seek mental health treatment have often been seen as weak, vulnerable, or unstable, leading to a reluctance to seek help when they need it.

However, in recent years, there has been a growing movement towards destigmatizing mental health care, and the benefits of seeking help for mental health issues are becoming more widely recognized.



Stigma exists for mental health issues due to a lack of understanding. The media often portrays people with mental disorders as dangerous, violent or unstable.

This can lead to people feeling afraid of those with mental disorders and can fuel discrimination.

Some of the most common reasons this exists are:

- The belief that mental disorders are not real medical conditions. This can lead to people thinking that those who have mental disorders are simply weak or crazy.
- The belief that mental disorders are caused by personal failings. This can lead to people thinking that those with mental disorders are lazy, weird or attention-seeking.
- The belief that mental disorders are untreatable. This can lead to people thinking that there is no point in seeking help for mental disorders.
- Fear of violence. People with mental disorders are often stereotyped as being dangerous, unpredictable and violent. This can make people very wary of interacting with them.
- The belief that mental disorders are contagious. This can lead to people avoiding those with mental disorders, as they believe they may catch the disorder themselves.

Fundamentally, mental health stigma eventuates from a lack of understanding mental health issues and faulty beliefs that mental health is a personal issue rather than a genuine medical condition.



Cultural Stigma: Stigma around mental health varies by culture, affecting how people perceive and seek help for mental health issues.

Barriers to Help-Seeking: Cultural stigma can discourage people from seeking mental health care due to fear of judgment or social consequences.

Combating Stigma: To reduce cultural stigma, awareness campaigns, education, and open conversations are crucial. They challenge stereotypes and encourage help-seeking.

How to Combat Mental Health Stigma



Education is key:

Help people understand what mental disorders are, their prevalence, and that they are treatable.

Show compassion:

When it comes to mental disorders, listen without judgement, be patient, and offer support.



Speak up:

Challenge negative comments about mental disorders, as this will stop the stigma from spreading.

Seek help:

Confide in a professional if you think you have a mental disorder - this will challenge the idea that they are untreatable.



Support organisations:

Advocate for Beyond Blue and Lifeline – organisations that work to combat mental health stigma.



AUSTRALIAWIDE
FIRST AID



**Mental Health =
Health (for diverse
communities)**

Educational video



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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzp4lZcJoSQ>

Tools for Inclusive Approaches (I)

Health professionals working in Roma communities need practical recommendations for culturally sensitive mental health care for healthcare providers, policymakers, and the community.

Inclusivity approaches emphasize the importance of cultural competence and inclusivity in mental health care and policy, promoting equitable support for all cultural backgrounds.



Tools for Inclusive Mental Health Approaches (II)



Language and Expression: Language is essential for communicating mental health concerns. Language barriers can make it challenging for individuals to express their needs and experiences effectively.

Cultural Competency: Mental health professionals must be culturally competent, adapting their approaches to accommodate linguistic diversity.

Challenges and Solutions: Overcoming language barriers may involve interpreters, bilingual professionals, and digital tools to ensure effective communication and accessible mental health care.



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Module 4: MENTAL HEALTH

Chapter 4: The Relationship Between Culture and Mental Health.

CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between culture and mental health is intricate, shaping how we perceive and address mental well-being.

Cultural competence, language, and traditional healing practices are crucial for all mental health professionals.

As we move forward, we need to prioritize culturally tailored interventions, inclusivity, and global perspectives to ensure everyone receives the support they need, regardless of their cultural background.



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