

# **Mental Health and Well-Being**

## Fulbright Pre-Departure Orientation

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# Culture Shock

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- Not a mental illness
- Normal/Expected
- Last two weeks or more
- Functioning is not disrupted
- Include: Helplessness, feeling out of control, vulnerable, fear, anxiety, confusion, sadness and sleep or appetite is impacted.

# Signs of Psychological Distress: What to look for?

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## Mood changes

- Marked nervousness, agitation or irritability
- Apparent depression or lack of energy
- Social withdrawal

## Behavioral changes

- Missing work
- Procrastinating on deadlines
- Increased substance use
- Inappropriately aggressive or abrasive behavior
- Increase in risky behaviors

## Evidence or Risk of harm

- Comments (Written or verbal) that suggest thoughts about harming oneself or any threats to another person
- Bizarre alarming statements, or evidence of engaging in dangerous behavior



# Levels of Crises

## Transitional

- Cultural adaptation
- Psychological/Emotional concerns that do not impair functioning
- There are coping skills that have helped to manage the situation

**Seek out support of  
Fulbright staff and peers**

## Urgent

- Signs of psychological distress impair functioning
- The concerns feel different
- Suicidal thoughts, without plan or intent
- Talking about the problem without seeking professional help

**Seek counseling**

## Emergent

- Imminent danger to self or others.
- Behavior that increases risk of harm.
- Grave disability that impacts one's ability to care for self at a basic level.
- Acute withdrawal symptoms due to alcohol or drug use.
- Medical Emergency.

**Connect immediately to a  
medical/psychiatric facility**

## Suicide: What to look for?

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Someone threatening to hurt or kill themselves

Someone looking for ways to kill themselves, such as seeking access to pills, weapons or other means

Someone talking or writing about death, dying or suicide

# What can you do to help?

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- Do not DIAGNOSE
- Identify the right time and place
- Do NOT promise confidentiality/secrets
- Focus on the behaviors, not the person
- Provide honest feedback and link consequences to behaviors
- Avoid judgment
- Listen
- Suggest helpful resources
- Reconnect and follow up



# Sexual Assault

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“**Sexual assault** takes many forms including attacks such as rape or attempted rape, as well as any unwanted sexual contact or threats. Usually a sexual assault occurs when someone touches any part of another person's body in a sexual way, even through clothes, without that person's consent. Some types of sexual acts which fall under the category of sexual assault include forced sexual intercourse (rape), sodomy (oral or anal sexual acts), child molestation, incest, fondling and attempted rape.”



◦ -- National Center for Victims of Crime

# Myths about sexual violence

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If the woman had a drink, it was not sexual assault

The “perpetrator” is usually a stranger

Women are responsible for the assault or rape if they were acted a certain way

If the woman did not scream or fight back, she wanted it

If she didn’t say no, she wanted it

If the woman didn’t say something immediately, it did not happen

Prostitutes cannot be raped

It's not rape if the couple is dating or is married





# Impact of Sexual Assault- Emotional/Psychological

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- Guilt
- Shock/Disbelief
- Rage
- Isolation
- Anger
- Confusion

- Numbness
- Minimization
- Anxiety/Fear
- Shame
- Mood changes

- Appetite Disturbance
- Sleep Disturbance
- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Sexual concerns

# Impact of Sexual Assault- Physical

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- Injury
- Pregnancy
- Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Physical safety concerns

# What can you do to help?

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- Remind them it is not their fault
- Listen non-judgmentally
- Give them choices/control over decisions
- Ascertain physical safety
- Discuss choices for a physical exam
- Discuss choices for a report
- Provide support
- Connect them to resources (short term/long term)



# What can you do to help?

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Refrain from normalizing the harassment and minimizing the experience



Check for safety concerns and identify safe routes



Give the victim a choice



Affirm that it is not a compliment and it is harassment





## Language: What is effective?

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- You will be fine, don't worry!
- I am concerned about you.
- Have you talked to anyone about these concerns before?
- I am happy to support you and walk you through some options.
- You have a lot going for you, don't forget that!



## Language: What is effective?

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- It is hard for me to know exactly what you are going through, but I know it is distressing for you
- Let's find a time to meet up and talk more about this.
- You seem upset and worried, would you like to talk about it?
- My brother went through the same thing, I know how you feel!
- If these concerns have been present for a long time, what would you think about consulting with a physician or another professional?

# Mindful Adaptation and Self-Care



## Tools for mindful adaptation

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- Be mindful of how you engage the new system/culture
  - Assess your expectations and do a reality check
  - Observe, understand, then react, spend some quiet time observing people around, notice patterns (don't operate from the autopilot)
  - View people in their multiple identities. The more we know about someone as a human being, the less we stereotype (funnel vision)





## Tools for mindful adaptation

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- Be mindful of how you engage the new system/culture
  - Understand the structure/value system of the host culture
  - Ask questions , ask people what they mean by their language or behaviors
  - Focus on cultural similarities, ideas which you share
  - Interact with members of the host culture



## Tools for mindful adaptation

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- Practice mindful living
  - Daily rituals to pause (even for ten minutes)
    - Breathing, visualization, mindfulness exercises
    - Transition Windows
    - App: Tactical Breather
    - Mindfulness practice : Youtube (Elisha Goldstein – 10 minute body scan practice)



## Tools for mindful adaptation

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- Practice mindful living
  - Sleep hygiene-
    - S- Substance
    - L- Laptop
    - E – Exercise
    - E – Entertainment
    - P - Pamper



## Tools for mindful adaptation

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- Be mindful of own and other's boundaries
  - Assess your own boundaries – sexual, romantic and other
  - Recognize cultural differences in boundaries
  - When confused – talk with your support network, point of contact in the program and get a realistic perspective



## Tools for mindful adaptation

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- Be mindful of existing vulnerabilities
  - If on medication, be mindful of continuing treatment and talk with your provider before departure.
  - If currently in treatment, be proactive about connecting with resources before departure.
  - Be mindful of how transitions can impact existing psychological vulnerabilities
  - If in distress that feels unmanageable, reach you to your point of contact in the program to connect with a local mental health professional



## Tools for mindful adaptation

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- Be mindful of your normal reaction to 'stress'
  - How does stress impact your appetite, sleep, physical activity and play?
  - Create a schedule and structure to maintain normalcy for diet, exercise, sleep and play
  - What is your unique set of successful coping strategies?

# RAIN

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**R**ecognize what is happening

**A**llow life to be just as it is

**I**nvestigate with kindness

**N**otice the shift in your sense of own being or identity

# Daily Rituals of Pause

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- Identify your transition Windows
- Be realistic about what you can and cannot do given the time, energy, resources you have
- Daily rituals of pause
- Slow down



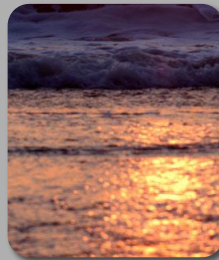
# Transition Windows



Ten  
minute  
medita  
tion



Take a  
coffee  
or tea  
break



Listen  
to  
music

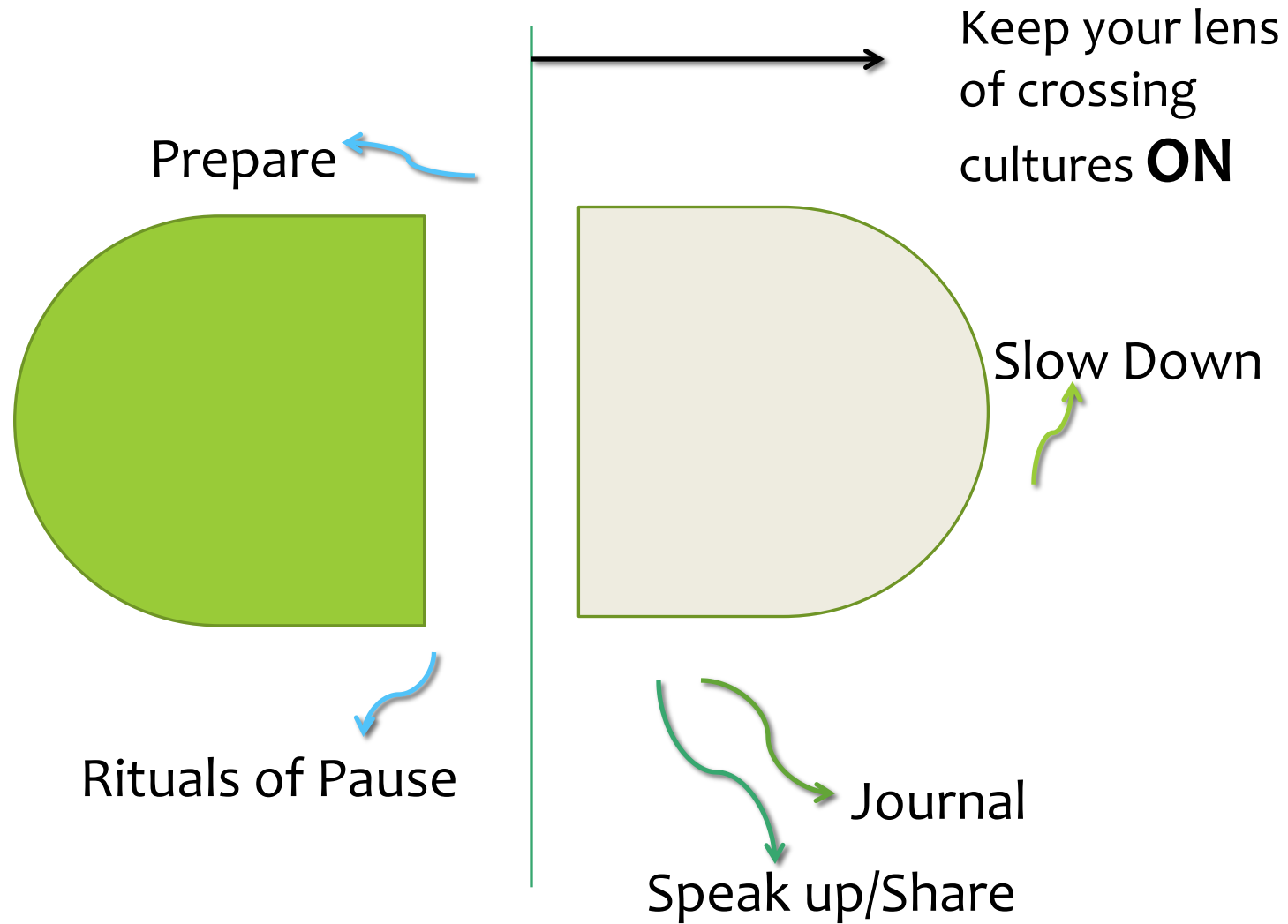


Shower



Grocery or  
window  
shopping

# Mindful Adaptation



“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

– Victor Frankl

