

Foreword

This Information Kit has been developed as part of the UWS Counselling Service's 'Towards Tolerance' (TT) Project.

During 2002, I had the pleasure of supervising Miriam Sharrouf who was undertaking a Social Work placement with the Service. Miriam worked tirelessly with our Muslim students. We were challenged by many lively discussions around issues of cultural sensitivity and inter-cultural communication. Miriam's presence helped develop our 'Towards Tolerance' initiative and challenged us to renew our commitment to ensuring that all students can 'claim their space' at UWS.

Miriam began work on this Information Kit as part of her placement. Others have added to it, chiefly Dawn Wade (Counselling Service).

We hope you find this a useful resource. We look forward to receiving your feedback. All who have been involved, see the Kit as a 'work in progress'. We hope it will be of assistance in working with your clients. My thanks to all who have worked on this part of the TT Project. As always, your efforts, enthusiasm and commitment to our University are appreciated.

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Contents

Introduction	1
Part A – Theories of Cultural Diversity Awareness	2
What is Culture?	2
<i>Common humanity</i>	2
<i>Collective group identity</i>	2
<i>Individual uniqueness</i>	2
Cultural Diversity	3
<i>Diversity values</i>	3
<i>REACH approach</i>	4
<i>Respecting diversity</i>	4
Australian Culture	5
<i>Is there a typical Australian ‘culture’?</i>	5
<i>Religious Freedom</i>	5
Part B – The History and Teachings of Islam	6
Notes on Islam	6
History	7
Teachings	8
Practices	10
<i>The Five Pillars</i>	10
<i>Religious days</i>	10
<i>Life and death</i>	11
<i>Suicide and Trauma</i>	11
Hijab—Islamic Dress	11
The Islamic Family	12
Marriage in Islam	12
Role of Women	13
Islam and Domestic Violence	14
Role of Parents and Children	14
Duties of Children	15
Part C – Strategies for Effective Inter-Cultural Communication	16
Effective Inter-cultural Communication	16
Skills in Verbal and Non-verbal Communication	17
Barriers to Inter-Cultural Communication	17

Decreasing Inter-Cultural Communication Barriers	19
Language Differences	19
Non-verbal Communication	19
Preconceptions and Stereotypes	19
Tendency to Evaluate Behaviours	19
High Levels of Stress	20
Notes For Non-Muslim Helping Professionals Working	21
With Muslim Clients	21
<i>General Comments</i>	22
Legal and Systemic Issues	23
Appendix 1	25
<i>Intercultural Communication for Reception Staff</i>	25
<i>Ten (10) Practical Strategies</i>	25
Appendix 2	26
Muslim Helping Professionals & Muslim Clients:	26
Obstacles and Solutions	26
<i>Client-Related Issues</i>	26
<i>Solutions</i>	26
<i>Community-Related Issues</i>	26
<i>Culture-Related Difficulties</i>	27
<i>Community- and Culture-Related Issues: Solutions</i>	27
<i>Helping Professional-Related Issues</i>	27
<i>Solutions</i>	27
Appendix 3	29
Defining Racial Discrimination	29
<i>The Difference Hate and Racism Make</i>	29
<i>Crisis and Response</i>	29
Appendix 4	30
Checklist for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	30
What Appears 'Harmless' may be Frightening to Survivors	31
of Official Violence	31
References & Further Reading	32
Useful Websites	34
Contact Details	35
Copyright Statement	35

Introduction

This information package aims to raise awareness of cultural diversity for non-Muslims in the helping profession who are working with Muslim clients. In particular, there is a need to be proactive and sensitive to these issues in order to maintain and improve working relationships with clients from Muslim cultural and religious backgrounds.

The authors acknowledge that this information package is a beginning rather than the definitive end, of information and advice on this subject. Although we have tried to provide fair, accurate and helpful information, we acknowledge and even welcome differences of opinion. We look forward to receiving your comments and suggestions, so that this information package can continue to evolve towards better serving the needs of its readers and enhancing service provision.

The information package is divided into three (3) sections:

Part A examines theories of cultural diversity awareness;

Part B explores the history and teachings of Islam;

Part C examines strategies for effective inter-cultural communication by exploring effective intercultural communication, the barriers to intercultural communication between different cultural groups, and strategies to decrease such barriers.

Part C also applies cultural diversity sensitivity to practice by examining skills and strategies for non-Muslim helping professionals working with Muslim clients. General comments regarding cultural sensitivity when working with Muslim clients are a key focus complemented by consideration of legal and systemic issues.

Two useful handouts: 'Practical Communication Strategies for Front Desk Reception Staff' and 'Muslim Helping Professionals Working with Muslim Clients' are included in the Appendix.

Part A – Theories of Cultural Diversity Awareness

What is Culture?

The term 'culture' describes the traditions, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, even ethnicity and skin colour shared by a group of people. It is identifiable in language, values, artefacts, symbols, ideas, etc. Everybody learns cultural characteristics and learns how to distinguish their own group from other groups by recognising and displaying them (Hofstede 1992). This is by no means a simple concept, nor is it free from explicit or implicit connotations or potential for exploitation.

The very concept of culture is fraught with ambiguities and any discussion of the topic requires discretion and empathy. Connotations of 'otherness' can arise where one person assumes a neutral or 'normal' humanity as opposed to another's 'culture'. A too-heavy awareness of prominent aspects of culture can also limit the way an individual is heard or understood by explaining their words and actions as easily accepted stereotypes. In reality, people group together at a number of different levels simultaneously and can shift allegiances over a lifetime. To illustrate this point it is helpful to consider just three levels of cultural identity.

Common humanity

All people share a common biological "operating system" including expressive behaviours such as language, memory, laughing, crying and aggression. While we share most of our genes with other primates, we have distinguishing characteristics such as complex language and spiritual belief systems, which are found around the world. (Eibelsfeldt 1976; REACH 1996a).

Collective group identity

The collective group identity is common to people belonging to a certain group but different from people belonging to other groups. It includes many routine behaviours such as: the language in which people express themselves; deference they show to their elders; the physical distance from other people they maintain in order to feel comfortable; general human activities like eating, making love and defecating and the ceremonies surrounding them; and so on (Gardener 1993). Groups may be as small as a couple or as large as a nation, and one individual may be part of several collective groups at one time with various degrees of allegiance.

Individual uniqueness

The combination of learned and inherited characteristics means that no two people are the same, not even identical twins. This results in a variety of behaviours even within small group cultures. (REACH, 1996a). Individual behaviour also changes over time as people mature and face different life experiences.

It is not possible to draw clear dividing lines between any of these levels of culture, but each individual's behaviour is uniquely affected by a combination of all three (Hofstede 1992). Importantly, focusing too heavily on only one level of influence can mean a failure to understand what that person is really like and even to misunderstandings and offence. An over emphasis of a person's common humanity leads to a kind of 'colour blindness'—a failure to acknowledge

individual variation and collective group influence. Excessive individualism fails to recognise common humanity or the effects of group culture. Assumptions about collective group identification or specific characteristics within that culture tend to lead to 'isms' and phobias such as racism, sexism and xenophobia, and fail to recognise individual variation or common humanity. If we are to have a healthy understanding of ourselves and others we need to appreciate the complexity of personal cultural identity and avoid simplistic assumptions.

Cultural Diversity

The democratic foundations of our society contain a balance of rights and responsibilities. Within this broad framework, each individual and group is welcome to make a contribution to the common good. (DIMIA 2003)

In 1994, Robert Fanighetti, then Director of Intelligence in Washington DC, explained that if we could shrink the world's population to a village of precisely 100, but maintain the existing human ratios, it would look something like this:

Region	Colour	Belief	Education
59 Asians	70 People of Colour	30 Christians	1 University Graduate
14 Europeans (including ex USSR)	30 White	50 Non-Christian	
12 Africans		20 Muslim	
8 South Americans (includes Caribbean)			
5 North Americans			
1 Australian			
1 Oceanian			

(Adapted from REACH 1996b)

As can be seen the true nature of the world may not reflect our cultural perceptions, in fact the world is a truly diverse place.

Diversity values

The REACH Centre in Seattle USA has researched and developed a set of useful 'diversity values' which are used throughout this booklet. These values are as follows.

- Diversity awareness is growth-oriented rather than deficiency-oriented.
- Diversity awareness is a systemic change process, not a content area.
- Everyone is a learner / everyone is a teacher.
- We work at living our basic principles.
- Time is fluid / we're in a marathon not a sprint.
- Humour heals and keeps us human.
- Say OUCH!—so we can all learn.

(REACH, 1996a, p. 17)

REACH approach

- HEAD, factual information
- HEART, attitudes and feelings
- HANDS, what you do
- HEALING, greater respect for human diversity

(REACH, 1996, p.43).

Respecting diversity

In exploring the area of cultural diversity awareness, it is important to ask: What expectations already exist? Is there a danger, that while looking for cultural differences, the many similarities are ignored? In what ways can important cultural gaps be bridged to prevent misunderstanding, embarrassment or offence? What policies exist in Australia to guide a 'multicultural' country?

Australian Culture

The freedom of all Australians to express and share their cultural values is dependent upon their abiding by mutual civic obligations. All Australians are expected to have an overriding loyalty to Australia and its people, and to respect the basic structures and principles underwriting our democratic society. These are the Constitution, Parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language, the rule of law, acceptance and equality. (DIMIA 2003)

Is there a typical Australian 'culture'?

Nationality is one type of collective group culture. Some countries have developed distinct cultures through periods of isolation or unique environmental conditions. Contemporary Australia, characterised by colonisation and immigration, is considered to be 'multicultural', meaning that it comprises a multiplicity of different collective group cultures rather than a longstanding, distinct set of traditions and experiences common to most people.

Australian Multiculturalism is the philosophy underlying Government policy and programs, which accepts, respects and celebrates our cultural diversity. It embraces the heritage of indigenous Australians, early European settlement, our Australian-grown customs and those of the diverse range of migrants now coming to this country. (DIMIA 2003)

Religious Freedom

In 1983, the High Court of Australia defined religion as "a complex set of beliefs and practices which point to a set of values and an understanding of the meaning of existence" (ABS 2003). The existence of such beliefs and practices is a common human experience, but the manifestation of those beliefs varies from group to group and sub-groups within larger groups. Like all other aspects of Australia's multiculturalism, a range of practices co-exist legally.

In 2001, comprising 5% of the population, non-Christian affiliates increased as follows: Buddhism 79%, Hinduism 42%, Islam 40% and Judaism 5%. (Islamic affiliates in 2001 constitute 1.5% of the total population). Between 1996 and 2001, there were just over half a million new arrivals to Australia. Of these 9% were affiliated to Islam, 9% Buddhism, 5% Hinduism and 1% Judaism. (ABS 2003).

While these figures are difficult to visualise as actual numbers of people, they do point to the diversity of beliefs in contemporary Australia.

Part B – The History and Teachings of Islam

Notes on Islam

Followers of Islam believe in:

- one, unique incomparable God, referred to as Allah;
- the Angels created by Allah;
- the Prophets through whom Allah's revelations were brought to mankind;
- the day of Judgment and individual accountability for one's actions;
- God's authority over human destiny; and
- life after death.

Islam rejects characterising God in any human form or depicting Him as favouring certain individuals or nations on the basis of wealth, power or race. God created humans as equals and they may get his favour only through virtue and piety.

The word 'Islam' is Arabic and means peace and submission. Hence, the Islamic religion is based upon the complete acceptance of the teaching of Allah and the prophets through whom he spoke. Originating in the Arabian Peninsular around 610, the history of Islam covers a period of over fourteen hundred years, so differences have developed between groups. Crotty, et al. (1989) describe Islam as divided into the following principle groups:

Sunni	Mainstream Muslims who rely exclusively on the Quar'an for guidance.
Shi'ites	Followers of Ali, a successor of Muhammad.
Sufis	The mystical branch of Islam.
Alwais	The 'Worshippers of Ali', who combined Islam with some Christian practices.
Druzes	The followers of Darazi. This is a very secretive religion.
Bahai	A universal religion claiming to fulfil Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Within Islam there is an enormous diversity of cultural and religious practice. Muslims are to be found in a wide belt of countries from Morocco through to the Philippines (see map in Crotty 1989, p. 51). In the near east there are Arab-speaking, Turkish-speaking and Persian-speaking Muslims. Muslims populate a large proportion of the Indian sub-continent and also the majority of the islands making up Indonesia.

Islam is a religion adhered to by over a billion people or almost one sixth of the world's population. Muslims do not speak one language or possess one culture, but many different languages and cultures depending on their country of origin. The particular cultural background of each family and individual has been critical in shaping both their interpretation of Islam and how they function in contemporary Australia. (DOCS, 1998).

Every Muslim family and person is unique. Hence, it cannot be assumed that every Muslim family rigorously follows all aspects of the teaching of Islam, or that any practice of a Muslim family (especially those considered different from mainstream Australian practices) derives from Islamic teachings). (DOCS, 1998).

History

Muhammad, born 571 in the city of Mecca, is believed to be not only the messenger of Allah through whom the revelation of the Qur'an came, but also the model Muslim. Muhammad is considered the last and greatest of the Prophets. Judaism and Christianity share the same roots. The prophets of all three religions are direct descendants from the prophet and patriarch Abraham—Muhammad from Abraham's eldest son Ishmael, with Moses and Jesus descended from his other son, Isaac.

The Qur'an says little about the life of Muhammad. Much that is known about him is from the *hadiths*, a collection of the deeds and sayings of Muhammad compiled from oral tradition 200 years after his death. (*Hadiths* are classified as sound, good or weak according to Islamic religious experts.)

From the *hadiths* it is known that Muhammad was an orphan who underwent practically every human experience in his roles as teacher, merchant, family man, and political, social and religious leader. At the age of 40 he received his first revelation. He died at the age of 63, leaving behind no wealth or property. In some countries, such as Pakistan, he is so highly thought of that expression of disrespect towards Muhammad is punishable by death. (Payne 2002).

According to tradition, Muhammad received his first revelation while meditating in a cave outside Mecca. Muhammad attracted a band of believers around him, convinced he was indeed God's messenger, the last and greatest of the Prophets.

Muhammad's message of strict monotheism and his strong critique of the idolatry and pagan practices of his contemporaries in Mecca led to his persecution. He was forced to leave Mecca and move to Medina. At Medina he was welcomed, and his teachings accepted, and he soon became the city's religious and political leader. In Medina he drafted the laws and practices of an ideal Islamic state.

Muhammad continued to receive revelations concerning constructing and ruling a theocratic society—a society in which God rules through his representative ruler and God-given law. The Qur'an not only covers issues of morality, worship, man's relationship to Allah and aspects of human relationships, the Qur'an also contains comprehensive teachings upon which systems of social justice, economics, politics, legislation, jurisprudence, law and international relations can be built.

Muhammad returned to Mecca with an army and negotiated the surrender of his previous persecutors. By the end of his life he had conquered almost the entire Arabian peninsula and united the disparate tribes and factions with Islam.

For Muslims, the final revelation of God's message to mankind came to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. This message was in essence a reconfirmation of the eternal message and all that was said before (DOCS 1998).

Teachings

'Allah' is the Arabic word for God, and refers to the Islamic teaching that there is only one true God of the entire world. Muhammad's revelations concern the God of Abraham, Isaac, David and Jesus. Islam claims to be the legitimate and final successor to Judaism and Christianity, and that they worship the same God.

Few words are as important as 'unity' in the Islamic vocabulary. Based on the 'oneness' of Allah, Islam affirms the 'oneness' of all Muslims—no matter where they live there is one *ummah* or community of Muslims. This sense of 'oneness' lies deep within the structures of Islamic belief. Jesus may have said: "Render to Caesar what is Caesars, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22: 21), but Muhammad made no such distinction between the civil and the religious. Islam is considered a complete way of life. It makes no distinction between the secular and the spiritual, providing criteria for judging behaviour and conduct in all aspects of life, including business and politics. It determines an individual's relationship with others, society, the environment and oneself. (DOCS, 1998) Hence, there is no separation between the 'church' and the 'state' as with Christianity and Judaism.

There is no formal hierarchical authority in Islam and no priests. An Imam, a learned person who knows the Qur'an and is chosen by the congregation, usually says prayers. The responsibilities of the Imam include leading prayer, marrying people and delivering fatwabs (i.e. authoritative interpretations of the Qur'an to provide direction in current matters). Families and the community seeking guidance and counselling also often seek the assistance of the Imam.

Islam is organized around the Mosque, which provides facilities for worship. The Mosque may also provide in some cases for the socialisation of members, for community welfare activities and for general social and cultural activities. Hence, Mosques often act as a valuable resource and point of contact both for Muslim immigrants and for non-Muslims wanting to familiarise themselves with Islam (DOCS, 1998).

Islam literally means 'submission', and a Muslim is one who submits (loosely translated). 'Islam' is related to 'salaam' or 'peace'. Islam is submitting oneself to him with whom peace is made. The one who surrenders and submits to the will of God finds peace both in this world and the world to come. Keeping the law (or *shari'ah*) is at the heart of the life of submission. Submission to God means submission to his law—and his law is comprehensive. It is intended to govern each and every part of a person's life, from cradle to grave: how to pray, fast, even sneeze and drink water (Payne, 2002).

The *shari'ah* is built on four foundations in descending order of importance:

1. The Qur'an is the supreme authority.
2. The *hadiths*, (e.g. that men wear beards comes from the *hadiths*, which record that Muhammad wore such a beard).
3. The consensus and common practice of the Muslim community (or *ijma*) establishes the law that is to be followed. (This contributes to variations between Muslims countries).
4. *Qiyas* or analogical reasoning. For example the Qur'an specifically forbids alcohol made from grapes or the date palm. Islamic jurists argue that since the principle behind the prohibition is avoidance of intoxication, then other alcoholic drinks (such as vodka) are also forbidden. (Payne, 2002).

Practices

The Five Pillars

The framework upon which Muslims are expected to base their lives is known as the Five Pillars of Islam. Whereas there is some variation in *shari'ah* throughout the world, all Muslims would acknowledge The Five Pillars on which obedience to Allah is built. Every action is done with awareness that it fulfils the will of Allah and is considered an act of worship in Islam. The Five Pillars lay down the acts of worship that are required of a Muslim.

1. **The declaration of faith (*shahadah*)** This is a phrase that all faithful pronounce, declaring that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammad is the messenger and servant of Allah.
2. **Five prescribed daily prayers (*salah*)** These act as a direct link between the worshipper and God. The verses are in Arabic and quoted from the Quar'an. Prayers are said at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, after sunset and before retiring. An Imam leads the saying of the prayers. All Muslims turn towards the city of Mecca (*Makkah*) when they pray and perform compulsory ablutions before praying.
3. **Welfare contribution (*zakah*)** Welfare is one of the most important principles of Islam. Islam prescribes that all things belong to God, and wealth is only held by humans in trust. It is expected that each Muslim will contribute 2.5% of his/her savings to charity.
4. **Fasting (*sawm*) during the month of Ramadan** This is an annual practice to develop self-control, unselfishness and self-purification. It involves fasting from sunrise to sunset: no food, drink, bad habits or bad attitudes. Ramadan is the holiest month of the Islamic calendar, being the month the first verses of the Quar'an were revealed. The sick, elderly, pregnant, menstruating women, nursing mothers and travellers may break the fast but are expected to make up an equal number of days later when it is possible for them to do so.
5. **Pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca (*Makkah*)** to be undertaken at least once in a lifetime if physically and financially able to do so. Pilgrims wear simple garments, which strip away distinctions of class so that all stand equal before God.

Religious days

There are two religious festivals in the Muslim calendar: *Eid ul-Adha* at the end of Ramadan; and *Eid ul-Fitr* to mark the close of the *Hajj*. This is the festival of sacrifice, with rituals to symbolise the readiness to sacrifice wealth and, if necessary, life for the cause of God. Every Friday is considered a holy day by Muslims. It is compulsory for males to attend Mosque around mid-day for sermon and prayers. Females can attend but are not obliged.

Life and death

Muslims believe that life on earth is only a transition period that precedes the latter life. Winning the latter life is the goal of all Muslims. This is achieved by gaining Allah's satisfaction through believing in Him and following His commands and prescriptions. The reward for those who gain Allah's satisfaction and forgiveness is heaven. Those who stray are destined for hell. Muslims are advised to work for earthly life as if they will live forever and to work for the latter life as if they will die tomorrow. This saying from Mohammad highlights the balance that Muslims work towards achieving in their life on earth.

Suicide and Trauma

Suicide is viewed in the same way as the crime of murder. Islamic teachings argue that since an individual did not create himself, his life does not belong to him. Instead it is a trust given to him by Allah. He is not allowed to diminish it, let alone harm or destroy it. A Muslim believes that he does not have the right or power to determine when it is his or anybody else's time to die. Muslims believe that a person's life only ends when Allah decides it is time for it to end.

And do not kill yourselves (nor kill one another). Surely Allah is most merciful to you. And whoever commits that through aggression and injustice, we shall cast him into the Fire, and that is easy for Allah. (*Surah An-Nisa*, 4:29–30 see *Koran*).

Islamic teachings require the Muslim to be resolute in facing hardships. (Sharrouf, unpublished). He is not permitted to 'run away' when tragedy befalls him or his hopes are dashed. It is believed that the Muslim is created by Allah to strive, to face his hardships head on whilst adhering to his Islamic principles. His unshakeable faith and moral steadfastness are his weapons against despair. Trauma is seen as a reward or test to teach a lesson and grow as an individual. That trauma is part of personal growth. That it is meant to test the person's faith.

Hijab—Islamic Dress

Although the female *hijab* is more noticeable, both Muslim men and women are expected to dress in such a way that they are modest and dignified, and where certain parts of the body (*awrah*) are to be covered in public.

The *awrah* of a male is the part of the body between the naval and the knee. The female *awrah* is the whole body with the exception of the face and the hands. Both must wear clothing that is loose so as not to describe the shape of the body. That is why women wear a cloak over their clothes. Thickness is another requirement. Clothing must be thick enough not to show the colour of the skin or the shape of the body. Clothing must also provide an overall dignified appearance. Clothing should not attract men's attention to a woman. It should not be shiny or flashy so that everybody notices the dress and the woman. (Sharrouf, unpublished).

The Islamic Family

Islam supports the maintenance of the extended family, including grandparents, grandchildren, uncles and aunts etc. The extended family of a Muslim includes anyone who is blood-related as well as others on whom there is prohibition to marry (e.g. stepmother). The Muslim extended family is patrilineal. The wife may be expected to allow her husband's parents to help with the care of the children first, rather than her own parents. The focus on the extended family is intended to ensure the preservation of natural and continuous links between generations and to provide a framework of closeness from which to deal with the difficulties of life (DOCS, 1998).

Islam considers the family as the natural unit—the backbone of society. It upholds the preservation of the family, especially in the raising of children and in the development of Islamic beliefs and identity of children. Fornication and adultery are prohibited. Islam welds the family together by three key powerful commitments:

1. **Kinship** is the most important and strongest tie between individuals. Muhammad is quoted as saying that there is “no sin more swiftly punished than oppression and the breaking of family ties”. Islam prohibits any form of severing kinship relations.
2. **Marital Commitments** weld a family together and Islam recognises marriage as the most wholesome framework for sexual relations and the rearing of children. Sexual intimacy or living outside of marriage does not constitute a family in Islam.
3. **Faith and Commitment to Islam** is essential for strong family relationships. It is considered that where all members of a family are faithful to Islam this will be more likely to lead to harmony and to the achievement of common goals and interests (DOCS, 1998).

Marriage in Islam

Islam requires that both partners must give their free and willing consent to the marriage. The partners enter a formal written contract, considered a holy agreement between them and God. In Islam the groom gives a dowry to the bride, usually in the form of a specified amount of money.

Arranged marriages are not part of Islam, and Islam considers it absolutely prohibited forcing a son or daughter into a marriage contract. However, it is a responsibility for parents to introduce their children to people who would be good partners, and the parents' approval should be sought by either gender when deciding to marry. It is the Imam's responsibility to ensure that both parties to a marriage are entering into it freely (DOCS, 1998).

Contrary to popular belief, monogamous marriage is the norm in the Islamic world, and polygamous marriages are now rare.

Importantly, Islamic *Shari'ah* law:

- does not permit or recognise the marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim (*kaafir*), because the man as head of the household has influence and authority over his wife, and it is not permissible for a non-Muslim to have authority over a Muslim woman;
- allows and recognises the marriage of a Muslim man to a woman from the people of the book (i.e. Christian or Jew); any marriage contract with any other religion is considered invalid (DOCS, 1998).

The husband is expected to be the leader of the family. His major responsibility is to meet the economic and material needs of his family, and he is obliged to support his wife, however independently wealthy she may be. The wife is expected to be the main pivot around which family relations revolve. Her major responsibility is to concentrate on the home and family, particularly to raise the children, educating them in an atmosphere of affection and commitment to Islam. The Muslim wife has the right to her own individuality, to retain her own name, and to own, inherit and use property as she wishes. She has the right and duty to pursue education and vocational goals that would develop her talents and skills, protect the interests of her family and strengthen the Muslim community (DOCS, 1998).

Divorce from an Islamic marriage is possible and may be initiated by either party. A husband can divorce his wife through an act of solemn repudiation made three times. After the first and second repudiation, the law demands that the couple deal with their dispute, seek marriage counselling or arbitration by near relatives or others of mutual choice. The wife can obtain a divorce but this must be through an Islamic court or Iman and be based on extreme reasons such as cruelty.

Role of Women

The Qur'an teaches that men and women are equal, that individuals should not be judged according to gender, beauty, wealth or privilege. The only thing that makes one person better than another is his or her character; this is one of the reasons for the *Hijab*. (Sharrouf, unpublished). The image of the typical Muslim woman wearing the veil and forced to stay home and forbidden to drive is all too common a media image. Although some countries have laws that oppress women, this should not be seen as coming from Islamic teachings. It should be remembered that some countries do not rule by *shari'ah* (Islamic Law) and have introduced their own cultural standpoints on the issue of gender equality that are, in fact, contrary to Islamic teachings.

And they (women) have rights (over their husbands) similar (to those of their husbands) over them to what is reasonable, but men have a degree (of responsibility) over them. (*Surah Al-Baqarah*, 2: 187).

Islam prescribes a society in which people have clearly defined roles that are essential to provide stability, certainty, security and prosperity for families and the overall society. Because the primary role of women is to care for the family, this may restrict the activities in which many of them participate. This is seen as benefiting women in two ways.

1. It ensures the proper functioning of society, such as raising children.
2. It avoids undesirable situations, such as women being placed in unsafe situations.

Islam and Domestic Violence

The marriage relationship between a man and wife according to Islam is one based on love, understanding and mutual respect. The woman is told to listen to her husband and the man in return told to treat his wife with love, affection and respect, and to make the welfare of the family top priority. This is emphasised by the prophet Mohammad who stated:

The best of you (i.e. men) are those who are best to their wives.

Violence of any kind towards women and forcing them against their will is not allowed in Islamic teachings. A Muslim marriage is a simple, legal agreement in which either partner is free to include conditions (Sharrouf, unpublished).

It is important to take the following into consideration:

Practices in relation to the role of women in Muslim countries vary between nations and culture. In some Muslim societies, practices have been introduced in the name of Islam which are not prescribed in the Quar'an and Islamic Law, and which are restrictive on women.

Some Muslim parents and families in Australia believe it is still appropriate for the family to function according to practices not prescribed in Islam but which exist in the culture from which the family came (DOCS, 1998).

Role of Parents and Children

Islam obliges parents to cherish, sustain, educate and train their children, and the Quar'an provides guidance in the correct way to raise children. Parent's responsibilities begin before the child is conceived, in making the right choice of partner, one who upholds Islamic beliefs. Before and after conception the mother must not imbibe any toxic substances such as alcohol or drugs. After conception, her role is to raise the child with the support of her husband, whose role is also to nurture and care for the child and provide discipline.

In Islamic teachings the child is to be raised in accordance with a process called *tarbiyyah*. Although the primary responsibility for *tarbiyyah* lies on the parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, siblings, neighbours and teachers all have an important role in the *tarbiyyah* of a new generation. *Tarbiyyah* implies being sensitive to the child's emotional and physical needs as well as inspiring confidence and trust and promoting creativity and innovation within the child. Islam imposes an obligation on parents to endeavour to make their children well aware of the need to choose the right friends to associate with and to keep away from those who might impede their moral worth. Under Islamic law the family's responsibility for their child does not cease at a certain age, as under secular law, but they are considered fully responsible for their child until they are married and live independently (this includes a married couple living with their parents) (DOCS, 1998). In Muslim families, the child with the greatest importance is typically the first-born male, with much emphasis placed on his role as the eldest son and male. Mothers and females are stronger authority figures than males before the child turns 7. After 7, the father plays a greater role in the child's upbringing (DOCS, 1998).

Duties of Children

The Quar'an requires children to treat their parents with goodness and mercy. Under Islam the duties of children towards parents are to:

- show love and gratitude and speak to them with kindness and respect;
- strive to do everything that would please them and make them happy;
- offer good advice and guidance especially if the parents are not Muslim;
- avoid angry expression in reaction to what they may disagree with;
- refrain from condemning one's parents or denouncing other parents;
- refrain from disobeying them (regarded by the prophet as a major sin);
- look after their needs especially when they become old and helpless;
- fulfil, after their death, any contracts they may have left, as well as to maintain contact with and be kind to the parent's friends.

Muhammad placed a great emphasis on a child's duty to continue to pray for his/her parents after they die (DOCS, 1998).

Part C – Strategies for Effective Inter-Cultural Communication

Effective Inter-cultural Communication

Effective inter-cultural communication can be defined as:

The ability to correctly attach meaning to the language and behaviour of people from another culture so that what we infer from that behaviour and language is the same as that intended.

(Gardener, 1993)

Generally, the following skills are required to be an effective inter-cultural communicator.

- *Reflective Listening Skills*: The ability to be an 'active' listener.
- *Appropriate Assertiveness Skills*: To be clear, concise and open.
- *Cultural Sensitivity*: Genuine empathy, awareness and tolerance.
- *Choice of Communication Environment*: Ensure the environment is relaxed, quiet and not distracting to maximize effective communication.

To handle inter-cultural communication effectively, it should be appreciated that the interaction is occurring at several levels. These are:

- Muslim client—host society
- Minority religious group—dominant religious group
- Culture—culture
- Individual—individual

The following skills can also apply to interpersonal communication. However, what is distinctive about the inter-cultural context is the possibility of the individuals involved holding distinctively different views on important aspects of the process and, even more importantly, not appreciating that this is happening. Differences in views may occur in:

- the definition of the problem
- how to tackle the problem
- definitions of success

Skills in Verbal and Non-verbal Communication

Whether engaged in direct communication, or via an interpreter, verbal and non-verbal communication is extremely important. Attention needs to be given to:

Verbal communication

The meanings, which are attached to specific words, phrases etc.

Non-verbal communication

The ability to detect non-verbal communication as well as to interpret it.

Proxemics

The perception of and use of personal and interpersonal space (e.g. distance between speakers).

Kinetics

The importance of bodily movements such as facial expression (e.g. seemingly inappropriate smiling, posture or extent of eye contact).

Paralanguage

Communication through, for example, loudness of voice, pauses, silences and inflections, which vary greatly across cultures (See Gardener, 1993).

Barriers to Inter-Cultural Communication

When engaging in inter-cultural communication the following barriers to communication can be anticipated.

Language Differences

Language is much more than words and grammar. Language and culture *cannot* be separated.

Non-verbal Communication

Our culture has taught us to often communicate automatically non-verbally. Those from another culture may place their own cultural interpretation on these non-verbal communications and come to a totally different meaning to that being conveyed. The host culture can also make the same mistake about meaning. For example, shaking the hand of the other person of the opposite sex in greeting is inappropriate in Islamic society unless you are a close family member.

Preconceptions & Stereotypes

We often try to fit people into patterns based on our previous experiences with them.

Unfortunately if applied to whole cultural or religious groups we are guilty of stereotyping and may find ourselves to be more than ready to interpret behaviour with new individuals as offensive. Such thinking is flawed because it ignores the concept of *individual differences*. To say someone acts in such a way because they follow the Islamic religion is questionable logic. Many people who consider themselves 'cultural' Muslims do not always act under Islamic guidance. In fact, their behaviour may be directly contrary to Islamic teachings (e.g. domestic violence).

Tendency to Evaluate Behaviours

When we make judgements based on our own cultural biases—for example, “Arabs are a lazy culture and this client’s failure to understand is because he is from an Arabic background.”—it is called ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is a belief that one’s own culture is superior to that of another person or group’s culture (see Appendix for a complete definition).

High Levels of Stress

Muslim clients from non-English speaking backgrounds are generally very anxious to adapt to Australian life. For many, there is much riding on their success after immigration, and this pressure to succeed combined with ‘culture shock’—from adjustment, lack of family and community support, and social isolation—can be an extremely stressful experience.

For helping professionals, there is the added stress caused by having to attend to clients with difficulties that Australian-born clients usually do not present with at consultations. These difficulties can include: heavy accents and/or difficulty expressing themselves, different cultural expectations and beliefs, ‘culture shock’ and confusion and failure to understand things Australian-born clients take for granted.

Decreasing Inter-Cultural Communication Barriers

Language Differences

There are three ways to reduce the barrier created by language differences:

- learn the language.
- find someone who can speak the language.
- ask for clarification to ensure you understand what the person intended to say (apply active listening skills).

Non-verbal Communication

- It is best not to assume an understanding of any non-verbal communication unless there is familiarity with the culture.
- If the non-verbal communication is 'insulting' from a personal cultural perspective, for example the client avoids eye contact, refrain from viewing it personally. It is important to remain dispassionate and objective.
- It is advantageous to develop an awareness of personal non-verbal communication habits, which may seem insulting in certain cultures. For example, cultural differences exist regarding personal space, the appropriateness of smiling, or touching. Use of the left hand, for example passing items with the left hand, is considered highly offensive in some cultures (Indonesia). The left hand is the 'toilet' hand and items should be only passed with the right hand.

Preconceptions and Stereotypes

- Every effort should be made to increase awareness of personal cultural preconceptions and stereotypes as each new culture is encountered. Appreciation should be made of personal culture differences.
- With this awareness, it is possible to re-interpret behaviour from the other's cultural perspective.
- Be willing to test, adapt and challenge stereotypes of different cultural groups to incorporate new experiences. Be wary of ideas that generalise and are overly simple, for example, "all Asians are inscrutable".

Tendency to Evaluate Behaviours

- Maintain objectivity.
- Recognised that it is impossible to change another's culture, nor would it be ethical to try. Cultural diversity is like bio-diversity—an appreciation of differences within the whole (see Abbott-Wade, 2003).
- Do not judge another culture by personal cultural values. Learn about cultural values whenever possible, respecting differences.

High Levels of Stress

Inter-cultural interactions are often ambiguous and, as a result, can create stress for the participants, as neither helping professional or client are sure what is expected by the other participant. As this is clarified and inter-cultural barriers are reduced, the level of stress for the helping professional, as well as the client, will naturally diminish.

In summary, characteristics of effective inter-cultural communication include¹:

- an **Awareness** of one's own culture and cultural limitations;
- an **Openness** to cultural differences;
- a **Client-oriented**, systematic learning style;
- utilising **Cultural Resources**;
- acknowledging **Cultural Integrity**.

(See Paul Petersen, 1988).

¹ See sAppendix 1: 'Practical Strategies for Reception Staff' for details on how to enhance counter staff effectiveness when communicating with Muslim clients from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Notes For Non-Muslim Helping Professionals Working With Muslim Clients

The following section suggests ways to apply cultural diversity sensitivity in practice.

In the Islamic religion, helping professional assistance by the opposite gender is not allowed. The reason for this is that the religion does not permit members of the opposite sex, who are not immediate family members, to be alone together for any reason.

Greetings in the Australian tradition often involve hand shaking or touching. This is impermissible in the Islamic faith between members of the opposite sex who are not immediate family.

In mainstream Australian culture, direct eye contact is considered a sign of honesty and indirect eye contact an indication of disrespect or guilt. In Islamic society averting the eyes is a sign of piety, modesty and respect.

During Christian celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter, Muslims may find it difficult to be greeted by such phrases as “Merry Christmas” or “Happy Easter” or “Happy New Year”. Muslims do not celebrate these holidays. Thus using these greetings with a Muslim client would be inappropriate.

During the month of Ramadan, which changes dates every year, Muslims are required to fast from sunrise to sundown—hence offering refreshments during the consultation is inappropriate. Care should be taken to establish whether Ramadan has started before offering refreshments to Muslim clients.

Personal space between helping professional and client is generally acceptable as long as it does not become less than the normal space adopted between the helping professional and client. Individual differences in levels of comfort also apply.

Most importantly, not all people who identify themselves as Muslim are in fact practitioners of Islam. Many people who identify themselves as Muslim may not follow The Five Pillars, including attending Mosque or understanding or reading the Quar’an. Hence, each case must be treated as unique, and care taken that individual pathologies are not automatically attributed to being a Muslim.

General Comments

Be aware that some Muslim clients are likely to have experienced or witnessed trauma and torture if they have migrated from certain countries where these experiences are or have been common place. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder may well be a complicating factor in their presenting difficulties (see Appendix: 'Checklist for PTSD') (Abbott-Wade, 2003).

It should be noted that the presenting issues of the Muslim client can be complicated by a history of trauma and torture or racial harassment (see Appendix for a definition of 'Racial Harassment'). Muslim clients who have migrated from troubled areas of the world such as Bosnia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia etc. should be assessed for potential Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Clients diagnosed with PTSD as a result of torture and trauma may find routine procedures and behaviour deeply troubling (please see Appendix, 'What Appears 'Harmless' May be Frightening To Survivors of Official Violence'.) Efforts should be made to accommodate these fears.

Muslim clients may have been subject to racial harassment while living in Australia. This can take many forms (see Appendix, 'The Difference Hate and Racism Make'.) This too can complicate the effectiveness of the helping relationship and needs to be sensitively addressed to ensure the creation of successful rapport with the client (Abbott-Wade, 2003).

Legal and Systemic Issues

The Government's aim is to build on our successes as a culturally diverse, accepting and open society, united through a shared future, and a commitment to our nation, its democratic institutions and values, and the rule of law. This vision is reflected in the four principles that underpin Multicultural policy:

Responsibilities of All—all Australians have a civic duty to support those basic structures and principles of Australian society, which guarantee us our freedom and equality and enable diversity in our society to flourish.

Respect for each person—subject to the law, all Australians have the right to express their own culture and beliefs and have a reciprocal obligation to respect the right of others to do the same.

Fairness for each person—all Australians are entitled to equality of treatment and opportunity. Social equity allows us all to contribute to the social, political and economic life of Australia, free from discrimination, including on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, location, gender or place of birth.

Benefits for all—all Australians benefit from the productive diversity, that is, the significant cultural, social and economic dividends arising from the diversity of our population. Diversity works for all Australians. (DIMIA 2003).

Australian democracy guarantees us our civic freedoms and our fundamental rights and equality, and it is the institutions of Australian democracy that enable diversity in our society to flourish. (DIMIA 2003).

Never compromise your legal and ethical responsibilities—be consistent.

Various laws apply to helping professionals. Under the law the helping professional is required to notify the authorities about abuse of children; domestic violence etc. Helping professionals can walk a 'tight rope'—if they notify the authorities out of a 'duty of care' they can become the enemy, and hence reduce or even lose the ability to help the Muslim family or client.

Some Muslim families lack trust in local authorities and services. They can also be socially isolated and without family or community support systems. In this situation, be aware that the family *is* the support system for many people. For example, if possible avoid taking the child out of the family because Muslim children do not always know how to cope outside of their tight-knit group, unlike non-Muslim children. Often they cannot cope outside their own families (Sadiq, 2003).

Many Muslim families and individuals face a lack of understanding, on the part of government and institutional bureaucracies, of cultural and religious differences. Outsiders can assume that Muslim women need to be 'liberated' from oppression, and act accordingly. (Sadiq, 2003).

Safety and security of the client and related persons should be the first priority (especially if the husband is unwilling to talk about severe family difficulties).

Keep proper and complete records of assessments, goal plans, intervention strategies, and other related material. This will assist the helping professional to defend themselves from any accusations of impropriety made by ex-clients or their family members.

Appendix 1

Intercultural Communication for Reception Staff

The following strategies will assist counter staff to engage Muslim clients, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds, without creating an unnecessary increase in stress levels for themselves and the client. These strategies recognise that English being their second language disadvantages the client.

Ten (10) Practical Strategies

1. Use simple, plain English. Avoid use of complicated, unusual or long words in English.
2. Speak clearly and concisely. Be mindful of speaking with vague references to more than one issue or topic. (Remember that many clients are literally translating what you say into their own language while you speak.)
3. Break down information into manageable chunks. Long-winded or wordy answers, while very appropriate for the Australian client, are often too unwieldy for the NESB client to follow. Excessive smiling may be an indication the client doesn't know what you're talking about but doesn't want to embarrass you or them by admitting this to you.
4. Supplement information with non-verbal communication, e.g. use maps or drawings to aid understanding. Avoid relying totally on verbal instructions, whenever possible.
5. Check that the client understands what has been said to them. Get them to repeat back to you what they understand you have told them. (Active listening skills). Failing to check at regular intervals that the other person understands your message correctly can cause huge misunderstandings. Remember that the client may be new to Australia and is meeting helping professional staff for the first time and is likely to be very impressionable.
6. Be patient and friendly. Difficulty understanding what is being said by a client or the extra time required hearing the client out can be frustrating. However, a friendly face and a calm manner can reduce the client's fears about communication and reduce the possibility they will become overly anxious and even harder to understand.
7. Create a pleasant, unstressed environment. Avoid presenting an image of pressure and stress, which is both unpleasant and off-putting to people of other cultures (particularly 'collectivist' cultures). They in turn may interpret this according to their own cultural expectations, creating a negative image of helping professionals or the agency they represent.
8. Do not complicate your message with unnecessary detail. Be as brief as possible.
9. Avoid slang, jargon and verbal jokes. Remember that humour is culture specific.
10. Speak calmly—do not shout or raise your voice. Speaking loudly or fast makes you more likely to be misunderstood—which is not only counterproductive to communication but has the possibility of deeply offending people from other cultures (Gardener, 1993).

Appendix 2

Muslim Helping Professionals & Muslim Clients: Obstacles and Solutions

Muslim helping professionals working within the Muslim community can face uniquely difficult situations. Muslim clients seeking assistance from a Muslim helping professional can present seeking assistance with difficulties that can be both clinical and spiritual. It is recognized by many Muslim helping professionals that many of the difficulties Muslim clients can face are caused by a lack of adherence to Islamic teachings (Saliq, 2003). The role of the Muslim helping professional is often seen as attending to the client's spiritual needs for clarity and reconciliation with their faith, as much as offering professional assistance. Hence Muslim helping professionals must have a thorough understanding of Islam—it is not enough to be a token Muslim to offer assistance to Muslim clients successfully.

Obstacles to offering helping professional assistance can be:

- Client Related
- Community Related
- Culture Related
- Legal
- Helping Professional related

Client-Related Issues

- Lack of true understanding of the principles and requirements of faith.
- Un-Islamic lifestyle.
- Abuse of faith to gain (and maintain) control over families/ spouse.
- Unrealistic expectations of counselling.
- No desire to change 'self'.
- Expect 'magical' solutions.

Solutions

- Empower client to make a choice to talk to you or not: use genuineness and kindness to establish rapport.
- Need to respect 'pride' so that it is left intact (Sadiq, 2003).

Community-Related Issues

- Lack of proper understanding and practice of the faith.
- Pressures on helping professional to take sides—not to tell local authorities. Ethically and legally you cannot comply.
- Lack of support for client and identified family (outside of Islamic community).
- When client faces problems they tend to seclude themselves completely. They are ashamed to go to social functions or they go to the mosque for prayer. This creates unnecessary trauma and distress.

- Lack of understanding and practice of faith in the larger Community: people can assume that it is because of the family's un-Islamic behaviour that problems have developed. In reality, the local Muslim community may not be practicing Islam (Sadiq, 2003).

Culture-Related Difficulties

- Confusing cultural practices with religious requirements.
- Stereotypes about roles, responsibilities, authorities of males, females, his wife's, his parents and children's roles.
- Values related to personal and family honour and the resultant fear of 'stigma'.
- Confusing cultural practices with religious requirements. For example, that it is '*haram*' to marry a Muslim from another nationality. In reality it is acceptable within Islam to marry into any nationality as long as they are also a Muslim (Sadiq, 2003).
- Stereotyping: A wife should never leave home without the permission of her husband; A child must obey its parents no matter how unjust; Parents can 'do anything'; children must love, respect and obey even if this is not shown towards them, and if contravened see this as a religious issue (Sadiq, 2003).

Community- and Culture-Related Issues: Solutions

- Take action to build rapport and trust with the local Muslim community.
- Develop educational and personal development groups and programs to encourage a greater understanding of Islam.
- Make programs culturally and religiously appropriate. For example, all groups or programs same sex rather than mixed gender.

Helping Professional-Related Issues

- Lack of true understanding of the principles and requirements of faith.
- Un-Islamic lifestyle—will lose all credibility.
- Abuse of faith to gain control.
- Fear of getting involved due to communal and religious pressures.
- Fear of being abused (verbal or physical violence etc.) by the client if they say something they disapprove of strongly (Sadiq, 2003).

Solutions

Do not accept a referral if it makes you feel uncomfortable because of your:

- Personal values;
- Professional ethics;
- Fear of abuse;
- Lack of expertise;
- Other experiences.

Don't accept a referral unless you *first* know what the issue is and who else is involved, so that you are making an informed choice.

If you choose to accept the referral, explain your role and legal obligations to the client as well as:

- What you will do;
- What you will not do;
- What you would be required to do in the case of X.

Lay out your expectations of the client in terms of:

- Keeping appointments;
- Respecting your limits;
- Home assignments;
- Anything else.

Ensure proper assessment and diagnosis, including:

- Personal emotional issues;
- Family issues;
- Socio-cultural issues;
- Religious issues;
- Helping professional expertise issues: educational, health, legal, financial, etc.

If the principles of religion are poorly understood, are not being adhered to or are being abused for self-serving purposes:

- Don't get trapped into starting from a religious perspective;
- Explain your reasons for temporarily putting the religious issues aside;
- Share the findings of your assessment and your formulations in a straight-forward manner;
- Suggest a plan of action—short-term, mid-term and long-term goals, strategies and mutual expectations.

If your client does not pursue an Islamic lifestyle say: "since you don't have an Islamic lifestyle now, teaching Islamic principles is not appropriate. The more pressing issue/goal is...".

Point it out if your client's behaviour contravenes Australian law. Explain that if they continue, as a helping professional, you are obligated to call the police.

Once a plan of action has been agreed upon, hold the client accountable:

- For keeping appointments, and showing up on time;
- For following advice, following through on appointments made on their behalf, or completing home assignments (Sadiq, 2003).

Appendix 3

Defining Racial Discrimination

[A] specific act of violence, intimidation or harassment carried out against an individual, group, or organisation (or their property) on the basis of colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin; and/or support for non-racist policies...the definition includes verbal and non-verbal intimidation, harassment and incitement to racial hatred, as well as physical violence against people and property. *National Inquiry into Racist Violence in Australia*, 1991.

Racial harassment is any behaviour which causes distress or suffering to the victim(s) and which is perceived to be motivated by the racism of the perpetrator(s)...Racial harassment restricts the right of people to live their lives without intimidation or injury. (Kimber & Cooper, 1991).

People subject to racial harassment describe the social impact of racism as follows:

- Official and social invisibility;
- Government programs that don't recognize you or your situation;
- An absence of images on TV;
- Over-visibility
- Being stared at or made to wait;
- Being seen as "a problem".

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Community Relations Strategy, (1996), *Dealing with Racist Violence: A Training Package for Service Providers*.

The Difference Hate and Racism Make

- Being hated leaves lasting scars on the mind;
- Powerlessness is always traumatic;
- Stereotypes de-personalize and de-humanise;
- Personal and family histories of racist oppression can produce "rational paranoia";
- Pain, outrage and a sense of injustice are reasonable responses to racist assault and harassment.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Community Relations Strategy, (1996), *Dealing with Racist Violence: A Training Package for Service Providers*.

Crisis and Response

Service providers working with people who have suffered a specific act of racist violence need to know;

- How a particular community or religious group takes care of its own members when they have been assaulted or grievously hurt;
- Where the safe places are for that community;
- Who are the people of real authority in that community;
- Who are the dangerous people;
- From which direction might pay-back or reprisal come.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Community Relations Strategy, (1996), *Dealing with Racist Violence*:

Appendix 4

Checklist for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Tense and restless during the interview, fidgety, nervous, agitated, flushed, shortness of breath, difficulties establishing relationship with interviewer, a mood of dullness and depression, a flatness in reporting events, overly suspicious and untrusting, overly watchful and wary, a reluctance to answer questions, a refusal to answer questions.
- Excessive tentativeness and nervousness, problems with walking, scars, deafness or partial deafness, difficulties concentrating at home and at work, shooting pains through the body, excessive tiredness.
- Headaches, intestinal problems, impaired sleep (insomnia, nightmares), loss of memory, impaired memory, feeling unable to breathe, vertigo, difficulties with vision, chronic pain, arthritis, broken teeth.
- A range of fears and phobias, fear of the dark, of bright lights, of being alone, of being outside, fear of sending the children alone to school or allowing children to play alone, fear of kidnapping, violence.
- Feelings of powerlessness, worthlessness, alienation and guilt.
- Suicidal feelings and attempts at suicide.
- Difficulties controlling emotions, marital problems, inappropriate anger, domestic violence, sudden attacks of panic, depression, crying, withdrawing from company, lack of energy, sexual dysfunction.
- Complaints about accommodation and housing, not wanting to leave the room or the house, imagining security risks associated with living on the ground floor, with a balcony, no locks on internal doors, neighbours whom one does not know.

What Appears 'Harmless' may be Frightening to Survivors of Official Violence

Service providers need to be very careful that seemingly harmless and innocuous people, situations, events, behaviours and standard operating procedures that appear 'self explanatory' may be terrifying, mysterious and confusing to survivors of torture and official or racist violence.

The following mundane behaviours and procedures can rekindle memories of torture and trauma:

- Doors being locked, doors without locks;
- Reminders of interrogative questioning—taking notes, using tape recorders, being asked the same question several times, shutting the door, other people coming and going without explanation;
- Having to wait without explanation, being left without explanation;
- Being asked too many questions;
- Doctors, dentists, nurses, ambulance staff, government employees. Anyone wearing a uniform;
- Being asked to undress, ordinary, everyday medical procedures such as injections, blood tests., ECG, EEG;
- Hydrotherapy, acupuncture, electrotherapy, traction, using a treatment table, touching without advance warning and explanation;
- People in white coats; People wearing dark glasses, people wearing gloves;
- Sudden loud noises, a car backfiring, blackouts, power failures, flickering lights, strange medical equipment.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Community Relations Strategy, (1996), *Dealing with Racist Violence: A Training Package for Service Providers*.

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Useful Websites

Compiled by Miriam Sharrouf (2002), Social Work Student - Counselling and Disability Services, University of Western Sydney.

Introduction to Islam

<http://www.jannah.org/articles/islamfaq.html>

Information about Islam

http://www.islamic-paths.org/Home/English/Eng_Home.htm

Authentic Islamic knowledge

<http://www.qss.org/ebooks/ebooks.html>

A site specifically on Islamic women

<http://www.angelfire.com/me/nmmnurah/index.html>

Information on Women in Islam

<http://www.jannah.org>

Resource on Islamic Knowledge

<http://www.al--islam.com/fdefault.asp>

Glossary of Islamic terms

<http://wwwmuttaqan.com/dictionary.html>

Common misconceptions about Islam

<http://www.jannah.org/articles/misc.html>

Information about Islam

<http://islamq&a.com>

Contact Details

Further information about this Information Kit and the UWS Counselling Service, can be obtained from:

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s.norris@uws.edu.au
Ph: 4620 3564

Further information and assistance in relation to Islam, Muslim Society and the activities of Muslim organisations and communities in NSW can be obtained from:

Islamic Council of NSW

405 Waterloo Road, CHULLORA NSW 2190
Ph: 9742 5752
<http://www.icnsw.org.au>

Muslim Women's Association

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