Client Case Study:
Utilising Imaginal Exposure Therapy with Multiple Traumatic Experiences

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Demographics

- Country of Birth: Iraq
- Religious/Ethnic Background: Sabian Mandaean
- Date of Birth: 29/06/1977
- Date of arrival: 16/8/2012
- Visa Type: Bridging Visa E
- Date of first session: 25/10/2013
Genogram
Trauma History

Early schooling (from 5 years old)
- Persecution related to faith

Iran – Iraq War (approx 5 years old)
- Bombings and gunfire close to home, followed by screams.

Invasion of Kuwait (approx 13 years old)
- Sounds of intense bombing and shootings terrified her
- Witnessed person being killed

Invasion of Iraq beginning in 2003 until she fled
- Seeing dead bodies on the street
- Rushing home and fearing she wouldn’t make it home safely due to gunfire
- Husband received threats to his safety
- Bombing of family home destroying half of it while family in it
- Uncle killed in home invasion
- Hearing about kidnappings and foul play within immediate community
Trauma History (continued)

- Journey to Australia (2012)
  - Dangerous escape away from home and through Indonesia
- Detention Centre experience
  - Birth of third child while in detention
- Current, ongoing uncertainty and fear about future.
Reported Complaints and Observations

- Feeling “psychologically unwell”
- Tired all the time
- Irritable and nervous
- Constantly worried about children
- Disturbed sleep - nightmares, sudden night waking, feeling unrested in the morning
- Intrusive memories when alone or when triggered – “so much has happened”
- Fluctuating mood
- Sense of responsibility and self-blame regarding current situation = self sacrifice
- Loss and separation from family
Other Ongoing Difficulties

- Asylum Seeker status in the height of talks about TPVs
- Whole life uprooted
- Unable to attend English classes – no other focus or purpose
- Concerns about two eldest sons suffering Selective Mutism
- Financial strains
- Ongoing difficulties in Iraq
Pre-Treatment Psychometrics

- **Hopkins Symptom Checklist Questionnaire (HSCQ):**
  - Anxiety = 2.3 (significant > 1.75)
  - Depression = 1.8 (significant > 1.75)
  - Total = 2.0 (significant > 1.75)

- **Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ-R):**
  - Trauma = 2.9 (significant > 2.5)

Administered December 2013
Clinical Case Formulation

Presenting Problems

- PTSD
- Symptoms of depression
- Grief related to separation and loss
Clinical Case Formulation

Complex Interaction

- Risk / Protective Factors
- Traumatic Experiences
- Normal Life Cycle
- International Events
- Social Political Background
- Cultural / Religious Aspects
- Trauma Reactions
- Australian Environment
- Settlement Problems

Treatment Plan and Progress

- Imaginal Exposure Therapy
- Sleep Hygiene
- Psychological Flexibility
- Supporting Resettlement Needs
- Addressing Mental Health in the Family
- Parenting Support
IMAGINAL EXPOSURE THERAPY

- Case formulation presented to client
- Psychoeducation about PTSD, fight/flight response, exposure therapy etc.
- Thematic categorisation of the traumatic events

- Conduct Graded Exposure Therapy
- Assess new learning
- Re-rate SUDs levels
Thematic Categorisation

‘Self as Worthy’
Thematic Categorisation

‘World as Benevolent’
Thematic Categorisation

‘World as Meaningful’
Thematic Categorisation

- Child born in detention
- Boat to Australia
- Under stress
- Not as good
- Dead bodies - blood, first time
- Discarded - no faith in clean body, funeral etc.
- Bombs/guns - screams as child rushes to parents' bed!
- Bombs/everyone killed through someone in bomb blast way
- Family home
- Family home
- Family
- Not a family
Conducting Graded ET:

beside the crying silently. 7 cars in total went and +
6 cousins was no another car from the +
stopped only once - due to possibility of being caught by cops.

Amused by in morning. They got there feeling quite

And lots of pain - suffering as a result of my form paint being

feared as it was quite terrifying - more terrible

but continue because they had to take a "ride" to town.

journey itself. Even phone light wasn't allowed, very dark.

My fear increased once we arrived, military like people ran

rogue we shouldn't have taken this route, people were annoyed
Arrived early in the morning they left. Later that day they
were expected to leave the beach - had to leave before sunrise.

Boats arrived, they left on 2nd boat. Same
boat or boats by small dinghy today due to low
water levels. Here family captured on
kayaks cleaning debris. She got wet, knew danger.
Best sometimes read. For r anxiety or fear was
different to what they were

Fell - her told it was metal. Surrey capacity for 10 people.

They were 70 people on the boat. Felt lucky they were
the other side. Water was across.

Instead, fishing boat had conditions; didn't think.
Examples of ‘New Learning’

- “I didn’t think we would make it but I had no choice”
- “..sometimes now I smile for the strength God gave us to get through”
- “It was terrifying… I regret we shouldn’t have taken this route”
- “lots of pain and suffering as a result of me, their mum, putting them at risk… but I (know) I had to take the risk for them”
(Temporary) Closure to Therapy

- Ceasing therapy … until next time!
- Post treatment measures
  - Hopkins Symptom Checklist =
    NON-symptomatic for anxiety and depression.
    - Anxiety = 1.7 (< 1.75)
    - Depression = 1.2 (< 1.75)
    - Total = 1.4 (< 1.75)
  - Harvard Trauma Questionnaire =
    NON-symptomatic for PTSD
    - Trauma = 1.1 (< 2.5)

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References

Thank you for your time!