



Adolescence is a difficult stage for all of us, but **young people from refugee backgrounds face additional barriers to this period in their lives**. It is important to highlight the new skills and social capital that young people develop during this process that helps them to better navigate life in Australia.

They are the experts

All decisions should be informed by the people we are working with. It's important to recognise **the specific needs, rights and aspirations** of young people from refugee backgrounds: they are the experts in their own life.

Strength-based approach

Taking a strength-based approach means **recognising the range of skills, resilience and resourcefulness** that young people from refugee backgrounds arrive with, and continue to develop over their settlement journey. This way, **we focus on their strengths, rather than 'deficits'**.

Trauma-informed practice

Working with people from refugee backgrounds, we try to use trauma-informed practices. This means **understanding and responding** to the specific needs of young people who have experienced trauma. It is underpinned by core values of **safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration** and **empowerment**.

Safety is important for both you and the young people we work with, **emphasise its importance to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment!**

Navigating identity

During the settlement process, young people are also **negotiating identity and belonging in the context of a new culture**. Perhaps coming from a collectivist culture, they may be unfamiliar with how concepts such as **independence, autonomy, freedom** and **child rights** operate in Australia.

Navigating family

Working within a family context, it's important that we **consider the kind of support, connection and expectations** that young people are surrounded by, as they will be determined by their cultural upbringing.

Young people from refugee backgrounds may also need to **navigate new roles and responsibilities** in their household, particularly if they can pick up a new language more easily. This can create **shifts in power and authority** between family members, which can also lead to **intergenerational disharmony and conflict**.

Risk factors

We should be aware of how **risk factors overlap** to create poor mental health outcomes in young people. These can include **family pressures and stigma**, changing expectations around **gender norms**, and **limited knowledge of available services** - which are all **heightened with refugee experience**.

Reflexive practice

Cultural responsiveness means **recognising the fundamental role that culture and cultural identity play in our sense of identity** and belonging in the community.

Culture is **complex** and **dynamic**, is shaped by factors like **age, developmental stage** and **migration experience**, and informed by **values** and **beliefs**. When we understand this, we are able to provide reflective and flexible support.

Reflexivity is key to providing effective support to young people from refugee backgrounds. We need to be **aware of our own culture** and **check what assumptions** we may bring to the work we do - consciously or not.

