

5.10 ESOL and Mental Health

For in-depth discussion of ESOL and mental health, see [1.17, Mental Health and ESOL Learners](#); [1.7, Culture and Health Resources Online](#); and [3.9, Mental Health: Bag of Rocks Lesson](#) in this toolkit.

Quick Links: ESOL Lesson Plans/Materials on Mental Health Topics

- [**Picture Stories for Adult ESL Health Literacy**](#)
These impersonal, easy-to-use cartoon stories can serve as springboards for discussion of challenging mental health topics. Created by Kate Singleton between 2001 and 2003, they are suitable for all ESOL levels. See in particular the following stories:
 - [**Depressed**](#)
 - [**What Should She Do?**](#) (domestic violence)
- [**U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants: Healthy Living Toolkit: Mental Health**](#)
These plain English materials designed for refugees and immigrants cover topics such as adjusting to a new culture, substance abuse, and managing stress.

ESOL and Mental Health

- [**International Institute of Boston: Mental Health and the ESL Classroom: A Guide for Teachers Working with Refugees**](#)
This guide gives explanations of trauma and other stressors refugees and other immigrants experience along with recommendations on how ESOL educators can create a comfortable, supportive learning environment for people with PTSD.
- [**Spring Institute: Cultural Adjustment, Mental Health, and ESL**](#)
This publication explores mental health conditions that learners may be experiencing, looks at connections between mental health and ESOL, and suggests instructional activities and strategies that support learners who are experiencing stress or trauma.

- [**World Education: Reducing Stress and Promoting Mental Health in the ABE/ESOL Classroom**](#)
This guide includes “practical approaches to help teachers [and programs] practice ... creating safe and stable learning environments where students can manage their stressors and persist in their learning goals.” Written by Lenore Balliro, this 2012 document is part of World Education’s Managing Stress to Improve Learning Project.

Trauma and Adult Learners

- [**Center for Adult English Language Acquisition \(CAELA\): Trauma and the Adult English Language Learner**](#)
This 2000 article by Janet Isserlis describes trauma and abuse in immigrant communities and the effects of trauma on learning. It proposes ways to modify instruction to facilitate learning among victims of trauma and violence.
- [**Learning and Violence: What Can You Do?**](#)
This list of tips for being supportive of learners who you know to be victims of violence, while maintaining your professional boundaries, comes from Jenny Horsman.
- [**Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition –for Adults \(LESLLA\) Proceedings: Trauma and Learning – What Do We Know, What Can We Learn?**](#)
Author Janet Isserlis describes her contribution (on pages 42-51 of this 2010 publication): *“This article describes an ongoing project of enabling practitioners to share understandings of issues underlying trauma and learning and to work together to articulate strategies and approaches to support learning for basic literacy level learners and practitioners. The article also ... reviews common wisdom about supporting victims and survivors of trauma and violence, and proposes ways in which practitioners can consider and address the issue in their own settings and contexts.”*

Mental Health, Immigration, and Culture

- [**American Psychological Association: The Mental Health Needs of Immigrants**](#)
The APA summarizes issues and recommendations for treating mental health issues among immigrant populations.



- **[Culture Shock Adjustment Timeline](#)**
This PDF provides an illustration of the cultural adjustment curve that immigrants and refugees typically experience. The handout explains the various stages of adjustment. ESOL teachers have used the curve (as is or in a simpler form) as a conversation and writing prompt in ESOL classes.
- **[National Alliance for Multicultural Mental Health: Lessons from the Field: Issues and Resources in Mental Health](#)**
This comprehensive guide for case workers explains mental health issues refugees may face; biological, cultural, social, and spiritual factors affecting their mental health; and effective ways for caseworkers to provide culturally sensitive support.
- **[National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\): Multicultural Action Center](#)**
This website links to resources on mental health for assorted cultural and linguistic minority groups in the U.S.
- **[The New York Times: The Americanization of Mental Illness](#)**
This interesting 2010 article by Ethan Watters discusses how different cultures experience mental health uniquely, how the U.S. views of mental health and mental health treatment are spreading worldwide, and what some implications of this spread are.
- **[Talking about Mental Health: A Narrative Approach](#)**
Marla Lipscomb, a clinical health social worker specializing in the mental health of refugees, discusses the benefits of using a narrative approach to discuss mental health in the U.S. with refugee groups.

Simple Health Information Materials (with U.S. medical model view of mental health)

- **[Healthy Roads Media: Mental Health](#)**
This website provides materials in multiple languages (including English) and formats. Topics include mental health in general, anxiety, autism, bipolar disorder, PTSD, OCD, depression, and more.
- **[Mayo Clinic: Stress Symptoms: Effects on Your Body and Behavior](#)**
This plain English article may be readable for higher level ESOL learners.
- **[Medline Plus: Mental Health](#)**
This site shares general, plain language articles on mental health. Some are available in multiple languages.

Domestic Violence and Adult Learners

- [**Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal: Domestic Trauma and Adult Education on the United States–Mexico Border**](#)
This 2010 article by Andres Muro and Erika Mein discusses the impact of trauma on learning and the results of a study focused on identifying the prevalence of domestic abuse among Hispanic women enrolled in a community education program and addressing the issue comprehensively.
- [**LINCS: The Impact of Domestic Violence on Adult Education Programs Discussion Summary**](#)
This online conversation, which ran from March 28th through April 1, 2011, on the LINCS Diversity and Literacy Discussion List, was hosted by Andres Muro and Erika Mein.
- [**National Domestic Violence Hotline**](#)
This website provides educational information on domestic violence, tips for recognizing abuse and helping victims, and links to support services in each state.
- [**Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance**](#)
This site provides educational resources and a directory with contact information for local support services around Virginia.

Substance Abuse

- [**Al-Anon Family Groups**](#)
Al-Anon is a support network for people who are family or friends of alcoholics; the site translates into Spanish and French.
- [**Alcoholics Anonymous**](#)
This website translates into Spanish and French.
- [**MedlinePlus: Alcoholism**](#)
This site may be usable by some ELLs. It includes many helpful articles on different aspects of alcohol use, some in easy English and some in different languages.
- [**National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\): Alcohol**](#)
- [**NIDA Easy-to-Read Drug Facts: Alcohol Facts**](#)
This site may be usable by some ELLs. It includes audio for the text on the page and videos ELLs can watch.

