

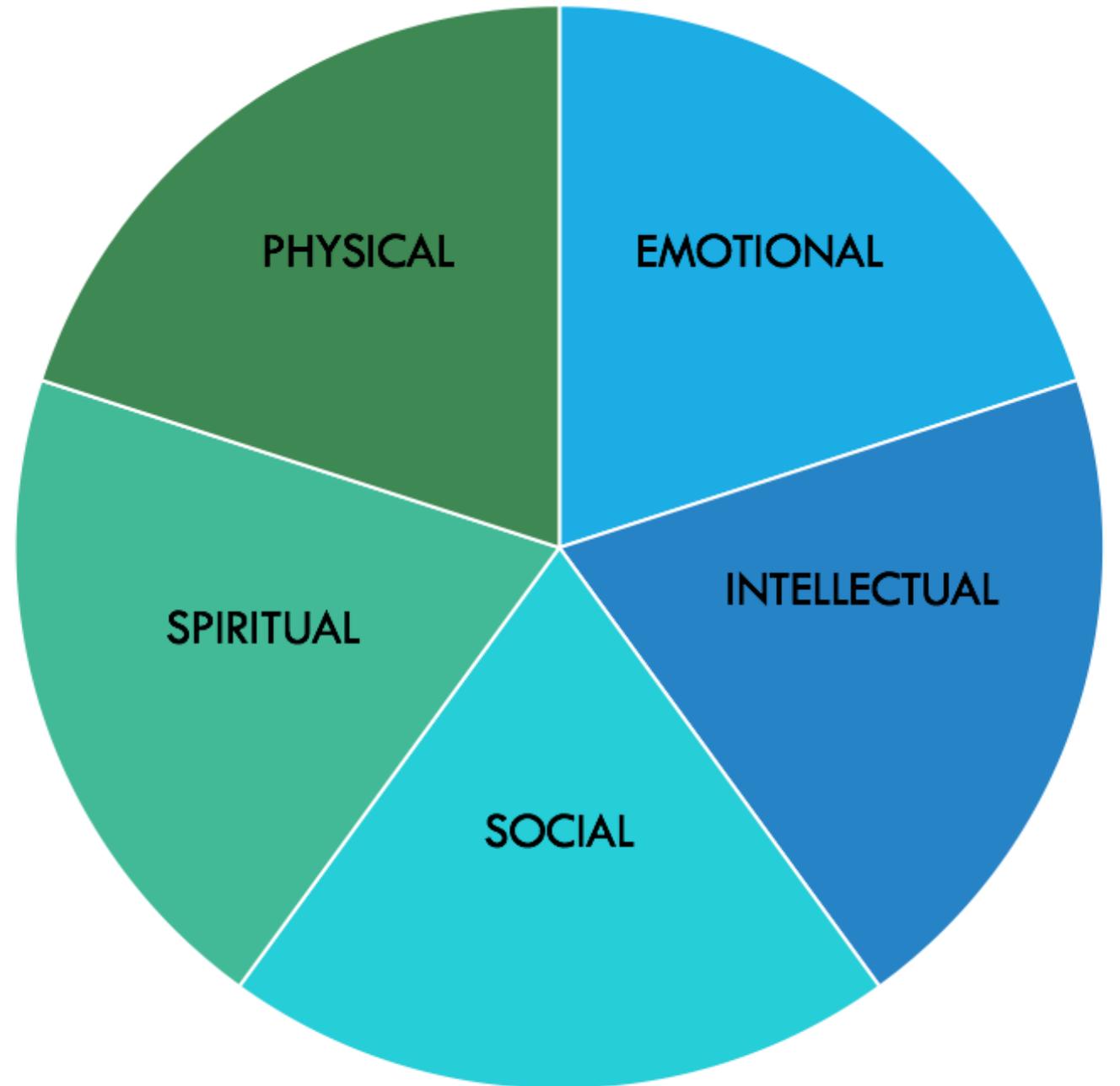
# ADDRESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF NEWCOMER YOUTH

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# WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

- Mental health is key to our well-being. It involves how we feel, think, act, and interact with the world around us.
- Mental health is about *realizing our potential, coping* with the normal stresses of life, and making a *contribution* to our community.
- Good mental health isn't about avoiding problems or trying to achieve a 'perfect' life. It's about living well and feeling capable *despite* challenges.
- Mental well-being is bigger than the presence or absence of a mental illness. People who live with a mental illness can and do thrive, just as people without a mental illness may experience poor mental health.
- It may be more helpful to think of good mental health as thriving.

**DIFFERENT  
COMPONENTS OF  
MENTAL HEALTH**





# SETTLEMENT RELATED STRESSORS

- The immigration and settlement process, in itself, is a stressful event for youth. Experiences related to immigration and settlement can compound already existing mental health issues and/or create new mental health challenges during an already complex time.
- Settlement Related Stressors include (but are not limited to):
  - Language
  - Adjusting to the Canadian Education System
  - Cultural Differences
  - Entering the Canadian Labour Market
  - Difficulties accessing information and resources
  - Discrimination and racism
  - Changing roles within families
  - Lack of recognition of prior experiences (school, work, etc.)
  - Poverty
  - Trauma



# MENTAL HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF IMMIGRATION & SETTLEMENT

- Isolation/minimal social network
- Feelings of grief related to loss and separation
- Disconnect from support systems (elders, faith community, teachers, etc.)
- Coping with high amounts of change and stress
- Living in the unknown (expectations, cultural rules and norms, future plans, etc.)
- Depression and anxiety
- Suicidal thoughts
- High levels of frustration (doubting self, skills and abilities)
- Unhealthy coping mechanisms (drug and/or alcohol use, smoking, high risk sexual behaviour)

# STRATEGIES FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

## 1. Provide opportunities for relationships building with both peers and adults

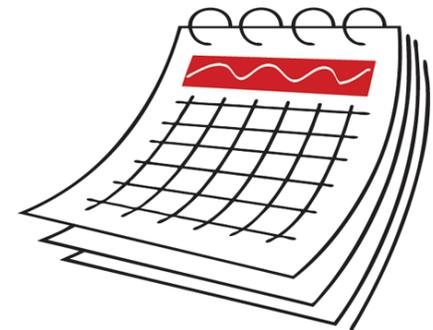
- Fostering safe, supportive and welcoming relationships between newcomer youth and trusted adults is one of the best ways to promote well-being
- Agency staff and volunteers should actively engage with youth during program activities
- Establish positive boundaries when working with individuals and groups
- Be a strong and supportive presence for children and youth
- Take initiative in getting to know each youth participant and take an ongoing but respectful interest in their lives
- Create opportunities for peer interaction in a supervised environment
- Organize mentorship opportunities for newcomer youth
  - peer-peer
  - youth-adult
  - older youth-younger youth



# STRATEGIES FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

## 2. Organize your programming in a routine way and be as consistent as possible

- Consistency and routines decrease feelings of 'unknown-ness' and helps create a safe space for youth
- Youth feel less 'overwhelmed' and get a break from the stressful and often confusing environments they spend time in (school, public transportation, etc.)
- Behaviour managements plans and strategies that are consistent will help youth know what is expected of them
- Post daily plans in areas where youth can see them. Use lots of visual aids to help youth who have lower English language skills



# STRATEGIES FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

## 3. Provide regular and on-going opportunities for psycho-education on topics relevant to newcomer youth

- Be sensitive to cultural implications while still providing youth with the information they need to keep themselves safe
- Create a safe and supportive space for youth to ask questions and share their experiences
- Topics might include:
  - Mental Health
  - Coping Strategies
  - Healthy Relationships (with peers, partners & parents/guardians)
  - Drugs/Alcohol/Smoking & Refusal Skills
  - Gangs
  - Puberty and safer sex



# STRATEGIES FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

- 4. Provide opportunities for the development of skills, abilities, personality and goals**
- Building or mastering a skill can help increase a youth's self-confidence and self-worth
  - Providing various activities can help youth determine what they like, what they are good at and can help them create their identity
  - Youth who may struggle in one area are provided with other areas to shine in
  - Goal setting can provide youth with hope for the future and can lessen feelings of hopelessness
  - Build on resiliency, transfer strengths
  - Connect youth to employment opportunities
  - Help youth connect to their community in meaningful ways
  - Opportunities for connections to and expressions of culture



# STRATEGIES FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

- 5. Educate others about the mental health challenges and needs of newcomer youth**
- Helping to raise awareness around the challenges associated with immigration and settlement helps to educate service providers, teachers and private/public institutions about the realities newcomer youth face on a daily basis.
    - Canadian School System (classroom teachers, admin, etc.)
    - Libraries
    - Recreation Services
    - Business community
  - Increased education leads to increased awareness and support (ideally)
  - Breakdown stereotypes and myths



# STRATEGIES FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

## 1. Build safe and supportive relationships with newcomer youth

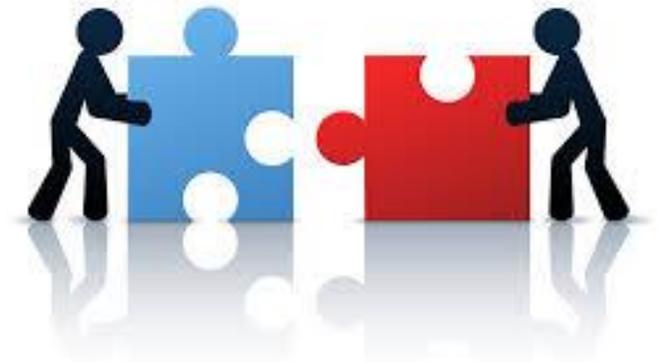
- Know youth well enough to be able to observe changes in behaviour
- Make sure youth know they can come to you when needed and be *available* and *present* if they do
- Provide opportunities for hope and comfort



# STRATEGIES FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

## 2. Regular documentation of Youth's behaviour and time spent in program

- Regular, formal documentation of changes in behaviour (Participant/Incident Reports)
  - Helps to create a fuller picture of presenting issues
- Culturally appropriate and ongoing assessments
- Regular debrief meetings



# STRATEGIES FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

## 3. Assist Clients in Learning, Developing & Practising New Behaviours and Identifying & Processing Emotions

- Develop psycho-social groups to meet the behaviour and pro-social skill needs of youth at your agency (anger management, communication, decision making, etc.)
- Provide specific interventions for individual children and youth participants, including:
  - Behaviour management strategies
  - Action plans
  - Referrals (to more appropriate/intensive programming)
  - Advocacy
  - Follow-up

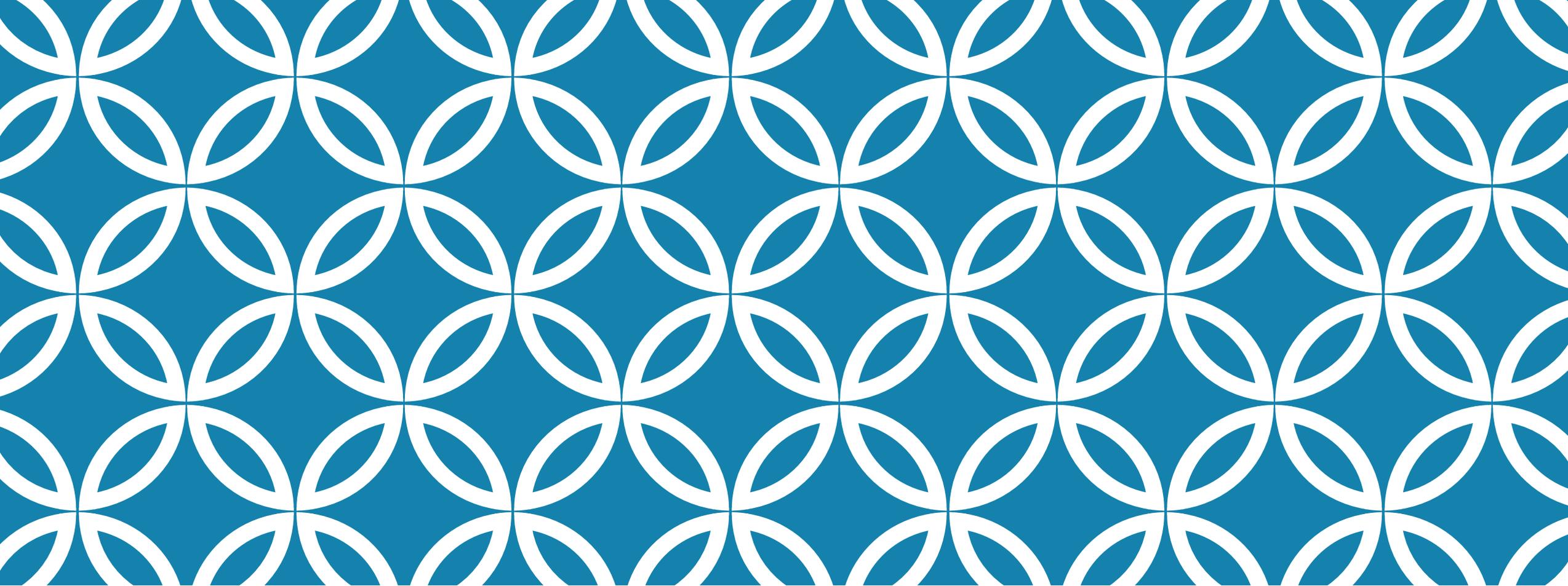






**QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?  
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