

**Mental States of War in the Consulting Room:
Refugees and Therapists**

Monica Luci, Ph.D (IAAP-IARPP)

This seminar will address mental states of war, both in refugees and psychosocial workers, and psychotherapists, during the war in Ukraine. Refugees who have just fled a conflict situation are displaced persons who have left the relative safety of their former lives and often their families or parts of them in dangerous situations. Especially when fleeing from a war, they may or may not suffer from acute forms of suffering, which may or may not develop further into known and codified disorders, from which they can then recover or develop more stable forms of suffering due to traumatic experiences and displacement or by exacerbation of previous vulnerabilities. The possibility of distinguishing all these different situations and not considering the mental state of refugees as if they were a single block, is fundamental for a work, modulated on the needs of individuals and families. Some tools will be indicated that can facilitate a population screening in this sense.

This seminar will illustrate the fundamental principles of my personal way of working with trauma in refugees, when this is the case, that I have been developing over twenty years of experience of therapeutic work with the most vulnerable of refugees - survivors of torture, rape, violence of gender, trafficking in human beings, unaccompanied minors, etc. The seminar will also have reference to some good practices, developed and codified in the EASO documents on people with special needs and in other international protocols.

Psychologists, psychotherapists and, more generally, frontline caregivers are extremely vulnerable to vicarious trauma. Their position must be considered very carefully especially in this crisis of the war in Ukraine, where the therapists are colleagues directly involved in the conflict or living in neighboring countries, under the threat of a possible war. The features of their geographical, material and psychological position needs attentive analysis. A set of principles for working safely with trauma in refugees will be proposed.

Due to the characteristics of this population, only a few refugees, often those with the most serious disorders and those who are lucky enough to be able to access services, reach the stage of access to psychotherapy. In these latter interventions, but also in short-term therapeutic or rehabilitative interventions, understanding refugee-therapist interaction offers the opportunity to act and work through these mental states of war.

Program (Central European Time):

9:00-10:00 The psychosocial and therapeutic work with refugees and their mental states of war

10:00-10:45 Discussion of clinical cases or work experiences

15 mins BREAK

11:00-12:00 The mental states of war in therapists and their work with refugees

12:00-13:00 Discussion of clinical cases or work experiences