

“We Don’t Talk About It”: Barriers to Mental Health Conversations with Refugee Youth in Participatory Action Research

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WHAT WE KNOW

- Mental health is often a difficult topic for refugee youth to discuss
- Talking about emotions can feel unsafe due to stigma and cultural beliefs

OBJECTIVE

This project explored how refugee youth talk about mental health



WHAT WE DID

Participatory Action Research

- 38 racialized refugee youth ages 12-21
- Community-based purposeful sampling

- Photovoice Projects
- Walking Interviews
- Focus Groups



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PRACTICE

- Create judgment-free peer-based spaces
- Use participatory and creative approaches
- Involve cultural brokers and community partners
- Recognize that silence can hold meaning



WHAT WE LEARNED

- Most youth said mental health isn't talked about in their families or communities — it's seen as shameful or private
- Youth worried about being judged or gossiped about if they shared their struggles
- Several feared adding stress to families who were already coping with resettlement challenges
- Conversations felt easier when they happened in safe and friendly spaces rather than formal settings



End THE
STIGMA

THANK YOU

With gratitude to the community partners who supported this project and the youth who shared their voices

“NOT ALL VOICES USE WORDS”

