

Creating Effective Suicide Prevention Strategies for the Hmong Community: *We Are The Peace We Need. We Are Our Own Solutions.*

Presented by
True J. Thao, MSW, LICSW

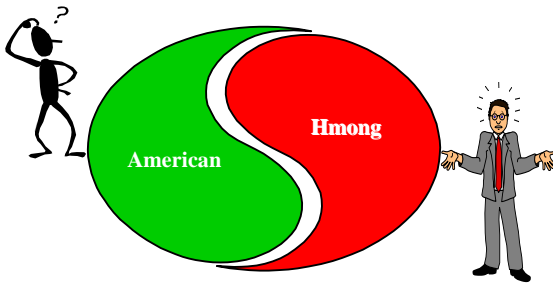
Suicide Prevention Objectives

- Create community awareness
- Promote community dialogue
- Promote wellness
- Increase access to services
- Increase the provider community cultural compatibility to serve Hmong
- Promote system changes

Suicide/Violence Prevention Road Map



Which One of me do you really know?



Hmong Demographics

BORN

- Asian
- Asian
- Asian
- American

RAISED

- & Asian
- & Asian/American
- & American
- & American

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT

- Body comes first
- Mind comes later
- Leaves native land for safety.
- Cannot return home.
- Circumstance is often abrupt and/or traumatic.
- Mind comes first
- Body comes later
- Leaves native land for prosperity.
- Returning home is a choice.
- Circumstance is planned with anticipation.

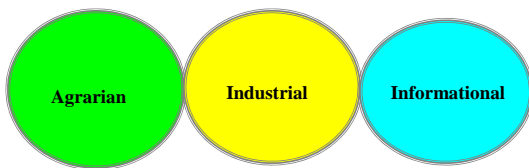
HMONG IN AMERICA

Hmong can not continue life as they have known it.

Acculturating into the American ways of life is a complex process.

Hmong live in limbo

Lifestyle Changes



Laos-1975 Hmong's Lifestyle Changes America-2005

Culture Shock

- Old behaviors are not getting the accustomed responses.
- The realization that one no longer knows the "rules of the game" and does not understand how to behave.

Source: Bridging Cultural Barriers for Corporate Success by Sondra Thiederman

Measurement of Wellness

- Physical functioning
- Wellness is understood more so as having to do with physiological and spiritual problems rather than psychological.
- *Appear* to be less PSYCHOLOGICAL MINDEDNESS

COMMON BELIEFS IN CAUSES OF ILLNESS

- Supernatural phenomena
- Punishment for past sinful acts
- Relationship with ancestors
- Mandate for life
- Stability of the soul
- Genetic predisposition

Traditional Remedies For Health Conditions

- Herbal Medicines
- Shamanism
- Incantation
- Soul Calling
- String Tying
- New Names Ceremony

Traditional Remedies For Health Conditions

- Bridge Ceremony
- Praying to “Ntuj”
- Fulfilling the Bargaining with Ntuj
- Religious Conversion
- Clan Conversion
- Modern Medicines
- And others

Treatment Expectations

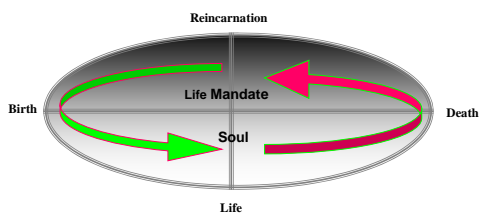
Definition affects interventions and outcome expectations

- Tangible vs Intangible
- Spiritual vs psychological/words
- Quick fix vs long-term management
- External vs internal self-driven

Cultural Context

- Refugee vs Immigrant
- Healer lead vs Partnership
- Symptoms vs Causes
- Quick fix vs Management
- Life and Death is cyclical
- The Concept of “Whole”

Hmong Life Cycle



Strategies

- Teen Magazine
- Radio Show
- Community Retreats
- Monthly Talking Circle
- Cross-Cultural Case Consultation
- Training for Professionals
