

## Podcast- Episode 6

Hello,

I am Dr. Charles David Tauber, CEO of the Coalition for Work with Psychotrauma and Peace, the CWWPP. You can see what we do and who we are on our website [www.cwwpp.org](http://www.cwwpp.org). We also welcome your comments on this podcast and your suggestions for future podcasts.

In this podcast, we will talk about migrants and their issues.

Why do people migrate? It's not an easy thing to do at all. People migrate because of war, because they've been discriminated against, because there has been violence against them, because they want to escape from poverty, because they want a better life for themselves and their children. Most people who migrate are being forced to migrate. Some migrate voluntarily, for school or work, etc., but most people feel that they are forced to go.

Unfortunately, now there is the dehumanization and criminalization of migration. Many governments are doing that, which is very unfortunate and, in our view, unethical.

People are mistreated in their places of origin, they have been mistreated on the way, and they are forced to live under very bad conditions. Frequently the conditions are unsanitary, cold, and every horror that you can possibly think of. There is also the term "administrative violence", meaning that they must go through what is seemingly impossible procedures in a language that is not their own.

Migrants have trauma at several levels and in several places. They have had a trauma in their place of origin, along their way, and they have trauma in their place of destination, that is, adapting to a new culture and a new situation. I will talk about each of these in future podcasts.

The point is, that migrants frequently are highly traumatized. We know that ignoring these traumas is very dangerous, both for the migrants and for society. For the migrants, they don't only have psychological distress, but they also get physical illnesses. In terms of society, there are possibilities for domestic violence, which is very frequent, because people are frustrated and highly traumatized. If this trauma and frustration are not dealt with, this can result in civil violence within the society.

There are a lot of physical and psychological issues that migrants have, and it's very important to get these out and to find out what these are and to deal with them. Some of the psychological issues include anxiety, depression, addiction. They can even have what we would call *reactive psychosis*, which is an escape from the reality of the situation.

When trauma doesn't have a place to get out, doesn't have a venting place, it can go into the body and cause physical symptoms. Very common ones are circulatory system issues such as high blood pressure, heart attacks, strokes, and so on. There also can be gastrointestinal problems such as ulcers. The immune system is affected by stress and trauma and so people are more likely to get sick more often. This can even cause cancer. There are endocrinological problems such as thyroid problems, diabetes, and so on. In short, anything can happen. It's very important to deal with both psychological and physical issues.

When you work with migrants, your main task is to listen. I don't know how many times I've been told that I was the first person who would listen to them, empathize with them, hear what they have to say, and listen to their stories. That's extremely important and I cannot emphasize it enough.

When you are working with migrants you must be very careful about your relationships. You must gain trust. It's an old saying but a true one: trust is very hard to get and very easy to lose. Tell people the truth. Do not make promises that you cannot keep. Regarding your level of closeness, be friendly but don't get over close, especially if you are going to stay in place for a short time. Be very careful because very traumatized people will begin to be dependent on you, and breaking that relationship or letting it go too far can be very dangerous both for the migrants and for you. You can get secondarily traumatized. That happens to virtually everyone, especially to people working with migrants. You do empathize with them; you do feel something for the people.

It's also very important to refer migrants to the proper people who can help them. Many migrants will have legal problems. Be sure to get a lawyer who knows a lot about immigration law because that can be very difficult and changes frequently. We've mentioned that migrants often have physical problems. Be sure to get a good doctor who knows what he or she is talking about. Also, in some organizations, some doctors know how to give a proper examination to migrants, particularly with regard to torture and to the medical issues that we've talked about.

We also recommend that you get migrants into some sort of either self-help group or psychological assistance where someone can work with them on a long-term basis. That's very important.

These are not the problems that are going to be solved today or tomorrow. It takes a while.

We were talking about the problems of migrants, but migrants have a very good effect on the community. In general, migrants are trying very hard and so they are very good workers. They add cultural diversity, and they add new ideas. So, it's very beneficial for the community to have migrants there.

Remember, it's very important to treat migrants humanely and properly and not to dehumanize them, which happens all too often. They also get criminalized as we've said. That is not ethical and not morally.

Accepting and assisting migrants works to the benefit of the community and it also avoids violence.

Thank you for listening and watching this podcast.

See you next time.