



Ulysses Syndrome

Did you know it is possible for our heads, hearts, and feet to be in different places at the same time? For some people, there is the place where they are standing and the places where their thoughts wander and hearts reside. Perhaps their thoughts and longings are with a faraway loved one, a distant home or friends they no longer see.

Some who migrate from one place to another and leave friends and family behind while trying to adapt to a new and different place might experience these thoughts and longings more intensely than others. This can be stressful. When this stress causes psychological and physical symptoms, it is called the **Ulysses Syndrome**. Dr. Joseba Achotegui, who worked with migrants and immigrants for many years in Spain, named the syndrome after the Greek mythological hero Ulysses. Like many of today's migrants, Ulysses experienced many hardships and dangers as he traveled far from his homeland and loved ones.

Dr. Achotegui's work and research, along with that of others, indicate some migrants and immigrants who experience adaptation stressors (**Migratory Mourning**s) may also experience physical and psychological symptoms such as nervousness, migraines, tension headaches, insomnia, fatigue, appetite loss, generalized ill-defined discomfort – the **Ulysses Syndrome**.

These physical and psychological symptoms can impact our health and wellbeing and our relationships with others, including our children.



7 Migratory Mournings

Some who experience Migratory Mournings may also experience physical and psychological symptoms known as the Ulysses Syndrome.



Missing loved ones

The uncertainty of not knowing when or if one will see loved ones again may cause migrants to experience a sense of loss and anxiety.



Homeland and geographic change

The landscape and the climate can be different and, in some cases, requires new knowledge to navigate and adaptation and resources to survive.



Challenges with a new language

Struggles with learning a new language affect daily life; the ability to find a job, navigate public spaces, shop, receive medical care, and adapt to a new community.



Change in social status

Highly trained professionals may lose their qualifications and need to work in jobs far different from their experience and credentials.

Access to opportunities such as housing and healthcare may be limited, too.



Adapting to a new culture

Values, habits, ways of relating may differ in the new community and be difficult to adapt to and/or understand all the while a person may be missing the music, food, scenery, sounds and smells of a left behind place.



Lost sense of belonging

Sometimes migrants face rejection because they are different while at the same time feeling the loss of belonging to the community and the culture he/she/they left behind.



Exposure to physical and psychological risk

Migrants may have been subject to physical and psychological harm during their journey to their new homeland. Though migrating to a new place isn't easy and is often a choice forced upon people due to circumstances beyond their control such as war and famine, there is hope ...

5 Ways to Heal

The good news is there are many ways to heal, build resilience, and strengthen ourselves and our families. The Strengthening Families'™ Five Protective Factors offer a framework for and strategies to address stress in healthy ways.



Build resilience

See strength and resilience in your own migration story. Relieve stress by connecting with others, spending time in nature, seeking mental health care, eating and sleeping well, exercising, breathing deeply, meditating, and having a spiritual practice/community.



Develop knowledge of parenting and child development

Parenting can be stressful anywhere and especially in a new place and a different culture. Seek out parenting classes and resources.

Parenting support groups and resources can be found

in-person and online. Check out Hui International parenting programs.



Create social connections

Build relationships with those nearby through activities and maintain relationships with those far away with social media, phone calls, and letters.



Develop social and emotional competence

Model healthy actions and reactions. "What parents do ... children will do." As parents-caregivers, we must not only teach our children social and emotional skills. We must model them, too. Be warm and responsive to a child's needs. Listen and respond. Set clear expectations and limits. Seek and find the good.



Connect with support in times of need

Seek community support and resources through resource centers and community programs.

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Building Stronger Communities...One Life at a Time

For more information, contact:



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