

# **SEX TRAFFICKING: WHAT IS IT? WHERE DO I START?**

**University of Texas at San Antonio**

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# PRESENTATION FILE



# Introduction of CAST Speakers



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# OBJECTIVES



<b>1</b>	Counselors Against Sex Trafficking
<b>2</b>	Introduction to Sex Trafficking
<b>3</b>	Impact of Sex Trafficking
<b>4</b>	Considerations for Counselors

# Counselors Against Sex Trafficking (CAST)

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## A Review of Child Sex Trafficking Instruments

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### ABSTRACT

Child sex trafficking (CST) has continued to exist in plain sight and often goes unidentified or misidentified in mental health settings. Often generalized as human trafficking, official statistics of children who fall victim of sex trafficking remains unknown and understudied. With social platforms becoming more available to youth, children are increasingly vulnerable to CST and are unaware of their exposure to victimization. Counselors working with children and adolescents are in

### KEYWORDS

Child sex-trafficking;  
commercial sexual  
exploitation; screening tool



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ORIGINAL ARTICLE



## A Content Analysis of Sex Trafficking Instruments

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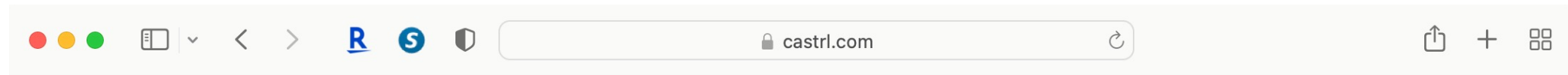
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### Abstract

This content analysis examined assessments available for the screening of sex trafficking to provide professional counselors further insight into the features of sex trafficking and how to best identify and measure this phenomenon. The authors reviewed 12 articles that included a complete or partial use of 13 instruments and completed a content analysis using Krippendorff's procedures. The final analysis

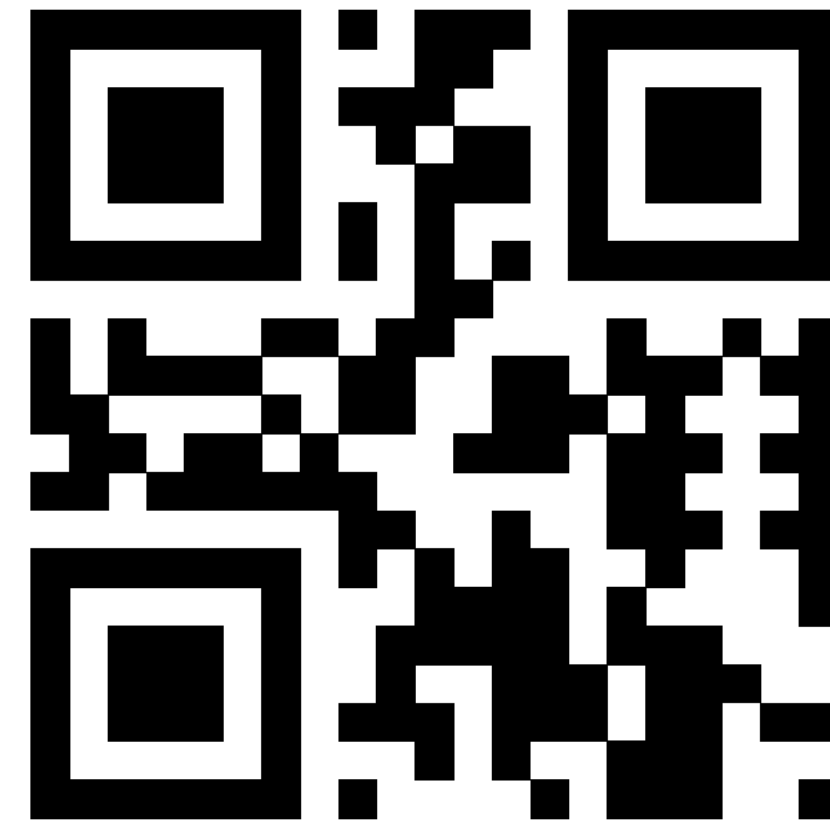


# Counselors Against Sex Trafficking (CAST)



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# Research with Sex Trafficking Content Experts

## Child Sex Trafficking Counseling Competencies


The CST Competencies for Counselors present 128 competency statements were organized into five domains:

- (a) intervention strategies and the helping relationship
- (b) trauma and sex trafficking
- (c) assessment of risk factors and indicators
- (d) ethical practice
- (e) cultural diversity and human growth and development.

Original Research

### Development of Child Sex Trafficking Counseling Competencies in the United States: A Delphi Study

Journal of Interpersonal Violence  
2023, Vol. 38(1-2) 1397–1423  
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Treatment of Victims and Perpetrators  
of Physical and Sexual Violence



COUNSELORS  
AGAINST SEX  
TRAFFICKING

# Counselors Against Sex Trafficking (CAST)

**Texas Higher  
Education**  
COORDINATING BOARD

**Minority Health Research and Education  
Grant Program**

## ST Clinical Placements

- Added 10 new internship sites
- A total of 30 student placements

## ST Training to Counselor-Trainees

- 2 days of ST-Specific training

## ST Training to Supervisors and Counselors in the Community





# Research on the Mental Health of Survivors of Sex Trafficking

Interviews with:

- 10 counselors with clinical experience of working with survivors of sex trafficking
- 10 survivors of sex trafficking



Phenomenological analysis on the lived experiences of counselors working with survivors of sex trafficking in the United States



Phenomenological analysis exploring the mental health experiences of survivors of sex trafficking



Grounded theory analysis seeking to understand how post trauma growth manifest in the lives of sex trafficking survivors in the United States



Grounded theory exploring how do social determinants of health play a role in the lives of sex trafficking survivors in the United States

# Introduction to Sex Trafficking

# Human Trafficking

- Modern-day slavery
- Human trafficking is the business of stealing freedom for profit
- Sex trafficking and forced labor
- Illegal exploitation of a person
- Estimated to gross \$150 billion annually (International Labor Organization, 2014)

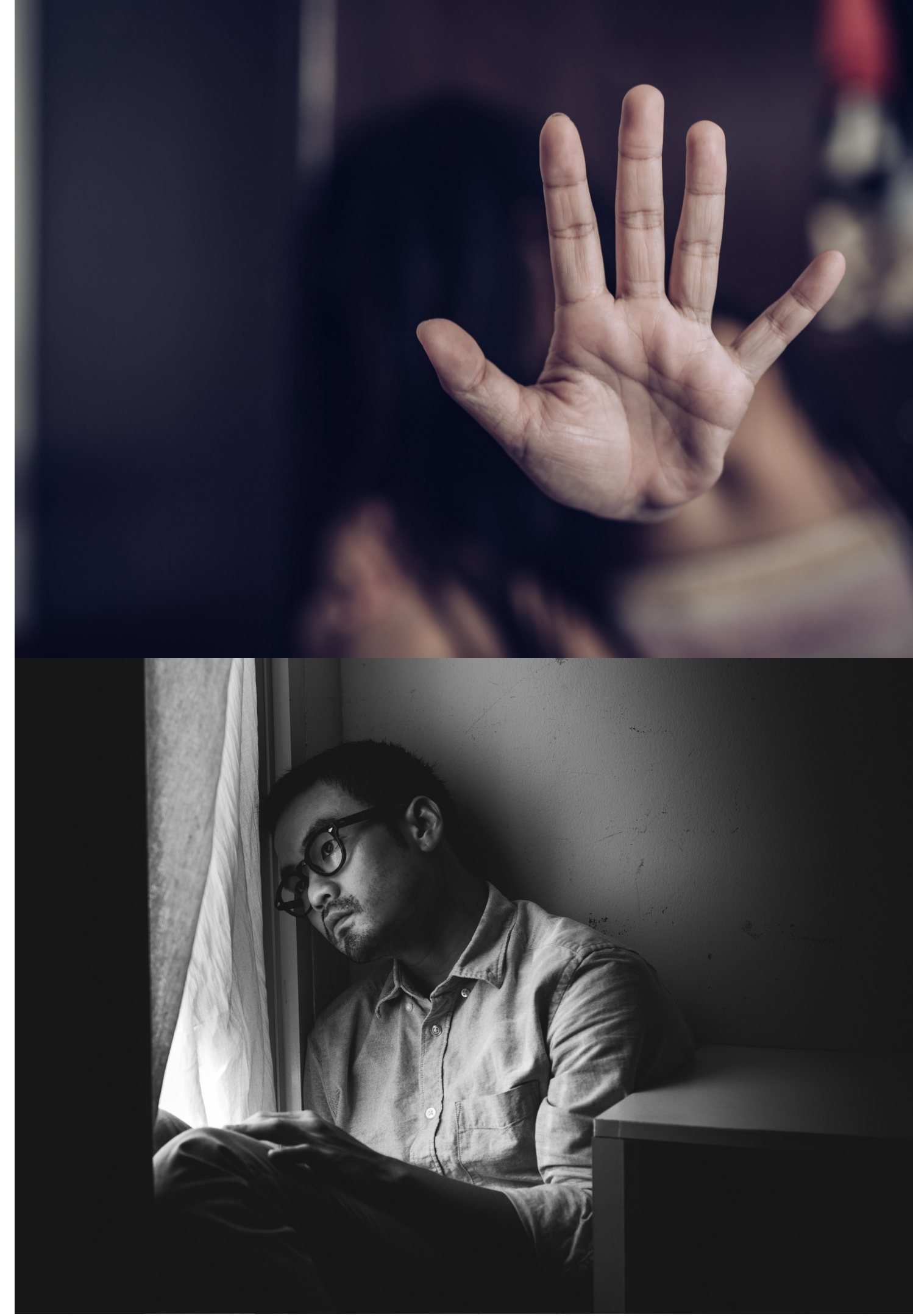
# Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, patronizing, soliciting, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act.

Any minor under the age of 18 **CAN NOT** consent to commercial sex and is considered a victim of sex trafficking regardless of whether force, fraud, or coercion is used.

6.3 million people are estimated to be trapped in forced sexual exploitation globally on any given day.

The US is listed among the top three countries of origin of victims along with Mexico and Honduras.



## Reframing Common Misconceptions

- ST does occur domestically.
- ST can but does not have to include some form of travel, transportation, or movement across state or national borders.
- ST can but does not always include elements of physical force, restraint, bondage, and/or violence.
- If a person receives any kind of payment for sex (e.g., money, food, shelter), they can still be trafficked.
- Although an estimated 80% of victims are female, males are also trafficked.
- Trafficking victims are not usually kidnapped.
- Sex traffickers are not always easy to identify.
- A person who is trafficked will not always feel negatively toward the person(s) trafficking them.

# Populations with Increased Vulnerability

Racial/Ethnic minorities

LGBTQ identities

Lower socioeconomic status

Foster care

Homeless

Children and Youth

Physical and Cognitive Disabilities

Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and  
Migrants



# Activity

## *Experiences of Survivors*

1. Highlight a few words/phrases that stand out.
2. What feelings/reactions do you have from reading these excerpts?

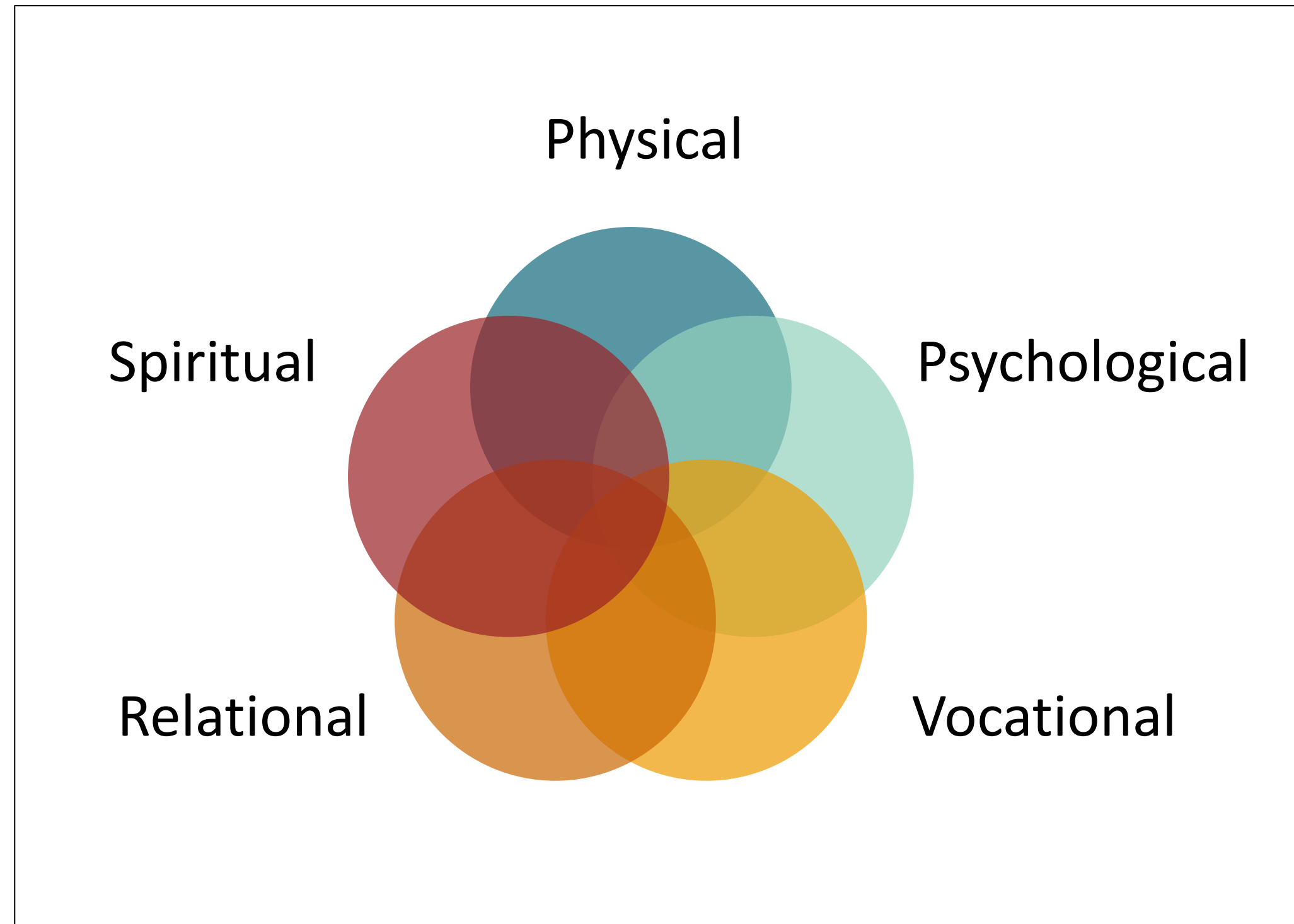
# Impact of Sex Trafficking



# Multidimensional Impact of Sex Trafficking

*“It's something that impacts  
your life forever, even if you  
don't want to it to.”*

- Crystal





## Understanding Shame

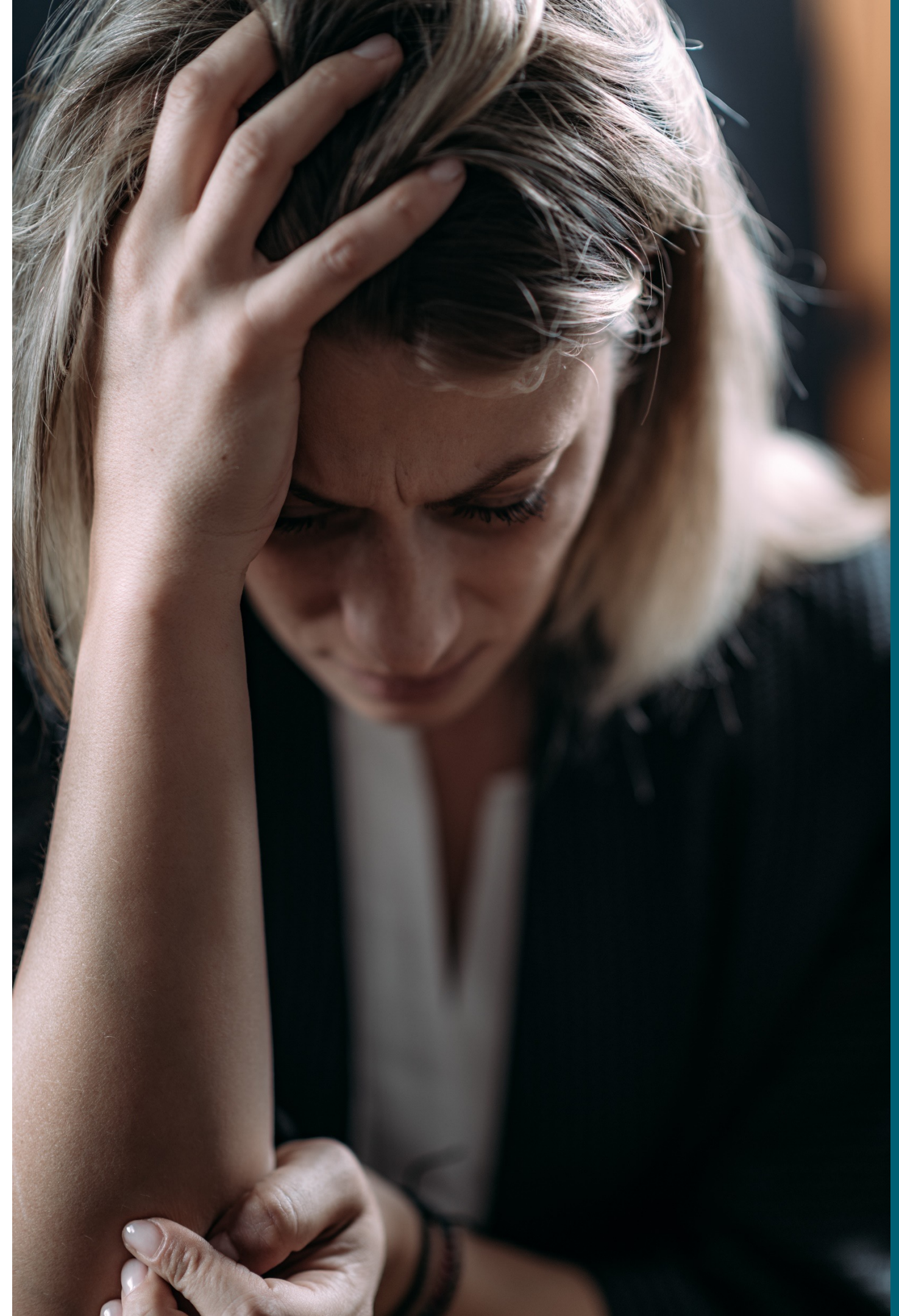
- *“They're just gonna feel shame and they're not gonna want to tell you that they went back, and they might even just not come into their counseling session.”*

## Understanding Grief

- *“Teasing out the identity of the perpetrator versus the victim and helping them know that those are two separate things I think that's where it starts. Is just um helping them divorce their identity.”*

## Addressing Substance Use

- *“Supposedly statistics are like 80% of women or men, children being trafficked are on drugs, I can guarantee you if they know it or not, it's like 99 or 100.”*



# Considerations for Counselors

*“So I think for clinicians it's important to create a neutral space...It doesn't mean they can't have their own belief systems, but they need to understand that maybe the things that bring them solace are things that were instruments of oppression for other people.”*

- Annabel

*“I think a lot of it is going to be looking for the signs, reading the body language...they're going to have their arms crossed, they're not going to look you in the eye, they're gonna lie to you because they're afraid to tell you the truth”*

-Crystal

*“Just be there to listen and don't try to like give them answers to their problem like they know what's best for them...don't like tell them like you need to do this because that's like another way of controlling someone. You know, like a word like ‘rescue someone’ is like something that needs to be taken out of the trafficking language. Because they're not rescuing a person, they've suffered like they've gone through hell, they know how to survive, they don't need to be rescued”*

-Gretchen

## Attributes

- Safe
- Trustworthy
- Relational
- Validating
- Empathic
- Honest
- Humility

## Knowledge and Skills

- Addressing non-verbal behavior
- Knowledge of sex trafficking and trauma
- Assessment and identifying sex trafficking
- Understanding client's level of engagement

## Helpful Practices

- Providing resources
- Providing support
- Empowerment of the client
- Modeling healthy boundaries

# Considerations for Assessment

- Knowledge of warning signs
  - Medical Concerns
  - Trauma or Mental health Concerns
  - Criminal and Legal history or Concerns
  - Personal Concerns Related to Locus of Control
  - Social Concerns
- ST Specific Instruments
  - Commercial Sexual Exploitation Identification Tool (CSE-IT)
  - Trafficking Victim Identification Tool (TVIT)
  - Human Trafficking Screening Tool (HTST)



## Content Areas in Sex Trafficking Instruments

- Commercial sexual exploitation
- Risk factors
- Forms of abuse
- Marital and physical health assessment
- Unstable living conditions and caregiving

(Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2022)



## Considerations for Assessment

- Clients impacted by ST will likely present with co-occurring concerns.

- *Messages from Survivors*

*“there's probably a lot of people being trafficked, and you have no freaking clue. And so, treat everyone the same and don't assume. Show up for them, without assumption, without judgment, and just listen to them. And then help them navigate the boundaries of our system so that you can best meet their needs. I would be asking like the basic questions about housing, about food, about you know, do you have a mattress that's on a frame?”*

- Jes





# Questions???

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# Thank you!

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