

Final Summary Report of The Virtual Armenian Community Symposiums

The first symposium on December 5, 2021 from 2-6pm, was attended by **38 participants**. The first part was a presentation by Talin Khechoomian, LCSW about depression. This was followed by a presentation on Substance Abuse by Hesou Abnosmasihi, an Associate MFT. He was able to provide professional information on core substance use issues, chemical changes and treatment levels. After a few songs and an explanation of how music can be healing in the Armenian community, there was a panel discussion about domestic violence. There were two participants, one from Didi-Hirsch and the other from YWCA. The panelists answered the following questions-

1. Can you explain how the YWCA helps people in DV situations?
2. Can you give an overview of the cycle of DV and the different types of abuse?
3. As a support person, what can we tell someone who is in a DV relationship?
4. What are some high risk groups for DV in the Armenian community?
5. How can we increase awareness about DV in the Armenian community?
6. How does the Armenian culture affect DV issues in our community (both positive and negative)?
7. Why do some people stay in DV relationships?

The poll questions are highlighted below in yellow. The poll responses were not gathered at the beginning of the symposium due to technical issues. These are the responses to the poll questions at the end of the symposium, to which 8 people responded-

User Name	User Email	Submitted Date/Time	1. There has to be a known cause for someone to experience depression	2. Depression can be treated	3. Genetics plays a key role in a person's addiction	4. A person can be cured of his/her addiction after treatment	5. Non-traditional therapies like art and music help with emotional wellbeing	6. People who stay in a Domestic Violence relationship are weak	7. Education and information cannot help someone in a Domestic Violence relationship
Participant #1		#####	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Part. #2		#####	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree
Part. #3		#####	Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree

Part #4	##### Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree
Part #5	##### Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Agree
Part. #6	##### Disagree	Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree
Part. #7	##### Neither Agree nor Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Disagree
Part. #8	##### Agree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree

The second symposium was held on January 27, 2022 from 2-6 pm, attended by **43 people**. The general topic was youth issues and mental health, especially concerns brought up by community members that Armenian youth do not feel included in the Armenian community for a variety of reasons. Viktoriya Petrossian, LCSW, talked about general mental health issues in teens and youth. She also talked about some unique mental health issues that Armenian youth deal with. This was followed by Erik Adamian, the Director of Education of ONE Archives Foundation presenting on LGBTQ awareness in the Armenian community. The non-traditional part of this symposium was conducted by Tamara Shahmoradian, LMFT, who helped the participants, through an art activity, become more aware of their key values. Finally, the panelists discussed these questions:

1. What can you do if you are an Armenian from the LGBTQ community? How do people express their sexual identity?
2. How can parents support their children who identify being LGBTQ?
3. What stereotypes exist in the Armenian community about being LGBTQ?
4. Can you discuss some key parenting skills?
5. What helps our children feel included?
6. What do you think are a few of the most important challenges Armenian teens/youth face today?
7. What are the most important things a parent/supporting adult can do to make a young person feel included?
8. How do we help our teens/youth open up about their thoughts/challenges/needs?
9. How has the war in Artsakh and its aftermath affected our youth?

The symposium poll questions were the following, rated from strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree to strongly disagree.

1. Recognizing generational differences and keeping communication open about challenges faced by teens can improve the quality of the relationship between parents and their teens.
2. Teens talk about suicide to get attention.
3. Being LGBTQ is a personal choice.
4. Rates of suicide are higher in the LGBTQ community.
5. Art helps with emotional wellbeing.
6. Armenian youth have less mental health issues than the general population.
7. The pandemic has increased rates of anxiety and depression in youth.

Since only a few peoples responded to the poll questions, the results could not be analyzed.

The third symposium was held on March 6, 2022 from 1-5pm, joined by **32 people**. Arpe Asaturyan, LCSW, presented from Armenia about the PTSD treatment she has been providing to soldiers. Then Talin Khechoumian, LCSW, talked about the treatment of family members of soldiers and how family members can support a soldier who is experiencing PTSD. The non-traditional component of this symposium was a discussion and meditation exercise by Liza Boubari. The panel discussion was on anxiety and the participants were Shant Boyadjian, LMFT and Adrineh Avetyan, LMFT. These were the questions that were asked to the panelists-

1. What are some unique things that cause anxiety in the Armenian people?
2. How do Armenians experience anxiety differently than the general population?
3. How are symptoms of anxiety expressed differently in the Armenian population?
4. How is anxiety accepted/not accepted in the Armenian community?
5. What are some coping skills that Armenians use?
6. What are some gender differences in experiencing and coping with anxiety in the Armenian population?
7. What are some recommendations you can give on how to cope with anxiety?
8. How did the Artsakh war affect Armenians' anxiety?

The poll questions at the third symposium were the following, rated from strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree to strongly disagree.

1. PTSD does not affect soldiers that have a strong character.
2. Only immediate family members are affected when a soldier dies or is injured.
3. Art therapy is not effective with soldiers.
4. Non-traditional ways of healing do not help with anxiety.
5. Anxiety is affected by the way you think.
6. Therapy does not help with anxiety, only meds do.
7. PTSD is caused only by war.

Since only a few peoples responded to the poll questions, the results could not be analyzed.

There are some general areas about this series of symposiums that are important and worth addressing-

1. Virtual Community Symposiums are not very accepted in the Armenian community since they prefer to attend in person events where there is also an opportunity to interact and socialize.
2. Overall, the feedback from the participants was extremely positive and appreciative. People sent emails expressing that these were topics that were so important and relevant in the Armenian community and that we needed to do more of these educational programs.
3. The poll was extremely challenging for many reasons. There were some technical difficulties and most of the participants did not answer the poll questions.
4. To increase community members' participation within the EE/ME subcommittee, it is crucial that community members realize the benefits of this subcommittee and what it can do for our community.

Below is the total number of views of the different segments of the symposiums on YouTube highlighted in yellow for a total of 127 (these numbers will grow and can be updated later on):

Symposium I

Depression-Armenian Mental Health Symposium 12.05.2021 PART 1 Dec 29, 2021 19
Non-traditional Healing (Music)-Armenian Mental Health Symposium 12.05.2021- Dec 29, 2021 12
Domestic Violence Panel-Armenian Mental Health Symposium 12.05.2021 PART 1 Dec 29, 2021 11
Substance Abuse Fundamentals-Armenian Mental Health Symposium 12.02.2021 PART 1 Dec 29, 2021 7

Symposium II

Armenian Youth Mental Health Wellness-Armenian Mental Health Symposium Part 2 Feb 26, 2022 34
Parenting Skills Panel Discussion-Armenian Mental Health Symposium Part 2 Feb 26, 2022 14
Armenian LGBTQ Awareness-Armenian Mental Health Symposium Part 2 Feb 26, 2022 11
Non-Traditional Healing with Art/Painting-Armenian Mental Health Symposium Part 2 Feb 26, 2022 7

Symposium III

Panel Discussion on Dealing with Anxiety-Armenian Mental Health Symposium Part 3 Apr 10, 2022 6
Non-Traditional Healing for Managing Anxiety & Stress-Armenian Mental Symposium Part 3 2
Effects of War on Families-Armenian Mental Symposium Part 3 Apr 10, 2022 2
Helping Soldier with PTSD-Armenian Mental Symposium Part 3 Apr 10, 2022 2

The combined total of people attending the three Symposiums (as of this date): **240 people**

Polling Results

Polls were designed as pre and post polls one at the beginning and one at the end to compare results as follows. Note that not everyone at the symposium participated in the polling:

Symposium I: Pre polls were available but Post results were not recorded due to technical issues with ZOOM.

Symposium II: Both pre and post poll results were available

Symposium III: Both pre and post polls were available however only one person completed the pre poll