

World Mental Health Day 2026: Lived Experiences Heard: Real Voices, Real Change

World Mental Health Day is observed annually on October 10th. This year's theme is "Lived Experiences Heard: Real Voices, Real Change." As providers, we know that listening to clients and involving them in how care is designed is essential to meaningful services, and research backs this up.

First, when treatment is adapted to fit a client's language, culture, and beliefs, it works better. A 2024 study looked at therapy for refugees and asylum seekers (McDermott et al., 2024). When the therapy was adapted to fit people's culture and language, it helped more than therapy that wasn't adapted. People were also much more likely to stick with treatment. One study found 84 out of 100 people stayed in culturally adapted care, compared to only 52 out of 100 in standard care. That's a big difference. It means listening to what clients need up front isn't extra. It's often the reason people stay in treatment long enough for it to help.

Second, who delivers the care matters. A 2024 study looked at care given by trained community members instead of only licensed specialists, and found real drops in anxiety, depression, and trauma symptoms. These improvements also lasted over time.

Third, it helps when a provider shares a client's language or culture. Studies show that when a provider and client share language or background, they communicate better and build more trust, and clients are more likely to stay in treatment.

Fourth, having ways for clients and communities to give ongoing feedback, like advisory boards, helps keep programs on track. This kind of feedback builds trust and keeps programs responsive to what communities actually need, even as those needs change over time.

Put simply, listening to clients isn't one extra step. It touches everything we do as providers: how we build programs, who delivers care, how we connect with clients one-on-one, and how we stay responsive over time.

Throughout its work, CARRE has tried to embody these principles, and it has greatly strengthened our work. Many clients and community members have shared that this inclusion felt meaningful, describing the work as "fulfilling" and saying their participation helped build trust with their community.

When we build bridges within communities, create space for intentional discussion and collaboration, and support communities to deliver care in ways that reflect their own cultures and values, we remove barriers to care. We are then more likely to achieve the wellbeing and recovery outcomes we're working toward, and to reach more of the people who need this support. Community centeredness is critical to both resonance and effectiveness.

In recognition of the World Mental Health Day theme, here are a few CARRE resources and articles that may be of interest:

1. [Toolkit for Adapting Evidence-Based Interventions for Children and Families Impacted by Crisis and Conflict](#)
2. [Switchboard Blog: Community Centered, Community Framed: How Adapting Evidence-Based Mental Health Interventions Promotes Effective and Meaningful Services](#)
3. [MHPSS Service Mapping](#)
4. [CAB Corner: Participatory Translation Review Practices](#)

References

McDermott, L., Hameed, I., & Lau-Zhu, A. (2024). Cultural adaptations, efficacy, and acceptability of psychological interventions for mental health in adults with refugees and asylum-seeker status: A systematic review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*.

Transdiagnostic psychological interventions for symptoms of common mental disorders delivered by non-specialist providers in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review and meta-analysis. (2024).