

## 7.10 True or false – mental health care

### Objective:

Review key principles on mental health care

### Time

15 minutes

### Resources needed:

A large space for participants to move around

A sign with “yes” or “no”

### Instructions for facilitators

- Find a space where participants can easily move around.
- If the group is too big, split into two or three groups and conduct the exercise in 2–3 different spaces (for example, a breakaway room or different ends of the room).
- Ask the participants in each group to stand in the middle of the room in a straight line.
- Place a sign (either on flip charts or pieces of paper with large writing) with “True” written on one side of the space and on the opposite side a sign with “False” on it.
- Read out loud one of the statements listed.
- Ask participants to respond by moving towards one of the signs – either true or false – depending on whether they think the statement is true or false.
- Ask each side to explain its point of view to the other side. Allow some time for debate.
- After a short debate, ask if anyone would like to change position.

### Statements

1. General health professionals should not ask about suicidal thoughts or attempts. It could encourage suicide attempts.
2. First-line support and teaching stress reduction exercises are part of basic psychosocial support for all survivors
3. Almost all women subjected to violence suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
4. Difficulty functioning in daily life characterizes moderate to severe depression
5. Benzodiazepines and antidepressants should not be prescribed to treat acute distress

### Answers:

1. General health professionals should not ask about suicidal thoughts or attempts. It could encourage suicide attempts.  
**False.** Asking about suicide attempts or thoughts does not increase suicide attempts. On the contrary, talking about suicide **often reduces the woman’s anxiety about suicidal thoughts** and helps her feel understood.
2. First-line support and teaching stress reduction exercises are part of basic psychosocial support for all survivors  
**True.** Other elements of basic psychosocial support include **strengthening positive coping methods** and exploring the availability of **social support**.
3. Almost all women subjected to violence suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

**False.** Most women experience psychological distress after violence but this **usually passes** and does not require clinical management. A **minority develop PTSD**, which is defined by symptoms of re-experiencing, avoidance, heightened sense of current threat, and difficulties in daily functioning for a month or more.

4. Difficulty functioning in daily life characterizes moderate to severe depression

**True.** Difficulty functioning is one of several criteria for diagnosis of moderate to severe depression.

5. Benzodiazepines and antidepressants should not be prescribed to treat acute distress

**True.** However, short-term treatment with benzodiazepines may be considered for **severe insomnia**, but with precautions.