



RESEARCH BRIEF: From Survivor to Thriver: Analyzing Challenges and Support in the Reintegration of Human Trafficking Survivors

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ABOUT

This analysis synthesizes current U.S. literature, highlighting key models and frameworks for supporting survivors' reintegration and emphasizing the importance of survivor-centered, trauma-informed approaches.

FINDINGS

Reintegration is achieved through long-term support systems, including financial sustainability, healthy relationships, peer support, mentorship, community connections, and credit repair. Equally important is recognizing and fostering survivors' inner strength, resilience, and self-advocacy.

CONCLUSION

Multi-dimensional support is crucial for the long-term reintegration of trafficking survivors, emphasizing the need for addressing financial stability and survivor autonomy to prevent revictimization

Human trafficking is widely recognized as a violation of human rights and a public health concern. Over the past two decades, extensive research has been conducted on the risk factors and vulnerabilities associated with human trafficking. However, little is known about the reintegration process for survivors. Just as the risk factors, actual entrapment, and exploitation of survivors are not linear processes, neither is their reintegration.

Although more studies are needed to establish comprehensive theories about the processes, support, and challenges of reintegration, emerging research studies highlight approaches to support survivors during their recovery phase after exiting trafficking. This analysis aims to synthesize current literature on reintegration within the United States. It identifies fifteen peer-reviewed articles, a book chapter, one report, and some local examples of successful programs. Moreover, it underscores key models, guiding principles, and frameworks that can support practitioners, government and non-governmental programs, and policy development strategic

plans that are survivor-centered and trauma-informed.

It is important to note that these findings and recommendations are based on limited literature, with most studies being exploratory. Nonetheless, this emerging understanding of reintegration during the post-trafficking phase is essential to ensure best practices in supporting survivors as they work to become strong, healthy individuals and contributors to society. This research brief aims to highlight such findings as well as local case studies that demonstrate how trafficking survivors can progress toward becoming thrivers.

Lastly, the 4 P's framework of human trafficking and the Posttraumatic Growth theory are integrated into the following discussion to better explain and understand the phenomena of reintegration in the lives of survivors.

Reintegration of Survivors of Human Trafficking—A Nonlinear Process :

The post-trafficking phase toward reintegration is complex and nonlinear, with survivors

facing multifaceted risks of revictimization. Successful exiting from trafficking, along with physical, mental, and emotional healing, and appropriate support throughout the reintegration process, are essential to avoid recidivism (Bruhns et al., 2018; Mumey et al., 2021; Loomba, 2017; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). Reintegration occurs after survivors have undergone initial physical, mental, emotional and spiritual healing following identification and recovery (Bruhns et al., 2018; Loomba, 2017; Okech, et al., 2018). At this stage, survivors have built sufficient inner strength to utilize the wrap-around support needed. This type of support forges a pathway to achieve their goals and dreams and transition from survivorship to thirvership. In this transition, survivors have voiced their hope for the future emerging through survivor-centered support of long-term social and community support, peers, mentors, and inner strength and determination (Mumey et al., 2021; Loomba, 2017; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). Emerging literature highlights key risk factors for trafficking vulnerability as survivors seek to heal, restore,



and reintegrate into society. These risk factors overlap with those that initially led to trafficking victimization and span across different types of trafficking. Economic and housing instability, homelessness, unresolved harmful outcomes of poly-victimization and trauma, lack of job and life skills, inadequate community support, history of involvement with the justice system, and damaged credit among others continue to make survivors vulnerable, even to the point of re-victimization (Bruhns et al., 2018; Cecchet & Thoburn, 2014; Corbett, 2018; Evans, 2020; Helpingstine, Kenny, & Canfield, 2021; Hemmings et al., 2016; Mumey et al., 2021; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). Nonetheless, exploratory literature suggests that survivors who receive survivor-centered, trauma-informed, compassionate care, and wrap-around services are more likely to successfully reduce recidivism, and at times avoid it altogether. The following sections will explore these ideas in more detail.

Challenges to Successful Reintegration

1. Mental Health:

Challenges to successful reintegration can be analyzed at multiple levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic. As aforementioned, overlapping risk factors that led survivors to their trafficking victimization continue to hinder their full restoration and successful reintegration into society.

At the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels, the deleterious effects of poly-victimization during pre-trafficking and trafficking lead to a sense of shame and deep mistrust of those around them, including healthcare providers, service providers, and community

members (Evans, 2020; Loomba, 2017; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). The negative outcomes of experienced violence, control, and abuse, especially when survivors are trafficked by family members, are not completely understood (Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). Additionally, exploratory studies have highlighted other intrapersonal struggles related to mental health. It is well-documented that survivors of trafficking experience a plethora of abuse from their former traffickers and sex buyers. These mistreatments include threats, physical and sexual abuse, such as beatings, rape, stabbings, and other forms of extreme violence, resulting in significant mental health struggles. These struggles often manifest as fear for life and safety, depression, depression-related symptoms such as crying, suicidal ideation, sleep challenges, numbness, flashbacks, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Additionally, survivors are constantly haunted by their previous trauma and life experiences, contributing to ongoing anxiety (Cecchet & Thoburn, 2014; Mumey et al., 2021; Okech, et al., 2018). The complexity of survivors' intrapersonal and interpersonal struggles and needs are essential elements to consider when supporting them in their healing journey so they can be ready for the reintegration phase.

2. Economic Instability:

Economic instability can be observed across multiple levels of analysis, including intrapersonal, institutional, community, and systemic levels. To achieve a successful initial exit from trafficking and avoid re-entering such experiences, it is crucial to recognize the barriers that prevent survivors from reintegrating into society. Achieving financial stability and economic independence are fundamental components

for the reintegration of human trafficking survivors. Research has identified several barriers to economic independence and sustainability. These barriers include unemployment or underpaid employment, damaged legal records, overload and burnout, and a lack of long-term plans or economic options (Corbett, 2018; Helpingstine, C., Kenny, M.C. & Canfield, B., 2021; Hemmings et al., 2016; Mumey et al., 2021; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). Economic instability upon exiting trafficking is common, hindering both initial exit and sustained recovery (Corbett, 2018; Mumey et al., 2021; Rajaram & Tidball, 2017). Underpaid jobs, lack of life skills, and job training heighten the vulnerability of re-entering trafficking (Helpingstine, Kenny & Canfield, 2021). Thus, the need to address multidimensional barriers to have successful reintegration.

The post-trafficking aftermath is challenging, especially when there are no systems in place to connect partners who can meet the multiple needs of survivors immediately. However, when resources are available, pathways of referral are established, and collaboration among social agencies is effective, local or national welfare systems can meet the immediate needs of this population (Hemmings et al., 2016). Achieving healing and reintegration requires long-term planning, commitment, and trauma-informed and survivor-centered services that support the reintegration process for many years to come. Applying a strength-based approach to support is also pivotal. This approach recognizes the talents and skills that survivors already possess and provides the suitable survivor-centered support to help them forge their path to reintegration (Hemmings et al., 2016; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018; Shyne's Interview, 2024).



3. Housing Instability, Homelessness Status and Other Needed Support:

Findings indicate that economic instability results in other factors that continue to place survivors in vulnerable situations. Economic instability leads to housing instability and often homelessness. Survivors have cited safe houses as an essential support for those seeking to exit trafficking. Specifically, in the initial aftermath, a space away from their trafficker is necessary to sustain their exit. Nonetheless, housing remains a challenge for many even after survivors enter the reintegration phase, especially when they have not achieved strong economic independence (Mumey et al., 2021; Rajaram & Tidball, 2017).

The difficulties in obtaining economic stability are exacerbated by a lack of social support systems and services that provide survivors a foundation. These services may include childcare, job training, higher education scholarships, and continuous mental, physical, and emotional support needed to build inner strength, resilience, and determination (Chambers, 2019; Corbett, 2018; Jain et al., 2022; Loomba, 2017; Rajaram & Tidball, 2017). In addition to the aforementioned social and healthcare services, there is an emphasis on building positive relationships as a means for survivors to find resilience after trafficking. These relationships can be fostered through mentors, peer-to-peer support, programs to improve family and community relationships, and

practitioners committed to long-term trauma-informed care (Bruhns et al., 2018; Evans, 2020; Knight et al., 2021; Rajaram & Tidball, 2017).

The Post-Traumatic Growth theory emphasizes that despite experiencing complex trauma, individuals have demonstrated resilience and the capacity to bounce back and experience positive change and growth if they are offered the aftercare they need to heal. Some analysis findings have demonstrated that those survivors with greater support and mentorship develop coping mechanisms and have decreased their PTSD that helps them to successfully reintegrate back into society. Nurturing the inner growth and strength are pivotal for reintegration and rebuilding a new identity (Bruhns et al., 2018; Loomba, 2017; Okech, et al., 2018). Other needed assistance and services include the need to clear credit damage and criminal records, and to teach them life skills such as

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banking, long-term saving plans, lending, flexible spending grants, and such (Corbett, 2018; Mumey et al., 2021). Creating platforms, spaces, and partnerships with communities and agencies that allow survivors to become partners in leadership roles are also essential to their reintegration (Bruhns et al., 2018; Loomba, 2017). Lastly, understanding the specific needs of survivors are extremely important. No one approach alone will completely meet the needs of all survivors. Each person is unique and requires individualized support and care (Bruhns et al., 2018; Shyne Interview, 2024).

Support that Leads to Reintegration

1. Building Trust in Others through Trauma-Informed Approaches of Care:

Exploratory studies highlight survivors’ voices in identifying the types of support that lead to successful reintegration. Suitable support for survivors of human trafficking operates across multiple levels, from intrapersonal to systemic.

At the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels, mistrusting others is a well-established negative outcome for those who have experienced complex trauma. Extreme violence can result in difficulty building bonds with others. Thus, building trust post-trafficking is essential for survivors to form healthy relationships. This is particularly important as they incorporate new experiences into their lives, such as obtaining vocational training, pursuing higher education, and starting their own businesses. Experiencing trusting relationships as positive support during the reintegration phase is a common theme in the literature of reintegration (Evans, 2020). These approaches must be trauma-informed care (Richie-Zavaleta, et al., 2022).

Rebuilding trust in others is a sign of healing and growth. Just as mistrust was built through toxic, abusive, and violent relationships, trust can be built through positive and nurturing ones. However, to reach this point, survivors need to experience relationships that offer encouragement and support. Failing to rebuild trust in others can be detrimental to their reintegration (Evans, 2020). Positive relationships build self-confidence and self-reliance among survivors of human



trafficking as they learn to enter new social settings (Loomba, 2017). This positive inner strength is essential to overcome destructive self-shame and feelings of worthlessness (Rajaram & Tidball, 2018).

2. Small Circle of Friends and Peer-to-Peer Support Systems:

Due to their mistrust, survivors often form a small circle of friends who can understand and support them. These circles most likely include other survivors who can empathize with one another. When small circles of friends do not exist, survivors can get discouraged and give up on their efforts to reintegrate. This camaraderie also offers a pathway and hope for the future. By seeing other survivors succeed in their endeavors, others can find encouragement, motivation and resiliency to overcome feelings of depression or hopelessness (Evans, 2020). Therefore, peer-to-peer support, mentors, and positive role models including faith-based community members are vitally important in the reintegration process and resiliency. For example “adopted mothers and fathers” can provide a framework of what healthy relationships may look like (Evans, 2020; Knights, et al., 2021; Loomba, 2017; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018).

Another positive aspect of building supportive relationships is that survivors begin to develop a different sense of identity that is not connected to their past victimization or experiences. As survivors feel comfortable engaging and building community, these interpersonal connections help them increase their social capital by finding the diverse support and resources they need for successful reintegration. These types of community ties could provide opportunities for recreation, affirmation, identity-building, and meeting practical needs. Since new

community ties do not discriminate against survivors based on their past (many times survivors do not share about their past during the post-trafficking phase), these experiences play a positive role in the reintegration process (Bruhns et al., 2018; Loomba, 2017; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018).

3. Opportunities for Growth:

Just like building positive relationships with peers, mentors, and community members, opportunities for personal growth are equally important. From meaningful job experiences to small personal achievements, these experiences continue to build inner strength, hope, and skills necessary for successful reintegration into society. For example, survivor networks can provide opportunities for leadership and personal growth. These opportunities allow survivors to reconnect with their strengths, ambitions, resourcefulness, and faith. These experiences can also provide a space to learn about their own talents and strengths (Bruhns et al., 2018; Evans, 2020; Helpingstine, Kenny, & Canfield, 2021; Loomba, 2017; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018).

Survivors have often voiced feeling “out-of-touch” with themselves. Therefore, growth opportunities, such as spaces and practices that enhance their internal drive, can be pivotal in their reintegration journey. Once developed, this inner drive can connect survivors with actionable plans and resources available in their community (Bruhns et al., 2018).

San Diegan Organization— Examples of Support for Reintegration:

This section highlights several local organizations in San Diego, California that provide support to survivors in their journey from

survivorship to thrivership. *Alabaster Jar Project* is a local nonprofit that began as a ministry supported by a church in North County San Diego. As it developed its programs, it eventually created *Grace House*, a long-term residential facility for survivors of sex trafficking (Alabaster Jar Project, 2023). This is an important support for housing instability, since homelessness is a risk factor for trafficking revictimization (Mumey et al., 2021; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). Additionally, *Alabaster Jar Project* has created a peer-support group, which is another key component in the reintegration process (Rajaram & Tidball, 2018).

Another San Diegan organization that provides long-term support to survivors of sex trafficking is *GenerateHope* (GH). GH was founded in 2009 and established roots in San Diego in 2010. In 2018, GH established its transitional housing to support the reintegration of survivors. This organization recognizes that every individual is different and may require various types of resources and support; hence their approach is tailored to individual needs (GenerateHope, n.d.). Other organizations that support survivors in their reintegration journey include the *Bilateral Safety Corridor Coalition*, *LifeLine Community Services*, among others.

As aforementioned, financial stability, community connections, and building self-esteem and resilience are essential components in the emerging literature of reintegration of survivors of human trafficking. *Shyne* is a nonprofit organization that seeks to support survivors of trafficking to achieve financial sustainability through a survivor-centered approach by providing participants with the tools to entrepreneurship and business development (Shyne, 2024). More than half of the organizations’ staff



are thrivers-led and operated. Moreover, *Shyne* has developed a model for financial healing and sustainability that is worth highlighting. This model not only applies evidence-based approaches to the reintegration process but also introduces new components to the conversations about the type of support needed for someone to transition from survivorship to thrivership (Lundstrom, M., 2023). The following section is based on an interview with Cynthia Luvlee, *Shyne's* founder and CEO, and Jazmyn Gasparri, *Shyne's* executive assistant and lived experience expert.

Interview Highlights on Reintegration

The interview reveals two main themes within the organization's approach to reintegration: financial healing and the implementation of a strength-based approach. Additionally, the interviewees provide recommendations for fostering and increasing suitable support for survivors attempting to reintegrate into society at multiple levels. The interview highlights and affirms aspects of the literature on reintegration concerning economic vulnerabilities and the necessary supports, as well as the interpersonal and intrapersonal supports contributing to relational healing. *Shyne's* non-judgmental, strength-based approach to care exemplifies these supports. Cynthia Luvlee states,

"The theory is that the vulnerability of being exploited can be alleviated when an individual has financial security and the ability to earn a living through purpose-driven activities. So a lot of what we focus on is equity, strength-based assessments, skills alignment, and just that inherent potential and purpose

that an individual has, who's had the experience of trafficking and exploitation and also has the wisdom of trafficking and exploitation as part of their story."

1. Financial Healing

An overarching theme revealed in the conversation was the aspect of **financial healing**, which *Shyne* focuses on as an integral part of a survivor's journey to heal and reintegrate. A key component of this financial healing is finding economic stability through *cash healing*, a term coined and described by interviewee Jazmyn Gasparri. *Cash healing* refers to the healing of a survivor's relationship with the concept of cash and its physical nature. This process helps reframe a survivor's view of cash versus money and its connection to their physical body, which was shaped during their trafficking experience and exploitation. Gasparri describes,

"Learning how money can move in different ways other than just, my body is going to provide me cash and then that cash has to be physically moved by my body again and controlled. So it was like a mind shift from cash to money because I couldn't see money outside of cash for a while. Learning the system of money and the energy of money versus cash was like a big 'aha' moment. Even just the small things we learned, you know, like these tiny little steps, like taking your wallet and shuffling your various cards around. Just the physical act of doing that, of moving money physically, which is what we were doing before. So tiny things like that, I know it does sound a little out there, but those small gestures kind of rewire our thinking around money."

Gasparri highlights this as she cited her economic situation upon exiting trafficking as a difficulty in finding

stability outside of *The Life*. Gasparri focuses on specifically the aspect of credit repair, highlighting her credit score as a significant barrier in her journey to **economic recovery**. She comments,

"...one of my biggest barriers, I would say, would be the credit because that just blocks housing, transportation, and all kinds of things. So I would say the credit repair has been such a crucial piece to moving forward."

Echoing this sentiment Luvlee states,

"That is going to be the biggest component, is removing from their credit history anything that happened during their trafficking experience so that they can access student loans, business loans, grants, housing, and all of the things that are attached to our credit [To learn more about credit repair, visit this website: [Debt Bondage Repair Act](#)]."

As *Shyne* works to offer support for survivors **learning how to engage with the financial systems**. It is an effort which goes beyond base repairs and works to offer the tools to cultivate an effective understanding of monetary systems, which may open doors to financial independence. Gasparri describes financial literacy needs. She shares,

"Before *Shyne*, I'd never had my own personal bank account. I didn't grow up seeing that a lot as an immigrant daughter... I just never had experience with banks and checks... So it was just a foreign concept to me."

Another aspect explored in the efforts to assist survivors in reaching **sustainable financial stability** was the identification of a survivor's passions to translate that into a viable career, which not only provides a fulfillment of purpose but



also a secure income. In recounting her life initially upon exit, before *Shyne*, Gasparri comments,

“I was pregnant at the time. I was working at Sprint, and I was like, ‘This is not cutting it,’ because you know, you’re used to having such a huge amount of cash flow and all of my basic needs being met. So coming out it [trafficking victimization] just felt like, how do I move forward if I’m financially trapped? I have all the skills to do the things, but like where?”

Financial instability left Gasparri vulnerable. She felt a *pull* to return to *The Life*. Moreover, she also felt like her work at *Sprint* left her passions and complete capabilities unexplored. This became more clear to her as she entered into partnership with *Shyne*, as Gasparri states,

“I don’t have to like doing a service-based business where I’m getting paid right there. I can create the structure of the business, and I can hire. I can hire people, I would have never thought I had the skills to do that. But Cynthia was really good at explaining like I was already managing people, like I could already delegate.”

Supporting the skill sets survivors bring is crucial for their successful entrepreneurship and business development. This model not only guides their business plans but also ignites motivation and excitement in their post-trafficking phase. Luvlee states,

“I think purpose-driven career training is important, not just placing people in jobs, but that it is something that aligns with them, that they’re excited about and want to show up for.”

Additionally, *Shyne* works to provide participants with the opportunity

to join an **extensive network** of resources. Through this membership, survivors enter into partnerships with additional organizations, small business owners, pro bono professionals, and are able to tap into a wide range of support that translates into tangible assistance and opportunities they would not have otherwise. Luvlee shares,

“A great partner that we have is *Empowered Network*, formerly *Empower Her Network*. Where in partnership they have allocated resources to, in fact, purchase the equipment for somebody to start a business, to provide rental assistance, to do some of those things that help create stability while they’re in *Shyne*’s training programs, and while they are figuring out their career path and their education plans, and they get an Empower plan.”

Through extensive inter-organizational networks combined with survivors’ passions, *Shyne* walks with survivors in building a sustainable career and achieving lasting financial healing with an informed and healthy understanding of monetary systems.

2. Strength-Based Approach

A strength-based approach is the second theme of the interview. *Shyne* applies this approach throughout their daily practices. Luvlee comments,

“[*Shyne*] began within that core principle of being grassroots and focusing on asset-based community development. We were doing skills assessments, looking at the community assets, figuring out what the community of survivors were interested in attaining for themselves. And then, we developed and piloted the created programs around the feedback that [survivors] were providing on gaps and services [needed].”

In the effort of reintegration, a strength-based approach encourages an environment in which perspectives can be shifted in multi-faceted ways, survivors are entering into a partnership with *Shyne* by **focusing on the assets and not the deficits**. Luvlee comments,

“When we focus on problems and deficits that a community has, and these gaps, and having to fix something, they [survivors] can feel very disempowered and they can feel very dependent. And so when we look at systems, you know of oppression, and what is at the forefront of what society is speaking to. I think that we have a grand opportunity with this particular group of individuals to bring to light some new solutions again because they’re touching on all of the social systems. And so they have this broader knowledge and understanding of how these systems work because they have been a part of them, maybe from birth. Whether it’s foster-care, incarceration, all of these things. So when we implement the assets-based community development model, what *Shyne* speaks to is survivor ownership. The ownership and the ability to, through self-determination, make the decisions for what’s best in their lives provides leadership and autonomy. We believe they honestly know what is best for their immediate needs, and we walk alongside them in support of their goals.”

A strength-based approach also manifests itself through partnerships. The outcome of this collaboration is that survivors are able to receive a **continuum of care**. For example, partnering with Rebecca Bender Initiative, an online resource that offers educational tools to foster professional development, strengthens *Shyne*’s efforts in their business development plans. Luvlee states,



"I'm not gonna go recreate Rebecca's work because she's absolutely the best at what she does. So we work together so that we have more resources.... And the only way to do that is to have those partnerships and MOU's."

Gasparri affirms this positive outcome of partnerships and collaborations from a strength-based approach. She comments,

"I think healing is not linear. Sometimes something will happen [post-trafficking]. It just comes back in a weird way, and you'll need a different type of service at a different time. So that's where the organizations being connected, kind of how I got through to *Shyne*, is really important. So that, it's this long-term process of like there's support, different types of support [to be available when needed]. It's not just, 'Here's the program, do it, and you'll be fine,' because that doesn't work for everybody, and everybody's definition of success is different. Like three years ago, [for example,] I would have been like, 'I just want to sit down at a desk and work and be fine.' But now I'm like, 'Let's take down all these oppressing systems, and let's do public speaking.' So it changes, and my personal definition of success changes."

Moreover, a positive association is found with survivors building confidence when they have **mentorship and encounter supportive communities** that allow space for healing relational trauma endured within trafficking says Gasparri,

"And having support, having the mentorship to go to, that was really healing, because [during trafficking victimization, your relationship with] traffickers, there's a lot of very intense relational dynamic. ...you're getting a lot of feedback [by traffickers]. ... So [now] having this mentorship...

I'm receiving positive feedback, and I know it's not going to be shame-based, and it's not manipulative [like it was with former trafficker(s)]. [Therefore] it's very safe and healing."

Peer-to-peer support continues to demonstrate positive outcomes in the post-trafficking phase. *Shyne* makes an effort to provide a space for survivors to be in community with each other. Gasparri describes how in a peer community she is able to feel seen and heal without judgment. She shares,

"So it's really nice to be in a network of other thrivers who, I can say, you know, a joke,... [and] they'll understand. But if I just say that to somebody else, they'll be looking at me like, 'That's crazy.' So that piece helps that [inside negative] voice kind of goes away, you're around other people who get it. And there's no consequence or punishment for not showing up to a class or not doing something."

Part of this non-judgemental approach allows survivors to take their own road, reclaiming their own **agency** in their healing process, leaning into their own judgment as an inner-strength. This aspect of personal autonomy in a survivor's decision of when and how to heal has been underscored within the literature (Godoy et al., 2020). Gasparri recounts how understanding her own healing process has allowed her to take small steps that would lead to large life changes and support her complete exit,

"...specifically, when I was more conscious about trying to heal and being ready to heal, and being ready to have steps or kind of goals that increased my confidence in my abilities to do something or to accomplish something. It's just kind of like those different smaller goals

stacked up to be like, okay, I did that, now I can do this."

Through having a continuum of care, timely support needed through partnerships, and a strength-based, survivor-centered approach, Luvlee has witnessed another outcome, **self-confidence**. She comments,

"It takes that consistency and steadfastness of continually showing up in an unbiased non-judgemental way, offering support, and really asking the individual, 'What do you need? How can I support you?' And then providing that support, not thinking that I have the answer for that for them, and that probably is what builds [the survivors'] self-confidence."

Gasparri shares,

"So being able to know that I don't have to be system-dependent forever, 'cause it used to feel that way, has increased my confidence and resilience. That like, hey I know there's a way to do this. I have to navigate it and figure it out, but I have the support to do that, and I've done all of these smaller things that just do a little bit of like, I call it like a kiss of confidence. And just like, okay, keep going, keep going. So yeah, that's how I built that, showing up and doing the everyday smaller things."

At the core of *Shyne* is the belief that survivors possess immense capabilities and potential. Allowing them to tap into these strengths, fosters healing in numerous ways and builds a recognition of their own resilience, creating an environment that contrasts with traditional nonadaptive resource systems. Luvlee comments,

"Jazmyn and I say, 'She shows up in the midst of a storm,' and most of our members do. And I'm not sure



why, it could be that connection building, that trust building, that relational healing, which is also sort of that underlying thing that we don't talk much about. Because a lot of people have come to *Shyne* and mentioned their distrust in the system, the re-exploitations that they have experienced, the feeling disempowered, not listened to, not included in decision making."

Within *Shyne's* efforts to highlight a survivor's existing assets and strengths as well as continued support without a timeline, survivors are able to build up intrapersonal strength and interpersonal trust with others. Thus, networks can provide healing that is lasting throughout the unforeseeable circumstances of life. Gasparri attests to as she comments,

"You're talking about long-term care and support. I've been able to navigate those things that would have before sent me right back into the cycle [trafficking re-victimization], and I now have the internal resilience and the support network to like, I don't have to do that, there are other options and other ways."

Through the demonstrated elements of a strength-based approach, and ultimately focusing on and utilizing the assets of survivors, *Shyne* is able to walk alongside survivors in their journey to reintegration. *Shyne's* long-term approach to care through a continuum of services and highlighting the agency of survivors in deciding the steps in their journey to healing provide healing in a relational sense in addition to the financial healing that their program strives to partner with survivors in achieving [Visit *Shyne's* Research and Publications [website](#) to watch highlights from this interview].

Recommendations

This analysis highlights crucial components of post-trafficking care that help prevent re-victimization. Key elements include long-term support such as housing, legal aid, credit restoration, access to higher education or vocational training, life-skills training, and peer-to-peer support (Bruhns et al., 2018; Jain et al., 2022; Loomba, 2017; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). Additionally, the literature underscores other essential approaches and components in the restoration process for survivors of human trafficking during their post-trafficking care and support. The following section outlines these recommendations.

1. Services Providers:

Although terms like "trauma-informed" and "survivor-centered" have become familiar to those working to support survivors of human trafficking, how these concepts translate into everyday practices may not be as clear. In the context of reintegration, these approaches include several key components synthesized from the literature.

First, understanding mistrust in service providers and other stakeholders is crucial. This mistrust results from the severe complex trauma of trafficking (Okech et al., 2018; Chambers, 2019; Evans, 2020; Mumey et al., 2021; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). Given the severity of poly-victimization and inhumane treatment experienced during trafficking, healing is a long-term, non-linear process (Mumey et al., 2021). At times, survivors may reject the assistance provided to them. Service providers must understand these processes and not give up on their clients (Corbett, 2018). A foundational principle of trauma-

informed care is understanding trauma itself and how it has impacted an individual's life, so service and healthcare providers or anyone engaging with this population can interact without re-traumatization (Chambers, 2019).

Second, it is essential for service and healthcare providers to recognize that survivors, despite their extreme experiences of violence and abuse, are capable of developing resilience, self-advocacy, and agency. These capacities are described by the post-trauma growth theory, which states that survivors of extreme violence and complex trauma can grow and develop resilience and coping mechanisms during post-trauma care (Loomba, 2017). When survivors are denied agency in their post-trafficking care, they are likely to opt out of these services altogether (Godoy et al., 2020). Therefore, post-trafficking care programs must adopt a survivor-centered and trauma-informed approach, recognizing the unique challenges in each survivor's journey to recovery and reintegration.

Moreover, approaches to support reintegration must be survivor-centered to be successful (Bruhns et al., 2018; Godoy et al., 2020). An example is the Medical Safe Haven, which assesses individuals' needs and collaborates with community services to provide survivor-centered post-trafficking care. This approach fosters a sense of agency by understanding complex trauma and recognizing survivors' resilience and capacity for growth during the healing and reintegration process (Chambers, 2019; Knight et al., 2021). Since human trafficking strips survivors of their agency, healthcare systems and service providers must affirm and support survivors' perceived needs and agency over their bodies and future choices. Encouraging personal autonomy and agency in recovery



is a common recommendation from survivors (Godoy et al., 2020; Bruhns et al., 2018). Part of empowering a survivor's agency involves not pushing them to change before they are ready, requiring patience and understanding that healing is not linear (Bruhns et al., 2018; Mumey et al., 2021).

Lastly, a compassionate-care approach includes a non-judgmental attitude towards clients. Literature shows that survivors of human trafficking often feel judged by their healthcare and service providers. Without eliminating this judgment, survivors are unlikely to build the trust and rapport necessary for effective reintegration (Loomba, 2017; Mumey et al., 2021; Knight et al., 2021; Okech et al., 2018; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018).

2. Multi-disciplinary collaboration/partnerships:

Community partnerships are essential to providing the support services that survivors of human trafficking need in their journey to reintegration. These services can include social services, law enforcement, legal representation, credit repair services, peer-to-peer support groups, and basic resources such as food, housing, transportation, child care, counseling, and career or vocational opportunities. Additionally, partnerships should involve researchers, evaluators, community stakeholders/agencies, and survivor-consultants who can provide feedback on program progress (Chambers, 2019; Loomba, 2017; Richie-Zavaleta, Bekmuratova, Sailors, Pray, 2022).

3. Data and Robust Design Evaluations:

It is currently unknown how many survivors of human trafficking successfully reach the post-

trafficking phase due to a lack of data and systems that methodologically identify this process. This challenge requires local and national attention to develop systems that collect the necessary data to understand the prevalence of trafficking and all its phases. Additionally, evaluating service providers using complex research designs that include longitudinal data collection is crucial to understand the evolution and essential components of survivor support, aiding in reintegration and the avoidance of re-entering trafficking (Krieger, Gibbs, & Cutbush, 2020; Richie-Zavaleta et al., 2022).

Conclusion

This brief highlights the multi-dimensional elements required to support a survivor in their long-term journey of successful reintegration. If the needed support is not available, survivors' vulnerabilities continue to threaten revictimization during post-trafficking. In San Diego, California, some local organizations are examples of how long-term support can lead to successful reintegration. This analysis includes an interview with some local leaders from *Shyne*. *Shyne* is a local organization that seeks to support its participants in their financial healing and building economic sustainability. In examining the concept of financial healing *Shyne* highlights the organizational networks available to provide care as well as the importance of the conjunction of passions and long-term stability. While describing *Shyne's* strength-based approach to care, the interview reveals how survivor agency is integral to one's journey from healing to reintegration. The interview consistently highlights the urgency of addressing survivors' financial situations to create sustainable economic practices. It also emphasizes the inherent assets

survivors bring to their own recovery and the need for organizations to adopt practices that support survivors' autonomy and ability to forge their own path to healing. Decreasing the vulnerabilities that lead to revictimization during the post-trafficking phase are crucial for the reintegration of survivors of trafficking. The above recommendations of this analysis can continue to inform organizations, leaders, stakeholders, and committed citizens in providing evidence-based support and resources for the successful reintegration of survivors during their post-trafficking phase. ■

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