

Working With Groups After A Crisis Suggestions for Sharing, Processing, Learning

These suggestions have been collected from many community and professional groups around the world that have used these materials particularly after natural disasters and other traumatic events.

The following manuals are online in the GFSC Library. The suggestions and the manuals are free downloads for individuals and communities who need them.

- To help Children
...And Now What? A HELPING HAND FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE SUFFERED A LOSS
[\[http://globalfacilitators.org/VirtLib/And%20Now%20What_sep06_r1.pdf\]](http://globalfacilitators.org/VirtLib/And%20Now%20What_sep06_r1.pdf)
- To help Adults
A Light In This Dark Valley: A GUIDE FOR EMOTIONAL RECOVERY: Fifty Things that You Can Do When There Is Nothing Else To Do
[\[http://globalfacilitators.org/VirtLib/LightValley_sep06_r1.pdf\]](http://globalfacilitators.org/VirtLib/LightValley_sep06_r1.pdf)
- To help Facilitators, Group and Community Leaders
FACILITATING PSYCHOSOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION: A Manual for Crisis and Disaster Intervention [\[http://globalfacilitators.org/VirtLib/FacPsyRecon_sep06_r1.pdf\]](http://globalfacilitators.org/VirtLib/FacPsyRecon_sep06_r1.pdf)

General Considerations (apply to all 3 manuals):

A. Review and Prepare Materials

1. If you are leading a group or working with another individual, please read and study the manuals thoroughly before working with others. Keep in mind that grief is a normal, natural and necessary part of human and social transitions.
2. If you have questions before or during your work with these materials, consult with people who have had experience with these materials and/or with the type of group you are working with. You can also send your questions or ideas to GFSC (info@globalfacilitators.org).
3. Consider how to adapt the manual and the participation techniques for the culture, sub-culture and characteristics of the group you are working with.
 - a. Keep in mind the participants' degree of recent trauma.
 - b. Plan for as much participation and interaction as the group and situation permit.



B. Arrange Space, Time, Environment

1. The space to be used is very important. If choices are available look for a space that has:
 - a. Room for some dynamic exercises as well as provide “psychological security” and privacy
 - b. Few distractions (for example, noise, traffic, interruptions)
 - c. Comfortable seating, light, ventilation, temperature, environment (for example, if possible have live plants in the space you are using)
2. If possible, use round or square tables with 5-7 people at each. This is much more effective than a large circle or rows of classroom (or auditorium) seating.
3. Try to arrange for child care while parents are participating in sessions.
4. In addition to a manual for each person, have paper, pens, pencils or crayons on the tables available for people to write or draw; also try to find small, soft toys to help work off nervous energy.

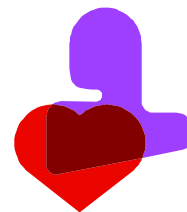


C. Leading/Facilitating the Sessions

1. Group or individual sessions for people who have experienced recent trauma should be:
 - a. Active (lots of physical and mental participation)
 - b. Short (typically no more than 40-80 minutes)
 - c. Frequent (daily, if possible)
2. The size of each group depends on many factors (including available facilitators; participant emotional state, attention span, fatigue; meeting space and time).
 - a. In general when people have suffered a trauma, plan for one facilitator for every 8 adults; one facilitator for every 4 children. Adjust the size of the groups as necessary.
3. The sequence of each of the manuals is important. Each section builds upon the learning and reflections from the previous sections. Do not skip sections.
4. Ideally, the sessions should be co-facilitated, with one person delivering a portion of the lesson and the other person observing the group process and participant responses. The facilitators have the option to alternate their roles depending on skill/comfort level and to keep attention levels high.
5. Use a dynamic and culturally appropriate delivery style.
 - a. Use and balance the three sources of information input and processing:
 - i. visual (posters, PPT slides, videos, drawing, graphic facilitation, etc.)
 - ii. auditory (background music, enthusiastic voices, sharing ideas, etc.)
 - iii. kinesthetic (movement, sensations, feelings, massage, etc.)
6. Remember that the capacity for learning and concentration are greatly reduced in stressful situations. Be flexible with time.



- a. If you need to end a session sooner than planned or you do not get through the portion you intended, you can get to it next time.
7. Pay attention to signs of fatigue, loss of interest, increased negative emotion (anger, frustration, oppositional behavior, refusal to participate).
 - a. Take a break or suspend the session if these occur.
8. Be creative in ways to encourage participation and responses.
 - a. Remember that some people are by nature quieter than others. Some people will process what is discussed internally and might not be ready or willing to share in a group.
 - b. Encourage people to keep a diary or write down what they are thinking about.
9. It is helpful to establish a structure or ritual for your sessions:
 - a. Begin and end the same way, (for example, always start with everyone sharing one word about how they are feeling at that moment; end each session with each person sharing a word about something discussed in that session).
 - b. Remind people when and where the next session will be.
 - c. Remind them to think about something specific for the next session or do a simple "homework" assignment. People may or may not complete the "homework" you give them. Do not be concerned about participants completing assignments.
10. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to any exercises. All responses should be recognized and affirmed, even if you do not agree with them.
 - a. Look for the positive elements in what the person is saying and then share options that promote positive behavior and thinking.
11. If you sense or observe a pattern of behavior or answers that are more disturbing than you feel competent to address, seek local professional advice regarding that person.
12. Pay attention to your own state of mind and emotions. When you feel tired, upset or distressed, ask someone else to assist or take over for you. If no one else is available, end the session and continue at the next session. This sets a good example for those you are working with.
 - a. You are modeling that you know your limits, that you are also grieving and affected by the tragedy and that you are taking care of yourself.



In addition to the general considerations above, when working with children:

1. Younger children (4-7 years) need you to read to them. Keep explanations simple and short. Ask them to tell you what they heard you say. Invite them to answer verbally, by drawing or demonstrating (“acting out”) the concepts, feelings, etc.
2. Older children (8-12 years) who can read and comprehend independently might need more in depth explanations. Please refer to the appropriate information in the other 2 manuals.
 - a. Sometimes it helps to ask reluctant older children to help you present the materials. You might invite them to assist you by reading aloud and/or evaluating some of the exercises after they have completed them. This will engage them in the exercises as well as give you their insights into how the materials might be presented in the future.



In addition to the general considerations above, when working with adults:

1. If adults are working independently with manual:
 - a. Suggest that they first quickly read through the entire manual to get a general sense of the process. Then take their time and do only one or two lessons each day, leaving time to write and think about each concept.
 - b. Suggest that they share their thoughts, feelings and actions with a trusted friend or family member.
2. Many adults might find it very beneficial to work through the manual lessons independently and share in a facilitated in self-help group. Some of the skills needed to mentor such a group can be found in the GFSC Facilitating Psycho-Social Reconstruction manual.



In addition to the general considerations above, when working with facilitators and caregivers, be mindful that:

1. Although grief is not pathological—expressing grief does not mean someone is sick or mentally ill—it can be very “therapeutic” when an individual, a family or a community goes through an appropriate grieving process and can share their feelings and experiences.
 - a. The vast majority of survivors need help finding new and effective resources within themselves to avoid making dangerous choices, to be able to overcome their desperate circumstances, and to take advantage of the opportunity for personal growth.
2. Reactions and responses to trauma are normal, natural and necessary in order to recover and build resilience. However, facilitators (including medical and social workers, educators and community leaders) should learn to recognize the behaviors and responses that are dangerous to an individual or community.

- a. Seek professional advice and assistance when you sense or think someone is in need of help beyond your capacity.
3. Caregivers include facilitators, first responders, parents, pastors, teachers, medical and social workers and many others. If you are working with a group of survivors and/or are a survivor yourself, you must pay attention to your own needs while you are devoting so much of your time and energy to the needs of others.
 - a. Pay attention to your physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs.
 - b. Pay attention to the needs of your co-workers. Often we can see what others need and ignore our own needs. Say/do something for others and allow others to say and do for you!



For more information, materials and resources, please visit Global Facilitator Service Corps, <http://globalfacilitators.org> or write to us at info@globalfacilitators.org.

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