SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

AIDS COMMITTEE OF TORONTO
February 2018

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Acknowledgements:

Many thanks to Paul Cogan for his assistance in creating
an electronic version of this manual (2009).

Published 1998
Maureen Carnegie
Chuck Marino
Scott Pope

Adapted 2009
Jocelyn Watchorn
Kate Murzin

Updated 2016
Andrew Eaton
Marsha Malbari
Constantine Cabarios

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

TRAINING OVERVIEW

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

TRAINING SESSION NUMBER ONE

- SESSION ONE AGENDA
- TRAINING GUIDELINES
- ROLE PLAYS: PURPOSE & GUIDELINES
- GROUP NORMS
- ACTIVE LISTENING
- STRUCTURED FEEDBACK
- THE FACILITATED PEER SUPPORT GROUP MODEL
- KEY ELEMENTS OF SUPPORT GROUPS
- EFFECTIVE VS. INEFFECTIVE GROUPS
- GROUP ATMOSPHERE
- STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Support Group Facilitator Training

Session One

<u>Overall Goal of Facilitator Training</u>
To provide a fun and challenging environment in which participants can learn and practice basic group facilitation skills and gain the confidence needed to co-facilitate support groups.

<u>Agenda</u>

1. Intro 'Sandbox' Activity

   - Move around the room and get quickly into pairs.
   - One partner asks the other to discuss their hopes for the facilitator training.
   - Discuss for two minutes.
   - When the bell rings, switch partners and repeat!

   Group discussion: What did you learn about your own/the group's hopes and expectations?

   <u>After this session, participants will</u>:
   - have a better idea of who is participating in the facilitator training;
   - be more aware of their personal expectations of the facilitator training and those of the group.

2. Introductions

3. Review Goals for the Evening

4. Agreements
   a. Housekeeping
   b. Training Guidelines
   c. Training Norms
      i. Universal Norms
      ii. What else do you need to feel safe in the training environment?
      iii. Accountability to one another

5. Listening Exercise

   - Find a partner. Please choose someone you don't already know.
   - Instructions to follow!

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Group discussion :   What makes it easy or difficult to listen?
What kinds of things do people need support with?
What makes it easy or difficult for people to get support?

After this session, participants will:
- be more aware of the factors which impact their ability to listen;
- have a better understanding of what is involved in giving/receiving support.

6. Active Listening

After this session, participants will be able to:
- Define active listening;
- demonstrate a variety of verbal and non-verbal active listening techniques.

7. Group Norms

After this session, participants will be able to:
- Define 'norms';
- identify the types of norms and differences between them;
- recognize the facilitator's role in establishing and modeling norms.

8. Structured Feedback

After this session, participants will be able to:
- Give feedback that results in positive change.

9. Introduction to Support Groups

After this session, participants will:
- Understand the facilitated peer support group model including:
  - the definition of a facilitated peer support group;
  - the role of the support group facilitator;
  - the goals/purpose/benefit of support groups;
  - the values/key elements of support groups;
  - how this type of group differs from a therapy group;
  - be able to contrast the qualities of effective and ineffective groups.
- Recognize the stages of group development.

  Group Discussion
  - What experiences do people here have with groups?
  - What do you think a facilitator does?
  - What are the goals/purpose/benefit of support groups?

10. Evaluations

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

TRAINING GUIDELINES

Some Things To Expect and Not To Expect from
Facilitator Training

Everyone comes to this training with different learning needs and expectations. Here are a few things that you can expect to experience, and a few you can expect not to experience in this training program.

DO EXPECT:

1. To gain basic skills in facilitating support groups. Our aim is to help you build a foundation which you can then expand on over time, with experience.
2. To spend different amounts of time on each topic. Due to varying skill levels, some people may require more or less time, depending on the area.
3. To have an opportunity to practice the skills within small groups.
4. To potentially still feel unprepared to facilitate groups by the end of the training, especially if you have never done so before. Your sense of preparedness will probably improve when you begin to facilitate 'real life' groups.
5. To experience some frustration when our time limits prevent extended discussion or practice.
6. To have fun and be challenged by learning new things and interacting with others in the training!

DON'T EXPECT:

1. To be an expert group facilitator by the time you have finished the training.
2. To cover specific types of issues/topics that groups discuss - i.e., the impact of care giving, spirituality, medications, etc. Our focus is on group skills, not group issues.
3. To utilize the training sessions as if this were a support group; participants are here to **learn group skills**, and must keep this in mind throughout the duration of the training.
4. To have unlimited time to voice your opinions.
5. To stay late — we will begin and end each session on time.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

TRAINING GUIDELINES

The following guidelines apply to all facilitator training sessions, and all participants are expected to adhere to them. These guidelines are intended to assist in creating a positive, respectful learning environment. **They are non-negotiable.**

Confidentiality - Each participant has signed a confidentiality agreement as a condition of attending this training. What this means is that nobody inside of the training group is identified to anybody outside of the training group. Anything of a personal nature discussed in the sessions is not to be discussed outside of the sessions.

Respect for differences - Each participant has different life experiences, affiliations, values, etc. Respect for this diversity is expected by interacting with each other in a considerate and courteous manner.

Use of "I" statements - Each participant will take ownership for her/his opinions/assertions by using "I" statements, (as opposed to "you", "we", etc.). For example, "I think...", "I feel..." I believe...".

Time and attendance - Each participant is expected to attend every session and to be on time. Trainers will start and end sessions on time. Further, each participant takes responsibility for ensuring they return on time from break-out exercises, and realizes that the work of the session will resume at the appointed time, regardless of absence.

If a participant is unable to attend a particular session (with reason), ACT's Group Programming Coordinator should be informed ahead of time. A decision to withdraw from the training should be relayed to the trainers (and fellow participants, if possible) at the earliest opportunity.

Limit the length of time you speak when you have the floor - Each participant agrees to be mindful that there are many participants in the training, all of whom have the right to actively participate. So that everyone has an equal opportunity to do this, please monitor yourself when you are speaking in the training group to ensure you are leaving time for others to contribute.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

ROLE PLAYS: PURPOSE & GUIDELINES

Role playing is a vital and major component of the AIDS Committee of Toronto Facilitator Training Program. Role playing creates an opportunity for training participants to build confidence, generate problem-solving strategies, utilize core facilitator skills, confront challenges and develop a personalized style of facilitating. Role playing also provides an opportunity for the trainers to monitor the skill development of the training participants.

Role playing, for many participants, can be very challenging, uncomfortable and cause anxiety. That said, it is important for the _trainers and participants_ to create and ensure a safe, positive and enhancing learning environment.

The purpose of the role plays is not to "outwit, outsmart, or outlast" the other training participants. When participating in a role play as a group member, the goal is not to ambush the facilitator.

When you participate in role play, please observe the following guidelines:
- take a turn at different roles, including facilitator (take a risk);
- if you are playing a group member, it's o.k. to be difficult, but not too difficult. Be _realistically_ challenging and be prepared to shift into non- resistance;
- keep focused on process;
- when giving feedback, emphasize what went well, what seemed to work, what you learned, etc. Avoid criticism or dwelling on what was `wrong'.

Remember, role plays are a brief moment in time of a make-believe group session. Role plays are an opportunity to learn from each other, and identify our areas of strength and challenge.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NORMS IN A SUPPORT GROUP

Every group, whether social, familial, supportive, etc., is regulated by 'rules' of behavior which can be either implicit or explicit. In a support group, these 'rules' are known as norms. The underlying purpose of group norms is to establish a 'culture' in the group. Norms provide a guide for interaction between members, and as such may be a prescription for as well as a prescription against certain kinds of behavior.

In a support group context, group norms are both explicit and implicit. The explicit norms are those which are verbalized and established within the first session. The implicit norms are those which are understood, but not directly expressed, and develop over time. An example of an implicit norm would be group members consistently relying on one member to express controversial opinions in group meetings.

The establishment of explicit norms provides the important first step towards creating an atmosphere of safety in the group. Explicit norms help to provide members with guidelines and establish expectations about how the group will 'operate'. As well, positive explicit norms contribute to the development of positive implicit group norms. While support groups generally benefit from the establishment of certain universal norms, (presented by the group facilitators), it is important that group members have the opportunity to decide upon additional norms which are important to the unique culture they wish to create. Facilitators might choose to elicit input from group members about norms with a statement like, "What do you need to have happen in this group so that you can feel safe and are prepared to participate?"

Support group facilitators play an important role not only in assisting members with establishing group norms, but in modeling the behavior associated with the norms. For example, facilitators model the use of "I" statements when expressing their ideas and opinions. Facilitator adherence to, and modeling of, group norms provides a reference point for group members.

UNIVERSAL NORMS

Confidentiality

Respect for differences

Use of "I" statements

Participation

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

GROUND RULES FOR SUPPORT GROUPS

One key to developing the safety that is so important for support groups is to establish ground rules that are discussed, agreed upon and adhered to by everyone in the group. Some ground rules might include the following.

Confidentiality

What is discussed in the group stays in the group, particularly anything that could identify any member.

Start and end on time

By starting and ending promptly, members develop trust and learn what they can expect from the group. This also respects members' busy schedules, which might include medical appointments or returning home to care for a loved one.

Be present or let someone know you won't be

Members need to know that their fellow members will attend the group or that they will call the facilitator or another member to inform the group of their upcoming absence.

Responsibility to raise issues

Facilitators won't be able to guess what the members may want to share. Members are responsible for getting their needs met in the group. Important issues should be put out on the table in a timely way.

Alcohol or drug use during the sessions

Group members are expected to come to the group without being impaired by alcohol or other non-prescription drugs.

No sex between facilitators and members

Sexual contact between a facilitator and a member can be detrimental to the group process. Sexual behavior has the potential to be destructive to the member as well as the group as a whole. Knowing from the start that sex and romance with the facilitator are not possibilities, can allow some members to feel safer and more comfortable.

Sex between members is also discouraged. With the need for safety and trust, the added complication of special relationships between members can be difficult for the group.

Informal, outside-of-group support among members

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Ideally, support among members will continue outside of group meetings. This may include phone calls, visits or other shared activity. Meetings can also continue informally after the conclusion of time-limited groups.

No secrets or special outside contact between members and facilitators

Facilitators should be clear about not having any special relationships with certain members. Favoritism, or the appearance of it, will lessen the facilitator's effectiveness.

Set guidelines for entering and leaving the group

In open groups, members will come and go. When adding new members, it helps to let current members know that new people will be joining. If possible, let members know at least a week in advance. Suggest that members who decide to leave should try to complete any unfinished business that may exist with other members or with the group and give at least one week's notice of their intention to leave the group.

Differences and disagreements are OK

Allow members to voice disagreements as long as they happen in a respectful way. Stress to members that disagreements can often be a source of growth.

Discuss non-sexual physical contact

Each group member is unique in how they view touching and hugging. Cultural or gender differences, boundary or abuse issues, loneliness, simple likes and dislikes can influence how comfortable someone is with physical touch. For some groups, a member may give a hug or put a hand on the shoulder of a member who has revealed something painful or shared an emotional issue or seems to be hurting. This response can be both natural and beneficial. However, no matter how well-intentioned and innocent the gesture, some people might feel violated and unsafe with any form of physical contact. Encourage the group to discuss this before anyone spontaneously and unknowingly oversteps another's boundaries.

"Check in' should be brief

Check in is a tool to use at the beginning of each group session. During check in, each group member briefly shares what happened to them between meetings, how they are feeling at the moment, what they'd like to talk about that session, etc. Check in works as a transition for group members from their day-to-day situations to the "culture" of the group. Check in is a time for facilitators and other group members to get a sense of the general mood and feelings of each group member. (Facilitators should check in). It's important for facilitators to ensure that check in doesn't become a series of extended monologues (which take up all the time).

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Establish a ground rule that check in will be time limited and that the time will be gently enforced by facilitators. Politely interrupt members who are taking too much time during check in. Redirect an extended check in to the purpose of the group. Let members know that if they raise an important issue during check in, the group will come back to it later and allow them to fully explore their issue.

Adapted from NATIONAL HIV/AIDS VOLUNTEER TRAINING KIT (1998: AIDS Committee of Toronto), Training Module 2: Support Group Facilitation: Support Group Manual (p.8-11)

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

UNIVERSAL GROUP NORMS (SAMPLE GROUP HANDOUT)

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Volunteers, ACT staff and service providers who run programs at ACT are expected to uphold the highest standards of confidentiality in their work. Similarly, it is expected that all support group participants will respect the privacy and confidentiality of other group members and volunteers. This is a non-negotiable group norm.

OTHER GUIDELINES:

Please be on time!

The time the group spends together is limited, so it is very important to maintain regular attendance. Please plan to arrive in advance so that the group can begin promptly at 6:30pm.

Keep us informed!

While we stress that attending all meetings will yield the best results for you and other members of the group, we understand that absences happen from time to time. If you are going to miss a session due to illness or other unexpected circumstances, please call the facilitator in advance of the meeting you will miss, so that we know that you are ok. Yes, we will worry about you and make attempts to locate you if you do not show up!

Participate!

Talking about some of these issues can be difficult, but ultimately the benefit you gain from being in a group is related to the effort you put in to participate. Participation takes many different forms: listen carefully to other group members, contribute to group discussions, or suggest topics of conversation. Who knows, you may find that you are not alone in what concerns you!

Respect each other and yourselves!

We will start the group by asking you to identify what you wish to achieve and helping you determine norms for the group. Treat each other with respect; the way you wish to be treated. Respect yourself and your own boundaries, and please let us know when you need help to maintain them.

Use "I" Statements!

When sharing your opinion, thoughts, feelings and experiences, use "I" statements. These statements start with "I think….", "I feel…..", "In my experience….", or "When that happened to me I……". Many times, others in the group or outside it have different points of view or have experienced something in a different way than you have. Using "I" statements gives everyone an opportunity to share what things are like for them.

OTHER NORMS FOR THIS GROUP:

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is an essential component of group facilitation. Generally, active listeners defer their own judgment about the speaker, resist giving feedback until the speaker is finished speaking, seek clarification, and paraphrase and check their understanding of the speaker's message.

Active listening has two parts: looking like you are listening and sounding like you are listening. Everything which follows is culture-bound whether that culture is based on nationality, gender, sexual orientation, age, or whatever. "Matching" the person you are listening to is a good (not perfect) general starting point.

Looking like you are listening is communicated non-verbally through position, posture, facial expressions, eye contact, etc.

A rough guide would be to:

1.	Face the person who is speaking more or less directly and
2.	At the same level (don't stand over the speaker) with a
3.	Distance of about two arm's lengths between.
4.	Maintain a relaxed (not slouched) posture.

The most important facial expression (apart from keeping your eyes open) is probably appropriate smiling. A fixed, expressionless face interferes with good listening. Head nods are encouraging.

In the absence of bodily contact, eye contact is probably the most important dimension of communication in active listening. Matching the eye contact of the speaker is a good place to start. Be sure not to completely avoid eye contact.

Sounding like you are listening is essential. This would include "minimal encouragers" (uh huh, yes, mmhh hmm, I see, etc.); repetition of a key word or phrase also communicates good listening.

Other ways of sounding like you are listening and encouraging the speaker are:

1.	**Rephrasing** something in your own words without adding anything and
2.	Asking, "Is that right?" (called "**checking out**" or a "**perception check**")
3.	When 1 and 2 are done together it is called **paraphrasing.**
4.	**Summarizing** what has been said is another verbal listening skill (often used with a perception check) as is
5.	**Clarifying** which is best done with
6.	**Open-ended questions** (who, what, when, where, etc ....) which put the focus on the speaker as opposed to

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

7. **Close-ended questions** (which can be answered with one word like 'yes' or 'no' or are multiple choice/either-or questions) usually reflect what the *listener* is thinking.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

STRUCTURED FEEDBACK
Chuck Marino

So what is effective feedback? Effective feedback is feedback that results in change. It really isn't very difficult to give feedback in the usual way:

- by criticizing
- by pointing out what's wrong
- by asking questions
- by telling someone a better way to do it
- etc.

It's pretty obvious that generally it doesn't feel good to be criticized in this way. Most of the time when someone is given this kind of feedback they are stifled rather than encouraged to speak up or to try something new.

Effective feedback results in positive change. For this to happen, the criticism must be heard and acted upon. To maximize the chances of this happening it is necessary for the critic to demonstrate:

- **respect** for the person being criticized;
- **understanding** of whatever is being criticized;
- the skills to **identify the positive parts**; and
- ability to indicate **a useful change**.

Structured feedback is a way of doing this. It is a very short, personal evaluation which contains your assessment of the positive and negative aspects of a meeting, an opinion, an idea, something someone has said or done, etc. **It is also a way for co-facilitators to evaluate each other and their groups so that they learn how to be more effective.**

Structured Feedback

Briefly state at least two or three positive things about whatever it is you want to give feedback on or criticize. Two or three things you liked, learned, understood in a new way, want more of, found useful, interesting, etc.

Briefly state the single most important thing which you think should he change. Say something like, "I see the main problem as how to..." or "I wish that..." **NOT** "I didn't like,.." or "You didn't..." or "You should..." or 'I really like that idea but..."

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FACILITATED PEER SUPPORT GROUP MODEL

Focus of the model:

The model of group work we will be working from is facilitated peer support.

A facilitated peer support group may be defined as:

A group of people who usually share common issues/problems/goals/life experiences and who join together for the purpose of mutual aid. The group is facilitated by a person(s) who has skill in group process and assists members in the structuring of, and communication within, the group.

Support group members, *not* the facilitators, are accepted as the experts on their situation/issues/problems. The aim of facilitators is to assist group members in bringing into awareness their strengths and knowledge, and to assist in creating opportunities to learn from each other and appropriate external resources.

The formulation of the content or agenda for the peer support group is usually not the *primary* focus of facilitators; for the most part, the agenda is set and driven by group members. Thus facilitators are more concerned with how the group is functioning, and less with **what** is being discussed in group.

Goals of the Facilitated Peer Support Group:

The goals of the peer support group are to:
1. Create safety, understanding and support amongst group members;
2. create connections or a sense of community between group members that will last beyond the duration of the group;
3. to empower group members.

Empowerment in this context means the acquisition of useful and relevant information, knowledge of one's personal and external resources, and an increased capacity and desire to use these skills. Facilitators foster empowerment in the peer support group by providing as safe an environment as possible which encourages learning from each other, supports positive risk, and always emphasizes the strengths (as opposed to the deficits) of group members.

It is important to be aware that emphasizing group member's strengths and abilities does not mean ignoring the difficulties and pain they may be experiencing. Group members must have opportunities to share these experiences. An emphasis on strengths means exploring the coping strategies and knowledge group members have developed as a result of their experiences. Regardless of how *we* may judge *them*, people employ diverse strategies to manage problematic situations every day.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Inherent Vales of Facilitated Peer Support Model:

There are many-different ways of structuring facilitated peer support groups. Regardless of the structure of the group, there are certain core values or beliefs which guide and support the process. These values and beliefs include:

- peer support is an important and valuable strategy in confronting the complex issues which affect people's lives;
- individuals are experts on their own circumstances and state of being;
- peer support groups can and do enhance individual coping and self esteem;
- peer support empowers groups, and the individuals in those groups. This results from the focus on strengths and abilities, the broadening and acquisition of relevant and useful information, and the 'community building function of group;
- the diminishment of isolation through membership in a peer support group is of value in and of itself regardless of what other benefits group members may derive from the experience;
- group members have ownership of the group;
- the capacity of a facilitated peer support group to become a self-help group is recognized, encouraged, and supported.

Expertise and Advice-Giving:

Facilitators have expertise in guiding group process - they do not necessarily have solutions to the problems presented by group members.

Because facilitators are frequently peers to group members, and/or because they are often very well informed about issues related to the focus of the group, it can be tempting to offer group members solutions or expert information. This is contrary to the goals of a facilitated peer support group.

It is important to remember that facilitators are usually viewed by group members as authority figures; therefore any advice or information you provide may be construed as the final, authoritative answer and discourage further investigation. Furthermore, group members may be reluctant to offer alternative opinions or options which differ from those of the facilitator.

Providing answers and/or presenting one's self as the expert denies the abilities of group members to know what is best for them. Providing solutions does not empower people. Assisting them to discover how they can come up with their own solutions does. As one facilitator of a group for HIV-positive people stated, "If I want to truly foster empowerment of the group, it is important that I tell members 'I have HIV and I'm here as the group facilitator, but this doesn't mean I do HIV better than you do."

Advice-giving is discouraged amongst group members as well as facilitators. We ask group members to use 'I' statements to avoid advice-giving (i.e. "I tried x…" rather than "You should try x…").

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

It is important to be aware of the difference between information provision and advice-giving. Group facilitators often have resource information, etc. that could be of great value to group members. If you have a piece of knowledge you believe group members would benefit by, you must be conscious of why, how, and when you offer it.

Example: Group members are talking about an issue that you have personally experienced. You had great success in dealing with the problem by using 'x' strategy. You think that group members should know about this strategy.

Advice-giving response: "When I had that problem, I did x. X involves…. (goes on at length to describe the strategy in detail). This was the best way of dealing with it, and I had great results. You should all try it - I bet you'll find it works great for you too!"

Information provision response: "I've had some experience dealing with this problem. It may be worthwhile to become informed about strategy x. Does anyone here have experience with strategy x? Is the group interested in finding out more about strategy x? Any ideas on how/where we could get that kind of information?"

Key points to remember:

Be clear about your role as a facilitator, both to yourself and to group members.

There is great strength and wisdom in each group — when the group is grappling with an issue, look to the group first as the best resource.

If the group needs expert information, ask the group how they want to go about getting the information; will a group member do research and report back to the group? Will a guest speaker be invited to speak to the group? Will the group go on an outing to discover the answers?

If you are working with a co-facilitator, seek feedback from her/him on your interventions with the group to ensure that they are within appropriate boundaries.

Assessment & Evaluation:

As a final note, facilitators/organizations which provide facilitated peer support groups benefit by having group members assess, or evaluate, the group experience and facilitation (a written evaluation form is often used for this purpose). This can provide invaluable feedback on what works and what doesn't work. A request for feedback can occur either at the completion of group, or periodically throughout the sessions.

Member evaluations reinforce the values associated with the facilitated peer support model in that they place importance on the opinions and experiences of the members, and emphasize the ownership that members have of the group. Evaluations by group

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

members are a learning tool which facilitators can utilize to assess their effectiveness, strengths, and areas for continued work.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUPPORT GROUP

1. **Mutual Aid**
   An alliance of individuals who benefit from working with each other on certain common problems or who need each other to work on those problems.

2. **Empowerment**
   a. Becoming aware of the power dynamics operating in your life space.
   b. Learning the skills necessary for controlling what can be controlled in your life.
   c. Exercising those skills without infringing on the rights of others, and
   d. Supporting the empowerment of others.

3. **Connection**
   Moving from the disconnection that results from facing a traumatic stressor to connection with self and with community.

4. **Leader/Co-Leader**
   a. Maintains a safe environment or a safe space;
   b. Facilitates connections between group members through active listening;
   c. Keeps the focus of the group upon the agreed upon goals of the group.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

EFFECTIVE VS. INEFFECTIVE GROUPS

EFFECTIVE GROUPS	INEFFECTIVE GROUPS
Goals are clarified and changed to give the best possible match between individual and competitively structured group goals. Goals are co-operatively structured.	Members accept imposed goals. Goals are competitively structured.
Communication is two-way: the open and accurate expression of both ideas and feelings expressed.	Communication is one-way and only ideas are expressed. Feelings are suppressed or ignored.
Participation and leadership are shared by all group members. Both 'task' and 'maintenance' roles are present.	Leadership is delegated and based on authority. Membership/participation is unequal, with high-authority members dominating. Only "task" roles present.
Decision making matches the situation - different methods at different times. Consensus is encouraged.	Decisions are made by the highest authority with little group discussion. Members' involvement is minimal.
Ability and information determine influence and power. Power is shared. 'Contracts' built to ensure individual goals/needs are met.	Position determines influence and power. Power is concentrated in authority positions. Obedience to authority is the rule.
Challenge and conflict seen as positive keys to members' involvement in decision making and good group work.	Challenge and conflict are ignored, denied, avoided or suppressed.
Interpersonal group behavior is emphasized. Cohesion is advanced through inclusion, acceptance, support and trust.	Individual roles are emphasized. Cohesion ignored, members controlled by force.
Members evaluate the effectiveness of the group and decide how to improve its functioning. Maintenance is an important component.	The highest authority evaluates the effectiveness and decides how goal accomplishment may be improved. Maintenance is ignored.
Interpersonal effectiveness, innovation and individuality is encouraged. Diversity is welcomed.	Organization, stability, and structure rigidly adhered to.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

GROUP ATMOSPHERE

Certain notable impressions usually result from a particular group meeting. One might have the impression that not much work was done due to a general inability to 'get started' on the part of group members. Or, one might have the impression that a lot of work was accomplished but that in the course of that work, tempers flared or members were on edge or touchy.

These types of impressions describe the group atmosphere. Some terms to describe the group atmosphere are:

Tense: When pressures are felt, sometimes because of time limitations, or conflict between members, or personally threatening topics, the atmosphere may be tense.

Flight: When the group pursues 'inappropriate' or outside topics or horseplay as a means of avoiding the real task at hand (which might be threatening or unpleasant), the group atmosphere may be one of flight.

Fight: Often group members will find themselves in disagreement with the topic, decisions to be made, or action to be taken. This intra-group conflict may be described as fight.

Work: When the group devotes itself to its task in a purposeful manner the atmosphere is one of work.

Play: The opposite of work may be play. This situation exists when the group avoids doing its work, and can't shake off being lighthearted.

Competitive: When several members seem out to win their own points, with the result that the group action can only proceed out of a win-lose situation, the session might be described as competitive.

Co-operative: As opposed to the competitive atmosphere, group members may work together harmoniously. When members seem to share goals and support one another in attaining group goals, the atmosphere may be described as co-operative.

Sluggish: Sometimes a group will try hard to deal with its task but just can't seem to get going. When members enter the session with low energy and do not gain momentum, the atmosphere can be described as sluggish.

Rewarding: When group members have worked together well and have accomplished the task they set for themselves they may feel a sense of satisfaction and that they have gained from the experience. The atmosphere may thus be described as rewarding.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT   (Tuckman, 1967)

Stage 1: Forming

- o becoming oriented to the group
- o wanting to belong
- o gathering information and impressions about each other
- o likely avoidance of conflict
- o may look to facilitator for leadership

Stage 2: Storming

- o communication patterns will begin to emerge
- o may see challenging of the facilitator
- o challenging other members
- o will look to norms/guidelines for clarity of rules
- o group members may express dissatisfaction behaviourally (missing meetings, arriving late)
- o opportunity for facilitators to empower the group

Stage 3: Norming

- o will begin to confront issues, not each other
- o establishment of group agreements
- o "honeymoon" period

Stage 4: Performing

- o working towards group goals
- o open communication
- o roles and responsibilities in group are flexible
- o high degree of comfort
- o disagreement can occur without conflict

Stage 5: Adjourning/Transforming/Deforming

- o about completion and disengagement
- o opportunity to experience closure/goodbye in a new way
- o anxiety or fear may present
- o possible regression to earlier stages of group development

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

TRAINING SESSION NUMBER TWO

- SESSION TWO AGENDA
- CHECK-INS
- CONTENT AND PROCESS
- BRIDGING AND CONNECTING

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Support Group Facilitator Training
Session Two

<u>Overall Goal of Facilitator Training</u>
To provide a fun and challenging environment in which participants can learn and practice basic group facilitation skills and gain the confidence needed to co-facilitate support groups.

<u>Agenda</u>

1. Housekeeping

2. Review Goals

3. Check-Ins & Check-Outs

<u>After this session, participants will</u>:

- know the purpose of a check-in;
- will be able to contrast what a check-in is and what it isn't;
- understand the format of and be able to facilitate a group check-in.

   a)   Group discussion
   - What does 'check in' mean to you?
   - What is the purpose of 'check in'?

   b)   Group exercise
   - Go around and do a brief group check in

4. Content and Process

<u>After this session, participants will</u>:

- be able to define content and process as they relate to group interactions
- recognize the facilitator's role with regards to process-observing;
- be able to recognize and demonstrate process-observing skills.

   a)   Group Exercise - "Fishbowl"
   - Half of the group will participate, half will observe.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

5. Bridging and Connecting

After this session, participants will:

- be able to define what bridging and connecting are;
- be aware of methods/approaches to bridging and connecting.

6. Role Plays

Skills for practice:

- check in;
- norm-setting;
- bridging & connecting group members.

7. Evaluations

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF CHECK-INS IN A SUPPORT GROUP

As a starting point to each meeting, support groups often use a 'check-in' format. The main purpose of the check-in is to re-orient members to the group environment and to determine who in the group needs time that session.

The format for check-ins usually consists of each member speaking in turn about how she/he is feeling that session in relation to issues relevant to the group context. This point is crucial for two reasons:

1. if the content is not relevant to the group context, members are bringing in extraneous issues which will side-track the group from its purpose and focus;
2. an agenda for the meeting is naturally formulated through individual requests for time and highlighting of emerging issues.

Check-ins should be brief and centered in the here-and-now. They should be brief because they are not the focus of the meeting; when members get caught up in lengthy check-ins; focus is often centered on one individual to the exclusion of others. Check-ins should be centered in the here-and-now in order to establish the focus on 'live' issues.

An example of a brief, here-and-now focused check-in might sound something like, "Tonight I am feeling angry. I've made a lot of realizations based on what we talked about last meeting, about how I feel being infected with HIV. I need some time to discuss this tonight." Note that even though this person refers to the last session, the comments are here-and-now focused because they are relevant to the group context, and the feelings are being experienced in the moment.

The role of the facilitators during check-in primarily involves the use of active listening skills. This means responding verbally and non-verbally to each member so mat she/he knows she/he is being heard. Verbal responses may include a brief paraphrase: i.e. "So you're feeling a lot of anger about being infected, and tonight you need some time to work on this in the group."

Check-in is not a time for probes and invitations to expand on expressed issues. The opportunity for this will come later as members begin to engage in the 'work' of the meeting.

It is important to note that in a support group context, group facilitators often take a turn in the check-in. Because facilitators are not participants in the group in the same way other members are, check-in is not an opportunity to comment on personal issues you may be experiencing.

For example, this is not the time to make a comment such as "I'm finding it difficult to be here tonight because a lot of the things we've been talking about are relevant to my issues. I'm just beginning to get in touch with my own anger about being HIV-positive". If

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

this is indeed the case for you, you do not have to risk your authenticity by denying that it is difficult for you to be there; you might instead say something like, "My energy is not as high as I would like it to be tonight. It may be a bit of a challenge for me to stay focused during our meeting." But when you begin to disclose your own issues, the focus is taken away from the group members, for whom the group exists. If the group is raising issues for you; consider speaking with your co-facilitator, supervisor, or another supportive person outside of the group context.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

CONTENT AND PROCESS
IN A SUPPORT GROUP

Content - is what the group is talking about. It refers to what is being said or talked about.

Process - is what is happening in the moment. It refers to the impact or effect of what is being talked about.

For example, if the group member is talking about a death and group members are silently listening or quietly crying, the **WHAT** that is being talked about is a death (content), and **HOW** this is affecting the group is that some members are listening silently or quietly crying (process, or the impact of what is being said).

Successful support group facilitators focus on the process most of the time (although not all of the time), as opposed to content. This requires focusing on what is happening in the group and not getting lost in the content. As with all group skills, maintaining a focus on the group process and not getting lost in the group content takes practice and attention.

A focus on process means emphasizing the 'how'. "How?" questions keep the focus on what is happening in the moment. "Why?" questions focus on the past. "Why?" questions are the hallmark of leaders who focus on content, keep group members from talking about feelings, and, emphasize their own authority and control.

For example, if John says that his partner is refusing to take his medication because it makes him feel sick (content) and Mary begins to cry (process), the facilitator could ask the group for ideas to help John's partner conform to his drug taking routine (content), or the facilitator could ask Mary why she is crying (content); or the facilitator could remind the group that the topic for tonight is 'positive thinking' (content).

On the other hand the facilitator could ask John how he feels about his partner's choice (process), or the facilitator could ask the group how they are feeling about what John is talking about (process) or the facilitator (a really good facilitator) could simply point out what is happening and invite responses from the group. Like this, "John is telling us about his partner's non-compliance and I am noticing that Mary is crying and the rest of the group seems to be silent. I guess I'm wondering what is going on for everyone right now."

An easy way to begin to focus on process instead of content is for the leader to simply identify what is going on right now in the group and to invite responses from the group. The formula is: "What's happening right now is _____and I am wondering how people are feeling about that", or "I am wondering how what we are talking about is affecting everyone."

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

CONTENT AND PROCESS EXERCISE

Below are statements made by group members, and corresponding responses made by group facilitators. Each statement is followed by a content response and a process response. Mark a "C" beside the response you believe is a content response, and a "P" beside the response you believe is a process response.

1. Group Member "I don't know why we have to accept new members into the group - we're getting along quite well and a new member would just change everything."

Group Facilitator: "A couple of people have expressed reluctance to have a new member join the group. Could we take some time and talk about how the idea of having a new person start is affecting everyone?"

Group Facilitator: "Well, we all agreed when the group started that we would accept new members. It wouldn't be fair to change the rules now."

2. Group Member: "Sorry I'm late again. I had to drop something off at the hospital for Pete and then pick up a prescription for myself. I'm now depleted, but it just couldn't be helped."

Group Facilitator: "Sounds like you were having a really busy day. No wonder you're flustered."

Group Facilitator: "How is caring for Pete and yourself affecting you?"

3. Group Member: "After I eat I feel so sick, so I tend to stick close to home. Now my friends think I'm abandoning them because they don't know the truth."

Group Facilitator: "How are you coping with feeling so ill and not having your friends know?"

Group Facilitator: "Why don't you try telling your friends of your illness?"

4. Group Member: "I just hate coming to this group week after week. I have better things to do."

Group Facilitator: "Well, that is legitimate, why don`t you check your schedule and let us know if it's going to work for you."

Group Facilitator: "It sounds like you have a lot going on. How is coming here every week affecting you?"

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

5. Group Member: "I really think the group should be longer than 10 weeks. It just seems too short."

Group Facilitator: "Yeah, a lot of people in these groups want them to be longer. Maybe we should look into changing the policy."

Group Facilitator: "It makes sense that you would be thinking about the group ending. How do you feel knowing that there are 2 sessions left?"

6. Group Member: (with raised voice to another group member) "Who the hell do you think you are telling me how to live my life?"

Group Facilitator: "Frank just yelled at Jean and I'm noticing that everyone is very quiet. I'm wondering what is going on for everyone."

Group Facilitator: "Calm down, you are very upset. Yelling your comments is not going to help resolve this."

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

BRIDGING & CONNECTING

In a support group, common themes/issues/opinions/perceptions/feelings/etc. usually arise between members. Recognition and identification of these commonalties is one way in which members of the group move toward cohesion, and ultimately empowerment.

Throughout the duration of the group, and especially in the early stages, when members may have not yet decided how they will include themselves, bridging or connecting is an important facilitator function. Bridging may be defined as identifying and summarizing for the group the common themes, issues, etc. which have emerged. A bridging statement may be one of three things:

1.   A paraphrase;
2.   a summary of content; or
3.   a reflection of feelings.

It is important to note that bridging statements are not interpretations of what you are hearing from group members; in other words they are not statements about what you think the underlying issues are. Bridging comments reflect what you have heard group members say.

Bridging can involve pointing out connections between two group members, for example: "Mary, you just talked about feeling a lot of confusion around treatment options, Fred was relating similar feelings earlier when he was talking about the decisions he's struggling with."

It also consists of summarizing expressed themes common to several or all group members, for example: "Everyone in this group has lost someone to AIDS, and several people have talked about their feelings of loss. We're beginning to express some of the feelings of grief shared by people in the group."

As in any paraphrase or summary (which is a main element of bridging), it is important to check out your perceptions with group members. It is not necessary to do this every time you make a bridging statement, and when you do, you might say something like, "Am I hearing some of you say .... ", or "The sense I'm getting is several people in the group are saying .... Is that right?"

After making a bridging statement, you may want to follow up with an open-ended question as a way of re-engaging the group in dialogue. For example, "There seems to be a theme emerging here of ...I wonder if someone else can say what they are thinking about this theme?"

Finally, as the support group evolves members will ideally begin to pattern themselves after the lead of the facilitators, spontaneously making bridging/connecting statements themselves. For example, "I can really relate to what you were saying Tom, about your feelings of uncertainty right now. This seems like something a lot of us here are trying to

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

cope with." When support group members begin to do their own bridging, this is a cue to facilitators to relinquish some of their responsibility for this task.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

TRAINING SESSION NUMBER THREE

- SESSION THREE AGENDA
- SKILLS REVIEW & TOOL BOX
- WORKING WITH EMOTION
- REFLECTING FEELINGS

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Support Group Facilitator Training
Session Three

Overall Goal of Facilitator Training

To provide a fun and challenging environment in which participants can learn and practice basic group facilitation skills and gain the confidence needed to co-facilitate support groups.

<u>Agenda</u>

1. Housekeeping

2. Review Goals

3. Skills Review

<u>After this session, participants will have a heightened awareness of:</u>
- Active listening - definition and techniques;
- Structured feedback skills;
- Content and process - definitions, facilitator's role in process-observing;
- Bridging and connecting - definitions, approaches.

4. Working with Emotion — (review from core skills)

<u>After this session, participants will:</u>
- understand the importance of emotion in a support group environment;
- recognize factors which affect their comfort level when dealing with emotion;
- recognize 'emotion words';
- possess the skills needed for working with emotion in a group.

5. Reflecting Feelings

<u>After this session, participants will:</u>
- understand the facilitator's role in reflecting feelings;
- be aware of techniques for exploring feelings.

6. Role plays: Feelings/Emotion

- Working with Emotion
- Reflecting feelings

7. Evaluations

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

WORKING WITH EMOTION

An important function of a support group is to help participants identify and express the feelings associated with their experiences. While feelings may not be the sole focus of a support group is important that facilitators encourage the creation of an atmosphere which allows for and encourages emotion.

When we avoid emotion in a support group context, we send a message that feelings are not safe or valued.

The result is that group members may deny the existence of and/ or suppress the expression of their feelings. Consequently, the group may stay on a superficial level, never going beyond an intellectual expression of individual experience. When this happens, the group ceases to become a support group and is instead a discussion group.

In all human endeavors, the element of emotion is always present, and how we deal with expressed emotion is culture-bound. In a support group context, we are often confronted with very deep and intense feelings. For both facilitators and group members, the expression of intense emotion can be frightening and/or anxiety- producing for a number of reasons, including:

1. the expressed emotion may echo emotions which we are not yet ready to explore or have not resolved;

2. the expressed emotion may evoke responses in ourselves which we feel uncomfortable with;

3. we may have concerns that the expression of strong emotion will "open the flood gates", resulting in an outpouring from group members that will become overwhelming or 'out of control';

4. as facilitators, we may feel that making space for the exploration of group members feelings may "trigger' an emotional response in ourselves;

5. we may feel responsible for making the expresser feel 'better';

6. we may believe we will be unable to respond to the emotion.

It is absolutely essential that support group facilitators become comfortable with the expression of emotion in the group, and are prepared to encourage its expression. How one reaches this comfort level is highly individualized and beyond the scope of facilitator training. However, there are a few key elements which are helpful in working with emotion as it emerges in group. If you sense that your group has 'shut down', that it is going in circles, not moving beyond the surface, etc., you may want to refer to this checklist:

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Checklist for Working with Emotion

- have I encouraged group members to name their feelings?
- have I 'allowed' group members to express feelings and stay with them?
- have I stayed focused on the person(s) expressing strong emotion?
- have I offered encouragement by paraphrasing, summarizing, empathizing?
- have I used bridging skills when more than one member is expressing an emotion?
- have I been respecting members' boundaries/limits of exploring emotion?
- have I sought support for myself outside of the group context (i.e. ensured that I have time to debrief with my co-facilitator after meetings, utilized supervision/ consultation opportunities, talked with someone who I know is understanding and supportive, etc)?
- have I been ignoring expressions of feeling instead of acknowledging them?
- have I been stifling the expression of feelings by reassuring, questioning the feeling, or changing the topic?
- have I been turning feeling expressions into intellectual statements?
- have I been pushing group member(s) to express more than they are comfortable with in the moment?
- have I been interpreting/labeling members feelings (i.e. "I think you have a lot of anger underneath your issues"), instead of asking the person to describe what s/he is experiencing (i.e. "You've been saying a lot about what you think about...I wonder if you can talk about the feelings that go along with that")?

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

WORKING WITH FEELINGS

1. Very seldom
2. Occasionally
3. Sometimes
4. Often
5. Most of the time

_____I am aware of my feelings
_____I am able to name my feelings
_____I am able to express my feelings
_____I am able to sustain a conversation about my feelings

_____I notice other people's feelings
_____I am able to encourage others to talk about their feelings
_____I am able to reflect other people's feelings without interpreting them
_____I am comfortable conversing with other people about their feelings

_____I initiate conversations with others about my feelings
_____People initiate conversations with me about their feelings

Comments:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

REFLECTING FEELINGS

When you are working with emotions, the most important facilitator intervention is to reflect those feelings back to the group member(s). Reflecting feelings opens up the exploration of felt experiences, sends a signal that feelings are acknowledged, and can move the group beyond a discussion of 'facts'.

Of primary importance when working on reflecting feelings is the avoidance of interpretations. What this means is that you do not express your theories about what a person is feeling or experiencing. Instead, you encourage the group member(s) to describe or name what s/he is feeling. Even when it may seem obvious (i.e. a person is crying/yelling/etc.), we do not truly know what the person is experiencing until we ask. As you will know from your own experience, tears do not always mean sadness, yelling does not always signify anger, silence does not always equal disinterest, etc.

There are four elements which can be utilized to work with feelings in the support group context which avoid interpretation and encourage members to express what they are experiencing:

1. When a member is speaking, listen for feeling words. Playback the feeling words you heard in a paraphrase. Example:

   Member: "I've been thinking a lot about John lately. He's been dead for a year now, and I should probably be moving on with my life. I just get so overwhelmed with sadness sometimes and I can't seem to get past it."

   Facilitator: "So there are times when you just feel overwhelmed with sadness, and you just can't seem to get past it."

2. Play back the feeling and check out the accuracy of your paraphrase. Following on the above example:

   Facilitator: "So there are times when you feel overwhelmed with sadness, and you just can't seem to get past it. Did I get that right?"

3. Encourage and assist the member to explore the feelings through clarification and summary. Following on the above example:

   Facilitator: "You feel overwhelmed with sadness - tell us some more about the sadness, what that's like for you."

   Member: "Yeah, you know I become so emotional, I just cry and cry. When I think about his death, I'm filled with this ache, this sense of utter emptiness."

   Facilitator: "So that overwhelming sadness is an ache, a feeling of just utter emptiness inside. Tell us some more about the emptiness."

Page 41

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

4. As a way of bringing it back to the group, once the member has had an opportunity to share her/his experience, you may want to utilize your bridging/ connecting skills. For example:

Facilitator: "Frank, you've been telling us about the overwhelming feelings of sadness and emptiness you have sometimes when you think about John and his death. I wonder if anyone else in the group can connect with these feelings?"

Core Skills Training- Communication -Feeling Words

Accepted	Embarrassed	Livid
Affectionate	Free	Lonely
Afraid	Frustrated	Loving
Angry	Grateful	Rejected
Anxious	Guilty	Respected
Ashamed	Happy	Sad
Attracted	Hopeful	Satisfied
Bored	Hurt	Shocked
Competitive	Inferior	Shy
Confused	Interested	Superior
Defensive	Intimate	Suspicious
Desperate	Jealous	Trusting
Disappointed	Joyful	

* this is not an exhaustive list *

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

TRAINING SESSION NUMBER FOUR

- SESSION FOUR AGENDA
- SKILLS REVIEW & TOOL BOX
- WORKING WITH CHALLENGING SITUATIONS
- CLOSURE
- SELF CARE

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Support Group Facilitator Training
Session Four

Overall Goal of Facilitator Training

To provide a fun and challenging environment in which participants can learn and practice basic group facilitation skills and gain the confidence needed to co-facilitate support groups.

Agenda
1. Housekeeping

2. Review Goals

3. Review of skills learned

4. Dealing with Challenging Situations in Groups

   - What are "challenging situations" to you?
   - Who are they challenging for?
   - What are your fears/challenges?
   - How can we manage these situations?

After this session, participants will:
- be able to recognize and identify challenging situations;
- be aware of how to deal with challenging situations as a group;
- know the role of the facilitator in dealing with challenging situations;
- demonstrate their ability to deal with challenging situations.

5. Closure

After this session, participants will:
- recognize the purpose/importance of group closure;
- know when to address group closure;
- recognize the role of group facilitators in closure.

6. Self-Care

After this session, participants will:
- know what self care is;
- recognize the importance of self care;
- be aware of strategies for self care.

7. Evaluations

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

DEALING WITH CHALLENGING SITUATIONS IN A GROUP

Like nearly everything else that goes on in the group, the difficult behavior of specific members is something that the whole group allows to happen, and the group itself can respond to any challenge.

The facilitator, rather than "fixing it", makes it safe for the group to address challenges. Sometimes, the "problem" also provides a way for the group to protect itself or to avoid what feels like a more uncomfortable scene.

For example, superficial conversations might keep people from facing the pain of their situation. Always being angry and non-accepting of one member who stands out as the most different can be a way to avoid being criticized. The facilitator can point out what they see is happening and gently ask the group if this is OK with them.

Facilitators should not assume to know the real reason something is going on. Do not get into analyzing. Instead, you, as the facilitator, can ask the group how they want to handle the situation.

The following are some challenges that might be encountered in a group:

One person does most of the talking

Consider what keeps other members from speaking up, what might they fear, what could make it safe for more people to talk?

Fighting between members

Differences and conflicts are natural and can help people learn about themselves and grow stronger. First, you, as the facilitator, might do some self examination to make sure that you are OK with conflict. In the group, keep calm, avoid taking sides and encourage "I" statements while discouraging put downs and judgments. As the conflict continues, perhaps focus on commonalities, and encourage other members to broaden the discussion.

People coming late

It's important for the group as a whole to enforce the ground rule of starting on time. If a pattern develops where the group never knows when the meeting has actually started (because it feels like they are always waiting for someone to get there) the group won't feel as sure of itself as a group.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

"Dumping" just before the end of the session

Members may wait to share their heaviest problems until the end of the session for many reasons: perhaps they're anxious, they're hoping the group will meet longer, they're trying to control the group, etc. Whatever the reason (and often the reason is not clear), make sure the group ends on time. Suggest that members bring up their concerns early in the meeting so they will be sure to get the time they need.

Denial

Though this may feel like a problem to the facilitators, it may or may not be a problem for the group. When it seems like "something's in the air" or some key issue has not been spoken about (like sex, death, suicide, love, etc.), it may help if the facilitator mentions that it's OK to talk about the issue if it's important to anyone.

Member in crisis

Sometimes, the normal rhythm of a group is disrupted when a member becomes enraged, overwhelmed, panicked and/ or hopeless because of sudden or unexpected changes in their life. These crisis feelings can "snowball" in the group (as member after member feels out of control. The calmness of the facilitator can alleviate this tendency.

Facilitators should stay calm, breathe deeply, speak slowly and encourage members of the group to do the same. Allow the extreme emotions to be expressed and respond to them with calm acceptance. If it seems necessary, one facilitator can take the member in crisis out of the room to spend some individual time with them. If it appears someone's life is in immediate danger, call for help. Encourage the member to contact their therapist, crisis hotline or 911 if the emergency calls for it.

Since the group will be affected by the crisis, and, at some level, each member may identify with the person in pain, it's crucial to encourage the group to talk about the experience.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

GROUP CLOSURE

Every group has a life span which includes a beginning, middle and end. Although each person experiences them uniquely, endings are meaning-laden. For many, the ending of group is experienced as a loss and therefore represents some of life's most crucial and painful issues.

Because each of us encounters endings throughout the course of our lives and because endings are so meaningful, it is absolutely essential to work with group members on closure. Working on closure provides opportunities for members to reflect on their experience in group, determine what they got from the group, and make plans on how to utilize group learnings in an ongoing way. The facilitator can aid this process by assuming the following closure tasks:

Regularly remind group members that the group will be ending. Group members may deny or ignore the fact that the group will end, and it is important that facilitators keep this in awareness. One way to achieve this is to keep members focused on what they have determined they want to work on. For example, "We have three more sessions left, and there are a few issues the group had said they wanted to address which we haven't yet covered. Can we take some time tonight to review what we want to cover in our remaining sessions?"

Encourage the transfer of learning from the group to the member's personal environment. The underlying goal of any support group is to help members become aware of, and better utilize, their personal and environmental resources. Facilitators can assist in this task by providing opportunities to reflect on the group experience throughout the course of the group, and especially at closure. At closure, some pertinent questions might include, "What's different for you now than when you started the group?", "What has changed that might help you deal differently with the issues that brought you here?", "What have you learned about yourself/the issues we've talked about/what's available to you while being in this group?". This is an excellent opportunity to help members acknowledge and appreciate their personal and environmental resources.

Encourage the expression of feelings about the ending of group. Facilitators can take on a modeling role here by reflecting on what the group has meant for them and how they feel about it ending.

Have faith that group participants will continue to grow once group has ended.
Sometimes it is difficult for facilitators to let go of the group because we worry that members are not 'ready' for it to end. It is important to remember that group participants had resources before the group started, and will continue to have them once it ends. Even when we think someone has not had enough time to get something significant from the group experience, it is important to remember that we often have no idea of what the true personal impact and meaning of an experience is for an individual. For some, it may not be until later that s/he significantly benefits from the group experience.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Some additional notes:

Working on closure should not be left until the last session. At the very least, facilitators should begin encouraging group members to actively talk about the group ending by the second last session. As noted above, regular reminders that the group will be ending should be given throughout the course of the group, and can be used as a way to keep the group focused on what they want to accomplish.

Closure exercises at each group meeting are a good way to get group members (and facilitators) into a routine of addressing endings. How this is accomplished varies from group to group, but your group might decide to end each meeting with a process similar to a check-in exercise.

Some ideas for closing exercises are:

- Have each member say how s/he is feeling in the moment, i.e. "Right now, I'm feeling energized by what we talked about in group tonight."
- Have each member say what s/he got from this meeting, i.e. "Tonight I got a better sense of what's really been bothering me. I'm now aware that I'm angry about..."
- Have each member say what s/he learned in this meeting, i.e. "I learned a lot about strategies people are using to deal with medication side effects."
- Have each member say what s/he wants to talk about next meeting, i.e. "At our next meeting, I really want us to talk about how we can have sex, and keep ourselves safe both physically and emotionally?"

Consider having members complete a written evaluation at the end of a group. This can assist members with starting to think about what the group experience has meant for them, as well provide you with valuable feedback on the group structure/format and your facilitation skills. If possible, evaluation forms should not be left to the last moment if you want thoughtful responses.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

SELF CARE FOR FACILITATORS

Providing supportive service to others can be extremely rewarding. At times, it can also be difficult and personally challenging.

As a support group facilitator, you are in a position to hear and witness people's pain and triumphs — this is a position which, in various ways, will undoubtedly have a personal impact. If you are in any way personally connected to the issues addressed in your groups, the impact may be even greater. To be able to effectively facilitate and maintain your own well-being, it is essential that you develop practices for your own self-care.

No one can tell you what you need to do to take care of yourself, but here are a few basic principles which make sense to consider:

- look after your physical well-being as best you can; try to eat healthy, get plenty of rest, exercise, etc.;
- figure out what you need to feel good, and find ways to get those needs met;
- establish a support system for yourself and utilize it — partner, family, friends, therapist, whoever;
- acknowledge and accept both your strengths and your limitations as a facilitator and as a human being;
- set realistic goals for yourself.

Specifically when you are facilitating:

- have a preparatory/check-in meeting with your co-facilitator before each meeting;
- debrief with your co-facilitator after each session — make sure to talk about how you felt about the facilitation experience, not just what happened for group members (the structured feedback format can come in really handy here);
- utilize 'supervision'/ consultation opportunities and other related resources to work out problematic areas;
- be proactive - if you are having difficulties in the group, and/or if facilitating the group is having a negative impact on you, don't wait for it to resolve itself. Utilize the supports at your disposal before you burnout;
- remind yourself that the well-being of the group is not solely your responsibility - you add a piece, but you do not have the power to control how people experience the group, or what they ultimately take with them from the experience.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

TRAINING SESSION NUMBER FIVE

- SESSION FIVE AGENDA
- WORKING WITH CO-FACILITATORS
- SELF DISCLOSURE
- WORKING WITH SILENCE
- GROUP LOGISTICS
    - o Facilitator Responsibilities
    - o Timeline of an ACT Support Group
    - o Meet & Greets
    - o Session Reporting
    - o Facilitator Supervision

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Support Group Facilitator Training
Session Five

Overall Goal of Facilitator Training

To provide a fun and challenging environment in which participants can learn and practice basic group facilitation skills and gain the confidence needed to co-facilitate support groups.

Agenda

1. Housekeeping

2. Review Goals

3. Parking Lot

4. Working with Co-Facilitators

After this session, participants will:
- have a better understanding of their own facilitation style and how their experiences/background affect it;
- be prepared to deal with the dynamics of working with a co-facilitator;
- have the skills necessary to coordinate work with a co-facilitator.

Group discussion
  o Co-facilitation

5. Self-Disclosure

After this session, participants will:
- be able to define self-disclosure;
- know the significance of self-disclosure;
- be able to recognize appropriate situations in which to self-disclose;
- be aware of strategies for self-disclosure;
- be able to recognize effective self-disclosure.

Page 51

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

6. Group Logistics

<u>After this session, participants will:</u>
- Have a better understanding of the administrative tasks associated with facilitating support groups at ACT;
- Be prepared to deal with emergencies/crises in the group setting, including knowing when to seek assistance from ACT staff or outside organizations;
- Understand better their role and responsibilities as part of the Support Group program;
- Understand how they will be supervised, supported and receive feedback from the Group Programming Coordinator.

   a) Volunteer Responsibilities
   b) The Role of the Group Programming Coordinator
   c) Administrative/logistical details for the Support Group Program

7. Graduation & Group Closure

8. Evaluations

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

QUESTIONS FOR CO-FACILITATORS
(Adapted from The Skilled Facilitator (1994), by Reger M. Schwarz)

Orientation/Style

1. The major values, beliefs, and principles that guide my facilitation are...
2. The major values, beliefs, and principles that other facilitators hold and that I strongly disagree with are…
3. At the beginning of a support group meeting, I usually...
4. At the end of a support group meeting, I usually...
5. When a group member talks too much, I usually...
6. When the group is silent, I usually...
7. When an individual group member is silent, I usually...
8. When a group member gets upset, I usually…
9. When a group member comes late, I usually
10. When a group member leaves early, I usually…
11. When group members are excessively polite and do not confront each other, I usually...
12. When there is conflict in the group, I usually…
13. When the group attacks one member, I usually...
14. When a group member takes a cheap shot at me or implies I am ineffective, I usually...
15. When a group member attempts to force other group members to accept her/his opinion, I usually...
16. When members are off track, I usually...
17. When a group member criticizes another group member, I usually...
18. My favorite group interventions are...
19. Interventions that a support group usually needs but that I don't often make are...
20. The things that I find most satisfying about facilitating support groups are...
21. The things that I find most frustrating about facilitating support groups are…
22. The things that I find most uncomfortable in facilitating support groups are...
23. On a continuum ranging from passive to very active, my intervention style is...
24. My typical intervention rhythm is (fast/slow)...

Experiences and Background

1. Discuss your experiences as a facilitator/co-facilitator. What types of groups have you facilitated? What were the content and process issues in the groups?
2. Discuss your best facilitation and co-facilitation experiences. What was it about these experiences that made them so successful?
3. Discuss your worst facilitation and co-facilitation experiences. What was it about these experiences that made them so unsuccessful?
4. Describe some of your facilitation behaviors that a co-facilitator might find idiosyncratic.
5. Describe the issues that have arisen between you and other co-facilitators.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

6.   Describe the areas in which you are trying to improve your facilitation. How would you like the co-facilitator to help you improve?
7.   What personal issues do you have that might hinder the ability of you and the co-facilitator to work with each other or with group members?
8.   Given what you know about the co-facilitator, what concerns do you have about working with that person?

Co-facilitator Co-ordination

1.   How will the pre-group tasks be divided?
2.   How will pre-session planning happen?
3.   How will post-group debriefings happen?
4.   Who will sit where in group meetings?
5.   Who will start the meeting? Who will finish it?
6.   How will you divide the labour?
7.   What kind of facilitator interventions and behavior are inside and outside the zone of deference that each of you will grant the other?
8.   Where, when, and how will you deal with the issues between you?
9.   What kinds of disagreements between you are you willing and not willing to show in front the group?
10.   What is non-negotiable for each of you as a co-facilitator?

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

SELF DISCLOSURE
Chuck Marino

Here is a good guideline: it is important that support group facilitators be genuine. Playing a role like the expert, the wise person, the sympathetic listener, etc. is phony. Being you, not hiding behind a role, is genuine.

Facilitators who never disclose anything about themselves are showing their group how to be cautious, impersonal, and closed.

Facilitators who reveal too much blur the distinction between themselves and their group; they would rather be a friend than facilitate the group. They burden the group with their own opinions, reactions, and memories.

An important part of being you is using your own feelings and reactions as a group facilitator. The question becomes when is it appropriate to disclose your own feelings and reactions?

1. A first indicator that self-disclosure may be called for is when you experience a persistent feeling or reaction to what is going on in the group. Perhaps you are feeling bored or irritated; maybe you feel uncertain or uneasy. If this is the case it is very likely that you are not the only one having this feeling and it becomes very important for you to disclose it. The key words here are persistent (it keeps coming back) and feeling (not a fleeting thought or memory). If you experience a persistent or recurring feeling this is an indicator that self-disclosure might be necessary or appropriate.

2. Unrehearsed disclosures about what you are experiencing right now are usually much more effective and facilitative than disclosures about your past or your memories. Putting this guideline in reverse; if it is too easy to reveal, or it is something you reveal often; or if it sounds rehearsed, it is probably not a good self-disclosure. A good self-disclosure is fresh, unrehearsed, and a little difficult to put out there. "I have had that experience myself" is not likely to be as good a disclosure as "I'm feeling a little anxious about what we are talking about and I am wondering if anyone else is sharing that feeling?"

3. The final guideline is to ask "What do I expect to happen if I disclose what's going on with me and will that empower the group or focus the group on me?" This is an important question to ask and answer. Predicting the effects of your self-disclosure will increase the chances that it will be effective. By observing the effects of your self-disclosure you can become better and better able to use this as an effective tool.

Here is how to evaluate a facilitator's disclosure: It was a good self disclosure if the next thing that happened was the group explored what they had been talking about more fully or at a deeper level.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Working with Silence
Constantine Cabarios

What is silence? According to the Merriam-Webster (2015) dictionary definition, silence (is a noun) "that lacks sound or noise; it is a situation, state or period of time in which people do not talk; a situation or state which someone does not talk about or answer questions about something."

What does silence mean? Silence has different meanings for people. It can be an uncomfortable experience and it can also provide a sense of relief. In *counselling*, silence is used as therapeutic tool by trained counsellors to allow their clients time to reflect, process emotions and/or retrieve memories and experiences that may add further insights into their therapeutic goals. The counsellor may use this technique to elicit *non-verbal* or *verbal* responses, depending on the level of therapeutic alliance between the counsellor and client.

For North American or Western European cultures, use of silence in communication can be an uncomfortable experience and yet according to social scientists, 70% of communication is *non-verbal* (Jaworski &Sachdev, 1998). North Americans may perceive effective communication as verbal (Knapp, 1975) and thus most forms of communication involve some form of conversing (e.g. small talk) or rhetoric (i.e. to persuade) and can present the speaker as confident, knowledgeable, engaging, expedient and effective (Davidson, 2009). In Asian or in Eastern cultures, *silence* may be viewed as a sign of respect, strength and wisdom (Davidson, 2009). Depending on various contexts, silence can have different meanings for people.

Silence Quotes	What does it mean?
Silence is a source of great strength. - Lao Tzu	
Nothing strengthens authority so much as silence. - Leonardo da Vinci	
Silence is a true friend who never betrays. - Confucius	
Silence is the sleep that nourishes wisdom. - Francis Bacon	
Silence is the most perfect expression of scorn. - George Bernard Shaw	
Tis better to be silent and be thought a fool, than to speak and remove all doubt. - Abraham Lincoln	
He who does not know how to be silent will not know how to speak. - Ausonius	

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Productive use of silence. In group work, silence can be a chance for group participants to rest, reflect, find balance or organize their thoughts and feelings after an emotion-filled moment (Vriend and Dyer, 1975). Conversely, it can provide group facilitators a chance to observe the group dynamics through non-verbal cues and monitor the reactions of the group participants and determine when to 'break the silence.'

Non-productive use of silence. This can manifest in group participants as a form of resistance to go against the 'leader' of the group (Vriend and Dyer, 1975). In other words, there might be a group member who is always leading the topic discussion and therefore other group members may feel resentful, anxious or fearful. Group members may be cognizant of 'taking up too much space' or perceived as 'ganging up' on the leader (Vriend and Dyer, 1975).

Knowing when to break silence. It is important for group facilitators to remind themselves and group members that silence is part of non-verbal communication and that they always have the choice to talk or not, as we are all unique individuals with different methods of expression. Group facilitators should be able to get sense of each group members' personalities and therefore determine if a group member is feeling anxious or distressed with the lack of verbal dialogue (Vriend and Dyer, 1975). There should be enough time for contemplation for all group members during the session and then the group facilitator should be able to bring the group back to a group discussion. However, the group facilitator should be careful with the tendency to influence the direction of the conversation. Rather, the group members should be able to take the initiative and 'break the silence' on their own.

Example of how to break the silence without being directive or suggestive:

Group facilitator: We've been silent for some time now. I'm wondering how people are feeling.

Activity: "Mirrors"

- Need one leader, one follower and observer(s)
- The leader will initiate a non-verbal behaviour (e.g. clapping hand, bowing head, looking up, yawning, etc.)
- The follower will follow the action(s) of the leader
- The observer (facilitator) will monitor reactions of the group

Description: The mirroring exercise is another actor warm-up that's adapted easily for any team-building activity. It can be performed in pairs or with everyone standing in a circle. One person leads by making slow movements with her arms, hands, head and body. Her partner or the others in the circle try to imitate her exactly. The trick to this

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

exercise is to avoid hesitating, then following the leader. Everyone should try to time their actions as close together as possible -- a mirror image -- so it's difficult to distinguish who's leading and who's following. The leader must make sure that her movements can be imitated. Eye contact can help the other people anticipate the next move.

Purpose: use of non-verbal cues, observation skills and being present in a group; 'listening' to group dynamic cues; builds awareness; use of non-verbal mirroring.

References

Jaworski, A. and Sachdev, J. (1998). Beliefs and Silence in the Classroom. *Language and Education,* 12 (4) pp. 273-292.

Knapp, H. (2007). *Therapeutic communication: Developing professional skills*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Vriend, J. and Dyer, W. W. (1975). Effectively handling silence in counseling groups. *Canadian Counsellor*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 2-8.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT
Human Resources Manual
Policy 9-23

1. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will honor the confidentiality of service users, clients, volunteers, staff, sponsors and donors and adhere to the established precepts of confidentiality of ACT Policies & Procedures and government legislation. We agree to consider information pertaining to medical conditions, family relations, phone numbers and addresses, sexual orientation and other facts of a highly personal nature as confidential and therefore we understand that we are not to disclose this information to any person who is not authorized by ACT to have access to such information without the specific permission of the individual concerned.

2. NON-DISCRIMINATION/EQUITY

In keeping with ACT's philosophies and policies, ACT will neither practice nor tolerate discrimination or harassment against any staff member, volunteer or service-user on the ground of race, creed, color, place of origin, ethnic origin, ancestry, citizenship, political or religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family relationship, HIV status, economic status, identity, disability or record of offences. We will treat each other, staff and service users with dignity, care and respect. We will be sensitive to and educate ourselves about individual and group differences. We will honor all clients' rights to self-determination and agree to support people in making their own personal choices.

3. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

We commit to our understanding and upholding of the Conflict of Interest policy. We agree to discuss any potential conflict with our supervisors and commit to being truthful in all matters to do with our volunteer relationship with ACT.

4. RELATIONSHIPS – BOUNDARIES

ACT encourages friendly relations between volunteers and those they serve. However, it is important to remain aware of appropriate boundaries. As with paid staff, ACT discourages relationships of a romantic or sexual nature between supervisors and those they supervise or volunteers and those they serve. We agree to maintain respectful and professional relationship boundaries during the course of our volunteer work and agree to speak with our supervisors should any relationship develop which makes it difficult for us to remain objective and fulfill our volunteer obligations.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

5. <u>LIMITS</u>

We agree to maintain the limits we have set for ourselves with respect to the emotional and physical resources we are willing to provide. We understand that our own training and education may limit our ability to service clients and we recognize the need to ask for assistance or refer when appropriate. If we feel we are being asked to do something outside of our job description, or are having difficulty saying no to a staff member, volunteer or client, we will ask for support and coaching from our supervisors and/or peers.

6. <u>ACCOUNTABILITY</u>

We agree to participate in supervision that is acceptable, reasonable, regular and visible according to the guidelines of the individual programs we are assigned to. Supervision guarantees accountability for the performance of assigned responsibilities, provides an opportunity for feedback and guidance, and assistance and support in my role as a volunteer.

7. <u>TRAINING AND CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT</u>

We understand that in accepting a volunteer position with ACT, we are agreeing to undertake and complete the necessary training before, during and in the course of our volunteer assignment as outlined by the Volunteer Coordinator and as indicated in our program agreements. We value our own continuing development and understand that it is essential as a volunteer. We will do this by keeping updated on new information, attend monthly meetings and relevant in-services, and by taking advantage of opportunities such as seminars and workshops offered both within and outside of ACT.

8. <u>ALCOHOL/DRUG USE</u>

We understand that being under the influence of alcohol or drugs may interfere with our ability to deliver service. We therefore agree: not to perform our volunteer duties while under the influence of drugs or alcohol; not to provide a client with illegal substances or encourage their use; not to participate with a client in alcohol consumption to the point where our effectiveness is impaired.

9. <u>SCENTS</u>

Many people living with HIV/AIDS and also those who suffer from environmental allergies, are extremely sensitive to strong scents. In order to make ACT as comfortable as possible for all people who are affected by this, staff and volunteers agree to moderate their use of colognes and perfume while working in the office or performing duties on behalf of ACT in the community.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

10. <u>NON-COMPLIANCE</u>

We understand that failure to adhere to any and all parts of this code may result in suspension from our volunteer duties and/or termination of our volunteer relationship with The AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT).

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATORS

1. All volunteers with ACT are representatives of the organization and, as such, agree to adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in the Volunteer Code of Conduct.

2. Confidentiality

   Your responsibility to the members of your group includes:

   - Safeguarding the confidentiality of group members' identities, names and contact information
   - Returning ALL documents related to the group to the Group Programming Coordinator upon completion of the group

   Tips on keeping information confidential:

   - Use only first names when taking group notes, including session reports
   - Keep all documents related to the group on the ACT premises
   - Do not acknowledge group members when you see them outside the group setting, unless they acknowledge you first. When making conversation, do not make any mention of ACT or the group
   - When leaving messages for group members, be discreet. Do not say what organization you're calling from.
   - Use the assigned ACT mailbox to receive messages/calls from group members. Safeguard the password to this mailbox.

3. Safety

   Confidentiality of client information does not extend to communication between volunteers and the Group Programming Coordinator, especially when issues of safety are involved.

   Specifically, you **MUST** report to the Group Programming Coordinator as soon as possible any situation involving intent to cause harm to self or others, including disclosure of intent to commit suicide, harm another person or admission of or intent to harm a child.

4. Session Reporting

   Volunteer Support Group Facilitators are required to fill out weekly session reports regarding group activities and submit them to the Group Programming Coordinator before the next weekly group session.

   These reports are important as they keep the Group Programming Coordinator informed of what is happening in the groups, identify emerging trends and issues affecting the communities ACT serves, and assist us in evaluating the Support Group Program.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

5.   Training

All volunteers in the Support Group program are required to program-specific meetings/trainings. In addition, Support Group Program volunteers are strongly encouraged to take part in other training opportunities within the organization.
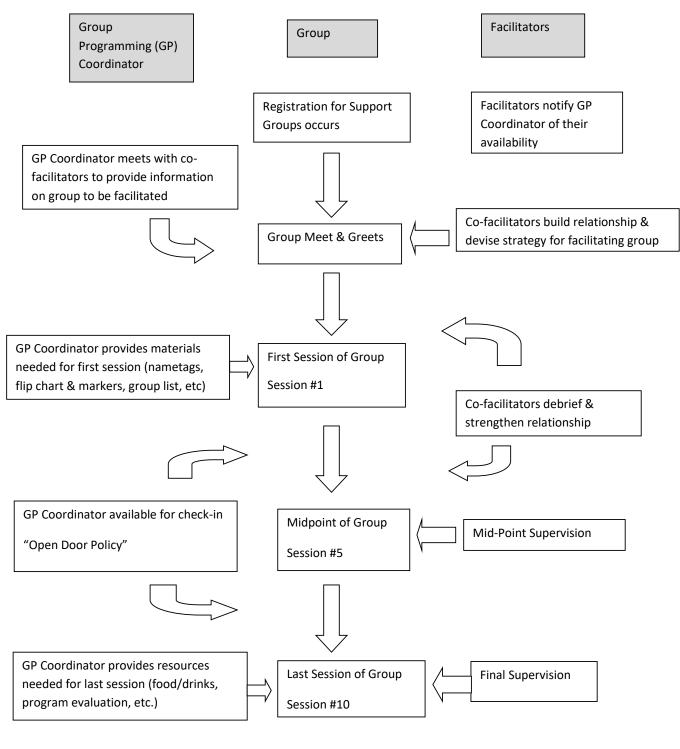
6.   Commitment

As a Support Group Facilitator, you are accountable to the Group Programming Coordinator, your co-facilitator and your group members to be present, on time and prepared to facilitate all scheduled meetings of the group. If you are ill, or unexpectedly cannot attend a group meeting, you must provide advanced notice to the Group Programming Coordinator and your co-facilitator.

7.   Support and Supervision

Participation in the supervision process, outlined below, is a requirement of all volunteers in the Support Group Program:

- Volunteer facilitators meet with the Group Programming Coordinator on a regular basis while the group they are facilitating is in progress. The Group Programming Coordinator is also available outside of regularly scheduled supervision meetings for consultation and problem solving regarding any issues that may arise during the course of their work.

- Facilitators of short-term groups will have supervision meetings with the Group Programming Coordinator at the middle (4-6 week mark) and end (after last session) of the group.

- Facilitators of on-going groups will informally check in with the Group Programming Coordinator on a regular basis and will have supervision meetings approximately quarterly.

8.   Boundaries
- Gifts
- Relationships with group members

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

TIMELINE OF A SHORT-TERM ACT SUPPORT GROUP

| Group Programming (GP) Coordinator | Group | Facilitators |

Registration for Support Groups occurs

Facilitators notify GP Coordinator of their availability

GP Coordinator meets with co-facilitators to provide information on group to be facilitated

Group Meet & Greets

Co-facilitators build relationship & devise strategy for facilitating group

GP Coordinator provides materials needed for first session (nametags, flip chart & markers, group list, etc)

First Session of Group

Session #1

Co-facilitators debrief & strengthen relationship

GP Coordinator available for check-in

"Open Door Policy"

Midpoint of Group

Session #5

Mid-Point Supervision

GP Coordinator provides resources needed for last session (food/drinks, program evaluation, etc.)

Last Session of Group

Session #10

Final Supervision

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

"MEET & GREETS"

"Meet & Greets" are 15-minute meetings that the group facilitators hold with each participant individually before the first group session. Social group work theory has a term for this process: Role Induction.

"Meet & Greets" <u>are not</u> an assessment of the group participant's eligibility to be part of the group. That assessment has already been completed by ACT's Group Programming Coordinator.

"Meet & Greets" <u>are</u> an opportunity for the group facilitators to introduce themselves to each group participant. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the roles of group participant and group facilitator, the process of the group, and how the group participant could feel safe in a support group setting.

Possible discussion topics during group "Meet & Greets":

Group processes:
- Check in — how it works, why it's done
- Where do discussion topics come from?
- Importance of group norms
- Timing — start & end times, breaks
- Calling in for absences

Group communication:
- Listening
- Sharing the air/taking turns talking
- Giving advice to fellow group members vs. sharing and relating personal experiences — "I statements"

Group philosophies:
- Talking about feelings/emotions is encouraged
- Respect for differences is expected
- Goals: exchange of information, support, ideas

Role of facilitators:
- Facilitating discussion among group members
- Focus on process, not content of discussion
- Do not provide all of the answers
- Do provide resources, referrals on where to look for information and encourage group members to do the same

Role of Group Programming Coordinator (distribute cards):
- Withdrawal from group
- Concerns/questions related to this or other programming

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

MEET & GREET QUESTIONNAIRE (SAMPLE)

Monday Evening Support Group

Monday October 19 – Monday December 21, 2009

Facilitators' Names, Ext. 408

Have you ever participated in a support group before? If YES, what was the experience like for you? If NO, how did you come to choose to participate in a support group?

What appeals to you about this group?

What are three things you hope to get out of this group?

1)

2)

3)

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

What can we as facilitators do to help you achieve your goals and make you feel that your participation in this group was a success?

Are there any worries or concerns you have about participating in this group?

Are there any specific issues or topics you would like to have addressed in this group?

Do you have any questions for us?

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Support Group Session Report (SAMPLE)

Group:	Session #:
Facilitators:	Date:
Topic:	Guest Speaker:
Members present:	Members absent:

Topics/issues covered in this session:

Are there any issues or concerns that arose in this session?

Comment on this session's group process – what worked well, what difficulties arose, conflict between group members, connections between group members, facilitation issues, etc.:

Are there any resources your group needs?

Are you encountering any situations which could be addressed through further training opportunities (skills and/or information-based)?

Page 68

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Volunteer Support Group Facilitator Supervision (SAMPLE)

Volunteer Name: _____

Supervisor Name: _____

Date of Supervision: _____

Current Volunteer Status: _____

Areas of Strength   **Areas of Potential Growth**

Part One: Volunteer Feedback (To be completed by the volunteer)

What I am doing well as a facilitator: 1. 2. 3.	What concerns/wishes I have for myself as a facilitator: 1. 2. 3.
What works well for me about the support group program: 1. 2.	What concerns/wishes I have about the support group program: 1. 2.

Part Two: Supervisor Feedback (To be completed by the Group Programming Coordinator)

What I see you doing well as facilitator: 1. 2.	My wishes for you as a facilitator are: 1. 2.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

3.	3.
Training and Professional Development Opportunities Completed: 1. 2.	Training and Professional Development Opportunities Recommended: 1. 2.

Part Three: Comments (to be completed during supervision)

Volunteer Signature: _____

Group Programming Coordinator Signature:_____

Date & Time of Next Supervision: _____

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

APPENDICES

- SUGGESTED READINGS
- FACILITATOR TOOL BOX

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

SUGGESTED READINGS

There are lots of books and articles about groups, group process, and group skills. Here are a few resources worth checking out:

Irvin D. Yalom, *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*. **4th ed. Basic Books. New York, 1995.**

Although this book is about psychotherapy groups, it is an excellent source of information, much of which can be appropriately modified to suit support groups. Yalom is widely considered to be the authority on group psychotherapy, but he has a definite psychoanalytic bias. If you are not a fan of psychoanalysis, prepare yourself for a provocative read!

Lawrence Shulman, *The Skills of Helping Individuals and Groups*. **PE. Peacock Publishers Inc. U.S.A., 1984. (There may be newer editions)**

This is a great book with clear, usable descriptions of various communication skills and group work. Lots of 'case' examples help to illustrate skills and theories.

David W. Johnson and Prank P. Johnson, *Joining Together - Group Theory and Group Skills*. **6th ed. Allyn & Bacon. USA., 1997.**

A good overview of group theory and skills with lots of facilitation skill-building exercises.

Harvey J. Bertcher, *Group Participation - Techniques for Leaders and Members*. **Sage Publications. USA., 1979.**

An oldie but a goodie! Clear, basic descriptions of the skills and tasks related to group work.

Alex Gitterman and Lawrence Shulman, *Mutual Aid Groups and the Life Cycle*. **PB. Peacock Publishers Inc. USA., 1986.**

The first chapter of this book describes some of the basic theoretical components associated with the Mutual Aid model. Case examples of group work with a variety of populations are presented.

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

TOOLS AND TIPS FOR SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATORS
"TOOL BOX"

Active listening
- Rephrasing
- Checking out/asking
- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing
- Clarifying
- Open- & closed-ended questions
- Body language/facial expressions
- Helps members to feel heard and understood

Bridging & Connecting
- Pointing out connections between group members
- Summarizing common themes
- Re-engaging the group in discussion
- Reduces isolation and helps to normalize experiences

Working with emotion & reflecting feelings
- Encouraging expression and exploration
- Respecting personal boundaries
- Listening for feeling words
- Naming the feelings and clarifying, then putting it to the group

Process Comments/Putting it back to the group
- Focusing on the "how" in the group
- Puts the power back to the group

Norms
- Redirects/focuses group
- Reinforces a structure
- Can often help with challenging situations in groups
- Helps to create safety in the group

Check Ins
- Can help to set agenda topics for evening
- Indicator of emotion in the room
- Brings everyone into the "here and now"

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATION TRAINING MANUAL

Structured Feedback
- Sets a tone for how to talk to each other
- Encourages a strength-based approach by pointing out helpful traits
- Helps members to "own" their words

Closure
- Using regular reminders
- Connecting the group experience to the personal environment
- Supporting/encouraging emotion around loss/closure
- Offers an opportunity to explore "unfinished business"

Working with a Co-Facilitator
- Can help to balance out skills
- Can help if there is a safety or security issue in the space
- Can offer support to each other
- Can offer more attention to the group