

Lay Counselling

A Trainer's Manual

Psychosocial Centre



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

WARTRAUMA
FOUNDATION



Danish Cancer Society




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INTRODUCING

‘LAY COUNSELLING: A TRAINER’S MANUAL’

Social and humanitarian organisations provide support to people affected by crisis events all across the globe every day. They respond to human suffering in many different ways, assisting people affected by disasters or other critical events, people suffering from loss or serious illnesses, and people living in isolation or being stigmatised.

Lay counselling – psychosocial support provided by staff or volunteers who do not have a mental health background or formal degree in counselling – is often used to assist people in need. Although lay counselling should never replace professional counselling, thousands of lay counsellors provide an important service to vulnerable people and to their organisations – and sometimes in areas and situations where no professional counselling is available. Therefore, it is important that lay counsellors are well prepared, well trained and effective.

The skills required of lay counsellors will differ depending on the setting in which they are working. For example, counselling on a phone line for people at risk of suicide will be different from helping in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, which will again differ from counselling people living with serious illnesses, such as cancer or HIV.

However, the organisations behind this manual believe that certain skills are *generic and apply to all lay counsellors*, whatever support they provide. **Lay Counselling: A Trainer’s Manual** sets out a two-day generic training workshop, with material applicable to all counselling contexts.

Trainers are encouraged to adapt or add modules to make the training specific to an organisation’s needs and the knowledge and skills required of lay counsellors in a particular context. Additional material accompanying this guide includes a set of PowerPoint slides and additional training activities.

These materials are available online at <http://www.pscentre.org>.

Lay Counselling: A Trainer’s Manual has been developed by the Danish Cancer Society, the War Trauma Foundation in the Netherlands, the University of Innsbruck, Austria and the Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, based in Copenhagen. It is based on our own, evidence-informed practice over many decades in lay counselling and psychosocial work, and has been researched and field-tested before publication. We hope it will extend knowledge about best practice in lay counselling and will be useful to you and your organisation.



Danish Cancer Society



Psychosocial Centre



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Introduction to the Manual

SECTION 1

1. Introduction to the Manual

1.1 Aim of the manual

This training manual is designed for trainers of lay counsellors to deliver a 2-day basic training. The training aims to give participants an understanding of what lay counselling is and the skills required. It sets out the role and responsibilities of lay counsellors and the organisations within which they work. By the end of the training, participants will have developed a range of listening and responding skills and have insight into the values, ethics and boundaries of their work as lay counsellors.

We have chosen to concentrate on one-on-one adult lay counselling in this training manual, as we believe counselling groups or children requires additional training and skills.

1.2 Audience: Who is this manual for?

This manual is designed for staff or associates of organisations that utilise lay counsellors in their support to people in need. We recommend that trainers using this manual have:

- A professional mental health or psychosocial background
- Clinical experience in counselling and/or in psychosocial support to people in crisis situations
- Experience as a trainer
- In-depth knowledge of the organisation

1.3 Structure: How to use this manual

This manual begins with information for trainers on facilitation, organising the training and understanding the role and place of lay counsellors within the support system of their organisation.

Next, the 2-day training workshop is outlined step by step. Each module contains learning objectives, instructions, activities and key messages. Suggested times for the activities and sections in each module are provided as well as the expected total duration of each module.

THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS ARE ILLUSTRATED BY SYMBOLS



Learning objectives



Module duration



Activity and section duration



This manual covers the basic skills and knowledge we feel are necessary for lay counsellors to be able to perform their task and to work in coordination with other team members in their organisations. You can tailor the training agenda and materials to best fit the needs of your lay counsellors and organisation. For example, a number of case studies are used in the training. You can use them “off the shelf” or adapt them to reflect the

specific situations faced by help-seekers of your organisation. If you do make changes to the material, try to adhere as much as possible to the learning points described for the module.

The PowerPoint slides, hand-outs and additional training activities that are developed for the training can be accessed on the website: <http://www.pscentre.org>.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED IN THE MANUAL

Lay counsellor	Participants in the training who are non-mental health professionals providing psychosocial support services
Help-seeker	The beneficiaries of support provided by lay counsellors in their organisations
Resilience	An individual's capacity to recover from, adapt and remain strong in the face of adversities
Psychosocial support	Actions that address both the emotional and social needs of individuals, with the aim to help people use their resources and to enhance resilience
Significant life events	Any event that endangers the balance between a person and his/her environment, and that forces the person to face change and cope by learning new modes of action, feeling and thought
Traumatic events	Extreme events outside the realm of usual everyday human experience that threaten life or personal integrity, and cause feelings of intense fear, horror or helplessness.
Personal crisis	The felt experience of a person, arising from the experience of a significant life event or traumatic event, and perceived as an imbalance between the person's resources to cope and the stress of the event



COMMUNITY-BASED PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT - MODULE 3

Psychological first aid and supportive communication

Active listening is the core element of psychological first aid

ACT
• EMPATHY
• NON-

Being
The Trainer

SECTION

2

2. BEING THE TRAINER

On our life journeys, we are all shaped by our experiences. It is through our encounters with people and events of all kinds that we learn, grow, connect with others, understand the world around us and find ourselves within the world. The road we travel is not always a smooth and straight path; it can be unpredictable with challenges along the way. Some of these challenges are major events that evoke strong feelings and have special meaning for us and those close to us. They can cause great distress and may stretch our capacity to understand and cope. However, distressing events - when we are able to cope successfully with them - can also bring the opportunity to gain insight into the world, our strengths and what is most important to us in our lives. The lay counsellors you train will encounter people at these important moments in their lives – during significant life events that require change and adaptation, in the midst of needing to make important life decisions, or possibly after exposure to crisis situations. Through the listening and helping skills which you help them to develop - as well as their own natural helping abilities - they can assist help-seekers to navigate times of great distress and regain their ability to cope and recover.

2.1 Walk the talk

As a trainer of lay counsellors, you have the opportunity to model the skills and values that the training aims to provide participants. These skills and values include:

- Good communication skills, including active listening and reflecting
- Non-judgmental attitude
- Warmth and empathy
- Respect for the help-seeker and their ability to help themselves

You can model these skills and values both in role plays as well as in your interaction with participants throughout the training. In this way, the trainer can “walk the talk” of the important concepts in the training.

2.2 Creating a safe and supportive atmosphere

Training in psychosocial issues and crisis events has the potential to touch on the personal experiences of participants, including painful or traumatic events. It is important to be aware of this as a trainer and to take steps to create a safe and supportive atmosphere for participants. Consider the following suggestions for ensuring a mutually supportive learning environment and ways of addressing possible emotional reactions of participants during the training:

- Find out about the background of participants, if possible, prior to the training.
- Set ground rules at the outset of the training, such as respecting confidentiality, listening without judgment and being sensitive to the feelings and experiences of fellow participants.
- Explain to participants that it is useful if they become personally involved in the training, but that they should not go over their personal boundaries and comfort level in sharing their own experiences. Likewise, encourage them to respect the boundaries of other participants if they choose not to share personal experiences.
- If a participant becomes distressed during the training, demonstrate support and be available to offer additional assistance or referral as needed outside of the training time.
- Stop or moderate discussions or sharing of traumatic stories that are distressing to the group.



Consider that if a participant has serious emotional distress during the training, it is possible that they have not been able to resolve their own past experiences and may not be suitable to work as a lay counsellor at this time.

2.3 Providing an opportunity to learn

Remember, when organising a workshop, that the aim is to *provide an opportunity to learn*. Learning is not only about gaining knowledge, but also involves self-reflection and practicing skills – in other words, becoming a lay counsellor involves:

- Change in attitude
- Change in knowledge
- Change in behaviour.

This manual suggests a range of participatory learning activities, including short presentations, brainstorming, role play and group discussions. All these activities are designed to help participants understand the relevance of the training to their own situations, and to broaden their view of the work through interaction with other group members. The intention is for participants to share experiences and to stimulate reflection and awareness of issues they may face as lay counsellors. In addition, varying the training methods and reinforcing main learning points in different formats will help participants maintain their interest and integrate learning. There are three basic kinds of learning styles: visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning (see box). Most people tend to prefer one style more than the other two.

As a trainer this should be taken into account when planning a training module.

Adults, when presented with new information, do not automatically assimilate and apply it to their own world. Learning is about understanding new information, linking it to current and past experiences and adapting it to one's own life or work situation.

It is useful for trainers to consider the most effective methods for adult education, particularly for training that involves learning specific skills. Adults often learn best when the learning process:

- Starts from their own reality and builds upon their experiences
- Is relevant to their daily lives or work
- Can be put into effect immediately.

This is called a “learner-centred” approach to training, engaging participants in an active role in relating the training topics to their own life and skills. The trainer then functions less as a teacher (giving lectures) and more as a facilitator of learning by encouraging discussion and contributing new ideas.



DIFFERENT WAYS OF LEARNING

Visual learners

Visual learners learn best by seeing information – words and numbers printed in text form, pictures, maps, graphs or other visual aids. Visual learners can make 'movies in their minds' of information they read and often pay close attention to the body language of others.

Auditory learners

Auditory learners learn best by listening and talking – listening to someone present information and by being allowed to discuss the topic and ask questions. Auditory learners can remember quite accurately details of information they hear during conversations or lectures. They can carry on interesting conversations and can articulate their ideas clearly.

Kinaesthetic learners

Kinaesthetic learners learn best by carrying out a physical activity. These are the "hands-on learners" who actually concentrate better and learn more easily when bodily sensations are involved. They realise through doing – building physical models or participating in role playing is a good way for them to incorporate information.



Organising The Training

SECTION 3

3. ORGANISING THE TRAINING

3.1 Lay counsellors: Their role and place in the support system

In order to design an effective training, it is important for you as a trainer to understand the role of lay counsellors in the system of support in your organisation. The lay counsellor may assist help-seekers by giving comfort, listening, helping people to make informed decisions, and making referrals to other services or professional support.

The specifics of how lay counsellors work within each system differs between organisations. In some organisations, they may offer front-line support via a telephone hotline or first contact with someone in distress. In other organisations, they may be asked to provide support after the help-seeker is seen by other staff members, or may complement the support provided by professional staff. The place of the lay counsellor in respect to other support staff is important for everyone to understand, so that the system works smoothly and the lay counsellor knows their role vis-à-vis professional support staff.

The model below shows how a person may encounter a significant stress in their life that

exceeds their resources to cope with the situation. When this happens, they can feel distress. They may be able to manage the situation themselves by reducing their stress or strengthening their coping resources, leading to coping and recovery without seeking assistance. However, in some instances they may feel sufficient distress to seek help. The lay counsellor may be the first helper to interface with the distressed person. The support they provide may be enough to bring the person back into balance so they can cope and recover. But, if the distress persists, worsens or is particularly severe, the lay counsellor would then refer the person to professional-level support. As the trainer, think through this model in terms of the system of support within your organisation. For example, perhaps your lay counsellors provide follow-up support or practical assistance after a person has seen a professional counsellor. The important message is that everyone in the support system must understand the role of the lay counsellor, the limits of their role and how and when to refer to other members of the support team, when necessary to provide help-seekers with the level of support they need.

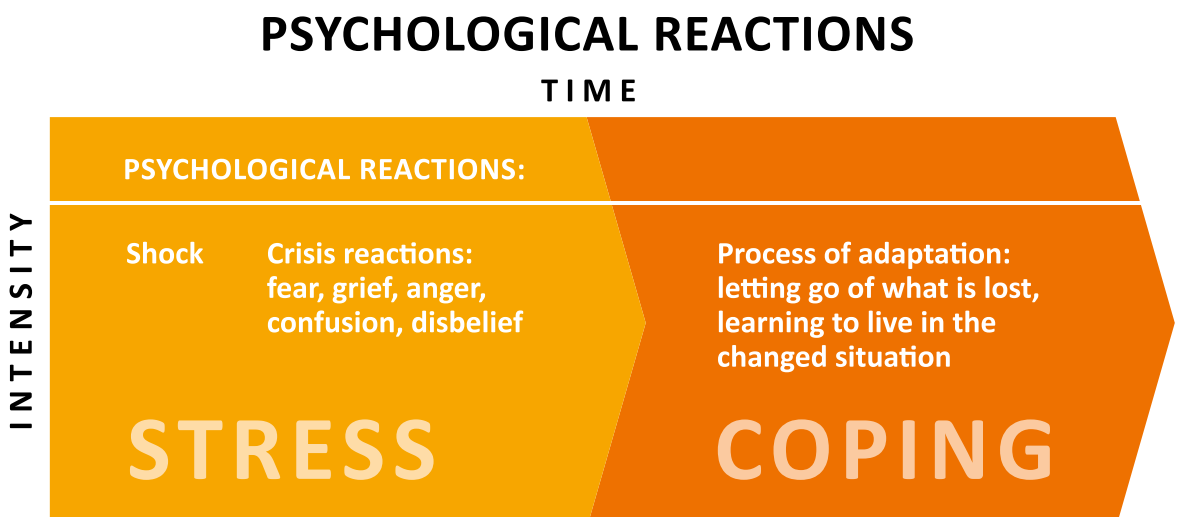




Photo: Mikkel Østergaard

3.2 Selecting participants

Each organisation will have a different process for recruiting and selecting training participants. It is helpful for the organisation to have set inclusion and exclusion criteria so that the selection process is clear. A candidate for lay counselling training should ideally possess the following:

- Knowledge of the organisation and its work
- Time and motivation to help
- Skills and experience in caring for others
- A clean criminal record
- Distance from own painful or traumatic experiences. Although there is no set time for people to recover from these experiences, it is helpful if participants are able to talk about their own experience without being overwhelmed.

An interview may be useful to screen appropriate candidates for lay counselling training – preferably face-to-face if possible. If possible, try to conduct the interview with a colleague to further ensure a fair selection process.

Rejecting volunteers

In order to maintain standards of good practice in your organisation and protect help-seekers from potential harm, it may be necessary to reject a candidate who does not meet the selection criteria of your organisation. For example, it is possible that:

- They do not fulfil requirements related to their background check
- They are felt to be unsuitable based on their interview
- It becomes evident during training, or afterwards when they begin working, that they are not suitable.

If you have to reject a candidate for lay counselling, try to be open and honest in your feedback. You may want to meet the candidate together with a colleague to be transparent in the process, as well as to debrief afterwards. If possible and appropriate, consider suggesting other volunteer positions in the organisation that the candidate could fill. In the end, keep the help-seeker as your main focus of concern as their needs for good service are paramount.

We also recommend informing participants in advance that their suitability for lay counselling will be evaluated during a selection process, during the training and afterwards during supervision. Try to hold a follow-up meeting after the training to give feedback on their performance, discuss any areas that may need improvement and/or to discuss whether or not to proceed. In addition, a supervision meeting within 1-3 months after the training is useful to discuss together if things have worked out as expected, and if both the candidate and supervisor are happy to go ahead.

trainer's notes on the topic, and activities to support learning. Any specific advice for the trainer is written in italics.

Suggested times are given for each section of the module. Try to use the working hours that people are used to locally and allow some flexibility in the schedule in case things get delayed. A series of short sessions is usually better than one long one. Remember to schedule free time for rest and socialising, and try to schedule active work after lunch periods when participants may feel sleepy.

Hand-outs and the accompanying PowerPoint slides are shown in the text so that you can see where they can be used in the module. If you don't have access to a data projector, you can print out the PowerPoint slides you want to use as hand-outs or copy the text onto flipchart paper. Some of the hand-outs suggested are specifically for your organisation so these should be identified in advance.

The PowerPoint slides, hand-outs and additional training activities can be accessed on the website: <http://www.pscentre.org>.

3.3 Planning the programme

When you are planning your training programme, consider what goals need to be met, and the level of training required for your group of participants to perform their lay counselling tasks.

The manual outlines a two-day training workshop in basic lay counselling, suggesting a timeframe and training methods. As the trainer, you can choose exactly how you deliver the programme so that it is relevant to your participants and organisation. For example, you can emphasise certain areas more than others or adapt materials to make them specific to your situation. The training activities and materials offered here are simply guidelines in offering basic training.

The two-day training workshop has ten modules. Each module has a set of learning objectives,

3.4 Organising practicalities

Knowing your participants

Before you begin the training, try to have as much information as possible about your participants. You may have this information available from the recruitment and selection process. If not, consider sending a questionnaire in advance of the training to ask participants about their:

- Age and sex
- Language proficiency
- Educational background
- Experience of working in the field of psychosocial support or related areas
- Experience with or knowledge of your organisation
- Expectations of the workshop.

Along with the questionnaire, general information about the workshop can be circulated, setting out the purpose of the workshop, location and any other relevant details.

It is best to have questionnaires returned prior to the workshop to allow time to make changes to the programme, where necessary.

Equipment

Think through what equipment and other supplies you need for your training:

- Laptop and projector, if you are using PowerPoint presentations
- Video or DVD players, if you want to show short clips featuring an organisation's work or a particular counselling approach
- Flip charts, markers, pens, post-it notes for group work
- Printed training outlines, background materials, folders.

Food

Be sure that food and beverages are organised and available in the training room. Be sure to schedule lunch and coffee breaks into your programme accordingly.

Room set-up

Think about how to set up the room. Do you want the participants to sit in a traditional classroom setup or in a U-shape, in groups or otherwise? Whatever arrangement is made, make sure all participants can see the trainer and screen/blackboard/flipchart easily. Sitting in a circle can be very effective when working with sensitive and difficult topics, as it puts everyone on the same level, reducing the power imbalance, which can exist in a training situation.

Also, think about whether participants should have tables in all sessions. Having a table makes note-taking and sharing written materials easier; not having one may encourage a more participatory approach and makes it easier to get up and engage in role plays.



Two-day training workshop



4. TWO-DAY TRAINING WORKSHOP

In the following a 2-day training workshop is outlined step by step. Each module contains learning objectives, instructions, activities and key messages. The PowerPoint slides, hand-outs and additional training activities can be accessed on the website: <http://www.pscentre.org>. On p. 88 you will find a detailed workshop planner.

DAY 1	Minutes		Page
	Lecture	Activity	
MODULE 1: WELCOME, TRAINING PROGRAMME AND GROUND RULES	60		24
1.1 INTRODUCTION	5	40	25
1.2 THE TRAINING PROGRAMME	5		26
1.3 GROUND RULES	10		27
BREAK	15		
MODULE 2: OUR ORGANISATION AND ITS TARGET GROUPS	40		28
	10	30	
BREAK	15		
MODULE 3: THE ROLE OF LAY COUNSELLORS	80		31
3.1 WHAT IS PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND HOW DOES LAY COUNSELLING FIT IN?	15		31
3.2 WHAT IS A LAY COUNSELLOR?	10		34
3.3 CODE OF CONDUCT, ETHICS, VALUES AND PREJUDICE	5	10	35
3.4 PERSONAL BOUNDARIES	10	10	37
3.5 WHEN PERSONAL ISSUES COME UP IN INTERACTIONS	5	10	37
3.6 CONFIDENTIALITY	5		39
LUNCH	60		
MODULE 4: REFERRALS AND REPORTING	25		40
4.1 WHEN TO REPORT OR REFER	5	10	40
4.2 HOW TO REFER AND TO WHOM		10	43
MODULE 5: COMMUNICATION – BASIC SKILLS	60		44
5.1 KEY ATTITUDES IN LAY COUNSELLING	5		45
5.2 HELPING HELP-SEEKERS TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS	5	20	46
5.3 ACTIVE LISTENING	15	15	48
BREAK	15		
MODULE 6: STRUCTURING A COUNSELLING CONVERSATION	45		50
6.1 THE PROCESS OF COUNSELLING	20	25	50

THE IMPORTANCE OF TAYLORING THE WORKSHOP

The sample workshop planner allows for 3 hours of training in the morning and 2.5 hours of training in the afternoon, with a one-hour break for lunch.

It is important that you modify the agenda according to your training needs.

DAY 2	Minutes		Page
	Lecture	Activity	
MODULE 7: LIFE EVENTS AND COPING	165		59
7.1 LIFE EVENTS	10	15	59
7.2 REACTIONS TO LIFE EVENTS: STRESS AND DISTRESS	15	10	61
7.3 RESILIENCE	15	15	63
7.4 COPING	10	15	65
BREAK	15		
7.5 GRIEF	20	10	67
7.6 SUICIDALITY	10	20	69
LUNCH	60		
MODULE 8: PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID (PFA)	60		72
8.1 PFA: WHAT, WHERE AND WHEN?	5	10	73
8.2 BASIC ELEMENTS OF PFA: SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION AND PRACTICAL HELP	10		74
8.3 STEP-BY-STEP PFA ACTIONS	5	30	75
BREAK	15		
MODULE 9: SELF-CARE	60		77
9.1 SOURCES OF STRESS		25	79
9.2 POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS: COMPASSION FATIGUE AND BURNOUT	10		79
9.3 STRESS MANAGEMENT		15	81
9.4 PEER SUPPORT	10		83
MODULE 10: EVALUATION AND CLOSING	15		84
10.1 EVALUATION			84
10.2 CLOSING			86

DAY 1

Before the day begins formally, welcome participants personally, as they arrive and register. Make sure that name tags for participants are available, together with any training materials that are needed. If appropriate, use first names during the workshop.

MODULE 1:

WELCOME, TRAINING PROGRAMME AND GROUND RULES



LEARNING POINTS

- **Get to know one another**
- **Introduction to the programme**
- **Agree on ground rules for the training**

Welcome

It is important to start the training on a positive note. Give participants the chance to get comfortable with their surroundings and have time to get acquainted with each other and you, as the trainer.

When a welcoming and supportive atmosphere is created, it is more likely that participants will develop trusting working relationships, and have the confidence to share ideas and participate in role plays.



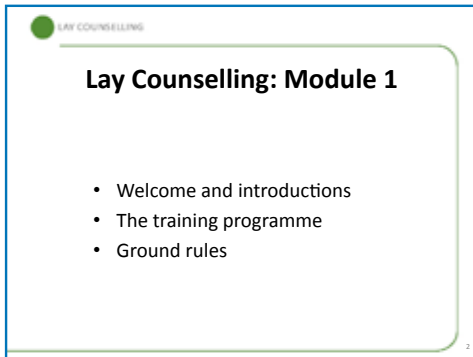
1.1 Introductions



Start by welcoming the participants and setting the scene for the training.

Use PPT 2: Welcome to introduce this module.

PPT 2: Welcome



You can model openness in the training right at the start, by introducing yourself personally - talking about yourself, your background, why you believe that lay counselling is an important topic etc. You could include a personal story about becoming aware of the importance of psychosocial support and lay counselling.

You can leave a ball lying on your table or hold it in your hands while talking, in preparation for the participant introductions activity.

There is a list of icebreakers in the additional materials available online that can be used as alternatives to the ones included in this workshop (<http://www.pscentre.org>).

Activity: Ball toss - Participants' introductions



Purpose

To get to know each other.

Procedure

Ask participants to form a circle.

Throw the ball to a participant. Ask him/her to introduce him/herself by name, explain their relationship to the organisation and say

perhaps one special thing about themselves (e.g. love to go hiking; crazy about beetroot; have ten cats. etc.). Ask him/her to toss the ball to another participant and ask them to introduce themselves in the same way.

When everyone has had a turn, ask the group to sit down again.



Activity: Interview - Expectations

As trainer, you need to keep a careful track of the time taken for this activity. Otherwise, the session will be running late right from the start.

Purpose

To share expectations of the training. This activity also gives participants an opportunity to practise listening.

Procedure

Ask participants to pair up with someone they do not already know.

Each person takes turns in introducing themselves and explaining their personal motivation for becoming a lay counsellor and what their expectations are of the training. Take 5 minutes for each person. Explain that once they are

finished, you will be asking each pair to introduce the other person (not themselves) to the large group.

After 10 minutes, call the whole group together and ask each pair to briefly present the other person to the large group and summarise their expectations. If you have a large number of participants, be sure, as a facilitator, to keep the feedback within time limits so that the exercise does not go on too long.

Wrap up

During this activity, as trainer, write up the expectations on a flipchart and take a few minutes to explain which expectations can be met and which cannot and why.

1.2 The training programme

Use PPT 3: Training programme.

PPT 3: Training programme

Lay Counselling		Training programme	
Day 1:	Modules	Day 2:	Modules
9.00-10.00	1. Welcome, introductions, the training programme and ground rules	9.00-10.45	7. Life events and coping
10.00-10.15	Break	10.45-11.00	Break
10.15-10.55	2. Our organisation and its target groups	11.00-12.00	7. Life events and coping continued
10.55-11.10	Break	12.00-13.00	Lunch
11.10-12.30	3. The role of lay counsellors	13.00-14.00	8. Psychological first aid
12.30-13.30	Lunch Break	14.00-14.15	Break
13.30-13.55	4. Referrals and reporting	14.15-15.15	9. Self-care
13.55-14.55	5. Communication – basic skills	15.15-15.30	10. Evaluation and goodbye
14.55-15.10	Break		
15.10-15.55	6. Structuring a counselling conversation		
15.55-16.00	Wrap up day 1		

Hand out the training programme if you have not done so before, and show the PowerPoint presentation. Briefly review the training programme and schedule with participants and ask if they have any questions.

1.3 Ground rules



Agreeing to ground rules at the start of the training is important in establishing respect and trust. For example, confidentiality is particularly important in any training on lay counselling, which will inevitably include personal sharing within the group.

Here are some basic ground rules

– you can add other things as suggested by participants, as appropriate:

- Mobile phones should be switched off
 - if this is not possible, ask participants to put them on silent mode out of respect for each other. If a participant is in the middle of a personal story, it can be disruptive and feel disrespectful to be interrupted by a ringing phone.
- Emphasise punctuality. Let participants know that the sessions can only start and end on time, if they return promptly from breaks and lunch.
- Explain that learning about psychosocial issues in the training involves learning about psychological processes and relating to personal feelings, experiences and memories. This can touch upon our own emotions, memories and feelings. Remind participants to be sensitive to this for themselves and for each other. Invite participants to feel free to speak with you if they have any concerns or feel uncomfortable with any topic.
- Confidentiality is a key issue. Let participants know that what is said in the room stays in the room. Some participants may share personal experiences or talk about sensitive issues. We must all commit to this ground rule in order to maintain confidentiality in the training group. Emphasise that confidentiality is essential, both when participating in the training and when working as a lay counsellor. (See code of conduct)
- Participants should be encouraged to share their views and concerns and be open to discussing different points of view. Through their contributions to the group discussions, participants will hopefully gain a sense of ownership of the process.
- Emphasise that everybody has the right to speak, but nobody is under any obligation. Some participants may not speak up regarding specific (sensitive) issues, but this does not mean that they are not listening or are not learning anything. Be aware of possible gender, cultural or other differences in how we communicate with each other.
- Although participants are encouraged to actively join in the discussion and sharing, emphasise that they should not go over their own personal boundaries and comfort level in sharing personal experiences with the group. Likewise, respect the level of sharing that others choose for themselves, even if it seems there is more to the story. This is also a skill to develop as a lay counsellor - the ability to be patient and allow someone to reveal their story in their own time.
- Respect and a non-judgmental attitude, as discussed later in the training are key to both the learning process and to lay counselling. Each individual member of the group should feel valued.
- Remember that, when talking about individual feelings and reactions, there is no “right or wrong”. The way we share our feelings and react to other people’s feelings is important. Although misunderstandings may occur, we will work together in the group to understand and resolve them.

MODULE 2:

OUR ORGANISATION AND ITS TARGET GROUPS

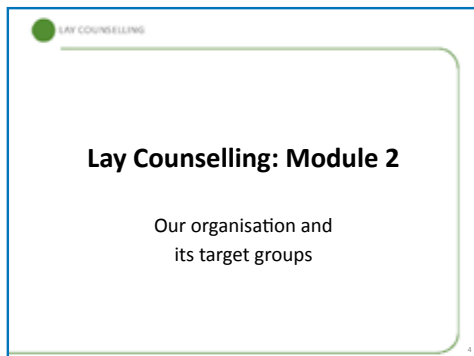


LEARNING POINTS

- Orient participants about the organisation
- Identify the needs of the organisation’s target group(s)
- Clarify the organisation’s expectations of lay counsellors

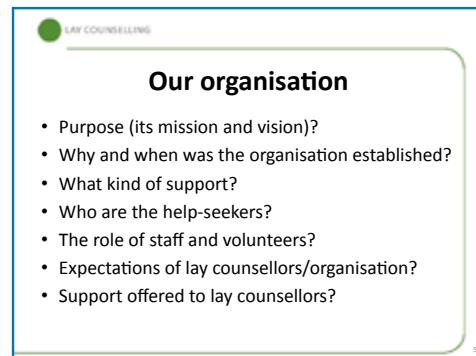
Show PPT 4: *Our organisation and its target groups* when introducing the module.

PPT 4: *Our organisation and its target groups*



Use PPT 5: *Our Organisation to support the next activity.*

PPT 5: *Our organisation*



This module orients participants to the organisation they are working with and the target groups it serves. It is important for the lay counsellor to understand the mission of the organisation, its values, who the help-seekers may be and the types of services that are offered. Explaining the work of the organisation puts into context the need for lay counselling within the organisation. There is a suggested outline for the module, but you can decide the best way to tailor this module to the specifics of your organisation. Be flexible with this module, and feel free to use other activities and materials if you prefer.



Photo: Danish Red Cross Youth



Activity: Getting to know the organisation

Purpose

To understand the aims of the organisation, who its target groups are and the role of staff and volunteers.

Procedure

Use the following questions to facilitate a discussion about the organisation and its target groups:

- *Who are the help-seekers of the organisation?*
 - *What role do staff and volunteers play in the organisation and how is the work organised?*
 - *What does the organisation expect of lay counsellors?*
 - *What support is provided by the organisation to lay counsellors?*
- *What is the purpose of the organisation (i.e. its mission and vision)?*
 - *Why and when was the organisation established?*
 - *What kinds of problems does the organisation try to address in providing support to help-seekers?*

Some organisations may make a contract with the lay counsellor that defines the terms of their work and the support that is provided to them in carrying out their tasks. If this is the case for your organisation, you may want to present and discuss the contract at this time.

Use PPT 6: *The people we help* to support the following activity

PPT 6: *The people we help*

LAY COUNSELLING

The people we help

- Characteristics of the help-seekers?
- Typical problems?
- What kind of support might the help-seeker need?





Activity: The people we help

Purpose

To identify the needs of target groups the organisation serves and discuss how lay counselling might benefit people seeking help.

Procedure

Ask participants what kind of needs they envisage help-seekers of the organisation might have. You could ask questions about help-seekers the lay counsellor may encounter, such as:

- *What is life like for (the help-seeker)?*
- *What would the typical problems be for (the help-seeker)?*
- *What kind of support might (the help-seeker) need?*

If the organisation has developed informational materials about their target groups and the challenges they face, this could be a good time to use them, or to show short videos, etc. Be sure to allow time for questions and answers.

Getting to know the help-seekers

It may be useful to invite a help-seeker who has received successful support from the organisation to tell their story to participants in the training course. They could be invited to talk about what life is like at present, what kind of support has been provided and what it has meant for them to receive the support. As trainer, you could assist by asking specific questions to direct the conversation or help the speaker to prepare beforehand. If this is not feasible, consider describing a case story here, but remember to ensure confidentiality.

Wrap up

Explain that, during this training, we will touch on how we can best meet the needs of the help-seekers. We will also discuss the role of a lay counsellor, as well as how to take care of ourselves when doing lay counselling.

MODULE 3:

THE ROLE OF LAY COUNSELLORS



LEARNING POINTS

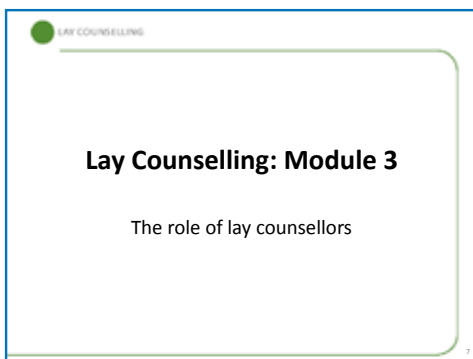
- Understand psychosocial support as a framework for lay counselling
- Be clear about the role and responsibility of lay counsellors
- Understand code of conduct, ethics and values, personal biases and prejudices, and the principle of confidentiality
- Recognise how personal issues of the lay counsellor may impact on interactions with help-seekers.

3.1 What is psychosocial support and how does lay counselling fit in?



Use PPT 7: *The role of lay counsellors*.

PPT 7: *The role of lay counsellors*



This is a short presentation on psychosocial support. You can use a data projector, printed hand-outs or flipchart paper to show the definitions in the box below and the pyramid below.

Before going into details about lay counselling, it is important to lay the foundations and explain what psychosocial support is and where lay counselling fits in.

Use PPT 8 and PPT 9 when going through the following.

Psychosocial support helps people recover after a personal crisis has disrupted their lives. It refers to the actions that address both the social and psychological needs of individuals, families and communities. Psychological and social dimensions of people's support needs are explained further in the box below.

Psychosocial support aims at enhancing the ability of people to bounce back and restore normality after adverse experiences. It can prevent distress and suffering from developing into something more severe and helps to overcome difficult life situations. Psychosocial activities may include practical and emotional assistance, helping people to make informed decisions, and helping to mobilise social support systems.

(Also available as PPT 8)

Psychosocial support:

Actions that address the social and psychological needs of individuals, families and communities and that aim to enhance the ability of people to bounce back and restore normality after adverse experiences

Psychosocial dimensions of people's needs for support:

Psychological dimensions = emotions, thought processes, feelings and internal reactions

Social dimensions = relationships, family and community networks, social values and cultural practices

IASC Intervention pyramid for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies

(Also available as PPT 9)



People are affected in different ways by significant life events and crises and require different kinds of support: some require professional psychological help while others find support within their social networks or through other types of services. The different types of support that people may need can be illustrated by a pyramid:



You can use the IASC diagram to stimulate a discussion on where lay counselling could be provided.

The bottom layer includes basic services and security necessary for the wellbeing of all persons, such as food, shelter, water and health care. If these basic needs are disrupted, a lay counsellor may help distressed people to connect with these kinds of services.

Lay counsellors may work in 'community and family support' and 'focused, non-specialised support.' Community and family support includes helping people to activate their own social support systems. This may include strengthening community support through women's groups and youth clubs, helping people to find loved ones after a disaster through family tracing and reunification, or communal mourning or healing events after a disaster or terrorist attack. Lay counsellors may assist at this level in helping people to mobilise their support networks.

Focused, non-specialised support includes individual, family or group psychosocial

interventions by trained or supervised helpers, such as lay counsellors. This kind of support includes emotional support for people facing significant life stressors or who have been exposed to critical events, and can include psychological first aid.

As we move up the pyramid, we see all people need basic services and security for their wellbeing, many people will need community and family support to help them cope and recover, and some may also need focused, non-specialised support. At the top level of the pyramid are specialised services by professionals, which only few people will require.

The lay counsellor is not a professional, and so his/her role would be to connect people who need this specialised support with the appropriate specialists, such as professional counsellors, psychologists or psychiatrists. This can include people who are still experiencing significant suffering and are unable to cope despite the support provided in the other three layers of the pyramid. In the next module we will talk more about referral.

3.2 What is a lay counsellor?

In this section, you are introducing the role of the lay counsellor, laying the ground work for the rest of the training course.

The following information is taken partly from Section 3 of this manual about the role and place of the lay counsellor in the support system. Tailor the information you provide to participants to be specific to their role in your organisation.

Lay counsellors provide important services to people in distress. They bring their empathy, listening ear and natural helping abilities to their role. Lay counsellors often meet help-seekers at important moments of their lives – *give specific examples from your organisation here.* They can help in giving comfort, listening, helping people to make informed decisions and making referrals to other services or professional support.

Lay counsellors fit within a system of support in our organisation. *Describe here how this works for your organisation.* The place of the lay counsellor in respect to other support staff is important for everyone to understand so that the system works smoothly and the lay counsellor knows their role vis-à-vis professional support staff.

Lay counselling

A key activity in many humanitarian organisations is support to individuals in crisis provided by trained lay counsellors. It is likely to consist of active listening, information sharing, and support to make informed decisions, all with the objective of empowering the individual to cope with stressful and critical situations. If a person needs professional help, the lay counsellor can also assist with referral to the relevant specialists (psychologists, therapists, etc.) or services (social, legal, etc.).

Use the definition above and PPT 10: Definition of lay counselling and PPT 11: Objectives of a lay counsellor to describe lay counselling.

PPT 10: Definition of lay counselling



Highlight some key points about lay counselling:

- A lay counsellor does not make decisions for the help-seeker, but rather listens without judgment, provides comfort and assists, supports and empowers a person in a critical life situation to make their own informed decisions.

Photo: Claudia Janke/British Red Cross



PPT 11: Objectives of a lay counsellor

LAY COUNSELLING

Objectives of a lay counsellor

- Empower the individual to cope with stressful and critical situations

and/or

- Refer when necessary

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PPT 13: Do no harm

LAY COUNSELLING

Do no harm

Do not:

- break the rule of confidentiality
- tell another person what to do or how to solve problems
- probe too deeply
- show disrespect
- act as a psychotherapist
- give promises that you cannot keep

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- A lay counsellor listens and provides information.
- A lay counsellor helps people to prioritise their problems and to weigh the pros and cons of their decisions.
- A lay counsellor assists the person by referring them to other services, when needed.

Use PPT 12: *As a lay counsellor, do* and PPT 13: *Do no harm* as a basis for going into more depth with the main tasks for the lay counsellor and what not to do when counselling.

PPT 12: As a lay counsellor, do

LAY COUNSELLING

As a lay counsellor, do

- give emotional and practical support
- listen and provide comfort to distressed people
- facilitate self-help
- give the information that is needed by the help-seeker
- help people to access basic needs
- refer to more specialised care if needed
- help people to make decisions and to solve problems
- act with the help-seeker but do not act for him/her

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3.3 Code of conduct, ethics, values and prejudice**Code of conduct of the organisation**

Hand out the code of conduct for the organisation, if you have one, and highlight the main aspects.

Lay counsellors not only have their own reputation to consider, but also that of the organisation that entrusts them to be a representative. Acquaint participants with the code of conduct for the organisation and encourage them to discuss any questions or concerns about the code of conduct with their line manager or supervisor.

Ethics, values and prejudice

As a lay counsellor, it is important to be aware of one's own – and other people's – values, norms and expectations, particularly what each person defines as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This lays the foundation for a respectful relationship with help-seekers of different backgrounds and is essential for the lay counsellor to be able to provide effective support.



Activity: Filters

Purpose

To name and reflect on the filters through which we listen to and understand other people.

Procedure

Brainstorm with the large group about the filters we use to listen to people. Write up all the words participants say on a flipchart. If they do not mention any of the following, add them to the list.

- Gender
- Age
- Culture
- Educational level
- Hobbies
- Experiences
- Upbringing
- Lifestyle
- Spiritual beliefs
- Sexuality

After brainstorming all different kinds of filters, discuss how they may affect the way lay counsellors listen to people.

Discussion points

Points to highlight in this discussion could include:

- *It is possible to unconsciously slip into your own biases when supporting a person from a different social background or culture, and in subtle ways communicate your disagreement with their religious beliefs or disapproval of their lifestyle.*

- *A judgmental attitude can communicate itself without words. For example, older people, lesbians, gay men and those who are not in a long-term relationship may not mention sexual anxieties, if they sense that you will be shocked or will disapprove.*
- *Knowing a few facts about another culture may lead to wrong assumptions. Warn participants not to generalise because they know a little bit. In some cultures or religions, it is not acceptable to discuss personal matters with someone of the opposite sex, but you cannot assume that this is the case for everyone you meet from that culture or region.*
- *Remind participants that they should not assume that people whose first language is not the same as theirs cannot communicate effectively. The lay counsellor should concentrate on the person and listen carefully to what he or she is saying. If the lay counsellor still does not understand, he or she should ask politely for the help-seeker to clarify what is meant and also be sure to check if the help-seeker also understands the lay counsellor!*

Wrap up

Wrap up the activity by reminding the participants that we cannot escape the filters we listen through. Respectful and effective support can, however, be ensured by reflecting on the filters and the possible effect on the interaction with a help-seeker.

3.4 Personal boundaries



When working as a lay counsellor, it is important to be aware of personal boundaries and how they differ from person to person.

Activity: Personal boundaries



Purpose

To experience our personal boundaries and understand that personal boundaries differ.

Procedure

Pair up with another person. Experiment with what it feels like to stand an “appropriate” distance apart. Walk a little bit back and forth. Person A starts with defining what feels like the right distance to allow for the person to stay in his or her comfort zone. Then it is Person B’s turn. Take a few moments to find out what feels right.

Now change to sitting positions. Find two chairs. Person A again starts by defining the distance, followed by Person B. Each person spends some minutes defining the right distance. Spend five minutes discussing the activity in pairs and then share in a plenary session.

Discussion points

Ask the participants how they experienced the activity.

How close could they get to each other?

How did it feel to be at a certain distance from the other person?

Wrap up

Explain that personal boundaries are part of what defines you as an individual. They are statements of what you will or will not do, what you like and do not like and how close someone can get to you. Physically touching or not touching may be similarly sensitive, and is often influenced by someone’s culture, age and gender. Just like you have to be aware of the help-seeker’s boundaries, you should also be aware of your own in order to create a comfortable and supportive working relationship between yourself and the help-seeker.

3.5 When personal issues come up in interactions



Lay counsellors often have life experiences that are relevant for the work they do in supporting others. They may have lived through a divorce, experienced a loss, or had an accident or serious illness. All of these life events can be important to their motivation and for the way they assist help-seekers.

However, lay counsellors need to be aware of how they understand and have come to peace with their experiences, as these experiences can sometimes negatively influence the support they provide to others with similar issues. They may also hear about issues and problems from help-seekers that challenge their own moral standards and attitudes. There is a danger for the lay counsellor to unfairly judge the help-seeker based on their own biases or beliefs. Emphasise to participants

that, even though moral neutrality is important in providing lay counselling, none of us are truly morally neutral. So it is important to know ourselves, be aware of our experiences and beliefs and try to keep the best interest of the help-seeker in mind whenever providing lay counselling.

Sometimes, we are not fully aware of our issues or motivations – sometimes these are “subconscious” but they can affect the interaction between the lay counsellor and help-seeker. If these subconscious, personal issues emerge in interaction with the

help-seeker, they can cause distress and anxiety (for either the lay counsellor or help-seeker) and may influence the counselling session negatively. For example, lay counsellors may begin to act like a guardian for the help-seeker, or become so involved in their own feelings that they are no longer able to clearly understand the help-seeker’s needs. They may give advice that is too directive or inappropriate, or may not truly recognise the help-seeker’s situation, and capacities and resources to help themselves.

Activity: Dealing with personal issues



Purpose

To understand how personal issues can interfere with interactions with help-seekers and to reflect on possible solutions and coping strategies.

Procedure

Provide a case example for this activity. For example, create a scenario where a help-seeker is seeking advice around getting divorced or being cheated on by their spouse, and the lay counsellor identifies either with the help-seeker or perhaps with their spouse because of having experienced the same situation. Give enough details so that the participants understand the example well.

This can be done as a group discussion or role play.

If you are doing a role play, ask participants to get into small groups, with each group having a lay counsellor, a help-seeker and at least one observer.

Discussion points

Discuss the case, using these questions:

- *How do you think shared experiences might influence the interaction?*
- *How do you perceive the help-seeker, their partner etc.?*
- *How do you identify that there is a personal issue for yourself as a lay counsellor?*
- *What can you do if you realise your own issues are interfering with the counselling?*

Wrap up

Reconvene the participants in a plenary session to discuss how they experienced the exercise. Provide some advice on what lay counsellors can do in these situations, such as seeking supervision, or referring the help-seeker to another counsellor.

3.6 Confidentiality



Confidentiality is a core principle in lay counselling. Remind participants that, as lay counsellors, they should convey to the help-seeker that what is discussed will be kept confidential – with some important exceptions.

Important exceptions to confidentiality include situations where it conflicts with what is called “the duty to warn” or “the duty to protect.” These are situations where there is a possibility that the help-seeker will harm him/herself (e.g. suicidal), or others (e.g. threats to hurt or kill another person, abuse of children or the elderly), or when the help-seeker is unable to care for him/herself (e.g. due to severe distress or mental illness). If a lay counsellor learns that someone is in danger of being hurt or subjected to a criminal offence in other ways, it is his/her duty to act on the information and get in touch with the relevant authorities.

Likewise, if they learn from children that they are being subjected to sexual abuse or other criminal acts, it is the lay counsellor’s responsibility to report to the relevant authorities in order to protect the child from harm. *Referrals and reporting will be discussed further after lunch.*

Describe to the participants that confidentiality also means that you do not share with other volunteers in the organisation, or with your friends and family, any information about the help-seekers or their stories. Even if you do not share the name and other details about the person, little things may often give the person’s identity away. During supervision, however, you can discuss freely the specifics of the situations and help-seekers that you encounter in order to know how best to support them, to clarify your own role and when to refer, and to receive support for yourself with difficult situations.

Optional activity: Confidentiality



Pair up and spend 10 minutes discussing situations where it might be difficult for you to maintain confidentiality. Discuss if you can foresee dilemmas. Report back in a plenary session and clarify the duty of the lay counsellor in these situations.

Wrap up

Wrap up the module by repeating the main tasks of a lay counsellor. The lay counsellors can provide invaluable support but it is important to be aware of pitfalls and the scope of responsibility of a lay counsellor. An important aspect of lay counselling is to know the limitations of the support provided and when to refer a help-seeker. Referral will be dealt with in the following module.

MODULE 4: REFERRALS AND REPORTING



LEARNING POINTS

- **Recognize when, how and to whom to report or refer help-seekers who need additional or more specialised support.**

All organisations will have procedures and protocols for referral. As a trainer you need to be familiar with these before the training in order to facilitate the following module.

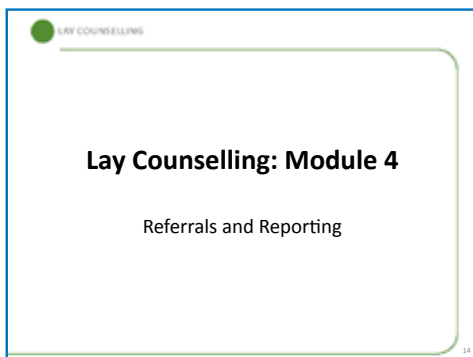
4.1 When to report or refer



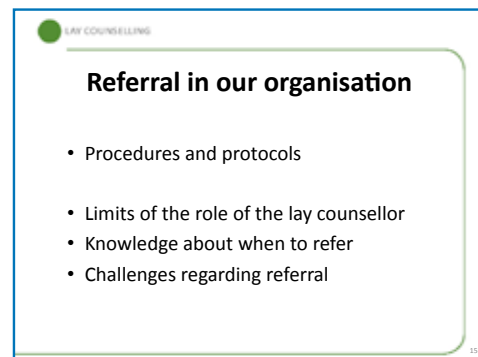
To introduce the module show PPT 14: Referrals and reporting

Show PPT 15: Referral in our organisation when going through the following

PPT 14: Referrals and reporting



PPT 15: Referral in our organisation



Explain to participants the system of support that is in place within your organisation, using examples of processes and procedures.

Knowing when to report or refer someone is very important. Lay counsellors need to be clear about the limitations of the service they can provide, as well as being aware of their own assumptions and personal issues, as discussed in the last module.

It is crucial that **everyone** in the support system of the organisation understands the role of the lay counsellor, the limits of their role, and how and when lay counsellors should refer. Sometimes the help-seeker is experiencing serious psychological problems and professional psychological support is needed. At other times social, legal, health or other services may be required. It is important for the lay counsellor to know the most common reasons to refer and the relevant providers/organisations to whom the lay counsellor can refer.

Suggesting a referral for more specialised help can sometimes be challenging. Many help-seekers are receptive to being referred to a mental health specialist, but others may have misconceptions, fears or unrealistic expectations regarding professional help. For example, some may believe a psychologist can read their thoughts or that professional help is only for “crazy” people. It is important to reassure help-seekers who may be nervous about a referral, and clarify what they can expect in seeing a mental health specialist. It can be helpful to encourage the help-seeker to write down the worries or symptoms they would like to discuss with the specialist, to help them feel less anxious.

If the help-seeker is very resistant to seeing a mental health specialist, the lay counsellor may instead be able to refer them first to their family doctor for help. In such situations, the lay counsellor might need to talk with a supervisor and seek information on the referral guidelines in the organisation.

Show PPT 16: Red Flags - Serious warning signs.

PPT 16: Red flags - serious warning signs

Red flags – serious warning signs

Is the help-seeker:

- severely disabled - almost unable to take care of himself/herself?
- harming himself/herself – self-destructive, suicidal?
- harming other people?

Remind participants that there are circumstances when action is needed immediately for people’s safety.

As described earlier, confidentiality cannot be maintained if the help-seeker is:

- Unable to take care of him/herself
- At risk of harming him/herself (e.g., self-destructive, suicidal)
- At risk of harming other people.



Activity: When to refer

Purpose

To make participants aware of the kinds of signs or behaviour that would make a referral to more specialised care necessary.

Procedure

Discuss the following question with participants:

What kind of signs or behaviours would cause you to make a referral?

There is a collection of case examples in the extra materials available online which might be helpful as a starting point for discussion.

Use the following to add to the list, if participants do not mention them during the discussion:

- Severe sleeping problems
- Uncontrollable strong emotions, such as severe depression
- Persistent physical symptoms that interfere with the help-seeker being able to function in his/her daily life
- Behaviour that poses a risk to oneself (e.g. suicidality)
- Behaviour that poses a risk to others (e.g. abuse or criminal activity)
- Extreme distress that has lasted for a long time without improving.

In some situations, the lay counsellor may be consulted by a concerned family member or friend who is worried about someone. The lay counsellor can ask the concerned loved one whether or not the person is exhibiting the kinds of serious signs or behaviours that warrant referral, especially immediate action. If yes, it may be necessary for the lay counsellor to seek advice from their supervisor in order to recommend the most appropriate steps to be sure the person will receive help, and that everyone is safe from harm.



4.2 How to refer and to whom

In preparation for this section of the training, have the following ready:

- Copies of the organisation's procedures for referral.
- An updated list of referral agencies with the necessary contact details.
- Documents that your organisation uses for lay counsellors to record their referrals. This usually includes a record of what the help-seeker has said, the action taken and the name of the referral agency.



Activity: Making a referral



Purpose

To make the participants aware of how to refer people needing specialised help.

Procedure

Briefly discuss the following questions:

- *How would you inform a help-seeker that you will need to report or refer?*
- *How would you make him/her understand that this is for the best?*

Give examples of how you can discuss these issues in a sensitive way. If, for example, the person needs to be referred to a mental health specialist, you might say something like this:

“Sometimes it is hard to tell people close to us what we are going through. This happens to all of us. Sometimes it is helpful for someone with an outside perspective to listen to our problems, in order to see things in a different way: experienced people who know how to deal with this kind of problem.”

Wrap up

Provide any relevant hand-outs from your organisation (procedures for referring, list of referral organisations, documents for recording a referral).

Highlight the main points in each document and answer any questions.

MODULE 5:

COMMUNICATION – BASIC SKILLS

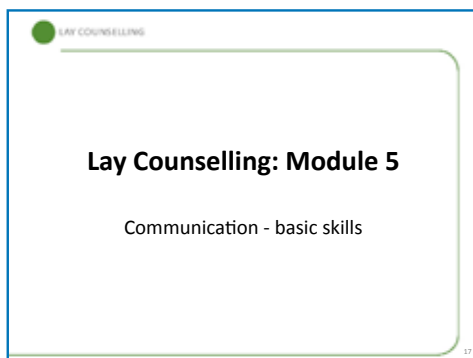


LEARNING POINTS

- Practice basic skills in lay counselling
- Learn how to accompany a help-seeker in decision-making,
- Understand and practise active listening

Use PPT 17: *Communication - basic skills* to introduce the module

PPT 17: **Communication – basic skills**



Good communication is the most fundamental support skill for lay counsellors. Learning how to listen and pay attention to the help-seeker is crucial. In contrast to everyday conversation, which is usually an active dialogue for both parties, lay counsellors spend most of their time as active listeners rather than talkers. It is the help-seeker who sets the frame for the dialogue and therefore is in focus. Learning to be a good listener is a skill that almost anyone can acquire through practice and training. Central to good listening is a set of attitudes that is conveyed when interacting with the help-seeker.



Photo: Mikkel Østergaard

5.1 Key attitudes in lay counselling



Listening and being present is a great gift that anyone can give to someone in distress. The aim of listening in lay counselling is to provide the opportunity for the help-seeker to express their thoughts and feelings in a supportive environment. The lay counsellor can create a supportive environment by conveying certain key attitudes that encourage the help-seeker to feel comfortable in sharing his/her experiences:

Show PPT 18: Key attitudes in lay counselling

PPT 18: Key attitudes in lay counselling

Key attitudes in lay counselling

- **Empathy** – to see and feel from the other person's point of view and understand what it is like to be that person
- **Respect** – warm acceptance of the help-seeker, meeting him/her as an equal human being
- To be **genuine** – to be true to oneself

Empathy is the ability to see and feel from the other person's point of view and understand from the heart what it is like to be that person. Responding to people's feelings with empathy is the most helpful way of supporting them.

Respect means having a warm acceptance of the help-seeker and meeting him/her as an equal human being. A lay counsellor should be open-minded, non-judgmental and aware of his/her own prejudices and biases so he/she can set them aside in the interaction. This allows the lay counsellor to listen effectively and not make false assumptions about the help-seeker.

The lay counsellor should try to give the help-seeker time and room to share emotions and thoughts, no matter what he/she gives voice to, and focus on whatever the person feels is a priority for them in seeking support.

To be genuine is the ability to be authentic, natural and true to oneself in any interaction. As a lay counsellor, it is important that help-seekers perceive him/her as someone they can trust. This does not mean that the lay counsellor should tell the help-seeker all of his/her own thoughts and feelings. Rather, it means responding in a natural and genuine way during the counselling situation. The lay counsellor should be aware of his/her own issues – emotions, opinions or judgements – that may come up during a counselling session, but the lay counsellor should not apply them to the other person. Rather, the lay counsellors should be able to balance his/her own experiences in order to stay with the other person in his/her needs, and still be human, real and authentic in the encounter.

Finally, it is important for a lay counsellor to listen to another person's thoughts and feelings (e.g., stories about grief or sorrow) with empathy, but without becoming overwhelmed by his/her own emotions. If the lay counsellor does find that he/she is becoming affected by the stories heard or is having difficulty remaining emotionally stable while helping others, then it is important to seek support from a supervisor. A lay counsellor needs to remember that this is something that can happen to any lay counsellor, and caring for his/her own wellbeing is also important in these situations.

5.2 Helping help-seekers to make their own decisions



Show PPT 19: Support to decision-making when going through the following section.

PPT 19: Support to decision-making

Support to decision-making

- Clarifying questions and providing relevant practical information
- Support to identify possible solutions
- 'Here and now' and try to guide to avoid life-changing decisions
- Accompanying, supporting and coaching rather than direct advice

An important role of lay counsellors is assisting help-seekers, who may feel overwhelmed by their situation, to make informed decisions. Lay counsellors bring their own experience and knowledge to the support they provide, but it is important they do not try to take decisions for the help-seeker, or take on too much responsibility or control in the situation.

Rather, it is important to empower and support the help-seeker to use their own coping resources to solve their problems.

Key points in assisting help-seekers to make their own decisions include:

- Asking questions which clarify the problem and providing relevant practical information to support the help-seeker in their decision-making process
- Supporting the help-seeker in identifying possible solutions
- Dealing with the 'here and now' and trying to guide the help-seeker to avoid making any life-changing decisions when they are feeling very upset
- Accompanying, supporting and coaching the help-seeker, rather than giving direct advice. To do this, follow what the help-seeker is saying and notice when they may indicate they are at the point of making a decision. At this point, you can reflect back to them the priorities and concerns they have shared with you in the counselling session to help them to be clear on their decision.



Photo: Danish Cancer Society

Photo: Ásta Ytre



Activity: Decision-making



Purpose

To practise assisting help-seekers in decision-making.

Procedure

Split participants into groups of three. One person is the help-seeker, one is the lay counsellor and the third person is an observer. The help-seeker has recently been diagnosed with a serious illness. However, there is a chance that she will be totally cured. The help-seeker and her husband are discussing with the lay counsellor whether they should tell their two children of 8 and 13, as the children sense something is wrong.

Let the participants play each role for five minutes, then swap roles, so that each participant has the chance to play each role. Let them choose another dilemma if they wish and if there is time for another role play. Spend 5 minutes discussing in a plenary session. Use the following questions:

- *Did the help-seeker feel understood and that good support was received? Why/why not?*
- *What kind of questions helped clarify the problem for the help-seeker?*
- *What was the most difficult part for the lay counsellor?*
- *What did the observer notice the lay counsellor did well? What could the lay counsellor have done better?*

Wrap up

Help-seekers will often feel best supported when the lay counsellor asks questions, which help to clarify the problem, and supports help-seekers in finding their own solutions. We will go into more depth about how to do that in the following section on active listening.

5.3 Active listening



Active listening means giving full attention to the speaker. This means not only listening to what is being said, but also listening to the ‘music’ behind the words and registering movements, body language, tone of voice and facial expressions. The art of listening, therefore, is to be able to distil the meaning both from what is said and how it is said.

What is active listening?

Brainstorm with the participants about what “active listening” means and how to do it. Write down on a flipchart all the words and concepts participants use to describe active listening.

Use PPT 20: Elements of active listening to wrap up the brainstorm and make sure the main elements of the concept are introduced.

PPT 20: Elements of active listening

LAY COUNSELLING

Elements of active listening

- **Trying to fully understand** the point of view of the help-seeker
- **Repeating** what the help-seeker has said and asking if you understood it right
- **Summarising** at the end what you have understood
- **Exploring** the emotional side of the problem well
- **Trying to find solutions together with** the help-seeker, **not for** the help-seeker

20

Active listening in support situations requires an ability to focus on the speaker and allow them space to talk without voicing one’s own thoughts, feelings and questions while they are speaking. Ask participants to think about the impact of active listening: Active listening makes the speaker feel that he/she is taken seriously, is being respected and is being treated as a full human being. When someone is given the opportunity to express their emotions and thoughts to another human being, it makes their difficulties seem somewhat easier to bear. It also can provide relief and further clarity as to how one can take the next little step to move on. In this sense, active listening provides a basis for the self-development of the help-seeker.

Use PPT 21: How to listen actively to complete the introduction to active listening.

PPT 21: How to listen actively

LAY COUNSELLING

How to listen actively

- Maintain eye contact (if this is culturally appropriate).
- Focus on the help-seeker and give them room to talk.
- Use clarifying questions and summarising statements.
- Avoid giving opinions, arguing or sympathising.
- Avoid being distracted.
- Focus on what the help-seeker is saying, rather than guessing or preparing for what you will say yourself next.
- Use your own body language to convey your attention.
- Use words like ‘yes’, and ‘hm’, and ‘go on’.
- Use appropriate facial expressions.
- Keep your posture relaxed and open.
- Be awake and attentive – maintain high energy levels.
- Allow time for silence and thoughts.

21



Activity: Active listening



Purpose

To practice active listening.

Procedure

Ask participants to pair up and decide who will be the active listener and who will be the speaker.

Ask speakers to choose a personal story from everyday life, that they feel comfortable to share and that is not related to a crisis event.

Ask listeners to give 100 per cent of their attention to what the speaker is saying, and allow the speaker to explore the topic in their own way rather than 'interviewing' them.

After five minutes, ask participants to switch roles with their partner. Repeat the exercise. End with a group discussion, using the following questions:

- *How was this different from everyday conversation?*
- *How did you feel when there were silences?*
- *Were you more comfortable as the speaker or the listener?*
- *What percentage of your attention were you able to give the speaker? What percentage do you usually give to people you are supporting?*
- *What stops you from giving 100 per cent of your attention?*

Wrap up

End the activity by summing up the main elements of active listening and the usefulness of it as a tool in psychosocial support.

Wrap up

One of the most important aspects of lay counselling is communication skills and how to support decision-making with active listening being a key tool. Besides knowing the relevant skills it is necessary to have a structure for the support given, which you will go through in the following module.

MODULE 6:

STRUCTURING A COUNSELLING CONVERSATION



LEARNING POINTS

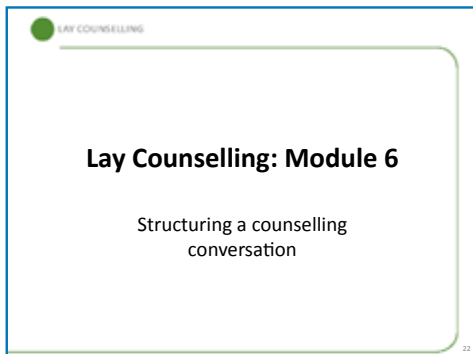
- Learn how to structure a counselling conversation
- Practise interviewing techniques
- Understand how to end a counselling session

6.1 The process of counselling



Use PPT 22: Structuring a counselling conversation to introduce the module.

PPT 22: Structuring a counselling conversation



A counselling conversation with a help-seeker is different from conversations we have every day with friends or family. The process of counselling usually has a structure, moving from opening (and making a contract when first meeting someone), to the stage of the conversation when the help-seeker is talking about their situation, and finally to closing.

Counselling is a process of building a trusting relationship, enabling the help-seeker to talk about his/her problems openly. The setting is therefore very important – ideally, a quiet place with sufficient privacy to ensure confidentiality and comfort for the help-seeker to share their story.



Photo: Magnus Bergström/Swedish Red Cross

Opening

Show PPT 23: Opening

PPT 23: Opening

LAY COUNSELLING

Opening

- 'Setting the scene'
- Contract or agreement

23

Encourage the participants to create a welcoming and safe atmosphere when meeting with a help-seeker for the first time. Greet the help-seeker appropriately (e.g. shake hands), introduce yourself by name and explain your role in the organisation as a lay counsellor. It is helpful to 'make a contract' to set out the scope of the support being offered. The contract clarifies the lay counsellor's role, sets out practicalities (for example, how often to meet) and explains what the limits are to the support the lay counsellor will provide. It may be useful at various points during the counselling to refer back to the contract if clarification is needed.

If the organisation has a contract form for the lay counsellor to use with help-seekers, have printed copies to give to participants. The text box below outlines some elements that are useful in a contract:

ELEMENTS OF A CONTRACT OR AGREEMENT:

- *Time frame: how often the lay counsellor and help-seeker will meet, length of sessions and an estimate of how long over time they will continue to meet (Note: in some organisations, it is not possible for the help-seeker to return and/or to see the same counsellor – this could be noted in the contract.)*
- *What will – and will NOT - happen in counselling sessions (i.e. what kind of support the lay counsellor will offer, and what services or types of support are NOT offered)*
- *The purpose of the counselling sessions as jointly decided by the lay counsellor and help-seeker*
- *Basic guiding principles such as confidentiality*
- *Potential for referral (i.e. when it is in the best interests of the help-seeker to involve someone else to help support them)*

‘Opening’ also refers to opening the conversation each time you meet a help-seeker. The start of the session is an important time, setting the atmosphere for the rest of the conversation. It can, for example, include summarising the conversation from last time and then asking the person how things are for them since their last visit.

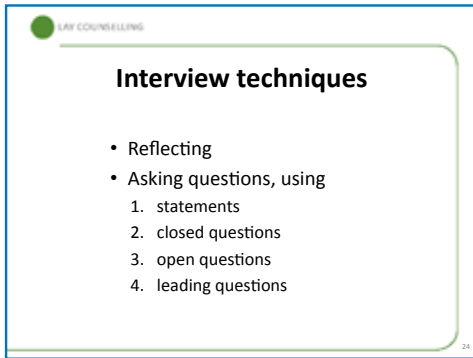
Ask participants what they think would be good ways of opening a session.



Interview techniques

Show PPT 24: Interview techniques

PPT 24: Interview techniques



There are various techniques the lay counsellor can use when communicating with the help-seeker in a beneficial way. Two fundamental techniques are presented below.

1. Reflecting

Enabling the help-seeker to express themselves by reflecting what they have said is a useful technique in counselling. Reflecting involves listening to what is being said, summarising the crucial thoughts and feelings being expressed and paraphrasing them back to the person. For example:

"I heard you say that you are thinking a lot about your son and that it brings up some difficult emotions. It seems to me that you are thinking about your son now. You looked sad when you were telling me about what he did last night."

Reflecting feelings is an alternative to the question, "How are you feeling?" Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments and beliefs can distort what we hear. Therefore, using reflecting we can clarify that we understand how the person is feeling and demonstrate our interest in their concerns. It is also an effective and supportive way to encourage the help-seeker to share more about their thoughts and experiences.

2. Asking questions

Questions can be asked in different ways. Both statements and questions can help in encouraging a person to express themselves.

Using a **statement** is a useful way of encouraging someone to tell you more:

"The more you tell me, the better I understand you."

"I would like to know more about that."

Asking a direct **question** also enables someone to tell you more. But there are different kinds of questions with different kinds of possible responses:

A closed question gives the respondent the opportunity only to say yes or no:

"Are you feeling better than last time we met?"

An open question gives the respondent the opportunity to answer the way they want:

"How do you feel today?"

A leading question has assumptions in it – it puts your words into the respondent's mouth, so the person feels forced to agree with you:

"Are you feeling very unhappy about your husband's death?"

Hand out the 'Dialogue example' to the participants (available online).

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

If you have time, you could do a short role play with a participant, demonstrating active listening, clarifying questions etc.

Recognising limits

Explain to participants that it is important to know and respect their limits as a lay counsellor, both for their own health and wellbeing as well as in the best interests of the help-seeker. Various challenges may arise in the counselling relationship. For example, the help-seeker may have unrealistic expectations of the lay counsellor – e.g. to solve their problems or to be available all of the time – or may become too dependent upon the lay counsellor. In these situations, recognise the boundaries and limits to lay counselling and try to find a solution. The best way to do this is together with the help-seeker: explore alternative possibilities, if necessary talk about referral (as discussed in module 4) and make a plan for the way forward.

Sometimes, the lay counsellor may feel overwhelmed by the help-seeker or their particular problem, and unable to help effectively. It can be that the lay counsellor's own issues are coming up, for example, and/or that the help-seeker would be better served by someone else (another lay counsellor or a professional). Explain to participants that if they feel overwhelmed in a counselling situation, they should be sure to speak to a supervisor to find out what the best solution may be.

In some situations lay counselling may not be appropriate for the help-seeker. Help-seekers may have expectations that cannot be met through lay counselling, or they may have difficulties that require urgent professional help, for example:

- The core issue is actually a social problem that needs to be addressed by other means.
- The help-seeker is dangerous to himself or others, or seriously mentally ill.
- The help-seeker has a personal agenda with the lay counsellor, such as wanting a romantic relationship.
- The problem is too big, and lay counselling is not effective and/or the help-seeker's complaints worsen over time.

Explain to participants that being able to recognise when lay counselling is inappropriate for the help-seeker is important and shows good judgment on the part of the lay counsellor. Encourage them to seek guidance from a supervisor in these situations for support in helping to end the relationship and refer the help-seeker to other services.

Endings

This section covers (1) ending a counselling session and (2) ending a counselling arrangement.

Closing a counselling conversation well is as important as opening the conversation well. The way lay counsellors handle the end of a counselling session or indeed the entire counselling process may determine whether a help-seeker will feel confident about acting on the support or information offered. It may also affect the help-seeker's feelings about contacting or using the organisation's counselling support again.



Wrapping up and ending a conversation in a supportive, open, polite way shows respect and empathy and lets the help-seeker remain in control. Summarising is a useful technique to draw a session to a close, for example:

“Let’s look at where we’ve got to and where to take things from here”.

At the end of a session, lay counsellors can offer to meet again and depending on the context, a plan can be made for more sessions.

Ending a counselling arrangement well means being clear about how (or whether) help-seekers can contact their lay counsellor or the organisation again. This depends on the setting for the work.

It might be possible to provide follow-up, for example by offering to phone in a few days to see how the help-seeker is doing or offer them an appointment to return. Knowing help will continue to be available can be comforting. People can encounter new needs and emotions, as they process the experience they have been through and adjust to changed circumstances. Checking in with the person by phone or face-to-face can provide an opportunity to assess what further support they still need.

Emphasise to participants that if they promise to follow-up, they must be sure to do so and be sure that it is feasible within the framework of their organisation.



Activity: A counselling conversation

Purpose

To practise a counselling conversation.

Procedure

Split the participants into groups of three with a help-seeker, a lay counsellor and an observer.

Use the case below or create another one that fits your target group (there are more case examples in the extra materials available online). Ask participants to role play establishing a relationship with a help-seeker. Ask the observer to note examples of good communication, e.g. making a contract, use of active listening and effective questions for gathering information in a supportive way.

Spend 10-15 minutes on the role play and 5 minutes on general feedback from the groups.

Case

Marcello, 18, has given up his training as a carpenter. He has never been a good pupil. His parents separated 10 years ago and he lives with his mother. He has always been anxious about exams and was very nervous and insecure when he had to take an exam. After giving up his training he has taken on different jobs, but at the moment he does not have a job. The relationship with his mother is very strained because of the situation. He does not have contact with his father. His mother wants him to go back to college. Marcello plays computer games night and day. He does not get up before midday and does not meet his peers anymore because he has no money. He feels depressed and thinks he is a loser. He knows he has to change something in his life but does not know how.

Afterwards, discuss the following questions:

Counsellor

- How did I begin? What did I say? Which structure did I give?
- How did I feel about Marcello?
- How did I adapt to Marcello?
- How did I feel in the interaction – what did I do well? What could I have done better?

Marcello

- How did I experience the counsellor in the very beginning?
- Did I feel secure?
- Did I trust him/her to be able to help me?
- Did I feel understood?
- Did I feel respected?

Observers

- What questions did you note that helped open the conversation?
- What type of questions did you notice the lay counsellor use and which worked well?
- How did the lay counsellors show they were listening?

Wrap up

As a wrap-up, gather the participants together and ask them how the session went – what they discussed afterwards.



WRAP UP DAY 1

Show PPT 25: Thank you for today.

PPT 25 : Thank you for today

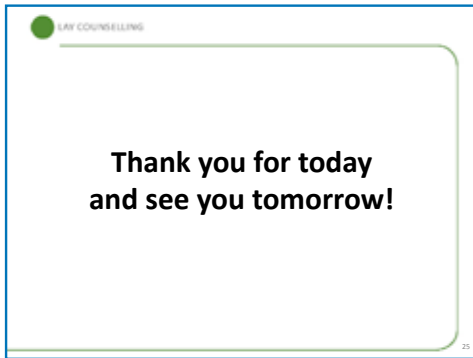


Photo: Olivier Nyssens

Activity: Wrap up the day



Purpose

To let the participants reflect on the day and end on a positive note.

Procedure

Ask participants to form a circle.

Ask them to throw a ball to one another.

When someone catches the ball, ask them to say one thing that they will take home from the day. It can be an “a-ha moment”, something that they found especially important, a lesson learned, a new understanding, a different perspective, etc.

Throw the ball to someone to start.

Wrap up

If appropriate, briefly respond to any significant points, concerns or questions raised, or defer these to be discussed on the following day. Say thank you for today and see you tomorrow.

DAY 2

WELCOME TO DAY 2

Welcome the participants to day 2 (PPT 26: **Welcome**) and ask them if there is anything they have been thinking about or if they have any questions regarding the sessions yesterday. As appropriate, respond to any significant points, concerns or questions raised from the previous day's reflection.

Remind them of the programme for today and ask if there are any questions.

Show PPT 26: Welcome

PPT 26 : **Welcome**

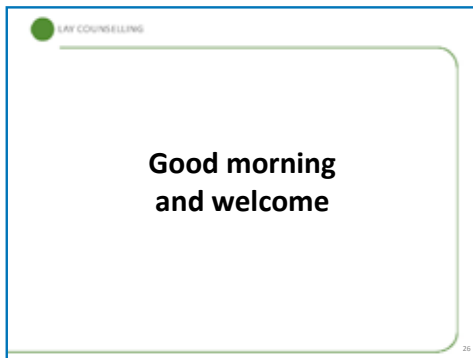


Photo: IFRC

MODULE 7:

LIFE EVENTS AND COPING

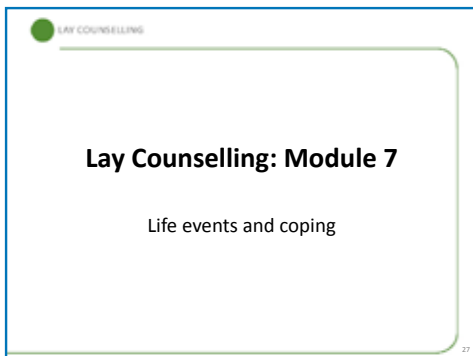


LEARNING POINTS

- **Be able to describe types of significant life events that may require help from a lay counsellor**
- **Recognise reactions to life events: stress and distress**
- **Understand the concepts of resilience, coping, grief and suicidality**

Use PPT 27: *Life events and coping* to introduce the module.

PPT 27: *Life events and coping*



7.1 Life events



Throughout life we have different experiences – we face luck and misfortune, adjust ourselves to changed circumstances, learn and develop. Many life situations are accompanied by uncertainty and stress, and some life events can be especially stressful. Everyone has resources, strengths, abilities and skills to deal with difficult situations and challenges. These are protective factors that promote hardiness and resilience, and are important to the way a person copes when confronted with demanding situations. Amongst other factors, stress and strain resulting from difficult (ranging

from irksome to horrible) situations can be seen as risk factors. The key to mental and emotional wellbeing is maintaining a balance in one's life so that protective factors outweigh risk factors.

It is not only the characteristics of a life event that make it stressful, but even more so it is the person's subjective experience of the event. Individuals may perceive the same situation very differently for many reasons, including the person's history of previous experiences, personality, levels of social support and life circumstance at the time of the event.

Before going on, ask the group to give examples of protective factors.

Different kinds of life events can cause different levels of stress:

A significant life event is an event that interrupts the normal course of our daily lives, and causes an imbalance between ourselves and our environment (i.e. social, physical worlds). The event forces us to face change and to cope by learning new modes of action, feeling and thought. The event itself may be perceived as pleasant or unpleasant, but it always brings about a change in our life.

Some life events can be particularly stressful, such as the birth of a child, transition of a young person to college, a change in jobs, sudden serious illness, marriage or divorce, moving to a new environment or the loss of a loved one. These events often change someone's normal daily routines and require them to adapt and develop new coping strategies.

Traumatic events are extreme events that are outside of the realm of usual everyday human experience, threaten life or personal integrity, and cause feelings of intense fear, horror or helplessness. Traumatic events can include actual or threatened experiences of serious bodily harm or possible death, witnessing these events happening to someone else, or hearing that a loved one has experienced such an event. These are potentially traumatising situations that can be associated with severe stress symptoms. Critical or traumatic events force us to face change in a much bigger way than other significant life events.

A personal crisis is the felt experience of a person – an inner process of questioning or stress – arising from the experience of a significant life event or a traumatic event. Someone in a personal crisis experiences an **imbalance** between their resources to cope and the stressors they are facing, as well as deeper questions about their life. They may ask themselves, “What is the meaning of my life? How can I live? How will my family survive now we have lost everything? What are the right choices to make? What values should I be directed by?” Every person responds differently to significant or traumatic life events, so the magnitude of crisis each person feels to a particular event can range in severity.

It is important for participants to understand that different help-seekers will perceive the severity or stressfulness of significant or traumatic events in their lives differently. No two people respond in the same way and any event has the potential of leading to a personal crisis. A crisis results when someone reaches the limit of his/her abilities and resources to cope with the situation.

Activity: Understanding significant and critical life events



Purpose

To raise awareness and understand the types of significant and traumatic life events the target group experiences that may lead to personal crises.

Procedure

Discuss with participants:

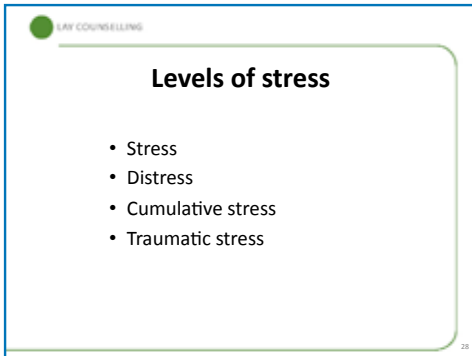
- What kind of events do the target group experience?
- Which are traumatic?
- What might make someone perceive an event as traumatic?
- What kind of resources or good ways of coping may they have?

7.2 Reactions to life events: stress and distress



Use PPT 28: *Levels of stress*

PPT 28: *Levels of stress*



Stress is a natural part of life. Normal daily stress comes from our environment (for example noise, extreme weather), from our jobs, from our relationships, and from ourselves, in the form of expectations, desires and ambitions.

Having some stress in our lives serves a purpose. It helps keep us motivated and active and mobilises our bodies and minds to react quickly in a situation. Sometimes the positive events in our lives can also feel stressful. Think about your first day of school as a young child, or getting married or moving into a new and better house. These are positive events but they also require us to grow and learn new skills so that we can adapt to the changes in our lives.

Distress is different. People may encounter a significant stress in their life that exceeds their resources to cope with the situation. When this happens, they can feel distress. They may be able to manage the situation themselves by reducing their stress or strengthening their coping resources, leading to coping and recovery without seeking assistance. However, in some instances, they may feel sufficient distress to seek help. The lay counsellor may be the first helper to interface with the distressed person. The support

they provide may be enough to bring the person back into balance so they can cope and recover.

Levels of stress may however become difficult to cope with. This happens in two different ways:

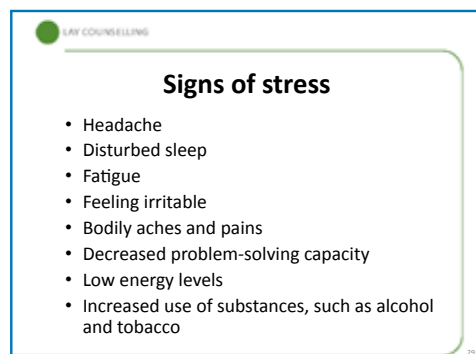
Cumulative stress: This happens when small stresses pile up, or when chronic stress is prolonged and there is no end in sight. For example, being chronically ill or caring for a chronically ill person over time can create cumulative stress. In the long term, cumulative stress can lead to many physical, emotional and relational problems for the person. “Burnout” is the term used when chronic stress symptoms take over and the person is unable to cope.

Traumatic stress: This is extreme stress that can happen around a traumatic event. The affected person may experience a ‘fight, flight or freeze response’. The symptoms may be severe, such as avoiding any reminders of the situation, feeling very jumpy and easily startled, and re-experiencing the event through dreams or “flashbacks” (a kind of awake dream as if the experience were happening again).

If distress persists for a long time, worsens or is particularly severe, the lay counsellor would then refer the person for professional support.

Use PPT 29: *Signs of stress when wrapping up the following activity.*

PPT 29: *Signs of stress*





Activity: Signs of stress



Purpose

To be aware of signs of stress

Procedure

Brainstorm common signs of stress in help-seekers or in peers.

Write suggestions on a flip chart and make sure the following kinds are mentioned (If they are not mentioned by participants, add them to the flipchart):

- *Physical signs, e.g. stomach ache, tiredness, disturbed sleep, low energy*
- *Mental signs, e.g. difficulty in concentrating, losing track of time*
- *Emotional signs, e.g. anxiety, being sad, feeling useless, anger or irritability*

- *Spiritual signs, e.g. life seems pointless, losing faith in one's spiritual or religious beliefs*
- *Behavioural signs, e.g. alcohol abuse (recklessness) and use of substances*
- *Interpersonal signs, e.g. withdrawal from loved ones, conflict with others,*

Wrap up

When wrapping up the activity show PPT 29: *Signs of stress*

It is important to know that most people cope and recover from significant life events – as well as traumatic life events – with time, using their own resources or with basic support such as help from a lay counsellor. However, if these signs of stress continue and worsen for an extended period of time (over 4-6 weeks) the lay counsellor should consider referring the help-seeker for professional help.

Use PPT 30: Common reactions to extreme stress

PPT 30: Common reactions to extreme stress

Common reactions to extreme stress

- Anxiety
- Constant watchfulness
- Startled responses
- Poor concentration
- Re-experiencing the event
- Guilt
- Sadness
- Anger
- Emotional numbness
- Withdrawal
- Disappointment
- Mental avoidance
- Behavioural avoidance

If you have time, talk about some common reactions to extreme stress and distress:

Depression

Depression is characterised by depressed or sad mood, diminished interest in activities that used to be pleasurable, weight gain or loss, agitation, fatigue, inappropriate guilt, difficulties concentrating, and sometimes recurrent thoughts of death. Depression is more than a “bad day”, it is a medical condition that can seriously affect a person’s life and their ability to function.

Alcohol/drug abuse

Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs is a common way that many people use to try to cope with significant or traumatic life events. People may drink too much or use drugs to numb themselves from the difficult thoughts, feelings, and memories related to the traumatic events in their lives. Although alcohol or drugs may feel like a quick solution, they often lead to even bigger problems in the end.

Panic attacks

A panic attack is a feeling of intense anxiety that may occur suddenly without any apparent

cause. Symptoms may include palpitations, chest pain, nausea, dizziness, numbness, hot flashes or chills, trembling, feelings of terror, a need to escape, nervousness of doing something embarrassing, and/or a fear of dying. An attack typically lasts more than 10 minutes. Most people who experience one panic attack will most likely have others.

Traumatic stress symptoms: post-traumatic stress disorder

Some people who experience traumatic stress (see description above) may go on to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is characterised by the persistence of the following three symptom groups at least one month after the experience of a traumatic event:

- Intrusions (thoughts, images, sounds and other memories of the event that cannot be controlled)
- Avoidance (of places, persons or other things that remind the person of the event)
- Arousal (a heightened state of being alert, jumpy and watchful of danger; often with sleep and concentration problems)

All of these three symptom groups must be present and the daily functioning of the person must be severely impaired to diagnose PTSD. If a person experiences these symptoms for more than a month after the event, he/she should be encouraged to seek professional help.

7.3 Resilience



Most people recover from significant or critical life events without professional help. They find the resources within themselves and their family and community to cope with difficulties. This ability to handle and overcome even very stressful life experiences is something that you have probably experienced yourself and have seen in friends and family members.

Resilience is described as a person’s or a community’s ability to absorb shocks and bounce back after experiencing a critical or traumatic event.

Resilience does not mean that people do not experience distress from the events in their lives, but rather that they are able to cope and recover using their resources.

What are the central elements of resilience?

Resilience is not a rigid trait, which a person has or does not have. In fact, everyone has coping abilities and these can be strengthened and promoted. But many factors influence how someone responds to and recovers from an event, such as the personal situation of the individual when the event happens, the individual’s personality and his/her history of other life experiences, and the type of event (e.g. its severity and magnitude). Personal attributes are important to resilience and helping people to cope with significant or traumatic life events. These include:

- The ability to make realistic plans and carry them out
- Having a positive image of oneself
- Feeling self-confident
- Having the ability to adapt easily to new situations
- Being able to deal with strong emotions
- Being able to communicate one’s feelings and thoughts
- Believing that change can happen

Resilient people also believe that they can overcome the event and that there will be a positive outcome. Resilient people often show pragmatic coping styles, such as “whatever it takes”. Characteristics of the individual such as self-enhancement, self-esteem, trust, optimism seem to be connected to resilience.

A person’s resilience at any given moment also depends on their environment and the community. Caring relationships and a network of social support from people inside and outside the family are central for building resilience. Others can offer understanding, companionship and support during difficult times. Resilience can be influenced by previous life experiences or exposure to critical events. People who have experienced other critical events and have recovered may be more resilient in overcoming similar events in the future. However, the opposite can also be true – if a person has not resolved or recovered fully from previous critical events, they may be more vulnerable to distress when encountering other significant or critical life events.

Use PPT 31: Building resilience to summarise.

PPT 31: Building resilience

The slide is titled "Building resilience" and is part of a presentation on Lay Counselling. It lists the following components:

- Information
- Expression of experience sharing
- Emotional and practical support
- Sense of safety
- Calming
- Community and self-efficacy (sense of control)
- Connectedness
- Instilling hope



Activity: Resilience

Ask participants to think about a person they know (or a person from the target group), whom they would describe as resilient.

List their personal characteristics, as well as the

characteristics of their environment, to explain the reasons why you chose this person.

Summarise feedback from the group on a flipchart.

7.4 Coping

Use PPT 32: Coping

PPT 32: Coping

LAY COUNSELLING

Coping

Coping is a constant process of cognitive (e.g. thoughts and knowledge), emotional and behavioural adaptation to deal with or manage unpleasant or even adverse events, states or situations.

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Coping is mainly about dealing with personal crises arising from significant or traumatic life events, as described earlier today. Whenever something unusual happens, people need to somehow make situations manageable, adapt to new circumstances and, after some time, return to a – maybe new and changed – mode of normality. Coping can be done in appropriate and healthy ways, but some people can get stuck in ways that might continue or deepen problems and make a return to “normality” very difficult.

When people in stress and crisis adopt a positive coping style, they tend to have a quicker recovery.



Photo: Erdem Coplen/Turkish Red Crescent



Activity: Positive and negative coping

Purpose

To reinforce ideas of positive and negative coping.

Procedure

Ask participants to come up with examples of positive and negative coping. Write their answers on a flipchart, splitting the page into 'positive and negative' ways of coping. Use the information below in the discussion.

Discussion points

In general, coping can be seen as successful/positive, if it helps in the process of:

- *Admitting that something distressing happened*
- *Finding a good balance between feelings and thoughts/knowledge about the incident*
- *Connecting to (significant) others*
- *Finding an appropriate language to think and talk about the events*
- *Integrating the experiences into one's life story*
- *Active problem-solving*
- *Eventually moving on and looking at the future, without being hampered by intrusive memories or having to avoid associations concerning the incident.*

Less supportive or even harmful/negative ways of coping can include:

- *Self-medication to numb uncomfortable feelings*
- *Alcohol or drug abuse*
- *Sustained avoidance, e.g. denial, excessively seeking distraction, never talking about the event, avoiding all reminders of the incident, etc.*
- *Social isolation*
- *Depressed mood that persists over a long period of time*
- *Aggressive behaviour.*

Wrap up

Explain to the participants that successful coping takes time. Intense negative feelings are common after someone experiences an extremely distressing event. Coping is about regaining control concerning these feelings – and not about making them suddenly disappear in a miraculous way.

Some examples to support healthy coping include:

- Ensuring safety and security by minimising further risks or potential stress.
- Keeping up daily routines to restore a sense of normality and manageability.
- Focusing on small-scale actions and work that can be handled easily.
- Seeking help and support from friends and family.
- Staying physically active (i.e. exercise, walks).
- Talking about one's experiences and trying to make sense of what has happened.
- Taking part in community life (cultural, political or religious activities) as appropriate.
- Setting goals and making plans to accomplish them.
- In the case of large-scale incidents such as a natural disaster, taking part in rebuilding activities or supporting others.

7.5 Grief



Very often, help-seekers experience grief due to the loss of a person, their health, their future prospects in life or other losses. Grief is a natural response to significant losses, and can be thought of as the price we pay for our ability to form loving relationships with the people in our lives. The better we understand grief, the better we will be able to help a bereaved person.

In this context, it is important for lay counsellors to understand that grief is not solely a linear process, meaning that a person loses someone or something and then gradually and steadily gets better. On the contrary, people in grief will often take two steps forward, then one step back, in their process of recovery.

People in grief have to cope with new and overwhelming emotions, as well as with new life circumstances. For anyone dealing with people in grief, it is important to be aware of the various ways people respond and deal with difficult life situations. When we lose someone or something of great importance to us, most of us grieve and some of us may experience a personal crisis.

Show PPT 33: *Grief*

PPT 33: *Grief*

Grief

- Grief is the reaction to the loss of somebody or something.
- One loss can lead to other losses.
- Grief is a process that takes time and involves learning experiences.

When going through PPT 33 explain the following

- Grief is the reaction to the loss of somebody or something we love. It can be seen at the price we pay for our ability to form loving relationships.
- One loss can lead to other losses, e.g. a critical illness can lead to job loss, loss of a sense of security, loss of finances, loss of social networks.
- Grieving is a process that takes time and involves learning to accept the loss, learning to cope with negative emotions, learning to cope with the changes that are brought about by the loss and learning to go on with one's life.

Use PPT 34: *Common reactions to grief*

PPT 34: Common reactions to grief

LAY COUNSELLING

Common reactions to grief

- Feeling depressed
- Change in activity level
- Restlessness
- Loss of appetite
- Sleeplessness
- Headache
- Disbelief,
- Problems of concentration
- Fatigue
- Crying
- Feelings of anger
- Estrangement

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When people experience grief for the first time, it can be quite overwhelming. They may come into contact with feelings they did not even know they had. The ability to contain experiences and reflect upon them is a central skill in handling difficult life situations. This can vary greatly from person to person and depends upon one's personal resources.

There is no timetable for grief. When someone is grieving, people around them may think they have recovered when in fact they are still in the process of understanding and coping with painful emotions. Additional support from an objective person – such as the lay counsellor – can help them to experience and process the pain they are feeling.



Photo: Todd Heisler/Scanpix



Activity: How to help a grieving person

Purpose

Identifying ways of helping.

Procedure

Ask the participants: How would you support a grieving person (what would you do as a lay counsellor)?

Write the answers on a flipchart. Make sure the following are mentioned:

- Express your concern (say you are sorry for their loss).
- Listen to the grieving person.
- Be fully present with the person (give the person your full attention).
- Offer practical support (ask how you can support the person).
- Encourage the person to continue to do activities they enjoy.
- Encourage the person not to isolate him/herself all of the time, but rather to continue to be with loved ones.
- Encourage the person to take breaks from painful emotions (e.g. suggest and encourage activities now and then to get a break and not dwell on the emotions all of the time).
- Help the person to accept the situation, and give encouragement that there will be happy moments and days again in the future.
- Support the person during anniversaries and commemoration days.

Wrap up

Summarise this section on grief, highlighting the following:

- It is important to reassure a grieving person that what they feel is normal.
- It is best if you avoid telling the bereaved what they 'should' be feeling or doing. There is no right way to grieve.
- Do not judge the person or take their grief reactions personally (grief may involve extreme emotions and behaviours).
- Do not pressure the person to 'move on' or make them feel like they have been grieving too long. This can actually slow their healing. There is no timetable for grieving.

7.6 Suicidality



Suicidality – when a person has thoughts about killing themselves or may have an actual plan to do so - is something that lay counsellors may encounter. It occurs in different situations, such as where a person is experiencing 'existential' suffering, prolonged grieving or depression. Explain to participants that if they believe that someone may be considering suicide, it is important to talk about this with the help-

seeker. Some lay counsellors may fear that if they ask someone about suicidal thoughts, they will put the idea in the person's head, but this is not the case! Rather, someone who is considering suicide is often willing to talk about their thoughts and plans, and may find it a relief to be able to share and receive help and support. The lay counsellor should refer the help-seeker for professional help as soon as possible. In this situation, it will be necessary to break confidentiality, as previously discussed.



Talk through PPT 35: Warning signs of suicide.

PPT 35: Warning signs of suicide.

LAY COUNSELLING

Warning signs of suicide

- Talking about killing or harming oneself
- Expressing strong feelings of hopelessness or being trapped
- An unusual preoccupation with death or dying
- Acting recklessly, as if they have a death wish (e.g. speeding through red lights)
- Calling or visiting people to say goodbye
- Getting affairs in order (giving away prized possessions, tying up loose ends)
- Saying things like: "Everyone would be better off without me" or "I want out."
- A sudden switch from being extremely depressed to acting calm and happy

Activity: Suicidality



Purpose

To learn how to assist a help-seeker who feels suicidal.

Procedure

Split the participants into pairs (one help-seeker and one lay counsellor) to do a role play: Explain that there are two aspects to the role play. 1) Finding a good way of asking a help-seeker about their feelings and if they have suicidal thoughts. 2) Practising referral to specialised help.

Role play for about 10 minutes

Instructions to help-seekers:

Think about the situation you are going to play (e.g., loss of relationship or job). Choose a situation that fits your target group.

When you do the role play, give hints about the problem you are facing and question "the sense of everything", but do not directly say that you consider suicide.

Instructions to lay counsellors:

Listen to the help-seeker and assess the scale of the problem. Ask about suicidal risk and try to come to a decision with the help-seeker about seeking professional help.

Discussion points

Gather the participants in a plenary session and discuss:

- *How did the counsellor find the session?*
- *Was it easy to recognise signs that the person was feeling suicidal?*
- *How did it feel for the help-seeker to be asked about their thoughts of suicide?*
- *How did you refer/were you referred for professional help?*

Wrap up

Emphasise that lay counsellors should never ignore suicidal warning signs. If a person shows signs of suicidal behaviour he/she should always be referred to a professional.



Wrap up

Lay counsellors should never ignore suicidal warning signs. If a person has suicidal thoughts, they must be referred to a professional. If this is the case, lay counsellors must clearly document the whole process of the conversation, the referral and the recommendations agreed with the help-seeker. If in any doubt whatsoever about a person's suicidality, lay counsellors should always consult their supervisor/manager.

If your organisation has a protocol to manage persons who are suicidal, be sure to explain this to participants and make them familiar with the necessary documentation.

*Law about handling help-seekers who are suicidal differs from country to country. Make sure you are clear about the **legal requirements** concerning reporting, referral and documenting what is done for people who are suicidal. For example, this may include the procedure for referring someone who is suicidal against their will for treatment, and informing them of your obligations to report and refer. Wrap up this section by providing relevant information about legislation and the responsibilities of lay counsellors and your organisation here.*

MODULE 8:

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID (PFA)

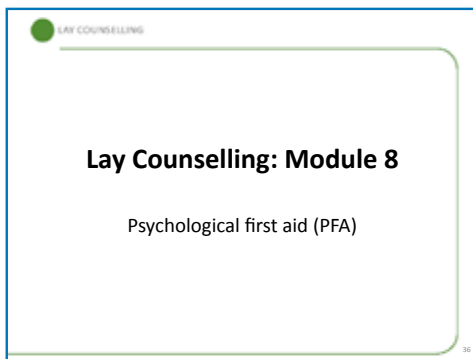


LEARNING POINTS

- **What is psychological first aid?**
- **PFA: When, where and with whom?**
- **Step-by-step PFA guide**
- **Basics of providing PFA**
- **Important things to keep in mind**
- **What comes next?**

Use PPT 36: *Psychological first aid* to introduce the module.

PPT 36: *Psychological first aid*



Lay counsellors may face situations in which they have to provide support to people who have recently experienced a critical event and are in acute distress. Perhaps they have been in an accident, injured or attacked. They may have experienced a natural disaster or fire, or perhaps they have just heard very distressing news of the death or serious illness of a loved one. Knowing how to provide psychological first aid will help lay counsellors to respond effectively in the situation. When someone has just been through a very distressing event, they may feel overwhelmed, vulnerable, anxious, uncertain or confused. They may experience sudden emotional upset, grief, anger or a sense of hopelessness, or even feel apathetic or numb. When someone is in shock or crisis, they may have difficulties thinking clearly and knowing what to do to help the situation and themselves.

Learning the principles of psychological first aid (PFA) will help lay counsellors understand the most helpful things to say and do, and increase their confidence in assisting people in acute distress.





Activity: When to use PFA

Purpose

To list the kinds of events participants may encounter as lay counsellors, where they could offer PFA.

Procedure

Ask participants to list the kinds of crisis events the people they are helping may encounter.

Write up examples on a flipchart. Use the list below to check that participants have covered the range of possible situations:

- *Accidents and fires*
- *Interpersonal violence (e.g. sexual violence, robbery)*
- *War and terrorist attacks*
- *Shocking news (e.g. death or serious illness of a loved one)*
- *Natural disasters.*

Then ask participants to think about and list what a distressed person in the situation may need **immediately**. In the discussion, emphasise that people in distress will be likely to need both emotional, as well as practical, support.

8.1 PFA: What, where and when?



The next three sections are an introduction to PFA.

What: PFA is caring support offered to people who have experienced a very distressing event or situation. It involves showing warmth and empathy and listening to them – skills and knowledge that lay counsellors also need to have for their usual tasks. However, it also may involve making the surroundings safe for them and helping them to deal with practical needs and problems related to the crisis event. With this support, the person can get stronger and regain the capacity to think and take care of themselves and others.

Where: PFA can be provided anywhere it is safe for the lay counsellor and the person seeking help to be. It may happen in a community centre, hospital or even at the site of a disaster or other crisis event. If it is at the scene of an accident or disaster, it is important for the lay counsellor to first take care of their own safety

and then the safety of the person being helped. If necessary and possible to do so, the lay counsellor should help the person to move to a safer place. Try to provide the person with a quiet place to rest and talk, and some privacy, as appropriate to their age, culture and gender.

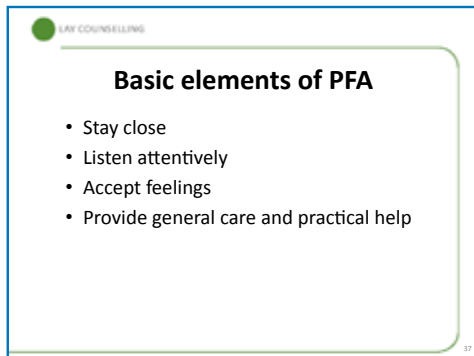
When: Depending on the type of work done, lay counsellors may meet people very soon after they have experienced a distressing event or situation, or some days or weeks after. PFA is usually given immediately for someone in acute distress, but may also be given later for people who are still experiencing distress or need the emotional and practical support of PFA.

8.2 Basic elements of PFA: supportive communication and practical help



Show PPT 37: Basic elements of PFA - use the notes below to talk about the bullet points.

PPT 37: Basic elements of PFA



1. Stay close

A person in crisis temporarily loses his or her basic sense of security and trust in the world. The world may suddenly seem dangerous, chaotic or unsafe, and the person may even lose their belief in the goodness of humankind. Lay counsellors can help the person to regain a sense of safety and trust by staying close and remaining calm, even if the person expresses extreme emotions. Being genuine, real and honest will help the distressed person to rebuild a sense of trust and safety.

2. Listen attentively

Taking time to listen to the person's story often helps the person to understand and come to terms with what they have experienced. Lay counsellors show they are listening by giving the person sincere attention, both with words and body language (see Module 5 on good communication).

3. Accept feelings

It is important to keep an open mind to what the person is saying and to accept their feelings and interpretation of events. Lay counsellors

should not try to correct the facts or judge the person's perceptions of how things happened. Having empathy and respect for the person will help in accepting their feelings. Demonstrating a sincere, positive regard for the welfare and worthiness of the person in distress is also important to help them recover.

4. Provide general care and practical help

When someone has experienced a crisis situation or is in shock, it is a great help if the lay counsellor lends a helping hand with practical things. This can include contacting someone who can be with the person, arranging for children to be picked up from school, helping the person with transport home, or helping them to get medical care or other support as needed. Remember, at the same time, to respect the person's wishes and not to take over too much responsibility. Rather, support them to regain control of their own situation, to consider their options and take their own decisions. This will help empower them to begin meeting their own needs.



Photo: Austrian Red Cross



8.3 Step-by-step PFA actions

Use PPT 38: *Step-by-step PFA actions* and use the notes below to talk through the bullet points. Distribute the hand-out on ‘*Step-by-step PFA actions*’, which you will find online.

PPT 38: *Step-by-step PFA actions*

LAY COUNSELLING

Step-by-step PFA actions

- Make contact
- Keep safe
- Provide quiet and privacy
- Practical comfort
- Listen
- Reassure and normalise feelings
- Help prioritise needs
- Connect with loved ones
- Give information

Step-by-step PFA actions

1. *Make contact*: Make contact with the person by introducing yourself (your name and agency) and saying how you can help.
2. *Keep safe*: If necessary and possible, remove the person from any dangers in the situation and from exposure to upsetting sights or sounds, the media or onlookers.
3. *Provide quiet and privacy*: Where appropriate and possible, find a private and quiet space for the person to rest, if they like, or to talk.
4. *Practical comfort*: Offer practical comfort, like a glass of water or blanket.
5. *Listen*: Ask the person if they would like to talk about what happened, and listen carefully to their story and any feelings and concerns they share. If they do not want to talk, just stay with them.
6. *Reassure and normalise feelings*: Reassure them that it is normal and human to have an emotional reaction to a very distressing event.
7. *Help prioritise needs*: Ask the person what they need, and help them to think through what is urgent and what can wait until later. Help them, if necessary, to meet urgent needs, such as housing or health care.
8. *Connect with loved ones*: Help the person connect to loved ones who can provide support.
9. *Give information*: Give factual information (i.e. names, contact details) about where and how to seek additional support.



Activity: PFA

Purpose

To practice PFA in a safe setting.

Procedure

Ask participants to break into small groups and give each group a case scenario. (*See online material for sample case scenarios. Try to use case scenarios that fit the organisation and settings participants are likely to encounter.*)

Ask each small group to role play the steps they would take in offering PFA to the affected

person in the scenario, keeping in mind the basic elements of PFA and step-by-step actions. Allow 10-15 minutes for the role play.

Emphasise to participants that they do not have to be perfect in the role plays. The most important aspect of PFA is showing genuine caring, warmth and concern for the person.

Ask for feedback after the role play.

Wrap up

Wrap up the module by asking participants what they feel is important to keep in mind when providing PFA. You can put these on a flipchart for discussion. Use the information below to emphasise the important things to keep in mind when offering PFA:

- Be trustworthy and follow through on things you promise.
- Never take advantage of the relationship with someone you are helping.
- Respect people's right to make their own decisions, and be sensitive to their questions and needs.
- Do not be intrusive or pushy, or force the person to tell their story if they do not want to.
- Keep confidentiality: keep private what someone tells you and the details of their experience, as appropriate.
- Know the limits of your role as a lay counsellor and when to refer someone for specialised support.

Hand out the PFA Do's and Don'ts

MODULE 9:

SELF-CARE



LEARNING POINTS

- **Recognise resources and potential sources of stress**
- **Identify personal coping strategies**
- **Understand the importance of peer support**
- **Recognise the role of the team and organisation in self-care.**

Use PPT 39: *Self-care* to introduce this module. This section emphasises both the lay counsellors' own resources and the organisations' resources regarding self-care and peer support. Talk about the importance of self-care using the notes below and then do the activity about personal resources.

PPT 39: *Self-care*

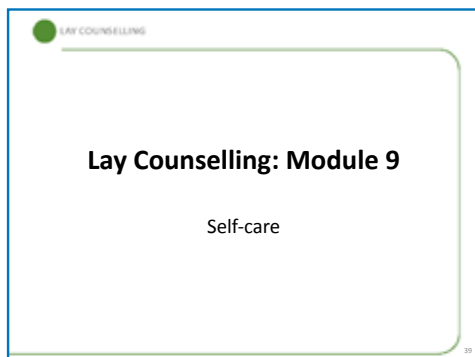


Photo: Reuters/Thomas White (Courtesy Alertnet)

Explain to participants that becoming a lay counsellor can have many rewards. The support and care we offer to others going through difficult times is important for the people we assist, and can bring special meaning to our own lives. However, the task also carries certain risks and responsibilities. We may encounter people in acute distress or with strong emotional reactions, and may hear very difficult stories of grief, loss or experiences of trauma. As helpers, we need to be deliberate about caring for ourselves so that we can be fully present and able to be there for others in distress. This means committing to the things that we know help to keep us emotionally and physically healthy on a daily basis. This can help us to be better prepared when challenges arise in work or life. We are better able to call upon our resources for resilience, if we have nurtured and paid attention to them on a regular basis.

Every person has natural resources for coping with life challenges. The factors in our lives that protect us when faced with stresses contribute to our resilience. One source of resilience is our own motivation for doing the work we do as lay counsellors. People who choose to work as lay counsellors are often motivated to help others through their compassion. Often, it is also because they themselves have been through difficult times and feel they can offer something useful to others in distress.

Compassion and motivation are sources of resilience. However, it is also important to look at our expectations of the work and to examine if they are realistic or idealistic. Keeping realistic expectations of what one can offer in the role as a lay counsellor and what one can expect in return from the work is a basic part of self-care.

Activity: My resources

Purpose

To raise awareness of participants' own resources for stress management.

Procedure

Ask participants to write down individually the things in their life that **sustain** them:

What resources do you have – within yourselves and from others – and what do you do to keep yourself healthy on a regular basis? What resources do you call upon, especially when times are tough?

Discussion points

Ask participants to share some of the things on their list. These can be put into categories on a flipchart, for example:

- *Personal resources: including our personalities/attributes, knowledge and experience, sense of humour, flexibility, ability to see people and events in a balanced way (not all good or all bad), being able to leave work behind at the end of the day*
- *People: including family, friends, co-workers, religious community, and supervisors or managers*
- *Activities: including exercise, eating well, resting enough, hobbies, yoga or meditation, prayer.*



Ask if participants listed something special or different for when times are tough? Check with them - in tough times, do you have to pay extra attention to how you care for yourselves?

Wrap up

Suggest that participants keep their list as a reminder of the resources and strategies they have for coping.

9.1 Sources of stress



Activity: What are potential sources of stress for lay counsellors?

Purpose

To make participants aware of sources of stress when working as a lay counsellor

Procedure

Ask participants:

What kind of stress do you encounter or imagine you will encounter in the course of your work? Think broadly - not only about the people you may be helping, but also what sources of stress might come from yourselves or your work colleagues.

List some examples on a flipchart.

Wrap up

Wrap up by adding additional sources of stress from the list below (if necessary) and continue to the next topics about the importance of being aware of the sources of stress and the risks connected to stress.

- Encountering difficult (e.g. angry or frustrated) or dissatisfied help-seekers
- Working with very distressed people
- Hearing stories of severe loss, tragedy or destruction
- Working with clients who might be a risk to themselves
- Encountering death or injury in the course of the work
- Having idealistic expectations of what a lay counsellor can do to help others
- Feeling one has to solve all the problems for someone they are helping
- Feeling guilty about paying attention to one's own needs for rest or support
- Feeling unsupported by one's colleagues or supervisor
- Difficult dynamics within a team or working with team members who are stressed.

9.2 Possible consequences of stress: Compassion fatigue and burnout



Use PPT 40: *Compassion fatigue* to explain the characteristics of compassion fatigue.

PPT 40: *Compassion fatigue*

Ask participants why it is important to be aware of the possible sources of stress.

One answer could be: being aware of possible sources of stress is important in order to avoid compassion fatigue and/or burnout.

Compassion fatigue

Compassion fatigue is a gradual lessening of feelings of compassion towards those seeking help. It can include feelings of helplessness or hopelessness in one's work, negative attitudes towards help-seekers and feelings of self-doubt or incompetence.

Compassion fatigue is a risk for lay counsellors who hear lots of stories of tragedy, loss or injury. It is characterised by a gradual lessening of feelings of compassion for help-seekers and can also include: feeling helpless or hopeless in one's work, negative attitudes toward help-seekers, and feelings of self-doubt or incompetence.

Use PPT 41: *Burnout*

PPT 41: **Burnout**

LAY COUNSELLING

Burnout

Burnout is a state of physical and emotional exhaustion due to chronic work stress. It is characterised by:

- Emotional exhaustion
- Depleted energy
- Loss of enthusiasm and motivation
- Lowered work efficiency
- Pessimism and cynicism
- Loss of a sense of personal accomplishment in one's work.

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Burnout is a state of physical and emotional exhaustion due to chronic work stress. It implies that stress has taken over and the person is no longer able to use their coping resources effectively. Burnout is characterised by:

- Emotional exhaustion
- Depleted energy, fatigue
- Loss of enthusiasm and motivation
- Lowered work efficiency
- Pessimism and cynicism
- Loss of a sense of personal accomplishment in one's work
- Changes in attitude or behaviour (e.g. neglecting personal safety or one's own needs, temper outbursts, withdrawing from colleagues and loved ones).

When burnout happens, it may be difficult for the persons to distance themselves from the situation or to recognise the signs of stress



themselves. It is important for everyone – including other team members and supervisors – to recognise and understand what is happening in order to support the lay counsellor.

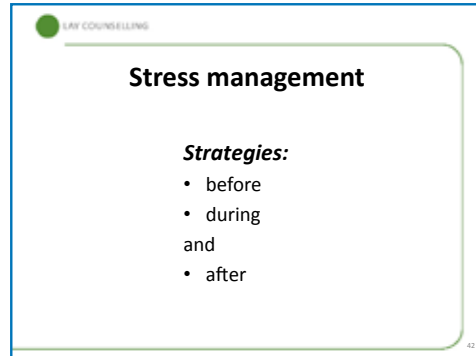
9.3 Stress management



Explain that lay counsellors can practice good stress management and wellbeing strategies **before, during** and **after** working with distressed people or in crisis situations.

Show PPT 42: Stress Management

PPT 42: Stress Management



Activity: Stress management strategies

Purpose

To raise awareness of different response strategies to stress.

Procedure

Split participants into 3 groups.

Ask group one to discuss: “What can you do **before** work to manage stress?”

Ask group two to discuss: “What can you do **during** work to manage stress?”

Ask group three to discuss: “What can you do **after** work to manage stress?”

Give each group around 5 minutes to discuss their question and then feedback to the large group.

Discussion points

Probe answers by asking the participants to consider what they can do to help themselves

during particularly stressful times (going back to the resources they listed earlier) and what they would need from their team and organisation during times of stress (i.e. what would be helpful for them). In the group discussion, note the range of strategies that can be helpful for individuals and teams, and the similarities and differences between participants’ responses. For example, one person may want to be left alone and given time to “cool down” if they are upset, whereas another would like to be able to talk to someone. Sensitivity to each other and flexibility are key to keeping a team functioning well together. Also note the different strategies for before, during and after working.

Wrap up

Wrap up the discussion by commenting on the different strategies that can be used and will vary from person to person. Distribute the hand-out ‘Strategies for stress management: before, during and after’.

STRATEGIES FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT: Before, during and after

Before:

- Knowing about potential stresses and risks to your wellbeing as a lay counsellor
- Maintaining healthy life habits (enough rest, exercise and good nutrition)
- Being aware of your resources for coping
- Honestly assessing your readiness to help others in any given situation (i.e. evaluating your own health and life situation to know if you are able to take on a helping role at this time)
- Attending briefing or training sessions to prepare for your role
- Having a clear job description
- Having clear lines of communication with supervisors and managers
- Knowing what support your agency/organisation provides and how to access it
- Knowing your team members and developing supportive relationships with them

During:

- Keeping reasonable working hours
- Having adequate working conditions wherever possible
- Watching out for signs of stress in oneself and team members and taking action to prevent more problems from developing
- Being willing to seek help from a supervisor or other support when you feel your stress levels are high, or you encountered a particularly difficult situation
- Being respectful, patient and understanding with other team members, particularly when working in very difficult situations
- Keeping reasonable expectations of what you can and cannot do in your work
- Attending supervision sessions and seeking help from supervisors when needed
- Attending any support sessions or team meetings to share experiences and feelings as the work is going on
- Leaving work behind at the end of the day or mission
- Taking your rest and relaxation
- Paying attention to and attending to your personal and family needs
- Talk to team members, friends and loved ones who can support you

After:

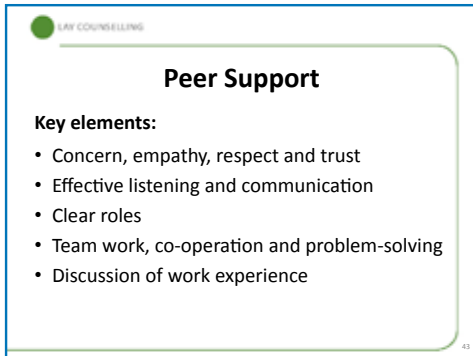
- Taking time to reflect on your experience and come to peace with any difficult aspects of it
- Making an honest appraisal with a supervisor about your work, acknowledging what you were able to do well and any limits you encountered
- Monitoring yourself and team members for signs of stress that may come some time after working in a particularly difficult situation or with a difficult client
- Attending any support sessions or team meetings to debrief, reflect and share feelings and experiences
- Seeking help and support (using resources provided by your organisation/agency or other sources) for any difficult emotions or signs of stress that you may feel after helping others
- Being willing to accept referral to a counsellor or professional if you or others notice stress symptoms taking over
- Take time to rest and relax after particularly challenging work periods, before resuming other work duties

9.4 Peer support



Show PPT 43: Peer support

PPT 43: Peer support



In addition to the ways in which we take care of ourselves, peer support is a useful strategy for coping and stress management amongst lay counsellors. Peer support involves support and assistance amongst team members at the same level.

As a lay counsellor, it is often helpful to know that other team members have the same feelings and reactions, worries or doubts. It is likely that the team members are also familiar with the work surroundings, the nature of the job and the particular stresses associated with it. Sometimes it feels easier to ask a peer at the same level for support rather than a supervisor or manager.

Together, peers can be creative in developing strategies that will work well in a particular agency or in a specific situation.

Peer support is an active process and requires peers to be engaged in supporting each other and creating the time and space to talk together about reactions, feelings and how to cope. The following are key elements of peer support:

- Concern, empathy, respect and trust
- Effective listening and communication
- Clear roles
- Team work, cooperation and problem-solving
- Discussion of work experience.

There are many different types of peer support, including:

- Buddy systems
- Group peer support meetings
- Trained peer supporters.

In all cases, peer support strategies can be very effective in creating a good, open working atmosphere amongst colleagues, where helpers feel understood and supported by each other.

Distribute the hand-out 'Peer support'.

Wrap up

Wrap up by explaining that coping with stress and maintaining wellbeing amongst lay counsellors requires everyone's commitment and effort – the lay counsellor themselves, colleagues and team members and managers in the organisation. Stress is not just an individual's problem. Everyone has a part to play in creating a supportive work environment, being understanding about the demands of the job, and treating each other with care and respect.

MODULE 10: EVALUATION AND CLOSING

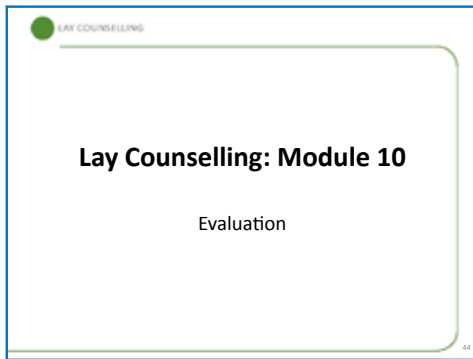


10.1 Evaluation



Use PPT 44: Evaluation to introduce this final module.

PPT 44: Evaluation



Evaluating the training workshop provides an opportunity for participants to give their feedback to the trainer, clarifying whether objectives were realistic and expectations achievable. Feedback contributes to the quality of the training over time and to the trainer's professional development.



Photo: Palle Krone



Activity: Evaluation

This can be done by using the evaluation questionnaire available online or by having a group evaluation session with participants. If you do both, hand out the questionnaire first - otherwise the discussions in the plenary session might influence participants' answers in the written questionnaire.

A good relationship with participants can enable you to ask for comments and to encourage constructive criticism.

Keep in mind that it is important to keep a record of the feedback given in a group evaluation.

Questions for a group evaluation could include:

- *To what extent has your knowledge of lay counselling increased?*
- *To what extent have your skills in lay counselling increased?*
- *To what extent were the goals of the workshop achieved?*
- *How accessible were course materials? What was particularly useful? What were the difficulties?*
- *What were you pleased about during the course?*
- *What suggestions do you have for improving the course?*
- *Name the three most important things you have learned.*
- *Name the one most significant experience you had during the training workshop.*

10.2 Closing

Show the final PPT 45: *Thank you and goodbye*

PPT 45: **Thank you and goodbye**



This may be an appropriate time to explain to participants what will come next in terms of an evaluation of their performance in the training course, how and when they will be contacted about or start their work as a lay counsellor and/or the process of supervision that may begin.

Activity: Saying goodbye

Ask participants to form a circle.

Throw a ball to one another and ask the person who catches the ball to say one thing that they will take home with them from the training. It can be an “a-ha moment”, something that they found especially important, a lesson learned, a new understanding, a different perspective etc.

Take time for everyone to have an opportunity to speak.

Having spent two days together, it is likely that participants will feel a bond with one another. Personal stories have been shared. Consequently, just as you say goodbye to a dear friend, take time for departure and saying goodbye, and wish the participants well in their work as lay counsellors.



ANNEX:

DETAILED COURSE PLANNER

DAY 1				
MIN	MODULE	LEARNING POINTS	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS
60	1. Welcome, training programme and ground rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know one another. • Introduction to the programme • Agree on ground rules for the training. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participants' introduction (ball toss) 2. Expectations (interviews + presentation in pairs) 	Ball
15	BREAK			
40	2. Our organisation and its target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orient participants about the organisation. • Identify the needs of the organisation's target group(s). • Clarify the organisation's expectations of lay counsellors. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Getting to know the organisation (plenary discussion) 2. The people we help (plenary discussion) 	Flipchart/white board
15	BREAK			
80	3. The role of lay counsellors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand psychosocial support as a framework for lay counselling. • Be clear about the role and responsibility of lay counsellors. • Understand code of conduct, ethics and values, personal biases and prejudices and the principle of confidentiality. • Recognise how the lay counsellor's personal issues may impact on interactions with help-seekers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Filters (brainstorm in plenary discussion) 2. Personal boundaries (physical activity in pairs) 3. Dealing with personal issues (group discussion or role play) 	Case scenarios
60	LUNCH BREAK			
25	4. Referrals and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise when, how and to whom to report or refer help-seekers who need additional or more specialised support. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When to refer (plenary discussion) 2. Making a referral (plenary discussion) 	Case scenario Relevant hand-outs: Procedures for referring, List of referral organisations, Documents for recording a referral
60	5. Communication – basic skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practise basic skills in lay counselling. • Learn how to accompany a help-seeker in decision-making. • Understand and practise active listening. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How to assist decision-making (role play) 2. Active listening (role play) 	
15	BREAK			



DAY 1

MIN	MODULE	LEARNING POINTS	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS
45	6. Structuring a counselling conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how to structure a counselling conversation. Practise interviewing techniques. Understand how to end a counselling session. 	1. A counselling session (role play)	Hand-out: Dialogue example
5	WRAP UP		1. Check out ball toss exercise	

DAY 2

	CHECK IN	GETTING BACK IN THE MOOD		
105	7. Life events and coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to describe types of significant life events that may require help from a lay counsellor. Recognise reactions to life events: stress, distress. Understand the concepts of resilience and coping 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding significant and critical life events (plenary discussion) Signs of stress (brainstorm in plenary discussion) Resilience (plenary discussion) Positive and negative coping 	Flipchart/ white board
15	BREAK			
60	7. Life events and coping – continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the concepts of grief and suicidality 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How to help a grieving person (brainstorm in plenary discussion) Suicidality (role play) 	
60	LUNCH BREAK			
60	8. Psychological First Aid (PFA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is psychological first aid? PFA: When, where and with whom? Step-by-step PFA guide Basics of providing PFA Important things to keep in mind What comes next? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> When to use PFA (brainstorm in plenary) PFA (role play) 	Case scenarios Hand-out: PFA Do's and don'ts Hand-out: Step-by-step PFA actions
15	BREAK			
60	9. Self-care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise resources and potential sources of stress. Identify personal coping strategies. Understand the importance of peer support. Recognise the role of the team and organisation in self-care. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> My resources (Individual activity) Potential sources of stress (Plenary discussion) Stress management strategies (group discussions/plenary) 	Hand-out: Strategies for stress management: before, during and after Hand-out: Peer support
15	10. Evaluation and closing		1. Evaluation (individual and/or plenary feedback)	Evaluation questionnaire
	WRAP UP	Wrap up and say goodbye	1. Check out (ball toss)	Ball

“Lay Counselling – a Trainer’s Manual” is designed for trainers of lay counsellors and offers a 2-day basic training. Psychosocial lay counselling provided by staff or volunteers who do not have a formal degree in counselling – is often used to assist people in need and thousands of lay counsellors provide an important service to vulnerable people. The training will help participants develop a range of listening and responding skills and gain insight into the values, ethics and boundaries of their work as lay counsellors.

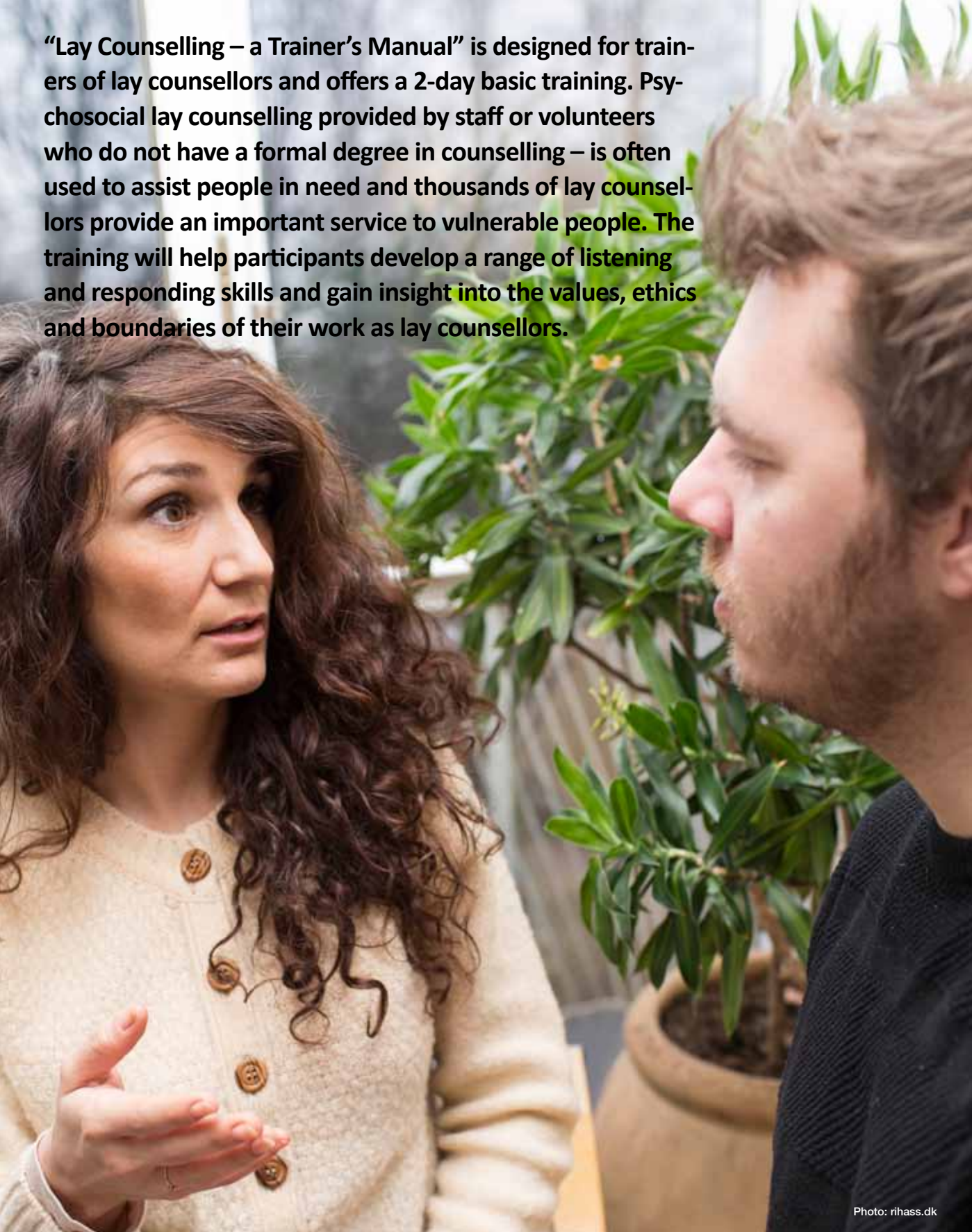


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