

GUIDE for GROUP LEADERS

Thank you for your willingness and commitment to help guide your group through this journey toward peace and purpose. We hope you find this experience educational and enriching for your group and yourself. To support you through this process, we've included the following suggestions for creating an environment most conducive to learning and sharing together.

SCHEDULING

This guide is designed for **13 meeting sessions total**—one meeting to show the movie and introduce the group, 11 meetings for each chapter of the discussion guide, and a 13th meeting for the graduation celebration.

Session 1 – The first session is to welcome people to the group and show *The Amendment* movie (90 minutes). After the movie, give participants a brief introduction to the *Amendment Trauma Recovery* group goals. You can pass out the full guide if all participants plan to return or pass out a copy of the table of contents if you are trying to recruit participants to join the discussion group.

Sessions 2-12 – The next eleven sessions are for discussing each chapter in this guide (60-90 minutes based on discussion time). Schedule 5-10 minutes at the beginning of class for casual meet & greet time.

Meeting 13 – Plan a Graduation Celebration to recognize your class experiences and breakthroughs. Ceremonies are an important part of the healing process. In *Session 12: Moving Forward*, participants outline their personal strengths and goals for the future. The graduation celebration is a great time for each person to share their plan for their “happy ending.” The graduation celebration can be in the same meeting place or someone’s home. It doesn’t need to be fancy—just sentimental. Talk to the group about inviting family members and friends to the celebration. If the group consensus is to invite guests, encourage them to do so. Otherwise, it can be just for group members. Consider creating a special keepsake to commemorate your sessions together (e.g., a small smooth rock with “peace” and “purpose” written on it).

Follow Up – Many 12-week sessions can create a great sense of motivation but that momentum can fizzle without follow-up. Plan to schedule ongoing check-ins to meet as a group and monitor each other’s progress. The back of this guide includes self-assessments and healthy-living logs that participants can continue to use to monitor their physical and emotional health over time.

LESSON FORMAT

Each lesson follows a similar format:

INTRODUCTIONS: Usually a follow-up from the previous lesson, this gives members a time to reflect on what they learned and applied from the homework.

BEHIND THE SCENES: This section gives additional insight into the movie clip. Sometimes its information about Brooks, Leslie and their parents not included in the movie or it may be additional research or references that help put the movie clip in context.

MOVIE CLIP: To access the movie clip, log into the Amendment Trauma Recovery Guide iPortal. The iPortal login instructions are included in the original email you received after signing up for the guide access. Once you've logged in, click on the session title then the "Movie Clip" button to get started. *Session 2: Finding Commonalities* also has an additional slide with a picture of the glass butterfly. The movie clip can be shown on a laptop or plugged into a TV or projector for a larger screen. It works just like a PowerPoint. The clips are streamed from the Internet and cannot be downloaded so test to be sure the clips are working before class starts.

THINK-PAIR-SHARE: Some people are shy about talking in class or formulating their ideas. The think-pair-share model gives everyone an opportunity to first write their responses to the questions (*think*) and talk about it with a partner (*pair*) before having a discussion with the whole group (*share*). You will be amazed what a difference this makes in group member's personal insights, participation level, and class climate. Even if quieter members don't share their ideas with the whole group they will gain a lot from the one-on-one partner conversations.

CLASS DISCUSSION: The class discussion questions are always **bolded** to help cue that these are questions to ask to the whole group and encourage participant feedback.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION: Some but not all sessions include this section, which is designed to apply the movie and discussion to additional activities and reflection.

HOMEWORK: Thinking about and applying the session points is an important process to developing new habits and insights. Encourage members to take the homework seriously and be prepared to talk about it at the beginning of the next section.

CREATING CLASS CLIMATE

This is a "support-group guide" rather than a "self-help guide" for good reason—a significant portion of the power of this intervention will come from the insights, accountability, and relationships of a group experience. As Aristotle first said, *the whole is greater than the sum of its parts*, meaning that together—members will gain more from each other than they could have on their own. Recovering from grief, loss and/or a traumatic experience can be a very lonely place. The comradery of this group is essential to the healing process. Therefore, as a group leader, it is essential that you create a class environment that is conducive to members sharing their thoughts and building authentic relationships with each other.

Discussion group leadership requires patience, skill, and preparation. While most group leaders are already eager to help and motivate others, one of the most valuable characteristics you can bring to this interactive discussion is the restraint to **listen more and talk less**. Creating a space in which participants feel genuinely cared for (and not lectured to) can be a powerful platform for intervention and personal growth.

Create a Comfortable, Inviting Space. Trauma survivors often have lost a sense of connection with the physical world around them. Their senses—sight, sound, smell,

touch, and taste—may have been so overwhelmed by the traumatic experience that they feel hyper-alert about any incoming stimuli or, on the other side of that, feel numb to their surroundings. Make an effort to create a meeting space that is warm, but not too warm, and comfortable. Consider including:

- Soft background music before the meeting starts
- Warm, good-smelling food and/or healthy snacks
- Tea, coffee, and/or hot chocolate (Have decaf available as well)
- Tissue box(es) (for wiping tears)
- Blankets (if appropriate for the setting)
- Soft, warm lighting. If appropriate, lamps often have a warmer glow than overhead lights.

As people enter the room, meet them at the door as if you were inviting them into your home. Hug (if appropriate), shake their hands, and/or put your hand on their shoulder. Gentle, respectful, physical contact is important to help people feel comfortable and connected to others.

Restrain from giving advice. *Do you like being told what to do?* Most people don't. While advice giving can be helpful, it can also be risky. The recipient may become defensive and close the door to further intervention. When you feel the group will benefit from your experience and expertise, try the "Feel, Felt, Found" method:

Step 1: Feel – Identify what s/he is feeling. [*"Sounds like you are feeling frustrated that your son isn't returning your calls."*]

Step 2: Felt – Empathize with his/her feeling and share a time when you felt something similar. [*"I remember feeling that way when my daughter went to college and stopped calling me."*]

Step 3: Found – Share what helped you overcome that feeling. [*"I found that as I continued to support her independence by sending letters of encouragement, she started to call home more often."*]

Listen with the intent to understand. Take a moment to break that down. What does it look and feel like to "listen with the intent to understand"? How do you know when someone is *fully* listening to you? How do you know when s/he is not listening?

Try the "**EARS**" **ACTIVE LISTENING** technique¹ and consider sharing this with group members:

Eye contact (varies with culture)

Acknowledge that you are listening (nodding and saying "hmm"). **A**sk open-ended questions (that lead to more than a "yes" or "no" answer).

Reflect feelings [*"Sounds like you're feeling (emotion)..."*]

Say in your own words what you heard the person say. [*"So you think that _____. Is that right?"*]

¹From Beland, K., Douglass, J. & Matheny, R.K. (2015). *School-Connect: Optimizing the High School Experience, Third Edition*. Bethesda, MD: School-Connect.

Don't let your mind wander to other topics or what you are going to say next. Listen with full effort to try to understand what your group members are thinking, feeling, and experiencing. Gentle, patient listening is essential to helping with the healing process.

Share the floor. If there are 10 people in the group, each person should participate 1/10th of the time (including the group leader). Of course some will talk more and some will talk less, but as the group leader it is your responsibility to keep people on time, on track, and considerate of others.

- **On Time** – Designate a certain amount of time for each section of the lesson. Before the lesson, write in your notes what time you should start and progress to the next section. If need be, introduce a section by specifying time frames. For example, for the first four to five questions (“Think-Pair-Share” section) start by saying, *“We’ll have 25 minutes for these questions. Please take about five minutes to answer the questions for yourself then 10 minutes to share with a partner. We will reconvene at [name a time] to discuss this as a group.”*
- **On Track** – If a participant deviates from the main topic or is monopolizing the conversation, redirect the discussion by paraphrasing what the person is saying or feeling and then ask, *“Can anyone else relate to the feeling of _____?”* While experiences are individual, feelings are universal. All group members can relate to the feelings of fear, frustration, disappointment, etc. If there is not time to continue that part of the discussion, say, *“Thank you [Name] for sharing. I would like to hear more about this, but we need to move to the next section. Can we talk about this after class?”* [Then be sure to follow up after class.]
- **Considerate of others** – Encourage group members to adhere to the Golden Rule: *“Treat others as you would like to be treated.”* Start the first class session by reminding the group of the importance of confidentiality, supportive listening, and sharing the floor. As you model empathetic listening by identifying the feelings and perspective of others, you will begin to set the tone for the class. For example, *“It looks like John has something he wants to share. John, is there something on your mind?”* or *“Sarah, you seem frustrated. Do you want to talk about it?”* or *“Jenn, you look worried. How can we support you in this?”* Lead by example, and if necessary, have private conversations after class with any group member who is being inconsiderate of others. In that conversation, cite positive characteristics about that individual that s/he could bring to the group that would benefit others, and be specific about class guidelines and expectations.

Use Think-Pair-Share. We recommend using the “**Think-Pair-Share**” method to ensure group-wide involvement. After seeing the movie clip, participants will write responses to the first four to five questions (*think*) then talk about their answers with a partner (*pair*) then reconvene as a group to talk about what they learned (*share*). The process of writing and reflecting on answers before discussing gives everyone a chance to think about their responses. Participants may be resistant to write or even think about trauma-related questions, but the questions are designed to start easy—directed at Brooks’ and Leslie’s lives—then progress to questions relevant to participants’ personal lives. Allow a good, long time for

people to write and reflect. It may seem like awkward silence, but sometimes the best insights come five minutes into that silence.

Consider reorganizing pairs throughout the sessions if you think it would help class climate. It may be best for people to choose their own seats and/or stay with the same partner week after week, but it also may be better to mix it up to help some people feel more engaged and included. Each class will create its own climate, and you may need to adjust the temperature one way or another.

Practice Deep Breathing. Throughout your normal day, practice taking deep, meaningful breaths. Take at least five deep breaths at a time. If you don't usually break for deep breaths, you will be amazed how effective breathing can relax your body and refresh your mind. During class, begin the class by asking participants to take at least five deep breaths. (This is better to start in the second or third class rather than the first.) If the class environment gets tense, stop to take deep breaths together as a class. It is a great "reset" button. See page 28 for guidance on effective breathing.

Let Moments and Breakthroughs Happen. There is a good chance some of these conversations will bring tears and grief. That's OK—and a necessary part of the journey. Let your participants be sad. Let them comfort each other. Accept that some cannot truly be comforted yet. It is a long, winding road back home with no true shortcuts. Let grief be—with the hope to set it free. If someone is overcome with grief during a session, consider letting a trusted group member or another counselor meet one-on-one with that person in the hallway or another room rather than asking them to continue with the session that day.

PLANNING AHEAD

Read Ahead to Session 10. *Session 10: Going Face-to-Face* requires you, the group leader, to role play the scene in which Brooks meets with Glen Ake, the man who shot his family. In the role play, you will represent the person/event that caused the other person's trauma and apologize, as Glen did in the movie. Please say only the words that Glen Ake said (listed on page 67). If you insert your own words, you may take on a different persona than the real source of trauma. You may repeat "I'm sorry," over and over. That's all you need to say. Let the other person do all the talking.

Be Prepared for the Next Level of Intervention. There is a good chance this class will open up deep wounds for many participants. If participants need additional counseling or substance abuse treatment, be prepared to recommend resources in your community that can take them to the next level, and be prepared to walk through that process with them. They may be motivated at group time but lose their courage later. Make an effort to call and ensure they are staying with their therapeutic interventions.

Use the Class Evaluations to Plan Your Next Class. Pages 93–96 are the class evaluations. They ask participants to rate each lesson in the guide and their overall experience with the class. Participant feedback is a great way to continue to make the class better and better each session. **Please send a copy of your evaluation results to Julea Douglass (address included on evaluation form). We too want to continue to make this class the most meaningful it can be and to use evaluation feedback to improve upon the lessons.

Contact Us. If you have any questions about the guide or facilitation, please feel free to e-mail the author, Julea Douglass at Julea@DouglassHouse.org. We welcome your questions, suggestions, and feedback.

