

# SHADOW'S EDGE TRAINING

Face-to-Face II



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## Group Facilitation Skills: Crisis Intervention and Safe Space Creation

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## Role-Playing Problematic Participant Behaviors

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# Group Facilitation Skills



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# Facilitation Skills

1. Crisis Intervention
2. Creating a safe and supportive space



# 1-Crisis Intervention

## 2-Crisis Intervention



### **Situations that may trigger a crisis during a session:**

- Panic attacks, dissociative reactions
- Crying spells, outbursts of anger
- Intra-group conflict, threats/hostility
- Intense triggering related to loss
- Narration of traumatic memories that surface

### **Pre-session crisis situations:**

- Recent trauma (earthquake, death, accident, violence)
- Sudden relocation, security concerns
- Signs of domestic violence, neglect, abuse

**First principle:** *Not suppressing the emotion, but regulating it.*

# Intervening in an Acute Crisis During the Session

## **1. Ensure safety – proceed with the goal of regulation:**

- "You are safe right now. You are here. I am here with you."
- Speak in a slow tone of voice, using clear and short  → **CO-REGULATION**
- Take a short break from the session if necessary

## **2. Use body awareness tools:**

- Ask them to feel their feet on the ground
- Focus on their breath (take 3 deep breaths together)
- Give prompts like, "Can you find something blue around you?" (focus on the 5 senses)

## **3. Normalize but don't dismiss:**

- "I'm so sorry you're going through this."
- "It's very normal to feel this way; many people have similar reactions when they're struggling."

## **4. Distraction techniques:**

- Small somatic prompts such as drawing a picture, drinking water, or holding an object

# Intervening in an Acute Crisis During a Session

- Use phrases like, "Thank you for sharing this with us. I can imagine this isn't easy for you," to acknowledge the adolescent's courage and trust.
- Focus on discovering the adolescent's current feelings rather than the details of the trauma:
  - "What emotions did this bring up for you as you were sharing this?"
  - "How are you feeling right now?"
- **Do not encourage detailed accounts.** Discussing traumatic details within the group can both re-trigger the person sharing the experience and may trigger other members.
- Reinforce the sense of social support by saying, "Experiences like this can be difficult, but sharing them is a way to feel that you are not alone."
- Other people in the group may also be triggered. You can create space by saying, "Sometimes such sharing can evoke strong feelings in the group, if anyone feels like saying something, we are here."
- If the adolescent is experiencing very intense emotions, indicate that you can work with them individually in more detail. While maintaining the boundaries of the group session, you can say, "We can talk about this separately; we won't leave you alone here right now."
- Emphasize the teen's resilience: "It's very valuable that you're strong enough to share this."



# In shock situations...

- If you notice that the person has lost connection with reality and their surroundings, you can help them return to the present moment and reality, you can assist by providing the following guidance and asking questions:
  - Give your instructions in a soft tone of voice
  - Use their name
  - Ask them to place their feet on the ground and feel the floor
  - Ask them to feel the surfaces they are sitting on and leaning against
  - Help them focus on their five senses by pointing out non-stressful stimuli one by one; ask questions about the things they see around them, the sounds they hear, etc.
  - Ask them to focus on their breathing, helping them to notice and regulate their breathing rhythm slowly
  - Help them notice areas of their body that feel "relaxed and heavy" and have them do exercises
  - Try to make eye contact

# How Should Post-Crisis Group Sessions Be Conducted?

Objective: **Expression – connection – understanding – rebuilding**

## **trust Session structure:**

- Warm-up: Physical exercise, games, group bonding activities
- Emotion recognition – expression exercises (e.g., emotion thermometer, drawing)
- Meaning-making: "What was difficult for you?", "What happened inside you afterward?"
- Closing: Hopeful sharing, relaxation exercise, safe closing

## **Inclusive statements:**

- "What you've been through may be very difficult. Here, we have a space where we can share that burden."
- "Sometimes words aren't enough, but we can look at those feelings together."
- "You can share as much as you feel comfortable with. We won't push you."
- "You can participate as much and as often as you wish."

# The Role of the Group Facilitator During Intervention

## **The facilitator's primary responsibilities:**

- Approaching the crisis without denying or dramatizing it
- Maintaining equal closeness and boundaries with all group members
- Being able to regulate one's own anxiety
- Enduring pain: "Not to fix, but to accompany"

## **The leader's inner voice during a crisis:**

- ✓ "Staying calm will help the child." "I am  
✓ in a safe place with them right now."

✗ "I don't know what to do, this is going badly." (This panic affects the child too.)

## **At the end of the process:**

- Brief individual assessment
- Note-taking (what happened, how I responded, which tools worked)
- Sharing in team supervision

# Traumatic Sharing and Situations Requiring Emergency Referral

## **Situations requiring urgent referral:**

- Statement of self-harm
- Suicidal thoughts or plans
- Report of sexual abuse
- Victimization of violence
- Serious neglect related to food/life safety

## **What to do:**

- Listen without judgment, try to obtain concrete information (time, place, people)
- "I may need to share what you've told me with my team members to support you."  
Inform them
- Refer to the protection or counseling unit in accordance with the protocol



2-Create a safe and supportive space

# Safe Space

A **safe space** is a physical, emotional, and social environment where adolescents can freely express their feelings and thoughts without feeling threatened.

## **A safe space for adolescents:**

- Feeling of not being judged
- Experience of being seen, heard, and respected
- Feeling a sense of control
- A context where their feelings are valid and acceptable

## **Safe space in the post-traumatic process:**

- Reduces the body's perception of threat
- Helps the brain move out of the "fight-flight-freeze" response

# Basic Principles for a Supportive Space

## **1. Physical safety:**

- Layout of the space: ensuring the enclosed area is safe, materials are accessible
- Keeping away from chaotic and triggering stimuli (e.g., having their backs turned toward debris)

## **2. Psychological safety:**

- The principle that **"what is said here belongs to this group"**
- Protection of privacy and boundaries
- Normalization of emotions

## **3. Relational trust:**

- The practitioner not being judgmental
- Active listening and reflection skills
- The message **"I am here for you, I see you"**

# Who Creates the Safe Space

## **The facilitator's role:**

- Should be compassionate, open, consistent, and slow
- Rules should be clear, flexibility should be conscious

## **Attitudes:**

- Empathy → "I'm here to understand"
- Non-judgmental → "It's very understandable that you feel this way"
- Respect → "You decide your story"
- Accompanying emotions → "I can see how difficult this is"

## **What not to do:**

- Excessive advice
- Pressuring comments
- Interfering with the adolescent's drawing/writing/material work

# Establishing a Safe Space with Group Rules

## **The group contract should be written together:**

- Respect for everyone's right to speak,
- No one is obligated to speak,
- What is shared stays within the group,
- Materials are shared, etc.

## **The principle of voluntariness for sharing in the group:**

- The "you can share if you want to" approach
- The right to share work exists, but there is no obligation to do so

## **Sensitivity to triggering content:**

- Warning before work that may trigger traumatic memories
- Referral to individual support if necessary

# Intervention in situations that violate the Safe Space

## Potential risky situations:

- Teasing or mocking within the group
- One person's traumatic narrative triggering others
- Failure to respect physical boundaries
- Uncontrolled crisis reactions (crying spells, outbursts of anger)

## Recommendations for intervention:

- Grounding the group: breathing exercises, focusing on the material
- Calming repetition: "You are safe right now"
- Individual support/follow-up plan before ending the process
- Co-regulation! Stay calm, show that you can be flexible, and that even if you are anxious, you can still be present "here and now."
- Being a role model is the most effective intervention method → Working on the relationship



## Final words

- The group came in very energetic, the group came in very disinterested. What should I do?
- Teenagers exhibiting disruptive behavior in the group:
  - "I see a dynamic between you and your friend, but this group also has a dynamic. What can we do so that we all feel good here?"
- What should I do when they share traumatic experiences?
  - When a teenager shares a traumatic experience in a group session, it shows both that the teenager trusts the group enough to open up and that the session has reached a sensitive point. In such a situation, the response must be both supportive of the teenager and protective of the safety of the other members of the group.



# Final words

- "Group facilitator" rather than "group leader" → We accompany participants on their journey.
- Unpredictability, a testing ground. Design the next group!
- If they don't want to do the activity, transform it.
- Externalization: "How do you think this character would behave?"
- Use a humorous tone
- If sharing is involved, be able to separate their own adolescence and experiences from the group
- Take notes at the end of the session
- Flexibility!

# Role-playing problematic participant behaviors (role-playing)

