



# Peer-to-Peer Psychosocial Support Groups for Women Guide (*Women Rise* Approach adapted)

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The Guide will be available in English, Greek and Italian.

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## Acknowledgements

*Women Rise* is an intervention aiming to support women in expanding their sources of support, building coping mechanisms to address chronic stress, and strengthening their own inherent resilience and empowerment through powerful connections with other women. It has been implemented since 2021 in more than 10 countries around the world, in Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and now in Europe.

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## Introduction to the Guide

Welcome to the *Peer-to-Peer Psychosocial Support Groups for Women Guide*! This guide is entirely based on [Women Rise: A Gender-Based Violence Psychosocial Support Framework and Toolkit](#). The Women Rise Toolkit is a comprehensive resource developed by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) that provides a GBV-centered Psychosocial Support (PSS) Framework and best practice guidance for GBV programs implementing PSS programming. It includes a structured group curriculum and associated training, capacity strengthening and supervision guidance and tools, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) guidance and tools. The entire resource can be accessible online in the link above, and practitioners are invited to first go through the “[About the toolkit](#)” section to decide which interventions best suit their purpose. The present document offers a more concise and comprehensive version of the ***Women Rise Group Intervention Core Curriculum, with key practical lessons learned from implementation in Athens and Palermo and instructions for the facilitator(s) through the sessions. In addition, it is completed with adapted Monitoring and Evaluation Resources.***

### ***Who is this guide for?***

This guide’s primary focus is the provision of focused, non-specialized support to women through group modalities (Level 3 of the MHPSS Pyramid). It aims to be used by GBV actors, organizations and professionals working on prevention and response programming, who wish to establish robust PSS groups for women with a displacement/migration background. The intervention should not aim at GBV survivors specifically, but it should yet consider that some of the participants will be survivors. Facilitator(s) will be able to follow the step-by-step instructions to conduct a psychosocial support group and adapt it to the group's needs. By using the M&E tools at the end of this guide, they will be able to gather and keep data. Before and during the implementation of the groups, it is necessary to train facilitators on the approach and the tools to be used, while their supervision and support is necessary during implementation. [Training](#) and [capacity strengthening and supervision](#) resources are not part of this guide, but they are available on the respective links, and programs that will implement psychosocial groups should refer to them.

### ***Context of the piloting***

This guide has been developed in the context of piloting PSS groups for forcibly displaced women in Europe, and specifically in Athens, Greece and Palermo, Italy. Three groups have been piloted in total: one French-speaking group in Athens and two Ukrainian and Russian speaking groups in Athens and Palermo,

respectively. The French speaking group consisted of forcibly displaced women from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC – Congo Kinshasa), the Republic of the Congo (Congo Brazzaville), and Guinea Conakry, living in Athens. All women had children of young age needing Child-Friendly Space (CFS) services during the sessions. The Ukrainian-speaking group in Athens consisted of women recently displaced due to the war of aggression in Ukraine, and the Russian-speaking group in Palermo consisted of migrants from Ukraine and Belarus, as well as recently displaced women due to the war of aggression in Ukraine.

### ***Adaptation process***

All facilitators, co-facilitators, and supervisors participated in a 5-day training before the outreach to the community and conduction of the groups. Staff training was used to discuss operational aspects such as group cohesion, outreach strategies, facilitation technique and part of the curriculum content. The facilitators and cultural mediators trained were invited to review content and contextualize it to the target group. For each group, at least one person sharing a similar cultural background or understanding of the target groups took part in the adaptation and facilitation of the sessions, with this person principally being the cultural mediator/co-facilitator. General adaptations were made based on the cultural aspects, characteristics and needs of each group. The adaptation was done jointly by the facilitator and co-facilitator at the preparation stage of each session and was concluded for this guide after the completion of the sessions.

### ***Key lessons learned and major adaptations***

For all groups, the activities where the participants had to be divided into pairs or small groups were adapted. Women were actively participating and behaving cohesively from the beginning of the sessions, therefore all discussions and activities were kept in the bigger group. The bigger group modality was also preferred in order to save time and keep the sessions shorter. This was a requirement raised by women participants from the screening stage and enrollment to the group, as they have high levels of responsibilities and roles that do not allow them to engage daily during long hours. Based on the participants' feedback, the implementation team decided to keep the 8 sessions sequencing but committed to having them 1,5 hours-long. *Note for implementation: Take into consideration the level of participation of the women and the size of the group for the modality of the activities. In bigger groups or if some participants are shy/hesitant to share, consider splitting the group into smaller groups or pairs for certain activities.*



### ***Keeping group cohesion and network through alternative communication channels***

In parallel with the sessions, WhatsApp and Telegram groups were used as communication tools. The online groups helped with arrangements, sharing the exercises and links about activities done in the sessions, or proposing new ones.

*Note for implementation: Create groups on instant messaging applications of the participants' preference for easier communication and to share resources outside of the group sessions*

### ***Working in the presence of young children***

As women participants were mothers of small children that were staying with their mothers in the room, often sleeping in their arms, some activities could not be done. This includes activities that required standing and movement (eg standing up in a circle, bear-mosquito-fish activity) and some ground exercises (e.g. Becoming a Flower).

*Note for implementation: Consider childcare aspects depending on the age of the children. The smaller ones (<2-3 yo) might not be able to join CFS and must stay with their mothers in the room. Consider mobility concerns of the participants and adapt exercises requiring movement accordingly.*

### ***Sociocultural considerations***

All women had a high level of spirituality and adhesion to religious values. Thus, they unanimously decided to choose a prayer as the group ritual. As they were coming from different religions, the serenity prayer was chosen, since it does not come from a specific religion, and seemed to cover all preferences. A second ritual was the use of animals that women can relate to easily based on their background (eg for this group, farm animals that can be found in villages in African countries were chosen), and specifically use the characteristics and behaviors of these animals to express how each one feels at the beginning of every session.

*Note for implementation: Take into consideration religious and cultural aspects and adapt the activities' content accordingly so that they are familiar and relatable to women's experiences.*

### ***Ukrainian and Russian speaking group***

For the Ukrainian and Russian speaking groups in Italy and Greece, the insight of Ukrainian co-facilitators/cultural mediators played a critical role in the adaptation of the sessions. It was advised that physical contact and touch are not culturally appropriate, especially in the beginning, when women don't know each other. In order to make participants feel comfortable, such activities were removed for this

group, e.g. the human knot game. The activities with animals were also removed, judged as non-attractive for this group. Women preferred reflections and discussions, relaxation, breathing, and grounding exercises instead; therefore, the facilitators adapted the sessions to contain more activities of this kind.

*Note for implementation: Consider cultural aspects related to physical contact/touch, and what might be considered silly and unattractive for one cultural group and what attractive (e.g. games, meditation, breathing exercises) and adapt accordingly.*

Additionally, as most Ukrainian men were not allowed to leave Ukraine and/or were at war at the time of the sessions, mentioning men in different activities was avoided, as it might have been challenging for participants. Discussions on political positions (Russia-Ukraine) were avoided as well, because they could trigger conflict among participants. Facilitators preferred instead to focus on women's experiences and the changes they would like to bring into their own lives. For the same reason, **the Ukrainian and Russian speaking group in Palermo** avoided discussions around relationships with partners, reflective questions about past, present, and future, and job and status. For this group, selective activities on grief were eliminated as they were thought to be potentially challenging, and the topics of anger and shame were selected instead.

### ***Best use of facilitators' background and experience***

Facilitators of the women's group in Palermo were yoga and meditation instructors and they could adapt some grounding exercises to meditation and yoga exercises, including different exercises than the ones existing in the original curriculum. The facilitators used instrumental music in some activities, a choice that was intentional in order to avoid choosing Russian or Ukrainian lyrics.

*Note for implementation: Each facilitator has their own training, skills, and experience and they can replace certain activities with relevant ones they feel more comfortable with or find more appropriate, after agreeing with their supervisor. Take into consideration possible conflict among the group due to political, ethnic, cultural, or religious differences. Consider recent or past experiences of trauma that the group might have.*

### ***Intervention of external facilitators***

The experience in Italy and Greece has showcased that intervention of an external facilitator for an extra session might bring new perspectives, deepen some of the acquired knowledge and help better respond to the needs of participants. In Greece, an additional session was included between sessions 4

(Understanding Stress Reactions) and 5 (Exploring Difficult Emotions). The WR facilitator identified at a very early stage that most of the women participants had lived traumatic experience and had still difficulties handling their consequences on their mental health and well-being. It was decided, together with her supervisor, to invite an MHPSS specialist (within the IRC team) to undertake one session on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and introduce coping mechanisms for stress. If the intervention of a MHPSS specialist (psychologist, psychiatrist) is feasible, it could also be that they are the ones explaining the functionality of human brains and the consequences on our emotions (from session 4) as, it is a section that is sometimes more difficult to manage by non-specialized facilitators. As a best practice, it is always recommended to ensure the consent of women participants in the session prior to the intervention of an external facilitator. It is also important to mention to them the topics of the intervention (which will be based on their feedback and identified needs), as well as the gender of the facilitator, to ensure women are comfortable with a potential male speaker.

### ***How to use the guidance***

In the following pages, the reader may find the group sessions, with detailed guidelines that lead facilitator(s) step by step through each activity. All the adaptations, alternate activities, lessons learned, and knowledge gained from the experience of the facilitators who implemented Women Rise PSS groups in Europe during the CARE project, are marked in color: the ones concerning the Ukrainian and Russian speaking groups are in green, and the ones in purple concern the French-speaking group. Some lessons learned and suggestions apply to all groups. Hopefully, this guide will be useful to teams that will implement women's PSS groups in Europe and a good start for their adaptation to their context and the specific needs of the groups, as each new group is unique and dynamic and requires its own adaptation process.

## Session 1: Introduction

### *Objectives:*

- *To get to know each other (participants and facilitators)*
- *To understand the objectives and activities of the emotional support group.*
- *To develop a basic set of goals/outcomes for each participant*
- *To understand all rules and set norms for the group sessions*
- *To build trust and comfort within the group*

### *Topics covered:*

- Introductions – Getting to know the group
  - o Hopes and fears
  - o Building trust
- Goals, Rules and Expectations (confidentiality)
- Explaining structure of the group and purpose of the group
  - o Setting the stage for the next 8 – 12 weeks
  - o What is emotional support/PSS group
  - o Common experiences and working together for solutions
- Introduction to concept of goal setting for the next week (homework – think about what you want this group to help you do/feel/experience)

### *Materials needed:*

- Flipcharts, Flipchart markers
- Tape
- Sticky notes
- Markers
- Notebooks for each participant to keep (all groups)

### *Preparation:*

- Draw or print a mood thermometer (Annex: Activity Materials) on a flipchart attached to the wall. Spread sheets on the floor and place chairs around them, so that the participants sit where they like.
- Choose appropriate music for each activity.
- Arrange small refreshments for the participants.
- Print copies of confidentiality forms (see M&E section)
- Draw up the outline of the sessions on a flip chart.

*Contextualization:*

Activity 1: If the included game is not appropriate for the context, it can be switched for any common name game.

Activity 3: Be sure to adjust the guidance to the number of weeks you have chosen. If the group is longer than 8 weeks, be sure to adjust the time frame to the appropriate amount of weeks.

Activity 3: If the group works on and sets group goals, be sure to include the sections labeled: GROUP GOALS. *(Note: this will likely make the group 120 minutes rather than 90 minutes so be sure to tell the group that this session will be 2 hours in the beginning.)*

**ACTIVITY ONE: INTRODUCTIONS, HOPES AND FEARS**

**Time: 20 Minutes**

Steps:

1. Welcome the women to the session and thank them for taking their time to attend it.
2. Introduce yourself and your role – both facilitators should introduce themselves.
3. Acknowledge that they are all busy and have taken time out of their day to come and participate. Explain that this is very important, especially for this group and we want them to be able to participate fully
4. Let them know that we will go over rules for the group and an in-depth explanation of the group objectives today but first we are going to start with a game to introduce ourselves.
5. Tell them that we are going to play a game to get to know each other at this point.
  - a. Ask the participants to stand in a circle and explain that we will go around the circle and each make a physical action and sound to answer a question.
  - b. Tell them that today the question is “What type of animal do you feel like today?”

**For the French-speaking group:**

As the participants may never have taken part in group activities, they may be shy at first to physically imitate and emit a sound from an animal; in that case, they may just say their name and how they feel.

- c. We have prepared on a flip chart a list of 5 or 6 names of animals with the characteristics that represent them according to you (facilitators)
- d. The facilitator gives an example by choosing an animal and sharing her feelings. She should mention that the choice of animal and the characteristics that represent it is entirely up to each participant.

For example

Cow: Bored

Bird: light-without problems-flying

Goat: Nervous-Frightened

Lion : Strong-Dynamic-feeling of control

Turtle : Tired- Sleepy- No Energy- Drags feet

- e. Each participant takes her turn, entering the circle, saying her name and then naming the animal chosen and the characteristics of the animal that correspond to her own feelings.
- f. Pay attention to each person and the feelings they share with the group.
- g. Go around the circle completely. Once everyone has finished thank them for participating and for their creativity.

**Alternative Activity to the Animal Game for the Ukrainian group in Italy and Greece**

*OPENING RITUAL: Check-in with the thermometer.*

- Draw a thermometer on a flipchart.
- Ask the participants to write their name on a piece of cardboard and stick it on the thermometer on the point where they feel closest to their mood from 0 to 5 (where 0 corresponds to a very negative mood and 5 to a very positive mood). Welcome the participants to share why they chose this number and how they feel.

**Alternative Activity to the Animal Game for the Ukrainian group in Greece**

*Check in using the weather*

- Sitting in a circle, we will take turns starting by saying our names and saying what kind of weather we feel like today. Welcome anyone who wants to share a little bit more.
- Ask the group to pay attention to every person and what they are sharing.
- Go around the circle. Once everyone has finished, thank them for their participation.

During the preparation of the sessions we had prepared an alternative exercise to the animal game, based on the fact that the women in the group might be more comfortable talking about music.

**Alternative Activity to the Animal Game for the French-speaking group**

*Choice of a music genre*

Same approach as for the animal game:

- A large circle is formed, and as each person enters the circle, they say their name
- The facilitator will have prepared a list of music genres on a flipchart, giving one or more examples of the feelings that she thinks correspond to each genre.
- She should mention that the participants can define the music genres and the corresponding feelings in a different way from those chosen by her, or add to them, etc. The main thing is to be able to give an easy-to-understand example.
- Examples of music genres:
  - Slow and soft-R&B (I chose this genre because I feel low on energy today)
  - Dancey-Reggaeton (I chose this genre because I feel happy and dancey today)
  - Noisy-Rock (I chose this genre because today I feel strong and very dynamic)
  - \*Church music-Gospel (I chose this genre because today I feel worried)
  - Traditional country music (I chose this music because today I think a lot about my country and I feel melancholic)

6. Next split the group into partners and tell them that we will spend 5 minutes discussing our hopes and fears with our partner.
  - a. Each set of partners should tell each other at least one hope they have for the group and one fear they have for the group.
  - b. If participants are reluctant to talk with each other, give an example of a “safe” fear – something simple like “I am afraid to talk in front of the group”

- c. After each small group has shared, bring them back to the larger circle and ask if anyone would like to share with the whole group.
  - d. Do not force anyone to share – but allow those who do want to share a hope, a fear, or both to do so.
7. Again, thank the participants for their honesty and for discussing so openly. Tell them that you would like to move onto the next activity – setting ground rules.

**For all groups:** Facilitators might also choose to invite women to use their notebooks, write down their thoughts throughout the sessions. This would be particularly benefitting for self-reflection as well as if women are not yet ready to share openly. This alternative can only be done with a group of women with literacy. If there is a discrepancy of level of literacy within the group, it is advised not to use it in order not to stigmatize women with lower level of literacy.

## **ACTIVITY TWO: GROUP AGREEMENTS**

**Time: 15 Minutes**

### Steps:

1. Now that everyone has gotten more comfortable with each other, explain that we will go through some important rules and set the agreements we will follow for our group.
2. Tape a piece of flip chart paper to the wall and write the words “Group Agreements” on it.
3. Ask the participants if they have any agreements they would like to suggest the group members should follow during our time together.
  - a. Suggestions can include things like – respect, listen to others when they are talking, do not talk over others, do not answer phones in the group room.
  - b. You can help them think of agreements if they have trouble answering or coming up with their own agreements.
4. **Confidentiality:** If the group does not come up with “Confidentiality” or “Privacy/Keep Secret” you will need to introduce it yourself. If they do come up with it, make sure to come back to it and further explain. Highlight the following:
  - a. In order to trust each other and speak openly, all members must promise to keep what is said in the group private between the group members
  - b. Other members may choose to tell private things to us but these are not our stories to tell to others outside of the group.
  - c. Remind participants that they are free to share their own personal experiences with anyone they trust. They can also share the coping strategies and activities with friends and family members. They cannot share anything that is shared by other members. These are not their experiences or stories to tell.
  - d. Explain that we have a “confidentiality form” that they need to sign saying they understand this.
  - e. Take the form and read it through with the group together. Ask if they have any questions on this.
  - f. Ask them all to sign the form and then file for your records.

**For all groups:** If there is any reluctance at the mention of signing the form, the facilitator can explain that this is a common practice to ensure that everyone agrees on the notion of confidentiality and that everyone feels comfortable being able to share without fear.

5. **Accepting Differences:** Much like confidentiality, if accepting differences is not mentioned by the group, the facilitator will need to introduce this idea. Discuss the following:
  - a. It is important to acknowledge the differences in the room. Depending on how the group is organized, there may be very visible differences between groups and there will always be unseen differences like differences in opinions and beliefs. This is valued and an important way that group members learn from each other.
  - b. We want group members to be able to share their feelings and experiences and be respectful of differences. Accepting differences is key to creating a space that feels safe and comfortable.
6. **Sharing Feelings:** Again, if sharing feelings is not brought up, as the facilitator, we need to introduce this idea. When discussing sharing feelings, highlight:
  - a. One of our goals is to create a space that feels comfortable for expressing emotions and feelings. We expect that when sharing feelings and emotions, group members will have physical expressions of emotions. There will be tears and difficult emotions like anger throughout the group. There will also be laughter and fun. All of these are expected.
  - b. In the group, recognizing and expressing emotions is a sign of bravery and courage in trusting the group enough to express these difficult emotions.
7. For each agreement, make sure everyone agrees before adopting it as an official group agreement. If there are agreements you feel are important that not everyone has agreed to, spend time discussing as a group its importance before moving on.

**Important group agreements include:**

- Respect confidentiality of the group
- Be on time/Keep time
- Come to every session
- Everyone has a chance to speak
- Listen
- Take turns speaking
- Be respectful of others
- Be honest
- Participate fully.
- Empathy
- Courageous Conversations
- OTHERS?

**Additional activities proposed for the Ukrainian group in Italy:**

- Performing guided Breathing (10 min)
  - Getting to know each other activity (30 minutes):
- a. Hand out sheets of paper and pens
  - b. Ask participants to describe themselves in a few words or write down what represents them (anonymously)
  - c. Fold the sheets of paper and place them in a box
  - d. In a circle, each participant picks up a sheet of paper and tries to guess who wrote it down. In this way the participants can get to know each other better and understand how the others see them.
  - e. It is not necessary to let the participants know whether they guessed right or not.



### **ACTIVITY THREE: SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE NEXT 8 – 12 WEEKS**

**Time: 20 – 35 Minutes**

**Note:** See examples at the end of the activity

#### Steps:

1. Tell the group that now we will discuss more in depth about the group and what will happen over the next \_\_ weeks.
2. Explain that this group was designed to help women in the community get support from each other and to be able to discuss their emotions and problems in a safe space.
  - a. **GROUP GOALS:** If the group is longer than 8 weeks and will include group goal setting, explain this in the following way: *Next week we will begin to look at how our lives are similar and different and the issues we all face as women in this community. As we talk about this, we can decide if we want to set a group goal for ourselves to address a particular issue or a group goal for something we want to accomplish over the next \_\_ weeks.*

Next week you can also introduce the option for the group members to continue working on their goal after the group ends. Facilitators should be clear that if they choose to continue to meet after the group ends, IRC facilitators will not be involved, but it will be for them to take forward on their own.
  - b. **GROUP GOALS:** If time allows, go back to the group hopes and review these or ask for participants to share again. Write them down and tell the participants we will come back to these next week.

Next week, the group can decide if they want to turn any of those hopes into group goals.
3. The group is designed to help them build support between each other and to better understand some key concepts that affect their lives.
4. **After going through the group, they should have a better understanding of their emotions and feel better able to work through distressing emotions.**
5. The group will meet for 90 minutes or 2 hours each week and a small refreshment will be served. Because each session builds on the last session, it's very important that everyone tries to attend every session.
  - a. In your pre-group interview (see M&E Tools: 1. Pre-group Meeting Form) with each of the women, you should have asked for preference on the time spent in group and made a decision based on the women's feedback. Confirm the time with the whole group now.
6. Each session will be made up of the following activities:
  - a. Ritual opening check in

The ritual opening should be the first exercise and should be the same every session. It should be short (no more than 5 minutes). The women can choose what they would like this to be. It can be a traditional greeting or song they sing every time. Or it can be something like a group check in with the same question. You may have to give some examples.

Scale of 1-10: How are you feeling today on a scale of 1-10  
Describe how you are feeling today as the weather  
Use one emotion to describe how you are feeling today.  
Today I need \_ from the group

Local or traditional song or dance

CONTEXTUALIZING: Depending on what ritual activity the women choose, you may want to do the relaxation exercise first and then do the ritual opening. Feel free to switch the order of these two to work best for the group.

b. Relaxation exercise at beginning

Explain that:

- Relaxation exercises are a tool to help us manage stress and emotions. These tools are activities and exercises that help us to remain calm, lower the impact of difficult emotions, and tools we can use when experiencing high stress or difficult emotions. We will talk more about different emotions and stress in later sessions. Part of what we will be learning in this group is how to identify all of our emotions, understand stress and find new ways to work through difficult emotions.
- We will do a relaxation or breathing exercise at the beginning and another type of exercise called a grounding exercise at the end of each session. Grounding exercises are exercises that help us connect to our bodies and move tension from our bodies. We will also learn other stress tools throughout. This gives us a set of “tools” to use and put in our “toolbox” that we can use when we are experiencing difficult emotions.
- All of these exercises are completely voluntary. If someone does not wish to participate in these activities, or the activity begins to feel too stressful, sitting quietly for the duration is fine.
- Important reasons we do relaxation techniques include:
  - Slows our heart rate
  - Makes us feel calmer
  - Can help with sleep
  - Other basic stress reduction language we can use here before actually getting into and exploring stress/stress symptoms in the group?

**Putting it into Practice – Deep Breathing:** (5 minutes)

Tell the group we will now practice one simple relaxation exercise focused on breathing. Using a gentle voice, provide the following instructions **slowly** and clearly:

- Sit in a comfortable position. Feel where your body makes contact with the floor. Deepen your connection to the floor through these points.
- Adjust your position so that you are upright but comfortable. If you feel comfortable, close your eyes. Otherwise, find a space in front of you to gaze softly.
- Bring your attention to your breath. Notice if your breath is shallow or deep. Fast or slow. Notice if you are breathing into your chest or your belly.
- Now, on your next in-breath, use your breath to fill your stomach, then your ribs, and lastly into your chest.
- As you exhale, release the breath from your chest, then your ribs, finally your stomach.
- Inhale stomach, ribs, chest
- Exhale chest, ribs, stomach
- *Repeat inhale and exhale x3*
- Now come back into your natural breath and just notice how you feel after taking these deeper breaths.
- When you're ready, slowly blink open your eyes and gently look around the room

**Spend a few minutes reflecting on the group experience of this exercise by asking:**

- How did you feel when taking these larger breaths? Have you ever done this type of breathing before?
- What did you notice in your body when doing this breathing? Does anyone feel calmer or more relaxed after this exercise?
- What did you notice about your thoughts or feelings while doing this breathing? What about now?
- What reasons might we have for doing this type of breathing? Based on what you felt in your body, thoughts and feelings, when might we use this type of breathing?  
*Use this question to lead into a brief explanation of breathing exercises – we can use breath to help us remain calm or regain calmness when feeling overwhelmed. There are many different types of breathing exercises. This is only one example.*

**CONTEXTUALIZATION:** This breathing exercise can be switched for any breathing exercise included in the training materials. Facilitators should choose the breathing exercise they feel most comfortable leading.

**Note to Facilitators:** Some participants will have difficulty with these exercises. They may experience anxiety or distress when practicing. If this happens, explain that sometimes, when we begin to slow down and concentrate on breath or emotions, it can feel scary. These reactions are actually normal when first starting to slow and connect with our emotions. If these feelings become overwhelming, simply return to a normal, comfortable breath and restart deep breathing if/when you feel ready.

**Lesson learned:** If this is the first time participants have heard and performed this type of exercise, choose one that is easy to understand and short, and perform.

Exercise performed at this level:

- Inhale through the nose-hold the breath and count in your head to 4-exhale through the mouth, dropping your shoulders.
- Repeat 5 times
- Then slowly open your eyes and look around the room.

Once you've completed the relaxation exercise, remind the participants that we were talking about the structure of the group. We will do a ritual opening and a relaxation exercise similar to the one we just did each week. From there we will cover the following:

- a. Recap from week before:  
Groups will always briefly recap the week before and what was talked about. If "homework" has been assigned, (usually practicing a specific relaxation or grounding technique), groups will spend 5-10 minutes discussing how the practice went, what individuals noticed about how they felt during and after practices sessions.
  - b. Work of the day (variety of exercises/worksheets/roleplays)  
Each week groups will focus on a different topic. To help everyone understand and gain more information about the topics being discussed, a variety of activities will be used. Each week will include multiple different activities focused on the week's topic.
  - c. Grounding exercise to close  
Just like relaxation exercises, grounding exercises are a type of coping mechanism. Grounding exercises help to calm us when we feel nervous/anxious and can help us feel more connected to the here and now rather than getting overrun by an emotion, feeling, or memory. They can help us to feel more in control.
  - d. We want to practice as many of these different coping mechanisms during our time together and in the time in between sessions. The more we practice, the more we benefit from these types of exercises.
7. Each session will be a mix of games, activities geared towards learning, and discussing the emotional affects or feelings that we experience. We call this psychosocial support. The word psychosocial has two parts:
    - a. Psycho – meaning associated internally with our thoughts and feelings
    - b. Social – meaning associated with our community and our external support from family, friends and others.
  8. This group will work on understanding our own internal thoughts and feelings but also building on our social support systems.
  9. This is not a class – this is a discussion group where everyone is equal. We can discuss our thoughts and opinions and talk about things that affect us all as women. We will learn from each other and have fun.
  10. Everyone will be asked to come up with two goals that you would like to accomplish by the end of the 12 weeks. We will set these goals next and then at the end of the 12 weeks, we will check back in on them and see what we have accomplished.
  11. Ask the group if they have questions and do your best to answer them fully.

#### **ACTIVITY FOUR: INTRODUCING GOAL SETTING**

**Time: 5 Minutes**

##### Steps:

1. Tell the group that next week we will do some activities to define and set goals for each of us. The goals will be focused on what we want to get out of the group. It is helpful to do this because it reminds us of where we started and how far we've come during our time together. Goals help us feel accomplished and give us something to work towards.
2. Explain to the group that we would now like them to think about what they want to get out of the group or accomplish over the \_\_ weeks. It can be small or big. And it can be focused on "psycho" or "social" or both.
3. Remind them that psycho in this sense has to do with dealing with and being able to handle our own emotions while social is referring to interacting in our communities, seeking and receiving support from others and feeling valued by others.
4. Tell the participants that their homework for this week is to think about what they want to accomplish while they are in this group and be ready to discuss these goals next week.

##### Contextualization – Group (9+ weeks):

If the group is longer than 8 weeks, the women have the option to also develop group goals and a group name. If they want to explore this, they will do it in Session 2: Being A Woman. In groups 9 weeks or longer, spend a few minutes to discuss the following:

- In next week's session we will discuss our personal goals after mapping our strengths and risks.
- We will also look at family and community strengths and weaknesses.
- The group can discuss and decide together if they would like to try to address a community issue that impacts them all. If they decide that this is something they are interested in, during week two they will choose a group name, and two or three issues that they would like to consider and try to address.
- If the women are interested in this option, it means that session 2 will be longer than normal.

When wrapping up the discussion, check with the women and confirm that Session 2 will be closer to two hours if they are deciding on group goals in addition to individual goals. Confirm with everyone that this extra time is ok with them. If anyone has issues, you can discuss with them after the session to see what might work for them.

#### **ACTIVITY FIVE: CHOOSING A RITUAL OPENING AND CLOSING**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

##### Steps:

1. Remind the group that each session we will begin in the same way. As a group, they should discuss how they want to open each session for the next \_\_ weeks.
2. Give the women a few minutes to discuss different ideas they have for the opening. If they get stuck, you can give them a few examples or remind them of the examples that you discussed earlier.
3. Everyone should be in agreement with the ritual opening activity before making a final decision.

4. Practice the chosen ritual once or twice if time allows.
5. Once the ritual opening has been chosen, explain that we will not choose a ritual closing but we will do a grounding exercise to close each day. The facilitators will lead these and each one will be a little different.
6. Remind the group that grounding exercises serve as a good way to close the circle because they help us remain in the present moment, rather than get overwhelmed by difficult emotions, feelings, and memories. They also can help us to calm down when feeling anxious or overwhelmed.
7. Once the closing activity has been explained, assign the home practice.

### **Home Practice:**

New skills:

3 part breath

When we learn new skills, the more we practice, the more we can benefit from these tools. Each participant should try to practice the breathing exercise that we did earlier in the session. Practice as many times as you'd like, but try to practice at least 3 times before returning to the group next week.

Goals: Spend time thinking about what you would like to get out of the group – what do you want to change or improve or learn? Be ready to discuss this next session.

Interaction: Get to know the other participants – spend a few minutes talking with others after we close. Or make plans to show up early before next session and talk with your fellow participants. Introduce yourself to at least one person whose name you do not remember.

### **ACTIVITY SIX: CLOSING THE DAY**

**Time: 15 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Tell the participants that we are going to close with the same game that we played at the beginning of the day.
  - a. Ask the participants to stand in a circle and explain that we will go around the circle and each make a physical action and sound to answer a question.
  - b. Remind them that today the question is “What type of animal do you feel like today?” – They can choose a new animal or they can keep the same animal it is their choice.
  - c. Tell them that each person will step into the center of the circle and say her name and will then demonstrate what type of animal she is. After she steps in, demonstrates, and steps out, the remaining members of the circle will step in, repeat her name and her action.
  - d. Demonstrate for the group first. Ask the group to pay attention to every person and do their best to recreate the action after her. Ask them to pay close attention because we will be adding a step to the game after everyone takes a turn.
2. Go around the circle completely.

3. This time, once everyone has gone, tell them that we will go around again. But the second time we have to step in and say someone else's name and demonstrate her animal. Repeat the exercise this way. Make sure that everyone's name is called and animal is demonstrated. If someone cannot remember the name of a person or her animal, they can ask her directly and then do it.
4. Once everyone has finished thank them for participating and for their creativity and willingness to ask each other their names again, animals and for their time and dedication in this first session.

**For the closing activity, the facilitator working with the French-speaking women chose the following game:**

The Human Knot (15 minutes):

1. Have all the women stand in a circle facing each other.
2. Have all of them reach in the circle with their right hands. They need to grab someone else's hand but they cannot grab the hand of either woman next to them.
3. Then have the women reach their left hand in and grab someone's hand, again not the either of the women next to them.
4. Now they must untangle their arms and get back to a circle with untangled arms. They cannot let go of each other's hands but can go under or over each other's arms to get untangled. Just don't break the chain to get untangled.
5. Once the women have untangled themselves, ask them to sit back down. Then have a brief discussion about what this activity demonstrates. Ask them:
  - a. What does this activity show us about working together?
  - b. What happens/how does it feel when we accomplish something together?
  - c. Are there activities in your life that would be easier to accomplish if you were able to work with others?
6. Highlight that we will be building our relationships with each other throughout the course of the group. When we work together we develop connection. Sometimes, we face challenges and the help of others can ease the burden. Forming connection and support is the work of the group. Hopefully, by the end of our time together, each woman will have connected with others and feel like she has gained additional sources of support in the other group members.

**For the closing activity, the facilitators working with the Ukrainian group in Italy chose the following activity:**

Free Dance (15 mins)

- The facilitators put on music, stand up and start dancing, inviting the participants to do the same.
- They move around the space freely, following the rhythm of their own bodies.
- Then follow up by asking how they felt sharing this activity with other members of the group. Is developing connection and support between them important?
- 

**For the closing activity, the facilitators working with the Ukrainian group in Greece chose the following activity:**

Two truths and a lie (15 mins)

- An activity to get to know each other better
- Sitting in circle, the women take turns stating 3 statements each, out of which 2 will be true and one will be false. Invite participants to be imaginative. The rest of the group must guess which one is false.

- The participant who is speaking will then reveal the correct answers and share a bit more if she wants
- The facilitator should be prepared to give a personal example to make the game easy to understand and motivate participants.

This activity can be facilitated at any point between session 2 and 5 to strengthen participants' knowledge of one another depending on how comfortable they are.



## Session 2: Being a Woman

### Objectives:

- *To reflect on our own roles and contributions.*
- *To understand the importance of time for oneself and self-care*
- *To identify an individual goal to accomplish during the group sessions.*
- *To identify strategies for increasing self-care.*

### Topics Covered:

- *Recapping Week 1*
- *Understanding psychosocial well-being and emotional support?*
- *Safety – linking our current and/or past experiences of safety to feelings.*
- *Risk and Resilience, Strengths and Risks*
  - o *Individual experiences: Who am I*
  - o *Shared experiences: What is the same in our stories?*
  - o *Women in society*
- *Individual goal setting*
- *Group naming (optional 9+ weeks)*
- *Group goal setting (optional 9+weeks)*

### Materials needed:

- Flip charts
- Tape
- Markers
- Paper
- Sticky notes
- Drawing Materials

### Preparation:

- Make a flipchart with the ecological map drawn out for activity five.
- Prepare your own past, present, future drawing
- Spread sheets on the floor and place chairs around them, so participants sit where they like.
- Choose the appropriate music for each activity.
- Prepare small refreshments for the participants in a corner of the room.

## **ACTIVITY ONE: RECAPING WEEK 1**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

### Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session.
2. After the opening is finished, tell them we will now do an activity to help us feel calm and refreshed.
3. Ask participants to sit comfortably in their chairs or on the floor.
4. Tell them that today we will do a type of breathing that can help you to slow your breathing and make you feel calmer.
5. Tell them we will be doing a "box breath." Explain that this is a breath where we inhale, hold the breath in, exhale, and hold with no breath for the same amount of time.
6. Ask them to watch as you give an example but tell them they do not have to breathe with you yet.
7. Give them an example of the box breath by saying "When we do the box breath, we will do it like this: Inhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4, exhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4." Pause and then ask them if this is clear. Give the example again if it's not clear.
8. Remind the group that sometimes this breath can make you feel nervous or slightly panicky, especially on the holds. If this starts to happen, they can always just return to a normal breath and then start the box breath again when they're ready.
9. Ask them if they're ready to start. Once the group is ready to start, remind them to get comfortable in their seats, close their eyes or gaze softly in front of them.
10. Tell them "Now let's inhale together... and exhale together. On the next breath, we will start the box breath..." Tell them "We will complete 7 cycles together"
  - a. Inhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4, exhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4.
  - b. Inhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4, exhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4.
  - c. Inhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4, exhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4.
  - d. Inhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4, exhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4.
  - e. Inhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4, exhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4.
  - f. Inhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4, exhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4.
  - g. Inhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4, exhale 2... 3... 4; hold 2... 3... 4.
11. Then ask them to return to a normal, easy breath. As they breathe quietly, ask them to notice how they feel different after doing this breath. Give them a few moments to reflect. Then ask them if anyone would like to share what they noticed. Once one or two women have shared, move on.
12. Ask them if there are questions from last week or things that they would like more information on from week 1. Spend 5 minutes answering questions.
13. Briefly introduce the topics for the day before moving into activity two.

#### *Contextualization:*

*How can this mindfulness activity be enacted in different cultural settings? For example, physical orientation may be different. Participants can be seated in a circle. The body scan and breath directions can be further contextualized based on the group/facilitator. Make sure that the pace is appropriate – not too short and not too long so that participants lose breath.*

**Activity proposed for the Ukrainian group:**

**Instead of the box breath activity, we performed guided grounding activities.**

**Activity proposed for the French-speaking group:**

After completing the opening ritual, and because for some participants it might be the first time they hear of previous topics:

Go back to the importance of psycho-social support.

Ask women if they were able to do the breathing exercises of last week and what they thought, how they felt.

**ACTIVITY TWO: WHO AM I?<sup>1</sup>**

**Time: 25 Minutes**

Steps:

1. Tell the women that we will now be doing an exercise where they get the chance to think about themselves and the things that effect their well-being as women.
2. Ask the women to think to themselves about how they would answer the question “Who am I?” in 5-10 words. They can think about personality traits, roles they play as women, responsibilities, etc. They should think about both weak spots or things they would like to improve as well as personal strengths/things they like about themselves.
3. In a circle, ask the women to call out some of the things they came up with. Once everyone has said at least one thing, give each woman a sheet of blank paper.  
In turn, each woman shares her qualities/strengths and weaknesses/what she would like to improve. At this stage, we suggest that we think of an individual objective for what we would like to improve and write it down in our notebooks.
4. Tell the women that they should think of all of the roles they play in their lives and the amount of time each role takes in her life. They will show the amount of time each role takes by tearing the sheet of paper into different sized pieces. For example – a small piece of paper would show that they give very little time to their role as a housecleaner in a week.  
Tell the women that we're now going to think about the different roles we play in our lives and the time we give to our different responsibilities. To make it easier to understand, think in terms of responsibilities over a period of a week.
5. Once they have all done this, ask the women to show their torn up pieces and explain the biggest and the smallest.  
Examples: the time I spend doing the housework, the time I spend cooking for the family, looking after the children, the time I spend with myself, whether it's braiding my hair or watching a video that interests me....
6. Ask the women if there is anything in their time divisions they would like to change – either to give more time or less time to.  
Give the women a few minutes to reflect upon this and ask them if they would like to share.

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<sup>1</sup> Modified from Rozan curriculum

7. Ask the women if they ever give time to just themselves, do they have a piece of paper that represents doing things they like or things to relax? Then ask the women if they feel this is important to have time for? What makes these things important? Ask the women if there is anything they feel needs to be improved about the way they share their time in their different responsibilities. Adapt the conversation depending on what the women share.

If the women have a lot of free time, and want to keep busy and be more active, mention that taking care of yourself and your family are important.

Ask them what they think and if they can think of an individual goal they'd like to add. If they want, they can write it down in their notebook.

*Motherhood and Parenting:*

When discussing self-care and taking time for ourselves, it is important to acknowledge that it can be hard to do this when we have children. Culturally, it may be expected or normalized that women always put their children's needs above all else and don't take time for themselves. Women may also just feel too busy with children. However, it is important to highlight that taking care of ourselves is a key factor in being able to take care of others long term, especially our children. Without self-care, we can become so tired, distressed, and overwhelmed that we are no longer able to care for others.

**French-speaking group lesson learned:** The common concern of forcibly displaced women may be to have much more free time on their hands. Group participants shared that they felt lost and spent a lot more time thinking about their problems. Direct the conversation towards what can help women think about what could improve their well-being. Is it taking part in creative activities? Starting language courses? Sport activities? Ask them what they think and if they can think of an individual goal they'd like to add. If they like, they can write it down in their notebooks.

8. After the group has had time to share their reflections, say "now we are going to move into another part of the exercise, while continuing to reflect on what we have shared around our current roles"
9. Do: take out the pre-prepared social-ecological map flip chart. Make sure that there is space on either side of the map to label one side "Risks" and one side "Strengths"
10. Say: we want to explore our roles in relation to our different relationships and structures in our lives. Some of our roles, we have the ability to change easily; whereas other roles are dependent on others and we cannot shift easily without the support of others. Some roles may depend on family members' support and others might depend on community or cultural support to change. We can think about these roles in four main "levels".
- We can think about first level as focusing on ourselves, and our own individual/personal roles (point to the center of the circle)
  - Closest to us after this are our family and friends. What are the roles we have in relation to our friends and family members? (Point to the first circle outside of the center)
  - Next, think about our wider community and (point to the second circle) the roles we take on here and
  - Then, finally culture and society; what roles do we take on when it comes to our society at large? (the third circle)

11. Ask the women who/what they think is included in each circle. Be sure to highlight that the first circle is made up of those closest to us. The second circle includes those we know in the community but would not turn to first for support. It also includes things like service providers – health care, schools, the Women and Girls’ Safe Space. The final circle includes social and political environments as well as our culture and values, expectations, and norms.
12. Discuss the roles women hold at each level and how it can sometimes be difficult to make changes, to take time out for themselves, to take time to do things they need and want to do. Ask the women to think about different things that make it difficult to take time for themselves. What are these?
  - a. As you get feedback from the group be sure to highlight that these challenges fall at different “levels”. Again, when we think about levels, we can think about four main levels:
    - i. Individual/personal
    - ii. Family/friends
    - iii. Community
    - iv. Culture and Society
  - b. When women give an example of a challenge, help them identify which level it is at. Make sure to get an example at each level. Write down each example at the appropriate level on the risks side of the flip chart Remember that some challenges may fall across multiple layers.
  - c. Tell the women we will come back to these levels more in the next activity.
13. Ask them how they might be able to find ways of making changes when needed and take time for themselves and care for themselves when they are exposed/experiencing challenges/risks? Make sure that everyone thinks about what activities might need to lessen in order to have more time for themselves. Ask them to focus on the strengths and resources that they do have that could help them take more time for themselves. What are these?
  - a. Prepare another flipchart with the four levels and label it strengths/resources. Write the examples women give you on this flipchart.
  - b. As you get feedback from the group here, again highlight where/what levels these strengths and resources fall on. Make sure to get at least one example at each level.
  - c. Acknowledge that it is not always easy to find time for ourselves and there are many barriers to taking time for ourselves and caring for ourselves. But, as we have just seen with these examples, we all have individual strengths and family/friend, community, and culture support to take care of ourselves.
14. Ask the women to think about which risks they identified have the most impact on each of them personally. Make sure that they understand that some of the risks may be the same for everyone, but some may be different and everyone will feel the impact of these risks differently.
15. Make sure to emphasize the importance of taking time for themselves and their health. Tell them that we will talk more about our emotions and recognizing them, as well as coping with them as the weeks continue.

**French-speaking group lessons learned:** Preparing an example in advance, in our case the story of a single mother living as a refugee in a foreign country, facilitated understanding of the socio-ecological map and women's participation.

**Challenges and resources mentioned by participants**

Challenges: Difficult to find work that adapts to the different needs of a single mother.

Resource: Support from family, friends and community when the woman needs to go to different organizations or services.

Ask the women at each challenge they mention whether this is something they can change themselves, or whether change depends on other factors in the socio-ecological map, family, community and society.

**For all groups:** The facilitators had a service mapping, both compiled in a document and, for the most important services for women, memorized. Keeping an updated service mapping, facilitators can concretize this sessions with practical information on available services.

### **ACTIVITY THREE: WOMEN'S ROLES<sup>2</sup>**

**Time: 30-45 Minutes**

#### Steps:

CONTEXTUALIZATION - Optional Discussion Questions for Displacement and Conflict (Step 4):

What are some of the effects the conflict and moving to the camp has had on their lives and the lives of their families? Remind them that they should think about both the physical and material effects as well as the emotional effects.

How do these effects impact women vs men? What about their children?

How have their lives been affected differently from the men around them?

Discuss the effects for women in particular, adding to the list that have not been identified by the group.

This could include:

- Women and girls being confined to their homes because of safety concerns
- Lack of access of information for women
- Increased risk of violence against women

Remind them that everyone has been affected by the conflict and living in the camps but that women and children are often more vulnerable to specific effects because of their position in society.

1. Tell the women that we are going to think about our social roles and the cultural norms and traditions that affect us. So we are now going to take a closer look at the community and culture level risks and strengths/resources that we have and experience. First, ask the women to take a piece of paper and draw meaningful events in their lives from the time they were born to now. Tell them they can draw one long line (or a 'timeline') down the paper and then add in words and/or drawings along the timeline from when they were born to now with all the meaningful events.
2. Second, ask the women to take another piece of paper and to draw the different activities they do in their homes, with their families and their communities.
3. After 10 minutes, ask the women to take another piece of paper and draw the meaningful events in men's lives from the time a man is born until now. Finally, on the last piece of paper,

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<sup>2</sup> Rozan modification

ask them to draw the different activities that men do in their homes, with their families and their communities.

4. Ask the women to compare the drawings of their lives and the drawings of men's lives. How are they different? How do these differences affect them during a crisis like the <insert relevant event>? Remind them that the impacts can be both positive and negative. How are they similar? How do these similarities affect them during a crisis like the <insert relevant event>?
5. Once they have gone through different impacts, pull out some of the negative impacts and remind women that sometimes our roles in society make us more vulnerable or can create extra problems for us. Which means that we might also need extra support to recover after something like this happens.
6. Ask the women if their roles have changed since <insert relevant event>. Are they doing anything that they were not doing before? Have these changes been positive, negative, both? How have men's roles changed?
7. In this activity, did anyone identify additional risks or strengths/resources at the individual, family, community or culture levels? Add any that women suggest to the previous flipcharts. Then ask the women to discuss and decide which of these risks impact all of us the most. This time we are thinking about the risks that impact all women, not just ourselves individually.
8. Make sure that the women understand that roles do change over time and due to situations like this. If we can identify our needs, in face of changing situations and roles, we can work with our community to change and adjust both men and women's roles to meet the needs of all community members.
9. Wrap up the conversation by using the points from the contextualization box below.

**Motherhood and Parenting:**

You may ask the women to highlight the role motherhood plays in their lives and how it is different or similar to fatherhood as a role in men's lives. In the discussion, it can be helpful to spend time discussing the different impacts parenthood has on them as women and men in the community.

**Contextualization:**

For discussion point 4 and 6, use any relevant marker of time – since being displaced, since the latest round of fighting, since moving to the city (if working in urban areas), since leaving their home country, etc.

**For the Ukrainian group in Italy:**

After Step 1, proceed as follows:

Reflect in groups by posing the following questions:

-According to your culture, what makes a woman fulfilled? And what does the man?

-In your opinion, does society have a positive or negative impact on your gender roles? Do you feel hindered?

Therefore, invite participants to share their views if they wish and lead the discussion.

**For the French-speaking group:**

We used the displacement of the country of origin as an example of a major event, and all the reflection exercises were based on this example. The women were much more interested in discussing their similarities, how their roles have changed since leaving their home countries, and the limitations.

The changes they themselves can make and the individual goals they want to achieve.

The reflection exercise on the role of men and women did not attract much participation. The women were much more interested in sharing their own experiences.

Contextualization:

For the 8 week sessions: it is important to note that we will be focusing on goals at the individual level, but in order for us to make progress on those goals, we have to know how the other levels impact us and what limitations may exist because of the impact of other levels. (For example, a goal of leaving the camp and moving somewhere else may be restricted by a government policy that says they must stay in the camp.)

#### **ACTIVITY FOUR: DRAWING MY GOALS: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE ACTIVITY<sup>3</sup>**

**For the French-speaking group:**

This activity has been given as a homework exercise to reflect upon. If the women are not comfortable drawing, they can express themselves with simple words and write in their notebooks and be ready to share what they want for the next session.

**Time: 25 minutes**

**Steps:**

1. Explain to the participants that they will have the opportunity to now reflect on a challenge in the past that they overcame, the good qualities and skills that they have now in the present, and their hopes for the future. They should think about all of the strengths and resources they have that they've identified in the previous two exercises.
2. Explain that they will complete this reflection exercise by using drawing as a medium. Tell them that the drawing does not need to be beautiful; this is not an art test! The purpose of the activity is for them to reflect and represent their reflections in whatever way they choose. Explain that if they want, they can draw people and/or they can use symbols to represent their ideas.
3. Ask participants to break up their piece of paper into three sections – in whatever way they want. In those sections ask them to draw:
  - a. PAST: Consider a challenge they successfully overcame in their life in the past. Ask participants to draw what skills or qualities they used to overcome this challenge.
  - b. PRESENT: Consider and draw their current positive qualities and skills and how they use them in their life right now. And any supports/resources they have at different levels.

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<sup>3</sup> Creativity and Empathy for Psychosocial Support Manual, Myanmar Arts Social Project (MASC), Hubbard, T., Lahhtaw, M. 2015



- c. FUTURE: Consider their hopes for the future – one goal or change that she would like to happen by the end of the group. Draw the skills, qualities, support and resources she will need to accomplish this goal. *Make sure that the women know to choose a goal that they want to work on throughout the sessions. We will come back to this goal throughout our time together.*
- d. FUTURE – 9+ weeks (if the group is completing 9+ weeks, then add in the following) Consider their hopes for the future in her community – one goal or change that she would like to see this group work on if they decide to become a community action group. *Make sure that the women know that this goal is in addition to the goal they want to work on throughout the sessions. This is a goal that they would continue to work on as a group after the sessions end.*
4. Once the images are completed, invite participants to make small groups and share with each other their three stages.
5. Tell the women that we will want to focus on finding similarities between our stories and also should respect the differences across individual stories. They should each briefly describe their pictures. While the others are speaking, each should pay attention to what is the same or similar between their stories and what is different.
6. Tell the women to come back to the larger group and that you will all debrief together before closing the activity. Questions for debrief:
  - a. How did you feel recalling the challenge you overcame and your present skills/qualities?
  - b. How did you feel reflecting on goal for the future? What would help you accomplish this goal in the future?
  - c. How did you feel when you listened to and shared your stories with others?
  - d. What was similar/the same in your stories?
  - e. What was different?
  - f. In the past and present, what were strengths that you noticed in others’ stories? In your own?
7. Remind the women that we will come back to these drawings throughout our time together and we will be able to add to them as we work towards our goals for this group.

*Contextualization:  
How can this activity be enacted in different cultural settings? For example, drawings made by women can be more simple or complex in regard to examples of challenges, qualities, skills, and hopes that they wish to reflect on.*

*Group (+9 weeks):  
For groups that continue to meet after these sessions – How will this type of reflective activity be continued and revisited by members? What type of goals are group members looking to set collectively? Individual goals can also be explored and presented to the group.*

**ACTIVITY FIVE: CLOSING THE SESSION:**

**Time: 5-10 minutes**

Steps:

1. Remind the women that today we focused on our own unique experiences and our shared experiences as women.
2. Ask the women if they have any questions about what we discussed today. Answer any questions that come up.

3. Move on to the grounding exercises for today: Feeling the weight of the body. If sitting on the floor/ground, have everyone move to the sides of the room so that their backs are against the wall.
4. Tell the women that we are going to do an exercise<sup>4</sup> that activates muscles in the torso and legs, which gives a feeling of our own physical strength and body structure. When we are overwhelmed, our muscles often change from extreme tension to collapse; they shift from a very active state to an overly relaxed.
5. When we are in touch with our physical strength and body structure, we are able to process our experiences and manage feelings (such as feelings of overwhelm) better.
6. Instruct the women to:
  - a. Sit in a comfortable position.
  - b. Feel your feet on the ground. Pause for five seconds.
  - c. Feel the weight of your legs. Hold for five seconds.
  - d. Try stamping your feet carefully and slowly from left to right, left, right, left, right. Feel your buttocks and thighs touching the seat of the chair (or the ground). Hold that for five seconds.
  - e. Feel your back against the back of the chair (or the wall).
  - f. Stay like that and notice if you feel any difference. Pause for 30 seconds before moving on.
7. Let the women know that next week we will be looking closer at our emotions and the impact our roles and responsibilities, along with other factors may have on our emotions.
8. Let the women know that next week will be a two hour session. Explain the homework for the day.

**For the Ukrainian group in Italy:**

Since the facilitators had expertise in yoga and meditation exercises and because the women had showed interest, instead of the grounding exercise (steps 3-6) we proceed as follows: End the session using a candle. On it, each woman will draw a symbol representing 'negative energy'. The candle is lit: the negative energy is then burnt and goes away. Stand for a few minutes watching the candle being lit, accompanied by background music.

After this, finish off with thermometer (check out).

**For the Ukrainian group in Greece:**

If participants are tired of sitting in the same place and have a need to stretch, you can choose to use a grounding exercise, such as "Becoming a Flower", instead of the above exercise (steps 3-6). (See Session 6, Option B, Activity Five: Becoming a Flower)

**For the French-speaking group:**

The participants preferred to repeat the box-breathing exercise done at the beginning of the session, instead of the grounding exercise (steps 3-6).

The facilitator can share through the WhatsApp group short videos of relaxation exercises that the women can do alone at home.

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<sup>4</sup> Health and Human Rights Info (2016). Mental health and gender-based violence: Helping survivors of sexual violence in conflict – a training manual. Modification

Homework:

Skills Building: Practice the grounding exercise from the closing at least three times before next week. Reflect on how you felt after completing it each time.

**Group cohesion:** Suggest creating a WhatsApp group if all the women have phones, to share information, ideas or simply ask each other for support if needed.

The facilitator can also use this group to send short videos of relaxation exercises to do at home.

Group Cohesion: Think of a name for the group to present to the other members next week. The name can be representative of you as a group of women or reflect your activities and goals for the group.

Group Cohesion (9+ weeks): Think of the issues/risks we identified at the community level and choose one you would like to work to address as a group. Be able to tell the group the issue you picked and the reasons you want to work on it.

## Session 3: Understanding Emotions

### Objectives:

- To understand the effects from conflict on vulnerable groups in the community
- To understand bodily reactions for different emotions and develop language for feelings in the body.
- To discuss the gender roles of our society as a cause of gender differences in reactions to disaster

### Topics Covered:

- The effects of conflict on vulnerable groups – how we exist in our communities, families and homes.
- Differences in reactions between men and women
- Gender socialization and its effects
- Finalizing group naming and group goal setting (optional 9+weeks)
- Baseline functioning
- Language of the body – developing a common language for feelings in the body
- Understanding emotions and their bodily reactions

### Materials needed:

- A4 Paper
- Tape
- Markers
- 2 small balls

### Preparation:

- Prepare all feelings cards before. Ensure there are enough pairs for the group.
- Make sure to have the Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors flip chart from Week 1 to display and two blank versions of the chart.
- Have the Ecological Map from Week 2 to display

**Note to Facilitator:** *This session will take 2 hours. If you find that this session is running too long, make sure to include time for **ACTIVITY SEVEN: WHAT IS STRESS?** You can cut either activity 5 or activity 6 if time is running short.*

### **ACTIVITY ONE: RECAPPING WEEK 2**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session. If the women did not determine their ritual opening last week, ask them if they have decided how they would like to open each session. Give them a few minutes to decide and discuss if needed.

2. Once they've decided, ask if one of the women can volunteer to lead them through the opening.

**For the Ukrainian group in Palermo:** Because the facilitators had yoga and meditation skills, they did Bhastrika Pranayama breathing exercise instead. This exercise is only advised for trained and experienced facilitators. There are other breathing exercises available in annex of the Women Rise Curriculum.

Proceed with steps 8 and 9

END OF ACTIVITY 1

3. After the opening is finished, tell them we will now do an activity to help us feel calm and refreshed.
4. Ask participants to stand up and find a space of their own in the room, not touching anyone else.
5. Ask them to stand comfortably, with their feet hip width apart and arms hanging loose from their shoulders.
6. Ask them to close their eyes and bring their attention to their bodies as you very slowly give the instructions below:
  - a. "Bring your attention to your feet. Notice how they feel against the floor. Notice how strong and stable your feet are, holding you upright."
  - b. "Now bring your attention to your legs. How do they feel? Are they tired or painful or tense? Consciously invite your legs to relax and hold you up standing up softly"
  - c. "Now move your attention to your upper and lower back. How does your back feel? Is it hard? Is there pain? Try to make your whole back feel soft and free."
  - d. "Now move your attention to your arms and hands. Are they tense? Are your hands clenched? Relax the muscles in your arms and make your hands soft and open"
  - e. "Bring your attention to your shoulders. What do you find here? Are they tense, relaxed, tired? Invite your shoulder muscles to be relaxed and soft."
  - f. "Now bring your attention up to your face and head. Place your attention on your jaw muscles, your mouth, your nose, your cheeks your eyes, your eyebrows, the space between your eyebrows and forehead. Is there any tension in these places? Try to release and let your face become soft and open."
  - g. "Now take this last moment to stand still and enjoy feeling being connected to your whole body. Notice how you feel from when you first stood up. Notice your breath moving in and out. Remind yourself that in this moment there is nothing else you need to do; only stand still and feel relaxed and safe."
  - h. "When you are ready, open your eyes"
7. Once everyone has opened their eyes, invite them to sit back down. Ask them to reflect on this experience.
  - a. "What did you feel as we were going through these relaxation steps?"
  - b. "Did you notice a change in your body as you brought attention to different parts of your body?"
  - c. "Was there any change in the existing tension in your body?"

*Contextualization:*

*Remember, this language may need adjustment based on the group. The goal of the facilitator is to help the participants feel relaxed by reducing tension and tightness through a body scan, as attention is brought to different parts of the body.*

**Alternative exercise for Activity 1: 5-minute relaxation**

The relaxation exercise video sent the previous days - Spaghetti exercise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1VpHaNPIQA>

Once the video is finished, ask them if the instructions were understandable

"What did it feel like? Were you able to draw attention to different parts of the body?" "Is there a change in the existing tension in your body?"

*[Lesson learned: Women are used to using their phones for games and connecting on their social media. Share meditation or relaxation videos through the common WhatsApp group to help them practice and familiarize themselves with this kind of exercise when they're at home. Choose an easy exercise, using very simple language suitable for women with different levels of education. The facilitator should listen to the video from start to end before sending it to prepare for the questions.]*

8. Ask them if there are questions from last week or things that they would like more information on from week 2. Spend 5 minutes answering questions.
9. Briefly introduce the topics for the day before moving into activity two.

**ACTIVITY TWO: GROUP NAME (AND GROUP GOAL – 9+ WEEKS):**

**Time: 5 – 20 Minutes**

Steps:

1. Remind the group of their homework from last week – to decide on a group name.
2. Ask each of the women if anyone has a suggestion for a group name that they would like to suggest. If you have multiple names that have been suggested, ask the women to vote on the name that they want to use. Vote either by writing names on a slip of paper or by closing their eyes and raising their hand for the name they want to use.

*Contextualization:*

*Remember that if you are doing 9 weeks or longer, you also need to ask for suggestions about what risk factor the group would like to try to address as a group goal.*

3. Then ask if anyone would like to suggest a group goal to work on. Take as many suggestions as offered by the women. The group can discuss amongst themselves from the suggestions and choose a goal that they would like to work on.
4. Make sure to clearly explain that the group goal will be discussed briefly during the group sessions but that this is also something that they can choose to work on outside of the group sessions and after the group sessions end.

### **ACTIVITY THREE: TRUST**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Start the work of the day by talking about the idea of trust. Tell the group that one of the things we want to accomplish in this group is a greater sense of trust.
2. Explain that when we're talking about trust, we're talking about establishing trust with each other but we're also talking about trust in ourselves. It can be hard to trust ourselves and our emotions after difficult experiences.
3. Understanding our emotions and feeling more in control of our emotions both day to day and when remembering difficult events in our lives can help us trust ourselves more.
4. Ask the group to think about a time when you experienced difficult emotions or feelings but you felt like you were able to manage those feelings? Now think about a time when you experienced difficult emotions and you did not feel in control of those feelings. What was different? What did you do that made you feel more in control and able to manage difficult emotions?

#### Normalizing:

It is important to acknowledge that women often experience difficult emotions like sadness, distress, anger, etc. Some of these may be culturally acceptable to show and some may not. Some may be considered "more negative" than others in our culture. No matter how our culture views these emotions, they are all normal and will continue to come up in our lives. What changes is how we think about them and our ability to manage these emotions.

The notion of dealing with difficult emotions or feelings may not be easily understood by participants, so the facilitator should have an example ready.

There may be confessions such as "when I learned that my mother was seriously ill, I was very sad but I knew I had to control myself, be very strong and not show my sadness, I didn't tell anyone about it I didn't even cry."

It may be that dealing with a difficult emotion is interpreted as controlling oneself and not showing one's pain; the facilitator could introduce at this level the notion of the positive expression mechanisms of our emotions, which we'll talk about in the next sessions, but every emotion is completely normal and needs to be expressed.

5. Explain that finding ways to manage difficult emotions is an important part of regaining trust in ourselves if we have lost it. Tell the group that the activities at the beginning and end of each session are meant to build our skills and our "toolbox" of managing difficult emotions.
6. Ask the group for some techniques that they use to manage difficult emotions. You can also give examples of the exercises that we've used in group and what emotions they are good for if the participants are having trouble. (Ex: deep breathing for anxiety, relaxation techniques for stress, hitting a pillow for anger/rage, etc).
7. Tell the participants that today we are going to begin exploring different emotions more in depth as part of this trust process. If we are more aware of and can recognize emotions more easily, it helps us trust what we are feeling and know what tools to use to manage these emotions.

## **ACTIVITY FOUR: IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS/FEELINGS<sup>5</sup>**

**Time: 20 Minutes**

### Steps:

1. Today we want to begin to understand and explore emotions and the feelings they create in our bodies. We will also start exploring how we deal with emotions we experience.
2. Ask the group what they think of when we say emotions. Ask them to name some emotions. Write everything they say, even if they say feelings rather than emotions.
3. Tell them that we have a limited number of emotions and emotions are most often unconscious – we don't have to think about them, they originate in the part of our brain that assesses danger and motivation. The most common list of main emotions is sadness, anger, surprise, joy, disgust, fear. Circle these or add them if they are not on the list.
4. Now ask them how emotions are different from feelings? Explain that feelings require conscious thought and can last much longer than emotions. Feelings are reactions to those emotions.
5. Explain that there are many more feelings than emotions and feelings may not be the same culture to culture. We learn and experience feelings based on our experiences, our culture, our individual personalities. Underline any feelings they have already named and you've written down. Ask the group to think of as many different feelings as possible. Tell them just to call out different feelings – write them down on a flip chart as they call them out.
6. Once a wide range of feelings have been identified, ask them if they think all of these feelings are normal.
7. Ask the group if they think it is important to talk about feelings? Why or why not?
8. Ask them to think about different ways they deal or work through feelings when they do not talk about them? Make the point that when we allow ourselves to explore and acknowledge our feelings in a health way, we are better prepared to cope with difficult feelings.
9. Emphasize that all feelings are normal and completely natural. There are no bad feelings. We will all experience these different feelings at different times. What is important is learning how to express them or deal with them in ways that are healthy, rather than damaging.
10. Tell them that you will read a series of statements about feelings. After each one you will ask them if it is true or false.
  - a. Feelings involve a total body reaction (T)
  - b. Feelings are not influenced by your thoughts and perceptions (F)
  - c. Feelings can be simple or complex (T)
  - d. Feelings can give you energy (T)
  - e. Feelings are never mixed. You only feel one at a time (F)
  - f. Feelings are often contagious (T)
  - g. Feelings are not right or wrong (T)
  - h. People often suppress feelings (T)
11. Make sure to discuss each one, especially if the group does not agree on each and ensure you explain why each statement is true or false if needed.

#### *Contextualization:*

*Culture and how it dictates feelings you can express (by gender, age, etc)  
What does that mean for experiencing these feelings?*

### **BREAK: 10 MINUTES**

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<sup>5</sup> Rozan modification



## **ACTIVITY FIVE: UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**

**Time: 15 Minutes**

**Preparation:** *Make sure you have the emotion pairs cut into strips ahead of time and that you have a container to let participants choose an emotion from it. Emotion cards are located in the Annex: Activity Materials at the end of the document.*

### **Steps:**

1. Remind the group that two weeks ago we talked briefly about the meaning of psychosocial. Remind them of the definition from last week if necessary.
2. Tell the group that when we speak about “psychosocial well-being” we mean to generally feel good about oneself and one’s life. It also means to feel confident in our ability to cope with challenges and to be able to address issues. It means that we feel like we can carry out day to day functions.<sup>6</sup>
3. Tell the group that this does not mean that we do not experience difficult emotions, but that we feel equipped and can move through difficult emotions without it causing disruption in our day to day lives. Part of being able to do this, means being able to name and identify both positive and difficult emotions.
4. Tell them that we will now do an activity to help us start to identify different emotions/feelings<sup>7</sup>.
5. Give each participant one of the feeling cards with an emotion. There should be at least 2 copies of each feelings card. Everyone should have an emotion/feeling that matches with someone else.
6. Tell the group that they cannot share their emotion card with others. They must keep it secret. Make sure that everyone knows their emotion. If there are non-literate participants, make sure that they have a card and that you have told them their emotion in another room or away from the others.
7. Explain to the participants that they should stand up and walk around the room physically demonstrating their emotion. While they do this, they must try and find the other person who has their same emotion. Everyone has a feeling match. Make sure that participants know that they are not allowed to ask others their emotion word. They must watch the others and find their match. They are only allowed to ask if they are very sure that the other person is their match.
8. Once they find their pair, ask the participants to sit together and tell each other about a time that they experienced that emotion.
9. After everyone has had a chance to talk in their pairs, ask the pairs to share which emotion they had to represent.
10. When the group has come back together, go through some of these debriefing questions:
  - a. How did you find your emotion pair? What did you focus on?
  - b. Which emotions were difficult to recognize? Do we all show emotion in the same way? Do we all experience emotion in the same way?
  - c. When you shared your experiences, what did you learn from each other?
    - i. What was it like to tell someone else about a negative experience?

#### **Contextualization:**

Use emotion or feeling to describe what we’re talking about. Either is fine – choose the one that translates best into the language of use for your context.

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<sup>6</sup> Women’s Psychosocial Support Group Module. *Rozan*

<sup>7</sup> MASC Psychosocial Well-Being Manual, “Find Your Feeling-Pair” Activity

- ii. Did your partner help you feel supported when you told a difficult experience? What about when you told a positive experience? What did it look like when your partner supported you? How did it feel to have someone support you?
- d. What emotions do you think we feel when we have good psychosocial well-being? What are the characteristics of someone with good psychosocial well-being?
  - i. Help them to bring out characteristics like confident, open, self-aware, responsibly, socially active, aware of our own emotions, active in the community.
- e. Close the session by reinforcing the following points:
  - i. Psychosocial well-being means that we are able to experience a wide array of emotions without becoming overwhelmed by them. It also means that we are able to function and carry out our daily activities while feeling largely happy and supported. We are able to address challenges and difficulties well.
  - ii. Sometimes, we need support to do this, particularly from others. In this activity we started experiencing emotional support with our feeling partners.
  - iii. We also started identifying different emotions that may not be expressed or experienced by everyone in the same way.

### **ACTIVITY SIX: UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS**

**Time: 30 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Tell the group that today we are going to explore the connection between mind and body more.
2. We are going to start by playing a game. Tell them that we are going to make different faces that match different emotions while sitting in the circle. Each person should try to make the best face to represent the emotion.
3. Go through several emotions starting with happy. Alternate between positive and negative emotions:
  - a. Happy
  - b. Sad
  - c. Excited
  - d. Angry
  - e. Joyful
  - f. Scared
4. Now tell them we are going to do the same thing but with our whole bodies. Ask the participants to stand up and move the chairs back against the wall.
5. Tell the participants that we will all walk around the room and when an emotion is called out they must all freeze in place and create a sculpture of that emotion using their whole body. It may help to think of a time when they experienced that emotion. If needed you can have your co-facilitator demonstrate. Repeat the list of emotions that you used before. Call out each one after 30 seconds of walking around. Make sure to have a small time for walking in between each emotion sculpture.
6. Once you've finished ask the group which negative emotion they were able to feel the strongest during the sculptures. Write it down on the flip chart. Ask them which positive emotion they were able to feel the strongest during the sculptures. Write their responses down on the flip chart.

7. Have them identify some of the physical sensations with the negative emotion that they chose. Then have them identify some of the physical sensations with the positive emotion that they chose.
8. You may want to use the following questions to discuss feelings:
  - a. What do you feel in your body with these emotions? Where do you feel it?
  - b. Can we sometimes feel more than one emotion at a time? (for example, when you are angry, do you feel other emotions too?). Are these multiple feelings sometimes contradictory? (i.e. a positive emotion and a negative emotion together).
  - c. Do some feelings hide other feelings? Is it easier for us to feel anger rather than an emotion like shame?
  - d. When you feel these emotions, what are some of the thoughts you have? How do you act when you feel these emotions?
  - e. If you changed a thought about the situation that caused you to feel sad or angry (use an example that one of the women gave you for anger or sadness), how would that change or influence your behavior?
9. To wrap up the conversation explain that every emotion can be felt in the body. During times of stress or trauma, we may feel many emotions that can be overwhelming. All of these reactions are a normal response from our bodies trying to help us survive. However, when feeling overwhelmed by the strength and amount of emotions, we may try to distance ourselves from the emotions rather than feeling them. Next week we will focus on stress reactions – what they are and feel like and identify various coping mechanisms to process these.

**For the French speaking group:**

Lesson learned: during the activity, participants were invited to recall difficult emotions such as sadness and anger. Some may want to share events from their lives. It is advisable to leave time for the person to express themselves and room for other participants to give their support if they do so spontaneously, even if this may disrupt the exercise or take much longer than expected.

**ACTIVITY SEVEN: WHAT IS STRESS?**

**Time: 30 minutes**

**Steps:**

1. Tell the group that we are now going to do an activity to understand the difference between stress and chronic (long-term) stress. We will also come back to this activity and talk more about this in Week 4. Explain that these are related and have similar impacts on our minds and bodies but the severity of these impacts differs.
2. Ask if anyone thinks they know what these two things are? Does anyone know what stress is? Ask for a definition of stress from the participants. Write responses down on a flip chart. Then write the following definition:
  - a. Any response of the body due to change
  - b. Can be positive or negative
  - c. Prolonged exposure to stress tends to have more negative effects
  - d. Stress can increase productivity up to a point and then begins to result in fatigue and even sickness after that peak point of productivity
  - e. Stress is an automatic response in our bodies to protect us against threats. (When we are talking about threats in this sense, we are talking about demands and hassles. Our bodies perceive all of these as threats) Stress is a natural reaction to a perceived threat.

Our body reacts by increasing heart rate, blood pressure and energy supplies. Once the threat is passed or has been dealt with, all of these things return to normal.

- f. Our body is essentially preparing us to either run away from a threat (flight) or deal with a threat physically (fight). Once we've done either of these things, the body returns to a normal heart rate, blood pressure and energy supplies.
3. Now ask if anyone knows how chronic (long-term) stress is different from the normal, everyday stress that we just defined? Again, write the responses down on a flip chart, Then write the following definition:
  - a. Chronic stress is a response to long-term emotional pressure and often results in prolonged situations where people feel that they have little to no control over the outcome or to make changes.
  - b. Point out that chronic stress is the point at which we are no longer increasing productivity (doing activities) but the point that our bodies begin to be tired/fatigued and start getting sick.
  - c. This means that the body's normal reactions to stress (increased heart rate, blood pressure, elevated energy supplies) stay elevated rather than returning to normal which can cause other health problems. Some of these include anxiety (feeling nervous all the time), depression (feeling low, sad, and unable to function for long periods of time), digestive problems, headaches, heart disease, sleep problems, and weight gain.
4. Bring out a flip chart and draw an outline of a body. Explain that we are going to draw the ways that stress and chronic stress feel in our bodies. We will use different colors and symbols to create a picture within this body on the flip chart. We will start with stress.
5. Ask the participants to think about an "everyday stress" – having enough time to cook dinner, someone being sick in the house, getting into an argument with your friend, or being excited to see a friend after a long time, starting a new job, etc. What does that feel like in your body? Where in your body do you feel it?
  - a. As women give you suggestions – ask each to come and draw a symbol for her suggestion on the place she feels it in her body. For example, a headache might be jagged lines across the forehead.
  - b. Then ask the women how stress impacts the ways they interact with others. If they are stressed, how do they treat others? What happens outside of their body, in their environments? They should again come and draw a symbol for this but it can be outside of the body, or originating in the body but going outward.
6. Now ask the participants to think about chronic stress. Remind them of the difference between chronic stress and normal everyday stress. How does this feel differently in our bodies? Where/how do you feel chronic stress? What does chronic stress feel like in your body?
  - a. As women give you suggestions for chronic stress, ask each to come and draw a symbol for her suggestion on the place she feels chronic stress in her body. It might be a bigger symbol or multiple symbols in different places when it's chronic stress.
  - b. How does chronic stress impact the way they interact with others? If they are experiencing chronic stress, what happens outside of their bodies, in their environments? What are the circumstances and situations that cause us chronic stress? Again, each woman should draw a symbol to represent her suggestion.
7. Highlight the key differences between stress and chronic stress:
  - a. Stress can be positive or negative. It is a natural response of the body due to change
  - b. Chronic stress is a response to long-term emotional pressure and often results in prolonged situations where people feel that they have little to no control over the outcome or to make changes.

- c. Stress can increase productivity but with chronic stress productivity diminishes
  - d. Stress can have negative effects, particularly when it is prolonged. Chronic stress can lead to disease and severe health impacts.
8. Then have the participants stand up and stretch/shake out and play fish, bear and mosquito game. In pairs, they should count to three then act out being a bear, fish or mosquito at the same time; the bear wins over/bites the fish, the fish wins over/eats the mosquito, and the mosquito wins over/bites the bear.
  9. Once they have played three times, they should walk around the room and find another partner. Do this for five minutes or until the participants seem relaxed.
  10. Remind them that this is a heavy topic and can be very hard to talk about but we have coping mechanisms that can help us. We just did one!

### **ACTIVITY EIGHT: CLOSING ACTIVITY**<sup>8</sup>

**Time: 15 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Ask someone to remind the group what the meaning of “psychosocial” is and then ask someone else why it’s important to focus on our well-being.
2. This exercise helps someone who is feeling anxious to calm herself. It can also be used to focus on the here-and-now.
3. Cross your arms in front of you and draw them towards your chest. With your right hand, hold your left upper arm. With your left hand, hold your right upper arm. Squeeze gently, and pull your arms inwards. Hold the squeeze for a little while. Find the right amount of squeeze for you right now.
4. Hold the tension and release. Then squeeze for a little while again and release. Stay like that for a moment.
5. Close by discussing:
  - a. How do you feel after doing this grounding exercise?
    - i. Your breathing?
    - ii. Your feelings?
    - iii. Your thoughts?
    - iv. Your heart?
    - v. Your body?
6. After you have finished discussing, thank them for coming and let them know that next week we will start discussing feelings more in depth and identifying coping mechanisms for difficult feelings. Let participants know that next week will also be a two hour session.

#### Homework:

Skills Building: Practice both the relaxation exercise and the grounding exercise at least three times before next session. Be prepared to speak about your experience of these and if you found one to be more effective than the other.

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<sup>8</sup> Health and Human Rights Info (2016). Mental health and gender-based violence Helping survivors of sexual violence in conflict – a training manual. Modification

## Session 4: Understanding Stress Reactions

### Objectives:

- *To understand that all emotions are normal as long as they do not disrupt our ability to function day to day*
- *To understand the impact of stress and stress reactions*
- *To understand coping skills, both negative and positive*
- *To understand the importance of expressing and managing emotions positively rather than negatively*

### Topics Covered:

- *Identifying Causes of Stress*
- *Window of Tolerance and Lowering Baseline Stress*
- *Feelings and Coping Mechanisms: Defense mechanisms and their affects*
- *Identifying Individual Coping Mechanisms*
- *Updating our goal sheets*

### Materials needed:

- Flip Charts
- Tape
- Markers
- Individual Goal Sheets

### Preparation:

- Facilitators should know any and all additional MHPSS services and how to refer to these services. If no other services exist, facilitators and supervisors should discuss how they can support anyone who feels they may be experiencing PTSD without additional MHPSS services BEFORE doing this session.
- Have the flip charts from Session 1 displayed for reference
- Draw the Window of Tolerance flip chart beforehand and have ready for activity three

### **ACTIVITY ONE: RECAPPING WEEK 3**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

### Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session.
2. Ask one woman to lead the ritual opening.
3. Once the ritual opening has been completed, move to the relaxation exercise for today

**For the Ukrainian group in Italy:** Since the facilitators had an expertise in aromatherapy, they proposed the following exercise: Provide participants different essential oils, each participant takes few minutes to smell, concentrate and guess the aroma of the oils. Proceed by asking participants how they feel. Does the smell of the oils brings out some memories? Were there moments where they couldn't concentrate or had some thoughts distracting them?  
Go on with step 13.

4. Tell the women that we will be doing an exercise today that focuses on concentration and stilling the thoughts in the mind.
5. Ask the participants to sit comfortably and to close their eyes or gaze softly in front of them.
6. Tell the participants: We will be focusing on the breath. Begin to slow your breath, deepening the inhale into your belly. Exhale fully.
7. Tell the participants: On each inhale count, starting at 1 for the first breath, 2 for the second, 3 for the third. On your exhales, let your mind be quiet.
8. Tell the participants: Each time you lose count and find yourself thinking about something else instead of counting, restart at 1. Notice how many times you need to restart at 1.
9. Give participants a few minutes of silence to breathe and count their breath.
10. After a few minutes, tell the participants to take one more breath and then open their eyes and come back to the group.
11. Ask the participants if they had to start counting from one more than once. What thoughts distracted them? How long did it take them to notice that they were no longer counting and had been distracted by their thoughts? What was it like to restart at 1? Did you have negative thoughts about having to start over or were you kind to yourself when starting over?
12. Tell the participants that we will try this activity again and see if it changes when we practice it again.
13. Ask them if there are questions from last week or things that they would like more information on from week 3. Spend 5 minutes answering questions.
14. Briefly introduce the topics for the day before moving into activity two.

## **ACTIVITY TWO: REVIEW OF STRESS AND CHRONIC STRESS**

**Time: 15 minutes**

### Steps:

1. Begin by having last week's flip chart that was used to outline stress in the body so that participants can refer to this for review.
2. Remind the group of last week's discussion of stress. Refer to the chart and ask a member to define stress. Make sure to correct or add in any missing pieces to the definition.
3. Ask another member to provide an example of how stress can affect the body.
4. Refer to the flip chart and ask another member to define chronic stress. Make sure to correct or add in any missing pieces to the definition.
5. Ask another member to provide an example of chronic stress.
6. Remind the group of the similarities and differences of stress and chronic stress.

### **ACTIVITY THREE: UNDERSTANDING OUR BRAIN AND EMOTIONS**

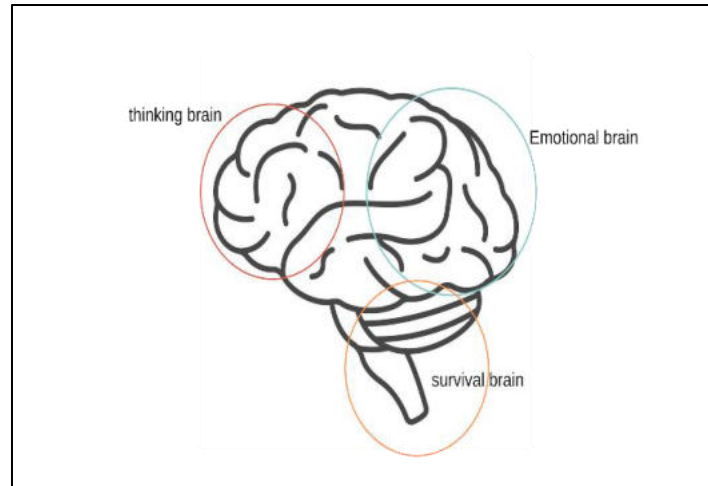
**Time: 45 Minutes**

**Preparation:** *Prepare a flipchart of the brain with the labels for thinking brain, emotional brain, and survival brain before hand*

#### **Steps:**

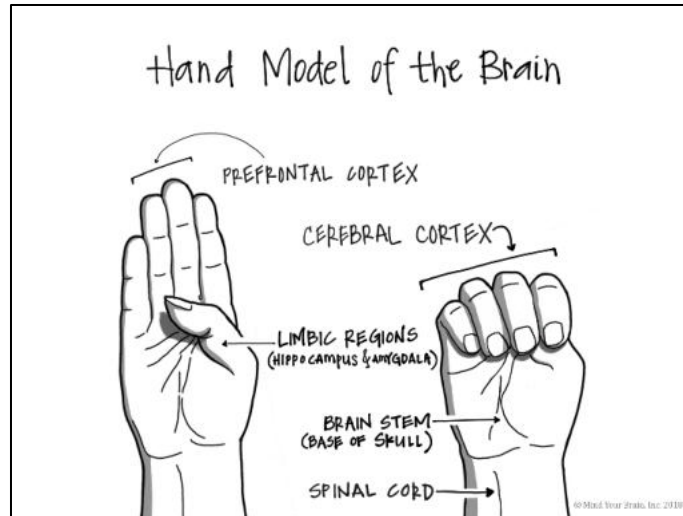
1. Explain that during this group we're going to be talking about how our brains work in times of extreme stress. We will be discussing and looking at how each of these influence the other. We will focus a lot of our discussions on emotions and feelings and building skills to cope with difficult emotions when we experience them.
2. Pass out a piece of paper to each person along with some markers, crayons, or colored pencils to draw with.
3. Instruct the group to spend 5 minutes drawing a happy memory. It can be a recent memory or a memory from childhood. It doesn't have to be something big. Just a time that they clearly remember feeling happy. Let everyone have at least 5 minutes to draw out their memory. If everyone finishes early, then you can move on to the next step.
4. Once everyone has finished drawing their memory, ask if 1 or 2 women would be willing to share their drawing and memory. Explain to the other participants that every time they hear something that is the same or similar in their story they should simply raise their hand. Everyone should watch the group members to see how often hands are raised.
5. Ask the volunteers to explain:
  - a. What their memory is
  - b. The thoughts they had at the time that made them know they were happy
  - c. How happy felt at the time (they might use descriptors like calm, light, or easy or they might say "I was laughing a lot, etc.)
  - d. What did they do/how did they act when they were happy.
6. While the women are speaking, keep track of feelings/behaviors/thoughts that seem to be common and that many of the women seem to relate to throughout.
7. Once both volunteers have explained their story, move into a discussion by asking if anyone noticed how often hands were raised. Highlight that participants had several common thoughts, behaviors, and feelings associated with being happy. Ask the women if they noticed some of the commonalities that they had. Explain that, despite differences in events and experiences, we have many commonalities and points of connection. You might use some of the following questions to guide the discussion:
  - a. How did you feel when you saw others raise their hands at the same time as you did?
  - b. Were you surprised at any of the things you had in common with the other women?  
What made you surprised? What about it was surprising?
8. Begin to shift the conversation and tell the women that we will spend the last part of the conversation working to understand our brains. Tell the women that we are always thinking, feeling and taking action. But when we are in times of stress, one part of our brain can override the other parts.
9. Bring out the flip chart with the brain on it and explain:





Picture 1: Thinking brain. Emotional brain. Survival brain.

- a. At the base of our neck we have the brain stem/base of brain. This part of the brain is our “survival” brain. It makes sure we do all the things we need to survive without actively thinking about it. (examples: breathing, blinking, swallowing, etc)
  - b. In the middle we have the emotional brain. This part of our brain thinks like an animal and attaches emotions to experiences. (examples: snake = dangerous, our emotional brain is the part of our brain that makes us jump out of the way for a snake before our thinking brain even realizes it is a snake)
  - c. Finally, towards the top and front of our brain is the thinking brain. This is the brain that can make slow, reasoned decisions based on facts, context, etc and not just on emotions.
10. Ask the participants – so what do we think happens in times of lots of emotions, high stress, or dangerous situations? Take a few suggestions from people, making sure to say yes or affirm any that are correct. (for example, someone might say “our brain shuts down” to which you could say yes, it’s correct that PART of our brain shuts down)
  11. Ask the participants to take one hand and make a fist with their thumb inside their fingers. Then open the hand back up but keep the thumb where it is. Then explain that your fingers represent the “thinking” brain. The palm is the “emotional” brain and the wrist/bottom of your hand is your brain stem (survival brain) and spinal cord (wrist and arm).



Picture 2: Hand model of the brain. Prefrontal cortex. Cerebral cortex. Limbic regions (hippocampus & amygdala). Brain stem (base of skull). Spinal cord.

12. Tell them that the thumb is the part of our brain that acts as a messenger. It sends messages about danger, safety, good and bad to both the emotional brain and the thinking brain. Ask them if they notice anything about where this messenger is compared to the emotional brain vs. the thinking brain?
  - a. Take a few suggestions/observations
  - b. Make sure that you discuss the fact that the thumb/messenger is much closer to the “emotional” brain than the thinking brain. In fact, the messenger is so close to the emotional brain that it touches part of the emotional brain. It doesn’t physically touch the thinking brain at all.
13. This means that when the messenger thinks there is danger or a problem, it can message the emotional brain much faster (this is why we jump automatically when we see a snake before fully realizing it is a snake)
14. And in times where we are afraid for our lives, experiencing terror or completely overwhelmed by a situation, the messenger can send messages to our emotional brain and the emotional brain can shut down/override the thinking brain.
  - a. Here ask the participants to close their fingers over their thumbs again. This is often referred to as “flipping your lid” and is what happens in these moments. Our emotional brain flips our thinking brain off during these times.
  - b. As your talking, have them keep flipping the fingers and continue to explain that:
    - i. This is actually beneficial during times of trauma and times where we are focused on survival.
    - ii. However, it can carry over into other times after danger has passed. This can mean that we often become overwhelmed by emotions
    - iii. Even if we don’t reach the “flipping our lid” state, emotions can still feel overwhelming and can carry more influence than our thoughts during these times.
15. Explain that in this group we are going to focus on understanding different emotions and how they feel in our bodies, and impact our thoughts and behaviors. Explain that our brains learn through three key things:
  - a. Experience

- b. Association (comparing/pairing things together)
  - c. Repetition
16. Because of how our brains learn, we will do a lot of activities that focus on creating new experiences with different emotions and pairing those difficult emotions with skills and techniques that help us to not become overwhelmed by them.
  17. Spend a few minutes making sure to answer any questions.

Lesson learned from the Ukrainian group in Greece: The participants had a lot of questions; some had already heard about the hand model; it is advised to the facilitators to prepare well to be comfortable to answer the questions.

#### **ACTIVITY FOUR: EXTREME STRESS**

**Time: 15 minutes**

##### Steps:

1. Now that we understand the brain, we can further explore extreme stress, which is a reaction to traumatic events. When such an event is experienced, survivors may behave differently than before the event.
2. This type of extreme stress can trigger survivors into entering “survival mode”. For example, when the thinking brain turns off, our brains may become more emotionally reactive, and forces us to either experience:
  - a. Flight
  - b. Flee
  - c. Freeze
3. Explain that it is important that we understand how this is different from and similar to normal stress and chronic stress. Survivors of traumatic events can feel a higher level of stress on a constant basis, which can be debilitating. Extreme stress is different than chronic, every day stress, as this type of stress is more intrusive, disruptive, and affects day-to-day functioning. Review a few of the common symptoms of extreme stress:
  - a. Unwanted, distressing memories of the traumatic event
  - b. Feeling like you are reliving the event
  - c. Severe emotional or physical reactions if something reminds you of the event.
  - d. Hopelessness about the future
  - e. Difficulty feeling close to people, even from family and friends
  - f. Always being “on guard” for danger
  - g. Feeling overwhelmed by guilt or shame
4. Conclude this section by first clarifying the difference between extreme stress and the other forms of stress. Explain that it is important to understand what extreme stress looks like because we need to be able to recognize it in ourselves and in others in our lives.
5. Lastly, explain that if someone does think that they are experiencing such symptoms of extreme stress, she may need more help than this group can provide. Relay that it is important to seek out a personal conversation if someone is experiencing any of the above mentioned symptoms

and/or feelings of having a “flipped lid” response to daily stressors. Individualized support can help address these reactions of extreme stress and allow the individual to handle overwhelming emotions.

6. We are now going to conclude this activity with a movement-based grounding activity: bird/fish/elephant.

### **ACTIVITY FIVE: BIRD FISH ELEPHANT GROUNDING ACTIVITY**

**Time: 15 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Remind the group that grounding can be slow and peaceful or it can be fun and active – what’s important is that it re-centers us in our own bodies and helps move stress, tension and other difficult emotions.
2. We are going to play a game where we make different animals with either 2 people, 3 people, or 4 people.
3. We will walk around the room and when I call out 2, 3, or 4, you must make the correct animal with that number of people (you and one other person, you and two other people, or you and three other people)
4. Explain that for 2 people (you and one other person) you will be a bird. Demonstrate a bird shape with your co-facilitator by linking elbows and then each of you holding out your free arm like wings and “flapping” them gently.
5. Explain that for 3 people, you must find two other people and become a fish. Ask for one volunteer. With the volunteer and your co-facilitator demonstrate the fish. Explain that one person will be the head by standing in front and making a triangle shape with arms out in front. The second person is in the middle and is the fin by making a triangle shape with arms above the head, toward the ceiling. The third person is the tail of the fish by putting their hands behind the back, like a tail.
6. Finally, when 4 is called, you must find 3 other people and become an elephant. One person stands in the middle and makes the head of the elephant, using their arm as the trunk. Two people stand on either side of the elephant head and become elephant ears by creating a “C” shape with their hands together overhead and the final person is the tail and body standing behind the head, bent over with a hand at their low back as the tail of the elephant. Demonstrate this with your co-facilitator and two volunteers.
7. Ask if everyone understands. Tell them we will do a few practice rounds to start. Ask them to begin walking around the room. Call out a number. Correct anything if people are not understanding. Then tell them to walk again. Call out a different number. Again, correct anything if needed. Ask them to walk again. Call out the final number. Correct if needed.
8. Tell them that now we will begin for real. We will call out numbers faster. Anyone who does not get in the correct number group or who makes a mistake with the animal will be out.
9. Go through rounds calling people out until you have one winner or a small group of winners.
10. Thank them all for participating.

**Alternative Activity:** Two truths and a lie (in place of grounding activity 5 – instructions in Session 1)

*[The women began to be fully engaged at the third session. The facilitator took the initiative of introducing this game where participants could learn one more thing about each other. Participants enjoyed it, they got excited and started to share a lot more]*

## **ACTIVITY SIX: FEELINGS AND COPING MECHANISMS**

**Time: 30 Minutes**

### Steps:

1. Ask the group to think about emotions that are difficult to express or process. What are they? Are there emotions that are harder for women to express than men? What about for men to express than women?
2. Make a brief point that socially, men are often allowed to express anger but not sadness, while it is much more accepted for women to express sadness rather than anger. But both of these emotions are normal for both sexes.
3. What happens when they are not able to or do not want to express an emotion that they are feeling? What kinds of things do they do or say to distract from that emotion?
4. Explain that we use what we call coping mechanisms to deal with our emotions. Some coping mechanisms are positive and can help us process these emotions, while others are more negative and help us avoid the emotions we are uncomfortable with, rather than work through them. We often call these negative coping mechanisms “defenses” because we use them to avoid feelings that might be too difficult, too threatening or that we may not know how to express.
5. Explain to the group that a defense is a strategy used by our own brains to protect us from being actively aware of thoughts or feelings that are too difficult for us to accept or tolerate. Our real feelings are expressed indirectly through some other form or feeling. Expressing these feelings indirectly through other feelings or actions allows us to reduce anxiety that is caused by the intolerable and overwhelming thought or feeling. Because our brain is protecting us, we often don’t realize that we are doing this.
6. Ask them to think about things that allow them to avoid feelings. You may need to help them with this. Some examples include: denial, humor, suppression, displacement (placing the feeling onto someone else, saying that they are feeling it instead of you) “self-medicating” (using alcohol, drugs, food or other things to numb or avoid the feeling).
7. We all use defenses sometimes and they can be useful. Discuss times when it might be useful to use a defense:
  - a. Crisis – when we need to stay in control and act according to what is immediately needed in the situation.
  - b. When someone does not feel worthy or good about themselves, keeping emotions contained or blocked off or avoided may allow them to feel good about themselves and do well in other areas.
  - c. Can they think of others?
8. Defenses can become harmful when we use them all the time to avoid uncomfortable feelings. Defenses can allow us to avoid feelings or problems causing feelings that are uncomfortable and this can create distance between us and the people we love if we are avoiding an area or action that is making us unhappy.
9. Self-medicating can become very harmful because a person can become dependent on alcohol, drugs, or even food to function and be unable to tolerate emotions without these aids.

10. Ask the group to think of times when they have used defenses. What did they use? Were they used constructively (like in a time of crisis) or are we using them repeatedly without addressing our emotions? How do you know when defenses are becoming negative?
11. Now ask the group to think of coping mechanisms they use that aren't defenses but are simply ways to help process the emotion. You may need to give an example or two from your own life. Common suggestions include exercise, visiting with friends, church or religious services/prayer, meditation, playing with our children, etc.
12. Ask the group to identify different exercises they have done so far in group that could be a tool for them to stay in their window of tolerance. If they are struggling, remind them that we have done exercises at the beginning and end of each session that they may have found helpful. As women list different exercises, ask if that exercise worked for other women. If not, highlight that not every exercise will work for every person. People are different and will find different exercises more or less helpful. What is important is that we experience and practice a wide variety of exercises to find the ones that work best for us.
13. Remind the group that we are working on developing more coping mechanisms for our toolbox to ensure that we have plenty of tools to use to process difficult emotions rather than to defend against difficult emotions.
14. Make the point that using defenses can be useful in small doses, we need to find ways to express our feelings and work through them in healthy ways so that we are able to continue to experience emotions. If we avoid or try to numb difficult feelings, we eventually start numbing good feelings too. Our ability to engage with the world depends on our ability to process and tolerate difficult emotions. Therefore, the more tools we have available to cope with and work through difficult emotions, the less we feel we have to use defenses.

**Group:**

If you haven't already, create a group goal. If you have created one already, check in with group members to confirm the goal or revisit that discussion.

## **ACTIVITY SEVEN: UPDATING GOAL SHEETS**

**Time: 10 minutes**

### **Steps:**

1. Pass out the past, present future drawings that the participants did at week 1. Tell them that we are going to look now at the future drawing and the goal we set with this drawing.
2. Now that we have started talking about feelings, coping strategies and have begun building our knowledge, we are taking the time to review and revise our goals and steps if needed. We can add or take away things as they feel necessary. Tell them that they can add words, pictures, symbols to the drawing to represent the steps they need to reach those goals. What actions, tools, and support to they need to reach their individual goals?
3. Tell them that they can take as long as they need to revise their goals sheets. If they don't want to make any changes, that's fine.
4. If you have time, ask one or two participants to share some of the steps they added to their future picture. What steps did they identify that they need to reach their goal? Highlight any coping mechanisms mentioned by the volunteers. If they don't mention any of the coping mechanisms we mentioned, remind the participants that we now have some of those tools and that they should add any of those if they will help reach their goals.

5. Be sure to collect all of the past, present, future drawings and file them in the participants' files. Lock the cabinet once all of these are filed.

### **ACTIVITY EIGHT: CLOSING THE SESSION<sup>9</sup>**

**Time: 5 minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Explain that we will close with an exercise to deepen and anchor positive feelings and messages. We will be doing an exercises that uses tapping on our bodies combined with positive spoken messages.
2. Choose a sentence about yourself that includes one of your strengths. For example "I am a good and dedicated mother" You will either say the sentence softly to yourself or speak it silently (in your head).
3. Put your right hand palm down on your left shoulder. Put your left hand palm down on your right shoulder. Say the sentence out loud first and pat your right hand on your left shoulder, then your left hand on your right shoulder.
4. Alternate the patting. Do ten pats altogether, five on each side, each time repeating your sentences aloud or in your head.
5. Once everyone has finished, remind them of the homework for the week and let them know that next session we will begin to explore specific emotions and how they impact us.

#### Homework:

Skills Building: Practice the grounding exercise from the closing at least three times before next week. Reflect on how you felt after completing it each time.

Skills Building: Note when you feel stressed. Try to remember what made you stressed in that moment and how you reacted. Were you in your "window of tolerance" or outside of it? How did you know? We will discuss next week.

#### **For the Ukrainian group in Italy:**

Replace the 2<sup>nd</sup> Skills Building activity with the following:

**TASK:** every morning, stop and breathe, 'I am happy to be living this day', always reflect on your strengths, say nice words to each other, even during everyday life. Think of yourself in the present and not in the past or future.

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<sup>9</sup> HHRI modification

## Session 5: Exploring Difficult Emotions

### *Objectives:*

- *To understand common difficult emotions and their potential impacts*
- *To gain a brief introduction to shame, guilt, anger, and grief*
- *To decide as a group which emotion to focus on in Session 6*

### *Topics Covered:*

- *Understanding the difference between shame and guilt*
- *Understanding Anger*
- *Understanding Grief*
- *Choosing Session 6 Topic*

### *Materials needed:*

- Flip Charts
- Tape
- Markers
- Individual Goal Sheets

### *Preparation:*

- Facilitators should be prepared with multiple activities that can be used for grounding after activities if necessary. Even lighter, introductory activities to difficult emotions can be potentially triggering for participants. Grounding exercises, particularly games that help us move and connect with our bodies, may be especially helpful in working through feelings brought up by these activities.

### *Contextualization:*

If the group is longer than 8 sessions, you may choose to do more than one of the emotions: shame/guilt, anger, grief. The facilitators and your supervisor should decide at the beginning how many of these sessions you will do. While you do have time to do all 3 sessions if you extend the overall number to 10 sessions, you may want to prioritize other optional sessions like the Safety and Intimate Partner Violence. This decision should be made before starting the group so that you know how many of these three emotions the group can choose to focus on in session 6.



### **ACTIVITY ONE: RECAPING WEEK 4**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session.
2. Ask one woman to lead the ritual opening.

**For all groups:** At this stage of the sessions, the women in the group have begun to show an interest in taking the initiative and are increasingly taking charge of what's going on in the group. The facilitator suggested if any of the participants would like to propose a favorite breathing exercise. The group conducted breathing exercises from previous sessions before continuing with the rest of the activities.]

3. Ask them if there are questions from last week or things that they would like more information on from week 4. Spend 5 minutes answering questions.
4. Briefly introduce the topics for the day before moving into activity two. Make sure to let everyone know that today we will have an opportunity to explore different difficult emotions and choose one that we would like to work on further in week 6. We will do this at the end of the session today.

### **ACTIVITY TWO: UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SHAME AND GUILT**

**Time: 20 Minutes**

Note for Facilitation:

This is a very sensitive topic and requires careful facilitation. We do not want to trigger members of the group. Be sure to not provide examples that are similar to group members' possible experiences when describing shame. **Do not** use examples of violence or shame that comes from an external source (i.e. family or community shaming a victim). Examples of shame can be scenarios where shame is internally felt (i.e. I burned dinner, etc.). If members do bring up examples of possibly triggering experiences, you can acknowledge that we are often shamed by others for things that we're not responsible for or for events that are not our fault, however, be sure to acknowledge and direct back to the examples you are facilitating. This is just the introduction to Shame and Guilt, and further discussion can occur in the optional session.

Steps:

1. Ask the group to split into four small groups and discuss what they think the difference is between feeling shame and feeling guilt.
2. Tell them to focus on how these two similar emotions feel differently when we experience them. Give them 5 minutes to discuss.
3. After 5 minutes have passed, give them 2 more minutes to come up with a definition of shame and a definition of guilt.
4. Ask each group to present their definitions for each. Once they have all finished, tell them that guilt and shame, while similar, are different. The easiest way to explain the difference is this:

- a. Guilt is – “I did a bad thing. I messed up. But I am still a good person.”
  - b. Shame is – “I am a bad person, I only mess up. I am not a good person”
5. Tell them that there is a powerful difference in experiencing feeling bad for doing something vs. feeling like you are a bad person who is not worthy or deserving of love. Remind them that we are all deserving of love and tell them that next week we will focus on practices to remind ourselves of that.
6. Tell them that when we are able to recognize that we feel bad or that we made a mistake but still remember and believe that we are worthy and deserving of love and care, then we are feeling worthiness. Tell them that we will explore worthiness and shame more in the session 6 activities if they choose to focus on shame and guilt.

**Contextualization:**

Based on the group, you can safely provide specific examples but make sure you highlight that guilt does not affect our feelings as a person, whereas shame affects our sense of worth and opinion of ourselves. Be sure to not provide examples that can possibly trigger the group members.

**ACTIVITY THREE: UNDERSTANDING ANGER**

**Time: 25 Minutes**

Steps:

1. Ask the participants to stand. Tell them to begin walking slowly around the room as they normally walk.
2. After 10-15 seconds, ask them to walk like they do when they are angry about something
3. After a brief interval (30 seconds to 1 minute) ask them to walk like themselves again. Then ask them to walk like they are very happy about something.
4. Repeat these steps, always asking them to walk normally in between each time:
  - a. Walk like a man who is angry
  - b. Walk like a young girl who is happy
  - c. Walk like a young girl who is angry
  - d. Walk like a teenage boy who is happy
  - e. Walk like a young boy whose mother is angry
  - f. Walk like a teenage girl who is excited
  - g. Walk like a woman whose husband is angry
  - h. Walk like a woman who is excited
  - i. Walk like a teenage girl who is angry
  - j. Walk like you at your happiest
5. Once they have finished walking, ask them to sit down again. Ask them what they thought about when they were asked to be angry. What things were they pretending to be angry about?
6. Were there differences in how they acted when they pretended to be an angry man vs an angry woman, girl, boy.. etc?
7. What are different things that make other people angry? How do different types of people express their anger? Is it easier for some people to express anger? Are women able to express their anger?
8. Ask them to think about expressing anger... what happens when they are unable to express anger – what are the effects?

9. Make sure that everyone understands that anger as an emotion is neither good nor bad. The ways that we express anger can be positive or negative, but anger is just an emotion and having emotions is a healthy part of being alive.
10. Make sure that they understand that we need to find healthy ways to express our anger because suppressing it can have adverse effects (increased stress, high blood pressure, getting sick more often, unhealthy relationships). Tell them that if they choose to focus on anger next week, we will explore a bit more about identifying sources of anger and expressing anger in healthy ways.

**Key points:**

You can also connect this to the Window of Tolerance exercise from last week. Holding on to anger and not being able to express and release it can cause us to more easily leave our window of tolerance when small disruptions or disappointments happen because we have not been able to express anger at something else that is “bigger” in our lives.

**For the French-speaking group:**

Lesson learned: the women have shown since the 2nd session that they prefer to talk about their own emotions without having to compare them with those of the men, so reflection questions were used and aimed solely at themselves and their children.

The activity requires them to stand up and walk around the room, which was difficult in our case because 2 of them had their children in their arms.

Suggest expressing the emotion in words, or writing on a piece of paper their thoughts and sharing afterwards or with facial expressions. Everyone can choose what they're comfortable with.

**For the Ukrainian group in Italy:**

Instead of steps 1 to 6 proceed as following:

We talked about anger directly in the group, asking them what anger was for them, how they manifest it and what strategies they use to manage it.

Continue with steps 7-10.

Lesson Learned: It is advised to the facilitators to be aware beforehand how to manage conflict in a group, staying neutral and reminding the participants the group agreements about respecting each one's opinions.

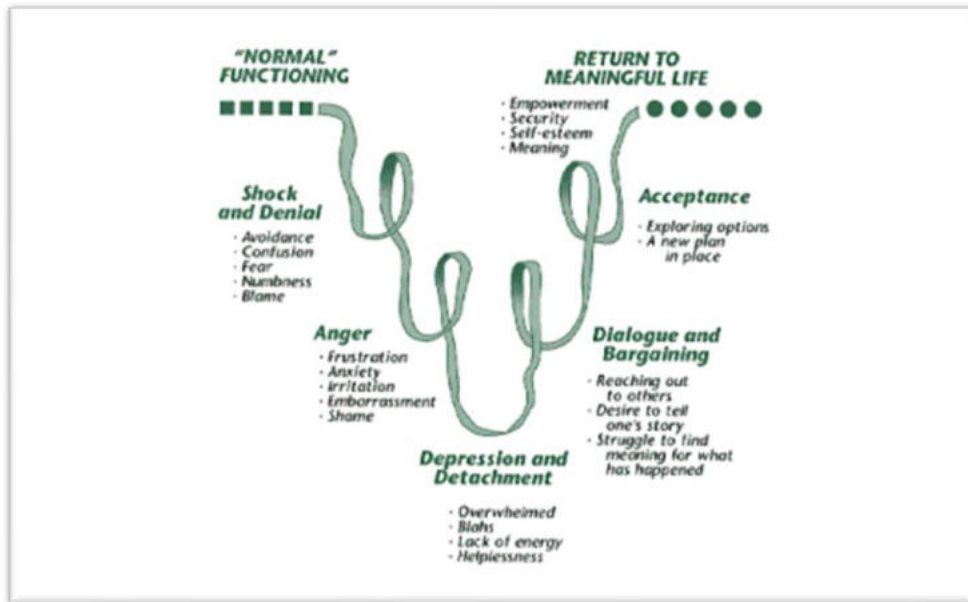
**ACTIVITY FOUR: WHAT IS GRIEF - INDIVIDUAL?**

**Time: 25 Minutes**

**Steps:**

1. Tell the participants that we will spend the last part of today talking about grief. Ask if anyone has heard this word before? What do they think of when they hear the word grief?
2. Explain that grief is defined as the normal process of reacting to a loss. The loss may be physical (such as a death), social (such as a divorce), or occupational (such as a job). Explain that this is a normal emotional reaction to any kind of loss.
3. Ask them what they think of when they think of losses. You may need to help them expand their list. Grief can be used to mourn any kind of loss, including death, divorce, miscarriage/abortion, moving, loss of home, loss of possessions, loss of health, change in lifestyle, change in social status, etc. It is much broader than death which is what many people think of when we say grief.

4. Ask the women to think individually about things they have grieved before. Give them a couple of minutes to think about things they have grieved.
5. Once they have done this, ask them to think about what they would consider an “acceptable” level of grief for these things – they do not have to talk about what they have grieved if they do not want to, only what they would consider “acceptable” or “normal” grieving.
6. After you have discussed this and several people have given answers, make sure to discuss that everyone grieves differently and our experiences are linked to many different factors, including level of attachment, personality, recent life circumstances, other losses experienced before, access and level of support, etc.



Picture 3: "Normal" Functionality - Return to Meaningful Life.



Picture 4: The five (5) stages of Grief.

7. Draw the 5 stages of grief for them and explain that grief normally follows these stages, although the length and severity of the stages can be different for everyone.
8. Ask them to think again of a time they grieved. Did it follow this pattern? How did grief change over time?
9. Explain that grief can follow this traditional pattern, however, it can also follow a non-linear pattern and not necessarily go through each stage.
10. Tell the group that we will explore the idea of communal grief more next week if they choose to focus on grief next week.

**Lesson learned:** Talking about grief can provoke intense emotions; despite this, the women had the opportunity to connect more deeply with one another, by sharing their personal experiences.

For the Ukrainian group we skipped the activity 4. We preferred not to address the topic of grief, considering the situation Ukrainian women were experiencing, as the war was still ongoing at the time of the session and talking about grief could be triggering.

#### **ACTIVITY FIVE: CHOOSING THE EMOTION FOR NEXT WEEK**

**Time: 5-10 Minutes**

Steps:

1. Ask the group to think about the three emotions we have discussed today: shame, anger, and grief. Ask them to think silently about the following questions:
  - a. Which emotion did you connect with most strongly today?
  - b. Which emotion do you feel like impacts or disrupts your day to day life the most (if any)?
  - c. Which emotion do you feel like you would benefit from understanding better?
2. Ask the group if anyone would like to suggest an emotion to focus on next week.
3. If people have differing opinions on which emotion to choose, ask each to explain why they would like to focus on an emotion and come to a consensus with the group. You may come to a consensus through discussion or you may choose to have a formal vote on which emotion to focus on next week.
4. Once the group has chosen the emotion they will focus on next week, tell them that we will also be focusing on compassion, in particular, self-compassion as part of this session.

**Contextualization:**  
 If you are going to focus on two emotions, make sure to clearly choose two with the group. If you will be focusing on all three emotions, tell the group that you will be focusing on all of these emotions over the coming three weeks. In each week, we will also focus on self-compassion.

## **ACTIVITY SIX: CLOSING THE SESSION**<sup>10</sup>

**Time: 5 minutes**

### Steps:

1. Explain that we will close with an exercise to deepen and anchor positive feelings and messages. We will be doing an exercise that uses tapping on our bodies combined with positive spoken messages.
2. Choose a sentence about yourself that includes one of your strengths. For example “I am a good and dedicated mother” You will either say the sentence softly to yourself or speak it silently (in your head).
3. Put your right hand palm down on your left shoulder. Put your left hand palm down on your right shoulder. Say the sentence out loud first and pat your right hand on your left shoulder, then your left hand on your right shoulder.

*[The women were shy about stating their qualities out loud, finding it ridiculous. It was suggested they try saying it in their head and try the exercise again at home.]*

4. Alternate the patting. Do ten pats altogether, five on each side, each time repeating your sentences aloud or in your head.

For the Ukrainian group in Greece and Italy: Instead of this activity, “Stress Blow Out” activity was used which seemed more appropriate releasing feelings of anger, since all participants were tense with the topic.

Once everyone has finished, remind them of the homework for the week and let them know that next session we will begin to explore specific emotions and how they impact us.

### Homework:

#### Skills Building:

Identifying Anger, Guilt, and Shame. Note each time you experience one of these emotions. Each time you notice that you’re feeling one or more of these emotions, try to also notice how you’re thinking about this experience. For example, if you’re feeling anger, are you also feeling shame because women are not supposed to show anger?

#### Skills Building:

Practice the relaxation exercise from the beginning of the session. Notice how you feel after doing this relaxation exercise in “real life.” Did you find it helpful? Or was it frustrating? Did you still feel anxious, angry or upset after doing it? Or did you notice that any difficult feelings were reduced or eliminated.

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<sup>10</sup> HHRI modification

## Session 6: Shame and Self-Blame (Option A), Anger (Option B), or Grief (Option C)

Depending on what the group has decided during Session 5, you will dedicate this session to one of the 3 options. You can dedicate the next session to a different emotion if the group decides so and there is space to extend the total duration of sessions. For further explanation, please refer to the original Women Rise Curriculum and Guidance to understand the different options depending on group dynamic and needs.

### Option A: Shame and Self-Blame

#### Objectives:

- To name and understand shame and self-blame
- To understand the difference between shame and guilt
- To identify positive ways to address shame
- To review goal sheets and note progress and adjust as needed

#### Topics Covered:

- Understanding the difference between shame and guilt.
- Worthiness vs. Shame
- Identifying positive strategies for addressing shame
- Reviewing goal sheets

#### Materials needed:

- Flip Charts
- Tape
- Markers
- A4 Paper

*Note to facilitators: You need to assess whether or not you are comfortable facilitating this session. If not, you can choose to facilitate the anger or grief session instead.*

### **ACTIVITY ONE: RECAPING WEEK 5**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session.
2. Lead the "Stress Blow-Out" relaxation exercise.
  - a. Ask participants to stand up and find a space of their own in the room, not touching anyone else.
  - b. Tell them that this is an exercise we can use when feeling angry, irritated, frustrated or upset. It can be useful when you're feeling stuck or need to let go of a feeling and reset.

- c. Lift both hands over your head and clench your fists hard
  - d. Take a deep breath and hold it with hands still clenched above your head
  - e. Pull down with your arms and keep elbows pointing down, hands still clenched as you blow out your breath through the mouth.
  - f. Finish your exhale by bending your knees gently and open the hands, arms pointing down by your sides
  - g. Repeat this 3-5 times
3. Ask them if there are questions from last week or things that they would like more information on from week 5. Spend 5 – 10 minutes answering questions because there was not extra time for questions at the end of last week.
  4. Briefly introduce the topics for the day before moving into activity two.

## **ACTIVITY TWO: WORTHINESS VS. SHAME AND IDENTIFYING POSITIVE STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING SHAME<sup>11</sup>**

**Time: 1 hour and 15 Minutes**

### Note for Facilitation:

This is a very sensitive topic and requires careful facilitation. You should feel comfortable facilitating this. We do not want to trigger members of the group. Be sure to not provide examples that are similar to group members' possible experiences when describing shame. **Do not** use examples of violence or shame that comes from an external source (i.e. family or community shaming a victim). Examples of shame should be scenarios where shame is internally felt (i.e. I burned dinner, etc.). If members do bring up examples of possibly triggering experiences, you can hold space, however, be sure to acknowledge, set boundaries, and direct back to the examples you are focusing on.

### Steps:

1. Remind the participants that last week we introduced the topic of shame and guilt. The key difference between shame and guilt is that shame uses self-blame to convince us that we are bad whereas guilt lets us recognize that we may have done something bad or wrong, but that does not make us a bad person.
2. When we think about shame, it is often self-reinforcing – meaning that we feel ashamed for feeling shame. One of the ways we start to break this cycle is by recognizing our own worthiness and having compassion for ourselves.
3. Ask the group what it looks like to have compassion for others? What does it look like to have compassion for ourselves?
  - a. Who is it easier to have compassion for, ourselves or others? Why is it hard to have compassion for ourselves? Why is it hard to recognize our own worthiness?
  - b. What do we tell ourselves when we are feeling shame? Are these words kind or cruel to ourselves? Think about this as we do this exercise.

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<sup>11</sup> Modified from MASC Personal Challenges Sculptures activity



4. Ask the participants to take a brief moment to identify a time they experienced shame. Tell them to make sure that it is a memory that they feel comfortable sharing with the group.
5. Ask the participants to also identify a time when they experienced worthiness or belonging. Again, it must be a memory that they feel comfortable sharing.
6. Ask a few members to come up and volunteer as sculptures in front of the class to demonstrate the difference between shame and worthiness.
7. Assign half of the members shame and half of the members worthiness. Have the two groups discuss the meaning and provide an example that demonstrates the word/concept.
8. Begin with the “shame” group. Ask them to choose a volunteer to demonstrate this moment in front of the class. There may be more than one volunteer helping illustrate their assigned word.
9. After the sculpture demonstration, ask the group to explain why they chose to act out this experience and how it ties to their assigned word.
10. Once the group members have finished explaining, be sure to thank her and the group members for their bravery. You can use any or all of the following questions to further explore:
  - a. What were you feeling in this moment?
  - b. How did you experience shame in your body? Where was shame felt in your body?
  - c. How strong were these feelings?
  - d. What were you thinking or telling yourself in this moment? Were those thoughts kind and compassionate?
  - e. What were you needing in this moment? What is a more compassionate thought you could have told yourself in this moment?
11. Ask the audience members if they have ideas for how to resolve or dissolve the shame in this scene. Take suggestions one at a time. Make sure to draw out suggestions that highlight a self-compassionate response.
12. After hearing a few suggestions, provide examples for the sculptor to change one thing in the scene that would improve it/lessen or lessen the shame- Ask the audience how this changes the scene and to determine if the needs are met now. Is the shame gone or addressed
13. Move next to the “worthiness” group and ask them similarly to demonstrate a moment that illustrates worthiness. Ask the sculptor/group members the same questions:
  - a. What are you feeling in this moment?
  - b. How did you experience a feeling of worthiness in your body? Where was it felt in your body?
  - c. How strong were these feelings?
  - d. Do you feel connected to your character
  - e. What are you thinking/needing in this moment? What enabled you to be compassionate within you and have these thoughts? Is there a more compassionate thought you could have told yourself in this moment?

Motherhood and Parenting:  
You may want to explore the cultural realities of being a mother and the shaming that can come from others around parenting choices.

Containment:  
If you know the speaker is a survivor, you may not want to ask questions about where in the body she was feeling shame as this could be potentially triggering for her.

14. Ask the audience how we could replicate these feelings of worthiness in other situations? How can we make it re-occur in other situations where we might be feeling shame? How can we transform shame back into worthiness? How can we be kinder and more compassionate to ourselves in moments of shame and self-blame?
15. Thank the group for their bravery and ask everyone standing to sit back down. Ask the group to think about the different sensations they observed in the sculptures' bodies, comparing the shame sculptures versus the worthiness sculptures. What was different across the groups? What was similar? What were the most common needs? Feelings? Were the causes of shame similar? What about worthiness? How many of you have faced similar feelings of shame?
16. Conclude this activity by once again thanking everyone for their participation. As this was a heavy topic, we will conclude with the Bear, Fish, Mosquito Activity.

*Key Points:*

Make sure that as you wrap up this session the following key points are addressed:

- It's often easier to feel compassion for others than for ourselves. Can we remind ourselves that if we wouldn't say something to our mother or our child in this situation, we should not say it to ourselves either?
- Compassion is not about being perfect, it's about giving ourselves the space and permission to accept that we are not perfect.
- We often feel shame because we are blaming ourselves for something – it might be for a traumatic event or it might be for something like burning dinner. Either way, it's important to remember that a traumatic event is not our fault. And something like burning dinner is something that happens to all of us. Remember, none of us are perfect. All of us mess up sometimes. The key is responding in these moments with kindness to ourselves.

**ACTIVITY THREE: BEAR, FISH, MOSQUITO**

**Time: 15 Minutes**

**Steps:**

1. Ask the group to stand up and stretch/shake out and gather in pairs. They should count to three then act out being a bear (demonstrate a bear by lifting hands over your head like claws and growling), fish (demonstrate a fish by making a fin on top of your head and "swimming") or mosquito (demonstrate a mosquito by using your pointer finger as a mosquito that bites) at the same time. The bear wins over/bites the fish, the fish wins over/eats the mosquito, and the mosquito wins over/bites the bear.
2. Once they have played three times they should walk around the room and find another partner. Do this for five minutes or until the participants seem relaxed.
3. Remind them that this is a heavy topic and can be very hard to talk about but we have coping mechanisms that can help us. We just did one!
4. Thank everyone for their participation.

## **ACTIVITY FIVE: CLOSING THE DAY**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

### Steps:

1. Explain that we will close with the same exercise to deepen and anchor positive feelings and messages. We will be doing an exercises that uses tapping on our bodies combined with positive spoken messages.
2. Ask participants to choose a new sentence about yourself that includes one of your strengths. It should not be the same sentence you used last week. For example “I am a good and dedicated mother” You will either say the sentence softly to yourself or speak it silently (in your head).
3. Put your right hand palm down on your left shoulder. Put your left hand palm down on your right shoulder. Say the sentence out loud first and pat your right hand on your left shoulder, then your left hand on your right shoulder.
4. Alternate the patting. Do ten pats altogether, five on each side, each time repeating your sentences aloud or in your head.
5. Once you’ve finished with your new sentence, repeat the whole exercise again with your sentence from last week.
6. Once everyone has finished, remind them of the homework for the week and thank them for their participation today.

Contextualization – 9+ weeks:

This closing exercise should be used for session 5 and session 6. If the group is longer than 8 weeks and the team is adding in an additional emotion, continue to use this exercise, working from a new sentence back to your oldest sentence from the Session 5 closing.

Homework:

Skills Building:

Identify when you feel shame. Each time you identify shame, see if you can change your self-talk to be more positive and compassionate. Try to remember at least one example of when you were self-compassionate.

Skills Building:

Practice the relaxation exercise from the end of the session. Notice how you feel after doing this exercise in “real life.” Did you find it helpful? Or was it frustrating? Did you still feel anxious, angry or upset after doing it? Or did you notice that any difficult feelings were reduced or eliminated.

Closing the group activity: *\*if this is the last session before the closing sessions*

Ask the group to bring found objects for a mural next week – everyday resources – they cannot buy anything. They can bring natural things (leaves, stones, flowers) or recycled materials (sweet wrappers, bottle tops, plastic bags, etc).

## Option B: Anger

### Objectives:

- To understand anger as a normal emotion
- To identify sources of anger
- To identify harmful ways of dealing with anger
- To identify positive and constructive ways to deal with anger

### Topics Covered:

- Understanding anger
- Sources of anger
- Coping with anger negatively and positively

### Materials needed:

- Flip Charts
- Tape
- Markers
- A4 Paper

### **ACTIVITY ONE: RECAPPING WEEK 5**

**Time: 15 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session.
2. Lead the "Stress Blow-Out" relaxation exercise. (see instructions in Option A: Shame and Self-Blame, Activity One)
3. Ask them if there are questions from last week or things that they would like more information on from week 5. Spend 5 – 10 minutes answering questions and recapping the anger activity from last week.
4. Briefly introduce the topics for the day before moving into activity two.

### **ACTIVITY TWO: SOURCES OF ANGER**

**Time: 15 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Remind the participants of the activity we did last week where we walked angrily vs. happily. Ask them to remember how that felt in their bodies when they walked like different people who were angry.
2. Remind participants that anger is neither positive nor negative, it's a natural reaction. However, anger can be constructive or destructive.
3. Split the participants into small groups and ask them to list as many things as possible that make them or their family members angry. Then ask them to list how they deal with anger in these instances. They can also list examples of how friends and family deal with anger as well.

4. Give participants five to ten minutes to come up with their lists about what makes them angry.
5. Once everyone has finished, ask each group to present two or three different things that make them angry. Once everyone has presented, ask them if there are some things that make them angrier than it would a man. Are there things that might anger a man more than them?
6. Then ask them to think of the different ways that we reacted in anger in the activity last week. Which of those reactions are more common for men? For women? What about the ways we react to anger that we came up with today?
7. Tell them that we will now move on to looking at positive and negative ways to cope with anger.

**Contextualization – 9+ Weeks:**

If the group is working on a group goal around changing something in their community, this is a good time to speak about how their anger can be used to motivate them to work on the community issue and try to enact change. You can highlight that activists often have a personal issue or experience with the cause that they are working on. For example, many survivors of sexual assault became involved in the #metoo movement as a way to hold men accountable for their actions and demand consequences from employers of these men.

**For the Ukrainian group in Italy and Greece:**

We adapted the questions and avoided to mention men since most women had their husbands and partners at war, we didn't want to use triggering questions.

**ACTIVITY THREE: COPING WITH ANGER NEGATIVELY AND POSITIVELY**

**Time: 40 Minutes**

**Steps:**

1. Ask them to split the reactions they just came up with into positive and negative. Which would they consider healthy and helpful? Which are unhealthy or unhelpful?
2. Learning to address our anger in healthy ways is something we can do. We can practice different skills to do this. However, if we've never learned these techniques before, we may continue to react to anger unhealthily.

3. Go back to the list of “healthy” ways that the group has identified. Remove any that are directly unhealthy – violence, yelling at someone, throwing things at someone – anything like this should not be considered healthy.
  - a. You may want to ask questions here about how they decided something was healthy or unhealthy. You could ask:
  - b. Has anyone had good experiences expressing their anger? Has anyone had experiences where expressing their anger caused more problems or made a situation worse? Has anyone experienced anger from someone else that was destructive? What about constructive?
  - c. What are examples of constructive use of anger? How is that different from destructive anger? If we feel like our anger is destructive frequently, what are ways that we could change it to be constructive?
4. Make sure that their healthy list consists of things that are culturally appropriate/things that they would feel comfortable doing – singing, dancing, talking to friends, exercise, taking a walk alone, meditating, etc may be on the list.
5. Emphasize that healthy ways to address anger means that we work through and express our anger in constructive, non-hurtful ways. Negative expression often hurts others, either emotionally, physically, or both.
6. Let the participants know that if they need to talk more/want to speak in private after this session, you are available.
7. Close this session by using a grounding activity to connect back to a positive emotion. Tell the participants that we will do an activity called “laugh back”
8. Tell the participants that you will start as the leader and will demonstrate a type of laughter. Everyone must then turn to the participant next to them and copy the same laugh to each other.
9. Stand firmly in your space and demonstrate a laugh. Make the laugh over-exaggerated and use multiple parts of your body in your laugh (hands, face, etc)
10. Make sure the participants copy you with their partners
11. Then demonstrate another laugh and have the participants turn to their partner and copy you
12. Demonstrate one more laugh and have them copy the laugh with their partner.
13. Then ask for a volunteer to lead the group in three more laughs. (This can be your co-facilitator if no one volunteers).
14. After the laugh back, ask the participants to take a seat again.

Facilitation note for IPV

You should feel comfortable during this facilitation. This topic can be triggering for those that have experience with IPV, especially when discussing examples of facing destructive anger from others. If members do mention IPV/feel triggered with such an example, be sure to hold space but maintain focus/boundary on the topic. Acknowledge that IPV can occur in a power/control dynamic. Remind members that they are welcome to take space away from the group with the co-facilitator.

## **ACTIVITY FIVE: COMPASSION<sup>12</sup>**

**Time: 20 Minutes**

### Steps:

1. Ask the group to choose one of their examples of something that makes you angry.
2. Now, close your eyes and imagine that your best friend was experiencing this. She's angry and feeling bad that she feels angry. She is struggling to deal with her anger. How would you respond to your friend in this situation? Especially when you are at your best and most able to support her? Think about what you would do and say. How you would speak to your friend.
3. Now think about the times that you are struggling with anger or feel bad about yourself. How do

Lesson learned from implementation: Role play with group participants can be way to make this activity more interactive and easier to relate to.

you typically respond to yourself? What do you do and say to yourself? How do you say it to yourself?

4. Is there a difference in how you speak and respond to yourself when compared to how you respond to your friend? What makes it different? Why is it different? What factors or fears impact how you treat yourself differently?
5. How might things change if you responded to yourself in the same way you respond to a friend when you're suffering?
6. Make sure to highlight the following points as you wrap up the discussion:
  - a. It's often easier for us to feel compassion for others rather than ourselves. Many of us struggle with self-compassion and being kind to ourselves.
    - i. Why are you afraid of having compassion for yourself?
  - b. It's often easier for us to "talk tough" to ourselves and tell ourselves to "just get over it and get through it"
    - i. Can you think of negative self-talk that comes up for you in these instances?
  - c. We often want to be perfect and never mess up. When we do mess up, we go back to that negative self-talk. But it's important to remember that we all mess up sometimes and we're never perfect. We can become frozen if we're worried about perfection. Part of getting unfrozen in these instances is being kind and compassionate towards ourselves
  - d. If we blame ourselves for our anger or feel guilty for feeling and expressing anger, it can cause us to go to negative self-talk again too. It is important to not blame ourselves for things that are not our fault. And when we do mess up and the blame is on us, it's important to be kind and forgive ourselves.

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<sup>12</sup> Neff, Kristin. Exercise 1: How would you treat a friend? Retrieved from <https://self-compassion.org/exercise-1-treat-friend/> (adaptation)

## **ACTIVITY SIX: CLOSING THE DAY**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

### Steps:

1. Explain that we will close with the same exercise to deepen and anchor positive feelings and messages. We will be doing an exercise that uses tapping on our bodies combined with positive spoken messages.
2. Ask participants to choose a new sentence about yourself that includes one of your strengths. It should not be the same sentence you used last week. For example "I am a good and dedicated mother" You will either say the sentence softly to yourself or speak it silently (in your head).
3. Put your right hand palm down on your left shoulder. Put your left hand palm down on your right shoulder. Say the sentence out loud first and pat your right hand on your left shoulder, then your left hand on your right shoulder.
4. Alternate the patting. Do ten pats altogether, five on each side, each time repeating your sentences aloud or in your head.
5. Once you've finished with your new sentence, repeat the whole exercise again with your sentence from last week.
6. Once everyone has finished, remind them of the homework for the week and thank them for their participation today.

### Contextualization – 9+ weeks:

This closing exercise should be used for session 5 and session 6. If the group is longer than 8 weeks and the team is adding in an additional emotion, continue to use this exercise, working from a new sentence back to your oldest sentence from the Session 5 closing.

### **Homework:**

#### Skills Building:

Identify when you feel anger. Each time you identify anger, see if you can change your self-talk to be more positive and compassionate. Try to remember at least one example of when you were self-compassionate.

#### Skills Building:

Practice the relaxation exercise from the end of the session. Notice how you feel after doing this exercise in "real life." Did you find it helpful? Or was it frustrating? Did you still feel anxious, angry or upset after doing it? Or did you notice that any difficult feelings were reduced or eliminated.

#### Closing the group activity: *\*if this is the last session before the closing sessions*

Ask the group to bring found objects for a mural next week – everyday resources – they cannot buy anything. They can bring natural things (leaves, stones, flowers) or recycled materials (sweet wrappers, bottle tops, plastic bags, etc).



## Option C: Grief

### Objectives:

- To understand grief and loss
- To identify the signs and symptoms of individual and communal grief
- To identify healthy ways of dealing with grief, especially long-term grief and sadness.

### Topics Covered:

- Individual Grief
  - o What are things we've lost that we need to grieve?
  - o Are we allowed to grieve them in our society?
- Communal Grief
  - o How does this differ from individual grief?
- Coping with Grief?

### Materials needed:

- Flip Charts
- Markers
- A4 Paper

### **ACTIVITY ONE: RECAPPING WEEK 5**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session.
2. Lead the "Stress Blow-Out" relaxation exercise. (see instructions in Option A: Shame and Self-Blame, Activity One)
3. Ask them if there are questions from last week or things that they would like more information on from week 5. Spend 5 – 10 minutes answering questions and recapping the anger activity from last week.
4. Briefly introduce the topics for the day before moving into activity two.

*[It's an exercise that really appealed to the women in the group. Most of them have children, and they mentioned that it can be useful when they feel overwhelmed.]*

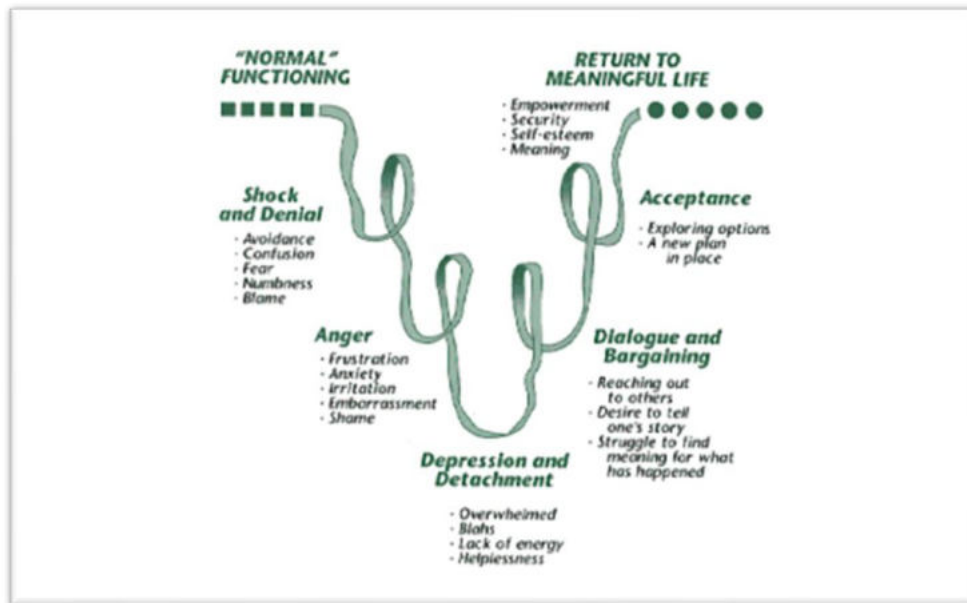
### **ACTIVITY TWO: WHAT IS GRIEF – INDIVIDUAL?**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Remind the participants that we defined grief last week (or in session 5). Ask if anyone can remember the definition we came up with for grief.

2. Once someone has given the definition, remind them that grief is a normal emotional reaction to any kind of loss. Remind them that grief can be used to mourn any kind of loss, including death, divorce, miscarriage/abortion, moving, loss of home, loss of possessions, loss of health, change in lifestyle, change in social status, etc. It is much broader than death which is what many people think of when we say grief.
3. Make sure to review that everyone grieves differently and our experiences are linked to many different factors, including level of attachment, personality, recent life circumstances, other losses experienced before, access and level of support, etc.
4. Reference the flip charts from week 5 with the stages of grief for them and explain that grief normally follows these stages, although the length and severity of the stages can be different for everyone.



Picture 5: "Normal" Functionality - Return to Meaningful Life.



Picture 6: The five (5) stages of Grief.

5. Note that the 5 stages of grief are also not necessarily linear or applicable to all, as individuals can experience these stages (or other emotions) at different points.
6. Make sure there are no questions about grief as an individual concept. Then tell the group that we will focus on the idea of communal grief in Activity Four.

### **ACTIVITY THREE: COPING WITH GRIEF**

**Time: 35 Minutes**

#### **Steps:**

1. Hand out paper and drawing materials. Tell the group that we will draw some individual pictures. In their pictures they should draw what it feels like to be grieving something on one side. On the other side, they should draw what it looks like when they have worked through grief/recovered.
2. Even if they feel like they are in the middle of a grieving process right now, ask them to think about what it will look like as these feelings fade and they start to feel better. What does that future hold?
3. Give them 10 – 15 minutes to draw their pictures. Once everyone has finished, ask them to give one to two sentences about each sides of their pictures.
4. As people talk about the side with grief, make sure to explain that sometimes these symptoms don't go away and this can be a more serious problem called depression. It is important to seek help and ask for support through the grieving process and especially if these feelings are not getting better with time.
5. Ask the group to name the ways that they (or people they know) have used to cope with grief in the past. Ideas can include: talking with friends/family, seeking support, using writing, drawing, singing or other creative acts to express grief, taking meaningful action (volunteering, working to change something specific), using entertainment, etc.

6. Ask each group member to identify one helpful way that she is currently using or thinks she can use to deal with sadness/grief.

*[Lesson learned: In activities where we had to draw, the women in the group weren't sure how to express themselves, they weren't comfortable. Choosing to express themselves just in words on a sheet of paper and then sharing what they'd written seemed easier for them.]*

#### **ACTIVITY FOUR: WHAT IS GRIEF – COMMUNAL?**

**Time: 15 Minutes**

##### Steps:

1. Ask the group to break up into partners. Once everyone has a partner, ask them to think about grief. Is it something that only individuals experience or are there times when grief is experienced by a whole community?
2. Tell the group to spend a few minutes discussing what they think the differences are between individual grief and communal grief. Does it look different? How? What do people do differently when they are communally grieving versus going through individual grief? Have there been instances of communal grief in their own communities that they can think of?
3. Ask the group to come back together and give summaries of what they talked about. Make sure that everyone understands that communal grief is a real thing that often happens after major crisis, natural disasters, and man-made disasters.
4. Make sure that major symptoms of communal grief, like feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, lack of activity, dependency, frustration, aggression/violence, and communal image being damaged are all discussed/drawn out in the conversation.
5. Next, introduce the topic of ambiguous loss, which is an unclear loss with no official verification of life or death of the person(s).
6. Note the complicated reactions that can arise with ambiguous loss, such as hope, confusion, grief, and the possible differences/disagreements in beliefs of the loss within a family or community. Explain that ambiguous loss can be felt both on an individual level and a communal level.
7. Explore with the group the differences between a known loss and an ambiguous loss. Note how ambiguous loss can affect an individual emotionally and mentally, as well as how it can affect a family and community
8. Are these things that they feel their communities are still dealing with? Most of the time, communities are able to regroup and feelings fade. Life returns to normal or a new normal. Has this happened in their communities?
9. What are ways that they could support community recovery? Come up with a list of at least 5 things that they think would support community healing.

#### **ACTIVITY FIVE: BECOMING A FLOWER**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

##### Steps:

1. Ask the group to choose one of their examples of grief. Think about how they felt experiencing this.

2. Then ask them to think about how they moved through that grief. How it changed over time. How they changed with it.
3. Tell them that we are going to do an exercise that helps ground you in the moment, provides a gentle, full body stretch and also reminds you that the feelings you're currently feeling are not permanent, you will move through them, just like a flower moves through the earth to grow and bloom.
4. Start by crouching down low toward the ground. You may want to tuck your head under your arms or curl your head toward your knees. If sitting, you may want to pull your knees up or bend at the waist over your legs.
5. As you stay in this position, think of yourself as a seed under the earth. You're curled under the ground waiting for the right conditions to grow.
6. As the weather begins to warm, the sun shines, and the rain nourishes you, slowly start moving while still crouched low.
7. Slowly, you begin to grow up and out of the earth. Perhaps with one arm growing up as a tiny shoot. Begin to lengthen your legs away from the ground or raise your torso, stretching them towards straight.
8. As your legs stretch and straighten, reach farther towards the sun by lengthening your torso and letting your arms come down by your side.
9. Then stretch your head up from its tucked position.
10. Keep growing and blooming by reaching both of your arms up overhead, raising your face to the sky and 'blooming' like a flower blooming in the sun. Maybe swaying in the wind gently as your arms reach towards the sky.
11. You can also reach and grow so much that you rise up on to your tip-toes, stretching as far and as close to the sun as you can.
12. When you've 'bloomed' and stretched overhead, take time for any other stretches that feel good to you before returning to a normal, gentle standing or seated position.
13. In your normal standing or sitting position, take a moment to notice any differences in how you feel before moving on with your day
14. Ask the participants to share what reasons we might have for doing this exercise now. Take a few responses. Make sure to mention that one of the reasons we do this is to remind ourselves that grief is a process, just like the growth of a flower. We move through it at different times, in different ways, taking different amounts of time. It's important to show ourselves compassion when moving through grief. We can't make ourselves go through this process any faster, just like we can't make a flower bloom any faster. Self-compassion for our grief actually helps us move through it. Another reason we do it is to move our bodies and move these heavy feelings and topics out of our bodies.

*For the French-speaking group:*

*[Lesson learned: this grounding exercise has been useful in some other sessions when participants are a bit sleepy. It can be adapted to the situation, used as a stretching exercise.]*

## **ACTIVITY SIX: CLOSING THE DAY**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

### Steps:

1. Explain that we will close with the same exercise to deepen and anchor positive feelings and messages. We will be doing an exercises that uses tapping on our bodies combined with positive spoken messages.
2. Ask participants to choose a new sentence about yourself that includes one of your strengths. It should not be the same sentence you used last week. For example “I am loved and supported.” Or “I am strong, I am brave, I can receive support when I need.” You will either say the sentence softly to yourself or speak it silently (in your head).
3. Put your right hand palm down on your left shoulder. Put your left hand palm down on your right shoulder. Say the sentence out loud first and pat your right hand on your left shoulder, then your left hand on your right shoulder.
4. Alternate the patting. Do ten pats altogether, five on each side, each time repeating your sentences aloud or in your head.
5. Once you’ve finished with your new sentence, repeat the whole exercise again with your sentence from last week.
6. Once everyone has finished, remind them of the homework for the week and thank them for their participation today.

### Homework:

#### Skills Building:

Identify when you feel grief. Each time you identify grief, see if you can change your self-talk to be more positive and compassionate. Try to remember at least one example of when you were self-compassionate.

#### Skills Building:

Practice the relaxation exercise from the end of the session. Notice how you feel after doing this exercise in “real life.” Did you find it helpful? Or was it frustrating? Did you still feel anxious, angry or upset after doing it? Or did you notice that any difficult feelings were reduced or eliminated.

Closing the group activity: *\*if this is the last session before the closing sessions*

Ask the group to bring found objects for a mural next week – everyday resources – they cannot buy anything. They can bring natural things (leaves, stones, flowers) or recycled materials (sweet wrappers, bottle tops, plastic bags, etc).

### **For the French-speaking group:**

This activity was well appreciated, and the women were comfortable doing this exercise at this stage. For the ones who remained shy, the others took the initiative and suggested qualities they saw on them.

## Closing Session 1: Looking Forward (Session 7+)

### *Objectives:*

- *To identify ways in which the participants can care for themselves*
- *To identify ways in which the participants can care for each other*
- *To identify ways in which the participants can care for their communities*

### *Topics Covered:*

- *Caring for ourselves*
- *Caring for each other*
- *Caring for our communities*

### *Materials needed:*

- Flip Charts
- Markers
- String, scissors, sticky tape
- Printed templates – Tree of life (Annex: Activity Materials)
- Paper and Drawing Materials

### **ACTIVITY ONE: RECAPPING Previous Weeks**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session.
2. Ask a participant to lead the ritual.
3. Give the women a choice on which previous relaxation exercise they would like to open with today. Allow 2-3 suggestions if there are more than one suggestion. If there are no suggestions, remind them of some of the previous relaxation and grounding exercises you've done. Allow a few minutes to decide. Once decided, lead the chosen relaxation or grounding exercise.
4. Spend 5 minutes answering any questions about the previous session.
5. Introduce today's topics. Explain that as we move into our last two sessions we want to begin wrapping up and looking toward the future.

### **ACTIVITY TWO: TREE OF LIFE<sup>13</sup>:**

**Time: 60 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Tell the group that as we come to a close, we want to take time to reflect on what we've experienced and how we can use this as we move forward into a new stage.

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<sup>13</sup> Adapted from REPSSI. [www.Repssi.org](http://www.Repssi.org)

2. Hand out paper and drawing materials. Tell the women that we will each draw a tree. The tree should include the roots, the ground around the tree, branches, leaves, and fruit of some kind. Every tree will be unique to the woman who draws it.

3. Give the women 5-10 minutes to draw their tree. Once everyone has finished drawing the tree, explain that each part of the tree represents a different part of their lives. As we go through the different parts of the tree, women can write words/sentences that represent each different part or they can draw symbols. The different parts of the tree are:

- a. Roots – Their history and past
- b. Ground – Their daily life now
- c. Trunk – Their unique skills and strengths
- d. Branches – Hopes, wishes, goals for the future
- e. Leaves – people who are important to them/sources of support
- f. Fruit – gifts they have been given

4. Give a few prompts and things to think about as they add to the drawing of the tree.

For the roots, ask them to reflect on:

- a. Where they come from (i.e. village, town, country);
- b. Their family history (origins, family name, ancestry, extended family); and,
- c. Those who have taught them the most in life.
- d. Also, as they reflect on their history, invite them to think about their favorite place at home and or a treasured song or dance or cultural celebration

For the ground, ask them to reflect on:

- a. Where the participant lives now
- b. What activities or routines the participant engages in every day
- c. Common chores and activities
- d. Favorite song, activity, or place when at home

For the trunk, ask them to reflect on:

- a. Skills they have learned to do in this group, including
- b. Talents
- c. Things that they do well or things that they are proud of about themselves
- d. Things that other's in this group have said they do well.
- e. Special skills, like being kind to others, taking care of others, (these may be things he or she does every day without thinking much about)

For the branches, ask them to reflect on:

- f. The goal that they set at the beginning of the group – include it on a branch here
- g. New goals for the future
- h. New hopes for the future

Contextualization: If the women have previously had trouble or lacked self-confidence around drawing/artistic exercises, you may want to give them a printed outline of a tree and ask them to decorate/color it instead of drawing it from scratch. When considering this, consider if they will benefit more from support in the form of a tree outline or if they will benefit more from stretching their skills and comfort level by drawing the tree themselves. Either way, you can highlight their skills, willingness to try new things, and each of their unique self-expression in their trees.

Contextualization:  
Explain to the group that individuals' roots are often only known to them and not seen by others. You can color those roots in and you don't have to explain or show them. You can choose to share only what you feel comfortable with sharing.



*Goals and hopes can be small and personal or bigger – like wishing for an end to war or being able to return home to country of origin.*

For the leaves, ask them to reflect on:

- a. Support systems and individual sources of support. (This can include other members of the group, family members, etc)
- b. People that are important to them – it does not matter if some of the important people in their lives have died. If the person is/was important to them, they should put them on the leaves

*Make sure that everyone knows that it is ok to label the names of those who have died or disappeared. These people are still important to us, even if they're no longer in our day-to-day life.*

For the fruit, ask them to reflect on:

- a. Gifts that have been given to them, including non-material gifts
  - b. Acts of kindness, time, or assistance that others have given them
  - c. Who has contributed to their lives
  - d. What impact those who have contributed to their lives have had on them
  - e. What impact you may have had on those who have given you these gifts.
5. Ask the women to review all of the different parts of their tree. If they want to add anything to the different parts, they can. Tell them that we will continue to use these trees next week. But right now we want to take a closer look at the branches (hopes for the future) and their original past, present, future drawing.

**Lesson learned for all groups:**

This activity can take much longer than expected, especially when some of the women in the group have formed friendships. Participants will tend to share certain aspects of their lives, such as past, support group, family etc.

Plan the continuation of the session in advance, depending on the group, or add an additional session to cover the rest of the activities.

If a participant misses the session and because the activity “Tree of life” continues in the next session, the facilitators should find a way to include the ones who didn’t attend to have their tree of life ready for the last session, e.g. give it as homework.

**ACTIVITY THREE: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

**Time: 20 Minutes (of the 60 minutes in tree of life)**

**Steps:**

1. Pass out the past, present, future drawings to everyone again. Tell them that we will now use our Tree of Life to update our past, present, future drawings.
2. Once everyone has their drawings, ask them to review the goal they set at the start. Did they accomplish their goal? Or do they still need to work on their goal? Either way, we are going to continue looking to the future.
3. If they have not accomplished their goal yet, they should think about what skills and supports they identified in their trunk and leaves that will/can help them accomplish their goal.
4. If they feel like they have accomplished their goal, then ask them to take a few minutes to review the goals and hopes on the other branches. They should choose one to focus on that

they feel like they can work towards currently. What skills and supports (from the trunk and leaves) would help them with this new goal?

5. Now ask each of them to draw a ladder on their future goal sheet. Tell them that when we climb a ladder we don't just reach the top by thinking about it. We have to take action to climb the ladder.
6. Ask the women - How do we reach the top of the ladder? Make sure that someone says step by step. Highlight that taking one step at a time can feel like it takes a long time but each step is progress. This is the same with our goals. We may get stuck at one step or have to repeat a step periodically, but even that is still progress.
7. Tell them that they should think about the steps they need to take to accomplish their goals (either new goals or the goal they are working on from the beginning of the group). What step do they need to take first? Second? Third? How many steps do they think it will take to accomplish their goal?
8. The women should now write their steps on each rung of the ladder, starting with the first step they think they need to take. (They can always draw a picture or symbol to represent each step instead of writing it out).
9. Once they've finished writing in the steps they need to take, they should then – for each step – write the skills and supports they might need to use to accomplish each step. Each time they identify a skill or support they need, they should think about how they can use that skill, how they will remember to use it, or how they will ask for that support.
10. Finally, at the top of the ladder, they should write or draw how they will know they have accomplished this goal.
11. Tell each of them that because this is the second to last week, they will take this drawing home with them today. They can keep it with them to remind themselves of their goals and the skills, strengths and supports they have to reach these goals.

#### **ACTIVITY FOUR, OPTION A: CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY INTRO (8 sessions)**

**Time: 10 Minutes**

##### Steps:

1. Tell the participants that this week and next week we will have time to work on a mural as part of our closing ceremony. We want to create a mural that represents the “strengths of our community”
2. Tell the women that they can decide how they want to define community.
  - a. They can create a mural that represents the group as a community and create a picture of how they will move forward and support each other in the group.
  - b. OR they can create a mural of the larger community as a whole. If they choose to do this, they will create a picture of the strengths of their community and what they as group members/a group can bring to it.
3. Remind them of the items they were asked to bring in last week and the week before. These will be used to make this mural. They can go out and get more things if needed but remember, they cannot buy anything.
4. Make sure the participants know that we will spend a large portion of next session completing this mural.

## **ACTIVITY FIVE: CLOSING THE SESSION**

**Time: 15 Minutes**

### **Steps:**

1. Tell the group that as we wrap up, we want to close this session decided together what we would like our last session to look like.
2. Let the women know that we have a few planned activities, like completing our mural, to do for the last session. But we want to create our last session together, as a group.
3. Let them know that you would like to hear suggestions from them about any activities they want to do during our last group.
4. Give the women time to discuss amongst themselves or to provide suggestions individually. As you discuss suggestions, make sure to remind them of any limitations on budget if necessary. Be sure that you do not agree to an activity or promise something that you cannot actually provide or support.
5. Help the women to come to agreement on at least one activity of their choosing. If the activity chosen is shorter, the group may be able to choose an additional activity. Use your judgment and your experience of previous sessions to make this decision.
6. Once you have agreed on at least one activity as a group, thank them for their participation and suggestions. Close out the session with the homework for the last session.

If you have budget to support certain things like refreshments or decorations, you can use these to support ideas. If not, be clear about budget limitations and what activities will or will not be possible.

Lesson learned: A creative group activity for the last session may not be the participants' favorite. Remain flexible and go with what the women prefer. This could be a stroll in nature ending with a picnic, or organizing a day when all the members get together for a meal as a more festive way of saying goodbye.

### **Homework:**

#### **Closing the group activity:**

Ask the group to leave their found objects for next week. Ask the group to bring additional found objects for a mural next week – everyday resources – they cannot buy anything. They can bring natural things (leaves, stones, flowers) or recycled materials (sweet wrappers, bottle tops, plastic bags, etc).

## Closing Session 2: Closing the Group (Session 8+)

### *Objectives:*

- *To review the main topics and issues covered in the previous weeks*
- *To celebrate the completion of the group and terminate the sessions in a positive way*
- *To reflect on our goals and the support systems we have created*

### *Topics covered:*

- *Reviewing the previous sessions*
- *Celebrating our communities*
- *Goal Reviews*
- *Saying goodbye*

### *Materials needed:*

- Flip Charts
- Tape, glue
- Markers
- Goal sheets

### **ACTIVITY ONE: RECAPPING PREVIOUS WEEKS**

**Time: 20 Minutes**

#### Steps:

1. Welcome all the women to this week's session.
2. Ask a participant to lead the ritual.
3. Give the women a choice on which previous relaxation exercise they would like to open with today. Allow 2-3 suggestions if there are more than one suggestion. If there are no suggestions, remind them of some of the previous relaxation and grounding exercises you've done. Allow a few minutes to decide. Once decided, lead the chosen relaxation or grounding exercise.
4. Spend 15 minutes going through the main topics with them from the previous weeks and answering questions they may have. Make sure to also spend some time talking through the most useful exercises/skills they think they will use the most as the sessions conclude.

## **ACTIVITY TWO: CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY (8 sessions)**

**Time: 40-50 Minutes**

### Steps:

1. Have everyone's tree of life sitting on a table. Ask each woman to find their tree of life and hang it up on the wall.
2. Tell the women that they should now walk around each other's trees and write words of encouragement, support or admiration on others' trees. If participants have used symbols instead of words, make sure that you spend some time at the end sharing verbally.
3. Once everyone has written on the others' trees, they should go back to their own tree and review what others' have written to them.
4. Spend some time speaking about their trees and the encouragement that has been written on their pictures.
  - a. Ask the women what it feels like to review all of the words of encouragement and support that others have written
  - b. Ask if there is anything that anyone wants to share with the group that they have gained from their time together or something that they will take with them and remember or use after the group ends.
5. The facilitator should spend the last half of this activity speaking about each participant's tree. The facilitator should highlight the participants' skills, hopes, dreams, gifts, relationships, etc.
  - a. Be sure to speak about the strong and firm roots that each participant has, as well as mention the dreams and hopes that each person expressed for him or herself.
  - b. It is also important to mention the people with whom each participant feels connected, who have taught and supported them in the past and who continue to take up this role in different ways. Be sure to acknowledge both those outside of the group like family, friends, faith leaders, etc and those in the group.
  - c. This process is important because of the re-enforcement and public affirmation it gives each participant. This gives the individual key take-home messages that she or he can refer back to, as needed. *Do not rush this process. While the retelling can be adapted (for example, to be done simultaneously in two or more smaller group rather than in front of all of the participants), a facilitator must be present to lead the retelling for each participant.*
6. To close this session, point out that our individual trees make an entire forest. This forest of trees is our community. We've created a community with this group. They can decide how this community changes, adapts and continues after the group sessions are done.

#### **Contextualization:**

If participants have limited literacy and are not comfortable writing, remind them that they can draw symbols (smile faces, hearts, etc). What's important is that they each draw or write something on every other member's tree.

#### **Feedback from the French-speaking group:**

This activity was both the most fun and emotional, as the participants had already got into the habit of giving each other an encouraging word from previous sessions. It is therefore encouraged to give it time and space and get well prepared.

### **Additional Steps (9+ sessions)**

*If the Women Rise group is longer than 8 weeks AND the group has chosen to form a community group that will meet on their own after the Women Rise group closes.*

7. Remind the group of their group goal and/or their personal goals that they set at the beginning. Ask the group what progress they've made. If the group says they haven't really made any progress, remind them of all of the skills they've gained and support systems they've created with each other. That's progress even if it doesn't feel like it.
8. Tell them that you're now going to give them the remaining time to talk about their group goal or reflect on their personal goals. Give them a sheet of paper and ask for one person to draw/write.
9. Now ask them to draw a ladder on the flip chart just like they did on their future goal sheet. Remind them that when we climb a ladder we don't just reach the top by thinking about it. We have to take action to climb the ladder.
10. Ask the women - How do we reach the top of the ladder for our group/personal goal? Make sure that someone says step by step. Highlight that taking one step at a time can feel like it takes a long time but each step is progress. This is the same with our group/personal goal too. We may get stuck at one step or have to repeat a step periodically, but even that is still progress.
11. Tell them that they should think about the steps they need to take to accomplish their group/personal goal. What step do they need to take first? Second? Third? How many steps do they think it will take to accomplish their goal?
12. The women should now write their steps on each rung of the ladder, starting with the first step they think they need to take. (They can always draw a picture or symbol to represent each step instead of writing it out). If their steps include meeting after the group, then they should note this on a rung with when they will first meet or how often they want to meet.
13. Once they've finished writing in the steps they need to take, they should then – for each step – write the skills and supports they might need to use to accomplish each step. They can even think about who within the group would be best for different steps. Each time they identify a skill or support they need to use or which person/people will work on a certain step, they should note this on the ladder rungs.
14. Finally, at the top of the ladder, they should write or draw how they will know they have accomplished this goal.

**Lessons learned:** Even in contexts where the continuation of the groups was unsure or not foresee, the ladder exercise can be helpful to set personal goals in the future. It is therefore encouraged to keep it.

### **ACTIVITY THREE: SAYING GOODBYE**

**Time: 30 Minutes (or 15 minutes for 9+sessions)**

#### Steps:

1. Tell the participants that we have now reached the end of our session. We will take the rest of our time together to say goodbye.
2. Let them know that we will first do the activity they chose together last week.
3. Gather any materials or refreshments needed for the activity and arrange the room as needed to complete the activity.
4. Complete the chosen closing activity.
5. Once you've completed the closing activity, ask the women to rejoin the circle for the last time.
6. Ask the participants if there is anything that they would like to share with the group. A positive experience? Something they've learned? A technique they will take with them when they go?
7. Let the group take turns sharing as long as they want/have things to say to each other.
8. As they finish speaking and sharing, thank them again for spending these \_\_ weeks together with us.
9. Remind them that you will be in touch about some final paperwork to do next week but they will do this individually.

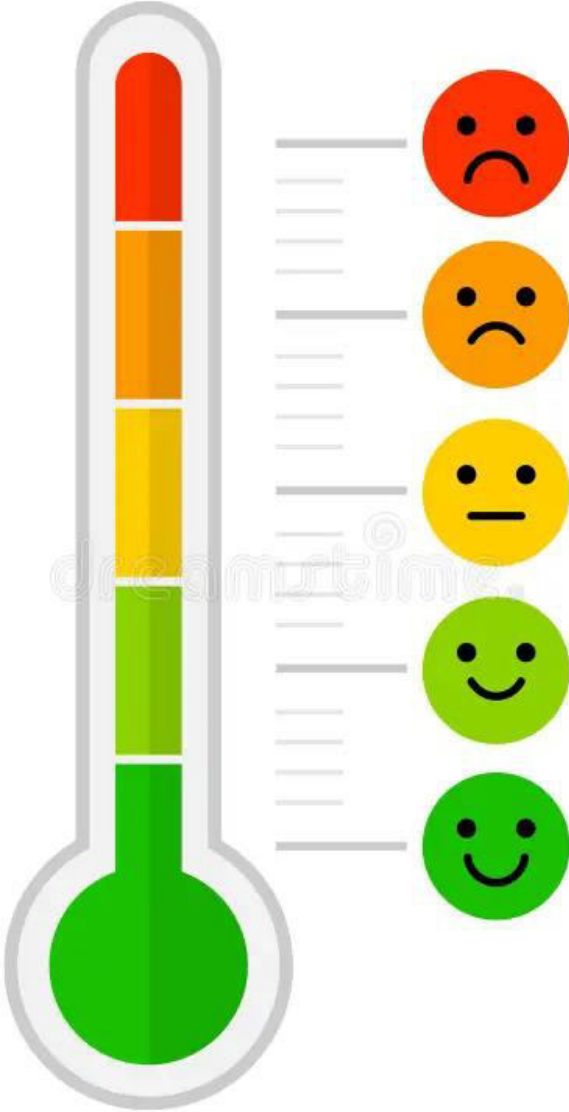
You can flip the order of these steps to best fit the chosen closing activity (or activities). It may work best for you to do the wrap up questions first and end on with the activity they've chosen. Or it may work best to do the chosen activity (or activities).

**Lesson learned: Even if participants don't choose to continue the group, they can benefit from staying in touch.**

Through the WhatsApp group formed at the start of the sessions, participants have got into the habit of sharing information about services in different organizations, job opportunities, and motivating each other to attend language courses. Confidentiality and respect are rules that were discussed at the start of the Women Rise session and that apply to the WhatsApp group. Women participants are invited to set up their own rules and regulations for the WhatsApp group and are encouraged to ensure members have the choice to stay in or not.

# Annex: Activity Materials

Session 1, Activity One: Introductions, Hopes and Fears  
*Mood Thermometer*





**Session 3, Activity Five: Understanding Psychosocial Wellbeing**

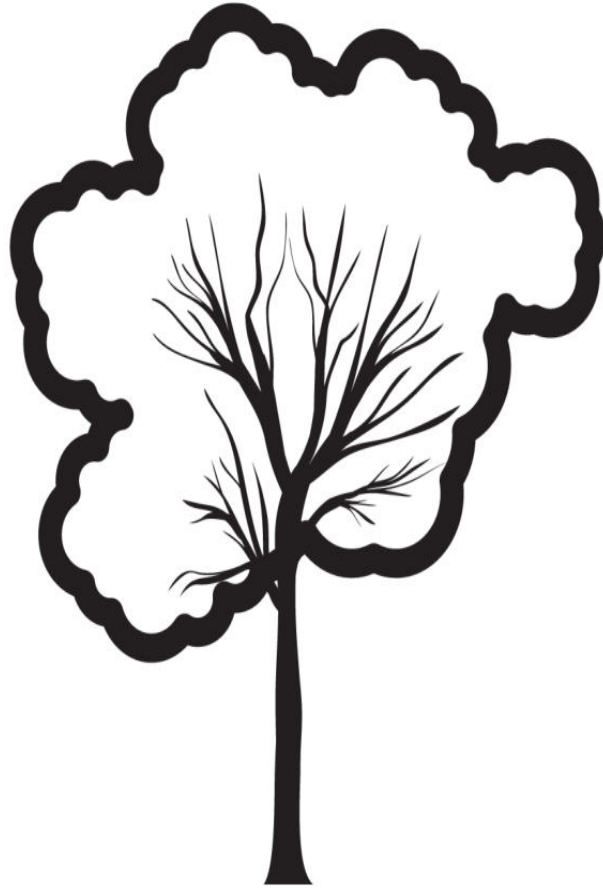
*Emotion Pairs*

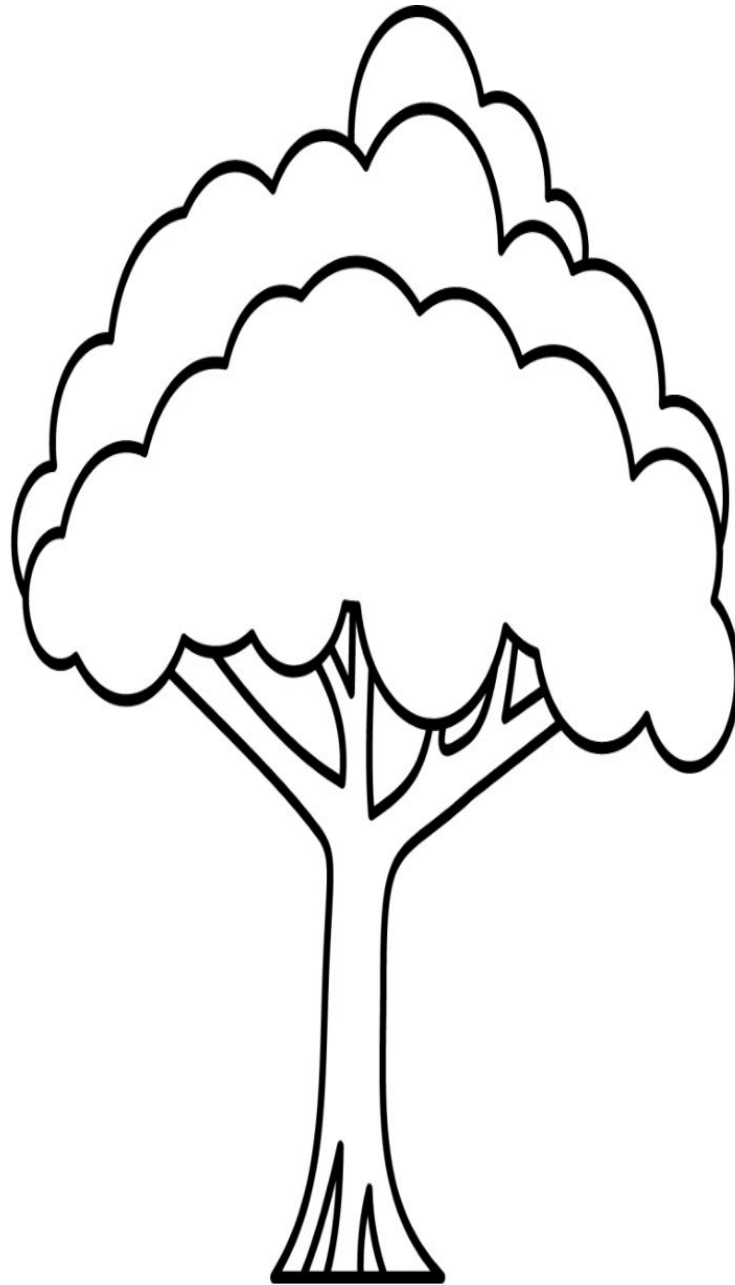
Content	Content
Angry	Angry
Joyful	Joyful
Frustrated	Frustrated
Anxious	Anxious
Jealous	Jealous

**Closing Session 1, Activity Two: Tree of Life**

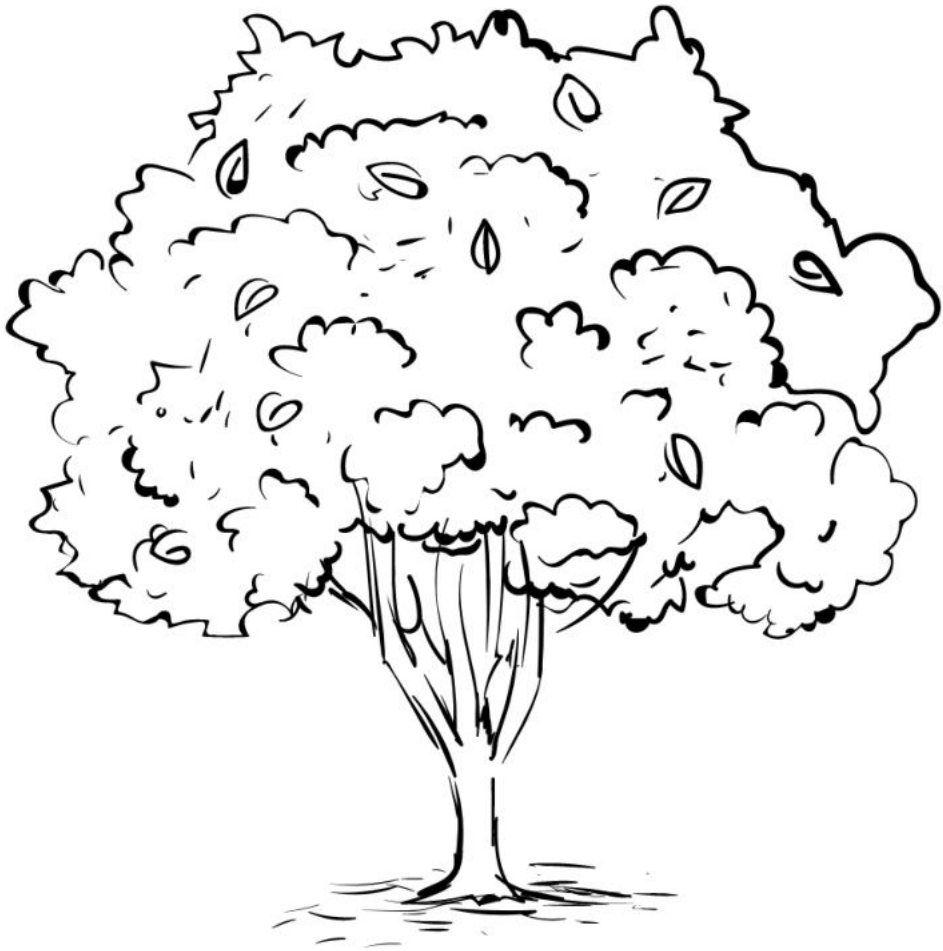
*Optional tree print outs if not drawing individual trees*

*Print out multiple copies of each version and let participants choose the individual tree they will use for this activity. If possible, print them out on paper larger than A4. However, A4 is fine if that's the only available option or most feasible in terms of budget, print time, etc.*









## Monitoring and Evaluation Tools

This section encompasses all the M&E tools used by the IRC piloting the approach in Italy and Greece. It contains eight (8) files in Word format. Some of these files have been taken from the Women Rise M&E Resources available [online](#) and adapted to the specific context of Athens and Palermo (1,3,4,5,7,8), while others have been created additionally for the specific purpose of the context and project (2,6) to monitor the piloting. On the following pages the reader can find:

The **pre-group meeting form (1)** is a tool used during the first meeting between the facilitator(s) and candidate participants to inform the latter about the group, its purpose, and agreements, and screen them by asking a set of questions to ensure safety of all participants and group cohesion. Together with the pre-group meeting form, a **privacy notice form (2)** is shared, informing participants how the project will use the personal data they provide and ensuring their consent. All answers provided by the candidate participants registering to the groups during the pre-group meeting shall be recorded on a Database tracker. For the piloting of the intervention, the tool [Database A. Pre-Group Meeting and Attendance Registry](#) has been adapted, according to the adapted pre-group meeting form (1). This adapted tracker is an Excel File and can be accessed [here](#).

A **confidentiality form (3)** should be shared with participants during the first session to document their agreement with the rules of the group and confidentiality. Additionally, an **attendance form (4)** should be used by facilitators to keep participants' anonymized attendance of the sessions, also to be recorded into the Excel Database tracker. The **Baseline-Endline Survey (5)** is used to assess participants' psychosocial functionality and felt stigma at the beginning of the sessions (Baseline) and towards the end of the sessions (Endline) and thus to measure whether the sessions have improved participant's psychosocial functioning and reduced their felt stigma.

A **Feedback Survey (6)** and a **Post-Group FGD Guide (7)** are the two tools used to gather participants' feedback after the completion of the group sessions. The first one is an anonymous survey measuring the satisfaction of participants on different elements of the group and its facilitation, and the second offers a guided discussion among a group of participants 1 week -1 month after the completion of sessions.

Last, the **Group PSS Session Feedback and Fidelity Form (8)** is a tool to be used by the facilitators and the supervisor to facilitate the supervision process and help identify support needs.

## 1. Pre-Group Meeting Form

### Purpose

The purpose of this meeting is to explain the overall goals of the group, go through the expectations of the group and the rules of the group.

- Every potential group member must attend at least one pre-group meeting/interview before being accepted into the group.
- The facilitator should ask the participant the questions listed below to help gather information about what the participant hopes to get out of being in the group and how they view/understand the group process.

### Instructions

1

Informed Consents & Brief Overview of Group

2

Screen the Potential Participant - Screen Tool

3

Screening Checklist (For Facilitator/Supervisor Only)

4

Referral Form (Optional)

## Step 1: Informed Consent & Brief Overview of Group

### Before starting the meeting

Give them a brief overview of what you want to talk about. You can say...

Today we are discussing the new support group that will be starting soon. This discussion is completely confidential\*\*.

*\* If this is someone **receiving Case Management services**, ask them if they remember the meaning of confidentiality and its limits before continuing*

*\*\* If this is someone who has **not received case management services**, please explain confidentiality before continuing<sup>14</sup>.*

In order to have an effective support group, we must determine who will participate carefully. I will give you a brief explanation of the group and then ask you a few questions. You can ask questions and seek clarification anytime. Once all the meetings with potential group members have been completed, we will let you know if you will be able to participate in this session of the group. If not, we will have more sessions that you may be able to participate in. You can also continue to come to other activities at the center as much as you would like [only for those who already participate in activities or, if not, inform about other available activities]. Do you have any questions so far?

### Informed consent

You must read this section to the participant and receive informed consent before going further.

Your participation is optional and you do not have to answer our questions if you do not want to. You may also leave the process at any time. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions, so please be honest in sharing your ideas. You do not need to share personal experiences or names of other people. You can stop me to ask questions or clarification at any time. And if you decide you do not want to go any further, you can stop at any time. Do you have any questions? Do you agree to participate in this discussion?

Yes       No

*Once you have received a **yes**, you can continue with the rest of the interview.*

---

<sup>14</sup> Confidentiality: Please fill out the section below on confidentiality. A reminder of confidentiality and that they signed a confidentiality form will need to be repeated during session 1 of the group meetings.



## Explanation of Group

In your conversation with the potential group member, be sure to communicate the following to them:

1. This is an 8 session group that will meet for approximately 1.5 to 2 hours each session. (*\*8-12, adjust depending on the number of sessions the team has decided on doing*)
2. The group will meet at the same time on the same day of the week for each of the weeks. This will be decided by the participants. (*If the team has structured the sessions differently than 1 session/week, explain how many sessions will take place each week and when. E.g. 2 sessions per week, on Tuesday and Thursday*)
3. During each of the sessions, a different, but related topic will be covered.
4. Each of these topics are focused on emotional well-being, different kinds of emotions and feelings, and how to cope with difficult emotions that we all have during difficult events in our lives.
5. Each session will start with a check in on (seeing) how everyone is doing and then move on to activities on the subject we're discussing on the day.
6. After the activities there will be time to discuss the activities, how this topic relates to our lives and what we might be able to do to support each other.
7. It is very important that the group feels like a safe and comforting space for everyone participating, and all group members feel comfortable with each other.
8. To help achieve this, we want all group members to attend all 8 sessions [8-12] and commit to coming for each session. There is a continuation from one session to the next, this is why it is important to not miss sessions.

## Goals of Group

These goals are simplified to help with clarity and understanding for participants with different educational levels.

1. The women in the group have a safe, confidential, and comfortable space to speak about difficult subjects and express their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs.
2. The women in the group understand better their emotions connected to their experiences.
3. The women in the group increase ability to support each other and feel like they have more support in turn.
4. The women who have experienced violence feel better supported by the women in the group.

## Group Agreements

Explain the group agreements. You can say...

In each group, the women will work together to decide on group agreements. We will uphold (follow) these agreements in every session. While the women who participate in the group choose these, there are two agreements that we always use. These are respect and confidentiality.

The Women Rise facilitators' primary purpose is to promote a safe environment for the group and its members. In order to create and maintain a safe environment, mutual respect between members must be consistent. The women in the group will have different backgrounds, experiences and beliefs. While members may not always agree, they must respect each other and communicate with respect.

The second way that we create a safe environment is through confidentiality. The group facilitators will maintain confidentiality and will not share anything outside of the group. All group members must commit to keeping what is said in the group, "in the group", meaning that it cannot be shared with others outside of the group. You may want to share what you are learning about yourself and your experiences with family members. This is fine to do as long as you remember not to talk about specific events of the group or share any stories or personal information of other group members. Do you have any questions so far?

*If there are questions, be sure to answer them. Once all questions are answered, you can say:*

I would now like to go through the consent form for the group with you. If you participate in the group this time, we will review this information during the first session of the group. If not, we will keep this form in a locked file to use and update if you participate in a future Women Rise group. (Not: if, for example, you don't speak the same language as the rest of the group, if you don't have the same available time, or if you are not ready for the group this time)

*Refer to the Women Rise Confidentiality form.*

## Step 2: Screen the Potential Participant – Screen Tool

The following questions should be asked as the bulk of the interview process for assessing a potential participant for joining the group. The questions can be ordered to best fit the flow of your conversation and can be reworded to best suit your needs, however, it is critical that all of the questions are answered and that the interviewer can assess the checklist below.

Participant code:

\_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

*If the participant doesn't already have a code, use the same methods as you use to create survivor codes for case management*

### PART ONE: Demographics

First, I am going to ask you to share a bit of information about yourself.

#### PRIORITY

Please prioritize the following questions.

1. Location of group: <i>(Enter city and safe space information)</i>	
2. What year you were born? <i>(Enter number)</i>	
3. What is your marital status?	<input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married, Civil Union or Living with intimate partner as if married <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Separated <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed <input type="checkbox"/> Engaged <input type="checkbox"/> Did Not Answer

<p>4. Are you currently living with your husband or partner?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No  <input type="checkbox"/> Did Not Answer</p>
<p>5. What is your legal status?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Refugee  <input type="checkbox"/> Asylum Seeker  <input type="checkbox"/> Other migrant status  <input type="checkbox"/> Did Not Answer</p>
<p><b>OPTIONAL</b>  If the woman being interviewed can answer the below <u>and your teams are interested in understanding the following for analysis purposes</u>, please proceed.  Otherwise, skip to the <i>Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability</i>.</p>	
<p>6. How many years have you lived in [Athens / Palermo]  (Enter number)</p>	
<p>7. Are you able to read and write in the language of the group?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, both  <input type="checkbox"/> I can read, but not write  <input type="checkbox"/> Neither read, nor write  <input type="checkbox"/> Did Not Answer</p>
<p>8. Are you currently in school?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No  <input type="checkbox"/> Did Not Answer</p>
<p>9. How many people are currently living in your house? [By house we mean under your roof.]  (Enter number)</p>	

<p>10. Do you have any children under your responsibility? How many? What are their ages? (Enter number)</p>	
--	--

**WASHINGTON GROUP SHORT SET OF QUESTIONS ON DISABILITY**  
 The next questions ask about difficulties you may have doing certain activities because of a HEALTH PROBLEM, including mental health. We ask these questions in order to be able to adapt the activities to your needs. You don't have to answer to any of these.

<p>11. Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No - no difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – some difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – a lot of difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot do at all</p>
<p>12. Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No - no difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – some difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – a lot of difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot do at all</p>
<p>13. Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No - no difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – some difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – a lot of difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot do at all</p>
<p>14. Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No - no difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – some difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – a lot of difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot do at all</p>
<p>15. Do you have difficulty (with self-care such as) washing all over or dressing?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No - no difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – some difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – a lot of difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot do at all</p>

<p>16. Using your usual (customary) language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No - no difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – some difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – a lot of difficulty  <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot do at all</p>
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**PART TWO: Screening Questions**

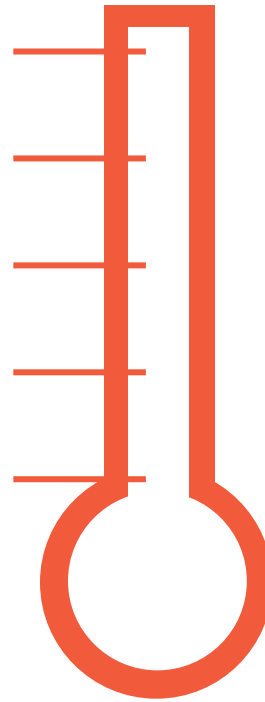
The next questions will ask you about your thoughts and feelings about the group. (some questions might be repetitive. Skip a question if it has been answered.)

Questions	Participant Response
<p>1. What interests you about participating in this group?</p>	
<p>2. What issues/emotions are you currently experiencing that you think the group could help you lessen or cope with?</p>	
<p>3. How do you think participating in this group will help you? (prefer this question to the 1<sup>st</sup>)</p>	
<p>4. Do you understand:  a. ...the outline of the group?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No( explain the outline of the group)  <input type="checkbox"/> Did not answer</p>
<p>b. ...the goals of the group?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No(explain again the goals)  <input type="checkbox"/> Did not answer</p>
<p>c. ...the rules of the group?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No(explain the rules)  <input type="checkbox"/> Did not answer</p>

<p>5. Please explain why you think confidentiality is important for this group.</p>	
<p>6. How would you react if you disagreed with someone in the group and you were feeling angry?</p>	
<p>7. How will you know if this group has helped you?</p>	
<p>8. Do you have any issues or barriers that would prevent you from attending the sessions?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No  <input type="checkbox"/> Did not answer</p>
<p>a. If yes, what support do you need to be able to attend all of the sessions?</p> <p>9. If you were to participate in the group what day(s) and time(s) during the week would be convenient for you?</p>	
<p><b>Emotional readiness question 1</b></p>	
<p>Do you feel that you are:</p>	



- Unable to handle (cope with) anything 4
- Unable to handle (cope with) most things 3
- Able to handle (cope with) some things,  
but not able to cope with other things 2
- Able to handle (cope with) most things 1
- Able to handle (cope with) anything 0

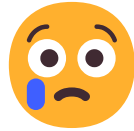


**Emotional readiness question 2**

Please circle the picture that best describes how much distress you have been experiencing in the past week, including today.



5. Extreme  
distress: "I feel as  
bad as I ever  
have"



4. A lot of distress



3. Moderate  
distress



2. A little distress



1. No distress:  
Things are good

You have reached the end of the interview. Thank the interviewee for their time and proceed to the [Screening Checklist](#).

### Step 3: Screening Checklist (For Facilitator/Supervisor Only)

After speaking with the potential participant, does she meet the following criteria:  
(Potential participants must meet the below criteria to be considered for the group)

- After a brief explanation of the course outline, does the woman still express an active interest in attending the group sessions?
- Can she commit to 1.5-2 hours per week for the group?
- When asked, does the woman express an interest AND ability to attend the full 8-week group process?
- Does she AND the facilitator feel like her needs/wants align with the group goals?
- Is the potential participant at an emotional stage that may be difficult but is not considered immediate crisis stage? (All participants must be in a place of at least minimal stability. Active crisis stages are best served through individual interventions)
- Did she respond with a 3 or less on Emotional Readiness Question 1 AND a 4 or less on Emotional Readiness Question 2?
- Does she have any barriers to attending the group that will need to be addressed before starting the group? Is she willing to work with a caseworker to try to address these barriers prior to starting the group?
- If the woman is a GBV survivor, has she been actively engaged in the individual case management process?

Consider these additional aspects when deciding if this person will be a participant for the group.

- Has the potential participant expressed feelings of loneliness, difficulties coping with current situation or isolation?
- Does the potential participant feel that she would benefit from stronger relationships with women in her community?

Once a potential participant has been identified as someone who meets the above criteria for individual suitability the following factors must be considered for determining if the individual will add to the cohesion of the group:

- Has the woman expressed similar difficulties/challenges as other identified participants?
- Is the woman a survivor of GBV? – ideally the group is made up of an almost equal split between those who are and those who are not survivors of GBV

Interviewer/facilitator recommends for participation in group curriculum?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

*If unsure, discuss with supervisor.*

Supervisor and Interviewer/Facilitator Discussion

Final decision for participation

- Yes
- No

Decision communicated to interviewee?

- Yes
  - No
- If no – why not?*

Based on the answers, behaviors, and screening for group participation, does the interviewee require a referral?

- Yes
  - No
- If yes, complete the [Referral Form](#) below and inform your supervisor.*

Interviewer name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Step 4: Referral Form (Optional)

*Please attach this form to the front of the Pre-Group meeting form if the potential participant requires a referral for follow up.*

#### Referral information

Full name:		Interviewee number/code:
Sex: <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male	Age:	Relationship to children:

#### Address

#### Phone number


#### Other contact information of the interviewee:

#### Is the interviewee aware of the referral?

	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
	<input type="checkbox"/> No

#### Best way to contact the interviewee


#### Reason for referral

--

## 2. Privacy Notice for Processing of Personal Data

- Your full name and contact information will only be accessed by the IRC program facilitators and the program manager. IRC facilitators will create a participant's code for you to store your personal information (gender, age, disability, marital status etc) in an anonymized, non-identifiable way. European Commission, Project Partners, and IRC may have access to your anonymized personal information only (no full name, no contact details).
- IRC will only **use anonymized demographic data** for reporting project results to the European Commission funding the project, for internal analysis and review of project outcomes and activities co-implemented with the project consortium partners.
- Your data will be saved in our archive for as long as required in connection with the program which, generally, will not be more than five years after the date it was collected.
- IRC may share your anonymized personal information with relevant staff within the IRC Network, which may mean the information is transferred to and stored in a location outside the European Economic Area, for example the United States.
- You have the right to request to see a copy of the personal information you have provided us. You may ask us to rectify, stop using, erase or to transport the information that you have provided us at any time. Should you exercise your above-mentioned rights, IRC will check whether the legal requirements for this are met.
- Where we rely on your consent to use your anonymized personal information, you have the right to withdraw that consent at any time, with effect on future use. IRC might then no longer be able to provide me services under the program.
- You are further entitled to make a complaint about us or the way we have processed your personal information to the Hellenic Data Protection Authority: <https://www.dpa.gr>.

Should you have questions regarding this privacy notice, you may contact us at [email].

I confirm that I have completely read the foregoing and understand its contents. I agree that IRC may process my personal data, and that of my children (if any), for the purposes of implementing the program.

Name:

Signature/Thumbprint of client (or parent/guardian if client is under 18):

Date:

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### 3. Confidentiality Form

The purpose of this form is to document a conversation between the group facilitator and the prospective group member during the pre-group meeting about the Women Rise psychosocial support group, confidentiality and exceptions to confidentiality, and the participant's rights. This form should be stored in a separate file from the pre-group interview file.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby give permission to participate in the Women Rise psychosocial support group services according to the following:

1. I have the right to decide what information I wish to share with the Women Rise group participants and facilitators. The facilitators will never pressure me to share any information which I do not wish to share.
2. If I am dissatisfied with the services I am receiving, I have the right to discuss any concerns with the facilitators or their supervisor or to discontinue attending the group at any time.
3. The facilitator will not refer me to any other service without first explaining the purpose of the referral, the way it would be made, and the expected consequences, and receiving my consent. At my request, the facilitator may accompany me to meet with the referred agency.
4. The facilitator will discuss with me, in a confidential meeting, if there are concerns that the group is no longer a good fit for me or if the facilitator feels I may need more support than the group can provide. If this is the case, the facilitator will explain the reasons she feels I need additional support and will explain any referrals she would like to make.
5. My name and information about my participation in the Women Rise Group will be kept confidential. My facilitators will not share any information I disclose in the group with anyone, with the following exceptions:
  - a. My facilitators may seek guidance from a supervisor in relation to the Women Rise group. My facilitator would only share information as needed to support me and other group members. It will not include information that could identify me.
  - b. If I express thoughts or plans of committing physical harm to myself or others, my facilitators will take action to protect my safety and the safety of those around me. This action may include speaking with others in my community about my situation. If there is a risk of immediate danger, my facilitators would not need to seek my consent in such cases, but would do her/his best to inform me of actions taken.

Attendance:

I understand that attendance in the group is very important. Group dynamics and trust depend on each member of the group attending all sessions. The facilitator has clearly explained the time commitment of this group. I have expressed my willingness and commitment to participate in all group sessions if selected as a Women Rise group member.

Signature/Thumbprint of client (or parent/guardian if client is under 18):

Facilitator signature:

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. Group PSS Session Attendance Form

Session Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Facilitator/Staff 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

	Participant Code	Transportation Tickets
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		



## 5. Baseline-Endline Combined PS Functioning & Felt Stigma Outcome Survey

Date of survey: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant code: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>PSYCHOSOCIAL FUNCTIONALITY SCALE</b>	
<p>I will ask you about specific tasks and activities. Thinking about the last four weeks, please tell me how difficult it is for you to carry out these activities. You will tell me if it is [point at the same time to Visual Aid 1]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not difficult at all</li> <li>• Difficult</li> <li>• A little bit difficult</li> <li>• Very difficult</li> <li>• So difficult that you often cannot do it.</li> </ul>	
1. Giving advice to family members	<input type="checkbox"/> Not difficult at all (0 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> A little bit difficult (1 pt) <input type="checkbox"/> A moderate amount (2 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> Very difficult (3 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> So difficult that you often cannot do it (4 pts)
2. Exchanging ideas with others	<input type="checkbox"/> Not difficult at all (0 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> A little bit difficult (1 pt) <input type="checkbox"/> A moderate amount (2 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> Very difficult (3 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> So difficult that you often cannot do it (4 pts)
3. Uniting with other community members to do tasks for the community	<input type="checkbox"/> Not difficult at all (0 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> A little bit difficult (1 pt) <input type="checkbox"/> A moderate amount (2 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> Very difficult (3 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> So difficult that you often cannot do it (4 pts)
4. Asking/getting help from other women in the community when you need it	<input type="checkbox"/> Not difficult at all (0 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> A little bit difficult (1 pt) <input type="checkbox"/> A moderate amount (2 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> Very difficult (3 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> So difficult that you often cannot do it (4 pts)
5. Making important decisions about daily life	<input type="checkbox"/> Not difficult at all (0 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> A little bit difficult (1 pt) <input type="checkbox"/> A moderate amount (2 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> Very difficult (3 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> So difficult that you often cannot do it (4 pts)
6. Taking part in family decisions	<input type="checkbox"/> Not difficult at all (0 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> A little bit difficult (1 pt) <input type="checkbox"/> A moderate amount (2 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> Very difficult (3 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> So difficult that you often cannot do it (4 pts)

7. Learning new skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Not difficult at all (0 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> A little bit difficult (1 pt) <input type="checkbox"/> A moderate amount (2 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> Very difficult (3 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> So difficult that you often cannot do it (4 pts)
8. Concentrating on your tasks or responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Not difficult at all (0 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> A little bit difficult (1 pt) <input type="checkbox"/> A moderate amount (2 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> Very difficult (3 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> So difficult that you often cannot do it (4 pts)
9. Interacting or dealing with people you don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> Not difficult at all (0 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> A little bit difficult (1 pt) <input type="checkbox"/> A moderate amount (2 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> Very difficult (3 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> So difficult that you often cannot do it (4 pts)

### FELT STIGMA SCALE

Thinking about the last four weeks, please tell me how much you have had these thoughts and feelings. You will tell me if it is [point at the same time the visual aid 2]:

- Not at all
- A little bit
- A moderate amount
- Very
- Extremely

10. Thinking about the last four weeks, how much detached, isolated, or withdrawn from others did you feel?	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all detached, isolated, or withdrawn from others (0 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> A little bit detached, isolated, or withdrawn from others (1 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> A moderate amount detached, isolated or withdrawn from others (2 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> Very detached, isolated, or withdrawn from others (3 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely detached, isolated, or withdrawn from others (4 pts)
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**Visuals for Psychosocial  
Functionality Scale**



**Not difficult  
at all**

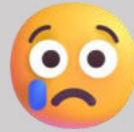
**A little bit  
difficult**

**Moderate  
amount**

**Very difficult**

**Unable to  
carry this out**

**Visuals for Felt Stigma  
Scale**



**Not at all**

**A little bit**

**A moderate  
amount**

**Very**

**Extremely**

## 6. Feedback Survey (to be completed online or offline, anonymously)

### Overview

At the **IRC**, we are committed to promoting client participation and responding to your feedback and complaints. We are requesting your participation in a short survey to learn about your experience in the Women Rise Group sessions. This survey is **voluntary** and **anonymous**, and it will take about **5 minutes** to complete. Participation or nonparticipation will not affect the services you receive from the IRC.

**Date of Survey:** mm/dd/yy

1	mandatory*	Did the Women Rise group facilitators treat you in a <b>friendly and respectful</b> manner during the sessions? <i>Respectfully: clients are treated professionally and without bias, prejudice, and harassment.</i>	Yes, very much Mostly Yes Somewhat / Neutral Not really No, not at all
2	mandatory*	Was the <b>duration</b> of the 8-sessions Women Rise adequate for your needs?	Yes Mostly yes Neutral Mostly No No
3	mandatory*	Are you satisfied with the <b>quality</b> of the <b>topics and activities</b> during Women Rise group sessions?	Yes Mostly yes Neutral Mostly No No
4	mandatory*	Did you feel <b>safe and secure</b> during the sessions?	Yes Mostly yes Neutral Mostly No No
5	mandatory*	During the Women Rise sessions, did the facilitators <b>make you feel part of the group</b> and involved you in the team activities?	Yes Mostly yes Neutral Mostly No No
6	mandatory*	Were you able to <b>share your thoughts and feelings</b> with the group when you needed to during the sessions?	Yes Mostly yes Neutral Mostly No No
7	mandatory*	Did you meet women during your participation in the group that you can <b>turn to for support</b> ?	Yes, a group of women (more than one) I can turn to for support.  Yes, one woman I can turn to for support.  No, I didn't meet someone I can turn to for support.  Other
7a	optional	If Other, would you like to specify? [skip logic]	Open text
8	mandatory*	After your participation in the Women Rise group sessions do you feel more connected to other women in your community, less connected or you did not observe any difference?	I feel <b>more</b> connected to other women in the community, after participating in the group.

		<i>Connected means having someone who you feel you can trust and feel most comfortable talking to</i>	<p>I feel <b>equally</b> connected to other women in the community as before participating in the group.</p> <p>I feel <b>less</b> connected to other women in the community after participating in the group</p> <p>I <b>don't feel connected</b> to the women in my community</p> <p>Other</p>
8a	optional	If Other, would you like to specify? [skip logic]	Open text
9	optional	Would you like to share your experience on how the group activities affected your relationship with other women in the community?	Open text
10	Optional	Is there anything else that you would like to comment on the sessions?	Open text

## 7. Post-Group Focus Group Discussion Guide (1 Week/Month Follow-up after Completion of PSS Group Sessions)

### Instructions

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#### Implementation Guidance

This tool should be used in the first month following the end of all 8-12 sessions of the Women Rise group cycle with no more than 10 members of the Women Rise Group.

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#### Translation

Before using the tool, **consider if translation is needed**. If yes, questions should be translated and discussed prior to the FGD with your supervisor and/or Women Rise colleagues to identify how to translate difficult or sensitive concepts. Please keep a written version if possible, of these translations and share back with your Technical Advisor/Scientific Responsible/Supervisor.

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#### Who are the Participants

Women Rise Group participants who have participated in at least 75% of the sessions. Please refer to the [tracker](#). The *Participant Demographic* section below will also need to be completed prior to the start of the discussion.

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#### Who is the Facilitator

The facilitator should be someone who was not a facilitator of the Women Rise group, but also could be someone familiar to them and is well aware of the program. For example, this could be an Officer/Senior Officer/Social Worker who has regularly visited the site and thus known in the community. The facilitator should not be the person facilitating Women Rise sessions for this particular group, but could be a facilitator from another site/location.

**Facilitator Tip:** *At times, you might need to ask yes/no questions to make sure we aren't assuming anything. But if a yes/no question is asked in an FGD, you **MUST** follow it up with a question asking for an explanation.*

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**Who is the Note-taker**

Please make sure that there is at least one designated note-taker per group; comments from the Women Rise participants should be recorded exactly as they are said, capturing as much detail as possible. The note-taker should be very familiar with this form and all the questions before the FGD begins.

**Note-taker Tip:** To help with tracking which participants speak, the note-taker can **internally** assign random numbers to each FGD participant (Woman 1, Woman 2, etc.). **This numbering system is not to be shared.** It is only to help the note-taker keep track of who is saying what and then report based on the numbering system.

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**What Materials you Need**

Printed questionnaire, pens, notebook

**Materials tip:** Always bring extra!

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## Essential Steps & Information Before Starting

Share the following information with all participants prior to starting the focus group discussion.



**A: Sit in a circle**

**B: Present the purpose of the discussion**

Explain:

- You are having this discussion today to get the honest feedback and perspective from the women who have just participated in the curriculum.
- The information will be used to make changes and improvements to the curriculum, so that it will be as relevant as possible for women in their community. Their perspective is very important and we take their opinions seriously.
- The information will also be used to determine how helpful this curriculum is in this setting for individual women.

**C: Provide informed consent**

Example Informed Consent Script:

*If you agree to participate, you will participate in and discussion lasting about 60 minutes. If you do not want to continue participation for any reason, at any time you can leave. Participation in the discussion is completely voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. I will not ask you why you do not want to participate. No negative consequences will occur if you choose not to participate or withdraw at any point.*

*I will take precautions to keep any information you provide during the discussion confidential. If someone approaches us, we will stop the conversation until we can continue in private. I will not present any other identifying information in anything that we produce based on this conversation. I will treat everything that you say today with respect*

*and will only share the answers you give as general answers combined with those from all the people who speak to us. I ask that you keep everything confidential, too and that you avoid using each other's name throughout the conversation, so we can maintain that confidentiality. With your permission, we will take notes to make sure that we do not miss what you have to say but will not capture any identifying information. Do you agree with me taking notes from our discussion?*

Be sure to emphasize these points:

- All information will be kept confidential and nothing they say will be directly attributed to them. The information will be combined and used within the group discuss but will not be able to be traced back to them in any way.
- Participation is voluntary; no one is obliged to respond to any questions if they do not wish to. Participants can leave the discussion at any time. No one is obliged to share personal experiences.

#### **D: Disclose compensation**

If participants are not receiving compensation, remind them that they will not receive any additional compensation support due to their participation in this discussion. If they are receiving compensation, assure them that their compensation will not be affected by their answers and they should feel free to express their opinions openly and honestly.

#### **E: Remind everyone about the group agreements they established in the very first session of the curriculum.**

- This is a safe space for you to express yourselves and everything discussed should be kept confidential.
- Respect people's opinion and ideas.
- There is no right or wrong answer.
- Everyone's opinion is important.
- If sharing stories, make sure not to use names or identifying information
- Do not share what is said in this group outside of the group

## Focus Group Discussion Guide

### General information

Fully complete this section prior to the start of the session, after you get the permission from participants to take notes.

Has the group given consent for you to take notes?

- Yes  
 No

Date

Session site location

Number of participants

### Participant demographics

Using the Excel tracker, please indicate the total number of Women Rise participants selected for this FGD who identify with the below subgroups.

Age Group:	Marital Status:	Disability Status
_____ Younger woman (18-35)	_____ Single	_____ Yes
_____ Adult woman (36-55)	_____ Married or living with intimate partner as if married	_____ No
_____ Older woman (56+)	_____ Divorced	
	_____ Separated	
	_____ Engaged	
	_____ Widowed	

### Discussion questions

**1** - If you were describing the group sessions to a friend, how would you explain it?

Probes:

- What would you tell them about the sessions?
- What would you tell them the purpose the group is?
- How would you describe the sessions?
- How would you describe the facilitators?

**2 - What knowledge or skills from the group sessions have you been able to use in everyday life?**

Probes:

- What knowledge has been most useful?
- What, if any, skills have you used?

**3 - What was your favorite session or activity in group sessions and why?**

*To avoid bias, the facilitator can choose to ask this question in different ways:*

Distribute 3 pieces of paper to each woman and have them write down their top 3 favorite sessions and why. Then the facilitator can read them out loud and ask for further explanation if necessary. List below all the sessions women mention, including how many mentioned it and the reasons why.

The facilitator puts up the session name (or graphic that represents the specific sessions) on the wall and asks the women to walk around and mark their top 3 favorite sessions. Then follow up with the entire group around their thoughts on why some of the 'most favorite' sessions were selected. Be sure to list below all the sessions women mention, including how many mentioned it and the reasons why.

Suppose participants have developed the comfort to state their opinions openly and feel free to disagree. In that case, you can ask directly the group to share their 3 favorite sessions taking turns and explain why they are their favorite.

Session name	How many women liked that session	What were the reasons why

<p><b>4</b> - Since you first started attending sessions... What have you learned about stress?</p> <p>Probe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What have you learned about ways to cope with stress?</li> <li>• How, if at all, have you shared this knowledge with other family members, friends, etc?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5</b> - What changes, if any, have occurred for you in your ability to recognize and manage difficult emotions since completing the group sessions?</p> <p>Probe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you provide an example of a stressful time and how you were able to manage it since completing the group sessions?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>6</b> - What changes, if any, have you noticed in your relationship with your partners and/or family since you participated in the group sessions?</p> <p>Probes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is it different?</li> <li>• How do you interact with them? Has this changed since participating in group sessions?</li> <li>• Who has it changed the most with (partner, siblings, children, etc.?)</li> </ul>	

<p><b>7</b> - Aside from your family members or community/religious leaders, do you feel like you have someone who you trust and would feel comfortable talking about your feelings with?</p> <p>Probes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes, how are these people different than those you confided in before participating in group sessions?</li> <li>• Are any of these people other members of the group? Or a friend, teacher? Can you explain who?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>8</b> - Thinking about a person or the people who you trust and feel most comfortable talking to, how, if at all, have you connected with them? Has that changed since participating in group?</p>	
<p><b>9</b> - What changes, if any, have occurred in your ability to engage in community activities and with other community members since completing the group sessions?</p> <p>Probes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfort levels? Confidence?</li> </ul>	

**10** - What did you think about the:

Timing of the sessions?

Length of the sessions?



## 8. Group PSS Session Feedback and Fidelity Form

**Definition:** The Group PSS Session Feedback and Fidelity Form is both a monitoring and evaluation tool and supervision tool that should be completed by the co-facilitators of any Psychosocial Support group that is using a set curriculum over multiple sessions. It is meant to review the individual sessions of a group curriculum to monitor the strengths and challenges faced in individual sessions, ease of session completion, and provide feedback for further contextualization and adaptation to the implementation setting.

**Purpose of the Tool:** This tool has been designed to be used for any closed group, multiple session, curriculum guided PSS group. Questions can be modified to more directly address the individual curriculum if necessary. If using with the Women Rise Mutual Support Curriculum, questions should not be modified. The Group PSS Session Feedback and Fidelity report should be used by facilitators within 24 hours of each session's completion. Facilitators should review and fill out the form together after each session.

**Frequency/Duration:** This form should be reviewed by the facilitators' supervisor each week and used to inform PSS Support Group Supervision meetings. The second section of the form should be completed by the supervisor to monitor facilitators' growth, skills, and inform their individual capacity building plans.

**Guidance:** Facilitators should fill out the Group PSS Feedback and Fidelity Form immediately after each session and should provide the form to their supervisor. The supervisor should review the feedback and fidelity forms from every facilitator pair before the supervision session. The supervisor should facilitate collaborative discussions between team members based on the feedback and fidelity forms and encourage facilitators to offer suggestions and facilitate the discussion.

Supervisors should ensure that they fill out the second section of the form and provide feedback to individual facilitators as necessary. This can be done during periodic individual supervision session. Case managers should be participating in regularly scheduled individual supervision sessions so feedback for case managers who are acting as group facilitators can take place during these sessions. Other staff working as facilitators should have periodic individual supervision sessions throughout the duration of the Group PSS sessions. Supervisors can choose when/how to schedule these and give feedback from these forms during those sessions.

**Group PSS Session Feedback and Fidelity Form (to be filled in by facilitators and handed to supervisor)**

Names of facilitators: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Session No: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Session Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

# of

Please provide a brief description of the material covered in today's session:	
Was the session conducted on the scheduled day/time?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If no, please explain:
Were the session activities carried out in the order given according to the manual?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>  Please describe any changes made and why these changes were made. If you used optional activities or switched an activity for an alternate activity, please describe which were used and why:

<p>Were you able to complete the entire session today?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/>      No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>At the start of the session, did you ask participants to reflect on what they learned or took away from the last session?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/>      No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please list key lessons learned or “take aways” that participants mentioned (please do not write names):</p>
<p>Did you notice any strong reactions during the session from participants?</p> <p><i>*Only complete this if you noticed specific emotional distress, emotional processing or breakthroughs, or group dynamics that you feel were important for the individual or for the group as a whole.*</i></p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/>      No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, what were they?</p> <hr/> <p>What do you think the person (and/or group) was feeling/needing?</p>

	<p>Did you respond with empathy?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Please explain:</p>
<p>Did you ask participants to share any homework/coping skills that they tried since the last session. What worked and what didn't?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please list some examples that participants mentioned (please do not write names):</p>
<p>Did all participants actively participate in today's session?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If no, please explain (e.g are some participants hesitant to speak, did people seem distracted, etc).</p>

<p>Please describe any things that went well during today's session:  (E.g. participants participated particularly actively to one session, good experience sharing, worked well as co-facilitators, used facilitation skills well (holding space, managing difficult emotions, responded empathetically), participants clearly understood goals and activity learning points)</p>	
<p>Please note any things that did not work well, or challenges you faced during today's session:  (E.g. aggressive reactions, reluctance from participants, disturbance of the session, struggled to co-facilitate, struggled with facilitation skills (empathy responses, managing difficult emotions, holding space, etc), participants did not clearly understand one or more activities or learning points)</p>	
<p>Please note any other reflections you have about the session, including changes you are seeing, any concerns you have, or any feedback received from participants):</p> <p><i>*Only complete if you have something specific that has NOT been captured above.*</i></p>	

Please describe any suggestion of amendments to the training module:  
E.g. allocate more time to a particular session, add more practical examples or activities to a particularly difficult session, remove exercises that are too difficult or too long) Please mention the session/exercise and page number

Facilitators Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of reception and supervision: \_\_\_\_\_

**For Supervisor Use Only, during group supervision for the current week:**

Date of group supervision: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

<p>Did each facilitator talk about at least one success and one challenge referenced above during group supervision sessions?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/>      No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please describe what you discussed:</p>
<p>Do any of the challenges discussed need additional support from the supervisor?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/>      No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please note actions and next steps to be taken.</p>
<p>Based on your supervision meetings, do you recommend either of these facilitators for any continued shadowing/observation?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/>      No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please name which facilitator(s): _____</p> <p>If yes, please describe what the facilitator still needs to gain from this.</p>

