



World Health  
Organization

Afghanistan

**SELF-CARE AND STAFF CARE:**  
A trainers' manual for a  
one-day training for humanitarian  
workers in Afghanistan



ANTARES  
FOUNDATION

## FOREWORD

In response to a request from WHO Afghanistan for creating a training of trainers especially designed for humanitarian staff working in Afghanistan, Antares Foundation, developed in close coordination with WHO Afghanistan, a training for field workers. After this training, field workers in the humanitarian sector in Afghanistan will be capable of providing a one day stress management training, on self-care and staff care for their organisations. The training will be held from November 7th till November 14th 2024 in Kabul, Afghanistan. The ToT will be provided for a total of 50 staff members from various organisations.

During this training humanitarian workers are trained to be able to deliver a one day stress management training on self-care and staff care in the field in order to reach as many humanitarian workers in the region as possible. Making self-care, staff care and stress management a priority for the humanitarian workers active in Afghanistan. This priority also includes raising awareness for all humanitarian workers about stress management and increasing their knowledge and skills relating to the concepts of stress, stress management, coping, resilience and resources.

Antares Foundation developed this manual to assist new trainers in preparing and implementing a one-day stress management on self-care and staff care training. It will be used as the basis for the training of trainers.

The training featured here aims to build the capacity of humanitarian workers in understanding and dealing with work, context, family and community related stressors. It has been written drawing on extensive training materials that the Antares Foundation has used in their work worldwide. It also refers to research showing the heavy toll on the mental health and wellbeing of humanitarian workers in the course of their work.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WHO Afghanistan extends its thanks to the Antares Foundation for their invaluable contribution in developing the Training of Trainers (ToT) program and training manual on stress management, self-care, and staff care for humanitarian workers in Afghanistan. This initiative represents a critical step toward enhancing the sustainability and well-being of humanitarian workers in the region.

Special acknowledgment to WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Afghanistan, Dr Edwin Ceniza Salvador, for his leadership and support, and the WHE Team Lead, Dr Jamshed Tanoli, for his guidance in ensuring the successful planning and implementation of this initiative.

We would also like to express our appreciation to Dr Manuel De Lara, Public Health Officer/WHE, and his dedicated team for their instrumental role in coordinating this endeavor. Their efforts in aligning the training content to the unique challenges faced by humanitarian workers in Afghanistan have been crucial.

This training will equip 50 humanitarian workers with the skills to deliver a one-day stress management training within their respective organizations. The anticipated ripple effect of this initiative will significantly contribute to raising awareness, building resilience, and prioritizing mental health care for humanitarian workers across Afghanistan.

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## Training materials

This manual includes all the training materials needed for the one-day training. It guides trainers step-by-step through each session and provides handouts (see handouts 11-1) to accompany the sessions.

The manual sets out the learning goals for each session, the materials needed, the timing, and the activities for the session. Trainer's notes are also included to highlight particular issues in the training process or activities.

There are also materials for trainers (see annexes A-D), including a training plan, some research summaries, lists of energisers and relaxation exercises.

## Adult learning

The key element of this manual is that it provides participants with an opportunity to familiarise themselves with self-care and staff care in an interactive way, appropriate to adult learning. It encourages participants to reflect on their own experiences together and to draw on their understanding about the topic.

The manual features a series of short presentations about staff care and stress management which allows for the development of learning. Case studies are used to help participants to apply learning to the situations they face in their work and personal lives. They are used to prompt discussion in small groups and there are learning points for trainers included in the manual.

There is an opportunity at the beginning of sessions 5, 3 and 6 for participants to facilitate energisers that they may know. This promotes fun and energises and uplifts the group, encouraging group interaction. Asking a participant to take the lead also reinforces the idea that they are able to contribute to the training. Energisers may also be useful learning experiences. The manual therefore prompts trainers to ask participants to reflect on what they have done and learned after each energiser.

At the end of each session there is also an option to do a relaxation exercise, if this seems appropriate to the group and setting. If used, these exercises give participants practical skills in dealing with stress in their everyday lives.

Adult learning is to: inspire, creating a safe place, teach where needed, invite to try out and be responsible for your own learning process where possible.

## ABOUT THIS MANUAL

### Introduction

This manual guides trainers through a one-day training on self-care and staff care for up to approximately 50 participants. 25 male / 25 female. It explains what stress is, what it looks like and what it is caused by. The manual also discusses different strategies in dealing with stress. The training closes with a review of the day and a brief evaluation.

Staff stress management is critical to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), as frontline workers are exposed to trauma, burnout, and secondary stress in regions of high conflict. Supporting staff resilience through individual, team, and organisational stress management is essential, as it enables them to effectively provide care and support to communities in need. Without addressing staff stress, the capacity to deliver quality MHPSS interventions may be compromised, reducing overall community well-being and recovery.

This training-of-trainers (TOT) will equip participants with the skills and background necessary to train community members to better understand stress and its causes and conditions, and to offer tools and strategies to better manage those stressors to support self and staff well-being.

Some participants will have an extensive background in supporting mental health and psychosocial support in their communities, while others will be learning many of these frameworks and skills for the first time. Regardless of the level of familiarity beforehand, this TOT will provide a robust training in how to use the content, processes and supportive materials outlined in this manual competently and effectively.

Participants will also be provided with additional supports (interview/supervision/refresher trainings/peer support, etc) through which they can continue to deepen their knowledge and skills where needed.

The training provides a safe learning environment for participants, taking account of the experiences of stress that participants are likely to bring to the training day.

### The programme

Here is a suggested schedule for the training programme the participants will be able to train their target group:

Session	Duration of Session	Sample Time
Session 1: Welcome and introductions	30m	8.00 - 8.30
Session 2: What is stress?	60m	8.30 - 9.30
BREAK	15m	9.30 - 9.45
Session 3: Different aspects of stress	80m	9.45 - 11:05
Session 4: Signs of stress	30m	11:05 - 11.35
LUNCH	55m	11.35 - 12.30
Session 5: Sources of stress	60m	12.30 - 1.30
BREAK	15m	1.30 - 1.45
Session 6: Resources for dealing with stress	70m/ 1h10m	1.45 - 2:55
Session 7: Review, evaluation and close	45m	2.55 - 3.45

# THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

## Session 1: Welcome & introductions

### Learning goals:

- By the end of the session, participants will know the objectives and programme for the training
- By the end of the session, participants will have got to know the facilitators and one another
- By the end of the session, participants will have agreed ground rules for the training.

### Materials needed:

Copies of handout 1 (page 28) (or write the training programme on a flipchart paper), flipchart paper and markers, tape to stick flipchart paper on the wall

### Time for session:

30 minutes

### Activities:

1. Welcome participants to the training and introduce yourself/yourselfs (the trainer/s) of the workshop. Tell the participants your name and job and the organisation you work for and give a summary of your work experience. If appropriate, mention your own experience or a personal story in relation to self-care or staff care.
2. Use an exercise to enable participants to get to know one another, if they are a group from different agencies. For example, ask participants to get into pairs and ask each person to introduce himself/herself to their partner by name, organisation, job, and expectations for the training. After a couple of minutes, ask each pair to introduce one another to the large group.
3. Now work on shared ground rules for the training. List the following suggestions on a flipchart paper:
  - Keep confidential what is shared in the group. Stories (details, experiences, etc) must stay here, but the lessons you learned from them can leave.
  - Let your voice be heard in this space, it matters - but don't feel under pressure to share and participate in everything. *The stress stays inside of us, until we're able to share it. We don't have to share or participate in everything here, but what we do share, supports us and our colleagues to have a healthier and better work environment, and our beneficiaries to then have better care and support from us!*
  - Be respectful of one another
  - Use of mobile phones will be limited (and agree on when access to mobile phones will be possible)
  - Not using laptops during training to check emails, etc.
  - Keep to time for the sessions and have breaks according to the plan.

Explain the first and second bullet points above very carefully:

*"Keeping things 'confidential' means that anything that has been shared that is personal to someone will stay with us. We won't tell others about what has been shared in this group. Mind your own boundaries too regarding sharing and participating in activities. If you have the feeling it is too much, don't force yourself!"*

Check whether participants understand and agree to these suggestions and ask if they wish to add other ground rules. Stick the list up on the wall. Refer back to it during the workshop to underline good examples of keeping the shared ground rules.

4. Hand out the training programme for today (handout 1 page 28). Explain it and write the following objectives on a piece of flipchart paper:

*“By the end of this workshop, participants will:*

- *have developed an understanding of self care and staff care*
- *be aware of strategies to deal with individual, team and organisational stress*
- *have experienced the benefits of mutual exchange and support in the learning process.”*

Check if participants have any questions.

5. Explain briefly why self-care and staff care is important:

*“We all know that working as a humanitarian worker is by nature stressful.”*

#### **Trainer's note:**

Please add a sentence or two here about the specific work context that participants come from. For example:

We know you are supporting many families each day, giving them information about the services that are available. You are the ones who are witnessing the personal difficulties faced by people in this area. You sometimes see people crying, or getting angry and frustrated. You are very aware of the very limited supply of food available, for example, and you see the effects of severe shortages in medicine for children and older people especially. There are administrators, drivers and cleaners in your organisation who are also affected by what they know about the work being done. It is really hard. You might also be affected yourselves in terms of your family members, friends and colleagues. You may experience energy shortages, lack of access to the healthcare you need, or other challenges that make it nearly impossible to care for your family and do your job. You feel completely frustrated about never being able to do enough.

*“This is stressful for you. What can you do about it?”*

*In fact the answer is not just your responsibility. There are three sources of support for humanitarian workers and volunteers:*

- *The **organisation** that employs you*
- *The **team** that you are part of*
- *And you as an **individual** and **what you can do to take care of yourself.**”*

6. Explain that you will be inviting participants to lead energisers during the day. This is an opportunity to have fun together and to help the group get through the learning process. Invite three people to be ready to lead energisers – one at the beginning of session 3, one at the beginning of session 5 and one at the beginning of session 6.

#### **Trainer's note:**

This opportunity to lead an activity reinforces the fact that participants are bringing their own learning experiences with them. BUT please have some energisers ready if no one is willing or prepared to lead one themselves (see annex C page 61).

7. If you have decided to include relaxation exercises at the end of each session, tell participants that you will be doing this. These exercises will give participants practical skills in dealing with stress in their everyday lives.
8. Close this session with a relaxation exercise. Use one of the ones included in this manual (in annex D page 65) or another one you have used for stress relief.
9. Facilitators might consider having participants pair up with one other person in the group for intermittent check-ins during breaks and after the training. There are buddy questions in HANDOUT 8 (page 48) that can be used for this purpose.



## Session 2: What is stress?

### Learning goals:

- By the end of the session, participants will be aware of the positive and negative aspects of stress
- Participants will have experienced mutual exchange in a safe environment

### Materials needed:

Flipchart paper and markers, copies of the case studies

### Time for session:

60 minutes

### Activities:

1. Start by inviting participants into pairs with someone they don't know: In pairs, name a time when you felt stressed. From both of your stories, what would you say stress is. Note things you had in common, and things that were different in each of your stories. One partner shares back to the large group.
2. As participants are sharing, facilitator to write down all the answers given on piece of flipchart paper.
3. Summarise the response and agree on a shared definition of stress. Ask participants if stress is good or bad?

#### Trainer's note:

Participants may talk about symptoms, sources and sometimes ways to reduce stress. They may not have a definition for stress, but they may be more able to describe how it affects them in their lives. At this stage do not exclude any ideas that are given. You will be able to categorise them more accurately at the end of the day in session 7, when you have completed the training. Please keep the flipchart for use at the end of session 7.

4. Begin to talk about stress, starting with the positive aspects of stress:

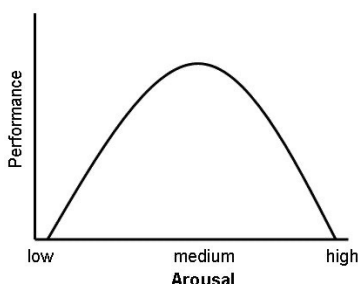
*“Stress is a normal part of life. The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it. Stress can be positive, keeping us alert and ready to avoid danger.*

For example:

- *If a car is driving extremely quickly towards you, it enables us to be able to run away from the car.*
- *If we are learning a challenging task at work, it helps us to be extra focussed and concentrated.*
- *If we have a new job or have become a parent, it gives us to have extra energy to get used to the changes that the job or the baby is bringing into our lives.*

*In other words, in small doses, stress can be a good thing. Stress releases chemicals into the blood which give you strength and extra energy. It can give you the push you need; it can motivate you to do your best and stay alert and focused.”*

5. Draw the diagram below on flipchart paper and explain how stress affects our ability to perform activities.



#### Explain:

*“The curve on the line shows that when stress is very low (on the left of the line) or very high (on the right of the line), a person's capacity to perform is very low. However, when stress is at a medium level, a person's capacity to perform is at its best.”*

If you would like to use videos, you can find links here, which explain the graph (these videos are currently only in English):

[What is stress](#)

[Positive and negative stress](#)

[Positive and negative stress graph](#)

6. Tell participants that you will give them a handout on stress that summarises the information covered in the sessions, so there is no need to take notes.
7. Give everyone copies of **handout 2** (case studies page 29). Ask participants to work in groups of four. Ask them to read **case study 1** and to discuss the following for 10 minutes:
  - What is causing the stress in this situation?
  - How did it help Amina/Hassam to face the situation?
  - What situations can you think of where stress has been helpful? Examples may be about co-workers or yourselves. In the situations you shared earlier in your pairs, can you think of any ways in which the stress was helpful to you?

Explain to participants that they do not need to share examples of their own or about colleagues if they do not wish to.

8. Spend 10 minutes as a large group getting brief summaries of the discussions from each of the groups. Here are some learning points in relation to the case study. Use them if you need to add to the discussion about Amina and Hassam:
  - The stress in this situation was that Amina/Hassam was faced with an unexpected challenge at work. They had never facilitated an information meeting before – it was not part of their usual responsibilities.
  - Amina/Hassam reacted to the challenge with physical and emotional responses, e.g. their heart rate went up, they felt anxious.
  - The stress released chemicals into their blood which gave them strength and extra energy. It enabled them to stay alert and focused.

9. Now move on to the negative aspects of stress and explain the following:

*“Stress becomes negative when it continues without relief and it goes beyond your ability to cope. Stress happens when the demands from the outside world are out of balance with the resources you need to cope.”*

Draw a weighing scale like the one here on a flipchart paper. On one side, write ‘demands’ and on the other side ‘resources’.



DEMANDS      RESOURCES

**Explain:**

*“When the scale tips down under the weight of many demands for a longer period of time, it will have a negative effect on our mental health.*

*Stress like this affects the mind, body, and behaviour in many ways. The specific signs and symptoms of stress vary from person to person, but all have the potential to harm your health, emotional wellbeing, and relationships with others.*

*We’ll talk more about this in the next session.”*

10. Ask participants to **reread case study 1** in their groups of four and discuss the following:
  - What is causing the stress in this situation?
  - How has it made life difficult for Amina/Hassam?
  - What situations can you think of where stress has made life difficult? In the situations you shared earlier in your pairs, can you think of any ways in which the stress made life difficult?
  - Examples may be about co-workers or yourselves. But make it clear that participants do not need to share examples if they do not wish to.

## Session 3. Different aspects of stress

### Learning goals:

- By the end of the session, participants will have a basic understanding of basic and cumulative stress, and of burnout, and traumatic stress

### Materials needed:

Flipchart paper and markers

### Time for session:

80 minutes

#### Trainer's note:

You will be doing presentations about different aspects of stress using information from handout 4 (page 35) in this session. But please do not give copies of handout 4 until the end of the session.

The handout sets out detailed information about PTSD, compassion fatigue, vicarious traumatisation and secondary trauma.

In the topic of traumatic stress, do not go into detail about individual's specific experiences, this can be re-traumatizing if there is not enough time/space for the conversation. Ensure that if someone needs to talk more, one of the facilitators can leave the space with them and referrals can be made for further supports. See the trainers note in the 'traumatic stress' section with more detailed info on how to support.

### Activities:

1. Begin with an energiser for five minutes and invite someone to take the lead. If no one has an energiser to share, have one ready to use (annex C page 61).  
After the energiser, ask participants to reflect on what they have done and learned. Link it to the session you are about to begin.
2. Explain that this session will look in more detail at the different aspects of stress which may cause difficulty for humanitarian workers. Tell participants that you will give them a handout at the end of session 5 with notes about the information you are going to cover in this session and session 5. So there is no need to take notes during the sessions.
3. Write the following words on a piece of flipchart paper and explain that you will be talking about each aspect in turn in this session:
  - BASIC STRESS
  - CUMULATIVE STRESS
  - BURNOUT
  - TRAUMATIC STRESS
  - COMPASSION FATIGUE

## Types of stress

4. **BASIC STRESS:** Briefly refer back to what basic stress is from the last session. This is the type of stress we talked about in relation to Hassam/Amina.
5. **CUMULATIVE STRESS:** The stress that Hassam/Amina experienced in the meeting was challenging but caused them to become successful in

**Materials:** 7-10 large balls

Facilitator will have a bag of balls and choose a volunteer. She'll ask the volunteer to hold all the balls without putting any of them down, as this is how many of our responsibilities are. She/he will throw a balls quickly to the participant and say outloud a common stress as they throw each ball (pick common ones he/she knows people in the field experience eg. a huge deadline just came up to finish a report, the children are sick and someone needs to stay with them). The participant will eventually 'drop the ball' and discuss how cumulative stress is all the small stresses adding up in a day.

*"Cumulative stress is the most common type of stress and may relate to factors at work, or to one's personal life or be a result of specific incidents. It is the term used to describe the type of negative stress we have talked about already. 'Prolonged' means that the stress is continuing for an extended period of time – over several weeks or months.*

*-'Without relief' means there is no rest from the stress that is happening.*

*Cumulative stress affects the mind, body, and behaviour in many ways. The specific signs and symptoms of stress vary from person to person, but all have the potential to harm your health, emotional wellbeing, and relationships with others. They can be physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and behavioural."*

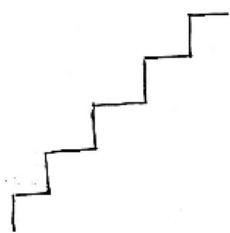
*Let's revisit Amina/Hassam's story and see how this is reflected on another day in their work.*

Ask participants to reference Handout 2 (page 29) which was distributed in the previous session, and read through **Case Study 2.** (7 min)

6. Write down these five categories on a piece of flipchart and ask participants for examples from Hassam's/Amina's story of signs of stress each: (10 min)
  - PHYSICAL
  - EMOTIONAL
  - MENTAL
  - SPIRITUAL
  - BEHAVIOURAL

What are additional signs of stress that you could see in each of these categories?

7. Explain the signs of cumulative stress may change over time. Draw a staircase like this:



### Facilitator:

Each step on this staircase is an additional stressor. Each stressor on its own, you can handle, but as they accumulate it takes more time and effort to recover from.

If you would like to, you can instead show the video, which has an explanation of the graph. *Videos may be subtitled, but the audio is in English.*

[Video: Cummulative stress](#)

## 8. BURNOUT:

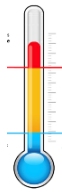


Chart Paper: Draw a thermometer with three colors: blue on the bottom, green or yellow in the middle, and red on top.

**Facilitator:** Now we're going to move into another type of stress reaction that's all too common for humanitarian workers - which we know as BURNOUT. Show me what your body does when the temperature drops very low like the winter in the mountains. (people may shiver or wrap around their scarves). Show me what your body does when it gets intensely hot like the middle of summer in the city? (people may show that it's hot with heavy breathing, fanning themselves, panting etc.). Our bodies start to shut down in the extreme hot or cold. A little hot or a little cold we can deal with, but when it is extremely hot or extremely cold, we can't function. This is like BURNOUT. When we get too hot (in the red zone of the thermometer), we may go into overdrive. Facilitator asks, "think about your work - what does hot zone overdrive look like for you?" eg. overworking, anxious, irritable

And when we get too cold, we may go into shut down. Facilitator asks: "What cold zone shutdown this look like for you?" (eg. feeling like it's hard to get anything done, overwhelmed, apathetic, sad, etc)

That's why we need to regulate the temperature in order to avoid burnout.

*Burnout is a state of emotional and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress at work. It can occur when a person feels overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands.*

For 1 minute turn to your partner and share if you tend to go to the EXTREME HOT (overdrive) or the EXTREME COLD (shutdown). Then, share ways that you have/can adjust the temperature if you notice you're too hot or too cold.

## 9. TRAUMATIC STRESS: Do a presentation using the following notes:

### Facilitator's note:

Discussions about traumatic stress have the potential to activate participants who have had these experiences. If someone becomes dysregulated during the session, have one facilitator take them outside to give them some water and space. Make sure you address the larger group that the person is being cared for. Don't try to engage in "therapy" with the participant, instead use grounding techniques in (Annex E) can help the person become present and recognize their safety in the space.

### TRAUMATIC STRESS

With Chart Paper: (Draw as you say this script). This is my garden. See these flowers (draw a few flowers), see these beautiful pomegranate trees (draw a few tree with fruits), now there are weeds (draw some stalks smaller than the flowers or trees). They are small, so I can just get rid of them right? (ask the group).

(People will say, just cut them off, etc). But, see the weeds have deep roots (draw the roots), so if I just cut them off, then they will grow again. they may not just grow again, they may grow more and more.

This is like TRAUMATIC STRESS. Traumatic stress results from witnessing or experiencing traumatic events. It could be one big event or smaller traumatic events that happen over time.

*People who experience traumatic stress might feel anxiety, powerlessness, helplessness, anger, guilt, shame, grief, deprivation, despair and hope.*

*That's why traumatic stress must be addressed at the root. Understanding what caused it and finding ways to cope and develop systems of support. Otherwise, the stress, like weeds can get worse over time.*

This type of stress can begin immediately after the traumatic event or be delayed. Being delayed means it could start days, months, or even years later.

### **COMPASSION FATIGUE**

Materials Needed: A jar, small pebbles, and water.

Another stress reaction common for humanitarian workers is COMPASSION FATIGUE. Humanitarian workers are often in a helping role with people suffering incredible hardships. When this exposure is prolonged and repeated, our ability to sustain compassion becomes stretched, and we can become overwhelmed by the pain, suffering and fear of those we care so much about.

### **Instructions:**

1. **The Empty Jar (Your Capacity):** Start with an empty jar. *Facilitator:* This jar represents your emotional and mental capacity.
2. **Adding Pebbles (Stressors and Trauma):** Gradually add small pebbles to the jar while describing common stressors, challenges, and the trauma that caregivers, therapists, or workers absorb from their clients and environment. *Facilitator:* Name specific stressors that they might pick up from the people they are working with. Here is the finances they must pay, the family problems, the lack of resources. The pebbles begin to fill the jar, showing how stress builds up over time. Ask: is it full yet?
3. **Pouring Water (Compassion):** As the jar fills with pebbles, start pouring water into it. *Facilitator:* The water represents one our biggest resources as humanitarian workers - the compassion and care that we offer to the people we serve. (Keep filling it while sharing how you are offering that care.) As the jar reaches its limit, the water starts to overflow. (let the jar overflow) Ask: What's happening now?
4. **Discussion:** Discuss how the overflowing water represents compassion fatigue. At a certain point, the person has no more capacity to absorb additional stress or give more compassion. The group can reflect on the importance of self-care, boundaries, and "emptying the jar" regularly to prevent overflow.

*Return to Handout 2 and ask participants to read **Case Study 3**. How do we see compassion fatigue/traumatic stress manifesting for Hassam/Amina? Share in groups of three. One person reports back. Facilitator takes notes.*

#### **Trainer's note:**

There is more information about PTSD, compassion fatigue, vicarious traumatization and secondary trauma in handout 4 (page 35).

10. Acknowledge with the group that this session may be the first time participants realise the extent of their stress. Close the session with a relaxation exercise (annex D page 65). Use one of the ones included in this manual or another one you have used for stress relief.

## Session 4: Signs of stress and supports

### Learning goals:

- By the end of the session, participants will have an understanding of stress in their own lives
- Participants will have identified local sources of support
- Participants will have experienced mutual exchange in a safe environment

### Materials needed:

Copies of handout 3 (page 34), pens

### Time for session:

30 minutes

#### Trainer's note:

This session may be the first time participants begin to recognise the extent of their stress. But please note this is a quick screening checklist, not a diagnostic tool.

### Activities:

1. **Facilitator:** For many of us this may be the first time we see so clearly how many of these common signs of stress are present in our lives. We will explore different strategies we can use to manage or reduce our stress in a later sessions, but for now we'll identify signs of stress in our lives and who can immediately support us when those signs of stress are present.  
Explain there will be no energiser this time. This session is for 30 minutes and is focussed on filling in a signs of stress checklist and identifying local sources of support.
2. We are often living with a lot of stress as humanitarian workers. In fact, we may be so used to it, we may not notice the level of stress that we're experiencing. We may not show these signs heavily, but others may be present, like body based issues. Sometimes, even admitting we are impacted by stress may feel hard. This exercise will require us to really go beyond the ways we may mask our feelings of stress to check in with our bodies, minds, and spirits. Feel free to add in signs for you to the list, as you set your scoring.
3. Briefly review handout 3 'signs of stress checklist', with the participants. Explain that in the first column of the checklist are a list of statements reflecting common signs of stress in humanitarian workers, for example: the first item "i feel tense or nervous". Indicate how often you experience feeling tense or nervous by checking one of the three boxes on the right hand side. At the end, you will assign a point score to each line according to which answer you chose. Ex. if for "i feel tense and nervous", I chose "often - more days than not", that line would be worth 3 points for me. You will add your total points at the end.  
Give them 10 minutes to do this individually. Explain that you will then ask everyone to get into groups of three after this time to discuss their results in small groups.
4. Now ask everyone to get into groups of three and share results if they wish to. Spend up to ten minutes doing this.

5. “Give me a HAND”: Finding Support Exercise.



Each participant will identify their own local sources of support. Say: Now that we have identified some signs of stress. Let's try to identify up to five people you are close to and can trust when we notice those signs appear. Look down at your hand, you can assign a person for each finger. You can even think of a phrase or message they might remind you of. Your palm represents you in the center, always connected! If you would like to remember this, you may trace your hand on paper and write out their names as a reminder.

**Trainer's note:**

The closest sources of support are most likely to be family members, friends and work colleagues. Encourage participants to think about trusted people who are close by and easy to contact.

6. If time, close the session with a relaxation exercise. Use one of the ones included in this manual (annex D page 65) or another one you have used for stress relief.



## Session 5: Sources of stress

### Learning goals:

- By the end of the session, participants will have an understanding of sources of stress in their own lives
- Participants will have experienced mutual exchange in a safe environment

### Materials needed:

Copies of handout 4 (page 35), flipchart paper and markers, paper and pens

### Time for session:

60 minutes

### Activities:

1. Begin with an energiser for five minutes – invite someone to take the lead. If no one has an energiser to share, have one ready to use (annex C page 61).  
After the energiser, ask participants to reflect on what they have done and learned from the energiser. Link it to the session you are about to begin.
2. Draw the scale again on flipchart paper and highlight the demands side of the scale.



DEMANDS      RESOURCES

#### **Explain:**

*Explain that session 5 – sources of stress – is all about the demands that press on people in their lives. The next session - session 6 – will then look at the resources we have for dealing with stress.*

3. Ask participants to write down individually their top five sources of stress at the moment. Give them about 5 min to do this.
4. Now ask participants to get into small groups of 3 or 4 people. Give each group a piece of flipchart paper and pens. Say: now, in your small groups please discuss with one another the sources of stress that you identified, noticing you had in common and what was different. Make a list together on the flipchart paper of them. There is 10 minutes for this exercise.
5. On a Chart Paper, write
  - A. Working in a complex context**
  - B. A difficult work environment**
  - C. Personal factors**
  - D. Other**

**Facilitator:** Share that they will be rotating to 2 other groups papers to begin categorising them. They can put A for working in a complex context for sources like societal ideals. B for difficult work environment for sources like heavy workload, C for personal factors like family issues, D (and write in another category that they may use). Facilitator set up a rotation. Have 3 minutes for them to move to the group to the right to categorise them and then rotate once more to add anything that's missing to a second group's paper.

6. Ask the group's questions to reflect, what did you notice that each group had similar and different? Were the most in A,B, or C? What did this make you realise how you're connected by sources of stress.

If there is time, refer to an example (or examples) of sources of stress from the research outlined in annex B (page 59).

**Trainer's note:**

Choose whichever examples of sources of stress from annex B that seem helpful to the participants you are working with. You can make photocopies of this annex and give it as a handout, if you want to.

7. You may find that this session has been difficult for participants. Acknowledge this with the group. Say: as we build our capacity to better understand the sources of our stress and how it manifests in each of us, the strategies we use to manage or cope with that stress will be more on target and thus more effective. Tell them the next session is about strategies for reducing stress and that this will hopefully be helpful in coping with all that they are dealing with.
8. Give out copies of handout 4 (page 35) on stress now.
9. Close the session with a relaxation exercise. Use one of the ones included in this manual (annex D page 65) or another one you have used for stress relief.
10. Reflect upon this part and share with a partner what you found to be most important for 1 minute each

## Session 6. Strategies and Resources for dealing with stress

### Learning goals:

- By the end of the session, participants will be familiar with strategies for dealing with stress at individual, team and organisational levels
- Participants will have experienced mutual exchange in a safe environment

### Materials needed:

Flipchart paper and markers, copies of handout 5 ,2 and 6, copies of the Antares Foundation 'Managing Stress in Humanitarian Workers: Guidelines for Good Practice' (if possible)

### Time for session:

70 minutes

### Activities:

1. Draw the scale again on flipchart paper and highlight the resources side of the scale.



DEMANDS      RESOURCES

#### Say:

*in our last session we explored the many sources of stress we had in common as humanitarian workers (the demands side of our scale). When those demands begin to weigh on us, we must balance the scales by drawing on resources that help us to cope, deal with or even reduce the stress from those demands. The resources in our lives vary from person to person but as humanitarian workers, we want to always remember three sources of support that we can count on (write these on chart paper as you name them)*

- The **organisation** that employs you
  - The **team** that you are part of
  - And you as an **individual** and **what you can do to take care of yourself, in terms of the support of family and friends.**
2. Ask participants to read **case study 4** in Handout 2 (page 29). In pairs, ask participants to identify some of the choices they observe Hassam/Amina make that support them to deal with stress for 3 minutes. Call the group back together and take one comment from each group as time allows.
  3. Ask participants to divide into three groups. Give them flipchart paper and markers. Ask group 1 to list as many ideas for dealing with stress as individuals. Ask group 2 to list as many ideas for dealing with stress as team members. Ask group 3 to list as many ideas for dealing with stress as an organisation, from their perspective. **Give 20 minutes to do this.** Some examples on the individual level: doing a workout or exercise. Eating healthy food. Taking breaks. Talk to someone/sharing your thoughts. Some examples on the organizational level: initiating wellbeing activities, creating wellbeing committees like group sports or gardening.
  4. There are many different strategies that people can use to master, tolerate, reduce or minimise stressful events. Ask each group to share some of their ideas with the large group. After each group shares, facilitator can invite participants to look to handout 5 (page 42) for additional ideas in each category. **Give 10 minutes for this discussion**
  5. Say: On handout 5 (page 42) Section B). there is also a list of unhelpful strategies if these have not yet been mentioned.

**Trainer's note:**

Take care not to try to cover all the bullet points in the handout about positive and unhelpful strategies. Select up to five that seem relevant to the group you are working with.

6. Ask everyone to read case study 5 in handout 2 (page 29). Ask participants to suggest some strategies for this NGO to reduce staff stress and to promote staff wellbeing. List them on a piece of flipchart paper. Here are some learning points in relation to the case study. Use them if you need to add to the discussion about the NGO:
- Develop a staff care policy
  - Explore ways of developing peer support within teams
  - Monitor and review job descriptions and expectations across teams
  - Review referral systems to other services
  - Train staff at all levels in stress management

Give 10 minutes for this.

## 7. Demonstration of Support Strategies

Distribute Handout 8 (page 48). Tell participants they will now engage in three different support strategies that are designed to reduce sources of stress at the level of your team, strengthen team work and promote social support between co-workers. Each activity will last 8 minutes with the facilitator guiding the process using Handout 8. - 24 min for rotations

**Facilitator's note:**

*Breakup your participants into groups of 4-5 people. Assign a facilitator to each group (either a pre-designated person or select one within the group). Each group will rotate through the following three strategies, spending 8 minutes on each.*

### A. Activity

#### Activity 1: Group Debriefing

1. Objective: Practice debriefing using the A, B, Cs of debriefing on Handout 8 (Staff Exercises: Group debrief & buddy questions to guide your feedback conversation.)

2. Instructions:

- One person will act as the facilitator for the debriefing session.
- As a group, choose a collective experience relevant to your office (e.g., a high-pressure deadline, challenging client, security issues).
- Read through the A,B,Cs of debriefing with your case in mind (as outlined in Handout 8).
- Discuss how this method can be applied in your workplace to support each other.

#### Activity 2: Meeting Check-Ins

1. Objective: Practice using check-ins to create a supportive and cohesive environment during meetings.

2. Instructions:

- The facilitator will guide the group through a sample check-in process.
- Select one of the Group Check-In Questions from Handout 8 or choose a custom question relevant to the group. Let each person they have 30 seconds to 1 minute.
- A few people will take a turn in answering the check-in question.
- Discuss how regular check-ins can improve communication and support within your team.

### Activity 3: Support Buddies

- Objective: Build connection and support through regular check-ins with a partner/co-worker around stressful events
- Instructions:
  - Pair up within the group.
  - Use the Buddy Questions from Handout 8
  - Partners take turns sharing and giving/receiving supportive feedback using the Buddy Questions (about 3 minutes/person)
  - Discuss how you would check in with your buddy throughout the week via call or text to provide emotional and security support.

### B. Debriefing

After all groups have completed the three activities, reconvene for a debriefing session to discuss reflections and key takeaways from each strategy. 5 min

How did you see the exercises supporting these three areas?

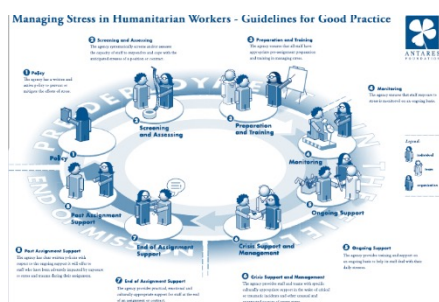
- Reduce sources of stress
- Strengthen team work
- Promote social support between co-workers

#### Facilitator's note:

Refer to research published in 2013<sup>1</sup> about local aid workers in Jordan:

- They recommended building on close relationships between co-workers to develop peer support networks, so that the support they give one another could be maximised.
- They recommended that managers be trained to develop stronger teams too. This would give some protection from their own exhaustion as well as increasing the functionality of the teams.

- If available, give out copies of the Antares Guidelines in the languages you are training in.



- Explain that this provides a system for the whole organisation to promote the wellbeing of staff at every stage of their employment
- Take five minutes to explain the chart as a way to think about incorporate support at different levels of an organization.

- If time, close the session with a relaxation exercise. Use one of the ones included in this manual (annex D page 65) or another one you have used for stress relief.

<sup>1</sup> From: Cynthia B. Eriksson, Barbara Lopes Cardozo, Frida Ghitis, Miriam Sabin, Carol Gotway Crawford, Julia Zhu, Bas Rijnen & Reinhard Kaiser (2013) Factors Associated With Adverse Mental Health Outcomes in Locally Recruited Aid Workers Assisting Iraqi Refugees in Jordan, Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma, 22:6, 677

## Session 7. Review, evaluation and close

### Learning goals:

- By the end of the session, participants will have reviewed and reflected on their own learning about self-care and staff care
- Participants will have evaluated the training

### Materials needed:

Flipchart from session 2, markers, copies of handout 7 and 9 ,8, (page 51 ,48 ,45) paper and pens, basket, certificates of attendance, if used.

### Time for session:

45 minutes

### Activities:

1. Explain the purpose of this session:

*“This is the last session. We will review and reflect on what we have learned together over the day and also make time to write a personal summary to take home. We will evaluate the training and say our goodbyes.”*

2. Go back to the flipchart from the beginning of session 2. Say: This morning we began our training by naming moments in our lives that cause us stress and using those to create a shared definition of what we as a group understand stress is. Refer back to the flipchat and review one or two stressors and remind the group of their definition. Now as we move into the closing session of this training, who can tell me some of the different types of stress we experience as humanitarian workers? (take 2-3 responses as time allows for each of the following) What are some of the sources of stress we identified?, What are some of the strategies for dealing with stress from the suggestions you came up with earlier (*remember those suggestions were listening to personal stories and coming up with examples of stress based on those stories*). Highlight them in different colours of markers.

#### Trainer's note:

This reinforces the fact that participants came with knowledge and experience about self-care and staff care before the workshop and that they have learned more during the workshop.

4. Take some time to reflect on the whole day with everyone, and ask:
  - *“How was the training?”*
  - *How well were you able to participate?*
  - *What feedback do you have?*
  - *What questions do you have?”*
5. Give out copies of handout 7 (page 45) and give participants 10 minutes to make their own summary of this training to take home. Explain that this is for their own use. Ask participants the following:
  - *“Write down things that are causing you stress at the moment and could cause you additional stress in the near future.*
  - *Write down the ways of coping you already use and which have a positive effect. And write down possible ways of coping you could use, but don't at the moment.*
  - *Write down symptoms you experience when under stress. These could function as your own alarm bells. When you notice these symptoms, you know your life is getting out of balance and you can take steps to change this.”*

6. Give out handout 9 (page 51) (the list of useful online resources) for participants to take home.
7. Ask everyone to stand in a circle and invite participants to write one thing they have learned on a piece of paper. Ask them to put the piece of paper in a basket. Now mix up the pieces of paper and send the basket around the group and ask participants in turn to read out the comments, one by one.
8. Thank everyone for their participation and ask them to sit down. Give out copies of handout 11 (evaluation questionnaire) and pens and ask everyone to fill it in.
9. Close the training by giving out certificates of attendance (handout 11, page 53), if used, and by thanking everyone for their work during the day and say goodbye. You may want to close with a type of song or phrase or chant that is familiar to your culture or organization to bring inspiration and hope.

## HANDOUTS FOR PARTICIPANTS

### Handout 1: The training programme for the day

#### Self-care and staff care

Session	Duration of Session	Sample Time
Session 1: Welcome and introductions	30m	8.00 - 8.30
Session 2: What is stress?	60m	8.30 - 9.30
BREAK	15m	9.30 - 9.45
Session 3: Different aspects of stress	80m	9.45 - 11:05
Session 4: Signs of stress	30m	11:05 - 11.35
LUNCH	55m	11.35 - 12.30
Session 5: Sources of stress	60m	12.30 - 1.30
BREAK	15m	1.30 - 1.45
Session 6: Resources for dealing with stress	70m/ 1h10m	1.45 - 2:55
Session 7: Review, evaluation and close	45m	2.55 - 3.45



## Handout 2: Case studies

The following case studies are provided to support learning throughout the various modules of this training. Each case study provides (2) versions of the case study, one for male participant groups (Hassam's story) and one for female participant groups (Amina's story). Reference the appropriate story for your group in each case study.

### Case study 1

#### **HASSAM;** Male

Hassam returns home after what should have been a regular day of work at the health centre. He is walking towards the bus stop and is rethinking his day. His manager had fallen ill and there was no one to take over the information meeting for new volunteers planned for that day. People had already arrived at the health centre and some had travelled many miles just for today. He felt short of breath as the number of clients steadily increased and for a moment he was so overwhelmed he didn't even know where to begin. He decided that he should take over the meeting. It was quite a challenge since he had only seen it, but never had done this before. However he couldn't send the people home. He battled thoughts that he would do a poor job, that he couldn't do it like his manager does, that maybe someone else was better fit but there was no one else. Eventually he decided to do the meeting himself.

Before the meeting started, Hassam noticed that he was a bit anxious when the session started. His heart rate went up and his hands were shaking. But he was focussed on his task and as time went by, he felt more at ease. At the end of the meeting, people were happy about the information they had received and they thanked him for the meeting. Afterwards he noticed he was more tired than usual, but satisfied with the job he had done.

*How was the stress a liability?*

#### **AMINA;** Female

Amina returns home after what should have been a regular day of work at the health centre. She is walking towards the bus stop and is rethinking her day. Her manager had fallen ill and there was no one to take over the information meeting for new volunteers planned for that day. People had already arrived at the health centre and some had travelled many miles just for today. She felt short of breath as the number of clients steadily increased and for a moment she was so overwhelmed she didn't even know where to begin. Amina decided to take over the meeting. It was quite a challenge since she had only seen it, but never had done this before. However she couldn't send the people home. She battled thoughts that she would do a poor job, that she couldn't do it like his manager does, that maybe someone else was better fit but there was no one else. Eventually she decided to do the meeting herself.

Before the meeting started, Amina noticed that she was a bit anxious when the session started. Her heart rate went up and her hands were shaking. But she was focussed on her task and as time went by, she felt more at ease. At the end of the meeting, people were happy about the information they had received and they thanked her for the meeting. Afterwards she noticed she was more tired than usual, but satisfied with the job she had done.

*How was the stress a liability?*

## Case study 2

### **HASSAM;** *Male*

Hassam is calling and consulting families today and there are so many on his list. It is still quite early in the morning and she already feels very tired. It is still quite early in the morning and he already feels very tired. Hassam started a job with a new programme four months ago that his brother recommended him for. His job was already demanding more and more of his time, but a bombing in one of his assigned neighborhoods two weeks ago has caused his caseload to grow substantially. Hassam has lived through more bombings that he can remember at this point, but a number of children were killed in this incident and the horrors shook Hassam to his core. He wept during his daily prayers as he moved through his increasingly busy work day. Of course it is good to see that it is reaching more and more people, but he is wondering how to manage it all. He doesn't know which tasks to prioritize today. He's got lots of emails to answer and families to consult, and his phone keeps ringing. He has received three calls from his wife already this morning asking him to help with his children who are overwhelming her. He has taken time to calm her down, and brainstorm together ways to keep his daughters occupied and engaged now that they are spending much more time at home. He does his best to respond to everything, and everything is important. Sometimes he catches himself thinking he is failing at everything he does.

Again he had little sleep last night. He was home late from work. His wife was already asleep. When he went to bed he couldn't stop thinking about a conversation he had with a mother who is grief stricken at the loss of her son in the bombing. His mind was also filled with worries about how to pay the bills. Especially now that they can only count on one income. He recalls sage advice from his brother that eventually helps him fall back asleep.

### **AMINA;** *Female*

Amina is calling and consulting families today and there are so many on her list.. It is still quite early in the morning and she already feels very tired. Amina started a job with a new programme four months ago that her sister recommended her for. Her job was already demanding more and more of her time, but a bombing in one of her assigned neighborhoods two weeks ago has caused her caseload to grow substantially. Amina has lived through more bombings than she can remember at this point, but a number of children were killed in this incident and the horrors shook Amina to her core. She wept during her daily prayers as she moved through her increasingly busy work day. Of course it is good to see that it is reaching more and more people, but she is wondering how to manage it all. She doesn't know which tasks to prioritize today. She's got lots of emails to answer and families to consult, and her phone keeps ringing. She has received three calls from her mother already this morning asking her to help with her children who are overwhelming her. She has taken time to calm her down, and brainstorm together ways to keep his daughters occupied and engaged now that they are spending much more time at home. She does her best to respond to everything, and everything is important. Sometimes she catches himself thinking he is failing at everything she does.

She ends up having to leave the office early to attend to the youngest child who is not feeling well and demanding attention. This creates extra stress as she is trying to manage emails and calls, while he demands her attention. Again she had little sleep last night. She was tossing and turning in bed for hours after putting the children to sleep, as she couldn't stop thinking about a conversation she had with a mother who is grief stricken at the loss of her son in the bombing. Her mind was also filled with worries about how to pay the bills. Especially now that they can only count on one income. She recalls sage advice from her sister that eventually helps her fall back asleep.

### Case study 3

#### **HASSAM;** *Male*

It has been four weeks since the bombing and Hassam's weekly caseload continues to be double his usual amount. There has been a shortage of medical supplies at the hospital and many of the injured have health complications that are causing strain on the families his organization works with. They have promised to bring in more staff support, but that has not happened so Hassam has done his best to balance the additional hours of accompanying families going through horrific challenges. As he meets with the father of a child who is clinging to life today, Hassam has a hard time focusing and feels frustration at the father as he is expressing grief over his daughter's state. He finds it difficult to feel empathy for him and rushes the appointment. When he gets home, he lashes out in frustration at his wife out of nowhere. His daughters start crying and when he sees them he breaks down in tears from the shame and guilt. His sleep is disturbed by nightmares where he sees his daughter on life support in the position of his client's daughter.

#### **AMINA;** *Female*

It has been four weeks since the bombing and Amina's weekly caseload continues to be double her usual amount. There has been a shortage of medical supplies at the hospital and many of the injured have health complications that are causing strain on the families his organization works with. They have promised to bring in more staff support, but that has not happened so Amina has done her best to balance the additional hours of accompanying families going through horrific challenges. As she meets with the mother of a child who is clinging to life today, She has a hard time focusing and feels frustration at the mother as she is expressing grief over her daughter's state. She finds it difficult to feel empathy for her and rushes the appointment. When she gets home, she lashes out in frustration at her children out of nowhere. Her daughters start crying and when she sees them she breaks down in tears from the shame and guilt. Her sleep is disturbed by nightmares where She sees her daughter on life support in the position of her client's daughter.

### Case study 4

#### **HASSAM;** *Male*

One afternoon at his office, Hassam's supervisor notices Hassam is falling asleep at his desk while on a phone call. The supervisor asks Hassam if he is tired and if he's been able to get enough rest lately. Usually Hassam would say "of course" even if that wasn't the case because he does not want to give the impression he is not doing his job well, but on this day he decides to be honest with his supervisor and share that he has been having difficulty keeping up with the increased caseload he is responsible for. His supervisor is understanding and helps him identify which cases could be reassigned to someone else to make the work more manageable, and even decides to take over some of them himself. He also suggests that Hassam take the rest of the day to get some rest as he knows he has another full day tomorrow. Hassam is able to take a walk after work and the fresh air and exercise brings him a sense of peace and gives him an idea about his family he hadn't thought of before.

Hassam and his wife live in an area with many families like theirs whose children all attend the same school. When he gets home from his walk, Hassam suggests that they invite a few of the couples to their home for dinner and they decide to open up about the challenges they have been experiencing with childcare. Sharing about their experiences feels like a relief to all, as they see they are not alone in what they are experiencing. One of the husbands suggests that perhaps each family can take a Saturday where they take all the children with them for the day, giving the other parents some time to care for the home and run errands that they would not be able to do otherwise.

**AMINA; Female**

One afternoon at his office, Amina's supervisor notices Amina is falling asleep at her desk while on a phone call. The supervisor asks Amina if she is tired and if she's been able to get enough rest lately. Usually Amina would say "of course" even if that wasn't the case because she does not want to give the impression she is not doing her job well, but on this day she decides to be honest with her supervisor and share that she has been having difficulty keeping up with the increased caseload she is responsible for. Her supervisor is understanding and helps her identify which cases could be reassigned to someone else to make the work more manageable, and even decides to take over some of them himself. He also suggests that Amina take the rest of the day to get some rest as he knows she has another full day tomorrow. Amina is able to speak with a friend on her way home and this brings her a sense of peace and gives her an idea about her family she hadn't thought of before.

Amina and her husband live in an area with many families like theirs whose children all attend the same school. When she gets home from work, Amina suggests that they invite a few of the couples to their home for dinner and they decide to open up about the challenges they have been experiencing with childcare. Sharing about their experiences feels like a relief to all, as they see they are not alone in what they are experiencing. One of the wives suggests that perhaps each family can take a Saturday where they take all the children with them for the day, giving the other parents some time to care for the home and run errands that they would not be able to do otherwise.

## Case study 5

**HASSAM; Male**

Hassam's organization had a focus group discussion with staff members. All of the participants stated they had a high workload. They never felt satisfied - their day never finished and they never felt they could do enough. They were very frustrated about not being able to address the basic needs of the children and families. They felt powerless about making a difference because often part of the solution was not in their hands. It depended on other services, or authorities to meet basic needs. The NGO did not have a staff care policy. The staff were trying to cope with daily stress on their own, for example, by 'working harder,' 'trying to breathe.'

**AMINA; Female**

Amina's organization had a focus group discussion with staff members. All of the participants stated they had a high workload. They never felt satisfied - their day never finished and they never felt they could do enough. They were very frustrated about not being able to address the basic needs of the children and families. They felt powerless about making a difference because often part of the solution was not in their hands. It depended on other services, or authorities to meet basic needs. The NGO did not have a staff care policy. The staff were trying to cope with daily stress on their own, for example, by 'working harder,' 'trying to breathe.'

### Handout 3: Signs of stress checklist

The following case studies are provided to support learning throughout the various modules of this training. Each case study provides (2) versions of the case study, one for male participant groups (Hassam's story) and one for female participant groups (Amina's story). Reference the appropriate story for your group in each case study.

		Never or rarely (score 1)	Sometimes or once in a while (score 2)	Often (more days than not) (score 3)
1.	I feel tense or nervous.			
2.	I have a lot of physical complaints (e.g. headaches, my heart is beating quickly, chest or stomach pains, chronic colds).			
3.	I feel chronically tired, even when I have had enough sleep.			
4.	I am easily agitated and react to any noise around me.			
5.	I'm sad and feel like I could cry.			
6.	I have lost my sense of humour.			
7.	I have trouble making decisions. I go over the issues in my mind, again and again, and they don't get any clearer.			
8.	I feel overwhelmed or fearful. I really would love a place where I feel safe.			
9.	I act impulsively or take risks I shouldn't take.			
10.	I have trouble concentrating or focusing on my work.			
11.	I have trouble planning and thinking clearly.			
12.	I am less efficient or more disorganised at work than usual.			
13.	I misplace or lose things I need for work or forget appointments or forget to do tasks.			
14.	I have sleep problems (trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, or sleeping too much, or nightmares)			
15.	I am irritable. Little things annoy me a lot. (e.g. I over-react to the failings of others, or I find myself arguing with friends or family members more than I used to).			

For <never>, score 1 point. For <sometimes> score 2 points. For <often> score 3 points. Now add up your total score:

- Under 20: Your state of stress is normal, given your working conditions.
- From 35 – 20: You are showing signs of stress and need to take action to “re-centre” yourself.
- From 48 – 36: You may be under severe stress. Ask for help from someone close to you and/or from your supervisor or manager and/or contact your doctor.

## Handout 4: What is stress?

### BASIC STRESS

Stress is a normal part of life. Many events that happen to us and around us, and many things that we do to ourselves, put stress on our bodies.

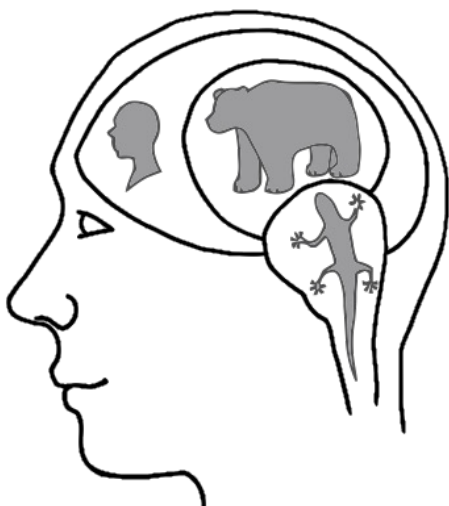
The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it. Stress can be positive, keeping us alert and ready to avoid danger. Our body and mind help us to react and prepare us to 'fight,' 'flight,' or 'freeze.'

For example:

- If a car is driving extremely quickly towards you, it enables us to be able to run away from the car.
- If we are learning a challenging task at work, it helps us to be extra focussed and concentrated.
- If we have a new job or have become a parent, it gives us to have extra energy to get used to the changes that the job or the baby is bringing into our lives.

In other words, in small doses, stress can be a good thing. Stress releases chemicals into the blood, which give you strength and extra energy. It can give you the push you need; it can motivate you to do your best and stay alert and focused. This is called 'basic stress.'

### Functions of the brain



Drawing by Ece Karakullukcu

#### Brain One: Reptile brain

This is the brain we share with birds, and reptiles. Think of it as the 'housekeeping brain.' Just the basics: hunger, temperature control, fight-or-flight fear responses, defending territory, keeping safe — When experiencing a high amount of stress, we can experience these responses. The structures that perform these functions within our brain are extremely similar to those in the brains of reptiles. Thus, this brain is called the 'R complex' (R for reptilian).

#### Brain Two: Mammal brain

This brain is called the limbic system. We humans share this brain with older mammals like dogs, cats, and horses, and even mice (as opposed to newer mammals like chimps; we'll get to them in a moment). Their brains, and this part of our brains, are extremely similar. Think about the difference between a mouse and a lizard, or between a cat and a snake, and you'll recognize what this mammalian brain adds to a creature's capacities. Mammals have feelings like ours.

#### Brain Three: Human brain

With this brain, primates can do things that horses and cows cannot, like complex social interactions and advance planning (such as planning an attack on a neighboring troop). Like the brain we share with primates, in humans - the cortex has grown to a huge size, somehow in association with our development of language.

The more stress we have, the less control we experience and thus the more we are using older parts of our brain, such as brain two and brain one.

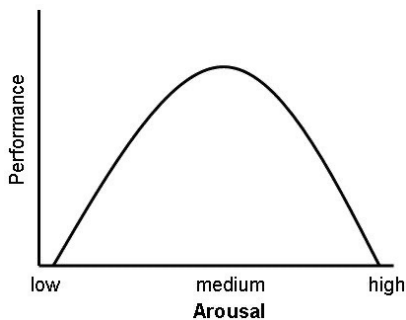
#### Trainer's note:

You may choose instead to use the videos linked below. Some of them will have subtitles for translation.

Source: [www.psycheducation.org](http://www.psycheducation.org)

[Link 1](#) | [Link 2](#) | [Link 3](#) | [Link 4](#)

## STRESS AND PERFORMANCE



In the diagram, the curve on the line shows that when stress is very low (on the left of the line) or very high (on the right of the line), a person's capacity to perform is very low. However, when stress is at a medium level, a person's capacity to perform is at its best.

## CUMULATIVE STRESS

This is the commonest type of stress and may relate to factors at work, or to one's personal life or be a result of specific incidents.

It is the type of stress that is prolonged and without relief:

- 'Prolonged' means that the stress is continuing for an extended period of time – over several weeks or months.
- 'Without relief' means there is no rest from the stress that is happening.

Cumulative stress affects the mind, body, and behaviour in many ways. The specific signs and symptoms of stress vary from person to person, but all have the potential to harm your health, emotional wellbeing, and relationships with others. They can be physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and behavioural.

Here are some examples: let's check if these represent the cultural context

### PHYSICAL

- Sleep disturbances
- Changes in appetite
- Stomach upsets (diarrhoea, nausea)
- Rapid heart rate
- Fatigue
- Muscle tremors and tension
- Back and neck pain (due to muscle tension)
- Headaches
- Inability to relax and rest
- Being easily startled

### EMOTIONAL

- Mood swings
- Feeling 'over-emotional'
- Irritability
- Anger
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Emotional numbness

### MENTAL

- Poor concentration
- Confusion and disorganised thoughts
- Forgetfulness
- Difficulty making decisions
- Dreams or nightmares
- Intrusive thoughts (involuntary thoughts)

**SPIRITUAL**

- Feelings of emptiness
- Loss of meaning
- Discouragement and loss of hope
- Cynicism
- Doubt
- Anger at God
- Alienation and loss of sense of connection

**BEHAVIOURAL**

- Risk-taking (e.g. driving recklessly)
- Over-eating or under-eating
- Increased smoking
- Listlessness
- Hyper-alertness
- Aggression and verbal outbursts
- Substance use
- Compulsive behaviour (i.e. nervous tics and pacing)
- Withdrawal/ isolation
- Having casual sexual relationships

The signs of stress may change over time:

EARLY WARNING SIGNS	MILD SIGNS	EXTENDED SIGNS	SEVERE SIGNS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boredom</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Low mood/low energy</li> <li>• Poor concentration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memory problems</li> <li>• Increased illness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship problems</li> <li>• Increased substance use</li> <li>• Performance changes</li> <li>• Fear of leaving home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship changes</li> <li>• Health changes</li> <li>• Personality changes</li> <li>• Becoming housebound</li> </ul>

**BURNOUT**

Burnout is a state of emotional and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress at work. It can occur when a person feels overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands.

In the beginning it can cause a loss of the interest or motivation that led the person to take on a certain role in the first place. Gradually the person loses energy to do their job, leaving them feeling increasingly hopeless, powerless, cynical, and resentful. This can eventually threaten the person's job, relationships, and health.

The signs of burnout tend to be more mental than physical, including:

- frustration and powerlessness
- hopelessness
- being drained of emotional energy
- detachment, withdrawal, isolation
- feeling trapped
- a noticeable drop in performance (sometimes to a point where the person is not able to do what is required)
- irritability
- sadness
- not caring anymore about people or work
- functioning on 'automatic pilot.'

There can be difficulties in identifying whether someone might have depression rather than burnout. When symptoms are both experienced at work and at home, it could be someone has or is developing depression. Symptoms associated with grief also resemble those of burnout and depression. However the cause for grief can be directly linked to one or perhaps several experiences with loss.



## TRAUMATIC STRESS

Traumatic stress results from being exposed to one traumatic event or a series of traumatic events. When this happens, a person feels overwhelmed with thoughts and feelings that affect their coping. Their sense of being in control is disrupted and their perceptions of their environment as safe and predictable are upset.

It is very important to remember that the thoughts and feelings of traumatic stress are normal reactions to abnormal traumatic events.

There are a wide range of thoughts and feelings associated with traumatic stress including:

### **anxiety**

- About the threat of physical harm to you or to those close to you
- About collapsing and losing control
- That you will be ignored or that loved ones will be lost
- That the event/s will happen again

### **powerlessness**

- You have been overwhelmed by the situation
- You are/were unable to help or save yourself or other people who have been affected

### **helplessness**

- Nobody can/could protect you or other people
- Nobody can/could change the situation

### **anger**

- At the people that allowed or caused the event/s to occur
- At the injustice or insanity of the situation
- At the shame and humiliation imparted to some people
- At the lack of understanding of others
- Because it happened to you and not to someone else

### **guilt**

- You are still alive and others are not
- You were inadequately prepared
- If you had acted differently

### **shame**

- About inner feelings such as helplessness and grief
- About inner feelings that you consider as selfish
- About your reaction to the situation

### **grief**

- You or others are hurt or have died

### **deprivation**

- You suffer(ed) material or moral losses

### **despair:**

alternating with:

hope for better times ahead.

This type of stress can begin immediately after the traumatic or be delayed. Being delayed means it could start days, months, or even years later.

**However, after experiencing traumatic stress, most people are able to re-find their emotional balance within weeks. This is called 'resilience.'**

## POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

One in every five people (20%) develops a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), if traumatic stress is too great or lasts a long time. Some people may also develop other mental health problems, such as depression. PTSD and depression occur together quite frequently.

PTSD is mainly characterised by four clusters of symptoms:

### 1. Intrusions

Intrusions are ways in which the traumatic event reoccurs over and over again in our thoughts and feelings. This may be in the form of disturbing memories or flashbacks or nightmares.

### 2. Hyper-arousal

Hyper-arousal refers to the alarmed state the body and mind remains in after the traumatic event. It feels as if the event may happen again.

### 3. Avoidance

Avoidance is the effort people make to avoid things that might trigger intrusions. This includes avoiding certain conversations, thoughts, places or persons. It may lead to social isolation and an overall numbing of emotional responsiveness.

### 4. Changes in world-view and identity

A traumatic event may severely affect the ways we experience the world around us and ourselves.

#### Facilitator's note:

If during this point in the training as participants begin to share more openly, they seem to be exhibiting signs of stress (eg. disassociation, overwhelm, shutdown, tears/sadness), One facilitator should check in with the participant and if possible, take them out of the room for a few minutes. Use grounding techniques in ( Annex E) to help the participant become present and recognize their safety in the space. Let the full group know that facilitators are handling it and will bring the participant back into the space.

## COMPASSION FATIGUE

Compassion fatigue occurs when humanitarian workers lose the capacity to empathise with beneficiaries. This may happen when their workload has been too high over a prolonged period of time or when they have an ongoing feeling of powerlessness towards the needs of beneficiaries. Compassion fatigue may be a sign of the development of burnout.

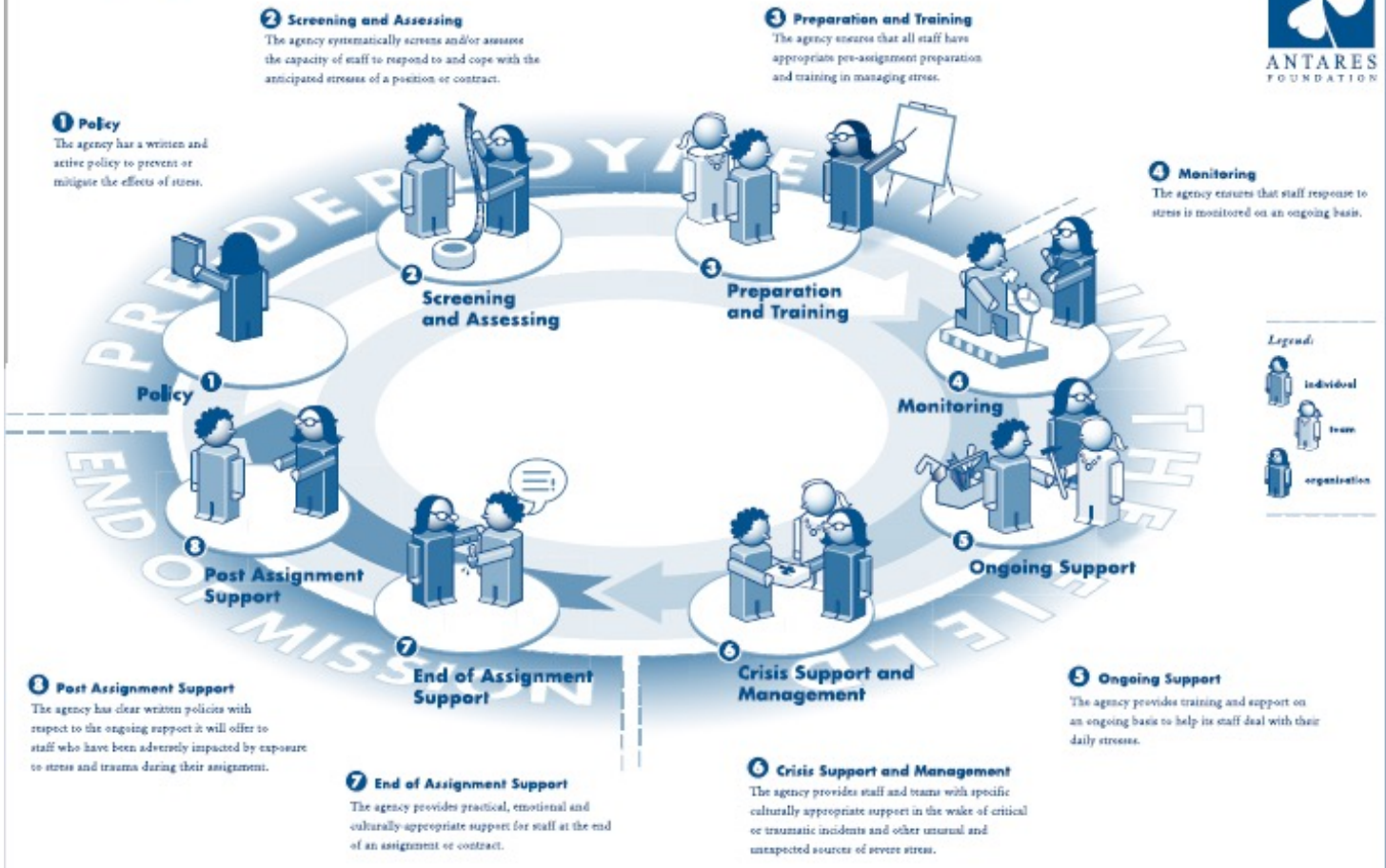
## VICARIOUS TRAUMATISATION AND SECONDARY TRAUMA

Vicarious traumatising is the process by which humanitarian workers see or listen to stories of traumatic events experienced by beneficiaries which lead to symptoms in the workers themselves.

Vicarious traumatising refers to **the process** and secondary trauma refers to **the symptoms**. Both indicate that the humanitarian workers have been affected by being in contact with beneficiaries.



# Managing Stress in Humanitarian Workers - Guidelines for Good Practice



## Handout 5: Strategies for dealing with stress

### A. Helpful strategies

Personal coping strategies:

- Having realistic expectations for yourself.
- Using your personal resources fully.
- Sharing your feelings with colleagues, friends or family.
- Religious or spiritual practice.
- Taking time (off) for yourself.
- Finding ways to relax, e.g. singing, reading, walking or by using relaxation techniques.
- Keeping your sense of humour.

Team member coping strategies:

- Showing colleagues you care, e.g. by small gestures like doing something for one another, exchanging gifts or simply through physical touch.
- Avoiding criticism and instead share words of affirmation.
- Communicating your needs, 'I need you to ...'
- Putting physical and psychological health and safety first.
- Not working more hours than you need to.
- Spending quality time with your team members, e.g. having coffee breaks together, sharing meals.

Team leaders coping strategies:

- Ensuring the safety of your team, as far as you can.
- Keeping open and clear communication.
- Informing relevant managers of incidents and your team's needs.
- Encouraging teamwork.
- Responding promptly to questions.

Organisational strategies:

- Appropriate screening, selection, and assignment of staff
- Staff orientation and stress management training
- Creating an atmosphere supportive of stress reduction and stress management
- Adequate training of managers (in management skills)
- Training of managers and supervisors in monitoring and mitigating staff stress
- Reviewing and monitoring existing agency policies and practices with respect to their impact on staff stress
- Routinely examining the effect of new policies, practices, or programmes on the stress experienced by staff
- Facilitation of stress management practices by individual staff members
- Providing staff members with appropriate feedback and with appropriate lines of communication

- Monitoring of stress levels of staff and routine interventions to reduce or mitigate stress
- Maintaining team or work-group coherence
- Interventions after acute/critical incident stress
- End of assignment or periodic debriefing and stress assessment
- Long-term follow-up and support.

## **B. Strategies that are not helpful**

Unhelpful personal coping factors:

- Blaming others.
- Use of substances.
- Passive Aggressive Behavior.
- Tendency to deny emotional reactions.
- Tendency to keep things to yourself.
- Procrastination.
- Isolation.

Unhelpful factors in the team or wider organisation:

- Poor communication between supervisors and staff
- Difficulty in balancing new, urgent priorities with old responsibilities
- Overly critical management; perceived lack of appreciation or lack of support
- Conflict between desire to serve needs of beneficiaries and meeting own needs
- Lack of sense of safety regarding the consequences of acknowledging stress at work
- Lack of clarity in job descriptions or expectations; ill-defined work; conflicting demands on the job
- Lack of variety in work; under-use of skills (often tied to desire of staff for jobs in an organization with meaningful goals)
- Lack of training in skills needed (including managerial skills)
- Overly-heavy (or overly-light) workload; lack of control over pacing of work; unpredictable or overly-long work hours; lack of breaks
- Too many meetings
- Work with no defined end-point; lack of separation of job and home; conflicts between work and home demands
- Job insecurity and/or career uncertainty
- Low participation in decision-making
- Interpersonal conflict at work; harassment – racial, sexual, ethnic, or personal; perceived favouritism or lack of fairness on part of managers
- Exposure to harrowing tales of field-based staff; indirect exposure to tales of victims.

## Handout 6: Intervention

<b>Set-up and preparation</b>	Review the steps with the group and select roles for the meeting, including the case owner, the chairperson, a timekeeper and observers (i.e. other group members). Make sure everyone can see one another.	5 min
<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Introduction of problem case</b> Case owner introduces their question or problem and gives background information and how they need support.	5 min
<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Exploration of the problem</b> Members of the group explore the question or problem by posing questions. They use different ways of gaining information e.g. open-ended questions, clarifying, restating, active listening, silence. They pay attention to content, process, relations, and feelings in the group. 5 minutes more may be added here, if more clarification is needed.	15 min
<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Problem definition</b> Members of the group take turns formulating one or more problem definitions. These should be brief, to the point, and no more than five sentences long. The case owner reformulates their question or problem after listening to all the problem definitions from group members.	15 min
<b>Step 4</b>	<b>Open discussion</b> The group has an open discussion on the problem, where participants give reflective comments. The case owner observes, but everyone participates.	10 min
<b>Step 5</b>	<b>Advising</b> Every member of the group formulates at least one piece of advice for the case owner. Neither the case owner nor other group members should respond or raise objections to the advice being given. They simply listen until each member of the group has spoken.	15 min
<b>Step 6</b>	<b>Case owner chooses</b> Then – and only then – the case owner reacts to the advice. They say what suits or not, and how they will proceed to use the advice.	10 min
<b>Step 7</b>	<b>Case and group evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The case owner evaluates the process of consultation – their experience, and the effects of cooperation with group members, etc.</li> <li>• The group reflects on the process of consultation.</li> </ul>	10 min

## Handout 7: My personal summary (Option 1)

Write down things that are causing you stress at the moment and could cause you additional stress in the near future.

Write down symptoms you experience when under stress. These could function as your own alarm bells. When you notice these symptoms, you know your life is getting out of balance and you can take steps to change this.

Write down the ways of coping you already use and which have a positive effect.

Think about these areas: physical health, emotional wellbeing, fun and leisure, spirituality, relationships, and learning. Write some possible techniques you could use in each of these areas.

## Handout 7: Self Care Plan - Option 2

\*\*\*adapted from Danish Red Cross and Afghan Red Crescent

### RECOGNISING STRESS and DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-CARE PLAN

- Invite participants to share where in their body they feel reactions to stress.
- When they do that, ask them to write how stress is manifesting / emotional, behavioural, cognitive and physical reactions they have.
- Say: Sometimes we feel so stressed that it affects us to the point that we feel we cannot continue. Now mark those signs or reactions that alerts you, that are telling you that you need to stop.
- And last, ask them to write down what helps them to feel better.
- When finish you can ask participants to if they feel comfortable to share their findings.

You can ask:

1. Do we all feel stress in the same part of our body?
2. Do we all have the same reactions to stress?
3. What are the things that can help you to feel better?
  - Write things that make them feel better on the flipchart. Example could be: focus on simple and routine tasks, talking to a person you trust, doing things you like, exercise, take rest, etc.).
  - Summarise their responses by saying:

Stress can appear in different ways, like how we feel, think, behave, or even physically. These reactions can differ from person to person, not just in how they show up but also in intensity and duration.

The purpose is to underline the physical effects of stress. Emphasize this is important because paying attention to your own body's stress signals, and maybe informing others about these signals, can be important steps towards dealing with stress and realizing something has to be done to minimize the unfortunate consequences of stress, such as anger, burn out, giving-up, apathy, etc.

Also, sometimes our colleagues might need support and it is important to remember that we all have different reactions to stress and we need different type of support to feel calm again. How can we know what can help someone to feel better? By askin. Always ask a person what you can do to support him/her. Do not assume that what helps you will help someone else.

- Invite participants to sit with their buddies. They have 10 minutes to discuss:
  1. How often you do things that relax you/makes you feel good?
  2. What stops you from doing it more often?
  3. What can you do to overcome those barriers?
- Now invite participants to think for themselves of activities they might realistically do regularly to reduce their stress and enhance their personal well-being. The trainer says and writes:

To make a self-care plan that actually works, we need to:

- a. Not aim too big, but take small steps at a time, finding out what works for us and build habits to do the things that are good for us.
- b. To be concrete on the what, how, when
- c. Commit to sticking to what we decide
  - Ask participants:
    1. WHY is this important?



- Explain:

Making small steps and adopting small habits can seem so much less exciting than embracing a big goal. However, we know that getting started at something and that initiating a change in our behaviour is often the hardest part.

If you make big unrealistic plans you will lose your motivation, risking of not doing it regularly and at the end stop doing it at all. It is important to take small steps to develop habits.

- Invite participants to sit with their buddies again. They have 10 minutes to discuss:
  1. What are at least 2 activities that you would like to do regularly?
  2. How often can you do it, e.g. daily or a few times a week?
  3. When can you do it, e.g. in the morning when I wake up and in the evening before going to bed?
- Highlight that the PFA principles of 'Look' and 'Listen' also apply to self-care, as the helper learns to recognize what kinds of situations or experiences affect them strongly. They LOOK to identify their own stress reactions. They LISTEN to their mind and body to identify what action is needed to make them feel better. And they LINK yourself to support and close ones.
- Explain that breathing exercise help to calm down, and with practise they are helpful techniques to manage stress. Invite participants to do a short breathing exercise with you, from the Appendix C on Relaxation techniques.

## Handout 8: Staff Exercises: Group debrief & buddy questions

### The ABCs of Debriefs

Debriefing is a psychosocial support tool which aims at reducing reactions to a potentially traumatizing event or as a way to solve a particularly challenging problem. Critical incident debriefs can be done when someone is facing a difficult event, like immediately after an attack, or a particularly challenging interpersonal problem in the field office or home.

#### **\*\*A (Ask - Ask for the overview)\*\***

“Could you give the group a brief overview of what happened in this situation from your perspective? Who among us was involved? How did it affect everyone? This will help us understand the timeline and the context better. What were our collective reactions? This can help us gauge the impact on our team.”

#### **\*\*B (Bad - What was Bad/the Worst for us?)\*\***

“What was the worst part of this event for our group? Let’s discuss how it’s impacted us emotionally and any common signs of stress among our members, like trouble sleeping or irritability. If these reactions seem typical under the circumstances, let’s acknowledge that we aren’t overreacting. How can we, as a group, support each other to reduce stress?”

#### **\*\*C (Care - What Care do we need right now?)\*\***

“What do we, as a group, need to feel supported during this time? What resources are available for our individual and collective well-being? Let’s identify the support structures we can rely on, and find out who among us can offer guidance or advice. If any of us are struggling, who else can we turn to?”

#### **\*\*D (Drawing - Describe the strengths we are drawing on)\*\***

“What are some of the strengths or resources our group is using to navigate this situation? I notice that we [remained calm under pressure] [used humor to cope] [supported each other] during the crisis. Let’s talk about the qualities we each bring to the table that help us through tough times.”

#### **\*\*E (Extend - Extend support for a follow-up conversation)\*\***

“Should we plan for a follow-up conversation to see how we’re all doing in a few days? What follow-up steps do we, as a group, think are necessary? Let’s schedule a time to reconvene and discuss any ongoing concerns or to simply check in with each other.”

### Group Check- In Questions

*These questions aim to foster a supportive space where group members can express themselves creatively while gently inviting deeper reflections.*

1. If your mood were a weather pattern today, what would it be and why?  
(Encourages playful metaphors while gently exploring emotional states.)
2. If how you’re feeling right now were a color or a type of food, what would it be and why?  
(Mixes creativity with self-expression through colors or foods.)
3. If you had a personal emoji today, which one would represent your current energy or mindset and why?  
(A lighthearted way to express feelings using familiar symbols.)
4. What’s something small that made you smile this week, and something that felt heavier and why?  
(Allows the group to share both joy and struggles, creating space for a range of emotions.)

5. If you think of your personal energy like a phone or computer charger, how full is your battery right now? Share why\*\*

(A modern metaphor that helps assess emotional and physical energy levels.)

6. If you could teleport to any place that represents calm or joy for you, where would you go? Share why

(Encourages the group to reflect on spaces that bring comfort and peace.)

7. What's one thing you're proud of this week, even if it's something small? Share why.

(Focuses on positive self-reflection, even amidst vulnerability.)

### **Buddy Questions**

Buddy systems for emotional well-being are vital for humanitarian aid workers, offering structured peer support in stressful environments. Organizations around the globe use various buddy check in methods from texts, calls, or in-person visits, with staff assigned buddies and asked to check in weekly or monthly, often rotating partners to build broader support network. HR and management should encourage buddy check-ins, especially during stressful periods to build collective care within the organization.

### **Try asking these 5 question to your buddy or come up with some of your own:**

1. On a scale of 1-10 (1- low, 10 high), how are you feeling today, both emotionally and physically?

*Alternative (Alt):* You can also ask them where they are on the thermometer that we did in class (cold to hot).

(This helps create a baseline for daily well-being.)

*If they answer 5 or below, you can also ask:*

Are there any signs of stress or burnout you've noticed in yourself that we should be mindful of? How can I help support you? (Encourages self-awareness and invites a proactive approach to preventing burnout.)

2. What feels particularly challenging for you right now, either in work or life outside of work? (Encourages sharing of current stressors or obstacles.)

*If you sense they want to talk more, you can ask:*

3. Is there anything else that's been weighing heavily on your mind that you've been avoiding or finding hard to talk about? (Opens space for discussing difficult topics they may be holding inside.)

4. What's one thing you need—whether it's time, support, or a small change—that would make your day or week feel more manageable? (Focuses on actionable needs that can reduce stress or increase well-being.)

*If they need some more support thinking of ideas, you could ask:*

When you've faced similar challenges in the past, what has helped you get through? What was helpful to you, either in a big way or maybe just a little bit. Can any of those strategies or resources be useful for you now? (Helps recall previous coping mechanisms or strengths that can be applied to current challenges.)

5. What have you been doing to recharge your energy? What/who supports or grounds you? Is there anything that helps, but you're not doing enough of? (Encourages reflection on personal support networks and coping strategies.)

*If they are able to answer, you can ask:*

How can I remind you or support you to do that this week? Is there anyone I can connect you with for more support?

*If they need more support, you can ask:*

What are some sources of strength or resilience you feel you can draw on right now—whether it's your values, a routine, faith, or something else? (Encourages identification of inner resources or external practices that provide grounding/love.)

## Handout 9: Useful online resources

### Websites

#### [www.antaesfoundation.org](http://www.antaesfoundation.org)

Antares Foundation works across all ranges and aspects of staff care and psychosocial support for humanitarian and developmental organisations worldwide.

They do this by offering direct psychosocial support in emergency settings; carrying out research on staff care systems and support; offering practical solutions for better staff care for individuals, teams and organisations; and campaigning for better care systems and support for both national and international staff

#### [www.mhpss.net](http://www.mhpss.net)

This is a global platform for connecting people, networks and organisations, for sharing resources and for building knowledge related to mental health and psychosocial support both in emergency settings and in situations of chronic hardship. The network functions as an online community of practice for mental health and psychosocial support in challenging humanitarian and development contexts.

### Guidelines on stress management

The Antares Foundation 'Managing Stress in Humanitarian Workers: Guidelines for Good Practice' is a comprehensive guide for organisations seeking to develop and sustain best practice in staff care and stress management. They are available at: [www.antaesfoundation.org/guidelines#.WY2dyCMrJcw](http://www.antaesfoundation.org/guidelines#.WY2dyCMrJcw)

### WHO resources on depression

There are various resources available at [www.who.int/depression/en](http://www.who.int/depression/en) including:

- Wondering why your new baby is not making you happy?
- Worried a child is depressed?
- Worried about the future: Preventing depression during your teens and twenties.
- Living with someone who is depressed.
- Staying positive and preventing depression as you get older.
- Do you know someone who may be considering suicide?
- Depression – what you should know.

### YouTube videos on depression

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VRRx7Mtep8>

## Handout 10: Evaluation questionnaire

Thank you for filling in this form. It is not necessary to give your name.

**Name of trainers:**

**Date:**

### A. General feedback:

Please mark with an X whether you think the content, presentations, trainers, timing were 'unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent'.

	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
<b>Content</b>				
<b>Presentations</b>				
<b>Trainers</b>				
<b>Timing</b>				

### B. Please mark with an X in the relevant boxes below regarding the following:

1. This training has helped me to be able to identify sources of stress.

Strongly agree	Agree	I'm not sure	Disagree
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2. This training has helped me to be able to recognize signs of stress in myself and in colleagues.

Strongly agree	Agree	I'm not sure	Disagree
----------------	-------	--------------	----------

2. This training has helped me to be able to recognize signs of stress in myself and in colleagues.

Strongly agree	Agree	I'm not sure	Disagree
----------------	-------	--------------	----------

3. This training has helped me to be able to identify strategies that can be used to reduce the impact of stress.

Strongly agree	Agree	I'm not sure	Disagree
----------------	-------	--------------	----------

4. What three things would you change about the day?

5. What three things would you want to keep in place about the day?

6. What other comments do you have?

## Handout 11: Certificate of participation

This is a link to an editable certificate for the course.

Just 'make a copy' under file and then edit for your organization. <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1dTrqvojAsEsfwOlx3ArBmRjbHMjjiFQwy-9gGRDEP2f8/edit?usp=sharing>

If not, you may use the certificate below:



## MATERIALS FOR TRAINERS

### Annex A: The training plan for workshop

This workshop aims to build the capacity of humanitarian workers in understanding and dealing with stress associated with individual, team and organisational factors in humanitarian settings.

By the end of this workshop, participants will:

- have developed an understanding of self-care and staff care
- be aware of strategies to deal with individual, team and organisational stress
- have experienced the benefits of mutual exchange and support in the learning process.

Session	Duration of Session	Sample Time
Session 1: Welcome and introductions	30m	8.00 - 8.30
Session 2: What is stress?	60m	8.30 - 9.30
BREAK	15m	9.30 - 9.45
Session 3: Different aspects of stress	80m	9.45 - 11:05
Session 4: Signs of stress	30m	11:05 - 11.35
LUNCH	55m	11.35 - 12.30
Session 5: Sources of stress	60m	12.30 - 1.30
BREAK	15m	1.30 - 1.45
Session 6: Resources for dealing with stress	70m/ 1h10m	1.45 - 2:55
Session 7: Review, evaluation and close	45m	2.55 - 3.45

Session	Time	Learning goals	Activities	Materials
Session 1: Welcome and introductions	30m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>know the objectives and programme for the training</li> <li>be introduced to the facilitators and one another</li> <li>have agreed ground rules for the training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>welcome</li> <li>introduction to theme</li> <li>overview of workshop</li> <li>introductions to one another</li> <li>agreeing ground rules</li> <li>relaxation exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>handout 1</li> <li>flipchart paper and markers</li> <li>tape</li> </ul>
Session 2: What is stress?	60m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>be aware of the positive and negative aspects of stress</li> <li>will have experienced mutual exchange in a safe environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>define stress</li> <li>discuss case studies 1 and 2</li> <li>relaxation exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>handout 2</li> <li>flipchart paper and markers</li> <li>case studies</li> </ul>
BREAK	15m			
Session 3: Different aspects of stress	80m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have a basic understanding of basic and cumulative stress, and of burnout, and traumatic stress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>energiser</li> <li>define cumulative stress, burnout, traumatic stress</li> <li>relaxation exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>flipchart paper and markers</li> <li>10-15 Small Stress Balls or a few bigger balls Bag filled with items</li> <li>Printout of the Stress Graph</li> <li>Printout of the Thermometer</li> <li>Printout of the Weed</li> <li>A jar, small pebbles, and water.</li> </ul>
Session 4: Signs of stress	30m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have an understanding of stress in their own lives</li> <li>will have experienced mutual exchange in a safe environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>complete the checklist and share results in small groups</li> <li>relaxation exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>handout 3</li> <li>pens</li> </ul>
LUNCH	55m	11.35 - 12.30		
Session 5: Sources of stress	60m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have a basic understanding of sources of stress</li> <li>will have experienced mutual exchange in a safe environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>energiser</li> <li>list top five sources of stress individually</li> <li>make categories of sources of stress together</li> <li>highlight stress is faced by humanitarian workers across the world</li> <li>relaxation exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>paper and pens</li> <li>flipchart paper and markers</li> <li>handout 4, handout 9</li> </ul>
BREAK	15m	1.30 - 1.45		



<p>Session 6: Resources for dealing with stress</p>	<p>70m/ 1h10m</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be familiar with strategies for dealing with stress at individual, team and organisational levels</li> <li>• will have experienced mutual exchange in a safe environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• energiser</li> <li>• list strategies at individual, team and organisational level in small groups and discuss together</li> <li>• discuss case study 3</li> <li>• highlight three specific elements of staff care – reduce sources of stress, strengthen team cohesion, promote social support between co-workers</li> <li>• give out copies of the Antares guidelines, if available</li> <li>• relaxation exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• flipchart paper and markers</li> <li>• handouts 2, 5 and 6</li> <li>• Antares Foundation guidelines, if available</li> </ul>
<p>Session 7: Review, evaluation and close</p>	<p>45m</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• will have reviewed and reflected on their own learning about self-care and staff care</li> <li>• will have evaluated the training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• look back at the flipchart from session 2 and reinforce learning from the training</li> <li>• review and reflect</li> <li>• address any questions</li> <li>• do a personal summary for stress management to take away</li> <li>• share learning</li> <li>• provide list of online resources</li> <li>• complete an evaluation of the training</li> <li>• close the training (with certificates, if used)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• flipchart from session 2,</li> <li>• markers,</li> <li>• copies of handouts 7, 8, 10, 11, 12</li> <li>• paper and pens,</li> <li>• basket,</li> <li>• certificates, if used, (handout 12)</li> </ul> <p>This is a link to an editable certificate for the course. Just 'make a copy' under file and then edit for your organization.</p> <p><a href="https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1dTrqvOjAsEsfwOlX3ArBmRjbHMjiFQwy-9gGRDEP2f8/edit?usp=sharing">https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1dTrqvOjAsEsfwOlX3ArBmRjbHMjiFQwy-9gGRDEP2f8/edit?usp=sharing</a></p>

## Annex B. Research about stress in humanitarian workers

### 1. A WHO online self-care questionnaire

A WHO online self care questionnaire of two groups of humanitarian workers (one working in Turkey and one in Syria) indicated high levels of compassion satisfaction (%61.5 in Turkey and %78.9 in Syria). However, %62.8 of those working in Turkey and %33.6 of those working in Syria rated themselves at average levels of burnout. %69.2 of those working in Turkey and %62.5 of those working in Syria rated themselves at average levels for secondary traumatic stress – with %2.6 of the group in Turkey rating themselves at high levels of secondary traumatic stress.

### 2. An online survey conducted in South Sudan

An online survey conducted in South Sudan found women and men reporting similar patterns of stressors. However “economic/financial problem” (%18), “Workload expected by organization is too high” (%18), “Excessive heat, cold or noise” (%16), and “Feeling powerless to change one’s own situation” (%16) ranked four and five in women’s top-five list of chronic stressors causing extreme stress, but were not part of the corresponding top-five list reported by men.

### 3. Research about local staff in Jordan

Research published in 2013 about local aid workers in Jordan recommended the following:

- They recommended building on close relationships between co-workers to develop peer support networks, so that the support they give one another could be maximised.
- They recommended that managers be trained to develop stronger teams too. This would give some protection from their own exhaustion as well as increasing the functionality of the teams.

### 4. Research about factors affecting mental health of local staff in Sri Lanka

Research about factors affecting mental health of local staff working in the Vanni region, Sri Lanka included the following: ‘Financial pressures were a significant source of stress for this population. (..) Low salaries lead to a number of consequences, including subsistence problems, family stress, and the need to have a second job, which cuts down on the time available to spend with family and friends, or to relax.

In addition, a substantial number of respondents reported being affected by (...) the work environment and workplace. Frequently cited chronic sources of stress included travel difficulties, including restrictions on movements, threatening checkpoints, and rough roads, and a high workload. These traveling stresses were affecting staff on a daily basis, impossible to get away from, and may have been aggravated by previous experiences during the months of active fighting in the area.

Issues concerning staff relationships with management and staff interpersonal relationships featured too (...) NGO staff members were looking for guidance, advice, and leadership from their organisational leaders. They wanted to be commended when they did well and not criticised too harshly when mistakes were made, and they wished to be treated with respect and courtesy, without discrimination. It should be noted that many of the managers also have been affected by the stress of a quarter century of war, and were likely to be displaying the effects of the conflict.’

## Annex C: Energisers

### Trainer's note:

Some of these energisers require physical contact. It may therefore be best to facilitate them with separate groups of men and women and to adapt for any cultural considerations.

### HUMAN KNOT 1

For this exercise people will be asked to stand in a circle and reach across for someone else's hand. A 'human knot' will emerge. The group then tries to unravel the human knot by unthreading their bodies without letting go of each other hands.

The ideal group size is approximately 10, but it can be done with anywhere from about 7 to 16. Much higher or lower and the task doesn't really work. The more people in a group, the more difficult the task, partly because of the complexity, and partly because there is physically less room to move. You could divide a larger group into two or more groups doing the task at the same time.

Most of the time a full circle falls out, but occasionally there are two or even three interlocking circles. People will often have been pulled in all sorts of directions (literally), so be prepared to have at least a short debrief by asking, «How well did you think the group worked together?» and, «What could have been done differently?» or «What do you think you've learned from this activity which can be applied in future activities?»

It is important to provide appropriate help if the activity proves too difficult. For example, this might be encouraging a group that it can be done because some groups lack confidence and might give up too early. It could be helping a couple of people to communicate to find a solution to part of the knot, or by allowing some participants to unclasp and reclasp their hands. How much to give is a fine balancing act. The task should be challenging, but especially as an initial activity. It should give the group some initial confidence and momentum in being able to work together to solve problems.

Please note: For this exercise people need some space to move freely. Take into consideration that this exercise involves close physical proximity.

### Instructions:

1. Ask participants to form a circle, shoulder-to-shoulder. Encouraging participants to all stand closer can be a subtle way of helping to prepare them for what is about to come.
2. Ask participants to each place a hand in the middle of the circle and to grasp another hand.
3. Then ask participants to put their other hand in the middle, grasp another person's hand. Every hand should hold a different person.
4. Don't let participants let go of hands. Explain to participants that what you'd like them to do is untangle themselves into a circle, without letting go of hands!
5. There can be a mixture of reactions, e.g. nervous laughter, fun amusement, excitement, trepidation or strong suspicion that it can't be done. Participants may change their grip so as to more comfortable, but they are not to unclasp and re-clasp so as to undo the knot.
6. Stand back and see what happens. Be prepared to see little progress for quite some time. However, once the initial unfolding happens, the pace towards the final solution usually seems to quicken.

## WILLOW IN THE WIND

This game builds trust amongst peers and also helps participants begin to give up some control by allowing peers to take responsibility for their safety.

### Instructions:

1. Divide the participants into groups of 8-10. Have one person stand in the middle as the others form a tight circle around him/her.
2. Those forming the circle must keep it small by standing shoulder to shoulder.
3. The person in the middle is asked to stand up straight with their hands folded across their chest (their right hand should touch their left shoulder and their left hand should touch their right shoulder). The person is asked to close their eyes.
4. Those forming the circle are used as “bumpers.” The person in the middle is then asked to lean back, trusting that the group will not allow them to fall. As the person in the middle leans, he/she is very gently passed to another member of the group who in turn gently passes them off to another. The person in the middle is gently passed amongst the group for as long as they feel comfortable.

## FLAMINGO

This is a good exercise that starts individually but usually ends with participants needing to cooperate with one another. It's a good exercise to reflect on and great fun to do too.

### Instructions:

1. Ask members of the group to find a spot in the room. (Make sure they do not stand in a circle).
2. Now ask them to stand on one leg and put their right or left foot against the other leg for balance. (As trainer, demonstrate what you are asking them to do. If you are not able to do this, ask for a participant who would be willing to do so.)
3. Let the group stand like this for 2-3 minutes, if possible. They could be asked to close their eyes to make it more relaxed - or complicated!
4. It is likely that some participants will not be able to balance very well. In this case you can ask, “What would help you?” They will come up with different solutions. Invite them to try them out. As trainer, you can prompt solutions to do with helping one another, such as someone offering a shoulder or hand to lean on, even if it's just for a moment.

## CIRCLE OF JOY

This is a fun way to explore how movement impacts relaxation and happiness. It explores different ways of calming our bodies and minds.

### Instructions:

1. Ask participants to stand in a circle and think of one movement (i.e. jumping up and down, shaking their head, taking a deep breath) that makes them feel more calm and/or happy.
2. The first participant demonstrates their movement.
3. The next participant must demonstrate the previous person's movement as well as introduce his/her movement. The following person must remember and demonstrate each previous participant's movement as well as introduce their own.
4. The further you move through a circle, the more difficult it gets to remember all of the movements. If a participant forgets a particular movement, they can ask the group for help.

## TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

This game is an excellent way for group members to get to know each other as well as help them explore assumptions they make about each other on a daily basis. It helps increase group trust and intimacy as well as help group member with group problem solving, communication, compromise, and negotiation skills.

### Instructions:

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle and think of three things they would like to say about themselves. Two of these things must be true and the third must be untrue.
2. Take turns going around the circle and asking one group member at a time to share his/her three things.
3. The rest of the group members must work together and decide which two things are true and which is a lie. The group must negotiate together to decide on one group answer only. The group scores points based on the number of correct answers.

## GET UP, STAND UP

This is a quick exercise which enables participants to get to know one another.

### Instructions:

1. Explain that in a couple of minutes you will ask a series of questions.
2. After each question, ask everyone who can answer “yes” to the question to stand up.
3. Before asking the next question, ask those people standing to sit down again.
4. Now begin to ask the questions in turn:

*Will everyone please stand up, who:*

- ... had to travel longer than 20 minutes to get here?
- ... is married?
- ... who enjoys football?
- ... has ever climbed a mountain?
- ... speaks more than three languages?
- ... has both a brother and a sister?
- ... has pets?
- ... likes singing?
- ... who experiences stress in their work?
- ... who is ready to get started with this training.

This energiser can be used later in training workshop, for example, by using a set of questions about the content of a session. The energiser is then a quick way of testing how well the participants understand the topic being covered.

## A OR B

This is another quick exercise that can be used as a way for participants to get to know one another.

You need two sheets of paper that read A and B to stick on the walls on different sides of the room. Make sure people can freely move between the two signs and chairs or tables are moved out of the way and there is no safety hazard.

### Instructions:

1. Ask the participants to come to the centre of the room.
2. Explain that you are going to read through a number of pairs of words.
3. Participants who feel that they are similar to the first word in each pair, should move near to sign A and those that feel closer to the second word, should move to sign B.
4. Explain that you will read the series of pairs one after another. Participants should continuously respond by moving to different points in the room depending on their preference.

You could use the following pairs or make up your own list, based on the group you are working with:

- the sun, the moon
- day, night
- hot, cold
- slow, fast
- yes, no
- sweet, sour
- pineapple, mango
- dog, cat
- Venus, Mars
- red, blue.

## Annex D: Relaxation exercises

### Trainer's note:

Cultural or contextual adaptations, can be added in to support adaptation for your group.

### MUSCLE RELAXATION

1. Sit in a comfortable position, lying on your back or sitting in a comfortable chair, without crossing your legs. (Feel free to adjust your position, if you need to). Throughout this exercise, maintain a slow, even breathing pattern.
2. Tense each muscle as tightly as possible for a count of ten, then release it completely. Start with your scalp, then proceed to your eyes, facial muscles, jaw, neck, shoulders, right fist, right arm, left fist, left arm, belly, buttocks, right foot, right calf, right thigh, left foot, left calf, left thigh.
3. As you relax each muscle, focus on the feelings of relaxation and heaviness in the muscle.

### VISUALIZATION

1. Sit in a comfortable position, without crossing the limbs. (Feel free to adjust your position, if you need to). Throughout this exercise, maintain a slow, even breathing pattern.
2. Choose a place or activity that you find very safe and relaxing (e.g., walking on the beach or in the woods). Imagine going to that place and being there, in great detail. Focus on the details – the feel of the sand between your toes, the sun on your body, the rustling of the leaves, etc.

### Images for relaxation:

When you are practicing relaxation, choose an image that conveys peace, comfort, or mental and physical letting go. This image can be anything you choose. You may think of the seashore, or a favourite spot in nature. It may be an image like the sun, a rope untwisting, ice melting, or a soothing colour. It may be the face of a pet or of someone you love. Every time you do relaxation, call up that image as you are becoming relaxed. Allow the symbol to grow and fill your awareness. Let all of the qualities of that symbol come to mind, and imagine them moving through your body on the rhythm of your breath. As you practise this more, you will be able to close your eyes anywhere and relax quickly by calling up your symbol and filling your awareness with it for a few minutes.

### LOVING KINDNESS/COMPASSION PRACTICE

1. **Find a Comfortable Position:** Begin by sitting or lying down in a comfortable position. Allow your body to relax. Gently close your eyes if you feel comfortable.
2. **Take a Few Deep Breaths:** Inhale deeply through your nose, allowing your belly to rise. Hold for a moment. Now exhale slowly through your mouth, feeling any tension melt away. Repeat this two more times.
3. **Bring Your Awareness to Your Heart:** Bring to mind a person or a pet for whom you are happy to see and have deep feelings of love. Imagine or sense this person or pet, noticing the feelings you have for them arise in your body. It may be a smile that spreads across your face, it may be a warmth in your body. Whatever it is, allow it to be felt.
4. **Let go** of this person or pet and continue to keep in awareness the feelings that have arisen. Place a hand over your heart. Feel the warmth of your hand and the rhythm of your heartbeat. Allow yourself to connect with this space of love and compassion within you.

5. **Start with Yourself:** Silently repeat these phrases, either in your mind or aloud:

*May I be safe*  
*May I be happy*  
*May I be healthy*  
*May I live in peace, no matter what I am given*  
*May my heart be filled with love and kindness.*

As you say these phrases, visualise a warm light surrounding you, filling you with love and kindness. Allow yourself to fully receive this warmth.

6. **Share Your Compassion:** Now, think of someone you care about deeply. Visualize them in your mind and repeat the same phrases for them:

*May you be safe*  
*May you be happy*  
*May you be healthy*  
*May you live in peace, no matter what you are given*  
*May your heart be filled with love and kindness.*

7. **Extend Your Circle:** Next, think of someone neutral—someone you don't know well. Visualize them and repeat the phrases:

*May you be safe*  
*May you be happy*  
*May you be healthy*  
*May you live in peace, no matter what you are given*  
*May your heart be filled with love and kindness.*

8. **Finally, Include All Beings:** Now, bring to mind all living beings everywhere. Feel your heart expand as you repeat the phrases:

*May you be safe*  
*May you be happy*  
*May you be healthy*  
*May you live in peace, no matter what you are given*  
*May your heart be filled with love and kindness.*

9. **Return to Yourself:** Slowly bring your focus back to yourself, holding onto that sense of warmth and kindness. Repeat the phrases for yourself once more:

*May I be safe*  
*May I be happy*  
*May I be healthy*  
*May I live in peace, no matter what I am given*  
*May my heart be filled with love and kindness.*

Take a few deep breaths. When you're ready, gently wiggle your fingers and toes. Open your eyes slowly, bringing this feeling of loving-kindness with you into your day.



## FIVE-MINUTE MUSCLE RELAXATION EXERCISE

1. Find a comfortable resting position.
2. Tense the muscles of your hands, arms, and shoulders. Hold the tension for 15 seconds (tightly but not so much that it hurts). Notice how you feel there, and then release. Appreciate the sensations of relaxation flowing into your hands, arms, and shoulders. Focus on the sensations of relaxation in this area for 20 seconds.
3. Tense the muscles of your face, in your mouth and throat, and around your neck. Hold for 15 seconds and release. Let your facial muscles smooth out, your neck release, and your throat relax. Notice the changes in sensations from tension to relaxation. Feelings of warmth and heaviness flow throughout your head area. Focus on the sensations of relaxation in this area for 20 seconds.
4. Now tense the muscles of the upper and lower back. While tensing these muscles, also tense the abdominal muscles and chest muscles. Hold for 15 seconds. Be aware of the tense sensations and then release. Be aware of the sensations of warm relaxation flowing from your head into your trunk. Appreciate these warm, relaxing feelings. Remember these feelings. Focus on the sensations of relaxation in this area for 20 seconds.
5. Now tense the muscles in the groin, buttocks, upper legs, lower legs, and feet. Tighten all these muscle groups at the same time. Hold them 15 seconds, and release. Notice the change in the sensations from tension to relaxation. Appreciate this change and enjoy the warm, heavy, relaxed sensations as they flow from your trunk to your legs and feet. Focus on the sensations of relaxation in this area for 20 seconds.
6. Now deepen your level of relaxation by focusing on your breathing. Breathe in deeply through your nose and hold your breath. Hold it to a count of four and notice the tension in your chest. Now exhale slowly. Blow out the air to a count of four and observe what happens throughout your body. Notice how your muscles continue to let go even more. They grow warmer, heavier, and more relaxed. Go on breathing deeply and evenly for a minute. After about a minute of deep breathing, continue with the next step.
7. Return to the awakened state by following these steps: First, move your hands and arms about, then move your feet and legs about, then move your head from side to side, then open your eyes and sit up, feeling calm and refreshed.

## BREATHING EXERCISE

1. Sit in a comfortable position, without crossing your legs. (Feel free to adjust your position, if you need to).
2. Breathe in through the nose slowly and deeply to the count of ten. Focus on abdominal breathing: make sure that your abdomen expands but that your chest does not rise. (See the box below for details on how to do this.)
3. Breathe out through the nose, slowly and completely, again counting to ten.
4. Concentrate on breathing and counting through each cycle. Repeat five to ten times.

### Abdominal breathing:

1. Place one hand on your stomach and one on your chest.
2. Take some slow, deep breaths into the stomach. It's helpful, but not essential, to breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth.
3. If you are doing abdominal breathing correctly, the lower hand should move as much or more than the hand on your chest.
4. Continue this slow, deep breathing for a couple of minutes, imagining the breath calming your body and clearing your mind.

## 'SPOT' MEDITATION

This technique can be practised during any free moment, for example sitting at a desk or waiting at a bus stop.

1. Sit (or stand) comfortably, wherever you are.
2. Pick out an interesting object in your field of vision. It could be a flower, the grass swaying in the wind, a pattern on someone's dress.
3. Settle your mind there and try to look - but not stare - at the object.
4. Use your eyes like a zoom lens in a camera. Let time slow down and explore the object at leisure. Imagine its texture or smell, if appropriate. Allow your mind to be free to make associations with the object.
5. Let your body soften and relax. Take a deep breath and sigh as you breathe out. Be aware of the object, your body and the stream of attention linking them.
6. Finally let the object go, consciously. Check how your mind state has changed. Are you calm and aware?

## FIVE-FINGER RELAXATION TECHNIQUE

The five-finger relaxation technique takes only a few minutes and can help with tension and anxiety. Two or three minutes spent on deep breathing and relaxation will be well spent, since focused relaxation and deep breathing have been shown to reduce the biological effects of tension and anxiety. By reducing the amount of adrenalin pumping into your system, you will clear your mind and begin to think again.

1. Sit in a comfortable position with both feet on the floor and your hands in your lap. Close your eyes.
2. Touch your thumb to your index finger. As you do so, go back in time when your body felt tired in a healthy way, when you had just engaged in an exhilarating physical activity. You might imagine that you had just played tennis, jogged, etc.
3. Touch your thumb to your middle finger. As you do so, go back to a time when you had a loving experience. It may be a warm embrace, or an intimate conversation, dinner with family or friends.
4. Touch your thumb to your ring finger. As you do so, go back to the nicest compliment you have ever received. Try to really accept it now. By accepting it, you are showing your high regard for the person who said it. You are really paying him or her a compliment.
5. Touch your thumb to your little finger. As you do so, go back to the most beautiful place you have ever been. Stay there for a while.

## A GUIDED RELAXATION EXERCISE

### Trainer's note:

This exercise is probably too long to include in a one-day training. However you may like to print it out to give to participants to take away, or use it in another setting.

This is a script for a relaxation exercise combining breathing and muscle relaxation. Have someone read it to you (or listen to a tape of yourself reading it) in a calm, slow voice, allowing time for you to take and hold breaths, to let out your breath slowly, and to first tighten, then relax your muscles slowly, as indicated in the script. After you have done this several times, you will be able to do the exercise without the tape or the reading.

*"Close your eyes and put yourself in a comfortable position. If you need to, you can make adjustments now or as we go along. Quiet moves will not disturb your relaxation."*

*Help your body begin to relax by taking some slow, deep breaths. Take a deep breath now. Hold your breath and count silently to three, or five, or ten. Take the amount of time holding your breath that feels good to you. Then let your breath out in an easy, soothing way. Breathe in again and hold it a few seconds... and, when you are ready, again let it out. As you let your breath out, imagine breathing out the tension in your body, out through your nose and mouth, breathing out the tension as you breathe out. Do it yet again, breathing in slowly... holding it... and out.*

*I will now going to teach you an easy method of relaxation. \* Make a tight fist with both hands... very tight ... so tight you can feel the tension in your forearms. Now, let go suddenly ... Notice the feeling of relaxation flowing up your arms... Make a fist with both hands again... and suddenly let go. Again, notice the feeling of relaxation in your arms... Let your mind move this feeling of muscle relaxation up your arms... through your shoulders...into your chest... into your stomach... into your hips. Continue to focus on this feeling of relaxation, moving it into your upper legs... through your knees... into your lower legs... your ankles and feet... Now let this feeling of comfortable relaxation move from your shoulders into your neck... into your jaw and forehead and scalp...Take a deep breath, and as you exhale, you can become even more deeply relaxed... You can deepen your relaxation by practicing this again. [Go back to the place above marked by the asterisk (\*) and repeat this section a second time].*

*However you feel right now is just fine. As you become even more relaxed and comfortable, each time you breath out you can continue to drift even deeper into a state of comfort... safe and serene ... When you relax, as you are now, you can think more clearly or simply allow yourself to enjoy feelings of comfort, serenity, and quiet. As a result of this relaxation, you can look forward to feeling more alert and energetic later on... You can enjoy a greater feeling of personal confidence and control over how you feel, how you think, and what you believe. You can feel calmer, more comfortable, more at ease, and more in control of what's important to you...*

*When you're ready, you can open your eyes. You can feel alert, or calm, or have whatever feelings are meaningful to you at this time. As you open your eyes, you may want to stretch and flex gently, as though you are waking from a wonderful nap."*

## Annex E: Grounding Techniques

These techniques can be used to support participants who may be having a strong trauma or emotional response. You do not need to take on a therapeutic role, but grounding can help them return to their bodies and the present moment quickly. Ask for permission to offer a technique, if possible (and appropriate), lower and slow your voice, you can walk through the prompts with them. You may see if they want some form of physical comfort like a glass of tea, to sit on our touch the ground, a hand to hold or other actions comfortable in your cultural context/relationship with them.

1. **5-4-3-2-1 practice** to engage their senses in the present moment (Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste), and
2. **Finger Holds for Emotional Regulation**  
 This practice is inspired by Jin Shin Jyutsu, a form of acupressure that connects emotions to different fingers. To calm and ground yourself, instruct them to use the following steps:  
**Step 1:** Start by holding the thumb of one hand with the other hand. Gently wrap your fingers around it and hold for a few deep breaths. Thumb: Helps with worry or anxiety.  
**Step 2:** Move to the index finger and hold it in the same way. Index finger: Helps with fear.  
**Step 3:** Continue holding each finger, one at a time, working through the middle finger (anger), ring finger (grief), and pinky (trying too hard or feeling disconnected).  
**Step 4:** Hold each finger for a minute or two, or until you feel a sense of calm.
3. **4-7-8 Breathing**  
 This breathing technique is designed to activate the parasympathetic nervous system and create a sense of calm. Here's how to do it:  
**Step 1:** Sit or stand comfortably. Close your eyes if it feels comfortable.  
**Step 2:** Inhale quietly through your nose for a count of 4.  
**Step 3:** Hold your breath for a count of 7.  
**Step 4:** Exhale completely through your mouth, making a soft whooshing sound, for a count of 8.  
**Step 5:** Repeat the cycle 3-4 times, focusing on the counting and the sensation of your breath.  
 Both of these practices can help shift focus from overwhelming feelings to the present moment, offering a sense of control and calm.



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