

# Responding to Staff Care Needs in Fragile Contexts (REST): Facilitation Manual

An accompanying manual that offers practical advice for the implementation  
of the assessment tool

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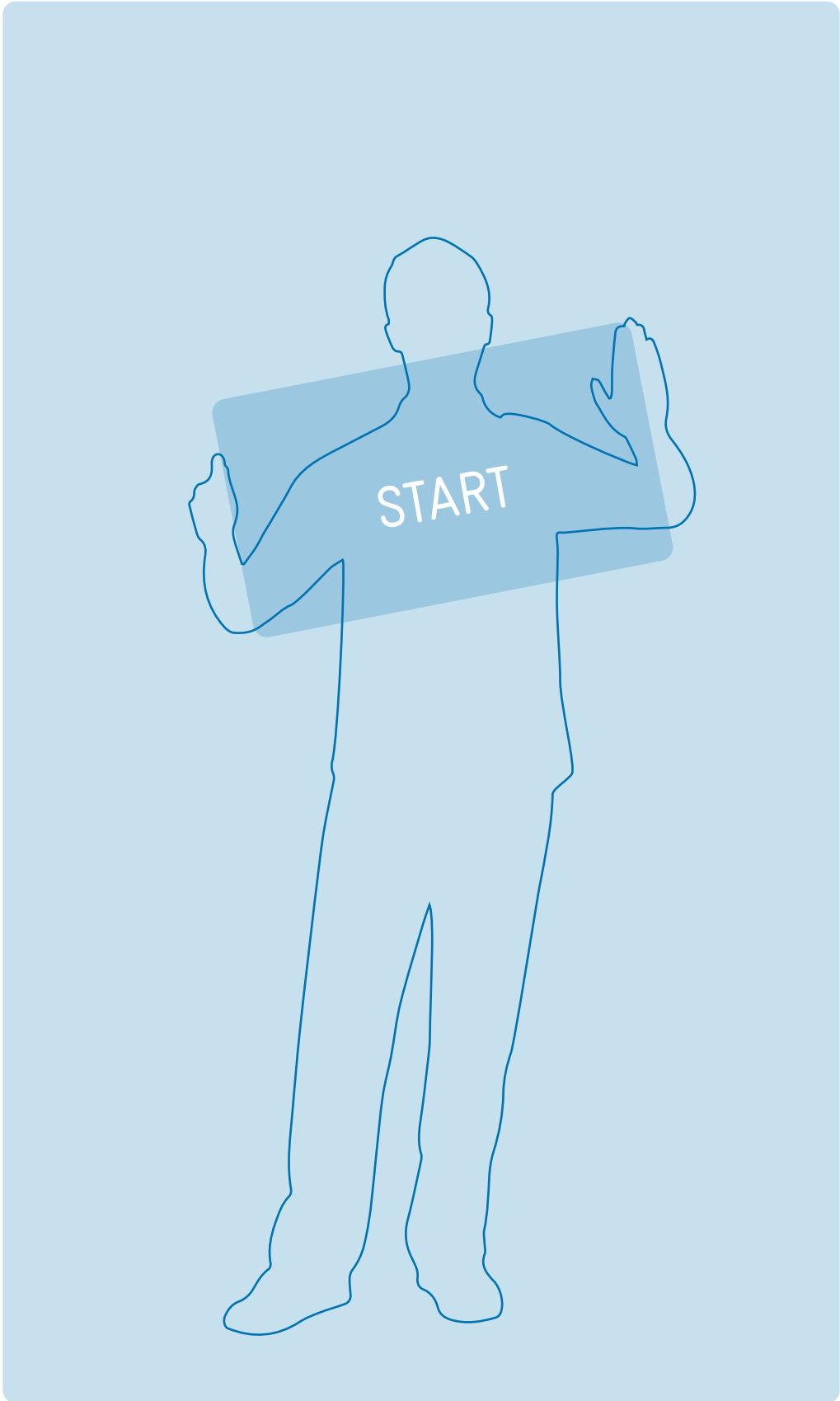
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# INTRODUCTION

This facilitation manual complements the REST assessment tool and the introductory guide. It provides practical recommendations on how to organize and shape the process and detailed explanations of the kinds of difficulties which may arise and possible ways to deal with those.

REST was designed to empower teams and organisations to take on staff care in a relational and process-oriented way. While it does not offer ready-made staff care solutions, the process it initiates is a supportive and empowering one, facilitating mutual acknowledgement, validation, relief/release, strategizing and solidarity. The REST tool can be used flexibly, according to the overall situation and needs of an organization/team, and the different modules and steps do not all have to be followed rigidly or mechanically. While this means that the tool has a certain degree of openness and adaptability, making it suitable for different contexts and groups, it also means that the role of facilitator is a more demanding one. Facilitators need to do a great deal of thinking before and during the REST process in order to make it as meaningful and productive as possible. Key capacities for effective facilitation include strong communication skills, experience in group facilitation, a commitment to ongoing self-reflexivity, a strong analytic ability to make connections across different levels of analysis, a certain amount of contextual knowledge, and a basic understanding of organizational dynamics.

Since every group that begins this process is different in work content, context, and group composition, we expect that the specific outcomes of this process will be different

as well. Groups vary in the way they define and prioritize needs, how creative they get in planning solutions, and in the level of external support and training they are able to acquire. There is no precise blueprint for what a good staff care plan looks like, however, a good plan always reflects the intention to address individual, group/team, and organizational issues in a collaborative way. This manual will help you, as a facilitator, to figure out what you need to know ahead of time, which sections of the tool are essential and which ones might be adapted, what kinds of issues can be anticipated and how to prepare for the reality that not everything in a group process can be predicted. It is important to read the manual in its entirety so that you can navigate this process in a way that remains flexible to the needs of the group and that is, at the same time, well-structured enough to generate concrete and sustainable responses to the challenges they present.

In the following pages we offer an overview of what can be achieved with the tool and the principles underlying the approach. We explain the possible challenges that can arise when using the tool and offer suggestions for how to deal with them. We also discuss important considerations for planning the REST implementation and explain the main tasks of the moderators, what to consider regarding the setting and in relation to some of the basic dynamics that occur in groups and how to work with them. Finally, in the section offering module by module guidance, you will find tips relating specifically to the individual steps, which can assist you in the implementation of the tool.

# KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE TOOL

The REST tool takes a group through a series of steps in order to analyse, define, and meet staff care needs. The process begins by establishing a common understanding of staff care as a collective institutional responsibility. This means that staff care is not viewed as a luxury, as an add-on, or as the facilitation of self-care. Instead, staff care consists of integrated structures and practices that are considered a basic necessity, which are protected by the organization, and which are shaped by those they are intended to support. Participants then begin identifying needs, analyzing one difficult situation in detail to pull out and examine broader issues. Next, they explore a range of overarching issues to see how they are relevant for their relative well-being. Finally, the group develops concrete plans to meet these needs and figures out how these plans will be implemented.

Beyond the basic aims of assessing and defining needs and developing a plan for the implementation of specific staff care structures, the tool has the following key objectives:

- Develop a psychosocial understanding of staff care as a set of contextualized practices that respond to specific needs within/across all levels of the organization.
- Foster dialogue within the organization, across levels, amplifying the voices of staff in relationship to each other which is essential in order to developing an understanding of what staff care needs exist and how they would most meaningfully be addressed.
- Begin or strengthen a process of relationship building, sharing, and increasing conflict capacity.
- Begin to examine the ways grief, trauma, fear, anger and other difficult emotions are a part of one's work and to find ways to work with them as well as possible.
- Produce a list of well-defined key staff care needs and a plan for concrete actions to be taken.

# BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE TOOL

## Participatory

Meaningful interventions must be shaped by those they are designed to support. The REST tool supports organizations to define their own needs and challenges, valuing and relying on the different expertise and experiences present within the organization. The approach is intended to both amplify voices of staff in the institution who come into most direct contact with suffering, injustice, and insecurity and to open an ongoing space for dialogue about different staff care needs and challenges across institutional roles. It is thus an overall process of empowerment, which strengthens communication and solidarity.

## Relative well-being

We understand well-being not as an individual state of being (achievable through good self-management techniques), but as a relationship that is consistently negotiated: a relationship between oneself and one's community and between oneself and broader structural conditions, including opportunities for development and growth, health, self-determination, safety/security, as well as possibilities for grieving, protest/dissent. Well-being is not about experiencing constant comfort and positivity, but about having and maintaining supportive relationships and structures that help a person to confront pain, illness, conflict, suffering, injustice in less destructive/oppressive ways. The illusion of constant positivity is especially damaging in contexts of war and crisis and this is why we speak of relative wellbeing.

What this means for staff care and using the REST tool:

- Feelings like sadness, anger, and despair are often seen as signs of illness or poor coping, but actually they are appropriate responses to violence and injustice.
- Emotions matter and they matter in/at work because they are an integral part of interacting with other people and are the basis for relationships which are at the core of psychosocial work. The REST tool supports staff to talk about emotions in a social context and as something everyone should pay attention to, not only psychologists.
- Staff care is not approached as practices to change individuals, but as practices to address the relationships between structural, organizational, group, and individual realities.

In this sense, the well-being and change this staff care approach wants to achieve is not only about states of being (e.g., how happy or depressed someone feels), but also about how well supported a person and/or group feels to develop personally and professionally, express difficult emotions, confront and transform conflict, reflect meaningfully on their work, make decisions and act, and/or set boundaries. In short, it is about their capacity to stay in relationship as much as possible in a difficult context.

## Psychosocial

The REST tool relies on a psychosocial understanding of well-being (as described above). From a psychosocial perspective, well-being has to do with the relationship between inner realities (e.g., feelings, beliefs, values) and external social realities. This means understanding how external circumstances shape inner realities and how inner realities can affect external circumstances. The REST process supports participants to make these connections in reference to challenges that come up in their work. Specifically, it asks participants to analyze issues across different dimensions (subjective, material, group, power to act) and to examine key psychosocial realities in fragile contexts (fear, trauma, grief, anger) in order to develop a comprehensive definition of staff care needs that is not limited to the individual level but encompasses the organizational and societal level as well and aims at developing a concrete plan that involves ongoing processes at all levels.

A psychosocial understanding of well-being is important for making sure that problems are not individualized, but seen as belonging to the relationship between a person and their environment, and for helping people to identify where/how they might be able to take action to transform challenges and conflicts. There are many reasons why this psychosocial linkage is not always obvious in day to day work and highlighting these connections when they appear is a key task of the facilitator.

## Conflict-sensitive

We understand conflict as a social and relational reality that is neither good nor bad, in and of itself. What can be damaging is how conflicts are carried out. The REST approach is conflict-sensitive in that it takes conflict as context, as content, and as a capacity.

## Conflict as context

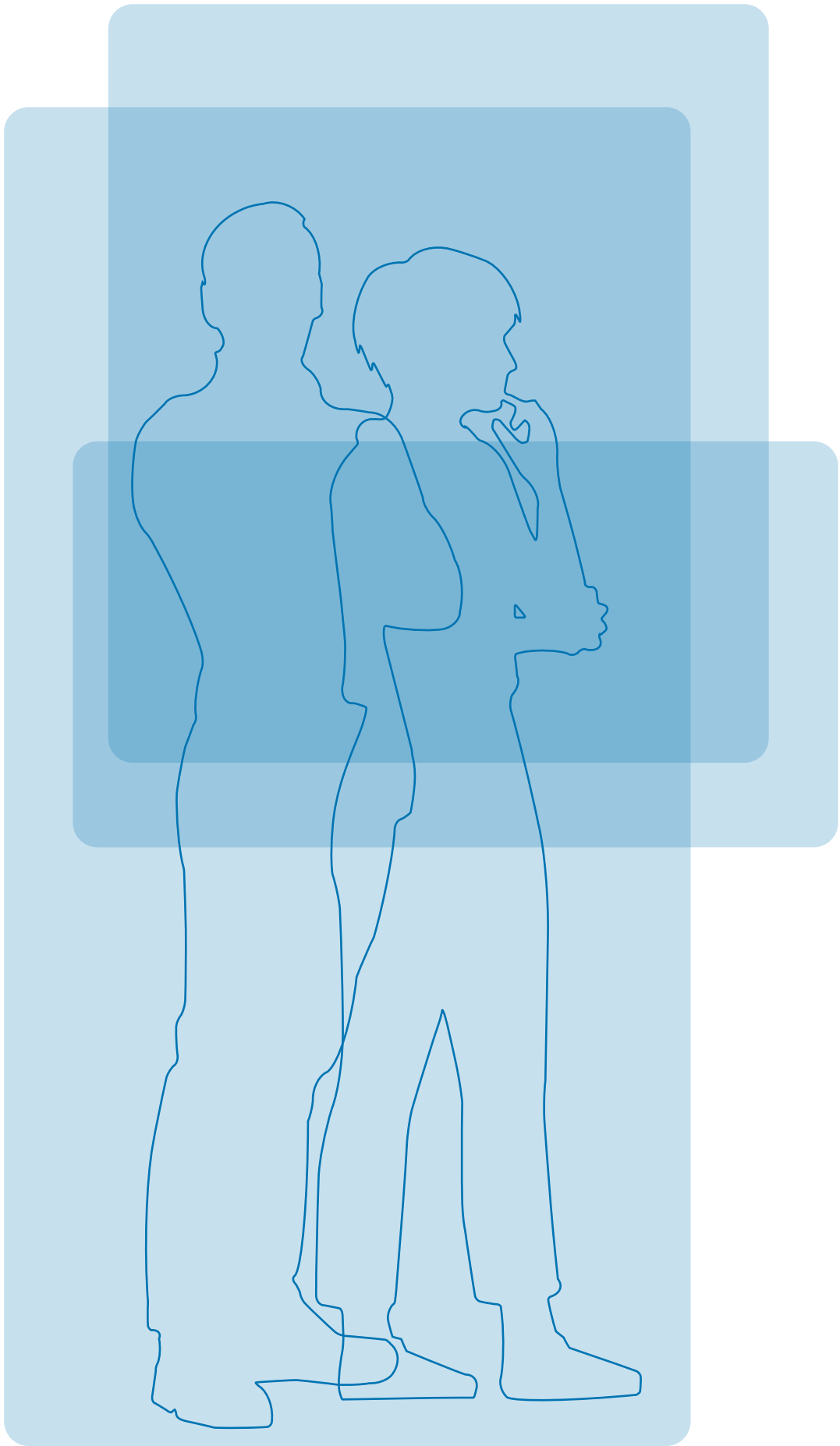
The REST approach assumes that staff care for people working in conflict cannot ignore conflict realities. Sustaining relative well-being in the context of conflict requires a frame for understanding and working with the ways broader social and political conflict gets inside you and the ways you and your organisation become part of the conflict. Good quality work and, correspondingly, good staff care, requires building reflective capacity on how one's work affects and is affected by the conflict and how one is positioned in relation to the conflict.

## Conflict as content

The REST tool asks groups to analyse a conflict situation across four psychosocial dimensions (subjective, material, power to act, group). Looking carefully at a conflict situation in this way helps participants to identify and understand opposing needs, interests, values, and objectives that affect wellbeing in work and beyond.

## Conflict as capacity

The REST approach assumes that conflict capacity, that is, the capacity to tolerate discomfort and engage constructively in conflict, is a key skill for individuals and groups to navigate change and development. Conflict capacity tends to be reduced in times of broader insecurity or violent conflict. Often conflict itself is seen as the real problem and not the way it is carried out. The REST tool supports groups to approach conflicts, not as threatening disputes to be avoided or silenced, but as tensions that offer possibilities for development and transformation.





# WHAT TO EXPECT

As a facilitator, you will guide the group to identify a number of overall challenges in their work, to analyze one of these challenges in depth in order to elaborate a list of key staff care needs, and to develop a concrete action plan to address these needs. You can expect that the process will begin to foster feelings of relief by acknowledging challenges and conflicts, feelings of recognition by opening up a space for supportive communication across organizational levels, and feelings of empowerment by engaging in collective analysis and strategizing.

At the same time, because this process is long and requires active emotional and intellectual engagement, there are certain difficulties and tensions that are to be expected throughout. One thing you can expect is that many people will not be used to this kind of participatory process (even if this is how they themselves work with communities) or to this kind of psychosocial discussion. They might not be used to spending this much time talking in detail about a specific difficult situation. It might also be a new experience to sit in a room with people from different levels of the organization and to speak in an open way about challenges. As a result, people may feel insecure about how or how much to engage at first. These insecurities are normal and some of the forms they commonly take are described in what follows. It is important that the facilitators acknowledge and work with this uncertainty, building trust and engagement over time.

## Common fears

### Fear of making conflicts worse by speaking about them

Many people avoid talking about conflicts because they are afraid of making them worse. However, just because a conflict is silenced, doesn't mean that it's not there, or that it's not being acted out, or that no one is being harmed by it. The destructive potential of conflicts is not in the fact that they exist, but in how they are carried out. The REST tool supports participants to engage respectfully and proactively about conflicts as opportunities for development. For this to happen, it is essential that the facilitators protect the participants from comments that judge, blame, shame, and/or degrade and protect a way of interacting with each other in which feelings can be discussed and vulnerability can be shown.

### Fear of appearing weak or unprofessional

As the facilitator, you are in a good position to, from the outset, challenge the idea that professionalism is connected to always showing strength and positivity. You can do

this by presenting the protection of vulnerability as a key objective of staff care and by presenting yourself in an authentic way (see the section on Basics of Facilitation for more on professional authenticity). Throughout the process, you can counter negative value judgments and negative self-judgments, validating people's expressions of vulnerability, emphasizing the professional value of feeling(s), and reframing weakness as a strength in an insecure situation, for example by showing how saying, "I'm scared and don't know what to do" is an important way of avoiding mistakes and harm caused by taking action without enough information.

### Fear of speaking up across hierarchies

Don't push people to overcome this fear too quickly. People often have a legitimate sense of what they are safe to share. It is not necessary that everyone shares everything they have in order to have a meaningful and generative discussion. It is important to acknowledge that speaking up in front of management can be difficult for frontline staff and that sharing vulnerabilities in front of their staff can also be intimidating for management. Working actively and transparently on building a climate of mutual trust is critical (see the section on Basics of Facilitation for more on establishing safe spaces).

### Fear of being criticized/judged by others

It is normal that people feel nervous about sharing vulnerabilities for fear of being judged. It is not only frontline staff who might feel they risk being judged by management, but also management who might feel anxious to open themselves up to potential criticism from front line staff, especially when organizational issues are on the table. As a facilitator, it is important to stress that the group is here to try to understand each other as best as they can and that understanding doesn't mean you have to agree. Creating a non-judgmental setting is not about banishing judgments; it is about helping people to be aware of judgments and assumptions as they arise and not pushing them on others.

As a facilitator, it is important to actively protect the person who is sharing a difficult situation from value judgments. Sometimes this can be done in a subtle way, for example by showing an alliance with the narrator by standing or sitting alongside her/him and by sharing appreciation for his/her openness, and sometimes this will require more active intervention, asking someone to rephrase/reframe their comment or interrupting someone who is saying something harmful, for example.

## Common frustrations

### **This process doesn't offer a training in self care techniques or a recipe for how to do staff care**

This is true, the process doesn't offer a standard recipe for self or staff care, but participants do develop real experience in how to understand and tackle staff care issues in a participatory way. Although the REST tool is not a staff care solution, as the facilitator, you can emphasize that part of what this process can achieve is an opening or strengthening of communication and participation in the organization, which is a key task of staff care. The kind of communication this process tends to foster is also important in that it offers the possibility of acknowledgement: acknowledgement that we are all affected by the suffering we encounter, that our work is seen, and that our emotions are legitimate.

In the preparation phase, it is important to make sure that all participants, not only management, will understand ahead of time what this workshop is really about, what it involves, and what it is not.

### **Many problems are discussed, but not all problems are solved**

It's important to recognize that not all problems are solvable. However, even problems without solutions can have better ways of being managed and worked with. It's critical not to discount the importance of acknowledging and examining problems in terms of the sense of relief this recognition can produce and/or in order to initiate a meaningful change process. As a facilitator, you can discuss upfront how important it is to really understand the problem you want to solve before you start trying to solve it. You can use the metaphor of a doctor prescribing medication without taking the time to do a thorough examination and diagnosis. Throughout the workshop, you can highlight how the definition of the difficulties are changing as the group analyses the problem situation in more depth.

Help the group stay realistic about their expectations of the process and be clear that meaningful staff care, just like meaningful self-care, isn't only comforting, but also involves some challenging work.

### **It is a long process that is sometimes tiring and emotionally demanding**

There will be moments where everybody is tired and drained. When this happens, acknowledge the participants' feelings. If the group's energy is especially low at certain points, you can take a break or lead a short energizing activity to help to regain focus, to reconnect to the moment/the body, or to alleviate a bit of tension. It is important that you be thoughtful in choosing the type of energizer and the moment to do it. You do not want to inadvertently belittle

the significance of what somebody has shared by diverting the group into a humorous energizer, for example. Continue to reassure the group that the facilitators are there to support the process and that ultimately, they are the ones to direct it. Stay in touch with the group about how they are feeling throughout.

## Common tensions

### **Someone speaks pain, vulnerability, or insecurity out loud in the group for the first time**

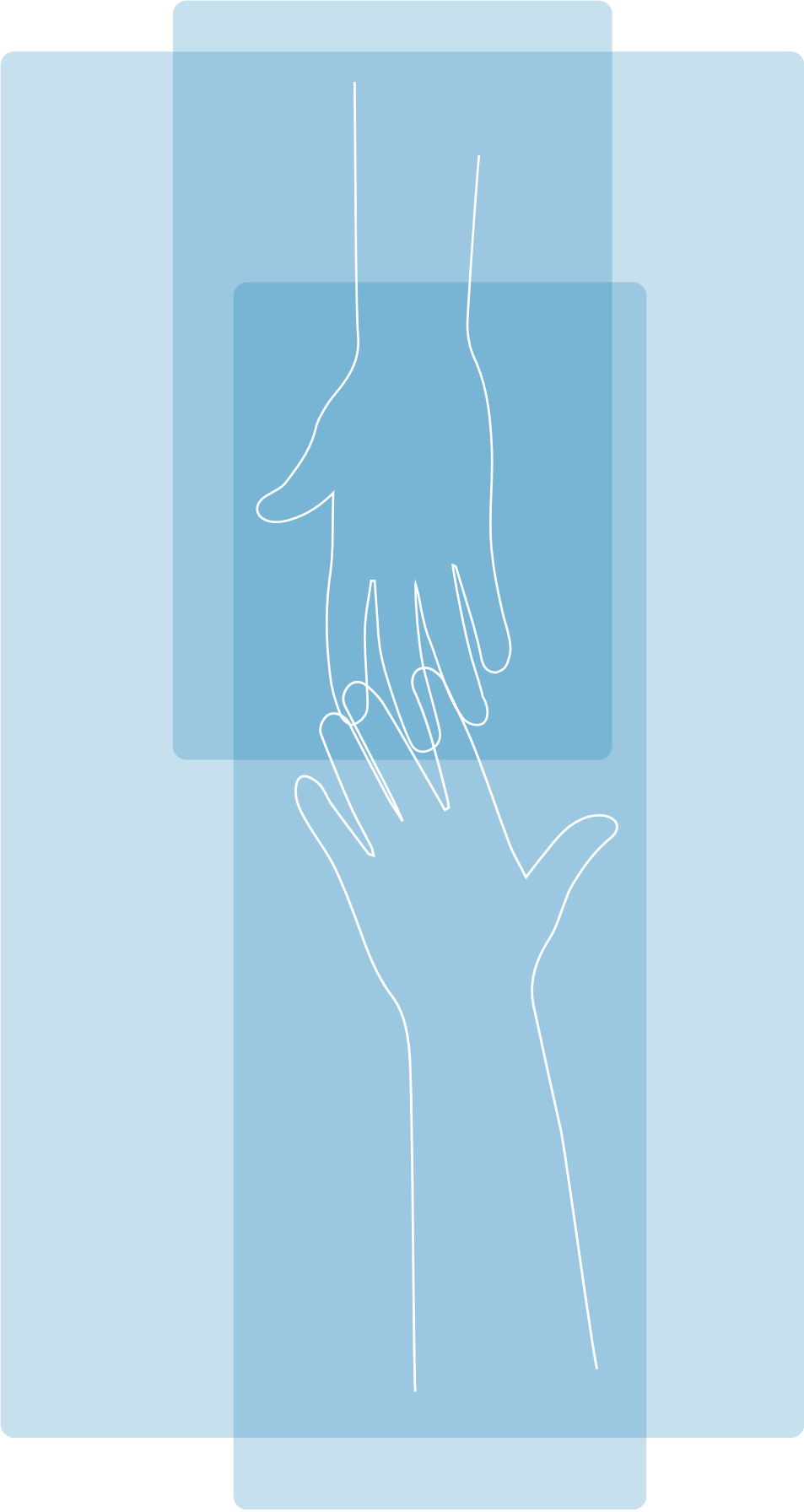
The first time someone opens up in a group that isn't used to sharing difficult emotions, the group often tries to silence, dismiss, neutralize, or invalidate the expression of vulnerability. It is important not to let such moments simply go by and it is critical to protect the person who has shared. You can reflect the particular dynamic back to the group (e.g., "I noticed I felt a bit tense there all of a sudden"), ask them what they make of it, and offer your own reflections. Note the resistance of the group in a non-judgmental way.

### **A conflict that has been suppressed or muted until now is spoken out loud**

Conflicts are not likely to be resolved in this process, but they can begin to transform. The REST process can offer the chance to acknowledge that a conflict exists and to figure out together what is at stake, what interests and needs belong to the conflict, and what might be required in order to confront it in a more transformative way. A silent or suppressed conflict does not mean no one is affected or harmed by it. Speaking it out loud is a first and necessary step to being able to work on it in less destructive ways. Nonetheless, it is important to respect and protect anyone who feels unsafe to discuss. In these cases, you can acknowledge what has been brought up as a conflict, summarize what appears to be at stake, and affirm that there isn't enough security yet to go further.

### **It doesn't always feel good while you are exposing problems and examining difficult emotions**

If you are working as external facilitators, acknowledge that it isn't easy to "air dirty laundry" so-to-speak in front of outsiders. It also isn't easy to do in front of each other because of the fear of appearing unprofessional or weak and the fear of being blamed. Often when a problem is 'exposed,' it is already known and is just not talked about openly. Instead it is usually the subject of gossip, rumours, and speculation. If the process of opening up problems is well contained by the facilitators by offering recognition and being sensitive to boundaries, this process can also be rewarding. As facilitators, keep the goals of the process in focus throughout: really understanding the difficulties in order to develop practices that sustain relative well-being.





### Feelings and reactions are expressed indirectly

Communication is always happening, even in silence. It is important to pay attention to the ways people may express their feelings or reactions in indirect ways, becoming preoccupied with one's cell phone, frequently leaving the room, or falling asleep, for example. Signs of inattention, restlessness, or fatigue are often assumed to signal boredom, disinterest, or hostility, but they could just as well signal nervousness, sadness, or emotional overload. Additionally, it is possible that someone feels bored or hostile because they are emotionally overwhelmed. As a facilitator, it can be easy to fall into the trap of assuming these are signs of disrespect toward you or other group members, either addressing them as forms of disrespect that should be corrected or ignoring them in order to avoid feeling hurt. Instead, it is important not to make assumptions about what is being expressed and rather to make clear observations about what you notice and to ask the group openly how they are feeling and where these feelings are coming from. It is normal that dynamics of resistance or avoidance appear when a group is dealing with difficult issues and emotions and it is important to pick these up as well. Sometimes a participant might approach a facilitator one-on-one to express something they do not feel comfortable sharing in the group. This might be more likely to happen in the beginning of the process because participants might be distrustful of the group. It is important to hear a person out, but to be clear on the limits of what you are able to do outside of the group context, and to avoid giving the sense of forming a secret alliance. It is important to distinguish between personal issues that really do require a private space for sharing and issues that actually belong to the group discussion. If it is a personal issue, you can engage, listen, and acknowledge, but it is very important to be clear on your limits as a facilitator and not a private therapist. If the issue is one that does belong to the group, see if you can figure out with the person whether there are any aspects of what they are experiencing that they would be comfortable to share with the group and/or what could help them to feel more secure.

### Common facilitator pitfalls

#### Wanting to solve all problems on the spot

This is neither possible, nor is it desirable. The REST tool should help groups identify their own challenges and develop their own tailor-made solutions. The kinds of problems identified in the REST process require ongoing atten-

tion beyond the workshop. It is not the facilitators' task to find solutions, but rather to support a thorough analysis, attainable and sustainable solutions, and the development of collective ownership of the REST process and beyond – a facilitator that solves all the problems disempowers the group. Again, it is important to keep in mind that not all problems have solutions and not simply because some problems are so complex or that a solution is out of reach (which is also often the case), but because so frequently in this work, the problems staff face refer to relationships (with oneself, with one's colleagues, with one's clients). Relationships are not something to be solved, but something that can and should be developed.

#### Wanting the participants to be happy the whole time

This is an understandable desire that also connects with participants' expectation that staff care should have an immediate effect on one's happiness and level of stress. It is important not to see tensions and conflicts in the process as signs of failure. It is important to pay attention to these dynamics, to acknowledge them, to approach them respectfully as openings for real contact with one another and spaces for change and development (personal, professional, group, institutional).

#### Pushing too hard for emotional breakthroughs

It can be extremely rewarding when a group develops enough trust to open up and share expressions of vulnerability with one another. However, as facilitators, it is important to respect when people remain more distant or quiet and to not over-emotionalize the content or to press too hard for people to open up and show particular signs of emotion. Emotion can be expressed in many different ways, directly and indirectly, and it is important to be attentive and responsive to what is in the room and not push for what one expects or hopes to see/hear.

Each of these common pitfalls has to do with the importance of recognizing the demands, the responsibilities, and the limits of the facilitator's role and their relationship with the group and the organization as a whole. Avoiding or overcoming these pitfalls requires ongoing critical self-reflexivity, that is, consistently paying attention to one's own wishes, interests, assumptions, position, and personal history and what role these play in shaping the process and its dynamics.

# WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SETTING UP THE REST WORKSHOP

The following describes important aspects to be considered when planning the workshop.

## Establishing contact with the organization

It is essential to establish a good relationship with management and to establish organizational commitment. To do this, of course, there must be an introduction in which facilitators and management get to know each other and the REST approach and the roles of the facilitators are explained. Furthermore, the process requirements should be made clear and transparent (e.g. time commitment, readiness to talk about problems) and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) should be signed by both sides. The MOU does not have to follow a specific template and should be drawn up according to the specificities of the organization, clearly laying out what the institution wants and what the external support will do.

Understanding the organizational context and work content is important and the more familiar the facilitators are with this context/content, the better. Some aspects of the organisational context and work content that are important to have a sense of include:

- Services and service-users
- Mission, mandate, key values
- Staff composition (age, sex, work experience, background, etc.)
- Roles and responsibilities
- Variety of work tasks and demands
- Staff care structures, experience with staff care
- Are there any current issues that concern the organization?
- Have there been any recent changes/are changes to be expected?
- What is the organisation's motivation to initiate this process and what are their expectations?
- Are there conflicts in the group?

## How much of the REST-tool to use

You should decide ahead of time, with input from the organisation, whether it would be best to use the REST tool

in its entirety or whether there are specific components to focus on. This decision will depend on a variety of factors, including your own knowledge and capacity, the amount of time the group has, what the group has already done related to staff care, etc.

## Who should participate

This process is designed, from the outset, to initiate a dialogue between front line staff, middle and upper management, emphasizing the needs of those working on the front line and ensuring a commitment from management to protect and implement what is planned. Therefore, in a group of maximum 18 people (in a larger group becomes increasingly difficult to have discussions in which everyone can participate), most of the participants should be front line staff with a few participants from middle and upper management. All participants should participate on equal terms, in the sense that they are expected to share their own experience, thoughts, and feelings. Management is not there to observe or to receive suggestions, but to engage in a mutual exchange, as people engaged in similarly challenging work, albeit from a different position.

## Single or Co-facilitation

We strongly recommend co-facilitation. Although it is possible to facilitate the REST implementation alone; it is an intensive process that demands consistent intellectual and emotional engagement. Being able to alternate taking primary responsibility for different components is a great advantage. Facilitation of this process is not simply the moderation of the discussion, but also requires consistently and meaningfully synthesizing the group's analyses in order to support the development of clear definitions of staff care needs and of a corresponding and concrete staff care plan. Doing this well is much easier when you have a co-facilitator to consult with. Additionally, having a co-facilitator greatly eases the task of detailed documentation of the process, as one person can take notes while the other facilitates.

## Language interpretation

If participants do not speak the same language as each other or as the facilitators, it is important to have external and professional interpretation whenever possible. Even when participants have good competency in the

other language, in such a process it is important that everyone has the option of speaking and processing in their first language. In these cases, interpretation should be arranged.

Some decisions about the appropriateness of simultaneous versus consecutive interpretation need to be made. Our experience has been that when the group and facilitators don't share a common language, it's effective for everything the facilitators say to be interpreted consecutively and for everything the group says to be interpreted simultaneously. If there are participants who do not share a common language, all interpretation should be done consecutively.

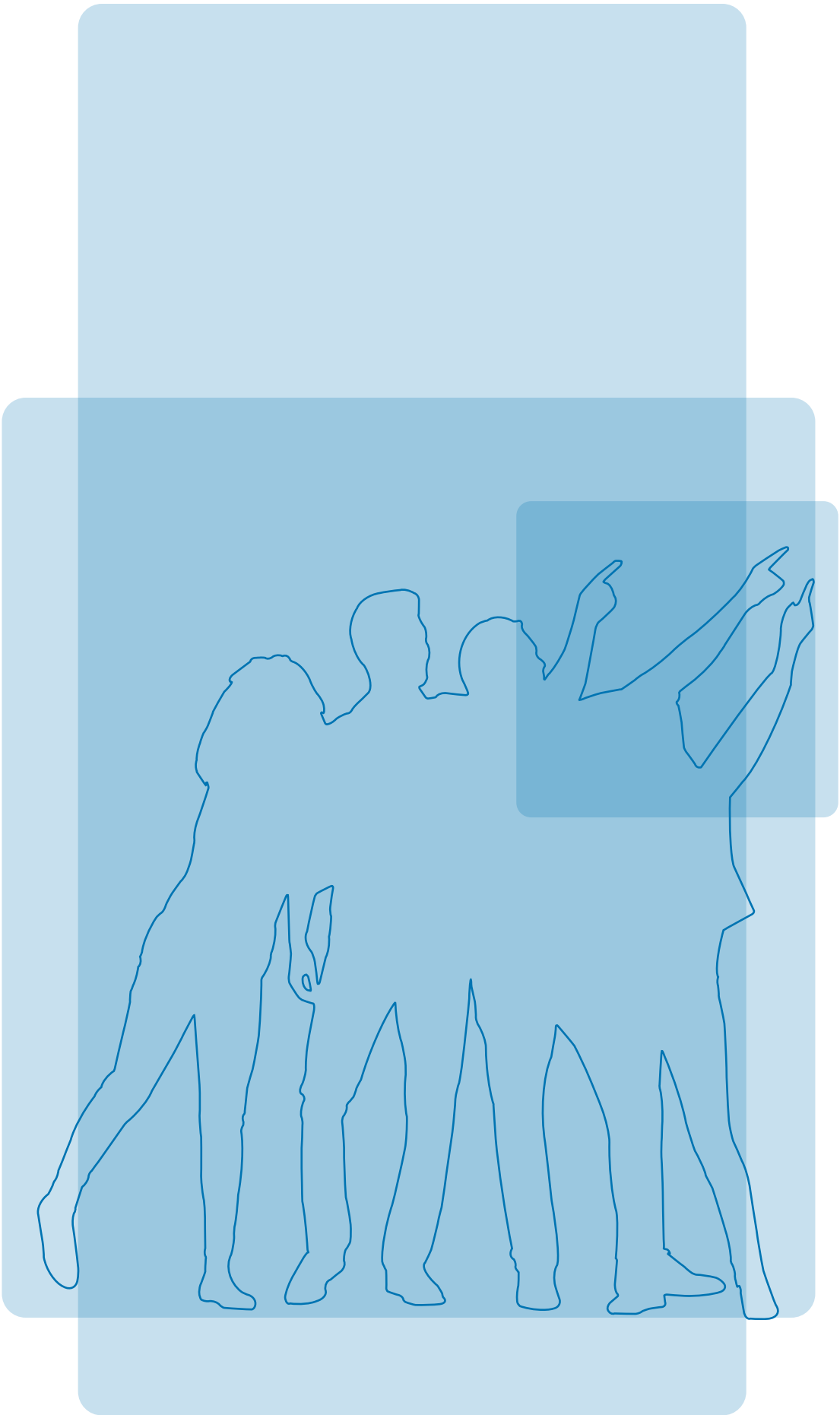
Whenever interpretation is necessary, it is important that it be precise. Interpreters should be asked to interpret everything directly in a person's own words and voice (e.g., using "I") and never to summarize, censor, "tidy up" or add to what someone has said. The facilitators should speak in shorter turns than may initially feel natural in order to facilitate precise interpretation. Ask participants to interject when they don't understand something or if they think something has been interpreted incorrectly. Good interpretation is difficult and emotionally demanding work and is a very important part of building and maintaining trust in an intensive process. Be sure to thank interpreters for their work in front of the group and check in with them to see how they are doing before they go at the end of each day.

## Setting

Establishing a securing setting is a key task of facilitators. Many of the recommendations here may seem like minor details, but are crucial to creating a trustworthy setting, particularly in an insecure context. Regardless of where the workshop is held, the room should be large enough to sit comfortably with all participants in one large circle and in small breakaway groups. Chairs should be arranged in a circle with nothing (e.g., tables) in between participants. To maintain a safe and confidential sharing space, an effort should be made to prevent interruptions into the room from people who are not participating (including venue staff, for example, if the workshop is being held externally) while the workshop is ongoing. Cell phones should be turned off throughout. Breaks are also an important part of the setting and give the opportunity to enter into a less formal exchange with the participants.

The group can decide whether this process takes place in-house or at another location. Certainly, it may be more affordable and practical to conduct the workshop at the organization. It may also have the advantage of, from the outset, not sending the message that staff care is a topic only dealt with outside of work. However, holding the workshop off premises usually guarantees fewer work-related interruptions and distractions and sends the message that the organization is eager to dedicate time, space, and money for thinking about staff care.







# MAIN TASKS OF THE FACILITATORS

As facilitators, your fundamental task is to establish a real relationship with the group, foster a vivid and engaging atmosphere, to contain the group process, and to protect the structure of the workshop. It is critical that participants feel genuinely invited into a collective process of envisioning and implementing staff care that is meaningful for them. Some specific considerations for doing this effectively are summarized below.

## Guiding the group through the process

- Facilitate the conversation by summarizing, condensing, and guiding clearly from step to step: Make the progression of steps clear and coherent, keep the group on topic, and when transitioning from step to step, highlight where the group is in the process and where they are going next.
- Finish each step with a summary and check in with the group to see if you've understood correctly and/or if something important is missing. When you summarize: include agreement, disagreement, interests, feelings, and wishes. Summarizing can also be helpful when a conflict arises, not only because it can clarify different perspectives, but also because it can help people feel heard and understood and can slow the pace of the conversation which can have a deescalating effect.
- Keep to the allotted time frames. Good time management is not simply a practical issue, but also a relational one, creating a secure framework and building trust. The participants see that they can rely on the facilitators.
  - Explain that respecting starting and ending times is a crucial piece of the participatory process and of establishing a trustworthy space
  - Begin on time (when this is not possible, comment on why you are waiting)
  - Give an overview of the steps you will cover and stick to this plan
  - Take breaks as scheduled
  - For group work, announce the time allotted and announce when a few minutes are left so that people can adjust

When running short on time, address the time pressure and how you want to deal with it. Write down any pending issues so that they can be worked on at a later time. Sometimes issues or dynamics come up that require more time and attention than planned and a certain degree of flexibility is useful in these cases. When this happens, facilitators can explicitly allot a specific amount of time to take up the presenting issue, while ensuring that the overall time frame remains steady and reliable.

## Supporting the development of the group's analysis

The REST process requires that facilitators take responsibility not only for its basic moderation, but also for supporting the group to develop a clear problem description and a strong analysis of identified challenges and to build a corresponding plan. As such, facilitators should share their knowledge about staff care issues and practices and offer their thoughts and observations on the developing analysis at key moments. When the group is at an important point in the process (a conflict, a discussion, a decision, etc.), facilitators should not only help to constructively carry on the process, but also offer their reflections and information to help them move forward; pointing to issues or aspects that may be more visible from an external perspective, examples of similar cases, ways of approaching a specific topic, possible advantages and disadvantages of a particular approach, and so on.

Although facilitators should offer their reflections and share their particular expertise, this should always be done within a participatory frame. Facilitators should consistently check with the group to see whether their reflections and interpretations make sense and feel relevant, without assuming that all participants share the same perspective. The group should be given clear opportunities to doubt, to contradict, or to reframe what the facilitators bring in. Facilitators are not there to educate participants about their own realities, but rather to exchange productively from different vantage points in order to generate a good collective analysis of work challenges. Each of the participants holds significant expert knowledge in their work and organization, so it is neither necessary nor useful for the moderators to provide what they might believe to be all the answers. Facilitators are not present to take on the role of expert and, rather, are there to accompany the collective process of the group.

## Supporting a participatory frame

The goal is for all group members to actively participate in a process that engages different perspectives and values different forms of expertise in order to collectively develop a meaningful, relevant, and sustainable staff care plan.

In order to involve all the participants, the following aspects are important:

- Foster a safe and supportive environment:

It is to be expected that most groups will begin with at least a certain degree of insecurity. You should expect that not only frontline staff might feel nervous to speak in front of management, but also that management might feel anxious about opening up in front of frontline staff. In some cases, there may be participants who feel it is simply not safe enough to share openly or honestly. A space does not become safe simply because you declare it so, even if everyone agrees. Safety is something that is built over time and with experience. Acknowledge this and explain that confidentiality is something we construct step by step, although it is something everyone should commit to. Encourage everyone to share in a way they feel is comfortable and express the hope that trust will be strengthened over time. It's also important to recognize that a group process is not hindered by some level of holding back. By no means is it the goal of the process to have everyone divulge all their inner thoughts and feelings, but rather to get people into authentic contact as much as possible in order to have meaningful exchanges that lead to meaningful staff care interventions.

- Keep conversation going in a constructive manner and balance participation:

- If many want to talk, propose a sequence of speakers to follow.
- If many remain silent, ask open questions, build on experience, offer examples, endure silence, and reflect together. Create opportunities for those who aren't speaking as much to get involved.
- If a few participants are dominating the discussion, the other participants might become either passive or aggressive. What you can do: Involve people who send non-verbal signals: „I see you are frowning. What is your opinion on this subject?“
- Interrupt those who are more dominant in an appreciative way, for example, „I have the impression that you are very committed to this topic and have a lot to say about it, but now I would also like to hear from the other participants.“

- There are, of course, some ways to begin to foster trust and a sense of safety, including:

- Making sure participants know ahead of time what to expect from this process, including the motivations and expectations of management for engaging in this process in the first place
- Addressing fears and insecurities when they come up, asking the group what they think could be done with these Establishing ground rules and revisiting these (including having agreements about how to deal with the issue of confidentiality)
- Promoting constructive, appreciative, resource-oriented communication
- Actively protecting participants, especially the participant whose situation is being analysed (for example, by giving them the final word after solutions are suggested)
- Following the principle: "disturbances take precedence". Disturbances are a normal part of the process and can give us important information about the state the participants are in. Disturbances refer to any instance in which the group process is impeded (e.g., fatigue, side-talks, restlessness). Address the disturbance, try to find out the reason, and then respond, for example, by offering a break, changing from input to discussion, explaining unclear aspects of the workshop, and so on.
- Attending actively to participants, not just paying attention to what they say, but also to their non-verbal signs is always useful. Verbalize these observations, for example, "Nour, I've seen you nodding to what Iman said – does what she said resonate with you?"

## Secure spaces for reflection during and following the REST process for the facilitators

Make sure you have reflection spaces for yourself following the workshop, for example, in the form of supervision, intervention, follow-up talks with your co-facilitator, etc. It is also important to build in time for reflection during the workshop to reflect on your feelings, actions, attitudes, and your effect on the process.

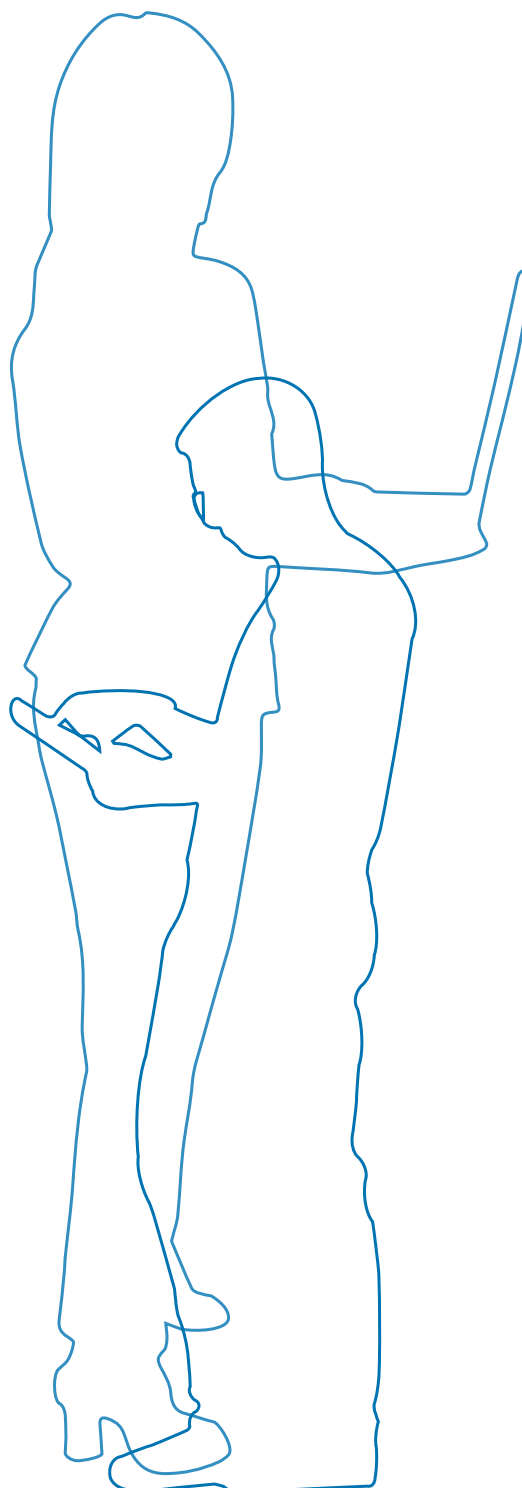
Some questions you might explore include,

- How well am I guiding the group through the process? What could I change or enhance?
- Are my expectations realistic? Are there ways I am putting too much pressure on myself?
- How well am I supporting the group's ownership of this process?
- What is my attitude towards the process and towards the participants?
- Are my boundaries adequate? Am I respecting my own boundaries?
- How is the group reacting to me?
- Do I have the support I need to cope with the difficult feelings this process can provoke in facilitators (e.g., helplessness, hopelessness, exhaustion)?

Your feelings are an important tool for reflection. Paying attention to your feelings can help you to remain aware of your own boundaries (see section on boundaries in the following section "Helpful attitudes for facilitation") and to better understand them in the group. Reflect on your feelings in relation to the group process; for example, if you feel confused or dizzy during a group discussion, it can be an indicator that something important is going on in that discussion that deserves more attention.

## Documenting the process and assuring the flow of information

The facilitators should document the process of the whole workshop as a memory aid for the participants, in order to highlight important insights, to give an overview of what has been done and as a support for providing information to the rest of the team who hasn't participated (discuss with the participants beforehand with whom this report is ought to be shared). At the end of the workshop, the motivation is often still very high, but it quickly fades away when people get back into the daily routine, so it is best to send this report as soon as possible.



# HELPFUL ATTITUDES FOR FACILITATION

## Boundaries and how to establish a trusting relationship

Part of establishing a trusting relationship is making your role and limits clear and transparent. Clear boundaries help to ensure security by offering structure and predictability. Certain personal and professional limits are important to make clear in this kind of process, for example, that facilitators are not present in a therapeutic capacity and are not there to provide solutions. Some boundaries are more obvious (e.g., legal and professional standards) and others are more nuanced and context-dependent. Many boundaries differ from person to person, from situation to situation, and need to be established together in an open and ongoing process. It is important to open up what might be considered “cultural” boundaries (personal space, taboo topics, cultural and religious manners, etc.) for discussion and not to assume that everyone in the room shares the same beliefs or practices, while, at the same time, respecting individual boundaries. The facilitators should establish a relationship and setting that is warm and personal, while paying attention to differences in how ‘friendliness,’ ‘openness,’ and ‘respect’ are constructed and perceived by individuals in different contexts and in different positions.

Because the REST process engages with challenging situations and difficult emotions, it is important to not only protect the boundaries of participants, but also to protect your own. This means that you are conscious of your feelings, of how they relate to the group process, and that you can integrate relevant information into the group discussion.

## Authenticity and professionalism

Authenticity and professionalism are often thought of as contradictions. In fact, authenticity is an integral part of professionalism. The relational dynamics between the group and the moderators are immensely important. For the group to start trusting the facilitators and build a meaningful connection, the facilitators must be authentic. It can be difficult to be authentic because we may have been socialized to hide our emotions, imperfections, and vulnerabilities. Also, we may be afraid jeopardize our status as experts and lose control over the process. It is likely that most of the participants share these fears in their work. So, when a facilitator strives to be authentic, not only does it allow a better connection to develop with participants, but it can also serve as an example for how to deal with emotions, imperfections, and vulnerability in one’s work. We

talk about protection of vulnerability as a key element of staff care – doing this ourselves puts it into action right from the beginning.

What do we mean by being “authentic”? It is important not to deny feelings and to pretend that we are, for example, relaxed, if we are not. Others are likely to pick up on how we feel anyway. Our feelings often give us important clues for the group process. If we reflect on this and bring this reflection into the group, it can be very helpful for the process. Examples of authenticity in the workshop could include: allowing yourself to show feelings (e.g. to cry when you are deeply touched), acknowledging when you don’t know something, being clear when you haven’t understood something, or being transparent if you have made a mistake, and being open for critique.

The participants and the group process always have priority. When you bring in your feelings, it is always with the aim of supporting the group process and within the context of your professional role. Don’t disclose personal information too early or too often in order to not overburden the participants. The participants should not feel responsible for or burdened by your feelings. Reflect on your behaviour and how it affects the individual participants and the group process. If your emotions are so strong that you are no longer present for the participants and the process and need help yourself, then this leads to a role reversal: the participants take care of you, which can lead to overburdening and fear. If something like this happens, you can check in and coordinate with your co-facilitator about how to proceed. Maybe you need to pause for reflection, or just a moment in which the other takes over the moderation, for example.

## Illusion of neutrality and necessity of multidirectional partiality

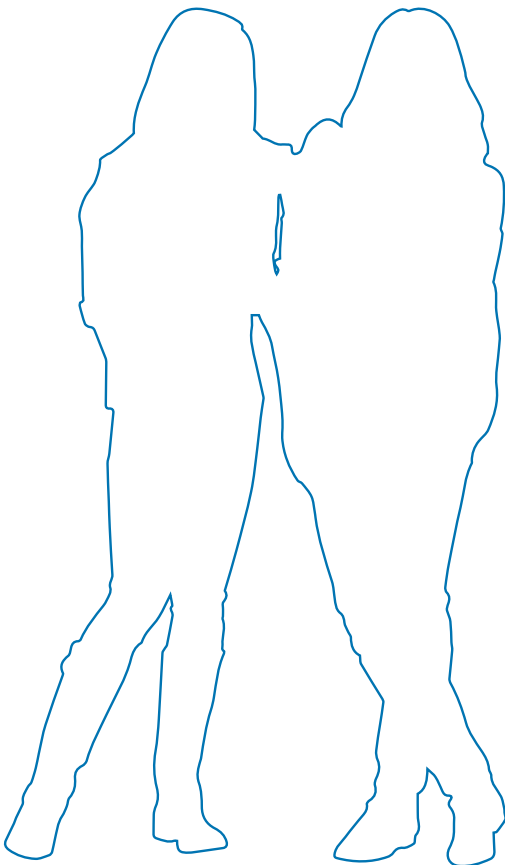
It is often suggested that facilitators be neutral towards the participants, the process, and the outcome. However, neutrality is an illusion. We all have particular standpoints, shaped by life history, ethnicity, religion, gender, abilities, etc., that influence our perceptions and that also shape how we are perceived by others. Recognizing that we can never be neutral is the first important step in dealing adequately with our assumptions, judgments, and biases. Instead of neutrality, we aim for a multidirectional partiality approach and an attitude of appreciation towards all participants. By multidirectional partiality, we mean that the facilitators are

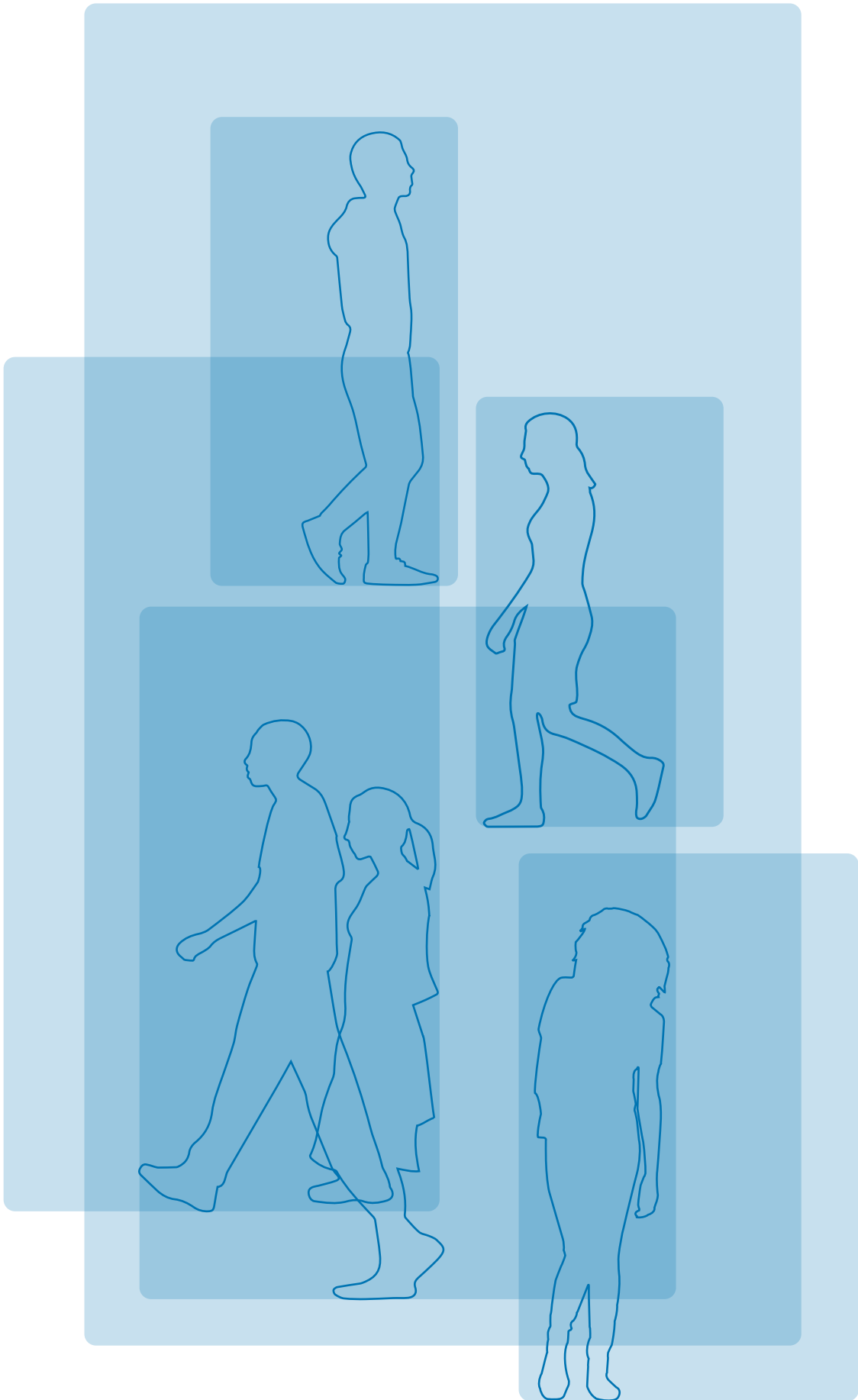
not aligned with one person / group, but connect empathetically with all participants and seek equal participation in the process and for everyone to be heard. Sometimes it makes sense to support certain participants / groups of participants in order to ensure that everyone can be heard and represent their interests, for example, by representing their concerns as a proxy, protecting participants from insults and judgments, etc. This may be necessary if there are clear power asymmetries, such as hierarchies, number of people, or rhetorical skills. It is important that this partisanship is short-term and transparent. Nobody is free of biases, but there are ways to deal with and work on your own biases to reduce the chance that they dominate and shape the dynamic:

## Self-compassion and care

Facilitating this process entails taking on some of the same challenges and risks that the participants face in their work (e.g., secondary trauma, desire to appear all-knowing or to feel permanently strong, working without limits, trying to solve all problems). It is normal to experience a range of difficult emotions during this process, self-doubt, insecurity, grief, frustration or anger, for example. It is important to engage with these emotions, to resist the tendency to relativize them, and to take the obligation for self/collective care seriously.

- Familiarize yourself with different forms of discrimination and reflect on your own experience, attitudes, and behaviour
- Find spaces to reflect on the facilitation (supervision, intervision, written reflection, debriefing with your co-facilitator, etc.)
- Seek feedback from participants and take it seriously
- Work with co-moderation to increase reflexivity and diversity





# BASICS OF GROUP DYNAMICS

Working with groups is different than working with individuals. Groups have particular ways of working, thinking, and feeling together and these are understood as *group dynamics*.

A very basic assumption of group dynamics is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, that is, that the characteristics of a group are different from the sum of the characteristics of the individuals in that group. What this means in practice is that there are dynamics in every group that cannot be understood as simple, observable transactions between the individual group members. As a facilitator, it is important to understand the kinds of dynamics that a group can produce, especially stages of group development, issues of power and hierarchy, processes of emotion within the group and between the group and the facilitator (transference and countertransference), as well as how these dynamics are intertwined with one another. In what follows we briefly describe these dynamics and how they relate to the REST process.

## Stages of group development

All groups experience different stages of development which have different implications in terms of roles, interpersonal interactions, and power structures. Although the stages do not appear mechanically one after the other, it can be helpful to recognize them when they do appear. Being able to recognize these stages can be helpful in understanding, interpreting, and working with the various issues and dynamics they tend to generate. There are five stages and each one is summarized here<sup>1</sup>.

During the first stage (forming), group members are more distrustful of one another and look to the assigned leader for direction, guidance, and other forms of security. Group members tend to be agreeable since they are concerned with inclusion in the group and try to avoid anything that could result in rejection. In the context of the REST workshops, you are typically starting with a double group reality in terms of forming. On one hand, the participants usually already know each other, and in this sense are not a new group. On the other hand, it is usually the first time they come together to work in this configuration and with facilitators they might not already know. This double group reality means that facilitators should be prepared to intervene in the group developmental processes of an existing

group and to deal with the uncertainties of a newly formed group. During the second stage two (storming), interpersonal interactions become more confident, assertive and substantive. Conflicts due to different perspectives and disagreements start to arise and conformity declines. In the context of REST workshops, you might find that the group expresses conflicts and difficulties they have with each other more clearly and that they question the facilitator more directly. Storming could also appear as a nice and intensive working atmosphere where everyone is really engaged with the process of developing staff care.

During the third stage (norming and trust), interactions become more anchored in trust and openness among the group members. The group's sense of security also increases as the members start trusting that other members are being candid about their feelings and beliefs. In the context of a REST workshop, collective reflection and working together on conflicts hopefully generates a certain level of trust and openness that will be more definitive of how the group works and feels together in the final stages of the workshop and in follow up meetings. It might be important to consider how new belongings formed in this stage can affect other individual or group relationships across the broader organisation.

During the fourth stage (performing) the group members start to get the work done. The group focuses more intently on accomplishing its goals. The interpersonal interactions are characterized in this stage as deep, very substantive and members share their thoughts openly. In the context of REST workshop, it is likely that this 'stage' of performing will become more visible in different moments throughout the workshop and hopefully more intensively so near the end in the planning stage.

During the fifth and final stage (adjourning or termination) the members of the group start realizing that the end is close and might start feeling a sense of impending loss and therefore bring up experiences of loss and separation. During the final stage there is often an increase in activity and redoubling of the efforts (on an individual level as well as team level) to complete the tasks and reach the goals. It's important to pay attention to this stage, even though the REST workshop is only a few days long. It's important, even in a relatively short process together, to say a proper goodbye as this offers a critical form of containment for the group.

<sup>1</sup> The above elaborated stages of group development is a condensed summary of Haynes, N. M. (2012). Group dynamics: Basics and pragmatics for practitioners. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>

Although the order of the stages suggests a linear process, this is typically not the case for most groups. Most groups evolve cyclically, meaning that they can „skip“ phases or „fall back“ and/or go through multiple cycles in the course of their existence, especially when group members drop out or join, or if, as is usually the case in REST workshops, the group members already partly know each other.

## Issues of Hierarchy in Organizations

Usually, the social structure of a society (e.g., gendered or classed dynamics) is also reflected in the hierarchy of an organization. In most cases, people belonging to groups with lower social status find themselves in lower levels of their workplace hierarchy and vice versa. This has a few consequences worth highlighting.

First, tensions between social groups may be present in the organization and in the workshop as tensions between levels of hierarchy.

Secondly, even if this is not the case, the social background of a person shapes the way he or she experiences challenges and conflicts at work and during the workshop. Groups experiencing social discrimination in social life are more aware of these issues and may react to something said or done even though others stay unaffected by that. In other words, the awareness of problematic issues at an organization and during the workshop varies between social groups.

Third, addressing issues comes with varying risks for different groups and this leads to different strategies in dealing with problems at work. In most cases, it is easier for staff in a higher position in the hierarchy to speak about problems. Not only is it harder for people assigned to lower levels of the organizational hierarchy to make their voices heard, they are also more likely to face negative consequences as a result of speaking up. Given the fact that most people working in lower hierarchies of an organization are also socially more vulnerable, they may choose to not speak openly about challenges and difficulties at work. During a workshop, these differences may lead to situations in which a particular conflict stays implicit, but still influences the group dynamics and overall atmosphere. For example, a participant might stay silent about ongoing experiences of sexual harassment from a manager for fear of retaliation and/or being stigmatized through victim-blaming.

It's important to recognize that issues of hierarchy and power exist in all organizations. Even in organizations with flat hierarchies, language skills, education, and level of comfort speaking in groups, for example, play a role in how different members engage in addressing issues and nego-

tiating about what has to be done. As facilitators, the task is to be sensitive to these differences and to understand where they might play a role in order to actively support different forms of participation and to promote a safe and genuine exchange.

## Processes of transference and countertransference

The psychodynamic concepts of transference and countertransference can be helpful when trying to understand the emotional dynamics occurring in the group process. Since this is not a therapeutic intervention, the way we make use of these concepts is rather straightforward. The basic idea is that feelings move between people in such a way that my feelings might appear in you, yours might appear in me, and we may all bring feelings from the people we are working with and mirror them in the group. In this sense, feelings do not only occur within individuals, but also within groups, and facilitators are no exception. For example, it could be that the group describes a very angering experience, but no one appears or otherwise expresses anger. Suddenly, however, one of the facilitator notices that she is feeling extremely frustrated and agitated. In terms of the concepts of transference and countertransference, it is possible that the facilitator is experiencing the feelings of anger of the group. Picking up these feelings can be an important facilitation tool. You can reflect your feeling back to the group with a question about whether this is something they experienced as well.

It can also be helpful to understand another aspect of transference processes: projection. Projection is the process of displacing one's feelings onto a different person. The basic idea here is that unconscious discomfort can cause people to attribute difficult feelings to another person in order to avoid facing these feelings. Projection makes it possible to address the difficult feelings without recognizing these feelings in oneself. In this sense, participants could project feelings of anger, sadness, and stress onto other members of the group in order to defend themselves against their own difficult emotions. Processes of projection influence the overall group process and should be taken up and worked on when possible. However, the notion of projection is a tricky one and can lend itself to insinuations and paternalistic interpretations. From facilitation perspective, it is important not to use this concept to make assertions or attributions, but as way of opening up more space for reflection on feelings that may not be consciously available, but which are nonetheless present in the group.



# DEALING WITH CONFLICTS AND STRONG EMOTIONS

## Dealing with conflicts

Conflicts and strong emotions are inevitable and depending on how they are dealt with, they can be harmful or they can contribute to growth and development. Ignoring a conflict does not make it disappear. And often what people do in order to avoid or silence a conflict is more damaging than confronting it. On the other hand, a well-managed conflict can have the effect of deepening understanding and improving relationships. As a facilitator, you can support the group to manage conflicts that arise in less destructive ways.

People who are involved in a conflict and experience strong emotions might express themselves in a destructive way, leading to a secondary conflict about the way the original conflict was addressed. This is why it is important to address a conflict when it arises and to facilitate a constructive exchange about it. At the same time, however, it is not sensible to address any given dispute. A conflict is worth addressing when you feel that it interferes with the capacity of the participants to listen and remain engaged in the workshop. In order to not get diverted from the key conflict situation the group has decided to focus on, acknowledge conflicts that arise, contain them, and check with the group to see to what extent what is arising influences or belongs to the situation you are working on together. It is important to link all issues to what you and the group have as a main topic.

## How to deal with a conflict?

Start with the person who gives you the impression that s/he is the most stressed. Try to name some of the feelings you have observed to see if you have understood correctly. Empathy, acknowledgment and understanding usually bring about some initial relief. It is, of course, very important that you offer empathy in a way that does not imply judgment of the other conflict parties. Involve all group members and don't let the conversation be dominated by a few people (generally, conflicts affect the whole team, and so it is also important that the whole group gets involved). Encourage the participants to speak in a respectful manner (using the first person, not judging the other person, referring instead to their actions, giving each other space to speak).

Summarize and synthesize the discussion and comments, highlight disagreements and overlaps. In some circumstances, a short feedback round about how people are feeling can be helpful and a short break may be helpful to get

some distance – although taking a break should not convey the message that you are trying to avoid the conflict. It is not your job as facilitators to find a solution; even the group should not have the goal to find a solution immediately.

The fundamental task is to find new ways of acknowledging problems, opening up a process for working on it, and developing an understanding for one another. When a conflict arises that needs to be worked with, name it and assign a space and time for exploring it with clear limits (the next 20 minutes). Not all conflicts can be solved and it is not your task to mediate or offer a verdict, but to protect a climate of respectful exchange.

## Dealing with strong emotions

In psychosocial work in contexts of violence and war, staff are confronted with challenging, often overwhelming situations and issues in addition to the everyday stress of a „normal“ work team. Frequently, helpers in these contexts are chronically overburdened and often experience feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness in the face of a limited capacity to act. It is common that these emotions are not openly discussed in the workplace, even though they are a normal and important response to suffering and injustice.

Many facilitators and many group members try to avoid expressions of powerful emotions because they fear it might provoke an overall loss of control or fear of appearing unprofessional and disturb the frame of the workshop or relationships in the team. Many of us have been taught that strong emotions are dangerous and burdening to others and that we should hide our feelings in order to protect ourselves and to shield others. The fact is, whether we hide them or not, emotions are present and exert a powerful influence on us and those around us. Especially when working in a context of conflict, difficult emotions are everywhere, they are a normal part of everyday life and should be treated as such. It's normal to feel a bit of apprehension when difficult emotions are expressed and it's important to remember that expressed emotions are typically not what one should fear and rather that it is the silenced emotions that are most threatening to the relative well-being of individuals and groups. In this sense, the question is not whether to allow feelings or not, but how to deal with them.

## What to do when people are fearful of sharing?

One explanation for why participants do not want to share

is a lack of trust, in the group, in the facilitators, or both. Trust is a belief/a faith, in the integrity of the process/group/facilitators. Trust cannot be established at will, but is something that develops when the participants experience acknowledgement and recognition. An important building block for establishing trust is the respect for boundaries in what or if people feel like sharing. It is important to clarify that everyone can decide on what terms they want to participate.

At the same time, it is also important to find out what the reason for the reluctance is in order to be able to work with it. You can note that people seem cautious and ask if there is a specific reason and whether there is something you can do differently (e.g., taking a few minutes for independent writing or visually representing their feelings; speaking in pairs before opening a plenary discussion). It is also important to emphasize that nobody is obliged to share and that it is good when people take their boundaries seriously and protect them.

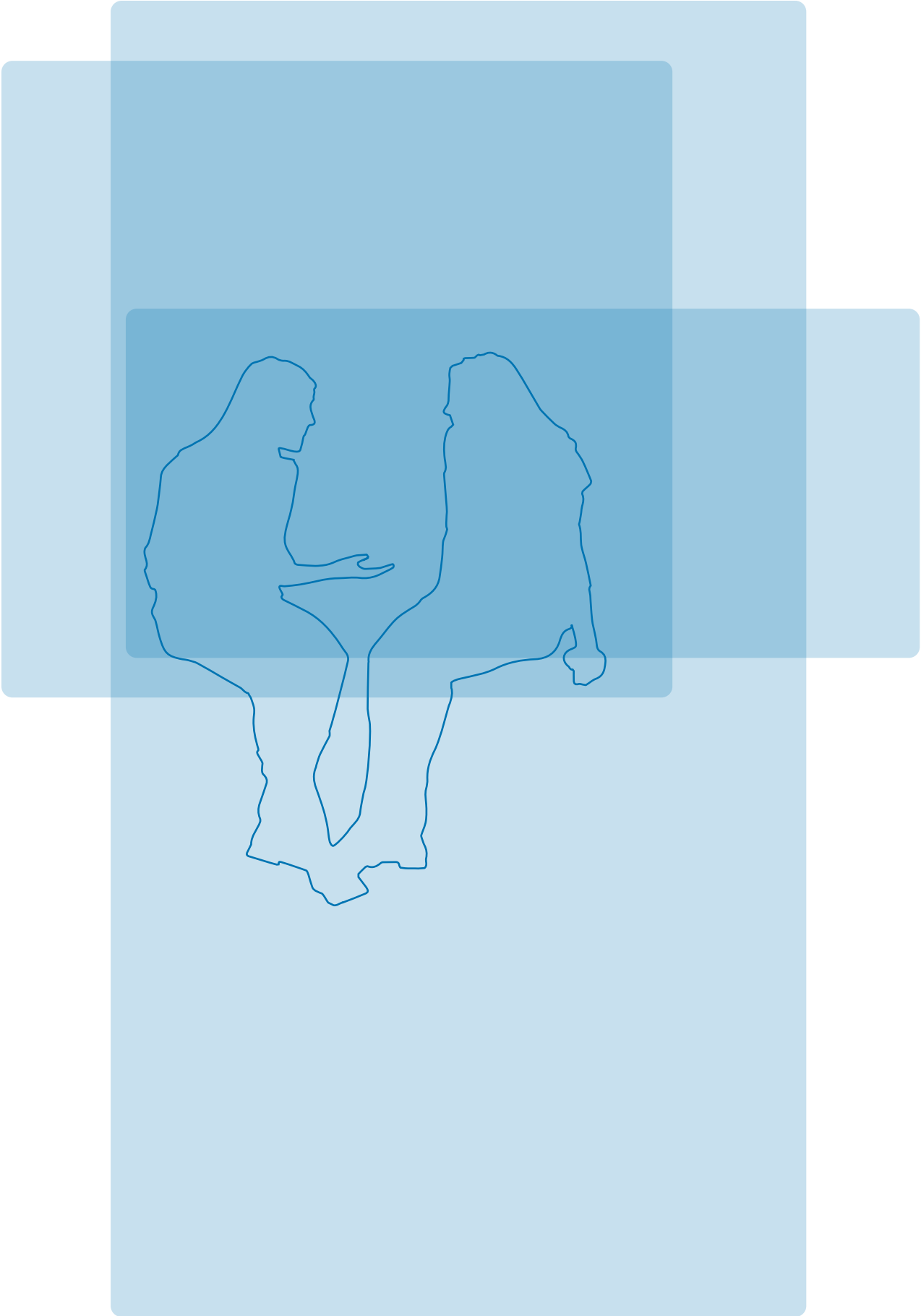
#### **How to contain strong emotions when they appear?**

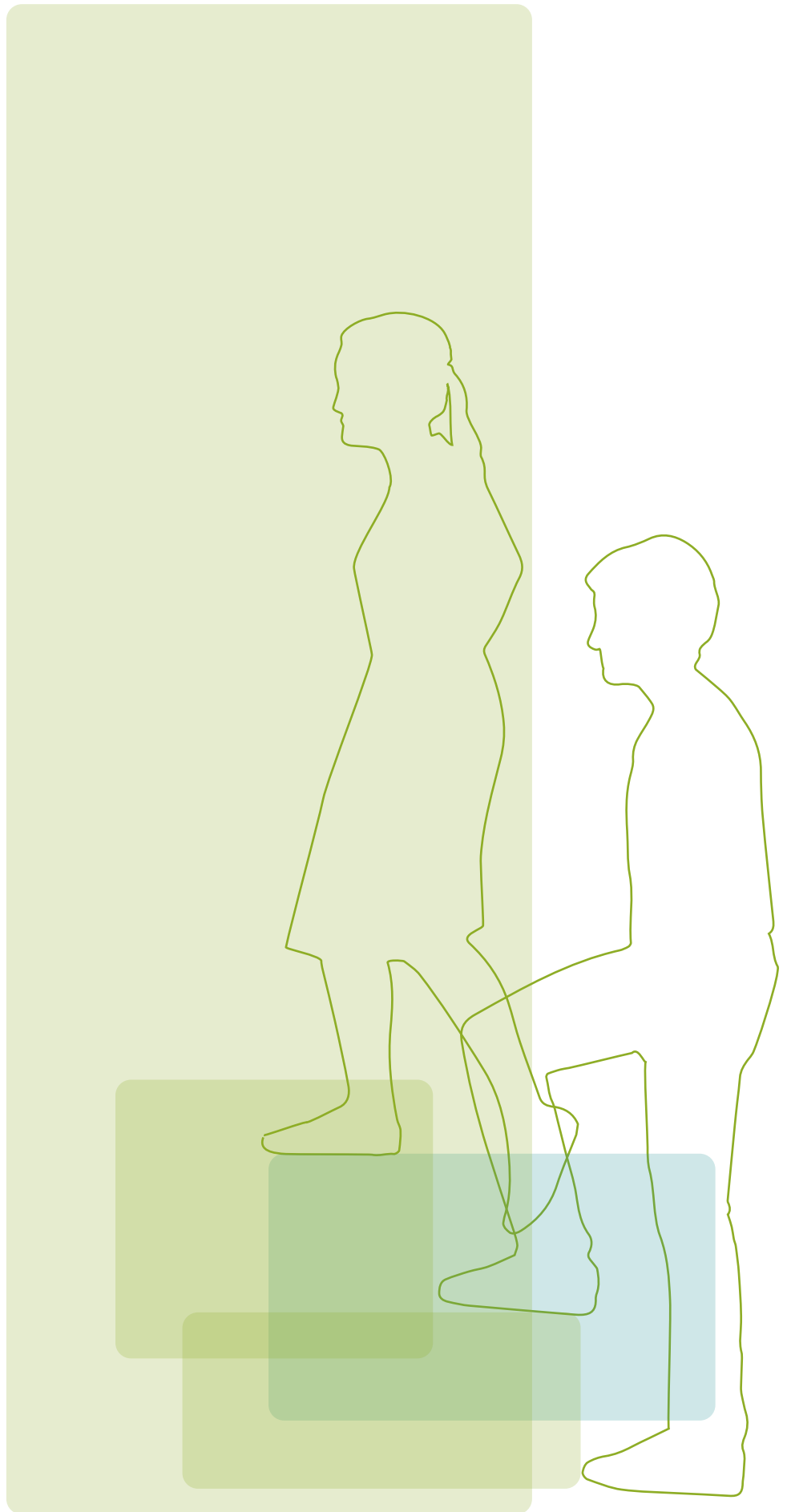
Acknowledge them. To feel contained means that even when confronted with difficult feelings, I am not left alone with them and see that I exist in a relational space where I am not shamed, but respected and acknowledged. Facilitators can support the containment of participants by making

sure that it is up to the participants to decide how deeply they want to immerse themselves in their feelings. It is very important that facilitators do not inadvertently send a different message in this regard. When participants open up and experience strong emotions, it is very important that facilitators help them to feel contained. To do so requires reliable boundaries, emotional attunement, and security.

#### **How to deal with participants' trauma/secondary trauma?**

When working in a context of war and conflict, trauma is not an exception but the rule. Most of the participants have experienced traumatic situations either directly or indirectly, some of which come to the surface and are shared in the workshop. It is the task of the facilitators to listen and to acknowledge the experiences, feelings and thoughts of the participants. Trauma is not only a matter for trauma specialists, but also has to be expected and dealt with in a non-pathologizing way in any context where it is a daily reality. It's not possible to make trauma pleasant. But when trauma is shared, the minimum one can do as a facilitator is to not banish it from the room, and rather listen, acknowledge, don't reduce, and protect the person from shaming. It is, however, important to keep in mind that the task of the facilitators is not a therapeutic one therefore it is crucial to keep the focus more on the group and the group process, rather than the digging deeply into personal experiences with the hopes of working them through.





# MODULE BY MODULE GUIDANCE

## Preparation phase

The considerations for the preparation phase are outlined in the section on “What to consider when setting up the REST workshop” on page 14.

## DAY 1

# MODULE 1: STARTING THE PROCESS

### Step 1 – Welcome, introductions and overview

**What is important:** Tuning in to one another, creating a space where people feel comfortable, and providing a coherent overview of the workshop. This step is crucial for the whole workshop since it lays the foundations for the relationships between participants and facilitators.

**What to look out for:** There are two potential facilitation risks here, rushing through this step and not allowing enough time for a trustworthy enough dynamic to develop and/or spending too much time describing the process and unintentionally establishing more of a training dynamic. It is important to find a good balance of giving just enough information about the REST process to orient the group and to take enough time with the introductions to allow a comfortable dynamic to develop.

### Introduction of facilitators

The way you introduce yourselves strongly influences the atmosphere of the group. Take some time to think about what you want to tell the group. A personal introduction is a bid for trust. The clearer the participants' impression of the facilitators is, the more they will feel safe in the setting and develop trust in the group process. It is important here to explain your role in the process, your key responsibilities and objectives, as well as what is beyond the scope of your role (e.g., therapy, providing a ready-made recipe for staff care).

### Introduction of participants, their background and experiences

In order to establish a comfortable atmosphere, it is good to add something more personal to the round of introductions, not only asking for names and professional roles, but also, for example, what is most important to them in their life or what they enjoyed during the previous weekend. If not all people know each other, it is good to ask them to make their names visible in some way.

### Overview of the schedule

Give the group an overview of the schedule for the next days and make sure to post the day's schedule on the wall where it can be seen throughout and update it when there are adjustments.

### Ground rules

Developing a set of ground rules should always be a collaborative exercise. There are some ground rules that should always be included in some form (see below) and will vary according to what the group has found useful in the past. Write down the rules and post them on the wall, so that they are clearly visible to everyone. Review the ground rules if necessary. The ground rules should help in making this a safer, more comfortable, and more empowering space. Of course, it is important that the facilitators stick to the ground rules themselves.

From a facilitation perspective, these ground rules are important:

- Punctuality as a commitment to one another, respecting each other's time and valuing each other's engagement
- Cell-phones off
- Confidentiality: You need to determine together what may and may not be shared outside the workshop space and how may and should be shared. This could additionally be discussed in your preparatory meetings with management. It is particularly important that management continue to consider what they can share with broader management in decision-making, planning, and implementation during and following the workshop
- Judgments: it is normal to judge, but being judged feels unpleasant. In order to establish an atmosphere where people feel safe to express, it is good to reflect on judgments and to not impose them on others

## Step 2 – Introducing a contextualized and conflict-sensitive approach to staff care

**What is important:** Often people are very used to the concept of self care and focus on the individual responsibility of staff for their wellbeing. As facilitators, it is important to emphasize that although there is also an individual responsibility when it comes to staff care, it is, most of all, an organizational responsibility and need and requires the development of continuous practices at all levels (individual, group/team, institutional). In the group discussion, it is important to take an active role in making connections between what participants express and the objectives of staff care.

**What to look out for:** As in step 1, there is a risk of overloading the group with too much technical information and creating an atmosphere that is more like a professional training. Overall, keep your introduction as simple and short as possible and avoid using academic terms. What exactly you share here should be adjusted depend-

ing on the group's previous experiences with staff care. The group discussion should bring out different reactions to the approach, which issues resonate and feel relevant and which ones not so much, and what experience the group already has with staff care. Facilitators should summarize by outlining how what people have shared will be taken up in the workshop over the following days and underscoring the importance of staff care as an organizational responsibility and a collective task.

## Step 3 – Introduction to REST structure and process

**What is important:** Emphasizing the participatory nature of the process, the importance of understanding challenges in order to develop meaningful solutions, the basic logic of the analytical process, that is, developing an understanding about broader challenges by examining one case in detail and then extending that understanding by re-examining the initial list of difficult situations and overarching issues.

# DAY 1

## MODULE 2: IDENTIFYING CHALLENGING SITUATIONS AT WORK

### Step 1 – Individually identifying challenging situations

**What is important:** That participants think of a concrete situation they are willing to share with others.

**What to look out for:** Frequently, participants come up with a general issue rather than a specific situation. For example, a participant might share that communication problems are a challenge at work and might describe some general issues like, "I was never told what my official responsibilities are" and "there is a lot of miscommunication." Sometimes this can happen because the instructions are not clear enough and offering the following questions for people to think about as they recall the difficult situation can help direct them to a more specific incident:

- What happened?
- When and where?
- Who else was there?
- How did you feel?
- How did you react?
- How did you feel later?

In other cases, people might describe general issues because they are nervous to share their difficulties. If this happens you can ask them what would help to make this feel safer for them and also to underline that it is up to them to choose what kind of stories they want to share.

### Step 2 – Sharing challenging situations and establishing a collective list of these issues

**What is important:** Getting a good balance between the number of different situations you hear about and the level

of detail shared, so that you get a good enough sense of the range of challenges and enough information for the group to make a good decision about which situation to focus on later. Given the time constraints, a maximum of 4 situations should be presented in more comprehensive detail. Form small groups so that each group can present at least one situation in detail in addition to the titles and summaries of the other situations.

**What to look out for:** Be ready to prompt for more details when someone describes a general issue. For example, "Can you describe a situation you had recently where this was a problem? Where were you? What happened?" On the other hand, for the situations that are not described in detail, you want to make sure that you have a sense of the general kind of issue(s) it involves. Sometimes this is clear from the title, but if not, ask for a sentence or two describing the main issue.

## Summary

Sum up what kinds of problems have been discussed and point out if there are any kinds of issues that have not come up at all. For example, it might be that all challenges have to do with interpersonal and organizational issues and nothing related to the relationship/work with beneficiaries has been mentioned. You can sum up the kinds of problems according to their content and where it appears. For example, you could have the following situations:

- A staff member has a client who is in a desperate situation and is expressing suicidal thoughts. She has medical problems which could be stabilized with medication, but does not have money to access it. The staff member feels very afraid that her client will commit suicide and sometimes helps her out with a bit of money, which is against the organization's policy. She feels helpless only being able to offer psychosocial support.
- A staff member who is part of the same community as the population served by the organization was threatened by a beneficiary while walking close to his home one evening. Until now, he hasn't talked about this experience with anyone at work.
- A staff member feels scared to conduct a survey alone in a neighbourhood she is not familiar with. Without saying that she feels afraid, she asks a colleague for help and he brushes it off, saying he has way too much to do.
- Two staff members get into an argument in front of a group of beneficiaries about how to resolve a problem with their school supplies distribution and one of them storms off, leaving his colleague alone.
- A staff member picks a fight with her younger sister after having a difficult session with a young client who is a survivor of severe physical and sexual violence.

Some of the issues you might highlight related to the content of the situations in this case include:

- Issues related to chronic insecurity
- Feelings of helplessness and fear
- Issues of belonging
- Fear of appearing weak
- Witnessing violence and injustice
- Displacement of emotions
- Working in isolation
- Lack of space for reflection

You could highlight how these problems seem to show up:

- In the work task itself
- In the relationship with beneficiaries
- Outside of work and/or at home
- Interpersonal relationships at/outside of work

## Step 3 – Selecting a situation for analysis

**What is important:** Supporting a good discussion (in a short amount of time) where participants consider different advantages and disadvantages for choosing one situation over another. You can suggest some criteria for how to choose, for example, is this a difficulty that comes up frequently and that many people need to deal with, or maybe it is something less common, but that has more severe consequences.

**What to look out for:** Sometimes the fact that only one situation will be chosen for analysis produces tension. You can address by highlighting that this doesn't mean that the rest of the list is forgotten, but that instead of looking superficially at all problems, the group examines one problem in depth in order to understand more general overlapping challenges and then refers back to the broader list of issues in module 6, step 2. Another challenge here might be that the group doesn't really decide or chooses a situation too quickly. Make sure there is enough discussion about which situation to choose. Usually the best situation for analysis is one that is rather specific and that clearly contains some overlapping issues with other situations on the list.

## DAY 1

# MODULE 3: UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES OF KEY ACTORS

### Step 1 – Getting a deeper Story and identifying key anchors

**What is important:** Here it is crucial to get a very good understanding of the situation from the perspective of the narrator. The following questions can be helpful:

- Where did this happen?
- When did this happen?
- What had happened before this?
- How did you feel?
- What did you think?
- What did you do and/or not do?
- What has happened since?

**What to look out for:** Sometimes the group tries to interrupt the narrator's story by offering opinions, solutions or judgments. The facilitator needs to protect the narrator and can do this by emphasizing that this step is about hearing and understanding the experience of the narrator.

Actively protecting the narrator is a key facilitation task, not only in this step, but throughout the rest of the workshop. Sharing a difficult situation makes the narrator vulnerable and can open them up to criticism or blame. Whenever judgments appear, it is important to intervene in an appropriate way, making what is happening transparent. Sometimes judgments are subtle and come in the form of well-intentioned advice (e.g., why don't you just refer the client to someone else?) and it might be enough to remind the group that this is not the stage for looking for solutions. Sometimes, judgments in the form of well-intentioned advice are less subtle (e.g., why don't you just refer the client to someone else since you can't handle the case by yourself?) and it might be necessary to point out that this expression contains a judgment, to remind the group that this stage is about really trying to understand the experience of the narrator, and to ask whether there is something this participant can relate to in the narrator's experience. Other times, judgments come in the form of explicit blame or shaming and this might warrant explicitly naming the judgment as harmful. If this

happens, it might be reasonable to have some time to get back to this situation at the end of the workshop and to check if and how things have changed for the narrator, how s/he feels, and if s/he needs any further support.

### Step 2 – Discovering different perspectives on the conflict

**What is important:** Developing a clear picture of a conflict by exploring the different needs, interests, values, etc. of the different actors involved in the situation. This step should also open up possibilities for empathic understanding by taking on different roles. A role play can also give the narrator a greater sense of control over the situation by putting the scene in their hands and by seeing it acted out. If you have enough time, you can ask the narrator to stage what they would like to have happened. Release the role players from their roles (e.g., by asking them to "shake off your roles"). This is important in order to not transfer the conflicts of the role play into the workshop setting and to make a clear distinction between the role and the role player.

If you don't have experience facilitating role plays, it is also possible to use other formats to explore different perspectives on the conflict.

**What to look out for:** Sometimes people start laughing during the role play. There can be different reasons for this: it might feel uncomfortable or silly to play a role in front of others or, on the other hand, it could be that it feels releasing to stand up and engage in this unusual way. Often, laughter is a way of trying to retain a protective distance. Most often, laughter is not malicious toward the narrator, but it can feel this way. Acknowledge the laughter and how a role play might feel awkward or funny. Sometimes this is enough, but you might also ask how people feel doing this role play.

If you know from what the narrator has already described that the conflict is very emotional and/or if it involves abuse and/or discrimination against the narrator, don't make them put their hand on the "opponent's" shoulder, only on/above the other actors. Tell the narrator that they may stop the scene at any time.



If the group is already highly emotionally engaged with the situation and seems willing and able to empathize with different positions, you might decide to explore these perspectives without a role play.

### Step 3 – Discussing the perspectives and getting a first grasp of the issues relevant in the conflict

**What is important:** Getting a clear enough description of the conflict and beginning to put it into the language of

staff care (e.g., which goals of staff care does the conflict imply, does it correspond with any of the overarching issues, etc.). Highlight, in particular, what the participants say about the relational dynamics, how asking for or needing support seems to be viewed, and what would have supported the narrator in this situation.

### Step 4 – Summary of the day

**What is important:** Remember to thank the narrator for sharing their story.



## DAY 2

# MODULE 4: ANALYZING PSYCHOSOCIAL CONFLICT DIMENSIONS

### Step 1 – Introducing conflict dimensions

**What is important:** You need to present the dimensions in enough detail that the participants are able to work with them. However, it is important to keep this introduction simple, saying just a couple of concise sentences about each dimension and perhaps offering an example related to the situation you are analyzing. Sometimes one dimension is more important than the other, but in any given situation, all of them are present and warrant discussion. It can be helpful to have a handout with a very simple description of the dimensions to share with the participants.

### Step 2 – Analyzing conflict dimensions

**What is important:** That groups make a start in naming some of the ways these dimensions affect the conflict situation. They don't need to name every single relevant aspect or detail. These can be filled in with your support during the presentations and again in your summary. Most people have not thought about the problem in this way, so it is helpful if facilitators develop for themselves a quick picture of which aspects of the problem refer to which dimensions.

**What to look out for:** It can happen, particularly in the subjective dimension, that people start judging the situation

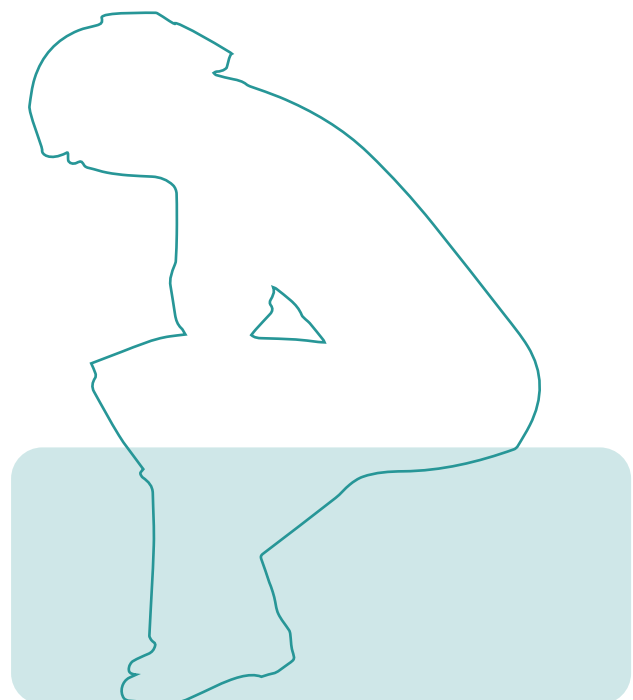
and/or the actors/the narrator. Emphasize that we cannot know for sure what people felt or what their intentions were and that we are trying to understand this situation in its complexity and not trying to figure out who was right/wrong, professional/unprofessional.

It usually makes sense that the narrator participates in the subjective dimension group, so that they can speak from their own perspective about their feelings, wishes, needs.

This task can cause confusion and sometimes groups take an overcomplicated approach and others an oversimplified approach. Don't wait to find out during the presentations that groups have misunderstood something. Make sure that each group is more or less on the right track by going around while the small groups are discussing to see how they are doing and to ask if anyone has any questions.

### Step 3 – Summary of analysis and implication for staff care

**What is important:** Emphasizing how the conflict analysis has changed our understanding of the conflict and making clear what this new understanding tells us about staff care needs.



## EXAMPLE

In the example situations described in Module 2, a staff member, Zahra, described how afraid and hopeless she felt only being able to offer psychosocial support to her client who was in a desperate financial and medical situation and who was expressing suicidal thoughts. The role play and the conflict analysis brought out many new aspects of the situation. It became clear, for example, that Zahra's client had experienced multiple losses, including the disappearance of her brother who used to provide for her financially. It also became clear that Zahra felt she was not adequately prepared to deal with suicidal cases and felt the only support she could offer was money, which violated her organization's regulations.

In this case, the conflict analysis dimensions (as they apply to Zahra and her client) could be summarized in the following way:

Subjective dimension: Zahra feels helpless to meet her client's needs and experiences self-doubt, guilt, and fear that she is not adequately prepared to deal with suicidal cases. Zahra feels hopeless about the potential of psychosocial support to really offer anything meaningful. She feels conflicted about giving her client money from her own pocket because it puts her own values in conflict with the organization's regulations.

Material dimension: Zahra's client does not have money to pay for basic necessities and does not have access to the medication she needs to regulate her chronic health conditions. Zahra's professional role does not permit her to offer material support and she does not have access to training or support that would help her work with suicidal cases.

Group dimension: Zahra's client has lost many people who were close to her, but still cares for her two children who she says are her only reason for being alive. Zahra's client has been displaced many times and does not know many people in her neighbourhood, but has mentioned a woman living nearby who sometimes comes around and has helped her to arrange medical visits. Zahra feels there is no one she can talk to about her fears and she is hiding the fact that she sometimes gives her client money from her colleagues.

Power dimension: Zahra feels powerless to help in her role of psychosocial support case worker and fears asking her management for support or training in dealing with high risk suicidal cases. She knows of other staff members who have been shamed for not being "up to the job."

This analysis raises a number of key questions for staff care. For example, what kinds of staff care structures or practices would support Zahra to...

- ... feel more secure in dealing with suicidal cases?
- ... find out what kind of psychosocial support is possible in this situation/what it can achieve?
- ... feel less alone with her feelings of hopelessness?
- ... look for ways to help her client access the medication she needs?

## DAY 2

# MODULE 5: ANALYZING PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES

### Step 1 – Introducing psychosocial issues

**What is important:** Acknowledging and destigmatizing the presence and depth of difficult emotions, which are a normal part of working with suffering and injustice. This overall module is also important in identifying spaces for interventions that address not only the individual experience but also the social realities that produce these. It is normal that the psychological and the social realities overlap. Emphasize that the aim of the next steps is not to “correctly” divide issues into the two categories, but to use the two categories as a way to more deeply reflect on and understand emotions in their context. It can be helpful to have a handout with a very simple description of the issues to share with the participants.

**What to look out for:** These issues do not need to be overdramatized: not everything is trauma and traumatic. Be sensitive to the nuances and context in what people share and take these psychosocial issues as points of orientation.

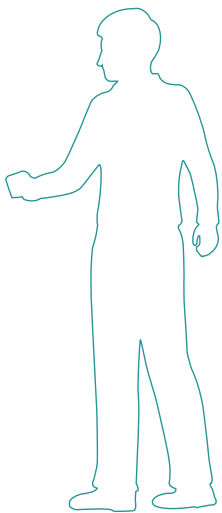
### Step 2 – Analyzing psychosocial issues

**What is important:** As in step 2 of the previous module, it is important here that groups make a start in naming some of the ways these issues appear in the conflict situation. Further relevant aspects can be filled in with your support during the presentations and again in your summary.

**What to look out for:** As in step 2 of the previous module, don't wait to find out during the presentations that groups have misunderstood something. Make sure that each group is more or less on the right track by going around while the small groups are discussing to see how they are doing and to ask if anyone has any questions.

### Step 3 – Summary of analysis and implication for staff care

**What is important:** Sum up what has changed in our understanding of the conflict. Continue to highlight how our changing understanding of the conflict changes our understanding of what the key staff care needs are.



## EXAMPLE

In Zahra's example, the analysis of the psychosocial issues (as they apply to Zahra and her client) could be summarized in the following way:

Threats/fears: Zahra's client fears she cannot provide for her children and is considering suicide. Zahra worries that her client will commit suicide and is afraid she will blame herself for not preventing it. She also fears her management and co-workers might hold her responsible and consider her to not be suitable for the job. She fears that if she doesn't give her client money, she will get severely ill, and fears repercussions if her colleagues find out she is doing this.

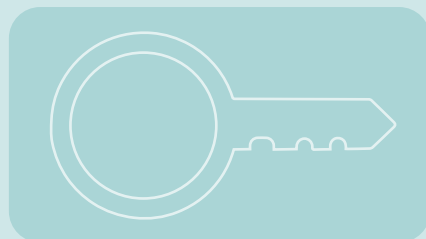
Loss/Grief: Zahra's client has lost multiple people who were close to her, including her brother who has been disappeared and whom she has not been able to mourn. She has been displaced multiple times, losing community ties and bonds and has lost her only source of income. Zahra has lost a sense that her work providing psychosocial support is useful or meaningful.

Anger/Injustice: Zahra feels angry witnessing her client's continuous insecurity and lack of access to necessities, including basic medications. She feels angry at herself for not being able to really help.

Destruction/Trauma: Zahra's client's home, family unit, and sense of basic security have been destroyed and she is losing the will to live. Zahra feels deeply affected, even outside of her work, by her client's situation and has not been able to sleep.

This analysis raises a number of further key questions for staff care. For example, what kinds of staff care structures or practices would support Zahra to...

- ... less likely to blame herself if her client commits suicide?
- ... feel protected by her management and team rather than at risk of being blamed?
- ... find ways to support her client to mourn her multiple losses?



## DAY 2

# MODULE 6: LINKING TO OVERARCHING STAFF CARE CHALLENGES IN CRISIS AND CONFLICT: A DEDUCTIVE ANALYSIS

Explain to participants that until this point in the workshop, you have closely examined a single, specific situation in order to pull out broader issues. Now, you will take a different approach, stepping back and looking at the broad range of issues (from the original list of situations and the overarching issues) in order to understand specific needs.

### Step 1 – Reconnecting to original list of challenges and overarching issues

**What is important:** Quite a lot of structuring capacity by facilitators is important here as this is where the group's analysis should both broaden and synthesize, making clear connections between the issues discussed in the problem situation, the original list, and the overarching issues in staff care. Participants are usually quite tired by this point and facilitators should be ready to be active in structuring and developing the analysis. It is helpful to

have thought about which issues are important to pick up again and some of the possible connections across lists and issues ahead of time.

### Step 2 – Adding to the list of staff care needs

**What is important:** This list will be your working list for developing a concrete plan for staff care, so it should be both comprehensive and specific by the end of this step.

### Step 3 – Summary of the day

**What is important:** This is a demanding day and participants have invested a great deal of intellectual and emotional energy, acknowledge and appreciate this and be sure to emphasize the concrete results/rewards of the day. Check with the participants to see how they are feeling and how they perceive the overall process so far.



## DAY 3

# MODULE 7: DEVELOPING A STAFF CARE PLAN

### Step 1 – Completing and clustering the staff care needs and developing ideas for staff care measures

**What is important:** This step requires a careful bringing together of the results of all the other steps. This is much easier to do if you have been successful in generating a good list of needs in the previous step. Some groups are highly enthusiastic and want to address many/all issues immediately. Remind them to be realistic and that it is better to have few realistic goals than many unachievable ones. Some of the ideas that come up can also be kept for addressing them later. Make a quick check in how realistic the goals really are.

### Step 2 – Discussing ideas for staff care measures

**What is important:** It is very important to make sure that each group has enough time to not just present, but also to discuss their ideas in the plenary. Be clear about time limits and stick to them. Facilitators should take an active role in developing the discussion, making sure that diverse worries and concerns as well as enthusiasm and support for ideas can be expressed.

### Step 3 – Getting specific

**What is important:** It is important that the responsibili-

ties are well distributed and that you avoid having just a couple of people taking on primary responsibility. It is especially important that management does not take sole responsibility for further developing and implementing the measures and that the group take collective ownership over the plan and its implementation. Set fixed dates for when what should be implemented. Facilitators should record the results and send them to the participants within a week, ideally even within 24 hours.

**What to look out for:** Sometimes things get complicated when decisions need to be made about who does what. Don't leave tasks unassigned as they are likely to be quickly forgotten. Make sure there is at least an initial plan of who is taking responsibility for each task.

At the end of the workshop, the motivation is often still very high, but it quickly fades away when you get into the daily routine, so it is best if the participants immediately start to implement it. In order to maintain motivation, the moderator should also be kept informed of the implementation and successes. This should be included in the action plan.

To facilitate the implementation of the plan: clarify when the results will be presented to those not present. Managers must be involved and the flow of information from the workshop to the outside must work well.

## DAY 3

# MODULE 8: ENDING AND GOODBYE

**What is important:** Make sure you really have 90 minutes for this module as saying goodbye is a very important part of maintaining a trustworthy relationship. A good goodbye is as important as a good welcome/introduction and helps to secure ongoing cohesion in the group.

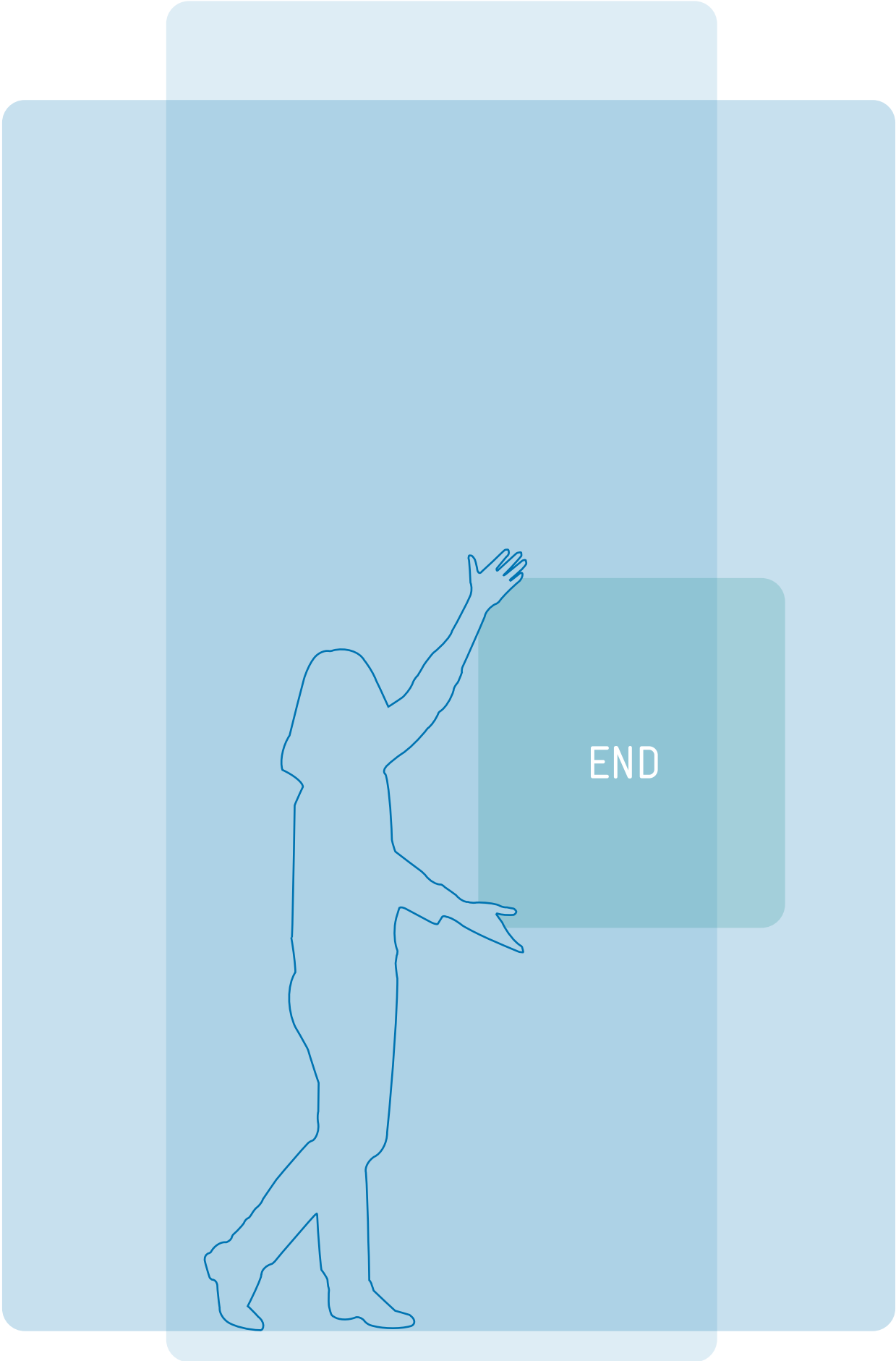
### Step 1 – Summary and feedback by the facilitators

**What is important:** Authenticity is very important when facilitators offer their feedback. An insincerely positive summary and feedback have the potential to undermine trust

and relationships that have been built in this process. It is important to be clear about difficulties or tensions in the process as well as emphasizing what has been accomplished.

### Step 2 – Feedback and evaluation of the workshop by participants

**What is important:** It is important that you have enough time for everyone to say something about how they experienced this process. Facilitators should not interject during this feedback.





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