

Managing Trauma Workbook

**A TOOLBOX of REPRODUCIBLE
ASSESSMENTS and ACTIVITIES
for FACILITATORS**

Ester R. A. Leutenberg
and John J. Liptak, EdD





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Using the *Managing Trauma Workbook*

Not everyone who experiences a traumatic event will necessarily suffer stress after trauma. People who experience a trauma may have very different reactions. Some may not experience any effects at all, while some will experience some effects because they are resilient, have a great support system, and have access to resources to help them. These people may not experience many, if any, symptoms of stress after a trauma.

For others, however, the effect of the trauma is significant and they experience stress as a result of their trauma. Often people who go through a personal event involving actual trauma, or who are exposed to an overwhelmingly stressful event or series of events, will continue to emotionally and physically re-experience the event and suffer from it over and over again, possibly for a long time.

Trauma can be life-changing. The activities in the *Managing Trauma Workbook* can be a tremendous benefit to anyone who has experienced a trauma.

There are many events that people perceive as stressful and that can cause stress as a result of having experienced them, however they are too numerous and too individualized to describe.

Some of the most common events include:

- Almost drowning
- Attack by animals
- Bombing
- Car or plane crash
- Child abuse or neglect
- Chronic disease or illness
- Criminal assault
- Cult abuse
- Earthquake
- Emotional abuse
- Explosion
- Fire
- Flood
- Incest
- Kidnapping
- Loss, or loss of use, of a body part
- Mugging
- Natural Disaster
- Nuclear disaster
- Physical abuse
- Physical proximity to a tragedy
- Rape
- Riots
- Sexual abuse
- Sudden life-threatening illness
- Terrorist attack
- Threat to safety
- Threatened with weapon
- Torture
- Verbal abuse
- War
- Witnessing a crime
- Witnessing a murder
- Witnessing anything terrible
- Witnessing suicide or attempted suicide

Factors that Affect Responses to Trauma

There are a wide variety of factors that affect the ways people respond to traumatic events.

Some of these factors include:

- **Prior knowledge** – People who know about a traumatic event before it happens tend to have less severe reactions. For example, if people knew that a hurricane was going to hit their city, they would have more time to prepare themselves physically, emotionally and psychologically.
- **Individual reactions** – Biological, emotional and environmental factors affect responses to trauma.
- **Number of events** – The more traumatic events people have, the greater their propensity for experiencing reactions.
- **Damage done** – The greater the damage to people, the more they are likely to have reactions.
- **The source** – The degree of inhumanity in the perpetration of the traumatic event.
- **Degree of responsibility** – People who feel responsible for causing or failing to prevent an event are more likely to have reactions.

How Does Trauma Manifest Itself?

Everyone experiences stress, but not all people experience the severe disruptive stress reactions associated with experiencing traumatic events. The difference between the experience of traumatic events and regular, ordinary stressful events depends on the perception of the events and individualized reactions. The level of inhumanity is significant. People may feel more traumatized by a violent crime than by nature's earthquake. Some are traumatized by a near-miss vehicle accident; others by serving in combat. Each person's experience is valid and treatable.

Because there are so many ways stress from traumatic events can manifest itself, these types of symptoms can be very difficult to identify and manage. It is critical to be aware of, and to understand, how these symptoms are commonly experienced.

Although most or all symptoms do not have to be present, those that are present will typically cause significant distress and/or impairment in a person's daily functioning.

Possible symptoms are listed on the next page.

How Does Trauma Manifest Itself? *(Continued)*

Some of the many symptoms that interfere with daily functioning:

- Experiencing upsetting memories of the event that interfere with daily functioning
- Having flashbacks and feelings that the event is happening again
- Experiencing nightmares related to the event
- Feeling intense pain and/or distress when reminded of the event
- Having intense physical reactions when reminded of the event
- Avoiding people and places that are reminders of the event
- Feeling detached from others
- Feeling emotionally numb, or avoiding thoughts and feelings that are reminders
- Inability to remember important aspects of the trauma
- Losing interest in life
- Losing interest in activities that at one time were pleasurable
- Sensing that a future that was once imagined is no longer attainable
- Failing to fall or stay asleep
- Having outbursts of anger
- Feeling irritable
- Experiencing concentration, focus and memory problems
- Fear of additional threats
- Feeling jumpy and easily startled
- Engaging in impulsive and risky behavior
- *Zoning out* for short periods of time

Losing interest in life and in activities that were once pleasurable, plus some of the above and additional symptoms, may relate to traumatic events and/or other mental health issues.

Our goal for this workbook is NOT to diagnose a mental illness, nor do we expect the facilitator to make that diagnosis from this workbook's content. Our goal is to touch on some of the symptoms and possibilities of trauma, create realizations, and provide coping methods which will help people to go forward and perhaps to consider the possible need for medications and/or therapy.

Our goal is also to help participants recognize that other people have the similar issues, that no shame is connected to them, and that mental health issues of any degree are not to be stigmatized nor should anyone feel like victims to stereotyping.

In *Managing Trauma Workbook*, we use the phrase *mental health issues* to include all types and levels of trauma issues.

Helping People Cope with Reactions to a Trauma

Trauma survivors display complex sets of symptoms that need to be addressed if they are to heal. Following are some of the ways that facilitators can assist their clients in processing traumatic events, learning to manage the symptoms of trauma, and beginning the transition to a more satisfied life.

- Help participants learn as much as possible about reactions to trauma.
- Help participants explore their traumatic event in a structured, safe way – if a mental health professional believes the process will be therapeutic for an individual.
- Help participants accept their traumatic event and the impact these events have on their lives while focusing on the importance of taking actions to cope with the reactions to traumatic stress.
- Help participants see the importance of being proactive in coping with the stress associated with their traumatic events.
- Help participants understand that recovery from traumatic events will not happen immediately, but will happen a little at a time.
- Help participants accept that the purpose may not necessarily be to forget their traumatic events, but rather to accept what happened and learn to cope with the issues they are experiencing.
- Help participants understand and develop a plan for recognizing and coping with both the physical, emotional, psychological and interpersonal symptoms that they are experiencing.
- Help participants learn to identify the triggers that bring on reactions to their traumatic stress, and learn to cope with these triggers.
- Help participants learn skills for making the transition to a more manageable and satisfying life.

How the *Managing Trauma Workbook* Can Help

People who have experienced a traumatic event are likely to develop a variety of symptoms associated with that event. The assessments and activities in this workbook are designed to provide facilitators with a wide variety of tools to use in helping people manage their lives more effectively. Many choices for self-exploration are provided for facilitators to determine which tools best suit the unique needs of their clients.

The purpose of this workbook is to provide a user-friendly guide to short-term assessments and activities to help people manage their issues related to trauma, and experience a greater sense of well-being. In addition, this workbook is designed to help provide facilitators and participants with tools and information needed to overcome the stigma attached to the reactions of trauma issues.

In order to help participants successfully deal with reactions to traumatic events, facilitators need to have a variety of assessments and activities to help their participants open-up and begin to manage the symptoms of traumatic issues. The *Managing Trauma Workbook* provides assessments and self-guided activities to help participants understand the intensity of their issues and how can lead a more effective life.

When to Worry?

The symptoms related to traumatic events can be very complex and difficult to cope with. The good news is that people can develop symptom management skills and progress toward more satisfying lives. The symptoms that accompany traumatic event issues that people deal with daily can be a very frightening way to live. **People who experience this over time are at risk of having a serious mental illness and need to seek a medical professional.**

Suicide Warning!

Many trauma survivors feel suicidal, have suicidal thoughts, and make plans for committing suicide. Sometimes they think that the only way to escape the physical, psychological, and emotional pain is to attempt suicide. Remember to take any talk about suicide or suicidal acts very seriously.

Signs of suicidal thoughts:

- Withdrawing from family, friends, and activities of interest in the past
- Increasing use of harmful substances
- Giving away possessions
- Expressing severe hopelessness about the future
- Making a plan to die by suicide
- Calling or visiting people to say goodbye
- Getting legal affairs in order
- Engaging in reckless actions
- Talking about killing or harming self
- Expressing feelings of being trapped with no way out
- Purchasing a weapon

Serious Mental Illness

If participants have a serious mental illness, they need to do much more than complete the assessments, activities and exercises contained in this workbook. They need to be taken seriously and facilitators can take an active role in their finding help immediately. All disturbances of thoughts, feelings and actions need to be thoroughly evaluated by a medical professional, and then treated with an appropriate combination of medication and group and/or individual therapy.

Format of the *Managing Trauma Workbook*

The *Managing Trauma Workbook* is designed to be used either independently or as part of an established mental health issue program. You may administer any of the assessments and the guided self-exploration activities to an individual or a group with whom you are working, and you may administer any of the assessments and activities over one or more days. Feel free to pick and choose those that best fit the outcomes you desire. The purpose of this workbook is to provide facilitators who work with individuals and groups who may be experiencing issues related to traumatic events with a series of reproducible activities that can be used to supplement their work with participants. Because these activity pages are reproducible, they can be photocopied as is, or you may adapt them by whiting out and writing in your own changes to suit the need of each group, using that page as your master to be photocopied for each participant.

Assessments

Assessments establish a behavioral baseline from which facilitators and participants can gauge progress toward identified goals. This workbook will supplement facilitator's work by providing assessments designed to measure behavioral baselines for evaluating client change. In order to do so, assessments with scoring directions and interpretation materials begin each chapter. The authors recommend that you begin presenting each topic by asking participants to complete the assessment. Facilitators can choose one or more, or all of the activities relevant to their participants' specific needs and concerns.

Each of the awareness modules contained in this book begin with an assessment for these purposes:

- Help facilitators to develop a numerical baseline of behavior, attitude and personality characteristics before they begin their plan of treatment.
- Help facilitators gather valuable information about their participants.
- Help facilitators in the measurement of change over time.
- Use as pre-tests and post-tests to measure changes in behavior, attitude, and personality.
- Help facilitators identify patterns that are negatively affecting a participant.
- Prompt insight and behavioral change.
- Assist participants to feel a part of the treatment-planning process.
- Provide participants with a starting point to begin to learn more about themselves and their strengths and limitations.

Assessments are a great aid in developing plans for effective change.

Be aware of the following when administering, scoring, and interpreting the assessments in this book:

- The purpose of these assessments is not to pigeonhole people, but to allow them to explore various elements of themselves and their situations.
- This book contains self-assessments and not tests. Traditional tests measure knowledge or right or wrong responses. For the assessments provided in this workbook, remind participants that there are no right or wrong answers. These assessments ask only for opinions or attitudes.
- The assessments in this workbook have face value, but have not been formally normed for validity and reliability.
- The assessments in this workbook are based on self-reported data. In other words, the accuracy and usefulness of the information is dependent on the information that participants honestly provide about themselves. Assure them that they do not need to share their information with anyone. They can be honest!
- Remind participants that the assessments are exploratory exercises and not a judgment of who they are as human beings.
- The assessments are not a substitute for professional assistance. If you feel any of your participants need more assistance than you can provide, refer them to an appropriate medical professional.

Format of the Managing Trauma Workbook (Continued) Assessment Script

When administering the assessments contained in this workbook, please remember that the assessments can be administered, scored, and interpreted by the client. If working in a group, facilitators should circulate among participants as they complete assessments to ensure that there are no questions. If working with an individual client, facilitators can use the instruction collaboratively.

Please note that as your participants begin the assessments in this workbook, the participants' instructions italicized below are meant to be a guide, so please do not feel you must read or say them word for word.

Tell your participants: *"You will be completing a quick assessment related to the topics we are discussing. Please remember that assessments are powerful tools if you are honest with yourself. Take your time and be truthful in your responses so that your results are an honest reflection of you. Your level of commitment in completing the assessments honestly will determine how much you learn about yourself."*

Allow participants to turn to the first page of their assessment and read the instructions silently to themselves. Then tell them: *"All of the assessments have similar formats, but they have different scales, responses, scoring instructions and methods for interpretation. If you do not understand how to complete the assessment, ask me before you turn the page to begin."*

Then tell them: *"Because there is no time limit for completing the assessments, take your time and work at your own pace. Do not answer the assessments as you think others would like you to answer them or how you think others see you. These assessments are for you to reflect on your life and explore some of the barriers that are keeping you from living a more satisfying life. Before completing each assessment, be sure to read the instructions."*

Make sure that nobody has a question, then tell them, *"Learning about yourself can be a positive and motivating experience. Don't stress about taking the assessments or discovering your results. Just respond honestly and learn as much about yourself as you can."*

Tell participants to turn the page and begin answering with Question 1. Allow sufficient time for all participants to complete the assessment. Answer any questions people have. As people begin to finish, read through the instructions for scoring the assessment. Have participants begin to score their own assessment and transfer their scores for interpretation. Make sure that nobody has a question about how to do the scoring.

Review the purpose of the interpretation table included after each assessment. Tell the participants: *"Remember, this assessment was not designed to label you. Rather, it was designed to develop a baseline of your behaviors. Regardless of how you score on an assessment, consider it a starting point upon which you can develop healthier habits. Take your time, reflect on your results, and note how they compare to what you already know about yourself."*

After participants have completed, scored, and interpreted their assessment, facilitators can use the self-exploration activities included in each module to supplement their traditional tools and techniques to help participants function more effectively.

(Continued on the next page)

Format of the Managing Trauma Workbook *(Continued)*

Self-Exploration Activities

This workbook will provide self-exploration activities that can be used to manage trauma issues. These activities, included after each of the assessments, will prompt self-reflection and promote self-understanding. They use a variety of formats to accommodate all learning styles, foster introspection, and promote pro-social behaviors, life skills and coping skills. The activities in each module correlate to the assessments to enable you to identify and select activities quickly and easily.

Self-exploration activities assist participants in self-reflection, enhance self-knowledge, identify potential ineffective behaviors, and teach more effective ways of coping with irrational behaviors. They are designed to help participants make a series of discoveries that lead to increased social and emotional competencies, as well as to serve as an energizing way to help participants grow personally and professionally. These brief, easy-to-use self-reflection tools are designed to promote insight and self-growth.

Many different types of guided self-exploration activities are provided for you to pick and choose the activities that are most needed by your participants and the ones that will be most appealing to them. The unique features of the exploration activities make them user-friendly and appropriate for a variety of individual sessions and group sessions.

In these activities, participants will have a variety of opportunities:

- To explore how they could make changes in their lives to feel better. These activities are designed to help participants reflect on their current life situations, discover new ways of living more effectively, and implement changes in their lives to accommodate these changes.
- To journal as a way of enhancing their self-awareness. Through journaling prompts, participants will be able to write about the thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that have contributed to, or are currently contributing to, their current life situation. Through journaling, participants are able to safely address their concerns, hopes and dreams for the future.
- To explore their reactions to trauma by examining their past for negative patterns and learning new ways of dealing more effectively in the future. These activities are designed to help participants reflect on their lives in ways that will allow them to develop healthier lifestyles.

The Stigma Awareness Approach

It is important that facilitators keep an open mind about mental health issues and the stigma attached to people experiencing these issues. Rather than thinking of people as having a mental disorder, or being mentally ill, the *Erasing the Stigma of Mental Health Issues through Awareness* series is designed to help facilitators to diminish the stigma that surrounds people suffering from unwanted thoughts, feelings and actions issues. Stigmas occur when people are unduly labeled, which sets the stage for discrimination and humiliation. Facilitators are able to help to erase the stigma of mental illness through enhanced awareness of the factors that activate the issues, accentuate the depth of the issues, and accelerate awareness and understanding.

To assist you, a module titled *Erasing the Stigma of Mental Health Issues* is included to provide activities for helping to erase the stigma associated with unwanted thoughts, feelings and actions issues.

The Awareness Modules

The reproducible awareness modules contained in this workbook will help you identify and select assessments and activities easily and quickly:

Module I: The Story of My Trauma

This module will help participants share all aspects of their story in a safe way and put it into a positive perspective.

Module II: My Escape-Mode

This module will help participants explore the various ways that they avoid and numb to forget their traumatic experience, and provides tools for coping with these symptoms.

Module III: Managing My Transition Experiences

This module will help participants explore ways that they can effectively manage trauma and move on from their traumatic experience.

Module IV: Tools for Coping with My Symptoms

This module will help participants explore the various ways that they re-experience their trauma and provides tools for coping with these symptoms.

Module V: Erasing the Stigma of Mental Health Issues

This module will help participants explore the stigma of having experienced a traumatic event in their lives and the impact that the stigma has on them.

Our thanks to these professionals who make us look good!

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My Story

Telling one’s story is healing! Many people who experience trauma feel guilty, ashamed or embarrassed to tell anyone their story. A great way to tell your story safely is by writing it out.

In the space that follows, write about the trauma that you experienced in as much detail as possible. Use the back of this page if you need additional space.

Thoughts about My Trauma - PAGE 1

Think about the trauma you experienced.

Journaling about that experience can help you make meaning of the event and reduce your distress.

Below, journal about your trauma.

When did the event happen? _____

What was happening before the event? _____

Did you feel that something was not right? _____

If so, explain your feelings. _____

(Continued on the next page)