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1. Introduction

- **Purpose and Scope:** This broad outline/brief manual is designed to guide facilitators in running effective and inclusive group sessions in collective spaces, emphasizing social justice, trauma sensitivity, and embodied activism.
- **Importance:** Effective group facilitation fosters community, supports diverse identities, and promotes mental health and well-being.

2. Broad Principles of Running a Group

- **Centering lived experiences of participants:** Focus on personal stories and experiences of members, valuing their unique perspectives and insights to create a space where participants feel seen and heard.
- **Considering identity locations:** Be mindful of diverse identities within the group, including privilege, facilitator identity, and group diversity, to create an inclusive environment. Recognize how these factors influence group dynamics and individual participation.
- **Community holding while deepening personal stories:** Balance individual sharing with group cohesion, ensuring personal narratives are supported by the community, creating a safe space for exploration.
- **Adopting a social justice stance and trauma-sensitive approach:** Use a framework that prioritizes social justice and trauma sensitivity, understanding participants may come from marginalized backgrounds. Recognize the impact of systemic oppression and create a space sensitive to trauma.
- **Language and accessibility accommodations:** Use inclusive and accessible language, considering regional languages and accommodations for neurodivergent participants. Ensure all participants can fully engage with the group content.
- **Centering how the body responds:** Pay attention to bodily responses and incorporate practices that acknowledge and address these reactions, such as mindfulness exercises and grounding techniques.
- **Building on participants' know-how:** Utilize the existing knowledge and experiences of participants to enhance psychoeducation and meaning-making within the group, recognizing and valuing participants' expertise.
- **Awareness of hierarchy:** Recognize and navigate hierarchical dynamics within the group, ensuring all voices are valued equally, being aware of power dynamics between facilitators and participants.

- **Balancing participants' autonomy:** Allow diverse forms of sharing and participation, prompting quieter members while keeping the group focused on its intentions. Respect participants' autonomy and encourage active participation.
- **Acknowledging systems actively:** Be conscious of systemic influences and address them as part of the group's discussions, recognizing the broader social and political context.
- **Holding space for diversities and intersectionalities:** Create an environment that respects and includes various identities and experiences of participants, being attuned to different ways participants may experience and express their identities.
- **Community agreements:** Establish clear guidelines for interaction (e.g., laughter, banter) to maintain a respectful and supportive group atmosphere, creating a sense of safety and trust.
- **Emphasizing process over product:** Focus on the process of sharing and learning rather than on achieving specific outcomes, valuing the journey of exploration and discovery.

3. Principles for Bringing a Topic of Discussion

- **Defining the term or practice:** Clearly articulate the meaning of the term or practice being introduced, considering both historical context and social justice perspectives to ensure all participants have a shared understanding.
- **Informed by community explorations:** Ensure the topic is relevant to the community's needs and experiences rather than solely based on the facilitator's expertise, being responsive to the interests and concerns of the group.
- **Making the topic accessible:** Use methods such as art, picture books, and other media to make the concept understandable and relevant to the group's context, engaging participants and making the topic more relatable.
- **Co-creating language and articulation:** Develop language and definitions collaboratively with the group to avoid narrow interpretations and foster inclusivity, valuing the input and perspectives of all participants.

4. Typical Structure

- **Community agreements and introduction:** Begin with establishing community agreements and introductions, including names and pronouns to set the tone for the session and create a sense of belonging.
- **Safety-sharp-safety approach:** Structure sessions to start and end with safety, incorporating sharp, challenging discussions in the middle while ensuring trauma sensitivity, balancing safety and exploration.
- **Gauging zones of safety, learning, and overwhelm:** Continuously assess participants' comfort levels and adjust the session accordingly, being responsive to the needs and reactions of the group.
- **Stating the intention and structure:** Clearly outline the day's intention and session structure to provide a sense of direction and purpose.
- **Activities:** Engage participants through activities such as mindfulness, art, movement, and theatre to facilitate exploration and expression.
- **Sharing and deepening:** Facilitate sharing of experiences, deepen discussions, and hold space for community support, creating opportunities for connection and reflection.
- **Collective psychoeducation:** Provide educational content relevant to the group's needs to build understanding and knowledge.
- **Check-in and closing:** Conduct a check-in to gauge participants' states and close the session with grounding exercises or reflections to ensure participants leave feeling supported and grounded.

5. Role of Facilitators and Co-Facilitators

- **Facilitator:**
 - **Setting direction and tone:** Guide the conversation and activities, ensuring alignment with the group's needs and safety, being responsive to the group's dynamics and energy.
 - **Leading activities:** Plan and execute group activities, being prepared and flexible.
 - **Collaboration:** Work with participants to understand group dynamics and individual needs, being attuned to the needs and experiences of participants.
 - **Navigating sharp topics:** Decide when to bring safety back or stay with challenging topics for generative discussions, being sensitive to the group's needs and readiness.
 - **Flexibility:** Adapt structure and process as needed to support participants, being open to changing plans and responding to the group's needs.

- **Building agency:** Focus on empowering participants and centering social justice and lived experiences, creating opportunities for participants to recognize and build on their strengths and agency.
- **Co-Facilitator:**
 - **Supporting the facilitator:** Assist with activities, translations, and maintaining group dynamics, being a supportive presence and providing additional help as needed.
 - **Observing and reflecting:** Provide observations and reflections post-session to enhance facilitation, being attentive to the group's dynamics and providing constructive feedback.
 - **Maintaining IAS:** Help ensure the group adheres to its intended stance and objectives, being a steward of the group's intentions and values.

6. Group Characteristics

- **Intersectionality:** Recognize the diverse identities within the group, including gender, sexuality, neurodivergence, disability, class, caste, and religion, being aware of how these identities intersect and impact participants' experiences.
- **Personal styles:** Be aware of individual differences in sharing and participation, respecting and valuing different ways of engaging with the group.
- **Diversity:** Embrace the group's diversity in terms of professional identities, age groups, financial backgrounds, and languages, creating an inclusive and welcoming environment.
- **Trauma and grief:** Understand the presence of trauma and grief and provide appropriate support, being sensitive to the emotional experiences of participants.
- **Community and belonging:** Acknowledge the need for community and belonging among participants, including those at different stages of transition, creating opportunities for connection and support.

7. Broad Challenges in a Group and Navigation Strategies

- **Deepening vs. holding back:** Assess when to delve deeper into discussions or maintain safety, being responsive to the group's needs and dynamics.
- **Time management:** Keep track of time and manage activities effectively, being organized and flexible.

- **Language and translation issues:** Use accessible language and provide translations as needed, being inclusive and ensuring all participants can fully engage.
- **Activities not landing:** Be prepared to adapt or change activities that do not resonate with the group, being flexible and responsive.
- **Logistical issues:** Address logistical challenges situationally, being prepared and adaptable.
- **Participants' personal experiences:** Bring participants back from individual experiences to the group context when necessary, balancing individual and group needs.
- **Sharp shares:** Decide whether to bring safety back or explore challenging topics, being sensitive and responsive to the group's needs.
- **Adherence to IAS:** Maintain flexibility while ensuring the group stays aligned with its intended stance, being a steward of the group's intentions and values.
- **Facilitator-cofacilitator dynamics:** Address any incoherence between facilitators through reflection and supervision, being communicative and collaborative.

8. Facilitator Preparation

- **Preparing for sessions:** Plan with clear objectives and materials, being organized and prepared.
- **Recommended training and resources:** Engage in training and utilize resources to enhance facilitation skills, continuously learning and developing.

9. Detailed Session Plans

- **Sample session plans:** Provide detailed activities, timing, and materials needed, creating structured and adaptable plans.

10. Tools and Techniques

- **Facilitating discussions:** Use tools such as active listening, reflective questioning, and mindfulness exercises to facilitate discussions, manage conflicts, and engage participants.