



# Psychological Well-being Manual

Action Contre La Faim & Metanoia Mental Health Services and Resource Center

September 2019



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# Forward

The extent of mental health problems are more and more recognized around the world (Whiteford, Ferrari, Degenhardt, Feigin, & Vos, 2015). With relatively recent political changes and conflicts around the country, a significant burden of mental health problems in Myanmar has also been emphasized by media, organizations, and academic research. For example, the Global Burden of Disease study highlighted that the extent of anxiety and depression in Myanmar is substantial and increasing (Nguyen, Lee, Schojan, & Bolton, 2018). However, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services are largely limited in Myanmar across all layers of MHPSS pyramid. Widespread stigma towards people with mental health problems, limited accessibility, limited resources, poor mental health literacy have all contributed to inadequate engagement with mental health services in Myanmar.

Through this Psychological Well-being Manual, ACF & Metanoia aim to improve mental health and psychosocial knowledge and skills, reduce stigma, increase accessibility and improve psychosocial wellbeing and resilience of people. This manual is aimed to support community facilitators to facilitate focus group discussions with a specific gender, age and other groups in the communities. Ideally, community facilitators will be trained by MHPSS experts so that they have a clear understanding of the subject matter and its impact on community wellbeing and resilience. It is not meant to be followed in any specific order. It aims to provide the facilitator with options to select from based on the needs of their communities.









We hope that this manual will be a useful resource for non-specialist MHPSS providers across the country and increase their capacity as part of the draft National Mental Health Strategy to increase access to MHPSS services.

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## Introduction











 <b>Duration</b> 15 - 10 minutes	 <b>Facilitator</b> one facilitator	 <b>Location</b> wide space with privacy
 <b>Group size</b> 8 - 12 participants	 <b>Gender</b> either specific gender or mixed-gender group	 <b>Age group</b> children 12 -18 or adults
 <b>Materials</b> chairs or marked sitting position	 <b>Objectives</b> The aim of the game is to help participants all relax, feel more comfortable and focus on where we are and who we are with in this moment.	

<b>Activity:</b>	<p>Explain to the participants that the aim of the game. Ask the participants to sit in a circle, with you standing in the center of the circle. Introduce your name and choose a criteria that you possess such as 'I have long hair'. Then, everybody who meets this criteria, and including you in the center will have to find a new place to sit within the circle. The one who doesn't find a place to sit in the circle, will now stand in the center, and think about another criteria. The game goes on for some more rounds.</p>
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## Ground Rules











 <b>Duration</b> 15 - 20 minutes	 <b>Facilitator</b> one facilitator	 <b>Location</b> quiet and wide sitting place
 <b>Group size</b> 8 - 12 participants	 <b>Gender</b> either specific gender or mixed-gender group	 <b>Age group</b> children 12 -18 or adults
 <b>Materials</b> large papers (flip chart) and marker pens	 <b>Objectives</b> This activity aim to create a safe environment for the participants by identifying the ground rules for the group.	

<b>Group Discussion</b>	<p>It is important to create a safe space for sharing and learning during our sessions. So let's discuss the ground rules we should keep.</p> <p><u>Ground rules to suggest if not included in the discussion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicating each other with respect</li> <li>- Sharing opinions and thoughts openly – we would like to encourage everyone to share their thoughts as everyone has a unique experience and viewpoint and we can all learn from each other.</li> <li>- Respecting the privacy of the participants</li> <li>- Avoiding forcing others to talk about what they don't want to</li> <li>- Actively listening to the person who is speaking even if one's own view is different from him or her</li> <li>- Avoiding judging other's opinions and sharing</li> <li>- Respecting and maintaining confidentiality</li> <li>- setting the phone in silent mode and</li> <li>- punctuality.</li> </ul>
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# Psychosocial Support











 <b>Duration</b> 30-45 minutes	 <b>Facilitator</b> one facilitator	 <b>Location</b> quiet space with privacy
 <b>Group size</b> 8 - 12 participants	 <b>Gender</b> either specific gender or mixed-gender group	 <b>Age group</b> children 12 -18, young adults (19-24), adults and elderly
 <b>Materials</b> no specific materials required	 <b>Objectives</b> This session aims to introduce the term “psychosocial support” with participants and improve their understanding of what involves in psychosocial support.	

<u>Psychosocial Support</u>	
Guide question for sharing	<p><i>When we talk about “support,” what do we mean?</i></p> <p><i>What kind of situations, do we need support or do we provide support to others?</i></p> <p><i>When you get/give that support, how does it help?/how do you feel?</i></p>
Say:	<p><i>When we get support, we feel less alone, and we feel we can deal with the problem more and it makes us feel better. It also helps us feel more connected and valued by other people. So, this is psychosocial support. We can get this support from our family members, friends, community members, and others.</i></p>
Discussion	<p><i>“Now, we are going to do a quick activity. Please raise one of your hands and list the five most supportive people in your lives, one on each finger. This can include family members, friends, community elders, and NGO workers, etc. It is okay if you cannot think of someone for each finger.”</i></p> <p>Ask the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Who is closest to you? Who do you really care about? Who makes you feel good? Who makes you laugh? Who helps you learn? Who helps you solve problems?</i></li> <li>- <i>Who gives you food, clothing, and shelter? Who looks after you when you are sick? Who helps you with your chores? Who helps you look after your baby?</i></li> <li>- <i>Is there someone who used to be close to but aren’t anymore? What happened? How do you feel about it?</i></li> </ul>
Activity	<p><i>Think of someone you really love. It can be anybody you want, may be someone you have been talked about. It can even be an animal.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Imagine that person or animal is standing right in front of you. What do they look like? Picture their face, their eyes and their smile. Imagine you are smiling back at them.</i></li> <li>- <i>Now, keeping your eyes closed, imagine that person is giving you a big hug, sending you love and strength.</i></li> <li>- <i>Enjoy that hug as that person hugs you, and sends you love and kindness. Hug them back, sending that love and kindness back to them.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>(Facilitator note: If people are comfortable, ask them to put their arms around themselves/ a teddy bear/ their child and hug. Leave a few moments silence)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Now, imagine you let go of that person gently and take a step back. See them smiling at you, and smile back at them. Know that they are with you.</i></li> <li>- <i>When you are ready, bring your hands together in front of you and start to rub your palms together really fast, building warmth between your hands. And then, put your hands on your face, the neck, hug yourself and imagine their love surrounding you.</i></li> </ul>
Wrap up	<p><i>“When we are struggling and get support from others, we feel less alone, we feel we can deal with the problem more and it makes us feel better. It also helps us feel more connected with and valued by other people. So, next time, you are facing hardships, try to reach out to people who can help and support you.”</i></p>

# Stress and Coping











 <p><b>Duration</b> 30-45 minutes</p>	 <p><b>Facilitator</b> one facilitator</p>	 <p><b>Location</b> quiet space with privacy</p>
 <p><b>Group size</b> 8 - 12 participants</p>	 <p><b>Gender</b> specific gender group recommended</p>	 <p><b>Age group</b> children 12 -18, young adults (19-24), adults and elderly</p>
 <p><b>Materials</b> chairs (the activities can be facilitated without chairs as well)</p>	 <p><b>Objectives</b> The aim of this session is to raise awareness of participants on what stress is and how they can cope.</p>	



<u>Stress and coping</u>	
Guide question for sharing	<i>What is stress? What makes you stressed? What kinds of things make it worse? How do you react?</i>
Say:	<p><i>Stress can be positive and safe. For example, if we are crossing the road and a car comes out of nowhere, stress helps us get to safety.</i></p> <p><i>Other times, stress can be because of difficult experiences such as running out of rice, a leaking roof, when a child gets sick, or arguments. These experiences are a part of life and they happen to everyone. In most cases, after a little while, things get better. <b>It is a little bit like rain. If there is some rain, you might get a little wet, it might be a little inconvenient but life goes on.</b></i></p> <p><i>Sometimes, many bad things happen at once or one after the other. Before we deal with one thing, the next is going wrong. It is challenging but we manage. <b>Similarly, in the monsoon season, it rains every day. Clothes don't dry, and things do not go according to plan. It is frustrating but we deal with it.</b></i></p> <p><i>How well we cope depends on how many things go wrong, how long they last and how much they affect our lives. Sometimes, it becomes too much. <b>It is like the rain turns into a flood, destroys homes, hurts people and leaves a trail of destruction.</b> But still, whether it is rain or other situation, with the right support and with time, people begin to put their lives back together.</i></p>
Activity	<p><i>Now, we will do an activity that can help you cope when you get stressed.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Sit straight in your chair or on the floor.</i></li> <li>- <i>Bring your hands to your lower belly. Relax your shoulders. Close your eyes.</i></li> <li>- <i>Take a long, deep, gentle breath in, sending the breath all the way down to your belly, so your stomach expands like a balloon.</i></li> <li>- <i>Breathe out slowly, noticing how the belly shrinks, like the air is going slowly out of the balloon again.</i></li> <li>- <i>Breathe in again, and breathe out again. Keep breathing like this for about 10 breaths.</i></li> </ul>
Wrap up	<i>Bad things are part of life. There are things you can do to help yourself such as speaking to people we trust, doing breathing exercises, doing things we enjoy, etc.</i>

# Wellbeing and Resilience











 <p><b>Duration</b> 30-45 minutes</p>	 <p><b>Facilitator</b> one facilitator</p>	 <p><b>Location</b> quiet space with privacy</p>
 <p><b>Group size</b> 8 - 12 participants</p>	 <p><b>Gender</b> either specific gender or mixed-gender group</p>	 <p><b>Age group</b> children (12-18 years) or adults</p>
 <p><b>Materials</b> no specific materials required</p>	 <p><b>Objectives</b> The aim of this session is to help participants familiar with the concepts of wellbeing and resilience and to help them identify resources to build their resilience.</p>	

<u>Wellbeing and resilience</u>	
Say:	<p><b>Wellbeing</b> is the idea of feeling good within yourself and being able to do your daily activities well.</p> <p><b>Resilience</b> is being able to bounce back when things are getting bad.</p> <p>Imagine you have a bowl inside you. The more challenges you face, the heavier the bowl gets, and the more your wellbeing is affected. Resilience is the ability to put holes in this bowl to make it lighter by doing things such as seeking help, speaking to friends and family, and doing enjoyable activities.</p>
Guide question for sharing	What do you do to help you bounce back when you face challenges?
Say:	<p>There are four main types of things that can help us bounce back.</p> <p><b>Body</b> _ When we are going through difficult times, we skip meals, we don't sleep, we don't bother with personal hygiene. We can look after our bodies by getting rest, getting enough sleep, eating regularly, drinking plenty of water, walking, and taking care of personal hygiene.</p> <p><b>Achievement</b> – When life is hard, we feel like we can't do anything. But, in fact, that we got through the day, and that we managed to do what we are supposed to do can be our achievements.</p> <p><b>Connection</b> – When things are tough, we withdraw, feel like nobody understands and worry we sound like we are complaining or being weak for asking help. Getting support from others helps us feel connected and valued and that can increase our wellbeing.</p> <p><b>Enjoyment</b> – When we are struggling, we forget or do not want to do enjoyable things. Doing things that we enjoy such as eating our favorite food, watching a film, listening to music, playing with our children can help improve our mood.</p> <p><b>Each time you do this, you are adding more holes to the bowl you carry around and lightening the load, thereby, increasing your wellbeing and resilience.</b></p>
Wrap up	There are many things you can do by yourself to increase your wellbeing and resilience. Other times, it helps to reach out to others to help you.

# Depression



 Duration 30-45 minutes	 Facilitator one facilitator	 Location quiet space with privacy
 Group size 8 - 12 participants	 Gender either specific gender or mixed-gender group	 Age group children 12 -18, young adults (19-24), adults and elderly
 Materials no specific materials required	 Objectives The aim of this session is to raise awareness of depression, how it affects people and how they can cope with it.	

Depression

Guide question for sharing

Have you ever felt depressed? When was that? What happened? How do you know you are feeling depressed?

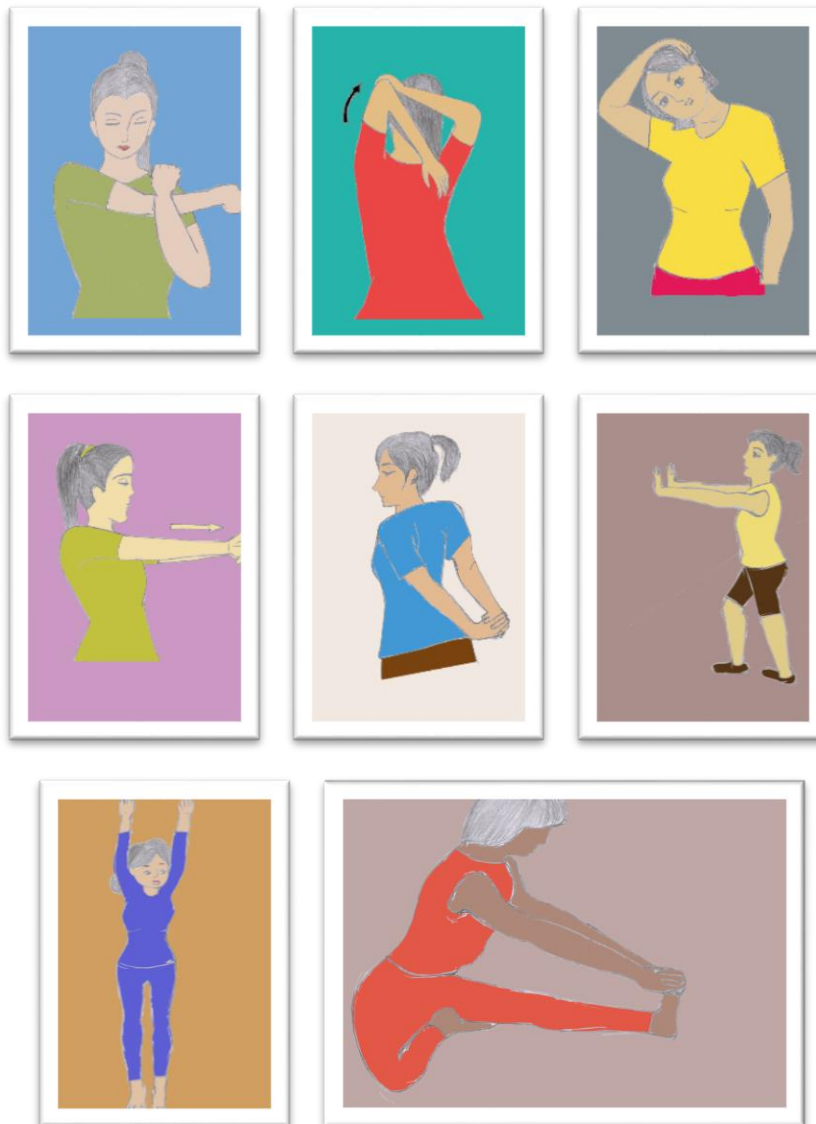
Say:

*Sometimes, if we feel we have no control, or can't change things, we can feel sad or angry or frustrated. It can affect our sleep and appetite. We may feel tired and not want to do anything or see anyone. Sometimes, things are so bad that we think things will not improve. We may blame ourselves, and think we are useless or worthless. At times, we may even think, "what's the point of living in this world?" This can be really hard for someone to go through it. The good news is that there are a lot of things you can do to help yourself.*

Activity 1

Sometimes, stretching can help us feel better. Here are a few options for you to try. Remember to breathe in through your nose and breathe out through your mouth when you do these.

(Facilitator Note: Please select the ones that are appropriate for the context.)











Wrap up

*"Today, we have learned about depression and how moving your body can help you feel better."*

## Grief











 Duration 30-45 minutes	 Facilitator one facilitator	 Location quiet space with privacy
 Group size 8 - 12 participants	 Gender either specific gender or mixed-gender group	 Age group children 12 -18, young adults (19-24), adults and elderly
 Materials A4 papers, pencils, crayons	 Objectives This session aims to help participants understand grief and how to cope with it.	

<u>Grief</u>	
<b>Say:</b>	<i>When we lose something or someone important to us, it can be really difficult to cope. When this happens suddenly or is taken away by force, it can feel worse. This is called grief.</i>
<b>Activity</b>	<p><i>Now, we would like to talk about something or someone you have lost. This activity is optional. For those of you who would like to share, please only share thoughts about people or things that no longer distress you.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Think about something or someone you have lost.</i></li> <li>- <i>Think about what this thing or person meant to you.</i></li> <li>- <i>If comfortable, take turns sharing who or what it was and why it is important to you.</i></li> <li>- <i>Take a piece of paper and fold it in half.</i></li> <li>- <i>On the left, draw something that represents the thing or person you have been talking about.</i></li> <li>- <i>On the right draw something you have in your life now that brings you comfort or joy – a person, an object, a belief, etc.</i></li> <li>- <i>Now open the paper, and draw something between the two that will help you move from your loss to what is important to you now – a bridge, a boat, a person, etc.</i></li> <li>- <i>How does the thing or person you drew help?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>This activity is adapted from Bridge of Hope, Toolkit for Community PSS Workers: Community-based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Sierra Leone.</i></p>
<b>Wrap up:</b>	<i>Each of us copes with grief in different ways. Sharing our experiences with others can bring comfort and help us cope. Another key part is to find a way to connect to the important things or people we have now.</i>

## Anxiety











 Duration 30-45 minutes	 Facilitator one facilitator	 Location quiet space with privacy
 Group size 8 - 12 participants	 Gender either specific gender or mixed-gender group	 Age group children 12 -18, young adults (19-24), adults and elderly
 Materials no specific materials required	 Objectives This session aims to raise awareness of anxiety and how to cope with it.	



<u>Anxiety</u>																																									
Guide question for sharing	<u>Have you ever experienced anxiety? What happens when you experience it? When does it happen? What helps?</u>																																								
Say:	We all experience anxiety. This can happen when we feel frightened or worried. Our hearts beat faster, our mouths go dry, it becomes hard to breathe, we start to sweat, we feel like we want to vomit, we feel like we have to go to the bathroom, or we cannot speak or move.																																								
Activity	<p><u>Muscle relaxation</u></p> <p>When we get stressed, we hold tension in our bodies. When we tense and release different muscles in our bodies, one at a time, it can help us relax.</p> <p>Let's start with our feet and work out way up or you can do this in the opposite direction.</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">Tense your</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Feet, as tight as you can..</td> <td style="width: 10%;">Hold 1, 2, 3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">Release</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tense your</td> <td>Calves, as tight as you can..</td> <td>Hold 1, 2, 3</td> <td>Release</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tense your</td> <td>Thighs, as tight as you can..</td> <td>Hold 1, 2, 3</td> <td>Release</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tense your</td> <td>Stomach, squeeze it in as much as you can..</td> <td>Hold 1, 2, 3</td> <td>Release</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tense your</td> <td>Chest, push it forward and tense it..</td> <td>Hold 1, 2, 3</td> <td>Release</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tense your</td> <td>Shoulders.. raise them to your ears</td> <td>Hold 1, 2, 3</td> <td>Release</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tense your</td> <td>Fists.. make a tight fist..</td> <td>Hold 1, 2, 3</td> <td>Release</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tense your</td> <td>Arms, stretch them out and turn them outwards</td> <td>Hold 1, 2, 3</td> <td>Release</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tense your</td> <td>Cheeks, suck in your cheeks as much as you can..</td> <td>Hold 1, 2, 3</td> <td>Release</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tense your</td> <td>Eyes, close your eyes as tightly as you can</td> <td>Hold 1, 2, 3</td> <td>Release</td> </tr> </table> <p>Now stand up and stretch your body to loosen it up. How are you feeling now? How does your body feel?</p> <p><u>Practice as a group</u></p>	Tense your	Feet, as tight as you can..	Hold 1, 2, 3	Release	Tense your	Calves, as tight as you can..	Hold 1, 2, 3	Release	Tense your	Thighs, as tight as you can..	Hold 1, 2, 3	Release	Tense your	Stomach, squeeze it in as much as you can..	Hold 1, 2, 3	Release	Tense your	Chest, push it forward and tense it..	Hold 1, 2, 3	Release	Tense your	Shoulders.. raise them to your ears	Hold 1, 2, 3	Release	Tense your	Fists.. make a tight fist..	Hold 1, 2, 3	Release	Tense your	Arms, stretch them out and turn them outwards	Hold 1, 2, 3	Release	Tense your	Cheeks, suck in your cheeks as much as you can..	Hold 1, 2, 3	Release	Tense your	Eyes, close your eyes as tightly as you can	Hold 1, 2, 3	Release
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Wrap up	Although anxiety is a difficult experience, we all experience it at some points and there are simple things you can do to help yourself calm down.																																								

# Trauma



 <b>Duration</b> 30-45 minutes	 <b>Facilitator</b> one facilitator	 <b>Location</b> quiet space with privacy
 <b>Group size</b> 8 - 12 participants	 <b>Gender</b> either specific gender or mixed-gender group	 <b>Age group</b> children 12 -18, young adults (19-24), adults and elderly
 <b>Materials</b> no specific materials required	 <b>Objectives</b> The aim of this session is to raise awareness of trauma and how to cope with it.	

<u>Trauma</u>	
Guide question for sharing	<u>Have you heard people use the word trauma? What does it mean? Do you know anyone who has experienced trauma?</u>
Say:	In our lives, we have difficult experiences. Sometimes it is too much for our mind to cope with. When this happens, sometimes, you might see pictures of the past events in your mind when you are awake or in your sleep and you feel like it is happening now. You may avoid things that remind you of difficult things from the past. You may find you cannot relax or are always worried about bad things happening again.
Activity	<p><i>At those times, focusing on the present where you are safe can help you feel better.</i>            (Note for facilitator: Facilitators can choose one or more activities from the options below based on the context. For some activities, the facilitators can ask participants to try at home if appropriate.)</p> <p><u>Grounding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Look around the room and name 3 things – of a specific color, or three different objects, or 3 things of a specific shape, etc. PRACTICE. How do you feel?</li> <li>- Eat or drink something – sweets or sweet tea or something and focus on the taste. PRACTICE. How do you feel?</li> <li>- Move to a different place – different room, and do something that you need to focus on fully such as play a game on your phone or sew something, or chop vegetables, or weave something, etc. Sometimes, focusing on doing something with another person such as playing with your child, talking to others, etc. also helps. PRACTICE. How do you feel?</li> </ul>
Wrap up	When we focus on what is happening now, it helps us realize we are now safe and it helps our body calm down. We can use these simple techniques for ourselves or for other people who are affected in a similar way.

## Reference

*Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). (2007). IASC guidelines on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings. IASC, Geneva.*

*Resource-oriented trauma therapy combined with eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) resource installation (ROTATE)*

*Toolkit for Community PSS Workers: Community-based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Sierra Leone*

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/>

