

Foundations in palliative care

A programme of facilitated learning for care-home staff

Facilitator's manual

Supported by



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Introduction

This guide will help you get the best out of the *Foundations in palliative care* training programme and fulfil your role as facilitator. Together, this guide and the other training materials included in the pack will provide you with everything you need to run the workshops successfully, whether or not you are an experienced facilitator and regardless of your current knowledge of palliative care. You will, of course, need to invest some time preparing for the workshops – about 3–4 hours for each workshop for each module. Start by working through this manual, which will take approximately 3 hours.

The role and responsibilities of the facilitator

Role

The title facilitator, as opposed to leader, teacher, instructor, trainer, or tutor, was chosen because this training programme takes a learner-centred approach (see p. 11), and your role is to guide the learning process.

The participants will have varying degrees of experience and understanding of palliative care, the dying process, and death, and your aim is to encourage them to share their ideas, values, and experiences, to learn from each other, and to validate what they already know but may not recognise as important and valuable.

During the workshops, you will need to encourage participants to reflect on their experience and practice. This will involve them thinking about and questioning what they do and how they do it. Many people work in a particular way without questioning, either because they were taught to do things in a certain way or because the work has become routine and they do not stop to think about it. However, if they reflect on what they do, they can ask if it could be done differently and better.

There is plenty of opportunity in the workshops for reflection, as well as for analysis, feedback, and discussion. The structure of the workshops and detailed instructions provided should leave you free to help participants get the most out of each session.

Responsibilities

Your practical responsibilities include setting the date and time, informing the participants, booking the room, arranging for certain equipment to be available and checking that it works, and providing the materials and other information. There might only be a limited choice of rooms and equipment but, if you can, book a room that is suitable for learning. If you are not the care-home manager, some of these duties may be undertaken by the manager, but you both need to be clear about each other's responsibilities.

Once the practical considerations have been organised, your responsibility is to make sure that the workshops run smoothly and that the practical arrangements enhance rather than hinder the learning process.

Either you or the care-home manager will need to recruit members of staff to attend the workshops. They will need to know what to expect and the level of commitment involved. A participant's flyer is provided that describes the training programme and explains what is expected of participants. There is space for you or the manager to write the time, date, and place of the first workshop. Reminders about subsequent workshops are provided in the workbook.

Acknowledging boundaries

It is also your responsibility to acknowledge that, for various reasons, both you and the participants could have strong feelings in response to some of the material and exercises included in the programme. For example, a participant may have recently experienced a bereavement or may know someone who is dying. As a result, he or she could experience strong feelings in some of the workshops that deal with similar issues. Such feelings can be difficult to manage. The establishment of ground rules and boundaries for the workshops (see p.13) at the beginning of the programme will help participants to understand that although they should support each other, the workshops are not therapy sessions. If someone needs extra help, they should be encouraged to seek it outside the workshop, perhaps from a colleague, a friend, or a relative.

How to use the training materials

Programme structure

The training programme comprises four modules (see table):

1. *First principles*
2. *Communication*
3. *Pain and symptom management*
4. *Bereavement care*

Structure of the training programme.

	Materials for facilitators		Materials for participants	
Preparation	Facilitator's manual		Participant's flyer	
Module 1 <i>First principles</i> (three workshops)	Facilitator's workshop guidelines	+ Module 1 booklet (includes facilitator texts)	Participant's workbook	
Module 2 <i>Communication</i> (three workshops)	Facilitator's workshop guidelines	+ Module 2 booklet (includes facilitator texts)	+ CD (four tracks)	Participant's workbook
Module 3 <i>Pain and symptom management</i> (three workshops)	Facilitator's workshop guidelines	+ Module 3 booklet (includes facilitator texts)		Participant's workbook
Module 4 <i>Bereavement care</i> (three workshops)	Facilitator's workshop guidelines	+ Module 4 booklet (includes facilitator texts)	+ CD (two tracks)	Participant's workbook

With the exception of one 2-hour workshop in the *Communication* module, each module includes three workshops that will each take 1.5 hours to complete. Each workshop is different in content but they all have the same format, which is described in the facilitator guidelines in each module.

Workshop format

Use the materials for the *First principles* module to help you work through this section.

Each workshop starts with an introductory session that enables you to:

- Make any necessary introductions
- Explain the aims of the workshop
- Set or confirm the ground rules
- Run through the programme

The group is together for the introductory session but may divide into smaller groups or pairs for subsequent activities. Some people will be more comfortable working and expressing their views in smaller groups and pairs than in one large group. Feedback sessions follow the activities to enable participants' opinions and experiences to be shared, and compared and contrasted.

The workshops also include general information and discussion sessions, that often require you to lead a discussion on a specified topic. These sessions are supported by facilitator texts and other materials in addition to the detailed facilitator guidelines for each workshop.

Your role in the different activities

General information and discussion sessions

Your role is to lead the discussion, using the appropriate facilitator text and supporting materials. The facilitator guidelines provide the main points to be drawn out in the discussion.

As far as possible, encourage the whole group to take part in the discussion. For a variety of reasons this may not be easy. Some people dominate discussions while others are too timid to take part. You will need to prevent the dominant members of the group from unintentionally stopping others speaking. The next chapter provides some helpful advice on this important aspect of your role.

Small-group activities or activities in pairs

You may need to allocate people to small groups to prevent participants always working in the same groups. However, if participants are to work in pairs, it is probably easier for them to work with their neighbours.

Some of the exercises require participants to talk about their personal experience. To provide the groups with some privacy, it may be necessary for them to move to different corners of the room.

The most important aspect of your role in these small-group activities is to make sure that the participants know exactly what they are expected to do. The facilitator guidelines give clear instructions that include a time allocation for each activity. It is your responsibility to keep to the time schedule and to warn the groups when the time allocated is about to end.

Some of the small-group activities include role play. Some people have difficulty with role play but the *Role play* section on p.15 provides further guidance on how to overcome difficulties.

Feedback sessions

These sessions give each small group or pair an opportunity to share their views with the whole group. Your task is to make sure that each group or pair is represented and that all the views are heard and noted. The facilitator guidelines often suggest that you write the views on the flipchart so that participants can compare and contrast their views.

The feedback will stimulate discussion, which you will also need to summarise. The facilitator guidelines indicate the important points. If any point does not arise, bring that point into the discussion.

Closing remarks

The closing remarks provide an opportunity for you to acknowledge the contribution made by each participant, and to introduce the next workshop. It is also an opportunity for participants to reflect on what they have learnt.

Supporting materials

The supporting materials are facilitator texts and further reading, a *Participant's workbook* for each module (which includes cases studies, information, and activities), and two CDs.

Facilitator texts

The facilitator texts provide the background information needed to run each workshop. Sometimes you will need to draw on them for information. At other times you will use them to guide discussions. The texts vary in length but, on average, they will take you between 15 minutes and 1 hour to read. They are not intended to be given to participants, but you may wish to use your notes on the texts.

Further reading

Further reading is provided in addition to the facilitator texts to provide you with additional background information to support you in your role as facilitator.

Participants' workbooks

A *Participant's workbook* is provided for each module in which participants may make notes during or after the workshops. It includes cases studies, scenarios for role play, useful definitions and other useful information that you will use in the workshops. It also has space for participants to note down their thoughts and reflections on how their practice has been changed by what they have learnt, and any ideas they have between workshops. You will need to give participants time to read and absorb the information in the workbooks and, in some cases, you will need to offer an explanation. The facilitator guidelines give full instructions on when and how to use the workbooks.

Further copies of the workbooks can be obtained free of charge from the Macmillan Cancer Relief Resources Line (tel: 01344 350310).

CD

There are two CDs: one accompanying Module 2 *Communication* and the other Module 4 *Bereavement care*. The CDs are in a pocket at the back of each module booklet, respectively. They are intended to be played to the whole group and to be used to stimulate discussion. You will need to listen to the tracks as part of your preparation for the workshops.

Participant's flyer

A participant's flyer is included in the training pack to enable you to inform participants of the time, date, and place of the first workshop. You will need to write in this information for the first workshop of module 1. Reminders about subsequent workshops are provided in the workbooks. The flyer also includes an overview of the programme to give participants an idea of what to expect. Further copies of the flyer can be obtained free of charge from the Macmillan Cancer Relief Resources Line (tel: 01344 350310).

Certificate of attendance/register

It is important that participants' development is recognised at the end of each module. Certificates of attendance are therefore provided in each *Participant's workbook*. The certificate is not linked to any national or vocational qualifications in the field. Its purpose is three-fold: to reward and

recognise the achievement of each participant personally, to reiterate the commitment of the care home to lifelong learning and career development for staff, and to provide the start of a portfolio of work that participants can use to demonstrate their learning.

Participants are expected to attend all three workshops in a module before the certificate is signed by you or the manager. You may therefore like to keep an informal register to enable you to keep track of attendance.

We encourage you to make the signing of the certificates and the end of the module something of a celebration for participants. You might like to arrange a special morning coffee or afternoon tea break by way of celebration.

How to facilitate learning in groups

A learner-centred approach

This training programme employs a learner-centred approach. Learner-centred groups are defined as those in which the following take place:¹

- The facilitator encourages participants to talk about their experiences and to offer opinions. Their knowledge is used to stimulate ideas, creativity, development, problem solving, and learning in the whole group
- Every participant's experience is equally valuable and valid. There are no wrong opinions, but opinions can be challenged
- Participants share in the process of learning, for example by reflection and by actively engaging with others in the group

Experiential learning

The workshop activities encourage participants to reflect on their personal and professional experience and knowledge, and to experience some of the feelings discussed. Participants are therefore able to relate what they learn in the workshops to something meaningful in their lives. This type of learning is called experiential learning. Experiential learning is particularly useful for people who work in settings that place a high demand on their emotions, such as care homes.

Creating and maintaining a safe environment

In order for participants to relax and work well together they need to feel safe. The workshop environment should therefore be comfortable, easily accessible, and private. You can create a feeling of comfort and, therefore, safety by:

- Arranging the chairs in a circular pattern rather than in rows, since a circular arrangement encourages group participation
- Making sure that refreshments, such as tea and coffee, are available
- Making sure that all the participants know the start and finish time, and that it is their responsibility to arrive on time. You could negotiate this when setting the ground rules (see below)
- Not letting the workshop over-run. Participants may have other

commitments after the workshop, such as meeting children from school, and they should not be made late by the workshop. Similarly, the workshop should not start earlier than planned or participants who arrive on time will be made to feel uncomfortable and there will be less time for everyone to settle in before the workshop begins. Use the participant's flyer and the reminders in the workbooks to help participants remember when and where the workshops will take place

Practical preparations

Some care homes have specialised training rooms that enable teaching to take place away from the main work of the home and without interruptions. However, whether or not this is the case, you may have little choice about where the workshops take place. If you can, find a place that:

- Is peaceful, private, and unlikely to be disturbed (put a 'Training in progress' or similar notice on the door)
- Is suitable and comfortable
- Has enough room for small-group activities
- Is properly equipped with working equipment, including flipcharts, pens, and a CD player (test them beforehand to avoid embarrassment or delays)
- Has facilities for making refreshments or has access to them nearby

Group considerations^{1,2}

The group should be big enough to include a diverse and rich range of experience but small enough for people to feel comfortable interacting with each other. A number between four and 12 people is ideal. In some homes there will be more than 12 participants. If so, divide them into two or more groups and run separate workshops. Fewer than four people is not practical and the care-home manager might consider inviting staff from other homes to join the workshops.

The workshops are designed to enable all levels of staff to work together. Inevitably, some of the skills discussed in the workshops will seem more appropriate to certain levels of staff than to others. For instance, pain relief might be thought to be outside the expertise of a care assistant. However, it is important for care assistants and other staff to understand how to recognise and relieve pain as they interact closely with residents and are in a good position to assess their pain. Similarly, the issue of breaking bad news might be the responsibility of senior staff, but care assistants are often the people to whom residents turn when they want to know something about their condition or that of another resident. Therefore, all staff should feel confident communicating difficult issues.

It will be important for you to know the mix of skills that make up your group, and to ensure that all participants feel that they have something important to contribute. Bear in mind the following points before running

the workshops:

- Find out in advance who will attend the workshops
- Be aware of the mix (work, age, gender, skill, experience)
- Restrict the group size to 4–12, or divide a larger group into two or more
- Ensure that participants understand the general objectives of the training programme, the starting and stopping times, and the overall length and structure of the course

Content preparation

- Study the workshop guidelines and texts beforehand to make sure that you are familiar with the subject of each workshop
- Prepare all the materials and equipment you will need for each workshop in advance, such as flipcharts, workbooks, and the CD player

Managing the process

The first session of the first workshop will set the tone for subsequent sessions, and is a time when participants could feel vulnerable and unsure about what is going to happen. Introductions, setting the ground rules, and explaining the programme and the aims will all contribute to putting them at ease.

Introductions

Usually, the participants will know each other, although they may be more familiar with some people than others. Therefore, begin the first session by asking them to say something about themselves.

Setting ground rules: agreeing how to work together

Setting boundaries helps define the purpose of the group and helps people feel safe. Such boundaries are often referred to as ground rules and include:

- Rules that participants decide are important, and that create an atmosphere in which they feel safe enough to share and take risks
- Rules about the practicalities of training

You will first need to explain that ground rules represent an agreement between participants about behaviour and work within the group. Ask them to suggest ground rules, which might be rules they have come across in other groups. Record the suggestions on the flipchart, which might include rules about:

- Confidentiality within the group
- Timekeeping

- Breaks for refreshments
- Taking turns in group discussions

Go through each one in a bit more detail to establish that everyone understands the suggestions. For example, confidentiality means different things to different people. Is it OK for group members to talk to their friends and family about personal comments made in the group? Probably not. If you are working in a small community, information could be spread around very easily. The group might decide that participants can or cannot talk to people outside the group about what is said in the workshops. As people often inadvertently let slip confidential information, you should point out that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, participants must decide for themselves if they wish to share with the group, and how much information they wish to give. They could also agree to make it clear when a contribution is to be kept inside the group.

As the facilitator, you should also be very clear about who you talk to about the group. Participants might well ask you not to identify them by name when you talk or write to supervisors, managers, or care-home owners about the workshops.

There will be some non-negotiable rules that you will need to establish, such as:

- The group is not a self-help, support, or therapy group, even if the majority would like it to be one
- Rules about smoking set by the home that are out of your control
- Participants must respect each other's point of view
- Participants must be given time off from their duties to attend the workshops
- Participants must turn up and be on time. Each workshop builds on the last, so continuity of attendance is essential

Objectives

Some participants may not be used to learning in groups and may feel unsure about what to expect. Each workshop therefore has a clear programme of activities and a set of aims and objectives.

Facilitating discussion

Many of the activities rely on you to facilitate discussion. Two techniques you might find helpful are brainstorming and small-group (or pairs) work.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a way of generating a lot of ideas in a short time. It is an effective way of opening up new channels, possibilities, and directions.

First, ask the whole group to share their 'off the top of their heads' ideas on

a given topic and record them in any order on the flipchart. Remember to:

- Introduce the topic clearly
- Set a time limit
- Record each contribution in brief and use only key words
- Let ideas flow freely without explanations
- Accept any idea, however bizarre

Then, look at the ideas as a group and identify common points, surprises, and links to the teaching points.

Small-group work or work in pairs

Breaking the group into smaller groups or pairs can help people feel less inhibited. Although the approach might vary (small groups, pairs, brainstorming) the whole group should come together afterwards to discuss the results of the activity.

Facilitators are often frightened that they and the group will 'dry up' and there will be just a tense silence. However, should this occur, remember that silences can be useful and can be used to give people time to think and reflect on what has been said. The temptation to leap in and fill every silence should therefore be resisted.

Silences will feel less threatening if you are well prepared and can introduce new material if the group is really flagging. Your body language is also important; if you smile and look relaxed you will set the tone for the group. Discussion points are suggested in the facilitator guidelines to help you prepare for the discussion sessions and to ensure that all the relevant topics are discussed.

Finishing a discussion can be as difficult as starting one. Watch the time so that you can steer the discussion to a close but, if the discussion is taking off into exciting territory and you are running out of time, ask participants if they would like to stay a little later or move on to the next activity and keep to time.

Role play

In role play participants assume a role and act out a given situation. The great advantage of this form of experiential learning is that it helps participants to experience a situation rather than just discuss it in the abstract. Role play will also help participants explore situations in which their own experience is limited. For example, it is difficult to imagine being resident in a care home and dependent on care from other people, but playing the role of a resident enables participants to begin to understand how it feels to be treated in certain ways.

Role plays can feel threatening to some people so you may need to spend time reassuring participants. If you think the term role play is off-putting, you could change it to 'simulation'.

For participants, the main aims of role play are to:

- Put themselves in other people's shoes to feel what it is like to be treated in a particular way and to understand why other people feel or behave as they do
- Experience a common situation
- Experiment and practise dealing with unfamiliar or difficult situations
- Practise a specific skill, such as active listening
- Appreciate group dynamics and see how a group deals with problems that arise

Introducing a role play

Explain what the role play is about, its purpose, and what you expect them to do. Reassure participants that they do not need to be able to act. Role play is primarily an exercise in imagination and is similar to rehearsing what to say or do in a particular situation, such as:

- Practising what to say when asking a manager for time off
- Rehearsing what to say to a resident's family
- Practising how to make a complaint in a shop

If this is the participants' first role play, you may need to go into some detail and allow time to answer questions. For example, you may need to explain that participants are not being judged, that each individual's experience is of value, and that it is useful for them to be able to try out what happens when they do or say certain things. Do not force reluctant people to take part. They are unlikely to perform well, but they will probably come to the conclusion that they too can do it if they first watch other people take part.

Briefing

Explain to participants which roles they are to play. Mini biographies are provided in the workbooks.

Arranging the room

Help participants arrange the room in any way that feels appropriate. If there are two rooms available and enough people, you can run two role-plays at the same time, which may be less threatening and enable participants to make comparisons.

Participants not taking part can observe, but ask them not to talk to each other during the role play, and ask them to make notes in their workbooks and, for example, answer the following questions:

- What helpful behaviour do you notice?
- What causes the situation to develop as it does?
- What alternatives could you suggest?
- Are participants missing chances or closing down possibilities by, for

example, missing a chance to listen or closing down a conversation when the other person wants to talk?

- What specific behaviour or statements make the situation better or worse?

The role play

During the role play, do not intervene unless there are problems. You can expect people to be frivolous at the start. If, however, the level of frivolity is too great, it could make people feel threatened and they might respond by trivialising the activity. Participants might also trivialise the role play if it is not sufficiently challenging. If this is the case, ask them to explain their difficulty and try to adapt the activity by, for example, changing their role.

After the role play

After the role play, make sure that participants have separated from their roles, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others. This is particularly important when someone has been asked to take on the role of a character who is disliked. To do this, simply ask each person to say who they are and that they are not the character they have just played. For example, 'I'm Parveen and I'm not the highly unsympathetic GP I've just been playing. I'm not that rude, although I think I did it quite well.'

If necessary, ask participants to talk briefly about how they felt about the role and how they differ from the person they played. If a participant has been identified with a very unpleasant role, it might be helpful to ask the rest of the group to confirm that they see the person as themselves and not as the person they played.

Do not allow any other comment or discussion until you have done this. If, in the discussion that follows, people persist in referring to each other as the characters they played, ask them not to do so.

Discussion

The discussion that follows a role play is as important as the role play itself as it consolidates learning.

First, take feedback from the participants in the key roles. Ask them how they felt about themselves and about the responses of other people. Encourage them to suggest how they might have handled the situation differently, if they found the responses unhelpful.

Second, give your feedback. Focus on participants' strengths and make suggestions about other ways of doing things.

Third, ask the observers to give their feedback. Encourage them to be positive and constructive rather than dwell on the things that went wrong.

Remember that a role play can be a very emotional experience, so make it clear that it is alright for people to talk about how they felt. Most of the

learning that takes place is the result of the experience of feeling what it is like to play a particular role. Finding potential solutions to problems comes second.

Managing the participants

The group will probably be made up of a broad range of care-home staff, such as qualified nurses, domestic or kitchen staff, managers, and care assistants. They will have varying degrees of confidence and expertise. Some participants, whatever their level of expertise, may not feel confident expressing their ideas and thoughts in a group setting; others may dominate; and people may disagree. The following sections provide some, although not exhaustive, guidance on how to manage such diverse groups and difficult situations.

Active listening in groups

Active listening skills are as important in groups as they are in one-to-one conversations. However, there are group characteristics that affect the use of these skills.

Since the interests of each person in the group matter equally, each opinion expressed deserves to be heard. This involves limiting some contributions to allow others to participate. Thus, the facilitator is both listening to each contribution while at the same time observing or 'reading' the group.

Reading the group involves interpreting the effect of what is being said on the rest of the group. Inevitably, your attention will be compromised when doing this but will be compensated for by the rest of group, who will be listening to the contribution. You might need to clarify what someone has said by paraphrasing or by asking further questions to ensure that you and the rest of the group have heard and understood correctly.

If a topic is of particular interest to the group, participants may all want to speak at once. This could cause you anxiety and alter your management style. In these situations you need to manage the contributions and ensure that everyone is heard. This includes preventing interruptions and private conversations. Be firm but do not hurt participants' feelings or inhibit them from making future contributions. A collection of prepared phrases might help, such as: 'This is an important issue that Ahmed has raised and we need to hear what everyone has to say. Please talk one at a time. Liz, let's hear from you first'. Consider each part of the phrase in turn:

1. 'This is an important issue that Ahmed has raised . . .' This acknowledges the individual contribution and signals the importance of the issue
2. '. . . and we need to hear what everyone has to say.' This demonstrates the value of other views

3. 'Please talk one at a time.' This gives some responsibility to the group for managing their contributions
4. 'Liz, let's hear from you first.' This shows the group that you are also managing the contributions by inviting one of the less talkative people to express her views before other people begin to speak

It is also helpful to raise your concerns about interruptions and private conversations and give responsibility to the group, rather than ask individuals to stop talking. For example, you might say: 'I'm sorry Maya, I must stop you and ask you to repeat that because we all need to hear what each other has to say.' This repeats the message that everyone gets a chance to speak, and reminds the group that they have a responsibility to listen to all contributions.

Generally, it is best to intervene early before patterns of poor listening are established and are seen as the norm.

Finally, group active listening also requires you to summarise discussions, both to clarify what has been said and to move the discussion on. This is particularly helpful in groups in which issues and arguments are revisited again and again without the group making any progress. Summarising can also be a useful part of conflict resolution (see below).

Providing support in groups

Although the workshops are not meant to be therapeutic, participants will need to be supported in ways that enable them to contribute effectively. You and the group can do this by showing that you value each other's contributions by listening to what is being said without judgement. Mutual encouragement is also important, as is sharing experiences with the group. When participants feel valued and that they belong in the group, their confidence increases and they contribute more enthusiastically.

Encouraging participation in groups

Not everyone will contribute to the same extent, and the extent to which they do so depends on two factors: their desire to do so and the opportunities they are given to contribute. You can provide opportunities for participants by:

- Inviting them to speak ('Sanjit, do you want to say something about that?')
- Acknowledging what they say ('What you have said about Jeremy's symptoms is a good example of what we are talking about')
- Helping them express a point ('Are you talking about the difficulty that people have in expressing loss, perhaps, Rose?')

To be able to encourage participation you need first to find out who wants to contribute by looking at body language. The signals people use when they want to speak include:

- Raising a hand
- Leaning forward
- Making direct eye contact
- Looking restless
- Looking excited
- Talking to a neighbour

Sometimes participants talk to their neighbours because they are unable to talk to the whole group. In this situation, you could invite the person to contribute in a way that does not embarrass them. A closed question will help as it will give the person the option to decline to speak, such as: 'Did you want to say anything, Jo?' or 'Do you agree Sue?'.

Dealing with domination

If contributions from individuals are limited because one member of the group is monopolising the time, you need to exercise some control. This must be done both assertively and sensitively. You might say, for example: 'Could we hear what other people think about that and then take up the other point later?'. This will create an opportunity for others to speak without putting down the participant or his or her contribution. Of course, make sure that you do return to the other point.

'Yes, and . . .' rather than 'Yes, but . . .' can be a positive way of breaking into a seemingly unstoppable flow of words. For instance, 'Yes, and that connects with what Ruth was saying about pain relief, doesn't it? Perhaps you could take that further, Ruth.'

Other participants may attempt to deal with the 'difficult' person. If so, you will have to ensure that the discussion is not side-tracked and can continue in a constructive way. You may find it necessary to talk to the person outside the group about his or her behaviour. In which case, offer supportive and constructive criticism to encourage change.

Handling conflict in groups

It would be very surprising if the participants agreed about everything discussed in the workshops. Good group work depends on using conflict and controversy productively. Conflicts range from mild disagreements to outbursts of anger. Conflict is not a sign of failure, but as unresolved conflict might cause difficulties and affect the learning process, it should be resolved as soon as possible.

The responsibility for resolving conflict lies with both you and the group as a whole, although your role is crucial to the way in which it is resolved. Try to relate the conflict as much as possible to your own experience and learn from your evaluation of that experience.

You will be aware how previous experience of conflict affects how well

future conflict is handled. Therefore, each member of the group will have different ways of expressing and handling emotions when in conflict with other people or when observing conflict between others. Some people will blame other participants or you for the problem. Sometimes it is true that everything would be better if one person changed his or her character or behaviour or stopped coming to the workshops altogether. However, such a person might be behaving in an apparently unreasonable way because of what is happening in the group.

Remember that anxiety and stress tend to bring out the worst in people and can make people defensive. It may therefore be necessary to look at what is causing a particular person's difficult behaviour, such as a personality clash or anxiety about an activity, and take appropriate action.

On the rare occasions when serious conflict does occur in a workshop, remember that you must be seen to be fair and you must give equal attention to both sides of an argument. If the whole group is divided by a fundamental issue the disagreement will need to be confronted by the group, or people will continue to disagree. In this situation, all that you can do is help diagnose the problem by summarising and clarifying the argument and by acknowledging participants' feelings on both sides.

Strong emotions

It is appropriate to consider how to manage strong emotions generally. Certain strong emotions, such as anger, can cause anxiety. Good communication involves managing and coping with such emotions and the anxiety they cause. In the counselling world the term containment is used to describe activity to manage strong emotions. Containment is a way of containing or holding expressed feelings in a way that is caring and that reassures the person that the feelings are not dangerous.

Containment is useful in the group setting because it enables the group to stay with the person and the feelings long enough for them to be expressed, without rescuing the person or stopping the feelings from being expressed. For example, if someone is very angry, giving them the space to express their anger while making empathetic responses is more likely to diffuse their anger than attempts to control them or stop them being angry.

Conclusion

By working through this manual you will have gained sufficient knowledge about the ways in which groups work and about the skills involved in group facilitation to feel confident about running your own workshops. However, there is no substitute for experience, and you will find that you will develop your own strategies and styles for dealing with groups as you gain experience.

References

1. Fletcher A. *Learning in groups. People and potential*. Reader section, course K502. Milton Keynes: The Open University, 1995.
2. The Open University. *The group leader notes. Confident parents, confident children*, course K504T. Milton Keynes: The Open University, 1998.

Additional copies of the workbooks, CDs and participant flyers can be ordered. Call the Macmillan Resources Line on 01344 350310 or order online www.professionalresources.org.uk/macmillan



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