ConnecTeen

Community-based Crisis Intervention Program

Additional Guidelines for a successful implementation



ConnecTEEN project

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Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

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Additional Guidelines for a successful implementation

A holistic approach

We adopt a holistic approach, considering the participant's entire life as an interconnected system. A sense of disconnection may contribute to the chaos or challenges they are experiencing. An individual's reaction to a specific situation often reveals patterns of thinking that may be limiting progress in other areas of life.

Example: A participant who frequently uses excessive language and struggles to articulate a clear point may exhibit similar difficulties in initiating or completing tasks in daily life. By supporting the participant in becoming more concise and focused—"bottom-lining" their communication—we may help develop a new, more effective behavioral mechanism. This clarity can positively impact their overall capacity for action and decision-making.

Key principles for the trainer

- **The participant holds the answers to their own life.** Your role as a trainer is to ask thoughtful, intentional questions that guide them toward uncovering those answers.
- **Participants are naturally creative, resourceful, and whole.** Trust in their ability to process and manage whatever emotions arise during the session.
- **See the participants in their full potential.** Your role is to hold a vision of the participant that is often greater than the one they currently hold for themselves. Trust their process.

Home Assignments

Home assignments are a fundamental component of the training program. Their purpose is to support participants in developing independence in self-management and in actively creating the life they desire.

These assignments serve as a bridge between the training environment and daily life, allowing participants to implement and embody the insights gained during each session. This process fosters a sense of empowerment—empowerment nurtures self-esteem, which builds confidence, and confidence, in turn, fuels meaningful action. Consistent action leads to sustainable behavioral change.

Implementation and accountability

Each day, select a few participants to share how they plan to approach the home assignment. They will briefly present their intended actions to the group. This not only reinforces their commitment but also serves as inspiration for others to discover their own personal approach to the task.

It is important to emphasize that this is not a theoretical or discussion-based program—it is an action-based program. The purpose of the assignments is to translate insight into tangible practice.

Home assignments act as a critical catalyst for long-term change. Through them, participants naturally engage others in their lives and begin integrating the work into real-world situations.

Guidance for trainers

- Participants may sometimes report that they have not completed their assignments. However, it is often the case that they have, in some way, taken meaningful steps without recognizing them as such. As a trainer, maintain a sense of curiosity on the participant's behalf. Ask reflective questions about what has occurred since the last session. This approach helps uncover moments of mastery or progress that participants may not yet be able to see in themselves.

The room

Every room should be set up with as few things as possible. The group, no matter how big or small, will sit in a semi-circle with no desks or table in front. The trainers will sit close to each other facing the group. A little bit away, so that you have a sense of a semi-circle, and not a full circle. Imagine an invincible line between you as trainers and the participants. They will have their own process, which you will not meddle in. Your job is simply to lead the exercises and see the participant as naturally creative, resourceful and whole. This last bit is only possible when you as a trainer stay out of the participants' processes.

Trust

Trust is a core value in the **ConnecTeen** program—one that underpins the integrity and transformative potential of the entire training process. Values reflect what is truly important to us, and within this program, **trust functions as the oxygen** that allows the work to breathe, grow, and come alive (trust the process). It is the foundation upon which meaningful, lasting change is built.

Trust as a Conscious Choice
Trust is not passive; it is a deliberate choice. To choose trust means to relinquish the illusion of control. As a trainer, you must accept that no amount of effort will allow you to control the inner worlds—the thoughts, emotions, and lived experiences—of twelve or more individuals.

The Process is Self-Sustaining
Transformation arises not from control, but from trust in the process itself. The process is sustained by the group, and by the contributions—conscious and unconscious—of each individual participant. As a trainer, your role is not to shape or fix, but to **hold space** and to lead with the deep belief that every participant is naturally **creative, resourceful, and whole**. You are not there to solve, rescue, or repair. You are there to trust and witness.

Trust in What Emerges
Whatever surfaces in the room—whether it appears constructive or destructive—emerges for a reason. Your role is to **trust the relevance of what shows up** for the participant. If a destructive pattern arises, meet it with trust, then guide the participant by reflecting the opposite or transformative potential of what emerged.

Trust that **everything that happens in the space—**every reaction, resistance, insight, or silence—has value and will contribute to the larger process already at work.

Group Process

Definition of a Group
A group is defined as **two or more individuals engaging in mutual social interaction** while working toward a **shared goal** (American Psychological Association, n.d.). In the context of our workshops, the collective goal is **personal change and the restoration of dignity**.

The Function and Value of Groups
Groups fulfill various human needs, and individuals join groups for different reasons. One fundamental reason is the **need for safety**—group affiliation creates a sense of belonging and collective power. Working collaboratively, group members can achieve goals and benefits that would be difficult or impossible to attain individually. As Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggest, the human need to belong is basic and essential; being part of a group satisfies this innate social need.

Groups also foster **synergy**—the principle that the **whole is greater than the sum of its parts** (American Psychological Association, n.d.). In other words, a well-functioning group can generate results that exceed the combined efforts of individuals working separately.

Learning Through Shared Reflection
Listening to others' reflections and perspectives provides valuable opportunities for learning and growth. It reinforces the understanding that there are **many valid ways to perceive and respond to a situation**. This broadens each participant's awareness of their own choices and behaviors and enhances their ability to act consciously and intentionally.

Navigating Group Dynamics
Contrary to common assumptions, effective group functioning does not depend on smooth, linear progress through fixed stages. **Conflict within a group is not inherently negative**. When handled constructively, it becomes a rich source of learning. Disruptive behavior or emotional turbulence is addressed in the group setting—not avoided or handled privately—because **every moment in the group is a chance for collective learning**. Open discussion fosters transparency, accountability, and growth for all members.

From Isolation to Connection
It is common for participants to enter the program with a deep sense of disconnection. Many express the belief that they are fundamentally different from others—"No one understands me" is a recurring sentiment. As participants hear from peers who share similar experiences, thoughts, or values, this sense of alienation begins to diminish. Over time, they begin to feel seen, heard, and connected.

For participants who have experienced **social isolation or a lack of network**, the group becomes a vital arena for **rebuilding confidence, practicing social interaction, and developing interpersonal skills.** Group participation supports the development of both identity and resilience.

Factors for Effective Group Functioning

Two critical factors contribute to optimal group performance:

1. **Effective Communication** – Open, respectful, and purposeful communication ensures that participants work collaboratively toward shared goals.
2. **Intentional Facilitation** – The group must be **intentionally guided** by the trainer. Every action and word should serve the purpose of moving the group forward in a process that supports both individual and collective development.

Ultimately, both the individual participants and the group, as a whole, contribute to defining and achieving the program's goals.

Citations

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Group. In APA Dictionary of Psychology. Retrieved April 29, 2024, from https://dictionary.apa.org/group

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FUNDACIÓN intras

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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.