



# Addressing Afghan Children's Psychosocial Needs in the Classroom:

*A case study of a training for trainers*

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Nina Papadopoulos

January 2003  
Peshawar, Pakistan



*Refugee Relief, Respect, Renewal*

# **Addressing Afghan Children's Psychosocial Needs in the Classroom:**

**A case study of a training for trainers**

**Based on the experiences of IRC in Pakistan**

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## ABOUT THE IRC

Founded in 1933, the International Rescue Committee is a leading nonsectarian, voluntary organization providing relief, protection and resettlement services for refugees and victims of oppression or violent conflict. The IRC is committed to freedom, human dignity and self-reliance. This commitment is reflected in well-planned global emergency relief, rehabilitation services, resettlement assistance and advocacy for refugees.

The IRC launched emergency programs in Pakistan in 1980 to provide medical aid to Afghan refugees fleeing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. For over two decades since, the IRC has worked in camps and settlements in Peshawar and across Pakistan's Northwest Frontier province, providing needed supplies, health, water and sanitation services, extensive education programs and income-generation projects.

The IRC supports 38 primary and secondary schools for Afghan refugee children and more than 50 community-based classes in Peshawar as well as refugee camps and settlements in the region. Of the 20,000 students, enrolled 70 percent are girls. Extensive teacher training covers curriculum development for all grade levels. A related female health education project provides schoolteachers and female community educators with the knowledge, training and skills to instruct Afghan women and children in camps, clinics and schools about disease prevention and hygiene.



## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Section 1: Introduction to the Process</b>	<b>6</b>
Background	6
Context	6
Current case study	8
How this case study can be used	10
Definitions and guiding principles	10
Methodology	12
<b>Section 2: Workshop Program</b>	<b>14</b>
Workshop 1	16
Exploring psychosocial wellness, resilience and positive emotions	
Workshop 2	39
Stress, normal childhood development and coping methods	
Workshop 3	59
Painful emotions, listening and helping children talk with adults	
<b>Section 3: Conclusions and Recommendations</b>	<b>71</b>
Results observed	72
Lessons learned	73
Glossary	74
Resources	76
References	78

## HANDOUTS

Handout 1 - Psychosocial Care and Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: IRC Statement and Guiding Principles	19
Handout 2 - Aspects of Normative Culture	22
Handout 3 - Locating Afghan Cultural Position	23
Handout 4 - Defining the Afghan Norm	24
Handout 5 - Examples of Resilience	25
Handout 6 - What is Focusing?	41
Handout 7 - The Guesthouse	42
Handout 8 - Guidelines for Modeling Good Listening	45
Handout 9 - Psychosocial Development: Children from ages 0 – 16	47
Handout 10 - Psychosocial Emotional Responses	51
Handout 11 - Simple Steps to Improve Psychosocial Wellness	58
Handout 12 - Worries and Painful Emotions	61
Handout 13 - Key Behavioral Patterns of Children who have Experienced Trauma	68

# Section 1

# Introduction

# to the Process

## BACKGROUND

Afghanistan is a country that has been at war for over twenty-three years. Most of its population has been displaced at least once during this time and nearly half the population of approximately 20 million has moved, because of the war, at least twice. Almost a third of the population has taken refuge outside Afghanistan's borders, most settling in Iran or Pakistan. Internecine fighting has taken its toll on the population, but the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 events precipitated a rapid influx of refugees into already full camps of NWFP, Pakistan.

IRC has been working in many of these camps providing education, teacher training and health education through its Female Education Program (FEP). IRC schools serve over 23,000 students and employ almost 1000 teachers. Following September 11, 2001, when IRC schools faced a rapid influx of students, many of whom were traumatized and poorly adjusted to the camps or to attending school, teachers and IRC teacher trainers recognized the need for psychosocial program support in the schools.

## CONTEXT

Without exception wars impose heavy emotional, social, and spiritual burdens on children, families, and communities. Loss of life, separation of children from caregivers, displacement, divided communities and polarized ethnic groups, disruption of organized patterns of living and meaning, victimization, destruction of homes, schools, health care systems and the rupture of the supply of basic services have devastating impacts on the physical, cognitive, psychological and social well being of children, adolescents, and the adults who provide care and protection to them. As recognized by the CRC<sup>1</sup> children have a right to receive interventions that promote protection, education, physical and psychological recovery, social integration, among other rights. Wars place children at special risk for many injuries including, physical injury,

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<sup>1</sup> CRC UNICEF Web Site. [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

separation and identity loss, victimization, exploitation and conscription. Lessons learned have shown that immediate interventions addressing these very real and potentially enduring psychosocial impacts of wars should be an integral part of any complex emergency response.

Wars and displacement can debilitate children on a long-term basis through their deleterious impact on education. For example, lack of access to education, lack of resources and materials for instruction, insufficient number of teachers, and teachers untrained to meet the needs of distressed children have the potential to place children at life-long disadvantage. In addition, even though children may be physically present, those who have undergone traumatic experiences face barriers that prevent them from being able to concentrate, focus, relax, retain information, expand creatively, and fully engage in the learning process in the classroom environment.

Education has a vital role to play in the psychosocial protection and recovery of children affected by armed conflict. Healthy psychosocial development depends on the opportunities that children have to learn and master new skills. Educational settings are a place where children can hope to gain this crucial developmental and psychosocial support. Teachers can be a primary resource for healthy psychosocial and cognitive development for children. However, many are poorly trained, unsupported, and unaware of the developmental needs of children.

Given the need, what are the most effective methodologies to help teachers promote healthy child development? Although there is still much to understand about how to best support the natural resilience and coping strategies of children in the classroom, in culturally appropriate and sustainable ways, some of these questions have partial answers gleaned from pilot interventions, innovative programming, calls for assistance to an overwhelming circumstance, feedback, evaluation, and lessons learned during these endeavors. For example, children learn best when instructional methods are student centered, engaging, nurturing, and reflect sound pedagogical practice. Children who have been exposed to the traumas of war need teaching methods that are also sensitized to their experiences and resulting difficulties. Training which focuses on sensitization, child-friendly communication, nurturance, and sound instructional approaches has the potential for large-scale impact on the wellness of all children in the classroom. As an organization IRC considers student-centered pedagogy fundamental to basic child-development, psychosocial adjustment, and child rights. The application of nurturing and student-centered methodologies of teaching creates supportive psychosocial environments in which children not only survive, but also thrive. In this pursuit, it should be noted that the IRC Pakistan Female Education Program and IRC HQ have developed several training instruments that are informational in nature and provide teachers with practical instruction on effective student-centered pedagogy, effective communication with children, and how to develop psychosocially informed group activities with children in the classroom.

## CURRENT CASE STUDY

The purpose of this program was to train IRC/FEP teacher trainers in psychosocial wellness models and to facilitate the development of teacher training materials for IRC refugee teachers. A reflective process was used to raise awareness, to build skills, knowledge, and the confidence to apply what they learned into teacher training strategies for Afghan teachers. Through the training of teacher trainers it was anticipated that teachers would learn how to provide improved psychosocial support to children in the classroom. The psychosocial programming detailed in this case study brings to light how a global concept like psychosocial wellness can be adapted to meet the special needs of Afghan children, resulting in improved learning for all children in the classroom.

The current case study grew out of a needs assessment in a specific emergency situation: the rapid and overwhelming influx of refugees from Afghanistan in the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> bombing campaign. Teachers requested help with swelling classrooms of distressed children.

Needs Assessment: In the course of monitoring program activities, FEP field staff noted that Afghan refugee teachers in Pakistan were experiencing many difficulties in coping with the influx of newly arrived refugees students from Afghanistan. As a result, a needs assessment was conducted in 14 schools to determine the scope of the problem. The assessment highlighted some major problems in the classroom, including:

- Lack of materials because of the sudden influx of children.
- Varied ages of students in same classroom
- Students with large gaps in their education or who were home-schooled without a consistent curriculum.
- Many distressed children who were separated from their primary caregiver and were being cared for by relatives
- Children who were experiencing concentration difficulties
- Children with behavioral problems
- Severe overcrowding to the point of negatively affecting all students

To explore solutions to these problems, a two-day workshop for teachers in areas of high refugee influx was held. The workshop sought to give information and support to the teachers. The meaning of the term psychosocial using IRC guidelines for psychosocial care and protection was reviewed. Then teachers and trainers explored what the most important psychosocial problems were facing the children they taught. The following list was generated:

- How to know if a child has a problem



- What ways do children show problems
- How to improve the listening ability of children
- How to engage a child if they don't want to talk or interact
- How to help children with problems
- How to help children with small problems
- How to help children with big problems
- How to help them be more relaxed

Based on this needs assessment and in response to the specific request of teachers, IRC Pakistan undertook a pilot program aimed at developing innovative ways to increase the awareness of teacher trainers to the concept of psychosocial wellness and to the needs of distressed children. The primary goal of the training was to help these teacher trainers explore new ways to increase awareness and sensitivity to psychosocial issues among teachers.

This document represents the case study of that pilot program. The methodology of the pilot program was primarily introspective and represents one approach to raising the consciousness of teachers. This methodology assumes that learning is achieved through reflection upon one's internal experience and is represented by a cycle of concrete experience, observation and reflection on that experience, formation of abstract concepts, and testing of these concepts in new situations. The methodology included strategies for enhancing introspection, such as, relaxation, visualization and focusing. This methodology serves as a first step toward increasing awareness and ways to apply that awareness to the development of classroom activities.

The case study has been designed as a starting point for discussion and training for teacher trainers. It describes how IRC's Female Education Program in Pakistan began to address psychosocial issues of refugee children with teacher trainers. The case study takes the reader through the entire process followed by FEP trainers, including their reactions and feedback. While not intended to serve as a training document, this case study contains several elements that could be extracted for use in training workshops, policy discussions, or during program design. It is important to underline that the pilot programs' methodology and context are intended to help trainers teach teachers. The materials are not designed to provide training in direct interventions with children in the classroom by teachers.

The overall aim is to strengthen coping mechanisms within children and their environment in order to mitigate the effects of war and displacement. This approach focuses on wellness, internal personal and community resourcefulness and social adjustment and reinforces coping mechanisms and resilience in children. Many of the available approaches to psychosocial wellness are not culturally appropriate for Afghans. In addition, these approaches are often anchored in Western psychotherapy models and frameworks. Given that Afghan teachers do not have the necessary skills to

apply these technical approaches, and given that making psychotherapy available to students is unrealistic, this approach seeks to provide a more hands-on, practical and culturally anchored approach to promoting psychosocial wellness that teachers can actually use in the classroom.

The psychosocial wellness approach recognizes the importance of cultural variables in program development and implementation. The general concepts of psychosocial wellness are combined in this training by recognizing Afghan cultural values and needs in the context of war, destruction and migration.

## HOW THIS CASE STUDY CAN BE USED

This case study is a work in progress and does not set out to be all encompassing or definitive. The pilot program is experimental in nature and represents an introspective methodology, which is one approach to understanding, sensitization, and knowledge. It is an innovative method of working with teacher trainers who will sensitize teachers to the psychosocial needs of war-affected children in the classroom. It is primarily intended for the use of teacher trainers in Pakistan and Afghanistan but may also be useful to other “trainer” audiences.

This case study is designed as a starting point for future discussions surrounding program development, design, policy formulation, and curriculum development in psychosocial wellness for Afghan children. The activities are mapped out exactly as they were carried out and therefore the reader can approach this document with a critical eye. The workshops were developed at a certain point in time in response to a specific situation but may have wider applications. The time frame for these workshops was extremely limited, in an ideal environment, the participant pool would be larger including representatives from other organizations, government ministries, and even parents and students. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to serious time constraints and prevailing priorities. The evaluation of this pilot program is covered in detail in Section Three of this document. In spite of these and other limitations preliminary results indicate that attitudes and teaching approaches of teachers who received training from the trainers who went through this pilot program were more student-centered and nurturing. These limitations notwithstanding, IRC is excited to make this knowledge and process accessible to others.

## DEFINITIONS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### 1. What do we mean by psychosocial?

Psychosocial refers to the dynamic relationship between psychological and social effects on the individual each continually reciprocally influencing the other. Psychological effects are those which affect different levels of functioning including cognitive (perceptions and memory as a basis for thoughts and learning), affective (emotions), and

behavioral. Social effects pertain to altered relationships, family and community networks, friendships, and social rules of conduct. In situations of armed conflict, psychosocial effects are due to death, separation and other losses, experiencing or witnessing physical violence, family and community breakdown, damaged human values and practices, and destruction of environment, including facilities and services. Armed conflict shatters trust, destroys communities, diminishes opportunities for personal development, and creates deep psychological wounds.

## 2. IRC's Guiding Principles for Psychosocial Programs

- Listening before acting: Our work shall be based on careful listening and respecting what children, adolescents, families and communities are saying;
- Genuine respect for the culture of the affected population;
- Assisting people to recover and supporting their resilience: interventions will build on the affected population's resources and current and traditional ways of coping, when they are in the best interest of the child;
- Promoting interventions that contribute to reestablishment of normal daily life so that children may resume their age-appropriate developmental course;
- Promoting and supporting interventions which preserve and reinforce the cohesion of the family, and discouraging any which risk separating children from their families, unless it is in a child's best interest;
- Involving children, their families and communities in the psychosocial recovery process;
- Promoting activities and opportunities to allow children to express their experiences and feelings in culturally appropriate ways in order to make meaning of these experiences and to integrate them into their lives, only if:
  - we are certain that no harm will ensue as a result of disclosure, and
  - we can ensure further comfort and help
- Continually re-examining our work, emphasizing evaluation and research for the purpose of:
  - ensuring that our psychosocial programs incorporate the above principles,
  - improving the quality and effectiveness of our programs,
  - contributing to the body of knowledge on how best to help war-affected children and adolescents, in terms of both theory and practice.

## 3. Psychosocial Needs of Aid Workers

During crisis situations the psychosocial needs of aid workers are often put secondary to relief efforts. Afghan aid workers have always been the mainstay of aid efforts in the refugee setting and in Afghanistan. They travel throughout Afghanistan and Pakistan, face the gravest dangers, and take the great risks. Afghan aid workers are themselves refugees and displaced persons. In addition to their own issues regarding the on-going war and family problems, they face the emotional stress from providing aid and relief. Little is known about the psychosocial effects of long term war on a population, but there is even less information of how war affects caregivers in such circumstances.

Studies internationally show that aid workers are at risk for stress related illnesses, including mental health problems. With respect to the current context, the pilot program illuminated the fact that the participants were under tremendous psychosocial stress but had very few resources and outlets to address this stress. This prompted them to request that the training not only include how to address the psychosocial needs of children in the classroom but to give them a broader base of knowledge and skills to better cope with their own personal psychosocial needs.

## METHODOLOGY

The process was broken down into three workshops that were three days each. Each activity includes specific learning objectives stated as the aim and includes time to illicit responses from the participants.

The workshops were designed to provide definitions and practical information on psychosocial wellness, resilience, emotional experience, stress, and coping. A participatory approach was used throughout in order to gain a clear understanding of participants' knowledge and skills with regard to psychosocial wellness and which topics or approaches needed more focus.

The program was designed as a TOT (Training of Trainers) and focuses on giving a basic introduction to trainers on a variety of psychosocial issues, and techniques to help trainers address the need for teachers and students to manage their emotional burdens. Participants were being trained to design their own training modules for Afghan teachers. Therefore a series of workshops were designed that would cover the above needs, as identified by the teachers and IRC staff. Six FEP trainers were selected to participate in the training program and were all women who knew each other. They are referred to in this guide as the participants.

Each workshop included theory, practical solutions and examples of psychosocial activities for teachers and children, including ways to help one's self and others relax and deal with emotional issues. 'Resilience' was the core conceptual handle for all training activities to be developed. The end goal was to develop skills in trainers that would enable them to design training modules for teachers to learn these skills and approaches.

A major aim was that the tools would eventually provide teachers with skills to help their students and also be useful for understanding their own psychological health.

Most importantly, the approach is experiential and built on the premise that in order to deal with emotions of any kind, one must be aware of what one is (they themselves are) feeling. There are many models that discuss the theory of experiential learning, one of the most recognized is that of David Kolb. According to Kolb's experiential learning model; learning, change, and growth are best facilitated by an integrated process that

begins first with concrete experience - the tangible qualities of the immediate experience and the grasping of the knowledge that takes place. Then comes active experimentation where a person changes his/her behavior and new knowledge occurs as a result. The completion of this cycle puts into practice the concepts and theories that have been developed through the reflection and conceptualization processes, which in turn should create an environment for future experiences.

In this workshop participants are required to introspect or 'tune in' and recognize their own feelings, and then focus on enhancing this awareness. This introspection and self-awareness becomes the foundation of dealing with and recognizing various other emotions tied to different experiences. Practical discussions focusing on how what they learn or experience can be transferred to sensitivity training exercises for teachers and activities that will help teachers improve their classroom teaching methods. After each workshop participants were charged with the task of experimenting with what they had learned and looking critically at what worked, what didn't work, and how certain techniques or topics could be adapted to better fit the Afghan refugee setting.

# Section 2

## Workshop Program

The entire program is broken down into three main workshops, each with a general theme. Each workshop was for three days. For each day there are overall goals, which are then supported by various activities; every activity is accompanied by a learning objective referred to as the *aim*.

The first workshop introduces participants to basic concepts of *psychosocial* and other key terms, and shows that when one speaks of 'wellness', one is including a full range of emotions, from pleasant to painful. These concepts establish the setting from which psychosocial well-being is addressed. Furthermore, this workshop guides participants in locating these concepts within their own cultural framework. This gives participants a conceptual framework for identifying, understanding and talking about emotions in a context that is culturally relevant.

The second workshop focuses on stress, normal childhood emotional development and methods to cope with one's personal stress and emotions. A new tool, *focusing* is introduced, which is grounded in the principal that in order to deal with emotions, one must be in touch with them. Emphasis is put on understanding that emotions are neither right nor wrong and in order to process them, awareness is necessary. Thus the focusing tool helps participants work on awareness without judgment so they can focus on their own emotions. In addition to guiding participants to be in tune with their feelings, the second workshop focuses on identifying sources of stress for varying ages of children. Activities go on to examine practical techniques that participants can apply to improve their mental health, and that of children, when they are experiencing stress.

The third workshop draws on participants' understanding of key concepts of psychosocial wellness and resilience. Participants apply some of the techniques they learned in the second workshop to explore emotions.

Locating an Afghan cultural position is of prime concern in this manual. To work on psychosocial wellness one must be grounded in the local culture. Cultural positioning was used to understand normative behavior within the Afghan cultural context. By understanding and being aware of what is considered acceptable and proper behavior, teachers can be more aware of children's actions that may be outside of the norm. For example, a child that is rude to an adult - this is unacceptable in Afghan culture, thus the teacher is able to identify that the student may be in distress. Also, cultural norms vary by ethnicity, geographic location, and context such as refugee camp vs. home country therefore this framework is adaptable to different circumstances.

Afghan culture is rich in metaphors and allegories. Stories are often used to make conversational points. Poetry, art and drama adapt well to the workshop activities as they play into this cultural style. Visualization, commonly used in workshops, is another use of imagery, and can be easily incorporated. Participants often express rich metaphors after each visualization activity. In this workshop a type of visualization called *focusing* is used as the entry point into discussing emotions. Focusing was developed by Eugene T. Gendlin of University of Chicago<sup>4</sup>. Focusing fits the Afghan cultural context because it is based in and easily related to Sufism and Islamic tradition<sup>5</sup>. This is a technique of self-therapy that teaches one to identify the way their personal problems concretely exist in the body, which allows them to change. Importantly for the psychological safety of the individual, it requires no disclosure of private information to anyone. Even the novice can find relief from painful emotions through focusing.

The workshop series contained:

- ☼ Theory
- ☼ Examples of how to apply the theory within the local cultural context
- ☼ Practical experience developing teaching modules
- ☼ Role plays
- ☼ Puppetry production and presentation
- ☼ Feedback on training methods

The workshops are in interactive format with a minimum of lectures and a great deal of time spent in group work and presentation by the participants. Art, drama, discussion, activities to promote improved listening and relaxation techniques are used to teach and promote psychosocial wellness. Participants were considered experts on local culture and on teacher training in general. Their skills were continuously utilized within the workshop context.

One of the most positive aspects was the time given between each major workshop. This allowed the participants to process the information, develop lesson plans based on the content learned in the workshops, and test out what they learned with children in their homes or neighborhoods. Some activities proved more successful than others. For this reason, many possibilities were explored in the workshops, encouraging creativity and cultural awareness for Afghan social norms and values. For example one participant tried body relaxation with small children and found it very difficult because they couldn't take it seriously. On the other hand, another participant found that using puppetry with children was very successful in exploring emotionally sensitive topics.

### ***Summary of Workshop Program***

**Workshop 1: Psychosocial wellness, resilience and positive emotions**

**Workshop 2: Stress, normal childhood emotional development and methods to cope with stress and emotions**

**Workshop 3: Painful emotions, practicing listening, methods to help children open up to adults about their painful emotions**

# WORKSHOP 1

## Exploring psychosocial wellness, resilience, and positive emotions



Purpose of  
first  
workshop

Introduce a framework to understand emotions from a 'wellness' perspective.

Explore key concepts of psychosocial wellness and resiliency.

Enable participants to contextualize basic definitions within their everyday lives, i.e. Situate these key concepts within Afghan culture.

Introduce various coping mechanisms.

## SESSION ONE

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In this  
session  
we will

- ✓ Review psychosocial definition and approaches
- ✓ Explore the concept of psychosocial wellness within the Afghan Context
- ✓ Consider a cultural positioning framework for Afghans
- ✓ Explore how war and displacement has affected Afghan children
- ✓ Define and examine examples of resilience

A critical aspect of understanding psychosocial wellness is the ability to identify culturally acceptable behavior. What is normal for one culture may be seen as abnormal in another. Therefore it is important to understand psychosocial norms. For example, in a society where individualism is valued, a child must learn to look after her own interests. Independent decisions are encouraged and the pressure to hide family information is less. In a collectivist society, a child will be taught that the group shares problems and decisions. Independent decisions are discouraged, and all members become guardians of family information. Psychosocial health in each of these cases will look very different, but the internal effect on the individual would be essentially the same.



## Activity One: Drawing a Self Portrait

**AIM:** Explore positive self-awareness

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Colored pencils, crayons, drawing paper

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity. Facilitate general introductions of participants.

- 1) Distribute paper and colored pencils or crayons to the participants.
- 2) Ask participants to be creative by drawing / coloring a picture of themselves. Ask them to write at least 3 things they like about themselves on the picture, focusing on positive aspects -- skills, looks, personality, or intelligence.
- 3) Bring the groups back together and ask them to share their pictures.
- 4) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from the activity using the following questions:
  - Describe what is in your picture. What is positive?
  - Is it easy to describe positive aspects about yourself? Why or why not?
  - How might this be used with children or in the classroom?

### FACILITATORS NOTES:

Keep in mind that participants might find that it is difficult to identify positive aspects of themselves. Give them time - one way to help them is to first ask them to identify positive aspects of each other as an opener.

## Activity Two: Rules and Objectives

**AIM:** Review objectives and rules of workshops

**TIME:** 30 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity. Define the goals and rules for the workshops.

- 1) Goals - Write the following goals on a flip chart open up each for discussion:
  - Identify psychosocial effects of war and displacement on children
  - Understand 'Psychosocial Wellness (PSW)
  - Build teachers skills in relation to the PSW of children
  - Address teachers PSW needs
  - Design PSW training components for teachers
- 2) Rules - Discuss and list on flip chart. Ask participants to brainstorm on what they think are important rules for the workshop. Incorporate the following:
  - Create safe space and emphasize confidentiality
  - What is said in this room should stay in this room, if personal things are said in this room, do not repeat it anywhere else
  - If you don't want someone else to know something private don't say it (protect yourself)

## Activity Three: Basic Terms

**AIM:** Define basic terms: psychosocial, wellness, resilience, and good listening

**TIME:** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** IRC's Guidelines on Psychosocial Care and Protection (Handout 1)

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity and keep participants in the large group.

- 1) Ask the participants to brainstorm what is meant by 'psychosocial' and to list key words or phrases.
  - Encourage participants to comment and ask each other questions
  - Distribute IRC's guidelines of Psychosocial Care and Protection
  - Write following definition on flip-chart - psychosocial refers to the dynamic relationship between psychological and social effects, each continually influencing the other
  - Discuss similarities between the groups definition and this definition
- 2) Ask the participants to brainstorm what is meant by 'resilience' and to list key words or phrases:
  - Encourage participants to comment and ask each other questions
  - Write following definition on flip-chart - resilience refers to the ability of human beings to cope positively with adversity
  - Discuss the similarities between the groups definition and this definition
- 3) Ask the participants to brainstorm what is meant by 'good listening':
  - Encourage participants to comment and ask each other questions
  - List the following definition on flip-chart - good listening is an active rather than passive activity, be interested and attentive, maintain eye contact, avoid distractions, listen patiently, listen to non-verbal messages, reflecting without offering advise
  - Discuss similarities between the groups definition and this definition
- 4) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from the activity based on the following questions:
  - What have you learned?
  - Which of these topics do you need additional information on?
  - Are these important in the classroom, why? Give examples

## Handout 1

### **Psychosocial Care and Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict**

#### **IRC STATEMENT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

##### ***Introduction***

Armed conflict, displacement and other crises have a devastating impact on the psychological and social well-being of children, adolescents and adults. IRC recognizes that early psychosocial intervention is an integral part of humanitarian assistance. IRC's psychosocial programs aim to both alleviate psychological distress and to strengthen existing coping mechanisms. In the case of children and adolescents, psychosocial interventions also aim to maintain or re-establish their normal development process. The broad framework for planning and implementing psychosocial programs is provided by a) the relevant Articles of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and b) UNHCR Guidelines for the Protection and Care of Refugee Children.

##### ***What do we mean by "psychosocial"?***

For the purpose of this statement, "psychosocial" refers to the dynamic relationship between psychological and social effects, each continually influencing the other.

"Psychological effects" are those which affect different levels of functioning including cognitive (perceptions and memory as a basis for thoughts and learning), affective (emotions), and behavioral. "Social effects" pertain to altered relationships, family and community networks, and economic status. In situations of armed conflict, they are due to actual or feared death, separation and other losses, experiencing or witnessing physical violence, family and community breakdown, damaged human values and practices, and destruction of environment, including facilities and services. Armed conflict shatters trust, destroys communities, diminishes opportunities for personal development, and creates deep psychological wounds.

IRC bases its work with conflict-affected children and adolescents on the following premises:

- a) Most children and adolescents who have endured catastrophic situations will regain normal functioning once safety and security have returned and developmental opportunities are restored, in the social, family and community context;
- b) Some children will require more specialized interventions to address their suffering and help restore their flow of development;
- c) Activities and opportunities which allow children to talk about or express in culturally appropriate ways painful events and feelings may help them make meaning out of these experiences and feelings and integrate them into their lives;
- d) Grounding all psychosocial interventions within the culture, unless it is not in the best interest of the child, is respectful, ethical and more likely to produce a sustained recovery.

### (...handout 1 continued)

Operating within the above framework, IRC's psychosocial work will be guided by the following principles:

- ☒ Listening before acting: *our work shall be based on careful listening to and respecting what children, adolescents, families and communities are saying;*
- ☒ Real understanding and respect for the culture of the affected population;
- ☒ Assisting people to recover and promoting their resilience: *interventions will build on the affected population's resources and current and traditional ways of coping, when they are in the best interest of the child;*
- ☒ Giving priority to supporting and promoting interventions which contribute to re-establishment of normal daily life so that children may resume their age-appropriate development;
- ☒ Promoting and supporting interventions which preserve and reinforce the cohesion of the family and community, and discouraging any which risks separating children from their families, unless it is in their best interests;
- ☒ Involving children, their families and communities in the psychosocial recovery process;
- ☒ Promoting culturally appropriate opportunities for children to express their experiences and feelings so that they may make meaning from and integrate them into their lives, only if:
  - we are certain that no harm will ensue as a result of disclosure, and
  - we can ensure further comfort and help
- ☒ Continually re-examining our work, emphasizing evaluation and research with the aim to:
  - ensuring that our psychosocial programs incorporate the above principles,
  - improving the quality and effectiveness of our programs and
  - contributing to the body of knowledge on how best to help war-affected children and adolescents, in terms of both theory and practice.

## Activity Four: Cultural Positioning

**AIM:** Examine Afghan Cultural Positioning

**TIME:** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Aspects of Normative Culture (Handout 2)  
Locating Afghan Cultural Position (Handout 3)  
Defining the Afghan Norm (Handout 4)

### BACKGROUND:

Cultural positioning helps participants to understand and articulate their own cultural values. Psychosocial wellness is based on what is normal or acceptable for society. This activity helps clarify Afghan norms and values. In the rest of the workshop this exercise is often referred back to with special reference to the charts the participants developed. This helps to clarify points about Afghan norms and values as participants move into other activities.

In addition, cultural positioning allows the participants to come up with what they feel is acceptable behavior within Afghan society within the current context (in this case as Afghan refugees living in Pakistan). Once you can talk about "normal/acceptable" as a group, you can talk about what "not-normal or unacceptable" looks like and what might be warning signs of a child in psychosocial trouble. A child that is clinging and is focused on the group is considered less normal in the US, but considered normal here. One would try to help the child become independent in the US, but here an independent child must learn to be as well as group focused.

In the following exercise cultural norms are discussed including where normative Afghan culture belongs on the scale for each topic. By understanding that Afghan culture values emotional control, for instance, an emotionally expressive child may be thought to have psychosocial problems.

In small groups, participants are asked to discuss collectivism, power distance, risk taking, and emotional control in the Afghan context.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity and keep participants in the large group.

- 1) Review the *aspects of normative culture handout* with the group.
  - Give examples for each from a contrasting group
  - Clarify any questions that still remain
  - Re-affirm that it is important to understand normative behavior so that one can more easily recognize when a child is acting outside the norm and may need help
  - Use the empty graph as an example

## Handout 2

### Aspects of Normative Culture

**1. Emotion expression vs. emotion control:** This factor indicates whether a society values free expression of emotions or control of them. People of a society that values controlling emotions may hide their feelings especially the negative ones. For example, they may control and hide their emotions and try not to show their tears to others. Whereas people of a society where it is encouraged to express emotions, will show their feelings and discuss their problems more openly.

**2. Large power distance vs. small power distance:** In a society with large power distance, people are distant from each other on the basis of the power they have. Power usually brings certain privileges to persons such as heads, directors, parents and elders. People with high power do not interact with those with smaller power. A society where the distance of power is small, gives equal rights to individuals and values each of them. People with high power frequently meet and interact with small power people and their ideas are frequently challenged and rejected by lower power people.

**3. Risk avoidance vs. risk taking:** This factor shows whether people in a society tend to take risks and perform activities with uncertain results or they prefer to avoid risks and uncertainties. In Afghan society people usually tends to take risks that can cause great dangers later. Especially currently, many Afghans go to Afghanistan and return through mountains, which can certainly be dangerous.

**4. Collectivism vs. individualism:** This refers to whether people prefer to live individually or collectively as groups. Afghan society prefers collectivism and it is normal to live together. Everyone in an Afghan society will value living together with family. Thus, if we come across a child who is eager to live alone and individually, we would be concerned that the child may have problems.

- 2) Working in pairs ask participants to discuss each of these aspects and chart where they would place Afghan culture as well as the middle of the line on the graph for each point.
- 3) Ask the groups to come together and share their graphs
- 4) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from the activity based of the following questions:
  - Why is it important to understand what is normal? (Ans: We need to understand what is normal for our society if we are to recognize those in need of help.)
  - How would some of the answers vary considering the following?: gender and age differences, differences in socio-economic status, and differences between public actions and those in the family?

If the person (shows an emotion) , is it normal? Fill in the blank and see if it sounds normal. Change gender and see if it sounds normal. Ask why?

### Handout 3

## Locating Cultural Position

Collectivism\_\_\_\_\_Individualism

Small power distance\_\_\_\_\_Large power distance

Weak uncertainty avoidance\_\_\_\_\_Strong uncertainty avoidance

Emotional control\_\_\_\_\_Emotional expressiveness

Key

● Shows the middle of the line

■ Shows where Afghan cultural position on the line is

### Participant responses to:

## Locating Cultural Position

Collectivism\_\_\_\_\_Individualism

Small power distance\_\_\_\_\_Large power distance

Weak uncertainty avoidance\_\_\_\_\_Strong uncertainty avoidance

Emotional control\_\_\_\_\_Emotional expressiveness

### FACILITATORS NOTE:

This is a difficult activity because it is looking at the participants' own society in a way that they have never been challenged to before; in a comparative way. The participants are expected to look at their culture as an outsider might. Be willing to take more time and review the concepts as many times as the group needs you to and to come up with examples from other culture groups and ways. Be careful not to give examples from their culture - or from your point of view. Remember there isn't a correct answer as culture is fluid so is the outcome of this activity.

## Handout 4

### Defining the Afghan Norm

**COLLECTIVISM** - What is normal: Collectivism or Individualism?

#### **Collectivism**

- Assume from birth that people belong to groups so problems are shared,
- Value harmony so may not say problem if about family

#### **Individualism**

- Assume that people look after own interests as a person moves toward independence,
- Problems are seen as personal and not effecting others.
- Less value on group harmony

**POWER DISTANCE** - What is normal: High Power Distance or Low Power Distance?

#### **High power distance**

- Differences in power are expected, accepted.
- Power brings privileges.
- Power-holders inaccessible.
- Cannot contradict authority

#### **Low power distance**

- Differences in power not accepted. Value on equal rights.
- Power-holders accessible.
- Disagreements expected.

**RISK TAKING** - What is normal: Avoiding risks or taking risks?

#### **Risk Avoidance**

- Prefer situations that are clear, predictable.
- Structure and precise answers and objectives preferred. Authority should have the answers

#### **Risk Taking**

- Unstructured situations and personal risk are accepted as normal.
- Like open-ended objectives.
- Authority may not have all the answers and that is ok.

**EMOTIONAL CONTROL** - What is normal: high or low emotional control?

#### **High emotional control**

- Contain one's emotions, especially negative ones.
- Value is placed on self-control and disagreements put emotions aside.
- The expression of certain emotions, such as crying, is discouraged.

#### **Low emotional control**

- Emotionally expressive
- Normal to show range of emotions, including negative ones.
- Open discussions good for resolving conflict.
- Tears are encouraged



## Activity Five: Contextualize Resilience

**AIM:** Review resilience and explore cultural context

**TIME:** 2 hours

**MATERIALS:** Examples of Resilience (Handout 5)

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity. Divide the participants into small groups.

- 1) Remind participants of the definition they developed earlier.
- 2) Ask each group to write down how Afghans would best understand resilience and list these definitions/words on a flip chart.
- 3) Review -Some children have more resilience than others, no two people react the same way. Ask participants for examples.
- 4) Bring everyone back together, ask them to share their culturally appropriate definitions with the group and agree on a common list.
- 5) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity focusing on the following questions:
  - Are the most important phrases on the list, if not what is missing?
  - What does this list tell us about resilience and Afghans?
  - How is resilience related to psychosocial wellness?

### FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

In reviewing the list that the group comes up with, make sure you include that part of resilience is having a range of emotions - both positive and painful. Also, it is important to be in touch with a variety of emotions. It is the avoidance of the painful emotions that can cause psychosocial problems.

### Handout 5

#### Examples of Resilience

- ☼ The green stick does not break when it is bent
- ☼ A goal to live for
- ☼ Resourcefulness
- ☼ Curiosity and intellectual mastery
- ☼ Selflessness toward others
- ☼ Compassion with detachment
- ☼ The need and ability to help others
- ☼ Ability to remember and invoke images of good
- ☼ A vision of the possibility to restore a civilized order
- ☼ Have a full range of emotions, both positive and negative
- ☼ Ability to be in touch with a variety of emotions

## Activity Six: Mapping Resilience

**AIM:** Explore the effects of war and displacement on Afghan children

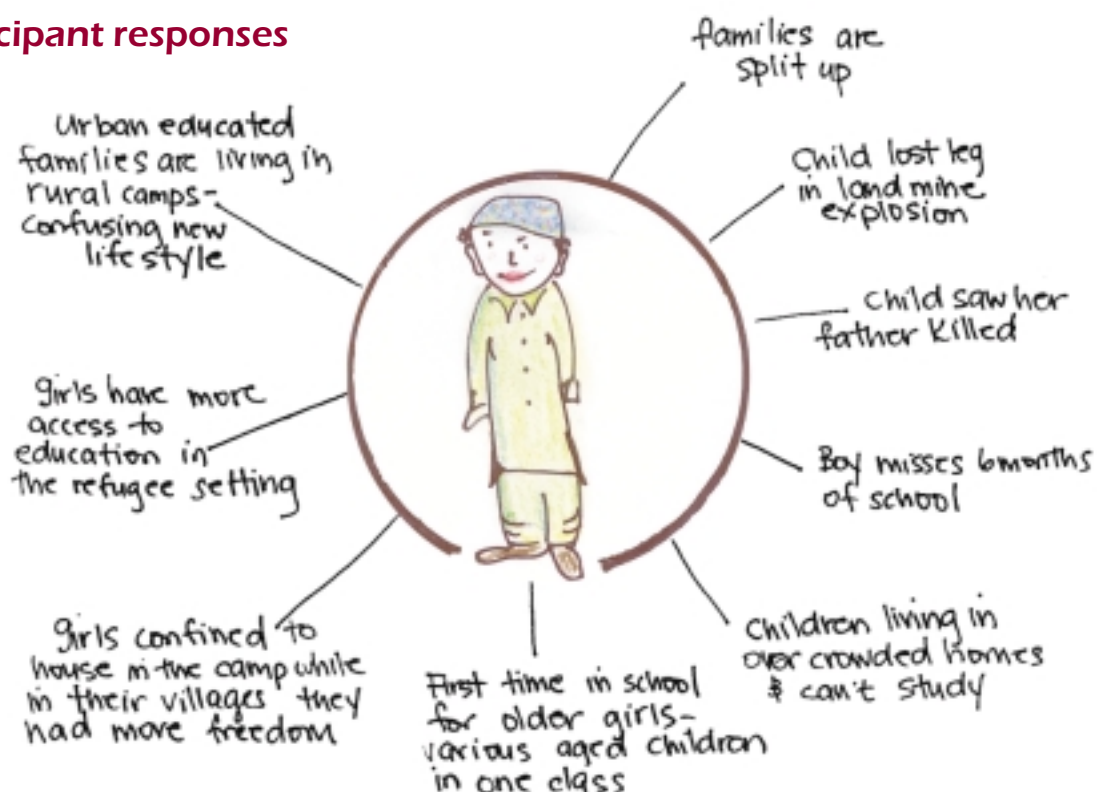
**TIME:** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Examples of Resilience (Handout 5)

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) Ask each group to discuss how the war has affected children including physical, social and emotional effects.
  - On a big piece of flip-chart paper ask someone to draw an Afghan child in the center. Add several lines coming out from the child
  - Ask the group to brainstorm various ways the war has effected children. Write these on the lines
  - Clarify any points where there may be questions
- 2) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity:
  - Which of these are positive and which are negative?
  - Refer to the *examples of resilience* list and discuss how a child affected by war could be supported using something from the list, for example: The child that lost a leg in the landmine might be able to help a blind child with schoolwork (taps into 'need to abd ability to help others')
  - On a flip chart list ways teachers can help children strengthen each example of resilience listed

### Participant responses



## Activity Seven: Personal Examples of Resilience

**AIM:** Explore types of resilience from your own experience

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Examples of Resilience (Handout 5)

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity. Divide participants into small groups.

- 1) Ask participants to think about their own family and people they know and write down examples of these people's resilience
- 2) Referring back to the examples of resilience list, ask them which example of resilience does this story represent
- 3) Bring everyone back together and ask each group to present their lists and give one example from each group discussion.
- 4) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity.

*Homework for tomorrow:* Bring a story, poem or Mullah Nasrudeen fables for children with a message on resilience<sup>6</sup>.

## REFLECTIONS

The participants gave two scenarios of children who were adversely affected by the war, but who were not in the war, recognizing the vulnerability of all Afghan children to painful events. The participants said there are effects when a child merely hears about events.

In the first example, a girl heard from a classmate about the problems in Afghanistan and became depressed. She went from being an "A" student to failing her classes. The second child overheard her parents discussing a death and the subsequent funeral. She developed a severe headache and went to bed. The next morning when she got up, her eyes were crossed and have stayed that way since. The family blames this on the bad news that she heard.

The most important aspect of these stories is that these children did not receive the emotional and psychological support they need from their parents and other important adults. Participants understood that the student should have been given more time to process the information and talk about it with her parents.

The overall process of the first day was successful at introducing psychosocial issues in a culturally positive way. Participants found some of the activities to be difficult at the onset, but, they worked through the activity, they were comfortable with the results. As experts in teacher training, they quickly saw the significance of the activities and had ideas on how to apply the material to their training sessions. Although the cultural positioning activity was successful, it was the most difficult to understand and to explain. It should be kept in the program but needs further modification.

## SESSION TWO

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- In this session we will* } ✓ Identify psychosocial issues faced by teachers  
✓ Identify psychosocial issues faced by students  
✓ Develop techniques to address these issues

Drawing on the achievements of day one, the second day's activities focus on deepening participants understanding of psychosocial wellness and equips participants with the skills to design materials for teachers to address children's psychosocial issues in the classroom.

### **Activity One: Effects on Children, Parents and Teachers**

**AIM:** Identify psychosocial issues for parents, teachers and children

**TIME:** 2 hours

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Explain the aim of this activity.

- 1) Review yesterday's activities by asking participants to define:
  - Resilience
  - Psychosocial
  - Afghan Cultural Positioning
- 2) Ask participants to give examples -
  - Write them on a flip chart
  - Encourage them to be personal if they are comfortable
- 3) Break into three groups and have each group discuss one of the following:
  - Ask first group to list as a group psychosocial issues for teachers
  - Ask second group to list as a group psychosocial issues for children (refer back to figure 1)
  - Ask third group to list psychosocial issues for families
- 4) Bring the groups back together and give each group the opportunity to present their lists. After each presentation ask the other participants if they have anything to add.
- 5) Ask the participants to identify similarities and differences between those living as Refugees and those living in Afghanistan.
- 6) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions:
  - Have issues changed over the years?
  - How can teachers be better supported?
  - How can children be better supported?
  - Is socioeconomic status a factor?

## Participant responses

### ***Psychosocial issues for teachers***

- ✿ No job opportunities for men in their families
- ✿ Improper living conditions for refugees
- ✿ Heavy pressure on women (workload both inside and outside the house)
- ✿ Violence against women in the family
- ✿ Responsibility of earning a living for their families and children
- ✿ Extra activities for income generation such as sewing
- ✿ Economical problems
- ✿ Uncertainty about their and their children's future
- ✿ Misconduct of school administration with the teachers
- ✿ Loss of family members and relatives
- ✿ Being affected by war
- ✿ Being far from relatives
- ✿ Lack of patience due to inappropriate and inadequate physical room in houses

### ***Psychosocial issues for children***

- ✿ Loss of family members and relatives
- ✿ No proper support so they need to work to earn their living
- ✿ Due to economical problems involvement in selling drugs
- ✿ Being far away from their families
- ✿ Feelings of loneliness
- ✿ Living with relatives and friends
- ✿ Living in orphanages that results in developing bad habits amongst the children
- ✿ Witnessing bad/traumatic experiences during the war
- ✿ Living in brutal war situation
- ✿ Doing labor and other heavy work
- ✿ Varying age differences amongst school students in one classroom
- ✿ Unfair wages and abuse toward working children
- ✿ Lack of parents' care/attention to physical and psychological needs of the children
- ✿ Lack of children's access to educational opportunities

## Activity Two: Learn to use Visualization

**AIM:** Examine emotion through visualization

**TIME:** 30 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity and stress that this is a framework that many other activities in the workshop are built upon - visualization. Go through the following with the entire group, step by step. (Note: This is an activity that should only be done by someone who has led a relaxation activity before).

- 1) Introduce emotions as guests of our bodies - Say, emotions are part of us, like guests, and if we listen to them we move forward in life. If we ignore them, they shout for attention like our children.
- 2) Introduce relaxation technique:
  - Close your eyes. We will begin with the outer body
  - Feel your hands and feet, slowly move your attention up from your feet to your legs - then to your entire body resting on the chair
  - Relax into that support of the chair --move to your hands - arms - shoulders, back of neck, head, and face and into the center of the body
  - Now that you are in the center of your body, think about your place in Afghanistan but see it as whole and completely undamaged
  - See the trees, flowers and children playing
  - (Give this a lot of time so they can really feel each part)
  - As you picture your whole and undamaged place in Afghanistan notice where you feel that in your body and what it feels like
- 3) Bring the participants out of the relaxation experience:
  - Now slowly bring your attention back to your body
  - Notice your head, and your back, and the support of the chair and then bring your attention out to your hands and feet
  - When you are ready slowly open your eyes
- 4) Facilitate a discussion about what they experienced based on the following questions:
  - Can you describe what you saw?
  - What did it feel like in your body? (encourage descriptions or images)
  - Where did you feel it?
- 5) Facilitate a discussion about what they learned from this activity based on the following questions:
  - How might this be used with teachers?
  - How might this be used with students?
  - What was difficult?
  - What did you like about it?

## FACILITATOR'S NOTES:

This is an experiential activity and guides participants to get in touch with their emotions. It is based on the premise that one must be in touch with their emotions in order to deal with them. Facilitator should have demonstrated competence and comfort in leading relaxation or visualization exercises.

## Activity Three: Relaxation

**AIM:** Explore the physical effects of resilience

**TIME:** 20 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Examples of Resilience (Handout 5)

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity. Participants should physically experience resilience. The psychosocial and physical are intimately connected.

- 1) Working in the large group facilitator selects an example of resilience from the list for example: selflessness toward others.
- 2) Participants should select a personal experience that reflects that example, for example: Even though my brother was killed in the war I now have to take care of his two children and I'm working so I can.
- 3) Ask participants to keep this personal experience in mind and introduce a visualization exercise:
  - Close your eyes. We will begin with the outer body
  - Feel your hands and feet, slowly move your attention up from your feet to your legs - then to your entire body resting on the chair
  - Relax into that support of the chair --move to your hands - arms - shoulders, back of neck, head, and face and into the center of the body
  - Now that you are in the center of your body
  - Think about the personal experience you have selected
  - Focus on the positive aspect that reflects resilience
  - Just notice it. What does it feel like in your body?
  - Where do you feel it in your body?
  - What else can you notice about that feeling?
  - (Give the participants time to feel and experience that positive resilience)

- 4) Bring the participants out of the relaxation experience
  - Now slowly bring your attention back to your body
  - Notice your head, and your back, and the support of the chair and then bring your attention out to your hands and feet
  - When you are ready slowly open your eyes
  
- 5) Facilitate a discussion about what they experienced based on the following questions:
  - Describe what you felt
  - What are the physical effects of resilience?
  - What did it feel like in your body? (encourage descriptions or images)
  - Where did you feel it?
  
- 6) Facilitate a discussion about what they learned from this activity based on the following questions
  - How might this be used with teachers
  - How might this be used with students
  - What was difficult?
  - What did you like about it?
  - What are some of the limitations of this exercise?
  - Can we draw any parallels between this relation and Afghan coping mechanisms?

## **Activity Four: Train Teachers in Resilience**

**AIM:** Design a psychosocial module for teachers

**TIME:** 1.5 hours

**MATERIALS:** Examples of Resilience (Handout 5)

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Explain the aim of this activity. Divide participants into pairs.

- 1) Ask participants to do the following activity:
  - Choose an aspect of resilience
  - Choose an age/class level
  - Choose a subject field (your expertise)
  - Write a learning objective for a teacher training activity on psychosocial
  - Use the homework story or poem as an entry point into the lesson
  - Add an activity (action, art or anything)
  - Develop a training module
  - Prepare a 15-20 min presentation
  
- 2) Bring the groups together and ask each group to present
  - The presenters will be the teachers
  - The rest of participants should role play as students



- 3) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions
- Which types of resilience have been illustrated?
  - How successful was the process?
  - Was the approach student centered?
  - Can it make a student more available for learning?
  - Does it open the space for dialogue between teacher and student?
  - How might you change this for students at another class level?

### FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

It is important to encourage participants to think outside the box for this activity and to make unusual connections between the subject they teach and emotions. You may want to walk around the room while they are working on this, checking in with their progress and help them come up with new ways of thinking about their lesson plans, encouraging them to try something really new and different.

## Participant responses to: Training Teachers in Resilience

### ***Drawing our own history***

Resilience type: The ability to remember and invoke good images of life.

Method: Story telling

Grade: 5

*In a night of the 16th century, 40 pilgrims together dreamed Hazrat Ali who tells them, "I rest in Khawaja Khairan hill under a pile of soil". In the morning, the pilgrims informed Sultan Hussain Baieqra, the king, of their dreams. Hearing this the king ordered to build a proper premises and a dome there. This was the shrine of Hazrat Ali. Today hundreds of thousands of wealthy and poor people visit this place with respect and courtesy. People from all parts of Afghanistan gather here in Now Roz (the first day of the New Year) and celebrate Mela Gul Surkh (Tulip celebrations). Visiting this pilgrimage, sick people recover from illnesses, blind people begin to see and those who can't move start to walk on their feet.*

In this role-play the teacher gave a history lesson on Afghanistan. After the lesson the teacher asked the students to 'draw their own history' in order to connect the larger history to their personal lives. This activity allowed children to explore memories of good times without discounting the bad. This was a powerful activity because the participants got a sense of how alive the subject of history became and how much they themselves are part of this history. It opened up an emotional connection and allowed them to talk about loss, and hope for the future.

### ***The Life of an Ant***

Resilience type: The need and ability to help others.

Method: Poetry

Grade: 6

*The following poem was used to help children understand that they can always help someone, even if they feel they themselves need help.*

*Don't trouble/bother even an ant  
Because it also has a life and life is so dear to everyone*

*The activity included blindfolding a child and asking the child to do tasks that require sight. Then a discussion followed that allowed children to talk about how they felt watching their classmate try to do these tasks. Next, the teacher talked about blind and disabled persons in the community and how the children might be able to do simple things to help them.*

### ***We are Like Waves***

Type of resilience: Effective repertory; having a full range of emotions, both positive and negative.

Method: Poetry

Grade 11

*Instructions: The poem introduced a physics class to wave action and friction.*

*We are like waves whose peace and rest results in their death  
Our lives lay in not relaxing and resting*

*Then the teacher led the students in a discussion about waves and friction as metaphors for life. This activity combined a lesson on wave action and friction with poetry and discussion. Wave action was a metaphor for life and emotion and the aspect of resilience having a full range of emotions both positive and negative. This allowed for an opportunity for students to share stories and look at hopeful aspects of life.*

### ***Ahmad's House***

Type of resilience: A vision of restoring a civilized order.

Method: Story telling and drawing

Grade: 3

*Instructions: The activity included the use of art, both to illustrate a story and to allow children to draw their own homes.*

*It was after the destruction of Ahmad's house that he and his family left Afghanistan and started to live in one of the relatives' house in Pakistan. Ahmad, an eight year old boy used to live in a furnished, beautiful big house with an immense garden and a big pool with transparent blue water. Ahmad loved his house and enjoyed playing in it.*

*The house where the family lived now was a small mud house and was not beautiful or furnished like the one the family had. He was very sad and always thinking of his beautiful house which was destroyed now. He didn't want to play in all the mud and dirt. He could see signs of the deepening poverty in faces of his mother and father. He knew that not only he, but also his parents were suffering from the crises and damages. They could no longer afford to have another beautiful house or repair their previous one.*

*Despite all his sorrows, Ahmad always thought that he would one day rebuild his beautiful house and bring all the laughter on the lips of his parents. Hence, he attended the school with great desire and with a hope that he will get an education and earn enough money to have another beautiful house. His hope and efforts for bringing happiness in his parents' lives caused Ahmad to finish school and be an honorable person. Finally the day came when Ahmad built a beautiful and big house with a garden, a pool and a lot of trees. Every thing of this house was more luxurious, bigger and prettier than that of his destroyed house 15 years ago.*

This activity used visuals of the destruction of a home and the boy's life after his home was destroyed. The teacher showed pictures of a crying boy. Then told the story of this boy who lost his home and family and is now living with his uncle. His uncle is a kind man who helps the boy see the value of school and the chance in the future to return and rebuild his home. The story illustrated adults who listen and care, and hope for the future. One workshop participant cried at the story. This was used as an entry point to discuss what a teacher could do if a child cries in such a situation. One participant said that previously she would have told the child not to cry, but now she knows that crying is ok and she would ask the child to talk about what is bringing the tears.

## **REFLECTIONS**

The ideas developed in activity four spanned from primary to secondary classes . One of the first training modules developed used visualization, a focusing method, to help younger children understand how a disabled child might feel and how children may be able to help such a child. Then the participants role-played it by blindfolding one person and having the rest of the group watch her struggle to follow instructions while not being able to see. The combination of internal observation, role-play and discussion illustrated how children can feel good about themselves, particularly when they help others.

## SESSION THREE

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- In this session we will* } ✓ Examine emotional maturity of children  
✓ Examine culturally appropriate ways of discussing resilience with regards to the children's emotional maturity level  
✓ Practice a variety of relaxation techniques

During day three, participants further practice and refine what they have learned and link them with age appropriate developmental activities. They also practice a variety of relaxation techniques.

### Activity One: Living Statues

**AIM:** Show resilience through a group activity

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Handout 5 Examples of Resilience

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity. Divide participants into small groups. Display examples of resilience list at the front of the room.

- 1) Ask each group to choose a type of resilience from the examples of resilience list that has not been illustrated:
  - Take 10 min to decide how you want to show this type
  - Design an activity that expresses this resilience using living statues
- 2) In a center space, your team will move the rest of the participants as if they are standing for a picture.
  - They will not talk or move unless you move them
  - Place them in a way that makes the point
  - After they are arranged to your team's satisfaction participants will try to guess which example you chose from the list
- 3) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions:
  - Which example of resilience was being expressed?
  - What are other ways it could have been expressed?
  - How does this relate to the emotional maturity of children?
  - How did you feel during this activity?
  - How could this activity be adapted to be used with teachers during a training session and with children in the classroom?

#### FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

The participants who are creating the statues may want action - they might have a hard time keeping themselves from moving. Keep reminding the participants to remain frozen and that they are creating statues.

## Activity Two: Negative and Positive Emotions

**AIM:** Examine physical reactions to various emotions

**TIME:** 1 hour

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity. This experiential activity helps participants understand more deeply how the physical reaction is connected to the emotional state, by exploring first a negative emotional reaction in their body and then a positive emotional reaction. Keep participants in the large group and make sure they are comfortable.

- 1) Introduce a visualization exercise (this is the negative emotional reaction):
  - Close your eyes. We will begin with the outer body
  - Feel your hands and feet, slowly move your attention up from your feet to your legs - then to your entire body resting on the chair
  - Relax into that support of the chair --move to your hands - arms - shoulders, back of neck, head, and face and into the center of the body.
  - Now that you are in the center of your body
  - Imagine someone at the door, it is someone you don't want to see
  - Just notice it
  - What does it feel like in your body?
  - Where do you feel it in your body?
  - What else can you notice about that feeling?
- 2) Bring the participants out of the relaxation experience:
  - Now slowly bring your attention back to your body
  - Notice your head, and your back, and the support of the chair and then bring your attention out to your hands and feet
  - When you are ready slowly open your eyes
- 3) Facilitate a discussion about what they experienced based on the following questions:
  - Describe what you felt
  - What are the physical effects of negative emotions?
  - What did it feel like in your body? (encourage descriptions or images)
  - Where did you feel it?
- 4) Introduce the second visualization exercise. (This is the positive emotional reaction). Go through the same process as in step one and two above, but this time the person at the door it is someone they want to see.)
- 5) Facilitate a discussion about what they experienced based on the questions in step three, but focusing on positive emotions.
- 6) Facilitate a discussion about what they learned from this activity:
  - How might this be used with teachers?, Students?

- What was difficult?
- What did you like about it?
- What are some of the limitations of this exercise?
- Can we draw parallels between this and Afghan coping mechanisms?

### FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

This activity has the potential to bring up some very heavy and painful feelings. It is very important to process it in terms of how their bodies feel. This is a protective step and helps to distance them from the actual event. Always end an exercise like this in the positive. If in the positive point someone still has a very negative reaction you can help talk that person from the negative into the positive again by focusing on their body feeling.

## Activity Three: Review and Wrap up for the Day

**AIM:** Review and wrap up for the day.

**TIME:** 30 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) Ask participants to discuss some of the major things they have learned
  - What did they like?
  - What was difficult?
- 2) Ask participants to practice some of the activities they learned during this workshop with teachers, family, and colleagues.
  - Let them know that in the next workshop they will be required to bring their lessons learned back and discuss them with the group.

### FACILITATOR'S NOTE

In "living statues" participants designed a scene depicting their chosen theme by moving workshop participants into position. One scene showed classmates helping their friend, who did not know how to do what she needed to do. The activity illustrated the "ability to help others." The second scene modeled sharing and helping as the participants were moved into positions that showed one as having many pencils and the other participants wanting to use them. The third showed friends caring for a sick friend. This activity provided a visual image of one or more aspects of resilience, reinforcing the concepts, while allowing the participants to explore resilience in the context of Afghan culture and everyday life. It allows children the chance to be creative and to be actively involved in a creative learning activity.

The final emotions activity was designed to help the helpers, but can also be used by teachers in the classroom. It helped the participants gain awareness of how emotions feel in their body and to help them learn ways to find some distancing from emotions that can be painful, while appreciating those that are comforting.

# WORKSHOP 2

## Stress, Normal Childhood Development and Methods to Cope

Now participants understand key concepts and have grounded concepts in Afghan culture.

In workshop two they will build on this by exploring stress and coping.

subsequently participants will explore various skills and tools to assist themselves, teachers and students to strengthen coping skills.

*Purpose of  
second  
workshop*

### SESSION ONE

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- ✓ Explore focusing technique as a way to better understand emotions
- ✓ Reinforce positive listening practices
- ✓ Examine development levels of children in Afghan society

*} In this  
session  
we will*

By now participants have had the chance to test some of what they have learned in the first workshop and become more familiar with what is working with teachers and children. They will build on the visualization exercises, review listening and examine development levels of children.

At this point stress and coping are introduced as they relate to psychosocial wellness. Stress is a normal part of everyday life, but too much stress can cause emotional and physiological damage. The participants asked for tools to help themselves - and subsequently help teachers help themselves - with emotional issues related to war and refugee life.

Children at different ages react to stress in different ways. Even though they might be sharing similar experiences their psychosocial reactions will be quite different and be affected by age, gender, socio-economic conditions, education levels, and especially family support. Teachers can play an important role in the child's life through emotional support, understanding, listening, providing guidance, and setting up positive behavioral boundaries.

## Activity One: Review

**AIM:** Review Resilience

**TIME:** 20 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity. In a large group:

- 1) Ask one of the participants to lead a brainstorm and review resilience
- 2) Write the answers on a flip-chart at the front of the room
- 3) Ask the participants: what other kinds of activities might foster resilience?
- 4) What is the value of using the tools explored in the last workshop?
- 5) Facilitate a discussion about what they experienced :
  - How can these tools help promote children's psychosocial well being?
  - Which ones did they practice?
  - What worked, what didn't?
  - Are there any other questions or comments?

## Activity Two: Learning about Focusing

**AIM:** Examine relaxation technique of focusing

**TIME:** 1 hour

**MATERIALS:** What is Focusing? (Handout 6)  
Guesthouse Poem, By Rumi (Handout7)

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of the activity and facilitate the following discussion with group:

- 1) Explain that the fastest and best way to deal with the stresses and pressures of life is to listen to them, as you would a guest that comes to your home.
- 2) Facilitate a group discussion and ask, what do you do when you have a guest come to your house?
  - What happens when it is a guest that you really love?
  - What happens when it is a guest that you are not happy to see?
  - What is the difference in the way you treat these two guests? (The idea is that in Afghan culture guests are always welcomed treated with respect)
- 3) Have the participants read The Guesthouse poem (Handout 8)
  - Discuss what they think it means.
  - As Rumi's poem recommends, it is important to treat all our emotions as guests, who bring new information and insights about our lives.
  - Ignoring these guests brings greater pain, but we often avoid them out of fear.
- 4) Explain that in the next activity they will be asked to sit with their guests and learn how to meet them with honor, compassion and patience.
  - Remember that if you think you already know what your guest is going to say, then you are not ready to listen to your guest
  - Prepare to be open and compassionate



## Handout 6

### What is Focusing?

Focusing is a process by which an individual can process (face...confront...even welcome) emotional issues and builds on visualization. Psychological problems can also be faced and dealt with through focusing. Eugene Gendlin developed focusing at the University of Chicago. He studied thousands of hours of video taped patient/therapist sessions and discovered that regardless of the method or the therapist, those clients who were thoughtful and paid attention to their own inner reactions benefited from therapy. Those who did not were less successful. It wasn't the therapist but the individual's ability to sense his or her own inner reactions that mattered. He developed what is now called Focusing based on this.

One advantage is that no one has to "talk to" and "disclose" private information. They can keep that to themselves and still have the benefit of the process. It works well with a listener, but Afghans like to do it alone. Also, this process gently lets one come toward a problem that is too painful in a way that is safe and does not leave one in emotional pain. If the problem is too great, the body protects the person and won't allow the problem to be approached until the person is ready.

The fastest and best way to deal with the stress and pressures of life is to listen to them, as you would a guest that comes to your home. The guest analogy is appealing and easily understood by Afghan participants because in Afghan culture the guest is considered a gift from God - even if you don't want them. Afghans recognize the focusing process as being rooted in their own traditions.

- ❁ Focussing is similar to a process developed and used by some Sufi groups. As Rumi's poem (The Guest House) recommends, it is important to treat all our emotions and feelings as guests, who bring new information and insights about our lives.
- ❁ Ignoring these guests brings greater pain, but we often avoid them out of fear.

The method involves 5 steps:

- 1. *Coming in***, where one does a general body scan to notice and be aware of one's own body. This is similar to meditation but one does not go as deep as one would for meditation. Begin at the feet and work up to the body, and up the back, to the tip of the head, then forward to the area between the throat and the gut. It is usually here that people find body reactions so go there last.
- 2. *Finding or inviting guests***. This is the point when one just recognizes that there is something in the body (emotion) that wants attention and it may feel like tightness or a pressure or some other body feeling. At this point one just recognizes that it is there and asks permission to be with it, like when a guest has something difficult to say or a problem that s/he may be afraid to talk about. At this point, one is to notice what he or she is aware of in their body

3. **Naming the guests.** At this point actively try to describe the feeling with a word, an image or a gesture. Coming up each time with a description and then check it with the body to see if it is right. Any change in the feeling is a sign that it is the correct description. Changes usually bring some relief or intensification. A feeling of understanding: yes, this is what it is! If there is no change, try again.
4. **Being with the guests.** This is the longest stage and in this one, sit with the feeling and wait for it to open up. It is important not to question it or try to solve its (referring to the guest) feelings. Spend time with the guest, using an attitude of respectful interest and curiosity. Ask the guest gentle open-ended questions and repeat back (reflect) whatever is sensed or heard.
5. **Ending.** This is a closure process and is a polite way to let any emotions know that they are heard. When it is time to stop, it is important to let the guests know that they can be visited again. By doing this, there can be a greater emotional release in the process. Finally, thank the body for what came and how the information and connection was important.

Focusing helps participants come to a better understanding of what they really want or feel<sup>7</sup>.

- ✿ Find a comfortable place with overwhelming feelings
- ✿ Release actions blocks or addictions
- ✿ Deal with disease or chronic physical illness
- ✿ In decision-making to decide what is best for you
- ✿ Helps with psychological pressures and stress

## Handout 7

### The Guesthouse

***By Jalaludin-e-Balkhi 'Rumi' (Translated by Coleman Barks)***

This being human is a guesthouse  
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
Some momentary awareness comes  
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,  
Who violently sweep your house

Empty of its furniture,  
Still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
For some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
Meet them at the door laughing,  
And invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,  
Because each has been sent  
As a guide from beyond.

## Activity Three: Trying Focusing

**AIM:** Practice Focusing and build on visualization

**TIME:** 45 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of the activity. This activity builds on the visualization activities from the first workshop. It uses the same process of recognizing body reactions and body feelings but goes deeper because the individual is looking at their own issue rather than being told what to visualize or what to think about. It is designed to help people cope with issues that build up and to which they have emotional reactions. Working in the large group go through the following steps. Remember that, like visualization, participants don't talk during this activity. Questions asked by the facilitator are meant to be answered to themselves silently.

- 1) Introduce focusing through visualization say:
  - Close your eyes. We will begin with the outer body.
  - Feel your hands and feet, slowly move your attention up from your feet to your legs - then to your entire body resting on the chair.
  - Relax into that support of the chair --move to your hands - arms - shoulders, back of neck, head, and face and into the center of the body.
  - Now that you are in the center of your body.
  - Allah is closer to you than your jugular vein. If you are afraid or need help, Allah is there all the time.
  
- 2) Find or invite your guests
  - Notice what you are aware of in your body
  - It may be a feeling of tightness somewhere, a pressure, shortness of breath, or lump in the throat.
  
- 3) Name the guests
  - How would you describe this guest?
  - Find a word, image, or gesture that describes this guest.
  - Check to see if the body responds to the word, image or gesture. (the body should have a physical reaction to this response)
  
- 4) Be present with the guest
  - Once the body has had a physical reaction to the word, gesture or image, ask the guest if it is OK to sit with it (this is another way of being compassionate or respectful)
  - Spend time with the guest and keep your attention on it
  - Accept anything the guest is telling you by repeating it back in your mind
  - Keep repeating back each thing the guest tells you (this is repetitive)
  
- 5) Bring the activity to a close
  - You have five minutes left in this activity
  - Ask your guests if there is anything else they want you to know before leaving

- As you are leaving tell the guests that you can and will come back
  - Thank your body for what came
- 6) Bring the participants out of the relaxation experience
- Now slowly bring your attention back to your body
  - Notice your head, and your back, and the support of the chair and then bring your attention out to your hands and feet.
  - When you are ready slowly open your eyes.
- 7) Facilitate a discussion about what they experienced based on these questions: (remind participants that they should not say anything personal - they should talk about the process, not about the details of their guest).
- Describe what you felt
  - What are the physical effects of focusing?
  - What did it feel like in your body? (encourage descriptions or images)
  - Where did you feel it?
- 8) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions
- How would this assist teachers and students with coping and stress?
  - Can anything be added to make it more comfortable?
  - How does this concept of focusing manifest in Islam and Afghan culture?
  - Are there other poems or traditions that can relate to this activity?

### FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

Some of the participants will not actually meet guests. This is fine and should be expected. The time spent during the activity is still relaxing. The actual focusing usually takes about 20 minutes, more than that for people who have not tried this before is actually too long. This activity can bring out many emotional issues; it is very common for participants to cry. The discussion that comes after is very valuable as each participant learns they share common emotional responses.

## Activity Four: Listening

**AIM:** Learn to be a good listener

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Guidelines for Modeling Good Listening Skills (Handout 8)

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of the activity. Divide participants into small groups.

- 1) Ask participants to discuss a time when they felt listened to
  - Ask - explore how you felt
  - What did the listener do that made you feel listened to? (list on flip chart)
- 2) Bring the groups together and ask them to share their results.

## Handout 8

### Guidelines for Modeling Good Listening Skills<sup>8</sup>

**Be interested and attentive.** Children can tell whether they have a person's interest and attention by the way the person replies or does not reply. Forget about the telephone and other distractions. Maintain eye contact to show that you really are with the child.

**Encourage talking.** Some children need an invitation to start talking. You might begin with, "Tell me about your day at school." Children are more likely to share their ideas and feelings when others think them important.

**Listen patiently.** People think faster than they speak. With limited vocabulary and experience in talking, children often take longer than adults to find the right word. Listen as though you have plenty of time.

**Hear children out.** Avoid cutting children off before they have finished speaking. It is easy to form an opinion or reject children's views before they finish what they have to say. It may be difficult to listen respectfully and not correct misconceptions, but respect their right to have and express their opinions.

**Listen to nonverbal messages.** Many messages children send are communicated non-verbally by their tone of voice, their facial expressions, their energy level, their posture, or changes in their behavior patterns. You can often tell more from the way a child says something than from what is said. When a child comes in obviously upset, be sure to find a quiet time then or sometime that day to help explore those feelings.

3) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from the activity :

- What is a good listener? (list on flip-chart)
- Why is listening important?
- Do you think children feel that teachers listen to them?
- What are Afghan norms around listening as it relates to children?

(If the list of what is a good listener doesn't contain these, add them:)

- A listener is a companion not a guide
- Ask for clarification if needed
- Reflect back what the speaker says by paraphrasing or repeating
- Don't try to repeat back everything or try to remember everything
- Do not question what you hear, or try to correct it
- Be open, patient, present, attentive, interested

### FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

Afghan approaches to listening tend to be focused on giving advice. It is important to stress that before one can give advice, they need to listen. Also, it was revealed that listening is a skill that needs practice so it is re-visited more deeply on Workshop 3 day 2.

## Suggestions for Improving Communication with Children

**Be interested.** Ask about children's ideas and opinions regularly. If you show your children that you are really interested in what they think, what they feel, and what their opinions are, they will become comfortable about expressing their thoughts to you.

**Avoid dead-end questions.** Ask children the kinds of questions that will extend interaction rather than cut it off. Questions that require a yes or no or right answer lead a conversation to a dead end. Questions that ask children to describe, explain, or share ideas extend the conversation.

**Extend conversation.** Try to pick up a piece of the child's conversation. Respond to his or her statements by asking a question that restates or uses some of the same words your child used. When you use children's own phrasing or terms, you strengthen their confidence in their conversational and verbal skills and reassure them that their ideas are being listened to and valued.

**Share your thoughts.** Share what you are thinking with the child. For instance, if you are puzzling over how to rearrange your furniture, get your child involved with questions such as, "I'm not sure where to put this shelf. Where do you think would be a good place?"

**Observe signs.** Watch the child for signs that it is time to end a conversation. When a child begins to stare into space, give silly responses, or ask you to repeat several of your comments, it is probably time to stop the exchange.

**Reflect feelings.** One of the most important skills good listeners have is the ability to put themselves in the shoes of others or empathize with the speaker by attempting to understand his or her thoughts and feelings. As an adult, try to mirror the children's feelings by repeating them. You might reflect a child's feelings by commenting, "It sounds as if you're angry at your math teacher." Restating or rephrasing what children have said is useful when they are experiencing powerful emotions that they may not be fully aware of.

**Help clarify and relate experiences.** As you listen, try to make the child's feelings clear by stating them in your own words. Your wider vocabulary can help children express themselves as accurately and clearly as possible and give them a deeper understanding of words and inner thoughts.

## Activity Five: Child Development in the Afghan Context

**AIM:** Review acceptable / normal Afghan child development

**TIME:** 45 minutes

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Explain the aim of this activity. Divide participants into small groups.

## Handout 9

### **Psychosocial Developmental : Children from ages 0 - 16 <sup>9</sup>**

Children under six should have interest and concern for:

- ✿ Social involvement with peers,
- ✿ Participation in rule-based group play,
- ✿ Increased motivation to learn, acquire technical knowledge

And one can expect children between the ages of 6 and 10 to:

- ✿ Be pleasant to be with
- ✿ Control emotions most of the time
  
- ✿ May become tense or irritable when trying to control emotions

One should not expect children between the ages of 6 and 10 to:

- ✿ Adapt to social pressures without anxiety
- ✿ Know that their changing moods affect others

Children between ages 11 and 16 are struggling with trying to grow up in many cultures. In Afghan societ. Adults can expect children to have:

- ✿ Many moody periods
- ✿ Exaggerated reactions to events
- ✿ Confusion about how they feel
- ✿ Express anger by brooding, refusing to speak, stomping away from situation
- ✿ Be preoccupied with good and bad traits they have
- ✿ Be ultra sensitive to criticism

- 1) In their groups ask them to discuss the following issues
  - What is normal for Afghan children aged 6-11?
  - What is normal for Afghan children aged 11-16?
  - Distinguish between male and female for adolescents.
  - Have them list their answers on flip charts and present to the larger group
  
- 2) Bring the groups back together and ask them to share their results.
  
- 3) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions
  - How do children affected by war and displacement vary from the lists?
  - Give some examples?
  - How can we help teachers to deal with children who are emotional?
  - What are signals that a child might be having a difficult time?

## **Activity Six: Average Child Development (ages 6-10)**

**AIM:** Chart average developmental levels for children aged 6-10

**TIME:** 20 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Developmental Chart for Children (Handout 9)

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Explain the aim of the activity and keep participants in the large group.

- 1) Review the developmental chart (handout 9)
- 2) Facilitate a group discussion based on the following questions
  - How might Afghan children be different from this list?
  - How do children affected by war and displacement vary from the lists?
  - Refer to cultural positioning chart and ask how it influences child development and or norms around children's behavior (list on flip chart)

## **Activity Seven: Average Child Development (ages 11-15)**

**AIM:** Chart average developmental levels for children aged 11-15

**TIME:** 20 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Developmental Chart for Children (Handout 9)

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Follow the same steps as activity six above, but orienting the questions towards children ages 11-15.

## **REFLECTIONS**

In a review of Resilience, the group decided that "positive remembrance of what one can do" and "confidence" should be added to the list. Also, they wanted to add "a strong belief in God or a higher power" as another important component.

*Normal emotional development* was discussed, as it relates to child development, then ways that stress and or trauma might impact normal development. Participants were asked to carefully discuss what is seen as normal in Afghan culture. This way, one can understand what is a problem, or when a child might be having difficulties. This means balancing the child's need to know that s/he is ok and helping her to adapt within cultural constraints.

In group work women listed what they believe are the negative consequences of stress, including body stops working, lips shiver, paralysis, feeling tight, feeling *khafa* (sad), diseases like heart attacks or high blood pressure, and even madness or depression.



## **Participant responses to: What is normal in afghan culture for children**

### ***Girls aged 6-10***

- ✿ Participation in plays such as playing with dolls, cooking etc.
- ✿ Sitting with elders (especially elder women) and listening to their words.
- ✿ Interest in singing and dancing
- ✿ Helping their mothers with doing the house chores
- ✿ Entertaining others by imitating, taking, singing.
- ✿ To some extent can adjust to the social pressures
- ✿ Realize other's feelings

### ***Boys aged 6-10***

- ✿ Participation in play such as football kite flying, playing with marbles etc.
- ✿ Watching movies and telling the film's story to friends.
- ✿ Doing some of the chores around the house such as bringing groceries, etc.
- ✿ Entertaining others by talking etc.
- ✿ Cannot easily adjust to the social pressures
- ✿ Do not realize other's feelings.

### ***Girls aged 11 - 16***

- ✿ Interest and desire to being with friends
- ✿ In case of conflict with others, they wouldn't talk for long hours.
- ✿ Do not show so much exaggerated reactions
- ✿ Are concerned about their positive and negative traits
- ✿ Are sensitive to criticism
- ✿ Do not have much unrealistic ideas about their abilities and weaknesses.
- ✿ Do not recognize that their self-defeating actions may keep them from meeting their life goals or feel happier.

### ***Boys 11-16***

- ✿ Increased interest and desire to be with friends.
- ✿ Forget the conflicts easily.
- ✿ Show much exaggerated reactions towards events.
- ✿ Are concerned about their positive and negative traits.
- ✿ Have much unrealistic ideas about their abilities and weaknesses.
- ✿ Are sensitive to criticism.
- ✿ Do not recognize that their self-defeating actions may keep them from meeting their life goals or feel happier.

## SESSION TWO

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- In this session we will* } ✓ Identify and chart sources of stress  
✓ Identify and consider common stress reactions  
✓ Explore ways of understanding and dealing with stress

On day two of workshop 2 participants delve deeper into stress by discussing first common reactions to stress, how children usually deal with stress and connecting this to various common coping mechanisms.

This section of the workshop focuses on stress, stress reactions and the impact of stress on children. For example, common stress reactions experienced were noted and discussed. Participants were encouraged to share stories and examples from their own lives and families, if they chose. Emotional, cognitive and biological reactions were illustrated.

### Activity One: Common Reactions to Stress

**AIM:** Explore common reactions to stress

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Common emotional reactions to stress (handout 10)

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity.

- 1) Review and discuss in the large group the following list in handout 12.
- 2) Divide participants into 3 small groups and ask each to discuss one of the following:
  - What are Afghan emotional responses to stress
  - What are Afghan cognitive response to stress
  - What are Afghan physical response to stress
  - Review for both adults and children
  - List on flip-chart
- 3) Bring the groups back together and ask each to share their results. Give each group time to receive feedback and add to their lists.
- 4) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions:
  - Do the definitions reflect everyone's common understanding?
  - What is missing?
  - What is the relationship between the three?
  - Which are some of the most difficult to recover from and why?

## Handout 10

### Psychosocial Common Emotional Reactions to Stress

Shock	Fatigue
Terror	Insomnia
Anger	Nightmares
Guilt	Hyper-arousal
Grief	Startle response
Disbelief	Somatic complaints
Self-blame	Impaired concentration
Irritability	Decreased self-esteem/ efficacy
Confusion	Common physical reactions to stress
Helplessness	Common cognitive reactions to stress
Disorientation	Regression to earlier developmental phase
Intrusive thoughts	

### Activity Two: Stress in the Classroom

**AIM:** Explore stress in the classroom

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Common Examples of Resilience

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Explain the aim of this activity. Divide participants into small groups.

- 1) Ask groups to discuss the following:
  - Issues that cause Afghan children stress
  - How Afghan culture deals with children's stress
  - Ways teacher's might help children deal with stress more successfully (referring back to the examples of resilience list)
  - List on flipcharts
- 2) Bring the groups back together and ask each to share their results. Give each group time to receive feedback and add to their lists.
- 3) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions:
  - Are there difference between Afghan children living as refugees and Afghan children living in Afghanistan? If so, what are they?
  - Are there differences between how rural and urban groups respond to children's stress? Socio-economic? Educated vs. uneducated?

#### **FACILITATOR'S NOTE**

This exercise is used as the basis for the next activity i.e. the puppet shows.

## Participant responses

### ***Issues that cause Afghan children stress***

Lack of parents' attention	Early marriages (girls)
Illiteracy	Severe economical and social conditions
War and fighting	Discrimination by gender and language
Family conflicts	Loss of family members or relatives
Immigrations	Inequity of rights amongst boys and girls
Internal displacements	Inappropriate imitation of fashions

### ***How does Afghan culture deal with children's stress?***

The way of dealing with children's stress differs from family to family and groups to groups in Afghan culture. The families that are educated would fulfill their children's needs and realize their rights while the other category (not educated and narrow-minded) will impose unnecessary restrictions on their children. Mostly boys can benefit from many privileges that girls cannot.

- ✿ The children are taken to celebrations and parties
- ✿ Girls are kept busy in helping their mothers with the house chores.
- ✿ There are certain verses from Quran and sayings of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) that show us ways of coping effectively with our stress.
- ✿ There are many poems, proverbs and elder sayings that show how to cope with problems and difficulties of life

### ***What ways might teachers help children more successfully deal with stress?***

- Get trust of children
- Provide opportunities of playing for children
- Realize and accept children's feelings
- Get in contact with the children's parents
- Be compassionate toward the children
- Give the children love and attention
- Avoid discrimination and favoritism
- Promote positive Afghan culture values
- Keep in mind problems with both boys and girls in the class
- Should be good listeners
- Should give the students part in classroom activities
- Encourage the children to work with and help their parents
- Should advise them
- Tell stories, and poems to make the children hopeful of the future
- Maintain a friendly atmosphere in the class
- Use a variety of student centered activities in the class
- Strengthen different aspects of resilience amongst the children
- Identify children who need special care and respond positively to their needs

## Activity Three: Puppet Shows

**AIM:** Explore helping children talk about stress through puppet shows

**TIME:** 3 hours (spanning two days)

**MATERIALS:** Cloth, sticks, rags, yarn, tape, stapler, colored pens, old baby clothes, and paper

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Explain the aim of this activity.

- 1) Discussion of use of puppets as communication tool with children.
  - Allows emotional distance when dealing with children with difficulties
  - Allows one to address highly sensitive topics without making it personal.
  - Define puppet in local language
- 2) Divide participants into small groups of between 3-5 people and remind them of the lists they brainstormed on regarding what causes stress in children and ways teachers can help support resilience.
- 3) Tell participants that they are going to design a puppet show
  - Practice making puppets with the participants
  - Ask participants to write a story: a 15 - 20 minute drama or a comedy that will show children healthy ways to talk about or cope with stress
  - Ask participants to gather materials for the puppets at home and make puppets out of simple materials that are not bought

*The next day in the morning:*

- 4) Allow groups to practice their puppet shows (30 minutes)
- 5) Bring the groups back together and ask them to present their puppet shows.
- 6) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions:
  - Which types of resilience are illustrated?
  - How successful was the process
  - How might you change the activity for students in another class level?

### Participant presentations of: Puppet Shows

#### **Group A (visual)**

The children all rush out to the school playground as the bell for the break rings. Amongst the children, there is a little girl, Salma, who is quiet and would not go outside. Some children come to her and ask her to play with them. But she replies that she doesn't want to play and that she is alright in the class. Hearing her reply, the children leave her and start to play in the school playground.

A lady teacher, while monitoring the classes, notices that Salma is sitting all alone in the class. The teacher comes near Salma and asks her for not playing with other children. Salma starts to cry. The teacher keeps on asking her whether any thing is wrong. After some minutes, Salma tells the teacher that every one at home calls her by strange names and they say that she is ugly. Her classmates also play tricks on her. The teacher, like a mirror first reflects what Salma says, i.e. every one at home calls you by strange names and they say that you are ugly. The teacher then tries to comfort the child by touching her physically and telling her that she is beautiful. The teacher tells the girl that if she plays with other children and be their friends, every one would be her friend and other children would like her. At the end, the teacher asks Salma to promise her to play with children and try to make friends. The teacher promises Salma to meet her again.

### ***Group B (visual)***

The teacher enters the class and asks the students about their homework. All students have brought their homework, except Shukria. When the teacher asks Shukria for her homework, she does not reply and starts to cry. The teacher tries to calm Shukria and learn what is wrong. Shukria says that she doesn't have any notebooks and her father doesn't have any money to buy one for her. She says that she has been away from school for several years and she cannot pick up what is taught. In addition, she feels shy to be sitting with such little girls in the class.

The teacher, also female, uses physical contact with the child (accepted in Afghan culture) and comforts her by saying that she will help her and that she needn't cry or worry about anything. She is never alone. The teacher helps the child take her book and read. The teacher uses an encouraging tone and approach that results in making the child participate in the class activities and study.

### ***Group C (visual)***

A little rabbit is sitting by the side of the road crying. Everyone passes by without paying attention to the little rabbit. Finally, a black squirrel comes singing and laughing. When the squirrel sees the little rabbit, it goes and sits beside it. The squirrel asks the rabbit the reason for crying. At this, the rabbit tells the squirrel that it has lost its parents and does not know where they are and where to go.

The squirrel laughs at what it is told. And replies that it also doesn't have any parents, but it is so pleasant and it would never care about it. What the squirrel says surprises the rabbit, who asks: "Can this be possible."

The squirrel tells the rabbit, "If you follow me, you will also become as happy as I am." And then the rabbit goes with the squirrel, who takes it to a dark world, which is a world of sorrows sunk in smoking.

When the little rabbit gets used to smoking and using drugs, the squirrel wouldn't give it any cigarettes, unless the rabbit gives the squirrel money. This is how the rabbit is left alone. The rabbit cries for a smoke, but would not get any. Hearing the rabbit's crying, a white pigeon comes to rescue it. The white pigeon makes the rabbit hopeful of the future and ultimately takes it back to the beautiful world of flowers and joy.



## REFLECTIONS

Puppet shows were developed to help children on stress problems and possible resilience solutions. The only rule for the puppets was that they had to be hand made from available materials. The shows were well done and touched on sensitive issues in a variety of ways. They offered information and encouraged resilience. FEP listed locally recognized stress reactions, as well. This was followed by a lengthy discussion on ways parents and teachers might help children talk about stress. Finally, the trainers were assigned the task of designing and presenting puppet shows that show children healthy ways to talk about stress. They were to gather materials for puppets at home or at work and could make puppets out of any material they chose. The only restriction was that they could not buy anything. It was suggested that they be creative and use the simplest and most common items. The resulting puppet shows were excellent and gave examples of children feeling isolated because they were newly arrived at the camp. Another puppet show focused on a student that was older than the other children in her class. The final puppet show used animal puppets to show how turning to drugs would make life worse not better when in difficult circumstances.

## SESSION THREE

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- In this session we will* } ✓ Identify life scale of emotions  
✓ Examine steps for improving mental health  
✓ Practice steps for improving mental health

Once participants have identified and explored common sources of stress, and reactions of children they move on to developing strategies to help children deal with these reactions in a positive and healthy way.

There are three basic steps in improving personal psychosocial health. One can change the way one thinks, i.e. their patterns of thought. One can change the way they treat their body, by adding exercise, taking up a sport, go for regular walks or practice deep breathing and relaxation. And one can also change the way one faces his or her emotions and stop avoiding how he or she feels.

One of the most successful projects in the workshop was also very simple: the Life Scale of Emotions. The teacher trainers were asked to make simple weighing scales that balance from a string. One side was for painful emotions and problems in their lives, the other side was for their blessings and positive things in their lives. Then, using beans or pebbles, they were asked to put one pebble or bean for each positive and negative point they could think of. The scales tipped to the positive side. This, in itself, was a visual reinforcement of resilience. After, the discussion revolved around what to do if the negative side weighed more. When this happens, one discusses the positive points in a person's life so that they see there is hope and goodness. Even in the refugee camps, positive points were found.

### Activity One: Life Scale of Emotions

**AIM:** Examine the life scale of emotions

**TIME:** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Sticks, pieces of string, two pieces of cloth, and very small stones

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Explain the aim of this activity. To be healthy one needs to be able to have hope for the future and recognize that, even in the worst situation, there are many good things in our lives (see examples of resilience: the ability to remember and invoke images of good). Ask the participants to divide into small groups.



- 1) Ask the groups to build an emotions scale
  - Gather the following materials: a stick, pieces of string, two pieces of cloth (cut into circles), and very small stones
  - Make small bags from the cloth by stitching around the edge and pulling the string. Leave an opening to insert small pebbles (visual)
  - Tie one back to each end of the stick (visual)
  - Tie a string in the middle of the stick so that it is balanced when it hangs from the string
  
- 2) Explain to the groups how to use the emotions scale
  - Have participants name emotions
  - Emotions they like place in one bag
  - Emotions they don't like, place in the opposite bag
  - Remind them that adults and children have both good and bad emotions and one can work on having a balance. (The balance usually tilts to the good side. When it does not, ask probing questions that might help the person add more pebbles to the good side).
  - Note: This activity can be used with all ages of children
  
- 3) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions
  - Which way did you expect the scale to tilt when you started?
  - What happened to the scale (which way did it tilt)?
  - How and when might you use this scale in the classroom?

## **Activity Two: Improving psychosocial wellness**

**AIM:** Review three basic steps to improving mental health

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Simple steps to improving psychosocial wellness (Handout 11)

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Explain the aim of this activity to the participants. This is a short discussion and tying things together.

- 1) Review with the group ask participants what they have learned in this workshop series.
  
- 2) Offer these points as a way to improve psychosocial wellness. Handout and discuss each point with examples

- 3) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions
- Have they tried any of these before?
  - What can we add to this list?
  - What has worked, what has not?
  - How do these steps relate to cultural positioning?
  - How do these steps support resilience?
  - What are some scenarios where some of these steps could support psychosocial wellness with children in the classroom?

### Handout 11

#### **Simple steps to Improve Psychosocial Wellness**

##### ***Change the way you think***

- ☒ Patterns of thought
- ☒ Trust that Allah knows and is with you

##### ***Change the way you treat your body***

- ☒ Exercise, or take up a sport, or go for regular walks
- ☒ Practice deep breathing and relaxation

##### ***Look inside your body to face your feeling with interested curiosity***

- ☒ Stop avoiding how you feel
- ☒ Accept how you're thinking or feeling without criticism

## **REFLECTIONS**

The group discussion reviewing steps to improve psychosocial wellness is a summary of this workshop series. One of the hardest things is to address one's emotions instead of trying to control them or deny them. These activities helped participants to understand and practice practical ways to address their own emotions and subsequently how this translates into the classroom.

# WORKSHOP 3

## Painful Emotions, Listening, and Helping Children Open up to Adults

Building on workshops one and two, in workshop three participants have had the opportunity to test many of the activities and skills and come back and focus on what has been successful and what has not.

Emotions are delved into more deeply through the exploration and discussion of painful emotions.

Participants are asked to draw on their understanding of key concepts of psychosocial and resiliency and apply some of the techniques they learned.

Painful emotions are explored including how children show what they are feeling.

Building on this, acceptable ways for Afghan children to react are reviewed. This lays the groundwork for developmental and psychosocial models.



Purpose of  
third  
workshop

### SESSION ONE

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- ✓ Review resilience and focusing
- ✓ Explore painful emotions and how children experience them
- ✓ Demonstrate positive listening skills



In this  
session  
we will

The first day of workshop three reviews and provides in depth discussion of resilience and listening. It is important to reinforce continually the value of accepting a full range of emotions as healthy.

Children tend to react to painful emotions through aggression, withdrawal or regression. One way to help children learn to face painful emotions and to become more resilient is through the use of art and drama.

## Activity One: Review

**AIM:** Review Workshops One and Two

**TIME:** 20 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) In the large group ask one of the participants to facilitate discussion.
  - What did we learn in the last workshop?
  - Write on flip chart (make sure the following are included):
    - A full range of emotions are important*
    - It is important to face all of these emotions*
    - Increase children's awareness of comfortable / comforting emotions*
    - Listen to the painful ones so that they can shift and leave*
- 2) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been tested with colleagues, teachers and children
  - What worked?
  - What didn't work?
  - How did you adapt some of the activities?

## Activity Two: Coping with Painful Emotions

**AIM:** Learn a tool to cope with painful emotions

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Worries and Painful Emotions (Handout 12)

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity. The participants will learn how to put their worries in a safe place through visualization. While in a large group go through the following with participants.

- 1) Write the words SAFE PLACE on the flip chart at the front of the room.
  - Say SAFE PLACE and ask participants to concentrate
  - Ask the group, how does it feel in your body when you hear this word?
  - Ask the group to describe how it feels in words, gestures or images
- 2) Reaffirm that everyone has problems and worries. On a flip chart at the front of the room display the following and discuss each point with the group.
- 3) Introduce a visualization exercise -- putting your worries in a safe place
  - Close your eyes. We will begin with the outer body
  - Feel your hands and feet, slowly move your attention up from your feet to your legs - then to your entire body resting on the chair
  - Relax into that support of the chair --move to your hands - arms - shoulders, back of neck, head, and face and into the center of the body

- Now that you are in the center of your body, check inside to meet your guests
  - Say hello to the guest you find and sit for just a brief minute with it so that it knows you hear it.
  - Ask the guest if it is ok to move to the safe place
  - Move it there and tell it you will come back to it, you will not forget it
  - (Give the participants time to move each guest)
  - Check to see if there is more to move; if so move the next guest too and as many as you need to move one at a time
  - Your body may feel lighter or quiet, calm or empty
  - Just sit with that quiet empty feeling
  - See what comes
- 4) Bring the participants out of the relaxation experience:
- Now slowly bring your attention back to your body
  - Notice your head, and your back, and the support of the chair and then bring your attention out to your hands and feet
  - When you are ready slowly open your eyes
- 5) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions:
- How did this activity make you feel?
  - How could this be adapted and used with teachers and children?

## Handout 12

### **Worries and Painful Emotions**

- ❖ Worries and painful emotions are normal
- ❖ Our bodies carry these worries and problems inside
- ❖ It can sometimes feel like our bodies are full of these
- ❖ It can feel like worries are too many and too close
- ❖ One way to manage the worries is to clear a space by putting them in a safe place for a while
- ❖ Think of a safe place - someplace in your imagination or in your home. It could be a box or a shelf or a drawer; anything you like

## Activity Three: How Children Show Emotion

**AIM:** Explore painful emotions and how children show what they are feeling

**TIME:** 45 minutes

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity. Divide participants into small groups.

- 1) Ask groups to discuss children and painful emotions
  - What are painful emotions? (listing the emotion)
  - What are positive emotions? (listing the emotion)
  - What are common examples of Afghan ways of facing painful emotions? (List on a flip-chart)
- 2) Bring the groups back together and ask them to share their lists.
- 3) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions:
  - Which of these emotions are more common?
  - Which ones are you more likely to see in men, women, boys, and girls?
  - If it is an emotion that is not commonly expressed, what are the reactions?
- 4) Using a flip chart discuss normal children's reactions when faced with painful emotions? (The list should have the following headings and answers can be inserted accordingly - for example a young child who saw a horrible event stops feeding themselves, this would come under regression -- for definitions, see glossary.)
  - Aggression*
  - Withdrawal*
  - Regression*
- 5) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions:
  - What are ways that Afghan children act when faced by painful emotions?
  - How does this vary by age and gender?
  - What are some signals for teachers to recognize?
  - How can teachers better support children dealing with painful emotions?

### Participant responses to:

### Afghan Ways of Facing Painful Emotions

In the workshop participants listed all the different painful emotions they could think of. And then discussed which ones seem to be most problematic for Afghans.

- ❖ Insult was one of the worst and brought many stories with it.
- ❖ Sadness was counted as a normal Afghan feeling that all Afghans constantly feel. It is also seen as a valued emotion, and a girl or boy, as well as adults, will be praised if they are seen as sad or sangeen.
- ❖ Blame was not common and tends to not be internalized. Fear is normal for women and children to express, but men are ridiculed if they express fear in any form. That would be shameful for both the man and his family.
- ❖ Shame is one of the strongest painful emotions. It is gendered, in that it manifests itself differently by gender. The notion of shame is used as a means of social control. To be without shame is a very great insult. Yet, to bring shame on the family can mean the death of that person.
- ❖ Revenge is also normal in Afghan society. Men are respected if they take revenge and shamed if they do not.
- ❖ Anger is another normal category. Afghans are quick to get angry and the participants say that there is a need to help children make anger a smaller part of their lives. This is another key category.
- ❖ Loneliness was not a meaningful category as it was hard to translate the concept. Afghans do not value being alone, which is how they tried to translate the term.
- ❖ Hopelessness is seen as uncommon and not normal to Afghans. Because of their belief in Allah and submission to Allah's will, they said that there is always hope. Should someone say they have lost hope, this signaled to the group that the person is depressed and needs help.
- ❖ Disappointment was the final word discussed by the group. They felt it is also a common but painful feeling that has touched all their lives.

Expressions for painful emotions and what one feels included:

- ❖ The heart or liver becoming water
- ❖ The liver bleeds.

## Activity Four: Drawing Emotions

**AIM:** Use drawing to further explore painful emotions

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Paper, colored pencils, markers, basket, and crayons

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Explain the aim of this activity.

- 1) Ask participants to write each painful and positive emotion (from activity 3) on individual slips of paper and throw them in a basket (one big basket for entire group - each emotion listed once).

- 2) Ask them to take a sheet of paper and fold it in half then fold it in half again and then one more time (so that there are 8 boxes). Give the following directions:
  - Open it up and outline the boxes and number them from 1 - 8
  - Each participant selects one emotion from the basket
  - Using colored pencils or crayons and checking with that inside place, show what each emotion looks like to you
  - Do this eight times (until all the boxes are filled) and don't show anyone else what you are drawing
- 3) When they are finished ask them to compare pictures in the large group.
- 4) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions:
  - What is the energy that the picture shows?
  - How does this emotion feel inside?
  - What patterns do we see in the pictures? (colors, images, space used)
  - What words describe the inside feeling?
  - What are ways to help the feeling feel better if it is a painful emotion?

### FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

Make sure to focus on commonalties of the pictures. For example are many participants using red to show anger? Do we see lots of sunshine? Guns? Flowers? Blood? The point is that many of us really do share these emotions and reactions to these emotions.

## Activity Five: Role-Play Emotions

**AIM:** Use drawing to further explore painful emotions

**TIME:** 1.5 - 2 hours

**MATERIALS:** Examples of Resilience (Handout 5)

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain the aim of this activity. Divide participants into three groups. Refer back to Aggression, Withdrawal, and Regression from Activity 3.

- 1) Ask the groups to each design a role-play that shows a child 'acting out' a painful emotion with the following directions:
  - Show ways you think a teacher/parent can help the child reinforce resilience
  - Remember to model positive listening
  - Concentrate on speaking from your center (focusing center)
- 2) Bring the groups back together and ask them to share their results.



- 3) After each role play facilitate a group discussion using these questions:
  - What is being illustrated? Can aggression, withdrawal, or regression be identified?
  - How does the role-play relate to resilience?
  - How did the adult in the role-play model positive listening?
  - How might this be used in a teacher-training module?

## **Activity Six: Emotional Walls**

**AIM:** Demonstrate value of emotional walls

**TIME:** 20 minutes

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Explain the aim of this activity. To learn to balance between helping children talk when they need to talk about emotions and understanding when they should be allowed to be silent.

- 1) Draw a picture of a fortified castle with no door or draw bridge (i.e. no way in or out) on a flip chart at the front of the room (large group activity).
- 2) Facilitate a discussion using the following questions:
  - What do you see in this picture?
  - What does it mean?
  - What does this symbolize with regard to psychosocial wellness?
  - What is missing?

### **FACILITATOR'S NOTE:**

During this activity emphasize that walls are for safety, but walls need doors. Focus on the importance of helping children feel safe with their emotions and allowing them to wait until they are ready to talk, rather than forcing the children to talk about painful memories when they may not be ready.

It is important to maintain the walls around children's emotions. You may want to conclude with a discussion of the way the body tries to protect the emotional health of a person. Here a fort is used to illustrate the concept. A healthy person has strong walls that protect them and a door in the wall, in the control of the individual, which allows people to enter if the individual so desires. But the door can also be closed when the individual does not feel safe.

## **REFLECTIONS**

The participants all admitted that they were afraid of what a workshop would be like that covered painful emotions. Because they came to such painful feelings and imagery with what were more positive models, they expected to be in pain in this workshop. In fact, the fear of the pain was more painful than the workshop itself.

## SESSION TWO

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In this  
session  
we will

- ✓ Improve understanding of positive listening
- ✓ Establish definitions of trauma

In session two of workshop three after practicing again positive listening, resilience is reinforced as a coping mechanism for emotional trauma. Trauma can be the immediate emotional reaction to a very painful event; painful as described by the child and not necessarily by adults. It is important that teachers and parents be aware of the effects of emotional trauma on children. There are many ways parents and teachers can help children in non-clinical ways by supporting resilience.

### Activity One: Review Listening

**AIM:** Analyze and review positive listening skills

**TIME:** 45 minutes

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Explain the aim of this activity and facilitate the following group discussion.

Have a participant volunteer to write the questions and answers on a flip chart in the front of the room.

- 1) Review the Guidelines for Modeling Good Listening Skills with the participants and ask them to come up with examples.
- 2) Ask the group to brainstorm around the question 'What do you do when you hear a problem? Possible points for discussion:
  - Try to explain everything?
  - Try to solve the problem?
  - Try to make everything OK?
  - Try to just listen with your inner place?
  - Review with the group that how we listen becomes a habit and we need to listen in different ways, based on why we are listening
- 3) Divide the participants into two groups, ask them to model positive listening.
  - Remember to say back the important or emotional parts
  - Try to use a couple of approaches from the handout at a time
  - After each role-play ask your partner how it felt and to provide you with feedback for improvement
  - Make sure you are using non-verbal communication signals
- 4) Bring the groups back together and ask them to share some of their results.

- 5) Facilitate a group discussion about what has been learned from this activity based on the following questions:
- What are you illustrating?
  - How did it feel to be the listener?
  - How did it feel to be listened to?
  - How do the guidelines fit into Afghan culture?

## **Activity Two: Experience Listening**

**AIM:** Examine how you listen, and are listened to

**TIME:** 20 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Key behavioral patterns of children that have experienced trauma (Handout 13)

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Explain the aim of this activity and facilitate large group discussion around the following questions.

- Do you know what it feels like to be listened to?
- Do you have anyone in your life that really listens to you?
- Describe how he/she listens to you that lets you feel heard.
- How do you feel when you are not listened to?
- How do you listen to others?

## **Activity Three: Talking About Trauma**

**AIM:** Review trauma

**TIME:** 30 minutes

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Explain the aim of this activity.

- 1) Ask participants what trauma means to them.
- 2) Review definition of trauma.
- 3) Review key behavioral patterns of children who have experienced trauma.
- 4) Facilitate a group discussion based on the following questions:
  - How are these related to aggression, withdrawal, and regression?
  - What are common Afghan children's reactions?
  - Are there any examples?

### **FACILITATOR'S NOTE**

Stress that the questions refer to changes in behavior. For example if a child was always combative and never wanted to help and suddenly is helpful - this is a sign that something has happen - even though the behavior could be seen as a sign of resilience and positive by the entire community.

## Handout 13

### Key Behavioral Indicators of Children that have Experienced Trauma

#### **Questions to ask yourself**

- ❖ Does the child cry easily? -- yes
- ❖ Does the child get easily angry? -- yes
- ❖ Is the child jumpy? -- yes
- ❖ Is the child helpful toward other children? -- no
- ❖ Does the child take the lead in initiating other activities? -- no
- ❖ Does the child feel sad or unhappy? -- yes
- ❖ Does the child get easily irritable? -- yes
- ❖ Is the child frightened that something bad will happen to him/her? -- yes
- ❖ Does the child think/talk often about the event? -- yes

## **Activity Four: Listening with Kindness**

**AIM:** Explore listening with kindness

**TIME:** 20 minutes

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Explain the aim of this activity. Break participants into small groups.

- 1) On a flip-chart make two columns: One labeled 'What helps you feel listened to?', and the other one 'What doesn't help you?'.
- 2) Ask them to discuss the following questions:
  - What does not help you feel listened to when feeling a painful emotion?
  - What does help you feel listened to when feeling a painful emotion?
  - Make sure to include verbal and non-verbal responses.
- 3) Bring groups back together to share their responses.
- 4) Facilitate a group discussion on what was learned in the activity using the following questions:
  - How can this be applied in the classroom?
  - Why is this activity called listening with kindness?

*At the end of the day, ask participants to plan for third day - they are the facilitators for the wrap-up and planning session.*

## Participant responses to: Experiencing Listening

### ***What helps you feel listened to?***

- ❖ Hearing back important points of my story
- ❖ Shaking head yes
- ❖ Empathetic facial expressions
- ❖ Looked straight at me
- ❖ Repeated what I said
- ❖ Asked questions to encourage me
- ❖ Body language
- ❖ Paying attention

### ***What doesn't help?***

- ❖ Compare your story with mine
- ❖ Try to help
- ❖ Tell stories of others
- ❖ Try to solve everything

## REFLECTIONS

Practicing listening proved critical and participants showed improvement each time they practiced. They were able to reflect on both professional and personal experiences and become more aware of their reactions to and behavior around listening.

One question that came up throughout the workshops was 'how do we know if a child is in trouble?' Sharing information on what is trauma was extremely helpful and a number of the participants realized that their own children needed some more listening to and support because of experiencing some traumatic event.

## SESSION THREE

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In this session we will

- ✓ Wrap-up
- ✓ Planning what is next

Day three gives participants a chance to wind down and do some final reflecting. The day should be planned and facilitated by the participants.

### Activity One: Review

**AIM:** Review lessons learned

**TIME:** 2 hours

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Explain the aim of this activity.

- 1) Facilitate a group discussion on lessons learned from the first workshop using the following questions:
  - What were they key terms learned?
  - Which activities or approaches were successful?
  - Which activities or approaches were not successful?
  - What was missing?
- 2) Facilitate a group discussion on lessons learned from the second workshop using the same questions as in step one above:
- 3) Facilitate a group discussion on lessons learned from the thrid workshop using the same questions as in step one above:

### Activity Two: What Next?

**AIM:** Review lessons learned

**TIME:** 1 hour

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

- 1) Building on the discussion of what worked, brainstorm and come up with a list of activities that could be adapted and used with teachers to help build their knowledge and skills around psychosocial support for school children
- 2) Map out a time-line for pilot testing some of the activities giving time to come back together, share feedback, and reflect.
- 3) Choose a diverse group of teachers to test the activities with; for example urban vs. rural, primary vs. secondary, male vs. female, home school vs formal school.

# Section 3

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The workshops condensed and simplified the theoretical components of psychosocial wellness for this very busy staff. They needed the focus of the workshop to be on the practical application of theory to meet the needs of IRC supported teachers. Participants felt it was important to do a series of small workshops, rather than one long one. This gave them an opportunity to really learn the material and put it into practice before new information was given. They also noted that the method of giving a theoretical model, followed by an exercise that helped them look at how each theory applied to local culture was critical to their ability to take the final step toward applying the theory in teacher training activities.

Also of great importance was the need to recognize the psychological burden that each of the teacher trainers are carrying, and to incorporate some self-help materials for them as well as the teachers. One morning during the workshop illustrated this point, as the work elicited very emotional responses from participants. Memories of the war and atrocities were vividly recalled by the group and shared. Tears flowed. Yet, the expression of these emotions and each person sharing their experiences led to a deeper connection within the group as each realized they were not alone. They were able to listen to each other and hold that space as another talked. Everyone was moved by the experience. Any program on psychosocial well-being needs to include such opportunities for talking about emotional issues in the group as they arise.

Afghans think and talk in stories and metaphors, making the use of symbolic materials easier in the context of the workshop. Poetry, art and drama play into this cultural style and enhance the learning process of the activities in which they are used. Visualization, another use of imagery, is also incorporated with ease, although most Afghans are shy the first time they try it. The participants express rich metaphors after each visualization activity.

In the end, participants felt their ability to help their teachers was enhanced and that the activities were immediately applicable to their personal lives and to their work. They worked diligently on teacher training modules, which were reviewed by the consultant for accuracy in both content and technique. In April a workshop, led by the FEP trainers, was held for all FEP staff as a way to improve training materials and gain feedback on the psychosocial approach. Response was very positive and all trainers felt the material would help their teachers deal with children who face psychosocial challenges. But, even more important, they felt the material would help teachers be better teachers for all their students, as they would have a greater understanding of what is emotionally normal for children in their classes and in their homes.

The fundamental basis of the psychosocial training is the use of resilience as a coping mechanism. Other issues that help support resilience and are common threads throughout the workshops include cultural positioning, developmental aspects of Afghan children and childhood in the refugee context, and Afghan stress reactions.

Therefore the following components are recommended for psychosocial training:

- ☒ Theory, followed by application and practical tasks;
- ☒ Root every activity in local culture and normative behavior
- ☒ Use resilience as the base/ framework from which to strengthen coping abilities
- ☒ Short training sessions (3-4 days) followed by a break of several weeks to allow staff to assimilate the materials and practice what they have learned;
- ☒ Opportunities for processing emotional issues by refugee or aid staff attending the workshop; and
- ☒ Connecting what is learned in the workshops to how it improves children's availability to learning.

## **RESULTS OBSERVED**

In November 2002, a team of FEP trainers led by a consultant Nini Kopps-Adamson carried out an initial classroom observation assessment to determine initial impact in the classroom environment of teachers who have received psychosocial training in comparison to those who have not. The methodology included questionnaires and interviews with teachers, students, principals and parents as well as classroom observations.

The assessment concluded that when comparing 4 schools visited, the attitude of the teachers who received the psychosocial training had changed substantially. Their way of teaching was more relaxed, they exhibited patience, were friendly, helpful and stimulating. They also expressed that they felt happier, more flexible, and much more confident and they are now able to find out about the students' problems and to help resolve many of them. They are much more focused on the students compared to in the past.

Moreover, this process has helped them to reconfirm that the students are the center of the learning process and not the teacher. Teachers said that when they feel that their students are stressed or tired they do some exercises in resiliency, for example in a drawing exercise many students drew themselves in crying situations. The 'scale of emotion' exercise was very effective in that students realized that happiness in their life prevailed over sadness.

Another major finding is in connection to pedagogical technique. It was observed that the way of teaching in the schools where teachers have attended psychosocial training has changed significantly.



The teachers involve the students much more in their lessons by asking better informed questions, (even some 'open' questions), they use role-playing, group work drawing and puppet shows to make their lessons interesting.

The assessment also found that teachers are much more focused on students' emotional needs, they realize now that a lot of negative behavior is often related to problems at home and they try to gain the trust of the students in order to discuss the problem and to resolve them together. However, economical problems are very difficult to solve. Nonetheless, because of improved relationships between teacher and students, students are starting to show more interest in the lessons, are doing their homework more, and their behavior has improved.

Headmasters and principals saw a change as well. They think the knowledge and skills teachers have gained has positive effects and has contributed to a more peaceful atmosphere in their schools. They observe a change in behavior and style of teaching, especially from the weaker teachers and the teachers who couldn't address student's emotional needs in the classroom. They also observe that due to this there is also an increase in student's interest in the lessons.

Students are happy with the change of attitude of the teachers. They feel they can trust them when they share their problems and they get help.

## LESSONS LEARNED

This is just the beginning of a process. We learned that by helping teachers to better understand their own emotions and that of their students, they became better teachers, more comfortable with teaching. We also realize this is a process that has just started and which needs attention and on-going efforts on the part of trainers and teachers to build on and evolve. We understand that we have only touched the tip of the iceberg.

The major lessons learned from this process include:

- ✿ More research and learning is needed focusing on addressing children's psychosocial needs in the classroom and in the family.
- ✿ Programs designed to address Afghan children's psychosocial needs must be rooted in cultural attitudes and should be age appropriate.
- ✿ Afghan teachers and aid workers in the refugee setting need more support to build their skills in mental health and psychosocial support.
- ✿ There is a need to understand various pressures children face based solely on gender (i.e. as children move into adolescence, esp. girls).
- ✿ It is essential to integrate psychosocial interventions into basic pedagogical training for teachers.
- ✿ As a society with strong oral traditions, Afghans enjoy learning through story telling, dramas, art and poetry.

## GLOSSARY

**Aggression** - (aggressive behavior) is an unplanned spontaneous expression of anger most frequently triggered by stressful life events or personal frustrations. Aggressive behavior is usually the result of a sudden impulse breakthrough or a loss of self-control skills. Often, students are not aware of their aggressive behavior until they hear themselves shout, swear, run out of a room or hit someone. After an aggressive outburst, some students feel guilty about their behavior and redirect their anger into self-punishment. Other students find ways to rationalizing or justifying their aggressive behavior by saying "He started it," or "I was only defending myself." Students' aggression is the most frequent expression of anger and is the easiest to modify and prevent.

**Experiential learning** - refers to *knowledge, skills, and/or abilities attained through observation, simulation, and/or participation that provides depth and meaning to learning by engaging the mind and/or body through activity, reflection, and application* (Craig 1997)<sup>10</sup>. Ultimately it provides for affective and behavioral, as well as cognitive learning. Whether in the classroom, field of occupation, or the great outdoors, experiential learning is a less abstract learning tool that allows the participant to test theory while demanding that the learner articulate their own questions and seek their own answers.

**Focusing** - developed by Eugene T. Gendlin of University of Chicago is a technique of self-therapy that teaches one to identify how personal problems concretely exist in one's body, which allows them to change. Importantly for the psychological safety of the individual, it requires no disclosure of private information to anyone.

**Psychosocial** - refers to the dynamic relationship between psychological and social effects on the individual each continually influencing the other. Psychological effects are those which affect different levels of functioning including cognitive (perceptions and memory as a basis for thoughts and learning), affective (emotions), and behavioral. Social effects pertain to altered relationships, family and community networks, and economic status. In situations of armed conflict, these effects are due to death, separation and other losses, experiencing or witnessing physical violence, family and community breakdown, damaged human values and practices, and destruction of environment, including facilities and services.

**Regression** - is a frequent indication that children are stressed. The two most frequent indicators that children are stressed are change in behaviors and regression of behaviors. Children under stress change their behavior and react by doing things that are not in keeping with their usual style. Behaviors seen in earlier phases of development, such as thumb sucking and regression in toilet habits may reappear.

**Resilience** - refers to the ability of human beings to cope positively with adversity and the ability to bounce back from stress and crisis.

**Rumi** - (Jalaludin Balkhi) was a philosopher and mystic of Islam born 1207 in Balkh, now part of modern day Afghanistan. His doctrine advocates unlimited tolerance, positive reasoning, goodness, charity and awareness through love. To him all religions are more or less truth.

Looking with the same eye on Muslim, Jew and Christian alike, his peaceful and tolerant teaching has appealed to people of all sects and creeds.

**Sufism** - is generally understood by scholars and Sufis to be the inner, mystical, or psycho-spiritual dimension of Islam. Today, however, many Muslims and non-Muslims believe that Sufism is outside the sphere of Islam. Nevertheless, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the foremost scholars of Islam contends that Sufism is simply the name for the inner or esoteric dimension of Islam.

**Wellness** - is an active, lifelong process of becoming aware of choices and making decisions toward a more balanced and fulfilling life. Wellness involves choices about our lives and our priorities that determine our lifestyles.

**Withdrawal** - is a defense mechanism also referred to as isolation. It is marked by separation and compartmentalized thinking; separating the appropriate feelings from the actual event. An example is when one recalls of an emotional event in detail, but feel no emotion about it.

## RESOURCES

The following references are useful for those who want to read more about some of the major issues covered in this guide including: resilience, children and war, communication, education for Afghans,

A Guide to Promoting Resilience in Children: Strengthening the Human Spirit.

Author: E. Groberg

Source: Bernard van Leer Foundation, Den Hag, 1995

Against All Odds: Surviving the War on Adolescents

Source: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, October 2001

Children - Not Soldiers: Guidelines for Working with Child Soldiers and Children Associated with Fighting Forces

Authors: Isobel McConnand and Sarah Uppard

Source: Save the Children Fund (SCF), December 2001

Communicating with Children: Helping Children in Distress. Development Manual 2

Author: N. Richman

Source: Save the Children, 1993

Education and Afghan Society in the Twentieth Century

Author: Saif R. Samady

Source: UNESCO, November 2001  
Helping Children Cope with the Stresses of War:  
A Manual for Teachers.

Author: M. Macksood

Source: UNICEF

Helping Children Outgrow War

Authors: Miller and F. Affolter

Source: USAID, 2002

The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: International Conference on War-Affected Children

Authors: Graça Machel

Source: UNICEF, September 2000

Lost Chances: The Changing Situation of Children in Afghanistan, 1999-2000

Source: Global Movement for Children, June 2001

Managing the Stress of Humanitarian Emergencies

Source: UNHCR, July 2001

Mental Health in Emergencies: Mental and Social Aspects of Health of Populations Exposed to Extreme Stressors

Source: World Health Organization (WHO), January 2003

No Place to be a Child: Growing up in a War Zone

Authors: J. Garbarino, K. Kostelny, & N. Dubrow

Source: Lexington Books, Lexington, MA, 1991

The Psychological Health of Relief Workers: Some Practical Suggestions

Author: Peter Salama

Source: Concern, January 1999

Psychosocial Wellness of Refugees

Author: Frederick L. Ahearn, Jr.

Source: Berghahn Books, 2000

Rapid Assessment Procedures: Addressing the Perceived Needs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Through Participatory Learning and Action

Authors: William M. Weiss, Paul Bolton and Anita V. Shankar

Source: Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, Center for Refugee and Disaster Studies, September 2000

Review of the Former Soviet Embassy Compound IDP Camp: Psychosocial Support Activities. Author: L. Arnston

Source: Save the Children, US/ UNICEF Afghanistan, 2001

Untapped Potential: Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict

Source: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, January 2000

Training to Help Traumatized Populations

Author(s): Judy Barsalou

Source: US Institute of Peace, December 2001

What do we need to know to understand children in war and community violence?

Author: J. Garbarino & K. Kostelny

Source: In R. J. Apfel & B. Simon (Eds.), *Minifields in their hearts: The mental health of children in war and communal violence* (pp. 33-51). New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> International Rescue Committee, *Psychosocial Guidelines and Principles*, New York, November 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Patricia Omidian, 'Aid Workers in Afghanistan,' *The Lancet*, December 2001.

<sup>3</sup>University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Management Co-operative Education  
<http://people.uleth.ca/~craisj/whatis.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Eugene T. Gendlin, *Focusing*, Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1982.

<sup>5</sup> Sufism is generally understood by scholars and Sufis to be the inner, mystical, or psycho-spiritual dimension of Islam. Today, however, many Muslims and non-Muslims believe that Sufism is outside the sphere of Islam. Nevertheless, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the foremost scholars of Islam, in his article [The Interior Life in Islam](#) contends that Sufism is simply the name for the inner or esoteric dimension of Islam. Dr. Alan Godlas, *Sufism's Many Paths*, University of Georgia.

<sup>6</sup> Mullah Nasrudin is a favorite character in stories throughout all of the Middle East. Children in Afghanistan hear Mullah Nasrudin stories growing up. Many of the stories teach a lesson while other just tell a funny story.

<sup>7</sup> Ann Weiser Cornell, *The Power of Focusing: A Practical Guide to Emotional Self-Healing*, New Harbinger, 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Carl Smith, *How Can Parents Model Good Listening Skills*, Fall 1992,  
[http://www.indiana.edu/~eric\\_rec/](http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/).

<sup>9</sup>Denise Chapman Weston and Mark S. Weston, *Playwise: 365 Fun-filled Activities for Building Character, Conscience, and Emotional Intelligence in Children*, New York: Tarcher/Putnam Books, 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Zimmerman *Encyclopedia of the Self* 2002,  
<http://www.selfknowledge.com/34090.htm> .

## NOTES



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