

# **Supporting Volunteer Resiliency Facilitator Workbook**

**July 2006**



*1961-2006: a legacy of service at home and abroad*

July 7, 2006

Dear Reader,

Welcome to this draft version of the *Facilitator's Workbook for Supporting Volunteer Resiliency*. It is our sincere hope that this training will benefit all your staff by helping them with the important task of Volunteer support.

Sincerely,

Claudia Kuric  
EMA Program and Training Advisor

Craig Hutton  
EMA Program and Training Specialist

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## Introduction

*Supporting Volunteer Resiliency* is a Peace Corps **staff training** that provides curricula in the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to effectively support Volunteers. The goals of this training are

- To introduce staff to a Volunteer support coaching model that promotes Volunteer problem solving;
- To build staff KSAs in the areas of listening, understanding, setting boundaries, giving feedback and problem solving; and
- To raise participants' awareness of the post systems necessary to provide effective Volunteer support.

For training to build Volunteer resiliency, please see the Peace Corps' *Volunteer Resiliency Training Toolkit* [ICE No.T0138K]. The *Volunteer Resiliency Training Toolkit* provides training sessions for Peace Corps **Volunteers**. These sessions allow exploration of Volunteer attitudes toward risk-taking; their comfort with peer pressure and decision-making; and their ability to identify healthy self-care strategies while under stress.

### ***Background: Why Train Volunteer Support?***

Several factors contribute to the need for providing appropriate support to Peace Corps Volunteers.

- Peace Corps service occurs in a high stress environment due in large part to multiple disconnects (PCVs usually experience change and loss on several levels, such as job, school, family, friends, community, culture, and place of worship).
- Cross-cultural understanding and personal adaptation are by definition stressful.
- Chronic stress may result in “moods” of guilt/anger and feelings of aloneness and result in high risk behaviors.
- Human connection is a “solution” for calming unfamiliar stressful states.
- In an emotionally charged environment, the need for connection or belonging may override safety concerns about inappropriate relationships.
- Volunteer adjustment is a matter of personal connection and community integration.
- Volunteer support and adjustment are based on building authentic relationships.

Quality Volunteer support has been a cornerstone of the Peace Corps since its inception. As the agency adapts to changes in the development arena in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it must also adapt its means of providing Volunteer support. In the fall of 2005, several offices in the agency sought a solution to the high rate of turnover and burnout in Volunteers working in high stress situations. The questions that these offices were asking were: How do we support Volunteers working in high stress communities? What tools and skills do

Volunteers need in order to be resilient and effective while providing service to Peace Corps host country partners?

The agency's Volunteer Resilience Group conducted a survey of Peace Corps field staff and the results of the survey were compiled and commonalities identified.<sup>1</sup> The group subsequently recommended the following strategies to address needs specific to Volunteers:

- Offer staff, including host country nationals, training in empathetic listening to enhance responsiveness;
- Strengthen coping skills for Volunteers; and
- Strengthen Volunteer peer support networks.

The Peace Corps acknowledges not only the need for continual reinforcement of Volunteer support; it also recognizes the crucial role of its field staff in providing that support. It is hoped this curriculum will be a helpful resource for training staff in how to sustain resilient Volunteers.

### ***Developing This Training***

In true Peace Corps fashion, the *Supporting Volunteer Resiliency* curriculum originated from several sources. During the EMA PTO Conference in fall 2005, the EMA PTOs participated in a design team session that developed the original content outline for this training. The training was created by a PC/Washington design team (Claudia Kuric, Stephen Moles, Catherine Kling and Craig Hutton) who combined the PTOs' content outline with the team's own ideas and many other Peace Corps resources. A first draft of the curriculum was delivered to, and critiqued by, teams of EMA PTOs and local program and training staff during the spring of 2006.

The valuable sources for the content of this training include:

- Volunteer Support Training designed by the Leadership Academy of the Center
- Volunteer Support curricula created by the Office of Special Services
- Overseas Staff Development Modules designed by the Center
- Conversations with Jon Sanders, Mykell Winterowd, and Bob Kirkhorn
- "Care for the Caregivers" Training, Dr. Robert Macy
- The Peace Corps Manual
- OSS materials and handouts including "Drown Proofing" and "HIV/AIDS Caregiver Training"
- Survival Run DVD © Pyramid Media

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<sup>1</sup> This document, as well as data gathered from 56 countries across the three regions, and commonalities identified across three regions can be found on @Agency\_All/EMA/Volunteer Resilience Research.

- A multitude of Peace Corps and external publications including

*Assets in Community Development: A Guide to Working with Community Groups* by Wilson, O'Donnell and Tharp. Communication Skills

*Communicating in a Diverse Workplace: A Practical Guide to Successful Workplace Communication Techniques* by Lillian A. Kuga. Jossey-Bass. 1996. 100 pgs. [ICE No. T0900]

*Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook*. Peace Corps. 1997. 256 pp. [ICE No.T0910]

*Decisional Dialogues in a Cultural Context*. Paul B. Pedersen and Daniel Hernandez. Sage Publications. 1997. 138 pp. [ICE No.T0400]

*Intercultural Sourcebook: Cross-Cultural Training Methods*. Sandra M. Fowler and Monica G. Mumford. Intercultural Press. 1995 229 pp. [ICE No. T0900]

### ***Trainer Preparation: Conducting Supporting Volunteer Resilience Workshops***

Anyone considering conducting the sessions contained in this manual should read this section first.

#### **Are You Ready?**

As you prepare this staff training, be sure to reinforce with participants that work in Volunteer support may be unlike work that they have done in other areas. Do the same for yourself. While several of the workshop objectives focus on building specific staff KSAs and introducing a coaching model of Volunteer support, it is essential to also recognize and understand that very often when dealing with matters of Volunteer support, emotional issues are front and center.

No staff member, no matter how good, should jump into providing direct Volunteer support without first having reviewed the topics, strategies, and approach described in this training and in the *Volunteer Resiliency Training Toolkit*. This is not a commentary on someone's capabilities as a staff member. Rather, it is related to the person's ability to support those Volunteers who face difficult memories, loss, and/or are engaging in stress-reducing behavior that could be defined as counterproductive, risky, and culturally inappropriate.

Analyze your personality and your training style honestly. Due to the issues mentioned above, if you do not feel comfortable training without a script, discussing emotional issues, or conducting an interactive workshop with your peers, you may not be the best person to conduct these staff trainings. While this training manual is largely scripted, effective Volunteer support workshops should be driven by the participants. Facilitators need to react to the input of the participants and relate their comments and experiences to the learning points.

Attend a few Volunteer support workshops as a participant. If you are a current Peace Corps staff member, invite your peers and/or supervisors to discuss their experiences with effective Volunteer support. This will give you firsthand knowledge of how a workshop is facilitated, and it will provide you with some of the background information that you will need to orient the workshop. If you have never facilitated a Volunteer support workshop before, you should co-facilitate with a more experienced trainer the first few sessions.

### **Questions to Ask Yourself as You Prepare**

Almost all Peace Corps staff has some experience with Volunteer support. Before leading these sessions, think about your own experiences supporting Volunteers – and those of your peers. Now, change your thoughts slightly and instead of thinking about supporting Volunteers in times of stress, think about how you support yourself. Understanding your own support mechanisms will help you when called on to support Volunteers. Review these questions from the *Volunteer Resiliency Training Toolkit* and consider sharing them with staff participants.

- What are my coping mechanisms for dealing with unusually stressful situations? Am I able to use a variety of methods to relieve stress?
- Have I worked in situations where stress continually piled up and seeking appropriate outlets was critical to my personal health as well as work performance? How well did I deal with the situations?
- How have I dealt with people telling me their problems?
- How have I provided support for friends, colleagues, or persons I supervise who are dealing with stress, grief and loss?
- How well have I dealt with situations where I need to advise someone that his or her behavior is risky or counterproductive?
- Are there areas in which I feel my knowledge is weak?
- How do I avoid interjecting my own personal biases and fears into my facilitation?

Until you can answer these questions honestly and acknowledge your own resiliency mechanisms, biases and cultural filters, it will be very difficult to effectively support Volunteers – and guide your peers in doing the same. Reflect on and use your own experience while facilitating this workshop. Speak from what you know and draw on the participants to share and discuss what they have seen.

### ***Facilitation and Training***

A Volunteer support leader serves as a facilitator as opposed to a traditional trainer. Traditional trainers tend to impart specific knowledge or skills and are often viewed as experts. Facilitators, on the other hand, lead exercises and discussions to help make sure that certain content or ideas are covered. While a facilitator may share new information,

the facilitator's primary role is to ask questions that make the participants look at subjects in a new way by provoking discussion and the sharing of experiences. Typically, a facilitator will not stand up and lecture to a group. The sessions presented here provide plenty of opportunity for the facilitator to ask the audience for input.

Facilitators help the participants share and process thoughts, experiences, and feelings. Ultimately, much of the learning will come from participant interaction and not lectures. It is the facilitator's job to listen and pull out facts and feelings as well as the unasked questions while maintaining neutrality.

### **The Roles of a Facilitator**

- Set norms for behavior and participation with the group's input.
- Establish and maintain a supportive group atmosphere.
- Create a safe environment for sharing and exploring ideas and feelings even if they are contradictory.
- Avoid sustained one-on-one individual interaction.
- Clarify points of view and points of agreement and disagreement.
- Observe and act on nonverbal behaviors.
- In difficult situations, handle the problem before it gets out of hand and without embarrassing people.
- Approach conflict in a firm, positive, and constructive way.
- Encourage participation from everyone.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Encourage the group to ask questions of each other.
- Provide summaries, conclusions, and continuity throughout the course of the workshop.
- Relate comments and anecdotes to learning points.

In this instance, the role of the facilitator will be to provoke and promote discussion of the ways in which Peace Corps staff can support Volunteers and help Volunteers learn to support themselves. Although these sessions include some skills training in specific knowledge areas, the main role of the facilitator will be to structure a supportive environment for exchange, discussion, and mutual peer support.

### ***Co-Facilitation***

In the pilot tests of these modules, it was evident that this training is best facilitated by two people—one American staff and one host country national staff. This is important due to the cross-cultural aspects of communication and coaching, and each will be able to offer unique perspectives on Volunteer support. Co-facilitation means that neither



individual is dominant. They work together and divide the material appropriately. Each supports the other by taking notes, catching raised hands that the other may not see, adding a different perspective when appropriate, and serving as a back-up. The use of two facilitators is especially encouraged if the workshop has more than 20 participants.

### **Setting Ground Rules**

Volunteer support can deal with highly personal and emotional issues. Staff needs to be able to create a safe environment so that Volunteers can share their feelings and experiences. This type of environment should be replicated in the staff training by setting group norms that will govern behavior during the sessions. To save time, write a few basic ground rules on a flip chart and post for all to see. Review each one at the start of the workshop and ask for other rules the group would like to add. After reading them and asking for other suggestions, ask for group agreement to the ground rules listed. Let them know that anyone can respectfully remind the group of the ground rules during the training session. You may wish to do this yourself at some point to show that it really is acceptable.

One ground rule that must be followed is that:

- While we will be talking about and possibly acting out Volunteer support issues, it is important not to ridicule Volunteers nor violate Volunteer confidentiality.

Choose a few of the following commonly used ground rules to write on a flipchart.

- Be open to new ideas.
- Everyone participates actively.
- It's OK to express feelings.
- Maintain confidentiality (what we say here does not leave the room).
- Assume that others have good intentions.
- If something upsets you, say so.
- Put relationships first and being right second.

### ***Techniques and Tools***

All trainers have a bag of tools and techniques to successfully manage training sessions. Volunteer support training requires special attention in the following areas.

#### **Establishing Rapport**

Create a positive and constructive relationship so that all participants feel comfortable. Start by considering your room setup carefully. Arrange chairs in a circle so that all participants are face to face and the facilitator can be part of the circle, thereby encouraging dialogue.

## **Difficult Questions**

At times, difficult questions will be asked that have no easy answers. It is acceptable for facilitators to admit not knowing all the answers. Take these opportunities to engage the group in brainstorming possible answers. First, paraphrase the question so that the question is understood. Ask the group, “What do you think about that?” Summarize responses and remind the group that there are no easy answers. Add questions to further the discussion or steer it in a new direction. Asking for the group’s input is a great way to deal with biased, destructive comments because it gets the group to take responsibility for its learning and produces an opportunity to practice speaking up against risky or unproductive behaviors.

## **Silence**

Silence can be an effective tool for any facilitator. However, many people are uncomfortable with silence in a group. Don’t worry if a group is slow to respond. Silently count to 10 or 15. Someone is likely to speak up. Also, remember that resilience training raises emotional topics and it may take time for participants to put feelings into words.

## **Asking Questions**

Asking questions is at the heart of facilitation and asking the right questions is an art. While there is no magic formula for sculpting a good question, try to provoke discussion by asking an open-ended question as opposed to one that simply requires a yes or no answer. Ask questions one at a time. Don’t forget to give people time to answer. If necessary, reword a question or give examples for clarity. Use follow-up questions to get participants to elaborate. Check for agreement. When charting information, use participants’ own words or ask permission to reword.

Some great ways to facilitate a discussion.

- Ask: “Are there any last comments before we move on?” (Before we break? Before lunch?)
- Notice what is not being said and ask questions that pull those issues out.
- Don’t be afraid to challenge the participants who are reluctant to consider new perspectives or ideas.
- Take general comments and bring them to the personal level and vice versa.
- Refer back to earlier comments and questions (jot them down to remind yourself).
- Draw parallels between comments.
- Invite feedback from specific individuals: “We haven’t heard from you in a while, John, what do you think?”
- Most importantly, give positive feedback.

## **Parking Lot**

During the course of a discussion, interesting but off-topic issues and questions often arise. Sometimes participants bring up issues that will be addressed in a different or later segment of the workshop. If this occurs, one solution is to post a piece of paper to “park” or write these questions and topics for later discussion. By using a parking lot, participants do not feel questions are being avoided or think that they or their concerns are unimportant. Review the list periodically, or at the end of the workshop, to see what was covered. For items that cannot be addressed, get participants’ ideas about resources, possible training, or other ideas.

## **Using Humor**

While these workshops address serious topics, it is okay to have fun! Injecting humor at the appropriate time can break tension. It can also encourage participation. If there is reluctance to answer a question and the silence continues, reminding the participants that, “This is the audience participation part of the day” or “Please, one at a time” can work wonders. Just remember that in a cross-cultural setting humor does not always translate. Be careful that humor is not at anyone’s expense.

## ***Using This Manual***

### **Design**

This manual contains information and exercises that can be put together to form workshops of varying lengths of time. Although many of the exercises can stand alone, they were designed to reinforce each other. In general, one session, at least, should be trained to take the participants from context and climate setting through building knowledge, applications, and integration.

### **Ending on a Positive Note**

While much of the day focuses on difficult topics and participants may respond differently than others, remind participants that they also share many similarities and that they should feel free to continue their discussions, learning, and support beyond the close of the training. All staff will eventually feel challenged in providing appropriate Volunteer support. This challenge is normal, and it is important to remember that just as we all work to support Volunteers, we must remember to support each other.

### **Manual Setup**

While much of each session is scripted, do not read verbatim from the lesson plans. Become familiar with each activity so you can set up, conduct, and debrief the activity in your own words. Tie the sessions together and make references to what was brought up in each. Although suggestions are made, it is up to you to pull it together.

### **Each Session Plan Has the Following:**

- A **session title**.
- An **overview** gives a brief description of the activity.

- The **time** listed is an approximation of how long each session takes. It will vary according to the size, composition, and participation level of those attending.
- The **objectives** tell what the exercise should accomplish.
- **Materials** listed include any supplies that are needed, as well as handouts and flipcharts to prepare.
- A **preparation** section is only included if a significant decision or preparation of materials is needed for the session.
- The **directions** include step-by-step instructions of how to set up and facilitate the activity followed by suggestions for debriefing the activity.
- **Facilitator's notes** appear in shaded boxes whenever there are specific hints and warnings about what to expect and also key learning points.
- Finally, there is room for **notes**, thoughts, and comments. This is a good place to make remarks about the timing of the session, or ideas on how it might work better in future workshops.

### ***Concluding Thoughts***

When planning and facilitating Volunteer support staff training, model the attitudes and behaviors participants should embrace. Accomplish this by creating an atmosphere that allows for the rich sharing of perspectives and experiences that are embodied in Peace Corps staff and Volunteers. Remember the main point of this workshop is to increase awareness, build skills, and begin an important dialogue on these issues that will continue long after the workshop.

# What is Volunteer Support?

## Overview

This session explores the meaning of volunteer support and the nuances of it related to the following questions:

- What are the major components of Volunteer support? For instance, “what does it look like”?
- How is Volunteer support like or unlike coaching as opposed to counseling?
- How is effective Volunteer support impacted by cultural differences?
- What insights or questions do we need to keep in mind during our training together?

There are two options for running this session depending on whether the DVD *Survival Run* is used as a training tool.

## Time

1 hour, 60 minutes (w/ DVD)

1 hour, 55 minutes (w/o DVD)

## Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the major components of Volunteer support; i.e.; “what does it look like”?
- Describe three ways that Volunteer support is like or unlike coaching as opposed to counseling.
- Identify at least three examples of how effective Volunteer support is impacted by cultural differences.
- List the commonly held insights or questions that need to be kept in mind during the training.

## Materials

There are handouts at the end of this section that could be used as part of the discussion, as background preparation for the facilitators, or as supplemental reading for the participants. These handouts are:

- *Handout A: Coaching vs. Counseling*
- *Handout B: A Coach Approach*
- *Handout C: Cultural Factors That Influence Volunteer Support*

This session has an optional DVD (*Survival Run*). Separate instructions are included below in the activity section if the DVD is incorporated.

## Preparation

Please note, there are two alternatives for the “Activity” section below. The first uses a DVD called *Survival Run* which is available from [www.pyramidmedia.com](http://www.pyramidmedia.com) or from the EMA Region PTA. The second is without the DVD. Separate guidelines and discussion questions are included for each.

If you choose to use the *Survival Run* DVD, ensure that you have the proper equipment and the training room is arranged to accommodate viewing of the DVD and subsequent debrief discussion. Review each of these possibilities and choose which makes the most sense for your workshop.

## Directions

### ***I. Introduction of SVR Curricula and This Session – 20 minutes***

Review agenda, goals, and objectives, and set ground rules.

The sessions that follow are designed to be conducted together and in order. There are six major sessions and two periods of time set aside for reflections and assessments.

#### *Step I: Review Goals of the SVR Curricula*

The goals of this training are:

- To introduce staff to a Volunteer support coaching model that promotes Volunteer problem solving.
- To build staff KSAs in the areas of listening, understanding, setting boundaries, giving feedback, and problem solving.
- To raise participants’ awareness of the post systems necessary to provide effective Volunteer support.

#### *Step II: Review the Agenda*

Refer participants to the agenda (on chart or on handout) and say a few words about each session.

#### *Step III: Set Ground Rules*

**Facilitator Note:** The facilitator should refer to the Introduction section on setting ground rules at the beginning of this document. Ground rules are important so that participants can share their feelings and experiences. Create this type of environment by setting group norms that will govern behavior during the sessions. To save time, write a few basic ground rules on a flip chart. Review each one at the start of the workshop and ask for other rules the group would like to add. After reading them and asking for other suggestions, ask the group to agree to the ground rules listed. Let them know that anyone can respectfully remind the group of the ground rules during the training session. You may wish to do this yourself at some point to show that it really is acceptable.

Choose a few of the following commonly used ground rules to write on a flipchart.

- It is important not to ridicule Volunteers nor violate Volunteer confidentiality.
- Be open to new ideas.
- Everyone participates actively.
- It's OK to express feelings.
- Maintain confidentiality (what we say here does not leave the room).
- Assume that others have good intentions.
- If something upsets you, say so.
- Put relationships first and being right second.

Explain to the group that these sessions were designed to strengthen their skills in Volunteer support and build awareness among participants of the challenges faced by many Volunteers and how we can HELP Volunteers to overcome these challenges.

## **II. Activity – 60 minutes (Option 1 – with Survival Run DVD)**

### *Step I:*

Explain that this session explores the meaning of Volunteer support and some nuances of it. We will be very active and have some quick, but deep conversations.

### *Step II: (20 minutes)*

Lead a facilitated discussion with the following questions:

- If you woke up on Friday and all of your PCVs were resilient, how would you know?
- What are the major aspects of Volunteer support that could help create this?

List these answers on a flipchart. As you are facilitating this and future sessions, this list of Volunteer support traits will be helpful to refer back to as the ideal you are intending to develop and promote.

### *Step III: (20 minutes)*

Show the *Survival Run* DVD. (12 minutes)

Facilitate a general debrief of the portion of the DVD that you have seen.

- What are your reactions to the DVD? What emotions did you experience?
- What did you see happen? Describe some moments that struck you and why.

### *Step IV: (20 minutes)*

Facilitate debrief of how Volunteer support is like/unlike *Survival Run*.

- How is this movie like or unlike volunteer support?
- In the context of Peace Corps, who is the blind runner like (PCV, staff, counterpart)? Who is the sighted runner like?
- How is a Volunteer's experience like/unlike the film?

- What term would you use to describe the relationship that the sighted runner has with the blind runner? (examples include: coach, guide, mentor, etc)

## **II. Activity – 55 minutes (Option 2 – without Survival Run DVD)**

### *Step I:*

Explain that this session explores the meaning of Volunteer support and some nuances of it. We will be very active and have some quick, but deep conversations.

### *Step II: (10 minutes)*

Lead a facilitated discussion in the large group with the following questions:

- If you woke up on Friday and all of your PCVs were resilient, how would you know?
- What are the major aspects of Volunteer support that could help create this?

### *Step III: (40 minutes)*

Allow 10 minutes for Individuals to read over the handouts on coaching and cultural considerations (*Handouts A, B, and C* found at the end of this session) and then in 2-3 small groups discuss the following:

- What are the major differences between coaching and counseling and which is the most appropriate approach to use in volunteer support?
- How might some of the cultural differences on your handout create difficulties when you offer support to volunteers?

After 20 minutes of discussion, then report out small groups and have a large group discussion for 10 minutes.

### *Step IV: (5 minutes)*

Ask the participants in the large group to identify a few insights or questions that they would like to keep in mind during our training together.

## **III. Discussion and Application – 35 minutes**

### *Step I: (20 minutes)*

Divide participants into small groups and ask them to reflect on and discuss– how culture might hinder support if you are supporting someone from another culture. (10 minutes)  
After group discussion, take time to report out to the larger group. (10 minutes)

### *Step II: (10 minutes)*

Ask the participants to return to the large group, and facilitate a brief discussion about which insights or questions do we need to keep in mind during our training together. (5 minutes)

### *Step III: Guided Imagery (5 minutes)*

You will NOT be REQUIRED to share the results of this exercise. We will use it to help inform the work we do together over the next few days. It may give you a challenge IF



you think the skills we are covering are too easy...it may help you to consider your own strengths and areas to work on more.

Get comfortable. Close your eyes if you like. Slow down your breathing. Remember all the times when a Volunteer had an issue that you **COULD** help them with (not something for the PCMO). Do not stop and analyze these moments, just let them go through your mind like a movie....(pause)

Now, remember the time when you had the **MOST difficulty** giving support to a one of those Volunteers (stay with issues that were appropriate for you).... **WHO** was involved? **THINK** of people both in the room and out of the room. **SEE** the place where you were talking. **HEAR** the words that were spoken. **DO NOT EDIT** now, just remember... remember **ALL** of your **FEELINGS**... remember how your body felt. Were you clenching your hands? Did you remember to breathe?

Now, focus on what made this interaction so difficult for you.... What challenged you about this situation? What did you learn about yourself?....(pause) In a few seconds, I will ask you to open your eyes and write some **QUICK** notes about this situation to help jog your memory later. They do not have to be well written or even in complete sentences. Just jot down some notes about who was involved, what the issue was and why it was difficult for you.

When you are done, go to break. You will have option of using this as a case study during our practice sessions. The choice is yours. Thank you.

**Notes:**

## Handout A

### Coaching vs. Counseling

- Coaching differs from counseling in that with counseling the focus is on the individual (the self) whereas with coaching the focus is on building effective relationships and sometimes making tough decisions. Counseling holds that there is some “problem” that needs to be fixed, that it has a personal locus and that working on the self will “fix” it. Therefore, some counselors may not be able to see the larger (organizational, managerial, cultural) issues at play due to their focus on the individual/“self”.
- “A key aspect of cross-cultural coaching (as opposed to domestic coaching) is that the one of our main goals is to get the Westerner to focus on others rather than themselves. The focus of our work is NOT the development of the self, but getting the manager to see the capacity and power of the GROUP of locals that they work with.” -- George Renwick, Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication, 2004
- To be successful as a coach you must demonstrate an attitude of respect for the client and their capacity to develop their own answers. This will not come across if you have been asked to do “remedial coaching” to fix a performance problem that is really better handled through a disciplinary or management intervention.
- Shift your thinking from “gap analysis” to “gift analysis.” Build on what the person already does well. Use this as a starting point.
- The success of most people overseas rests more on their ability to form productive relationships and not so much on their ability to “achieve results.” Learning to “manage the context” will lead to success, not better time management, stress management, etc. Context here means the person’s role, their scope of work (and problems they face), their position in the community or organization, as well as with outside players, and the quality and number of their LOCAL relationships. The coach’s role is to help the other person manage these, not to make them super-productive. Look for opportunities to manage the context in ways that has a positive, cascading impact on others in the organization.

## Handout B

# A Coach Approach

LISTEN...INQUIRE...ENDORSE...EMPOWER

### **What to Listen For or Watch For**

- Opportunities
- Accomplishments
- Motivation
- Challenges or Obstacles

### **Inquire To**

- Promote Possibility Thinking
- Increase Awareness of Options and Consequences
- Understand Assumptions
- Uncover Resources
- Identify Barriers to Progress
- Obtain Commitment for Action

### **What to Endorse**

- Initiative and Attitude
- Personal Development
- Accomplishments
- Teamwork and Collaboration
- Capabilities and Potential
- Learning

### **What to Empower**

- Ownership and Responsibility
- Productivity and Creativity
- Innovative Approaches
- Change and Learning
- Managed Risk Taking
- Self-Management

## Handout C

# Cultural Factors that Influence Volunteer Support

Below are some cultural differences in communication and worldviews that can influence how we are taught to see the world and how we are taught to support each other. Some cultures reflect the views in the left column more; others reflect the views in the right column more. The ways in which you support another person might vary depending on which column is more pronounced. Think about your own culture and how it compares with American culture. What are some differences? How might these impact your ability to give a Volunteer the type of support that they would like or that feels familiar to them?

<p><b>DIRECT COMMUNICATION</b> Getting or giving information is the goal of communication. Relying more on words and literal interpretations. Communication focuses first on the task and then on the relationship. Conflict is normal and accepted.</p>	<p><b>INDIRECT COMMUNICATION</b> Maintaining harmony and saving face are important when communicating. Relying less on words and literal interpretation and more on what is not said or on nonverbal cues. Communication focuses first on the relationship and then on the task. Conflict is normal and accepted.</p>
<p><b>DISPLAY EMOTIONS OPENLY</b> Display of emotions is considered normal and acceptable to show. Emotions such as joy, excitement, affection, anger and displeasure are acceptable to show in public.</p>	<p><b>MAINTAIN CALM AND COOL COMPOSURE</b> Public display of emotions is considered embarrassing, and improper. People who show emotions are criticized and often avoided. They may be considered weak or immature.</p>
<p><b>AUTONOMY</b> People are seen as independent. Individuals receive recognition and decision making is by majority rule. Loyalty from/to the organization is less; results are key.</p>	<p><b>TEAMWORK</b> People are seen as a part of a larger group or collective. Teamwork, cooperation, group recognition and loyalty to/from the organization are the norm. Decision making is by consensus.</p>
<p><b>FIXED TIME</b> People do things one at a time – they stand in line; they expect undivided attention. Interruptions are bad; schedules, deadlines are important. Late is bad; adherence to schedule is the goal.</p>	<p><b>FLEXIBLE TIME</b> People do many things at one time. People stand in line less. Divided attention is okay. Interruptions are just a part of life. Schedules and deadlines are considered a loose guide. Late is late, not bad.</p>
<p><b>FREE WILL</b> There are few givens in life, few things I cannot change and must accept. I can be/do whatever I want, if I make the effort. My happiness is up to me. Sadness is not normal. Human beings can mostly control what happens to them.</p>	<p><b>FATE</b> There are some things I have to live with; there may be limits to what I can do/be; both happiness and suffering are a normal part of life. Human beings are only sometimes in control of what happens to them.</p>
<p><b>PROGRESS IS INEVITABLE</b> Every problem has a solution. Change is usually for the better. Tradition is not always right. Optimism is best. Technology is often the answer. New is usually better.</p>	<p><b>PROGRESS IS NOT AUTOMATIC</b> Some problems cannot be solved. Change can be for the worse. Realism is best. Tradition is a good guide. Technology does not have all the answers. New is new, not necessarily better.</p>
<p><b>SELF IDENTIFICATION</b> Primary identification is with one's self. The self is the smallest unit of survival. Self-reliance, personal freedom, emotional distance from others are important. Protecting one's self guarantees well-being of others. Identity is a function of one's own achievements.</p>	<p><b>GROUP IDENTIFICATION</b> The smallest unit of survival is the primary group. Interdependence through looking after the group insures well-being of the individual. People need close affiliation with others. Too much freedom is scary. Identity is the function of group membership</p>

# Listening and Understanding

## Overview

This module begins with the introduction of a coaching model for Volunteer support. Through a series of small group exercises, the participants practice the skills of listening (verbal, non-verbal, and virtual), asking questions, paraphrasing, and empathy. At the end, an in-depth skills practice session provides an opportunity for the participants to get feedback on, and improve, the skills addressed during this session.

## Time

3 hours, 15 minutes

(Approximate time: depends on number of participants and how fast you complete the exercises)

## Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to

- Articulate the basic principles of effective Volunteer support in terms of a general approach and specifically what you can do before, during, and after meeting with a Volunteer.
- Illustrate the basics of Volunteer support through effective interactions, including
  - effective listening
  - posing questions
  - responding appropriately

## Materials

The following handouts will be referred to and distributed during this session:

- *Handout A: Steps for Supporting Volunteer Resiliency*
- *Handout B: Tools for Active Listening*
- *Handout C: A Good Paraphrase*
- *Handout D: Listener's Checklist*

Additionally, *Handout E: Non-Verbal Behavior* and *Handout F: Enhancing Natural Listening Skills* are optional resources that may be used as part of the group discussions, as background preparation for the facilitators, or as supplemental reading for the participants. Please review these handouts prior to the session to decide how you would like to use them.

## Preparation

There are several brief Volunteer scenarios in this module which need to be acted out by a person who plays a Volunteer. This “actor” should not be a participant or a real Volunteer. Decide which of the facilitators will be this actor beforehand and have them familiarize themselves with the substances of their mini-scenarios. These scenarios are noted as such in the text.

## Directions

### ***I. Introduction – 15 minutes***

Distribute *Handout A: Steps for Supporting Volunteer Resiliency*. We are going to be going through each of these steps and practicing these skills over the next two days. Today we will be focusing on the first two steps: listening and understanding.

Listening well is the first step to understanding so that you may be able to coach Volunteers. Remember the intent is to understand - not to fix. We will briefly review listening skills. These may seem basic but really listening well is a skill that can be improved no matter how much we already do it.

Ask:

- Why is listening so important?
- What happens when a person does not listen to us?

Think back to conversations you have had recently. How do we know when someone is listening to us? Possible answers:

- Body language says paying attention
- Setting is conducive to listening
- Verbal responses
- Listener relates to the speaker's own cultural context

How do we know when others aren't listening? Possible answers:

- Distractions, cell phones, interruptions
- Poor body language
- Doing other things while listening; too busy
- Jumping to solutions/trying to provide easy fix

Review the answers given to how we know someone is listening. Restate how these can be summarized into the following categories:

- Verbal Communication
- Non Verbal Communication
- Listener Readiness
- Environment for Listening

An important aspect of listening is being aware of both verbal and non-verbal communication. In addition, today a lot of our communication is “virtual”– through

email and cell phone text messaging. Many aspects of communication, particularly non-verbal and virtual communication behaviors, can have different meanings depending on the culture, gender and age of those communicating.

## **II. Activity – 90 minutes**

### *Step I: Speaker/Listener Practice (15 minutes)*

Let's spend a few minutes looking at how we listen. Break participants into dyads (try to have dyads with one American and one HCN). Explain you will take turns communicating where one person plays the role of a Volunteer talking and the other a staff person listening.

Participants decide who will be the speaker (Volunteer) and the listener (staff person). The Volunteer should talk for two minutes about a problem s/he is having – keeping the example simple. The listener should not speak but can give reactions non-verbally (ex. nodding head, motioning with hand).

Tell the participants when two minutes is over and then ask them to switch roles and talk for two more minutes.

Facilitate a debrief of the activity with the following questions:

- When you were talking, did you feel listened to?
- When you were listening, was it hard to show you were listening without words?
- Was it hard to listen for two minutes without talking?
- What non-verbal communication cues did you notice?
- Did you see anything that could be misinterpreted in your own culture?

### *Step II: Non-Verbal Communication (15 minutes)*

Let's look at non-verbal communication. Ask participants to call out any non-verbal cues that come to mind. These could include:

- Smiling when someone is talking
- Avoiding eye contact
- “Poker face” (showing no expression)
- Touching someone on the knee
- Standing very close
- Silence
- Hand gestures

Pick out a few of these cues, and ask what they mean in American culture and what they mean in the listener's culture.

Now, ask participants:

- If there is difference in non-verbal cues between cultures, how do you know you have it “right” when communicating with a Volunteer?
- What has helped you understand non-verbal communication when talking with someone from another culture?

Possible answers might be:

- Using your powers of observation
- Not assuming you understand until you have asked for confirmation

Point out that these non-verbal differences are mostly unconscious.

*Step III: Active Listening (60 minutes)*

Clarify that non-verbal communication is only one aspect of listening. Now, let’s talk about some tools of “active listening” – ways to show a listener that you are actively involved in the conversation.

Some tools of “active listening” are

- 1. Asking Questions**
- 2. Paraphrasing**
- 3. Responding With Empathy**

Facilitate the following activities to lead participants through understanding and experiencing these “active listening” tools.

**1. Asking Questions (20 minutes)**

Explain that there are two types of questions: **open** and **closed**. Open questions encourage conversation and exploration. They help the listener find out more about what is happening in the situation. Examples include:

“Tell me about. . . .?”

“How is that for you?”

“What is going on?”

“What do you mean by. . . .?”

Closed questions can be answered by “yes,” “no,” or one word. Closed questions discourage conversation. These usually start with: “did,” “do,” “are,” “is,” “have,” etc.

Ask the group for a couple of examples of each.

Ask when open-ended questions might be useful. Possible answers might be:

When you are beginning a conversation.



When you are helping the Volunteer to clarify or elaborate.

When you are problem-solving with the Volunteer.

Then, ask when close-ended questions might be useful: Possible answers might be:

When the Volunteer is very upset.

When the Volunteer is expressing vague feelings or complaints.

When you want to bring closure to the interaction by helping the Volunteer form a plan.

When you are dealing with a crisis situation.

Ask the participants to go back into their dyads and take five minutes to work together and come up with two examples of both open and closed questions for the following scenario. (This scenario works best when acted out by the “actor”.)

*Scenario: “I would like to talk to you about changing sites. I have been here for three months and have not made any real friends. I don’t think people like me here and perhaps I just got off to a bad start.”*

At the end of five minutes, ask some people to report out on their answers. Discuss:

- Was it easy to come up with these questions?
- When would you want to use open-ended questions?
- When would you want to use close-ended questions

Summarize: In the beginning, we want to encourage the person to talk about what is going on with them; therefore we need to use open questions. We need to be aware of “why” questions such as “Why do you think this is so?” These can put people in a defensive position. (Also, sometimes “why” does not move you to action, for example, why am I eating this fattening food? vs. take action to stop eating it).

## **2. Paraphrasing (20 minutes)**

Ask participants for a definition of paraphrasing. Read a short statement and ask for someone to paraphrase it. Explain that paraphrasing checks perceptions, clarifies, and reflects empathy. It lets the person know you heard him/her. Distribute *Handout C: A Good Paraphrase*. Briefly review the content.

In your dyad, work together to come up with a paraphrase for the following Volunteer scenario. (This scenario works best when acted out by the “actor”.)

*Scenario: “I can get up everyday and go to the job and do what I’m supposed to. But, I feel distracted and listless a lot, and I’m not exercising or playing the guitar much anymore, and I seem to be spending a lot of my time at night just*

*listening to music I brought from home. Even when other Volunteers ask me to go out with them on weekends, I seldom do. It's really not the way I am at home."*

**Facilitator Note:** As a facilitator, watch for, and point out, when participants are jumping to conclusions and interpreting. If they do this, remind them to be careful not to interpret. At this point they should only be reflecting back what they think they have heard.

Ask for paraphrases from the group. Ask the dyad to do this again with another Volunteer scenario. (This scenario works best when acted out by the “actor”.)

*Scenario: “I’ll bet I’ve written 15 letters since I’ve been at my site and as of yesterday, I’ve gotten only one letter back—and it was a short one. Before I left the States, everybody in the world promised they would write. And it’s so hard being out here in the middle of nowhere without any news from home. Maybe I shouldn’t be expecting so much from my family and friends but its tough getting up everyday and pushing on when you’re feeling out of it.”*

### **3. Responding With Empathy (20 minutes)**

Explain that empathy is another tool we use in effective listening. We suspend our own judgment for now and put ourselves in the other person’s situation. We focus on really hearing what the other person is saying. To provide Volunteer support, we need to listen both for how the Volunteer is feeling and for what he or she is saying. A helpful response is one that includes first hearing the feeling.

Ask the group for ways that we can show empathy? Answers might include:

- Reflecting feelings so that the person feels heard and understood.
- Being nonjudgmental.
- Listening for feeling and content.
- Confirming feelings: “Are you saying you feel \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_? (Be careful with “you feel that” or “you think that.” It reflects an opinion—not a feeling).
- Demonstrating non-verbal empathy in a culturally appropriate manner.

In your dyad, work on empathetic responses for the previous scenarios. Review a few examples of their responses.

Debrief:

- Do you have any concerns about showing empathy?
- What does showing empathy mean to you? In your culture?
- Can you show empathy without agreeing with what was said?

- What is the worst or best thing that could happen when showing empathy?

### **III. Discussion and Application (90 minutes)**

#### *Step I: Practice Session for Listening and Understanding (75 minutes)*

So far, we have reviewed several components of listening and understanding. For the next activity, have participants break into triads.

Tell the participants that we're going to spend the next hour or so practicing these behaviors. Form triads with people other than those with whom you worked in the dyad earlier. In your triad, you will each take turns being a Volunteer, a staff person/listener, and an outside observer to the interaction. You will have five minutes to talk about an issue the Volunteer has. When it is your turn to be a Volunteer, you will need to come up with a simple scenario of a Volunteer issue to discuss. This could be the incident you visualized during the last session, another incident from your own work experience, or an incident you make up. Present the situation as if you actually are the Volunteer.

When you are playing the staff member role, that is, yourself as a listener, remember at this point you are still not trying to fix anything. The outside observers are to stay quiet and watch the interaction, looking for nonverbal cues, open and closed questions, paraphrasing, and empathy.

Post on a flipchart:

<p><b>Observers, look for:</b> <b>Nonverbal cues</b> <b>Asking open and closed questions</b> <b>Paraphrasing</b> <b>Showing empathy</b></p>
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Give the participants five minutes to play out their first roles. At the end of five minutes, stop. You may want to briefly review the ground rules with the group before the feedback sessions.

For feedback sessions, first ask the participants to be silent for one minute and write down their observations. The staff person who was the listener should have the first opportunity to critique themselves and then get feedback from both the observer and the "Volunteer." (This should take 10 minutes total.) Facilitators should move around the room and help participants who are still unsure about the process.

Do round two of role play for five minutes (switching the roles) and then feedback (10 minutes). Then, do a third round of role play (switching the roles yet again). Conduct the final round of feedback (10 minutes). (Thus, every person in the triad will have had the opportunity to play a Volunteer once, a staff listener once, and an observer once.)

At the end of round three, ask the participants to fill out *Handout D: Listener's Checklist* by themselves so that they may think about the skills they are good at and ones they want to improve (5 minutes).

Once they have filled out the checklist, explain that they will now have a chance to practice the skills again using what they learned during the previous rounds. Each triad should practice the same scenario for each role for 5 minutes. There should not be any feedback after the practice. Allow five minutes for round one. End after 5 minutes, ask the participants to switch roles; give them another five minutes and then switch again for a final five minutes.

### *Step II (15 minutes)*

After participants have completed the rounds, bring the group back together and briefly discuss:

- What did you notice?
- Were there any surprises?
- When did they (the “Volunteer”) feel responded to?
- Did you want to solve the Volunteer’s problems? Did you want to tell them what to do?
- How did it feel to use these strategies in a purposeful way?
- Did you have any questions or observations about any of these tools?
- What are some of the cross-cultural issues we need to be aware of when doing this? What do you need to know about the local culture to use these techniques appropriately?

Be sure to emphasize the following points during the debrief of the practice session.

- When you reflect back what you heard it allows the Volunteer to feel heard and understood; it does not mean you agree with what s/he said. This also allows you to move on to coaching.
- It is natural to want to move immediately to problem-solving. It is important not to go there too fast – you need to listen and identify the problem first. This may feel uncomfortable and “unfinished.” That is okay.
- The ability to hold silence is important – don’t fill up the silence too soon. Watch for the non-verbal cues that tell you the person is engaged in self-exploration during the silence. It is about helping the person do what they need to do, not doing it for them.
- You don’t have to be exact in your understanding of what the Volunteer said, but you need to be in the “ballpark.”
- How do you know you have it right? Continue to point out how a person responds with non-verbal and verbal cues when the listener really understands.

**Facilitator Note:** These activities are meant to introduce the principles of Volunteer support that will provide a framework for the various activities that follow over the next two days. Presenting these skills can be messy. Stress to the participants that these are skills that go together and will be used in a process. All aspects will not be used all the time, but all of these skills are part of the process.

This session is a mixed series of explaining, demonstrating, and practice by participants, using handouts for emphasis. Practice and/or discussion starts and stops to introduce new concepts. Some concepts require immediate practice; others may be introduced but not immediately practiced. This can be adapted to the group.

When practice sessions are modeled first by facilitators, keep examples simple in the beginning exercises. The timing of these exercises is approximate. Use the group as a guide – move more quickly if a concept is quickly grasped and more slowly if not. Points that should be raised throughout the session:

- What is the support person's state of mind and how does this impact on the interaction?
- What should the support person be aware of in communicating, verbally and non-verbally, his/her state of mind?
- How does verbal and non-verbal communication impact the interaction?

**Notes:**

## Handout A

# Steps for Supporting Volunteer Resiliency<sup>2</sup>

### General Approach

- Start where the Volunteer is, not where we would like him or her to be.
- Believe the Volunteer can solve his or her own problems.
- Do things that strengthen the Volunteer's resilience, not their dependency on you or others.
- Do NOT "solve" the Volunteer's problem.
- Be aware of your own responses (verbal and nonverbal) and how they can help you better support the Volunteer.

### Before

- Schedule time to attend to a Volunteer.
- Calm yourself first before trying to calm an anxious Volunteer.
- Do not underestimate the presenting problem.

### During

1. Listen and understand.
2. Respond to both the feelings and content in ways that allow the Volunteer to explain and express fully.
3. Identify the issue, whose problem it is, and who is responsible for fixing the problem.
4. Give feedback and explore options.
  - Volunteer's Problem:*
    - Identify Options
    - Choose the Best Option
  - Your Problem:*
    - Clearly state concern.
    - Clearly state expectations.
    - Clearly state consequences
5. Make a plan about how you will help the Volunteer to address their issue

### After

- Follow through on the plan by checking in and offering support

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Office of Special Services, Mykell Winterowd, 2004.

## Handout B

# Tools for Active Listening<sup>3</sup>

**Responding with empathy:** *The ability to understand things from the other person's point of view in order to communicate acceptance and willingness to listen.*

Use empathetic responses to

- Convey acceptance and establish rapport.
- Encourage the speaker to continue talking.

**Restating:** *Repetition of a part of the speaker's own words to show the speaker you have received the information.*

Use a restatement to

- "Check out" the meaning of something the speaker has said.
- Encourage the speaker to explore other parts of the matter.

**Paraphrasing:** *Stating, in your words, your interpretation of the speaker's message.*

Use paraphrasing to

- Confirm that you understand the speaker's feelings and their relation to the communication.
- Help the speaker evaluate his or her feelings about the matter at hand.
- Help the speaker reach a solution to the problem.

**Summarizing:** *To condense large portions of what has been said and to highlight the key ideas.*

Use a summary to

- Focus the discussion.
- Confirm mutual understanding at a particular point.
- Guide the speaker to a new aspect of the matter at hand.
- Get agreement on certain points which have been brought up, to close the conversation.

**Questioning:** *Open-ended and specific questions may get the speaker to express feelings and thoughts about a problem while closed questions discourage or finalize conversation.*

Use open questions to encourage conversation and exploration. They help the listener find out more about what is happening in the situation. Examples include:

- "Tell me about. . . ?"

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from OSD Staff Development Materials, Duane Karlen, 1999

- “How is that for you?”
- “What’s going on?”
- “What do you mean by. . . .?”

Open-ended questions may be useful

- When you are beginning a conversation.
- When you are helping the Volunteer to clarify or elaborate.
- When you are problem-solving with the Volunteer.

Closed questions can be answered by “yes,” “no,” or one word; closed questions discourage conversation. These usually start with: “did,” “do,” “are,” “is,” “have,” etc. Close-ended questions might be useful:

- When the Volunteer is very upset.
- When the Volunteer is expressing vague feelings or complaints.
- When you want to bring closure to the interaction by helping the Volunteer form a plan.
- When you are dealing with a crisis situation.



## Handout C

# A Good Paraphrase

### A good paraphrase

- Checks perceptions
- Clarifies what was said
- Gives accurate empathy
- Captures the essence
- Conveys meaning, but uses different words
- Should be shorter
- Should help clarify
- Allows Volunteer to feel comfortable to disagree or correct

### Possible Openings

- Let me see if I've got this right.....?
- Sounds like.....?
- I think I hear you saying.....?
- So, in other words.....?

### Possible Ending

- End by asking, "Is that right?"

## Handout D

### Listener's Checklist

1. Do you listen for facts?                      Rarely 1        2        3        4        5 Often
2. Do you listen for ideas and the speaker's underlying feelings?  
   Rarely 1        2        3        4        5 Often
3. Do you interrupt immediately if you disagree with the speaker?  
   Rarely 1        2        3        4        5 Often
4. Are you easily distracted while listening?  
   Rarely 1        2        3        4        5 Often
5. Do you observe non-verbal information?  
   Rarely 1        2        3        4        5 Often
6. Do you make an effort to let the speaker know you are listening?  
   Rarely 1        2        3        4        5 Often
7. Do you judge the importance of the message based on what a person tells you by his or her mannerisms or appearance?  
   Rarely 1        2        3        4        5 Often
8. Do you give the other person enough time to complete his/her train of thought?  
   Rarely 1        2        3        4        5 Often
9. Do you use eye contact appropriate to the cultural context?  
   Rarely 1        2        3        4        5 Often
10. Do you make an effort to understand the other person's point of view?  
   Rarely 1        2        3        4        5 Often
11. Do you ask the other person to clarify words or statements to be sure that you understood correctly?  
   Rarely 1        2        3        4        5 Often
12. Do you express your impatience if the speaker expresses his idea slowly?  
   Rarely 1        2        3        4        5 Often

## Handout E

# Non-Verbal Behaviors

Although these categories are broken down into specific groups, in real communication they are interconnected. Facial expression, gestures and eye contact often occur simultaneously.

**Eye Contact** refers to both frequency and duration. Both differ between cultures, genders, and between socioeconomic classes. Differences in eye contact may cause us to feel uncomfortable without understanding why, because in some cultures, prolonged eye contact is a sign of honesty. Avoiding eye contact might be interpreted as dishonesty, something to hide. In another culture, avoiding eye contact is a sign of politeness. Direct eye contact is rude.

**Facial expressions** include smiling, laughing, and frowning. People of all cultures may smile at times, but the meanings may vary from joy to embarrassment. A laugh can indicate real amusement or nervousness or frustration. Showing anger varies from culture to culture in intensity and type of expression. Frowning, gesturing, shouting, sucking in one's breath, getting red in the face are all variations of showing anger in different cultures.

**Head movements:** Some cultures nod yes, some lift their heads to nod no. Some shake their head for no, though in others, moving the head from side to side is not negation.

**Posture:** The way we sit, stand and walk sends non-verbal messages. Some cultures stand tall to convey confidence; some cultures prostrate themselves to show respect. Some peoples sit in chairs; others conduct business sitting on the floor. Cultures expect different postures from men and women: women in some countries adapt the way they sit and stand based on cultural rules.

**Touching**, including the handshake, has become acceptable in business but handshakes vary. Distances, firmness of grip, length of grip all have different meanings. Some cultures bow. Some cultures touch more than others: if we understand that touching is natural in some cultures, we will be less offended if someone touches us. We must also need to know when touching is inappropriate.

**Space:** How close and how distant we stand to someone is culturally learned. Private space—our personal bubble—varies from culture to culture. The size of the private space is influenced by social status, gender, age, and authority. Attitudes about entering rooms or closing doors or locking rooms carry over into office space. The arrangement of office space is a reflection of underlying cultural values. The office can be private, communal, or a meeting place. In cultures that value a big personal space, large and private offices represent status.

**Appearance:** The way people dress sends messages. Are rules for dressing formalized or casual? Dressing according to custom and expectations shows respect for form and establishes a foundation for future dealings. Subtle aspects of dress can let people know something about one's ethnicity or home location.

**Silence** sends messages. The interpretation of silence varies from culture to culture, but all cultures use silence at times to get a point across. Some cultures use silence to mean a breakdown in communication, that something is wrong. Others use silence as a time to really understand the meaning. Some cultures distrust words: truth can be found in silence.

## Handout F

# Enhancing Natural Listening Skills

There are times we have all been able to listen well and there are times we have not. Was it that in one moment we possessed the skills and in another we forgot that we already knew what we needed to know to help someone else? Certainly listening “skills” are present at any intimate conversation and seem totally absent when we become angry or feel threatened. Even for the most seasoned listeners, it is extremely difficult to assist someone who is angry at them. Effective active listening skill training takes time, practice, and supervision. While many Posts do not have the resources for this type of training, all Staff can provide more effective Volunteer support by consciously developing an environment in which their own “natural” helping skills can be accessed. The following “habits” make it easier for all of us to listen.

- ***Schedule time to attend to a Volunteer with emotional challenges.*** Let the Volunteer know you really want to hear what they have to say and want to be able to give them the time they will need to talk. Find 45 – 60 minutes later in the day when you really can listen without distraction. Place your phone on hold.
- ***Calm yourself first before trying to calm an anxious Volunteer.*** Do not rush from one session with a difficult Volunteer to another. Count to ten, breathe deeply, and take a drink of water.
- ***Debrief rather than fix problems.*** Ask Volunteers to describe as fully as they can what happened—what they *saw or heard*. Find out how they *feel* about the experience. Understand what they *fear* (safety, site change, early termination, etc). Then, and only then, ask the Volunteer what s/he thinks might help the situation.
- ***Establish the loci of responsibility.*** Is this really your problem or theirs? If there is real danger to the Volunteer it *is* our/your problem. If it is an emotional adjustment concern, listen.
- ***Tolerate silence.*** All of us feel uncomfortable with silence in the presence of pain or stress. We want to fill the void with soothing helpful words. When we do, we take responsibility for relieving the discomfort. Silence is a time for the Volunteer to get in touch with his or her feelings. If you ask a discouraged Volunteer a question, stop. Wait. Count to ten. It is important for them to do the talking. Healing, more often than not, comes from within.
- ***Attend to your own "garden" before weeding your neighbor's.*** Your family comes first. If you have a child or spouse at home who needs immediate attention, it will be impossible to listen well to a Volunteer who might be complaining about what seems to be something relatively minor.
- ***Do not underestimate the presenting problem.*** The discussion of a minor problem may be the only safe way a Volunteer can open up a conversation about

deeper emotional struggles. A Volunteer who has left his or her site, taken a long bus ride into town to talk with you about how he or she cannot sleep because a dog barks all night long, may really be talking about how helpless and alone they feel. All conversations are ultimately about something important—if nothing more than human connection.

- ***Use your own emotions to help understand what a Volunteer is saying.*** Your feelings do matter. If you understand your own feelings when dealing with a troubled Volunteer it can be a clue to the challenge the Volunteer is facing. If for example you feel
  - **annoyed**--- the Volunteer may be feeling disconnected from staff, other Volunteers, or family and friends at home, etc.
  - **angry**—the Volunteer may be feeling powerless, trying to regain control.
  - **hurt**—the Volunteer may be feeling emotionally unprotected, vulnerable.
  - **helpless/frustrated** – the Volunteer may be feeling lost, depressed, or directionless.

Hopefully what comes from understanding this is that most likely, while you may have a strong, unfamiliar emotional reaction to a Volunteer's behavior, it is not about your effectiveness but about a *discouraged* strategy on the part of the Volunteer to regain mastery over a very human goal-- **connection** or contact with someone else; **power** or control over elements in the environment; **protection** from emotional and physical harm; and/or finding a **community** in which to belong.

Jon Sanders, LCSW  
Office of Special Services  
October, 2005

# Reflections and Assessment

## Overview

Participants work in small groups to reflect and make follow-up plans on:

- Participants' strengths and weaknesses in using the skills covered
- Cultural differences between Americans and locals that might help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support
- Factors at their post that may help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support

Large group discussion follows.

## Time

50 minutes

## Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to

- Identify their own and their team members' strengths and weaknesses (opportunities for mentoring others and challenges on which to focus) using the skills covered in the previous session(s).
- Identify recognized cultural differences between Americans and locals that might help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support.
- Discuss commonly identified (by self and peers) factors at their post that may help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support.
- Suggest a viable plan of action for one or both team members to strengthen their and their posts capacity to support Volunteers using the skills taught in the previous sessions.

## Materials

The handout at the end of this section can be used for personal reflection and assessment in the first activity and then to focus discussion in the following activities. Handouts include:

- *Handout A: Reflections and Assessment*

The facilitator should also feel free to include:

- Handouts from prior sessions
- Self-assessment tools (if available)
- Access to charts with identified best practices (if any)

## Directions

### **I. Introduction – 10 minutes**

*Step I: Form Groups and Write Reflections (10 minutes)*

The participants should form pairs (or small groups) and write their individual reflections on the following questions using *Handout A: Reflection and Assessment*. Ideally, the groups should be mixed with Americans and HCNs. Focus on the following questions:

- What are your strengths and weaknesses using the skills covered in the previous session(s)?
- What cultural differences between Americans and locals might help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support?
- What are other factors at their post that may help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support?

### **II. Activity – 15 minutes**

*Step I: Discuss in Pairs/Small Groups (15 minutes)*

Discuss the answers to the questions above. Then transition to talking about the question below:

- What can we plan to do that will strengthen our own and our post's capacity to support Volunteers using the skills taught in the previous session(s)?

### **III. Discussion and Application - 25 minutes**

*Step I: Large Group Discussion (20 minutes)*

Given the above group work and related dialog, ask participants to return to the larger group and facilitate a discussion focusing on the following questions:

- Would anyone like to share any highlights of their discussion?
- What skills that we covered will you be most likely to implement at post?
- What will be difficult to implement (and why)?
- What cultural factors did you identify?
- What next steps will you take at post?

*Step II: Closing (5 minutes)*

Ask participants to review their individual reflections and assessments and add or revise items based on discussions they had in pairs and in the large group. Let them know that they will not be required to share these – this part of the exercise is **ONLY** for their own learning and improvement.

## Notes:

## Handout A

# Reflections and Assessments

**Fill out this form individually and then discuss in pairs or small groups to add to and/or edit what you wrote.**

1. What are your strengths and weaknesses using the skills covered in the previous session(s)?
2. What cultural differences exist between Americans and locals that might help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support?
3. What are other factors at post that may help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support?
4. What can we plan to do that will strengthen our own and our Post's capacity to support Volunteers using the skills taught in the previous session(s)?



# Knowing Yourself

## Overview

This session gives participants the opportunity to reflect on the personality traits they bring to supporting Volunteers. Participants observe how several negative personality traits can interfere with providing effective Volunteer support. They then explore in a large group and individually how to enhance positive traits that lead to providing quality Volunteer support.

Facilitator Note: All the sessions in this curriculum except this one follow an iterative order that should be followed. This session has been placed in this part of the curriculum as that is where it made most sense during the EMA pilot sessions. However, it could also be placed after other sessions, depending on timing. Use your judgment as to when to deliver this session.

## Time

60 minutes

## Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to

- Identify how common personality traits can interfere with providing effective volunteer support.
- List three things they can personally do to improve their effectiveness in supporting Volunteers.

## Materials

Pre-printed cards (see page 44).

## Preparations

For the first activity, you will need to prepare a large card for each of 12 personality traits. The instructions for this preparation are on page 44. To set up this exercise, tape or post the cards with the pre-printed traits on a wall or board so that they may be seen by the participants. The room will need to be set up in a circle with two chairs at the front of the room and the traits posted close to the two chairs.

You will also need an “actor” to role play a Volunteer vignette during the first activity. This actor should not be a participant. You may use one of the Volunteer scenarios from the Listening and Understanding session or have another simple vignette ready.

## Directions

### *1. Introduction*

We have observed during previous activities how staff members’ behaviors can affect Volunteers. Everyone has moments when they aren’t effective due to being tired,

stressed, or distracted by other issues. Also, certain situations or people can remind us of previous, unrelated situations. During these times, we may revert to negative personality traits that may interfere with how we interact with Volunteers.

## **II. Activity – 40 minutes**

### *Step I: (5 minutes)*

Explain that we're going to look at certain personality traits and how they may affect Volunteer support. You will notice that posted on the wall are cards which represent several personality traits. What we'd like to do is invite our Volunteer "actor" back to meet with the staff.

This activity will be presented as a fishbowl. Thus, the facilitator will start acting as a staff member from the point of view of one of these traits. When a participant feels ready come take our place and act out another trait, please take the trait off the wall, tap the facilitator on the shoulder, sit down and take a few minutes to interact with the Volunteer from the point of view of having that trait.

### *Step II (20 minutes)*

Sit in the two chairs at the front of the room with the Volunteer actor. Begin a conversation with the "Volunteer" acting out their scenario and the facilitator acting from the point of view of one of the traits. When someone else is ready, they can step up to the two chairs, tap the facilitator's shoulder, and take his/her place. (If no one has done this after a few minutes, the co-facilitator should encourage the participants to take turns). Continue to have participants take turns acting out a trait until all the traits are acted out.

At the end, thank the "Volunteer" and have them switch chairs before the debrief.

### *Step III. (15 minutes)*

Debrief with the following questions:

- What did you notice about the effects of the trait on the PCV?
- How did the person's trait affect the interaction?
- Do you think when a person acts from the frame of one of these traits that it is intentional?
- How does what you observed carry into how you want to (or don't want to) support Volunteers?

## **III. Discussion and Application – 20 minutes**

Segue into a discussion on what can be done to lessen us reacting from a negative personality trait or point of view.

Ask, what do you do to prepare yourself to provide Volunteer support so that you are positive and effective?

List their answers on a flipchart. Answers could include actions from a variety of areas including:

**Environmental**

- Arranging physical space so that it is physically pleasant and conducive to conversations

**Self-care Actions**

- Calming yourself first before trying to calm an anxious Volunteer.
- Taking time between difficult Volunteer sessions (counting to ten, breathing deeply, taking a drink of water, standing up from the desk and stretching for a few minutes)
- Making time for self-care activities—time with family and friends; exercise, sleep, etc.

**Organizational**

- Encouraging a positive environment in the workplace

Explain that you would like the participants to think about all the things they discussed in this session—the traits that were modeled, the personality traits they may revert to which may not be effective, and the items listed on the flipchart. Ask them to silently think about a few actions they would like to try or do (suggest they may want to write these down). They will not share this with the group. Give them five minutes to reflect on this, thank them, and then end the session.

**Notes:**

## **Material Preparation for Personality Traits Activity**

Write/print each characteristic and its descriptors on a separate piece of paper. The print needs to be big enough so that it can be seen by all the participants in the room.

### ***Cynicism***

- Loss of trust in self, others, culture
- Loss of faith – “seen it all before”

### ***Worry***

- Negative, anxious thinking or fixating

### ***Resignation***

- Giving up, despair
- Pointlessness

### ***Resentment***

- Blame, envy at others
- Powerlessness

### ***Con (artist)***

- Embellishing the truth
- Taking short cuts
- Appear what you're not

### ***Explanation***

- Having a reason for everything
- Rationalization

### ***Self-doubt***

- Second guessing self
- Loss of belief in self

### ***Disassociation***

- Disconnection
- Checking out

### ***Placation***

- Giving up a piece of yourself to keep the peace

### ***Self-righteousness***

- Must be right
- Hold self as superior

### ***Confusion***

- Distraction
- Refusal to set self up to take responsibility

### ***Regret***

- Focus on past
- Shame, humiliation

# Setting Boundaries and Discernment

## Overview

This session starts off with exploring who has the lead responsibility in addressing Volunteer problems. Volunteer issues are compared to gifts, sometimes gifts one may not want. Participants look at how they deal with unwanted gifts in their own culture. Then they analyze a set of Volunteer issues and determine who should take the lead in addressing those issues. Finally, the participants look at ways to discern the true nature/root cause of these issues.

## Time

1 hour, 45 minutes

## Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to

- List the major types of problems where Country Directors and PCMOs need to take the lead.
- Demonstrate how to refuse to accept responsibility for a problem that is not theirs to address.
- Identify at least four tools that can be used to discern the nature of a Volunteer's problem.

## Materials

There are handouts at the end of this section that could be used as part of the discussion, as background preparation for the facilitators, or as supplemental reading for the participants. Handouts include:

- *Handout A: Problem, Problem... Who has the Problem?*
- *Handout B: Emotional Cycles of the Volunteer*
- *Handout C: Cross-Cultural Adjustment*
- *Handout D: Discernment*

Item(s) to use as unwanted gifts – see Introduction.

In addition to the handouts, materials for the *Gifts* activity need prior preparation; instructions are on pages 50-51. You will also need flipcharts for discernment discussion and a mailing label or name tag for each participant.

## Preparations

To prepare the gifts, see *Guide for Creating the Gifts for the Gifts Session* on pages 50-51. Additionally, you will need to prepare name tags or some type of label that signifies one of each of the four roles played by people in this exercise (PCMO, CD, P&T Staff and PCV). The four groups (and thus, the number of four types of labels) should be evenly divided among the participants.

## Directions

### ***I. Introduction – 10 minutes***

#### *Step I: (5 minutes)*

Set the stage for the participants with the following questions and activity. We are talking about PCVs feeling self-reliant and well supported. Let's talk about one aspect of that. What are the staff roles in Volunteer support and who owns the problems/issues that may arise? Several staff may be involved in issues of Volunteer support but there is usually one person who takes the lead in being responsible for an issue. For example, what might be issues the CD takes a lead in? (answer: safety and security; policy violations); PCMO? (answer: mental and physical health issues).

When people have problems, sometimes they may try to get someone else to solve them. Many times one person may try to give to others responsibility for what they need to address. You might call this being given a **gift** you don't really want. Dealing with an unwanted gift varies among cultures so let's look at how you say no to a gift you don't want in your culture.

#### *Step II: (5 minutes)*

Offer an item as a gift to several people in the group and ask how they would deal with this unwanted gift. Debrief by stating that addressing this situation varies depending on many factors including culture and personality.

### ***II. Activity – 45 minutes***

#### *Step I: (5 minutes)*

This activity flows from the above introductory description and debrief. Introduce this activity portion of the module with the following description and explain to participants that they will have a chance to practice refusing gifts that are not theirs to accept.

Explain that sometimes a PCV issue may be ours to take the lead in addressing and sometimes it may be an unwanted gift. For many PCV problems, several staff may need to become involved from their respective roles. However, usually there is one person who should take the lead in addressing solutions for these problems. Let's spend some time looking at who should take the lead.

#### *Step II: (15 minutes)*

Divide the group into four small groups at opposite corners of the room – PCMOs, CDs, Program and Training staff, and Volunteers. Give them their appropriate, pre-made label/name tag to identify the role they are playing.

Tell them you have gifts for them—these gifts are actually Volunteers problems. Their task is to decide whether they should take the lead in addressing them or if someone else should. If they don't think they should take the lead, they should try to get the person they think is responsible to take the lead (by giving them the gift).

Hand each person one “gift” (the pre-made vignettes on a folded piece of paper – instructions for creating the vignettes on pages 50-51. Tell them their job is to decide if they are the right person to take the lead with this issue. If so, they should keep the “gift.” If not, they should try to find someone in the role they think is the appropriate lead person and try to convince them why they should take this “gift.”

Watch the group to keep up the gift exchanges until the energy has slowed down and it seems most gifts are not moving to another person.

*Step III: Debrief (25 minutes)*

Go around the room and discuss each of the vignettes on the gifts. Ask the participant holding the gift why they took it. Then, ask the others for their reactions or if they felt differently. Bring up teaching points within the gifts as you discuss them. The color-coded bows can help you identify if the vignettes ended up with the “correct” group. You could ask why the holder thinks they should take the lead and ask if the group concurs.

Use the following wrap-up questions to debrief the exercise:

- Which group had the most gifts? Point out the color coding and ask if any one group got ones that were color coded differently. Usually the P&T group ends up with the majority of the gifts including many or most that are color coded for the PCVs. Why would it be that the P&T staff have the most issues?
- What did you notice? Were there any surprises?
- We looked at how we deal with unwanted gifts in different cultures. What role did culture play in whether you accepted the gift?
- Was it hard to say no to a PCV’s problem? A co-worker who wanted to give you his/her problem?
- What does this imply for how you work with your co-workers?

**Facilitator Note:** Usually the issue of triangulation comes up during this exercise. Triangulation in this situation is when a PCV will go to two or more staff people to address the same issue. This may result in the staff contradicting each other and thus, creating a conflict between staff members. Watch the debrief conversation so that it does not become antagonistic on how the staff has triangulated in the past. If so, you may need to remind the participants they will have time later in the training (during Reflections and Assessment) to address ways post could avoid triangulation in the future.

From the above debriefing conversation, transition directly into the next activity on discernment.

### **III. Discussion and Application – 50 minutes**

#### *Step I: (10 minutes)*

Segue into discernment by mentioning that sometimes, in order to determine who has the major responsibility for addressing a problem, you need to understand more clearly what the problem is. Discernment means perceiving something that is hidden, under the surface. All of the communication skills we have discussed are vital to discerning the nature of the problem. There are other things that may be done to discern the problem.

Ask the group:

- Can you give a few examples of when a Volunteer presented one problem that turned out to not be the real issue?
- How did they find out what was the real issue?
- What do they do in their current jobs to discern what is really going on?

Post their answers on a flipchart and review their answers. Suggest to participants they may also want to consider the following:

- The presenting problem
- Their own emotions
- The Volunteer adjustment cycle
- Performance and motivation

#### *Step II: (30 minutes)*

Lead a facilitated discussion on the following (*Handout D* contains a synopsis of the following material).

You may first want to ***consider the presenting problem***. The discussion of a minor problem may be the only safe way a PCV can open up a conversation about deeper emotional struggles. A Volunteer who has left his or her site, taken a long bus ride into town to talk with you about how they can't sleep because a dog barks all night long may really be talking about how helpless and alone they feel. All conversations are ultimately about something important—if nothing more than human connection.

***Use your own emotions to help understand what a Volunteer is saying.*** Your feelings do matter. If you understand your own feelings when dealing with a troubled Volunteer, it can be a clue to the challenge the PCV is facing.

Put the following on a flipchart and walk the participants through this.



If you feel...	Then, the Volunteer may be feeling...
Annoyed	Disconnected from staff, other PCVs, or family and friends at home, etc.
Angry	Powerless and trying to regain control.
Hurt	Emotionally unprotected, vulnerable.
Helpless/Frustrated	Lost, depressed, or directionless.

**Consider where the Volunteer is in the adjustment cycle.** Volunteers follow predictable cycles in cross-cultural adaptation and community integration. Many times, it is helpful to know where a Volunteer is in their adjustment cycle so that you can factor that in helping Volunteers consider options. (Caution: it is important not to minimize the Volunteer's problem by stating it is just part of the adjustment cycle and that they will "get over it."). Note there are two similar handouts related to this: *The Cycle of Vulnerability and Adjustment* and *General Cross Cultural Framework*. Choose one to use to walk the participants through the main points. They are both included at the end of this session.

If the issue is related to the *Volunteer's performance or motivation*, the following may be useful in helping you consider options to explore.

Performance	Motivations	Then, explore...
Have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes	Want to do it	The external factors that may be causing the problem. Helpful tools may be brainstorming or creating a problem tree.
Don't have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes	Want to do it	Ways to build KSAs through training, mentoring, and resources.
Have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes	Don't want to do it	Why there is not motivation, and if necessary, consider a behavior contract.
Don't have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes	Don't want to do it	A behavioral contract or counseling out the Volunteer.

*Step III: (10 minutes)*

Debrief this discussion with the following questions:

- Can you think of how any of these tools relate to a real-life Volunteer issue?
- How do these tools relate to coaching Volunteers to be resilient?

**Notes:**

## Guide for Creating the Gifts for the Gifts Session

Chose which of the following one-line problem descriptions you want to use, put one each on a piece of paper and tri-fold each. Color code the paper “gifts” with a colored marker bow according to the categories they belong in (ex. blue bow for PCMOs, green bow for CDs etc).

### **Primary Responsibility Lies with the PCMO:**

A normally outgoing PCV acts nervous and quiet around her counterpart. The counterpart calls the PCV his treasure and touches her in ways that just don't feel right to you. When you ask her if there are problems she says no but always hangs her head and won't look at you.

A PCV has been working at an agency with abused children. Lately, on the weekends, the PCV is going mountain climbing without ropes on dangerous rock cliffs outside her village.

A PCV won't get out of bed. She says she is not sick but just tired and wants to be left alone. This has been happening for one week.

A PCV has lost 20 kilos in two months. He says he feels fine but you notice he looks pale and he gets tired when climbing the stairs to his office.

### **Primary Responsibility Lies with the CD:**

A PCV gets drunk and throws up in the host family's living room. He then passes out on the floor. The PCV wants you to tell the host family not to be so upset.

A PCV gets a visible, large tattoo. She doesn't see it as a problem.

A PCV tells you she got an anonymous note telling her that she needs to stop her secondary project of teaching English to local prostitutes.

A PCV lies about being out of site when police in a neighboring country call to tell you the PCV was arrested there. The PCV gets on the phone and says don't worry; they'll take care of the problem.

### **Primary Responsibility Lies with the P&T Staff:**

A TEFL PCV tells you that after two months at site he hates teaching. He wants to switch projects.

A PCV wants to change his homestay family because it is now all women. (The father had to leave the country to get a job.)

One of your PCVs reminds you of one of your childhood friends. Lately, she is making friends with people in her village who you think are bad. You plan to tell her to stop seeing these people.

A PCV who calls you every few days calls you again to talk about her host mother. You excuse yourself after a few minutes and make-up a story that you have an emergency you have to go deal with.

A PCV tells you his counterpart is stealing the fuel used for the office generator so there is no electricity in the office. The PCV can't use the computer she needs to do her work.

**Primary Responsibility Lies with the Volunteer:**

A PCV is very upset because she is gaining weight and can't fit into any of her clothes. She says it's her host mother's fault because the mother keeps pushing food on the PCV. The PVC wants to change families.

A PCV calls you complaining that he hates his wallpaper and he insists that it be changed. He wants money from Peace Corps to change it.

A PCV is angry that his site has no internet access. He asks to be moved to a new site.

During a meeting with a PCV and his counterpart, you notice the PCV saying several culturally insensitive and rude things. After the meeting, the PCV says his counterpart has an attitude against him.

A PCV wants to write a SPA proposal but is upset because he can't figure out how to do the budget according to the guidelines.

A PCV is spending most of his time on his secondary project. When you ask why, he says there is no work at his primary site.

A PCV complains that the local language is too hard. He can't find any good tutors in his city.

A PCV calls to tell you she hates the narrow minded thinking of the people in her village and she wants to change sites.

A PVC is requesting to visit a neighboring city every weekend because her small village is boring and nothing is happening there.

## Handout A

# Problem, Problem...Who Has the Problem?

### WHOSE PROBLEM IS IT?

*Is it your problem?*

- Medical?
- Safety and security?
- Did PC make a mistake by putting the PCV there?
- Ask yourself, “WHO IS BOTHERED BY THIS?”

### HOW TO RESPOND

*If the other person’s problem:*

- Hear it
- Help them to process it, and accept that it exists.
- Their solutions will work for them better than yours!
- If it’s their problem, don’t solve it!

*If your problem:* (post or staff issues)

- Listen (feeling and content)
- Use I statement—
  - Clearly state your concern
  - Clearly state expectations
  - Clearly state consequences
  - Make a plan
  - Follow-through—if you’re not going to do it, don’t say it!

**Set appropriate limits** on what you (or others) can or cannot do to resolve the situation.

**Be assertive:** Focus on behavior, not motives. Be specific. Be brief. Be non-judgmental

**Be consistent:** Apply policy fairly. Keep your colleagues informed. Watch out for “splitting.” Always be equitable and fair.

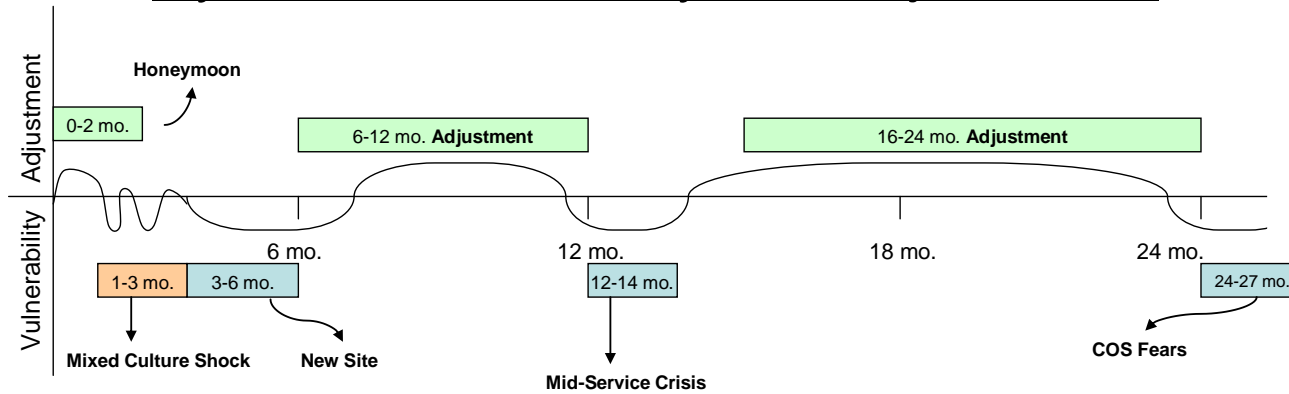
*When to Refer to a PCMO:* Thoughts of suicide or wanting to die. PCV is doing very dangerous things. Rape or major assault. Lots of alcohol. Depression, anger or anxiety has lasted more than a month and is getting in the way of work or normal life.

Consider **use of a PIP** (if appropriate)

## Handout B

# Emotional Cycles of the Volunteer

## Cycle of Vulnerability and Adjustment\*



### Departure

**Emotional Issues:** denial, unreal expectations, loss, confusion, and excitement  
**Tasks:** Ritualize “Good-byes” and “fit everything in”

### Arrival (month 1-2)

**Emotional Issues:** fatigue, reactivity, overwhelmed, frustration, helplessness, anxiety, fearfulness, health, euphoria, regression

**Tasks:** getting immediate needs met; getting a comfort level in culture; dealing with worry/doubt

### Engagement (month 4-8)

**Emotional Issues:** seeing the world in “black and white” excitement/fear, anger/fascination, depression/joy, work/fun, anticipation/regression, loneliness/new friends, idealization/prejudice

**Tasks:** cultural connection; dealing with guilt/blame re: privilege and affluence; trying to find a comfort level; work; language

### Acceptance (month 11-14)

**Emotional Issues:** fitting in; establishing a routine; sadness; feeling competent; withdrawal; disappointment  
**Tasks:** connections; mastery over aloneness; developing competency; dealing with desperation and feeling different; beginning to feel normal

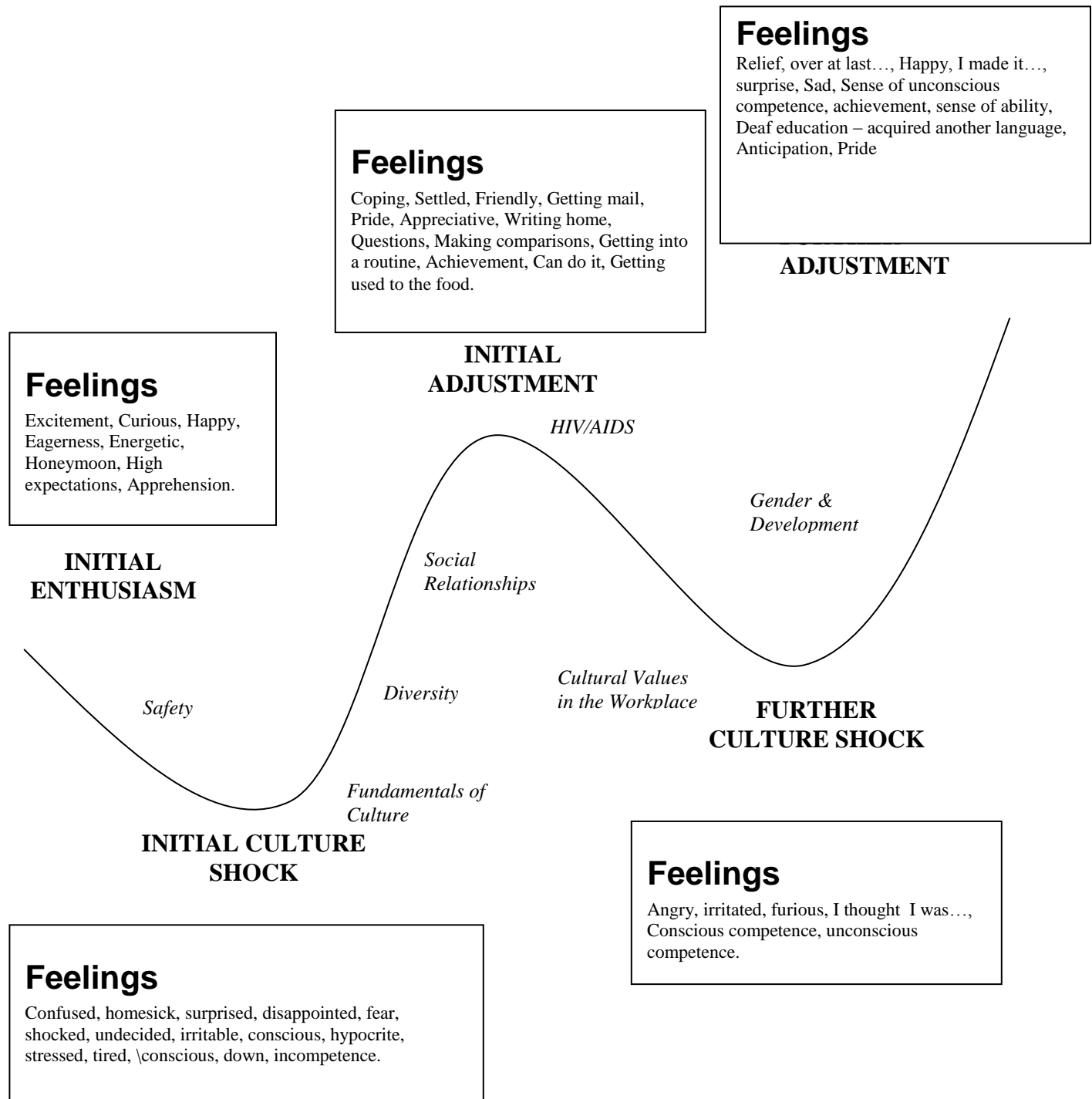
### Return (month 18-21)

**Emotional Issues:** thinking about going home; denial; unreal expectations; fear/panic; grief/loss; aloneness; anticipation  
**Tasks:** saying “good-bye;” making plans for the future; dealing with grief and loss – putting it all together

\*Compiled from information from the Office of Special Services

# HANDOUT C

## Cross-Cultural Adjustment (Culture Shock)



**NOTE:** There were general comments in the group that many of these themes should be a gradual process and slowly introduced in training, not only once. Formality, styles of communication, Face, and Change were discussed but not placed in the framework.

## HANDOUT D

# Discernment

Discernment means perceiving something that is hidden, under the surface. There are several things to consider when attempting to discern the real nature of a presenting problem.

1. ***First, consider the presenting problem.*** The discussion of a minor problem may be the only safe way a PCV can open up a conversation about deeper emotional struggles. A Volunteer who has left his or her site, taken a long bus ride into town to talk with you about how they can't sleep because a dog barks all night long, may really be talking about how helpless and alone they feel. All conversations are ultimately about something important—if nothing more than human connection.
2. ***Use your own emotions to help understand what a Volunteer is saying.*** Your feelings do matter. If you understand your own feelings when dealing with a troubled Volunteer it can be a clue to the challenge the PCV is facing.

If you feel...	Then, the Volunteer may be feeling...
Annoyed	Disconnected from staff, other PCVs, or family and friends at home, etc.
Angry	Powerless and trying to regain control.
Hurt	Emotionally unprotected, vulnerable.
Helpless/Frustrated	Lost, depressed, or directionless.

3. ***Consider where the Volunteer is in the adjustment cycle.*** Volunteers follow predictable cycles in cross-cultural adaptation and community integration. Many times it is helpful to know where a Volunteer is in their adjustment cycle so that you can factor that in helping Volunteers consider options. (Caution: it is important not to minimize the Volunteer's problem by stating it is just part of the adjustment cycle and that they will "get over it.")
4. ***If the issue is related to the Volunteer's performance or motivation the following may be useful in helping you consider options to explore.***

Performance	Motivations	Then, explore...
Have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes	Want to do it	The external factors that may be causing the problem. Helpful tools may be brainstorming or creating a problem tree.
Don't have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes	Want to do it	Ways to build KSAs through training, mentoring, and resources.
Have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes	Don't want to do it	Why there is not motivation, and if necessary, consider a behavior contract.
Don't have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes	Don't want to do it	A behavioral contract or counseling out the Volunteer.

# Giving Feedback and Exploring Options

## Overview

Participants will practice the skills of summarizing, giving feedback, exploring options, and considering issues in cross-cultural feedback. Participants will first break into four groups to read information and report out on (respectively) summarizing, giving feedback, exploring options and issues in cross-cultural feedback. They will then practice these skills by role-playing a Volunteer vignette.

## Time

One hour, 50 minutes

## Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Demonstrate how to appropriately and successfully apply the techniques of summarizing, giving feedback, and exploring options in coaching Volunteers as they would if presented with a difficult Volunteer support situation at their post.

## Materials

There are handouts at the end of this section that should be used as part of the discussion, as background preparation for the facilitators, or as supplemental reading for the participants. Handouts include:

- *Handout A: Summarizing*
- *Handout B: Giving Feedback*
- *Handout C: Feedback in Individualist and Collectivist Cultures*
- *Handout D: Exploring Options*
- *Handout E: Sample Scenarios for Feedback and Exploring Options Session*

You will also need flip charts for each group, a brief Volunteer vignette, and an actor to role play the vignette. You may use one of the Volunteer scenarios used during the Listening and Understanding session.

## Directions

### ***I. Introduction – 5 minutes***

Explain to participants that over the next several hours, they will practice the skills of summarizing, giving feedback, exploring options, and considering issues in cross-cultural feedback. The first activity will involve group work and reporting out and the second will involve role plays.



## **II. Activities – 90 minutes**

*Step I: (50 minutes)*

Divide the participants into four groups. Assign each group the lead with one of the following handouts:

- *Handout A: Summarizing*
- *Handout B: Giving Feedback*
- *Handout C: Feedback in Individualist Cultures and Collectivist Cultures*
- *Handout D: Exploring Options*

Their small group's task will be to: (30 minutes)

- Read their respective handout.
- On a flipchart highlight 2-3 main points from the handout.
- Read the scenario for Volunteer "AI" on *Handout E : Sample Scenarios for Feedback and Exploring Options Session*.
- Give a QUOTE of what they would say to AI based on the skills they are assigned (i.e. how would you give feedback to AI? or how would you explore options with AI?).
- Have them write on the flipchart 2-3 sentences they would say to AI based on their respective skills.
- Assign a spokesperson from their groups to present their flipchart to the larger group.

After 30 minutes for this small group time, have the groups then report out on their results. (20 minutes)

*Step II: (20 minutes)*

Explain that the next exercise will give the participants an opportunity to practice all the skills together. You may have the actor who played the Volunteer in the prior session use this as the example for the group to work with or you may create a new vignette. You will need to have an actor and a brief Volunteer vignette for this exercise.

Have actor say something like (they may improvise and add to this scene)

- *"I'll bet I've written 15 letters since I've been at my site and as of yesterday, I've gotten only one letter back—and it was a short one. Before I left the States, everybody in the world promised they would write. And it's so hard being out here in the middle of nowhere without any news from home. Maybe I shouldn't be expecting so much from my family and friends but it's tough getting up everyday and pushing on when you're feeling out of it."*

Give groups 5 minutes to come up with how they might respond to the actor using their assigned skill.

Have the actor play out their vignette again with his/her chair facing away from the group as if he/she is on the phone. Start with the Summarizing group, after that the Giving Feedback, then Cultural Aspects, then exploring Options). For 1-2 minutes per group, a person will come up and sit behind the actor (as if on the phone) and use examples of their assigned skill. Thus by the end of 8-10 minute role play the actor will have had (at least) 4 people show how to use skills of summarizing, feedback, cultural considerations, and exploring options.

**Facilitator Note:** During the debrief you should point out that sometimes a Volunteer will resist exploring options simply because they are not “done yet” with talking through the issue or do not yet have the ability to see a path forward. This may not mean that they are resistive or uncooperative, but sometimes may mean that they need more time to express themselves or that there are other related issues (different from the presenting problem) that are not yet surfaced or addressed). If this is the case, patiently return to the previous steps (such as listening, understanding and feedback) then try again later to move to exploring options.

*Step III: Practice all three skills (20 minutes)*

Get into the same triads as the listening session and practice all three skills together. You may want to use the same scenario as you did in the listening session and “pick up” the conversation where you left off. You do NOT need to repeat the listening steps. Just start with summarizing, and then go to feedback and exploring options. If staff conduct a lot of Volunteer support via phone, you may wish to do this exercise with *chairs facing away from each other, as if on the phone.* .

### **III. Discussion and Application – 15 minutes**

Debrief:

- What was easy?
- What was hard?
- Which of these skills will be easy or hard to implement (and why)?

**Notes:**

## **Handout A**

# **Summarizing**

### **Guidelines**

Summarize in a way that assures the Volunteer that they have been “heard and understood.” Sometimes this is all a person really needs.

Summarize in a way that checks whether you have heard and understood “the whole story” before you give feedback.

Summarize in a way that provides a “mirror” through which Volunteers “hear” themselves and their situation.

Summarize in a way that helps Volunteers to organize and give meaning to what is happening to them. It is more than just the “sum total” of all your previous paraphrases.

Summarize in a way that helps Volunteers begin thinking about next steps by shifting the conversation from the past to the future. “So the current situation is...”

### **Notes from Discussion**

### **Cultural Considerations**

### **My Priorities**

## Handout B

# Giving Feedback

### Guidelines

Focus on the behavior rather than the person

Focus on observations rather than inferences

Focus on what is being said rather than why it is being said

Focus on descriptions rather than judgments

Focus on describing behaviors in terms of “more” or “less” rather than “either-or”

Focus on behavior that is related to THIS situation (rather than generalizing)

Focus on providing the type and amount of feedback that the person can use, rather than venting or saying “all that you could say” about the issue

### Notes from Discussion

### Cultural Considerations

### My Priorities

## **Handout C**

### **Feedback in Individualist and Collectivist Cultures**

A useful way to think about cultural differences is to picture a continuum. Toward one side of the continuum is the more collective culture, and toward the other side of the continuum is the more an individualistic culture. Of course, within each cultural group, each individual is unique. In other words, people from collective cultures can be very individualistic, and people from individualistic cultures can be very collective.

#### **CULTURAL PREFERENCES IN GIVING AND GETTING FEEDBACK**

##### ***Collectivist Cultures***

We lighten, perhaps withhold, the negative side, bad news and complaints so as not to bring disharmony into relationships. Respect is more important than facts

We often give criticism or raise problems through a third party so that feelings or "face" are protected.

We wait for the appropriate time and place, make it private and casual. Don't embarrass the individual or the group by a public display. We should always measure our words and think before we speak. When we give feedback directly it is often given to the group without singling out individuals.

Open confrontation is discouraged or even forbidden

##### ***Individualist Cultures***

We deliver both positive and negative assessments, good and bad news, in order to improve one's self and one's performance. Facts are more important than preserving appearances.

We give criticism directly. Third-party feedback is often seen as cowardly.

We value giving feedback almost immediately, "the sooner the better," and sometimes publicly.

We "think out loud" and express our "gut feelings."

We form our feedback on individual responsibility and performance.

Open confrontation could be productive.

## **Handout D**

# **Exploring Options**

### **Guidelines**

Focus on guiding the Volunteer to take responsibility for next steps

Focus on the future rather than the past

Focus on guiding the Volunteer to see what she or he CAN do (rather than CANNOT do)

Focus on sharing ideas/information (rather than “fixing the problem” or giving advice)

Focus on exploration of new options (rather than relying on “trusty” solutions)

Focus on maximizing possible options by resolving or removing perceived barriers

Focus on clarifying inconsistencies or contradictions without judgment

Focus on helping the Volunteer to articulate clear next steps that they will take

Focus on any support or resources the Volunteer needs to take the identified next steps

Focus on when the next steps and follow up contact will happen

### **Notes from Discussion**

### **Cultural Considerations**

### **My Priorities**

## Handout E

# Sample Scenario for Feedback and Exploring Options Session

**Scenario – Al:** Al is a 63-year-old Volunteer working in your agricultural extension project. His job description requires that he spend most of his time traveling around the district, meeting with farmers and seeing their fields. But ever since he arrived at the district agricultural office, his co-workers have been very protective of him. They do not allow him to do any physical work and feel that at his age, he should not be doing tasks that are beneath him, which seems to mean anything that takes him out of the office. The roads are poor, they say; the jeeps are uncomfortable and always breaking down; meaning you may have to go long distances on foot. They insist he stay in the office and do paperwork and serve as a kind of wise old man. For his part, Al is going stir crazy. He's in excellent shape ("much better than these young dudes," he tells you), and there's really nothing to do in the office. Now he has come to ask you for help.

# Reflections and Assessment

## Overview

Work in small groups or large group to reflect and make follow-up plans about:

- Their strengths and weaknesses using the skills covered
- Cultural differences between Americans and locals that might help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support
- Factors at their post that may help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support

Large group discussion will follow.

## Time

50 minutes

## Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Identify their own and their team members' strengths and weaknesses (opportunities for mentoring others and challenges on which to focus) using the skills covered in the previous session(s).
- Identify recognized cultural differences between Americans and locals that might help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support.
- Discuss commonly identified (by self and peers) factors at their post that may help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support.
- Suggest a viable plan of action for one or both team members to strengthen their and their posts capacity to support Volunteers using the skills taught in the previous sessions.

## Materials

The handout at the end of this section can be used for personal reflection and assessment in the first activity and then to focus discussion in the following activities. Handouts include:

- *Handout A: Reflections and Assessment*

The facilitator should also feel free to include:

- Handouts from prior sessions
- Self-assessment tools (if available)
- Access to charts with identified best practices (if any)



## Directions

### **I. Introduction – 10 minutes**

*Step I: Form Groups and Write Reflections (10 minutes)*

The participants should form pairs (or small groups) and write their individual reflections on the following questions using *Handout a: Reflection and Assessment*. Ideally, the groups should be mixed with Americans and HCNs. Focus on the following questions:

- What are your strengths and weaknesses using the skills covered in the previous session(s)?
- What cultural differences between Americans and locals might help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support?
- What are other factors at their post that may help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support?

### **II. Activity – 15 minutes**

*Step I: Discuss in Pairs/Small Groups (15 minutes)*

Discuss the answers to the questions above. Then transition to talking about the question below:

- What can we plan to do that will strengthen our own and our post's capacity to support Volunteers using the skills taught in the previous session(s)?

### **III. Discussion and Application - 25 minutes**

*Step I: Large Group Discussion (20 minutes)*

Given the above group work and related dialog, ask participants to return to the larger group and facilitate a discussion focusing on the following questions:

- Would anyone like to share any highlights of their discussion?
- What skills that we covered will you be most likely to implement at post?
- What will be difficult to implement (and why)?
- What cultural factors did you identify?
- What next steps will you take at post?

*Step II: Closing (5 minutes)*

Ask participants to review their individual reflections and assessments and add or revise items based on discussions they had in pairs and in the large group. Let them know that they will not be required to share these – this part of the exercise is **ONLY** for their own learning and improvement.

## Notes:

## **Handout A**

# **Reflections and Assessments**

**Fill out this form individually and then discuss in pairs to add or edit what you wrote.**

1. What are your strengths and weaknesses using the skills covered in the previous session(s)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What cultural differences exist between Americans and locals that might help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What are other factors at post that may help or hinder the use of these skills in Volunteer support?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What can we plan to do that will strengthen our own and our Post's capacity to support Volunteers using the skills taught in the previous session(s)?

# Putting It All Together

## Overview

This session is the final application and also the integration step of the *Supporting Volunteer Resiliency* training. Participants practice support skills using a multi-faceted Volunteer case study.

## Time

90 minutes

## Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Identify some types of multi-faceted Volunteer support issues that may require coordination among staff.
- Differentiate and respond appropriately to issues requiring programmatic support vs. emotional support drawing on the skills learned during this workshop, from peers, or from your own experience.
- Successfully demonstrate all support steps in one practice session as you would if responding to a real Volunteer.

## Materials

The handout at the end of this section should be used as part of the discussion, as background preparation for the facilitators, or as supplemental reading for the participants.

- *Handout A: Putting It All Together Case Study*

## Directions

### ***I. Introduction – 10 minutes***

#### *Step I: (5 minutes)*

Explain that this session will challenge you to apply the steps we have covered in a complicated case involving many players and some very emotional issues. The goal is not for you to fail, but to have a chance to apply the steps in a “real life” circumstance.

#### *Step II: (5 minutes)*

In order to recognize that the participants ALREADY had such experiences, ask “Just to set the tone for this exercise – and to show that these things really DO happen - will a few of you share the issues at the heart of the most challenging Volunteer support issues you have handled? We will not get into how you handled the issue or critique your actions; we just want to hear the issues.”

If someone begins to share names or other information that may identify the people involved, please stop them ask them to make their comments less specific so that confidentiality is maintained.

## **II. Activity – 55 minutes**

*Step I: Review Case Study (included at end of session) and Prepare Strategy and Questions. (15 minutes)*

In pairs (ideally a mix of American hires and local staff) read over the case study about Alice. Strategize how you two (and others at post) could best coordinate support for this volunteer.

Prepare a simple plan for your meeting with Alice including

- Your goals for the meeting
- How you might reach these using the skills we have been learning – using the steps that we have covered
- Who else would you want to talk with, and what more would you like to know

*Step II: Round One Role Plays (20 minutes)*

One person uses the plan above to support “Alice,” who is played by the other staff member. (10 minutes)

The other person uses the plan above to support “Alice,” who is played by the first person. (10 minutes)

*Step III: Mini-Debrief “Want to Improve” (5 minutes)*

In pairs, debrief how well you enacted your plan and used the support skills. Use the guidelines for feedback covered in the previous session.

First person, one minute review of how they did, then one minute feedback from the other person.

Second person, one minute review of how they did, then one minute feedback from the other person.

One minute to plan what to do better next time.

*Step IV: Round Two Role Plays (20 minutes)*

Repeat round one above and try to implement a few improvements identified in the debrief above.

One person uses the plan above to support “Alice,” who is played by the other staff member. (10 minutes)

The other person uses the plan above to support “Alice,” who is played by the first person. (10 minutes)

### **III. Discussion and Application – 25 minutes**

After the second role play, ask participants to return to the larger group and select from the following questions to debrief the activity:

- What did you all decide on as next steps at the end of your conversation with Alice?
- Who at post needs to be involved and why?
- What cultural aspect might be impacting this case? Could it be that Alice feels more comfortable with the PTO because they are American? How does this affect staff roles at post?
- Which of the support skills that we learned were you able to use?
- Which of the steps was easiest or hardest to implement and why?
- Did you improve from one round to the next?
- How did you prepare yourself?
- Which of the steps in the process of support seem particularly useful and why?
- What more did you want to know and from whom? (See below Facilitator Notes)
- What next steps do you intend to implement in your daily work?

Facilitator Notes: If it does not come up in the course of the conversation, be sure to point out that much of the “information” in the case study was hearsay, gossip, or insinuation. In fact, what the Volunteer actually did or did not do is not clear and should not be taken for granted. For instance in the “real life” case from which the scenario was taken, the Volunteer had NOT slept with her host brother and was NOT having a romantic or sexual relationship with her counterpart. She did sleep with another Volunteer early on in PST and developed a reputation for being “loose” which followed her throughout her service because other Volunteers spread (somewhat untrue) gossip about her. Also, her friendly behavior with her counterpart was interpreted by some locals as more than friendship and this contributed to her already bad reputation.

During the debrief emphasize that steps do not always go exactly in order but it is important to cover each one. For instance, if you skip the active listening steps you may not get the full and accurate picture. Each step may seem hard when isolated and practiced alone, but many people find that the skills come more naturally when a part of a typical conversation. Using the steps in the support process can help guide your conversations with Volunteers and give you an indication of how to structure the conversation to best benefit the Volunteer.

#### **Notes:**

## Handout A

# Putting It All Together

### CASE STUDY

**Alice** is 24 year old SED Volunteer who has been in country for nine months. She emailed the PTO for an appointment because she was upset with her Program Manager. The PM told her that her “relationship” with her host country supervisor was causing problems for her in the town and negatively impacting her work. She disagreed, saying that her friendship with her counterpart was not a problem and the members of her community and the staff of the NGO had not complained to her. In fact, everyone treated her very nicely.

It turns out that the PM recently met another PCV’s counterpart on a site visit and the counterpart said that the situation was an embarrassment because Alice was the main topic of gossip among the women of the town. The other PCV’s counterpart said that the NGO where Alice works already has a bad reputation and that this just confirms people’s worst impressions. When the PM told Alice this, she was enraged and defensive. When Alice called the PTO, she said she wanted help in teaching the PM that “he had no right to make judgments about her personal life.” She complained about his “stupidity” and that of the other counterpart.

The PTO sent an email to Alice saying that he/she would be glad to see Alice and made an appointment for them to talk. Alice sounded greatly relieved and said, “I knew I could count on you. You have always been so wonderful. I knew you would understand.”

Before their session, the PTO and the PM chatted about what they had observed about Alice since she had arrived in country. Alice seemed to be someone who had an instant group of friends and followers among the trainees. Her warmth, intensity and outspokenness were very appealing to some and a bit off-putting to others. She could be very caring about the underdog in any situation. This clearly was one element of her passion for Peace Corps service. On the other hand, she was quite hostile when her language teacher and the Training Manager both had to talk to her and ask her to try to be on time for class and to respect certain local norms. She seemed to think the rules did not apply to her.

The Training Manager also told the PTO that it is was rumored Alice had had sex with her host family brother, and that this happened at the same time she was having a relationship with another trainee. The PTO wondered how much Alice had heard of the health sessions in PST on contraception and STDs...and also about successful community entry.

Alice’s site is on the way to the capital city and is a popular “stopping off place” for many PCVs. Several of them said that it is such fun to hang out at Alice’s place, but it is very hard to leave and go back to their sites. Alice seems to be sad when people leave and quite anxious about being alone.



## **Volunteer Resiliency Training Toolkit**

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## Introduction

### Why train resilience?

Why do we have fire drills? There is no smoke. There is no fire. We have fire drills so that we are ready if there is a fire. Fire drills allow us to **practice** – to use our past experiences, our best judgment, make mistakes or get confused if the rules are changed -- **and learn**, practice and learn so that if there is a fire, we have some experience to reference.

Resiliency training plays the same role as fire drills. In PST trainees can get actively involved in scenarios, simulations, and case studies to practice: what would they have done in the States? what other experiences have they had that lead them to behave the way they might? what conditions are new and unfamiliar? what behaviors will lead to different outcomes in their Peace Corps setting? Try them out. Discuss and develop strategies. Consider the ramifications for their personal health and safety, their commitment to their communities and colleagues, their goals for being Peace Corps Volunteers. Practice and learn so that they have some in-country experience to reference should a tough situation appear or develop.

What are our goals when Volunteers use inappropriate behavior? If they drink too much, do we just want to send them home or do we want them to stop drinking? Drinking too much is both a symptom and a risky behavior; the Volunteer may see it as a solution to being overwhelmed, isolated. Why are they drinking too much? Can't face their daily encounters with neighbors and friends who are getting sick and dying from HIV/AIDS? Need to relieve the stress of trying to convince their adolescent students or youth group that education and training can help them out of poverty, or that battered women can seek refuge, or that taking intravenous drugs is putting them at risk? Our goal is to get heavily drinking Volunteers to change their behavior so that they can be safe, mentally and physically healthy, and so that they can be effective Volunteers. Behavior change isn't easy. It happens most often when the circumstances reward them for change, when change is reinforced by their peers and supported by their staff. Back to the commitment and goals for being Peace Corps Volunteers.

Pre-service training is a time to look at prevention. Perhaps it's a time to do the work of "worrying." What are some of the difficult situations they may face? How will they react? How can they support one another as peers? How will their staff support them? During PST they need to develop some concepts and vocabulary that will help them deal with what's ahead. Resiliency training must be geared to the realities of the host country and give the trainees practice in facing those realities.

### Background

In the fall of 2005, several offices in the agency were seeking ways to address the high turnover and burnout in Volunteers working in high stress situations. The questions that

these offices were asking were: How do we support Volunteers working in high stress communities? What tools and skills do Volunteers need in order to be resilient and effective while working with their Peace Corps host country partners?

The agency's Volunteer Resilience Group conducted a survey of Peace Corps field staff and the results of the survey were compiled and commonalities identified.<sup>1</sup> The group recommended the following strategies to address needs specific to Volunteers:

- offer staff, including host country nationals, training in empathetic listening to enhance responsiveness
- strengthen coping skills for Volunteers
- strengthen Volunteer peer support networks

At the same time these survey results were being analyzed, the Center for Field Assistance and Applied Research (the Center) had an opportunity to collaborate with the North American Simulation and Gaming Association (NASAGA) to create activities and simulations specifically tailored for developing training for Peace Corps Volunteer resiliency. Simulations and games can be extremely effective training tools for such topics since simulations and games generate actual behavior, rather than what people "say" they will do in a given situation. They provide a chance to try out behaviors and reflect on them. This collaboration resulted in several games and simulations created or modified specifically for Peace Corps Volunteers that allow exploration of their attitudes toward risk-taking, their comfort with peer pressure and decision-making, and their ability to identify healthy self-care strategies while under stress.

In addition to the interactive sessions created at the NASAGA conference and activities developed by Center specialists, this *Toolkit* contains information from the Peace Corps Office of Special Services. The Center appreciates the input and support received from all contributors to this important training resource.

## Field testing

The sessions were compiled into a *Volunteer Resiliency Training Toolkit*. Pilot testing of a number of the sessions resulted in the selection of some for a draft mini *Toolkit* for field testing. It provided nine session plans grouped in four categories: context and climate setting, building knowledge, applications, and integration. The mini *Toolkit* was made available worldwide and used at various posts. Feedback from the field has led to the current *Toolkit* which contains 13 sessions.

## Session methods

All sessions involve trainees in interactive learning. Each session may be considered a frame: the method employed may be filled with different content. The guided

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<sup>1</sup> This document, as well as data gathered from 56 countries across the three regions, and commonalities identified across three regions can be found on Agency All/EMA/Volunteer Resilience Research.

visualization can carry trainees down any number of potentially difficult paths; the loss exercise focused on specific host country realities; the Volunteer letter format rewritten to address any number of topics; the sequential case study move through any sequence of choices in the host country setting.

The sessions are powerful because they engage the learner: they provide practice with the emotional as well as intellectual content. They can help the trainees develop the vocabulary to talk about feelings. They must be carefully conducted and skillfully debriefed. (See Appendix A: Trainer Preparation) Combined with other post-produced materials, they can provide staff with fire drill practice for their trainees.

Some of the sessions – or parts of them – have been used in the field in staff retreats or staff training. (See Appendix B: Field Insights.) The materials are cross-reference in the staff training workshop, *Staff Training to Support Volunteer Resiliency*, which is also included on the *Training for Resiliency CD* [ICE No.T0138K].

### **Relation to health, safety, and cross-cultural content**

Resiliency training has a broad range of applications to Volunteer life. It's one of the cross-cutting subjects that is relevant in almost any discussion about Volunteer service. Here is a story that highlights how resiliency might be part of the average Volunteer's day-to-day life.

Mary, a Volunteer who works in an HIV/AIDS project, is exposed everyday to the disease and the effects it is having on her small community and its families. Professionally, she has to maintain the stamina to continue her work and build her credibility in an environment where stigma and shame are attached to a disease that is taboo to talk about (*Technical*). Gender roles in her community dictate who can and can't directly address men about their health issues and Mary struggles with this as well (*Cross-cultural*). She doesn't want to interfere with the culture, but she doesn't understand it either. After a few months at her site, Mary quickly learns that the stressors can be overwhelming so she started exercising with neighborhood children to keep fit and to have a few laughs (*Health*). When opportunities are available, Mary also visits her district center to spend time with other Volunteers. She enjoys their company, but worries about a friend who is really struggling at his site. His coping strategies seem to be drinking heavily and then shouting at "ignorant" locals (*Safety*). Mary wonders what to do...

Because it is a cross-cutting topic, sessions on Volunteer resiliency may be integrated into technical, cross-cultural, health, and safety sequences during both PST and IST training. For example, the simulation Resilia is an experiential way to introduce cross-cultural adjustment and the cycle of feelings. It is also a tool that can lead into community entry discussions and planning.

## **Sample goals and learning objectives**

### **Goal 1**

To build resiliency in trainees/Volunteers by increasing their understanding of stress, including cumulative and different stressors in the Peace Corps context, and where and how support is available.

By the end of these sessions trainees and/or Volunteers will

1. Describe the cumulative nature of stress, and how stressors in the Peace Corps context may differ from what they are accustomed to.
2. Recognize the coping strategies they tend to use to deal with stress and identify which are most appropriate in the Peace Corps context; identify some new coping strategies that may be useful.
3. Distinguish between constructive/healthy choices and destructive/unhealthy choices in response to the stresses inherent in being a Volunteer.

### **Goal 2**

To raise trainees' awareness of the links between risky behaviors and personal health and safety, and potential compromise of their goals of serving in the Peace Corps.

By the end of these sessions trainees and/or Volunteers will

1. Understand the consequences of destructive/unhealthy behaviors for themselves, their fellow Volunteers, the Peace Corps, and the community they serve.
2. Develop knowledge of concepts and vocabulary to describe feelings they may experience and benefit by discussing with peers or staff.
3. Know to whom to go to for support: including how to support themselves, and to request and receive support from other Volunteers, staff, and their community.

## **Sample agendas**

(see next page)

**One-day training program (general Volunteer resiliency focus)\***

Section	Title	Page	Topic	Time
Context and Climate Setting	Overview		Introduction to the unit	30 minutes
Context and Climate Setting	Chance Cards		Getting acquainted; expectations; knowledge of topic	45-60 minutes
Building Knowledge	Drown-proofing: A Way of Framing Resiliency		Preparing for the experience	120 minutes
Building Knowledge	Risk-taking		Exploring their risk-taking tendencies and relating them to Peace Corps realities	45-60 minutes
Application	Decisions! Decisions!		Sequential case study: risk taking and stress	75-90 minutes
Integration	The Essence of Resilience		Summarizing	30-45 minutes

**One-day training program (HIV/AIDS focus)\***

Section	Title	Page	Topic	Time
Context and Climate Setting	Overview		Introduction to the unit	30 minutes
Context and Climate Setting	Hello Game		Getting acquainted; expectations; knowledge of topic	30-45 minutes
Building Knowledge	Drown-proofing: A Way of Framing Resiliency		Preparing for the experience	60 minutes
Building Knowledge	The Loss Exercise: Compassion Fatigue		Experiencing the feelings of loss; understanding compassion fatigue	30-45 minutes
Application	Decisions! Decisions!		Sequential case study: risk taking and stress	75-90 minutes
Application	A Volunteer's Letter		Looking for support: what helps	30-45 minutes
Integration	Connections and Tensions		Summarizing	45-60 minutes

\*Note: posts may chose to use less sessions and/or to integrate them into other health and safety, technical, or cross-cultural programs. These are suggestions for putting together a sequential, one-full day of training around resiliency.

## Context and Climate Setting

### Session: Overview

#### Overview of Training

This session provides an experiential way to introduce the training on resiliency. It also gives the trainees an idea of what the other sessions will be.

#### Time

30 minutes

#### Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will

1. Describe stress as cumulative and problematic if not attended to.
2. Define resiliency in terms of the Volunteer's ability to recover from many and unusual stresses in a healthy and safe way.

#### Materials

Two paper cups

Pitcher of water (sufficient to fill both cups)

Flipchart with schedule of sessions (trainer should design based on sessions to be presented, breaks, etc.)

Blank flipchart

Markers

#### Preparation

1. Read the session and determine if the method of presenting the analogy is practical for your audience and training site. Consider if you could do it with all trainees holding cups.
2. Determine the schedule of sessions and create a flipchart.

#### Directions

##### I. Introduction (10 minutes)

A. Welcome participants to the training.

B. Invite two participants to come to the front for a demonstration.

1. Have them face the audience. Give each a paper cup and ask that they hold them at arm's length in front of them. Put a little water in each cup.

## 2. Ask participants:

How heavy is each glass of water? Let participants answer. *(Answers will vary.)*

## 1. State:

The absolute weight doesn't matter. (Add a little more water to each cup.) It depends on how long you try to hold it. And it gets fuller and fuller. (Fill cups up.)

If you hold it for a minute, that's not a problem. If you hold it for an hour, you'll have an ache in your arm. If you hold it for a day, we'll have to call an ambulance.

In each case, it's the same weight, but the longer you hold it, the heavier it becomes.

## 2. Ask:

How is this cup of water like stress? *(This is the way it is with stress management. If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, as the burden becomes increasingly heavy, we won't be able to carry on. As with the cup of water, you have to put it down for a while and rest before holding it again. When we're refreshed, we can carry on with the burden.)*

## 3. One stressful incident doesn't usually break us down. But, like adding to the cup, little by little, stress builds up; it's cumulative. In order to recover from stress, we need to take time out—find ways to put the burdens down and relax—empty the cup, at least a little, so we can begin again.

## II. Overview of resiliency training (15 minutes)

- A. Reveal the flipchart with the schedule. Describe the sessions.
- B. Write resiliency on a blank flipchart. Ask participants what they think it means. Note their answers. *(Answers should include the ability to bounce back—or forward – from high stress situations so as to be able to continue working; feeling positive again; to learn from/be transformed by challenges into a more emotionally stable, capable individual; become better able to handle new situations.)*
- C. Ask what they think might be tough for them as Volunteers? What might cause them stress? List on a flipchart. *(Answers may include language, different cultural norms, climate/environment, new job they don't know well, challenges of living with poverty, being a minority for the first time, etc.)*

- D. Ask how many of them see three or more items on the chart that probably will be stressful to them? Note that they should remember the cup: little by little it fills up and is held. It needs to be put down, emptied sometimes. The sessions we will be doing will help them develop strategies for being resilient as they deal with the stresses of being a Volunteer.

**III. Transition** (5 minutes)

*(Trainer's note: Make an appropriate transition to the next session you will be doing.)*

**Learning Points**

(Points to be brought up if they do not occur naturally in the discussion.)

1. Stress is cumulative and needs to be addressed before it becomes problematic.
2. Peace Corps experience will present Volunteers with a number of new stressful situations; learning about resiliency will help them address the cumulative stress.

**Notes**



## Context and Climate Setting

### Session: Chance Cards

#### Overview

This session uses an interactive technique to get participants thinking about how they best deal with stress and how those methods may or may not be appropriate at post. It also allows trainers to see the range and preferred ideas of the group.

#### Time

45 to 60 minutes

#### Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will

1. Identify several ways they have dealt with heavy stress in the past.
2. Identify one or two of the most constructive stress relievers that they think they can use as Peace Corps Volunteers.
3. Consider how to modify some stress relievers to make them possible in the new environment.
4. Relate stress to the Volunteer experience.

#### Materials

Five 3x5 cards (or ¼ sheets of paper) per participant

Pen or pencil for each participant

Flipchart pad and eight markers

Noisemaker (whistle, bell, etc.)

Flipchart from overview session with stressors for Volunteers

Optional handout: Coping Strategy Awareness

#### Directions

##### I. Introduction (1 minute)

*(Trainer's note: This session should follow the overview session where you introduce stress as a cup being filled with water and then held for a long period of time. That introduces the cumulative characteristic of stress. This session then moves on to look at stress relievers.)*

Say:

We have just discussed stress and some of the stressors we anticipate that Peace Corps service will bring. In this session we are going to look at how we prefer to deal with stress.

## II. Chance card activity (30 minutes)

### A. Writing cards

- a. Distribute 3x5 cards. *(Either have participants pull chairs up to tables that have cards, or give each participant up to five cards.)*

- b. Ask participants:

What things have helped you in times of high stress? They may be things you do, people you talk to ... whatever ways you have found helpful to relieving high levels of stress in your past. Think about it for a moment. Then write one idea per card. Write up to five cards, or more if there are blanks available. Please print so that others can read the cards.

- c. Collect the cards, mix them up, and spread them (writing side up) on tables.

- d. Select cards. Say:

Please walk around the tables and read all of the cards. Then pick up three that you think are useful ways to relieve stress. Move to the center of the room when you have your three cards.

- e. Exchange cards. Explain:

You are going to have about five minutes to walk around the room and meet up with other people. Find a partner and share all of your cards with each other. You must exchange one card—pick one from your partner that you like. Move on to a new partner and repeat the sharing/exchanging one card process. Please continue doing this until I tell you to stop.

OK, start moving about. *(Allow about five minutes which should be enough time for them to exchange cards with at least five people. Meanwhile, collect all the leftover cards.)*

- f. Stop and form small groups.

Call “stop” or use a noisemaker to get attention. Ask them to form groups of four to five members and find a place they can sit together. *(It is preferable if they gather around a table so that they can write on a flipchart, but they can do it on the floor.)*

- g. Small group task.

1. Say:

Put all of your cards out where everyone can see them. Talk about each of them and how you think they are helpful to relieve stress. Then reach a consensus on the five ideas that you think are the best. Reaching consensus means you all must agree—you cannot vote. You must convince each other that the idea is one of the best five choices you have. You'll have about 10 minutes to do this.

2. After about nine minutes, go to each group and see how they are doing. Provide them with a blank sheet of flipchart paper and a marker. Tell them they have one minute to finish deciding and to write their five items on the flipchart.

### III. Discussion and application (15 to 20 minutes)

#### A. Groups report out

Ask each group in turn to bring their flipchart to the front, post it, and read their five items. *(Post charts side by side so all are visible.)*

Ask if anyone has questions. Have group members clarify, as needed.

#### B. Discussion

Use questions such as the following:

1. What are the common items on various charts? Why did so many of you chose these?
2. What types of stress relievers are mentioned? *(relaxation, exercise, diversion, talking it out, etc.)*
3. Are any of these risky behaviors? If so, how? Might any of them be more risky in the host country than at home? If yes, why?
4. Are any of these impossible, or less possible, in the host country than at home? *(Calling friends on the phone, going to movies, etc.)*

*Trainer note: If using the optional handout, you may want to introduce the concept in this discussion, or distribute and discuss it here or in C below.*

#### C. Relationship to anticipated stressors on Volunteers. *(Post the flipchart from the overview session of what might be tough for them—cause stress—as Volunteers.)*

1. Ask them to consider whether they think their stress relievers will help with the items they listed. If they can't match their old forms of stress relief to these items, have them determine what others might be. *(For example, different people as support: contacts at their sites with whom they can exercise, play sports, enjoy other hobbies; other Volunteers;*

*Peace Corps staff; maybe writing about instead of talking out difficult situations, etc.)*

2. If using the optional handout, introduce it here, if not used in section B above.

### **Learning Points**

(Points to be brought up if they do not occur naturally in the discussion.)

1. Different people have different preferences for relieving stress.
2. Some preferred stress relievers may not be available, some may carry more risk than at home, or may have to be modified because of the environment.

### **Notes**

Trainers may wish to type up the “final five” charts for the Volunteers. They also might want to look through all of the cards written to see the range of ideas presented, and those that were not chosen to see if there are any that might need to be raised and addressed because they are against Peace Corps policies, are highly risky, or culturally inappropriate in the host country.

This session is based on a session format called Group Grope created by Thiagarajan, Sivasailam “Thiagi.” Used with permission.

## Handout

### Coping Strategy Awareness

Many coping strategies are developed unconsciously. (Conscious strategies are those that can be articulated and planned i.e. “I’m really stressed, let’s get together and take in a movie.”) Unconscious strategies are those we do every day to modulate stress and anxiety. They work because they alter internal states and regulate the timing, intensity, and/or frequency of exposure. They may include:

- Procrastinating, denying
- Sighing, moaning, complaining, cursing
- Talking more or less than usual
- Pacing, fidgeting
- Distancing, avoiding, isolating
- Drinking, eating, snacking
- Self gratification

These strategies work in the short term but can become problematic when used without awareness over the long run. If these strategies are used consciously, they tend to be more productive. “Sighing” may become *taking a deep breath*; “talking” becomes *connecting with friends*; “pacing” becomes *exercise*,” “Distancing” and “Isolation” become *counting to ten* and *taking a break*; and “eating” becomes being able to cook your own *comfort food* etc. Our preferred strategy should give us relief and pleasure rather than guilt or increased frustration.

It is helpful to be aware of one’s own preferred style or strategy when entering a new or difficult social situation. It is a far different thing to “choose” to stand to one side and observe than to be isolated and apart because we don’t feel we have any other option. Are you an observer/joiner? Are you vocal/quiet? Do you find a safe place to research the world around you or do you explore in order to learn?

How will any of our unconscious strategies be challenged in a new culture?

Assumption: In new cultures, our preferred unconscious strategies may serve to intensify social challenges making us feel increasingly lonely, isolated, miserable and/or bored.

#### Awareness process

- Unconscious unawareness—not knowing that you don’t know (a 6 year-old driving a car toy car)
- Conscious unawareness—knowing that you don’t know (a 12 year old knowing he can’t really drive)
- Conscious awareness—knowing that you know (a 16 year old who just got his license)
- Unconscious awareness—not knowing all that you know (a 32 year old who drives without thinking about it)

Jon Sanders, LCSW; Office of Special Services

## Context and Climate Setting

### Session: Hello Game

#### Overview

This game structures participants' interactions and encourages them to explore the training topic: HIV/AIDS. (Other topics could be working with out-of-school youth, living in inner-city locations, dealing with trafficking in persons, domestic abuse, dealing with corruption, or other highly stressful situations.) As an opener, facilitator and participants will tap into prior knowledge of the training topic. Alternatively, you may use this game as a closer to encourage participants to review and summarize what they learned from your training session.

#### Time

30 to 45 minutes

#### Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will

1. Describe the range of experience of participants with HIV/AIDS work.
2. List at least five participant expectations of the workshop.
3. Identify at least 10 myths of HIV/AIDS.
4. Identify at least five fears participants have about HIV/AIDS.

#### Materials

Timer  
Whistle  
Flipchart paper  
Markers

#### Directions

##### I. Introduction (5-10 minutes)

- A. Explain that you would like to find out what the participants already know about our topic: HIV/AIDS. In order to do this, you are going to play a game that will require participants to create detailed lists of different aspects of the concept.
- B. Reveal a flipchart with the following topics listed:  
  
Experience working with HIV/AIDS topics  
Myths about HIV/AIDS  
Fears about HIV/AIDS  
Expectations of this workshop
- C. Ask participants to form into four roughly equal-sized teams and sit together. (It does not matter if some teams have an extra member.)

- D. Assign a different topic to each team.
- E. Explain that each team will have the specific task of collecting information about the assigned category. In this process, each team should collect information from every person in the room. Also explain that the teams will have **three minutes** to plan, **three minutes** to collect information, and **three minutes** to analyze and organize the information before presenting it to the whole group.

## II. Group work (10 minutes)

- A. Conduct the planning period.

Ask teams to spend the next three minutes planning how they will survey the room and gather responses from all participants. Keep track of the time and give a one-minute warning after two minutes.

- B. Conduct the data-collection period.

At the end of three minutes, announce the conclusion of the planning period. Ask team members to go around the room, interview members of the other teams, and collect information associated with the team's task. Get out of the way and, as before, keep track of the time, giving a one-minute warning at the two-minute mark. Also, during the work time, pass out a blank flipchart and markers to each team in preparation for the next task.

- C. Conduct the data-analysis period.

At the end of three minutes, ask teams to stop collecting data and return to their original location. Each team should analyze the data, organize the information in suitable categories, and record their findings on their flipchart.

## III. Presentations and debrief (15 minutes)

- A. Invite teams to take turns presenting their findings to everyone in the room. Select the teams in any order. After each team's presentation, ask clarifying questions and encourage other teams to add additional information.
- B. Debrief the participants. At the end of all four presentations, discuss the information with the group.
  - 1. Ask for common themes, differences, surprises, and missing items.
  - 2. Ask if any of the expectations in the lists suggest misconceptions. If so, correct them.

3. Ask what the range of experience working with HIV/AIDS tells them, provides for them.
4. Relate this activity to the rest of your training session. *(Potential points might include using the information and experience already in the room; being creative in working together; taking responsibility for the learning of the group; etc.)*

### **Learning Points**

(Points to be brought up if they do not occur naturally in the discussion.)

1. Working with HIV/AIDS is much more complicated than just knowing the biology and helping people understand transmission; there are emotional and cultural issues as well.
2. Resiliency is going to require individual initiative to become active in finding support and help when needed and being part of mutually supportive group.

### **Notes**

Adapted with permission from online resources of training games by Thiagi, [www.thiagi.com](http://www.thiagi.com).



## Context and Climate Setting

### Session: Guided Visualization

#### Overview

This session has Volunteers reflect back on their entry into their community and getting established. It helps them recall some difficult times and then work with those. Though trainees could reflect on experiences before Peace Corps, this session is probably better to use at an early IST where everyone is reflecting on their Peace Corps experience. Placed there, it would be introductory to working on specific issues that are difficult for the Volunteers, such as dealing with death and dying, corruption, or other highly stressful situations.

#### Time

30-45 minutes

#### Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will

1. Reflect on their entry into their communities, identifying events and feelings.
2. Focus on a difficult event/series of events and express their feelings about it in words or drawing.
3. Consider how they coped with high stress and how they might do it better next time.

#### Directions

##### I. Introduction (5 minutes)

*Trainer's note: give an appropriate introduction based on when and why you are using the session.*

##### II. Guided visualization (10 minutes)

###### A. Say

We are going to revisit you entering your site, getting settled, and beginning your work through a guided visualization. To do that I will give you some prompts and time to think....just let your mind take you back to the scenes and feelings.

###### B. Guided visualization

*Trainer note: speak in a low, calming voice. Evoke sensory images: sights, sounds, colors, textures, smells, etc. Pace yourself, leaving quiet time after each prompt to give participants time to reflect and visualize each topic before moving on.*

Find a place that's comfortable: a chair, sitting on the floor, wherever you can relax without falling asleep!

Take a couple of deep breaths and let each out slowly; as you exhale the second breath, close your eyes.

As I provide topics for you to think about, please imagine events during the first few months of your service.

You have finished training, you had a great graduation and have said goodbye to your training friends..... You're on your way to your site. What is going through your mind: what are your expectations? Your hopes? Your fears?.....(long pause)

Finally, you are at your site. What are your first impressions? What images strike you? What do you see, hear, smell, feel?..... What does it look like? What smells strike you?..... How are people interacting?..... Who is the first person who greets you?..... Who is the first person who shakes your hand, and what does that feel like?.....

When you finally get your luggage and are able to go to your new home, what does it look like?..... Is anyone there to greet you?..... How is it decorated? Is there furniture?..... Are you living alone? Are you living with a family?..... How are you feeling and what sensations do you have on this first exploration of your new home?..... What was it like that first night in your new bed as you crawled in to go to sleep?.....

In the morning, how did you prepare to go to your first day of work in your home community?..... Did you have a counterpart?..... Did you have an office, go to a school?..... Did you work with farmers, elders, or key people in the community? Who greeted you?.....

Think about your daily patterns: who do you speak to?..... Where do you shop?..... Who do you visit with regularly?..... How do you get to work or around town?..... What has the weather been like? Have you been hot or cold?..... What does the sun on your face feel like?.....

As you continue to move into and become integrated in the community, you established friendships and relationships both at work and personally. Who are these people and what do you know about them?..... How do you spend time with them?..... Have you met their families... or have you been to their homes for a meal?..... Have they been to your home?.....

Think back to the first big challenge you experienced in your new community. It may have been an injustice witnessed, or a tragedy that has befallen a colleague or

friend. Perhaps someone has become seriously ill, or a neighbor, friend, or colleague has been hospitalized for an extended period of time or died.....visualize the event.....how did you feel?.....what did you do?.....(long pause)

What have you written home about? What have you told your parents and friends, and what haven't you told them so they wouldn't worry about you?.....

Sit with these images and let thoughts surface and move like waves.....

Open your eyes and without talking, begin to write whatever comes to you. Feel free to draw, if that's what comes to mind rather than words. This activity is for you to explore an issue and your ability to be resilient in the face of adversity. You can share if you choose to, but you will not have to if you don't feel like it. *(Give participants 5 minutes or so; watch to see when they seem to finish.)*

### C. Sharing (15 minutes)

- a. Prior to the participants sharing personal stories if they choose, you may want to take this time to share any personal story regarding resilience. Be patient, give people opportunity.
- b. Options: share as a large group or get into small groups of two or three.
- c. Perhaps start by sharing lighter, common experiences, such as a first impression of their home or a person. Then move into a sharing their challenging memory. Remind that they do not have to share any situation if they do not want to.

## III. Summary (10 minutes)

### A. Ask

1. What were the big challenges? Why? Were they new experiences, unexpected, unsettling because you didn't understand them?
2. In reflecting back on them and discussing them, do you have some new insights, ideas on how you might have handled the situations differently? handled your emotions better?
3. What are you learning about creating a support system in your new environment that will help you bounce back, learn from and grow from your experiences?

- B. Remind Volunteers that they are invested, committed and engaged, and can be responsible and accountable and learn to deal with difficult situations appropriately. They have a variety of outlets to cope with challenges in a healthy and constructive way. That's what the other sessions in this workshop will help them with.

## **Optional information**

### **Activity for end of workshop:**

Revisit guided imagery again. Re-enter community at the end of the workshop. Take them through the challenging situations and think about what they could have done differently. "Who have you talked to, what have you written? What kind of feelings do you have? How would you "re-do" yourself?"

### **River analogy**

Boulders build up and block the water's path. Issues left undealt with over time can cause a blockage of the water. Dealing with the boulders one at a time can keep things moving and won't deprive the river over time. How can you relate this analogy to dealing with the stresses of your Peace Corps experiences?

## **Learning Points**

(Points to be brought up if they do not occur naturally in the discussion.)

- 1.
- 2.

## **Notes**

## Building Knowledge

### Session: Drown-proofing: A Way of Framing Resiliency for Volunteers

#### Overview

To introduce the analogy of the preparation divers (or participants in other rugged or risky sports) take prior to diving to the preparation Peace Corps Volunteers might make to be prepared for unusual stresses they will face. This session should follow Chance Cards or another context and climate setting session.

#### Time

2 hours

#### Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will

1. Identify the many personal resources they bring to the Volunteer experience.
2. Identify knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to learn.
3. Describe the importance of relationships to their resiliency as Peace Corps Volunteers.

#### Materials

Blank flip charts, markers, tape

Prepared flip charts (each with one point from Handout A as heading and these three questions spaced below:

1. How is this like a Volunteer's experience?
2. What resources do you have (internal, external)
3. What resources (knowledge/skills/attitudes) do you need?)

Handouts:

- A. Preparation for Going Diving
- B. Intentional Relationship Building/Maintenance Worksheet
- C. Intentional Relationship Building/Maintenance

#### Directions

##### I. Introduction and Model (20 minutes)

- A. What does the Peace Corps ask you to do, in the most general sense? *To survive and enjoy prolonged exposure to an unfamiliar environment.* We recognize that Volunteers are under a lot of stress.
- B. We have found that methods to keep swimmers and divers safe have parallels to keeping you able to survive and enjoy prolonged exposure to unfamiliar environments. Let's explore that analogy. How many of you have been diving? If not diving, what other high risk sports have you participated in?
- C. Distribute Handout A: Preparation for Going Diving.

*Trainer note: If Volunteers have not had experience going diving, use the same general categories with something they are more familiar with – sky diving, skiing, etc.*

1. Let's look at each point for a diver or someone doing another extreme sport. (Discuss but do not take notes):
  - a. Train and practice for a variety of conditions  
*(learn to put on gear; practice breathing underwater where still can stand, then gradually go into deeper and deeper clear water, then murky water, then turbulent water...)*
  - b. Do not go in alone or without adequate supervision  
*(instructor leads step by step practice, gives feedback; taught to never dive alone; how to communicate with fellow divers, etc.)*
  - c. Be able to access and use available resources  
*(know what emergency gear you have and how to use it; practice getting out of difficult situations with an instructor present...)*
  - d. Become familiar with the depth and location of hazards  
*(learn how to read maps and reports of diving areas; identify types of hazards and what their affects might be.....)*
  - e. Be able to help others  
*(be aware of how others are behaving; know how to assist if they have problems with their oxygen supply or equipment....)*
  - f. Know how to prepare for future contingencies  
*(think ahead to weather conditions, consider what might happen with an uncooperative or inexperienced fellow diver)*
  - g. Manage high risk behaviors  
*(learn precautions before diving – e.g. not drinking, being rested, when/what to eat; develop network of divers you can call to join you; have equipment clean and repaired, sufficient air, etc.)*
2. These are the preparations divers take before diving. How do these categories relate to the Peace Corps Volunteer experience? That's what we'll explore next.

## II. Relating preparation for diving to resiliency (45 minutes)

### A. Ask, what is resiliency?

*(facing difficult situations and overcoming them; bouncing back--or forward—from high stress situations so as to be able to continue working, feeling positive again; learning from/ being transformed by challenges into a more emotionally stable, capable individual)*

Why do we need to talk about resiliency in Volunteers?

*(Peace Corps by its very nature puts Volunteers in continually stressful situations: living in a different culture; working under trying circumstances; often isolated and lonely by lack of language skills and distance from other Volunteers; facing different health and safety risks than at home, etc.)*

### B. Post or reveal the seven prepared flip charts around the room. Explain

Now let's look at the totality of all you bring to resiliency. Think for a minute: You came to the country with all of your life experiences – education, work, personal strengths. You're going through PST, learning facts and new behaviors, and receiving materials and resources. For each of these categories, what tools, resources do you have, either from the Peace Corps or your own background?

You'll see there is one chart for each of the categories we just discussed related to going diving. Under each point are three questions. Please assemble around the charts in equal groups and answer the questions on the chart where you are standing. You'll have 10 minutes.

*(Facilitator should help groups form and begin work. Answer any questions individual groups have. After 10 minutes, call time)*

### C. Now ask each group to move to the chart to their right. They'll have 5 minutes to read the chart and add any points they wish to make.

### D. After 5 minutes, have them move again. Continue until they have gone to all of the charts.

### E. Whole group discussion

1. Were there any surprises about the resources you have?
2. Do you know where to get the resources you need?

*Trainer notes: Learning Points to include*

1. *You have a lot of tools.*

2. *This looks like a lot of disjointed information, but taken as a whole, there is lots that builds resiliency.*
3. *You are in the middle of it – developing resiliency. You have to take responsibility for it.*
4. *Drown-proofing is both building on what's in you and relationships you build to support you.*

### III. Building intentional relationships (60 minutes)

#### A. Note to group:

If we look back at our charts, there are places that we see how important having people to rely on is to resiliency. Let's now look at how to build relationships which will support you and contribute to sense of well-being.

#### B. Distribute handout B, and ask Volunteers to do the individual task:

*Trainer note: If this session is done so early in PST that the trainees have not spent any length of time at their sites, modify the assignment to have them recall an important time in their life – maybe even the decision of whether or not to join the Peace Corps – and think of the people who were important in that time: helping them analyze the situation, supplying important information, supporting their decision, remaining a stable influence while they were have difficulty, etc. They can still share and analyze the types of people who were important and those with whom they formed intentional relationships for the type of support they needed. Finally, they can project who they might need to develop intentional relationships with at their sites and outside of their sites to help them as Volunteers.*

Think back on the time that you have spent at your sites so far. Identify a few key relationships that have contributed to, or detracted from, your success and satisfaction. Try to remember all the details about how and when you got to know these people. Jot down a few notes for yourself. You'll have about 5 minutes to do this.

#### C. Ask them to form small groups of five or six, and do the group task at the bottom of the page in the next 15 minutes:

Discuss the following questions:

1. Who are the people you originally talked to? How did you make contact? Are these the same people with whom you are now in contact?
2. Which relationships have you intentionally built and/or maintained?
3. How have the people you built relationships with helped/hindered your effectiveness and satisfaction at your site?
4. Who else might be important people to meet? Why?
5. How will you go about meeting and involving them?



D. In the large group, ask for some representative answers to the questions.

*Trainer notes: Learning points to include:*

- 1. It is not necessarily easy to build strong relationships in communities where you are the outsider and many things are different.*
- 2. It may be disheartening if you are working in an environment where people are plagued with illness or hopelessness.*
- 3. You may need to do some searching to find viable, hopeful creative counterparts and coworkers.*
- 4. It may be necessary to develop intentional relationships with hopeful and positive people outside of your community with whom you can talk and get energy.*

E. Distribute Handout C and review the key considerations for developing successful contacts.

F. Review the earlier definition of resiliency.

1. Ask participants how they think their own skills, resources, and the intentional relationships they anticipate can help them develop resiliency.
2. Ask them to think of one concrete action they can take to give themselves better “drown-proofing.”

## **Notes**

This session is very suited for in-service training. Even if it has been done in PST, the experiences the Volunteers have had will make the discussion much richer.

**Handout A**

**Preparation for Going Diving**

1. Train and practice for a variety of conditions
2. Do not go in a lone or without adequate supervision
3. Be able to access and use available resources
4. Become familiar with the depth and location of hazards
5. Be able to help others
6. Know how to prepare for future contingencies
7. Manage high-risk behaviors

**Handout B****Intentional Relationship Building/Maintenance Worksheet**

**Individually:** Think back on the time that you have spent at your sites so far. Identify a few key relationships that have contributed to, or detracted from, your success and satisfaction. Try to remember all the details about how and when you got to know these people. Jot down a few notes for yourself.

**In small groups,** discuss the following questions:

1. Who are the people you originally talked to? How did you make contact? Are these the same people with whom you are now in contact?
2. Which relationships have you intentionally built and/or maintained?
3. How have the people you built relationships with helped/hindered your effectiveness and satisfaction at your site?
4. Who else might be important people to meet? Why?
5. How will you go about meeting and involving them?

**Handout C****Intentional Relationship Building/Maintenance****Characteristics and key considerations for successful contacts:**

- Fact finding (learn about the person you are interested in contacting).
- Find someone who knows the person (as a referral or for an introduction).
- Enter and participate in activity settings.
- Drop-in, telephone, schedule an appointment, as is culturally appropriate.
- Explore areas of mutual interest, make a connection on a personal basis; look for shared beliefs and values.
- Leave the door open to follow-up; continue developing the relationship.
- Emphasize *process* not *product*. Without rushing the process of developing a relationship, look for appropriate opportunities to introduce collaborative activities.

**Keep in mind the following points about appreciative inquiry and intentional relationship building (IRB):**

- IRB takes time and is the key to successful and full community integration.
- Personal connections are indispensable.
- It is important to consider diplomacy, gender, and power relations.
- TRUST is absolutely essential.
- Look for shared values, beliefs, and experiences.
- Ideas for collaborative projects should come from community members.
- The IRB process requires courage, commitment, and confidence.
- “Meetings” and “contacts” do not necessarily equal “relationships.”

## **Building Knowledge**

### **Session: Risk-taking**

#### **Overview**

In this session, participants begin by playing a simple card game in pairs to determine their comfort with risk-taking. They then form a live continuum of degrees of comfort with risk-taking, and discuss the issues of risk-taking with Volunteer service, health, safety, and resilience.

Why use a game? An advantage of using simulations and games for training is that the behavior generated is actual behavior, rather than what people “say” they do. Preferences show themselves and people will talk more readily about their feelings and perceptions.

#### **Time**

60 minutes

#### **Objectives**

By the end of the session, participants will

1. Describe their general affinity or aversion to risk-taking.
2. Identify some of the stresses or pressures of Peace Corps service that might lead to risky behaviors.
3. Relate risky behaviors to their health and safety as Volunteers.

#### **Materials**

One deck of cards for every four players; create two “sets” of cards by selecting cards ace through 10 of a black suit and cards ace through 10 of a red suit for each “set.”

Signs: “Low Risk” and “High Risk”

Paper and pencil for each participant

Flipchart and markers

#### **Directions**

##### **I. Introduction** (1 minute)

“Enjoy the moment” is a valid piece of advice. “Think of the future” is another valid piece of advice. In this session we are going to do a playing card simulation that gives you practice in choosing between these two pieces of advice when making a series of decisions. Through this game we are going to explore risk-taking.

##### **II. Card game Karma** (20 minutes)

###### **A. Playing the game**

1. Brief the participants.

Demonstrate the rules of the game by playing a sample game with a participant from the audience. Assume the role of the dealer and let the participant make the decisions. Play the game according to the rules as explained below.

### Rules

1. Karma is primarily a solitaire game that is played by two players for 10 rounds. The object of the game is to accumulate a high score by the end of the tenth round. Participants usually accumulate a score of about 30 points.
2. One person will be the dealer; your partner will be the decision-maker.
3. The dealer shuffles two sets of cards separately, ace through 10 of a black suit, and ace through 10 of a red suit. The black cards are the “hand” and the red ones are the “stock.”
4. The decision-maker takes any card from the black hand and turns it face up.
  - a. If the card selected by the decision-maker has a value of 1 through 5 (counting the ace as 1), then this value is recorded on the player’s score sheet as the enjoyment score for the first round.
  - b. If the card selected by the decision-maker has a value greater than 5, it is labeled a *temptation* card. The decision-maker has the choice of enjoying or resisting it.
    - If she chooses to enjoy it, the value of the card is recorded on the score sheet as the enjoyment score for the first round. In this case, the dealer takes some red cards from the other hand and inserts them, face down, in the hand of black cards. The number of red cards depends upon the magnitude of temptation: If the decision-maker accepted a 6, one red card is moved to the black hand. If she accepted a 7, two red cards, and so on. (The number of red cards equals the value of the temptation card minus five.)
    - If the decision-maker resists the temptation card, she does not receive any enjoyment points for the round. No red cards are moved to the hand of black cards.
- 1) The game continues in the same fashion. The value of any black card less than six is added to the decision-maker’s enjoyment score for the round. In the case of a temptation card, the player has the choice of accepting it (which results in adding points to the score and moving red cards from the stock to the hand) or resisting it (which results in no addition of points to

- the score or red cards to the hand). If there are not enough red cards remaining in the stock, the player must resist during that round.
- 2) During any round, if the decision-maker selects a red card, its value is *subtracted* from the decision-maker's current total score.
  - 3) The game ends after the tenth round. The decision-maker's total enjoyment score becomes her score for the game.
2. Ask each participant to find a partner.
    - a. Between you, decide who will be the dealer and who will be the decision-maker for the first round.
    - b. Give each pair of partners a set of 10 black cards (the hand) and 10 red cards (the stock).
  3. Ask them to begin to play, keeping score of each round. If they have questions they can raise their hands for help.
  4. **Reverse roles:** The decision-maker of the first game becomes the dealer for next game. The game is repeated as before.
  5. Ask someone to collect the cards and have participants reassemble as a full group.

### III. Debriefing (10 minutes)

*(Trainer's note: Select from the questions below, and/or add some of your own.)*

- What was your score? (Trainer counts back from maximum of 55; participants raise their hand when their score is called.)
- How does this game reflect your Peace Corps work life?
- How does this game reflect your personal life?
- Did the second decision-maker let the first player's score influence her choices and her perception of the final score? Why do you think this happens? How does this reflect the real world?
- When you came across your first temptation card, what did you decide to do? Why?
- How would you have reacted if your score became negative?
- What was your decision during the last round? Did it differ significantly from your behavior during earlier rounds?
- Do you agree or disagree with the statement: Decision-makers play in a reckless fashion during the last round. They don't resist temptations during this round.
- If the hand contains several red cards, are you likely to grow more reckless? Why?

### IV. Continuum (15 minutes)

- A. Ask participants to think about their general reaction to risk-taking.

Based on the game we just played and your life in general, do you think you like to take risks (*place High Risk sign at one side of the room*) or are risk-averse (*place Low Risk sign at opposite side of room*)?

B. Explain:

1. We are going to form a continuum from low risk to high risk across the room. Think about where you think are on that continuum and go stand there and then listen.
  - a. Look at where you are in comparison to others.
  - b. Turn to those nearest you and talk about why you chose the place you did.
2. Ask a group toward each end to talk about why they are there.
3. Now ask them to consider one or more of the following situations, and to place themselves again on the continuum. Discuss responses to each.

*(Trainer's note: Create other more relevant scenarios as necessary.)*

- You live in a high prevalence area for HIV/AIDS and you meet someone to whom you are attracted and want to have sex.
  - You live where transportation is unsafe because the roads are dangerous, cars and busses are overloaded, and drivers take risks. You are so lonely, however, that you frequently to travel to other towns to visit other Volunteers, often returning late at night.
  - You find your daily work frustrating and stressful, and find drinking every night helps you feel better.
4. Ask participants to return to their seats.

**V. Summary and closure (15 minutes)**

A. Reflection

Ask participants to take a moment to think about their particular situation as Volunteers.

1. What kinds of behaviors are particularly risky to your safety?
2. What kinds of behaviors are risky for your health?
3. How can you relieve the stress and perhaps loneliness without engaging in high risk behaviors?



B. Alternatives to risky behaviors:

Brainstorm a list of activities that provide a change of pace and perhaps a challenge but are not risky to your their health and safety. (*Ideas may include journaling or creative writing, exercise, learning a local sport/cooking/song/craft, art, learning to garden, starting a youth club or activity at the school, etc.*)

C. Closure ...

### Learning Points

(Points to be brought up if they do not occur naturally in the discussion.)

1. Some people are more risk-averse than others.
2. What is risky behavior may be different as a Volunteer; more activities may be risky in the Volunteer setting than would be at home.
3. Thinking about the possibilities of risks to behaviors in advance gives you time to consider alternative behaviors.

### Notes

The Karma game is adapted with permission from online resources of training games by Thiagi, [www.thiagi.com](http://www.thiagi.com).

## **Building Knowledge**

### **Session: The Loss Exercise: Compassion Fatigue**

#### **Overview**

This exercise is a powerful way to discuss empathy and compassion for people who are experiencing grief or loss. It provides opportunities to explore compassion fatigue and identify some strategies to deal with it. It is appropriate for helping trainees who may work with those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

#### **Time**

60 minutes

#### **Objectives**

By the end of the session, participants will

1. Describe some of the feelings of extreme loss.
2. Relate their experience to issues around HIV/AIDS.
3. Describe compassion fatigue and explain some ways of dealing with it.

#### **Materials**

Paper and pens/pencils for participants

Handout: Taking Care of Yourself: Some Guidance for Volunteers

#### **Trainer preparation**

This session requires a trainer with experience in dealing with strong emotional responses and working with those responses in a group setting. The trainer should be knowledgeable about grief, loss, and compassion fatigue. Read the handout in preparation for presenting the session.

#### **Directions**

##### **I. Introduction (2 minutes)**

- A. Introduce this session as being one to help build empathy for loss. It may be an emotional experience. That is OK. We will work with the emotions that the session brings.
- B. Explain that participants will be thinking and writing individually. They will never have to reveal what they have written down.

**II. The exercise (10 minutes)**

- A. Ask participants to take a piece of paper and a pen or pencil and number their paper from 1 to 5. Explain that you are going to read five statements, and they will need to respond to the statements on their papers. No one else will see their papers and we won't collect them after this exercise. Do not share it with anyone else.
- B. Read each statement and give participants time to write down their responses.
1. Write down the name of the personal possession that you love most. Maybe it is your house, or a special item that your grandmother gave you, a book or something else. What one thing means the most to you? Write that after number one.
  1. Write down the part of your body that you are most proud of. Perhaps you like your eyes because they help you see, or you are very proud of your hair, or you love your ears because they help you listen to music, or you love your voice because it helps you to sing. Write down the one part of your body that you are most proud of for number two.
  2. Write down the name of the activity you most enjoy doing. Maybe it is going to church, playing football, dancing, or something else. What do you love doing more than anything else? Write that activity for number three.
  3. Write down one secret or very confidential thing about yourself that no one else in the world or only one other person knows about. Every one of us has some secret or very private things that he or she does not want anyone to know about. Write that thing for number four.
  4. Last, write down the name of the person whose love and support means more to you than anything else in the world. Write that person's name for number five.
- C. After everyone has finished, explain that you will now go through the list again. As you go through each statement, they should imagine that they are living through what you are saying.
1. Imagine that something terrible has happened that causes you to lose the material thing that you love most. Either someone steals it from you or some other loss happens that takes that thing away from you completely. You will never again see the thing listed on line number one. Cross it off your list now.
  2. Imagine that an accident or other unfortunate occurrence causes you to lose or lose the use of the part of your body that you are proudest of. This part of your

body is gone, and you will never have use of it again as long as you live. Cross out number two now.

3. Imagine that this same accident or unfortunate occurrence makes it impossible for you to do your favorite activity ever again. You will never again, in your entire life, be able to do the activity you wrote in number three. Cross out number three now.
4. Imagine that because of all of the above situations, your secret has been exposed. Everyone now knows what you wrote on number four. It has become public knowledge—everyone in school, in town, at church, and in the community is talking about what you wrote on number four. Circle number four now.
5. Last, because of all these changes (losing your possession, losing your body part, not being able to do your favorite activity, and everyone knowing your secret), the person that you love most in the world leaves you forever. You will never again see this person that you love and who is your most important source of support. Cross out number five now.

### III. Debriefing (15 minutes)

#### A. Emotions

1. Say,  
Take a few moments of silence to be with your feelings. *(People may feel uncomfortable. You probably want to say it is OK to feel bad.)*
2. Ask participants to note on their papers what they are feeling. They may want to write just words or phrases. They will not have to share anything they don't wish to. *(Give them time to think...don't rush this.)*
3. Invite participants to share any of the feelings that they would care to; they can just call them out. Write all feelings expressed on a flipchart. *(Feelings may include sad, overwhelmed, suicidal, depressed, angry, helpless, etc.)*
4. Ask if they would like to discuss any of them? Use prompts such as
  - a. What feelings do you see written up here that you share?
  - b. Are there any you do not understand? If so, can someone explain the feeling and what they think the reason behind it is?
  - c. Did any of you have feelings that were hard to express? Have you had opportunities to talk about feelings? Are you comfortable doing that?
  - d. Were there any of the losses that I asked you to consider that bothered you more than others? What ones? Why were they so troublesome?

5. Ask if they have had experiences—perhaps not this extreme—where such emotions were present. Does anyone want to share in a sentence or two what happened?

#### B. Application

1. Ask the participants to look at their list, and imagine how these feelings might relate to testing positive for HIV/AIDS. (*Personal possessions – loss of home, loved ones; body part – inability to use hands to touch others/prepare food, etc.; activities – loss of energy, friends excluding you; secret—stigma and discrimination coming from the knowledge one is HIV+ or has AIDS; loss of the person who loves, supports you – divorce/family disowning one because of fear or shame, being left when loved one dies, etc.*)
2. Many people who are living with HIV say this is how they feel everyday.
3. Most Volunteers consider themselves empathetic and compassionate. If people you are working with are experiencing huge losses, you will probably be feeling some of the losses, too. The repeated exposure to sad situations may lead to **compassion fatigue**.
4. What do you think compassion fatigue would feel like? (*Sadness, feeling overwhelmed, depressed, guilt: need to do more but can't; physical exhaustion*)
5. What would help you deal with these feelings? Write down your ideas.

### IV. Support (20 to 30 minutes)

#### A. Advice from professionals

1. There is an office in Peace Corps /Washington called the Office of Special Services. The staff there are available to work with post staff and Volunteers on issues such as compassion fatigue.
2. Let's read their description and advice. Distribute the handout and allow participants time to read it.

#### B. Discussion

1. What did you learn about compassion fatigue?
2. How can burnout affect your job performance and your feelings about yourself?

3. How did your ideas of dealing with compassion fatigue compare or contrast with the recommendations given?

C. Discussion of types of support

1. With your neighbors, form triads.
2. Discuss the suggestions under ‘What Can You Do?’ If talking about their own support, where can they find these things? What responsibilities do they have to support one another?

**IV. Closure** (5 minutes)

Ask each participant to name something they think they’ll need (in terms of support) and something they can give.

Alternately, select some of the stories of hope from Appendix B and have participants read them aloud.

**Learning Points**

1. Losses are cumulative. In thinking about themselves as well as others, consider the different dimensions of loss.
2. Compassion fatigue and burnout may occur where there is emotional overload and subsequent emotional exhaustion.
3. Burnout may manifest itself in reduced motivation, poor volume and quality of work performance, or dissatisfaction with or departure from work activities altogether.
2. Support is a range of activities, from individual small actions (healthy lifestyle) to local or peer support to organizational services. Try to build systems of support that can help you debrief your experiences and broaden your perspectives.

**Notes**

This exercise is adapted from the *HIV/AIDS Training Resource Kit* [ICE No.T0136K], Mitigation and Care Module, Session One. It might be helpful for the trainer to read that training module for more background.

## Handout

# Taking Care of Yourself: Some Guidance for Volunteers

*By Sharon Forrence and Jon Sanders, Office of Special Services*

Work as a Peace Corps Volunteer is by definition a challenge. The successful coping skills you developed to master daily life at home are tested as you experience the inevitable ups and downs of adjusting to a new culture. Anticipating these adjustments and utilizing pre-service training helps you through the process of adaptation.

Living and working in communities hard hit by the AIDS epidemic can add layers of complexity to the challenge of adjustment and adaptation. Volunteers may, for the first time, be confronted with the death and dying of friends and close colleagues. These losses in turn intensify feelings of loneliness that are normal when we disconnect from familiar surroundings and try to adjust to new settings. Some Volunteers talk about feeling numbed or exhausted. Some cope by working harder, hoping to realize a measurable impact even while the tides of the epidemic seem to wipe away their successes. Others may drink or engage in risky behavior as a way of dealing with emotional intensity. Empathy, a tool to help us make connections with others, can become overtaxed as these connections continually break and relationships make us vulnerable to grief.

## Compassion Fatigue

The Peace Corps has become increasingly aware that many Volunteers and staff throughout the world are working in communities and projects where AIDS can negate any sense of success or meaning, placing them at heightened risk for burnout and depression. This “compassion fatigue” occurs where highly committed, caring people become fatalistic and lose focus and motivation. People likely to be affected are usually high achievers with good intentions, ideals, and the desire to make a difference, striving to create an impact through their work efforts; this drive spurs them to “give their all” but can also shatter them when they feel they have failed. Experts in this area believe that the pattern of emotional overload and subsequent emotional exhaustion, at the heart of the syndrome, exists when people cannot look at work merely as a job; rather, they want to affect people, and they want their work to be significant. Because they identify emotionally with work, they equate failure at work with personal failure. You might be at risk when:

- You find it difficult to say “no” to additional commitments or responsibilities.
- You have been under intense and sustained pressure for some time.
- Your high standards make it difficult to delegate to others.
- You have been trying to achieve too much for too long.
- You have been giving too much emotional support to others for too long.

Burnout will often manifest itself in reduced motivation, poor volume and quality of performance, or dissatisfaction with or departure from the activity altogether.

### What to Watch For

Burnout is a predictable consequence when a Volunteer fails to “debrief” or re-energize actively and regularly. Intense living can become “addictive.” The Volunteer takes on more and more, working harder and harder, with less and less feeling of accomplishment. Burnout will normally occur slowly, over a prolonged period of time, and may express itself physically or mentally. Symptoms include:

- A feeling of lack of control over commitments
- An incorrect belief that you are accomplishing less
- A growing tendency to think negatively
- Loss of a sense of purpose and energy
- Increasing detachment from relationships (this may cause further conflict and stress, adding to the problem)

### What You Can Do

*Diversify your work.* Look for variety in the work you are doing. The immediate and compelling need to ease symptoms and/or help with coping strategies can monopolize a Volunteer’s time. It can be helpful to also focus on prevention and education, working with those for whom there is hope of living AIDS-free. Seek out non HIV/AIDS related activities or projects

*Seek out other helpers.* Seek out local initiatives and helpers whose energy and determination are contagious. It is not unusual for helpers and members of the community to develop a fatalistic, shortsighted view of the future; therefore, it is imperative to find ways of making hope “contagious.” Not everyone is ready for change. Work with people who want to learn.

*Develop a support network.* Developing a web of support in your community and amongst other Volunteers is important to help broaden your perspectives and deal with feelings of loneliness.

*Give yourself a break.* Allow yourself programmed time to de-stress. Accept that there will be ups and downs. If you feel down it is not a sign of a lack of effectiveness but may be a sign that it is time to think about or do something differently. Periodic, regularly programmed breaks are helpful and provide opportunities to re-energize from the strain of daily identification with those under “siege.”

*Practice **active** de-stressing everyday.* Even if you aren’t feeling stressed, tension can be present even in the absence of stress symptoms. Coping with stress is an everyday purposeful activity. While distractive activities (listening to loud music, getting involved in highly charged relationships, or self soothing by eating and drinking) may help for the



moment, strategies in which you are actively involved—walking, jogging, meditating, crafting, drawing, playing an instrument, gardening etc.—have longer lasting, healthier benefits.

*Find ways to tell the story.* Helpers can become overwhelmed by the “impossibility” of making things better. Being able to listen, to be present, to help others tell their story, and to tell your own story is also part of the job. Write to friends, contribute to alumni magazines, find a mentor with whom you can share your experience.

*Develop a wellness lifestyle.* A wellness lifestyle is not just the absence of disease but also the presence of good physical and mental health. It includes positive connections with others, physical health, creative activity, healthy emotional expression, and the ability to feel a sense of purpose in the work you are doing.

## Applications

### Session: A Volunteer's Letter

#### Overview

In this session, participants react to a letter from a Volunteer about compounded stresses on the job and at the site. By responding to the letter, they explore techniques for increasing their own resilience as Volunteers.

#### Time

45 to 60 minutes

#### Objectives

By the end of the session, the trainees will

1. Consider the different ways to support a person going through cumulative stresses as a Volunteer.
2. Determine at least five healthy and positive ways a Volunteer can help themselves and be supported during high and continued stress.

#### Materials

Flipchart

Colored Markers (8)

Timer

Whistle or other noisemaker

Blank paper and pen/pencil for each participant

Handouts:

- A. Letter from Chris
- B. Some Techniques for Increasing Volunteer Resilience

#### Preparation

1. Read handout A, Letter from Chris, to determine if it is appropriate to your situation. If not, write a different letter that brings out the situations Volunteers at your post will face.
2. Read the alternative ways to use a Volunteer letter in the trainer's notes at the end of the session. Using one of those or an idea of your own, make any changes in the flow of the session to better suit what you want to do.
3. Review handout B, and adjust it to meet your post and Volunteers' situations.

#### Directions

##### I. Introduction (5 minutes)

Briefly introduce the concept of resilience and discuss its importance in the life of a Volunteer. Point out that most people have personal techniques for making themselves snap out of negative thoughts and feelings of helplessness. The activity we are about to do will enable you to share such techniques.

**II. The letter from Chris (10 minutes)****A. Instructions**

You will get a copy of a letter written by a Volunteer, Chris. Read the letter and write an appropriate reply to Chris. Try to include two or more practical techniques you think might help Chris bounce back from the negative feelings that seem overwhelming. Please work independently. You'll have 10 minutes to write your response.

B. Distribute copies of handout A, the Letter from Chris, blank pieces of paper, and pens/pencils.

C. At the end of the time limit, blow the whistle and ask participants to wrap up their replies. Also ask each participant to create and write a four-digit Player Identification Number (PIN) at the top of his or her reply.

**II. Small group work with the responses (20-30 minutes)**

A. Ask participants to divide themselves into teams of five or six members each. They should seat themselves as groups as far apart from the other teams as possible.

*(Trainer's note: Adjust the numbers as needed. It is best to have at least three teams, and not have more than six members per team because of the team task.)*

B. Collect and redistribute the replies to Chris's letter.

Collect the replies from each member of each team, making sure that each member has a PIN. Keep the replies from each team as a separate packet. Give the set of replies from one team to the next team. (The replies from the last team goes to the first team.)

C. Review the replies and select the best one.

Ask each team to read aloud the replies received and select the most practical one. All team members should be involved in this selection process. Announce a five-minute time limit for this activity.

D. Identify the winning replies.

Ask each team to read the best/most practical reply that it selected. After all teams have done this, ask teams to read the PIN of the selected reply. Identify the authors of the winning replies and congratulate them.

E. Identify practical techniques for resilience.

Ask each team to read all of the replies again and make a list (on a blank flipchart) of different techniques for increasing resilience, identifying each technique in a few words. They have 10 minutes to list different techniques.

F. Compare with the master list.

1. Ask each team to post and read its list of resiliency techniques to the group.
2. Distribute copies of handout B, Techniques for Increasing Volunteer Resilience. Explain that this list contains some of the best suggestions from replies written during previous rounds of conducting this activity. Ask each team to compare its techniques with the earlier ones from different teams. Announce a five-minute time limit for this activity.

**IV. Debriefing** (5-10 minutes)

Conduct a discussion of the insights gained by different participants. Questions may include:

1. What did you learn from doing this exercise? (from writing a response; from your group discussions, etc.)
2. How do you think this session might help you as you experience stresses as a Volunteer?

**Learning Points**

(Points to be brought up if they do not occur naturally in the discussion.)

1. Stresses are both positive and negative. As the negatives ones occur, they tend to accumulate.
2. Volunteers will probably experience different kinds of stress than they are accustomed to. Some of the usual coping techniques may not be available or useful.
3. Volunteers need to find out what support they have from different people and activities, and learn how to rely on those as the feel stressed.

**Notes**

This session is based on a draft called Resilience written for the Peace Corps by Silvasailam Thiagarajan (“Thiagi”) in 2006.

There are various ways a sample letter like the one in this session can be used. Here are some possibilities. Number three with an asterisk is most similar to this session plan.

1. Trainees/Volunteers describe their fears
  - a. Trainees are asked to write their most feared scenario on a 3x5 card.
  - b. Sharing can be voluntary or not at all. (Not necessary)
  - c. Read the Volunteer’s letter aloud or distribute it to trainees to read.
  - d. They rewrite their most feared scenario.
  - e. They put it in an envelope, seal it, and write their name on it. They give it to staff.
  - f. Six months into service, or at an in-service training, they receive their card back. They read it and react. (This may be made into a session in in-service training.)

2. Trainees write a letter to the Volunteer in the letter, as (options):
  - a. Themselves, in pre-service training or in-service training.
  - b. A significant other who received the letter at home.
- 3.\* Trainees pretend they are the Volunteer in the letter.
  - c. They receive a letter from a significant other from home who says, “How are you doing? What is going on with you? Please write. I’d love to hear from you.”
  - d. Each trainee writes a response letter.
  - e. Letters are collected and redistributed to different people. In groups, they read the letters aloud and select the one they like the best. (Groups can determine what they mean by “best.”)
  - f. Each group shares the letter they chose and explains why.
3. Trainees analyze content of letter and develop a plan.
  - a. Trainees form groups; each group gets a copy of the letter.
  - b. They read the letter and determine the different issues that Chris is facing.
  - c. They talk about potential resources for Chris.
  - d. They develop a plan for Chris to address some of the issues.
  - e. They share their ideas with the other groups.
  - f. Staff adds in other sources of support, suggestions.

## Handout A

### A Letter from Chris

I volunteered as an AIDS educator in Nkhotakota, Malawi. Initially, I focused on becoming part of the system. Early on I learned the routine. The hospital staff and community members participated in a series of training events but mainly came for the per diem. I was often sought out by people claiming to be very interested in HIV prevention, but later came to find they were much more interested in the per diem. The system of trainings had truly become an income-generating activity in Malawi. My frustration with the apathy began to grow because I focused an incredible amount of time and energy on these trainings, which were not creating any change in behavior or decreasing the impact of HIV on Malawians.

As a secondary project, I decided to work with the children's malnourished ward because our district's infants were dying very rapidly upon arrival to the hospital. With regular meetings and lots of attention, we were able to revamp the program to decrease mortality by 50 percent in one month. To this day, I often tell people about that success. However, I generally leave out the fact that the program fell apart when the senior medical officer and the head nurse both died within my first year in the country. Both were HIV positive. When these incredibly capable people passed away it created a staggering void and left us without replacements. The senior medical officer who passed away was also my neighbor and a very good friend. I played with his twin sons every day and waited in fear, hoping they would not be positive too. I began to realize that I was working in a country where hope had died.

Although Volunteers were encouraged not to travel, I knew of Volunteers who frequently left the country searching for peace and a respite. Several Volunteers became involved in dangerous and unhealthy relationships, one with a very abusive ex-patriot and one with a married Malawian who refused to wear condoms. I was friendly with Volunteers who had major problems with alcohol and there were various other Volunteers coping with the situation in other destructive and harmful ways. The destructive behaviors were apparent to most Volunteers. There was no way to deal with overwhelming grief that seemed to sit on our chests on a daily basis.

When I read through my journal of this past year, I am shocked by the desperation and grief that I felt on a daily basis. My journal is filled with death and tragedy. The pages list deaths that overwhelmed me at the time and still do, including the death of my gardener, my neighbors, my coworkers, the school's assistant headmaster, children I played with, community members, and patients I befriended. For me, there was no escape from their despair. My personal inability to cope with these tragedies is limiting my ability to be effective. I just don't know what to do to get out of this morass of grief.

## **Handout B**

### **Some Techniques for Increasing Volunteer Resilience**

Practice active de-stressing every day in positive ways: quiet time (reading, meditating, doing crafts, drawing) and active ways (walking/jogging, gardening, playing an instrument).

Diversify your work: find places to do a different type of work once in awhile, like working with the school or youth out of school.

Plan and take periodic breaks.

Develop a support network: in your community, with other Volunteers. Find those who are positive; make hope contagious.

Seek to learn something new—improve language skills, learn about local history, native plants, how to cook local dishes.

## Applications

### Resilia Simulation

#### Overview

This simulation will allow trainees to experience some of the stresses they may encounter as they meet their counterparts and begin their assignments. It forces them to reflect on their feelings. The purpose is to explore the factors that may differ from past high stress situations and the support available that will help them to become resilient and effective in their work.

#### Time

3 hours

#### Recommended Group Size

Eight or more, preferably in multiples of four. If you do not have a multiple of four participants, some groups can have three, eliminating the role of Peace Corps Volunteer #1.

#### Objectives

By the end of the simulation (including the experience and debriefing), trainees will

1. Describe their personal reaction to a high stress situation and natural coping styles.
2. Identify at least three factors in the simulation that caused them stress that could not be addressed by their natural coping styles.
3. Describe at least five ways they can develop resilience by using resources available to them in their Peace Corps setting.

#### Materials

Blank flipcharts

For each table

- One pad of 3x3 paper or 10 quarter or half sheets of paper
- Four pens
- Four blank journals (see template at end of session plan)
- Prepared flip chart: “Chart Your Journey”
- Four colored markers, each a different color
- Four labeled envelopes that each contains its role sheet and own set of round cards
  - Peace Corps Volunteer #1
  - Peace Corps Volunteer #2
  - Host counterpart #1
  - Host counterpart #2

(Attach to the front of the round four card, in the envelope of host counterpart #2, a sticky paper that says, “Lost 20 pounds in one month.”)

Prepared flip chart: “Chart Your Journey” (extra copy)

One envelop containing the rumor cards labeled “rumor cards” for the facilitator

Role sheet: APCD or other staff member (optional)



**Handouts:**

- A. Information and Instructions for Participants
- B. Volunteers Working in High Stigma Communities (optional)
- C. Resources for Volunteers (prepared by post)

**Preparation**

1. Read the “Trainer’s Notes for Resilia” that follow the session plan. These will give you a rationale for the simulation and how to use it, how best to review the simulation to understand what will happen, what staff is needed to run it, and how to revise it to make it relevant to the situations your trainees/Volunteers will face.
2. To prepare the round cards for the game, use the version that can be printed on regular sheets of paper, cutting each in half. (For each round, each person will have a half sheet of paper that describes what they are to do in the round and whatever personal information about their lives that may be introduced.) If you have access to colored paper, you might make the cards for each round a different color: round one is white, round two is blue, etc.
3. For the Volunteer “meeting” in round 4, you can choose whether to have an APCD or other staff role to facilitate that meeting or just let the Volunteers talk on their own. If you have more than 5 tables, you should form two separate Volunteer groups in round 4. You might have one meeting facilitated and the other not; it would be interesting to debrief how each meeting went and the pros and cons of each in terms of the experience and learning.
4. Handout B could be useful if this simulation is used in high HIV/AIDS prevalence countries, where the stresses from issues related to the disease are major impacts on Volunteers. Handout B could be used in the debriefing, if it feels relevant.
5. Develop handout C, Resources for Volunteers, for your post.

**Room Set-Up**

- Tables, each with four chairs. Spread tables apart as much as possible. If necessary, two groups could sit at the opposite ends of long tables.
- Additional space where two members from each table can gather for a discussion in Round 4. If there are more than 5 tables, have space for two groups. This space may be outside of the main training area. Chairs are not necessary; participants can just stand or sit on the floor for this brief round.

## Directions

### I. Introduction (10 minutes)

- A. Explain that in this session they will have an opportunity to practice meeting with counterparts, learn about a community, and explore the ways they might work within the community. The purpose of the simulation is to let them practice entering a community and reflect on what is happening, how it feels, and how they might deal with some of the stresses that arise.
- B. Begin by doing a brainstorm activity to develop group norms about how we show respect for each other. Post them on a flipchart in full view of participants.
- B. Distribute a copy of handout A, Information and Instructions for Participants, to each participant. Read it aloud and invite any questions of clarification.

### II. The simulation (2 hours)

- A. Ask participants to take seats at the tables.
- B. Give one of the four labeled role envelopes to each participant at each table. Tell them not to open the envelopes until directed.

*Trainer note: If you are using staff or PCVLs in the simulation to take the roles of HCNs, be sure they get the materials for the those roles.*

- C. Once all participants have an envelope, tell them that there are sequenced instructions inside and they should not read ahead to the next round. Ask them to open their envelopes and take out the sheet that says “role card.” That is the role they’ll play in the simulation.
  - Ask them to read their role and think about it for a few minutes.
  - Ask them to imagine themselves in the community described.
  - If they are HCNs, think about how old they might be, who their family consists of, what their work might be like, what other obligations they might have. What are their expectations of having a Peace Corps Volunteer coming to the community to live and work? What do they hope the Volunteer will be able to do for them?
  - Ask the trainees/Volunteers to think of going to this community and getting ready to meet their counterparts. What are their expectations? hopes? concerns?
- D. Next ask them to silently read round card #1 and to begin their meeting.

E. Conduct each round as follows. (You may increase or decrease the time for each round, based on the energy you observe from participants, but realize the times allotted in the session require 2 hours for the simulation to play out. Adding time to the simulation **must not** decrease the time allotted to the debrief..)

- Round one (15 minutes total)
  - Do task outlined on round one cards (5 minutes)
  - Reflection (10 minutes)
    1. Give each participant a blank journal.
    2. Tell them to write their name on the front of it.
    3. Tell them to reflect on what just happened and to privately write their thoughts and feelings in the journal. Tell them that they will not be asked to show their journal to anyone else.
    4. In the last minute, ask them to turn to the page with the graph and identify where their energy is for round 1.
  
- Round two (15 minutes total)
  - Listen to and discuss information from round 2 cards. (8 minutes)
  - Reflection (7 minutes)
    1. Write in journals for 5 minutes.
    2. Take a minute to think about what you will do at the end of the day today; write that in your journal.
    3. Identify where you are on the graph. (1 minute)

*Trainer note: starting with round two, and continuing with every succeeding round, drop a rumor card at each table. You may give it to a specific person or just put it on the table. Different tables will get different rumors.*

- Round three (15 minutes total)
  - Do task on round three cards. (8 minutes)
  - Reflection. (7 minutes)
    1. Tell them to write their thoughts and feelings in their journals.
    2. After five minutes, tell them to finish their journal entry by writing what they will do in their downtime after their working day today. (This is still pretending they're in the simulation.)
    3. Ask them to identify where they are on the graph. (1 minute)
  
- Round four (20 minutes total)
  - Read the round four cards. The Volunteers take their cards and journals and form small groups of Volunteers only to follow their instructions. (If you have an APCD role, that person joins a group of Volunteers.) The Counterparts stay at the table and follow their instructions. (10 minutes)
  - Reflection (10 minutes)
    1. Tell participants to reflect on what happened in this round and to write their thoughts and feelings in their journal. Remind them that they will not be asked to show their journal to anyone else.

2. After eight minutes, tell them to finish their journal entry by writing what they will do in their downtime after their working day today. (This is still pretending they're in the simulation.)
  3. Ask them to identify where they are on the energy chart after this round.
- Rounds five to seven (15 minutes total, each)
    - Do task on the round cards. (5 minutes)
    - Reflection and journal writing as in round four above. (10 minutes)
- F. Call time. Tell participants that the simulation is over. Ask them to stay seated wherever they are.
1. Ask them to just sit quietly for a moment, close their eyes, and relax. (Pause)
  2. Say, We realize you have been playing roles that may have brought up lots of feelings – some of them perhaps intense. (Pause) Take a few minutes to absorb all that you have just gone through – your role, your discussions, your feelings. Realize you are not the host country nationals/counterparts nor the Volunteers; you each were just playing roles. (Pause)
  3. Ask them to bring themselves back to the training room by opening their eyes.
  4. Say, Take a few minutes to think back through the experience of the last couple of hours. If you wish, read through your journal, look at the chart. Then take a few minutes to write a final paragraph or two in your journal about the experience – it could be about the highs and lows you experienced. (5 minutes)
  5. Thank each other for playing the roles.
  6. Now I'd like to ask your permission to help you move out of the emotional place and into a cognitive one.

### III. Debrief and summary ( 45 minutes)

- A. Small group debrief (15 minutes)
1. Take your extra chart, and each using a different colored marker, put each of your marks on the extra chart, and connect the points.
  2. Using the chart as a reference, share with your group members your expectations, perceptions, excitement, disappointments.

*Trainer note: move from group to group, listening to the discussions. Note items you might want to bring into the large group discussion.*

**B. Large group debrief (30 minutes)**

1. Invite group to reassemble for a plenary discussion, with chairs pulled to the front of the room. They will need to bring their journals and the composite chart they created. Either have them post their composite charts, or put their lines on the larger wall chart.
2. Note that as they discuss, they should share only what they're comfortable sharing. Remind them of the group norms they agreed to just before the simulation.
3. Using the charts as a starting point, ask participants to look for patterns. What were individuals feeling when they marked the charts at various points – i.e. what caused rises and drops?
  - a. Were there times everyone in the group was up or down?
  - b. What affects did information from home have on your mood, you ability or interest in what was happening with your counterparts/community? Did you receive information you didn't tell anyone about? Why or why not?
  - c. Does any one have a specific journal entry they would like to share? (Perhaps have two or three from high energy periods, same for low energy periods.)
  - d. When you heard what people wrote about when they were "down," is there anything you wanted to say or do to help that person?
4. During the simulation, did any coping strategies emerge to help you deal with your stress? (Examples: develop a thick skin, ignore it, share/vent with peers, etc.) Were the separate meetings in round 4 useful in reducing stress? Why or why not?
5. What did you learn about yourself by participating in this simulation? In general, what did you learn about dealing with challenges of this kind? Does any one want to share what they wrote at the end of the simulation?
6. To what extent do you think this simulation reflects realities you may face?
7. What did you learn about yourself, others, that might be helpful as you enter your own community to start your service?

**C. Analysis of coping strategies (optional)**

1. Distribute the handout B, *Volunteers Working in High Stigma Communities*. Allow a few minutes for participants to silently read it. Describe and discuss activities that are considered “high risk” to Volunteers’ health and safety in the host country.
2. Ask participants to look at the sentence they wrote at the end of each of the entries in their journal. This should reflect what they would do in their downtime. Ask them to silently consider whether those activities might be categorized as “over-functioning,” “un-functioning” or “under-functioning” according to the handout. Invite any comments or questions.

#### D. Looking at resources.

1. Distribute handout C that describes resources available to them in their Peace Corps setting that can help them develop resilience. Review it together. *(Option: Ask them to form small groups and to write two questions they have about those resources. After ten minutes, answer those questions for the whole group.)*
1. Tell them to add to their journal at least five ways they are most likely to use to develop resilience.

#### E. Closure

Invite questions and comments on the session.

### Learning Points

(Points to be brought up if they do not occur naturally in the discussion.)

- 1.
- 2.

### Notes

The original design of this simulation for the Peace Corps was created by Debi Bridle as a part of a certificate course in game design during the 2005 North American Simulation and Gaming Association (NASAGA) Conference, in Manchester, New Hampshire. It subsequently was refined by specialists Chuck Needlman, Judee Blohm, and Stephen Moles in the Center through pilot runs and discussions with participants from the Center, OSS, African region, and outside educators.

## Trainer's Notes for Resilia

Resilia is a simulation. It presents *selected, key elements* of the experience of new Volunteers meeting with counterparts and attempting to get oriented and started working in their communities. It introduces the following elements to trainees/Volunteers:

1. Meeting with counterparts for first time.
2. Introducing themselves with their backgrounds, expectations.
3. Trying to communicate (in English) with people who have different lives, expectations.
4. Experiencing the dual stress of information from the “home” side of their lives at the same time as beginning their Volunteer experience.
5. Surfacing what they are experiencing, feeling, thinking.
6. Exploring how they might deal with unexpected stresses and how they can look for support.

Why is this an important learning tool? Simulations provide participants a chance to practice, just like flight simulators for pilots and fire drills in schools and office buildings do. The value in using this simulation in PST is to provide trainees an opportunity to experience the interactions and react....see how they did, explore how they felt, think about what might work better, or what might help them.

It is “a slice of reality.” It introduces key aspects of beginning in a community and leaves out others. This is purposeful; the elements selected are meant to give enough of the experience to have trainees feel the ups and downs, some of the emotions they may encounter in order to focus on how to cope with stresses in their new environment. Trainees also have to deal with stressors in their personal lives (i.e. a sick relative back home or missing an important occasion) at the same time as trying to adjust to life in the community.

As a part of the resiliency toolkit, it provides a way for trainees to build knowledge about themselves in order to be better prepared to look for positive ways to deal with stress. The simulation has them practice journaling, tracking their emotions on a chart, having a “break” from the community with an all-Volunteer meeting, and specifically thinking about how they would deal with stress at the end of the day in their community. These different elements are discussed in the debriefing.

Resilia does not have to stand alone in PST. It may well follow other sessions from the Resiliency Toolkit, and is a good introduction to cross-cultural adjustment and culture shock. It seems like a good fit right after initial site visits, when trainees will have gotten at least a glimpse at where they will live and work.

This session takes a big block of time. It needs three full hours. The third hour is the debriefing part; debriefing is essential for the lessons to evolve from the experience. It is **also essential to debrief** as it is unethical to involve participants in a session that will provoke emotions without dealing constructively with those emotions afterward.

Two facilitators should present this session. There are lots of things to do, distribute, and keep time of. It takes two. Two will also notice more of what is going on which can be used in the debriefing. It is not necessary to have a trained psychologist run this session. Good facilitators should be able to deal with emotions that may arise. And, if something in the simulation triggers strong emotions based on past experiences, a facilitator can assist the participant in getting more help to work through those, such as with the PCMO.

Some suggestions for dealing with tears, should there be some:

- give the person space to have/feel their emotions.
- say something like “your tears are welcome here” or “tears are okay.”
- give tissues and don’t touch the person; touching will interrupt their process.

Generally the person will share why they are upset, but may not. After the simulation is over, check with the person individually to see if they are okay. If they want to talk about what upset them, let them do that. If they are very upset (perhaps because of something unresolved that surfaced during the simulation), suggest that they might want to talk more about it with the PCMO.

### Suggestions for reviewing (and possibly revising) the simulation

1. Read through the training session to see how the session unfolds.
2. Read the role cards and then the round cards where you see all four roles at once. This may be a place you would like to make some changes to be more realistic for your post. Changes can be made in the type of community, type of Volunteer assignments, roles of the counterparts, and issues facing the community. It is best to make content changes only, not changes in the sequence of the rounds. The sequence and timing of the simulation have been tested and they work. Changes in the structure may lead to unexpected problems with running the simulation.

If you decide to make changes, here’s what needs to be done:

- a. Write a scenario that incorporates difficult/stressful issues that your participants face. The scenario should include location, description of the geography, size of the community, time of year (if it makes a difference) and other details that help set the scene.
- b. Create roles for two Volunteers and two community members. Develop a short role sheet for each which incorporates the scenario (from a) plus their role in it.
- c. Develop the “round cards” for each role for each of the seven rounds of the simulation. If possible, use the model provided and just change the details based on the scenario.



3. Read the rumor cards. Most of the rumor cards can be changed to reflect situations more likely at post. Leave some of them as rumors, as rumors influence participant thinking and emotions and will be debriefed. Some may be changed to “text messages” from friends, home, APCD, etc. Use only as many as you want. Using all 10 is not necessary; they are presented as examples.

#### Suggestions for how many can participate

This simulation can be run successful with only eight trainees, two tables of four. It can also be run with as many as six tables or 24 trainees. For more than 24, you might want to run two separate simulations, or run it at different times (e.g., with some trainees while other trainees are doing a different activity, and then reverse; or with different clusters of CBT groups on different weekends.)

#### Suggestions for using experienced Volunteers and/or Volunteer leaders

You might want to have experienced Volunteers, PCVLs, or HCNs play the roles of counterparts.

## **Template for journal and Chart Your Journey flip chart**

To make simple journals with three sheets of paper:

1. Print the template for the title page (see next page) on one sheet.
2. Print the “Chart Your Journey” graph on another sheet.
3. Get one blank sheet.
4. Fold all three sheets in half.
5. Lay the title page sheet open with the title facing the table.
6. Lay the chart page face up on top of that sheet and staple it to the top right corner of the title page sheet. Fold the chart over.
7. Insert the folded blank sheet between the front cover and the chart. Fold the title page over the rest.

Make enough copies of the “Chart Your Journey” graph so each table has one extra copy to use at the end of the simulation.

Make a large flipchart-size “Chart Your Journey” graph to use during the large group debrief.

**Journal**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Chart Your Journey**

(see pdf file attached to session plan)

## Handout A

### Information and Instructions for Participants

During this simulation, you will be working in small teams of new Peace Corps Volunteers and their host country counterparts. You will begin to develop relationships and will work together to solve problems. Your job will be to contribute as much as possible without jeopardizing your own health and well-being. Remember that you can leave the Peace Corps or quit your job at any time.

Each of you will be assigned a different role. Half will be Peace Corps Volunteers; half will be host country counterparts. Use your own name and as much real information as you're comfortable sharing.

You will be given an envelope that contains a series of round cards. At the beginning of each round, you will read the card for that round. The information on your cards will be about your community or the meeting you are about to have. It may also have some personal information – about your health or that of friends and family, or events happening in your hometown back home or to other Volunteers or community members. You do not need to share any personal information unless you are instructed to do so. You determine what to share as the conversation develops.

Do not read ahead to the next round. Do not show your cards to anybody else.

## Handout B

### Volunteers Working in High Stigma Communities

#### HIV/AIDS and Stigma

The influence of stigma (shame/guilt) in high HIV/AIDS environments is that communities affected develop dysfunctional communication or interpersonal systems which make confrontation of the problem extremely difficult.

“Dysfunctional” has a very specific meaning in this context. Customary ways of resolving community challenges are replaced by three **rules**:

1. Do not **talk** to or tell anyone about the problem;
2. Do not **trust** anyone to respond compassionately; and
3. Do not let anyone know how you **feel**.

As such, HIV/AIDS becomes the proverbial “elephant in the living room.” We go about our routines without ever talking about this thing that is taking up so much space in our lives and harming our family and friends. While the disease is infectious, the silence is contagious. Everyone is vulnerable and Volunteers and workers in the field may unconsciously develop coping strategies which can lead to burnout or early termination. Those discouraged strategies can include:

**Over-functioning** : These Volunteers are seen as “models” for everyone else. As such they may not give themselves needed breaks or rest. They may never feel satisfied with their efforts as they know just how much more could be done. Praise falls on deaf ears. It only proves that others are out of touch. They may feel guilty for not doing more.

**Un-functioning**: These workers “know” at some level that the work is overwhelming. They sense that they will never live up to the standards set by the “super” worker. As a result, they may turn to more negative strategies for coping with shame/guilt: high-risk behaviors, misuse of alcohol/drugs, unexplained absences from work, etc. They may feel angry at those that put them in this “impossible” situation, shame the morning after, and guilt at not doing the “right thing.”

**Under-functioning**: These Volunteers are aware that the other two are grabbing all the attention and may develop a strategy which seeks anonymity. All they want to do is get through the next couple of years without allowing their feelings to become too intense. They may fear that if they really let anyone know how they are doing that others will make a decision about whether or not they should stay. They may feel shame at not being more proactive or assertive, at not voicing their concerns, and not doing as much as others.

## Handout C

### Resources for Volunteers

(This is a sample. This handout is to be prepared by each Post.)

#### People

- Peer support networks
- Other Volunteers
- Local community members
- Friends and family back home
- Religious leaders or counselors
- Programming staff
- Training staff
- PTO/SRPTC
- Peace Corps medical officer
- Country director
- Embassy psychiatrist

#### Print and Electronic Materials

- Seven Practices of a Highly Resilient Post (selected sections) from OSS
- “A slice of life” - video and facilitated session
- Self-help strategies - handout
- The threat of verbal and physical assault – handout
- Coping with grief and loss from afar - handout
- *A Few Minor Adjustments* - book
- *Culture Matters* – book
- [www.peopleinaid.org](http://www.peopleinaid.org)

**Role definitions****Volunteer #1 Role Card**

You are a Volunteer assigned to an African community of approximately 1100 residents to work with the local health center responsible for preventive health education activities. Your initial counterpart is the local community health nurse. You are just beginning your Volunteer service. You had little health education experience before this assignment, though you did conduct HIV/AIDS peer education trainings while at university. Your pre-service training was designed to address the topics, techniques, and language needed to serve as a health education Volunteer (primarily nutrition/food security and reproductive health—including HIV and malaria).

The village you now live in is small, rural, agriculturally dependent, and is situated along the border of two countries.

**Volunteer #2 Role Card**

You are a Volunteer assigned to an African community of approximately 1100 residents to work in agriculture/natural resources management. Your initial counterpart is the head of the women's agricultural cooperative. You have just started your Volunteer service. You had some farming experience before your assignment. Your pre-service training was designed to address the topics, techniques, and language needed to serve as an ag/natural resource Volunteer (primarily local crops and trees, agricultural diseases, erosion control, and crop storage and marketing).

The village is small, rural, agriculturally dependent, and is situated along the border of two countries.



**Host Counterpart #1 Role Card**

You are a community health nurse in an African community of approximately 1100 residents. You work at the local health center and are the only trained medical person living in town. A doctor visits one day a month. The village is small, rural, agriculturally dependent, and is situated along the border of two countries. The main health problems are malaria, sexually transmitted diseases/infections (though HIV prevalence is unknown), and malnutrition.

You heard about the Peace Corps and requested a Volunteer to help with health education. That was several years ago, but you are about to meet the new health education Volunteer as well as another Volunteer who also has been assigned to your community.

**Host Counterpart #2 Role Card**

Your family lives in an African community of approximately 1100 residents. You have always been farmers, mostly raising your own food but selling some crops for cash. The village is small, rural, agriculturally dependent, and is situated along the border of two countries.

You are the head of a women's agricultural cooperative. You helped develop the cooperative to be able to share expenses of seed, storage, and marketing. Occasionally you have been able to have an agriculture extension agent visit, but now you are about to meet a Peace Corps Volunteer who will be living in your community and helping with agriculture and natural resources issues.

**APCD or other Peace Corps staff role card** (optional role)

You are attending a regional gathering of new Volunteers. They have been at their posts for several months and this meeting is to give them a chance to talk about their experiences so far.

Don't be overly directive. Listen and encourage them to discuss their concerns with each other and support each other.

## RESILIA Round Cards

*Note to trainer:* this view is so you can see what is happening with all roles during each round. Use the longer version (1/2 page per round per role) to make the cards for the simulation.

Peace Corps Volunteer #1	Peace Corps Volunteer #2	Host Counterpart #1	Host Counterpart #2
<p><b>Round 1:</b> Today you will be meeting with your counterpart and another new Volunteer and his/her counterpart for the first time. The purpose of the meeting is to get acquainted.</p> <p>You are to introduce yourself. Reveal some information about yourself and tell a little about your background. You can mention activities you like to do. You can explain why you volunteered for the Peace Corps.</p>	<p><b>Round 1:</b> Today you will be meeting with your counterpart and another new Volunteer and his/her counterpart for the first time. The purpose of the meeting is to get acquainted.</p> <p>You are to introduce yourself. Reveal some information about yourself and tell a little about your background. You can mention activities you like to do. You can explain why you volunteered for the Peace Corps.</p>	<p><b>Round 1:</b> Today you will be meeting with your new Volunteer and another new Volunteer and his/her counterpart for the first time. The purpose of the meeting is to get acquainted.</p> <p>You are to introduce yourself. Reveal some information about yourself and tell a little about your background. You can mention activities you like to do. You can explain why you chose your job.</p>	<p><b>Round 1:</b> Today you will be meeting with your new Volunteer and another new Volunteer and his/her counterpart for the first time. The purpose of the meeting is to get acquainted.</p> <p>You are to introduce yourself. Reveal some information about yourself and tell a little about your background. You can mention activities you like to do. You can explain why you chose your job.</p>

<p><b>Round 2:</b> It is two weeks later and you are meeting again. The purpose of this meeting is to learn more about issues in the community.</p> <p>Your host counterparts will describe some of the current problems and existing programs to deal with those problems.</p>	<p><b>Round 2:</b> It is two weeks later and you are meeting again. The purpose of this meeting is to learn more about issues in the community.</p> <p>Your host counterparts will describe some of the current problems and existing programs to deal with those problems.</p>	<p><b>Round 2:</b> It is two weeks later and you are meeting again. The purpose of this meeting is to tell the Volunteers more about issues in the community so they can help you.</p> <p>You and counterpart #2 will describe some of the current problems and existing programs to deal with those problems. Include some of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Malaria is a big problem. Many people don't come to the clinic because they don't have money.</i></li> <li>• <i>Malnourished children are dying. We are trying to educate mothers about better diets.</i></li> <li>• <i>More young women seem ill these days; we don't know why.</i></li> <li>• <i>Sexually transmitted diseases are a big problem during the dry season when truckers stop on their trips to "visit" local women. (HIV prevalence is unknown)</i></li> <li>• <i>Trafficking of young women and girls has been a community problem as they easily could be sold at the border. The new local government enforces the anti-trafficking laws and there has been a reduction in the number of girls who "immigrate."</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Round 2:</b> It is two weeks later and you are meeting again. The purpose of this meeting is to tell the Volunteers more about issues in the community so they can help you</p> <p>You and counterpart #1 will describe some of the current problems and existing programs to deal with those problems. Include some of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It is the rainy season and the rains are more torrential than last. Many of the onion and cassava fields are flooded and there is concern that the harvest (money) crops will be jeopardized.</i></li> <li>• <i>The roads are frequently impassible now and it is hard to get anything to market.</i></li> <li>• <i>This season is also called the "hungry season" because this month represents the time after planting and before harvest when there is frequently less food available and people have run out of money.</i></li> <li>• <i>More people are always sick in the rainy season and so work goes undone. This year seems worse than ever; many people are very thin with little energy..</i></li> </ul>
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<p><b>Round 3:</b> It is two weeks later and you are going to meet again to look at ways you may be able to work with your community.</p> <p>Just prior to the meeting you received mail from home, telling you that your grandmother (or grandfather or favorite aunt or uncle) is ill in the hospital.</p>	<p><b>Round 3:</b> It is two weeks later and you are going to meet again to look at ways you may be able to work with your community.</p> <p>Earlier this morning you received mail from your best friend, telling you she/he has just accepted an exciting job offer and will be starting work next week.</p>	<p><b>Round 3:</b> It is two weeks later and you are going to meet again to look at ways the Volunteers may be able to work with your community.</p> <p>You are thinking of other things. Your next-door neighbor is distraught because word got out in town that he has AIDS. He's being ostracized by everyone. You're worried about him. <b>Be sure to tell the others about this before anyone else speaks.</b></p>	<p><b>Round 3:</b> It is two weeks later and you are going to meet again to look at ways the Volunteers may be able to work with your community.</p> <p>Your six-year-old niece just died of dehydration. You do not have to tell anyone unless you want to.</p>
<p><b>Round 4:</b> It is the following weekend. You and the other Volunteer are spending the weekend with some other new Volunteers in the area. It is your chance to share experiences, talk about how you are feeling.</p> <p>Last week you heard from a second year Volunteer you met who is very excited about working on a school garden/child nutrition project.</p>	<p><b>Round 4:</b> It is the following weekend. You and the other Volunteer are spending the weekend with some other new Volunteers in the area. It is your chance to share experiences, talk about how you are feeling.</p> <p>You have heard a rumor that some of the Volunteers in the cluster villages are drunk often.</p>	<p><b>Round 4:</b> It is later in the week and you see the other counterpart and have a chance to talk. You can talk about whatever concerns you have or focus on how you can use your Volunteers to help with village problems.</p> <p>You are worried about the number of children who are sick; many are not coming to the clinic.</p>	<p><b>Round 4:</b> It is later in the week and you see the other counterpart and have a chance to talk. You can talk about whatever concerns you have or focus on how you can use your Volunteers to help with village problems.</p> <p>You have not been feeling well recently. You have lost a lot of weight. You must wear the enclosed sticker that says "Lost 20 pounds in the last month."</p>
<p><b>Round 5:</b> It's two weeks later and you're going to meet with your counterparts again. You want to get to work doing something.</p> <p>Looking through your notes from training reminds you that you learned how to prepare more nutrient dense meals using local foods.</p>	<p><b>Round 5:</b> It's two weeks later and you're going to meet with your counterparts again. Look for a specific idea that you can propose working on.</p> <p>You received a Volunteer newsletter this week with reference to some new materials on income-generating projects.</p>	<p><b>Round 5:</b> It's two weeks later and you're going to meet with the Volunteers again.</p>	<p><b>Round 5:</b> It's two weeks later and you're going to meet with the Volunteers again.</p>

<p><b>Round 6:</b> You are meeting with your counterparts two weeks later and you propose a specific idea you have.</p> <p>You just received mail from home, telling you there’s been no change in your sick relative’s health.</p>	<p><b>Round 6:</b> You are meeting with your counterparts two weeks later and you propose a project to work on.</p> <p>You just received mail from home, describing the fun surprise party you missed for your sibling’s birthday.</p>	<p><b>Round 6:</b> You are meeting with the Volunteers two weeks later. They asked to meet because they have ideas to work on. Be somewhat skeptical – at least respond in a non-committal culturally appropriate way.</p> <p>Your next-door neighbor committed suicide because he couldn’t handle the ostracism.</p>	<p><b>Round 6:</b> You are meeting with the Volunteers two weeks later at their request as they have some projects in mind. Be less than 100% enthusiastic but somewhat ambiguous in your responses.</p> <p>You are concerned because you’ve heard that the treasurer of the coop has been approached by several members to give them “informal loans” because they have no money for food.</p>
<p><b>Round 7:</b> Another two weeks have passed and you really want to leave this meeting with an agreement on some action. Do your best to get the counterparts to help work on some idea that they think will be beneficial to the village.</p> <p>You just received mail from home, telling you your relative seems to be doing well and has been released from the hospital.</p>	<p><b>Round 7:</b> Another two weeks have passed and you really want to leave this meeting with an agreement on some action. Try and work with the clues from the counterparts you got from the last meeting to collaboratively decide on some action to help the community.</p> <p>You just received mail from your best friend, telling you his/her partner left him/her for someone else. He/she is devastated.</p>	<p><b>Round 7:</b> It’s two weeks later. You’ve been thinking about the Volunteers’ ideas and know they want to get busy but you don’t want them doing things that will not help. Try and find something that will be useful to the community and yet culturally appropriate for them to help with.</p>	<p><b>Round 7:</b> It’s two weeks later. You’ve been thinking about the Volunteers’ ideas and know they want to get busy but you don’t want them doing things that will not help. Try and find something that will be useful to the community and yet culturally appropriate for them to help with.</p>

**Rumor cards**

*Note to trainer:* These are examples and most of them relate to the local situation described in the simulation and roles. Rumors are important as they affect people. So including some rumors—in some format—should be part of the simulation. However, you may wish to do some of the following:

1. If you change the scenario on which the simulation is based, you will need to change the rumors to fit the new situation.
2. Some rumors are on the round cards; they can be changed also.
3. The rumors might be text messages, blog entries, newspaper headlines, etc. You might note different forms of hearing the rumors that could happen in your country situation.

<p><b>Rumor card:</b> You heard a rumor that a Volunteer in your group has decided to quit and go home.</p>	<p><b>Rumor card:</b> You’ve heard a rumor that a male teacher who is HIV+ has raped one of the school girls.</p>	<p><b>Rumor card:</b> There’s a rumor that there is a cholera outbreak in a nearby town. Nothing has been confirmed by the Ministry of Health.</p>	<p><b>Rumor card:</b> You’ve heard a rumor that the government knows HIV/AIDS is a problem but is not going to announce it to the public.</p>
<p><b>Rumor card:</b> You’ve heard a rumor that several young women who recently returned from “immigration” have AIDS.</p>	<p><b>Rumor card:</b> You’ve heard a rumor that local women have set up a sex house to cater to the truckers in order to get extra income to buy food.</p>	<p><b>Rumor card:</b> There’s a rumor that a section of the road to the capital has washed out and no trucks with produce can pass.</p>	<p><b>Rumor card:</b> Several farmers have dug cassava to feed their families and found much of the crop rotten due to the heavy rains.</p>
<p><b>Rumor card:</b></p>	<p><b>Rumor card:</b></p>	<p><b>Rumor card:</b></p>	<p><b>Rumor card:</b></p>
<p><b>Rumor card:</b></p>	<p><b>Rumor card:</b></p>	<p><b>Rumor card:</b></p>	<p><b>Rumor card:</b></p>

**Role, round, and rumor cards for reproduction/use in simulation**

See pages that follow



## RESILIA Round Cards

### Host Counterpart #1

#### **Round 1:**

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You are to introduce yourself. Reveal some information about yourself and tell a little about your background. You can mention activities you like to do. You can explain why you chose your job.

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## RESILIA Round Cards

### Host Counterpart #1

#### Round 2:

It is two weeks later and you are meeting again. The purpose of this meeting is to tell the Volunteers more about issues in the community so they can help you.

You and counterpart #2 will describe some of the current problems and existing programs to deal with those problems. Include some of the following:

- *Malaria is a big problem. Many people don't come to the clinic because they don't have money.*
- *Malnourished children are dying. We are trying to educate mothers about better diets.*
- *More young women seem ill these days; we don't know why.*
- *Sexually transmitted diseases are a big problem during the dry season when truckers stop on their trips to "visit" local women. (HIV prevalence is unknown)*
- *Trafficking of young women and girls has been a community problem as they easily could be sold at the border. The new local government enforces the anti-trafficking laws and there has been a reduction in the number of girls who "immigrate."*

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## RESILIA Round Cards

### Host Counterpart #1

#### Round 3:

It is two weeks later and you are going to meet again to look at ways the Volunteers may be able to work with your community.

You are thinking of other things. Your next-door neighbor is distraught because word got out in town that he has AIDS. He's being ostracized by everyone. You're worried about him. **Be sure to tell the others about this before anyone else speaks.**

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## **RESILIA Round Cards**

### **Host Counterpart #1**

#### **Round 4:**

It is later in the week and you see the other counterpart and have a chance to talk. You can talk about whatever concerns you have or focus on how you can use your Volunteers to help with village problems.

You are worried about the number of children who are sick; many are not coming to the clinic.

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## RESILIA Round Cards

### Host Counterpart #1

#### **Round 6:**

You are meeting with the Volunteers two weeks later. They asked to meet because they have ideas to work on. Be somewhat skeptical – at least respond in a non-committal culturally appropriate way.

Your next-door neighbor committed suicide because he couldn't handle the ostracism.

## RESILIA Round Cards

### Host Counterpart #1

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#### **Round 7:**

It's two weeks later. You've been thinking about the Volunteers' ideas and know they want to get busy but you don't want them doing things that will not help. Try and find something that will be useful to the community and yet culturally appropriate for them to help with.

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## RESILIA Round Cards

### Host Counterpart #2

#### **Round 1:**

Today you will be meeting with your new Volunteer and another new Volunteer and his/her counterpart for the first time. The purpose of the meeting is to get acquainted.

You are to introduce yourself. Reveal some information about yourself and tell a little about your background. You can mention activities you like to do. You can explain why you chose your job.

## RESILIA Round Cards

### Host Counterpart #2

#### **Round 1:**

Today you will be meeting with your new Volunteer and another new Volunteer and his/her counterpart for the first time. The purpose of the meeting is to get acquainted.

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## RESILIA Round Cards

### Host Counterpart #2

#### Round 2:

It is two weeks later and you are meeting again. The purpose of this meeting is to tell the Volunteers more about issues in the community so they can help you

You and counterpart #1 will describe some of the current problems and existing programs to deal with those problems. Include some of the following:

- *It is the rainy season and the rains are more torrential than last. Many of the onion and cassava fields are flooded and there is concern that the harvest (money) crops will be jeopardized.*
- *The roads are frequently impassible now and it is hard to get anything to market.*
- *This seasons is also called the “hungry season” because this month represents the time after planting and before harvest when there is frequently less food available and people have run out of money.*

***More people are always sick in the rainy season and so work goes undone. This year seems worse than ever; many people are very thin with little energy..***

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## **RESILIA Round Cards**

### **Host Counterpart #2**

#### **Round 3:**

It is two weeks later and you are going to meet again to look at ways the Volunteers may be able to work with your community.

Your six-year-old niece just died of dehydration. You do not have to tell anyone unless you want to.

## **RESILIA Round Cards**

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It is two weeks later and you are going to meet again to look at ways the Volunteers may be able to work with your community.

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## RESILIA Round Cards

### Host Counterpart #2

#### **Round 4:**

It is later in the week and you see the other counterpart and have a chance to talk. You can talk about whatever concerns you have or focus on how you can use your Volunteers to help with village problems.

You have not been feeling well recently. You have lost a lot of weight. You must wear the enclosed sticker that says “Lost 20 pounds in the last month.”

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It is later in the week and you see the other counterpart and have a chance to talk. You can talk about whatever concerns you have or focus on how you can use your Volunteers to help with village problems.

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#### **Round 6:**

You are meeting with the Volunteers two weeks later at their request as they have some projects in mind. Be less than 100% enthusiastic but somewhat ambiguous in your responses.

You are concerned because you've heard that the treasurer of the coop has been approached by several members to give them "informal loans" because they have no money for food.

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You are meeting with the Volunteers two weeks later at their request as they have some projects in mind. Be less than 100% enthusiastic but somewhat ambiguous in your responses.

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#### **Round 7:**

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## **RESILIA Round Cards**

### **Peace Corps Volunteer #1**

#### **Round 1:**

Today you will be meeting with your counterpart and another new Volunteer and his/her counterpart for the first time. The purpose of the meeting is to get acquainted.

You are to introduce yourself. Reveal some information about yourself and tell a little about your background. You can mention activities you like to do. You can explain why you volunteered for Peace Corps.

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It is two weeks later and you are meeting again. The purpose of this meeting is to learn more about issues in the community.

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It is two weeks later and you are going to meet again to look at ways you may be able to work with your community.

Just prior to the meeting you received mail from home, telling you that your grandmother (or grandfather or favorite aunt or uncle) is ill in the hospital.

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Last week you heard from a second year Volunteer you met who is very excited about working on a school garden/child nutrition project.

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It's two weeks later and you're going to meet with your counterparts again. You want to get to work doing something.

Looking through your notes from training reminds you that you learned how to prepare more nutrient dense meals using local foods.

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Looking through your notes from training reminds you that you learned how to prepare more nutrient dense meals using local foods.

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You are meeting with your counterparts two weeks later and you propose a specific idea you have.

You just received mail from home, telling you there's been no change in your sick relative's health.

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Another two weeks have passed and you really want to leave this meeting with an agreement on some action. Do your best to get the counterparts to help work on some idea that they think will be beneficial to the village.

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Today you will be meeting with your counterpart and another new Volunteer and his/her counterpart for the first time. The purpose of the meeting is to get acquainted.

You are to introduce yourself. Reveal some information about yourself and tell a little about your background. You can mention activities you like to do. You can explain why you volunteered for the Peace Corps.

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It is two weeks later and you are going to meet again to look at ways you may be able to work with your community.

Earlier this morning you received mail from your best friend, telling you she/he has just accepted an exciting job offer and will be starting work next week.

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You have heard a rumor that some of the Volunteers in the cluster villages are drunk often.

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It's two weeks later and you're going to meet with your counterparts again. Look for a specific idea that you can propose working on.

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You are meeting with your counterparts two weeks later and you propose a project to work on.

You just received mail from home, describing the fun surprise party you missed for your sibling's birthday.

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You just received mail from your best friend, telling you his/her partner left him/her for someone else. He/she is devastated.

**1\*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card**

You heard a rumor that a Volunteer in your group has decided to quit and go home.

**2\*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card**

You've heard a rumor that several young women who recently returned from "immigration" have AIDS.

**3\*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card**

You've heard a rumor that a male teacher who is HIV+ has raped one of the school girls.

**4\*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card**

You've heard a rumor that local women have set up a sex house to cater to the truckers in order to get extra income to buy food.

**5\*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card**

There's a rumor that there is a cholera outbreak in a nearby town. Nothing has been confirmed by the Ministry of Health.

**6\*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card**

You've heard a rumor that the government knows HIV/AIDS is a problem but is not going to announce it to the public.

**\*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card \*Rumor Card**



## Applications

### Session: Decisions! Decisions!

#### Overview

Volunteers' goals, as is that of Peace Corps staff, is to have a **safe, productive** and **interesting** Peace Corps tour of service. We have learned from Volunteers and returned Volunteers that developing the capacity to “think smart, act smart and stay safe” is an important strategy for meeting that goal.

So what is think smart and act smart? It is the ability, even under stress, to take a moment, take a breath, and remind oneself of ones own stated personal goals and the limits one defined for oneself in training. Doing that, everyone will make better and safer decisions—even in the face of pressure.

In this session, trainees or Volunteers work with the data from a real, tragic experience of a group of Volunteers. This session is designed as a sequential case study, with pauses to discuss, strategize, role play, and reflect. It contains a final section on resisting peer pressure.

If risky behavior is a problem at post, this might be a good session to follow the session “Risk-taking” in the Building Knowledge Sessions.

#### Time

1 ½- 2 hours

#### Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will

1. Recognize the larger picture in decision-making situations.
2. Experience the strength of peer pressure and its role in their health and safety.
3. Reconfirm their commitment to the Peace Corps mission and their part in it.

#### Materials

Flipchart paper and markers

Paper and pens/pencils for each participant

Handouts:

- A. Volunteer scenario—part 1
- B. Volunteer scenario—part 2
- C. Volunteer scenario—part 3
- D. Decisions! Decisions! Questions

## Directions

### I. Introduction (5 minutes)

#### A. State:

Your goal, as is that of Peace Corps staff, is for you to have a **safe, productive** and **interesting** Peace Corps tour of service.

We have learned from Volunteers and returned Volunteers that developing the capacity to “think smart, act smart, and stay safe” is an important strategy for meeting that goal. So what is think smart and act smart? It is the ability, even under stress, to take a moment, take a breath, and remind yourself of your own stated personal goals and the limits you defined for yourself in training. You will make better and safer decisions—even in the face of pressure

#### B. State:

In this session, we are going to explore a real situation that happened to a group of Volunteers. Our purpose is to look at decision points and consider the options.

### II. Sequential case study (60 to 75 minutes)

#### A. Distribute handout A and ask participants to read part one of the scenario.

#### B. Discuss

1. What are the issues facing the Volunteers and taxi driver? *(You might list them as “pushes” and “pulls” on a flipchart. The “pushes” are the circumstances or factors that encourage them to cross the ravine. The “pulls” are the ones that encourage them not to go. Be sure to consider the point of view of the taxi driver as well as the Volunteers.)*
2. What experiences have you had that might help you make a decision if you were in this circumstance?
3. Note on paper, for yourself, what you would have wanted to do if you were there. Would you have brought it up to the group? (Note yes or no.)
4. What do you think they decided to do? What would be the deciding factor?

#### C. Distribute handout B and ask participants to read part two of the scenario.



## D. Discuss and role play

1. What are the pros and cons of continuing to the hostel, across the second ravine?
2. List the people and where they stand on the decision. Who do you most identify with?
3. Let's try playing out a decision-making scenario. *(Select people to play the roles of the Volunteers and taxi driver. Have them come to the front and discuss the choices and make a decision. See if other participants would like to replay the decision-making discussion—as there is interest, replay it several times to get several possible decisions.)*
4. Ask participants to answer these three questions on their papers:
  - a. What would you have wanted to do? How hard would you have pushed the group to do that?
  - b. What do you think the Volunteers decided to do?
  - c. What do you think happened?

E. Distribute handout C and ask them to read the conclusion of this **real** story.

## F. Reflect and discuss

1. Say: Take a couple quiet minutes to think about this terrible event.
2. How did this make you feel?
3. State:

Smart thinking is recognizing that short-term relief of pressure, peer pressure or one's own stress, is not worth long-term problems or worse. This event did not have to happen!

None of the Volunteers in this avoidable, sad event thought peer pressure would ever provoke them into such a dangerous decision.

What about you? Could you avoid following the temptation to go along? You can inoculate yourself from many poor and unsafe decisions with preparation: using the power of your thinking and decision-making to prevent falling victim to group-think.

4. Ask how many of them thought the incident would end like this?

### III. Peer pressure (10-30 minutes)

*Trainer note: This is a good place to take a few minutes to practice responding to peer pressure. Here are two ideas.*

1. Have participants pair up. Ask them to think of a “risky activity” that they might like to do – for example going to a local bar at night and drinking until late. Then have them take turns trying to convince the other person to participate in the activity.

After the practice, discuss what techniques they used to pressure the person such as using “pressure lines” ( “everyone will be there,” “you know you’d like to go – it will be a good break” ), bargaining (“if you’ll go with me tonight, I’ll go to town with you next weekend”), ridicule (“don’t be a wimp”), threats of exclusion (“if you don’t come along, we’re going to quite asking you to do stuff with us”), etc.

2. Form small groups of 3-5. Have each group write a short scenario where they want one or more other Volunteers to go along with their plan. Have them select a couple of other Volunteers to role play the situation with them, trying to convince the other Volunteers to comply.

Discuss as above.

### IV. Closing (10 minutes)

#### A. Reflection

1. Ask participants to reflect for a moment on their own goals as Volunteers.
2. Distribute handout D, *Decisions! Decisions! Questions*, and ask them to write their answers.

#### B. Closing thoughts

1. Ask participants to share some of their thoughts from this session.
2. As a staff member, share some of yours.

### Learning Points

(Points to be brought up if they do not occur naturally in the discussion.)

1. Judgment can be impaired by various things, such as being overly stressed and the desire to enjoy oneself.
2. Peer pressure can be exceedingly strong and may prevent one from doing what they think is best, safest.

## Notes

The *Life Skills Manual* [ICE No. M0063] has sessions on assertiveness (in Communication Skills) and peer pressure (in Relationship Skills) that may be useful in conjunction with this session.

## Handout A

### Volunteer Scenario—Part One

In 2001, seven first-year small business Volunteers in the country of Valencia were working on a short-term project in a very small town in Vallero Province, about 2 ½ hours outside of the capital, Primavera. They came from different sites in the Vallero region. Their APCD, Carlos, had driven them to the site of the project and remained with them for the first week. At the end of the week he returned to the capital as the project was going well. For transportation, the Volunteers would use the single taxi in town, a Land Rover that had been checked for good tires and brakes.

During the three-week project, the Volunteers were based at a nongovernmental organization (NGO) hostel atop a hill, across two ravines (usually passable, mostly dry riverbeds) a little way out of town. The Volunteers were two women and four men between the ages of 23 and 35. One had been a police officer in the Midwest, four were recent college graduates, and one had been a high school teacher in California. They were all educated, motivated, and relatively hard-working Volunteers.

On the evening of Saturday, October 23, a party was scheduled at the NGO hostel. The Volunteers were eager to attend the party and ready to return to base after a hard day at work—during the rainy season—in the unfamiliar environment of this town. It had been raining for two days, off and on. At 5:00 p.m. they signaled Orlando, the taxi driver, that they were ready to go back to the hostel. It was pouring. Orlando came in the Land Rover and the Volunteers piled in. They were driven to the first of the two ravines, the more shallow but wider of the two, and Orlando, clearly a bit leery of crossing this now flowing river in his taxi, paused and asked them if they wouldn't prefer to wait in the town until the next day. Julie, the former police officer, thought that would be a better idea, though where would they sleep?

## Handout B

### Volunteer Scenario—Part 2

So they took off and crossed the riverbed very slowly: the wheels were spinning, the rain was torrential. Slowly, slowly they drove and made it to the other side—with relief.

They continued on the gravel road, which was potholed and waterlogged in places, and arrived at the second ravine. The rain had not stopped. This ravine was just below the NGO site so they could see the lights from the party, but the overpowering noise of the storm made it impossible to hear the music. This usually dry and narrow riverbed now had a very strong current: the ravine was at the bottom of a sea cliff so that the torrential storm was causing heavy water and tree limbs, rocks, and other flotsam and jetsam to course down the cliff and through the ravine.

Tom thought it looked a bit dangerous, but waited for the others to say something. Julie said again that it might be better to turn back or wait it out. Orlando agreed with her, so did Barney, but he was taken with the lights of the party and wanted to go on—as did Todd and John. Kati stayed silent, but was visibly nervous. Jeremy thought Julie might be right, but was teased by the others not to be “a wuss.”

## Handout C

### Volunteer Scenario—Part 3

They decided to “test the waters” and make sure of the depth—on the theory that if it were not too deep, the taxi could pass through. Todd, who was tall and saw himself as macho, got out of the taxi and waded into the river with a stick. It was hard to walk but the stick hit bottom at about three feet. So they decided to cross, and told Orlando they would pay him extra.

At first the taxi inched across getting buffeted by the wind, the raging water, and debris. Halfway across the river, the taxi was hit by a large tree trunk and destabilized—it overturned and hit a boulder then it turned upright again. The door was damaged and several of the Volunteers were hurt. They were in the middle of the river with the debris pressured down from the cliff and pummeling the car. Orlando fruitlessly honked the horn and shouted to alert the people at the hostel.

The taxi was hit hard again and overturned again. The damaged door swung open and Julie, Todd, and Kati were thrown out into the raging river. Everyone left was terrified, screaming, and trying to hold on as the taxi righted itself again.

The remaining Volunteers and Orlando were frantic now and screaming to the people on the other side of the ravine. Finally, someone outside of the hostel saw the taxi in grave distress and he called for help. The taxi was immobilized. The rains were slightly diminishing.

The remaining Volunteers and Orlando were able to pull themselves on top of the Land Rover and were pulled to safety, one by one, with a rope they held as they walked across the river to the waiting hands of people from the hostel. They were traumatized and cold. They were not able get in touch with the Peace Corps until much later.

The next day, Julie and Todd’s bodies were found floating, swollen, and bashed, in different locations down river. Kati, terrified, had grabbed onto a limb and held on until she almost fainted. When the rains slowed, she was able to make it to the riverbank. She can’t remember now how she made it, but she remembered thinking about her parents and sister and never seeing them again. Her leg was broken and she was bruised in many places.

The others were cut and bruised but all survived. They say they will never forget the incident. The loss was tragic and the injuries were serious: this incident impacted the families of the Volunteers and affected the entire Peace Corps community. There was a memorial service for Todd and Julie at the training site.

## Handout D

### Decisions! Decisions! Questions

1. Review your own goals as a Volunteer. Please articulate today, and periodically remind yourself, of your own values and your reasons for being in the Peace Corps. What are some of those reasons?
2. What value do you place on your own safety and health? What about your fellow Volunteers? And what about the potential impact of your actions on your country program?
3. What would you caution fellow Volunteers to do in such a circumstance? How could you encourage them to think of the risks involved?

## Integration

### Session: Connections and Tensions

#### Overview

Connections and tensions is a way to explore the issue of Volunteer resilience from a more holistic perspective and generate a deeper discussion about the topic. The session recognizes and reinforces the idea that Volunteer resilience is related to and shaped by a whole variety of factors—and that an individual Volunteer’s behavior is only one part of that larger context. For more on this topic, staff can request a copy of *The Seven Habits of a Highly Resilient Post* from the Office of Special Services.

#### Time

60 to 90 minutes

#### Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will

1. Identify several key ideas for resiliency and relate them to each other.
2. Describe how some key resiliency factors may be in tension and how this tension can be resolved.

#### Materials

At least three 3x5 cards for each participant

One pen or pencil for each participant

One blank name tag for each participant

Chart paper and stand

Ball of yarn or string

Markers

#### Directions

##### I. Introduction (10 minutes)

- A. Distribute three 3x5 cards to each participant. Ask: What are the three most important things you can do to strengthen your own and each other’s resilience? Write one strategy on each card.
- B. Have individuals report out by choosing the most important item from their cards and sharing it with the group (use second choice if first choice is already reported by another person). Write all responses on a chart for all to see.
- C. Ask each person to review the chart and select an idea they feel is important, and then write the idea on a name tag. Reinforce that they are **not** picking their favorite or the most important idea, just one that they think is important to explore further.



*(Trainer's notes: It helps if the ideas are written like a headline in one to three words so that they are clearly visible when written on the name tag. If you have a large group you may want to have pairs of people represent a single idea. This will shorten the time needed to relate and report out in the following two steps. If you opt for pairs, always allow a person who feels strongly about an idea to represent it alone.)*

## **II. Relate to the other ideas in the room (10-20 minutes)**

- A. Say: Become the idea that you selected and go around the room and talk to the other ideas. See how you relate to one another. Does one idea form the foundation for the other? Do you see ways that they might be at odds? How could that be resolved without weakening resilience?
- B. Stop the conversations after people have had the opportunity to interact with most of the participants and say, "I heard a lot of interesting discussions. Give me a short headline about the idea you represent and how you related to other ideas." *(Do not get into a complete debrief of the connection of ideas yet. The point in this step is to form the web.)*
- C. Next, say, "Let's build a web of all these relationships. Sounds to me like 'knowing yourself' might come first. Is that what I am hearing?" Unwind some yarn from the ball and give the end of the yarn to "knowing yourself." As "knowing yourself" holds on to the yarn say, "From knowing yourself, who should get the yarn next, or how does it relate to others?" Participants might say that "having a local friend" should come next because it is often needed for a successful community entry and to help to understand the inevitable cross-cultural differences.  
  
Pass the ball of yarn to "Local Friend" who takes hold of the yarn. The group continues to build the web by asking how ideas are related to one another. The group continues moving the yarn until all are connected. Some ideas may be mentioned several times and that person ends up holding several loops of yarn.
- D. Point to ideas who are holding several loops of yarn and ask for thoughts from the group. Local Friend might say "This idea seems to be key! If we work on these ideas, other things may fall into place."
- E. Then ask: "What are some possible tensions among the ideas?" Someone points out that "spend quiet time alone" and "integrate into community" (two of the ideas mentioned) might be in tension. Ask for thoughts from the group about how to reconcile these ideas.
- F. Then say: "What would happen if an idea were missing?" To demonstrate, ask one of the ideas with one or a very few wraps of yarn to drop the yarn, and then ask the group to step back to pick up the slack and tighten the web. Local Friend may note that the web *is* feeling wobbly or less stable. Do this once more, but this time

ask one of ideas with many loops to drop the yarn. Repeat dropping little and then big ideas until the web becomes too unstable to hold together. Then ask everyone to drop the yarn and move to the debriefing step.

### III. Debrief of activity (10-20 minutes)

A. Debrief the group with questions like these:

- How are you feeling?
- How did you experience the activity?
- What did you observe during the activity?
- What ideas were reinforced by this activity? Have any ideas changed? How?
- It is useful to see the connections and tensions among the ideas? How?
- Based on this activity, what might you do differently in the future?
- Can you imagine a circumstance in which you could put these ideas into action where they would really make a difference for someone?
- How can we use this to strengthen your peer support of each other?

The group might point out that it has a new view of the original list and has a new sense of which of the items might be a “lever” or “catalyst” for producing results in several areas. They also see where they need to explore some tension among the ideas. From dropping parts of the web, they now have the view that for the whole to succeed, all of the items must be attended to since none is operating in a vacuum.

B. Thank the group for its observations and for “being such great ideas.” Ask participants, throughout the rest of the pre-service training and through their service, to think back on this exercise and to look for things to do that act as a catalyst for their own or each other’s resilience. Also, think back on and watch out for things that weaken each other’s resilience.

C. After a minute of silence thinking on these questions, ask if there is anyone who wants to share out loud his or her thoughts. Take a few of these (until all who want to have had a chance to share) and wrap up by thanking people for their willingness to do some deep thinking and reflecting on this important topic

### Learning Points

(Points to be brought up if they do not occur naturally in the discussion.)

- 1.
- 2.

### Notes

This session is adapted with permission from a session by Chris Saeger.

## **Integration**

### **Session: The Essence of Resilience**

#### **Overview**

Teams of participants write several summaries of the sessions, repeatedly reducing the length of each summary until they arrive at the “essence” of their learning or insights.

*(Trainer’s note: This technique is especially useful with conceptual or informational content that can be effectively summarized. In this case, the training content is more subjective and key learnings may vary from one person to the next. Therefore, there may be a need to provide more time for discussion and debate during the creation of the 16-word and 8-word summaries.)*

#### **Time**

45 to 60 minutes

#### **Objectives**

By the end of the session, participants will

1. Identify their major learning and insights from the preceding training sessions.
2. Distill and prioritize among their learning and insights to express the essence of their learning.

#### **Materials**

Flipcharts from previous sessions

Notes and handouts from previous sessions

Paper and pen for each person

#### **Directions**

##### **I. Introduction (5 minutes)**

- A. Tell participants that they are going to have a creative way to summarize what they have learned in the sessions about resiliency.
- B. They will have a few minutes to look at any of the flip charts and recall the sessions that we have done. If they have notes or handouts, they should review them to identify key words, ideas, or insights that summarize their learning in these sessions.

##### **II. Group Summaries (30 minutes)**

- A. First group summary
  1. Ask participants to form groups (three to five people per group).

2. Their task is to create a 16-word summary of their learning from the sessions on resiliency. They'll have 10 minutes to do the task.
- B. Reading of summaries
- Ask teams to share their summaries one at a time. Each team should listen to the summaries from different teams and identify any aspects that it could use in the next summary.
- C. Second Group Summary
1. Now ask teams to rewrite their summary into exactly eight words, retaining the key ideas and borrowing thoughts and words from other teams' earlier summaries.
  2. At the end of the five minutes ask each group to share its current summary, one at a time. No explanations, discussion, or debate should be allowed at this time.
- D. Third Group Summary
1. Repeat the process, asking teams to reduce the length of the summary to four words.
  2. At the end of the five minutes ask each group to share its current summary one at a time. No explanations, discussion, or debate should be allowed at this time.

### III. Individual Summary (5 minutes)

Finally, ask each participant to write an individual summary of two words that expresses the essence of what he or she has learned. Tell participants that they will not be required to share these summaries, but can volunteer to share. Ask for volunteers.

### Learning Points

(Points to be brought up if they do not occur naturally in the discussion.)

1. In order to prepare a short summary, participants have to recall the content and identify what is most important/essential.
2. The fewer the words, the more conceptual the summary becomes.

### Notes

Session used with permission from Thiagarajan Sivasailam "Thiagi."

## Integration

### Session: PSA Activity

#### Overview

This session gives participants time to reflect on the topic of resiliency and what it means in terms of their Peace Corps service. Then they create a 90-second TV “spot” to convey the message of how to be/become resilient to potential volunteers.

#### Time

30-45 minutes

#### Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will

1. Discuss resiliency in PC Volunteer terms.
2. Create a 90-second TV “spot” to convey how new Volunteers can become resilient.

#### Materials

Blank flip chart paper

Colored markers

Flipcharts and handouts from all previous sessions

#### Directions

##### I. Introduction (5 minutes)

- A. Explain that as a way of summarizing the sessions on resiliency in their own terms, they will have a chance to be creative.
- B. In small groups, they will review the content of the sessions, think about examples of stressors in their lives as Volunteers, and decide what advice they have for themselves and others on becoming more resilient.
- C. Then, they are to create a 90-second TV spot that could be used to inform potential Volunteers about constructively dealing with the stresses of their service.
  1. They are welcome to use flip carts and markers or any other materials in the room or that they can easily find.
  2. They will have 15 minutes to review and prepare their PSA.

##### II. Preparation of PSAs (20 minutes)

- A. Ask them to divide themselves into groups of five.
- B. Begin their review of the content and development of their PSA.

- C. After 5 minutes, remind them of the time left.
- D. After 10 minutes, remind them that have 5 minutes to finish preparing.

### **III. Running the PSAs (20 minutes)**

- A. Ask the groups, one after another to present their PSAs.
- B. When all have finished, ask the groups to meet briefly and discuss all the PSAs in terms of their message. Select their favorite one.
- C. Have each group report out their favorite PSA with the reasons they chose it.

### **Learning Points**

(Points to be brought up if they do not occur naturally in the discussion.)

1. Stresses Volunteers face will be different than those from home.
2. Some of the ways to reduce stress will have to be different because of what is available and cultural customs.
3. It is important to find healthy and safe ways to relax and recoup their energy.

### **Notes**

This would be a good IST activity.

## **Appendix A:**

### **Trainer Preparation: Conducting Volunteer Resilience Workshops**

Anyone considering conducting the sessions contained in this manual or any other resilience training should read this section first.

#### **Are you ready?**

Conducting a resilience workshop may be unlike conducting most other workshops you have led. Unlike many other workshops that teach skills, emotional issues are front and center. Not every trainer, no matter how good, is suited to conduct a resilience workshop. This is not a commentary on someone's experience as a trainer. Rather, it is directly related to the person's ability to facilitate a productive and honest workshop that may be emotionally charged by using skills in helping individuals within the group deal with difficult memories, loss, and counterproductive/risky/culturally inappropriate stress reducing behavior. Resilience facilitators must also be experienced with group dynamics and demonstrate strong support skills.

- Analyze your personality and your training style honestly. Due to the issues mentioned above, if you do not feel comfortable training without a script, discussing emotional issues, or conducting an interactive workshop, you may not be the best person to conduct a resilience session. While this training manual is largely scripted, effective resilience workshops should be driven by the participants. Trainers need to react to the input of the participants and relate their comments and experiences to the learning points. Trainers who are most comfortable when they are in control or who confront trainees rather than ask thoughtful questions may not create a safe space for resilience training. This sometimes causes participants to withdraw and shut down rather than open up and stretch their abilities.
- Reflect on and utilize your own resilience, your own experiences with difficult situations—issues that make you feel uncomfortable, sad, or helpless. As a resilience facilitator, speak from your own experiences, be aware of your shortcomings and know what issues and subjects cause an emotional reaction for you.
- Attend a few resilience workshops (such as stress management, dealing with grief and loss, behavior change related to risky behaviors) as a participant. This provides some of the basic background information that everyone needs and it will also allow you to experience what your participants will go through and what their reactions may be. It will also give you firsthand knowledge of how such a workshop is facilitated. If you have never facilitated a resilience workshop before, you should co-facilitate with a more experienced trainer the first few sessions.

#### **Questions to ask yourself as you prepare to conduct a resilience workshop:**

- ❖ What are my coping mechanisms for dealing with unusually stressful situations?  
Am I able to use a variety of methods to relieve stress?

- ❖ Have I worked in situations where stress continually piled up and seeking appropriate outlets was critical to my personal health as well as work performance? How well did I deal with the situations?
- ❖ How have I dealt with grief and loss?
- ❖ How have I provided support for friends, colleagues, or persons I supervise who are dealing with stress, grief and loss?
- ❖ How well have I dealt with situations where I need to advise someone that his or her behavior is risky or counterproductive?
- ❖ Are there areas in which I feel my knowledge is weak?
- ❖ How do I avoid interjecting my own personal biases and fears into my facilitation?

Until you can answer these questions honestly and acknowledge your own resiliency mechanisms, biases and cultural filters, it will be very difficult to conduct an effective resilience workshop.

## **Facilitation and Training**

A resilience workshop leader serves as a facilitator as opposed to a traditional trainer. Traditional trainers tend to impart specific knowledge or skills and are often viewed as experts. Facilitators, on the other hand, lead exercises and discussions to help make sure that certain content or ideas are covered. While a facilitator may share new information, the facilitator's primary role is to ask questions that make the participants look at subjects in a new way by provoking discussion and the sharing of experiences. Typically, a facilitator will not stand up and lecture to a group. The sessions presented here provide plenty of opportunity for the facilitator to ask the audience for input.

Facilitators help the participants share and process thoughts, experiences, and feelings. Ultimately, much of the learning will come from participant interaction and not lectures. It is the facilitator's job to listen and pull out facts and feelings as well as the unasked questions while maintaining neutrality.

### **The role of a facilitator**

- Set norms for behavior and participation with the group's input.
- Establish and maintain a supportive group atmosphere.
- Create a safe environment for sharing and exploring ideas and feelings even if they are contradictory.



- Avoid sustained one-on-one individual interaction.
- Clarify points of view and points of agreement and disagreement.
- Observe and act on nonverbal behaviors.
- In difficult situations, handle the problem before it gets out of hand and without embarrassing people.
- Approach conflict in a firm, positive, and constructive way.
- Encourage participation from everyone.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Encourage the group to ask questions of each other.
- Provide summaries, conclusions, and continuity throughout the course of the workshop.
- Relate comments and anecdotes to learning points.

## **Co-Facilitation**

Whenever possible, a person with clinical social work or psychology background should assist with resilience workshops. Such a person often co-facilitates with another trainer. Co-facilitation means that neither individual is dominant. They work together and divide the material appropriately. Each supports the other by taking notes, catching raised hands that the other may not see, adding a different perspective when appropriate, and serving as a back-up. The use of two facilitators is especially encouraged if the workshop has more than 20 participants.

## **Setting Ground Rules**

Resilience workshops deal with highly personal and emotional issues. Facilitators create a safe environment so that participants can share their feelings and experiences. Create this type of environment by setting group norms that will govern behavior during the sessions. To save time, write a few basic ground rules on a flip chart and post for all to see. Review each one at the start of the workshop and ask for other rules the group would like to add. After reading them and asking for other suggestions, ask for group agreement to the ground rules listed. Let them know that anyone can respectfully remind the group of the ground rules during the training session. You may wish to do this yourself at some point to show that it really is acceptable.

Choose a few of the following commonly used ground rules to write on a flipchart.

- Be open to new ideas.
- Everyone participates actively.
- It's OK to express feelings.
- Maintain confidentiality (what we say here does not leave the room).
- Assume that others have good intentions.
- If something upsets you, say so.
- Put relationships first and being right second.

## **Techniques and Tools**

All trainers have a bag of tools and techniques to successfully manage training sessions. Resilience training requires special attention in the following areas.

### **Establishing Rapport**

Create a positive and constructive relationship so that all participants feel comfortable. Start by considering your classroom setup carefully. Arrange chairs in a circle so that all participants are face to face and the facilitator can be part of the circle, thereby encouraging dialogue.

### **Difficult Questions**

At times, difficult questions will be asked that have no easy answers. It is acceptable for facilitators to admit not knowing all the answers. Take these opportunities to engage the group in brainstorming possible answers. First, paraphrase the question so that the question is understood. Ask the group: "What do you think about that?" Summarize responses and remind the group that there are no easy answers. Add questions to further the discussion or steer it in a new direction. Asking for the group's input is a great way to deal with biased, destructive comments because it gets the group to take responsibility for its learning and produces an opportunity to practice speaking up against risky or unproductive behaviors.

### **Silence**

Silence can be an effective tool for any facilitator. However, many people are uncomfortable with silence in a group. Don't worry if a group is slow to respond,

silently count to 10 or 15. Someone is likely to speak up. Also, remember that resilience training raises emotional topics and it may take time for participants to put feelings into words.

### **Asking Questions**

Asking questions is at the heart of facilitation and asking the right questions is an art. While there is no magic formula for sculpting a good question, try to provoke discussion by asking an open-ended question as opposed to one that simply requires a yes or no answer. Ask questions one at a time. Don't forget to give people time to answer. If necessary, reword a question or give examples for clarity. Use follow-up questions to get participants to elaborate. Check for agreement. When charting information, use participants' own words or ask permission to reword.

Some great ways to facilitate a discussion.

- ❑ Ask: "Are there any last comments before we move on?" (Before we break? Before lunch?)
- ❑ Notice what is not being said and ask questions that pull those issues out.
- ❑ Don't be afraid to challenge the participants who are reluctant to consider new perspectives or ideas.
- ❑ Take general comments and bring them to the personal level and vice versa.
- ❑ Refer back to earlier comments and questions (jot them down to remind yourself).
- ❑ Draw parallels between comments.
- ❑ Invite feedback from specific individuals: "We haven't heard from you in a while, John, what do you think?"
- ❑ Most importantly, give positive feedback.

### **"Parking Lot"**

During the course of a discussion, interesting but off-topic issues and questions often arise. Sometimes participants bring up issues that will be addressed in a different or later segment of the workshop. If this occurs, one solution is to post a piece of paper to "park" or write these questions and topics for later discussion. By using a parking lot, participants do not feel questions are being avoided or think that they or their concerns are unimportant. Review the list periodically, or at the end of the workshop, to see what was covered. For items that cannot be addressed, get participants' ideas about resources, possible training, or other ideas.

### **Using Humor**

While resilience workshops address serious topics it is okay to have fun! Injecting humor at the appropriate time can break tension. It can also encourage participation. If there is reluctance to answer a question and the silence

continues, reminding the participants that, “This is the audience participation part of the day” or “Please, one at a time” can work wonders. Just remember that in a cross-cultural setting humor does not always translate. Be careful that humor is not at anyone’s expense.

## Using This Manual

### Design

This manual contains information and exercises that can be put together to form workshops of varying lengths of time. Although many of the exercises can stand alone, they were designed to reinforce each other. In general, one session, at least, should be trained to take the participants from context and climate setting through building knowledge, applications, and integration.

### Ending on a Positive Note

While much of the day focuses on difficult topics and participants may respond differently than others, remind participants that they also share many similarities and all human beings are deeply connected. It is this connection and caring for one another that helps us deal better with high stress, grief, and loss. Place such a sentiment at the wrap-up portion of the workshop to end the day on an encouraging note. Remind participants that it is okay if they are leaving the workshop with more questions than they started with because that means they are becoming more aware of situations they may face that will require the resilience we are working to build.

### Manual Setup

While much of each session is scripted, do not read verbatim from the lesson plans. Become familiar with each activity so you can set up, conduct, and debrief the activity in your own words. Tie the sessions together and make references to what was brought up in each. Although suggestions are made, it is up to you to pull it together.

Each session plan has the following:

A **session title** that includes a theme and a method. For example: *Building Knowledge: Risk-taking*.

An **overview** gives a brief description of the activity.

The **time** listed is an approximation of how long each session takes. It will vary according to the size, composition, and participation level of those attending.

The **objectives** tell what the exercise should accomplish.

**Materials** listed include any supplies that are needed, as well as handouts and flipcharts to prepare.

A **preparation** section is only included if a significant decision or preparation of materials is needed for the session.

The **directions** include step-by-step instructions of how to set up and facilitate the activity followed by suggestions for debriefing the activity.

*Trainer's notes* appear in italics whenever there are specific hints and warnings about what to expect.

At the end of each session is a list of **learning points**. These are key points that should come up during the course of the discussion and need to be brought up if they have not occurred naturally.

Finally, there is room for **notes**, thoughts, and comments. This is a good place to make remarks about the timing of the session, or ideas on how it might work better in future workshops.

## Concluding Thoughts

When planning and facilitating a resilience workshop, model the attitudes and behaviors participants should embrace. Accomplish this by creating an atmosphere that allows for the rich sharing of perspectives and experiences that are embodied in Peace Corps Volunteers, and being supportive when they struggle with emotions. Remember: this short workshop may not change anyone, but it will increase awareness, build skills, and begin an important dialogue on these issues that will continue long after the workshop.

**Appendix B:  
Volunteers Stories of Hope (working with HIV/AIDS)**

*Trainer note: these stories may be used in various ways in training. They may be helpful after doing the session on Loss: Compassion Fatigue. A few might be selected to use as a closing for the resiliency workshop.*

Written by a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ghana

The individuals that I affect on a daily basis give me hope. I know that the struggle against HIV/AIDS is not futile because I see the influence that we can have when we make an effort to educate others. Furthermore, I am working in a country with a very negative stigma associated with AIDS and sometimes interacting with people who are HIV+...giving even an ounce of hope to someone who is HIV+ to go on living, that also gives me hope that my endeavor is worthwhile.

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Written by a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ghana

I had the good fortune to work with an indefatigable counterpart for my first two years of Peace Corps service. Damian believes in and cares about the students he teaches. Damian is also passionate about doing whatever he can to slow the progress of AIDS in our society. His attitude is contagious, and as I began applying my theater background during extra-curricular activities with youth, I witnessed the powerful effects that dramatic training can have on people's empathy and sense of personal responsibility. I believe in the messages of HIV prevention and compassion towards those affected by AIDS because I have seen people heed these messages and desire to perpetuate them.

+++++

Written by 72-year-old Volunteer in Lesotho

Hope is young people and that there is still time, opportunity and ways to motivate them to change their behavior. Hope for the Peace Corps is to help youth. To not have hope is not to live. Hope is what gets you up in the morning. Hope around HIV/AIDS for me as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Lesotho is reaching YOUTH!

+++++

Written by Volunteer in Lesotho

On any given day 11 people go to the Leribe Hospital and nine of those eleven test positive. At national or local level, the statistics are grim. Hope is what we all hold on to. You just have to.

++++  
Written by a Peace Corps Volunteer in Togo

Miriama is 11 years old. She often misses school because she doesn't feel well. She is too weak to work in the fields. When the adults go to the fields the children left behind tease her and even hit her. She lives with her uncle whose wives don't make food that she can eat without aggravating her symptoms. She used to live with her father in a different town. He died of AIDS last spring. She struggles against the fear that rises up inside her when she realizes that she's all alone and that she has the same illness that her precious father died of just a few months ago. Her own life will be cut short. A life too young to even say that it's been lived.

Where is hope for my little friend? It's in the supportive glance her teacher gives her when she has to run out of the classroom to use the toilet. In the discrete manner that her nurse gives her a bit of money to buy something she can eat. In the way her Peace Corps friend takes her to the library to discover new things. Her hope is found in those of us who are not afraid to hug her, share our food with her, hold her hand as we walk. Hope is found in the small gestures we don't even think about which bring a smile into the eyes of a little girl. That's her hope. My hope is the music of her laughter.

++++  
Written by a Peace Corps Volunteer in Moldova

*Any* person can ask themselves "how do I find hope in this struggle against HIV?" It's a virus that chooses anyone. Therefore no one is immune, and we can all claim subject to its wrath. But I'm a health education Peace Corps Volunteer. I'm here in the Republic of Moldova to help spread the word about disease prevention that may not otherwise reach people. So I in particular can ask myself this question, and indeed, it's a valid one. This disease, which spreads by such common behaviors, is spreading like wildfire. How can we be optimistic about an epidemic that boils down to a moment's decision? One could suppose that it will even thrive amidst onlookers' pessimism and indifference, and that only the future will tell our fate. But I invest my effort and optimism in this fight. I put my sights on the simple fact that this disease is preventable, and we need to tell people about it.

We are a society capable of extraordinary things, and communication is one of them. Indeed, simple communication is what will eventually stifle the HIV virus and its momentum. However, health educators know very well that they have their work cut out for them. If it were only so easy as to "put the word out there," and behavior change would fall perfectly into place. No, personal health is far more complicated than that. Some people will attend my seminars, they will listen and understand, but they will continue to isolate themselves from the reality of this virus. They keep a wall between the information and their personal decisions because it just won't happen to them. All health educators face this reality, and it underscores the importance of that question "how do you find hope?" Personally, in my work and in my desire to educate people about their health, I gain an incredible satisfaction when I know that I *did* convince someone to take

responsibility for their own well-being. Spreading awareness about how the virus is transmitted is part of the deal—it's part of the job. But knowing that I helped to convince someone that they indeed have the power to control their fate, to direct their own path, that is an accomplishment that reaches me inside. HIV education involves many personal aspects of health—self-awareness, communication, decision-making skills, and self-esteem. Therefore, when someone really thinks and takes a good look at their lives in the context of HIV and AIDS, they take a giant step into the world of life skills and self-empowerment. This is a simple right we all have—to be informed and self-reliant. So, it's a great source of motivation for me, to know that it's so simple. Go out there, reach people, tell people. It's a preventable disease. What an empowering idea—that I am helping people to help themselves.

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Written by a Peace Corps Volunteer serving in Thailand.

During Peace Corps training, I had developed a desire to get involved with volunteering at AIDS hospices, and was looking forward to getting started right away upon arrival at site. However, AIDS education in Thailand is weak at this point, and, as a result, many people in Thailand fear AIDS and anyone who has the disease. I asked my supervisor at my site where the AIDS hospices were in my province, only to be told that there were none. I had been told by others at site that, in fact, there are AIDS hospices in my province. As you can imagine, this was very frustrating for me. I decided that, instead of breaking face, it would be best to wait until I had an opportunity to develop stronger relationships before I would ask my supervisor again for this information.

About three months later, during our Peace Corps in-service training, we had a guest speaker come to talk with us about the situation in Thailand. He presented a video of a story about a young Thai girl who had been orphaned by parents who died of AIDS. In addition, this poor young girl also was watching her younger sister die of AIDS. It was a heartbreaking story, to say the least. After the video, I asked him how I could help. He simply said, "Come visit the children at the hospice in Bangkok."

I happened to be in Bangkok (about seven hours by bus from my site) that weekend. I called the guest speaker that weekend and he met me and took me to the hospice.

When we got there, we met up with a gentleman who works at the hospice and who showed us around. After visiting briefly with a few adult patients, he took us to upstairs spend time with the children who are living at the hospice with HIV. There were about 25 children there that day. With the exception of a few, most appeared to be healthy, as they are receiving medication daily. They ranged in age from infants to about 13 years old.

The children were beautiful and so happy to see us there. Interestingly enough, they were not at all shy about approaching us ... instead, they ran right up to us and hugged us, sat in our laps, smiled and played with us. It was so apparent that they loved having us there. And, sadly, it was also apparent that these children are craving affection and attention.



Most of them are orphaned or have little/no contact with their families. They have each other and the staff at the hospice, but that is about all. Can you imagine?

Visiting the hospice was, by far, the most rewarding experience I've had to date here in Thailand. Although we were only there just over an hour, there was no doubt that the children enjoyed having us there, and we all really enjoyed being there with them. The staff at the hospice expressed their thanks to us, and encouraged us to come back when we are in Bangkok.

A few weeks later, I was able to obtain information about an AIDS hospice in another province about four hours north of my site. I went there with another Volunteer, and, again, had a wonderful experience. I have been there twice since. The priest who runs that hospice was shy about asking us to help in any way besides visiting with the children, so I asked him if there was any other way that we could help. He told us that the Thai women who work at the hospice don't get much vacation, and that he would like us to relieve them from work once in a while so that they could have some time off. So, I will be going to that hospice in the near future to work with some of the Thai women there, with hope of giving some of the other workers a little time off.

It has been wonderful to get involved in this type of work. It can be very sad, but mostly it is really fun. The younger children love to play, and for better or worse, most of them are not aware that they have AIDS and often think that they are in the home because they are orphans. This allows them to deal with one problem at a time.

The experience has been very fulfilling and rewarding. If you have an interest in helping children with AIDS, I very strongly encourage you to get involved ... you won't regret it!

Oh, and by the way, now that my supervisor sees that I am very serious about helping with the AIDS hospices, she is starting to warm up to the idea of helping in my own province. She is now looking into the possibility of visiting a hospice about one hour away.

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Written by a Peace Corps Volunteer in Haiti

Sodanette is my housekeeper. She is twenty-six years old, has never been to school, comes from a dirt-poor family and has a three-and-a-half year old daughter. She has no idea where her mother is. She abandoned the family when the children were young to start a new life in Jeremie. Her unmarried sister has a daughter not quite two years old who suffers from sickle cell anemia. Needless to say, it has not been the most joyous of lives. Such is Haiti.

Her quality of life took a turn for the better when she started working for me. Suddenly, she had a comfortable place to live, good food and water, a flush toilet (first in her family to enjoy that luxury), a steady income and a chance to learn to read and write. Her life was filled with other firsts: first meal in a restaurant, first ride in a private car (she didn't

know how to unlock the door), first omelet, first bed she ever slept in alone, first red shoes. For some reason, fate doesn't like dramatic changes. It has a way of intruding on a good time and sending us to bed without our pudding and pasty tarts.

Nanèt (Sodanette's nickname) has been through a series of respiratory ailments in the last two months. A doctor friend gave her a quick check and advised that she may have an enlarged thyroid. It was decided that I would take her into the provincial capital for some tests. Before we could get into town, she developed a painful lump between her right breast and armpit. It was hot to the touch and each day became more limiting. Rather than subject her to further discomfort in a tap-tap, I arranged for a woulib (free ride) with a friend who worked in Les Cayes. After an initial checkup, the doctor ordered a series of tests. Fortunately, he operates a lab on site. (It was yet another in the long series of firsts for her: first visit to a doctor, first needle.) After quick stick, we were off to eat Chinese food (still another first) and await the results.

Nanèt remained cheerfully oblivious while we went to the market and purchased provisions. As we sat outside the doctor's office waiting for the post-lunch reopening, she chatted animatedly with the many other patients returning to get their own results. All this time, I was imagining the worst: breast cancer.

At the appointed hour, the doors opened and everyone settled into their chairs to await the call to appear before the doctor. In a departure from the morning visit, Nanèt bravely entered his office alone. For ten tense minutes, I sat and waited.

When she reappeared, she seemed mildly concerned but not unduly so. She informed me that the lump was an allergic reaction. She handed me a prescription written in French. I could make out enough to understand that someone was going to have to give her a series of injections. I remember thinking "this must be some allergy." My curiosity was piqued so I asked to see the pages of test results in her hand. That's when my heart stopped beating. Sodanette had tested positive for syphilis and HIV. In the United States, HIV consigns many to an expensive existence dependant upon an evolving cocktail of wonder drugs. In Haiti, none but the most wealthy or politically connected get access to AZT, protease inhibitors and whatever else may be in the research pipeline. HIV is tantamount to a death sentence for the untold thousands who are carriers of the virus. (There are no statistics for incidence of HIV or AIDS in Haiti. Like much of Africa and Asia, everyone denies its existence. To acknowledge the disease is to invite ostracism by all members of the community including your own family. Victims are the lepers of the 21st century. Societal neglect only hastens progression. Estimates by organizations ranging from the World Health Organization to the International Monetary Fund provide a best guess for infection of between 8 percent and 18 percent of the population. The fact is that no one has any idea.)

Because I was not in the room when the doctor broke the news, I cannot say why it didn't sink in. Shock? Denial? Selective hearing? All were reasonable explanations. Whatever the cause, it fell to me to explain what it all meant. As she sat crying in the tap-tap, I put my arm around her shoulder. I wanted to cry with her but I forced myself to contain the

tears. If I started crying about all the sad things I see in Haiti, I would never be able to stop.

I had her tested two years ago. She was retested six months later with similar results. For the most part she ignores it. Whenever I think she is becoming sexually active, I remind her about her responsibility to use a condom 100 percent of the time. (There is no way in hell she will tell a boyfriend that she is HIV positive. Not only would that end the relationship but word of her infection would quickly spread throughout the commune.)

This usually depresses her for a couple of days during which time she ignores my counsel and goes about her business. I must continually remind her about sharp objects and the risk of blood-to-blood transmission. Her sister and niece who live with me do not know her HIV status so it falls to me to be proactive in protecting them. The problem with HIV in rural Haiti is that the patient remains asymptomatic for such a long time. Generally, after six months or a year, they convince themselves that the doctor made a mistake and resume their former risky sexual behavior.

## Training Resources to Support Volunteer Resiliency September 2009

If the need is	Sources of sessions	Specific sessions	Location of materials	Integration possibilities	Notes
<b>Staff skills in</b> supporting Volunteers – general	Supporting Volunteer Resiliency training	Coaching vs counseling; Cultural factors what affect support; Setting boundaries and discernment; Who’s problem is it? Active listening; Reflection and assessment; Knowing yourself; Giving feedback and exploring options	<i>Training for Resiliency CD</i> [ICE No. T0138K]		These materials were originally developed for PTO training in EMA. They have been modified for training in several countries in Africa. Modified sessions may be available through regions.
<b>Staff skills in</b> developing good counterpart/supervisor relationships	<i>Working with Supervisors and Counterparts</i> [ICE No. T0121]	Sessions for counterpart/supervisor/ training (with and without Volunteers): roles and expectations; culture and communication styles; PC regulations and policies; relationships: cultural thresholds of intimacy	Available through ICE in hardcopy and on the <i>Peace Corps Digital Documents – Sharing Promising Practices CD</i> [RE014K]	Samples of workshops at end of PST in publication. Session on cultural thresholds of intimacy can be integrated into Volunteer health training or cross-cultural training, if an issue at post	Thresholds of intimacy session was contributed to the manual from the Safety and Security office.
<b>Staff skills in</b> supporting Volunteers in high corruption areas	<i>Corruption and Transparency as Development Issues CD</i> – staff training module [ICE T0137K]	Introduction: corruption as a universal problem; System integrity; Staff support with checks and balances; Volunteer support	A hardcopy publication <i>Greaseless</i> [ICE CD060] accompanies the training modules on the CD		These materials were originally developed for and piloted in EMA. The final product in not region-specific. There are both staff and volunteer modules.

<b>If the need is</b>	<b>Sources of sessions</b>	<b>Specific sessions</b>	<b>Location of materials</b>	<b>Integration possibilities</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Volunteer preparation</b> for facing high stress situations - general	<i>Volunteer Resiliency Training Toolkit</i>	Defining resiliency and stress reduction; Risky behavior; Simulating entry into the community; Making decisions	<i>Training for Resiliency CD</i> [ICE No. T0138K]	In PST, integrate with cross-cultural adaptation sessions, follow-up to site visit In IST, as debrief of experiences and developing support network	
<b>Volunteer preparation</b> for health and safety in new culture	Digitized videos: “Serving Safely” and “A Slice of Life”	Talk to PCMO or safety officer at post for sessions and videos	<i>Digitized Training Resources Vol 2 and 2 CD</i> [ICE No. RE042]	Sessions usually included in PST	
<b>Volunteer preparation</b> for working with counterparts and supervisors	<i>Working with Supervisors and Counterparts</i> [ICE No. T0121]	Sessions for counterpart/supervisor/training (with and without Volunteers): roles and expectations; culture and communication styles; PC regulations and policies; relationships: cultural thresholds of intimacy	Available through ICE in hardcopy and on the <i>Peace Corps Digital Documents – Sharing Promising Practices CD</i> [RE014K]	Samples of workshops at end of PST in publication. Session on cultural thresholds of intimacy can be integrated into Volunteer health training or cross-cultural training, if an issue at post	Thresholds of intimacy session was contributed to the manual from the Safety and Security office.
<b>Volunteer preparation</b> for dealing with diversity	Diversity Training Modules for Pre-Service Training	Several sessions each on defining diversity, understanding barriers, building understanding, taking action	<i>Diversity Training Modules for Pre-Service Training CD</i> [ICE No. T0129K]	Sessions help build mutual support and community among trainees and support the development of strategies for community integration	

If the need is	Sources of sessions	Specific sessions	Location of materials	Integration possibilities	Notes
<b>Volunteer preparation</b> in dealing with corruption	<i>Corruption and Transparency as Development Issues CD</i> – Volunteer modules for PST and IST [ICE T0137K]	For PST: Challenges in development; Is it corruption?; How to avoid difficult situations. For IST: Experiences and solutions; System integrity and Peace Corps projects; Strategies for effective Peace Corps experience and projects.	A hardcopy publication <i>Greaseless</i> [ICE CD060] accompanies the training modules on the CD	PST sessions can be integrated with other development content. IST sessions can initiate a first technical IST.	These materials were originally developed for and piloted in EMA. The final product is not region-specific. There are both staff and volunteer modules
<b>Volunteer preparation</b> in dealing with high HIV/AIDS prevalence, including grief and loss	*Volunteer Resiliency Training Toolkit; * <i>HIV/AIDS Training Resource Kit</i> [ICE No. T0136K]; *Digitized video: “Come Back Healthy”	In Resiliency Toolkit: The loss exercise; Volunteer’s letter; Resilia simulation In HIV/AIDS Resource Kit: Reducing the Risk of PCV’s HIV Exposure (Volunteer Support Module) Defining the Issues for the Volunteer (Mitigation and Care Module)	*Volunteer Resiliency Training Toolkit is located on the CD <i>Training for Resiliency</i> [ICE No. T0138K]. * “Come Back Healthy” video is on the <i>Digitized Training Resources Vol 2 and 2 CD</i> [ICE No. RE042]	Reducing the Risk session is part of PCMO training in PST. Other sessions may be integrated with sessions on adjustment, cross-cultural sessions, or with health training for Volunteers	
<b>Volunteer preparation</b> in dealing with trafficking	The Quest for Success teaching module	Sessions for preparing students to think critically about work opportunities at home and abroad (to avoid falling into trafficking traps)	Check with EMA region and/or WID/GAD office for links to training materials prepared by other organizations.		

## Field Insights

The Staff Support for Volunteer Resiliency materials were made available to the field in 2006. A “mini” version of the Volunteer Resiliency Training Toolkit was made available also in 2006. Additional sessions have been added to the Volunteer training since that time so the compiled comments here do not address all of the current sessions.

### Staff Training Modules

The complete set of training sessions has been adapted to local needs in some posts, with versions of their own training documented. Botswana and Zambia, for example adapted materials prior to running their own training programs in 2007.

Countries reporting the use of sessions have highlighted their value in helping staff

- Define Volunteer support.
- See how to better support Volunteer resiliency through active listening and the coaching model.
- Improve communication and relationship building between staff members and between staff members and PCVLs.
- Prepare staff is TOT for PST to work with trainees on cross-cultural issues that come up during training.

Sessions have been integrated into

- TOTs for PST
- Staff development
- IPBS retreat

The impact of training using these training sessions include

- LCFs and TCFs better able to facilitate issues, understand their roles in Volunteer support, and encourage trainees to work on their own strategies and solutions when addressing challenges to working and living in the host country.
- HCN staff better prepared to ‘coach’ trainees through their adaptation process and discuss strategies for active listening and giving feedback on an ongoing process.

### Volunteer Resiliency Training Modules used with staff

Some posts have incorporated some of the Volunteer session into their staff training, specifically

- Overview session with cups of water – to discussion of cumulative stress. Note: A modification was suggested where the cups have some rocks in them, then sand is added, then water...a similar activity appears in the Training Design and Development (TDE) materials.

- Chance Cards – staff wrote safe and unsafe ways Volunteers deal with stress on the cards. Then the session is conducted as written in the Volunteer materials.

Some posts added a third day to the Staff Training to Support Volunteer Resiliency training to use the following Volunteer sessions with staff:

- Drown-proofing
- Chance Cards
- Decisions! Decisions!
- Connections and Tensions

### **Volunteer Resiliency Training used with stagees, trainees, and Volunteers**

Posts report integrating some of the Volunteer training sessions into these events:

- Staging – the overview activity with cups of water for cumulative stress.
- In PST with medical and security training.
- In PST and IST for resiliency and peer support.

Use of specific sessions:

- Overview session with cups of water – good opener for discussion on stress management as part of medical session on mental health.
- Decisions! Decisions! in PST has had strong impact and trainees take away awareness of peer pressure and how it affects decision-making.
- Connections and Tensions – used as part of safety and security/medical session on peer support during IST.

Some of the sessions have been used with Diversity Committees and Peer Support Networks.



## **Sample Integration of Staff and Volunteer Training Sessions In TOT for Pre-Service Training**

PC/Moldova used the following sequence of sessions and materials from both the staff training sessions and Volunteer training sessions during a 2006 TOT for pre-service training.

Introduction: What is Volunteer Support?

- We brainstormed –
  - What is a challenge in PCV life/service?
  - What is a challenge in the work of staff while supporting PCTs/PCVs?
  - When do PCVs/PCTs need support?
  - Where do they go for support?
- We had the title of the training, Supporting Volunteer Resiliency, written on flip chart and staff were wondering what RESILIENCY means, so we came up with a definition and thus, conducted the training in the direction of talking about feelings.
  - We used the handouts *Emotional Cycle of the Volunteer* and *Cross Cultural Adjustment* while discussing different feelings and emotional issues Volunteers undergo as they live and serve in a different cultural environment.
  - As trainers we led the discussion to have staff identify the culture as an important factor that affects Volunteer support. We had staff think about our culture: where we grew, were educated and live as staff, and compared it to American culture. We talked about how these differences may impact their ability as staff to give the PCTs/PCVs support. We used here the handout *Cultural Factors that Influence Volunteer Support*.
- We brainstormed: When do PCVs need to be supported? Staff shared different cases they remembered in their work experience with PCVs when they needed to give support.
- We asked staff to write on cards examples of different ways PCVs may deal with stress -- safe and unsafe ways. We collected the cards and did the activity Chance Cards and it was very well received.
- We did the overview with the glass of water for introducing the topic of dealing with stress. The handout *Effects of Stress* was given after this activity and we as trainers categorized types of stress into behavior, emotional and physical responses. Other handouts *Individual Responsibility for Stress Management* and *Twenty Tips to Live with Stress* were given to staff during these discussions.
- We used an activity where staff closed their eyes and imagined a resilient PCV. After that we collected staff ideas about the indicators of a resilient PCT/PCV and wrote them on flipchart. Staff discussed *Practices of Highly Resilient PCVs* and we provided this handout.
- We asked staff to take some time and write on cards PCV issues they remember having to deal with recently or the most frequently. We collected the cards and

- distributed them to different participants and conducted the activity *The Gift*. We used the handout *Setting Boundaries and Discernment* – excellent activity.
- One of the most important training objectives was to guide staff in the idea of empowering PCTs/PCVs to build their own resiliency.
  - Next we conducted the session on Steps for Supporting PCT/PCV Resiliency. We used activities and handouts on *Tools for Active Listening, Asking Questions, Types of Questions; A Good Paraphrase, Summarizing, Giving Feedback, and Exploring Options*.
  - Staff was instructed to form groups and role play supporting PCV resiliency using the steps they learned. They selected a staff member, a PCV and an observer who gave feedback on how they worked. One of the trainers role played a PCV who was presenting an issue to his staff (LCF/APCD). The formed groups had to use steps in listening and understanding, responding with empathy, asking questions, paraphrasing, summarizing, giving feedback, supporting helping the PCV help himself.
  - At the end we used the handout *Observer's Checklist* for staff to evaluate their skills in supporting Volunteer resiliency.

#### Notes on the training

Overall, how was the training received?

**This was the best received training. Staff was very actively involved in participating in all the activities and shared their experiences and asked questions to learn more about supporting Volunteer resiliency (SVR). They found the training very necessary and were willing to have more time spent on it. Resiliency training was the best. Empowering PCVs to build their own resiliency was extremely valuable for staff to know, and they were happy to learn about that.**

How did the training meet your expectations for increasing awareness, knowledge, skills and affecting attitudes?

**We were very satisfied by the results of the training. Staff was so happy to have had the chance to participate in this type of training as it raised awareness of their major job responsibility as staff in SVR and at the same time they realized that there is a structure to use in supporting PCTs/PCVs. They said it took away some fear and a load off their shoulders as they really felt they built KSAs. Besides they enjoyed the handouts and found them very clear and useful.**

What were the strong points?

- **Defining resiliency**
- **Steps for Supporting PCT/PCV Resiliency exercises and handouts**
- **Cycle of PCT/PCV Vulnerability and Adjustment**
- **Cultural Factors that Influence PCT/PCV Support**
- **Setting Boundaries and Discernment**

What topics needed more/different attention?

- **Setting Boundaries and Discernment**

What, if any, additional topics need to be addressed?

- **All were excellent.**

- **We want/need the film Survival Run to use in the coaching/counseling training. We liked it so much in another workshop and know that it would be good to use and very effective at our post.**

What impact of the training have you noticed?

**Having staff trained in supporting PCTs resiliency resulted in better adjusted trainees in PST, with less cultural issues, and staff feeling better equipped with practical tools to be performing their role in SVR.**

## **Providing Support in Highly Challenged Posts**

Jon Sanders, LCSW, Office of Special Services (October 2004)

It can be extremely difficult to maintain Volunteer productivity and morale in highly stressful environments when dysfunctional communication strategies are used by discouraged Staff and Volunteers. “Dysfunctional” has a very specific meaning in this context. Customary ways of resolving predictable challenges are replaced by three RULES: 1. Do not TALK to or tell anyone about the problem; 2. Do not TRUST anyone to respond compassionately; & 3. do not let anyone know how you FEEL. As such emotional and behavioral issues becomes the proverbial “elephant in the living room.” We go about our routines without ever talking about this thing that is taking up so much space in our lives and harming our friends and colleagues. The silence becomes contagious. No one talks openly about depression from grief and loss due to HIV/AIDS; no one shares his or her concern for a Volunteer who is drinking heavily or engaging in unprotected sex; no one brings up how afraid we are of violence in the community. Everyone is vulnerable to this “dys-ease,” and Volunteers and workers in the field may unconsciously develop coping strategies which ultimately lead to burnout or early termination. Those discouraged STRATEGIES can include:

Over-functioning : These PCVs are seen as “models” for everyone else. As such they may not give themselves needed breaks or rest. They may never feel satisfied with their efforts as they know just how much more needs to be done. Praise falls on deaf ears. It only proves that others are out of touch. They may feel guilty for not doing more.

Un-functioning: These workers “know” at some level that the work is overwhelming. They sense that they will never live up to the standards set by the “super” worker. As a result, they may turn to more negative strategies for coping with shame/guilt. High risk behaviors, misuse of alcohol/drugs, unexplained absences from work etc. They may feel angry at those who put them in this “impossible” situation, shame the morning after, and guilt for not doing the “right” thing.

Under-functioning: These Volunteers are aware that the other two are grabbing all the attention and may develop a strategy which seeks anonymity. All they want to do is get through the next couple of years without allowing their feelings to become too intense. They may fear that if they really let anyone know how they are doing they could be early terminated. They feel shame for not being more proactive or assertive, for not voicing their concerns, and for not doing as much as others.

Strategies to help Volunteers remain resilient throughout their service must include ways of helping them TALK about their experience, find ways to manage FEELINGS, and develop TRUST of the systems in place to support them. Ideas includes:

- ***Peer & post support training*** which encourages finding words which help explain unfamiliar and disquieting thoughts or emotions
- ***“Diversifying” projects/programs*** that are highly intense i.e. including positive/hope-giving activities such as teaching children expressive arts instead of

focusing only on home care for families affected by the final stages of HIV/AIDS.

- Building a “community of connection” to help Volunteers and/or Staff feel that they are part of a team—buddy systems, IST debriefings etc.
- *Expanding mental health resources* at Post—counselors, Volunteer self help libraries, stress management training etc.
- *Recruiting and training PTOs/Staff* who can facilitate group debriefings & brainstorm strategies for staying resilient.
- *Developing pre-staging materials* that provide invitees with more realistic understanding of the challenges ahead and an email contact at Post.
- *Providing on-going training/debriefing* throughout the life cycle of the PCV to deal with such topics as grief and loss, reverse cultural shock, coping with safety and security concerns etc.

In effect, the litmus test for enhancing approaches to support Volunteers and Staff in high stress areas is how the plan contributes to minimizing the impact of the three (3) rules found in dysfunctional systems. 1. Does the idea help increase a Volunteer’s ability to communicate freely with Staff and/or others; 2. Does the approach help develop a community of connection and trust; and/or 3. Does this training or effort promote an environment where strong unfamiliar feelings can be expressed safely.

## The Seven Habits of Highly Resilient Posts

“Drown proofing.” Jon Sanders LCSW, VS/SS 2/2/08

Training and preparing Peace Corps Volunteers to be buoyant and emotionally resilient is everyone’s job. While cross-cultural training during PST is often seen as a way of helping PCVs learn to make the transition to a new environment, cross-cultural challenges are an on-going phenomena throughout the life cycle of the Volunteer. Both Volunteers and Staff should be proactive co-participants in developing resiliency which benefits all involved. Resiliency training and supportive systems may be the best way to assure that the greatest number of Volunteers productively completes service. This approach of a *resilient Post*, promotes creativity, flexibility and working together to resolve roadblocks to meaningful service.

PST has been viewed by some Volunteers as a “hurdle” or test in which they must become measurably competent in six areas: technical skill, language, health, cross-cultural, diversity and safety/security. But how does their experience generate feedback that will help the next group of Trainees, and how does difficult to measure or non observable information come to the attention of those designing training or managing Posts? Throughout the Volunteer experience, possibly the most important questions to be asked are, “What during training could have helped with the situation you are presently encountering?” The most important narrative question to be asked at Completion of Service Conferences is, “Describe periods of difficulty, when they occurred, how you felt, what you did to get over them?”

*PCV Alison R is found to be routinely out of her site visiting with another PCV who lives three hours away by bus. The APCD has told Alison that she cannot leave her site without permission but the behavior persists. Eventually she is administratively separated. What has not been discussed is that the PCV’s efforts to connect with someone who truly understands the realities of her life is an important part of her effort to reduce anxiety and stress which cannot be addressed by other means. What was not known was that Alison had just learned that her younger brother was getting divorced; she found out that a married professor at the school where she teaches has HIV/AIDS and may be having sex with one of his 15 year old students; she has been told by the headmaster of the school not to give anyone a poor grade because none of the children will ever really use the English they have been taught; and even though many families have told her they hope their child will benefit from education, no one who has ever graduated from the school has gone on to a career outside of subsistence farming.*

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The PCVs behavior was an attempt to self-treat underlying pain *not* defeat Peace Corps policy. Why was it difficult for her to talk to others about her situation? What messages had she been hearing? What in training would have helped her prepare for this experience?

**If we were to adopt recommendations from health-care professionals regarding how to help swimmers/scuba divers remain safe, resilient and aware, we might find parallels for the Volunteer as they too seek to survive and even enjoy prolonged exposure to an environment which is alien from life as usual. The seven (7) recommendations or “habits” can be summarized as follows:**

1. Learn to *adapt* to a variety of conditions;
2. Do not go in alone or without *connection* or supervision;
3. Make sure you are properly *equipped* and know how to access and use available resources;
4. Be *alert* to the depth and location of hazards;
5. Know how to *forecast* seasonal differences which affect safety;
6. Develop skills to *respond* to or help others, and
7. Understand and *manage* high-risk behaviors.

### **I. Adapt to a variety of cross-cultural conditions**

In part cross-cultural training can and should seek to help Volunteers with the multiple challenges that are experienced when dealing with unexpected or unfamiliar environments. Most cross-cultural Pre-Service Training focuses on familiarizing PCTs with the new and unfamiliar norms, values, customs, tradition and beliefs of the host culture. PST enhances communication skills and awareness of different communication styles. Trainers may include social, historic and political influences on perception and attitude. Once learned, these concepts are presumed to remain relatively constant during the Volunteer’s service. The approach to adaptation is, “the more you know, the better you will do.” Cross-cultural “competency” is equated with “knowing” at least a minimum core body of information. The challenge for many Volunteers, however, is not only in understanding more about the external environment but also understanding their own internal fluctuating feelings. In other words, knowing how to swim in a pool may not help with never-before-experienced panic when caught in a cross-cultural rip tide.

Emotional challenges for Volunteers may include:

- Dealing with one’s own anxiety about uncertainty
- Tolerating and valuing paradox
- Expressing feelings interpersonally & safely in an unfamiliar language
- Accepting that we have negative feelings such as aggression, isolation, boredom
- Managing stress; accepting the “gift” of our own fear
- Developing compassion for the difficult self as well as the difficult other
- Dealing with our feelings of guilt/blame; prejudice and regression
- Coping with grief and loss

Training can help Volunteers develop awareness that unusually intense reactions/emotions (helplessness, irritability, anger, numbing, social fears, and hurt as well as hyper-vigilant physiologic responses) can be a *normal* part of transition/growth. This awareness can be encouraged through facilitated group discussion during pre-service training (PST) as well as in-service training (IST).

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*During a recent training field trip to visit a Volunteer, PCT Mark O believed a woman in the market place had threatened him with a machete. She had approached him with the blade extended shouting “threats”. When he returned from the visit, he didn’t tell anyone for two days during which time he stayed by himself even in the evenings avoiding his host country family. During a feedback session with the training Staff he was told that he needed to “participate more.” When he finally related what had happened, he was told that the woman was probably just trying to sell him fruit. A week later, Mark resigned.*

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What might a facilitator have done prior to and following a field trip to help David and others process their experience in a safe way? The bullets following each section are not offered as a “checklist” but rather as a range of examples to spark the open exchange of ideas.

How can we prepare Staff and Trainees adapt for the widest range of conditions?

- Recruit members of the Post Support Network (PSN) or other second year volunteers to help process discussions safely without fear of being judged following training exercises or critical events.
- Educate staff & Volunteers regarding the influence of stress on hearing, physiologic response, projection, cognitive dissonance etc.
- Normalize unfamiliar emotional responses to unusual situations prior to exposure; review “Volunteer life cycle” with trainees utilizing PCVs who might form a panel discussion group.
- Role play & process with language instructor a variety of difficult emotional challenges: attending a funeral (loss); anti-American threats/sexual harassment (anger); saying “no” to insistent demands to drink (social discomfort).
- Involve language instructors in helping to expand expressive/emotional vocabularies as well as strategies for the safe expression of feelings.
- Assist PCTs translate individual stress management strategies into workable host country strategies.
- Take advantage of “teachable” moments (i.e. when things go “wrong” during training) to help develop reflective, sense-making skills.

## **II. Connect to support and supervision**

The degree of loss, disconnection and change experienced by Volunteers and Trainees is significant. (The Holmes-Rahe Stress Scale if applied to Trainees would suggest that they experience stress equivalent to 3 times that related to the loss of a spouse.) Mental health practitioners know that willingness to adopt a new coping strategy depends greatly on the connection between the counselor and the person counseled. The reduction of anxiety and stress, for which high-risk behavior may be used as an “antidote,” must be more than teaching stress reduction technique. Strategies must include personal relationship building at all levels—with other Volunteers, counterparts, hosting families, and supervisors. A recent survey of Peace Corps Medical Officers has indicated that isolation and loneliness are the major precipitants in the rise of mental health visits to the PCMO.



In this regard Volunteer safety and security also rely on community integration. Meaningful connection underlies the ability of people to create options for dealing with challenges.

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*When Phillip first arrived at “his” island, no one in the Peace Corps office except for his APCD had ever been there. He later learned that the APCD had met the chief for less than one hour and then had flown out by seaplane. The nearest Volunteer was a day away by freighter that came to the island once a week. In halting language, Phillip tried to explain to the chief that he was on the island to help promote small artisan businesses due to the economic down turn in the market for coconut products. The chief, on the other hand, thought that Phillip’s contribution would be best served by living with his oldest daughter. Phillip had been quite proactive prior to his service talking with RPCVs about being gay in the Peace Corps. Nothing in the Diversity Manual or in his talks with the Country Director had prepared him for this experience. It took Phillip four months to change sites.*

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How can we maximize opportunities for connection?

- Even before PST, nominees can be invited to connect via e-mail with a currently serving Volunteer.
- Orient and “train” host families for Community Based Training. (Training Staff might be encouraged to at least have a meal with the families to better understand how to help promote communication and connection).
- Facilitate a meeting with PCT and local counterparts/supervisors prior to the Volunteer’s settling in at site. Site development is *on-going* rather than something that is only done just prior to site placement.
- Develop PC Office norms that “welcome” Volunteers/Trainees; schedule routine site visits by all Staff so that they know more about the Volunteer experience.
- Review out-of-site policy to allow for taking “mental health” time outs.
- Provide all Staff with sensitivity/diversity training to help promote open dialog regarding site placement expectations, concerns, challenges etc.

### **III. Equip and assure access to local resources**

*Mary has been a Volunteer for over a year. Last month she accepted a ride from one of her villagers to the nearest town where she could catch a bus into the capital. She knew the driver as the son of one of the town leaders. When she got into the cab of his truck she could smell alcohol and knew she had made a mistake. When he became physically aggressive and tried to grab her, she jumped out when the vehicle slowed at a turn and ran. Why didn’t she tell anyone for so long? All PCVs had attended talks by a local mental health consultant, trained in the U.S., who offers counseling near the Peace Corps office. The Regional Security Officer (RSO) from the Embassy had only the month before talked during IST about keeping safe by using common sense tactics and invited all Volunteers to share any concerns with him. What Mary also had not shared was her lack of connection with the mental health consultant and security officer. In the recent “training” the consultant suggested that Volunteers might deal with stress by taking hot scented baths and getting together with friends. (Mary takes a “shower” by putting her head under a pipe flowing with ice-cold water that comes from a mountain stream. The nearest Volunteer lives three hours away by bus and Mary has used all of her leave.). After the RSO’s talk Mary felt that she would be blamed for anything that happened to her because she had not used “common sense.”*

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Knowing about resources, procedures, and protocols is everyone's responsibility including contract personnel. Mary did not know that there were well trained counselors at Post or in the Office of Special Services with whom she could have talked. Knowledge about resources and access to information are clearly critical for Emergency Action Plans and for maintaining resiliency during any crisis. During an earthquake, it may be too late to start looking for the *Crisis Management Handbook*.

How can we assure the availability of meaningful resources and information?

- PCMO/CD can work with the Embassy CLO and ex-patriot community to recruit mental health providers.
- During PST practice sending messages via a warden system or communication tree to assure that information is conveyed consistently and accurately along the information chain.
- Assess and train local mental health consultants – all MH providers should be invited to go on at least one site visit with the PCMO to better understand the realities of Peace Corps life.
- Develop a Post Support Network (PSN) and promote PCV training in peer/counterpart consulting skills. (PSN's should not be seen as an alternative to mental health counseling but as an integral part of the mental health referral system; as responders assisting victims who may need support at night or during criminal proceedings; as facilitators of cross-cultural challenges during trainings, as organizers/promoters of self-help materials or libraries etc.)
- Assure that accommodated Volunteers understand limitations of confidentiality re site placement (PCMO may need to talk with APCD regarding suitability of a site for an accommodated Volunteer).
- Familiarize all Staff with critical incident/rape responses debriefing and provide opportunities for them to learn about what a victim will experience in-country following an assault.

#### **IV. Alert to hazards: health, safety and security**

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*Bill had been in service for 6 weeks when other Volunteers sent word to the PCMO that they were concerned about his drinking. He had apparently gotten into a fight at a bar frequented by Volunteers. If two other Volunteers had not happened to walk in and ask the owner for his help in calming down a local patron, the situation had the potential of becoming life threatening. Bill, apparently during college, had developed a "habit" of drinking 4-5 drinks on weekend nights to "let off steam," and he continued this habit into Peace Corps service. What Bill did not know was that the local beer was twice as strong as beer in the U.S. and that in the past months he had lost weight. In effect he was drinking twice what he was used to and his body was less able to metabolize alcohol.*

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Clearly, drinking alone at a neighborhood bar may not be a “problem” for a given Volunteer. It becomes a problem, however, for Staff who may know that there has been a recent increase in anti-American threats, who know that any fight with an individual is a fight with an extended family or intricate kinship network.

What can we do to increase awareness of hazards?

- Train for safety and security utilizing adult learning participatory models (i.e. role plays, group processing of field activities etc).
- Use signed “contracts” for safety-- medical compliance (e.g. anti-malaria medication, drug use etc) for which a violation would mean administrative separation.
- Provide alcohol/drug awareness and high-risk behavior prevention counseling (HIV/AIDS, travel etc).
- Utilize Host Country Nationals (HCNs) as cultural guides for discussion about cross-cultural perceptions of risk and risk avoidance. (i.e. how do they “back down” from confrontation?)
- All Volunteers should be active participants in developing the Emergency Action Plan (EAP); solicit input from PCVs regarding contingencies should infrastructure be compromised.

## V. **Forecast “seasonal” challenges to safety and well-being**

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*On December 16<sup>th</sup>, PCV Daryl G biked the two miles to his host country agency office hoping to talk with his counterpart about information he had received concerning their conservation project. When he walked in, the place was empty. The guard sitting in the yard told him everyone was gone for the holiday and was not expected back until January 7. When Daryl saw the PCMO at his mid-service physical, he described having mood swings, getting extremely angry over little things, and feeling guilty for not being very productive. He said he sometimes felt a bit dizzy and thought it might be a reaction to his parasite medication.*

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Seeing the horizon or being able to anticipate the roll and pitch of the deck of a ship can help keep passengers from developing motion sickness. In the same way, being able to plan for down time or a standfast or being able to anticipate one’s own needs during unsteady periods can promote resiliency and adaptability. (Note: Stress can also involve not only having too much to do but too little).

What do we need to better anticipate change?

- Understand the implications of elections, holidays, and school vacation time on taking leave or getting together with other Volunteers.
- Understand the emotional impact of longer nights/rainy season/burning season etc. (e.g. SAD—Seasonal Affective Disorder).

- Utilize planned conferences (IST, AVC, COS) to help process safety & security experiences, “normalize” unfamiliar emotional reactions, and develop strategies for dealing with anticipated concerns.

## **VI. Respond to those in need of assistance**

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*PCV Brian received an e-mail from home that his cousin, David, had died in an automobile accident. They had practically grown up together and vacationed every summer at a family owned beach house. Their parents often remarked that they were really more like brothers than cousins. Brian contacted his APCD with the news saying he wanted to be with his family for the services and that the family could not afford to pay for the ticket. The Country Director let him know that Emergency Leave policy could not be used to cover the situation. Brian chose to early terminate.*

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What might we have done to respond to Brian? What other resources might be made available to him? What else can Volunteers and Staff do not only for self-help but to help others?

What skills and techniques might be developed to help respond to Volunteers in need?

- Organizing and training Post Support Networks (Materials are available from OSS).
- Providing life skills training (PST, IST, AVC) to all Volunteers in such topics as: conflict resolution, culturally sensitive assertiveness training, stress management techniques, active listening, problem solving, and coping strategies.
- Developing self-help libraries organized and run by Volunteers. (Volunteers who are closing service can be asked to suggest or donate books that helped them cope with difficult times).
- Posts can help PCVs grieve from afar.\*

## **VII. Manage high risk behaviors**

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*Following the death of a Volunteer, PCV Diana S was referred to the PCMO because she was experiencing periods of uncontrollable grief. She was given medication to help with sleep, and a member of the Post Support Network was asked to keep an eye on her. What Diana did not tell the PCMO was that she was feeling terribly guilty. She had known for some time that the Volunteer had been drinking heavily and at a party he had offered her Xanax that he easily obtained at a pharmacy. The preliminary autopsy indicated an alcohol/drug interaction that literally paralyzed the PCV's ability to breathe. Diana didn't want to tell anyone about the prescription drugs lest her friend be administratively separated.*

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When Volunteers become discouraged after familiar coping strategies become less and less effective, they may resort to high-risk behaviors to calm anxieties, treat depression etc. Why? Because they work. Alcohol, for example, dissolves feelings of aloneness. During high-risk sexual activity, one doesn't feel depressed, inadequate or unproductive.

A Volunteer's use of a high risk coping strategy, however, tends to transfer the anxiety or stress to someone else—usually a Staff member or another Volunteer. At this point clear *policies and procedures* may help limit the negative impact of those behaviors and promote less destructive alternatives that, if necessary, may include early termination. *Laissez faire* approaches, (“After all, we’re all adults”) which assert that Volunteer's are ultimately responsible for their own behaviors, may serve in the short term to lower Staff anxiety and decrease feeling overwhelmingly responsibility. Should the Volunteer, however, continue to engage in unhealthy and contagious strategies, the result may translate into greater and more time consuming problems for Staff. Under high levels of stress, individuals do not always make choices in their long-term best interest. It is at this point, when a negative behavior is identified that the challenge is to make the consequence timely, clear, fair, and non-punitive. Healthy boundaries promote mutual respect. Good policies and procedures provide consistent expectations and responses. They are in place to assure safety and reduce risk in an uncertain world.

What can we do to develop policies and procedures that assure safety and productivity?

- Review policies and procedures to avoid co-mingling minor administrative issues with those which seriously impact a Volunteer's safety should they be ignored.
- Utilize Performance Improvement Plans (PIP) early in the history of problematic behaviors. The PIP should not be seen as “punishment” rather as an opportunity to engage in an interactive conversation in order to match a Volunteer's skills with the most appropriate and safest work environment.
- Promote prevention counseling which engages in active dialog with Volunteers and incorporates concepts of Appreciative Inquiry etc.
- Post should model and promote responsible approaches to alcohol. (Cash bars, for example, tend to reduce alcohol consumption vs. providing access to free kegs).
- Review of Volunteer handbook and internet communications to better manage expectations regarding risks & hardships (e.g. HIV/AIDS, famine, urban crime etc).

### **The Litmus Test of Resiliency**

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- a. <sup>\*</sup> Help PCVs communicate with family to develop or plan memorial services. (Select hymns, readings, remembrances).
  - b. Posts can help the Volunteer connect with the Post Support Network (PSN), Volunteer leader, another Volunteer or a pastoral/secular counselor.
  - c. PCVs can be encouraged to develop rituals/rites that are timed to coincide with services planned by the family at home.
  - d. Rituals/rites might include elements in keeping with local traditions or customs such as: releasing balloons or flying kites, prayer flags in the wind, strewing flowers or floating candles on water, writing prayers or messages on paper to be set afire.
  - e. PCVs can be encouraged to journal or write letters to or about the person for whom they are grieving. Some elements common in this type of writing are: thanking the person for the gifts received from them; asking forgiveness for opportunities lost or hurts not mended; and expressing those feeling we would have liked to share the last time we were with that person.
  - f. Volunteers may be given leave to be with others—another Volunteer, their host country family, another staff member etc.
  - g. The Country Director may wish to invite the Volunteer, when appropriate, to join in their own family activity—dinner, religious observance, etc.