

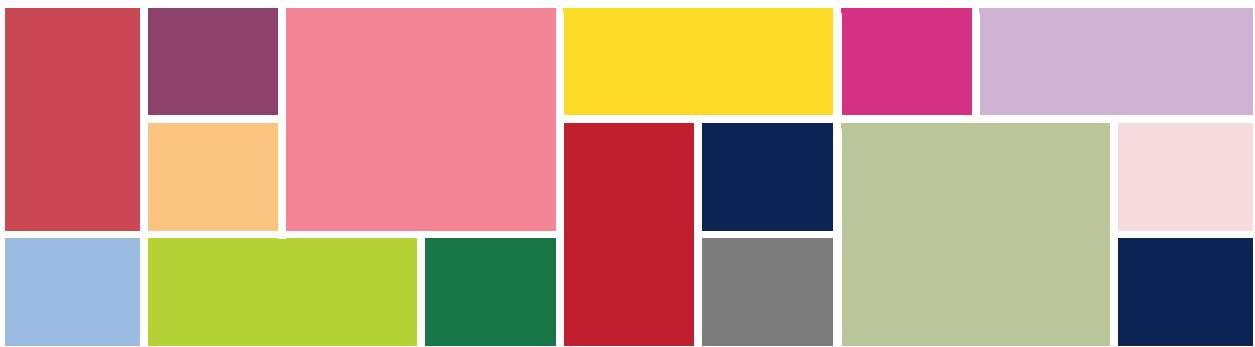


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Caregiver Psychosocial Support Session Guide

Helping Young Children with Disabilities Meet Their
Potential



MCSP is a global USAID initiative to introduce and support high-impact health interventions in 25 priority countries to help prevent child and maternal deaths. MCSP supports programming in maternal, newborn, and child health, immunization, family planning and reproductive health, nutrition, health systems strengthening, water/sanitation/hygiene, malaria, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and pediatric HIV care and treatment. MCSP will tackle these issues through approaches that also focus on household and community mobilization, gender integration, and digital health, among others.

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Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to act as a guide for the facilitation of caregiver psychosocial support sessions, which will be referred to as support sessions after this point. Peers, counselors, or community health workers who have attended the psychosocial support training can facilitate these group sessions.

Support sessions are designed for caregivers of children, of any age, who have disabilities, including children within the 0–3-year age range. It is important that all caregivers be invited to the support sessions: mothers, fathers, maternal and paternal grandmothers and grandfathers, and any other caregiver present in the child’s life. If needed, you can set up separate sessions with male caregivers, which are conducted by male facilitators.

Package of Materials

The following package of materials will be provided to each support session facilitator:

- A **guide book** for support sessions
- A **registration book** with names, attendance, and phone numbers
- A **folder** for additional materials such as checklists, tracking of experiences, etc. (optional)
- A **list of resources** available at the community level (referral services, etc.)—Note: These should be collected by countries before the training. Please see details in the background section.

Overview of Sessions

This *Caregiver Psychosocial Support Session Guide* consists of 12 sessions for weekly facilitation to ensure regular contact between participants. Three types of sessions will be organized: (1) participants will be invited to share their experiences in an open forum for three sessions; (2) art-based discussion prompts will be used in seven of the sessions to enable participants to engage in artistic activities related to different themes and topics, and share their experiences; and (3) two guest speakers will be invited to the sessions to share their personal stories and experiences with the participants. After sessions 4 and 8, the group facilitator will gather feedback from the group on what is working well, what improvements need to be made, and what adjustments are necessary.

It is recommended that each session be about 1.5 hours in duration.

Most sessions will follow this five-step process:

1. Step 1 (10 minutes): Opening
2. Step 2 (30 minutes): Check in
3. Step 3 (15 minutes): Discussion prompt
4. Step 4 (30 minutes): Discussion
5. Step 5 (5 minutes): Facilitator closes session with an exercise on gratitude

The following is an overview of the themes, sessions, and prompts:

Theme	Session	Prompt	Purpose
Making connections	Session 1: Introductions	Create a representation of yourself with sticks and fabric scraps.	Participants get to know each other.
	Session 2: Love	Draw someone who is important to you.	Participants share something personal to begin establishing a connection with others.
	Session 3: Open forum	Caregivers are invited to talk about their challenges and successes.	Discussion is determined by the interest and needs of the group.
Receiving help and helping others	Session 4: Support to cope with stress (guest speaker)	Invite a counselor to talk about how to recognize stress, manage stress, and what external support is available. At the end of the session, gather feedback from the group and make adjustments.	Participants learn about stress and what support is available in their community if they want to reach out for help.
	Session 5: My support network	Write down the people you can count on for help.	Participants realize that they have a network they can count on, including fellow participants in the support session group.
	Session 6: Helping others	Draw something you did to help someone.	Participants reflect on how they have the strength to help others.
Exploring how we feel	Session 7: Open forum	Caregivers are invited to talk about their challenges and successes.	Discussion is determined by the interest and needs of the group.
	Session 8: Feelings pie chart	Color within circle to represent all the emotions you feel. At the end of the session, gather feedback from the group and make adjustments.	Participants explore and share how they feel.
	Session 9: Learning from others (guest speaker)	Invite an adult with a disability or a caregiver of an older child with a disability to talk about their journey.	Participants may feel inspired by someone who has been through a similar journey.
My life	Session 10: Open forum	Caregivers are invited to talk about their challenges and successes.	Discussion is determined by the interest and needs of the group.
	Session 11: Tree of life	Draw the tree of life. At the end of the session, gather feedback from the group and make adjustments.	Participants begin gently exploring their lives and continue connecting with others.

Theme	Session	Prompt	Purpose
	Session 12: Caring for ourselves	Think about how you take care of yourself. Write down five things that you do. Write down five things you need to do.	Participants reflect on how they care for themselves and what they can do in the future to continue to take care of themselves.

Materials Needed

- Chairs or cushions to sit on
- Tissue boxes placed around the room
- Snacks and beverages
- Markers and paper

Remember

- The group sits and forms a circle (not a semicircle).
- During the sharing session, do not go around the circle. Invite participants to share if they would like to.
- Emphasize confidentiality during each session.

Background Information

How Were These Sessions Developed?

These sessions drew from Save the Children’s arts programs and peer support group resources. Similar art activities have been implemented in over 20 countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

What Are Support Groups?

Support groups are made up of people who share similar problems and experiences. In a support group, participants can talk to others who truly understand what they are going through. They can help each other and work together to solve their own problems. Support groups are made up of peers who are directly affected by the problem.

How Are the Discussion Prompts Used?

The discussion prompts are designed to help adults connect with each other, share successes and challenges, and understand and express feelings related to stressful experiences in their lives. Through the discussion prompts involving art activities, during which they draw their feelings and then verbally share that experience, participants can become increasingly comfortable sharing their emotions and connecting with other participants of the peer support group.

How Do the Sessions Address Disabilities?

All sessions include an open forum where caregivers can discuss their successes and challenges. Caregivers can then choose whether to continue discussing these topics or engage in an art activity followed by a discussion. These art discussion prompts focus on emotions that are relevant for caregivers of children with disabilities, such as sharing, building a support network and recognizing one’s ability to help others.

The sessions will not force caregivers to talk about their children’s disabilities. Some caregivers may readily begin talking about their children’s disabilities while others may need more time. It is also possible that in some sessions, caregivers will want to discuss other issues they are facing.

While there may be widespread societal stigma toward disability, the sessions will have members who are all experiencing this stigma, which will make it easier for them to open up. The group facilitator will aim to create a trusting environment to enable participants to share their experiences.

What Can the Group Do if a Participant Becomes Emotional in the Session?

Caregivers may become emotional during the session, and this release is part of the coping process. During this time, the rest of the group can quietly wait for the caregiver to collect their thoughts. The group should not offer tissues, but tissues should be placed around the room—before the session starts—so that the caregiver can reach for one if needed. One group member can come closer to the caregiver to indicate their support, but that person should not initiate any contact. The caregiver may then reach out for physical support (e.g., a hug) if they want. It is important to allow the caregiver to choose how they would like to process these emotions. This practice is used in support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

At the end of the session, the group facilitator can check in with the caregiver to see how they are doing. The facilitator can also refer the participant to various community resources available (see below).

When Should a Group Facilitator Refer the Participant to a Mental Health Provider?

The group facilitator should refer the participant to a specialized mental health provider when they appear to be in situations such as these:

- Displaying or revealing severe depression or anxiety
- Expressing a desire for self-harm
- Expressing a desire to hurt the child
- Any form of abuse and neglect toward their children
- Domestic violence

In a crisis situation, the facilitator should put aside plans for the group and reach out for help from a counselor, mental health professional, or hotline. Each facilitator will receive a list of resources they can use.

What Resources Will Be Collected before the Training?

The following resources will need to be collected, before the training, for the caregivers:

- Contact details for mental health professionals, hospitals/clinics, Alcoholics Anonymous, police, domestic violence support, child protection services, etc.
- Referral process if the caregiver reveals or the facilitator notices severe depression or anxiety in the family
- Referral process if a parent expresses that they want to inflict self-harm
- Referral process if a parent expresses that they want to hurt the child
- Referral process if the caregiver reveals or the facilitator notices any form of abuse and neglect toward the children
- Referral process if the caregiver reveals or the facilitator notices domestic violence in the household

Each country should check for existing mandates for reporting/child-safeguarding regulations related to abuse/domestic violence. The peer facilitator will need to follow mandatory reporting requirements for each country.

How Can the Facilitator Participate in Self-Care?

Creating support groups for facilitators to meet once a month is an important component of the support network. This will allow facilitators to process their own stress and support each other. Before each session, the facilitators also need to assess their emotional capability to facilitate the group. If they are not able, then they need to find another facilitator to run the session.

What Will Happen after the 12 Sessions?

The 12 sessions will take place over 6 months. During this time, the group facilitator can try to identify one or two peer facilitators, from within the group, who may be able take over the facilitation after the 12 sessions are completed.

The main purpose of the group is to provide a support network for the caregivers. It is possible that over time, the group may be able to replace the discussion prompts with a local craft (weaving, sewing, etc.). The idea is for caregivers to come together to discuss issues and successes, and to keep busy with their hands.

Session Delivery

Theme I: Making Connections

Session I: Introductions¹

Materials: Sticks, string, tape, Play-Doh (optional), paper, and fabric scraps.

Prompt: Create a representation of yourself.

Guidelines for the First Session	
<p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Welcome, everyone! This is the first meeting of our support group for caregivers of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.”• “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” <p>Note: Please identify how you would like to start each session and keep it the same each time. One option used by peer support groups is the Serenity Prayer.² The whole group can say the prayer together. You may also choose a song, poem, or anything else that encourages self-reflection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “All women and men who care for children with disabilities of any age are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.”• “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.”• “Let us go around the room and introduce ourselves. I will start.” <p>The facilitator can introduce themselves and share their experience with disabilities. The story should be personal, so it will hopefully encourage others to open up.</p> <p>Invite members to introduce themselves.</p>
<p>Step 2: Establishing guidelines</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p>	<p>To create emotional safety in our support group, we need to remember these four ground rules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Listening</u>: One person speaks at a time. Please listen to what other people are saying, and raise your hand if you have something to say. Your turn will come once the person before you in the queue has finished.• <u>Confidentiality</u>: We keep everything we hear confidential. “What is shared in this room stays in this room.”• <u>Safe place for feelings</u>: We share and honor our real feelings and are not role-playing. Feelings are neither right nor wrong, neither good nor bad. All feelings are accepted. We never mock or attack another person’s feelings or ideas.• <u>Respecting boundaries</u>: We respect the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual boundaries of each member of the support group. We never give unsolicited hugs. We never tell anyone what they should or should not be thinking, feeling, or doing. We respect religious beliefs and practices.• <u>Sharing</u>: We do not comment on another person’s drawing, unless it’s positive.

¹ Source: Adapted from https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/smf-112_en.pdf.

² Serenity Prayer: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

Guidelines for the First Session	
<p>Step 3: Discussion prompt</p> <p>Time: 20 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We will begin with a meditation (see meditation script).” • “Each time we meet, we will have a discussion prompt. Usually, this will be an activity that involves drawing.” • “Today, we are going to introduce ourselves by making a representation of ourselves with sticks and fabrics.” <p>Distribute a basket of sticks and materials to the participants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You can each take a stick and any material in this basket. You will have 15 minutes to create your representation. I will give you a warning when we are halfway through the time. Afterwards, we will share with everyone in the group.” • “You are now halfway through the time.” • “You have 2 minutes before we stop drawing and begin to share.”
<p>Step 4: Sharing</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Would anyone like to talk about their drawing?” Invite group members to share if they would like. Encourage members to listen and offer support to one another.
<p>Step 5: Closing</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This week, we are building a foundation for our group and getting to know each other. Art can allow us to explore our feelings and express them in a deeper way than just talking about them. It's also fun and relaxing to do things with our hands. • “Thank you very much for coming today. Our next meeting will take place on ___ at ___(time) in ___(location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” • “We look forward to seeing you next week.”

Session 2: Love

Materials: Paper and markers (or crayons).

Prompt: Invite them to draw someone who is important to them.

Guidelines for the Second Session	
<p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcome, everyone! This is the regular meeting of _____ [group name] for caregivers of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.” • “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” • “All women and men who care for children with disabilities of any age are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.” • “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.” • If there are new members: The facilitator can introduce themselves and share their experience with disabilities. The story should be personal and will hopefully encourage others to open up. Then, the facilitator can invite any new members to introduce themselves. • “We will begin with a quiet moment to ground ourselves.” [The group remains quiet for 1 minute.]
<p>Step 2: Check in</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does anyone want to share how you are doing? • What have you found challenging since we last met? • What successes have you experienced?

Guidelines for the Second Session	
<p>Step 3: Discussion prompt (optional)</p> <p>Time: 15 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Today, we are going to draw someone who is important to us. You can each take a piece of paper and a marker.” <p>Distribute paper and markers (or crayons).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “To begin, close your eyes. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and breathe out through your mouth. Once again, take a deep breath in through your nose, and breathe out through your mouth. And one more time, in and out.” • “Think about someone who is important to you. Notice how you feel when you remember this person.” [Pause.] • “Gently open your eyes. You can draw this person or a representation of your relationship with this person on the paper. You have 15 minutes to work on your drawing.” • “You are now halfway through the time.” • “You have 2 minutes before we stop drawing and begin to share.”
<p>Step 4: Sharing (optional)</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Would anyone like to talk about their drawing?” Invite group members to share if they would like. • Thank the participants for sharing.
<p>Step 5: Closing</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have reached the end of our session and will begin our closing activity. Let us go around the room, and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.” • “Thank you very much for coming today. Our next meeting will take place on ____, at ____ (time), and at ____ (location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” • “We look forward to seeing you next week.”

Session 3: Open Forum

Caregivers can use this time to talk about their experiences or any issue they choose.

Guidelines for the Third Session	
<p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcome, everyone! This is the regular meeting of _____ [group name] for caregivers of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.” • “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” • “All women and men who care for children with disabilities of any age are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.” • “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.” • If there are new members: The facilitator can introduce themselves and share their experience with disabilities. The story should be personal and will hopefully encourage others to open up. Then, the facilitator can invite any new members to introduce themselves. • “We will begin with a quiet moment to ground ourselves.” [The group remains quiet for 1 minute.]

Guidelines for the Third Session	
<p>Step 2: Check in</p> <p>Time: 45–75 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does anyone want to share how you are doing? • What have you found challenging since we last met? • What successes have you experienced?
<p>Step 3: Closing</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have reached the end of our session and will begin our closing activity. Let us go around the room, and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.” • “Thank you very much for coming today. Our next meeting will take place on ___ at ___ (time) in ___ (location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” • “We look forward to seeing you next week.”

Theme 2: Receiving Help and Helping Others

Session 4: Support for Coping with Stress (Guest Speaker)

Invite a counselor to talk about how to recognize stress, manage stress, and identify what external support is available.

Note: If the guest speaker cannot come, and this is learned at the last minute, skip to Session 5.

Guidelines for the Fourth Session	
<p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcome, everyone! This is the regular meeting of _____ [group name] for caregivers of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.” • “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” • “All women and men who care for children with disabilities of any age are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.” • “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.” • If there are new members: The facilitator can introduce themselves and share their experience with disabilities. The story should be personal and will hopefully encourage others to open up. Then, the facilitator can invite any new members to introduce themselves. • “We will begin with a quiet moment to ground ourselves.” [The group remains quiet for 1 minute.]
<p>Step 2: Guest speaker</p> <p>Time: 60–75 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the guest speaker, and invite them to speak for 40 minutes. • Invite participants to ask questions; let this question period be 20–35 minutes in duration.
<p>Step 3: Closing</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have reached the end of our session and will begin our closing activity. Let us go around the room, and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.” • “Thank you very much for coming today. Our next meeting will take place on ___ at ___ (time) in ___ (location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” • “We look forward to seeing you next week.”

Session 5: My Support Network

Materials: Paper and markers (or crayons).

Prompt: Invite participants to write down who they have counted on for help in the past.

Note: What if a person does not have a support network?

- Many caregivers may not have a support network before joining the group, so the aim of the psychosocial support group is to create such a network. During Session 5, when the participants are asked to draw their support network, they all should be able to include the members of that network, as well as any other support they receive.

Guidelines for the Fifth Session	
<p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcome, everyone! This is the regular meeting of _____ [group name] for caregivers of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.” • “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” • “All women and men who care for children with disabilities of any age are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.” • “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.” • If there are new members: The facilitator can introduce themselves and share their experience with disabilities. The story should be personal and will hopefully encourage others to open up. Then, the facilitator can invite any new members to introduce themselves. • “We will begin with a quiet moment to ground ourselves.” [The group remains quiet for 1 minute.]
<p>Step 2: Check in</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does anyone want to share how you are doing? • What have you found challenging since we last met? • What successes have you experienced?
<p>Step 3: Discussion prompt (optional)</p> <p>Time: 15 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Today, we are going to draw our support network. You can each take a piece of paper and a marker.” <p>Distribute paper and markers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “To begin, close your eyes. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and breathe out through your mouth. Once again, take a deep breath in through your nose, and breathe out through your mouth. And one more time, in and out.” • “Think about the people you have been able to count on. They may be family, friends, counselors, therapists, nurses, or doctors. Think about this group and the support it has provided you. Notice how you feel as a member of this group. Notice the support you receive through this group.” <p>...[Pause.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Gently open your eyes. You can draw your support network on the paper. You have 15 minutes to work on your drawing.” • “You are now halfway through the time.” • “You have 2 minutes before we stop drawing and begin to share.”

Guidelines for the Fifth Session	
<p>Step 4: Sharing (optional)</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Would anyone like to talk about their drawing?” Invite group members to share if they would like. • Thank the participants for sharing.
<p>Step 5: Closing</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have reached the end of our session and will begin our closing activity. Let us go around the room, and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.” • “Thank you very much for coming today. Our next meeting will take place on ___ at ___ (time) in ___(location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” • “We look forward to seeing you next week.”

Session 6: Helping Others

Materials: Paper and markers (or crayons).

Prompt: Invite participants to draw something they did to help someone.

Guidelines for the Sixth Session	
<p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcome, everyone! This is the regular meeting of _____ [group name] for caregivers of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.” • “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” • “All women and men who care for children with disabilities of any age are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.” • “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.” • If there are new members: The facilitator can introduce themselves and share their experience with disabilities. The story should be personal and will hopefully encourage others to open up. Then, the facilitator can invite any new members to introduce themselves. • “We will begin with a quiet moment to ground ourselves.” [The group remains quiet for 1 minute.]
<p>Step 2: Check in</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does anyone want to share how you are doing? • What have you found challenging since we last met? • What successes have you experienced?

Guidelines for the Sixth Session	
<p>Step 3: Discussion prompt</p> <p>Time: 15 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Today, we are going to draw something we did to help someone else. You can each take a piece of paper and markers.” <p>Distribute paper and markers (or crayons).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “To begin, close your eyes. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and breathe out through your mouth. Once again, take a deep breath in through your nose, and breathe out through your mouth. And one more time, in and out.” • “Think about a time you’ve been able to help someone. Try to recall the details and how you felt. [Pause.] Gently open your eyes. You can draw the memory on your paper. Feel free to use symbols, shapes, colors. You have 15 minutes to work on your drawing. • “You are now halfway through the time.” • “You have 2 minutes before we stop drawing and begin to share.”
<p>Step 4: Sharing</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Would anyone like to talk about their drawing?” Invite group members to share if they would like. • Thank the participants for sharing.
<p>Step 5: Closing</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have reached the end of our session and will begin our closing activity. Let us go around the room, and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.” • “Thank you very much for coming today. Our next meeting will take place on ___ at ___ (time) in ___(location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” • “We look forward to seeing you next week.”

Theme 3: Exploring How We Feel

Session 7: Open Forum

Caregivers can use the time to talk about their experiences or any issue they choose.

Guidelines for the Seventh Session	
<p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcome, everyone! This is the regular meeting of _____ [group name] for caregivers of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.” • “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” • “All women and men who care for children with disabilities of any age are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.” • “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.” • If there are new members: The facilitator can introduce themselves and share their experience with disabilities. The story should be personal and will hopefully encourage others to open up. Then, the facilitator can invite any new members to introduce themselves. • “We will begin with a quiet moment to ground ourselves.” [The group remains quiet for 1 minute.]

Guidelines for the Seventh Session	
<p>Step 2: Check in</p> <p>Time: 45–75 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does anyone want to share how you are doing? • What have you found challenging since we last met? • What successes have you experienced?
<p>Step 3: Closing</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have reached the end of our session and will begin our closing activity. Let us go around the room and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.” • “Thank you very much for coming today. Our next meeting will take place on ___ at ___ (time) in ___(location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” • “We look forward to seeing you next week.”

Session 8: Feelings Pie Chart

Materials: Paper and markers (or crayons).

Prompt: Invite participants to color a circle to reflect the different emotions they are feeling at the time.

Guidelines for the Eighth Session	
<p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcome, everyone! This is the regular meeting of _____ [group name] for caregivers of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.” • “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” • “All women and men who care for children with disabilities of any age are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.” • “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.” • If there are new members: The facilitator can introduce themselves and share their experience with disabilities. The story should be personal and will hopefully encourage others to open up. Then, the facilitator can invite any new members to introduce themselves. • “We will begin with a quiet moment to ground ourselves.” [The group remains quiet for 1 minute.]
<p>Step 2: Check in</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does anyone want to share how you are doing? • What have you found challenging since we last met? • What successes have you experienced?

Guidelines for the Eighth Session

<p>Step 3: Discussion prompt</p> <p>Time: 15 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Today, we are going to draw how we feel at this moment. You can each take a piece of paper and markers (or crayons).” <p>Distribute paper and markers (or crayons).</p> <p>Introduction: Ask participants how they are feeling at the moment. Tell them it’s okay if they are feeling many things at the same time. Sometimes we might feel happy and tired, or hopeful and angry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to draw a large circle on their paper. Ask them to think of the different feelings they have at this moment and to assign a color to each feeling. There is no right or wrong color to represent a feeling. Any color is ok. • Invite participants to make a list of those feelings with the corresponding color somewhere on the sheet of paper so that they create a “legend” or “key” to understand how the pie is divided. • Ask participants to divide the pie according to the size of each feeling they are experiencing in the moment. Some feelings will be stronger than others, so some pieces of the pie will be larger than others.
<p>Step 4: Sharing</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Would anyone like to talk about their drawing?” Invite group members to share if they would like. • Thank the participants for sharing.
<p>Step 5: Closing</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have reached the end of our session and will begin our closing activity. Let us go around the room, and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.” • “Thank you very much for coming today. Our next meeting will take place on ___ at ___ (time) in ___ (location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” • “We look forward to seeing you next week.”

Session 9: Learning from Others (Guest Speaker)

Invite an adult with a disability, or a caregiver of an older child with a disability, to talk about their journey.

Note: If the guest speaker cannot come, and this is learned at the last minute, skip to Session 10.

Guidelines for the Ninth Session	
<p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcome, everyone! This is the regular meeting of _____ [group name] for caregivers of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.” • “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” • “All women and men who care for children with disabilities of any age are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.” • “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.” • If there are new members: The facilitator can introduce themselves and share their experience with disabilities. The story should be personal and will hopefully encourage others to open up. Then, the facilitator can invite any new members to introduce themselves. • “We will begin with a quiet moment to ground ourselves.” [The group remains quiet for 1 minute.]
<p>Step 2: Guest speaker</p> <p>Time: 60–75 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the guest speaker and invite them to speak for 40 minutes. • Invite participants to ask questions; this question period should be 20–35 minutes in duration.
<p>Step 3: Closing</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have reached the end of our session and will begin our closing activity. Let us go around the room, and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.” • “Thank you very much for coming today. Our next meeting will take place on ___ at ___ (time) in ___ (location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” • “We look forward to seeing you next week.”

Theme 4: Discovering Who We Are

Session 10: Open Forum

Caregivers can use the time to talk about their experiences or any issue they choose.

Guidelines for the Tenth Session	
<p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcome, everyone! This is the regular meeting of _____ [group name] for caregivers of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.” • “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” • “All women and men who care for children with disabilities of any age are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.” • “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.” • If there are new members: The facilitator can introduce themselves and share their experience with disabilities. The story should be personal and will hopefully encourage others to open up. Then, the facilitator can invite any new members to introduce themselves. • “We will begin with a quiet moment to ground ourselves.” [The group remains quiet for 1 minute.]
<p>Step 2: Check in</p> <p>Time: 45–75 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does anyone want to share how you are doing? • What have you found challenging since we last met? • What successes have you experienced?
<p>Step 3: Closing</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have reached the end of our session and will begin our closing activity. Let us go around the room, and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.” • “Thank you very much for coming today. Our next meeting will take place on ___ at ___ (time) in ___ (location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” • “We look forward to seeing you next week.”

Session 11: Tree of Life

Materials: A sheet of paper that is at least 2 ft x 3 ft for each participant, paint, paintbrushes, and cups with water.

Prompt: The tree-of-life activity encourages participants to tell their story and think about the precious things in their lives. The exercise gives them some distance from their problems.

Note: The guiding questions in the script should be slowly read aloud by the facilitator as the participants are drawing or painting.

Guidelines for the Eleventh Session

<p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcome, everyone! This is the regular meeting of _____ [group name] for caregivers of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.” • “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” • “All women and men who care for children with disabilities of any age are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.” • “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.” • If there are new members: The facilitator can introduce themselves and share their experience with disabilities. The story should be personal and will hopefully encourage others to open up. Then, the facilitator can invite any new members to introduce themselves. • “We will begin with a quiet moment to ground ourselves.” [The group remains quiet for 1 minute.]
<p>Step 2: Discussion prompt</p> <p>Time: 45 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Today, we are going to draw our own Tree of Life.” <p>Distribute paper and markers (or crayons).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “As you draw each part of your tree, starting with the roots at the bottom of the tree, I will read something to you about it that might give you ideas about what you want to put in your drawing. You can also write words on your Tree of Life if you want to.” • “The Roots: Where did you come from? This includes your village, family name, and the meaning of your name. (The names of your extended family can be added.) Add those who have taught you the most in life.” • “The Ground: With whom do you live now, and what do you do every day? What are some of your favorite things? What do you enjoy doing that gives you pleasure?” • “The Trunk: What is the most important part of you? This can be a special talent or something about you, such as being a good friend or helping other people.” • “The Branches: What are your hopes, dreams, and wishes for the future?” • “The Leaves: What do you love about yourself? What do you feel proud about? What are some of the things you have done that you feel good about?” • “The Fruit: What are some of the ways that people have given you gifts in your life? This is not about things, but about kindness and support. Who has helped you, and who have you helped?” • “Put all around the tree the things you are thankful for.” <p>At the end of the session, hang all the trees together to create a forest of each participant’s tree of life.</p>
<p>Step 3: Sharing</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Would anyone like to talk about their drawing?” Invite group members to share if they would like. • Thank the participants for sharing.
<p>Step 4: Closing</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have reached the end of our session and will begin our closing activity. Let us go around the room, and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.” • “Thank you very much for coming today. Our next meeting will take place on ____ at ____ (time) in ____ (location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” • “We look forward to seeing you next week.”

Session 12: Caring for Ourselves

Materials: Paper and markers (or crayons).

Prompt: Invite participants to think about how they take care of themselves.

Guidelines for the Twelfth Session	
<p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcome, everyone! This is the regular meeting of _____ [group name] for caregivers of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.” • “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” • “All women and men who care for children with disabilities of any age are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.” • “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.” • If there are new members: The facilitator can introduce themselves and share their experience with disabilities. The story should be personal and will hopefully encourage others to open up. Then, the facilitator can invite any new members to introduce themselves. • “We will begin with a quiet moment to ground ourselves.” [The group remains quiet for 1 minute.]
<p>Step 2: Check in</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does anyone want to share how you are doing? • What have you found challenging since we last met? • What successes have you experienced?
<p>Step 3: Discussion prompt</p> <p>Time: 15 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Today, we are going to think about how we care for ourselves. You can each take a piece of paper and a marker (or a crayon).” <p>Distribute paper and markers (or crayons).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “To begin, close your eyes. Think about the things you do in your day for yourself.” [Pause.] Now think about the things you would like to do.” [Pause.] • “Gently open your eyes. You can draw or write at least five things you currently do to take care of yourself.” [Pause.] • “Now draw or write at least five additional things you will do to take care of yourself. You have 15 minutes to work on your drawing.” • “You are now halfway through the time.” • “You have 2 minutes before we stop drawing and begin to share.”
<p>Step 4: Sharing</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Would anyone like to talk about their drawing?” Invite group members to share if they would like. • Thank the participants for sharing.
<p>Step 5: Closing</p> <p>Time: 5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have reached the end of our session and will begin our closing activity. Let us go around the room, and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.” • “Thank you very much for coming today. As you know, this is the twelfth and final session. Let’s discuss if we would like to continue our support group. If so, should we meet at the same time? Should we begin from Session 1 or are there other sessions that we would like to being with? Our next meeting will take place on ___ at ___ (time) in ___(location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” • “We look forward to seeing you next week.”

Meditation Script

You can use any of the meditation scripts below at any time you feel the group needs centering and calming. You can use it to ground the group at the start of the support group session.

Script 1. Breathing Exercise

Show participants how to breathe. When you breathe in, your belly moves in toward the spine. When you breathe out, your belly extends outward. Explain that sometimes when we breathe, the air goes to our chest and does not make its way to the belly. This breathing is shallow. Explain that it is better to breathe so that the air goes all the way down to the belly. Then lead them through the following meditation.

Sit comfortably on the floor with legs crossed or on a chair with feet touching the floor; keep hands on knees and eyes closed. Slowly blow out through your mouth all the churned-up air from inside your body, as if you were blowing up a balloon (get it all out, blowing it into a make-believe balloon that you will then let fly away). Count one (to yourself). As you breathe in fresh, clean air through your nose, as slowly as you can, count two (to yourself). Blow the air out through your mouth, counting three (to yourself). Breathe in fresh air through your nose and count four (to yourself). Keep doing this until you count to 10. Watch those imaginary balloons filling with hot air and flying away!

Slowly return your attention to the room. Rub your hands together, and place them over your eyes. Then gently open your eyes.

Script 2. Self-Soothing Activity: Tense and Relax

When our minds are stressed, our bodies often tighten up, too—even if we are not aware of it. In this self-soothing activity, you will be using your entire body as a “stress ball.”

Sit comfortably, or lie down. Wrinkle your forehead (as if you were angry); then let it relax. Squint your eyes; then relax. Scrunch up your nose (as if you are going to sneeze); then relax. Purse your lips (as if they were just a straight line); then relax. Open your mouth wide, and stick your tongue out like a lion; then let your mouth go slack. Clench your teeth; then yawn as widely as you can. Feel your face relax. Lift your shoulders up to your ears; then let them drop down. Hold out your arms straight (with elbows not bent); then relax. Make a fist; then relax your fingers. Stiffen your legs from your hips to your feet; then relax. Curl your toes; then uncurl them. Let your body feel heavy. Feel how good it is to let your body relax.

When you are ready, open your eyes.

Script 3. Color Your Cloud Relaxation³

(Preparation through the breath)

“Let’s start by practicing our breath...breathe in through your nose, and breathe out through your mouth or nose.

Take in a deep breath. [Brief Pause.] Then release a deep breath.

Keep breathing for several times. [Brief Pause.]

Until your body feels very relaxed... [Pause.]

And keep breathing... [Brief Pause.]

In and out. [Brief Pause.] In and out.”

³ Source: Save the Children. HEART Manual.

(Introduction of the cloud)

“Now imagine that there is a cloud around your feet. [Pause.]
It’s a beautiful soft cloud. [Brief Pause.]
In your favorite color... [Pause.]
Let it be your favorite color if you want... [Long Pause.]
And it’s soft, beautiful, and so relaxing. [Pause.]”

(Start Progressive Muscle Relaxation from feet to waist)

“It’s relaxing your toes and your feet... [Brief Pause.]
Then it’s moving up to your calves...relaxing your calves. [Brief Pause.]
Then moving up to your knees. [Pause.]
And then to your hips... [Brief Pause.]
And then to your waist... [Brief Pause.]
And you’re feeling good...and relaxed. [Long Pause.]”

(Continue Progressive Muscle Relaxation from hands and arms to neck)

“And this beautiful soft cloud is now moving up through your hands and arms... [Brief Pause.]
And your back... [Brief Pause.]
And up to your neck... [Brief Pause.]
And you’re still breathing... [Brief Pause.]
In and out... [Brief Pause.]
In and out... [Brief Pause.]
Feeling good and feeling relaxed. [Pause.]”

(Ending Progressive Muscle Relaxation at the top of the head)

“And now this beautiful cloud in your favorite color... [Brief Pause.]
Is moving up through your head... [Brief Pause.]
Making your whole face feel relaxed... [Pause.]
And now you are completely covered in this cloud... [Brief Pause.]
From your feet all the way to the top of your head... [Pause.]”

“Slowly come back to the room. Rub your hands together, and place them over your eyes. Then gently, open your eyes.”

Suggested Songs, Poems, and Prayers

The following songs, poems, and prayers can also be used to ground the group at the start of the support group session. The participants can also suggest local prayers, songs, and poems.

- Songs:
 - “We Shall Overcome”
 - “Lean on Me”
 - “This Little Guiding Light”
- Poems:
 - “I’m Touched by an Angel”
 - “Invictus”
- Prayer:
 - “Serenity Prayer”

Sample Caregiver Support Group Training Plan

Objectives

- Introduce participants to the process of creating and facilitating peer support groups.
- Develop participants' skills to train others and/or conduct peer support groups.
- Identify group facilitators, and develop plans for launching group sessions.

Materials

- Sticks
- Fabric scraps
- String
- Paper
- Markers, crayons, oil pastels, etc.
- Flip chart
- Tape
- Glue

Preparation

Create a list of these resources in the country or community (see Day 2 schedule for details):

- Name/location of mental health professionals
- Name/location of health centers
- Times when health centers are open
- Name/location of hospital that provides specific kind of therapy (such psychiatry/psychology)
- Name of other early stimulation programs
- Name of child care centers

Set Up the Room

- Set up the materials on the side of the room.
- Set up round tables on one side of the room. Set up a circular seating arrangement on the other side of the room.
- In the middle of the room, place a tissue box, some Play-Doh, or things that the participants can pick up.

- Write the (1) objectives of the training, (2) schedule for the 2 days, (3) ground rules, (4) names of the 12 sessions, (5) and structure of the support group on flip charts. You can hang them up as you go through them during the day.

Facilitation Tips

- Arrive a day early to meet with mental health professionals, finalize the list of resources and document them in a PowerPoint slide, and go through the agenda. Invite them to act if people become upset. Also, divide them up so that they can each be assigned to a small group.
- Each day, the sharing will happen in small groups, You should keep the groups the same for the whole day, but you can change the groups the following day.
- Keep a copy of the registration form with you in case you need to contact the participants at any point outside of the training (e.g., if you are concerned about a participant).
- Remind the participants that every exercise is “real.” They should reflect on their life and not role-play, joke, or imagine scenarios or feelings.

Day 1

Time	Activity	Details	
8:30–8:45 a.m.	Registration	Participants register with their name, phone number, email address, position, organization, and any other details.	
8:45–9:00 a.m.	Opening	US Mission and Ministry of Health	
9:00–9:10 a.m.	Welcome	<p>1. Welcome all participants to the training.</p> <p>“Welcome to our 2-day training on setting up support groups. We are so glad you are able to join us.”</p> <p>2. Explain the objectives of the training. You can show slide 2 or write the objectives of the training on a flip chart.</p> <p>“Over the course of these 2 days, we will learn about how we can set up and run support groups. Our training will be focused on the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce you to the process of creating and facilitating peer support groups. • Develop your skills to train others and/or conduct peer support groups. • Identify group facilitators among you—based on interest, skills, time, etc. <p>“After the training, the group facilitators will set up support groups for caregivers of children with disabilities, which will aim to meet every 2 weeks.”</p>	

Time	Activity	Details	
		<p>“It is important to mention that <u>support groups are not therapy groups</u>. Support groups are set up to allow people who are experiencing similar difficulties to meet and support each other. These are effective in reducing stress and increasing support.”</p> <p>“Some of you may be interested and able to train others who will be facilitating the group sessions. Others may want to directly facilitate the group sessions. And some of you may just be here to learn about group sessions and would then refer people to the sessions. All of you do not have to become trainers or run group sessions. You can decide at the end of the training how you would like to become involved.”</p> <p>“During the training, we are going to cover some theory and practical steps on creating and running support group sessions. We will also learn how to use a few prompts to generate a discussion on a particular theme. You will be able to experience some of these sessions for yourselves to better engage with the materials.”</p> <p>“Have any of you run support groups before?” [You can draw on them if they have. Do not ask if anyone has been part of a support group.]</p> <p>“Do you have any questions?”</p> <p>3. Go through the overall schedule of the 2 days (slide 3). Explain when you will start, end, and take time for breaks and lunch.</p> <p>“Here is the schedule for the next 2 days [show the schedule on the flip chart, and provide an overall understanding]. We will start each day at __; lunch will be at __, and we will have two breaks at __ and __. We will end at __. Does that work for all of you?”</p> <p>4. Tell participants they can wear comfortable clothes.</p> <p>“This is a very relaxed and hands-on training. Please feel free to come wearing comfortable clothes.”</p> <p>5. Explain the layout of the room—where the art supplies are located, etc.</p> <p>“We have round tables set up here for small group discussions and art work. We also have an area here where we can all sit together in a circle. All the art materials are here. The bathrooms are located ____.”</p>	
9:10–9:20 a.m.	Grounding	1. Show the video on grounding.	

Time	Activity	Details	
9:20–9:30 a.m.	Guidelines	<p>1. Ask participants to propose some ground rules for the training. Explain that these are critical for the quality of the training. You can discuss these, but there is no need to write them.</p> <p>“What are some ground rules you think are important for our training?”</p> <p>2. Present the ground rules for the training and group sessions.</p> <p>“Thank you for sharing. Those are great ideas, and we can group them into five categories: listening, confidentiality, safe place for feelings, respecting boundaries, and sharing. These are the five ground rules we will use for our training and for the group sessions:</p> <p><u>Listening</u>: One person speaks at a time. Please listen to what other people are saying and raise your hand if you have something to say. Your turn will come once the person before you has finished.</p> <p><u>Confidentiality</u>: We keep everything we hear as confidential. “What is shared in this room, stays in this room.”</p> <p><u>Safe place for feelings</u>: We share and honor our real feelings and are not role-playing. Feelings are neither right nor wrong, neither good nor bad. All feelings are accepted. We never mock or attack another person’s feelings or ideas.</p> <p><u>Respecting boundaries</u>: We respect the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual boundaries of members of the support group. We never give unsolicited hugs, and we never tell anyone what they should or should not be thinking, feeling, or doing. We respect religious beliefs and practices.</p> <p><u>Sharing</u>: We do not comment on another person’s drawing, unless it’s positive.”</p>	

Time	Activity	Details	
9:30– 10:15 a.m.	Session 1: Introductions	<p>1. Invite participants to introduce themselves.</p> <p>“We are going to go around the circle now and say our names and how we heard about this training.”</p> <p>2. Invite participants to choose a grounding activity of their choice. You can present 2–3 options based on the context (e.g., sit in silence, sing and dance, say a prayer together, do a breathing exercise).</p> <p>“We are going to start the day by centering ourselves. Do you do anything that brings you a sense of peace and calmness?” [Invite answers.]</p> <p>“What would you like to do as a group?”</p> <p>3. Guide participants through a grounding activity. You can either choose one that was proposed by the participants or guide them through the 5-4-3-2-1 exercise.</p> <p>“Take a look around you, and notice 5 things you see... Now notice 4 things you feel... Now notice 3 things you can hear... Now notice 2 things you can smell... And finally, notice 1 thing you can taste.”</p> <p>4. Invite participants to make a representation of themselves. Give them 10 minutes to make the figure.</p> <p>Place sticks and baskets of materials (leaves, cloth, paper, Play-Doh, etc.) in the center of the floor.</p> <p>“Please feel free to take a stick and any materials to create a figure of yourself. You will have 10 minutes to make the figure and then you will be invited to share this with the group. I will let you know when you are halfway through your time and when you have 1 minute remaining.”</p> <p>You can create small groups of four if the participants would prefer to share in small groups.</p> <p>You can also invite some participants to share in the big group if they wish.</p>	
10:15– 10:30 a.m.	Break		

Time	Activity	Details	
10:30–11:15 a.m.	What is stress?	<p>1. Preparation: Write “stress” on one side of the room and “calm” on the other side. You don’t need to tell the participants about this yet.</p> <p>2. Invite participants to walk around the room.</p> <p>“Take a walk around the room. Explore the space. If anything catches your eye, just stop. If you want to smell something, go ahead. If you want to acknowledge someone in the room with your eyes, feel free to. You can walk a bit faster, skip, walk backwards. Feel free to walk however you want. Then explore the whole space around you.”</p> <p>“Now we are all going to move fast, all together. Now slow down. Notice how you feel today.”</p> <p>3. Ask participants to notice the two words in the room.</p> <p>“Notice that there are two words written on the two sides of the room. Imagine that this is a spectrum. Place yourselves on the spectrum. Notice where you are and where others are. Think about whether you want to reach out to others to support them or to have them support you.”</p> <p>4. Participants reflect on the experience of stress.</p> <p>“Now remember a time when you had a highly stressful experience. Take some crayons and paper. You can use colors and the shapes to express how to release that stressful experience. You can crumple the paper if you want to. <u>Do whatever you need to release the stress, but do not draw the stressful experience.</u></p> <p>“Pair up with someone else, and put your drawings between you. You can stand or stay seated. One person will start by doing a movement that reflects their drawing. The pair will then do the movement together.”</p> <p>“Now the partner does a movement that reflects the partner’s drawing (not their own). They then do the movement together.”</p> <p>5. Discuss the process.</p> <p>“What was it like to share the story of stress without words?” [Invite answers.] Participants may say that they felt understood or supported; some may not have wanted to speak.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> If needed, the facilitator can tell the group to come back together and do an activity together to process the stress. You can scream, stomp, tear paper, etc.</p>	
11:15 a.m.–12:30 p.m.	Reducing stress through support groups	<p>1. Participants discuss the stress experienced by caregivers of children with disabilities (slide 10).</p> <p>2. Go through the slides on stress and support groups (slides 11–15)</p>	
12:30–1:30 p.m.	Lunch break		

Time	Activity	Details
1:30–2:45 p.m.	Open forum	<p>1. Introduce the open forum (5 minutes).</p> <p>“We will have three types of group sessions. One will use art as discussion prompts. The second will involve guest speakers, and the third will be an open forum. During the open forum, participants can freely discuss their difficulties and successes. We are going to take some time now to try the open forum. Imagine that this open forum is for professionals working with caregivers of children with disabilities so that you can share your experiences and learn from each other.”</p> <p>2. Participants engage in an open forum. You should lead participants through the following steps in groups of 8–15 people (50 minutes).</p> <p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcome, everyone! This is the regular meeting of the support group for those working with families of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.” • “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” • “All who work with children with disabilities, and the children’s families, are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.” • “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.” • “We will begin with a quiet moment to ground ourselves.” [The group remains quiet for 1 minute]. <p>Step 2: Check in</p> <p>Ask participants how they are doing since the last time you all met. This piece should be quite brief. There is no need to go around the circle.</p> <p>Step 3: Open forum</p> <p>Ask the group the following questions. You may also ask other questions to guide the group’s discussion. The main purpose is to facilitate the group’s sharing of experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have been your experiences working with children with disabilities? • What do you find challenging? • What successes have you experienced? <p>Step 4: Closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have reached the end of our session and will begin our closing activity. Let us go around the room, and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.” • “Thank you very much for coming today. Our next meeting will take place on ___ at ___ (time) in ___ (location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” • “We look forward to seeing you in 2 weeks.”

Time	Activity	Details	
		<p>3. Discuss the benefits of the open forum (20 minutes).</p> <p>“How did you find this experience?”</p>	
2:45–3:00 p.m.	Break		
3:00–4:00 p.m.	Session 8	<p>1. Facilitate Session 8—Feeling Pie Chart—using the four steps of the peer support group.</p> <p>Step 1: Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcome, everyone! This is the regular meeting of the support group for those working with families of children with disabilities. My name is _____, and I am the group facilitator.” • “Let us open with a song/prayer—all together.” • “All who work with children with disabilities, and the children’s families, are welcome to join. Here, we share our experiences, strength, and hope with each other, and we help each other solve problems. New members can join anytime.” • “Our primary purpose is to support each other through this group.” • “We will begin with a quiet moment to ground ourselves.” [The group remains quiet for 1 minute]. <p>Step 2: Check in</p> <p>Ask participants how they are doing since the last time you all met. This piece should be quite brief. There is no need to go around the circle.</p> <p>Step 3: Discussion using a prompt</p> <p>Ask participants how they are feeling. Tell them it’s okay if they are feeling many things at the same time. Sometimes we might feel happy and tired, or hopeful and angry. Then invite the participants to share how they are feeling.</p> <p>Ask participants to draw a large circle on their paper. Ask them to think of the different feelings they have at this moment and then assign a color to each feeling. There is no right or wrong color to represent each feeling. Any color is ok.</p> <p>Invite participants to make a list of those feelings with the corresponding color somewhere on the sheet of paper to create a “legend” or “key” to understand how the pie is divided.</p> <p>Ask participants to divide the pie according to the size of each feeling they are experiencing at the moment. Some feelings will be stronger than others, so some pieces of the pie will be larger than others.</p> <p>Once they are done, they can share in small groups.</p>	

Time	Activity	Details	
		<p>Step 4: Closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “We have reached the end of our session and will begin our closing activity. Let us go around the room, and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.” “Thank you very much for coming today. Our next meeting will take place on ___ at ___ (time) in ___(location). Could we have a volunteer to remind other participants by phone?” “We look forward to seeing you in two weeks.” <p>2. Discuss, as a big group, how they felt about this activity (5 minutes).</p> <p>“What did you think about this activity?” [Invite answers.]</p> <p>“How did it feel to share how you feel with others?”</p> <p>3. Explain when this session will take place and what the benefits would be.</p> <p>“The feelings pie chart is the sixth session in the session guide. It is a good activity to help participants identify their feelings and realize that we often have a mix of emotions at one time. When we verbalize negative emotions, they lose their power. Being able to say I am stressed or sad or angry tends to reduce these feelings.”</p>	
4:00–4:45 p.m.	Referral and guest speakers	<p>1. Present and discuss mental health and other resources available in the country. Use slide 19 on “Referrals.”</p> <p>“We have discussed how we can set up a support group, but we may also need specialized services for caregivers with disabilities. What resources are available in the country to support caregivers of children with disabilities?”</p> <p>“Here is a list of resources we have identified. You can refer caregivers who you feel need additional support to the relevant services. You can also refer caregivers to the support groups we set up.”</p> <p>2. Discuss who could be a guest speaker and why.</p> <p>“You can invite guest speakers to join a few of the sessions. We have suggested two in the script: a mental health professional and someone who has an older child with a disability. The mental health professional could help the caregivers understand what support is available. The person with an older child with a disability could provide a different perspective and be a source of support and inspiration.”</p> <p>“Who else could be a guest speaker?”</p>	Participants

Time	Activity	Details	
4:45–5:00 p.m.	Wrapping up/ reflection	<p>“We have reached the end of our first day. Let us go around the room, and everyone can share something for which they are grateful. You can skip your turn if you do not feel like sharing today.”</p> <p>Can we go around the room to share something you have learned and a question you have?”</p> <p>“You have two things to do for your homework. First, you need to prepare to facilitate one of the following sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session 2: Love • Session 5: My support network • Session 6: Helping others • Session 12: Caring for ourselves” <p>“Second, you need to think about three things that you can do to take care of yourselves. They could be things like getting 8 hours of sleep or going for a walk. We will share this tomorrow.”</p>	

Day 2

Time	Activity	Details	Facilitator
9:00-9:30 a.m.	Opening	<p>1. Welcome participants to the second day of the training. Do an opening exercise and assess if changes are needed in the training.</p> <p>“Welcome to the second day of our training. Let’s all stand in a circle. To start off, I would like to invite each of you to think of a word that represents how you feel today.” [Each participant says their word.]</p> <p>“Now we will have a few quiet moments of reflection. During this time, think of a word representing something you would like to give to others.” [Stay still for a minute.]</p> <p>“Now that you have your word, we will go around the circle and each person will do an action for their word; then everyone will copy it. You do not have to say anything.” [Each person does their action twice: once alone and the second time with everyone. Go around the circle.]</p> <p>2. Review what was done the day before.</p> <p>“Let’s start with a review of what we did yesterday. We talked about how support groups are groups of people who share similar difficulties and get together on a regular basis. Bringing people who are experiencing similar challenges together can reduce their isolation, allow them to realize that they are not alone, share ideas and successes, and support each other.”</p> <p>“Yesterday, we discussed why a support group might be helpful, how to set up a support group, and covered three examples of sessions: open discussions, talks by guest speakers and sessions with a discussion prompt. We also identified additional resources that are available here, which can be shared with the caregivers.”</p>	

Time	Activity	Details	Facilitator
		<p>“Today, we are going to start off with a discussion prompt. Then you will have the chance to facilitate sessions in small groups to experience the act of facilitation. And then we will end the day by making plans for next steps.”</p> <p>3. Gather feedback about the last day and make adjustments. This is to model how a support group may check in with the group and address any concerns or include suggestions.</p> <p>“How did you feel about yesterday?” [Invite answers.]</p> <p>“Would you like to make any changes to improve the training?”</p> <p>4. Follow up on questions from the previous day.</p> <p>“Let’s go through the questions you raised at the end of the day yesterday.” [Go through questions.]</p> <p>“Do you have any additional questions?”</p>	
9:30–10:30 a.m.	Session 11	<p>1. Lead participants through the tree-of-life exercise (30 minutes to draw and 20 minutes to share in a small group).</p> <p>Follow the script from Session 11. They can share their Trees of Life in small groups.</p> <p>2. Discuss, as a big group, how they felt about this activity (5 minutes).</p> <p>“What did you think about this activity?” [Invite answers.]</p> <p>3. Explain when this session will take place (5 minutes).</p> <p>“The tree of life is the second to last session in the session guide. It is a good activity to help participants reflect on their life together and create a forest. By this point, the group will know each other well, and this will allow them to connect some more.”</p>	
10:30–10:45 a.m.	Tea break		

Time	Activity	Details	Facilitator
10:45–11:15 a.m.	Preparing to facilitate	<p>1. Lead participants through a stretch. Each person can do a stretch that the rest of the group copies. Then go around the circle.</p> <p>“Let’s stand in a circle. Each person will do a stretch, and the rest of the group will copy it.”</p> <p>2. Go through the slides on preparing to facilitate.</p> <p>3. Participants prepare to facilitate their session. Facilitator leads them through the steps to facilitating a first session (see script) and then lets them prepare.</p> <p>“Now you will have about half an hour to prepare the session that you are going to be facilitating in small groups. These are all going to be sessions with discussion prompts, but as you know, there will also be three open forum sessions and two with guest speakers.”</p> <p>“These sessions will follow four steps. You will start off with an introduction; then you will check in, followed by a prompt-based and closing. You will have about 30 minutes for each session, so they will be shorter than they would be in reality, but this is mostly to give you the chance to practice.”</p> <p>4. Create groups of four with one person to facilitate each session.</p> <p>“Let’s create groups of four where one person is responsible for each session. Then you can find a comfortable place to sit with your group.”</p>	Participants
11:15–11:45 a.m.	Facilitation demonstration	<p>1. Group facilitator runs a session on love, following the script for Session 2.</p> <p>2. Group briefly discusses how the session went.</p>	Participants
11:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.	Facilitation demonstration	<p>1. Group facilitator runs a session on “my support network,” following the script for Session 5.</p> <p>2. Group briefly discusses how the session went.</p>	Participants
12:15–1:15 p.m.	Lunch break		
1:15–1:45 p.m.	Facilitation demonstration	<p>1. Group facilitator runs a session on “helping others,” following the script for Session 6.</p> <p>2. Group briefly discusses how the session went.</p>	Participants
1:45–2:15 p.m.	Facilitation demonstration	<p>1. Group facilitator runs session on “caring for ourselves,” following the script for Session 12.</p> <p>2. Group briefly discusses how the session went.</p>	Participants

Time	Activity	Details	Facilitator
2:15–2:45 p.m.	Facilitation practice	<p>1. Group discusses how they feel about facilitating the sessions.</p> <p>“Congratulations! You have now all facilitated a group session. How did it go?” [Invite answers.]</p>	
2:45–3:00 p.m.	Tea break		
3:00–4:30 p.m.	Planning	<p>If this is a training for group facilitators, then do the following:</p> <p>1. Discuss plans to set up group sessions and responses to potential issues (slides 29 and 30).</p> <p>“Let’s review once more how we will be setting up the group sessions.” [Summarize the main points from Day 1 on how they will set up the group sessions. You can use the PowerPoint slides if needed.]</p> <p>“Do you have any questions?”</p> <p>If this is a training-of-trainer session, then do the following:</p> <p>2. The participants facilitate three of the training sessions (e.g., introductions, open forum, and referral).</p> <p>“You are familiar with how to run the group sessions, but as trainers, you also need to be able to run the sessions. For the next hour, you will take turns facilitating the sessions in our training manual.”</p> <p><i>Note:</i> You may need 30 more minutes for this step (for a total of 1.5 hours to practice facilitating). Please consider starting earlier, shortening lunch, or ending slightly later.</p> <p>3. Discuss plans to roll out the training and respond to potential issues (30 minutes).</p> <p>“Now, let’s take some time to discuss how you will roll out this training. When will it take place? Where will it take place?”</p> <p>“Let’s go through the training schedule. Do you want to make any changes to the schedule? Do you need to extend any sessions or change any sessions?”</p>	

Time	Activity	Details	Facilitator
4:30–5:00 p.m.	Wrapping up	<p>1. Participants make self-care cards and choose three.</p> <p>“We have reached the end of our training. To close, we are going to review our homework. Please write on these three cards three self-care actions. Let’s put them all together in the middle of the circle.”</p> <p>“Now you can go around and look at the cards. You can pick any three cards that you would like to commit to. They may be your own or someone else’s. Self-care is very important for running these sessions. To help others, you need to first take care of yourself.”</p> <p>2. Wrap up training with “I came with..., and I leave with...”</p> <p>“As our closing activity, we are going to go around the circle. Each person will say “I came with..., and I leave with...” [Go around the circle.]</p> <p>3. Hand out certificates, take a group photo, thank participants, and end the training.</p> <p>“Thank you for being such great, active contributors to this training. I really enjoyed learning from you. Some of you may go forward and lead these support group sessions if you choose to. Others may be able to support these sessions and refer caregivers. Together, you can really make a difference in the caregivers’ and children’s lives.”</p>	

Additional Resources

Section 2: creating and facilitating peer support groups. Community Tool Box website.

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/enhancing-support/peer-support-groups/main>.

Accessed January 24, 2019.

Mental Health America. 2016. Support group facilitation guide. Mental Health America website.

<https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/sites/default/files/MHA%20Support%20Group%20Facilitation%20Guide%202016.pdf>. Accessed January 24, 2019.

Self-Help Resource Centre. Peer support facilitator guide. Self-help Resource Centre website.

<http://www.selfhelp.on.ca/site/wp-content/uploads/MH-Peer-Support-Manual1.pdf>. Accessed January 24, 2019.