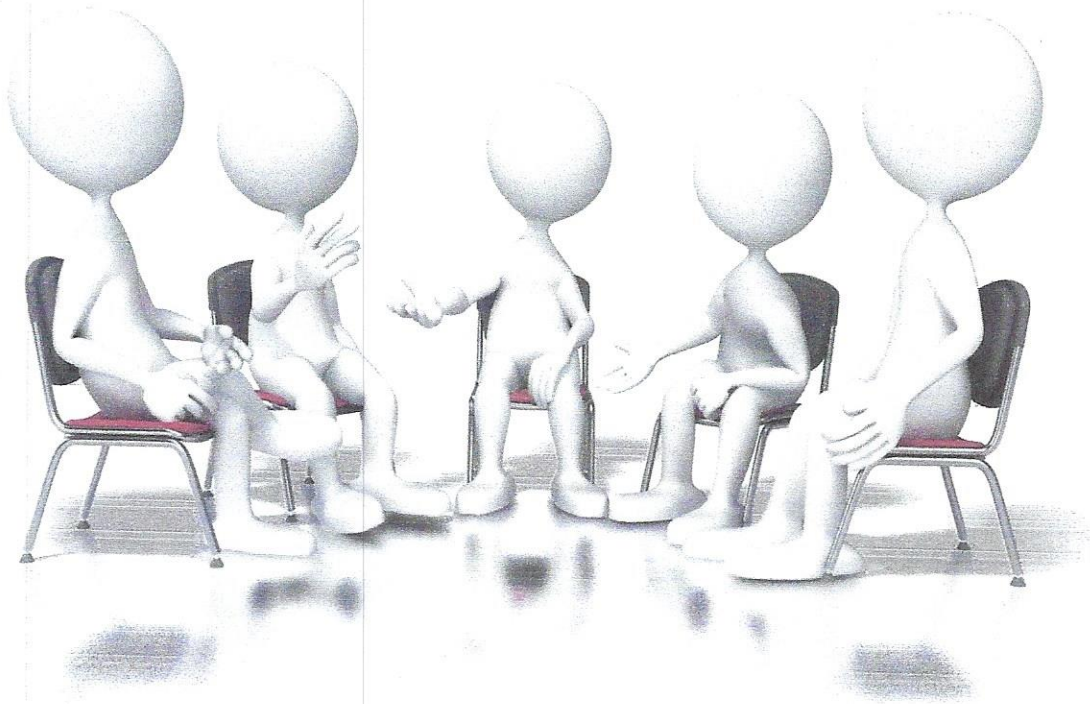


Group Facilitation Training Manual



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Maine Transgender Network



www.mainetransnet.org

MaineTransNet Peer Support Group Facilitator Manual (updated 9/1/17)

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Thank you for your interest in becoming a MaineTransNet peer support group facilitator! This document covers the following important topics regarding groups run by MaineTransNet:

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Section 1: MaineTransNet's Philosophy of Groups

The Purpose of Our Groups

The goal of MaineTransNet groups is to empower participants to co-create a sense of belonging and community, to give and receive support regarding the experiences of being trans or gender nonconforming, to learn more about ourselves and others, and to encourage each other to live fully and authentically in a way that reflects each person's unique goals, values, and priorities.

Background

Since 2007, MaineTransNet has held peer support groups for transgender, GNC, and questioning individuals in Maine. Beginning with a monthly group in Portland, and branching out to Bangor soon after, MaineTransNet groups now exist in Bangor, Waterville, Brunswick, Lewiston, and Portland. Along with our regular support groups for trans individuals, we also offer regular-meeting groups in Portland for parents and allies, elders (aka "Of a Certain Age"), trans and allies together, and nonbinary-identified individuals. We also offer a weekly "drop-in" and periodic "coffee socials"—while these activities are not "groups" in the traditional sense, they also contribute to the creation of meaningful connections and sense of community. Over the years, we have offered various other support and social opportunities ranging from book clubs to pickup basketball to picnics.

Topics that frequently come up in groups include issues related to family, relationships, coming out, employment, physical and mental health, strategies to get accurate information about trans-related issues (legal, medical, etc.), the many nuances of gender identity, and the complexities of navigating the world as trans and non-binary people.

Our Peer Support Model

All of our groups and events are dependant on the active engagement of members of our local trans communities. MaineTransNet was founded with the intention becoming a *network* of many trans individuals and allies supporting each other as we work for the betterment of our community. We take an egalitarian approach to all of our groups and programs. What this means is that our groups are peer-driven—group participants share responsibility with facilitators in determining the content and direction of each group. Our groups are **not** meant to take the form of a few select Wise Leaders providing advice and services to passive group attendees. Our groups are not therapy or "treatment-focused" groups. We do not give legal or medical advice, or otherwise tell people how to live their lives (though we certainly encourage everyone to make safe and informed decisions!) We see each participant as an equal with their own complexities, life goals, strengths, weaknesses, and wisdom. We strongly believe that each person's life path is valuable and valid, and that there is no "right way" to experience, define, or express one's gender.

The Role of the Group Facilitator

Group facilitators are responsible for holding the space for the magic of group support to occur. This involves creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, enforcing the ground rules, keeping the conversation on track, demonstrating empathy and compassion, and encouraging participation from whomever wants to participate in the manner that feels most comfortable for each person. At times, group facilitators may need to mediate disagreements, challenge unhelpful generalizations and assumptions, and set clear limits around participant behaviors that could negatively impact the group. Facilitators constantly monitor the group "temperature" to intervene if problems arise (or ideally, before they arise!). Facilitators model communication that is direct, assertive, and compassionate. They communicate that group participants have **shared ownership** for the group—that each person's voice is vital in shaping the group's content/purpose/priorities AND in using

assertive communicating to address potential unmet group needs or conflicts that may arise. Most importantly, facilitators *facilitate* the group conversation in a way that validates a variety of life experiences and identities, allows meaningful participation from all, and fosters a sense of connection among participants.

Qualities & Skills of an Effective Group Facilitator:

As group facilitators, we have a wide range of personality types, natural communication styles, life experiences, and intersecting identities. There is no requirement to have a certain type of background, sky-high self-esteem, or a thousand years of relevant experience to be a good group facilitator. The traits and skills that *do* tend to be most important in effective group facilitation are:

- Empathy for others
 - Open-mindedness
 - Ability to avoid “binary” and/or “hierarchical thinking” (i.e. “there must be one right way to do things and all other ways are wrong...”)
- Self-awareness & social/interpersonal-awareness
 - Ability/willingness to reflect on facilitation strengths & weaknesses and the initiative to continually work on becoming the best group facilitator possible
 - Sensitivity to the changing moods, needs, and “climate” of the group and ability to react accordingly
 - Ability to set clear boundaries as needed, and avoid taking on responsibility for other people’s decisions or outcomes
- Communication skills
 - Assertive communication style (as opposed to aggressive, passive, or passive-aggressive styles)
 - “Active listening” skills (i.e. summarizing, mirroring/reflecting content/emotion, open-ended questions, etc.)
 - Good conflict-resolution skills, including the belief that in general, people have good intentions and are trying their best. (i.e. If someone says something perceived to be offensive, chances are that it was due to ignorance rather than malicious intent. This belief makes it much easier to react with compassion rather than anger and defensiveness.)

The Importance of Having a Strong Outside-of-Group Support System

Effective facilitation requires a high level of awareness and prioritization of participants’ needs, which means that it is vital for group facilitators to have a strong personal support system **outside of the group they are facilitating**. Experiencing a group’s supportive and accepting environment is one of the nice “side effects” of facilitating. However, it is imperative that facilitators recognize that the needs of group members are the priority and that we are not using the group to seek support for ourselves. Group facilitation can be complex and it is not possible to effectively facilitate if we are distracted by attempts to use the group for our own personal purposes. This does not mean that you cannot share experiences or even personal struggles relevant to the topic being discussed, *if you determine that sharing your experiences would be helpful (especially if you have a perspective on a topic that has not and is unlikely to be shared by another group participant)*. A distinction between the role of the group facilitator and the role of any other person is that the facilitator must prioritize the needs of the *group* while people having a conversation among a group of friends are typically more focused on their own needs/wants as they decide what to share.

Before committing to become a group facilitator, carefully consider whether you currently have sufficient out-of-group support and are confident you have places to turn to deal with the small and major life stressors associated with being a human being.

Aside from personal life stressors, the process of facilitating itself can sometimes create stress. It is likely that some participants will share stories and experiences that accentuate the oppression that trans people often face. Some participants may express intense feelings of hopelessness. Others might face challenges that have no simple answers and become frustrated that you can't solve their problem. A participant might talk about making a major decision that doesn't align with your own values and goals. You might hear a rumor from your friend's mother's electrician that her neighbor's child's teacher is trans and they don't like your group because of [insert some vague complaint that is completely out of touch with reality], yet there is no way for you to tell this neighbor's child's teacher that the thing they think isn't even true, and-I'm-totally-trying-my-best,-so-just-stop-with-the-alleged-vague-complaints—I've-never-met-you-and-you-don't-even-know-me!!! These are a few of the types of stress that you may be faced with as a facilitator.

Before becoming a facilitator, think about your current levels of life stress (trans-related or otherwise), and assess how confident you are that you will be able to find healthy ways to manage strong emotions or deal with additional group-related stressors that may arise **in a manner likely to maintain positive relationships** with group participants and co-facilitators. If you are like most people with good self-awareness, you can probably think of an example (or many!) where you didn't react to a situation in an "ideal" manner, maybe because you felt overwhelmed, exhausted, powerless, defensive, hopeless, threatened, or totally invalidated. When we are really stressed, it can be difficult to find ways to respond constructively and kindly, especially if you are feeling put on the spot. However, as group facilitators who are in the position to have an enormous positive OR negative influence on someone who may be at a very vulnerable point in their lives (regardless of whether we want this power or not), it is especially important for facilitators to feel confident in their conflict resolution and coping skills so that we are ready to reasonably deal with any situation in a calm and kind manner. This is not to say that you can't have any strong feelings or disagreements in your group, but just to be aware that the group facilitator has an added responsibility to communicate respectfully and compassionately, even (or especially) with those with whom we have the strongest disagreements. If—being completely honest with yourself—you're thinking that it's likely your current stress level could make it difficult to take on additional group-related stressors right now, don't be hard on yourself! There are so many ways aside from group facilitation to provide support or make a positive difference in the world. And there will always be groups to facilitate if you decide that that's what you want to do at some point down the road.

Having said all of that, you may be wondering, "What in the world am I getting into?!" Rest assured that the vast majority of groups will likely be smooth sailing and it's certainly possible that you might not experience *any* major group-related interpersonal drama during your time as a facilitator. Hopefully your group facilitation experience will be relatively stress-free and 100% life-enriching! It's just that for the sake of avoiding burnout and maintaining group continuity, it's important to carefully self-assess our current coping ability and support system situation before making the commitment to facilitate a group and embracing the highs and lows that sometimes come along for the ride.

Recommended Group Guidelines

Because MTN groups are peer-driven, specific group guidelines may vary slightly from group to group depending on the purpose of the group and priorities of the participants. It is expected that all MTN groups will be accepting spaces of mutual respect and we request that participants maintain confidentiality. Below are some sample group guidelines. At the start of each meeting, group facilitators should briefly review the guidelines with participants (even if you think that the participants already know the guidelines). This does not need to be a lengthy conversation, but it is always important to ensure that we are all starting from the same page and are agreeing to some basic community standards.

Please be aware that there may be unwritten/unspoken should-be-common-sense guidelines that, if broken, demand immediate intervention from facilitators. This includes comments, “jokes,” and generalizations regarding race, ethnicity, disability, religion, age, socioeconomic status, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, relationship status, family arrangement, immigration status, or veteran status. Also be sure to interrupt group conversations that assume that everyone present has the same views on political or social issues. We are a diverse community and it is likely that someone in the group is feeling left out or invalidated whenever there are sweeping assumptions made about the experiences, identities, and beliefs of a large group of people. Although respectful disagreement and discussion about specific issues is perfectly fine, it is never appropriate to ridicule a group of people based on an identity status as part of an MTN group. Violent language and sexual harassment should also not be tolerated, even when intended as a “joke.” Kindly explain why this type of language is harmful and move on. (Take note of the person’s reaction, as well as the reactions of any participants regarding the inappropriate comment—if you think it would be helpful, check in with participants 1:1 after the group for further discussion or explanation.)

Suggested MaineTransNet Group Guidelines

- Respect confidentiality
- One person talks at a time
 - Please don't dominate the group—give others a chance to speak!
 - If you rarely talk, *please do* (if you're comfortable)—the group will benefit from what you have to share!
- One conversation at a time
 - if someone brings up a topic, don't change the subject until the discussion is over – if unsure, ask
- Avoid assumptions
 - speak from your own experience ("I statements")
 - People in the group have a range of gender identities (and *other* identities)...there is no ONE way to be [insert identity]
 - Let's avoid hierarchies based on number of medical procedures or other arbitrary criteria. We honor people's right to explore and define their identity regardless of external appearance, medical decisions, etc.
- Respect differences and different opinions
 - Disagreeing on certain issues is expected and normal in any group of people. Let's create a group climate where it's possible to calmly and respectfully discuss differences without regressing to hostility and hurt feelings.
- Respect privacy
 - Be mindful of questions you are asking and *how* you are asking them – give others option to not respond
 - Some people are more willing to share their email or other contact information than others—please don't pressure anyone to give information they aren't comfortable sharing. (If you ask once and get a vague answer or a "no," don't push the issue.)
- "Clique-free zone"
 - Some people may be friends outside of the group and some may not be. While this is fine and normal, *when we're in the group, please try not to be exclusive or start exclusive conversations* (for example, telling inside jokes that only a few people will understand, inviting a few people to an after-group gathering while leaving out others, etc.)
- Be mindful of triggers and generalizations
 - Please avoid violent language, graphic descriptions of violent situations, and comments that have any chance of being interpreted as sexual harassment, even if these comments are meant as a "joke." It probably wasn't funny anyway.
 - Avoid making assumptions about the intersecting identities and life experiences of other group participants. We are a diverse group and you know what happens when you assume!
 - Please do not make widespread generalizations about groups of people based on an identity status, including race, ethnicity, disability, religion, age, socioeconomic status, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, relationship status, family arrangement, immigration status, veteran status, or political affiliation. (If you're thinking of starting a sentence with, "I'm not racist, but..." this is an indicator that you should just go ahead and avoid ever saying this sentence.)
- Be assertive
 - If you don't want to talk about something or answer a particular question, just say so. If something is happening in the group that is making you uncomfortable, speak up—it could create a productive discussion! Make this YOUR group!

Section 2: Expectations of Facilitators

See the “group facilitator expectation highlights” in the Forms and Handouts section for a condensed summary.

General

For the sake of group consistency, we ask that facilitators commit to one year of facilitation (12 group meetings), unless otherwise arranged.

In order to stay connected with MTN and other group facilitators, every three months or so we will hold a group facilitator peer supervision meeting featuring ongoing training in areas of interest and an opportunity to share ideas, challenges, feedback, and suggestions with other facilitators. It is expected that facilitators make their best effort to attend all three of these meetings. Mileage reimbursement will be available and location and schedule will be determined based on the availability of facilitators.

Facilitators are expected to stay in touch with Alex and/or Quinn at least quarterly to provide updates about your group. (More regular contact is fine too, and most definitely stay in touch if there are any group-related challenges you are facing.)

Before the Meeting

Currently groups are advertised on Facebook. If you have other ideas about how to get the word out about your group, let's talk! (talk to Quinn for website/social media ideas)

Arrive at the group location at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start of the meeting. If it might be confusing for new participants to find the group, hang signs or strategically station a “greeter.”

Pre-group “welcomingness”: What's going on as people are waiting for the group to start? Attempt to greet people as they arrive (or, for a large group, make sure that someone is acknowledging new arrivals). Be aware if anyone seems anxious or left out and attempt to include them in some way. Even if you are not a naturally extroverted social butterfly, as a facilitator, you are the one responsible for creating a friendly and accepting atmosphere. Group participants will have varying levels of ease with social interaction, and even the most socially-savvy person may be very nervous attending a group for the first time. Welcoming newcomers and showing basic friendliness goes a long way. Try to help newcomers and/or those who struggle with social interaction be a part of the pre-group conversation if they want to be.

During the Meeting

- Establish and maintain a safe and accepting atmosphere
- Stay on track
- Actively Listen
- Mediate Disagreements
- Compassionately challenge unhelpful beliefs/patterns/behaviors

1. Establish and maintain a safe and accepting atmosphere

Review group guidelines and obtain agreement from the group to observe the guidelines.

Be aware of group norms and intervene if there are incidents occurring that conflict with group guidelines, or if you notice any subgrouping and “cliques” happening that are creating an “in-group” and an “out-group.”

2. Stay on track

Set the agenda: Make sure group members know the purpose and structure of the group and a general idea about what to expect.

Once the purpose of the group is established, one of the facilitator's tasks is to **keep things on track**. Often times participants are reminded of something and launch into a story that seems to be on a completely different topic from what's being discussed.

Sometimes no intervention is necessary if you think the item being shared is sorta-kinda related to the topic, or if the person is likely to quickly return to group-relevant material.

But, when an innocent tangential seedling erupts into a Giant Redwood of unrelated never-ending storytime and other group members are looking at their watches and falling asleep, it's important to get the group back on track. One way to do this is the "**jump-in/connect/transition back strategy**":

1. Jump in at the first possible opportunity (try to be assertive but sensitive)
2. Find something the person was saying that relates to the main topic, no matter how small, and make the connection
- 2b. If the tangent is *so* unrelated that there's not a shred of material that is at all relevant to the group, thank the person for their input and briefly explain the need to get back on track.
3. Transition back to the main topic.

Throughout the group, try your best to ensure that everyone has the chance to meaningfully participate. This doesn't mean that everyone will talk for exactly the same amount of time (or even at all!), but ideally each participant will feel like they have the **opportunity** to be heard.

Example 1:

The group has been talking about dealing with insensitive siblings.

Fiona: ...and so, I don't even know if it's worth starting a conversation with him. We always end up in an argument about nothing. It's like since I've transitioned he goes out of his way to point out every little mistake I make or argue with every little thing he doesn't agree with. But it's never about gender stuff. That's something we don't talk about--

Timmy Tangent: I hate that! My sister does the exact same thing! Like, last time I saw her we were talking about mp3 players...well, she calls them *iPods*, even if it's not an iPod. I tried to explain like ten times that there are different kinds of mp3 players and not everyone has an iPod. I hate Apple products. It's like once you buy Apple stuff, you can only buy *more* Apple stuff because nothing is compatible, and if your battery dies you better plan on paying like \$200 for a new battery--it's ridiculous! I have a Zune and there's nothing wrong with it at all. I'd recommend it to anyone...

Facilitator: So Timmy, you definitely relate to Fiona when it comes to arguments with siblings!

Timmy Tangent: That's for sure!

Facilitator: Fiona, did you have more you wanted to say about your upcoming visit with your brother?

**

Example 2:

Fiona: ...and so, I don't even know if it's worth starting a conversation with him. We always end up in an argument about nothing. It's like since I've transitioned he goes out of his way to point out every little mistake I make or argue with every little thing he doesn't agree with. But it's never about gender stuff. That's something we don't talk about--

Timmy Tangent: I hate it when people don't talk about whatever the real issue is! These days everyone wants to hide behind being politically correct and acting all fake and nice and then they stab you in the back! It's because of the internet. Kids these days don't learn how to interact with others and they just spend all their time Twittering and looking at computer porn! Parents don't even raise their kids anymore, they just plop them down in front of the TV. It's a disgrace what this country has come to!

Facilitator: Sounds like you have some strong opinions about this! This could really be a topic of its own! Right now I'd like to make sure Fiona gets to finish talking about her experience with her brother and then maybe we can see if anyone has feedback or similar experiences dealing with siblings. Fiona?
* * *

3. Actively Listen

"Active listening" refers to any number of techniques used to show that the person communicating is being heard, validated, and understood.

Remember that sometimes the group leader talks the least.

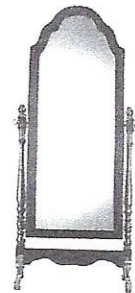
"Mirroring," perhaps the most important listening skill we can use, is simply summarizing a person's content of what they just communicated, or the emotions that they expressed in order to show you were listening, you understand, and you are not judging

You use mirroring to check out that you "hear" what the other person is saying. There are many ways to do this. For example:

"You must really feel _____."

"What you're saying is that _____."

"That sounds really _____."



Using this technique can be a little awkward at first and has the potential to make you sound like Stereotypical TV Therapist. It just takes practice to figure out how to do this in a natural-seeming way. However, it's definitely worth the effort. Mirroring is one of this most important skills you will use as a group facilitator (or as a "listener" in any situation—seriously, try it!).

In addition to mirroring, you can also use follow up questions to keep the conversation going and get more people involved in the discussion. Use follow up questions to help create a group *conversation*, rather than a series of individuals taking turns telling semi-related stories.

Some examples:

What do others think?

Does everyone agree with that?

Does anyone relate to what _____ is experiencing? How so?

What would you like from members of the group? How can we be most helpful?

How to Be an Awful Listener:

Use these tactics if you want to be the worst listener ever. Or try to avoid them if you don't.

1. "Cheering up"

Raphael: My father is really having trouble accepting that I'm trans. He keeps forgetting to use the right pronouns and I don't think he's even trying to get them right.

Michelangelo: Well, it's not so bad. At least he hasn't kicked you out of the house. Compared to most people, you're actually pretty lucky!

2. Promise-making

Hansel: Ever since I came out to my family, my grandmother hasn't called me even once.

Gretel: Oh, don't worry! She's probably just busy! It will be ok, I promise!

3. Unsolicited advice

Jean Luc: I feel like people are questioning what gender I am everywhere I go. I don't even want to leave the house anymore. I'm so tired of dealing with this!

Beverly: Have you tried wearing a hat? I think that might help people see you the way you want to be seen. And what about the way you sit. Have you tried sitting like *this*?

4. Defensiveness

Victoria: When you interrupt me in the group, I feel like you don't care what I'm talking about.

Elizabeth: Well *you* interrupt people all the time!

5. Judging and/or Minimizing

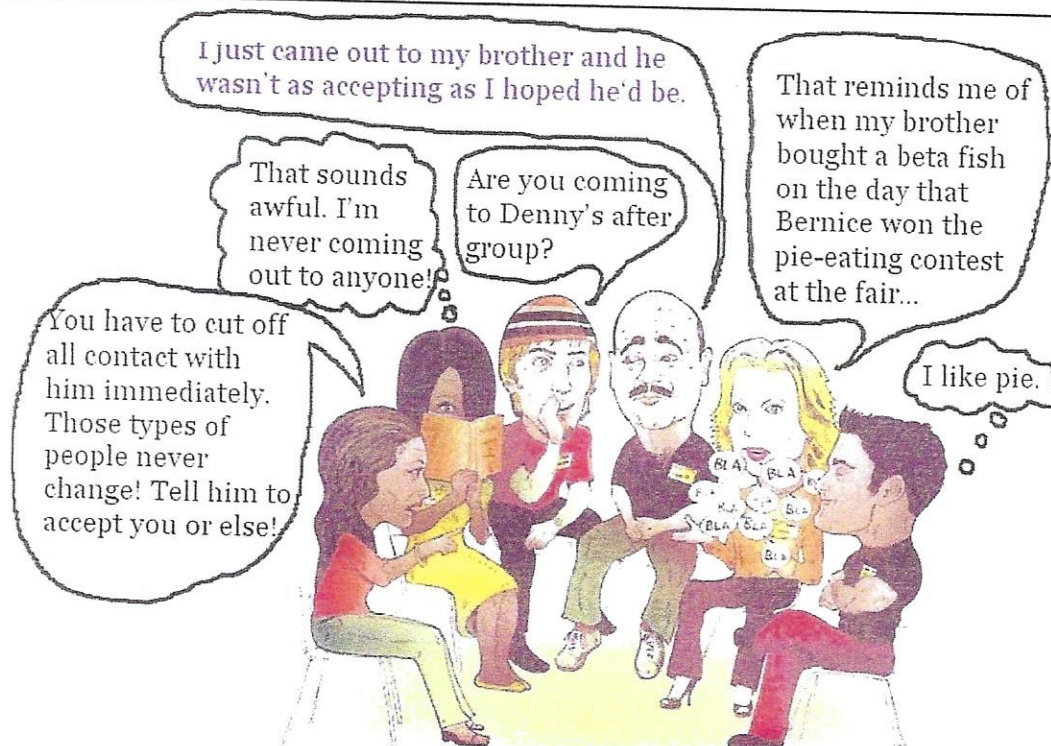
Genghis: I want to tell my vegan cooking group that I'm transgender, but I don't know if they'll understand. They already met me as a man.

Attila: You shouldn't feel like that. Of course they'll accept you—they're vegans!

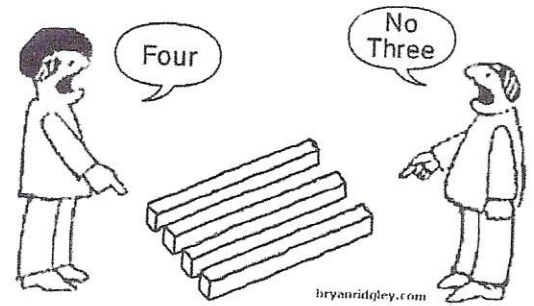
6. Narrow-focusing

Ernie: I'm worried about what all my friends on Myspace will think if I change my name and pronouns.

Bert: I can't believe you're still on Myspace! I didn't think it still existed!



Anytime you get a group of people together for a conversation, disagreements are bound to come up. Usually group participants are able to self-regulate and work out disagreements without any issue. However, as the facilitator, keep in mind that people in the group will likely have varying levels of communication skills, problem-solving strategies, and frustration tolerance. It is your job to make sure that all voices are heard, especially when there is a disagreement or a "charged topic" being discussed. Carefully watch people's body language for signs that someone might feel unheard, left out, or frustrated. Group members might need prompting from you to determine when it is appropriate to jump in. If you see that someone has been waiting to say something, be sure that they are not ignored while all of the "eager talkers" have their say.



Here are a few tips to keep in mind during a disagreement or discussion where there are different points of view:

- (a) **Encourage the use of "I statements."** Try to get your group in the habit of speaking from their own experiences, rather than making generalizations about everyone. This may sound like common sense, but it probably one of the most common ways that group members frustrate each other.

Example:

I statement: I had a really bad experience at the church my family went to when I was a kid.

NOT an I-statement: You know how Christians are! It's no wonder that trans people hate them!

It is especially important to interrupt the conversation if a group participant is attempting to speak on behalf of a group of people or assign labels to a group of people that they are not part of. Keep in mind that trans people come in all varieties, and it is very likely that someone is feeling excluded and shamed if someone is putting down a group of people. Religion and politics are two areas where this tends to happen. As the group facilitator, you are responsible for maintaining a respectful atmosphere where the militant atheist and the evangelical Christian and the radical anarchist and the mainstream Democrat (and even the occasional Republican!) feel supported. This does not mean that everyone in the group needs to agree, but just that no one needs to worry about being "put down" at an MTN group.

- (b) **Focus on the issue or behavior, not the person.** If a discussion comes up related to unwanted behaviors of someone in the group, keep the discussion focused on the specific behaviors, rather than making it about the person's general worthiness as a human being.

Example:

Helpful: "When you keep interrupting me, I get frustrated and forget what I wanted to say."

Not helpful: "If you actually cared about other people, this group would be a lot less annoying!"

- (c) **Keep it civil.** In the case that a conversation goes bad, immediately interrupt any disrespectful communication. Acknowledge that there are obviously strong opinions about [topic] and remind the group about the importance of communicating with respect in order to provide a safe environment for everyone.

Example of one way to kindly interrupt unintentional mildly-offensive statements:

“Bob, I’m going to cut you off for a second. I know you probably didn’t mean to be disrespectful towards all left-handed people, but the way your comments just came out makes me uncomfortable.” [In most cases, Bob will apologize and/or clarify statements in a more helpful way. Then you may choose to quickly re-frame Bob’s comments in a non-offensive manner and transition the discussion back to the main topic.]

(d) **Find common ground.** Whenever possible, relate participants’ experiences to each other to foster discussion and rather than “verbal competition.”

Example:

“I don’t think we need to make a judgment about whether it’s harder to come out to parents or to children. Both definitely have their challenges! What stood out to me about both Bob and Suzie’s experiences was…”

(e) **Reinforce the “normality” of honest discussion/disagreement.** At the conclusion of a tense discussion, it can be helpful to remind the group that it’s perfectly healthy to have discussions where people have different points of view. Acknowledge the courage it takes to be authentic while still respecting others’ viewpoints. If there is a particular person who you are worried might be upset about “losing” an argument or having a minority opinion, it might be helpful to thank them for their participation and courage to speak up even though their experience was different than others’. (This is especially important when the person with the minority opinion is someone who doesn’t often speak up in the group.)

5. Compassionately challenge unhelpful beliefs/patterns/behaviors

In most cases, it isn’t necessary to “challenge” a participant making statements that you suspect are not-completely-accurate, especially if they are talking about their own experiences. However, if a participant begins offering “factual” information to the group that you know is not accurate (or is beyond their area of expertise), you may need to intervene, especially if the information being offered could be harmful.

Example:

“Bob, I’m going to interrupt you for a second. Since none of us are Suzie’s doctor, I don’t think it’s a good idea to tell her to change her medication dosages. Why don’t you tell her about *your* experience with this medication, and then, if Suzie wants to talk to her doctor about it, she can do that?”

If the not-completely-accurate information being provided is irrelevant to the person’s main point and isn’t going to harm anyone in the group, it is probably best to ignore it. You don’t want to detract from the person’s main point (or allow other group members to do so) simply to be a know-it-all. Choose your battles!

Example:

Bob: Last week I came out to my co-workers. I work in a cotton gin factory, which has been around since the cotton gin was invented in 1793. It’s the oldest cotton gin factory in the nation.

Suzie: Actually, the cotton gin was invented in 1794.

Bob: That’s a common misconception, but it was, in fact, invented by Eli Whitney in 1793, though it wasn’t patented until 1794.

Suzie: Well that's controversial. Some think that Whitney stole some of his ideas from Catherine Littlefield Greene, the true inventor.

Bob: That has never been verified independently. Actually—

Facilitator: This conversation sounds like it could be an entire group topic in itself! But for the sake of time, Bob, why don't you tell us about your experience coming out at work?

Another situation in which you may need to challenge a group participant is where a participant may be generalizing their experience to the entire group (or to any group of people).

Example 1:

Bob: It's important for everyone to know that if you decide to transition, you might as well give up any hope that you'll be in a relationship ever again. People who think they can transition *and* find love are just delusional.

Facilitator: Well, luckily, I know that's not the case for everyone! It sounds like *you* have had some rough experiences, though. Did you want to talk about that?

Example 2: (use "reframing" as a subtle challenge of sorts)

Bob: It's important for everyone to know that if you decide to transition, you might as well give up any hope that you'll be in a relationship ever again. People who think they can transition *and* find love are just delusional.

Facilitator: You've had some really disappointing dates this month. *[This re-focuses the discussion to Bob's recent experiences, rather than the perceived hopelessness of all trans people.]*

[Note: in cases like the example above, it can be really difficult to both validate the person's feelings, and at the same time, ensure that the rest of the group isn't getting the discouraging message that they will never be in a fulfilling relationship. Ideally, group members will offer a balance of positive and negative experiences. However, if the group happens to be made up of a majority of participants who happen to be struggling and feeling hopeless, there's an extra burden on the facilitator to offer glimmers of hope—or at least avoid having new members get the message, "I must be doomed." This does not mean that you should be unrealistic or downplay someone's struggle. Just be careful to avoid situations where participants are likely to leave the group feeling more hopeless than when they arrived. If many people are sharing negative experiences, at the least be sure to also include discussion about how people cope with challenges, or something along those lines.]

Be aware of common patterns of unhelpful thinking that might be bringing the group down. (see next page for examples) Though it isn't our job as facilitators to provide cognitive-behavioral therapy, it may be helpful to be curious about alternative points of view with questions/statements like, "Is it possible that..." or "I wonder if there are any other explanations for..." or "How do other folks in the group interpret Bob's experience with his sister?"

Unhelpful Thinking Styles

All or nothing thinking



Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

If I'm not perfect I have failed

Either I do it right or not at all

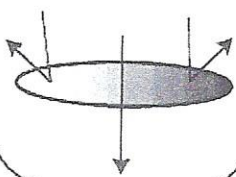
Over-generalising

"everything is always rubbish"

"nothing good ever happens"

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

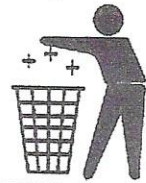
Mental filter



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

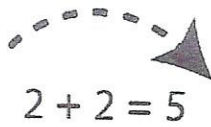
Disqualifying the positive



Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

That doesn't count

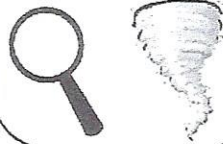
Jumping to conclusions



There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)

Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

Emotional reasoning



Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.

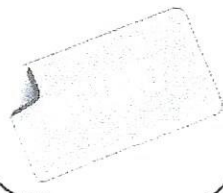
I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot

should must

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

Labelling



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

*I'm a loser
I'm completely useless
They're such an idiot*

Personalisation

"this is my fault"

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

As the end of the meeting approaches, it's often helpful to give a 10 or 15 minute warning so that anyone who wanted to be sure to share something will have the opportunity to do so. It can also be helpful to invite (without pressuring) those who have been less talkative throughout the meeting to share any input they have about topics that were discussed.

Attempt to end the group on a positive note. Even if the group topic has focused on a deep and depressing issue, it's important to draw attention to some of the more hopeful points that have come up to avoid having everyone leave the group discouraged! Or, if emphasizing hopefulness feels too contrived, draw attention to the fact that people are coming together to support each other and have these important conversations, which can be meaningful in itself.

Outside of the Meeting

Maintaining Healthy Boundaries: As a group facilitator, you are in a position of power. You may or may not want this power, but it is unavoidable. Although MTN groups are peer support groups, newcomers to the group are likely to perceive you as a leader and Important Person. It is vital to think about these power dynamics and take steps to maintain healthy boundaries.

So what does this mean? "Healthy boundaries" might look different from person-to-person. Overall, the purpose of establishing boundaries are to (1) clarify your role as facilitator to prevent disappointment when unrealistic or impossible expectations are not met, and (2) know what you can and cannot do so that you don't self-destruct after failing to save the world and all of its people.

Think about your role as facilitator and your responsibilities to the group. Do you have friends (or enemies!) in the group that you will need to take special care to not treat differently from other participants? What are some examples of healthy/unhealthy boundaries to be aware of? How can you set healthy boundaries without seeming like a jerk?

Different group facilitators have different philosophies about the details of their role as a facilitator and their personal decisions about limits and values. Consider the following questions:

You are the group facilitator. Is it ok to be friends with one of the group members you meet in your group?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not acceptable at all! Undecided/It depends Totally Acceptable Every Time!
.....

Is it ok to date a member of your group?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not acceptable at all! Undecided/It depends Totally Acceptable Every Time!
.....

A group member asks you for a ride home, which is about 30 minutes out of your way.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not acceptable at all! Undecided/It depends Totally Acceptable Every Time!
.....

A group member calls you in tears, explaining that they've just been kicked out of their home. They ask to stay with you for a few days until they can get things figured out.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not acceptable at all! Undecided/It depends Totally Acceptable Every Time!
.....

Setting and maintaining boundaries in a kind-yet-firm manner can be a challenge, especially for people who want to do all they can to help others. One of the purposes of maintaining contact with other MTN group facilitators is to have opportunities to discuss these matters and work out the various tricky situations that are likely to arise at some point.

Social Media Interaction: If you have connections with group members via social media (i.e. you are Facebook friends), be extra mindful about power dynamics and be aware that you are being perceived as a community leader. ☺

In terms of Facebook “groups,” MaineTransNet has an “official” group set up for the purpose of interacting and seeking support between groups: MaineTransNet (Trans Exchange Maine and E-support). We encourage group members to use that group, rather than having lots of little Facebook groups specific to each particular support group location. This allows for the potential of getting more responses to posts, and the opportunity to interact with folks who might attend other groups. Because of the oversight necessary in monitoring a group via social media, we discourage group facilitators from setting up online groups separate from the regular MTN e-support group. If group participants want to set up a way to talk amongst themselves on Facebook or other social media outside of the meeting, obviously that is perfectly fine, but those groups are not considered “official” MTN-run groups. This reduces the chance of someone feeling excluded or having problems arise as a result of unmonitored online group communication.

Section 3: Planning for Group Consistency

Group consistency is vital for a well-functioning group! If you are committing to be an MTN facilitator, it is expected that you will prioritize the group and schedule other your events and activities around it.

Unexpected facilitator absences:

If you have an illness or urgent personal situation that prevents you from attending, check in with your co-facilitator. It's fine if only one facilitator is there to cover the group in case of occasional emergency situations. If you have concerns about your ability (or a co-facilitator's ability) to consistently attend, check in with Alex or Quinn to brainstorm possible solutions.

If neither facilitator is available for the group, contact Alex and Quinn immediately so that they can arrange for a substitute facilitator. It is very important that we not cancel group meetings. Group participants often depend on our meetings for a much-needed source of support and it can be very upsetting to lose this opportunity. Also, if someone shows up for a group to discover that it has been unexpectedly canceled, they are unlikely to come back, especially if they were planning to attend for the first time.

Weather-related closures:

As a general rule, if the school district in the town where the group meets is canceled due to weather, so is the group. Having this rule makes it easy for participants to simply check for school closures. Start talking about this policy early and often so that participants are aware of it. If your group is canceled due to weather, contact Quinn immediately so that we can also announce the cancellation via social media. If you decide that conditions are too dangerous to drive in even though school was held as scheduled, this is your call; however, it's especially important to reach out to known group participants to make sure they know the group is canceled.



Before starting a new group, please complete the Group Logistics Plan on the following pages, which addresses the practical details of running your group and plans to ensure that the group will meet every month as scheduled.

Group Logistics Plan

The purpose of this form is to identify any areas that might be barriers to group consistency and consider possible steps to minimize them. Only one group logistics plan PER GROUP is necessary. Group logistics plans must be approved by Alex or Quinn before beginning new groups.

Facilitator 1:

Name _____ Pronouns _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Any notes about communication? (i.e. let us know if it's not ok to leave a message or if we should use a different name when calling, etc)

Facilitator 2:

Name _____ Pronouns _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Any notes about communication? (i.e. let us know if it's not ok to leave a message or if we should use a different name when calling, etc)

Day and Time of Group: (Recommended meeting duration is 90 minutes)

At least one group facilitator is expected to arrive at the group location at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start time. It's expected that both facilitators will consistently be punctual and ready to begin the meeting at the scheduled time.

Group Location Address: _____

Is the actual room you will be meeting in easy to find once participants arrive at the address?
If not, what's the plan for directing participants in the right direction?

Are there any foreseeable obstacles with the group location that need to be addressed? (unexpected closures, access to the building, safety, accessibility, confidentiality concerns?) If so, how will these obstacles be managed?

Contact info for group location liaison (Who is the person you communicate with if there are any issues with the meeting space, if the door is unexpectedly locked, etc.):

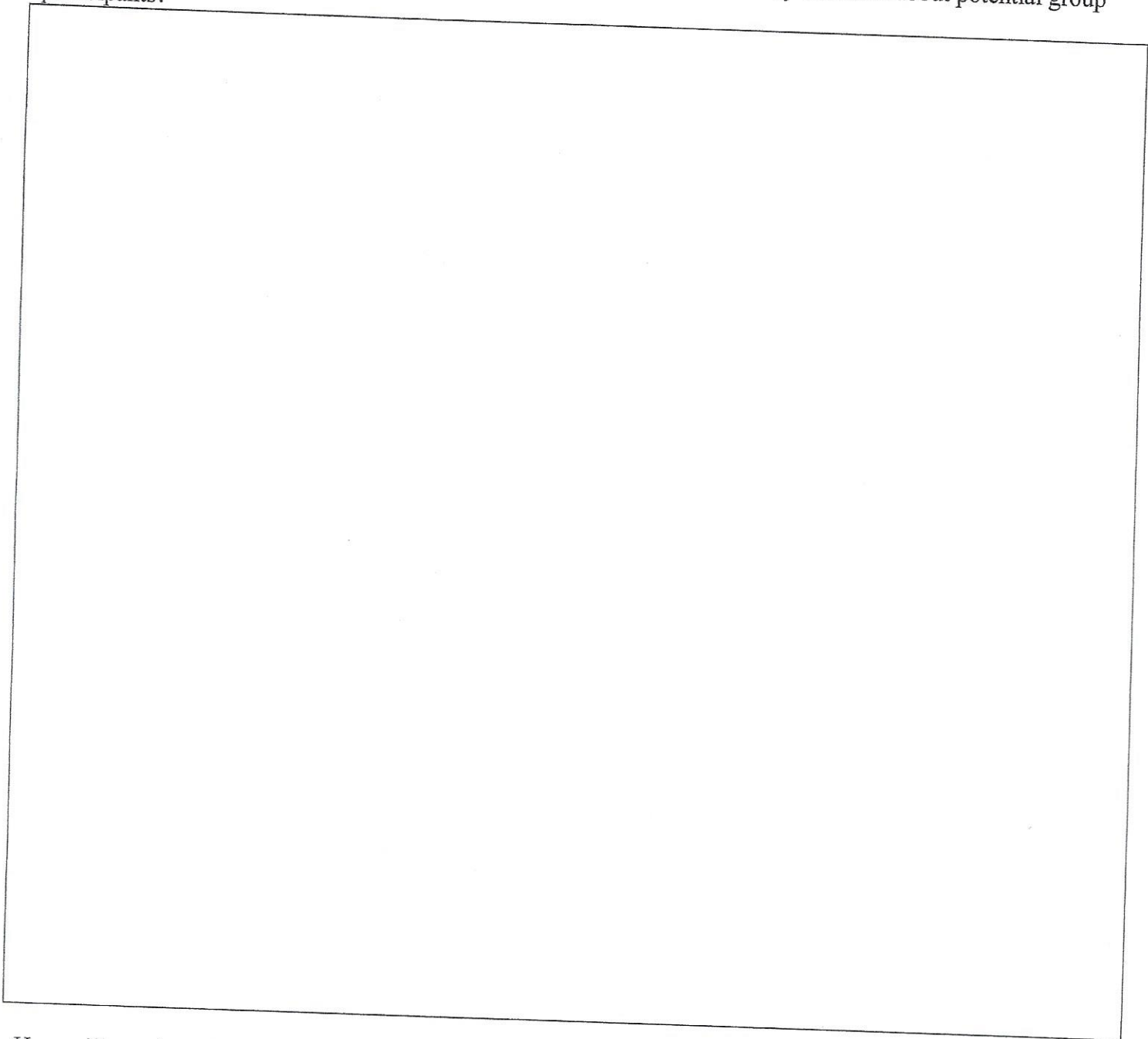
Name _____ Pronouns _____

Phone _____

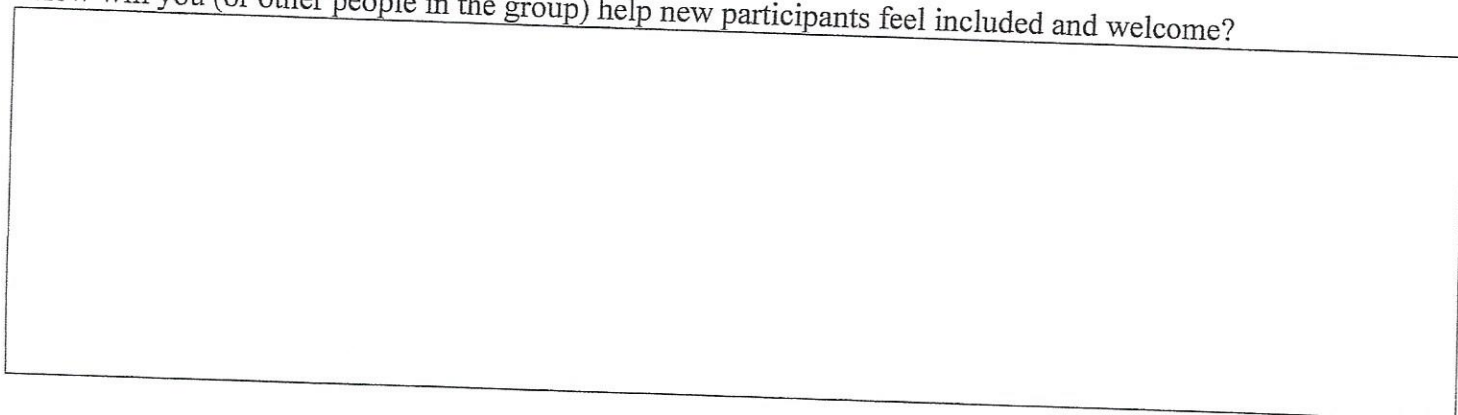
Email _____

Any notes about communication? (i.e. let us know if it's not ok to leave a message or if we should use a different name when calling, etc)

Who will be attending this group? Consider demographics—who is the group for? Who is it not for? What are the participants' needs & expectations? Any special considerations? Any concerns about potential group participants?



How will you (or other people in the group) help new participants feel included and welcome?



What ground rules do you think are vital to review at the start of each meeting?

Consider any potential barriers that might prevent you from following through with facilitating the group? (i.e. transportation concerns, child care, work or school scheduling conflicts, family or other obligations, ongoing health issues, etc.) Will you and your co-facilitator be able to ensure that at least one of you will be able to facilitate at every scheduled group meeting except in very rare emergency situations?

Yes _____ No _____ Unsure _____

What is your plan for out-of-group communication with your facilitator if you need to get in touch?

Group facilitation is an important commitment and for the sake of group continuity we ask that facilitators commit to at least six months of facilitation (6 group meetings), unless other arrangements have been discussed. Are you willing to commit to facilitating at least 6 group meetings?

Yes _____ No _____ Unsure _____

If an unforeseen emergency happens that prevents both facilitators from attending the meeting, please contact Alex and Quinn as soon as possible so that we can arrange for a substitute to facilitate the meeting.

Alex's contact info:

Email: alex@awholenotherstory.com

Text (preferred) or phone: 207-408-1685

Facebook messages are also fine.

Quinn's contact info:

Email: mtn@mainetransnet.org

Phone: 207-370-0359

Ensuring that group meetings are happening consistently is our highest priority. If you are interested in facilitating additional groups or programs through MaineTransNet (for example, a group for allies, social events, etc.), we ask that you first facilitate one group for at least six months before adding additional groups or increasing the frequency of group meetings. This is to reduce the likelihood of facilitators taking on too much or becoming overwhelmed or burnt out. It is much better to have one consistently-meeting group than several things at once followed by nothing at all. There may be some exceptions to this, such as helping to arrange informal social gatherings, or a one-time meeting/event on a specific topic requested by group participants. Please talk to Alex or Quinn if you have ideas about expanding our programming.

I am familiar with the expectations of MaineTransNet group facilitators and am confident that I can be consistent in facilitating as scheduled for at least 6 months. If I have any concerns about my role as facilitator or unexpected obstacles that make it difficult to continue facilitating, I will contact Alex or Quinn right away.

Signature, Facilitator 1 _____ Date _____

Signature, Facilitator 2 _____ Date _____

Signature, Group Facilitator Supervisor _____ Date _____

Section 4: Group Dynamics

Each group typically goes through different “phases” as group members get to know each other and routines and roles get established. These phases are often referred to as forming, storming, norming, and performing.

Forming: Group members come together and begin to get to know each other. It is likely not completely clear what the true purpose of the group will be and/or how participants will use it. Most participants have a desire for acceptance and fitting in. Group members size each other up and start to establish roles. Group members look to the leader for direction. Interactions tend to be polite and superficial.

Storming: Group members begin to reveal their true feelings and communicate more authentically. Conflicts may arise as personalities emerge, people vie for “power” within the group, and the group begins to organize itself. Participants continue to see themselves as individuals rather than as part of a group.

Norming: Group norms, values, roles, and relationships become well-established, which make the group more stable. Participants are committed to the goals of the group and the group guidelines. A group “culture” begins to form. The group becomes more cohesive and relationships among members strengthen.

Performing: The group has a high level of trust among members and is focused on accomplishing its mission. The group has an effective structure and procedures. The power hierarchies that previously existed have much less importance. Participants feel connected to a community and see themselves as part of a greater whole.

Note: In an open group in which members are changing each week, the group may go back and forth through different stages, depending on the dynamics that day. In some cases, it may seem as if a group goes through all the stages within a single group meeting!

Question: How do the roles and responsibilities of the group facilitator change depending on what stage the group is in?

What makes a group effective? According to Irvin Yalom, a prominent group therapist, the following factors are most influential in inspiring positive change in group participants:

- **Instillation of hope:** The encouragement and sense of hope displayed by others in the group begins to rub off
- **Universality:** Group participants realize they are not alone
- **Imparting of information:** Participants learn practical tips and gain knowledge from others in the group
- **Altruism:** Participants feel good about themselves for helping other people
- **“Corrective recapitulation of the primary family group”:** Group members learn from participating in relationships within the group; they may have opportunities to re-enact certain family dynamics with other group members. If someone has had terrible experiences with family members, they may be able to learn from the group that healthy relationships can exist and it is possible to feel accepted in a group of people.
- **Development of socializing techniques:** Interacting with many different types of people improves social skills and gives participants the confidence to develop relationships outside of the group
- **Imitative behavior:** Participants learn from the positive behaviors of others in the group and integrate these behaviors in their own lives outside of the group

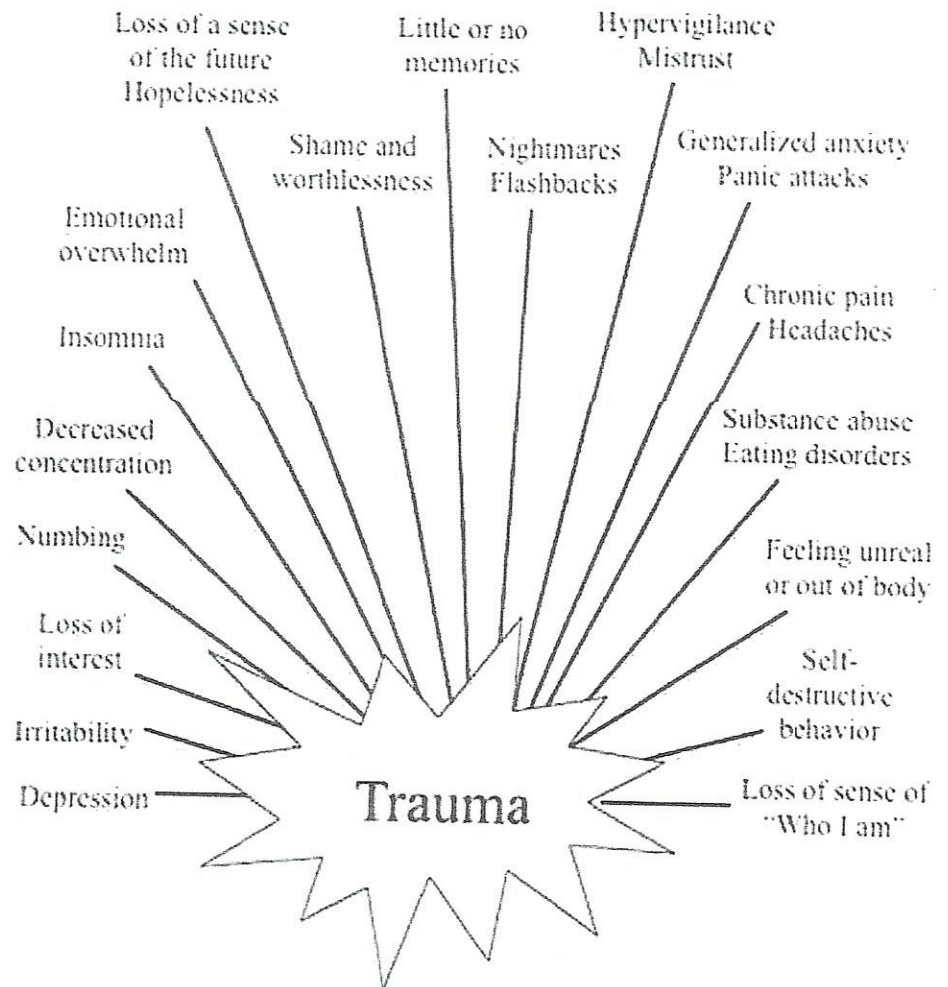
Understanding the Impact of Trauma on Trans & GNC Individuals

Research consistently shows that trans people face a disproportionate amount of adverse experiences. Even though some trans individuals may have had relatively “easy” experiences in comparison to others’, simply going through the process of growing up in a gender that does not feel congruent with our identity can have similar impacts on some people as other types of traumatic events, such as assault, abuse, or living through a life-threatening disaster.

How does this affect our groups? Given that we have a group population with high rates of past or current traumatic experiences, it’s important to be aware of how this can manifest. Individuals who have survived a traumatic event often have a highly-reactive fight-or-flight response, meaning that they are more likely to perceive danger, whether or not that danger actually exists in the present moment. It’s vital for facilitators to keep in mind that this type of response is a survival mechanism and that the person is very unlikely actually trying to be “over-reactive,” “argumentative,” or “dramatic.” Group facilitators should stay alert for tense conversations in which it appears that one or more people are having a strong reaction. Whenever possible, validate participants’ feelings. If necessary, redirect the person interacting with someone who appears to be emotionally-charged. Ask for clarification about what is happening in the conversation. It’s often the case that someone has misread another person’s tone and are making negative assumptions about that person’s intentions, which can easily be clarified if you ask the group for the information that you believe the triggered person may be lacking.

Stay calm, thank participants for having the courage to engage in sometimes-emotional conversations, and be quick to shut down unhelpful comments from group members who do not understand how trauma impacts communication and social interaction (such as “You’re being too sensitive,” “There’s no need to be so dramatic,” etc.).

Throughout the group, stay on the lookout for participants who seem upset, agitated, or overwhelmed. Make a special effort to demonstrate encouragement and support to them. Take time to briefly check in with people after the group if you are concerned about them. Oftentimes a simple sign that someone cares can have a huge impact.



"Trauma survivors have symptoms instead of memories" [Harvey, 1990]

Adapted from Bremner & Marmar, 1998

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Section 5: Challenging Situations

Suggested Steps for Managing Urgent Safety-Related Situations

Hopefully, you won't encounter any situations in which you or someone else may be in danger. However, given the amount of adversary faced by the trans community, or the fact that 41% of trans people attempt suicide, it's vital to be prepared.

This section provides some information about situations to be aware of and to plan for for the purpose of making sure our group leaders are prepared for emergency situations. However, as MaineTransNet's groups are part of a non-clinical peer support program and our facilitators are peer volunteers, we cannot enforce that our volunteers follow a specific protocol in dealing with emergency situations. We ask that you use common sense in dealing with any emergency situations that may arise and consider the recommendations in this section in making decisions. We will have ongoing conversations about the topics below when we meet for our quarterly facilitator meetings. Before starting as a facilitator, you will receive training that addresses basic crisis management. If you have questions or concerns at any time about crisis situations, please talk to Alex or Quinn.

Some of the potential crisis situations that you should think about how you would handle are:

- A participant shares suicidal feelings and/or implies they are considering suicide
- Disclosures of abuse, for example:
 - A participant is a minor (or an adult in the care of a guardian) and is the victim of abuse or neglect
 - The participant indicates that they are acting in an abusive manner towards another person
 - A participant speaks or acts in a threatening manner towards another group member
 - A participant is experiencing violence and/or other forms of abuse within a relationship
- A participant has unexpectedly become homeless or is at risk of becoming homeless
- A participant is facing another type of crisis related to health, legal issues, financial issues, etc.

1. Develop a plan and be ready to implement it.

- Consider: What are the worst-case-scenarios I hope I never need to deal with and what would I do? Stay connected with other group facilitators to learn about their experiences and plans for managing challenging situations. Talk to your co-facilitator to make sure you are on the same page regarding plans to manage a crisis.
- Know your local resources or how to find resources. See "selected resources" in Forms and Handouts section for a list that you could provide to someone who needs them.
- Always have at least one group facilitator with a working cell phone in case of emergency.

2. Act.

- Review the "Responding to Suicidal Behavior" handout from the Maine Suicide Prevention Program (next page)
- If you think someone is in immediate danger of seriously harming themselves or someone else, do not leave the person alone.
- Do not make promises to keep plans of suicide a secret.

- Say, "Let's call the Maine Crisis Hotline to get you some help." (1-888-568-1112)
When you call, ask to speak to a crisis worker in your county. The crisis worker will talk to the person and tell them (or you) what steps to take next.
- If the person will not call a crisis hotline, ask if it's ok to have an MTN counselor-on-call volunteer follow up with them. Get their contact info. Call/text Alex immediately after the group, who will do the following-up.
- If someone abruptly leaves the group and you believe that they are an immediate danger to themselves or another person, consider calling for help (9-1-1 or your local police department's non-emergency number). [No MTN group leader has had to call for help as of now, but it's best to be prepared just in case.]
- If you are a MaineTransNet group leader who needed to take action because you were concerned about someone's safety, call Alex to fill him in as soon as possible.

Remember: We can only be responsible for our own choices and no one else's.

Although it can be very difficult to know that someone may be engaging in destructive behaviors or relationships or making decisions that are unhealthy, we cannot force someone to change or to make different decisions, especially if they are not aware that a problem exists. Telling someone what to do—if they are not asking for specific advice—is rarely helpful and often backfires (except in cases where there is an immediate risk of harm). Be sure to keep clear boundaries and do what you need to do to take care of yourself—if you try to be every group participant's free therapist, best friend, case manager, transportation-provider, emergency shelter-provider, 24/7 crisis hotline operator, and/or general savior, you **WILL** quickly burn out. The purpose of the group is to provide a space where people can feel accepted and supported, and perhaps work on issues that are important to them, at a time that they decide is right. Focus your energy on helping people develop relationships within the group and communicating honestly. Don't try to be a "rescuer"—that is way too much pressure.

See next pages for handouts on responding to suicidal behavior.

Responding to Suicidal Behavior

Suicide can be an impulsive act, but it does not usually occur spontaneously. People do not just decide, all of a sudden, to end their lives. They first find themselves in increasingly difficult circumstances. Their coping skills are inadequate to deal with their problems. If someone does not intervene, eventually they are unable to cope and they see suicide as the only solution to solving their problems.

Once the idea has been considered, time is needed to plan where, when and how to complete the act. The process might take only a few hours, but typically it takes days, weeks, or months. While some young people behave very impulsively and move quickly towards suicide, the average crisis period lasts about two weeks. There is usually time to intervene. The earlier the intervention the better.

The goals of suicide intervention are to help the person:

- ◆ Get through the crisis without harm
- ◆ Know that hope exists
- ◆ See alternatives to suicide
- ◆ Identify and access available helping resources

Three Steps to Helping a Suicidal Person:

- ◆ Show you care, listen.
- ◆ Ask about suicidal intent.
- ◆ Persuade the suicidal individual to get help and help them get help.

Ask a Question About Suicide

Asking a question about suicide does not increase the risk of suicide. It is very important to use words that are comfortable for you. A young person may resist your questions, but usually (s)he will feel relief that someone has finally recognized his or her pain. It is very important to keep the conversation going in a calm and reassuring manner.

It is important to talk to a suicidal person alone and in private to allow him or her to talk freely and be able to express emotions.

Your role and relationship to the suicidal person determines how you set the stage for asking a suicide related question. The fact that you ASK the question is much more important than how you ask.

Examples of suicide related questions:

- ◆ Are you planning your suicide?
- ◆ Are you thinking about killing yourself?
- ◆ When people are in as much pain as you seem to be, they sometimes want to end their life. Are you feeling that way?
- ◆ You seem very unhappy, are you thinking about ending your life?

Responding to the answer:

When someone responds that they are thinking about suicide, it must be taken seriously.

Helpful basic guidelines:

- ◆ Listen with your full attention. Take your time, be patient.
- ◆ Speak slowly, softly, calmly.
- ◆ Acknowledge the pain.
- ◆ Reassure, be positive.
- ◆ Identify individuals (s)he can trust for support and help.
- ◆ Formulate a plan for getting help, building hope.
- ◆ Remove lethal means and substances safely and immediately.
- ◆ Offer help/hope in any way you can. Know your own limits. Do not allow yourself to be the only person who can help.

Avoid:

- ◆ Acting shocked.
- ◆ Reacting with anger.
- ◆ Interrupting and offering advice.
- ◆ Minimizing or discounting the problem.
- ◆ Arguing about suicide being "right" or "wrong".
- ◆ Judging, condemning.
- ◆ Causing guilty feelings.
- ◆ Getting over involved or owning the problem.
- ◆ Offering unrealistic solutions.

Never:

- ◆ Ignore the behavior.
- ◆ Promise total confidentiality or agree to keep a secret.
- ◆ Try to forcefully remove a weapon.
- ◆ Leave a youth alone if you think there is an imminent danger of suicide.

Persuading Someone to Get Help:

Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness are common to suicidal people. Your support in building hope and finding help can make the difference between life and death.

Trust your instincts and take action when you think someone might be suicidal. Talk to him or her, making it clear that it is OK to talk about suicidal thoughts and feelings and that helping resources are available. Seek professional help as soon as possible.

Ask Directly:

- ◆ Will you let me help you get help?
- ◆ Whom would you like to contact for help?
- ◆ Will you go with me to get help?

How to Refer Someone for Help

Efforts to persuade someone to live are usually met with relief, so do not hesitate to intervene.

The best way is to take the person directly to someone who will help.

If that is not possible, get the person to agree to get help, and assist with making arrangements for that help as soon as possible.

A third alternative is to get a promise from the suicidal person that they will not kill themselves and that they will seek help.

If you believe a person to be in danger of suicide, it is up to you to use your judgment to see that they get the help they need. Call for Emergency Assistance - the statewide crisis hotline, police, emergency services or other helping resources familiar to you.

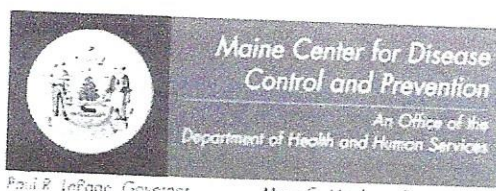
What if Help is Refused?

When a youth is suspected to be suicidal, the first course of action for a professional service provider is to follow the protocol of the local institution, agency, or facility.

Parents/guardians should be involved as soon as possible. They must be informed as to why the child is suspected to be suicidal. In the event that a mandated reporter determines that a youth under age 18 appears to be at risk of attempting suicide and the parent/guardian refuses to obtain services for him/her, a report should be made to Child Protective Services (CPS) at 1-800-452-1999 for neglect - failure to seek necessary mental health treatment which may place the child at risk of serious harm. CPS will conduct an assessment to determine if abuse or neglect does exist and to engage the family voluntarily in meeting the treatment needs of the child. If the parents still will not seek treatment and the CPS believes that this places the child at risk of serious harm or at immediate risk of serious harm, a Court Order will be sought ordering the required treatment services. If there appears to be a danger of abuse if the parents are involved, a report should be made to CPS and an assessment will be conducted as described above.

By calling the statewide crisis hotline, **1-888-568-1112**, you will access the appropriate crisis intervention agency in your area.

Crisis service agencies offer professionals who have the skills, authority, and responsibility to formally assess the risk factors and level of care necessary. Treatable mental or emotional illness often underlies suicidal behavior. Treatment can work even if it has to be forced. Sometimes involuntary treatment may be necessary. It is important that each suicidal person, at the very least, has the opportunity to get help.



Sometimes group participants may disclose information that requires some following-up. Examples of this? What would you do?

Handling uncomfortable group moments:

1. Stay aware of the group's "temperature."
2. Identify your goal before intervening.
3. Consider the other person's feelings.
4. Be direct. If you don't say what you're thinking, no one will know.
5. Say what you need to say, then stop.
6. Listen to the person's response.

Are there topics/content that someone might bring up that wouldn't be appropriate for group discussion?

Policy for Managing Disruptive or Problematic Group Participants

What are the most challenging types of people for you to work with as a group leader?

*Consider motives/needs.
Validate feeling/intention.*

The Dominator

The Wallflower

snoopy snorkerton

THE "I SPEAK FOR MY PEOPLE" REPRESENTATIVE

THE UNSOLICITED ADVICE-GIVER

THE JUDGER

The Know it all Expert of Vast Experience

THE OPPRESSION OLYMPICS COMPETITOR

The Socially-Challenged

THE NAY-SAYING CRITIC

The Recently-Broken-Up Lovers

The issue of cliques
 Trans "hierarchies" & competition
 Outside-of-group "drama"

If a group participant is becoming disruptive during a group, use the option to talk to someone 1:1 outside of room (assuming there's a co-leader who would stay in the room)

Quickly cut off communication that is disrespectful or threatening. (Don't wait for them to finish their statement/threat.) If the person keeps talking, keep talking over them [calmly!] until they stop and listen to you.

Use "I really want to understand your point of view, but not in this manner" or something similar.

Asking someone to leave/not return - Under what circumstances is this necessary? How would you manage this?

In the rare case that an ongoing issue starts to affect other participants' sense of safety or acceptance, we will follow these steps:

1. A group facilitator will privately speak to the group member whose behaviors are causing problems for other group members and help them identify ways to change the behavior
2. If the problematic behavior continues, the person will be asked to participate in a meeting with the group facilitator and a person from the MTN Board of Directors who is not directly involved in the situation. The facilitator, board member, and participant will form a plan to change problematic behaviors and a procedure to provide feedback to the member regarding the success of these changes.
3. If the person continues to behave in a manner detrimental to the group, they will be asked to leave the group and not return.

After six months, if the person is willing to make necessary changes, they may contact a group facilitator, who will discuss the situation with the MTN Board of Directors and make a determination about whether or not it would be appropriate for the member to resume attendance. If it is determined that the member's participation will not be harmful to the overall wellbeing of the group, the participant will first need to participate in a meeting with a group facilitator and a neutral board member to discuss what will now be different in that person's behavior. The group facilitator will provide ongoing feedback to the participant about whether they have been successful in making necessary changes and will provide a determination about the person's continued participation in the group.

Section 6: Forms & Handouts - Summary

This section contains the following:

Group Facilitator Expectation Highlights

A summary of what we expect from MaineTransNet group facilitators

Group Facilitator Application

For new potential group facilitators. Please give your completed application to Alex or Quinn.

Selected Resources

This is a list of hotline numbers for crisis response services and other resources that may be helpful to some of our group participants. Please be familiar with resources available to help individuals facing various forms of hardship and encourage group participants who have needs that go beyond what can be addressed in the group to take advantage of help that is available.

MaineTransNet Group Information for Participants

This handout provides basic information about MaineTransNet and our groups, as well as some of the basic group guidelines and tips for being a good group member. Please have these handouts available for any participants who want one.

Mileage Reimbursement Form

If you would like to be reimbursed for your travel to the group meetings you facilitate and/or the quarterly facilitator supervision/training meetings, use this form. Give your completed mileage reimbursement forms to Quinn.

Group Attendance/Demographics Form

Please use this form so that we can keep a record of group attendance. Emphasize that we are asking for first name only (or initials or even a pseudonym if the person prefers). The information we collect is to help us have an accurate picture of the demographics of our group participants for the purposes of future program development. Participants are welcome to skip sections if they do not feel comfortable providing information. Please ensure that at minimum, this form reflects the number of participants at each meeting.

MTN Group Facilitator Expectation Highlights

- Work with the Group Facilitator Supervisor to establish and manage the group. Complete the Group Logistics Plan and discuss with Group Supervisor.
- Provide a brief bio and picture for the MaineTransNet website (What do you want people to know about you? What are your hopes for this group? Why did you decide to be a group facilitator? etc.)
- Work with the MTN Communications Team to advertise your group and/or communicate information about your group using social media (if applicable)
- Arrive at the group at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start time in order to welcome participants as they arrive.
- Help to establish a safe, confidential, and affirming environment in which group participants can discuss experiences and feel included, validated, and supported.
- Understand that group participants have a variety of backgrounds, world views, and communication styles, and be able to hold space for the respectful discussion of opinions, identities, and decisions that may be different from yours.
- Assist group participants in creating group guidelines that provide a safe and supportive environment. Enforce the group guidelines. These may vary slightly from group-to-group, but should always include
 - Emphasizing the importance of confidentiality.
 - Ensuring that all group attendees have the opportunity to meaningfully participate.
 - Encouraging open discussion and acceptance among group participants that every person has their own unique values, life goals, priorities, and ways of understanding their intersecting identities.
 - Challenging blanket assumptions about groups of people (encourage "I statements").
 - Immediately intervening to disrupt hate speech or violent language.
- Model assertive and empathetic communication.
- Group facilitators **do not** provide legal or medical advice on behalf of MTN.
- Attend at least 3 facilitator meetings per year for peer supervision and/or ongoing training. These meetings will be held quarterly on a weekend afternoon for 2-3 hours.
- Keep track of group attendance (using the sign in sheet) and submit the form to the Group Facilitator Supervisor within a week after your group.
- If you have a professional background/license (i.e. you work in social service, health, or legal fields), be clear that in your role as an MTN group facilitator you are acting as a **volunteer peer facilitator**, rather than as a group therapist, lawyer, etc. Identify any potential complications that may arise due to your professional background (such as dual relationships, mandated reporting issues, etc.) and discuss with the Group Facilitator Supervisor as soon as you become aware of them.
- Group facilitators may be asked to step down from their facilitation role for a variety of reasons, including inconsistency, conflicts of interest, irresolvable conflicts with group members, consistent negative feedback from participants, lack of communication etc. Whenever possible, we will attempt to resolve any concerns in ways other than asking a facilitator to step down. However, in the case that attempts at resolution fail and you are asked to end your facilitation duties, we expect that facilitators will continue to interact respectfully and professionally with any present or former group participants and/or representatives of MaineTransNet.

Group Facilitator Application

Date _____

Name _____ Pronouns _____
(if your legal name is different from the name that you use, feel free to list whatever you prefer to be called)

Home address _____

Phone _____
(please use the number that could be used to most easily reach you, for example, in case of a group cancellation)

Email _____

Any notes about communication? (i.e. let us know if it's not ok to leave a message or if we should use a different name when calling, etc)

Are you over the age of 18? Yes No

Have you ever participated in a support group and/or discussion group before? Yes No

Have you ever facilitated a support group and/or discussion group before? Yes No

I am

trans / nonbinary

a parent (or caretaker) of someone who is trans or nonbinary

a partner of someone who is trans or nonbinary

other: _____

Can you commit to at least 6 months of facilitating your group as scheduled? Yes No

Can you commit to attending at least 3 group facilitator meetings per year? (Meetings will be offered at least four times a year on a weekend afternoon.) Yes No

Do you have any potential obstacles that would prevent you from being consistent in your facilitation responsibilities? Yes No

If yes, please explain:

Do you have strong support system to rely on for emotional support **outside of the group that you will be facilitating**? Yes No Unsure

How long have you identified as trans / nonbinary (or known about a partner/family member who is trans or nonbinary)? ___ Less than 1 year ___ Between 1 and 3 years ___ Over 3 years

Please list two references (not related to you) who would be able to provide information about your communication skills, responsibility, and manner of responding to challenging situations.

Reference 1

Name _____

Relationship to you _____

Email (preferred) and/or phone number _____

Reference 2

Name _____

Relationship to you _____

Email (preferred) and/or phone number _____

After receiving this application, the Group Facilitator Supervisor will contact you for an interview to discuss your application and ideas about facilitating. The questions we are most interested in learning about are:

- Why are you interested in leading a peer support group with MaineTransNet?
- What skills and experience do you have that would help you be a good facilitator?
- How do you address conflict? What is an example of a time you dealt with a situation that involved a conflict?
- What do you think your greatest challenge as a group facilitator will be?
- How open-minded would you say you are? Why?
- What is an example of a time you changed your opinion about an issue or a person?
- How do you deal with criticism?
- Do you have any concerns about being "out" as trans / nonbinary (or the partner or family member of a trans person / nonbinary person)?
- What would your ideal group look like?
- What questions do you have about being a group facilitator?

Selected Resources:

2-1-1 Maine - is Maine's health and human services information and referral system. Dial 211 or go to their website.

Trans Lifeline - (877-565-8860) – "Trans Lifeline is a 501(c)3 non-profit dedicated to the well being of transgender people. We run a hotline staffed by transgender people for transgender people. Trans Lifeline volunteers are ready to respond to whatever support needs members of our community might have."

The Trevor Lifeline - (866-488-7386) - "The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth. Our trained counselors are here to support you 24/7. If you are a young person who is in crisis, feeling suicidal, or in need of a safe and judgment-free place to talk, call The Trevor Lifeline now. It's free and confidential."

Statewide Crisis Hotline / Maine Youth Suicide Prevention - If you are concerned about yourself or about somebody else, call the crisis hotline at 1-888-568-1112. Ask to be connected to a crisis counselor in your area.

National Suicide Prevention Hotline - If you are not in Maine, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

The Maine Warm Line -Toll-free: 1-866-771-9276. In Greater Portland area: (772-9276) "Confidential telephone support services for non-crisis situations, including, but not limited to: Peer-to-peer support, social connection, sharing personal victories, overcoming fear, grief or sadness, developing effective strategies for the future, assistance with referrals to community resources, talking to someone when feeling sad, lonely, or discouraged. The Maine Warm Line is open every day from 5:00 PM to 8 AM. Yes, we will be open on weekends and holidays. The Warm Line is a toll free number."

NAMI Maine Help Line (Available Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm): 1-800-464-5767. "Provides confidential non-crisis help for consumers of mental health services and their family members, and offers support and assistance with information about mental illness and the support & treatment system, understanding your rights and where to get the help you need."

Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA) - 83 Western Ave. Suite 2, Augusta, ME 04330 Hotline: 1-800-871-7741 TTY: 1-888-458-5599

Statewide Domestic Violence Helpline Hotline - 1-866-83-4HELP

Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine (SARSSM) - 1-800-313-9900

"We provide support to all people affected by all types of sexual violence including women, men, gay, straight, young, old We believe that everyone has the inner strength to find their own path to healing from sexual assault, sexual abuse and any other forms of sexual violence. Our advocates are trained to respond to many aspects of sexual assault and are knowledgeable about the resources available to assist in healing. They are committed to providing non-judgmental support and guidance to assist in this healing process."

Alcoholics Anonymous - 1-800-737-6237

"During business hours, your call will be taken by a member of Alcoholics Anonymous who knows exactly what you are going through and can give you all the information you need. At night, we have a well qualified answering service, who can give meeting information, or put you in touch with an recovering alcoholic, in your area, who will speak with you about your problem."

Narcotics Anonymous - call their helpline to talk to a recovering addict: 1-800-974-0062

Child Abuse - 1-800-452-1999 - Maine's child abuse hotline is staffed 24 hours a day

Elder Abuse - 1-800-624-8404 - "The Office of Elder Services provides or arranges for services to protect incapacitated and dependent adults (age 18 and over) in danger of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Calls may be made anonymously."



Group Information for Participants

Thank you for attending a group! MaineTransNet offers peer support meetings for members of the trans community in Portland, Bangor, Waterville, Brunswick, and Lewiston. If you are looking for community and support, please join us! Check out our website for addresses, directions, and more info: www.mainetransnet.org Also feel free to "like" us on Facebook to stay current with event updates, cancellations, and news relevant to the trans community.

Note on terminology: We use "trans" as an umbrella term to include non-binary and gender nonconforming identities, and individuals questioning their gender identity. If you think you belong in our groups, you probably do! Being trans is not a competition and there is no one way to express gender. We welcome all members of the trans community to our groups, regardless of intention to medically transition, what you look like, or where you are in your transition journey (whatever that might mean to you)! Our groups are a non-judgmental environment where all participants are valued and affirmed. You are welcome here!

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: I'm questioning my gender identity, have never met other trans people, and I'm REALLY nervous about attending a group. What should I do?

A: Join us anyway! Many people were very nervous about attending for the first time, but you'll quickly find that we are a very accepting bunch of folks. There is no pressure for you to talk or share anything that you don't want to. Many people coming to the group for the first time choose to just listen with participating very much. This is totally fine! You are welcome at MTN!

Q: Why can't I bring my very-supportive partner/friend/parent/child to a trans-only meeting?

A: Supportive allies are wonderful and we're so thankful they exist. Some of our meetings are "trans-only" for the comfort and safety of those in the group who are most comfortable in a trans-only space and would not otherwise attend the group. Most of our lives are shared with cisgender (not trans) people, and trans-only meetings may be the only time that many of us have an opportunity to exist in a trans-only space. This is not meant to offend our cis allies, and we ask that you respect our trans-only guideline in groups where it applies. Please feel free to attend our trans & allies groups, social events, and community events. Contact mtn@mainetransnet.org if you would like more info about ways to get involved.

Q: I'm not really looking for "support," but I want to get involved with MaineTransNet. What can I do?

A: We are always looking for volunteers willing to be a part of creating the programming that they would like to see! If you are interested in helping start a book club, dance party, trans-bird-watching society, hiking group, etc. (or helping out with some of the projects we're currently working on), we would love to talk to you about how to make this happen. Contact mtn@mainetransnet.org.

Q: I want to come to a group for the first time. What do I wear?

A: Whatever you want! Wear what makes you the most comfortable. Remember, this is a non-judgmental space and you are welcome at MTN!



Did you enjoy our group? Feel free to try out our other MTN groups as well! (list current as of 9/1/17):
Please check out our website for current group listings and descriptions of each group

Portland:

Trans-Only group: 1st Wed. of the month, 6:00-7:30pm
Dana Health Center, Maine Medical Center Campus

Parents & Allies-Only Support Meeting: 1st Wed. of the month, 6:00-7:30pm, Dana Health Center, Maine Medical Center Campus

Trans AND Allies Support: 3rd Wed. of the month, 6:00-7:30pm, Dana Health Center, Maine Medical Center Campus

Non-Binary/Genderqueer Support: 3rd Mon. of the month, 7:00-8:30pm, MTN office, Equality Community Center

Trans People "of a Certain Age": 3rd Sun. of the month, 2:00-4:00pm, MTN office, Equality Community Center (for trans people ages 35+)

Weekly Drop-in: every Wed., 1:00-5:00pm
MTN office, Equality Community Center

MTN drop-ins are an opportunity for folks looking for a quieter, informal setting to get and give support, and socialize with other trans people. The space is open to trans folks and any allies they choose to bring, and provides opportunity to ask questions, get resources, check out our library, and enjoy the company of a small group of supportive individuals. (check the MTN Facebook page for cancellations)

Bangor:

Trans AND Allies Group: 1st & 3rd Sundays, 5:00pm
Health Equity Alliance office

Trans-Only Meeting: 1st Monday of the month, 6:00-7:30pm, Health Equity Alliance office

Waterville:

Trans-Only Meeting: 4th Mon. of the month, 6:00-7:30pm
Pleasant St. Methodist Church

Lewiston:

Trans-Only Meeting: last Mon. of each month 6:00-7:00pm
Center for Wisdom's Women (open to all genders)

Brunswick:

Trans-Only Group: 2nd and 4th Fri. of the month, 6:00-7:30pm, Bowdoin College campus



In order to create a safe and supportive environment for all attending our groups, we ask that group participants observe the following guidelines:

1. Respect confidentiality
 - What is talked about in the group stays in the group.
 - Please don't share information with other people about who was at a group without permission.
2. Step forward, step back
 - Please don't dominate the conversation—give others a chance to speak! Frequently ask yourself: Is everyone in the room participating equally, or are only a few people "carrying" the group? **What can I do to help create space for equal participation from everyone?**
 - If you rarely talk, *please do* (if you're comfortable)—the group will benefit from what you have to share!
 - Recognize that some people need to process internally before jumping into a conversation. If there's a silence in the room, this probably means that people are thinking. This is ok! Please resist the urge to fill silences just for the sake of doing so.
3. One conversation at a time
 - If someone brings up a topic, don't change the subject until the discussion is over – if unsure, ask.
 - Avoid cross-talk and side conversations during the group.
4. "Clique-free zone"
 - Some people may be friends outside of the group and some may not be. While this is fine and normal, *when we're in the group*, please try not to be exclusive or start exclusive conversations (for example, telling inside jokes that only a few people will understand, inviting a few people to an after-group gathering while leaving out others, etc.)

5. Avoid assumptions

- **Speak from your own experience** ("I statements").
- Don't make assumptions about what is best for someone else or give advice about what someone "should" do (unless you are explicitly asked to provide advice).
- Recognize that people in the group have a range of gender identities (and *other* identities). There is no ONE way to be [insert identity].
- Avoid trans hierarchies based on "transition status" or other arbitrary criteria. We honor people's right to explore and define their identity regardless of external appearance, medical decisions, etc. Every person's experiences and choices are valid and valuable!

6. Respect differences and different opinions

- Disagreeing on certain issues is expected and normal in any group of people. Let's create a group climate where it's possible to calmly and respectfully discuss differences without regressing to hostility or defensiveness.
- Assume good intentions: If someone says something that you interpret as offensive, please communicate this in a gentle manner. We all make mistakes from time to time and chances are that the person did not realize that what they said could be problematic.

7. Respect privacy and personal triggers

- Be mindful of questions you are asking and **how** you are asking them – give others the option to not respond
- Some people are more willing to share their email or other contact information than others—please don't pressure anyone to give information they aren't comfortable sharing. (If you ask once and get a vague answer or a "no," don't push the issue.)
- Be aware that group members have had a variety of experiences, some of which may have been traumatic. Please be mindful of this when participating in conversation. For example, avoid superfluous description of violence or specific details of abuse or other traumatic incidents which are likely to be upsetting to others.
- Violent language or threatening is not tolerated in group (even if it is meant as a "joke between friends").

8. Be assertive

- If you don't want to talk about something or answer a particular question, just say so. If something is happening in the group that is making you uncomfortable, speak up—it could create a productive discussion! Talk to a group facilitator if something is happening that you would like help addressing. Make this **YOUR** group!

If problems arise...

If you have a concern about a group member's interactions with you (inside or outside of the group) that is negatively impacting your experience in the group, and you have not been able to resolve the issue with that person, please talk to a group facilitator.

In the rare case that an ongoing issue starts to affect other participants' sense of safety or acceptance, we will follow these steps:

1. A group facilitator will privately speak to the group member whose behaviors are causing problems for other group members and help them identify ways to change the behavior
2. If the problematic behavior continues, the person will be asked to participate in a meeting with the group facilitator and a person from the MTN Board of Directors who is not directly involved in the situation. The facilitator, board member, and participant will form a plan to change problematic behaviors and a procedure to provide feedback to the member regarding the success of these changes.
3. If the person continues to behave in a manner detrimental to the group, they will be asked to leave the group and not return.

Tasks of a group facilitator – what does a good group facilitator do? What do they avoid doing?

Before the group starts		During the group		After the group	
Do:	Pay attention to:	Do:	Pay attention to:	Do:	Pay attention to:

Not in any order!

Tasks of a group facilitator – what does a good group facilitator do? What do they avoid doing?

Before the group starts		During the group		After the group	
Do:	Pay attention to:	Do:	Pay attention to:	Do:	Pay attention to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - welcome newcomers - facilitate small-talk - (re)arrange the room <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seating arrangements - advertise group - provide directions - reassure the nervous - act friendly - involve new/quiet people in group conversations (if they want to be involved) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pre-group "cliques" behavior - meeting room accessibility issues - "roles" within the group - dynamics - any strange tension or weirdness going on? - what are the unique needs or expectations of this group? - bathroom location? - gender-neutral option? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - actively listen (and model this behavior for others to use) - connect participants' experiences to each other - keep things on track - mediate disagreements - enforce ground rules - make/review ground rules - challenge (kindly) unhelpful behaviors, patterns, beliefs, etc. - encourage equal participation - provide support, affirmation, encouragement - notice what's good + point it out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - does the group have an atmosphere of acceptance + respect? - are people participating equally - or at least have that opportunity? - do I need to politely cut anyone off who has been dominating the conversation? - is there anyone I should check in with after the group? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - check in w/ folks individually if necessary - individually thank newcomers for coming - follow up on any unfinished convos - make introductions between members (if necessary), try to involve new/sty people in conversations - clean up room 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cigues - did I leave the room the way I found it? - do I need any support for myself to process what has happened?

Group Facilitator Self-Evaluation Form

"Spirit of Collaboration & Acceptance"

High					Low				
5		4	3		2	1			
<p>Actively fosters participation from group members and power-sharing within the group. Is flexible in meeting needs of group (i.e. doesn't rigidly stick to a proposed topic that no one is interested in). Validates participation from group members and values members' knowledge and experiences. Solicits participation from a range of group members. Makes room for different perspective/points of view. Shows a warm, friendly, and encouraging attitude. Privately checks in before or after group with "challenging members" if necessary.</p>			<p>Shares floor time with group members. May not perceive or may ignore opportunities to deepen/validate/encourage members' participation. Occasionally attempts to find similarities or connections in members' narratives.</p>			<p>Dominates floor time. Assumes role of expert. Gives frequent unsolicited advice. Does not empower group members to provide support for each other or problem-solve issues. Makes no attempt to connect members' experiences or encourage in-depth conversations. Takes sides in potentially-controversial discussions. Does not create a warm and welcoming environment (i.e. is sarcastic, puts people down, dismisses others' opinions, sneers excessively in the manner of Mr. Grinch, etc.)</p>			

Facilitation Skills

High					Low				
5		4	3		2	1			
<p>Enforces group guidelines in order to create a safe environment, "knows the room," keeps group on topic, tactfully interrupts "over-talkers" to allow other participation, encourages group dialogue (rather than having a bunch of people taking turns telling stories), connects members' narratives by pointing out common themes, making references to something that was said earlier in the group, asking follow-up questions to encourage in-depth conversation, etc.</p>			<p>Asks some questions to steer group conversation. Enforces some group guidelines, such as reminding people not to interrupt each other. Makes occasional attempts to foster group interaction and in-depth conversation (as opposed to having people take turns making statements or telling stories with no connection to each other).</p>			<p>Provides no structure and allows group to run itself. Allows a few people to dominate. Doesn't attempt to engage more quiet participants. Allows group to get way off-topic (or the "topic" is never clear). Members take turns telling stories with little connection/interaction with each other and the facilitator does not attempt to stimulate interactive dialogue.</p>			

Helpful interventions

Connecting group members' stories/statements to each other or to a common theme	
Reflection of content/meaning/emotion to clarify, summarize, demonstrate understanding, or get back to group topic if off track	
Encourage/create opportunities for participation from quieter members	
Questions (& follow up questions) Open questions vs. closed questions	
Affirmations (if appropriate)	
Reframe tense situations / find commonality in disagreement (in intention, if not in content)	
Validate diversity of experience	

Activity: A Good Fit?

Are the following people appropriate for your group? What special considerations might they have?

1. Nate is 11-years-old. His parents say, "He's very mature for his age. It doesn't matter that everyone else in the group is an adult."
2. Jim is a cisgender man who wants to join the group because he has not been having success in relationships and wants to find a potential date. He says, "I'm very respectful and I'm basically an honorary member of the trans community anyway!"
3. Juanita is a trans adult with developmental delays who lives in a group home. A staff from the group home calls to find out if Rachel can attend the group and whether a staff member can join her. The staff member tells you that Rachel has some difficulty reading social cues and staying on track in conversations.
4. Rachel calls to express interest in the group, revealing that she was just released from prison and has since relapsed on drugs. She hopes that joining the group will give her something to motivate her to stay sober. She asks you whether there are any Jewish people in the group and mentions that she has had bad experiences with Judaism as a child and now believes that "all Jews should be punched in the face! And I can say that--I used to be one of them!"
5. Jesús is looking for a group where he can find people who can relate to some of his experiences as a Latino trans man. He mentions that a group he used to attend was made up of all white people who were friendly, but didn't seem to take his cultural identity seriously.
6. A case manager calls to find out if his client, Xelda, can attend your group. He mentions that Xelda has had some difficulty in groups in the past due to dating multiple group members at the same time and spreading rumors about them. He says that Xelda is very quick to date new people as a way to seek acceptance and typically finds a new romantic partner immediately upon joining any group of people.
7. Tanika wants to join your group, telling you, "I want to give back to my community by helping young trans people find their way. I don't need any support for myself, but since I've completed my transition long ago, I know exactly what young trans people need to do to be successful and I can help them take these steps."
8. Wando says that they want to come to the group, are worried about being "very socially awkward." They say they have a lot of anxiety and can't usually handle group situations or talking in front of people.

