

Basic psychosocial support (PSS) in education: A training manual for teachers and other stakeholders

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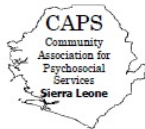
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Enabling Access to Mental Health in Sierra Leone

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Introduction

Psychosocial wellbeing is a necessary condition for any human being to realize their full potential and to lead fulfilling, healthy and productive lives. People that have psychosocial wellbeing are confident, have self-esteem, feel safe, and are able to solve problems, make decisions, build positive social relationships, work together and resolve conflicts¹.

All children have psychosocial support needs. These can vary depending on a child's age, their life experiences, their family situation, gender, and even their individual personalities. The school and classroom environment, as well as the relationships between pupils and the teacher and pupil, can contribute to supporting a child's psychosocial wellbeing. This 3-day psychosocial support (PSS) for teachers and other stakeholders aims to assist people working in Sierra Leone's education sector to feel to support the psychosocial wellbeing of pupils in classrooms and the wider school environment.

Since the nation of Sierra Leone was faced with the Ebola outbreak and crisis, the psychosocial wellbeing of children and their families has been compromised in many and serious ways. For children, the experience of schools being closed for almost one year will have vastly influenced their psychosocial support systems and wellbeing. It is anticipated that children resuming school after such a long break will struggle with a range of psychosocial issues. These issues will likely to interfere with children's learning, their behavior at school and the overall atmosphere of the school environment. Additionally, children may still be experiencing distress as a consequence of major life-changes and may struggle to concentrate or re-establish their focus for study. Finally, parents and teachers will equally feel the pressures brought about in crisis recovery situations, which may further have consequences on children's behavior.

With this context as a backdrop, this manual provides teachers with some basic tools and skills to be able to offer psychosocial support to distressed children (or their parents or colleagues). Tools further aim to enable teachers to explore creative ways to help children (either individually or in the classroom) to reduce stress, foster resilience and coping, build supportive relationships and possibly prevent short and long term psychological problems. These tools are not just for Ebola-affected communities however. They will be widely beneficial at all times for teachers and other education stakeholders as well.

The Basic psychosocial support (PSS) in education: A training manual for teachers and other stakeholders outlines a 3-day training program. It comprises basic psychological first aid skills development, creative tools for stress management, an overview of important life skills for pupils and some of the general principles of psychosocial support. The training concludes with very practical activities that intend to foster creative thinking for teachers in how they engage children in the learning process while encouraging their psychosocial wellbeing. The training will be led by joint teams of counsellors, social welfare officers, education staff and other psychosocial support workers in Sierra Leone's local services.

Through prioritizing children's education, as well as their psychosocial wellbeing, teachers have great potential to truly impact the psychosocial wellbeing of all pupils, their parents, families and wider communities.

¹ REPSSI (Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative). *Teacher's Diploma in Psychosocial Care, Support and Protection. Module 1, 2nd Edn. December 2014.*

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Training Summary & Schedule

DAY 1		
0830-0900	Participant registration	30 mins
0900-0930	PSS Training Introduction	30 mins
0930-1000	Psychological First Aid: An Introduction	30 mins
1000-1030	Psychological First Aid: Look. Engaging parents, children, families and looking for people needing support	30 mins
1030-1100	Morning tea	25-30 mins
1100-1300	Psychological First Aid: Listen. Communication skills	120 mins
1300-1400	Lunch	50-60 mins
1400-1500	Psychological First Aid: Link. Referrals	60 mins
1500-1615	Psychological First Aid: Practicing skills	75 mins
1616-1630	Homework & Day 1 Conclusions	15 mins
DAY 2		
0830-0900	Participant registration	30 mins
0900-0930	Review of Day 1 and Defining stress	30 mins
0930-1030	Understanding stress across the ages	60 mins
1030-1100	Morning tea	25-30 mins
1100-1200	Understanding stress across the ages (continued...)	60 mins
1200-1300	Managing stress	60 mins
1300-1400	Lunch	50-60 mins
1400-1500	Managing stress (continued...)	60 mins
1500-1615	Life skills to support pupils	75 mins
1615-1630	Homework & Day 2 Conclusions	15 mins
DAY 3		
0830-0900	Participant registration	30 mins
0900-0930	Review of Day 2 and defining psychosocial support	30 mins
0930-1030	General principles of psychosocial support	60 mins
1030-1100	Morning tea	20-30 mins
1100-1230	Stigma and shame	90 mins
1230-1330	Lunch	50-60 mins
1330-1600	Experiential tools for teachers	150 mins
1600-1640	Action planning. Training assessment	40 mins
1640-1650	Wrap up and administrative issues	10 mins

Day 1

Session One: Psychosocial Support (PSS) Training Introduction

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Know what to expect and not to expect from a training on the Principles of PSS in education
- Understand the benefits of learning practical PSS skills before theoretical knowledge

TIME ALLOCATION

Welcome and introduction to the 3-day PSS training	5 Minutes
Activity 1: What to expect and not to expect from training in the Principles of PSS in education	20 Minutes
Conclusion	5 Minutes
TOTAL	30 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

No materials required

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION TO THE 3-DAY PSS TRAINING [05 MINUTES]

- Everybody needs psychosocial support and wellbeing to be able to live full and productive lives.
- Psychosocial wellbeing is the state in which an individual, family or community has cognitive, emotional and spiritual strengths combined with positive social relationships. People that have psychosocial wellbeing are confident, have self-esteem, feel safe, and are able to solve problems, make decisions, work together and resolve conflicts².
- All children have psychosocial support needs. These can vary depending on a child's age, their life experiences, their family situation, gender, and even their individual personalities.
- The school and classroom environment, as well as the relationships between pupils and the teacher and pupil, can contribute to supporting a child's psychosocial wellbeing.
- It is hoped that this 3-day PSS training will help you feel more empowered as a teacher to support the psychosocial wellbeing of pupils in your school and/or classroom.

² REPSSI (Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative). *Teacher's Diploma in Psychosocial Care, Support and Protection. Module 1, 2nd Edn. December 2014.*

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT TO EXPECT AND NOT TO EXPECT FROM TRAINING IN THE PRINCIPLES OF PSS IN EDUCATION [20 MINUTES]

- There are many aspects to psychosocial support.
- Of course, we will only be able to cover a few key areas in the next 3-days.
- This activity is intended to give you an idea of what to expect or not to expect in these 3 days of training.

Instruction: I'd like you to stand up. I'm going to read out some psychosocial support topics. If you think "yes, this will be covered in our 3-day training"; place your hands on your head". If you think "no, this will not be covered in our 3-day training"; place your hands on your hips.

Read out to the group and give them a moment to decide "yes" (hands on head) or "no" (hands on hips)	Response and explanation about what is/is not covered in the 3-day training
In this 3-day training I will learn how to be a counsellor.	No. Counselling is a fairly technical intervention that requires a lot of training – much more than we can offer over 3-days. But we will be teaching you some simple communication skills that will help you better support children, especially if they are showing signs of distress.
In this 3-day training I will learn all about the theories of psychosocial support.	Yes and No (trick question!). Our focus during these 3-days is to help you develop more skills than knowledge. As we go, we will cover some theory and a lot of information. So you can focus more on skills, we will be doing skills-based work in the first 2 days and follow this up on the 3 rd day with some general principles of psychosocial support and how to apply these practically. By teaching skills first, it often makes the theory more relevant.
In this 3-day training I will learn how to support a child who is crying or upset.	Yes. Today (day 1 of training) we will be learning about Psychological First Aid (PFA), which is an approach that is intended to help you support other people who are showing signs of distress.
In this 3-day training I will learn how to engage with families and support parents.	Yes. The skills and tools we will share over the 3-day training can be used for children and adults, but of course, you may need to think about how you change your approach for the different age groups.
In this 3-day training I will learn all about trauma and trauma recovery.	No. Trauma is a common term but it may not always be the most accurate description of what people experience when they have gone through crisis. The topic of trauma recovery is very complex. Rather than teach you about trauma, we're going to focus on STRESS and how this affects children, their learning and ways we can support them to manage stress. This will help all children in some way, whereas trauma interventions may only be relevant for a few children.
In this 3-day training I will learn how to manage my own stress.	Yes. All our discussions about stress are intended for you to learn about your own stress management.
In this 3-day training I will	Yes. It is important that we understand the extent to which we

learn about how to refer children to services.	can support children and their families, and when we need to get other services to assist them.
In this 3-day training we will focus mainly on children affected by Ebola.	No. This training program will be useful for all children at school. However, some of the approaches might be especially necessary for Ebola-affected children, such as those who lost caregivers, have changed homes, or had difficult experiences during the Ebola crisis.
In this 3-day training I will learn how to give children life skills.	Yes and No (trick question!). Life skills for children is an area that usually requires longer training. It often follows a particular life-skills program. We will discuss some life skills to support pupils, but we will not be training in a particular life skills program.
In this 3-day training I will learn some practical and creative ways to provide psychosocial support for children.	Yes. It is the goal of this training to build your practical skills, give you some specific ideas for supporting children individually and in the classroom. We hope to empower you to use your own creativity as well so you can best support children at school.

Session Two: Psychological First Aid (PFA): An introduction³

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Define Psychological First Aid (PFA)
- Describe what PFA is and is not
- Recall the action principles of PFA – Look, Listen, Link

TIME ALLOCATION

Defining PFA	5 Minutes
Activity 1: Learning what PFA is and is not	20 Minutes
Activity 2: The action principles of PFA – Look, Listen, Link	5 Minutes
TOTAL	30 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Flip chart, markers, tape for sticking papers to the walls.

DEFINING PFA: [05 MINUTES]

BEFORE this session: Write the following definition of PFA on a flip chart and have it displayed in the training room: “PFA describes a humane, supportive response to someone who is suffering and may need support”.

- Psychological First Aid is also referred to as Psychosocial First Aid. It is often just called “PFA”
- [Reading from the flipchart] - PFA is defined as a humane, supportive response to someone who is suffering and may need support

ACTIVITY 1: LEARNING WHAT PFA IS AND IS NOT [20 MINUTES]

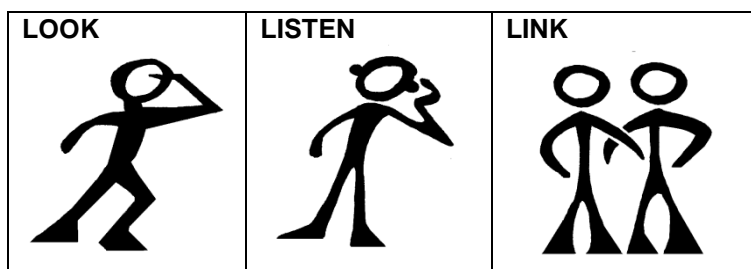
Instruction: Divide participants into two groups. Ask the first group to answer the question of “what PFA IS” and the second group to answer “what PFA IS NOT”. Ask each group to note their answers on flipchart paper and then read out their answers. If necessary, reinforce to the group what PFA is and is not from the following answers table:

³ All material about Psychological First Aid is taken from: World Health Organization, War Trauma Foundation and World Vision International (2011). *Psychological first aid: guide for field workers*. WHO: Geneva – and from: Save the Children (2013). *Psychological first aid training manual for child practitioners*. Save:UK.

PFA is...	PFA is not...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical (providing practical/material care and support) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Something only professionals can do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support that does not intrude or is forced upon others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional counselling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About assessing the needs and concerns of people you are supporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clinical or psychiatric intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of good clinical care when used by professionals or non-professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological debriefing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping people to access basic needs (e.g. food, water, information) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking people to analyse their experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comforting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking people to put their stories into a timeframe and accurate order of events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping people to feel calm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressing people to tell you their story
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressing people to share the details of their story
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping others to connect to information, services or other support systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking people about in-depth feelings about what has happened to them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting people from further harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving direct advice (unless necessary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping people to decide for themselves what their next actions will be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Something everybody needs or wants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private and confidential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A counselling 'session'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapted according to age, culture, gender and for those who may need special attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The same for everyone

ACTIVITY 2: THE ACTION PRINCIPLES OF PFA [5 MINUTES]

- There are three main action principles to PFA. These are “Look”, “Listen” and “Link”
- **Instruction:** Ask participants to stand. Say the words “Look, Listen and Link” slowly, while also doing the actions – E.g. To “look”, place your hand to your forehead and pretend to be ‘looking’ out; To “listen”, place your hand at the back of your ear and push that side of your head forward slightly; To “link”, place your hands on your hips. These images may help:



Repeat these actions for Look, Listen, Link at least 3 times with the group, then ‘mix them up’. E.g. call out “Listen” and ask them to do the right action, then call out “Look”, “Link” “Look”, “Listen”, “Look”, “Link”, and so forth. Do this a few times, but always end with the proper Look, Listen and Link order.

Session Three: Psychological First Aid (PFA): Look. Engaging parents, children, families, and looking for people needing support

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Check for safety for themselves and others
- Check for people with obvious urgent basic needs
- Identify serious distress reactions or signs that parents, children or families might need support

TIME ALLOCATION

Introduction	5 Minutes
Activity 1: What to look for	20 Minutes
Conclusion	5 Minutes
TOTAL	30 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Flip chart, markers, tape for sticking papers to the walls. Participants notebooks

INTRODUCTION: [05 MINUTES]

- We will not know if a person needs support if we are not actively looking for the signs that tell us they require assistance.
- There are three main things we need to LOOK for to know whether or not PFA might be helpful. These are:
 - Looking for the safety – for yourself and for the person you are trying to assist;
 - Looking to see if that person has any obvious or urgent basic needs; and
 - Looking for any signs of distress that people may have, which may be an indication that they need support.

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT TO LOOK FOR [20 MINUTES]

Instructions: On the flipchart, draw a line (top to bottom) down the center creating 2 columns.

- In the plenary (meaning the *full* group), ask the participants to brainstorm what might be some safety considerations they need to look for. Be sure to emphasize that their safety always comes first. Write key responses in one column of the flipchart
- In the plenary, ask the participants to brainstorm what might be obvious urgent basic needs. Ensure they cover urgent medical assistance, food, water, protection and so forth. Write key responses on the other column of the flipchart.

- Ask the plenary the following question: *“What do we do if these are things we have seen? Should we continue to provide PFA?”*
- The answer to the above question is *“it depends”*. For example, if it is not safe, then do not engage. If there are dangers to the individual, these should be addressed first, though they may need support to meet those safety needs. Or, if there is an urgent medical need, this must be attended to first, but the person could be supported emotionally by having someone go to the health clinic with them.

Instructions: Write this question on a new flipchart – *“What are the signs of distress that might suggest a pupil needs support?”* Ask participants to turn to the person next to them and discuss this question in pairs, listing their answers on A4 paper. After about 5 minutes ask pairs to join two other pairs (forming small groups of 6) to exchange and discuss their answers.

In the plenary, ask if the signs of distress for pupils are the same or different for parents? [FYI – they will likely be similar themes for children, adults and families in general].

CONCLUSION [5 MINUTES]

- Conclude with a summary of information from the session.
- Ask the participants to stand again and go through the actions for Look, Listen and Link.
- Explain that the group has been “looking” and the next session will focus on listening.

Session Four: Psychological First Aid (PFA): Listen. Communication Skills

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Approach people who may need support
- Apply good communication skills and adapt these for children
- Ask about people's needs and concerns
- Listen to people
- Help people to prioritize their concerns
- Help children to feel calm

TIME ALLOCATION

Introduction	5 Minutes
Activity 1: Approaching people who may need support	20 Minutes
Activity 2: Good communication skills and adapting communication for children	30 Minutes
Activity 3: Asking about people's needs and concerns by hearing what they say and helping them prioritize their concerns	40 Minutes
Activity 4: Helping children feel calm	20 Minutes
Conclusion	5 Minutes
TOTAL	120 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Flip chart, markers, tape for sticking papers to the walls.

INTRODUCTION: [05 MINUTES]

- Communication is a two-way process of reaching mutual understanding, in which people exchange (encode-decode) information, news, ideas and feelings.
- Effective communication is about listening for what people say, but also understanding the emotions and needs behind the information they share.
- Communication can be verbal, non-verbal (e.g. tone of voice or body language).
- We may need to approach adults or children differently depending on the mood and communication signals they send us.

ACTIVITY 1: APPROACHING PEOPLE WHO MAY NEED SUPPORT [20 MINUTES]

Instruction: Split the group into two smaller groups. To the first group, inform them that the other group will be acting like children who are in distress. Their task will be to approach one child each and offer them support. To the second group, ask ¼ of the people to each play one of the following roles:

- A child aged 8 years showing signs of anger
- A child aged 15 years showing signs of deep sadness
- A child aged 6 years showing signs of fear
- A child aged 12 years behaving with extreme energy (hyper-activity)

Call out “go” to the first group so they can approach the “children” in the second group. Allow them about 5 minutes to interact. Afterwards, discuss the exercise with the whole group, using the following questions to generate discussion:

- For those approaching the children, what could you identify about the child’s mood based on their behavior?
- For those approaching the children, what type of support did you think these children needed?
- For those who acted out the children, what was especially helpful from the person who approached you?
- For those who acted out the children, was there anything that was not helpful?
- Did you the person approaching the children introduce themselves and what they wanted to do? Did they ask the child’s name?
- When the adults were approaching or speaking with the children, what did they do to help the child feel at ease? E.g. did the adult get down to ‘eye-level’ with the child?
- Did anyone try to move their position in order to find a quieter place to talk?

Key messages for approaching people who may need support:

- Be respectful and polite when approaching others.
- Introduce yourself.
- Ask for their names.
- Ask if you can offer support.
- Always ensure the safety of yourself first and the other person.
- Remember to look for signs of distress or any other urgent needs.
- Try to find a quiet and safe place to talk
- Listen to the body-language being shared by the other person to give you clues about what might be concerning them. This is especially true for children who may not have the words to be able to explain how they feel.

ACTIVITY 2: GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND ADAPTING COMMUNICATION FOR CHILDREN [30 MINUTES]

Instruction: With the full group, ask them to call out important elements about good communication. As they are called out, list these on the flipchart, being sure that some of the key communication skills are included, such as:

- Give your full attention
- Avoid distractions or interruptions and try not to move the person along too quickly (e.g. by looking at your watch or asking them to talk faster)
- Position yourself in a way that is engaging and supportive, not too close, but not too far
- Show you are listening by nodding, smiling, using familial expressions
- Repeat back to the person what they say to ensure you understand them
- Avoid judgment and telling the other person what to do (listen for their solutions)
- Use a calm and encouraging tone of voice
- Don't use technical terms (e.g. don't say "I'm going to give you PFA now"!)
- Silence is OK. Silence can sometimes give the other person space to think about what they tell you or what you have said
- Sometimes touch (e.g. hand-holding or an arm around a shoulder) can be comforting, but be mindful of gender and cultural differences

Instruction: With this list, ask the group what they might need to consider differently when communicating with children? Highlight or list new ideas.

Instruction: Write this phrase on a flipchart: "**Ah, Thomas. You are here. Come in. I have been waiting for you**". Ask the participants to divide into pairs. Ask them to say this phrase to the other person in a variety of ways. For example, in an encouraging way, in a threatening tone of voice, in a happy tone of voice, an angry tone of voice, in an inquiring voice.

Discuss with the plenary group what this tells us about the importance of our tone of voice and body language when communicating with children. **Key message** is that children pick up on more than we realize and how we communicate with children is often more important than the words we use.

ACTIVITY 3: ASKING ABOUT PEOPLES NEEDS AND CONCERNS BY HEARING WHAT THEY SAY AND HELPING THEM PRIORITIZE THEIR CONCERNS [40 MINUTES]

- One of the most important skills in communication is understanding the meaning behind what people say.
- Often, children express their feelings through their actions, facial expressions or creative outputs, such as artwork or play.
- Children can benefit by being supported to identify their feelings, such as when adults can help them to put words to their emotions

TRAINING TIP: *If you have two facilitators during training, it might be good to do this exercise in two smaller groups, with each facilitator playing Rose in their small group. This will help people engage more with the role-play and experiment with their skills.*

Instruction - Tell the group:

I'm going to be a 15 year old girl. My name is Rose. I'm going to share some details about my story with you. When I finish, I'd like you to call out single statements that begin with the phrase "I hear you say...". For example, "I hear you say that you are feeling sad". Help me to identify the feelings underneath the words I use. I will respond by telling you that this is true. But don't worry if you get it wrong, because I'll just give you more information that will help clarify my experience and emotions with you. As I read the story, it might be useful to take a few notes for yourself.

So my name is Rose and I am a 15 year old girl. **[Read out slowly with expression]**

Since returning to school I've found it hard to focus on my studies. Did you know that my father died from Ebola? My mum survived, but she's not the same person she used to be. She always seems busy. Busy at work, busy in the house, busy with my younger brothers. There's nobody at home I can talk to. And when I'm not at school, she keeps asking me to do chores. So many chores! I get tired and I cry at night before I go to sleep. I wish my father was still here. At school, I don't think my friends care about the fact that my father died. They just say lots of people died from Ebola and I'm lucky I still have my mother. Then, after school, I have to walk past the store where there is a boy. He's 18. I like him because he's kind to me. He listens to me. But he's started to touch me in a way I'm not comfortable with. I still want to be his friend, but sometimes he scares me when he touches me. I don't know what to do.

- Ask the group to respond using the phrase "I hear you say...". When they use these statements, stay *in role as Rose*.
- If they say things that accurately reflect your feelings, say "Yes" and give them more information about how you/Rose feels.
- If they don't reflect my feelings, say "No" and offer them more clarity about your/Rose's experience.
 - ✓ E.g. "I hear you say that it feels lonely at home" - [Rose] "Yes. My mother has no time to talk to me anymore and I miss her being interested in my life".
 - ✓ E.g. "I hear you say that it's been hard reconnecting with your school friends since you returned" - [Rose] "Yes. It seems like my friends don't care that my father died and they don't understand how much I miss him".
 - ✓ E.g. "I hear you say that you are angry with your mother" - [Rose] "No. I wouldn't say angry. I miss spending time with her".
 - ✓ E.g. "I hear you say that you're worried this boy might hurt you" - [Rose] "No. I don't think he would hurt me. But when he touches me I don't feel ready for that. But I'm scared that if I don't have sex with him he won't be my friend anymore".
 - ✓ E.g. "I hear you say that with everything going on for you it's hard to focus on your studies" - [Rose] "Yes. I have so much on my mind and concentrating or doing homework is so hard right now".

Instruction: Ask the wider group

- What is the biggest priority and concern for Rose?
- Do we decide which problem she needs to deal with first? Or does Rose?
- How can we help Rose prioritize which concerns to address first?

Key messages:

- We need to ASK Rose which concern SHE wishes to deal with first.
- This will help her feel more in control of managing her own problems and feeling less overwhelmed by so many worries.
- E.g. Reflect to Rose: “There are so many things going on for you right now. What do you think is the most important problem you’d like to deal with first?”

Instruction: With the wider group, discuss:

- Rose’s story and the underlying meaning behind the information she provided. Discuss how this helps strengthen the communication by seeking out the meaning and not just the facts.
- How younger children might express meaning in their play or actions?

ACTIVITY 4: HELPING CHILDREN FEEL CALM [20 MINUTES]

- There are many ways to help children feel calm, but the most effective approach will be when the calming technique matches the mood or behaviour of the child(ren).
- We will cover more strategies for helping people and children feel calm in the stress management modules, but we can begin to explore ideas here as this is part of how we approach and engage children in a calming way to provide them with psychosocial support.

Instruction: Divide the group into four smaller groups. Each group will be given a scenario. They have to act out the scene in a 3 minute demonstration showing show how they intend to help the child/children feel calm.

<p>Group 1/Scenario 1: You have a classroom with many children. It is a hot day and they are not concentrating. Some children are misbehaving and others are appearing sleepy. Show how the teacher can help create more calm in the classroom and re-engage the children to learn.</p>
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<p>Group 2/Scenario 2: You are the teacher and having a meeting with two children and their parents. The children have been fighting at school. During the interview, the parents become angry and the children begin to cry.</p>
--

<p>Group 3/Scenario 3: You are a teacher who has just witnessed an event in the playground where a small group of children were pointing and making fun of another child. The child moves away from the crowd, sits on the ground and cries.</p>

<p>Group 4/Scenario 4: It is the first day back at school. You are leading an assembly of all the pupils. They are excited to be back at school, talking, shouting and moving a lot. You need to get their attention and speak to them about new rules for school safety.</p>
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ACTIVITY 4: CONCLUSION [5 MINUTES]

Without going into details, summarise for the group the key topics covered throughout the morning, including:

- What PFA is and is not
- The action principles of PFA – Look, Listen, Link (do the actions!)
- Identifying the signs of distress and how to approach people or children who need support
- Good communication skills and how to adapt these for children
- Communicating your listening skills by hearing the meaning of what people say, not just the facts
- Helping people prioritize their concerns
- Being creative in helping children to feel calm

Reflect that most of our activities have focused on children; however the same principles apply for adults (e.g. parents or other teachers) too.

Session Five: Psychological First Aid (PFA): Link. Referrals

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Identify the informal links to support children, parents and families
- Identify when children, parents or families may require additional support
- Identify the formal links and referrals to support children, parents and families
- Provide information in a useful way

TIME ALLOCATION

Introduction	5 Minutes
Activity 1: Assisting children, parents and families to link with community supports	35 Minutes
Activity 2: Providing information to others	15 Minutes
Conclusion	5 Minutes
TOTAL	60 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Flip chart, markers, tape for sticking papers to the walls. Coloured crayons/pencils/markers. A blindfold (either a piece of material or shirt that can be wrapped around a person's head).

INTRODUCTION: [10 MINUTES]

- Remind participants that we are continuing to build our skills in providing PFA to children and parents. So far we have covered Look and Listen and this session will focus on LINK. Do the actions for Look, Listen, Link with the group again!
- The Link aspect of PFA is about ensuring the person we are supporting are able to connect to others so that they can continue addressing their concerns and meeting their needs.
- People often think that “link” or “referral” means professional support. However, most linking and referrals will be to informal supports that already exist in the community or by accessing services that are widely available.
- Most people have others they can turn to for support on different problems.

Instruction: Point to a different trainee/participant and ask them each a different question, shown below (they will likely say people such as their imam, or father, or mother, or sister, or health nurse, or friend).

- Who in your life would you speak to if you were having a spiritual problem?
- Who in your life would you speak to if you were having a financial problem?
- Who in your life would you speak to if you were having a medical problem?
- Who in your life would you speak to if you were having a relationship problem?
- Who in your life would you speak to if you were having a problem dealing with your child's behavior?

Explain that most people have others in their lives that can support them for dealing with different types of problems. Our goal is to match the problem with the support people need.

ACTIVITY 1: ASSISTING CHILDREN, PARENTS AND FAMILIES TO LINK WITH COMMUNITY SUPPORTS [35 MINUTES]

Instruction: Divide the large group into 3 smaller groups. Ask each group to prepare a poster to present to the wider group. Allow only about 20 minutes to complete the task so there is time for discussion at the end.

- **Group 1/Poster 1** – Create a poster that shows the various informal supports that exist within a community. Examples might include: churches, clubs, traditional healers, neighbors. This poster might use symbols or drawings to describe informal supports.
- **Group 2/Poster 2** – Create a poster that shows when children, parents or families might need additional support. Examples might include: signs of mental illness or disability, child protection concerns, severe behavioral problems. This poster might use symbols or drawings to describe formal supports.
- **Group 3/Poster 3** – Create a poster that shows what the process will be for referring children, parents or families to additional supports. For example: the school writes a referral letter, the teacher discusses the problem with the parent, the school receives a report of the referral having occurred and so forth. This poster is likely to be a 'flow-chart' format.

Display each poster in the room and ask one member from each group to explain to others the information in their poster. Allow time for questions, answers and group discussion.

ACTIVITY 2: PROVIDING INFORMATION TO OTHERS [10 MINUTES]

Instruction: Ask for one volunteer who agrees to be blindfolded. Ask them to leave the room for a few minutes so they cannot see what is being arranged. Instruct the group to be quiet. Get them to quietly organize themselves into a circle. There is nothing in the center of the circle except for one item (e.g. a water bottle, or note book). Place the item slightly off-center in a random location within the circle. The participants' role will be to instruct the blindfolded volunteer on finding the item in the circle. Walk the blindfolded volunteer to the circle, some distance away from the item. The only instruction they will receive is that the wider group will now provide them with directions.

Once the blindfolded volunteer has 'found' the item, discuss this with the group about how providing clear instructions are so important to linking people to other supports. Reflect on:

- The need for the person to know what they are being asked to do;
- The need for the instructions to be clear and specific;
- The need for the instructions to be detailed enough to know what to do, but not too detailed to become confused;
- The need for instructions to be fully explained.

- Note that some people may find it helpful to have directions to referrals and links written down for them.

CONCLUSION [5 MINUTES]

Remind participants that

- Some people will require additional support than what teachers can provide;
- Linking people to other supports could mean linking them to informal or formal supports;
- Each school is going to need a clear process in place for formal referrals (including knowing what referral services are available in their areas);
- When providing instructions for a referral, these need to be clearly explained.
- Participants have now learned about all the PFA action principles – Look, Listen and Link. Next is the need to practice bringing all the pieces together.

One at a time, point to different participants and ask them each a different question, shown below. They will likely respond by mentioning people such as their imam, father, mother, sister, health nurse, or friend.

- Who in your life would you speak to if you were having a spiritual problem?
- Who in your life would you speak to if you were having a financial problem?
- Who in your life would you speak to if you were having a medical problem?
- Who in your life would you speak to if you were having a relationship problem?
- Who in your life would you speak to if you were having a problem dealing with your child's behavior?

Explain that most people have others in their lives that can support them for dealing with different types of problems. Our goal is to help people match their problem with the most helpful support that can assist them further.

Session Six: Psychological First Aid (PFA): Practicing skills

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Use the PFA action principles (look, listen, link) to support others

TIME ALLOCATION

Introduction	5 Minutes
Activity 1: Role play 1	15 Minutes
Activity 2: Role play 2	15 Minutes
Conclusion	5 Minutes
TOTAL	60 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

No materials required

INTRODUCTION: [5 MINUTES]

- The best way to practice PFA skills is to do them!
- In this session, we will ask you to play the role of a child or the role of a PFA support person. Each person will then switch roles for the second role play.

ACTIVITY 1: ROLE PLAY 1 [15 MINUTES]

Instruction:

- Divide the group into two (even numbers). As group 1 to be the PFA support person. Remind them to think about what to Look for, Listen for and what Links might be useful for the person they are assisting.
- Gather the second group around. *Instruct them to play the role of a 12 year old child who has been orphaned by Ebola and is now living with his/her grandmother. The child is having difficulty making friends at the new school, misses the parents deeply and finds the grandmother loving, but without adequate income to meet all their needs. People playing the 12-year old child can expand on their story or feelings throughout the conversation.*
- Allow 10 minutes for the role play to take place. After that, ask the pairs to work with another pair (forming small groups of four) to discuss what they had to look for, listen for and consider as useful links. For the child, what was helpful or not helpful?

ACTIVITY 2: ROLE PLAY 2 [15 MINUTES]

- Repeat the above steps for the second role play, but give a different role to the group playing the child needing support.
- *Instruct them to play the role of an 8 year old child. This child knew of people in their community who had died from Ebola. Although their family remained intact, he/she experienced the closure of their business during the Ebola crisis and the child's father is now drinking a lot and being cruel to their mother and the children. This child doesn't talk about their feelings a lot, but has a tendency to misbehave in the classroom. He/she are often sent out of the room for being naughty and this confirms for the child that he/she is a bad person. People playing the 8-year old child can expand on their story or feelings throughout the conversation.*
- Allow 10 minutes for the role play to take place. After that, ask the pairs to work with another pair (forming small groups of four) to discuss what they had to look for, listen for and consider as useful links. For the child, what was helpful or not helpful?

CONCLUSION [5 MINUTES]

- Gather the wider group back into a large circle.
- Ask if there were any clear observations from the role-play exercise and/or pressing questions.
- Allow this session to lead into the final session of the day (outlined below)

Session Seven: Homework and Day 1 Conclusions

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Implement PFA learnings in a 'real life' scenario
- Summarise key learnings from the day

TIME ALLOCATION

Homework instructions	5 Minutes
Day 1 conclusions	10 Minutes
TOTAL	15 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

No materials required

HOMEWORK INSTRUCTIONS: [5 MINUTES]

- With participants in the circle, explain to them that the best way for them to improve their skills is to keep practicing. The homework task is about practicing skills learned today.
- Each participant will be asked to interact with at least one other person during the evening. They will be required to seek out more information from that person about their feelings on a particular topic and use their skills in "I hear you saying..." to try and reflect the meaning back to the person. Participants will be asked to pay attention to how this impacted their conversation and report back to others tomorrow.

DAY 1 CONCLUSIONS [10 MINUTES]

- Staying in the circle, ask each participant to say one thing that has had an impact on them from today's learnings.
- Conclude the day by having everyone in the circle stand and do the action principles of PFA – Look, Listen and Link.

Day 2

Session One: Review of Day 1 & Defining Stress

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Recall the action principles of PFA and communication skills
- Define stress and stressors

TIME ALLOCATION

Activity 1: Review of Day 1 PFA and Communication skills	15 Minutes
Activity 2: Defining stress and stressors	15 Minutes
TOTAL	30 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

No materials required

ACTIVITY 1: REVIEW OF DAY 1 PFA AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS [15 MINUTES]

- Welcome the group back to Day 2 of the PSS training. Note that today will be heavily focused on stress and stress management; and again, learning more skills today before a little theory on Day 3
- Enquire with the wider group who did their homework by having a conversation with someone using their communication skills and the “I hear you saying” exercise
- Obtain some examples from the group about how their communication skills resulted in different communication outcomes
- Ask if a volunteer from the group can lead others in the Look, Listen and Link actions

ACTIVITY 2: DEFINING STRESS AND STRESSORS [15 MINUTES]

- Stress is mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from difficult or demanding circumstances
- Often, stress causes people to feel tense, uncomfortable and sometimes overwhelmed with feelings of not being able to cope
- Stress is often experienced in body as well as in the mind

Ask the group to call out common signs or symptoms of high stress. Ensure most of the following are mentioned: Pounding heart, aggression, excessive use of alcohol, tobacco or drug abuse, anger, fear, negative self-talk, avoidance, shallow breathing, escape, poor judgment, indecision, temporary lack of interest in grooming, repeated danger talk, neglecting personal safety and physical needs, sleep difficulties, feeling of inadequacy, etc.

- Stressors refer to the causes of stress. Sometimes stressors can be removed, but mostly, people need to learn how to better manage their stress because stressors cannot always be eliminated.

Ask the group to call out common stressors. Ensure most of the following are mentioned: Crises (including health emergency outbreaks such as Ebola), lack of basic needs, workplace stress, stress at home, stress in relationships, academic stress, life circumstances.

- The signs and symptoms of stress could relate to many problems, but by learning to manage stress first is a good way to try and obtain immediate relief.
- If some of the signs or symptoms persist over a long period of time, it may be necessary to link people with additional supports.
- Stress can be healthy at times. It can focus your attention or mobilize you for action. However it is not healthy for stress to be constantly high in peoples' lives.
- Constant stress can lead to poor health and for children, can hinder their development.
- Adults and children will show stress differently. Children may also show stress differently depending on their age.

Session Two: Understanding stress across the ages

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Know about children's reactions to stressful events at different ages
- Understand the consequences of stress experienced by a child in a learning/school environment
- Identify the reactions of parents, caretakers and teachers to stressful events
- Understand the consequences on children when parents, caretakers and teachers experience stress

TIME ALLOCATION*

Activity 1: Causes and reactions to stress for children	40 Minutes
Activity 2: Stress across the ages and its impacts on learning	50 Minutes
Activity 3: Stress and parents, caretakers and teachers	20 Minutes
Activity 4: The signs of stress across the ages	10 Minutes
TOTAL	120 Minutes
<i>*This session may run over morning tea, so try to fit this in between activities. Or if pressed for time, you can make it a "working morning tea" where participants eat and drink while they continue working</i>	

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Flip chart, markers, tape for sticking papers to the walls. Two-page hand out titled "The signs of stress across the ages"

ACTIVITY 1: CAUSES AND REACTIONS TO STRESS FOR CHILDREN [40 MINUTES]

BEFORE this session: Draw up a flipchart example of the template for groups to use, as follows:

Situations/experiences that might have caused stress for children in the past 12-months	On a scale of 0-10, how stressful would this be for a child? (0=no stress; 10=extreme stress)	How might a child <u>feel</u> (=inside the body or mind) when experiencing this situation?	How might a child behave or express these feelings in a way that can be observed by others?
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			

- Divide the group into three smaller groups. Ask each group to draw up the above template and discuss 7 situations or experiences that children might have found stressful in the past 12-months. Rate the extent of stress this may have caused, discuss how a child might feel and behave.
- Mind that children might express the same feelings in different ways!
- Allow the groups 20 minutes to complete this task.
- Ask one person from each group to read out their responses (3 minutes each)
- Discuss in the wider plenary. Stimulate discussion about whether some experiences, stressful feelings and/or behaviours might be different for girls and boys (10 mins).

ACTIVITY 2: STRESS ACROSS THE AGES AND ITS IMPACTS ON LEARNING [50 MINUTES]

Instruction: Divide the group into three smaller groups, giving each group one of the following age brackets:

- 4-6 years
- 7-11 years
- 12-17 years

Each group has three tasks

1. List on a flipchart as many of the stress responses (i.e.: stress behaviours) that are most likely to be seen their age group; and
2. Describe the impacts these responses and behaviours will have for the child's capacity to learn in school
3. Deliver to the wider group a short 3-minute play that shows a challenging situation at school (or in the classroom or between a teacher and pupil) that might be expected from children in this age group; showing also the impacts to their learning.

Allow the five groups 25 minutes to develop their lists and plays. Allow 20 minutes for the plays to be presented and discussed in the plenary.

ACTIVITY 3: STRESS AND PARENTS, CARETAKERS AND TEACHERS [20 MINUTES]

BEFORE this session: Draw up a flipchart example of the template for groups to use, as follows:

Situations/experiences that might have caused stress for parents/ caretakers or teachers in the past 12-months	How would these stressful experiences impact parenting? Or teaching?	How might children respond to the stress that parents or teachers experience?

- Divide the group into two groups. One group writes about parents/caretakers. The other group writes about teachers. Allow 20 minutes to complete this task.
- Report back to plenary and discuss (10 minutes). **Key message** is that even though parents/caretakers or teachers may be experiencing their own stress, this is still likely to influence children in some way.

ACTIVITY 4: THE SIGNS OF STRESS ACROSS THE AGES [10 MINUTES]

Provide participants with a copy of the handout. Review this briefly with the plenary group, concluding this session with the key message that (1) children of different ages experience and show their stress in different ways; (2) children's stress will impact their learning and behavior in school; and (3) the stress experienced by parents, caretakers and/or teachers will also influence children's behavior and capacity to learn.

HANDOUT: THE SIGNS OF STRESS ACROSS THE AGES⁴

How a person reacts to stress is determined by:

- Age and developmental stage
- How others, especially parents and caregivers, react.
- What they have experienced
- Past experiences, such as abuse, family violence, neglect

A child in distress experiences one or more stress symptoms, which usually results in them being unable to function to their optimal level

Common reactions to stress for all age-groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signs of fear that the event will take place again - Worry that their loved ones or they themselves will be hurt or separated - Crying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reactions to seeing their community destroyed - Reactions to separation from parents and siblings - Sleep disturbances
Common reactions to stress in the function children aged 0-3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Clinging' to their caregivers - Regress to behaviour when younger - Changes in sleep and eating pattern - Irritability - Afraid of things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor concentration - Hyperactive - More demanding - Change in play - Crying
Common reactions to stress in the function children aged 4-6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clinging to adults - Regress to younger behaviour - Sleep disturbances - Changes in eating patterns - Take on adult roles - Irritability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easily confused - Poor concentration - Inactive / hyperactive - Stop talking - Stop playing - Anxious or worried
Common reactions to stress in the function children aged 7-12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Withdrawn - Concerned about other affected - Sleep disturbances - Changes in eating pattern - Feel / express fear - Irritability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aggression / restless - Poor memory and concentration - Somatic symptoms - Feel confused - Talk about the event - Self-blame/guilt
Common reactions to stress in the function children aged 13-17 (teens)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intense grief - Show excessive concern for others - Self-conscious - Feel guilt and shame - Self-absorbed - Defiant of authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased risk taking - Changes in relationships - Aggressive - Self-destructive - Feeling hopeless - Relying more on peers

⁴ All material is taken from two main sources: (1) World Health Organization, War Trauma Foundation and World Vision International (2011). *Psychological first aid: guide for field workers*. WHO: Geneva – and (2) Save the Children (2013). *Psychological first aid training manual for child practitioners*. Save:UK.

Common reactions to stress for all age-groups that impact the body (psychosomatic/ physical reactions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tiredness - Tight chest - Shortness of breath - Dry mouth - Muscle weakness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stomach ache - Dizziness - Shaking - Headaches - General aches
Very serious distress reactions in children when they occur most of the time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Withdrawn or very quiet with little or no movements - Hide or shy away from other people - Do not respond to others, do not speak at all - Scared, panicking, hysterical - Worried 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical symptoms of not feeling well: Shaking, headaches, loss of appetite, aches and pain - Cry a lot - Aggressive, trying to hurt others - Clinging to their care-givers - Confused or disorientated

The following groups of children are at increased risk of having strong stress reactions:

- Children who have survived Ebola
- Children who have lost parents, siblings, friends or other loved ones
- Children who are separated from their family or care-givers
- Children in (interim) care centers
- Children who have watched loved ones or others being sick or die
- Children who feel guilty about surviving when others died
- Children with physical disabilities
- Children with learning disabilities
- Children who were already in distressing circumstances pre-Ebola
- Children of parents in distress
- Pupils of teachers in distress
- Menpikin (ward)

Parents and teachers in distress may have similar reactions as children and may not be able to take care of themselves or their children

Psychological First Aid (PFA) can help you support children, parents and teachers in distress

- To **look** for and identify persons children who are more distressed than other children
- To **listen** better to persons and children in distress using good communication skills
- To handle common problems related to stress
- To know how and when to **refer or link** people to additional supports
- To use your skills for any child/person in distress – not just related to the Ebola crisis!

Session Three: Managing Stress

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Recognise healthy/unhealthy coping mechanisms;
- Understand basic concepts of burnout and self-care
- Practice and share some basic relaxation strategies
- Access more ideas for classroom/creative activities for stress management
- Access more ideas for grief and bereavement rituals to help pupils recognise lost ones.

TIME ALLOCATION*

Introduction	5 Minutes
Activity 1: Recognising healthy/unhealthy coping strategies	15 Minutes
Activity 2: Individual Stress Management: Burnout and Self care ⁵	10 Minutes
Activity 3: Basic Relaxation and Mindfulness Strategies: Participatory demonstrations	30 Minutes
Activity 4: Classroom/creative activities for stress management ⁶	25 Minutes
Activity 5: Grief and bereavement rituals to help pupils recognise lost ones.	30 Minutes
Conclusion	5 Minutes
TOTAL	120 Minutes

**This session may need to be split into two sessions if it goes over a tea or lunch break. Try to find an appropriate place to take the break without disrupting the flow of an activity*

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Flip chart, A4 paper, markers, pens, tape for sticking papers to the walls.

INTRODUCTION: [05 MINUTES]

Brief introduction to the objectives outlined for the session.

⁵ Activity 2 is adapted from the Psychosocial Support for Ebola-Affected Communities in Sierra Leone Training Manual, Ministry of Social Welfare and Gender Affairs, Government of Sierra Leone, 2014.

⁶ All relaxation and creative exercises are taken from The Enabling Access to Mental Health in Sierra Leone 'Guide to Basic Relaxation Exercises', by Tamsin Evans, 2015

ACTIVITY 1: RECOGNISING HEALTH/UNHEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES [15 MINUTES]

- Everyone deals with stress differently. Some ways can be healthy, but other ways can be unhealthy or potentially harmful
- If something bad happens to us, we may respond by talking to somebody we trust about it. This is a healthy coping strategy.
- But if something bad happens to us, we may respond by withdrawing from people, or by finding another outlet for our stress, such as taking too many drugs or alcohol, which is unhealthy and may be harmful

Discussion:

- On the flipchart, draw a line (top to bottom) in the centre. Ask participants to call out healthy coping strategies, and then unhealthy coping strategies. Ensure some of the important ones from the table below are included.

Healthy Coping Strategies	Unhealthy Coping Strategies
Practicing relaxation techniques	Abuse of drugs / alcohol (this could include legal drugs such as cigarettes and caffeine)
Talking to a loved one/trusted acquaintance	Denial – pretending nothing is wrong
Spending time with friends and family	Withdrawal - from support mechanisms/ society
Engaging in hobbies, such as reading, listening to/playing music, singing.	Self-blame - blaming oneself for what has happened
Engaging in creative activities, such as art, drama	Seeking revenge
Engaging in physical activity, such as sports or dance.	Acting violently (including domestic violence)
Attending a place of religious worship	Over-eating / or refusing to eat

With the plenary group, stimulate discussion by asking:

- How do men and women, boys or girls respond differently to stress?
- What healthy or unhealthy coping strategies might men, women, boys or girls be more likely to use?
- Might there be some coping strategies that could fall into both healthy and unhealthy?
 - **NOTE:** Some activities are not always easy to put into one camp or the other. For example, drinking alcohol may help some people to relax, whereas it may make others become unpredictable, violent, anxious or depressed. Sex might be another coping strategy. When age-appropriate and consensual, it could be viewed as a healthy response. But if it is not age-appropriate, non-consensual or used too often or unsafely, it could be unhealthy.

ACTIVITY 2: INDIVIDUAL STRESS MANAGEMENT: BURNOUT AND SELF CARE⁷ [10 MINUTES]

- As discussed earlier, stress is not always bad. Low levels of stress can help us to block distraction and focus on the situation at hand. Good stress mobilises our energy and prepares us for action, by triggering our natural 'fight or flight response'.
- However, it is important to recognise where levels of stress can become overwhelming and lead to **burnout**.
- Burnout is a severe state of emotional and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. The symptoms of burnout include:
 - ✓ chronic physical and emotional exhaustion;
 - ✓ irritability;
 - ✓ depleted energy;
 - ✓ feeling trapped;
 - ✓ detachment, withdrawal or isolation;
 - ✓ reduced or lack of enthusiasm and motivation to work;
 - ✓ a diminished sense of personal accomplishment;
 - ✓ hopelessness;
 - ✓ sadness;
 - ✓ pessimism and cynicism;
 - ✓ inability to make objective decisions about whether or not to continue the work;
 - ✓ loss of effectiveness at work/school.

How can we manage stress effectively?

SELF CARE!

- Know your limitations.
- Get enough rest.
- Get good nutrition (eat healthily).
- Control your intake of alcohol, tobacco and drugs.
- Exercise.
- Practice deep breathing (in a quiet space or anywhere).
- Practice staying in the present moment (mindfulness).
- Do things you love – talk to your family members, play with children, listen to music, read, pray, draw, write, sing, dance, etc.

⁷ Training Manual: Psychosocial Support for Ebola-Affected Communities in Sierra Leone, Ministry of Social Welfare and Gender Affairs, Government of Sierra Leone, 2014.

ACTIVITY 3: BASIC RELAXATION AND MINDFULNESS STRATEGIES: PARTICIPATORY DEMONSTRATIONS⁸ [30 MINUTES]

- Breathing and relaxation exercises are great tool for soothing the nervous system.
- They can help relieve the tension that builds in the body and mind from difficult life experiences, and can help alleviate feelings of stress, depression, anxiety, anger and grief.
- They can help us feel calmer, steadier, and more balanced.
- We call many of these activities **mindfulness practices**, because they help us to become **more mindful of the present moment**, and less caught up in distractions and stress.

Demonstration 1: Abdominal Breathing (or belly breathing) [5 Minutes]

- Often when we are stressed our breathing becomes shallow, high in our chests, and we forget to breathe deeply into our bellies.
- Abdominal breathing is very calming and centering, and helps us to draw nurturing oxygen deep into our lungs.

Instructions for the leading the group:

- Bring your hands to your lower belly with the 3 middle fingers touching.
- Relax your shoulders
- Take a long, deep, gentle inhale, sending the breath all the way down to your belly, so your stomach expands (keep your shoulders relaxed). You should find that your middle fingers naturally part slightly as the belly expands with the breath.
- Exhale slowly, feeling how the belly naturally draws inwards as the breath exits the body and the middle fingers slide to touch again.
- Do this abdominal breathing a minimum of ten times (Inhale/Exhale).
- **With children** you can explain that when they inhale they are blowing up their tummy softly like a balloon, and when they exhale, the air is going slowly out of the balloon again.

⁸ All relaxation exercises are taken from The Enabling Access to Mental Health in Sierra Leone ‘Guide to Basic Relaxation Exercises’, by Tamsin Evans, 2015.

Demonstration 2: The Wave of Light [5 Minutes]

This exercise combines breath, movement and visualisation.

Instructions for the group:

- Find a comfortable standing position.
- Relax your shoulders. Ground your feet evenly.
- Feel the length in your spine, from your tailbone to the the top of your head.
- Place your left foot forward, grounding the feet again.
- Inhale: float your hands forwards and over your head. Imagine you are drawing a wave of bright light above your head.
- Exhale: move your hands downwards, past the shoulders, as if you are showering yourself with a wave of soothing cool light.
- Keep this flowing for at least ten breaths. With each inhale imagine drawing that wave of beautiful, healing light above you. With each exhale, imagine that cool, shining light flowing down over you, taking your tightness and troubles away.
- Repeat on the other side, with the right foot forward. Breathe in the shower of light. Exhale and let go of any negativity within you. Feel the flow of light cleansing and renewing you.

Demonstration 3: Loving Kindness (a short exercise for children) [5 Minutes]

Instructions for the group:

- Close your eyes and think of someone you really love.
- Imagine that person is standing in front of you – really picture them there.
- What do they look like? Picture their eyes, and their smile. Perhaps they have a pleasant familiar smell.
- Now put your arms around yourself and imagine that person is giving you a big hug, sending you love and strength.
- Hug them back, sending that love back to them.

Demonstration 4: Using Hands to Release Stress and Build Calm [5 Minutes]

Instructions for the group:

- Make a fist with your hand.
- Take an inhale and imagine you are squeezing all your worries and stress into your fist,
- Hold your breath. Squeeze those hands really tight!
- Then exhale deeply, and release your fingers - letting the stress and worries go.

- Now, with one hand, take hold of a finger on the opposite hand.
- Squeeze the finger softly and inhale, saying in your head 'I am calm'
- As you exhale, relax the squeeze and say 'I am peaceful, I am kind'.
- Variation - These words are an example. You can substitute many others, such as 'I am loved, I am perfect just as I am, I am clever, I am strong', etc.

Demonstration 5: My Special Place (a guided meditation script) [10 Minutes]

Instructions for the group:

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Close your eyes.
- Relax all the muscles in your body.
- Take several deep breaths, breathing in through your nose and out through your nose.
- Inhale all the way to your belly. Exhale, feel your chest soften.
- Keep breathing slowly and softly. Gentle long inhales then gentle long exhales.
- Listen and follow the story in your mind.

[Facilitator to read this script, slowly and in a calm voice]

Think about a place that makes you feel safe, calm and happy. This could be a beach, a forest, a place in your house/a loved one's house. It could be near the ocean, or a river or lake, or up in the mountains. It can be a real place that you know, or an imaginary place you would like to visit. Wherever it is, this is a place where you feel completely safe, calm and contented. It is a place where you can be completely yourself, where you feel free, where you feel happy and at ease.

Continue to breathe in slowly, and breathe out slowly.

Imagine you are standing in that place that makes you feel safe, calm and happy. What does it look like? What do you see? Is it sunny? Or cool? What colours do you see? Imagine yourself walking around, as you notice things. Is there any water, or trees? Is there grass? Or sand? What colour is the sky? What else do you see? Are there flowers? Perhaps you see animals or people?

Now focus on the sounds of this place. What can you hear? Can you hear the wind? Do you hear water? Maybe there is the sound of birdsong. Perhaps you can hear music, or children playing. If you are walking, what does the ground sound like as you walk on it?

Now start to think about the lovely smells in this happy place. What fragrances are entering your nostrils? Perhaps the scent of a flower, or your favourite food cooking somewhere. Breathe in deeply and enjoy those good smells.

And now, start to focus on how it feels to be here. Check into your body. How does your skin feel – can you feel the breeze on your skin? Do you feel warm or cool? What do you feel inside? Maybe some warmth, or a smile.

You may like to keep walking, or you may like find somewhere comfortable to lie down in this place now; you choose - it's your space and you can do anything you want here, you can be yourself. Just continuing to enjoy how it feels to be here, calm, relaxed, safe and happy, surrounded by these beautiful sights, sounds, smells and sensations.

Leave a silence of at least 2 minutes, before continuing:

This is a place you can always come back to, which is always there, inside your heart. You can visit whenever you want. Now, very gradually, begin to notice your breathing again – the gentle rhythm of inhales and exhales. Notice the feeling of the air on your skin. Very softly begin to wiggle your fingers and toes. Inhale and take a big stretch. Exhale deeply. When you are ready, open your eyes.

Variation - For young children, this kind of concentration might be difficult. In cases such as this, you can 'tell a story' instead, so that you create the safe space for them as part of your story. For example: *'Imagine that you are standing on a white sandy beach. It's early in the morning, and everything is quiet. The sun is rising slowly and you can feel the warm light on your face and your body. You are feeling happy and peaceful. The sand beneath your bare feet is soft and warm. A light breeze strokes your face. The sky is blue and open, and birds are flying and singing above. This place is safe and you can relax here.'*

ACTIVITY 4: CLASSROOM/CREATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT [25 MINUTES]

- Because we are all unique, different activities help different people in releasing stress.
- Often creative and physical activities are really effective in helping us to manage stress.
- Here are some ideas for teachers to support children's stress management in the classroom.

Get Creative

- Exercising creativity through art can be a great way to reduce tension.
- If you have resources, collect some safe materials for an art session (coloured pencils/pens/paint, child-friendly glue, coloured paper, string, wood, scrap material, etc.).
- Ask children to make a collage or a sculpture, combining the materials in any way they like to form a picture or sculpture – you might like to focus on self-portraits, or portraits of family/friends, still life, landscape, or something abstract like a feeling (e.g. what does happiness look like?). There should be no rules about the art work looks like.
- Where resources are limited, you can simply use paper and pencils. Paper can be folded, twisted, etc. to make new shapes, or used for papier-mâché.
- Natural resources such as leaves, twigs and stones can also be used to make images/sculptures.

Try this now: Take blank piece of paper and craft it (twist, fold, crumple, draw on it, etc.) to illustrate how you are feeling today. Turn to your neighbour and explain what your artwork represents.

Get Moving

- Physical activity reduces stress reactivity, particularly in children.
- Encourage movement-orientated activities, such as sports, dance, and/or gentle activities such as walking and stretching.
- You could even add in a small stretching break in class if you see that energy levels are low or children are distracted.

Try this now:

- Ask participants to stand
- Inhale: Reach your arms up to touch the sky.
- Exhale: Fold down to touch the earth
- Inhale: Reach back to the sky (fly up like a bird)
- Exhale: Fold down to touch the earth
- Inhale: Stay here
- Exhale: Sway your arms from side to side, like an elephant swaying its trunk. Come back to center.
- Inhale: Fly back up to reach the sky.
- Exhale: Bring your hands to your heart in 'prayer' position.
- Tree Pose: Bend your right knee, find your balance, and place your foot on the inside of your left calf. Balance here for 5 deep breaths. Imagine you are like a tree, grounded, strong. If you want you can inhale and grow your branches to the sky, reaching your hands up. Exhale, bring your hands back to center. Repeat on the left side.

Mindful Walking Art Activity:

- Take your children to the school playground.
- Ask them to begin to walk around the playground in **total silence**
- Instruct them to simply noticing everything around them – all the tiny details: the colours, the textures, the smells, the sounds, the feeling of the sunshine or breeze.
- Instruct them to re-enter the classroom in silence, sit down, and draw something beautiful that they noticed as they were walking – it can be anything, no matter how big or small.
- They should try to keep in secret from their neighbours.
- Afterwards, ask children to share what they have drawn.

Try this now:

- Walk about the room in **total silence**
- Notice everything around you – all the tiny details: the colours, the textures, the smells, the sounds, the feeling of the room
- When you are ready, return to your seat and draw something that you noticed
- Share your drawing with your neighbor

Singing and Drama Activities

- Great for involving children in a group, and encouraging self-expression and release of difficult feelings.
- **Singing** can be healing because it makes us breathe deeply (this is calming and brings oxygen to the brain), and helps to release emotions through the voice (expression). It is also said to help our memory function and concentration. Singing as part of a group can make us feel part of a supportive and functioning network.
- **Drama activities** can help children to explore and process feelings and events, and feeling included to work as part of a group to create something.

ACTIVITY 5: GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT RITUALS TO HELP PUPILS RECOGNISE LOST ONES [30 MINS]

- For people of all ages, expressing grief is a natural part of healing.
- Just like adults, children need to grieve loss, especially the death of loved ones.

- Grieving can be a very long-term process
- It can involve expressing painful emotions connected to loss which may re-surface at any time when something triggers a thought, emotion or memory.
- We all express grief in different ways. There is no one way or 'correct' way 'correct' way to grieve.

- Two activities below offer just a few examples of creative ways in which schools can help children to recognise and celebrate lost loved ones as part of the bereavement process.

Letter Writing / Picture drawing (these can be added to the memory box)

Ask children to write a letter or draw a picture to their loved one who has died:

- ✓ What you would like to say to them if they were sitting with you today?
- ✓ What did you love about them?
- ✓ What did you appreciate?
- ✓ What will you miss?
- ✓ What memories will you want to hold on to?
- ✓ What things won't you miss?!

Let the child decide what they would like to do with their letter. E.g. they may take it with them for safe-keeping, or choose to have a personal ceremony where they bury the letter and lay a flower there. They may like to mark this place, so that they can come back to it when they want to remember their loved one. This may be helpful where children have not been about to attend funerals.

Dance

- As a group, make 'A Dance for Our Lost Loved Ones'. Through this process children will engage in a group, communicate with their peers, express themselves and exercise.
- Ask each child to contribute an appropriate dance move that symbolises their love for that person. This move can either be performed as a solo, or worked into the routine for all dancers to perform together.
- If possible, invite the children's family and friends to watch a performance of the dance.

Remembrance Site

- Consider the possibility dedicating an area/monument at your school, where children can go to remember their loved ones.

Group discussion [15 Minutes]:

- In groups of 4, discuss other rituals that may help pupils in managing grief.
- Select one idea to share with all participants.

CONCLUSION: [10 MINUTES]

Questions and round up on Managing Stress sessions.

Session Four: Life skills to support pupils

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Know what is meant by life skills and why they are useful for pupils
- Identify some important life skills for pupils
- Support pupils to develop life skills as part of their learning at school

TIME ALLOCATION

Activity 1: Defining life skills and what they are	30 Minutes
Activity 2: Helping pupils to develop life skills as part of education	40 Minutes
Conclusion	5 Minutes
TOTAL	75 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Flip chart, markers, tape for sticking papers to the walls.

ACTIVITY 1: DEFINING LIFE SKILLS AND WHAT THEY ARE [30 MINUTES]

Life skills are:

- The skills needed by an individual to operate effectively in society in an active and constructive way.
- Personal and social skills necessary for people to be confident within themselves, with other people and the wider community.
- Abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands of everyday life.

The goals of life skills are to help individuals:

- Know their strengths and limitations
- Support creative and critical thinking
- Become empathic and coexist amicably with others
- Be assertive and can communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively
- To identify, cope with and find solutions to difficult or challenging situations

Life skills are important for pupils because they help young people to:

- Make positive healthy choices and avoid risky behaviour
- Make informed choices
- Resist peer pressure
- Form and develop mutual beneficial relationships
- Acquire knowledge
- Make positive changes in behavior and attitudes
- Avoid STIs including HIV
- Prevent transmission of Ebola to self and others

Plenary discussion:

Ask the group to call out different life skills that are important for young people to develop. Make a list on the flipchart. Ensure the following life skills are included in the list:

- Decision-making
- Problem solving
- Assertiveness
- Empathy (concern for others)
- Creative thinking
- Resisting peer pressure
- Effective communication
- Negotiating friendships
- Interpersonal relationship skills
- Goal setting
- Coping with stress and emotions
- Critical thinking
- Self-awareness

NOTE: Skills such as developing a curriculum vitae, job searing, interviewing skills, entrepreneurial skills etc. are considered “livelihood” or “vocational” skills rather than life skills.

Instructions:

- Ask individuals to rank the top 4 life-skills they believe to be critical for pupils to develop.
- By asking people to raise their hands for each life skill listed, place a number against each life skill. Highlight on the flipchart the identified “top 4”.

**ACTIVITY 2: HELPING PUPILS DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS AS PART OF EDUCATION
[40 MINUTES]**

Instructions:

- Divide the group into four smaller groups. Each group is to be given one of the top 4 life skills identified in the previous activity. NOTE: If Effective Communication is in the top 4, select the next highest ranked life skill, since effective communication has already been discussed the previous day in PFA training.
- Each group should discuss and write-up their responses to the following questions:
 - What are the benefits of this life skill for young people?
 - How will this life skill help boys?
 - How will this life skill help girls?
 - How can this life skill be taught?
 - What are some classroom activities that could be implemented to strengthen this life skill?

Instructions: Allow 20 minutes for group work, and another 20 minutes for each group to report back to plenary and discuss their ideas with the wider group

CONCLUSION [5 MINUTES]

- Emphasise that for young people, getting through their academic material is important, but developing life skills throughout their school years is critical to their success as adults
- Encourage teachers that they are in one of the strongest positions to empower young people to learn life skills as part of their daily education programs
- Summarise learnings

Session Five: Homework and Day 2 Conclusions

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Implement stress management skills
- Summarise key learnings from the day

TIME ALLOCATION

Homework instructions	5 Minutes
Day 2 conclusions	10 Minutes
TOTAL	15 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

No materials required

HOMEWORK INSTRUCTIONS: [5 MINUTES]

- Bring the group together in a circle to review the homework task and the Day 2 conclusions
- This is a simple example of how we can exercise mindfulness (being present) in our daily activities.
- This exercise is called “mindful eating”
- See if you can find an opportunity to sit down and eat a meal in silence. If not a whole meal, even just part of a meal, or a snack.
- Before you begin to eat, close your eyes and really enjoy the smell of the food. Notice it as if for the first time. As you put the first mouthful onto your tongue, take a moment to notice how the food feels in your mouth – move it around, enjoy the textures and flavors. Notice them as if you had never eaten this food before. Try to savor each and every mouthful of your meal in this way. It might take a while to eat, but you may enjoy it more!

DAY 2 CONCLUSIONS [10 MINUTES]

- Staying in the circle, ask each participant to say one thing that has had an impact on them from today’s learnings.

Day 3

Session One: Review of Day 2 & Defining PSS

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Recall the stress reactions of children and how this can impact their learning
- Recall stress management strategies
- Recall important life skills to support pupils
- Define psychosocial support
-

TIME ALLOCATION

Activity 1: Review of Day 2 information about stress and life skills to support pupils	15 Minutes
Activity 2: Defining psychosocial support	15 Minutes
TOTAL	30 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Flip chart, markers

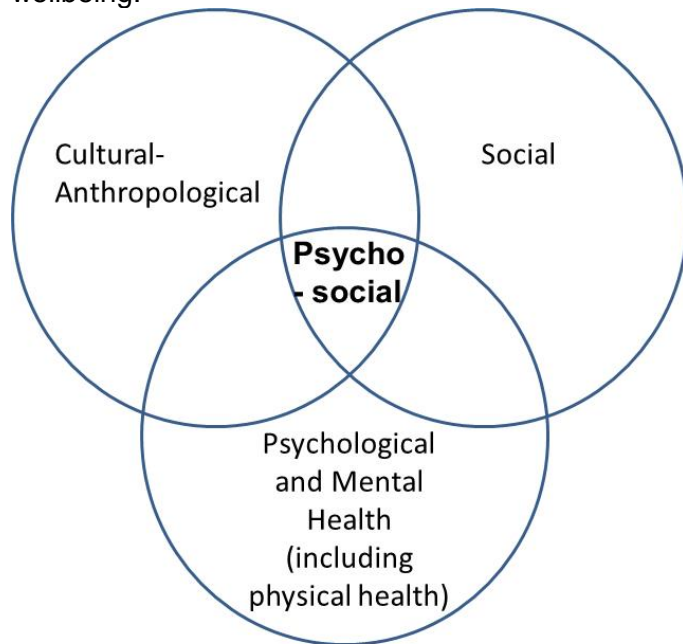
ACTIVITY 1: REVIEW OF DAY 2 INFORMATION ABOUT STRESS AND LIFE SKILLS TO SUPPORT PUPILS [15 MINUTES]

- Welcome the group back to Day 3 of the PSS training. Note that today will be a little theory, some discussion on stigma and shame as well as some practical tools for teachers to create a positive psychosocial environment for children in schools
- Enquire with the wider group who did their homework task – mindful eating.
- Obtain some reflections from the group about their homework task experience
- Reflect on the importance of teacher self-care and stress management. How can teachers use what they learned yesterday to care for themselves?
- Ask the wider group to call out the main life skills they can encourage to support pupils.

ACTIVITY 2: DEFINING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT [15 MINUTES]

- Theoretically, psychosocial support refers to the dynamic relationship between the psychological and social influences on a person's mind, behavior and experiences.
- There are three main elements to psychosocial wellbeing. These are social, psychological and cultural. Psychosocial hones in on the intersection of these elements.
- **Instruction:** Draw the diagram below and explain the three main elements

Psychosocial is the center point of where these cultural, social and psychological elements come together. Ensuring wellbeing across all these elements will help to support overall psychosocial wellbeing.



1. **The cultural elements** refer to local customs, gender roles, traditions and the ways individuals function according to the formal and informal rules of a society. Some say that **spiritual elements** sit within cultural elements, while others suggest they may be an additional and separate element
2. **The social elements** refer to the ways people interact within their families, communities, amongst peers and other networks (including teachers)
3. **The psychological elements** refer to people's emotions, behavior, thoughts, memory, learning (cognitive) abilities, perceptions.

Note that other important factors contribute to psychosocial wellbeing, such as economic factors, environmental factors, political factors, law and order. These elements are sometimes referred to as the **ecological or environmental elements** in which people live.

Session Two: The general principles of psychosocial support

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Know the 6 core principles for psychosocial support
- Identify the impacts of crises on people's psychosocial wellbeing
- Consider ways that the closure of schools during Sierra Leone's Ebola crisis has impacted children
- Anticipate possible challenges for children returning to school after a long break

TIME ALLOCATION

Activity 1: The 6 core principles of psychosocial support	20 Minutes
Activity 2: How crises affect people's psychosocial wellbeing	15 Minutes
Activity 3: Children returning to school after the Ebola crisis	25 Minutes
TOTAL	60 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Flipchart paper, markers

ACTIVITY 1: THE 6 CORE PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT⁹ [20 MINUTES]

- **Before this session**, write on a flipchart the 6 core principles of psychosocial support so you can refer to them as you explain them:
- Whenever we provide psychosocial support, we must always ensure these 6 core principles are considered:
 1. **Human rights and equity** - to maximize fairness in the availability and accessibility of psychosocial support and related services across gender, age, language groups, ethnic groups and based on identified/assessed needs.
 2. **Participation** of the person(s) affected and receiving treatment so that their rights to receive or refuse certain forms of assistance are respected.
 3. **Do No Harm** by ensuring that people do not go beyond their capacity as a psychosocial support person and any professional services are culturally and age-appropriate and based on recent evidence.
 4. **Building on available resources and capacities**, by using as many local supports as possible, encouraging people to help themselves and finding ways to strengthen communities to provide care for others.

⁹ The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings (IASC, 2008)

5. **Integrated support systems** that ensure any mental health and/or psychosocial support services are linked to wider systems, such as the health, education and social welfare systems. This helps ensure sustainability for long-term support if required.
 6. **Multi-layered support** refers to the need to ensure that people receive ALL forms of assistance – ranging from having access to basic needs and safety, being part of a community and family, having access to local services for further support as well as more technical and specialized services if needed.
- **Ask the group** which core principle they believe to be the most important one?
NOTE: Ideally, they will identify that “Do no harm” is the most important. If we are unsure about how to help others, the least we can do is ensure no further harm comes to them while we find the best care possible.

ACTIVITY 2: HOW CRISES AFFECT PEOPLE’S PSYCHOSOCIAL WELLBEING [15 MINUTES]

Inform the group: Crises usually affect people’s psychosocial wellbeing in one or two ways – Socially or Psychologically

Instruction:

- Ask the group to speak to a few people just nearby and discuss what might be some of the social and psychological impacts on people when they experience crisis?
- After 5 minutes ask for wider input from the whole group.
- It will be important to note for the group the following:
 - Crises often have 3 impacts on people’s social and/or psychological wellbeing
 - People who had social and/or psychological problems before the crisis will likely experience even more problems during or after the crisis;
 - People may be affected directly by the crisis, such as by losing contact with friends or experiencing psychological stress and trauma
 - People providing help to crisis-affected communities may also cause social or psychological problems, such as by further stigmatizing certain groups of people or causing people more stress when the aid they receive does not match their needs.
 - What is most important to remember, however, is that **most people recovery from crisis without the need for professional services.** Once people receive basic needs, safety, re-connection with family and community (including schools), they usually recover and return to their previous psychosocial state after about 12-18 months.

ACTIVITY 3: CHILDREN RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER THE EBOLA CRISIS [25 MINUTES]

- As Sierra Leone gradually recovers from the Ebola crisis and children begin returning to school, there will be challenges for children after having not attended classes for so long.

Instructions:

- Gather into smaller groups.
- Discuss some of the psychosocial issues in the back-to-school situation that you anticipate children will be experiencing
- Order your list of psychosocial issues according to the numbers of children likely to experience those challenges (e.g. all children will experience certain challenges so these issues should be on top, while some challenges will only be faced by a few children, and these should be ordered towards the bottom)
- Write up your list of psychosocial issues (in ranked order) on a flipchart. Post the small group flipcharts on the wall and have participants do a “poster walk” to see the ideas listed by others.

- Note for the group that teachers will have to be aware of these common problems; but that they will also have to be “Looking” (remember PFA!) for smaller numbers of children who may experience more serious problems.
- Although there may only be a few children experiencing certain psychosocial issues, these may well be the most vulnerable children in a teacher’s classroom.

Session Three: Stigma and Shame¹⁰

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Understand stigma and shame
- Identify individuals who may be at risk of experiencing stigma and shame
- Understand the impacts of stigma and shame on the individual and the community
- Help children to handle stigma and shame

TIME ALLOCATION

Activity 1: Understanding stigma and shame	50 Minutes
Activity 2: The impacts of stigma and shame	10 Minutes
Activity 3: How to manage stigma	25 Minutes
Activity 4: Conclusion	5 Minutes
TOTAL	90 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Flipchart and markers

ACTIVITY 1: UNDERSTANDING STIGMA AND SHAME [50 MINUTES]

BEFORE this session write the following definitions on a flipchart:

- **STIGMA** is a negative judgment against a person or a group. It is extreme disapproval of, or discontent with a person or a group because of something that distinguishes them from others.
- **SHAME** is one's own feeling of being defective, unacceptable or damaged. Shame is stronger than embarrassment or guilt (which is I DID something wrong). Shame is a feeling that "I AM" something wrong.

Review the definitions of stigma and shame with the plenary group. Ask if people have questions.

¹⁰ Material for this session is taken directly from: Government of Sierra Leone, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. *Training Manual: Psychosocial Support for Ebola-Affected Communities in Sierra Leone*, September 2014

Instruction: Divide the group into five smaller groups, asking each to discuss the following:

- Group 1 – What causes stigma or shame?
- Group 2 – why do people stigmatise or shame others?
- Group 3 – what impacts can stigma have on the individual?
- Group 4 – what impacts can stigma have on the community?
- Group 5 – what groups of children in Sierra Leone are at risk of being stigmatized and/or feeling shame?

Allow each group 20 minutes to discuss and get one person from each group to present a summary of their ideas to the wider plenary (25 mins).

ACTIVITY 2: THE IMPACTS OF STIGMA AND SHAME [10 MINUTES]

Instructions for Round 1:

- Ask for a volunteer.
- Once identified, ask that volunteer to leave the room with you briefly for instructions - tell them that it will be their task to teach the other participants a short dance. Simple movements such as stomping feet, clapping hands, moving from left to right. Suggest they practice for a few moments before bringing them back to the room.
- Ask the remaining participants to stand in a circle. Tell them the volunteer will be teaching them a dance, instructing them to follow the directions given.
- Invite the volunteer back to the room to teach the dance and allow this to continue for a few minutes.

Instructions for Round 2:

- After completion of the first dance, ask for a new volunteer. Leave the room with them and give them the same instructions as the first volunteer.
- When you return to the main room, instruct the rest of the group to respond differently this time. Tell them that when this volunteer begins to teach them the dance, they should all run away!
- Invite the volunteer back to the room to teach the dance....
- After this activity, ask the volunteer how they felt when everyone ran away. They may have felt embarrassed, ashamed, angry, surprised, confused...
- Explain to the group that this game demonstrates the impact of stigma when suddenly the response to something they do is completely different to the normal response or the responses that other people receive.

ACTIVITY 3: HOW TO MANAGE STIGMA [25 MINUTES]

Divide the group into four separate groups. Allocate each group one of the previously identified children at risk of stigma. Ask the group to discuss ways that teachers can help reduce stigma and support those individuals in their classrooms (15 mins). Ask each group to report back their suggestions to the rest of the plenary (10 mins).

Ensure that the plenary discussion emphasizes how important it is that:

- People have accurate and factual information about the issues people are stigmatized for (e.g. If a child survived Ebola they are not a risk to themselves or others);
- Teachers find ways to be inclusive of stigmatized children rather than casting them aside (e.g. including young mothers in the classroom);
- Teachers can use their PFA and stress management skills to support the child, parent or family being stigmatised and help them to manage their problems.

ACTIVITY 4: CONCLUSION [5 MINUTES]

Summarize key learnings from this session on stigma and shame, reminding participants about what it is; how stigma and shame are different concepts and that teachers have influence on improving the situation for stigmatized groups of children at school.

Session Four: Experiential tools for teachers

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Provide teachers with practical exercises and creative ways for pupils and groups of pupils to address psychosocial issues
- Encourage teachers to think creatively about how to support children in dealing with psychosocial issues
- Reflect on how teachers can help and support each other in finding creative ways to offer psychosocial support for children

TIME ALLOCATION

Activity 1: An introduction to creative activities to support children's psychosocial wellbeing	10 Minutes
Activity 2: Pass on the rhythm	20 Minutes
Activity 3: Freeze!	10 Minutes
Activity 4: The energy within	10 Minutes
Activity 5: My hero on a mission	25 Minutes
Activity 6: Handy strengths	10 Minutes
Activity 7: The colour of my feelings	15 Minutes
Activity 8: When I am happy	20 Minutes
Activity 9: Creative choices for teachers	25 Minutes
Conclusion	5 Minutes
TOTAL	150 Minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Blank A4 paper. Colour pencils (or crayons). Markers.

ACTIVITY 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S PSYCHOSOCIAL WELLBEING [10 MINUTES]

Introduction to creative activities that support children's psychosocial wellbeing

- We have already seen that many children will experience challenges in returning to school, after having been away for so long. Some children will have also gone through major life-changes since they were last in school.
- To support children in distress, Psychological First Aid (PFA) and stress management tools will be important ways to support children, parents, colleagues and identify those who may need more specialized support.

- There are other creative ways that can support children’s wellbeing. Some activities can help children address some recurring psychosocial challenges through group activities that are fun and enjoyable.
- Through play children can communicate and process their experiences. Play engages a child’s brains (intellectual), their heart (emotional) and their bodies (physical).
- Expressive play can help children learn about and process their psychosocial concerns. For instance, activities involving art, physical movement, theatre, dance and music.
- Structured play in a school environment is one of the ways to help children build resilience, life skills and to recover from difficult life experiences.
- The same benefits apply for parents, caretakers and teachers when engaging in activities that stimulate brain, heart and body.

Things to remember about this session:

- This session will be entirely “activity” focused. It is intended to provide you with some examples of activities you could do with children in your school, or even your classroom!
- During this session, we will do the activities as adults. But always think about how you might use these creative approaches as a teacher to benefit children.
- Due to training time constraints, we will do these activities fairly quickly. However most activities could be done with children over a time, in different classroom sessions or over a number of hours.
- Remember – while Ebola is still around, be sure to manage these activities in a way that still meets safety protocols for regular hand-washing and Avoiding Body Contact (ABC).

ACTIVITY 2: PASS ON THE RHYTHM [20 MINUTES]

Instructions:

- The group forms a circle.
- The facilitator stands in the middle and starts a rhythm, such as a clapping rhythm with a foot stomp.
- Encourage others in the circle to mimic the gestures.
- After a short while the person in the middle indicates somebody else from the circle to step in and take over the lead (while they return to the circle).
- The new person adapts the rhythm to their own style, maybe using song or dance or any other movement/sound. The rest of the group keeps mimicking the leader.
- Keep going until everyone in the circle has had a turn.

Group reflection:

- A variation could be that after the center person has given the rhythm, he/she shares something with the others – e.g. how they are feeling today, or something they feel excited about.
- Benefits of this activity is that it encourages self-expression; promotes creativity, spontaneity and imagination; creates a model for respectful acceptance of the others; encourages group cohesiveness and cooperation. This exercise also allows for children to release energy.

ACTIVITY 3: FREEZE! [10 MINUTES]

Instructions:

- Ask the participants to start moving about the room
- The facilitator instructs the pupils to move in a certain way – e.g. walk slowly, jump, walk on tip-toes, move while bending down low etc.
- The facilitator calls out “FREEZE!” and all participants should stop immediately – as though they are a statue.
- Facilitator then gives further instructions such as, put your hand on your head, put one hand on belly and other on knee, put one finger on nose and other on elbow and so forth
- Repeat a few times

Group reflection:

- A variation could be that children move to music and they have to FREEZE when the music stops.
- Benefits of this activity are to help children develop bodily awareness and coordination. It promotes a sense of wellbeing and confidence, releases energy and encourages social interaction in a relaxed and fun way.

ACTIVITY 4: THE ENERGY WITHIN [10 MINUTES]

Instructions:

- Ask the participants to stand in a circle with some good space between each other
- Get the participants to shake their body – starting with their hands, then their arms, legs, torso, head. Shake all parts of the body.
- Ask the participants to start walking in place, running in place, run as fast as you can in place.
- Next, ask the participants to stand very still
- Tell the participants: *“Feel what’s happening to your body. Feel your heart beating. Feel the tingles in your belly and legs and arms. Feel the heat in your body. This is your energy. Your energy within. But your energy can be still because the floor beneath you is steady. It doesn’t move and keeps us safe. Think of the people in our lives who help us feel safe and steady. Use your energy within to feel the love and support they offer you.”*
- Then instruct participants to open their eyes slowly. As them to slowly move their fingers, their shoulders, their heads from side to side and return ‘normal’.

Group reflection:

- A variation for children could be to have them sit or lie on the floor rather than remain standing. This activity could also be done outdoors.
- Benefits of this activity is that it children to become aware of positive energy that flows through their bodies and allow them to find a quick way to quieten that energy when they need to. It also allows children to mentally link up with important people in their lives.

ACTIVITY 5: MY HERO ON A MISSION [25 MINUTES]

Instructions:

- Ask participants to begin thinking about a creative story
- Give them guidelines to set up the story and encourage them to take some notes
 - Ask them to think of a main character who will be the story hero or heroine.
 - Ask them to think about what this character looks like.
 - Think about where the character lives;
 - Next, tell them that the character will be given a mission or a task
 - Describe the mission of the character.
 - What obstacles will the character likely face on their mission?
 - What materials will help your character carry out their mission and overcome the obstacles?
 - What people will this character need to support them on their mission and to help them overcome the obstacles?
 - How does the character feel during their mission?
 - What does the character do to cope and stay on track with completing their mission?
 - How will the story end – does the character succeed in their mission or do they need to find new chapters in order to complete the task?
- Ask the participants to turn to the person next to them and share some information about their story.

Group reflection:

- Many variations can be used in this exercise. It could be used as a study activity to encourage writing and use of words. Children could be guided with a specific mission or challenge that relates to a problem existing in the school or community. This activity can also be combined with other creative arts, such as drawing, or theatre. For instance, children could be encouraged to create their own books and/or to create a play that is acted out in small groups.
- Benefits of this activity are for children to learn about coping mechanisms, managing stress, and becoming more self-aware. It allows children to improve their internal and external communication, and promotes cohesiveness and creativity when conducted in small groups.

ACTIVITY 6: HANDY STRENGTHS [10 MINUTES]

Instructions:

- Ask participants to draw an outline of their hand on a blank sheet of A4 paper.
- Ask participants to write on the inside of each finger something special about themselves.
- Encourage participants to decorate their hands using colours, shapes, patterns etc.
- Allow each participant to stick their hand image on the wall.
- Gather the group around the wall of hands and ask a few participants in the group to share their special traits or strengths. The group then comes up with at least one additional and positive attribute for that participant.
- *Note: For this training, only do the individual reviews with a few participants, however emphasize that if done in a classroom setting, every child should have their turn.*

Group reflection:

- A variation could be to ask a child at different times of the day or week to share their strengths – e.g. two children each morning and two children after each lunch break.
- Benefits of this activity help children identify differences and at the same time celebrates these differences as being special. It also promotes social inclusion as opposed to stigma and exclusion, as well as stimulating self-esteem and positive self-image.

ACTIVITY 7: THE COLOUR OF MY FEELINGS [15 MINUTES]

Instructions:

- Ask participants to select a color or colors that reflect their mood and feeling of the day.
- Ask participants to use that color to draw anything they like on a blank A4 sheet.
- They may choose to draw a picture, a pattern, use the whole of the paper or just a part of it.
- Ask participants to talk with the person next to them about their colours and drawings – sharing why these colours reflected their mood and feeling of the day.
- Ask participants to reflect on:
 - Whether or not it was difficult or easy to draw their feelings?
 - Whether they had to do something to be able to identify what they were feeling?
 - What it was like to put a colour to their feelings?
 - Whether their mood now (after drawing the picture) is different to when they began?

Group reflection:

- Benefits of this activity help children to reflect on and accept their feelings/mood. It allows participants to identify with an emotion and offers a way to creatively express it.

ACTIVITY 8: WHEN I AM HAPPY [20 MINUTES]

Instructions:

- Organise for the participants to stand in a circle.
- From the center of the circle, the facilitator [slowly] reads out this poem:

*When I am sad, I want to cry
When I am proud I want to fly
When I am curious I want to know
When I am impatient I want to go
When I am bored I want to play
When I am happy I smile all day
When I am shy I want to hide
When I am depressed I want to stay inside
When I am puzzled I want to shrug
When I am loving I kiss and hug*

- Ask the participants to share their own moods and what type of action they do when in that mood. You can either do this one-by-one, or as a whole group!
- Draw attention to the fact that even though some people share the same moods and feelings, they might have different ways of expressing them.

Group reflection:

- Benefits of this activity help children to learn about and recognize their emotions. It stimulates social and emotional development in children.

ACTIVITY 9: CREATIVE CHOICES FOR TEACHERS [25 MINUTES]

Instructions:

- Divide the group into four smaller groups
- Ask each group to come up with additional creative activities for children that may support their psychosocial wellbeing.
- Encourage groups to think especially about traditional games in Sierra Leone
- Explore options for creative activities for individual pupils, classrooms or whole school communities
- Each group report back to plenary

For plenary discussion, explore what might be ways that teachers can share creative ideas for psychosocial support for pupils with other teachers at the school?

CONCLUSION [5 MINUTES]

- Reflect on the fact that there is not one way or one activity that will address all the psychosocial support needs for all the children. Therefore, providing children with a range of creative approaches to building their psychosocial wellbeing is more likely to support them over time.
- Remember that play is not something children do to take a break from serious learning. For children, play IS serious learning. And it is critical for their psychosocial support, wellbeing and development.

"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning."
—Mr. Rogers

SEEKING YOUR FEEDBACK!

This document has been created by a team of professionals from education and social welfare with inputs from teacher master trainers, mental health and psychosocial support professionals, local and international experts. However, we are eager to receive the feedback of people who have actually participated in the training! **Please speak with your facilitators about your ideas, suggestions and general feedback on this 3-day PSS training program.**