

Leader/Helper Training Notes

(Can also be used as speaker notes for someone running a Training Session for leaders/helpers.)

Contents

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Welcome	Greetings and introductions	10 mins
Ice Breaker	In breakout groups of 3 introduce yourself as you would on week 1 of the course	10 mins
Who the course is for	Principles of the course and why we use small groups	5 mins
What you need to do as a leader or helper	First night basics, building rapport online, dealing with difficult situations, tips for sharing personal stories, working as a team and using WhatsApp.	20 mins
A sample evening	Overview of a typical evening online	5 mins
New this term	Updated Leaders' Guides, section on difficult groups, new material for 'Discussion Week', training videos and a more streamlined 'Getting Professional Help' week, optional evenings on 'Abuse Issues', 'Men and Abuse', 'Faith Issues' and 'Men's Issues'.	10 mins
Conclusion/ Q&A		As needed

1. Welcome

- Greet guests as they arrive ask them to put in the chat where they are from - model the friendly style leaders should adopt on week 1
- 'Check the Tech' - as we would with guests on week 1, make sure everyone can see and been seen/heard
- Introduce yourself and any co-presenters, warmly welcome guests and thank them for coming (model what leaders should do each session)
- Explain there is a huge range of experience here - old hands and people helping for the first time - the aim is to learn from each other and answer ALL the questions you want especially as a first-time helper. Please jump in with questions when you like. Please don't log off at the end without asking.
- Describe the content/format of the evening

2. Ice Breaker

We'd like to start the training evening with an ice breaker and an introduction to each other, in breakout groups of three. The introductions on the first evening of the course are critical to starting well and this ice breaker tonight helps this to happen.

We are going to ask each of you to talk for 1 minute about "How you come to be on the course" as this is the first question on the course.

Tips for a good introduction

- Stick to a maximum of 1 minute (get the others to time you) (yes - 1 minute is enough!)
- Give a very high-level account of your story e.g. I was married for 4 years, my marriage ended in 2009, I have 2 children...
- Give an example of something you found very difficult about your breakup
- Give an example of something you found really helpful for your recovery
- Make it clear that you are a helper or leader
- Think about being inclusive e.g. avoid Christian language
- Steady measured pace
- Remember that your openness and honesty breeds openness and honesty in others

Once you have introduced yourself ask the others to spend the next 2 minutes giving you feedback then switch over so everyone introduces themselves and receives feedback.

Giving feedback on another person's introduction

- Did they come across well?
- Was what they said helpful?
- How could it be more impactful? Welcoming? Inclusive?

If you found this difficult practice with your team before the course starts

3. Who the course is for and why we use small groups

Let's remind ourselves of the Restored Lives basics. WHAT is it we are trying to do?

Restored Lives creates a safe, non-judgmental environment for people to meet others in a similar situation and then discuss, question and grapple with the important issues they are facing. We don't have to 'fix' people or come up with a solution.

We listen, introduce them to ideas and tools to help themselves, and signpost them to additional professional support. The aim for our guests is not just to 'get through' the relationship breakdown but to come out of it with a restored and fulfilled life. We provide a structure to help people move on. We provide hope.

People come on the course from all walks of life and all stages of their relationship breakdown and recovery. As leaders, we need to accommodate this too. It challenges us to be inclusive and non-judgmental.

Although the course is often run through churches and by Christians and is based on Christian values, it is designed for and marketed to people of all faiths or none. So we must not assume everyone is Christian or goes to church. It is therefore important to facilitate discussions so that, even if there is only one person with no expressed faith or an atheist in your group, the discussions are at their level to make them feel cared for and not excluded. So, moderate your own words and if necessary the groups', to avoid overly 'Christian' language. Our guests are often vulnerable and this is not the place to evangelise.

We come with our own experience of the journey of divorce and separation and as such can be examples of hope for our guests. But the course is for and about them and not us. For the vast majority of the time, we keep quiet and limit what we share of our own story to give maximum time for guests to share theirs. Leaders and helpers often find this hard.

Working in a small group allows all guests to participate and to speak openly about what is on their mind. Listening to others can take the spotlight off guests' own problems and give a sense of perspective/have their problems seem less overwhelming. Guests can learn from other guests' experiences and witness others learning from theirs which can lift guests' self-confidence.

Repeatedly guests say the small groups are the best bit of the course.

4. What you need to do as a leader or helper

NB: At the time of reading you may not know whether you will be a leader or a helper as groups are not finalised until shortly before the course as we often have a lot of late entries. So we encourage you to learn the role of both leader and helper as we regularly find that people have to do both during the course.

1. Getting off to a flying start - first-night basics

Most leaders find the first night the most challenging and the most important. To make it go well we recommend:

Be ready

- Be early (guests often arrive early)
- Be familiar with the programme, comfy with the tech
- Meet with your helpers well before the first session and organise who will do what

Brilliant Introductions

- Decide how you will greet people - what question will you ask - choose something neutral such as 'where are you joining us from' rather than 'great to see you here'
- Warmly thank guests for coming (Thank you and well done for being here)
- Introduce yourself in a well-rehearsed one minute precis, this models a good introduction for guests
- Develop rapport and ask easy/light questions to get people talking

Set the ground rules - it will pay off later

The online format can lead some guests to not be fully 'present'. For example, continually arriving late, going on and off camera etc. As if they have the course 'going on in the background'. So setting the ground rules around punctuality, 'see and be seen, hear and be heard, no-one else in the room etc will make it easier to deal with difficult situations if they arise later.

Manage the time and finish on time

- The most important thing this evening is the introductions. So flex the time to let these overrun if need be but do finish on time and create a moment for people to leave at 9.30 if they want to. You can ask people to watch the final personal story in their own time rather than finish late.

2. Small group principles - confidentiality and participation

The videos explain the key group principles of confidentiality and participation; What is discussed in the group must not be shared outside the group (subject to normal safeguarding rules) and that people can participate as much or as little as they want.

Leaders may need to reinforce these rules and make sure guests understand them. Things to point out are:

Confidentiality

- Guests should not have people/children in the room with them who can hear what is going on. If this is a practical challenge you can encourage guests to use headphones.
- No recording or taking screenshots.
- As a leader, if you are concerned about someone we would encourage you to sound out the advice of another leader. This is within our code of confidentiality.

Participation

- Everyone is encouraged to participate and their views should be listened to and treated with respect.
- In particular, this is a course for people of all faiths or none so guests need to be respectful of the variety of views.
- It is quite normal to feel tearful
- As a leader, it is your role to make sure everyone has time to speak. Explain this and say something like
'So you will find that I often interrupt you. I apologize in advance for that but it is part of my role - to make sure we have a good free-flowing conversation. If I feel that someone has a lot more to say than we can share in the group then I or one of the helpers will make sure that you have that time to speak but it may be outside the group session.'

Ask for the group's agreement to these. If you have this agreement now it will be much easier to 'enforce' later.

3. Develop rapport and encourage guests to remain 'present' during the evening. - top techniques

A key part of a leader's role is to facilitate easy discussion in the group. Here are some techniques to help encourage free-flowing conversation online.

Set up your tech so you can fully engage - see and be seen

- Height - elevate your device to eye level
- Light - don't have your face in shadow or silhouette but have warm light in front
- Sight

- Demonstrate interest in your audience by facing the screen and occasionally looking directly into the camera - this is the single most helpful thing to do to create rapport with your audience! It is the equivalent of making direct eye contact face to face.
- Make the audience your focus. Stop using the laptop like a mirror! Take the focus off yourself by using the 'hide self view' feature. This stops us from focussing on ourselves and frees us to make our guests our focus.
- Encourage guests to keep their cameras on all the time. Virtual events work best when everyone is visually present.

Build rapport by

- Warmly welcoming people. Practice phrases like 'Thank you and well done for being here'. 'Thank you for sharing that'. 'That was really helpful'. 'A lot of people will have similar experiences and be able to understand that and that will really help them'. When people are thanked they become willing to share more.
- Appear open and warm - have your body language match your words. Be physically open by adopting an open posture - sit forward - use your hands - pause - smile. These all show you want to engage/connect with your guests. They will be reading you! Practice.
- Be interested before you are interesting - get guests talking about things they want to talk about .. they will then be most comfortable .. for example, ask about homeschooling or something in their room or being nervous online - it will allow them to reveal more about themselves .. and be the basis of building a relationship
- Listen - we already know about asking open questions - but you also need to show you are listening .. nod .. show you are receiving what is being said .. pick up chances to follow up on things guests have said with further questions.
- Be human - If we focus too much on moving a discussion along we risk giving abrupt responses when a guest may have just shared a really difficult thought or emotion. Make sure to thank them and take a moment to recognise what they have shared.
- Be unshockable - Details that guests choose to share may be shocking or triggering for you but it's important that you hold a safe space for guests to share how they are feeling.

All these let people know that they are valued and important and builds self-confidence and trust which in turn encourages them to participate and engage.

Encourage conversation

Here is a useful way of developing group conversation on zoom. Practice it in your leader/helper team.

- The leader asks a guest a question
- Guest replies

- A helper responds or reflects back what has been said and then asks another guest a question.

This models natural conversation and hopefully other guests will feel comfortable chipping in and the conversations will start to flow.

You can use your words to direct the conversation around the group. If you want a guest to say more then try saying “Thank you for sharing that, it must have been difficult”; but if you want to move the conversation to another guest you could say “Thank you for sharing that, has anyone else had that experience?”

An alternative is to ‘pass the ball’ where the person speaking decides who will speak next (metaphorically passes the ball to them)

Feel Comfortable with Silence

Not everyone is an extrovert - silence can be the time when a guest is building up the courage to speak. The following can help:

- Practice saying ‘It’s time to move on unless anyone has a final point’. At that moment - some really good points come up - these are the people who have been preparing themselves.
- Online it can be hard to know if you are going to be asked a question next. Practice saying ‘ I’m going to ask a question in a minute and I am first of all going to ask Tom and then I’ll invite comments from Jane and Jason’

Use Break Out Rooms

Use the opportunities to use breakout rooms and create more yourself. They are a great way to give guests more air time and let them get to know each other better,

4. Be ready to deal with difficult situations

Guest no-shows

If a guest doesn’t arrive, send them a message to check whether they are having technical difficulties. If you are not able to contact them, follow up with them during the week. If they want to defer to next term please contact the course administrator.

Over talkative guests

Some talkative people are deeply pained and this is their only opportunity to share. Some people overtalk when they are nervous. So a talkative person in the first session may relax in the following sessions and won’t say as much. Be gentle to begin, then if the guest continues to dominate the conversation, you will need to be bolder.

The situation is much easier to deal with if you have explained your role as group moderator in the first session. Remember the rest of the group will be relieved by your intervention.

Suggestions include

- Interrupting at an appropriate pause by asking the group an open question such as, 'Has anyone else felt or experienced this?'
- Finding extra time elsewhere for that person to talk.
- Leaning forward and assertively interrupting with phrases such as:
'Thank you very much. I'm going to move on to the next person now and we can come back to this if we have time'
'Jo, I need to stop you there because I want to hear what Mary has to say'
'Janet, let's pause there and listen to what Jack thinks'
'Teresa ... Teresa (bit louder) hold it there let's see if we can let you finish that story later - right now we need to move on to
- Zoom is our friend here! It will automatically switch to the person speaking most loudly so you could, as a last resort, speak over the top of someone or if it is very extreme put the guest on mute explaining you need to move the conversation along.

People over sharing their faith

It is common to find that guests who talk a lot about their faith may assume everyone in the group is Christian. It is for the group leader and helpers to moderate this so that all guests feel comfortable.

You will need to face this head-on and gently remind the guest that there are people in the group from all faiths. You might want to rehearse a couple of useful phrases such as 'Jo, I'm really glad your faith has helped you. Others in the group may not have the same faith as you however all your views are welcome'.

The new optional evening on Faith/Christian issues provides an opportunity to talk about faith related questions so leaders can encourage guests to save those questions for that session.

Quiet guests

If a guest has not participated at all, it is worth dropping them a note in the chat and/or trying to catch up with them after the course session as sometimes people have things to discuss which they are not comfortable sharing with the group.

Tearful guests

Guests are often tearful and this can be hard to deal with online. We can be tempted to think it is our fault and that we have failed our guests and 'allowed them to get upset'. There is no shame in expressing emotion - in fact it is a healthy response to sadness. Strong emotions

can be the trigger for positive action. Some ideas are: Reassure them this is a safe space to be emotional, to sympathetically comfort, explain that these are difficult issues to deal with so feeling emotional is totally normal/understandable, tell them that you cried many times during the course, encourage them to do whatever helps them most, go ahead and cry, take time out, get a tissue or have a break.

Guests who want to keep their camera switched off

You will need to use your judgement here. In general zoom calls work best when everyone is visually present. Sometimes if a guest is feeling emotional they choose to switch their camera off. Other vulnerable guests can be wary of being seen and recognised. Be sympathetic and over time most will feel settled and confident enough to come back on camera. Maybe suggest they put it on to say hello and then switch off until they feel more comfortable.

If you are concerned that a guest may not be who they say they are or are using the camera to conceal something then we suggest you call them by phone and/or discuss with the course leaders.

What to do when we are asked for advice

It is very important that we don't give advice. We are not responsible for guests, nor the choices they make. We also need to guard against leaders and helpers 'picking up the burdens' of their guests.

Plus giving advice can be dangerous. It is impossible to know all the issues that a guest is facing even if we believe that a guest has told us everything. Someone else close to the situation may have a very different perspective of what's happening.

Our role is to support guests in making their own good decisions. This builds their self-confidence, empowers them to take responsibility for their choices and this helps them move on quicker.

If you are faced with a direct question then respond back with another question, such as 'What options do you have?' or 'What are you thinking of doing?'. In your small group, you can ask the rest of the group "Has anyone else had experience of this situation?'. You will be amazed at how other guests' experiences help answer these questions and how this is valuable for both people.

If you are pressed further, as a last resort, rather than give advice we suggest you speak about your own experience, or what happened in your situation.

Leading a group where lots of guests have difficult stories

Sometimes lots of guests in a group will have very difficult stories. This can feel challenging and overwhelming to us as leaders as well as guests. The following can help

1. For them

- Remember that those with the greatest need are generally those with the toughest stories so will most likely be benefiting most from your support. Be aware they may be very vocal or very quiet. It is particularly important to thank them for sharing.
- Often the hardest groups bond the most and support each other long after the course has ended. You are building the foundation of this now.
- If a guest is recounting a story unduly upsetting to themselves or others in the group, use your discretion and consider suggesting you talk with them about it separately offline.
- Remember WE are not the solution to anyone's problems. We are loving and supportive and walk alongside people but we do not have to live their journey or find their solutions
- There is real hope - we have seen so many stories of people successfully moving on from incredibly difficult situations. Pray and have hope that this is going to be one of them.

2. For us

- Leaders take 10 minutes at the end of each session to check in with your helpers. Helpers whose journeys are still raw may be overwhelmed and you may need to allow them to adopt an attitude of 'receiving' through parts of the course. This is normal and fine. Guest's stories often trigger powerful emotions from our own pasts.
- Be confident that you can escalate appropriately
 - remind yourself of the safeguarding steps you should take if you are concerned (covered in section 8 of these notes).
- Be confident that you can signpost effectively. Plan how to support each person.
 - What course elements will you point them to?
 - What other organisations can you signpost them to?
 - During the Professionals Evening help them make wise choices who to see

5. Guidelines for telling your personal story

Leaders and helpers should resist talking about themselves in group discussions. Leaders often feel their story is important or that they have much advice to give to people. But the details of your story are rarely relevant. What is important is that guests know you have a story and that, as a result, you are empathetic and that you can understand a little of what

they are going through. What is even more important is that your guests get to share **their** stories. Each minute you speak is a minute a guest doesn't get to speak - it's about them not you!

There are two appropriate opportunities during the course for you to share your personal story. During the introduction on the first evening and during 'Personal Stories Live' which gives an option for you to replace the pre-recorded personal story at the end of an evening with an interview of your own.

How we give our personal story is such an important issue that we have drafted a separate handout attached to these notes. **Please take the time to read it** as we have found that it is easy to give a chronological recount of your marriage rather than talking about the key issues that you came up against and how you tackled them which guests will find much more beneficial.

For the first-night leader/helper introductions please prepare and rehearse your introduction carefully. It should be a maximum of a minute long. There is no template for this; it is for you to describe yourself and also to model the type of introduction which is helpful for other guests to give. It is fine to show vulnerability by mentioning something you found/find difficult. It can also be helpful to include something non RL related. If others do the same this can be the basis for non RL chat at times.

Sharing your Personal Story during the 10-minute Personal Stories Live session at the end of an evening allows you to present more detail about the hardest things you have had to cope with and the tools and skills that helped you. The best way to give these stories is to be interviewed. It is helpful if your story ties in with the content of that evening's session as this deepens understanding of the subject.

To give your personal story you do not need to be fully recovered. Honesty and vulnerability about your issues and how you have dealt with them can generate real hope for guests.

It is most important that you follow the Guidelines for Telling Personal Stories in the attached handout and practice it beforehand with the interviewer.

6. 'You're a Team!' - Organising and supporting your group of helpers

Leaders will want to meet with their helpers ahead of time to work out how you will run your group and who will do what. You need to

- Divide up the tasks
- Practice your 1-minute introductions and the technique for developing conversation
- Check your own set-ups and practice the tech
- Decide whether your bandwidth will support you showing the video by sharing your screen (advised if possible) or if you are going to share the link with guests. If the latter you will need to prepare to explain this to guests.

- Agree who will be in charge of the tech - it can be easier if one person does the tech and another facilitates the discussion
- Organise Personal Stories Live - decide who will be the interviewer/interviewee and on which evening

Here are suggestions for the various roles but you may want to divide them up differently:

Leader role

- Facilitate the discussion, ask questions as per the program plus follow up questions
- Refer guests to the course manuals
- Stay on top of the timings and finish on time. Some guests may enjoy staying a little later for further discussion and you can offer this.
- Set up WhatsApp group (or delegate to a helper)
- Talk to your helpers after each session -
 - Is there anyone you are worried about? Who will contact them?
 - Are your helpers OK/what are they finding difficult?
- Don't drift into your own story but encourage and release others

Helper role

- This is primarily a silent supportive role.
- Fill in for the leader if they are delayed or absent
- Support the group leader in creating a good environment for people to talk
- If a guest is struggling with the tech telephone them and sort it out
- Model introductions on week one
- Facilitate discussion when in break out rooms
- Observe guests
 - Feedback to the leader (either real-time via your mini WhatsApp group or at the end of the evening)
 - Spot people who are wanting to speak and encourage them
- Keep an eye on the chat function - maybe instigate a conversation and respond to questions when they arrive
- Drop a note to anyone looking like they are struggling
- If someone is having a crisis talk to them separately offline
- Look after anyone who is tearful
- Don't drift into your own story but encourage and release others

Leader/helper support

We all need to take care to protect ourselves emotionally. We can hear painfully difficult stories and we need to take care not to 'take on' guests' problems. We are not professional counsellors. This can be hard, so leaders should regularly check in with their helpers and ask if there are things they would like to talk through. Equally helpers are encouraged to ask for support/time to chat - it is completely normal to find some situations a bit overwhelming as a new helper or to find it brings to the surface one's own struggles during divorce. Group leaders are encouraged to seek the support of one of the course leaders if they would like to offload/discuss any issues.

7. Using WhatsApp Groups

1. For each small group (guests plus leader/helpers)

This is a really important way to build rapport in the group and build a group so they can support each other after the end of the course. Set it up on week 1 and post messages each weekend to get it going. Encourage your helpers to reply to get the ball rolling. Here are some ideas.

- a. Weekend after week 1 - Here's me and my pet
- b. Weekend after week 2 - I made this selfie today
- c. Weekend after week 3 - How's everyone doing. Mark yourselves on a scale of 1 to 10.
- d. Weekend after week 4 - How is everyone doing - reply with j emoji
- e. Weekend after week 5 - How is everyone doing - reply with a meme

Encourage simple easy chat about what people are doing and events that they have mentioned.

Leaders introduce the idea to their group at the end of the first evening. They should ask anyone who doesn't want to be part of the WhatsApp group to let them know

2. For Leaders/Helpers

- Setup a WhatsApp group for just the leader and helpers of your small group. This lets you discreetly message each other during the evening with suggestions/concerns about guests or about what is happening next.
- Also set up a WhatsApp group for all the leaders and helpers of all groups. This helps with course admin and sharing ideas.

8. Spotting people who need extra help and knowing what to do

We want you to be confident in identifying guests who are facing serious life problems. **As a new helper always refer any concerns to your leader or the course leader.**

These situations are rare and remember we are not experts. But it is important to be able to spot when you need to encourage people to get specialised help (with issues that are either life-threatening or that keep on coming up in a person's life without being resolved).

Ensure that the group draws these people in and provides them with a safe environment to be open and honest. You will likely find it easier to follow up outside the group situation.

There are 4 situations we need to watch out for:

1. If a guest speaks of **suicidal thoughts** or fears of suicide.

The most important thing for them to do is to speak with their own doctor about these feelings.

If you (unusually) find yourself in a situation with more time with someone who is seriously considering suicide then the points to make are as follows:

- They are not unusual, many people feel this. Relationship breakdown brings with it huge pain but people do get through to a full recovery
- Don't do anything now. Make a promise not to do anything for 24 hours. You may have this feeling now but you don't have to act on it.
- Stop taking drugs and alcohol – they make your thoughts worse
- Talk to someone like a doctor or counsellor about your feelings. Ring the Samaritans which is a great support to people in these situations.

2. **Depression** is very common among people going through divorce and separation. Guests should discuss this with their doctor. All guests are sent a handout after week 1 about depression. The 'rule of thumb' if someone has a low mood that persists for more than two weeks then they should speak with their doctor.

3. **Alcohol dependence/abuse** needs to be dealt with by a doctor and counsellor.

4. We also need to be alert to those who may have been or are being **abused** by their former spouse. Guests can find it difficult to admit this. Possible signs are:
 - quiet speech
 - downcast eyes and little contribution to the discussion
 - continued crying over a period of time
 - extreme sense of shame

A recent estimate was that 1 in 4 of our guests are or have been in this situation. So we need to be informed and confident in our support.

We suggest you

- Read the handout on Recovering from Abuse and dealing with a high conflict ex
https://www.restoredlives.org/wp-content/uploads/Week-1_Abuse_Handout_V2.2.pdf
- All guests are sent this handout after the first session.
- Signpost guests who are or have been subject to abuse to one of the organisations listed on the handout

- Be mindful that some of the material covered in the course may be tackled in a different way by someone who is separating from an abuser. As with other guests, help them to take the right perspective on these issues, particularly communication, parenting and wishing your ex well.
- We now offer separate evenings on abuse which we will be running in partnership with abuse experts from the charity Restored
- There will also be an opportunity to meet with a specialist in abuse on the professionals evening. However this is a short 10 minute introductory meeting. A guest with urgent or severe needs would be advised to get help sooner.
- If you sense a guest may be in danger of abuse, then you should try and discuss it with them. This may be difficult in a group conversation. Try asking 'do you feel safe where you are now? A further conversation outside the group situation will help you understand the situation better.

Very rarely a situation may arise where you are concerned that a person or their children are at risk of harm by another person or themselves and this may occur soon (i.e tonight or in the near future). In such circumstances we have a duty of care to escalate this and you should therefore contact Erik Castenskiold. If you want to get in touch with a safeguarding officer directly then contact the HTB safeguarding officer Andy Goodwin on 07747 768257.

In all circumstances, facilitators should do the following:

1. **Listen** - hear their issues and concerns using reflective listening
2. **Accept** - take their comments on face value without questioning their view
3. **Record** - note down what they have said and email it to Kathy
4. **Report** - contact Erik when there is a safeguarding issue

For adults, it can be difficult if the adult does not want to change the situation at the moment and, in this scenario, we need to support them as much as we can. There are excellent organisations that can help people understand and get out of these difficult circumstances – these are listed in the handout referred to above

These are typically the serious issues that we need to look out for. If you are in any doubt do please talk to Erik Castenskiold or to one of the group leaders. We have good contacts with a number of professionals who may be able to help. Luckily, in our experience, these emergency situations are rare.

9. A sample evening

The course is divided into 7 sessions and a celebration dinner. Each has small group discussions interspersed with a number of teaching videos. Each finishes with an interview with someone who has been through the journey of divorce and separation. This can be a

live interview with one of the leaders or helpers or a recording. They highlight their key issues and how they overcame them. This communicates real hope and gives people confidence that a restored life is possible in the future.

There is a Leader's Guide including a detailed timetable for each week which includes

- A detailed timetable highlighting anything new
- A summary of the most important issues to remember that week
- Discussion questions and instructions for any exercise - helpful phrases and hints on how to make the evening run well
- Video link and minute markers for each section
- Attachments sent to guests that week

This will be sent to you each week (midweek) so you have time to prepare.

10. What's New This Term

- Week 4, the discussion week, is now leader led and you will need to prepare for this. There is a new worksheet which you will need to share with your group on screen. You will need to explain it to them and invite them to write down answers to some questions. We have done this to try and engage different learning styles. There are detailed instructions in the Leaders' Guide. . In the fullness of time it will be incorporated into the workbooks.

New Last term

- Evaluation forms - no excuse for putting this top of the list! We've allowed extra time in week 7 for this. **Please make sure all guests fill in the form during the evening.** The feedback is increasingly important as we seek to improve the course and get funding for growth.
- Updated Leader Guides

Fresh in this term's guides....

- Ability to flex timings - you can start earlier or later if that suits your group - but be mindful that the mailchimp weekly emails will all refer to a start time of 7pm. The 'Getting Professional Help' Evening and Celebration Evenings will both start at 7 for everyone.
- Whatever your official kick off time is you can start the first video as soon as everyone is ready.
- Handouts and weblinks relevant to each week are listed just underneath the timetable. Please have a look at these yourself and point them out to your group. They will be sent to guests immediately after the session. These are an important part of the course material so please check the following week that people have received them and ask what people found helpful from them.

- More optional questions - for each discussion time we have included a range of questions - some leaders like to have plenty prepared - but there is no need to get through them all
 - Please limit the traffic on the Leader/Helper WhatsApp group. If it gets too busy people no longer bother to look and miss key information.
 - Personal Stories Live have been a hit. We encourage you to share your stories live. Guidelines on telling personal stories are as appendices each week. It is important to read and follow them.
- Abuse - please be aware that some of the material may have to be selectively applied if there is an abusive situation, in particular some of the Communication sections, elements of Forgiveness, Coparenting. As with any guest, help them work through what is applicable to their situation.
- Week 5 Children. We now offer 3 videos - one for guests without children, one for guests with young children (under 16) and one for guests with older/adult children. If you have a mixed group, you can use breakout groups so that guests see the one relevant to them. If you plan to do this, check that you have enough helpers to put one in each breakout. Some groups have wanted to all watch the same one so they should choose which they feel is most relevant. If they are undecided we suggest the one for older children has the most widespread appeal. Make sure to send all 3 videos to everyone to watch afterwards if they like and follow up with them the following week.
- Optional evenings. Members of the team will be running optional additional sessions. As leaders and helpers you do not need to attend but you are very welcome if you would like to.
 - Abuse issues - 4 November 2021 will be run in partnership with abuse specialists 'Restored' and will include: What is abuse?, Getting and staying safe, Boundaries, No contact communication, Parallel parenting, Recovering from trauma and moving on
 - Faith issues - [date tbc] - hosted by [...] - a chance to open up about the faith aspects of divorce
 - Men's issues - [date tbc] hosted by [...]
 - Abuse and Men - hosted jointly with Mankind - for men who have suffered or are suffering abuse [date tbc]
- Week 6 Professionals evening -
 - Guests have the opportunity to book a series of 10 minute slots with one of a range of professionals.
 - Preparation starts in week 4 when guests watch a short training video including a walk through the system as if you are a guest making a booking and logging in on the night.
 - You will need to be familiar with the video to be able to help guests practice there and then.

- On week 5 you will need to check that all guests have been able to make bookings and help those who have not. Also on week 5 you will help guests think about what is their main issue. This is in itself a hugely helpful question for guests to ask themselves. What is blocking your recovery? What do you need to know/do? Could any of these professionals help you? What exactly do you need to know? On the night, professionals will have phone numbers of all guests. If the video link does not work within one minute of the appointment start time they will call the guest so you don't need to do anything other than reassure guests to wait by their phones if they have issues logging in.
- Group leaders will be sent a list of appointments booked the day before.
- Make sure your guests understand the format of the evening. Some have found it confusing.

- Week 6 Living Life Well/What are my values?

Guests find this new session very valuable. Some guests have mentioned that the values examples shown in the videos are very different to their own. You will need to explain to guests that these clips illustrate the values of a range of people and are intended to stimulate thought and discussion. Don't let guests get hung up on the specific examples in the clips - these are always going to be personal - but move them on to thinking about their own values.

- Celebration evening

- Please make sure you explain to your group that this opens in a single zoom call with everyone who has been doing the course this term in other groups. So they can expect to see new faces!
- invite alumni - some previous groups have come in full and stayed late. Please get the date in the diary 29 November 2021 for your previous online groups asap
- Alumni are invited to share a 'pearl of wisdom' - something they would like to pass on to people ending the course. Put these in the chat and then circulate them at the end of the evening.

11. Conclusion

We hope you now feel confident about running, helping or leading on the course.

Most people going through divorce and separation feel very isolated and lack the practical advice to help them recover.

We are excited about this course because we have seen how it can change the direction of people's lives for the better. Helping one person recover means that the relationships around them are also renewed and refreshed. This is especially important when children are involved.

All we have to do is to come alongside someone, support them, love them, resist giving them advice and encourage them to heal and be restored in their own time.

The impact of the course in restoring people's lives is huge. So I want to thank you for being involved with Restored Lives and giving many people hope.

12. FAQ

Can we vary the start/end time for our group or move to a different day?

Keeping to the same day is important as it complicates the admin of the course to change days. If you would like to start the call a little earlier or later this is ok if all guests agree - however, please be aware that guests will receive a weekly email from the central team with the start time so you will need to agree with guests to ignore that email and meet at whatever time you agree with them.

Should we be in touch with guests during the week?

We are very mindful that leaders and helpers are giving of their precious time. You know how much time you can spare. It can be helpful at times to drop a note or have a quick call with a guest who is struggling during the week. But this is not compulsory and it is for each leader/helper to decide for themselves what they can commit to.

Can we pray with people?

Restored Lives is often run by Christian volunteers who come from a church setting. While understanding that the course is for people of all faiths or none, we do like to give the opportunity for people to receive prayer if they would like it. If you want to offer to pray for people on specific issues then this should be done outside the group session. Equally, not all the volunteers are Christians so leaders should make sure that any prayer requests are handled sensitively.

What if I need to miss a week?

It is best for guests if leaders can commit to the full 8 weeks. But we understand this is not always possible. Just let your leader/helper know soonest to avoid a situation where a group is without leaders/helpers.

What if a guest misses a week?

You might want to contact them and check they are OK. You can send them the link to the video they missed and refer them to the relevant chapters in the course book.

Who do we contact for help?

		Telephone	Email
Hels Bradley	Marketing & Local Leaders main point of contact	0785 2941 875	helen.bradley@restoredlives.org
Kathy Miller	Course Coordinator - anything	07973 564928	kathymiller1978@hotmail.com

Helen Newbury	Weekly Timetables/content, Professionals Evening, Teens courses, Overseas courses point of contact	07949 862001	helen.newbury@re storedlives.org
Erik Castenskiold	Anything	07808 094907	ecastenskiold@gm ail.com

Telling Personal Stories Live

The online course gives an opportunity to share personal stories; our own and those of previous course attendees. These personal stories of healing and restoration are the lifeblood of the course. By being honest and open about the hardest things we have had to overcome we can breed a spirit of openness among course guests.

We have 2 opportunities for this on the course

1. Leaders and helpers can give a very brief introduction to themselves during week 1 as part of the guest introductions
2. At the end of each evening during the 'Personal Story' session either via a pre-recorded video or live with one of the leader/helpers interviewing another

1. First night leader/helper introductions

Please prepare and rehearse your introduction carefully. It should be a maximum of a minute long. There is no template for this. It is for you to describe yourself and also to model the type of introduction which is helpful for other guests to give. It is fine to show vulnerability by mentioning something you found/find difficult. It can also be helpful to include something non RL related. If others do the same this can be the basis for non RL chat at times.

Most importantly please read and follow the '**Important Considerations**' guidance below. We practice these first night introductions during the training evening.

2. Personal story live

If you are comfortable doing so, we encourage you to replace one of the pre-recorded stories at the end of each course session with your live story.

We suggest you make this about 5 minutes long. A useful format is to ask one of the other helpers to interview you and then invite questions from the group. Consider picking a week where your experience fits with the content of the evening. We suggest you answer the following:

- **In brief (30 secs), what was your background?** (i.e how long did you know them / how long were you married/did you have children / where did you live / anything general that gives context?)
- **What happened to you?** (the lead up to your relationship breakdown / what caused your relationship breakdown / what happened thereafter)
- **What were the hardest or biggest issues** you experienced? (Ideally relate these to today's session)
- **How did you deal with these issues?**
- **How do you feel now?**

- **If there was one thing that you would say to someone going through separation and divorce, what would it be?**

Important considerations when telling your story

- Restored Lives is about our guests - not us. Personal stories are not an opportunity for you to voice your situation or vent your opinions. Think carefully about what bits of your story are helpful to your audience.
- Focus on the key issues that you came up against and how you tackled them, rather than a chronological recount of your marriage and divorce. Do give a quick contextual background, but limit this to 30 seconds.
- You do not have to 'have all the answers' or be 'completely restored'. In fact, honesty about where you are now, even if you feel that you are a work in progress, is really helpful for guests to hear.
- Be mindful of the audience - this means not being 'overly Christian' and being inclusive in what we say. For example, when asked what helped you you might want to refer to your faith helping you in the same way as you might refer to having a trusted friend or seeing a counsellor. Remember the course is for people of all faiths and none. It is also for people from all backgrounds, incomes, etc. So make sure that the key themes in your story are not lost on people because of audience preconceptions.
- When talking about our ex we need to be respectful and not put them down or purposely diminish them in the eyes of someone who might know them in what is a public setting.
- Make sure you protect your ex's identity, changing his/her name or other details if need be. For example, John a builder from Croydon could become Paul a plumber from Barnet.
- Tell the facts in such a way that they are uncontroversial. A good test is to ask yourself 'Would I be comfortable telling my story in this way if my ex was in the room'?
- Do feel free to speak openly about how you responded to what happened: what you experienced, felt or found difficult, plus what helped, etc. This part of the story is really important. It is about us, and not about the ex.