

THE CARING HELPER WORKBOOK

Dale G. Larson, Ph.D.

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Using This Training Program

The Caring Helper Workbook

This workbook is designed to enhance learning for viewers of the *Caring Helper* videotapes. It contains introductions to each of the six tapes in the series, preparation questions to stimulate thought and to help prepare the viewer for the content of each session, review questions for group discussion and individual reflection, exercises for skill development, and a list of resources and selected bibliography.

The workbook can serve as a personal guide and reference book for each learner. Participants can use the workbook to record personal notes, ideas, experiences, and observations while taking the course. These notes will serve as a personal reference and reminder long after learners have completed the training course.

Suggestions for Groups

Read the Introduction, Pre-Work Questions, and Highlights before watching the videotape. Allow one-half to one hour following each tape for Review Questions and Activities. You can review segments of the tape for discussion.

Suggestions for Individuals

Read the Introduction, Pre-work Questions, and Highlights before watching the videotape. Individual viewers can privately reflect on the Review Questions and Activities and can experiment with helping and self-care skills outside the viewing room. All viewers are encouraged to think critically about the ideas presented and to be patient and persistent when initiating change in their helping and self-care skills.

Copies of this workbook may be printed by purchasers of The Caring Helper videotapes, solely for the personal use by participants who view the videotapes for training purposes. The material in this workbook may not be modified or reproduced in any other manner. This limited license for reproduction does not forfeit any copyright protection of this workbook.

Highlights

- The helper as a person
- The rewards of helping
- Helping as a natural process
- The challenge of caring
- The helper's pit

Review Questions and Activities

What does it feel like to help others? Do you ever have any of the positive experiences described in this session? How does caring for others impact on you?

Does the “feel good—do good” hypothesis make sense to you? Does it match your experience? How or how not?

What keeps your “caring flame” burning brightly? Identify specific uplifting events at work and at home that enhance your mood and support your helping.

Have you ever been overly involved with the people you help? Think of the most difficult experience you have had as a helper, one that definitely pulled you into the “helper's pit.” What happened? What does this experience teach you about your vulnerabilities, your coping skills, and your coping resources (i.e., your “tree limbs”)?

Discuss the challenge of caring as you experience it. What is trying to meet this challenge like for you?

Highlights

- Grief and loss
- The stages of grief
- Tasks of grieving
- Complicated grief reactions
- Specific techniques and intervention goals

Review Questions and Activities

What are the benefits and risks of using a conceptual model like “stages of grief” in our work as helpers? When have you found it helpful? When have you found it not helpful?

Many issues important in bereavement counseling are not addressed here (e.g., the age of the grieving person, the nature of the death, anticipatory grief, “unfinished business” between the griever and the deceased, etc.). Discuss helping situations in which these and other issues have been or might be significant factors.

Highlights

- Stages of skill development
- Attending skills
- Communication microskills
- Closed questions, open (direct) questions, and open (indirect) questions
- Grief's questions

Review Questions and Activities

Discuss the use of silence as a communication skill. Passivity and the use of silence are often confused. How are they different?

Consider your use of questions as a helper. Are there any other ways you can gather information? Discuss how questions can often be used to give advice and to share our own opinions about things.

Discuss directiveness as a dimension in your helping interventions. How could you be more directive with regard to process and less directive with regard to content?

Discuss the client-frame-of-reference response as a nondirective mirroring response. What effect does this skill have *on the helper*?

Exercises

Try doing things differently—like asking open rather than closed questions, or asking no questions for 15 to 30 minutes at a time.

During the next week carefully monitor your own use of advisement as a helper. Take a close look at how often you advise and the kinds of advisement you give.

Practice closed and open questions and the client-frame-of-reference response with others in your group. Form dyads and have one person disclose stressful experiences he or she is having as a helper. Have the other person (the helper) first use only closed questions, then only open questions, then no questions, and then no questions plus one or two client-frame-of-reference responses during four three-minute periods. Stop and have the entire group discuss the impact (on both the discloser and the helper) of the different microskills on the helping interaction. Then switch roles and repeat the exercise.

4: Guidelines for Listening and Helping

Introduction

Session four presents general guidelines for listening and helping, including: enhancing self-esteem, suspending judgments, resisting outside distractions, recalling content while listening, creating two-way intimacy through appropriate self-disclosure, using a wide range of communication microskills, and helping people tell their stories. Common errors and myths in helping grieving persons are discussed, including the trivialization of distress.

Pre-Work Questions

As you think about your helping interventions in the past, what are some of the “bloopers” you can think of? What did you do that made helping go awry?

All caregivers are occasionally judgmental or critical of the people they help. When are you most likely to be critical or judgmental? What kinds of situations and behaviors evoke the most judgmental parts of you?

What are some of the ways you enhance the self-esteem of the people you help? What have you tried that has worked well?

Personal Notes

Highlights

- Guidelines for listening and helping
- Myths and Mistakes in Helping
- The Trivialization of Distress
- Recommendations to Helpers
- Things to Remember

Review Questions and Activities

Discuss some of the ways that judgmental thoughts and behaviors creep in for you as a helper. Is it ever OK to be critical of the behavior of the people you help?

What are your experiences with self-disclosure as a helper? When has it worked or not worked as a helping intervention? Discuss the relationship between genuineness and self-disclosure in helping.

Share examples of the trivialization of distress—by yourself as a helper, by family members, and by the culture at large.

In this tape the group makes many recommendations concerning what not to do as a helper working with grieving persons. Discuss these and add mistakes you have made as a helper to this list. What do these mistakes teach you?

When you review your current communication skills usage, what areas need the most attention and development? How can you expand and strengthen your helping skills repertoire?

5: Making Support Groups Work

Introduction

This session begins with a look at the role of social support in coping and stress management. Then it describes support groups and how they help. Guidelines for developing and enhancing support groups, and strategies for an open-ended approach to support group facilitation are then discussed. Next, typical problems that occur in support groups are identified and specific group exercises for enhancing the effectiveness of support groups are presented and then modeled by a group of experienced helpers. Finally, the issue of evaluation and feedback in the support group is addressed.

Pre-Work Questions

What have you found makes support groups work or not work? Give examples of specific problems that you have found in current or past groups.

What is the difference between a psychotherapy group and a support group?

What is the role of the facilitator or leader in a support group? How directive should the leader be?

Personal Notes

Discuss the “distress-disclosure dilemma” in terms of your own disclosure of difficult experiences as a helper. What kinds of responses from others encourage the development of helper secrets in yourself and in other group members?

Discuss the different kinds of support groups (e.g., support only; support with an educational component) and support group leadership (e.g., self-led with rotating leadership among group members; facilitation by a person(s) from outside the group).

Discuss the value and techniques of ongoing evaluation and feedback in support groups. Practice the evaluation techniques discussed in this tape in your own group.

Exercises

Practice the moodcheck, all-for-one, and helper secrets exercises in your training group or other ongoing support group you lead or participate in.

6: The Helper's Journey

Introduction

This session presents a model of stress and coping incorporating the helper's and goals. Different "invisible stressors" are identified and the key characteristics of burnout are presented. Next, specific antidotes to stress and burnout are discussed. The series ends with a reminder of the importance of self-care for the caregiver and vignettes of bereaved persons talking about their grief experiences and what was most helpful for them in their grief work.

Pre-Work Questions

Write out a detailed list of the stressors you experience as a caregiver. After generating this list, put a 1 next to the most stressful item, a 2 for the next most stressful item, and so forth.

Burnout often results from frustrated idealism and having one's goals as a helper blocked. Do you see any relation between what is stressful for you as a helper and the motivations that led you to become involved as a caregiver (look at your list of motivations from Session One)?

What kinds of support for you as a helper do you or don't you receive from family, friends, coworkers, and society?

Personal Notes

Highlights

- A model of stress and coping
- Threat versus challenge appraisals
- Social support as a stress buffer
- Irrational thoughts as invisible stressors
- Burnout
- Antidotes to burnout: setting limits; exercise; relaxation and meditation; compartmentalization; awareness of feelings; helping skills; “turtle or racehorse?”; work toward your goals; build a good support system
- The helper’s journey

Review Questions and Activities

Discuss any problems you have setting limits as a helper. What has and hasn’t worked for you?

What emotional buttons get pushed in your work? How do you cope with them? Notice how your way of coping is the same or different from other that of other group members.

What is burnout like for you? What feelings and experiences do you have in those days and weeks when you’re feeling “burned out”?

What helps you maintain balance and prevent burnout as a helper? Which of the antidotes identified in this session are already useful to you? Which others might be worth exploring?

As you begin practicing new stress management behaviors, how can you enlist the support of others (at home, in a support group, etc.) in maintaining these new behaviors?

Exercises

Look over the list of stressors you made before viewing the videotape and write a “B” next to those stressors that you consider **Beyond** your control—you think there’s absolutely nothing you can do to change them or reduce their impact. After you do this, go through your list a second time and put a “W” next to all the remaining stressors; these are, by process of elimination, at least somewhat **Within** your control. Then present your list of stressors and ratings to each other (large group or dyads) and try to think creatively about how one might move specific “B’s” into the “W” category. Explore all the ways that you can possibly have control over your stressors even if they seem beyond your control at first glance.

Conclusion

This training program is only a small input to your development as a helper. As a group, or as an individual, consider what may still be lacking in your knowledge or skills as a caregiver. What additional information and training do you need?

If you have viewed the *Caring Helper* as a member of a training group, take some time to discuss how your learning and experiences in this group have helped you. In what ways are you different as a result of this training? Be sure to take a few minutes to share appreciations with each other and to say good-bye if the group will not be meeting again.

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Special Credits and References

The Caring Helper Videotapes:

Session 2: The “tasks of grieving” are based on the model presented by William Worden, Ph.D. in *Grief counseling and grief therapy*, Springer, 1982.

Session 3: 1) SOLVER acronym from Egan, G. (1982). *The skilled helper: A model for systematic helping and interpersonal relating* (2nd ed.). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole. 2) Grief’s questions lecture based on a presentation by Marcia Lattanzi-Licht, R.N., M.A., at Clemson University, Clemson, SC, 9/11/88.

Session 4: For a more complete discussion of the trivialization of distress, see Lazarus, R. S. (1984). The trivialization of distress. In B. L. Hammonds and C. J. Scheirer (Eds), *Psychology and Health: The Master Lecture Series, Vol. 3* (pp. 125-144). Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association.

Session 5: 1) The Moodcheck, All-for-One, and Helper Secrets exercises are described in greater detail in the *Common Concern* training program available from The California Self-Help Center, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, 90024, (213) 825-1799, and in Larson, D. G. (1985). Helper secrets: Invisible stressors in hospice work. *American Journal of Hospice Care*, 2, 35-40. 2) The approach to support group facilitation taken here is strongly influenced by the work of Dr. Leta Adler and Michael Boreing, (Boreing, M. L., & Adler, L.M. (1982). *Facilitating support groups: An instructional guide*. Unpublished NIMH Training Grant.

Dr. Dale G. Larson Requests Your Feedback

Since I’m not able to be there in person, I’d love to hear from you about your experiences with this training program. Please write or call me at:

Dale G. Larson, Ph.D.
Santa Clara University
220 Bannan Hall
Santa Clara, CA, 95053
tele: (408) 554-4320.

*The Caring Helper videotapes
may be ordered from:*

Applied Vision, LLC
P.O. Box 1245
San Carlos, CA 94070
tele: (650) 591-9307
web: www.appliedv.com

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