



NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID
actalliance

THE ATLAS

STRESS
AND ANGER
MANAGEMENT



UNDERSTAND.



EXPRESS.



MANAGE.





ABAAD is a non-profit, non-religious civil organization that does not discriminate on the basis of political affiliation. It strives to achieve gender equality as a fundamental condition for sustainable social and economic development in the Middle East and North Africa. ABAAD works to promote equality for women, support their effective participation, engage men, and advocate with decision-makers and opinion leaders.

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CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
Why Engage Men & Boys?	6
What Is This Manual Trying To Achieve?	6
Guiding Frameworks In Engaging Men.....	7
Who Is This Manual For?	8
How Should This Manual Be Used?.....	8
Who Should Facilitate The Sessions?	9
Choosing The Right Facilitators	10
How To Recruit Men?	12
Beginning The Sessions Basic Considerations	13
Structure Of Each Session	14
Sessions Of The Manual	16
Session 1: Understanding Stress Factors In Our Lives	17
Session 2: Understanding Negative Consequences Of Anger	21
Session 3: Understanding The Importance Of Expressing Stress In A Positive Manner.....	25
Session 4: Same Water, Different Heat	28
Session 4 - Part 2: That's Your Cue	30

Session 5: Understanding Gender Roles And Norms (Part 1)	32
Session 6: Understanding Gender Roles (Part 2)	33
Closing Remarks	38
Exit Strategy	38
Monitoring And Evaluation	39
Acronyms.....	39
Endnotes	40

INTRODUCTION

In Greek mythology, Atlas was a Titan who was the epitome of strength and power. Atlas, as a punishment, was condemned to use his strength to “hold the heavens” and the weight of the world for all eternity. Images of Atlas usually show the powerful and muscular Titan holding the entire globe on his shoulders. While symbolic, many men feel quite similar to Atlas. For many men, it may feel that the weight of the entire world is also on their shoulders. The important difference is while Atlas is a mythological character, men in our society are not. Men feel this great sense of burden and obligation because of unrealistic and impractical patriarchal societal expectations that are imposed upon them. The pressure from responsibilities associated with their perceived unilateral roles as ‘provider’ and ‘protector’ of their families, communities, and country coupled with shame associated with an inability to successfully fulfill those roles can cause high and dangerous levels of distress.

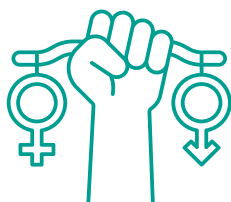
Compounding these pressures are prescriptive gendered ideals that stunt mental well-being, and block communication channels that are important for their interpersonal relationships. Among those unrealistic ideals are beliefs that men should always be in control, have solutions for every problem, never need to seek help from others, and to never discuss their concerns or worries openly. Abiding by these untenable expectations prevents men from finding necessary outlets for emotional expression, learning how to communicate and share their burdens with others, and understanding the difference between healthy displays of the emotion of anger and violent externalized responses to anger and stress. These factors combined creates a complicated matrix

that results in many possible negative mental health and behavioral outcomes for men and the people in these men’s lives. In the worst of instances, the unmanaged stressors and resultant anger may manifest in violent and harmful practices with others in their lives including violence against women and children. This manual aims to dispel and challenge unrealistic patriarchal social expectations and allows participants to acquire vital coping strategies that will decrease the distress in their lives, allow them to emotionally express and communicate more effectively with those closest to them, and build deeper and more meaningful connections with other women, men, and children in their lives.

Most importantly, the manual emphasizes the importance of expressing stress and anger in ways that are non-violent and not detrimental to the health and well-being of the men themselves, their families, friends, and loved ones. Through the culturally tested and validated sessions within this manual, men will understand the importance of expressing their stress and emotions, managing the various factors that cause stress in their lives, and the multitude of benefits that come with communicating honestly, openly, and non-violently. Participants will understand the individual and societal dangers of outdated patriarchal understandings of Masculinities and their roles as men and the many benefits of accepting more Equitable and Caring Masculinities. The punishment of Atlas is not the burden of men. Functional or healthy Patriarchy is Mythology. It is the power of collaboration and partnership that allow us to hold the stress and burdens in our world together, united, and free of violence.

WHY THIS MANUAL?

The training curriculum is designed in a practical way that addresses the GBV contributing factors of stress and anger as well as the GBV root causes of gender discrimination. Trainers/facilitators are invited to support men to become actors of change who can assist the process of delivering, evaluating, and fine-tuning the sessions of the manual. To achieve this end, facilitators are asked to deliver the sessions in the same order in which they are presented within this manual.



Over five sessions, participants and facilitators will share a learning journey through which they build on and consolidate new ideas, and gain confidence about why stress and anger are often expressed by men through violence, what types of violence might they perpetrate, and how to become proactive to prevent such violence from happening again. The learning process has been designed to engage adult men through an experimental approach. Participants will become familiar with each topic either through direct discussion or by being guided to draw comparisons with things that have happened in their own lives, using interactive games and group work. All of the games are followed by open discussions with participants about the exercise and the concepts conveyed therein. It is during these discussions that participants can be encouraged to share more personal experiences and beliefs, and work through their questions and concerns with the support of the group.

The games were developed in Lebanon and tested with Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian communities, and they take into account the cultural background and challenges faced by men and boys dealing with gender ideologies the South West Asia and North Africa Region (SWANA).

WHY ENGAGE MEN & BOYS?



92%

of reported incidents are perpetrated against females by males¹.

Many national level GBV prevention and response programs in the SWANA region have traditionally focused on supporting women and girls to prevent and address the consequences of Gender Based Violence.

Therefore, there is a critical need to engage men, not only to help them understand why they are using violence, but to guide them away from perpetrating violence against women and girls, and finally, to offer them an opportunity to become allies against GBV.

WHAT IS THIS MANUAL TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

This Manual was designed as part of an ongoing effort in the region, led by Abaad: Resource Center for Gender Equality since 2011. It aims to empower men to understand their stress and anger, and to recognize how this may lead to negative mental health outcomes, degradation of social relationships, and violence.

This approach aims to engage men to avoid and prevent GBV through a phased approach. The first phase encourages men to become allies in ending GBV by enabling them to understand stress as a factor that contributes to and perpetuates a culture in which men use and even condone GBV.

The objectives of the Manual are the following:



Objective 1

Men are able to better identify and manage their stress and anger and to direct it differently, away from contributing to the perpetration of gender-based violence.



Objective 2

Inspire discussions in which men are able to understand basic concepts of gender equality and become aware of how unequal power relationships are a root cause of gender-based violence.

GUIDING FRAMEWORKS IN ENGAGING MEN

Understanding Context and Power

While men are neither inherently bad nor violent, the majority remain unaware that they live in cultures that confer privilege on males. One such 'privilege' is that men are allowed, or even expected, to use violence against women and girls, and can do so without punishment.

Cultures promoting gender inequality often rely on men being socialized according to a patriarchal (male-centered) and binary (male versus female, strong versus weak) understanding of gender and gender relations.

Transformation and Choice

To engage men is to invite them to transform themselves, and, by this means, to change the whole of society. If men are given the tools and the know-how to change, they can make a choice to live differently. They can move from believing in traditional and hegemonic patriarchal gender roles that hurt and control, to choose behaviors that promote personal and social peace.

Human Rights and Gender Equality are not abstract concepts: they provide frameworks within which men and women can live more equal, fulfilling lives.

Creating Safe and Non-Judgmental Spaces

This process of transformation should be one where the men engaged can move at their own pace and do not feel judged. Almost all men who attend the

course will have been deeply shaped by patriarchal norms and will never have learned to question why they behave as they do. They are likely to feel challenged by the subject material in this course and may feel blamed when they recognize how they have been socialized to support and perpetrate GBV.

Time, Resistance, and Sustainable Change

Men and women alike are socialized within the patriarchal system. Until they see the values held within that system as problematic, they will not feel motivated to challenge it. They are also likely to face resistance from others – both men and women – when they begin to see themselves as responsible for changing a violence-promoting system.

Men engaging to support real and sustainable gender transformation is a process that requires time and resources and usually cannot happen in just a few sessions. The system being challenged is centuries old, which means that long-term effort, resources, and commitment are necessary. Training is an invaluable tool in starting and facilitating the transformation process, but it remains only a tool.

Cultural Sensitivity and Accountability

Masculinities and interpretations of 'correct' gender behavior may differ from culture to culture. While trainers and program developers must make extra efforts to ensure that trainings (venue, trainers, discussions, etc.) are sensitive to the cultural environment, they must also challenge traditional cultural practices when they contradict principles of Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Non-violence.

WHO IS THIS MANUAL FOR?

Intended Users

This manual is meant to be used by Gender expert trainers who would like to discuss Men's Mental Health issues as a springboard for discussing GBV, Masculinities, and Non-violence.

This manual could, inversely, be used by Mental Health experts who would like to begin discussing issues of Gender and GBV with the beneficiaries of the training.

Additional Uses

Finally, the manual may also be used to introduce the importance of healthy mental health practices among men and to promote further psychological services (Individual psychological counseling, couples therapy, family therapy, or alternative trainings concerning nonviolence, active listening, and communication, etc.) for men within the community.

HOW SHOULD THIS MANUAL BE USED?

Purpose and Scope

The main use of this manual is to serve as a curriculum for implementing stress and anger management workshops in Lebanon or in the Southwest Asian and North Africa (SWANA) region, where it has been validated and tested.

This curriculum could also serve as a starting point for trainers who wish to discuss other issues of men and masculinities. The current manual investigates the intersections of masculinities and mental health from a social psychological perspective.

If sufficient rapport and trust has been built with a group of men using the current curriculum, experienced trainers in issues of gender and masculinities can use the collective relationship of

the group as a safe springboard into more intensive transformative masculinities' trainings and curriculums.

This strategy works especially well in communities in which terminologies such as gender, gender equality, and violence against women can trigger resistant or defensive responses from potential male beneficiaries in the community. Beginning those relationships by discussing mental health and men overtly discusses the costs of Patriarchal masculinities, and the necessity of deviation from that identity.

Protection Considerations

Protection monitoring visits should have been conducted in order to better understand the community and risk factors for women, girls, boys, and men.

WHO SHOULD FACILITATE THE SESSIONS?

Required Background and Skills

Potential facilitators of this manual should meet the below competencies and skills in order to deliver the sessions ethically and effectively:

The facilitator should have a social work, psychology, or relevant humanities background (educational and/or professional) and genuine interest in gender equality issues.

The staff member should be trained on the following topics:

- » GBV prevention and response (including how to deal with disclosure of GBV both by survivors and perpetrators; both by females and males).
- » Facilitators should have a strong understanding of the root causes, contributing factors, and consequences (social, psychological and physical) of GBV, as well as the response services available for survivors of GBV.
- » Holistic behavior change communication with communities, while focusing on engaging men and boys and supporting women and girls to understand peaceful and non-violent masculinities and gender equality.
- » Understanding war trauma and post-traumatic stress.
- » Facilitators should know how to conduct PSS sessions, including dealing with resistance, conflict resolution, and emotional distress.
- » Without in-depth knowledge in these fields, the messages contained within the activities will not be delivered properly and may be skewed in a manner that would be harmful to participants and their families, in line with the “Do No Harm” principle.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT FACILITATORS

Facilitation Approach

The preferred approach is for two staff members to facilitate sessions to support each other, manage conflict, and observe unanticipated effects for evaluation.

It is recommended that facilitators keep a field journal documenting session dynamics, unexpected issues, and breakthroughs.

Co-facilitation Considerations

- » Mixed female–male facilitation teams
- » Combination of older and younger male facilitators
- » Differences in religion, region, ethnicity, exposure to war, and cultural sensitivities

Much resistance to new gender approaches stems from intergenerational differences between men, especially in contexts affected by war, which may

disrupt traditional social structures and create mistrust, rivalry, or resistance. These dynamics may negatively affect session outcomes.

Mixed-Sex Facilitation

In some groups, mixed-sex facilitation teams may be challenging, particularly when sensitive topics are discussed. Depending on resources, sessions may be facilitated by men, with parallel sessions held with women, followed by joint discussions on shared issues. This approach supports gender parity and highlights similarities between women and men.

TIPS TO THE TRAINERS

Tip 1: Using the Manual in Community Settings

This manual is meant to be used on the ground with communities. It is important to allow enough time and open discussion for participants to assimilate the knowledge they gain (with respect to gender) into new attitudes and behaviors.

Abaad has observed, through its work within Lebanese and Syrian populations, that patriarchal ideas of male control often result in increasing violence. Social habits and beliefs that promote male dominance become even more challenging when men feel powerless. Patriarchy tells men to protect and provide for women and children; however, armed conflicts and displacement weaken men's ability to fulfill these roles, making them feel more vulnerable materially, physically, and emotionally.

Tip 2: Dealing with Resistance

This training program aims to open new conversations about non-violent and equitable masculinities in unpredictable situations. Trainers should expect resistance to concepts that challenge established cultural norms, particularly in displacement settings, where reinforcing culturally accepted gender-discriminatory behaviors may be the only way men feel security and control.

Facilitators need to empathize with men affected by displacement and understand that displacement impacts all refugees and may result in trauma, behaviors, and attitudes, including violence. When resistance appears, facilitators should avoid judgment and instead see resistance as a starting point for discussion, creating a safe space to address difficult issues and question traditional gender roles.

Tip 3: Making Sessions Practical and Relevant

The trauma experienced by conflict-affected populations due to displacement, loss, or ongoing trauma can be overwhelming. Facilitators may find it difficult to explain the relevance of discussing gender equality when basic needs such as food, water, and security are unmet.

Training sessions must therefore be very practical and provide tangible and immediate benefits, such as stress relief and improvements in family or workplace relationships. This helps participants recognize that managing anger and stress is a starting point for promoting gender equality and improving their daily lives and the lives of those around them.



HOW TO RECRUIT MEN?

Recruiting and retaining men for the training sessions might prove challenging. As much as possible, participants should be grouped together around their similar life experiences.

Recruiting men and ensuring their commitment throughout the sessions can be challenging. The target group is likely to prioritize livelihood activities that allow them to meet their basic needs (e.g., finding work). Thus, they might not consider these sessions important to participate in.

Given the challenges they face in their daily lives, finding appropriate and relevant methods to recruit and retain participants is the cornerstone of a successful implementation of this manual. It will determine the group dynamics and outcomes.

Grouping Recommendations

As much as possible, participants should be grouped according to their similar life experiences. The more they share with each other, the more they will connect, develop positive group dynamics, and identify with each other.

Participants should be within the same age range.

Additional Notes

First, one strength of the games in this manual is that they do not focus on gender in an obvious manner, but rather convey gender-sensitive messages in an implicit manner. Most of the games in this manual are focused on stress and anger management. The activities are most effective when presented to participants as such. Following the game, discussions can begin on gender roles, ending men's violence against women, and Gender Equality.

Second, recruitment of men for these trainings should rely on the trust previously established with these men and their communities. Other services provided to the community, professionalism, confidentiality, effectiveness of programs, and unconditional positive regard towards beneficiaries.

Building Trust:

- » Share with participants in an empathic way your awareness of their daily struggle.
- » Explain why these sessions are important and what the major objectives are.
- » Appreciate the effort of participants to attend the sessions.
- » Give the participants the choice of whether or not to attend. However, once the curriculum starts, participants should commit to attending all sessions

BEGINNING THE SESSIONS

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

Duration and timing

Each session should not take longer than 1 – 1.5 hours. The total time frame for conducting these sessions should be one and a half months – i.e. one session a week.

The schedule of the sessions should, to the greatest extent possible, be adapted based on the participants' availability and concurring commitments. The venue at which the sessions will be conducted should be within easy reach of the participants.

Number of participants

It is recommended to keep the number of participants between 8 and 12. Small groups are more effective to help develop a dynamic that will foster the group's feeling of safety and building trust.

Group's specificities

Once the participants are identified, prior to forming the groups, it is recommended to identify the group's specificities' and organize them accordingly.

What are the commonalities of this particular age group, in terms of age, life experience (e.g. marital status and fatherhood, war and displacement experiences, etc...)?

- » Have they had previous sessions on preventing GBV?
- » What level of understanding do they already have of GBV?
- » Why are the participants interested in this training?
- » What are the participants' goals/expectations?
- » What do they hope to achieve by joining the sessions?

STRUCTURE OF EACH SESSION

Each session should be structured in a similar way. Participants should be informed about this structure in order to know what to expect.

1. Opening ritual: checking in with each other, finding out how participants are doing, and whether they are feeling any benefits from the previous session they attended.
2. Discussion to introduce the plan for the session that is about to begin.
3. Exercise of the day.
4. Discussion about the exercise of the day.
5. Participatory evaluation of the session and introduction of the subject of the next discussion.
6. Ritual of closure.

This general plan can be adapted based on the group dynamic and on the facilitator's observations. Energizers might be suggested during the session if the facilitator feels that the group is tired or not engaged in the discussions/exercises. However, the choice of rituals, exercises, and points of discussion should be logically related and interlinked throughout the session. In other words, each of the steps within the session should logically introduce the following:

Example of ritual of beginning/end:

Check-in/check-out exercise:

Invite participants to talk about the importance of talking about emotions/feelings – both our own and other people's. Then go around the room and invite each person to say one word about how they feel today. This will help them identify and express their own feelings and switch from the “doing” mode (everyday work and household responsibilities) to

the “feeling” mode. Feelings are not always treated as important, so this is a chance to practice noticing and respecting them. Check-in may feel awkward at first, which is normal. The facilitator should start the first check-in to model it for the participants.

Four rules for check-in:

- » No interrupting, and no conversations or responding to what people say
- » It is always okay to pass — just say “pass”
- » All feelings are okay — share whatever feelings you are having

Agreeing on Ground Rules

Ground rules are essential to create a safe and caring environment. It is recommended to develop a short list of ground rules with the participants at the beginning of the support process, as it generates

a greater sense of ownership and engagement. Ground rules help establish safety and trust among group participants before interaction begins.

Examples of Ground Rules

- » Listening
- » Being open to others' opinions
- » Honesty
- » Patience
- » Respecting confidentiality (seeking permission for photos or social media posts as well)
- » Willingness to learn
- » Supporting and assisting each other
- » Working at a pace convenient to all individuals involved

- » Arriving on time and attending the full session
- » Avoiding distractions: cell phones to be switched off for the duration of the session
- » Attending all the sessions

Integrating Ground Rules into Group Dynamics

Ground rules can be integrated if participants themselves develop each concept. For example, the facilitator can ask participants to work in sub-groups to define core concepts like confidentiality, patience, and being non-judgmental. Each sub-group should create a clear definition and explain why it is important when individuals speak in the group.

SESSIONS OF THE MANUAL

This Manual includes five sessions based on resources already tested and validated by Abaad. The facilitator might switch sessions based on the dynamic and expectations of the group.

SESSION
01

Understanding stress factors in our lives

SESSION
02

Understanding negative consequences of anger

SESSION
03

Understanding the importance of expressing stress and emotions

SESSION
04

Same Water, Different Heat

SESSION
05

Understanding gender roles (Part 1)

SESSION
06

Understanding gender roles (Part 2)

Understanding Stress Factors In Our Lives



Why is this session important?

In order to understand the necessity of stress and anger management, it is important to understand what triggers stress and anger. A 'stressor' is a trigger that leads to a stressful response.

If stressors are not understood and overcome, they can accumulate over time, building greater tension and amplifying stress levels.

Despite an individual's tolerance of stress, without ways to release it, negative psychological and physical expressions will occur.

Especially in communities tolerant of men's anger and violence (physical or emotional), such behaviors may become "normalized."



Participants should learn...

Stress builds up if it is avoided. It does not disappear if not released or attended to.

It is important to understand and manage one's own stress: other people are not the triggers and cannot be blamed for one's anger, frustration, or sadness.

Stress can manifest differently for men and women, because social expectations of men's and women's behaviors are different – including how they are allowed to respond to triggering events.



Suggested Materials:

- » Plenty of marbles/similar objects (300–500 depending on group size)
- » Cups (1 per participant)
- » Water
- » Tissue paper / Paper towels
- » Medium-sized bowls (1 per participant)
- » Tape (scotch or masking)



Instructions:

- » Cover the top of the bowl with a paper towel, and fix it with tape.
- » Fill cups (1 per participant) with marbles and water. Refill as needed to keep marbles immersed.
- » Participants take marbles, one at a time, from the cup and place them on the tissue.
- » Repeat until the tissue breaks.

Objective of the game

Place as many marbles on the tissue as possible before it tears.

Opening the discussion:

Ask participants how many marbles they added before the tissue tore.

Ask if it's possible to endlessly place marbles without breaking the tissue.

Discuss analogies to life stress and importance of stress and anger management:

- » Tissue = individual's capacity to hold stress
- » Marbles = stressors in life
- » Without proper stress release, the threshold will break, affecting psychological and physical health
- » Avoiding stress does not make it go away; it still weighs on us and those close to us
- » Releasing stress in a healthy way prevents negative effects

Discussion prompts

Share experiences of high stress and its effects on mood, interactions, and health.

Identify sources of stress and their negative impacts.

Explore ways to relieve stress and compare positive vs negative techniques.

Bringing Gender into the session

Do men and women have different sources of stress? Describe.

Do men and women respond differently to stress? Explain.

Does stress change over life stages? Who taught your current coping strategies?

How does your stress affect your relationships?

Tips For The Facilitator

Tip 1

If materials are limited, a few participants play while others observe, noting stress responses and reactions. All can join discussion.

Tip 2

Be aware water may spill; ensure participants' safety.

Tip 3

Discussions can begin during the game on communication and emotional expression. Address why participants may avoid discussing stress.

Tip 4

Keep discussion questions open-ended to allow self-expression.

Tip 5

Highlight how participants' responses are gendered, learned from parents, elders, or societal expectations.

Understanding Negative Consequences of Anger



Why is this session important?

Anger is a natural emotion. To feel anger is not a negative thing. It is how we express our anger that can be either healthy or problematic. An unhealthy expression of anger is one that is too severe or too constant/regular, or leads to violence.

This exercise addresses extreme behavioral manifestations of anger. An expression of anger, and the severity of that expression, can do major damage to a person's psychological, physical, and social well-being, and cause harm to those around them.

Participants need to understand this cycle of cause and effect to monitor and manage their own anger reactions.



Participants should learn...

The negative consequences of expressing anger through violence, and how to manage their anger before they lose control.

Severe anger can damage health psychologically and physically, and affect valued social relationships.

Rage often leads to emotional, verbal, psychological, and physical violence.

The expression of anger can differ for men and women, shaped by stereotypes about masculine and feminine behaviour, often learned early in life.



Suggested Materials:

- » Medium-sized bucket with holes
- » Large bucket
- » Enough sand, water, or any similar material to fill 2 large buckets



Instructions:

- » The facilitator demonstrates the exercise.
- » Show that the medium bucket has holes.
- » Fill the large bucket with sand, water, or similar, and pour it into the medium bucket (overflowing).
- » Wait for the medium bucket to empty and repeat a second experiment: fill the large bucket and pour into the medium bucket but stop before it overflows.
- » Lead an open discussion linking the exercise to stress and anger management.

Opening the discussion:

Ask participants what differed between the 1st and 2nd experiments (why didn't the bucket overflow the second time?).

Draw the analogy: the bucket symbolizes the amount of stress a person can hold before expressing it unhealthily. Overflow = extreme expression of anger/rage with negative psychological, physical, and social effects.

When the level of sand/water is contained, this symbolizes controlling or redirecting anger before it spills over.

Discuss the adverse effects of rage on self and others.

Facilitator Questions

Can anyone give an example of rage you've seen or expressed?

What are the effects of uncontained rage? On the individual? On others?

Why does rage often result in violence?

What consequences follow rage – are they different for men and women?

If violent expressions of anger were not tolerated, what difference would it make in families and communities?

Bringing Gender into the session

Do men and women show anger differently? Why?

Are social expectations shaping your responses and others'?

When and from whom did you learn how to express anger?

How did people react when you first acted angrily?

Differences in rage expression among household members (siblings, parents)?

Tips For The Facilitator

Tip 1

Allow participants to reflect on their behaviors, social intentions, and gender norms. Recognize that learned behaviors, male privilege, and destructive patterns can be changed.

Tip 2

A participant can volunteer to help with experiments to increase interaction.

Tip 3

Stories of rage may be personal; participants should share observations rather than personal acts. If specific GBV cases are disclosed, offer private discussion after the session.

Tip 4

Emphasize preventive strategies to control reactions to stressors, as extreme rage hinders communication, empathy, and self-control.

Tip 5

Accept that others are not responsible for your rage. Ending anger and violence is a personal journey, starting with choosing not to use destructive behaviors.

Understanding The Importance Of Expressing Stress In A Positive Manner



Why is this game important?

Now that the participants understand the negative effect of stress and anger (expression, frequency, and severity), it is important to realise how healthy methods of stress relief are necessary for their mental well-being, and for keeping healthy interpersonal interactions with others.



Participants should learn...

The importance of expressing one's emotions in a non-destructive way, as a strategy for stress relief and management.

To cope differently with stress, especially through learning about taking personal responsibility for your feelings and not blaming them on others, or making them the objects of your bad feelings. This is especially important to learn when we hope to facilitate positive changes in interpersonal gender dynamics: men are taught, from birth, that females are less valuable and important than they are, and therefore do not deserve men's respect and care, although they have to care for men and meet their needs. A huge part of unlearning that paradigm is to become responsible for how you feel and behave and not to blame another or make excuses for your violence towards others. Behavioral change can only come from within, through learning a new set of responses and making different choices about how to react when things are difficult.





Suggested Materials:

- » Tennis balls or similar
- » Paper and pens



Instructions:

The group is divided into teams of 3 people.

Roles:

- » Participant A tosses tennis balls at a regular rate to participant B (3 meters apart).
- » Participant B catches the tennis balls.
- » Participant C counts the number of tennis balls caught by B.
- » The first round: “no mercy” – fast throws, B feels overwhelmed, C shouts when a ball is dropped.
- » Ask B to explain feelings: control, emotions, and perception of other players.
- » Second round: adapted rules – B can say “pause” to offload balls to C, then say “un-pause” to resume. Ends when B drops a ball or after 5 minutes.

Debrief: compare feelings, performance, and enjoyment between the two rounds.

Opening the discussion:

The balls represent stress in life; other players are triggers or support for stress management.

Game 1: stress is overwhelming, negative responses appear.

Game 2: sharing/pausing allows relief and cooperation.

Discussion points: stress relief, cooperation, emotional expression, gender norms.

Questions: Bringing Gender into the session

What have you observed in your society about relying on others to help relieve stress?

Have you observed a difference between how men and women cooperate with and support one another?

How do men and women share or not share their emotions?

Lessons about men talking to or relying on women?

Effects if men ask women for help?

Ease of expressing emotions by gender? Reactions from others?

Same Water, Different Heat



Why is it Important?

To understand stress and anger and when to use relevant techniques, participants must first understand triggers—specific words, actions, or behaviors that provoke anger or negative emotions. Each individual reacts differently to similar stimuli, as triggers often touch on sensitive, emotionally charged areas unique to each person.



Participants should Learn...

Understanding triggers is essential to managing stress and anger.

Identifying personal triggers is the first step toward self-regulation.

Techniques:

- » Demonstration with analogies (egg & carrot experiment)
- » Group work, brainstorming, and discussions



Suggested Materials:

- » Flipcharts
- » Markers



Instructions:

- » Conduct the egg & carrot experiment to show that the same environment affects individuals differently.
- » Give an example (e.g., traffic stress affects people differently).
- » Divide participants into groups (4–7 people). Each group lists events that stress, frustrate, or anger them, especially those not affecting others similarly.
- » Groups have 15 minutes to complete their lists on flipcharts.
- » Each group selects a representative to present results (5 minutes per group).

Opening the discussion:

Highlight similarities and differences across lists.

Explain that emotional significance of triggers amplifies reactions.

Encourage participants to identify strategies to respond differently, distract themselves, or avoid triggers.

SESSION

04

Part 2: That's your Cue



Why is it Important?

Recognizing cues—signs that one is becoming stressed or angry—helps participants predict, control, and prevent extreme reactions. This session deepens understanding of personal cues and their types.



Participants should Learn...

Four types of cues and how they differ

Give examples of each type

Identify their personal cues for stress and anger

Techniques:

- » Group work and open discussion
- » Brainstorming



Materials:

- » 3+ flipchart papers
- » Colored markers
- » Masking tape



Instructions:

- » Divide the group into 3 subgroups, each assigned a cue type: Physical, Behavioral, Cognitive.
- » Provide definitions and examples.
- » Groups brainstorm examples from personal or observed experiences (with discretion) for 15 minutes.
- » Each group nominates a presenter to share outputs (3–5 minutes).

Discussion

Review examples from each group.

Explore how recognizing cues can help prevent or control anger and stress.

Ask: Which cues are universal? How can you respond better when triggered?

Understanding Gender Roles And Norms (Part 1)



Why is this game important?

Gender roles in Lebanese and Syrian societies are deeply entrenched and affect expectations from birth. Understanding how role models influence choices, actions, and beliefs helps participants:

- » Recognize the flexibility of gender norms
- » Understand how displacement or social change affects gender roles
- » Reflect on stress caused by disrupted roles



Participants should learn...

How role models shape expectations of men and women
 How socialization affects their choices and behaviors
 How they reinforce gender ideologies and how to make alternative choices

Materials:



- » Flipchart paper
- » Markers

Instructions:



- » Divide participants into two groups: men's role models vs women's role models.
- » Reflect on childhood role models (family, celebrities, fictional characters).
- » Discuss how these role models influenced gender beliefs, actions, and stress levels.
- » Reconvene into the larger group. Present and discuss:
- » Differences in men's and women's role models
- » Changes in gender roles over time
- » How role models relate to stressors and coping

SESSION

06

Understanding Gender Roles (Part 2)



Why is this session important?

Gender socialization shapes expectations, stress, and reactions. Questioning inherited gender norms allows participants to reflect on:

- » How beliefs create personal stress
- » Ways to reduce stress by redefining gender roles



Participants should learn...

How upbringing and social norms shape beliefs and behaviors regarding gender

How to recognize non-normative behaviors and challenge expectations



Materials:

- » Flipchart paper
- » Markers



Instructions:

- » Group division and boxes
- » The facilitator divides the participants into two groups. Each of the groups will have two flipchart papers.
- » The facilitator will ask each group to draw a box on each of the sheets.
- » One is the "Act like a Man" box, and the other is the "Act like a Woman" box.
- » The groups will also be requested to leave some space outside the boxes, where they can place anything that seems not to fit in, to defy, challenge, or reshape social expectations about appropriate gender behaviors.
- » They can also record anything they have noticed that is not normative – people who make choices or live lifestyles that make them different from the rest.
- » Expectations inside and outside the boxes
- » The facilitators ask participants in each group to write what is expected of a man inside the "Act like a Man" box.
- » All behaviors that is not expected of a man or that is not considered 'manly' is written outside the box.
- » Repeat the same instructions for the "Act like a Woman" box, this time focusing on society's expectations from women.
- » Participants record all their insights on flipcharts.
- » Presentation and discussion
- » Each group nominates a presenter and the two groups reconvene in the big group.
- » The groups each present the information on their flipchart to the larger group.
- » The facilitator leads a discussion where the differences are discussed (see "Opening the discussion" and "Questions: Bringing gender into the session").
- » "Act like a Human" box
- » Once the discussion regarding the behavior expected of the two gender binaries, as well as the behavior that does not conform to each, is wrapped up, the facilitator brings up a third flipchart sheet.
- » This time, the sheet is entitled "Act like a Human."
- » The facilitator asks participants to select the behaviours they feel are positive, and that any person should carry out as human beings, rather than as "men" or "women."

Questions: Bringing Gender into the session

1. Socialization and pressure

How are men taught, and then socially pressured, to be different from women and vice versa?

2. Feelings and shared humanity

What feelings are a “real man”/“real woman” supposed to have? What about shared feelings?

Are there social spaces in which to be ‘the same’ or ‘just human’ together?

If yes, how do we find and nurture these spaces?

3. Expression of feelings and social norms

What have participants observed about how “real men” are expected to express their feelings?

What about their observations on “real women”?

What happens to people who do not know, or cannot, or will not, behave within socially accepted norms?

How do people generally treat such individuals?

What does this treatment tell everyone else about how to behave – and what are the consequences for not behaving ‘normally’?

4. The boxes and their qualities

Are there any common qualities in each of the boxes?

What about the qualities outside them?

5. Inside and outside the box

How many men here are in the box all of the time?

Does anyone know any women who are ‘inside the box’ all the time?

What are our reactions to the behaviours that are outside the box?

What do we do when we find ourselves or others unable to stay in a box?

How would we describe our feelings when we find ourselves or see others ‘outside’ a box or behaving in a way we (individuals or society at large) think is ‘other’?

Think about what society values and rewards – staying ‘boxed’ or being ‘free’?

6. Labels and judgments

What is said about men inside the box?

What is said about men who do not fit into a box?

What is said about women who do not fit into a box?

7. Being 'other' or 'outsiders'

What happens to people who are labelled 'other' or 'outsiders'?

8. Men and the 'real man' box

Have you ever observed a situation in which a man went outside the 'real man' box?

What happened to him?

How did others respond?

What did you learn about being an 'insider' or an 'outsider' in your community?

What did the person do to try to 'get back in the box'?

How did others respond to his efforts?

Have you ever observed a man who always stays 'inside the box'?

What have you seen happen to him – are there benefits and privileges from being able to do that?

Are there any personal costs?

9. Women and the box

What about women: have you observed any who 'get outside the box'?

What about those who always 'stay in the box'?

What are the rewards and costs for a woman to do that?

10. Safety, power, and access

What have you observed about women's safety and their access to social power?

Does their relationship to the boxes help them attain some power?

Does it protect them and keep them safe?

11. Beyond boxes

Do human beings really fit neatly into a 'manly' or 'womanly' box?

What about behaviors we share?

What about things we do that are not based in or reinforced by 'normality'?

Remember that the exercise seeks to look at stereotypes and expectations, and not necessarily at individual behaviors.

12. Reflection and change

Now you have had an opportunity to think about different social 'boxes' and the ways in which they promise individuals power, success, and security if they can conform to certain ideals and behaviors.

Do the boxes still seem true to you?

Do they deliver what they promise?

Do you see ways in which the boxes might be limiting, not freeing?

Do you see opportunities for positive change – for example, when people are choosing to move outside the box?

CLOSING REMARKS

Reflection on the learning process

Following the last session, the facilitator should help the participants to reflect back on their learning process throughout the sessions.

Questions for participants

Ask the participants:

- » After these five weeks together, can you see ways in which you might be able to live more freely, seeing the boxes and keeping what is helpful from them but also allowing yourself and others to move outside the box without stress or guilt?
- » What do you think would happen to you, your family, and your society if you chose to do some things differently from now onwards?

EXIT STRATEGY

Following the completion of the five sessions, the facilitator should ensure to follow up on the group of participants once after the sessions.

In addition, the facilitator should support the participant to identify strategies to further engage in stress reduction, especially to enable better GBV prevention and response. Reducing stress is an integral aspect of this work: GBV can be largely prevented when people learn to develop better anger management skills and ensure practicing them to see the tangible benefits in their lives.

Community-based follow-up options

Community-based committees: DRC can support the participants to form committees whose focus will continue to be on stress management, with an emphasis on how it supports GBV prevention and response.

Development of IEC materials: Participants can be involved in development and testing of specific key messages that are appropriate for the community.

Other community-based interventions, including deeper discussions of issues, themes, or new questions arising from the initial sessions.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In order to measure the effectiveness of the approach adopted throughout the present Manual, it's important to built-in monitoring and evaluation system. Prior to beginning and after the end of the sessions, the facilitator will ask participants to fill in a survey on their knowledge and attitudes towards gender roles and stress/anger management.

Facilitators will play an important role in keeping a weekly evaluation record that can be reflected on after the pilot training is over. Each week, they should use their field diary to record what questions or solutions came up, any unanticipated responses, any issues that arise between sessions and get reported on, or other relevant information that can be fed back to make the training stronger and more relevant. Facilitators should take photographs of any written responses – charts etc.

A separate debriefing session for all facilitators should be offered, if possible, so that shared learning can be captured and different responses understood.

ACRONYMS

CSMS	Collective Site Management and Coordination
EVAW	Ending violence against women
GBV	Gender-based violence
GE	Gender equality
ITS	Informal tented settlements
PSS	Psychosocial support
VAW	Violence against women

ENDNOTES

- 1 DRC's GBVIMS data 1 DRC's GBVIMS data for 2014 Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy, Harvard Student Paper.

MEN CENTER HELPLINE

Weekdays 09:00 – 17:00

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