

Emotional Care Guidelines — Leaders Guide

Use this leader version when facilitating any workbook session that may surface painful memories or strong emotions. Read it before every session and share the short **Leader’s Opening** (pg. 17) with the group at the start. This version keeps the original participant wording but adds practical cues, scripts, and leader actions so you can shepherd the group safely and compassionately.

1. Safety First (for leaders)

Core guidance for facilitators

- Remind the group: *Pause when overwhelmed. Strong emotions are normal.* Encourage participants to stop the exercise if they become uncomfortable.
- Offer alternatives: participants may journal, pray, draw, or sit quietly instead of sharing.
- Know your limits: you are a leader, not a therapist. If someone needs more than pastoral support, refer them to a mental-health professional.
- Confidentiality: establish and enforce a “what’s shared here stays here” agreement.

Leader actions

- Before the session: post a small sign with local crisis numbers and any logistics (break room, restroom, quiet space).
 - During the session: watch body language (shaking, dissociation, withdrawal). If someone appears triggered, gently offer a break or a one-on-one check-in.
 - After the session: allow 5–10 minutes of light, restoring activity (prayer, song, guided breathing) to bring emotional regulation before people leave.
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2. Grounding Tool: 90 Seconds to Calm — with Prayer

Teach both sensory grounding and short prayer practices so participants have spiritual and somatic tools.

90-Second Grounding Tool (teach & model):

1. Name **5 things you can see** (pause).
2. Name **4 things you can touch** (pause).
3. Name **3 things you can hear** (pause).
4. Name **2 things you can smell** (pause).
5. Take **3 slow breaths** (in for 4, out for 6).

Add prayer as grounding (two quick options):

- **Breath Prayer:** Inhale slowly and silently say, “*Lord, You are with me.*” Exhale and say, “*I release this to You.*” Repeat 3 times.
- **Scripture Prayer:** Lead the group in a short verse (example): “*Cast all your cares on Him, for He cares for you.*” (1 Peter 5:7) — read together, then pause.

Leader tip: Demonstrate the grounding aloud once. Invite participants to use either the sensory or prayer version (or both) whenever they feel triggered.

3. How to Engage Each Section Safely (leader prompts & options)

Use these leader cues when introducing each workbook section:

- **Scripture Engagement** – Prompt: “*Read slowly. Notice what feels comforting and what feels hard. Focus on the phrase that brings peace.*” Offer the option to journal privately.
- **Truth Connection** – Prompt: “*Compare a painful belief with Scripture. Invite small, testable actions rather than immediate ‘fixes.’*” Encourage attendees to choose gentle experiments.
- **Neuroscience Meets Scripture** – Briefly explain (simple language) how feelings and memory can replay offenses; pair each teaching point with a 60–90 second calming practice.
- **Application Challenge** – Offer three tiers (light / moderate / deeper). Example prompt: “*Choose the level that keeps you safe—no pressure.*”
- **My Story** – Make sharing explicitly optional. Provide formats: 1) silent journaling, 2) written bullet points, 3) short verbal share (max 2 minutes).
- **Freedom Moment** – Lead a short, simple ritual (breath prayer, holding a stone, symbolic release). Keep symbolism limited so it’s not triggering.
- **Closing Challenge & Celebration** – Focus on small wins. Invite one line of testimony or a short gratitude sentence; never require detail.

4. Group Guidelines (for facilitators to set and enforce)

- **Optional sharing:** Repeat at the start: “*No one is required to disclose painful details.*”
 - **Confidentiality & respect:** Remind participants to protect privacy and avoid unsolicited advice.
 - **Signal system:** Offer a discreet way to indicate distress (e.g., raise a hand or step outside).
 - **Time & pacing:** Don’t rush. Keep a predictable rhythm: teaching → quiet reflection → grounding → short discussion.
 - **Referral plan:** Have a list of local counselors, clergy, and crisis lines to offer when needed.
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5. Crisis & Support Plan (leader responsibilities)

- If someone is in immediate danger, call **911 (U.S.)**.
- If someone expresses suicidal intent or imminent harm, stay with them, call emergency services, and follow your organization's safety protocol.
- National Crisis Lifeline (U.S.): **988** — keep this visible to the group.
- Maintain private notes (confidential) of any safety concerns and follow up personally with the participant afterward.
- Optional - Provide a blank area on printed handouts or a slide to add local/faith-based or professional contact information.