



## Talking Trauma...and Survival

Read first: Below are some “complete the sentence” discussion points for group therapy to get the group to start discussing potentially traumatic and/or challenging memories, situations, and feelings. Due to the sensitive nature of these topics, this activity should only be done if **the everyone in the group is prepared to keep things 100% safe and respectful**. Also, the group facilitator(s) should also feel prepared and qualified to guide the group in the discussion of some difficult topics and provide support as needed. Otherwise, seek supervision first before using this worksheet

Also: It would be a good idea to have a **group discussion** prior to starting, making sure the group environment is a **safe and respectful** for this exercise. Some guidelines to discuss with the group:

- Everyone should listen to the person speaking. It can be hurtful when someone shares sensitive personal information while others in the group interrupt or ignore the speaker. Listen respectfully
- Laughing, noises or negative comments about another person’s pain also is hurtful and should not be a part of this group in any way.
- When listening, focus on two things:
  - Empathy – Try to understand what the person sharing went through (or is going through) and:
  - No Judgement – We all have done things we may feel ashamed of. It is important that people in the group can share some of these things without fear of being judged by others in the group
- Finally, due to the potentially triggering nature of some of the discussions that may arise about trauma, hurt, emotional pain, etc., everyone should have some coping skills prepared. Some basic considerations:
  - If someone sharing looks like they are getting upset or overly anxious it may be a good idea to pause the sharing and check in with that person to see if they feel okay to continue, otherwise it is okay to stop
  - If any topic feels too sensitive to discuss it is okay to pass or share an alternate answer that is less triggering or upsetting. There are some questions that may not apply to certain individuals
  - If one of the points on the list does not seem appropriate to discuss at this time, the group leader should skip that point. Be selective when choosing which points to discuss and which to skip. You do not need to cover all of the material provided for this exercise as it may be too much. **There are also strength building talking points on the discussion list to focus on. These are colored blue. Make sure to try to discuss these positive points**
  - At strategic points in the group, as well as at the end of the group, it is a good idea to check in with the group as a whole to see how everyone is doing before continuing. Also, when closing the session make sure to debrief the group and allow everyone to check in about how they are feeling before closing the session
  - Finally, it can be important to keep watch on the “pulse” of the group. There can easily be a point when the group has had enough so it is OK to stop talking about difficult memories and situations and just focus on coping and moving forward in a positive manner.

When prepared, the “Talking Trauma and Survival” discussion points are on the following page:



## Taking Trauma and Survival – *Complete the Sentence:*

Something I have a tough time getting over is...

One thing I am proud to say that I successfully endured and rebounded from is...

An emotion that I find to be challenging is...

One thing that I know helps me to cope with my feelings is...

A memory that I have that still hurts to think about is...

I am now more resilient because I have learned....

I feel regret about...

A skill I have developed for self-care in times of stress is...

A painful lesson I have learned from my past is...

I am so much stronger today because....

I could have died or have been severely injured when....

In times of trouble, I know that I can rely on...

One difficult thing that I witnessed was....

I can help others who have had similar experiences by...

I was treated hurtfully by...

When I need support or a listening ear, I know that I can turn to...

One thing I would describe as “unresolved” is....

If a life situation ever feels like “too much” or “I am struggling,” I know that I can...

One experience that I had with “disaster” is....

One reason that I know that I am a survivor is...

Something harsh that was said to me in my life was....

I know for sure, one good thing about “me” today is....

A situation that I still struggle sometimes to deal with is...

I know that I will never give up because...

What helps me the most today is... (list three things)

1 -

2 -

3 -

One positive thing I will take away from today’s group is....

***“No one escapes pain, fear, and suffering. Yet from pain can come wisdom, from fear can come courage, from suffering can come strength – if we have the virtue of resilience.” — Eric Greitens, Resilience***