

## **Therapeutic groupwork skills responding to young people experiencing conflict in European communities of change.**

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Mick Foot, Teacher, Community Theatre Artist.  
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### **Key features:**

- \* action research with communities of change**
- \* support for young people experiencing trauma**
- \* principles of respectful engagement, creative expression and the poetic principle of resilience and hope.**

### **Rationale**

The presenters are teachers and social workers experienced in action research projects which work with local communities to discover how best to support young people experiencing emotional distress and trauma. We believe action research aligns itself to the processes of social work as a profession with its distinct qualities of respectful engagement and participation to build community resilience ( Dominelli 2012).

We have worked with social workers across Europe responding to young people experiencing community transition due to structural economic tensions and demographic change as well as forced migration from conflict zones ( Analyti 2012). We also have an on-going action research partnership with social workers in Occupied Territory, Palestine to develop new ways of responding to young people experiencing individual and collective trauma due to community oppression.

All our approaches develop skills which are transferable across cultures and contexts of conflict. They are framed on processes of respectful engagement which listen to the wisdom and resources within the community, mirrored within the group of participating young people. They are designed to have deep effect, based on principles of self discovery, mutuality and commitment to change.

Marginalised groups are more vulnerable to the effects of trauma. By actively addressing trauma this can empower groups to have the confidence to change and engage in wider social and cultural inclusion ( Harms, L. 2015).

### **Workshop approach**

Our workshop design teaches through participation the key features of our practice approach ( 4 day design):

1. groupwork skills in therapeutic engagement to support notions of belonging and connection.
2. creative expression – storytelling ( verbal and pictorial), dance and rhythm to explore troubled experiences and invite shared understandings of healing approaches.
3. sharing teaching and practice approaches to treat symptoms of trauma and conflict adapted from EMDR dual attention techniques for use with groups suffering trauma and bereavement ( Dyredov,2010).
4. celebration and aspiration setting to acknowledge survival, resilience and sustainability in the group / community.

The group work projects are aimed at working with young people but can extend to the community in the final celebration day to allow the action research team to develop specialised themes, eg. acknowledgement of women in community resilience / regeneration.

Our workshop design invites participants to engage in each of the 4 training sections as condensed versions of the 4 day training programme, then culminates with a plenary to invite discussion of progression and potential for action research alliances in the group of attendees.

Analyti, A (2012). War-Affected Children: Psychological Trauma and Intervention.

<http://www.care-palestine.com/trauma-recovery-projects.html>.

Dominelli ( 2012) Revitalising Communities in a Globalising World. Ashgate.

Dyredrov, A ( 2010) Supporting Traumatized Children and Teenagers. Jessica Kingsley.

Harms, L. ( 2015) Understanding Trauma and Resilience. Palgrave.