

# Psychological First Aid for Young Peers

A training manual



## Psychological First Aid for Young Peers. A training manual

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See the many resources on PFA as *A Guide to Psychological First Aid for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*, training materials - including online trainings modules adapted to COVID 19 - for adults, children, staff and volunteers and groups as well as videos, and podcasts; all at [pscentre.org](http://pscentre.org)

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## Foreword

How can I support a peer or a friend? What should I do and say? What should I not say? Many young people grapple with such questions when someone is in distress. It is natural for young people to handle the challenging developmental tasks that are part of being an adolescent. Indeed, it is a sad fact that many also have more serious issues to deal with. There is increasing evidence that a huge number of young people are failing to thrive and are struggling with poor mental health. It appears that, the number of youth globally reporting that they feel lonely and do not know how to reach out to others for help is on the rise. The prevalence of mental health conditions is expected to more than double in a humanitarian crisis and this affects a staggeringly high number of young persons.

Having the companionship of one's peers is one of the most important factors for young people to thrive and be well. Empowering young people to be able to be there for each other and to know how to offer support in a non-intrusive way are key social, developmental, and emotional skills. Many mental health conditions develop in adolescence, so a focus on youth is particularly important. Young peers have a central role to play in ensuring early and sustainable access to psychosocial support to a fellow peer in distress. Timely and appropriate support is critical in preventing mental health conditions from developing or becoming more severe.

Psychological first aid is a structured way of supporting someone who needs help. It involves caring about a person in difficulty, paying attention to their reactions and how they feel, listening to them, and if needed, providing practical help. Psychological first aid is also about accompaniment; it helps make a young person in difficulty feel that there is someone who can support them.

With the aim of making psychological first aid accessible to young people around the world, the IFRC PS Centre has developed a training toolkit, Psychological First Aid for young peers. The training tool is created for young people to learn to be a compassionate helper, it strengthens skills in being a good listener, and in offering practical help without encouraging dependency. It is empowering for youth to have the needed skills and knowledge to support their peers. It raises awareness about helpers needing to care for themselves. It also includes support to each young peer so that they do not have to carry the task of helping someone alone.

The toolkit can be used by the Red Cross Red Crescent and beyond in various settings such as schools, youth clubs and youth organisations, and incorporated in sports and leisure activities.

*Nana Wiedemann*

**Nana Wiedemann**  
PS Centre Director

# Introduction



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## Introduction

This **Psychological First Aid (PFA) for Young Peers. A training manual** is part of a package of materials which has been developed by the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support (PS Centre). The materials introduce PFA to young people, outlining what PFA is and how it can be used to provide peer support in different contexts. There are two components to the package:

- **PFA for Young Peers: A handbook.** This handbook introduces PFA to young people. It explains the key principles of LOOK, LISTEN, LINK in PFA and gives examples of how young people can use PFA to support their peers.
- **PFA for Young Peers: A training manual.** This manual features a two-day training, with a suggested training programme and training notes, including links to other resources on PFA.

The training in **PFA for Young Peers** can be delivered on its own or be included in a broader package of training and support to young people.

The training programme featured here is a two-day training, aimed at young people between the ages of 12 and 23 years. Key learning objectives for young peers include:

- At the end of the training, participants will understand what PFA is.
- At the end of the training, participants will be able to use PFA with their peers.
- At the end of the training, participants will know what to do if someone needs more support than can be given through PFA.
- At the end of the training, participants will be aware of self-care strategies for themselves and be linked with support mechanisms.

### Psychological first aid

Psychological first aid (PFA) is a set of skills and knowledge that can be used to help people who are in distress. It enables people to help others feel calm and less stressed in difficult times. PFA involves paying attention to a person and their needs, helping them to make informed decisions and access the support they need.

### A COVID-19 safe environment

This manual was developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, no specific instructions are included regarding COVID-19 safety measures, as they vary from country to country across the globe. Training facilitators should be aware of existing regulations in their context and make every effort to observe the recommended advice regarding safe physical distancing, use of face masks, hand washing, etc.

The training emphasises the supportive roles young people can provide to one another through PFA. It is not aimed at selecting candidates to become PFA peer supporters. However, after this training participants may be invited to consider becoming ‘ambassadors’ in PFA for young peers. In this case, there would be specific training offered for this role.

Other resources on PFA are available from the IFRC Psychosocial Centre at <https://pscentre.org/?s=PFA>

## How to use this manual

The training programme is a two-day training, with four sessions on day one and five sessions on day two as suggested in the training programme on page 8. Alternatively single sessions could be facilitated once a week or in blocks over several weeks, depending on the requirements of the group. In situations where it is not possible to gather in groups, the training can be delivered remotely.





This training is aimed at young people between the ages of 12 and 23 years of age. Where possible, participants can be divided into age groups, for example, 12-15, 16-19, and 20-23. Some activities may be more appropriate for younger age ranges and some for older. Facilitators may of course use their judgement in adapting activities according to the needs of their particular training group.

The activities featured here promote active learning, where young people engage in exercises to apply knowledge and skills on PFA. All the sessions encourage the participation of the young participants in small groups and in plenary, and also include time for individual reflection. Giving and receiving feedback should be done in a constructive, respectful way (see annex 2). There should be no more than 25 participants in a group if possible, and no less than ten.

It is important to find a venue for the training activities with enough space for the group to physically move around and participate in activities together, while also having room to work in small groups. Basic materials needed include:

- Flipchart paper, paper and post-it notes (or small pieces of paper)
- Markers, pens and coloured pens

Other items may be needed for individual sessions. These are indicated in the training notes.

Icon	Meaning of icon
	Time needed for activity
	Aim of the session
	Key learning points
	Materials needed

## Facilitators

It is important that facilitators have relevant experience and knowledge in relation to PFA and in terms of working with young people. We recommend the following:

- Facilitators have a thorough understanding of PFA principles and approaches.
- Facilitators have experience of offering PFA.
- Facilitators are familiar with working with people between the ages of 12 and 23, and use learning and training approaches which are creative and dynamic.

Ideally, two facilitators deliver the training, one of whom should be a young person and one over the age of 18.

It is vital that facilitators identify local supports for participants before the training starts. These are groups or agencies which are accessible locally to participants if they need to speak to someone or have difficulties with some of the topics. Annex 3 is a template for facilitators to list contact information for local services for referral, where they are available.

Note to facilitators: Please read the **PFA for Young Peers. A handbook** as part of your preparation for facilitating the training on PFA with young peers. The handbook is aimed at introducing PFA to young people themselves. If possible, have copies of the handbook available for participants.

## The training programme

Sessions	Time	Materials
DAY ONE		
Introductions	1 hour	Flipchart with the training programme written on it, blank flipchart paper, markers, post-it notes or small pieces of paper and sticky tape, pens
Who are my peers?	1 hour	Flipchart paper, post-it notes or markers
What issues affect young people our age?	1 hour	Flipchart paper, post-it notes or small pieces of paper and sticky tape, a hat or other container, markers or coloured pens
Introducing PFA	3 hours	Balloons, cabbage game – each statement for what PFA is and is not printed on separate pieces of paper, flipchart paper and markers, copies of annex 3 with local information completed
DAY TWO		
Presenting PFA	1.5 hours	Cards with CONTENT, FEELINGS and NEEDS written on them
Using PFA as peer support	1.5 hours	Paper and pens, copies of the case studies (if these are needed), a set of cards for each participant with LOOK, LISTEN, LINK written on them (one principle per card)
Difficulties in providing PFA as a young peer	1.5 hours	Copies of the case study (if needed), flipchart with questions about the case study written on it, blank flipchart paper and markers
Self-care	1 hour	List of contact details for mentors, supervisors or others who will be available to support the participants after the training
Closing	30 minutes	Paper or card plus a marker for each person

Note to facilitators:  
Please add in time for breaks and meals when planning your own training programme.



# The training programme



# Day one

## Introductions



1 hour



To introduce participants to one another and to the facilitators; to provide an overview of the training.



To get to know one another; to establish constructive ways of working together in a positive, fun, and safe learning environment.



Flipchart with the training programme written on it, post-it notes or small pieces of paper, pens, flipchart paper, markers.

1. Welcome everyone to the training. Explain that learning about PFA as a young person unpacks what it means to be a compassionate helper. It strengthens skills in being a good listener and in offering practical help without encouraging dependency. It also raises awareness about helpers needing to care for themselves. It also includes support to each young peer so that they do not have to carry the task of helping someone alone.
2. Go through the training programme briefly (have it stuck on the wall so that it can be easily seen) and check that everyone understands the plan for the two days. Ask them to think about something they would like to come away with at the end of the training. Ask everyone to write an expectation on a post-it note - one per expectation.
3. Ask everyone to stand in a circle and invite participants to step forward in no particular order, say their name and one expectation they have written. For example, *Hi, I'm Ahmed and I hope that I will learn about PFA*, or *My name is Sara, I hope I can share with others in the group*. Everyone responds by greeting the person, *Hi Ahmed! Hello Sara!* Once they have all introduced themselves, invite each participant to stick their expectation onto a piece of flip chart paper.
4. Ask everyone to sit down or gather around the flip chart with all the post-it notes on it. Explain that everyone has come with expectations and begin to read each one aloud. Find some that are the same and group them together – for example, several participants may have written, 'I want to learn how to do PFA'. Now ask participants if they can see some other expectations that could be grouped together. There may also be some expectations that stand alone - this is OK. Continue and read out all the post-its and ask for clarification if expectations are not clear. Thank everyone for sharing their thoughts about the training.
5. Do a fun energiser. Incorporate each person's name into the energiser so that everyone learns each other's names.
6. Now explain that training goes well when groups agree with one another as to how they are going to work together. Say: *Let's work on writing a group charter to list all the ways that we want to make this training helpful for everyone. What ideas do you have?* Encourage participants to think positively rather than writing a list of rules that begin

with “Do not...” (See the example of a group charter in the box below). Aspects to cover could include:

- how to listen well to one another
- making space for questions
- agreeing about the use of mobile phones
- how to build trust in the group
- agreeing what to share or not to share on social media
- keeping to time.

Invite a volunteer to write down each agreed element of the charter on a piece of flip-chart paper during the discussion. When the group has agreed their charter, ask everyone to sign it and then stick it somewhere visible for the entire training programme.

7. Close the session by thanking everyone for participating. Acknowledge that the group is already beginning to work together and learn from one another.

### Our group charter

- We listen to one another. We do our best to give each other time to say what we want to say without interrupting.
- We keep our phones turned off except for break times.
- We think questions are good. We encourage one another to ask questions.
- We learn together by sharing our ideas and working in groups, with respect for one another.
- We build trust with one another – no one has to share anything they do not wish to.
- We only share photos or videos from the training on social media if everyone has agreed. Anyone in the group under 18 also needs their parents/caregivers’ permission to do this.
- We start and finish our training sessions on time. After breaks, we come together again at the agreed time.
- If anyone is upset, we seek help from the facilitators.

Signed: Ahmed, Sara, Janna, Charlie, Aila, David, Anna, Jonah, Simon, Carol

## Who are my peers?



1 hour



To define what a peer is.



To identify the key characteristics of being a peer; to provide opportunities for participants to work individually, in pairs and in the large group.



Flipchart paper, post-it notes or markers.

1. Begin the session with an exercise. Ask everyone to stand in a circle. Explain: *I am going to ask you to walk around in a minute. When I shout STOP, I want everyone to turn to someone beside them and spend one or two minutes together to find out some things you have in common. Begin by saying your name again in your pairs to help you get to know one another.* Now say GO and give everyone time to get moving. Shout STOP and allow a couple of minutes for the pairs to share what they have in common. Do this two or three times.
2. Invite a few pairs in the circle to share how they found out about what they had in common. Focus here on the kind of questions they asked one another - not on what they found out. Explain that a central part of PFA is about being able to ask helpful questions and that this will be part of the training later. Acknowledge any open questions that pairs may have used as examples of a helpful way of asking questions.
3. Ask everyone to sit down and discuss in plenary about the concept of a 'peer'. Ask these questions:
  - What does the word 'peer' mean for you?
  - Is it possible for you to be a peer with different groups of people?
  - If someone is the same age as you, does it mean they are your peers and you will have something in common with them?

Discuss ideas around similarities such as age, gender, geography, faith, culture. Invite some of the pairs who linked together in the exercise to share the things they had in common. For example, they may have found they liked the same music, books, videos, or social media groups. They may have discovered they have similar opinions and attitudes about important topics, such as the climate crisis or girls' education, etc.

4. Ask the participants to share their thoughts about what a peer is, record what they are saying on a piece of flipchart paper headed 'Who are my peers?' Draw a line in the middle of the flipchart and write the ideas for peer groups on one side (See the example below).

## Who are my peers?

Everyone the same age as me

Everyone who attends my school

Everyone who likes rap music

Everyone who is vegan

All the boys in my class

All the girls in my class

Everyone of my age in my village

Everyone who loves playing football

Everyone who campaigns about trees being cut down

5. Now give each participant a marker or some post-it notes. Ask them to write a ✓ or stick their post-it notes in the blank column beside all the categories they feel are their peers. It doesn't matter if participants choose different categories. They can write their name or not – decide which is best for the training group.
6. When everyone has done this, ask these questions:
  - Would anyone like to talk us through their responses?
  - What can we see from looking at all the responses from the whole group?
  - What do the differences tell us about being a peer?
7. Close the session by saying the definition of a peer is usually as follows:

A peer is someone the same age as you, equal to you, someone with whom you share similarities.

Note to facilitators: Being equal in this definition means in a relationship between two students, for example, both are equal in terms of the power between them. This is different from a student and a teacher, where the power in the relationship is held by the teacher.

## What issues affect young people our age?



1 hour



To explore the range of difficulties faced by young people in this context.



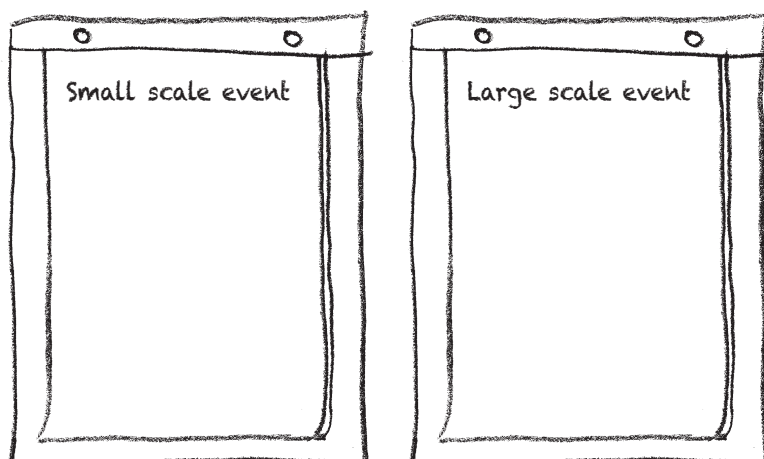
To distinguish between small scale and large scale events; to identify common signs of distress after an event.



Flipchart paper, post-it notes or small pieces of paper and sticky tape, a hat or other container, markers or coloured pens.

Note to facilitators: There is information about reactions to crisis events in **PFA for Young Peers: A handbook**.

1. Open the session by asking, *What kind of difficulties do you and your peers face these days?* Take time to listen to several participants without making any comments.
2. Say young people often have individual issues in their lives that they are dealing with as well as bigger events that affect a lot of people. Reflect on the responses that come from the group and if possible, categorise them as a more individual concern or an issue which may have a wider impact.
3. Give everyone small pieces of paper and ask them to write a difficulty young people of their age may face in their lives – one example per piece of paper. Ask them not to write their name on the paper. Explain that young people, like everyone, can be affected by daily difficulties such as an argument with a close friend, or perhaps being bullied at school. They can also be affected by much bigger issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic which has impacted everyone, or disasters, emergencies and large scale crises in their town or region or even affecting an entire country. When they have finished writing, ask participants to put their pieces of paper in the hat.
4. Put two flipchart pages on the wall, one with the heading, 'small scale event', and one with the heading, 'large scale event.' Explain that the scale refers to the size of the event itself and the number of people affected, not the size of the impact it has on an individual.



5. Ask everyone to stand in a circle and put the hat in the middle. Invite each person in turn to take a paper from the hat. Give the group a few minutes to turn to their neighbour to discuss whether the difficulty on their paper is a small scale or large scale event. Take five minutes to share in plenary. Now invite each pair to stick their pieces of paper on the flipcharts – they have to stick them either on the small scale event or large scale event.
6. Ask participants to return to working in their pairs and ask them to select two difficulties from the lists on the flipcharts – one small scale one and one large scale one. Ask them to think what reactions a person or people affected by the difficulty might make at three different time points – right after they have experienced the difficulty, two weeks afterwards and then two months afterwards. Give them paper and markers to draw a timeline and to write or draw the reactions along the timeline. Do this twice – once for the small scale event and one for the large scale event.
7. Close the session by discussing in plenary what the young people affected by small and large scale difficulties might need.

## Small event



## Large event



## Introducing and practising PFA



3 hours



To learn about and practise the key principles of PFA.



To know how to prepare oneself before offering help; to know how to stay calm when helping; to know how to look first before taking action; to be able to listen actively; to know how to link someone to relevant services.



Balloons, cabbage game – each statement for what PFA is and is not printed on separate pieces of paper, flipchart paper and markers, copies of annex 3 with information on local services for referral completed.

Note to facilitators: The exercises in this session are close contact and it may be advisable to have separate groups for different genders.

### EXERCISES ON LOOK

#### PART ONE (30 minutes)

1. Say to the group: *So far in the training, we have got to know one another and have thought about what a peer is and who our peers are. We have identified together the kind of difficulties faced by young people our age. We have learned that problems can affect many people, or they can affect only a few people, and they can be big or small problems. Now we are going to learn about PFA – psychological first aid. We are going to learn about PFA and how to put it into practice.*
2. Explain that all helpers need to know how to look out for themselves when they are faced with someone in distress and this will be the starting point for the group today too. Ask everyone to stand in an open space together and give each participant a balloon to blow up. Invite everyone to tap their balloons up into the air and try to keep them up as much as possible. Don't give too many instructions and let the exercise play out for a few minutes. It is likely to be a bit chaotic.
3. Shout STOP and let the excitement die down! Ask everyone to sit down and reflect together on what happened. Discuss how it was – ask who enjoyed it and who was nervous about the balloons popping. How did different participants look out for themselves? Comment positively on those who didn't want to join in, kept to the fringes and those who loved it.
4. Link this exercise with a situation where they may be preparing themselves for supporting a peer in distress. Explain that this will include mental and physical preparation. Give examples from what some of the participants may have said about the balloon exercise. Say, *When you are about to support a young person, you might say to yourself: "OK, I will be fine, I know what I am doing". This is a kind of mental preparation for yourself. You might also have to physically prepare yourself by putting on a safety jacket and helmet.*



- To close this part of the session, discuss what PFA young peers could do to keep themselves calm when faced with someone in distress. Examples may include taking a few deep breaths before engaging with the person; talking quietly to yourself (self-talk) to stay calm; observing the situation for a few minutes without reacting.

## PART TWO (30 minutes)

Note to facilitators: Use situations for this exercise that are relevant to the young participants in the group. There are three suggestions for tableaux given below in the training notes, but you can replace them with ones that are relevant to the lives and experiences of the training group.

- Say to the group: *We're now to work in groups to reflect on the kinds of situations that cause young people difficulty and distress. We're going to do this in silence - forming 'tableaus' or pictures together.*
- Ask some of the participants to make groups of different sizes and be ready to form three or four tableaux, such as:
  - A group of six participants could form a tableau representing a bike accident on a busy road.
  - A group of three could form a tableau of three classmates fighting in the playground.
  - A large group of young people could form a tableau of young people who have been hit by a fence blown down by strong winds.
- Depending on the size of the whole group, the others who are not involved in the tableaux can walk around in pairs and threes discussing what they see and what needs there might be for help.
- Now bring everyone together in plenary. Invite participants to summarise each of the situations they saw and what the needs were likely to be for those affected. A key learning point for this exercise is that it is always very important to look first before taking action. Be sure to make this point.
- End this exercise by discussing what would be a good way of approaching someone in distress. Here is an example:
  - Hello. My name is XX. May I help you? What happened? Did you hurt yourself?*

## PART THREE (2 hours)

Move on to introducing PFA:

For older participants, use the summary of what PFA is and what it is not in the handbook. Read each statement aloud and invite participants to say in their own words what that means.

For younger participants, play the Cabbage game: Print out each statement from the box below (what PFA is and what it is not), mix them all up and roll them into the shape of a ball. With the participants in a circle, throw the ball from one to the other. When someone catches the ball, they peel off a piece of paper ('a leaf from the cabbage') and read out what is written. Participants must decide if it is or is not PFA. Correct any misunderstandings and explain the reasons for why the statement is or isn't PFA. Address any questions they may have.

### PFA is...

- Helping someone in difficulty to feel safe and calm
- Finding out about what they need and what they are worried about
- Making sure they do not come to more harm or face danger
- Providing emotional support and being there for someone
- Helping someone to solve their immediate problem, such as contacting someone who can help them
- Helping someone to find out where to get the help they need from services in the context.

### PFA is not...

- Something only professionals and experts can do
- Psychological therapy or counselling
- Asking someone to think about the reasons why this has happened or what the deeper meaning is behind it
- Asking someone to tell every detail of what has happened to them
- Putting pressure on someone to share their feelings about what has happened to them.

2. Say: *There are three basic principles for PFA. They are LOOK, LISTEN and LINK (see the handbook for more on this). Write the three words on a flipchart paper. Explain what each word means as follows:*
  - *LOOK means looking at the situation to see if it is safe, what kind of help is needed, how you can or cannot help, and if it is SAFE for you to help. LOOK means noticing the situation of the person you are trying to help. How are they responding? What is the best type of safe and effective support they need?*
  - *LISTEN refers to the way we communicate and means active listening. Active listening is more than listening with our ears. It involves our body language, eye contact, etc. It can also mean allowing silence and time to be quiet.*
  - *LINK means helping someone to access support they need. This could be a loved one or family member, it could be a trusted adult like a teacher or social worker, or it could be a specialist support service.*

### EXERCISES ON LISTEN

1. Explain that everyone has already practised the LOOK principle by doing the group work in tableaux and so now it is time to practise LISTEN. Ask the participants to stand in a circle and explain that they are going to throw an imaginary ball to one another. Each time a person catches the ball, their task is to demonstrate body language for not listening. As they throw the ball to one another, ask the participants to call out the name of the person they are throwing the ball to and say: *Show us what you do when you are not listening to someone who is talking to you!*
2. With older participants, continue the game and add another task: *Show us what it looks like when you are pretending to look as if you are listening, but you are not.* For example, sometimes when you are talking to somebody, you can see that their mind is a thousand miles away as they have a vacant look in their eyes.

3. Sum up typical body language signs of not listening. Here are some examples: folding your arms, looking away, rolling your eyes, looking down, sighing, fidgeting, tapping your fingers or feet, interrupting, or making distracting movements. With older groups, also discuss how they would see if someone were genuinely listening and using body language such as looking at you and nodding their head, or if someone were not truly present with you and not really in listening mode. Ask everyone what is difficult for them when listening to others. Examples could include not concentrating on the response, thinking about what you are going to say next, being distracted by other people speaking, their phone or other noises, not wanting to let the conversation be silent. Do a short, silent exercise by asking participants to sit for a minute in a circle, without speaking. Ask what it was like. What could make it more comfortable to be quiet in a group?
4. Now ask everyone to stand up and form pairs. Ask them to take it in turns to talk about something they enjoy doing and after two minutes their partner recaps what they have said. Afterwards each speaker should say whether the recap was accurate.
5. Explain that the final listening exercise is a longer one. Ask everyone to form pairs – try to find someone new for this exercise, one is A and the other is B. A will role play a person in distress and B will role play the PFA peer helper. Ask the pairs to choose one of the small-scale issues from the session on ‘What issues affect young people our age.’ Explain: *We facilitators will walk around observing each pair to see signs of how you are listening in three areas - to the content of what the person in distress is saying, to their feelings, and to their needs.*
6. Close this part of the session by asking what participants learned about the LISTEN principle for PFA.
7. Do an energiser – either one that participants suggest or another one that is suitable to the group.

## EXERCISES ON LINK

1. Explain that it is now time to practise the third principle of PFA – LINK. Say: LINK means helping someone to access the support they need. This could be a loved one or family member, it could be a trusted adult like a teacher or social worker, or it could be a specialist support service. An important part of PFA is to make the link with someone who can help the peer you have been in contact with. This means you need to know who you can make a link with in your area before you provide PFA to young peers. Making a list of sources of support is a vital part of PFA. This is what we are going to do now.
2. Ask participants to form groups of four to five. Ask them to discuss and then note down all the categories of support they can think of in their area. Spend a few minutes asking what categories of support they came up with. Now give out copies of annex 3 with contact information for local services completed. Alternative: If time allows, ask for volunteers from each group to role play approaching the support they have identified and how they would outline the problem and ask for help.
3. Provide local guidance on what they should do in linking young people in distress to other help. This could include telling a volunteer supervisor for young peers of their plans to make a referral; keeping identifying information about the person in distress confidential from other friends and family; how to assist a young peer to make a referral.
4. Explain that it is important to know if someone is in severe distress. If this is the case, then it would be vital to link them with specialist help. Write the examples of signs of distress on flipchart paper and read them aloud. Invite participants to comment on each in turn, as they wish, or to ask questions.

## Signs of severe distress that mean someone needs more help than you can give

You may notice that a peer you are helping has changed. Perhaps they are changing so much that you feel like they aren't the same person any more. They may be showing signs of severe distress which means they need more help than you can give.

Examples of behaviours and signs and symptoms that someone needs more help could be:

- If they have not been able to sleep for a while and seem disoriented.
- If they are very unhappy and not interested in eating or looking after themselves like they used to.
- If they lose their temper easily and are more irritable than usual.
- If they threaten to self-harm or to hurt someone else.
- If they start drinking alcohol a lot or taking drugs.
- If they say that they are in immediate danger.

### PRACTISING LOOK, LISTEN AND LINK

Note to facilitators: You may choose to use the remaining time in this session to do an activity which gives the group more practice in listening.

1. Begin by asking the participants to form groups of four. Give each group a scenario to work on, such as:
  - A friend is being cyber-bullied by someone from another class or group.
  - A friend is being teased because of gender, class or ethnic background.
  - A friend is engaged in on-line chatting with much older people.
  - A friend is upset as their parents are fighting as one of them lost their job.
  - A friend has lost a much-loved uncle to a sudden illness.
  - A friend is being called bad names (sexually harassed) when going to school and having to pass a group of people.
  - A friend is hitting a younger sibling and you need help to find out how to talk to your friend to change their behaviour towards the younger sibling.
  - A friend is drinking alcohol more and more and experimenting with drugs.
  - OR use examples of small or large scale events from the session earlier in the day.
2. Give the following instructions to the groups:
 

Each group divides into two pairs and role plays how they would support someone with the issue. Person A has a problem and person B listens carefully and reflects back on the content, feelings and needs which person A presents. The other pair watches the role play and observes what is happening and gives feedback when the role play is over. The next pair role plays their issue and receives feedback from the other pair. Now, ask the pairs to come together again as a group of four and to briefly discuss the exercise and to agree up to five key learning points from what they did.
3. Bring all the participants back together in plenary. Discuss what they observed and invite each group to share their learning points.
4. Do a closing activity to end day one. For example, invite participants to reflect on their expectations for the training and ask them if they are on course to fulfilling their expectations.

# Day two

## Presenting PFA



1.5 hours



To reinforce knowledge about PFA.



To strengthen understanding about being non-judgemental when helping; to reinforce learning in relation to listening to the content, feelings and needs of those seeking help.



Multiple cards with CONTENT, FEELINGS or NEEDS written on them.

1. Welcome everyone to day two. Check in with participants and ask for volunteers to summarise what they learned about PFA in day one.
2. As a fun opener, do the following game which highlights all the ways that helpers may be judgemental – something that is NOT recommended! Invite participants to form pairs and to shout out judgemental things to one another in turn about someone needing help. Examples could be: *You don't deserve help; you are too old to get my help; you are beyond help; you don't belong here so I'm not going to help you; it's all your fault; I really don't like you and so I'm not going to help you.*
3. During the game, go round the pairs and write down some of the judgemental things people are saying.
4. After a few minutes, call a halt to the game. Read out some examples of what you heard participants saying. Ask them to explain why each example is judgemental.
5. Say that PFA skills draw from basic helping skills, such as responding without judgement, active listening, being there for someone, calming someone in distress, attending to someone's immediate needs and finding other sources of support for someone who needs help.
6. Remind participants about the listening exercise they did on day one which focused on the content, feelings and needs of the person seeking help. Explain that they will do this listening exercise again but now they will add another element. This time they will note any reactions they have to the content, feelings or needs which the person seeking help presents. This happens in real life, for example, when someone has an experience which is similar to one that the helper has had.
7. Do a half circle check to ensure participants can distinguish between content, feelings and needs. Take three responses in each category to the sentence: *I am a bit upset as I locked myself out of the door this morning and forgot important papers for the meeting we have today.* Discuss what difference it makes for a person when the responder focuses on the different categories. Ask participants to imagine themselves in the situation and to notice how the different responses make them feel.
8. Now ask participants to do an exercise in pairs - person A is the person seeking help and person B is the helper. Ask all the As to talk about a minor conflict with a friend or colleague from some time ago that may be resolved now. Give a card to all the Bs with instructions to listen to one category – and respond to one category only – either content, feelings or needs.
9. Close the session by taking feedback about the final exercise.

## Using PFA as peer support



1.5 hours



To reinforce skills in applying the key principles of LOOK, LISTEN and LINK.



To know and apply skills in relation LOOK, LISTEN and LINK.



Paper and pens, copies of the case studies (if these are needed), a set of cards for each participant with LOOK, LISTEN, LINK written on them (one principle per card).

1. Explain that this session is about using PFA in small scale and large scale crises. Ask a few participants to recap the types of events listed yesterday in day one in the session about issues young people face.
2. Divide everyone into small groups and ask them to choose one of the small scale or large scale events. Ask them to answer the following questions:
  - What would you LOOK for in this type of event?
  - What could you LISTEN for in this type of event?
  - What suggestions do you have for who you could LINK with in this type of event?
3. Now ask each group to develop a short story (case study) based on the event they have chosen. Explain that a case study often features the names of the people involved and includes details about what happened. Read out one or two of the examples in annex 1 or if the group has difficulty with writing a case study, use some of the ones in annex 1 instead, depending on the age group, ability and experience of the group.
4. Explain that the next step is to develop a role play based on the case study. Give the groups time to practise and then invite each group in turn to do their role play for the whole training group.
5. As each group does its role play, ask those watching to look out for examples of the LOOK, LISTEN, LINK principles. Give everyone cards with the words LOOK, LISTEN, LINK written on them. Ask those observing to raise the card with the relevant principle when they see examples of each of them being applied.
6. After all the role plays, discuss the strategies which each group used to help and support their peers. Discuss how the participants would feel being helped in the different ways. Were there any ways that help was given which were not helpful?

## Difficulties in providing PFA as a young peer



1.5 hours



To discuss possible difficulties arising from PFA for young peers and identify potential solutions.



To illustrate that there are often dilemmas in offering help; to highlight the importance of seeking help to solve difficulties in providing PFA.



Copies of the case study (if needed), flipchart with questions about the case study written on it, blank flipchart paper and markers.

1. Say: *In this session we are going to look at issues which may make it difficult to provide PFA to our friends at times. We're also going to find some possible solutions to the difficulties we identify.*  
*Everyone has feelings and people can sometimes be hurt, sad, or feel betrayed by their friends - all this is normal. We are going to look at a story about two young people who had some problems and discuss what we would do in that situation.*
2. Read the following to the group and hand out a copy to everyone. Participants may close their eyes to listen to the story or read along with the facilitator – whatever suits them best:

### The story of Karam and Noah

Karam is 17 and has been trained in PFA for young peers, along with other people in their school. One day his best friend, Noah, aged 16, tells him that he is planning to run away from home as he is having problems with his father.

Noah has been saving up and now has enough money to go to the city. He has the address of a friend's cousin who moved there ten years ago and he plans to find a job in the city somehow. He is planning to leave in seven days' time.

Karam knows that Noah and his father do not get on well at all. They have been arguing a lot recently and Noah is sick of it. Noah's father wants him to study harder and they argue about this constantly. Noah doesn't want to go to university. He wants to be a carpenter but his father does not agree.

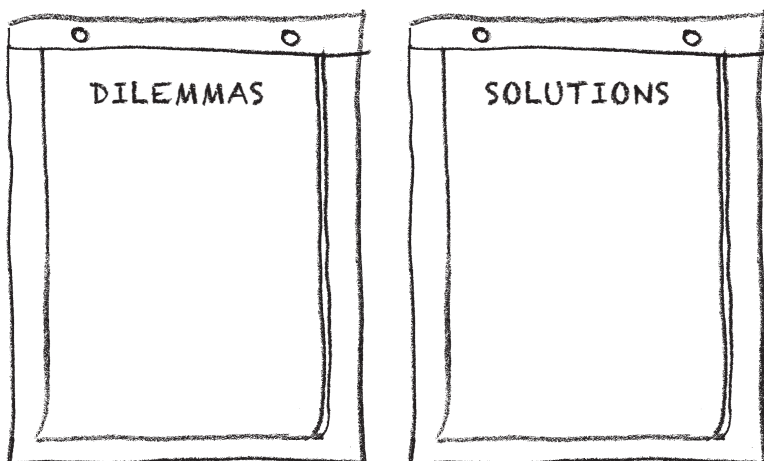
Noah makes Karam swear he will not tell anyone that he is planning to run away. He asks Karam to say that they are spending the evening together if anyone asks where Noah is. He makes Karam promise to lie and say he knows nothing about where Noah has gone.

Later that evening at home, Karam thinks about what Noah is planning. Karam doesn't feel comfortable lying, and he is also very worried about Noah's safety. Karam decides to tell his father what Noah has planned and asks for his advice. Karam asks his father not to tell anyone because he made a promise to Noah that he wouldn't. Karam's father thanks Karam for telling him, but says he cannot promise not to tell anyone. He asks Karam to invite Noah to stay with them for a while so they can look at some options, if Noah's parents agree. Karam's father will speak to Noah's father.

The next day, Karam does as has been suggested and asks Noah to stay with them for a while instead of running away. He explains that he was so concerned about Noah that he had decided to tell his father about the situation and ask his advice.

Noah is furious. He shouts at Karam and says they cannot believe that he could betray him like this, that he thought they were friends. Noah says he will never speak to Karam again. Their friendship is finished forever and he wishes they had never met. Noah tells Karam his life is ruined and it is all Karam's fault.

3. Ask participants to form groups of four or five. Ask them to discuss the story, using the following questions on the flipchart:
  - Was Karam right to tell his father or not?
  - Was the solution proposed by Karam's father the right one or not?
  - Should Noah have involved his friend in this situation or not?
  - What can be done to salvage their friendship, or should Karam just walk away?
4. In plenary, take feedback from the groups in turn, by listing first the dilemmas in the story. List the feedback on flipchart paper under two headings, DILEMMAS and SOLUTIONS. As each group contributes in turn, ask participants not to repeat what has already been said, but just to add anything new to the list.



5. Now look at each dilemma in turn and ask the group to come to a consensus on what they agree the best solution to be and identify their role in reaching the solution. Write the solutions on the flipchart too.
  - For example: Noah's and Karam's fathers could meet with the school principal to discuss other career options.
  - A mediator could meet with Noah and his father to explore how they both feel.
  - Karam could write a letter to Noah explaining why he told his father.
6. After the discussion, highlight these points:
  - You can't fix everything by yourself, and PFA is not a solution for everything. It is a humane, caring system of support based on human kindness and listening. It is OK to ask for support.
  - Things are not clear-cut when feelings are involved. You are not responsible for someone else's feelings.
  - If you are unsure, worried or confused about a situation with another person, tell your mentor, supervisor or a trusted adult - nobody expects you to have all the answers.
7. Close the session by asking whether the participants think Karam was a good friend to Noah. Take time to allow several participants to make a response. Say that being a good friend sometimes means that we find ourselves in a quandary about what to do for the best. It may mean that we need to get advice ourselves.



## Self-care



45 minutes



To introduce the concept of self-care and identify strategies for staying healthy; to identify relevant supports for participants after the training.



To be aware of the benefits of self-care and know healthy strategies to stay well; to recognise that support is an integral part of being a helper.



Contact details for mentors, supervisors or others who will be available to support the participants after the training.

Note to facilitators: It is important for young people to be aware of their own needs and to be able to recognise if they are feeling burned out or in need of support. Young peers will all need some kind of supervision and mentoring. This will depend on the context and will be influenced by the types of difficulties faced by the young people themselves, the supports available to them, and the nature of the group. For example, if the training group is associated with a Red Cross Red Crescent National Society, they may already have systems set up to offer mentoring and help in their ongoing activities. If the training group is associated with a school group, community or sporting group, access to mentoring or supervision from a trusted adult, youth worker or other professional may have to be organised.

1. Say: *It is very important for helpers of any kind to look after themselves as well as the people they are helping. This is called self-care. This might seem like a strange idea when you first hear it. But, have you ever heard someone say – “You cannot pour from an empty cup”? This means that it is hard to be there for someone and give your friendship and help if you feel drained or tired or burned out. Everyone feels drained and burned out at times, it is not a sign of weakness. This session is about the kinds of strategies you can use to make sure you keep happy and healthy and are not overstressed by offering help to others.*
2. Ask each participant to reflect for two minutes on what makes them happy, what ‘fills their cup’ after a busy or stressful time. Examples include going for a walk, listening to music, participating in sport, spending time with a friend, reading a book, cooking a nice meal, etc. Ask the participants to turn to the person beside them and take it in turns to tell their partner what they do for themselves. Before going onto the next step, invite a few pairs to share the things they enjoy doing with the whole group. Explain that these activities are part of self-care. They are personal strategies that help individuals feel happy and relaxed.
3. Now ask everyone to work in their pairs again. Ask them to discuss the following questions:
  - How much time on average per week do you spend ‘filling your cup’? Is it enough?
  - What stops you from doing the activities you enjoy and help you to relax?
  - How easy is it to say no when someone asks you to give emotional or physical support?
  - What ideas do you have on how you could make more time or space to do the self-care activities that you enjoy? Share ideas with one another.

4. Before going onto the next step, invite a few pairs to share their ideas for making more time for self-care activities.
5. Now give everyone time to quietly write 'a contract for my own self-care'. Suggest they list their favourite self-care activities and then add the steps for making them happen. They can sign their contract and decorate it if they wish to.
6. Say: *So far you have been thinking about the things you can do to feel relaxed and happy. There are also supports that are available to you that are also part of good self-care. These are the supports we set up for this group in case you need to speak to someone, such as mentors, supervisors, teachers or Red Cross Red Crescent supports.* (Note to facilitators: Give information here about the specific support offered in your context).
7. Discuss in plenary the kinds of situations young peers engaged in PFA might need to talk about with a mentor or supervisor. What expectations do they have of this person?
8. Provide information about how support is offered in the context, including the contact details if this has not already been given.
9. Discuss setting up a buddy system too if this seems appropriate to the group (see box below).

### Buddy system

If the participants know each other and have developed positive relationships with each other, they could set up a buddy system amongst themselves. This could be in pairs or for the whole group, using a WhatsApp or Facebook private group, for example. As the facilitator, you can decide what is appropriate depending on the age of the group and the context. If the group has bonded and gets on well, you can explore ways for them to support each other as 'buddies' and keep in touch after the training has ended, either face-to-face, online, or both.

10. Close the session by summarising that good self-care includes personal strategies to keep happy and relaxed and linking with group strategies for support such as, for example, mentors or supervisors, buddy system, etc.

## Closing



30 minutes



To bring the training to a close.



To highlight individual learning achieved during the training; to encourage the participants by giving them feedback on positive qualities about themselves.



Paper or card plus a marker for each person.

1. Invite everyone to sit on chairs placed in a circle. Explain that the training is now coming to a close and thank everyone for their participation and engagement.
2. Remind everyone that learning about PFA as a young person unpacks what it means to be a compassionate helper. It strengthens skills in being a good listener and in offering practical help to someone without making that person dependent. It raises awareness about helpers needing to care for themselves too. And it provides support to each PFA young peer so that they do not have to carry the task of helping someone alone.
3. Invite participants to say one thing they have learned about themselves or about PFA during the two days of the training.
4. Now give everyone a piece of A4 paper or card (including the facilitators) and a marker and ask them to write their name on it. Now ask everyone to stand up and leave their paper or card on their chair. Ask everyone to circulate around the room, taking time to go to each chair and writing a response to the following question, 'What qualities does this person have as a good PFA peer supporter?' Ask them to write positive comments about the person under their name. For example, this could include being a good listener, their capacity for friendship and being caring, their creativity, their calming energy.
5. When everyone has finished, ask them to sit down again (on any chair). If they find themselves sitting on a chair with their own name on the card, ask them to swap it with another person.
6. Now call out the name of each participant in turn and invite the person with their card to hand it to them. As the person receives their card, invite everyone to clap.
7. Give the group a few minutes to read their card quietly. Ask them how they feel reading what has been written. Is anyone surprised? Invite a few participants to say how they feel.
8. Explain to the participants that all of these cards are important reminders of what makes them good PFA peer supporters. All these qualities are part of them and have also made the group special.
9. Ask everyone to stand up in a circle and walk in towards each other, with hands outstretched in front. When the circle is as small as it can be, ask them to grab a hand, bend forwards, count to three and then raise hands in the air and shout GOODBYE!

# Annexes



#ESPER GUHLE - JRC PS CENTRE

## Annex 1: Case studies for group work

Use these case studies as they are or adapt them to the context of the training group:

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A new student has joined your school. He is very quiet, and despite being introduced to everyone, he does not join others at lunchtime. One day you hear him crying in the bathroom. He tells you to leave him alone when you ask what is wrong.

---

Aila is your best friend. Her dog, Milo, has just died of old age. Aila and Milo have grown up together and she cannot remember life without him. She is very upset and cannot stop crying.

---

You were supposed to meet your classmate at 5 o'clock outside school. But at 5 o'clock he was nowhere to be seen. Later he phones you to say that he has fallen off his bike about five minutes from the school. He sounds very upset and can't describe exactly what has happened.

---

Your friend has a bruise on her arm. She tells you she fell down the stairs. The next time you see her, she has a bruise on her cheek. She tells you she banged into a door at home. The next time you see her she has a sore shoulder and can't move it. You press her for information, and after some time, she tells you that her father is hitting her. She begs you not to tell anyone and asks you to promise that you will keep it secret. She is frightened of what will happen if she tells anyone.

---

You and your friend have been friends for years and go walking together every weekend. One day on one of your walks, your friend tells you that he feels sad all the time, he cannot sleep, and feels like he has nothing to look forward to. He doesn't feel like eating, and considered cancelling the walk today, but didn't as he didn't want to let you down. This has been going on for a while but he has kept it secret from you.

---

You play basketball every week. One day, one of the players is called out of the training session to receive the news that his sister has been involved in a terrible accident. He is completely shocked and stunned. He doesn't know which hospital his sister has been taken to and his phone has no battery.

---

Your friend John's partner has broken up with him. He is devastated and has stopped joining in with social activities with you and your other friends. You have been to see him at his home, but he just sits and talks about his partner, wondering what went wrong and how he wishes it could have been different.

---

Someone is spreading sexually explicit rumours about one of your friends online, and also sending insulting messages to her. Everyone is talking about her, and the messages are being shared around to lots of people. Now, people are looking at her when she is walks around the school, and whispering about her and mocking her. She tells you she can't go on like this and would rather be dead than have to put up with this any longer. She tells you her life is torture and she cannot see a solution or a way out.

---

Anna's parents are getting a divorce. You and Anna have been friends for years and live next door to each other. Sometimes you can hear Anna's parents arguing through the wall. Anna is spending more and more time at your house. She is very quiet and sad.

## Annex 2: Giving and receiving feedback

There are points during the PFA training when participants give feedback to each other regarding work they have done. It is very important that facilitators create a culture of giving and receiving feedback amongst the group in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Depending on the group, it may be helpful to spend some time explaining how to do this in a positive way.

Feedback consists of comments in relation to what a person or group likes about something and where they see room for improvement. Giving feedback on the work of another group gives participants the opportunity to demonstrate their own learning and understanding of what they have experienced, and it also validates the work of the group who have presented.

Here are some key points for giving feedback:

- Give positive comments first. Before you make suggestions for change, state clearly the positive comments you have and what you liked.
- Refer to concrete examples when giving feedback. Be specific, this will help the group or individual to learn.
- Do not judge or assess – for example, do not say, “That was bad!” It is more helpful to describe the impact of the task or activity on you.
- Give support and suggestions for how a task or activity could be changed.

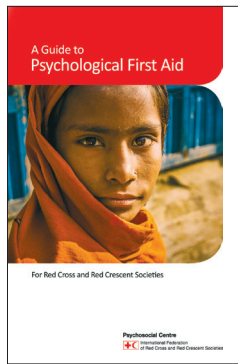
If participants are giving feedback to a group, the facilitators can provide guidance in how to do this, by asking prompt questions such as *So, can you suggest an alternative way to group 2? or What did you like about this presentation? or Can you tell group B why you are making that point?*

Receiving feedback can be challenging if it is not given carefully and in a respectful way. It can be experienced as hurtful or shaming. It is therefore very important that this aspect of the dynamics of the training is facilitated well too.

### Annex 3: Making a referral

Before the training begins, facilitators should fill out the template below, giving contact details with local information for the participants to take away after the training. The list of services on the left is not comprehensive. Use it as a starting point for identifying the services which are available in a specific area and make sure they are appropriate for the age group which will use them, for example, younger children may not need contact details of SGBV help and support.

Referral services	Contact details
Emergency services	
Police	
Fire	
Ambulance	
Child protection services	
Health services	
Counselling services for young people	
SGBV help and support	
LGBTQIA+ counselling services	



# Psychological First Aid

## For Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Psychological first aid is a simple, yet powerful way of helping someone in distress. It involves paying attention to the person’s reactions, active listening and if relevant, practical assistance to help address immediate problems and basic needs. Learning psychological first aid skills and understanding reactions to crises empowers helpers to help others and apply the same skills to their own lives.

Psychological First Aid for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has several parts that can be used separately or together. It includes an introductory guide, a short booklet and four training modules. There are training modules covering basic PFA skills, PFA for children, providing PFA in groups and supporting teams, as well as other PFA training materials including for training and learning about PFA online. All materials can be downloaded on [pscentre.org](http://pscentre.org).

We hope these materials will support staff and volunteers in their primary work of helping others. Our goal is to assist National Societies in offering the most effective psychosocial support possible to the people they serve.

