

COMMONHELPSOURCE · GROUP FACILITATOR SERIES

Emotional Regulation

In the Context of PTSD and Complex Trauma

A FACILITATOR SCRIPT FOR GROUP LEADERS

Group Meeting Script · Date: _____ · Facilitator: _____

ABOUT THIS SCRIPT

This script is designed to be read aloud by a group facilitator. The bold sections are your speaking text, read them directly to the group. Italic notes in parentheses are facilitator instructions, not for the group. You do not need to cover every question. Follow the energy in the room. Estimated session length: 45–60 minutes. This script is a facilitation aid only. It does not constitute clinical supervision, treatment planning, or a substitute for professional training or licensure.

THIS SESSION INCLUDES

- Opening: sets the tone and invites the group in
- Today's Focus: psychoeducation on the topic, written for the spoken voice
- Opening Question: a gentle entry point for discussion
- Group Discussion: 6 guided questions, progressively deeper
- Skill Spotlight: one practical, learnable tool
- Closing: a warm, grounded close

OPENING: READ ALOUD TO OPEN THE GROUP

Good [morning / afternoon / evening], everyone. I'm glad you're here. Before we get started, I just want to say, showing up is not always easy. Whatever brought you through that door today, this is a space where you don't have to have it all figured out. None of us do. Today we're going to spend some time talking about emotional regulation, and specifically, how it connects to the experience of living with PTSD and Complex Trauma. Let's get into it.

TODAY'S FOCUS: READ TO THE GROUP

(Speak slowly and naturally. Read this as a conversation, not a presentation.)

For some people who have lived through traumatic experiences, the nervous system can remain on high alert. Strong emotions—fear, anger, shame, or grief—may arrive quickly and feel difficult to manage. They may also show up around reminders of what happened, including sights, sounds, thoughts, or situations.

That is not a personal failure. It can be part of a learned survival response that once helped a person get through danger. Even after danger has passed, the body may still react as though protection is needed.

Emotional regulation is the skill of being able to feel our feelings, even the big, overwhelming ones, without being controlled by them. It doesn't mean not feeling. It means building enough of a pause between the feeling and the reaction that we have a choice.

For some people in recovery, substance use may have become a way to get temporary relief from overwhelming feelings. Part of recovery can be practicing additional coping choices that support safety and long-term goals. These skills can be learned, practiced, and strengthened with support.

OPENING QUESTION: READ ALOUD, THEN PAUSE

(Give it real time. Silence is okay. Reflect back what you hear before moving on.)

"When you notice a strong emotion coming on, whether it's anger, fear, sadness, or something else, what does that feel like in your body before you even have a name for it?"

(Pause, let the group respond. Don't fill the silence. Normalize whatever comes up.)

GROUP DISCUSSION: READ EACH QUESTION AND ALLOW TIME FOR RESPONSES

(You don't have to use all six. Read the room and follow the energy.)

Let's dig a little deeper together. I'll read a few questions and we can take our time with each one. You can share or just listen, both are okay.

1. Can you think of a time when a strong emotion came on suddenly and you weren't sure where it came from? What happened in that moment?

(Pause, allow responses before continuing.)

2. What does 'being triggered' mean to you, and how is it different from just a regular bad mood?

(Pause, allow responses before continuing.)

3. What are some things, places, sounds, situations, or even people, that tend to bring up those big feelings for you?

(Pause, allow responses before continuing.)

4. Have you ever tried anything to help yourself come back to the present when emotions were running high? What worked, even a little?

(Pause, allow responses before continuing.)

5. What makes it hard to reach for a healthy coping skill in the moment when you're overwhelmed?

(Pause, allow responses before continuing.)

6. If you could give someone one piece of advice about living with trauma and strong emotions without losing yourself, what would it be?

(Pause, allow responses before continuing.)

SKILL SPOTLIGHT: OPTIONAL: READ IF TIME ALLOWS

(Introduce the skill, explain it, then offer to practice together if the group is interested.)

SKILL SPOTLIGHT | Grounding: The 5-4-3-2-1 Method

When you feel overwhelmed, this technique can help bring you back to the present moment. Name five things you can see right now. Four things you can physically touch. Three things you can hear. Two things you can smell. One thing you can taste. The exercise directs attention to concrete details in the present. If any step feels uncomfortable or inaccessible, skip it, adapt it, or choose another grounding practice. We can practice it together right now if the group wants to.

CLOSING: READ ALOUD TO CLOSE THE GROUP

What we talked about today, trauma, strong emotions, what it takes to stay regulated, this is some of the hardest work a person can do. I want you to know I see it. Every person in this room who showed up today is doing that work. The goal isn't to never feel overwhelmed. The goal is to know that when you are, you have more tools than you used to. And you have people around you who understand. Thank you for being here.

Thank you for being here today. Take care of yourselves.