

Seeking Support



Cultivating Resilience

Activity

Prepared by: Root Cuthbertson 2020. Text adapted from Claire Milne 2018.

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There are several ways groups can cultivate resilience -- the ability to adapt to uncertainty or turbulence. One valuable way is by seeking and getting support for individuals and groups to maintain their well-being. This guide provides some suggestions about seeking support, a few activities to try, and some discussion questions.

Why Seek Support?

Many individuals working in groups find they can maintain their effectiveness, creativity, and satisfaction by actively seeking and getting support. This can be an important ingredient in enhancing individual wellbeing, and catalysing personal development. Groups can also seek support to find more resilient and regenerative ways of working together.

- Working with a group can be fantastic as well as challenging, frustrating, and exhausting. Burnout and conflict are very real possibilities (see [Burnout to Balance](#), see [Re-Framing Conflict](#)). Seeking support is one way to address tensions – either with other group members, with an overwhelming workload, or with an aspect of the group culture.
- Many Transition groups are addressing large societal issues, and progress toward tangible goals can feel slow. This can give rise to common emotions like anger, frustration, hopelessness, sadness, or fear. Individuals who seek support with their emotions often find them more bearable (see [Making Space for Uncomfortable Emotions](#)).
- Group leaders in positions of authority with many responsibilities often experience stress. Without support for this stress, leaders' behaviours, words, and actions can affect the group negatively. Leaders who seek support set an example of self-care, helping to normalise this in the group culture.
- Groups can seek support for members to feel more enlivened and empowered in the group environment. Sometimes an external group facilitator can provide support for inclusion and deeper reflection, helping everyone's voice to be heard, including quieter people's.



- Many groups which have developed a culture of urgency can put pressure on members to achieve goals too fast or in an unhealthy way. Groups like this can seek support to slow down fast-paced or overly full meetings, and reduce the amount of emotionally-charged conversations (see [Burnout to Balance](#), see [Transition in Group Culture](#)).
- Seeking support can be an act of vulnerability. [Researcher Brené Brown](#) has been exploring the power of vulnerability to transform individuals, groups, and society. The admission that support is needed can reveal that an individual or a group is imperfect, subject to human 'weaknesses,' and can not 'go-it-alone.' Vulnerability can highlight a reliance on others or an interdependence, which is at the heart of collaborative group culture and group resilience.

Types of Support

For Individuals:

- One-to-one support from friends or family members who are willing to listen. Clarify whether you want them to simply listen, not offering solutions or ideas about fixing anything - or if you are seeking their advice, experience, top tips, and problem-solving.
- Peer-to-peer support with another person with similar interests. Explore how to best support each other, whether through simply listening or more active coaching (see [Guide - Mentoring](#)).
- One-to-one professional counselling, mentoring, coaching, or supervision. Transition Town Totnes has a [Mentoring Scheme](#) for local counsellors, mentors, coaches, and therapists to offer their professional time to Transitioners seeking support.

For Groups:

- A group of people from different Transition projects comparing their experiences and supporting each other, such as ['Macy Mondays.'](#)
- A designated meeting time for your group to focus on personal topics. Try sharing feelings about celebrations and successes, challenges or tensions, and including appreciations and gratitude (see [Making Space for Uncomfortable Emotions](#)).
- Inviting an external group facilitator to attend a few meetings and to offer specialised support for your group's dynamics, process, governance, or culture.



Not Seeking or Getting Support

There are many reasons why someone might avoid seeking support and not get enough. Typically, these are based on a personal history where seeking support was not encouraged, resulting in beliefs like:

- people in general do not deserve or need support, so neither does any specific individual.
- there will be bad consequences for seeking support.
- relationships based on support are somehow wrong.
- getting support, like earning money, involves a transaction.
- any form of self-care, like support, rest, or nourishment, is either wrong or best kept to a minimum.

Ideally your group can transition toward a culture where it feels better to seek and get support than not to (see [Transition in Group Culture](#)). Because this can involve disrupting behaviour habits or patterns, it can feel uncomfortable at first. Try allowing those who may be unused to seeking support some time to practise -- not getting it quite right and trying again. During this kind of transition, patience, kindness, and compassion often help.

Activity - 3 Ways

- In pairs, take it in turns to answer the question: *"What are 3 ways I like to feel support?"*
- Keep time so one person has 3 - 10 minutes to answer this question. Your partner will listen without responding, and write notes.
- Swap roles so the other person answers the same question, whilst your partner listens and writes notes.
- Thank your partner, and give each other your written notes.

Activity - Recommendations

In pairs, share a story about a time you tried to seek support. How did you know you needed support? How much time went by before you decided to seek support? Who did you approach? Was it easy or difficult? Why? Did you learn anything you might recommend to someone else seeking support? Make a list of top tips or things to avoid.

Activity - Role Models

In pairs, discuss: who in the past role-modelled for you what seeking support looks like? How did this affect how you feel about seeking support? When you seek support now, what adjustments might you make? Make a list of what you'd do the same, do differently, or do more.



Discussion Questions

As a whole group discuss:

- Why would someone not seek support? Make a list of obstacles, taboos, disincentives, social stigmas, or other barriers to seeking support. Has it been hard for you to seek support? Why or why not?
- In your experience, what has getting support looked like? After reviewing this guide, how do you now think about getting support?
- How much support are the individuals in your group getting? How do you know? How easy is it for someone in your group to say that they might need more support?
- How supported is your group as a whole? What are some types of support your group has or would like to have? What kinds of support do other groups like yours get? What support might help your group to collaborate better.

Related Resources

Self-Care series [01](#) [02](#) [03](#) [04](#) [05](#) [06](#)
[Burnout to Balance](#)
[Inquiry – Emotions](#)
[Knowing What I Feel](#)
[Making Space for Uncomfortable Emotions](#)
[Compassion for Challenging Behaviour](#)
[Sharing and Celebrating Failings](#)
[Re-Framing Conflict](#)

[Offering and Receiving Feedback](#)
[Effective Groups](#)
[Task-Process-Relationship](#)
[Transition in Group Culture](#)
[Working Together Well](#)
[Guide - Mentoring](#)
[Offering Appreciation and Gratitude](#)



References

[Brené Brown](#)
[Macy Mondays](#)
[Mentoring Scheme](#)

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