

FACT SHEET

Before Screening Ghosthunter

Prior to screening GHOSTHUNTER and discussing trauma and its impacts, it is important to note that abuse, neglect and violence are all prevalent. It is also important to be mindful that some people will have a close and personal experience of trauma. For this reason it is critical to create and maintain a safe space for participants.

We recommend these steps:

- Establishing a safe space for participants – at the commencement:
 - Acknowledge that thinking and talking about trauma can be difficult and ask participants to do what they need to take care of themselves
 - Suggest that participants can speak to the educator if they find the content and/or process difficult at any point
 - Make the point that we want people to have a safe learning environment
 - Given the prevalence of trauma a percentage of participants or their family or friends will have trauma histories.
 - Suggest to participants that this education session is not the optimal space for sharing details of personal stories both for the safety of themselves and others
 - State that this is an educational session and not a therapeutic group



GHOSTHUNTER



blue knot
foundation

National Centre of Excellence
for Complex Trauma

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- To support cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, acknowledge country and the Traditional Owners of the land on which you are meeting.
 - The specific clan groups can be named if the Traditional Owners are recognised in law via a Native Title determination and by Indigenous people in this location
 - An acknowledgement of “Elders past, present and future and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people present today” is recommended
 - In the Torres Strait region, 18 island-based communities and 2 mainland communities at Seisia and Bamaga, Northern Peninsula area, Cape York, Qld it is common for significant workshops/events to also have an opening prayer given by a Torres Strait Islander Elder/participant or religious office bearer, if in attendance. At these workshops/events a prayer is also often given to bless the food/catering for these events.
 - A formal Welcome to Country is given at an event/activity is a fee-for-service in recognition of the local Elder and their community. This should be negotiated with the relevant community and Elder/Elders.
- Provide a written Trigger Warning e.g. GHOSTHUNTER contains occasional course language and presents themes related to sexual assault, child abuse, domestic and family violence, and suicide.

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- Provide a written list of Specialist Support Services. The following services provide support, advice, and can debrief professionals working in responding to child abuse, sexual assault, domestic and family violence and providing crisis support:
 - **Blue Knot Foundation** is a national specialist service which provides over-the-phone counselling, information and support for adult survivors of childhood trauma and abuse. Their Helpline operates Monday – Sunday 9am to 5pm on 1300 657 380.
 - **1800RESPECT** is a national counselling helpline that offers support and information around domestic violence and sexual assault 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 1800 737 732.
 - **Lifeline Australia** provides 24 hours a day, 7 days a week crisis support on 13 11 14.
 - **Kids Helpline** provides 24 hours a day, 7 days a week phone and online counselling service for ages 5 to 25 on 1800 55 1800.
- As we discuss this material, it may be helpful to assume that some people will have personal knowledge and expertise about abuse and violence. A statement like the one which follows can help acknowledge this experience and normalize it. This can help minimise the risk of survivors in the room feeling stigmatized, isolated and alone:
 - “We know that child abuse and other traumas in Australia are prevalent. Given this, I wish to acknowledge the personal experience we may have in the room. As we go explore issues that the film raises together please consider that many of us may have some understanding of childhood trauma, either directly or through someone they know.”
- In respecting this statement, it is important to then be consistent with language and reflections. In talking about survivors’ experiences, it is vital to not pathologize, judge, “other,” or “them” people who are trauma survivors.

A Guide to Discussions

Common Participant Reactions	Reason this Happens	Suggested Strategies
Participants may become distracted and/or disengaged.	These are 'normal' responses to working with complex traumatic content, and are to be expected.	You may wish to normalise this with a statement such as: "As we explore this content together, we are going to be talking about traumatic events, violence and child abuse. None of these events should happen to anyone, but they do. You may need to take a break at times as you may find this process and the content upsetting or concerning. This is completely understandable. It's also normal to become distracted and disengaged. You might find you want to leave the room, or check your phone. All of that is okay. Try to notice if and when you do become upset, disengaged or distracted, and do what you need to take good care of yourself."
Participants may want "to do" things to "fix" the problem.	This is another normal response to working with complex traumatic content.	Strategies around this could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging that people may feel this way • Providing participants with a relevant activity • Validating the value of engaging in a learning and reflective process such as the session, in its own right

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Common Participant Reactions	Reason this Happens	Suggested Strategies
Participants might make inappropriate or derogatory comments about the people in GHOSTHUNTER, or survivors in general.	Sometimes when participants are distancing themselves from the content, and processing it, they may respond like this. People who have their own experience of trauma might be additionally triggered at times. Others might make a comment without realising that it is derogatory.	<p>You may wish to acknowledge the statement but not validate it. For example you could say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “That is certainly an interesting point” or “That is an alternative perspective.” <p>If the comment is clearly derogatory, gently suggest another way by saying something like: “It is important for everyone here to feel safe. Using words which either intentionally or unintentionally put someone down can be invalidating. Another way is to...” It is also important to also bring the group back to a constructive discussion to help restore safety for all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an educator and if the comment is not clearly derogatory, it might be preferable to not respond directly but rather say: “What do we all think about this idea that...?” • If you felt it was appropriate to respond to the comment more directly, you might say: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A different perspective is to consider...”

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Common Participant Reactions	Reason this Happens	Suggested Strategies
Participants may speak about their own experiences.	It has often been a concern that talking about childhood trauma provides a forum in which to reveal personal experiences. In an educational environment and not a therapeutic one, the safety of the person disclosing and those in the group is a priority at all times. Understandably many educators don't feel equipped to hold the space in which a person is disclosing, and may be concerned about participants' safety when someone shares – both for that person and the group.	<p>An introductory containment statement such as this may be helpful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In acknowledging that some people in any room may have a personal experience of childhood trauma, including in this room, I want to tell you that—at no point— will I be asking you to share your personal experiences. If it sounds as though I have asked a question along those lines, it was not intended in that way. Everyone's personal experiences are very important. However in this forum we can't give you and your personal story the time and space it deserves.”

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Common Participant Reactions	Reason this Happens	Suggested Strategies
Participants may speak about their own experiences.	Participants may be concerned that they will be expected to discuss their own experiences, and this may make them less likely to participate in discussions or could be distressing for them.	<p>It is important to be consistent and not ask participants to disclose their own experiences. If a participant does disclose in the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Thank you for sharing your personal experience with us.” • At an opportune time, perhaps check in with the participant, thank them again for their contribution, and check if there is any further support they would like. Refer them to the support services if they would like you to. Reassure the person that different people access support services at different times in their lives. <p>If a participant does disclose to you directly (without the group present):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to what they have to say without distraction. • Take a non-judgmental attitude; validate the person. • Do what you can to make them feel as safe as possible.

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Participants may speak about their own experiences (cont.)	Participants may be concerned that they will be expected to discuss their own experiences, and this may make them less likely to participate in discussions or could be distressing for them.	<p>Don't cut them short; however discourage a focus on distressing detail (e.g., the specifics of the abuse or trauma):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank them for sharing their personal expertise with you. • Ask if they are feeling supported and how they might best feel supported. • Refer them to support service.
As the session ends, the general "feeling" in the room might be flat.	Given the content relates to trauma, it is expected that participants may feel flat. It may be a display of their empathy.	<p>Acknowledging the empathy that is in the room may be validating and empowering.</p> <p>If you are concerned that focusing on childhood trauma might negatively impact participants' mood in general, you may wish to introduce an activity which, fosters hope and possibility without negating the existing feelings. Videos of infants receiving hearing aids or eye glasses for the first time can also feel restorative (as these videos often show moments of positive care-giver attachment).</p>

Teaching About Trauma

Common Participant Reactions	Reason this Happens	Suggested Strategies
Lack of containment at the end of the session.	Given the nature of the content, this is another 'normal' response.	At the close of each class/session, you may wish to conduct a quick Group Check In, and ask participants how they are feeling while validating their feelings. If it is a larger group, people might do this in pairs. You may also ask participants to write a sentence about how they are feeling (without asking them to share). This is another containment strategy.

Remember to take care of yourself, too!
You may wish to journal about your experiences,
debrief with trusted colleagues, call a helpline
for a professional debrief, engage in activities you enjoy,
or seek support.