Befriending Survivors of Torture
– Building a Web of Community Support

Participant’s Manual

A Manual for an Interactive Workshop

By

The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture
Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto
School of Social Work, York University

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Mandate

The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture aids survivors to overcome the lasting effects of torture and war. Working with the community, the Centre supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, advocates for their protection and integrity, and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families. The CCVT gives hope after the horror.

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Introduction

About the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture

The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture was founded by a multi-disciplinary group of volunteers. In the mid 1970s, Toronto physicians began to see torture survivors in their practices. Lawyers, social workers and community groups were also attending to survivors. The Canadian Centre for the Investigation and Prevention of Torture (CCIPT) was established in 1977 by a group of physicians, educators, and community activists associated with Amnesty International with the express purpose of providing a community based antidote to torture and its effects. The Centre was only the second such organization to be founded in a country of refugee asylum (in the previous year, the Rehabilitation Centre for Torture was instituted in Denmark.) From 1977 to 1983, CCIPT assisted torture survivors by means of a volunteer-driven program. Health professionals, lawyers and community-based volunteers established support networks of service and care.

Originally, CCIPT served refugee survivors from the Southern Cone of Latin America - from the military dictatorships in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. But, as the Central American Wars became more intense, refugees from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras also became members. Soon, CCIPT was seeing people from the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The operational definition began to expand to include those who were witnesses and/or victims of war and organized violence. Family and friends who lost a loved one to “disappearance” were included in the service. It was the traumatic effects of the experience that determined if the Centre could be of assistance to the survivor.

The Centre was originally conceived as a specialized service thought at the time to be required by a relatively small percentage of the total refugee population. But as time went on, the Centre began to receive people from Iran, South Africa, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan and, ultimately, from more than 90 of the world’s countries. Since its inception, the Centre has assisted more than 11,000 survivors from 99 countries. (In 1998-1999, the Centre registered 839 clients from a total of 60 countries). Because of the emerging awareness of torture as an ongoing problem of modernity, the CCIPT was formally incorporated in 1983. In 1988, the Centre’s name was changed to the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture. Clearly, sadly, the Centre would become a long-term project.

While physicians played a prominent role in founding the Centre, they did not create a clinic. From its inception, CCVT was planned to be a community model of care. This design corresponds with the recognition that the practice of torture is a social act that requires social response. Although the individual who has been victimized may require specialized medical and psychological treatment, this model recognizes that there are a variety of constituent factors that affect health and well-
being. It also takes into account the “ripple” effect that torture, organized violence and war has on individuals, families, the community and the larger social structure.

The volunteer “befriending” program was established to provide social support and to help establish links to the host community. The volunteer program was a core service that became more structured as it developed. Re-establishing the community link was determined to be vital for survivors. As Philip Berger explained in interviews, “People don’t necessarily need a doctor. They need someone to talk to.”

The Experience of CCVT

- Torture as a social problem and challenge to citizenship
- Requires a social and political response: a community development orientation
- A range of programs including Volunteer programs and among them the core Befriending Program.
- A diverse population is served
- Policy advocacy around immigration & human rights issues
- Participants in global human rights movements.

The Link Project

The CCVT is dedicated to a community orientation. Its Befriending Program, linking individual survivors with volunteers, is one of the cornerstones of the Centre’s settlement services. After years of experience, the Centre sought to conduct a self-study of the Befriending Program to document its successful practices of befriending and to enhance the features of the program. A participatory research project entitled “Link-by-Link: Creating Community with Survivors of Torture” was developed, involving the Centre and University researchers on an equal footing at all stages. Training sessions and accompanying materials reflect the central findings and philosophy of the research.

Experiencing torture, war and other forms of organized violence results in deep disruption of human ties. The fundamental issue in refugee resettlement is how to reconstruct with refugees the reality and capacity for interpersonal ties and how to foster an alternative web of relations in the host community. We argue that the host community is equally challenged to make room for the newcomers. Volunteers and other linking agents are therefore essential to the possibility of building community with survivors. This, of course, is highly intricate work. Understanding how ties can
be rebuilt at the interpersonal and community levels and fostering these are crucially important. A feature of CCVT’s Befriending Program is that it fosters interpersonal ties as an objective in itself and as a mediating link between survivors and the host community.

It is with this dual focus in mind that we set out to conduct our project. A research ethics protocol developed by CCVT stated that any inquiry conducted at the Centre would have to be congruent with this participatory approach, requiring input from all constituencies in the project in its design. An Advisory Committee was set up to receive input from clients, volunteers and staff members. Focus groups were held with volunteers, clients and staff. Small group interviews with a number of befriending pairs and staff member were complemented by individual interviews.

A second principle was that gathering knowledge should not elicit traumatic materials from the participants. Therefore research would not address past events and traumatic material directly. As to the training activities, we wished to avoid discussing the nature of trauma in a way that could be wounding. Instead, the project was geared from the outset to address the present and focus on the disruptive effects of traumatic events. The past must be addressed as filtered through the present.

Knowledge came to be seen as a transformative process. More than an activity of “collecting knowledge”, the project challenged the researchers’ understanding and involved a process of learning and transformation through dialogue. The same principle was adhered to in the way training was to be conducted. A key issue was to avoid ways of learning which induce distancing. We wanted training to rest on the processing of knowledge as developed in actual encounters. The format and accompanying materials therefore invite reflective and active learning. To achieve this, a number of exercises were designed to be personally engaging and reflective. Evocative material and imagery were used. Several exercises were explicitly built on sharing knowledge around selected topics. An implication was that each workshop could be tailored in a unique way, based on the participants and the training circumstances.

Building befriending relations concerns the personal and collective realms. Training must address the social nature of interpersonal ties as well as how they extend at the organizational level and move into the community. Training contents are clustered around this idea of ever-widening webs of relations: starting from the nature and dynamics of the befriending relationship between the client and volunteer, to organizational support for the construction and maintenance of those ties (particularly through sustained staff involvement and other means in the environment of the organization), to an expanding web of relations into the community at large.
The Manual -

The range of contents is clustered around central themes: the Befriending Relationship, How Befriending is sustained by the Staff and by the Environment of the Agency, and the broader Web of Relations in the Community. Each thematic area includes several issues or modules for discussion. The first part of the workshop is highly reflective and builds toward the second part which is more pragmatically oriented.

This manual provides the background, rationale, objectives, and the major concepts of the workshop. It presents a range of possible exercises, experiences and issues for discussion related to key topics; and offers ample space for note taking. This workshop is not necessarily a linear process. The order of the themes will depend on which issues arise in the course of discussion and when they are dealt with in the group exercises.

Each workshop will benefit from adapting the exercise formats and sequences to the group’s responses.

A couple of guiding thoughts

Trauma and the Present -

The relationship between past and present is a complex and a sensitive one. We wish to avoid discussing the nature of trauma in a way that could be wounding or alternatively that could induce a distancing from the learning. The past is addressed as it is filtered through the present. That is, we will focus on the effects of past trauma as it influences the present.

Personal and Collective -

Learnings are about personal and collective processes. We wish to maintain the view of the collective throughout our considerations of the personal

Learnings will not be handed out as prescriptive lines of action, but instead will be explored as principles of understanding and their ramifications: the kinds of implications, dilemmas and challenges that they present to us in our various functions.
Cluster I: Bridging Distances
Forming Relationships
Cluster 1: Bridging Distances, Forming Relationships

Module 1. Introductions

Ways of Learning

This workshop developed out of our project and it is based both on what we learned and how we learned it. Our learning took place through extensive dialogues with staff, volunteers and survivors. The participants were also divided into groups of varying sizes, enabling them to discuss the issues in greater depth.

In this workshop, we will be learning through dialogues - among staff, volunteers and if possible with people who have used settlement services. We will draw on your learnings and experiences, the experiences of the staff, volunteers and clients of CCVT and the learnings of our research project. Through dialogue and reflection we will seek to expand our shared understanding of what we can do to support survivors of torture and war as they settle in our communities.

Learnings start from our experiences and our “wanting to know”, involving mind, feelings and values. This is a somewhat different approach than discussing “expectations”. 
Module 2. On Friendship

Exercise The challenges and rewards of friendship

Turn to your neighbor, share challenging or rewarding moments of a friendship in your life.

Module 3. Forming relationships

At the CCVT, the befriending experience is recognized as a learning experience between the befriender and the survivor. Neither person really knows the other initially, as both come from different worlds and have experienced (sometimes radically) different realities. The formation of a trusting relationship between the two requires that both parties possess a natural desire to learn about the experiences and thoughts of the other. There is a distance there, and an encounter. Befriending starts as an encounter between persons who step out of different worlds, and bring different experiences. **Befriending is not just a service, it is foremost an encounter.**

Exercise 1 Visualization

Everyone takes a chair and sits alone somewhere in the room. Now breathe deeply and slowly and reflect or visualize what you thought about this workshop. What led you to come today to the workshop, was there any hesitation, dread, anticipation, etc.? What did you think on the way here (words, images), what issues did you find yourself curious about? Take a final breath, come out of the visualization.
Notes

Exercise 2  Challenging Previous Conceptions

*In groups of three*

Tell a story about an experience in a relationship with a survivor of torture, or a similar experience where you learned something different about someone that changed the way you understood the experience, or an experience you might imagine, which challenged your previous conceptions. For example, what unfounded assumptions could a befriender have about their friend? Explore these misconceptions.

Exercise 3  Introducing

The group will be divided into 3: A, B, C. C should find an A and a B and introduce them to each other. After a 5-minute conversation, reflect on the following questions:

1. How is this experience similar or different to the first time you met a friend?
2. How does it relate to meeting a friend through another friend?
3. What is it like to be the linking person, to bring the other 2 together?

The befriending relationship is a constructed relationship. It is also a real relationship.

This is an encounter more than a service.
Cluster II: Connecting in the Shadow of the Eclipse
Cluster II: Connecting in the Shadow of the Eclipse

Module 1. Connections and Disconnections

“we come from fractured communities”

Befriending is about connections and disconnections with different experiences. This module introduces a core theme of the befriending relationship, which has a social origin.

Exercise

Previous connections and disconnections from larger communities

Consider drawings done by clients in the Art Therapy Program at CCVT. The clients were asked to do two tasks: 1) draw a tree as a self-portrait, 2) draw a bridge connecting the present and past, indicate which direction the traffic is going and to locate themselves somewhere in the picture.

1. Name what you can imagine as types of disconnections survivors experienced; social, political context and interpersonal. What kinds of ties were broken and what ties remained?

2. How do the broken ties affect the new connections being built?
The Pull Between the Past and Present

Exercise 1  Sharing as both author and witness

In pairs

Make two drawings, a story of an event, situation, or image of the past and a story of an event, situation or image of the present and tell them to your partner.

Then overlay your past/present images on tracing paper

What is the link between the past and present?
Notes

Song of a small bird

Sitting in loneliness I hide
From the sounds of agony
From the bombs
From the missiles
From the pollution
From the hatred
From the corruption
From the greed and ambition
That encircles the womb of our mother earth.

Sitting on a dusty branch
Of arid forgetfulness
I try to whistle to the four winds
That are hidden in the sacred mountains of the gods
Invaded by miserable conquest.

I sense the fragrant note of the orchid that was
The sweet kiss of the wind, cooling
The warm hand of my assassinated friend
And the harsh steps of the boot that persecuted us.
Even now… the dangers of the night beats in our dreams.
Like ants we escape to different horizons
Each one with his leaf, searching for shelter
Towards some corner where peace and harmony is cherished.

Suddenly, in the colourful distance
We find our house under a maple tree.
Its sweetness soothes our fatigue
And the extravagant brush of spring changes our appearance
Our spirits open like the mouths of tulips
Pure, clear, contemplative, colourful
We walk without horizons, singing our hopes
We are a garden of a thousand loves and hues
That serenades
From different pains
Where the sweet maple grows
Gifting us with many tastes
Recreating our illusions and future labours

Hernan Astudillo (translated from Spanish)
In the Shadow of the Eclipse

An eclipse is produced by an alien object being interposed between the source of light and the object to be illuminated. In many traditional cultures this represents a calamity full of foreboding and danger. The torture experience and all that goes along with it eclipses all that went before, relationships, trust, autonomy, etc. and spells imminent danger for future experiences in relationships and communities.

For the “outsider” who enters into a relationship with the victim of torture, this part of the other’s life remains eclipsed, partly because of the survivor’s silence and inability and/or unwillingness to “tell” about it, and partly because the outsider can never truly experience that part, or indeed any part of another’s life.

We recognize that befrienders are more than just friends to survivors. The shadow challenges humanity at a deep level, and we are positioned differently as friends and befrienders in relation to the eclipse experience.
Notes

Exercise  Experiencing the Eclipse

The object blocking the source of light in the room represents the client’s story. As part of your group, move in and out of that shadow. Consider the following statements:

1. The source of light is the entire life of the person.
2. The object blocking the light is the experience of torture.
3. The shadow is the projection of the effects of the experience of torture.
4. There is a sense of the unknowable in the shadow.
5. The shadow exists in the present.

Volunteers, service providers stand at the edge of the eclipse, in a different place in relation to the eclipse.

Form 2 groups representing staff, and volunteers. Imagine you are a staff person or a volunteer.

Question:
Imagine how far or how close you want to move into the shadow and light of the eclipse? How do you imagine yourself? Do you move there?

Some staff/volunteers have also had this experience.
Notes

Module 2. Dynamics of Communicating and Relating

Telling and listening

Explore the reciprocal dynamic of telling and listening in the befriending relationship.

**Exercise  Telling and Listening: Transmitting the Story**

An object is passed on to you. You are receiving the story of a friend. You take it. You look at it, you feel its weight, then you pass it on to another person.

How do you treat the story? How did you receive it? How did you transmit it? How do you tell, how do you listen?

Discuss holding on to the weight, what it is like to pass it on to someone else, to unburden oneself, and perhaps not wanting to burden the other.

Consider the experience of being heard and not being heard.
Notes

Learnings

The power of being listened to, being heard

Reflect on the power of being listened to, of being heard, and of being believed.

Friends, befrienders share experiences.

- The power of being listened to, and believed.
- Caring and listening for connecting.
- Telling/listening and trust.
- Torture as shame and silence, of being disbelieved.

Responding to surprise telling

- When friend talks and surprises you, they are telling something that is powerful, do you need to do something?

  “and you are driving south down University Ave and the person is telling you what happened to them”

Befrienders can feel embarrassed, and unsure as to how to respond. The befriender may feel her/his response is not powerful enough. Discuss what the teller may be expecting.
Notes

Not wanting to talk

Friend does not talk about past events

- Friend may not want to tell. Some persons will not talk about past events.
- They haven’t told their close friends. Not talking is a way of coping.
- It is ok for the person not to talk, and not to be pressured to talk.
- Befriender may be concerned that s/he is not able to establish trust
- It takes time to be ready to talk. Going at the pace of the friend.
- Other times, there is not enough comfort and trust

The friend does not talk about events – refusing to pass on the burden

- The friend does not want to burden befriender. It may be a way of protecting the befriender.
- The friend fears transmitting the burden, like poison.

The friend is silent, the befriender doubts authenticity

When the friend does not talk at all about past events, and seems to be mostly in the present, and seems to enjoy life, the befriender may doubt that the authenticity of the events. That is problematic. S/he may come to doubt the reality of the other person’s life. This feeds into disbelief about torture, and overall mistrust.
Module 3. Giving, Receiving and Mutuality

Befriending is more than a service relationship in which one gives and the other receives. In the project, participants have told us how comfort and trust develop out of reciprocity, like in friendships. Accepting giving gestures from friends. There are different ways in which persons in a befriending relationship can give to each other.

Participants have also told us that when befriending relations were one-sided, and where they could not reciprocate, they did not continue.

Exercise Mutuality

*Large group discussion*

1. What does the role of mutuality play in these relations?
2. How does it feel when it is not mutual?
3. How do you give back to your friend?
4. How do you receive from your friend?
5. What do you give to your friends?

What is so important about mutuality?
Learnings

Giving and Mutual Sharing

Mutuality is a core feature of friendly relationships including befriending

**Mutuality can take many forms.**

Share experiences about mutual sharing you might have experienced in befriending relationships:

- There are small and large sharings, daily moments, having coffee together, doing pleasurable activities you both enjoy.
- Sharing an interest (movies, music, nature, hobby, culture, cooking, etc.)
- Sharing dreams, visions, hopes, spirituality.
- Giving and receiving advice and suggestions; problem-solving.
- Avoid the “saviour” attitude

Giving, Being Available and Setting Boundaries

Friends and befriencers struggle with balancing the wish to respond with the need to set boundaries

**Sharing experiences:**
Befrienders may want to create a safe place, and to be available at any time for their friend. This may be reinforced by the agency’s message that they should be there for their friend. Befrienders may end up feeling burdened and wondering how to set limits without offending their friend. It is important to make the relationship safe for the befriender.
Notes

“I do more than I would with my friends”
I have felt I cannot say “no”

What happens when it is not mutual and the befriender feels overburdened?

Consider role definitions. For example, is it appropriate to become an employer?
Cluster III: Culture
Cluster III: Culture

This cluster explores the importance of culture in forming relationships and connections (and disconnections). The interaction and influence of cross cultural experiences - nobody remains the same. Culture is a common thread that runs through all issues, a way of being, and a way of learning. Culture shapes how we are in relationships.

This is an overarching theme that relates to all aspects of the belief system, ideology, idiom and meaning that inform a person’s or group’s patterns of expression and behaviour, as they are perceived by themselves and by others. In this respect, everyone is a bearer and an observer of culture, and every relationship and every organization and community is an encounter of cultures. The particular experience of immigration brings this dimension to the fore – often in a superficial way. And often we fail to recognize the power of culture in organizing a person’s conceptual, emotional and social world – and the significance and the implications of the encounter of cultures in interpersonal, organizational and community processes – even when there appears to be no difference.

Culture can be a source of misunderstanding and disconnection as well as a source of learning and connection. At times, this cultural distance can be too great to be bridged. Attempts to impose culture in the befriending relationship can also be alienating.
### Notes

#### Exercise: Culture and Relationships

In small groups of 1 or 2 triads, share what your cultural experiences have taught you about forming relationships and creating communities. What are your cultural patterns of invitations, friendships, doing things together?

Explore cultural misunderstandings you have experienced in a befriending relationship.

Identify yourself as coming from cultures that are collectively or individually oriented. What is it like to encounter someone from the opposite orientation? What is the impact of deep community conflicts on the formation of relationships among people of the same cultural or ethnic group? What can be done to bridge cultural differences particularly around relationship formation? Think of moments, experiences of sharing of culture and/or of misunderstanding that sharing.

Share your findings around culture with the larger group.
Notes

Life can be seen as a journey, a river. One of the friends in the advisory group spoke about the need for his volunteer to be on a journey too. His volunteer needed to be someone who was open, aware, and reflective, who wants to explore and understand, and who seeks out new experiences. He also used the imagery of a river – a sense of constant motion, movement, sometimes fast tumbling over rocks forming rapids, sometimes quiet gathering in pools. A distinction between traveling by river or road on a journey is made by the Canadian poet Michael Crummey. An excerpt from his poem *Rivers/Roads* reads:

A highway wants to own the landscape,
it sections prairies into neat squares
swallows mile after mile of countryside
to connect the dots of cities and towns,
to make sense of things.

A river is less opinionated
less predictable
it never argues with gravity
its history is a series of delicate negotiations
with
geography and time.

A road and a river reflects the difference between a straight line and a flow. A river is not linear or rigid, it does not cut straight through the rocks, it moves with the terrain, at times slowly, other times swiftly. It does not force down resistance, rather, it acknowledges and accommodates it. As the Austrian artist Hundertwasser has stated:

The straight line is Godless
The straight line is the only Non-CREATIVE line
The straight line does not suit man as the image of God
Cluster IV: The Agency as a Holding Environment, a Community Safe House
We now move to the larger circle of the agency and what sustains the befriending relationship in the agency. We will explore how we create a sense of community within our own organizations to support survivors and volunteer befrienders.

In our research, survivors referred to CCVT as a “safe house”. It is a place where they find support, recognition and solidarity. Survivors do not have to explain themselves all the time. Staff understand the impact of the torture experience and develop programs that are appropriate to the needs of survivors. The staff provide a “holding environment” that sustains and supports newcomers particularly during the early settlement period. It is a relationship that goes beyond service. The development of trust and the formation of personal connections are critical to the survivor as they strive to establish themselves in the larger community.

Staff also are important to the volunteer befrienders. Volunteers rely on staff for ongoing support and guidance as they befriend survivors. The recruitment, screening and training of volunteers is a crucial activity of the agency. Together, staff and volunteers form a circle of solidarity for survivors.

Ideally, the agency/safe house has many doors – there are several ways of entering and leaving. Different programs are available for different needs. The agency promotes the development of a sense of community, of connections, and helps survivors to enter into the larger community. In this cluster, we will examine our own practices and explore strategies for change.
Module 1. Creating Communities Within Our Agencies

This exercise explores how we create a sense of community within our agencies.

**Exercise ** How do we create a Safe House?

Break into groups of five or six. Each group has a piece of flip chart paper and coloured markers.

Using the metaphor of the safe house, or holding hands, or another image. How does your agency work to counter the experience of betrayal? How do you create a safe environment that encourages people to come back? How do you create an agency that promotes community and solidarity?

Consider the philosophy of your organization, its structure and paths of communication.

**Discussion:**

How do we create community within our agencies? How do we promote solidarity, and connection? How do we help those who have experienced betrayal form relationships that will help to sustain them in the larger community?

As a group, hang up your picture and share it with the larger group.
Learnings

CCVT strategies include

- Community development, forming relationships and connections among staff, volunteers and users of the service.
- It is an approach that is non-hierarchical, respects diversity and difference; facilitates social connections e.g. shared coffee space/time, frequent social gatherings, use of support groups.
- Staff reflect the diversity of the clients and the many languages that are spoken.
- Volunteers are integrated into the service system.
- There are many connections with other resources in the community.
Module 2. The Relationship of the Agency and Volunteer

This section examines how volunteers are recruited, trained and supported using the experiences of CCVT and the participating agencies.

Befriending is a constructed relationship that is built over time, and can achieve different types of qualities.

Screening, matching and initial training are ways of preparing for the relationship, and creating safe conditions.

Recruiting, Screening and Training of Volunteers

Exercise 1  Lifelines

This exercise helps you explore your personal histories and remember what influenced you to work with survivors of torture and/or war. Draw a line across the centre of a blank page representing the journey from past to present. Locate events and experiences that contributed towards working with survivors either as a staff member or volunteer.

Personal sharing:
Share your lifelines and stories. If you are not comfortable sharing your stories, take a few minutes for personal reflection.
Exercise 2  Practices

In groups of 2 triads that include volunteers and staff who have worked with volunteers, discuss your practices of recruiting, screening and training of volunteers.

Given our learnings of the needs of survivors, what are the implications for our practices in recruiting, screening and training of volunteers? What are you doing that is working? What would you like to see done differently?
Learnings

Recruiting

- Word of mouth
- Advertising
- Use of volunteer agencies.
- Information Technology
- How do volunteers find organizations?

Screening

Examine volunteers’ motivations and abilities for developing relationships with survivors of torture. What do volunteers bring from their own journey?

Interview

- Capacity for self reflection.
- Human rights values and social justice orientation.
- Cross-cultural background and experience, how we view others, prejudices that might get in the way.
- Interest in assisting in the immigration/settlement process.
- Personal experience of trauma, and how that is managed?
- Desire to assist others.
- Inspiration and background of giving through religious or other communities.
- Openness and ability to improvise in shifting situations
- Readiness and ability to commit to the relationship

References

Volunteer contracts: agency/volunteer expectations
Other- specific to the agency
Notes

Initial training

Initial training is used to prepare the volunteer and also as a way of screening

- Orientation
- Preparation for the first meeting
- Making resources available
- Dealing with issues of timing, i.e. *when* should I use resources?
- Confidentiality

Matching, Sustaining and Monitoring

Ongoing training and support meetings provide opportunities for volunteers to meet each other, share experiences and facilitate the orientation of new volunteers. Volunteers can participate in identifying training needs and facilitating training sessions.

**Exercise 3  Agency Support**

*In groups of 2 triads*

As a volunteer, talk about your experience, your fears, anxieties and expectations on entering a befriending relationship. What support did you want and receive from the agency? What should agencies do to support volunteers?

As a staff member, talk about your own anxieties and expectations about matching the “right” volunteer for your client.

Share and record your findings on flip chart paper. As a group, contribute one item to each list.
Learnings

Matching

Before entering the relationship

- Wanting background knowledge; different countries, different circumstances vs. the requirement to maintain confidentiality
- Matching for connection and matching for safety
- Matching on the basis of gender.
- Looking for similar interests – so the befriender and friend can do ‘sharing’ (also compatible personalities)
- This is not just a service. You need to know more about them as people.

Entering the relationship

- How to prepare each for the encounter
- Turning to staff; what types of questions often asked, what concerns are raised.
- Feelings of anticipation or anxiety about the meeting (on all sides – client, volunteer and staff)
- How to create safe conditions for meeting
Sustaining and Monitoring the Relationship

Staff are important as a resource to both volunteer and client in the ongoing befriending relationship, particularly during crises.

- Individual relations with staff reporting
- Continuity in contact with the agency and its staff
- Bureaucratic reporting as conflict with relationship, “you don’t keep files on a friendship”

- Crisis situations
- Staff as cultural broker
- Training as a way of monitoring and support by reminding volunteers that they are part of a larger web.
Cluster V: Creating a Web of Relationships
Multiple connections best support survivors as they settle in their new community. These connections form a “web” of relationships that become the social support system of the newcomer. This “safety net” has many points of connection: family, friends, health providers, legal and social services, schools and religious communities. The agency helps the survivor to build connections one by one into a flexible and string web of support. Agency staff and volunteers form a bridge that links the survivor to their new community. In this cluster, we will identify the community contacts and services that support the survivor and explore how these relationships are developed and maintained.

To better serve survivors and to advocate for the end of torture, the web is expanded around the globe to other organizations and agencies committed to universal human rights and social justice. Participants consider strategies of coalition building and policy advocacy locally, nationally and internationally.
Creating the web: The survivor and the family

Befriending often includes more than the individual person. It is more than a one-to-one relationship. It can involve the greater family: sharing, and normalizing through family activities which includes both children and adults.

Befriending relations may include overlapping networks of friendships, but not always. There may be limitations to these networks. It has become evident that the actual number of connections is not that important relative to the most important element which is the transfer of trust to new relationships.

Exercise 1  Sharing networks

Explore the possibilities and limitations to these sharing networks.

Exercise 2  Accompaniment and encounters with institutions

In 1 or 2 triads, explore the process of going outside the agency, trace the process of establishing links between the survivor and the larger community, including institutions, through the befriending relationship, perhaps with the help of staff.

- Positive experiences, what happened to make it positive?
- Obstacles, negative experiences such as bureaucratic responses
- Ways of handling: friend, volunteer, home agency, outside organizations, advocacy (volunteers call on their own network of relations and resources)
Learnings

Accompaniment

Accompaniment is a collective, step-by-step act of support. It is also a means of socialization for newcomers, showing the way, how to act.

Encounters and institutions

The meaning of institutions in their country of origin and affects the newcomer’s expectations and patterns of relating and/or avoiding institutional contact.

It is also important to note how contacts with institutions in the host country resonate from earlier experiences with institutions and how these contacts diverge from earlier experiences.

Immigration procedures are important for the person’s identity and sense of well-being; the refugee hearing is often heralded as a turning-point event.

Accompaniment is a means of learning through the back door for volunteers - discovering obstacles in institutions, procedures and attitudes; learning how institutions relate to newcomers; gaining a new understanding of institutional responses.
Module 2. Mapping the Web of the Agency Relationship

Exercise  Making Connections

Work in 1 or 2 triads; a staff member and volunteer should be in each group. Talk about the importance of the connections outside the agency and how these connections are formed and maintained. On flip charts, draw the web of your outside connections with your agency at the centre.

Explore how the web then grows, expanding as connections are formed. The links that they have and the relative strength of these relationships could be portrayed as a solid line for a good relationship, a dotted line for a weaker relationship. Agencies or resources that are wanted but not yet secured could also be located on the sheet. What do we do to develop these relationships; i.e., who will make the contact? Is there a role for volunteers? Board members? Advocacy?

Share your images and experiences with the larger group. The positive experiences: what helps connections happen. The negative experiences: the obstacles that are identified. Include experiences and suggestions on ways of handling different relationships, the process of building trustworthy relationships.

In your day-to-day work, what are the resources or services you draw on in the community? What are the resources and services that you would like to see?

From accompaniment and witnessing to advocacy
Module 3. Expanding the Web - Advocacy

The image of the web continues and is expanded to global proportions/linkages. Spiders will also spin webs collectively filling a whole field. This image is particularly useful in thinking of global social movements for human rights and social justice. Settlement services in a community, in the province, in the country and around the world can connect, be part of the larger web. Webs connect, transmit and are sensitive to touch. Movement in one part of a web will be felt throughout.

This module examines the importance of organizational connections, locally and around the world as part of the process of better serving survivors and being part of a larger social movement for human rights. It also explores the strategies of coalition building and policy advocacy.

**Exercise Expanding the web**

As a group of staff/volunteers from your respective agencies, expand the web of your organization - current and desired linkages - and present your advocacy activities and opportunities.

1. What needs were identified in the Befriending relationship – resources, education, mediation, policy?
2. What would you want to see differently?

The web would include links and activities at three levels:

1. Local
2. National
3. International
Cluster VI: Implications for Training, Learning and Networking
Notes

Cluster VI: Implications for Training and Learning and Networking

An evaluation of the experience to provide input for further development of the workshop format.

**Exercise: Going Forward**

In a triad, reflect on moments of the workshop that were significant for you. Which of those moments would you take with you and how would it inform your work, how you interact in the relationship, in the organization, in the community?

This is a work in progress. What suggestions or changes do you have for this workshop? What could be strengthened?

What further learnings are required? Explore how you are and/or want to become part of the growing network of individuals and organizations committed to supporting survivors and advocating for human rights and social justice.

Share your findings with the larger group and record them on flip chart paper.
CCVT VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

NAME________________________________  ADDRESS_________________________________________
CITY_______________________  POSTAL CODE________
HOME PHONE_______________ BUS______________

LANGUAGES; SPEAK Fluently___________________________________________________________

HAVE YOU WORKED WITH REFUGEES BEFORE: YES ___ NO___

PLEASE LIST ANY EXPERIENCE WHICH YOU FEEL IS RELEVANT
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT CCVT?
WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US?

AREAS OF INTEREST (please circle one or more areas which you feel you have time to dedicate to)
   1- BEFRIENDING (offering ongoing personal support for a survivor)
   2- INTERPRETING/ESCORTING (usually week days)
   3- ESL TUTOR/COMPUTER TUTOR (ONE-ON-ONE (weekly session)
   4- PUBLIC EDUCATION (information tables, school info. Sessions, newsletter)
   5- SOCIAL EVENTS (holiday parties, picnic, volunteer nights etc.)
   6- VOLUNTEER ADVISORY COMMITTEE (Projects to improve volunteer program)
   7- OFFICE
   8- OTHER (Please list other area of interest/ways in which you would like to contribute)


APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY HOURS OF YOUR TIME CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE?_____________

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
EDUCATION__________________________________________PAID WORK EXPERIENCE

VOLUNTEER WORK EXPERIENCE:
SPECIAL INTERESTS OR HOBBIES: _________________________________________________________

FOR OFFICE USE:
Orientation: _________
Reference: _________
Placement: _________
REFERENCES

Dear

_____________________ has applied to serve as a Volunteer at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, an agency which provides services for refugees who have survived torture. Board policy requires that we ask each volunteer for three references; one from family, one from business, and one other. We are asking you to provide one such reference.

Would you please complete the attached form, and return it as soon as possible to the CCVT? Since our volunteers constitute a major component of the work of our Centre, we really are grateful for your taking time to help us by providing some further information on a prospective volunteer. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (416) 363-1066.

Sincerely,

Volunteer Coordinator

__________________________________________________________________________________________

REFERENCES FOR: ________________________________

I have know the above for __________________________ in the following capacity: (please describe briefly)
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

In my experience, this person’s outstanding qualities are:
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

I believe your agency will benefit from association with this person because:
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

SIGNED __________________________  PLEASE PRINT NAME _________________________
DATE     ___________________
VOLUNTEER CONTRACT

NAME OF VOLUNTEER: __________________________________________

As a volunteer with the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, I understand that the survivor-volunteer relationship should be based on friendship, equal partnership and shared participation in activities. Participation by both the volunteer and the survivor is voluntary and either have the right to terminate the relationship at any time after discussing it with the Volunteer Coordinator.

As a volunteer with CCVT I undertake the following responsibilities:

1. I will respect and work within the mandate of CCVT.
2. I will maintain a commitment to the program for one year.
3. I will attend at least two orientation sessions prior to the introduction of my new friend.
4. I will attend monthly meetings and other educational workshops.
5. I will maintain weekly contact with my new friend and I will communicate with the Volunteer Coordinator at least once a month to keep her or him updated regarding the progress.
6. I will not use this relationship to promote any religious or political beliefs that I may hold nor will I use this relationship for any personal financial gain.
7. I will at all times respect the right to privacy of the individual or family with whom I am match. I will treat any information shared with me with confidence, and not disclose such information without due authority.

_______________________________________
SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER

_______________________________________
WITNESS

DATE: _________________________________
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I, the undersigned, do willingly promise to hold in confidence all matters that come to my attention in the performance of my duties at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, including information from and about clients and matters regarding colleagues.

I will respect the privacy of the people whom I serve and confer only with those designated as my supervisors and/or administrators.

Signed___________________________________

Dated ___________________________________

Witness ___________________________________

Name of Supervisor _________________________
Volunteers are a vital part of the CCVT and its programs.

As part of the professional services component, volunteers can act as escorts and interpreters, accompanying clients to appointments with physicians, specialists, lawyers and social service agencies.

Volunteers are also important in the ESL program. They allow students to learn and practice in small groups or one-on-one with a volunteer tutor. They assist in the Drop-in as well as with general office support.

One of the most important roles of the volunteer is to act as a befriender to a survivor. Volunteers are paired with a CCVT client and provide ongoing personal, non-professional support. They can offer to clients basic information and life skills and general assistance to help the survivor adjust to life in a new country.

Many survivors of torture do not trust officials and agencies as a result of their experiences. The CCVT volunteer acts as a friend, assisting when requested and connects the survivor to the larger community of which they are a part.

Volunteers are in regular contact with CCVT staff with any questions or problems. There are regular meetings of volunteers, in which information and experiences are shared. Seminars and professional development sessions are also offered for volunteers.

There are many ways you can get involved with the CCVT.

- **Consider becoming a Volunteer.**
- If you are a member of a community group or professional organization or agency concerned and interested in survivors of torture and their particular needs, **ask the CCVT to speak to your group.**
- If you see survivors of torture in your work as a doctor, lawyer or social worker for instance, **contact the CCVT for information about torture and its effects. Consider becoming part of the professional services network of the centre.**
- If you are a survivor of torture, the CCVT can help you **access the services and resources** you may need and want. Please call (416) 363-1066

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**I WANT TO HELP!**

**THE WORK OF THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR VICTIMS OF TERROR**

Name: _______________________
Address: ________________________
Phone: ________________________

I am enclosing my tax deductible donation of:

☐ $20  ☐ $35  ☐ $50  ☐ $150  ☐ $250
☐ Other $________________

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**Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture**

194 Jarvis Street, 2nd Floor
Toronto, ON M5B 2B7

TEL: (416) 363-1066
FAX: (416) 363-2122

Internet: www.icomm.ca/ccvt
e-mail: mabai@ccvt.org

Charitable Registration No. 133327908RR0001
WHO WE SERVE

CCVT is a non-profit, registered charitable organization. It was incorporated in 1983.

The Centre’s mandate is to respond to the continuing needs unique to survivors of torture and their families in Canada and abroad, and to increase public awareness in Canada and abroad of torture and its effects.

Torture is not a modern day phenomenon; it has been practiced almost from the beginning of civilization. Torture is now illegal under both national and international law. There are United Nations agreements dealing specifically with torture. (The United Nations Convention Against Torture came into force June 26, 1987). Even so, modern day torture is widespread and Amnesty International estimated there are more than 90 countries in the world that systematically practice torture. Some of the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, such as memory loss, lack of concentration, distrust of strangers and fear of groups and authority figures, for instance, are barriers to learning a new language.

Survivors of torture experience monumental difficulties when rebuilding their lives in Canada. The CCVT exists to help survivors of torture overcome these obstacles.

SERVICES

COORDINATED PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
The CCVT provides assessment, settlement Counselling and Crisis Intervention. The centre also coordinates a medical network of experienced physicians, psychiatrists and other specialists. Referrals of survivors of torture are accepted and the staff will arrange for a client assessment. They will also refer the client for appropriate medical attention and/or treatment and counselling. There is a reciprocal referral service for legal and social assistance when required.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAM
The ESL program and its curriculum are especially designed for CCVT clients.

It is difficult to learn a new language as an adult, to adjust to a different culture and deal with the everyday problems of a newcomer to Canada. The survivor of torture faces additional unique problems. Some of the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, such as memory loss, lack of concentration, distrust of strangers and fear of groups and authority figures, for instance, are barriers to learning a new language.

ESL classes at the centre are small and informal. They are in comfortable, familiar surroundings and have a calm, non-threatening atmosphere. A literacy class has been added to the program.

SUPPORT AND GROUP PROGRAMS
CCVT group programs include a Drop-in Program, which assists survivors in accessing services available in Toronto.

The CCVT has developed Mutual Support Groups and Art Therapy sessions for survivors. Bilingual staff members, members of the medical group of the centre, as well as public health nurses are some of the resources available to the group.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND INFORMATION
The public education program of the CCVT responds to the numerous requests the centre receives for information, workshops and consultations on torture and its aftermath. Last year, the CCVT made more than 250 presentations and conducted training sessions and workshops at the local, national and international level. Speakers’ information and resource materials are available from the Centre.

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS
CCVT is associated with a coalition of Centres which support victims of violence, repression and torture, in exile or in their own countries.

CCVT supports the efforts of the Documentation and Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims in Ethiopia and the family counselling Centre in Sri Lanka.
Legacies of Torture And Organized Violence

PHYSICAL

- pain, transitory and chronic
- broken bones and joint pain
- haematomas
- damaged teeth and gums
- cardiopulmonary disorders
- infertility and sterility
- impotence
- gastro-intestinal disorders
- hearing impairment
- damage to internal organs
- gynaecological abnormalities
- damaged motor apparatus
- spinal damage and injury to vertebrae
- scar tissue
- hypertension
- bladder infection and urinary tract disorder
- amputated body parts
- paralysis and/or numbness
- sexual disorder
- headaches

PSYCHOLOGICAL

- anxiety
- depression
- guilt, including survivor guilt
- paranoia and suspiciousness
- phobias
- sleep disturbances, including insomnia and nightmares
- impaired memory, loss of memory
- hypersensitivity
- concentration difficulties
- fear of authority
- irritability
- panic attacks
- suicidal feelings, suicide attempts
- nervousness
- flashbacks and intrusive thoughts
- expectation of a foreshortened future
- diminished ability to experience intense ranges of emotion
- diminished expectations of life and its possibilities
- excessive concern for children, relatives and friends
- decreased self-esteem
- introversion
- lethargy
- generalized fear
- sorrow and grief
POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

PTSD is a designation of the American Psychiatric Association applied in cases when people encounter problems resulting from an experience which is normally regarded as being outside of the range of ordinary human circumstances. While the diagnosis carries with it its own set of clinical implications, it can be a useful way to understand that people who respond normally to abnormal situations are not medically ill.

If a person has experienced an event that is outside the range of usual human experience and that would be remarkably distressing to almost anyone, the effects of such trauma can be seen to be "normal" in relation to the overwhelming event. It is "normal" to have traumatic effects after enduring torture. It is the practice of torture that is aberrant, not the responses of its victims.

PTSD characteristics may include:

- changes in the way people feel
- changes in consciousness
- change in relations with others
- change in belief systems and values
According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (1994), in order for PTSD to be diagnosed, an individual must exhibit symptoms in each of the following three areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ONE INTRUSIVE SYMPTOM</th>
<th>e.g. persistent dreams of the traumatic event; flashback episodes; intense distress when exposed to reminders of the trauma; inability to think of anything else</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TWO HYPERAROUSAL SYMPTOMS</td>
<td>e.g. sleep disorders; irritability or bursts of anger; hypervigilance; concentration difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THREE AVOIDANCE SYMPTOMS</td>
<td>e.g. feelings of detachment; restricted range of affect; sense of foreshortened future; inability to recall important aspects of the trauma; persistent avoidance of situations or matters associated with the traumatic event</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Resources Available From CCVT

CCVT Information Kit       No Charge
CCVT Volunteer’s Guide     No Charge
CCVT Monthly Bulletin      No Charge

**Community Support for Survivors of Torture** (book) $25

**Torture and Second Language Acquisition** (manual) $20

**In Our Midst: Educational Aid to Work with Survivors of Torture and Organized Violence** (book) $35

**War Is Not A Game** – video (32 min.) and workbook $35

**Window of Hope: Coming to Terms with Torture** – video (21 min.) $20