

GSA Network

Community Care Curriculum

Introduction

Community care is fundamental to sustaining ourselves, our networks, and our movement, especially for Trans, Queer, and Two-Spirit youth and communities. This toolkit contains train-the-trainer curriculum that you can use to lead workshops on the meaning of community care and mutual aid, the many ways we practice community care, and building skills to support showing up for our communities.

How To Use This Resource

This resource is designed to be flexible and accessible for a variety of audiences. Here are some suggestions for effectively utilizing this resource.

Target Age Range

This workshop is suitable for youth and young adults, ideally ages 13 to 25. It can be adapted for younger participants with modifications to the language and activities to ensure understanding and engagement.

Ability Considerations

Physical Movement: Participants may need to engage in some physical activities, such as small group discussions, role-playing scenarios, or movement exercises related to safety strategies. Ensure that activities can accommodate varying mobility levels. Offer alternatives for those who may not be able to move in specific ways.

Emotional Safety: Be mindful of participants' emotional well-being, as discussions around community crisis and disaster may evoke strong feelings. Create a supportive environment where participants feel comfortable sharing and expressing themselves.

As a facilitator, it can be helpful to validate feelings that come up, or pause and invite the group to take a deep grounding breath during harder moments.

Format Options

In-Person Workshops: The resource is designed to facilitate in-person discussions and activities, allowing for interactive engagement and immediate feedback.

Virtual Adaptation: This resource can also be adapted for virtual use. Utilize online platforms for group discussions and activities, ensuring all materials are accessible digitally. Consider using breakout rooms for smaller discussions and online tools (like polls or collaborative documents) to engage participants actively.

Preparation and Materials

Review the curriculum timeline and objectives beforehand to tailor the content to your specific audience and context. Gather necessary materials, such as worksheets and visual aids, in advance to facilitate a smooth workshop experience.

Facilitator Role

As a facilitator, create an inclusive and engaging environment. Encourage participation from all voices, ensuring that each participant feels valued and heard. Be prepared to adapt activities and discussions based on the needs of your group.

Follow Up

After the workshop, consider providing resources for further learning and opportunities for participants to stay engaged in advocacy and activism. Encourage them to share their experiences and continue the conversation in their communities.

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"Mutual aid projects let us practice meeting our own and each other's needs, based in shared commitments to dignity, care, and justice."

Dean Spade

Workshop Curriculum: Community Care

This one hour and thirty minute training will explore community care, mutual aid, and how we can show up for one another.

Duration	One hour and thirty minutes
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build an understanding of how to define mutual aid and community care• Learn about some examples of mutual aid and community care• Identify and gather tools for how you individually want to participate in responding in crisis and offering support and care
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Facilitator's Guide<input type="checkbox"/> Printed handouts of Examples section and Readiness Checklist
Accessibility	Dedicated space for small group discussions, with breakout rooms or designated areas (for in-person gatherings) to allow everyone to spread out comfortably.
Key Activities	<p>Opening (15 min): Review objectives and agenda. Check-in question about personal experiences with support.</p> <p>Definitions (25 min): Share definitions of community care and mutual aid. Explore examples of mutual aid and discuss.</p> <p>Self Reflection (20 min): Reflect on individual capacity and community resources.</p> <p>Support Your Peers (25 min): Values and skills to guide you in supporting others.</p> <p>Closing (5 min): Reflect on commitments you can make to community care.</p>

Agenda

Estimated Time

Activity and Topic

15 mins

OPENING

Review objectives and agenda.

Remind your group of your existing group agreements, or take a moment to create a few.

~Ask the Group: Think of a time you have come together as a group to help someone. What did you do? Or, if you haven't been, imagine a situation in which you are. Focus on how you all supported, not necessarily what happened. As *always, feel free to use a different check in question that works better for your group, if you'd like.*

Discuss in small groups for 5 minutes. Come back together to share a couple of responses with the large group for 5 minutes.

25 mins

DEFINITIONS (5 minutes)

~Ask the Group: What comes to mind when you think of community care? Mutual aid? Have folks call out words that come to mind.

[Facilitator Preparation: As a second options, rather than people calling out words, you can prepare a whiteboard/chart paper with the two phrases, and ask folks to put words on sticky notes and put them up.]

→ Definitions

Mutual aid is a community's collective effort to support one another and meet each other's material needs, driven by an understanding that existing systems often fall short. It is an organizing tool that embodies the radical act of caring for one another while striving to create meaningful change in the world. Mutual aid is not charity, or to get something in return. It is a reflection of reciprocity, not a one-way interaction.

Community care is the intentional practice of offering compassion, support, and resources to benefit others, both within and outside one's immediate circle. It is grounded in mutual aid, collective responsibility, and the cultivation of togetherness, recognizing that our well-being is intertwined with the welfare of others.

→ Examples (5 minutes)

[Facilitator Preparation: You can present these examples in various ways: as a worksheet and have folks read individually, create slides and read through each one, or print larger copies and put them up as a gallery walk.]

Mutual aid can vary in size and scope for every community - mutual aid can happen in large organizations or smaller groups such as a group of neighbors cooking each other dinner on different days of the week or when they're going through a rough time.

Black Panther's Free Breakfast Program

The Panthers started the Free Breakfast Program because hunger and poverty made it difficult for many poor Black children to learn in school. The program was initiated at St. Augustine's Church in Oakland in January 1969. By 1971, at least 36 cities had a breakfast program. Unfortunately, this program was considered a threat by the FBI, who then increased their efforts to destroy the Black Panther Party, which unfortunately also broke up the Free Breakfast Program. In cooptation of the radical actions of feeding children for free, Congress authorized expansion of the program to all public schools in 1975, around the same time of dismantling of the Free Breakfast Program.

Further Reading: <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/black-panther-party-s-free-breakfast-program-1969-1980/>, <https://www.history.com/news/free-school-breakfast-black-panther-party>

The Jane Collective

The Jane Collective was a healthcare initiative and a political education project that provided abortion and reproductive healthcare solutions before they were legally accessible to thousands of women and brought attention to the many unsafe illegal abortions done in Chicago. It is estimated that from 1969 to 1973 the Jane Collective provided nearly twelve thousand abortions. They were active from the late 1960s until the 1973 passing of Roe v. Wade.

Further Reading: <https://embryo.asu.edu/pages/jane-collective-1969-1973>

Pansy Collective

Pansy Collective is an all-trans artist collective based in Western North Carolina. After Hurricane Helene hit in 2024, they fundraised and distributed \$150,000. Long before FEMA had any presence in Western North Carolina after Hurricane Helene, Pansy Collective distributed six truckloads, two trailers, and a box truck filled with non-perishable food, water, cleaning supplies, diapers, gas and gas cans, toiletries, batteries, and hygiene products to various hubs, including remote mountain locations where residents were unable to leave.

Further Reading: <https://www.them.us/story/queer-appalachian-mutual-aid-helene-gay-queer-djs-faster-than-national-guard-fema-asheville-western-north-carolina>

Circle City Mutual Aid

CCMA is an autonomous collective of Indianapolis residents dedicated to sharing skills + resources, building community through outreach, and developing relationships with their neighbors. Every Sunday they come together to share in

the community and offer immediate basic needs for free. No barriers, no questions asked.

Further Reading: <https://ccma.community>

[Facilitator Preparation: *Do you have an example from your community? Add it!]*

Discussion (15 minutes)

[Facilitator Preparation: *If you have a larger group, adjust for this by picking two questions that resonate with you out of the below three questions.]*

1. Any observations and reactions to these examples? Do any images, feelings, ideas come to mind?
2. Now that you're seeing the definition, have you engaged in mutual aid before?
 - a. **~Tell the Group:** Mutual aid can be a big project, or a group of a few friends. Folks might already be doing this and not think of it as mutual aid.
3. What are ways that you've seen communities do the job of care when local power structures fall short?

20 mins

SELF REFLECTION

~Tell the Group: Let's start with ourselves -how can we be ready to care for others? It's important to practice self-awareness -are you ready and do you have capacity to actively listen and hold what this person might share?

Journaling (5 minutes)

Ask participants to reflect on the following prompts and write down their thoughts and reflections in response.

1. How do you know you have capacity and energy to support someone?
2. What methods do you use to support others? For example, scheduling a time to check in on them over phone or via text, offering to drop off something they need, or putting money together with friends to send a small gift card.
3. What are your non-negotiables, or things you cannot support with? These might be areas of trauma you have experienced, or something else.

Readiness Checklist (5 minutes)

~Tell the Group: As we build our own understanding and learn our own capacity, this readiness checklist can help.

Ask the group to review the checklist with a partner. This handout is in the next section of the toolkit.

Mapping Your Community (10 minutes)

[Facilitator Preparation: *Create a different way for folks to engage! You can prepare these questions on pieces of chart paper and invite them to write*

responses, and then review other's responses by doing a gallery walk, and taking a moment to walk around and read what others wrote.]

- How do you identify when you need help? What support might you need? (Knowing that this can change over time)
- Where and who can you go to for different kinds of support?
 - Examples: People you can ask (teachers, cousin, etc), communities you are a part of or know of (youth center, spiritual space, farmers market)

Write and put up responses for 5 minutes. Read other's responses and then invite a couple of reactions to what folks read for 5 minutes.

25 mins

SUPPORTING YOUR PEERS

~**Tell the Group:** An important part of this work is being able to hold space for someone who is having a hard time. It can also be a challenge to do this! Let's talk about some tools that can make it easier to grow into this skill.

Person-centered values (5 minutes)

- Meet people where they are at and respect their self-determination - they are the expert in their situation.
- There is no one size fits all solution and no perfect formula - have tools at the ready and adapt your response to people's needs.
- Create resources outside of yourself - no one person can hold or fix everything. One person shouldn't be carrying all the weight. Remember that support for support people is important, too!
- Many situations don't have immediate solutions. Sometimes it's just about being a presence with your friend during a hard time.

Principles of Communication (5 minutes)

- Be non-judgemental in your communication. Be curious without making assumptions. Every person can need something different, or see a situation differently.
- Get consent from the person to provide support
 - Ask if someone just wants to be heard, or if they also want to hear advice, observations, or feedback
- Offer specific forms of support and/or what types of support you're up for instead of generalizing
 - + offer examples 'I can come by with food or text you a reminder to take your meds, if that feels helpful' instead of just 'call me if you need me'

Practice (15 minutes)

Pair Practice (5 minutes): Get into pairs, and pick one of the below practice situations below (or make up your own!). Decide your roles: Person A (support

person) and Person B (someone who may need support). Practice what you might say. Don't forget to switch roles halfway through!

Example One: A friend is a bit withdrawn, and you're not sure what's going on, but you think something might be wrong.

Example Two : Your friend has been having a hard time at home. You know the situation is ongoing, but want to check in and see how they're doing today.

Tip: Set a timer for two and a half minutes, and prompt the group when it's time to switch.

Large group discussion (10 minutes): How did it feel to try on these roles? What was said that felt useful?

5 mins

CLOSING

What's one commitment you can make to caring for your community? What's one commitment you can make to caring for yourself?

Tip: Depending on your group size, share as a large group (this takes longer with a bigger group), or ask folks to share with a partner.

Readiness Checklist

This checklist will help you assess if you have capacity to support someone else.

Pause and Reflect on Your Feelings

Take a moment to assess how you're feeling emotionally. Ask yourself questions like:

- Am I feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or calm and grounded?
- Do I have the mental space to offer support?

Check Your Physical State

Tune into your body by asking:

- Am I well-rested, hydrated, and nourished?
- Do I feel physically strong enough to take on additional responsibilities?

Assess Your Current Commitments

Review what's already on your plate. Consider:

- Do I have time to dedicate without neglecting my own needs or obligations?
- Am I balancing school, work, or other responsibilities?

Set Boundaries and Communicate

Be honest with yourself about what you can realistically offer. If necessary, communicate your limitations to the person in need:

- Can I listen and provide emotional support, without attempting to problem-solve?
- Have I shared what time of time I can commit?

Evaluate Your Motivation

Ask yourself why you want to help and if it aligns with your capacity:

- Am I helping because I truly want to, or do I feel pressured?
- How will helping this person affect my mental state?

Consider Past Experiences

Reflect on similar situations where you've helped someone:

- How did it impact you then?

- Are there lessons you can apply to your current situation?
-

Ask for Help if Needed

If you realize your capacity is limited, consider reaching out to a trusted adult, peer, or professional who can step in. Remember, it's okay to acknowledge when you're not in a position to fully support someone.

By taking these steps, you can ensure you are supporting others while also maintaining your own well-being.

Resource List

Here is a list of resource for your reference, in case you need to identify support.

LGBTQ+ Resources

- [The Trevor Project -Suicide Prevention for LGBTQ+ Young People](#)
- [Imi](#)
- [Trans and Queer Wellness Resources –GSA Network](#)
- [Trans Wellness Zine PDF \(ourtranstruth.org\)](#)
- [Q Chat Space | Home](#)

Hotlines

- [24/7 Suicide Hotline for LGBTQ Youth -We're here for you Now \(thetrevorproject.org\)](#)
- [Home - Trans Lifeline](#)
- [LGBT National Youth Talkline -LGBT National Help Center \(lgbthotline.org\)](#)
- [NAMI HelpLine | NAMI](#)
- [Call BlackLine — Crisis Call Line](#)

Mental Health Resources

- [Home - National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network \(nqttcn.com\)](#)
- [BEAM: Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective](#)
- [Homepage -Latinx Therapists Action Network \(ltan.org\)](#)
- [Video Resource Library | NAMI](#)
- [Home –Asian Mental Health Collective \(asianmhc.org\)](#)

Further Reading on Mutual Aid

- [What is Mutual Aid?](#)
- [Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis \(and the Next\) by Dean Spade](#)
- [Pod mapping](#)

Contact

For further information, please reach out to us at starschool@gsanetwork.org

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