

MUTUAL AID DISASTER RELIEF

WORKSHOP FACILITATION GUIDE



“WE ARE NOT AFRAID OF RUINS.

OUR OPPOSITION MIGHT BLAST AND RUIN ITS OWN WORLD
BEFORE IT LEAVES THE STAGE OF HISTORY...

WE CARRY A NEW WORLD HERE, IN OUR HEARTS.
THAT WORLD IS GROWING IN THIS MINUTE.”

- BUENAVENTURA DURRUTI -

INTRODUCTION

Mutual Aid Disaster Relief was founded to amplify and support community's abilities to meet their own needs during and after disasters through a d.i.y. ethic rooted in solidarity. To get a pulse on community aspirations and challenges, to build deeper relationships with the ever-growing network, and to share insights and lessons learned from past iterations of grassroots d.i.y. humanitarian aid projects, we engaged in a 30 city training tour in Spring 2018.

On our tour, we divided our visit into two events. The first was an evening of storytelling, accompanied by Beehive Collective graphics, to illustrate 500+ years of colonization on this continent, a central disaster in which all environmental and industrial calamities are rooted, with historic and contemporary examples of disaster capitalism and mutual aid.

The second event was an interactive, popular education-style workshop that challenged community members to join us in difficult conversations while also inviting participation and welcoming all experience levels through fun games and fast-paced exercises.

This guide breaks down the flow of the interactive portion. It is important to note that this is a living document. What you are reading now is a *rough draft*, and it is only one version of how this could be done. The current tour team is making many changes as they work with different groups and integrate lessons and feedback, and surely you have lots of good ideas too - lets keep developing this curriculum together! We hope that this template for facilitators can spark conversations about mutual aid survival programs unique to your local area; its just getting the conversation started.

Whether future disasters become focal points for the powerful to entrench policies that uphold their privilege and political, social, and economic control or whether they become opportunities to build more empowered and resilient individuals and communities that strengthen our movements for radical social change is up to us and the choices we make.

We are super excited to make this freely available. Please give feedback at MutualAidDisasterRelief@gmail.com or madr_training_tours@riseup.net, and please share! Let's turn the tide against disaster capitalism.

With love,

Mutual Aid Disaster Relief Training Working Group

HOSTING A WORKSHOP

tips for getting a good turnout

The program outlined in this packet is geared toward maximum accessibility and can be used by different communities in different ways. Whether you have an established group that is interested in getting involved in disaster relief, want to build capacity for responding to disasters in your own community, or seek to meet and activate more folks concerned about these issues, this training can be a great starting place. It's a good idea to think about who your "target audience" is when you are thinking about hosting an event and consider how to adapt the program to their needs.

One of our beliefs is that there is a place for all of us in this work. Try to create a space that is welcoming to all. Make sure you have an accessible venue that can accommodate people's physical needs including folks with disabilities. It's good to choose a location that is familiar and comfortable. Consider providing food, interpretation or childcare if needed. Think about who you want to be there in making choices about the event, including scheduling. Are weekends good or bad? Do people work "9 to 5"s? Do people have time to do the whole training at once or do you need to make it a series? There's no "right" answer, only the answer that is right for your community.

The other key to a successful event is promotion! Advertise the event widely - this program is a really good way to meet new people with different perspectives. Conventional wisdom says that most people need to see/hear about the event *at least* 3+ times (preferably different media each time) in order to remember and make room for it in their schedule. That means flyers, newspapers, radio, email lists, and personal invitations - don't *just* make a facebook event and hope that the algorithm will do all the work for you. It takes a lot of work, so you should recruit a dedicated team.

We created a [handy promotion guide](#), based on successes during extensive touring with the Beehive Collective and other educational projects we have experienced. It too is a rough draft, and we hope to spruce it up with

some cute pics sometime later. But its full of useful tips. Please consult this info to help make a promotions plan at least one month before the event (2-3 months before, even better). Get yourself a promo team that is excited and eager to see a big turnout, and start spreading the word!

INTERSECTIONAL FACILITATION

an introduction

If you're new to facilitation, or want to brush up with a few tips, we've adapted some helpful advice from our friends at the [Anti-Oppressive Resource and Training Alliance \(AORTA\)](#). The "COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS" poster on page 16 is also inspired by their work, and will be a handy facilitators reference tool during the event.

Facilitation ensures that the group is empowered *as a whole*. This applies to facilitators as well as participants. This style of workshop is called "popular education," which means that everyone in the space is both teacher and learner. There shouldn't be power held *over*, but rather *with* the group.

BASIC ROLES OF A FACILITATOR

- Open up an accessible space that meets as many needs as possible. (i.e. , clearly labeled bathrooms, water, allergy safe and vegetarian food options if possible, interpreters if necessary, etc.)
- Lay out a simple agenda.
- Keep an eye on time and offer periodic check-ins.
- Help the group follow its agreements.
- Help keep the group conversation on topic and relevant. Prevent ramblings and tangents.
- Make suggestions and help the group come to the decisions that are best for the whole. Help people keep an eye on what's best for the group, rather than their personal preference.
- Occasionally summarize discussion and note key areas of agreement to help move forward.
- Finish large points on something short and easy; end with a good tone.
- Ensure that everyone gets to participate and share, not just those comfortable with speaking up.

- Keep track of whose talking and whose voices are being heard.
- Work to prevent any (conscious or unconscious) attempts by individuals to overpower the group as a whole. This mostly happens along class, race, and gender lines. (For example: a college-educated, white man may feel more inclined to speak over a less privileged, Latina woman if he isn't aware of the way he takes up space.)

WATCH OUT FOR RED FLAGS

- Individuals monopolizing conversation.
- Unhealthy, unchallenged, or unnamed power dynamics.
- People interrupting each other.
- People repeating or re-stating what others have said.
- Tone and body language: Do people look upset? Checked out? Bored? Angry? If you see this, check in with the group as a whole, or quietly with individuals.

SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION

Prepare to be bold and name oppressions within the space before they present themselves. Normalize a language of “calling in,” or gently recognizing when harmful habits appear, and offering alternatives to help people express themselves without ignoring or tokenizing others unique identities.

Oppression can happen at the individual level, institutionally, and culturally as well. It can be subtle, as in the nuances of language we do or do not use, or plain, like when some are excluded for their differences. None of us are perfect, and we all have a lot of trauma to unpack, but our goal should always be to address and reverse this violence along the lines of gender, race, class, age, ability, mental or physical health, legal status, documentation, education, housing or job security, and lived experience.

Example: there are more than two gender identifications. To help facilitate an inclusive space, be intentional about asking folks what pronouns apply to them. Some may use feminine terms, others may use neutral they/them/theirs. Make space for people to become more comfortable and familiar with recognizing these. Avoid placing the emotional labor of explaining gender's importance on marginalized people who regularly have to explain themselves to others. Always remember to speak *with*, and not *for*.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Not setting clear boundaries for yourself as facilitator, getting pushed around by the group.
- Not having a co-facilitator when you need one, or forgetting to get additional support like a notetaker, logistics coordinator, setup help, etc.
- Not taking a break when YOU need one. (When the facilitator needs a break, it can be to everyone's advantage to have a break!)
- Meeting for too long a time period without food, water, and/or breaks.
- Rushing the group. (Sometimes going slower takes less time in the long run).
- Not leaving time and space for people's feelings.
- Becoming inflexible or unwilling to adapt the agenda; be ready to meet the group's evolving needs.

NOTE-TAKING

Notes that no one can read is the most common mistake of them all! It is highly recommended that anyone who will be scribing notes gets some practice writing legibly and BIG. Remember that some participants may be 20+ feet away from your notes; typically you will want to write letters at least 2 inches high, or maybe even bigger with large groups.

This is also helpful for getting through activities and discussions efficiently. Most of the popcorn-style conversations should be kept within recommended times - each one of these topics *could* lead to lengthy nuanced dialogue, but this workshop, a 101-level survey of many different areas of knowledge, is not the best place for that. Most of these conversations should elicit between 15-40 responses, depending on complexity of topics. Less is more! Moving along and understanding how different concepts are connected is often much more educational than exhaustive listing.

Facilitation and transitions will go smoothly if you decide in advance the maximum number of responses you want to record, then write big enough that by the time you reach that number, the page is completely full. Then, just move on to the next segment, easily and naturally. If you write small, and the page never fills up, it is more likely to get stuck circling through the same stuff, rather than quickly moving on to the next concept and expanding the conversation.

SETTING UP YOUR WORKSHOP

tips on how to best utilize this curriculum

MATERIALS

A few things you'll need to conduct this program include markers, masking tape, BIG paper (the bigger the better), small scrap paper, pens, stopwatch, speakers, chairs. Depending on the needs of the group, you may also want tables, talking stick, maybe safety gear to demonstrate, or additional game props like yarn, 2-way radios, legos.

TIME MANAGEMENT

This workshop has a lot of parts, some of which are optional, and we had success with versions that squeezed into 2 hours as well as those that stretched into more than 6. We found the format here to work well - fast-paced and engaging with a fair number of games, but also plenty of breaks and spaciousness to let a conversation go longer if necessary. It usually went about 4 hours including a 30 minute lunch break.

You are more than welcome to choose only the exercises that you like, add your own, and continue to evolve this workshop. Just remember to think about time - it slips away faster than you might predict!

Be sure to make space for breaks as needed (minimum every 90 minutes or so). We have included examples of *game breaks* that can keep the momentum going and/or inject a little silliness between heavy convos, while also giving folks an opportunity to step out for 10 minutes.

game breaks:

Spectrogram, p 42

Musical Chairs, p 52

SETUP

Arrange the space to ensure that everyone has a clear vision of the notes and that anyone with accessibility needs can move around with ease. Some activities may involve moving chairs around.

Remember to set up a table with food - for most people a 4 hour workshop without a lunch break is impossible, and if the table is laid before the workshop begins, folks can feel comfortable to snack as needed.

It is a great idea to have supplementary materials set up as well. Often things begin about 15-30+ mins after the scheduled start. A merch table full of books, zines, stickers, shirts, posters, updates and promotions, etc. is a great way to engage folks waiting. You can include sign-up sheets for your organizations and campaigns, and a donation basket for purchases and tips (you deserve it - facilitation is hard work!). Usually the merch table is popular after the workshop ends too, and participants will appreciate further readings that are relevant to what they just learned.

The following pages alternate between templates for *wall notes* that provide reference for all, and descriptions of corresponding activities with *instructions for games* and *facilitator tips* for troubleshooting.

On large papers, copy the wall notes and diagrams that make most sense for the length and scope of your workshop. Going from last to first, use masking tape to post sheets to the wall, each covering the others. You may want to keep key references - Agenda, Learning Goals, Slogans, Agreements - separate to the side so that they are always visible. After discussing the first sheet, peel it from the wall and repost it in a corner of the room to begin a workshop timeline. In the end, the room will have new informative wallpaper!

BEGIN

Once there seems to be a solid group of people in the room, turn down the music, or use another trick to gather attention. No need to stress out too much if you are still waiting on some to arrive; this workshop includes extended introductions, so it gets a gradual start. This helps not only because it allows you to start without waiting for everyone, but also because each intro piece further frames the vision and expectations while introducing the facilitators and the concepts first, and then gradually drawing participants into conversation more and more.

We must always begin by expressing gratitude...

WORKSHOP CONTENT

The following pages include examples of notes and diagrams used to introduce activities and clarify concepts, as well as corresponding instructions, scripts, and facilitator tips for each segment

WALL NOTES:

12 GRATITUDE, LAND ACKNOWLEDGE
14 INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE
16 COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS
19 LEARNING GOALS
20 SLOGANS
21 AGENDA
23 POPULAR EDUCATION
26 CORE VALUES
29 WHAT IS MUTUAL AID?
31 HISTORIC EXAMPLES
34 LESSONS LEARNED
38 MADR VISION
40 CHARITY OR SOLIDARITY?
44 MATRIX OF DOMINATION
46 FORCE FIELDS
48 COMING IN A GOOD WAY
50 ANTI-OPPRESSION & ACCESSIBILITY
54 PHASES OF DISASTERS RECOVERY
57 PHASES PART 2
60 DISASTERS & HAZARDS
63 RESPONDING
67 COMMUNITY CARE
70 BURNOUT
71 HEALING
73 AFFINITY GROUPS
75 WHO ELSE IS RESPONDING?
78 BREAKDOWN TO BREAKTHROUGH
80 FUTURE TRAININGS AND SKILLS WE CAN SHARE

GAMES:

Fast Active Games:

25 Step In
30 Speed Round 1
41 Speed Round 2
42 Spectrogram
52 Musical Chairs
81 Yarn Web

Conversation-starter Exercises and Tools:

45 Matrix of Domination
47 Force Fields
59 Hopes & Fears
61 Connection Map: Disasters & Hazards
77 Breakout Groups

GRATITUDE
and
GIVING
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Presenter Point

GRATITUDE & LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Type: Welcome

Materials:

Time: 3 minutes

SUMMARY

The first disasters in this country's history are colonization, capitalism, and other systemic oppressions. Make space for gratitude and mindfulness.

DETAILS

Be sure to thank your hosts, organizers and promoters, and any groups who sent representatives. Take this time to point out any food, drinks, bathrooms, emergency exits, and merchandise available.

Recognize that the land we're on is stolen, and that stolen bodies have been, and are still to this day, used to develop this country. Study the indigenous groups that once lived or remain in the area. List them on this sheet. The following statement is typically considered good land acknowledgement protocol:

We recognize that the land on which we gather is traditional territory of indigenous peoples (instead of this generic phrase, *name specific nations, tribes, or bands and any relevant treaties to the best of your abilities).*

Ask the group to think about their connections to the land as individuals and as a culture. What waterways can they name? How did they get those names? Are there any landmarks? Did/do those have significance to the indigenous population? Reflect that disaster relief must be de-colonial in order to be liberatory.

Lineages of resistance have set the table for us to have these conversations today. Expressing gratitude for movement elders from diverse communities is also appropriate here.

EXAMPLES

www.native-land.ca

This website is a great resource for studying the lands we inhabit.

INCLUSION

- Respect gender pronouns
- Use "differently-abled", "houseless", "neurodivergent"
- Make room for diverse perspectives
- Unpack white supremacy
- Honor confusion

Presenter Point

ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION

Type: Framing, Expectations

Materials:

Time: 2 minutes

SUMMARY

Our work is intersectional, meaning that it draws from a diversity of backgrounds and inspirations that work together. In order to keep this tradition alive, we need to use inclusive language that respects where others are coming from and celebrates our uniqueness.

DETAILS

*We encourage inclusive language to strive toward creating safer spaces and to be welcoming to all. So we will ask for folks to share their gender pronouns; we will use phrases like *houseless* instead of *homeless* and *neurodivergent* instead of *crazy*; and we will facilitate in ways that seek diverse perspectives, encourage everyone to participate, and center typically marginalized identities. We ask the entire group to acknowledge and to gently counter cultural norms which privilege the opinions of the loud white cis-men in the room. And its not just white men - there are so many nuances of intersectional privileges and oppressions, we must work together to unpack and understand them. They are very complex and elusive, so its ok to be confused about them - listen compassionately.*

Facilitator Tip: This example sheet includes the term *differently-abled.* We have recently been criticized for using this term because it is widely regarded as condescending in the disability community. Alternative suggestions include *person with disability* similar to person of color, and this is an entry into a conversation about the benefits of person-first language. [*We are learning and improving this content every time we hold a workshop!*]

AGREEMENTS

IMPACT IS GREATER
THAN INTENT

WE CAN'T BE ARTICULATE
ALL OF THE TIME

ONE MIC

MOVE UP, MOVE UP

BE AWARE OF TIME

EXPECT & RESPECT
A LACK OF CLOSURE

ALONE WE KNOW A LITTLE,
TOGETHER WE KNOW A LOT

WHAT'S SAID HERE STAYS HERE,
WHAT'S LEARNED HERE LEAVES HERE

Presenter Point

AGREEMENTS

Type: Framing, Expectations

Materials:

Time: 5 minutes

SUMMARY

These community agreements are inspired by the Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance (AORTA).

DETAILS

Community agreements help define your role as facilitator and clarify the group's expectations. One of your responsibilities to the group is to make sure these agreements are upheld. This isn't about demanding rules, it's about understanding guidelines that allow everyone in the group to participate. It helps to caution against the loud white man trope before an uncomfortable situation arises.

IMPACT IS GREATER THAN INTENT:

We have to acknowledge that sometimes what we mean isn't always how others interpret what we say. Accept this and consider diverse perspectives. Own our effects on others.

WE CAN'T BE ARTICULATE ALL OF THE TIME:

We won't always have all the words. And that's okay. This isn't a space to show off how smart we are, but instead to build each other up.

ONE MIC:

Respect the voices of our co-learners. One voice at a time.

MOVE UP, MOVE UP:

"Step Up, Step Back" is a phrase that's been used to encourage that folks who take up a lot of air time to step into positions of lifting up other voices while stepping back from always having to be heard or seen. It's also an invitation for people who speak up less often to step into speaking out without fear of being shut down. Because not all people can step, we say "Move Up, Move Up" instead. A reminder that we're building upward together.

BE AWARE OF TIME:

Just like we're space travelers, we're also time travelers. We have a lot of material to cover in limited time. Lets move quickly in the beginning to ensure enough time for the good stuff later.

EXPECT & RESPECT A LACK OF CLOSURE:

Not all of our questions will be answered in this space, and we won't have time for every discussion. We may have to sit with thoughts or feelings and return to them at another meeting.

ALONE WE KNOW A LITTLE, TOGETHER WE KNOW A LOT:

Nobody, especially the facilitators, should use knowledge to hold power over others. We're all learning in conversation, sharing little bits to create new knowledge which we hold together.

WHAT'S SAID HERE STAYS HERE, WHAT'S LEARNED HERE LEAVES HERE:

Take time to listen to people's stories. If they share personal information, ask if that's something they'd like shared outside of the workshop. Use consent, and be mindful of people's personal boundaries.

In order for these to be meaningful, they need to come from the group itself. Present the agreements listed above, and open the floor to input or questions.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Facilitator Tip: Participants sometimes bring up agreements that we do not accept. Like “assume best intentions” and “default to trust.” We don't use these because if someone is unable to do this (say they're feeling untrusting of someone, or un-safe), having a list on the wall telling them to do so isn't going to change anything. Some agreements aren't always possible, especially when we take into consideration that we build up necessary tools to protect ourselves in response to traumas caused by sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, capitalism. Some alternatives we offer are “be generous with each other,” or “this is a space for learning.”

NEXT PAGE:

LEARNING GOALS

After folks feel good about the agreements, you can move on to describing the learning goals on the following pages. It works well to combine all of this in one fell swoop. We recommend that you place the Agreements, Learning Goals, and Slogans sheets right next to each other and keep them posted visibly for the duration of the workshop. You can just read the sheet labeled Learning Goals, easy!

LEARNING GOALS

- I Understand what is meant by solidarity not charity, mutual aid survival programs, and how this can be a strategic path forward for our movements.
- II Understand that disaster response is community organizing, and community organizing is disaster preparedness.□
- III Understand that you can do this too!
We aren't experts and you don't have to be one either. We all have valuable skills to contribute that are needed in this movement.

WE KNOW - WE ADVOCATE - WE EMBODY

SOLIDARITY, NOT CHARITY

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING
IS DISASTER PREP
(& VICE VERSA)

ALL OF US CAN DO THIS!

[slogans]

AGENDA

- I INTRODUCTIONS
- II DEFINING MUTUAL AID,
“SOLIDARITY, NOT CHARITY,”
& LESSONS LEARNED
- III OPPRESSIONS,
INTERSECTIONS,
& ACCESSIBILITY
- IV DISASTER ANALYSIS
- V COMMUNITY RESPONSE
- VI NEXT STEPS, CLOSING

AGENDA

Type: Framing, Expectations

Materials:

Time: 2 minutes

SUMMARY

A clear and well-constructed agenda that all participants can agree to, is a crucial step for an efficient, inclusive, and awesome meeting. The facilitator's role is to both keep the participants on track and also notice when the agenda isn't working and changes need to happen.

DETAILS

Review the agenda and share your reasoning. If you have just completed Agreements and Learning Goals, you are already most of the way through the introductions section. For your reference, these are the parts of each section (in this version, other arrangements work too!):

- I. *Introductions - Gratitude, Inclusion, Agreements, Learning Goals, Agenda, Pop-Ed, Step In game : 25-35 min*
- II. *Mutual Aid - Mutual Aid, History, Lessons, MADR Model, Solidarity Not Charity, Spectrogram game : 65-75 min*
- III. *Oppressions - Matrix, Force Fields, Coming Good, Accessibility, Musical Chairs game : 35-45 min*
- IV. *Disasters - Phases, Hopes & Fears, Disasters & Hazards, Responding : 40-55 min*
- V. *Community - Community Care, Burnout, Cope/Heal, Affinity Groups, Others : 25-35 min*
- VI. *Next Steps - Breakout Activity (optional), Closing, Trainings & Skills, Assessment, Yarn Web game : 15- 60*

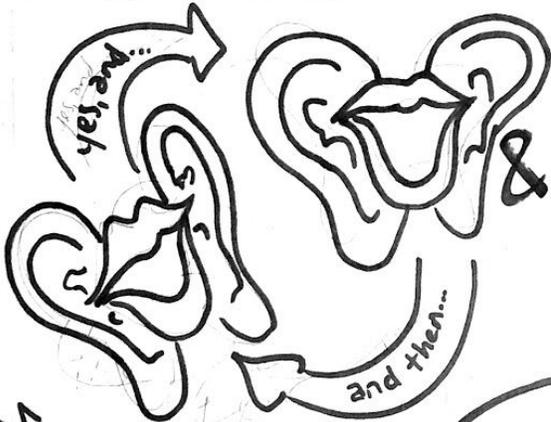
It helps to mention that the sections are not equal lengths, and that the exact schedule will be determined by the pace and focus of the groups discussion. But no worries, we will include breaks when they are needed! This is also a great time for announcements and logistical updates (for food, bathrooms, accessibility needs, etc.).

Facilitator Tip: It is important to take a break or to switch over to a game when it is necessary rather than when you scheduled it. Be sure to break after big discussions. Popular education workshops are marathons, not sprints. Don't be afraid to stop everything, get up and shake things out if energy is flagging. See *Game Breaks*, Spectrogram (p42) and Musical Chairs (p52)

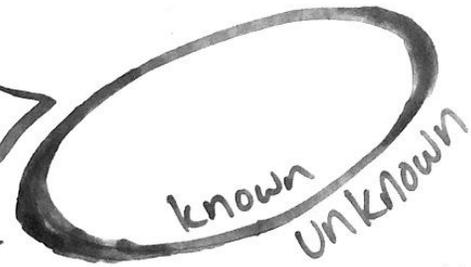
→ POPULAR ←

EDUCATION ↘

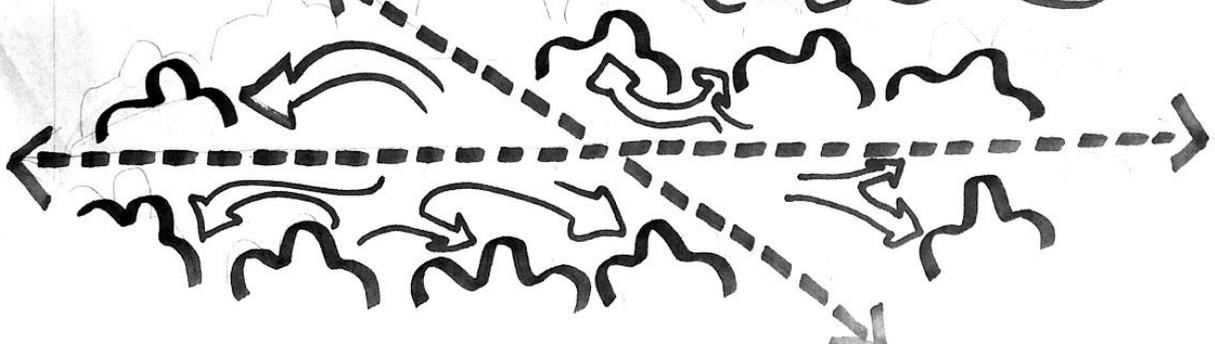
We are all teachers & learners



Learning edge



→ "GAMES!"



Presenter Point

POPULAR EDUCATION & THE LEARNING EDGE

Type: Framing, Expectations

Materials:

Time: 3 minutes

SUMMARY

Explanation of this style of workshop.

DETAILS

Popular education is a philosophy that criticizes the educational mode where teachers or experts are assumed to have special abilities to download information into passive receptacles called students. It is based on the simple idea that we are all teachers and learners, that teaching and learning are two sides of the same coin, that with the right questions a group can struggle together as co-learners to reflect on issues in their community and to take action. In practice, the many forms of popular education strive to make complex information accessible, but not simplified. Facilitators assume that all participants hold great knowledge, and they begin where people are at, with their unique perspectives, experiences, and skills.

The Learning Edge is a concept that helps us to collaborate in our learning even when we have different levels of experience. In this drawing, everything inside the circle is the known, everything outside the circle is the unknown. We are on the learning edge when we have one foot in the known, one in the unknown, when we are receptive and not defensive, yet also challenged to expand our understanding. In our conversations today, we want to stay on the learning edge. We are going to start with very basic concepts, for the sake of accessibility, but if you want to take it to the next level, there is plenty of space to add in diverse perspectives. Its up to all of you to take the conversation to your learning edge.

And the Learning Edge is the reason that we like to play games! Games provide a lot of structure, while also challenging us to be creative. Most of these are cooperative games, though there is also a little bit of soft competition here and there, to encourage you all to think fast and get talking! So lets begin with our first game:

Group Activity

STEP IN ICEBREAKER

Type: Circle, Introductions

Materials:

Time: 10-20+ minutes

SUMMARY

A circle activity to introduce names, pronouns, and areas of interest.

DETAILS

Form a big circle, sitting or standing as their bodies allow. Explain that this game will get a sense of what interests and perspectives are in the room. Participants will be asked to step in to the circle if they agree with a prompt, then say their name, gender pronoun, and a very brief story related to the prompt.

It is best to introduce yourself first, so begin with a prompt that applies to yourself. You may want to begin by naming a type of social justice, community organizing, or volunteer work, such as “step into the circle if you’re involved in anti-racist organizing.” In a multi-generational group, it can be really fruitful to start with prompts like *I started being active in my community in the 60s* or *I started in the 70s.... 80s... 90s...* etc. Anyone who identifies is encouraged to take one step forward into the circle. There will be many opportunities, so folks don’t have to step in immediately if they are very shy. Go around the circle, each person briefly states their name, pronoun, and interest or experience they have with the prompt. Keep responses around 30 seconds - with a big group of big talkers this game can easily turn into 20-30 minutes. But also be flexible. Because of the fast-paced nature of this workshop, there is not a lot of space for self-introductions and promoting ones own work, so give whatever time is necessary if it feels right. This is a great time to notice who will take up more or less airtime.

Each time folks step in for a prompt, invite those who havent spoken to share. Subtly discourage those who have spoken already to go again. That way, once all have introduced themselves then everyone is just stepping in and out quickly. After each prompt is finished, step back into the larger circle and suggest a new prompt. Once each facilitator has offered one, open to the group to let them explore who is in the room. Be sure to include everyone by offering Educator, Artist/Creator, Parent, Veteran etc. With most groups, this is fun and they suggest lots of questions/prompts, many of them spin into side conversations, and it is a perfect ice-breaker. Remember to cut it off before it gets too long!

MADR CORE VALUES

Mutual Aid

Solidarity, Not Charity

Self-Determination

Mandar Obedeciendo

Participation and Horizontality

Autonomous Direct Action

Intersectionality

Sustainability

Dual Power

Collective Liberation

Presenter Point

MADR CORE VALUES

Type: Mini-Lecture

Materials:

Time: 5 minutes

SUMMARY

Core values lay down a foundation for common understanding. They can be referred to throughout the workshop and this part can serve as temperature check for the group's level of exposure to these terms.

DETAILS

When we conducted these workshops, we had already covered the principles in the introductory presentation the night before, so we usually posted this sheet near the front of the room but only referred to it occasionally in conversations. You may choose to cover these briefly; choose your own words to describe these concepts clearly to your unique audience. You may also choose to make it a discussion, it can be a very fruitful one.

Facilitator Tip: These principles are very important, the foundation of all the work we prioritize, so it is important that everyone actually understands them. The text below is lifted directly from MADR website, worded as originally agreed upon by the founding cadre. It doesn't work for everyone; keep in mind that if you have succeeded in bringing together a diverse group, not everyone will be up to speed on nuanced jargon. In the next addition of this booklet we will include another version of these core values. We are definitely open to your input!

Mutual Aid: Voluntary, reciprocal, participatory assistance among equals and being with, not for, disaster survivors. Imagine the mycological connections of a forest.

Solidarity, Not Charity: Power with, not over. We avoid the notion that there are passive receivers of aid and powerful givers. Disaster survivors themselves are the first responders to crisis; the role of outside aid is to support survivors to support each other.

Self-Determination: Individuals and communities impacted by disaster have the agency, ability, and power to make their own decisions and choices about their lives, recovery, and long term resilience, without interference or coercion from outside forces.

Mandar Obedeciendo: The Zapatista principle of *mandar obedeciendo*— to follow by obeying, or leadership from below— teaches that those with access to power, wealth, and influence should follow the direction of those with the least.

Participation and Horizontality: Decentralization and sharing of power within groups and communities reduces hierarchies and power imbalances within and between groups of people, enabling disaster survivors and responders to participate fully in rebuilding a better world together.

Autonomous Direct Action: Saving lives, homes, and communities in the event and aftermath of disaster may require taking bold action without waiting for permission from authorities. Disaster survivors themselves are the most important authority on just action.

Intersectionality: Historical and systemic forms of oppression and discrimination work together to make some people and groups more vulnerable to different types of disaster and during the rebuilding process. A just disaster response acknowledges, adapts to, and addresses the different needs, priorities, and perspectives of diverse disaster survivors.

Sustainability: Sustainable disaster recovery encompasses a respect for the intersectionality of all living systems, community norms and practices, as well as the distribution of knowledge about ecologically-sound and economically viable systems designs, which provide for their own needs and do not exploit or pollute.

Dual Power: A strategy for the bottom-up transformation and replacement of existing institutions and mechanisms of society with self-organized counter-institutions. Composting the old world while nurturing the new without waiting until “after the revolution.”

Collective Liberation: In the words of Fannie Lou Hamer, “Nobody’s free until everybody’s free.” All struggles are intimately connected and movements must work together and share knowledge, power, and resources. That is the nature of this work.

— WHAT IS —
MUTUAL AID?

Group Activity

SPEED ROUND 1 -MUTUAL AID

Type: Small groups, Competitive

Materials: Markers

Time: 10 minutes

SUMMARY

Defining basic vocabulary, with a competitive twist

DETAILS

Begin with a very basic definition of mutual aid:

*Mutual aid is *voluntary* *reciprocal* *sharing* of what we have - resources, skills, ideas.*

Write down those starred terms. Now you have gotten the easy ones out of the way, participants will be challenged to come up with many more nuanced characteristics and examples. Divide into at least 2 groups, about 3-6 in each. They have a 2 minute time limit to come up with at least 10 more descriptions of what mutual aid means to them, what it looks like, how it feels, and why it's necessary. This can be a friendly competition if that seems to vibe with the room. The first group to 10 wins! You can even award points - there is another speed round later, so other teams have a chance to catch up. If no one reaches 10 by 2 minutes, no one wins, but this is irrelevant.

Bring the group back to discuss what they came up with and scribe these responses onto the note sheet. Delve into complex topics as necessary. Allow time for folks to wrestle with this concept, since this will be a base for the rest of the day's conversation. If participation is low, try gently suggesting a few common experiences or examples, or asking the room to elaborate on certain subjects.

EXAMPLES

- *Consensual, Cooperative*
- *Builds strong and diverse relationships*
- *Shared values and responsibility*
- *Resilient and sustainable*
- *Not based on "market values"*
- *Shared trauma and healing*
- *Community gardens*
- *Houses of Hospitality*

HISTORIC EXAMPLES OF MUTUAL AID

WOBBLIES

CATHOLIC WORKERS

BLACK PANTHERS

LOS TOPOS

9/11 NEW YORK CITY

COMMON GROUND

OCCUPY SANDY

Presenter Point

HISTORIC EXAMPLES OF MUTUAL AID

Type: Mini-Lecture

Materials:

Time: 10-15 minutes

SUMMARY

Condensed history of survival programs and aid networks that have inspired us. Consider customizing with your local knowledge and experience. (e.g., Young Lords, Flint water crisis, Standing Rock, Puerto Rico, etc.)

DETAILS

These are the briefest of introductions to these inspiring groups, abbreviated to keep this booklet concise. Do more research on those you feel are most relevant to your community.

Wobblies - The Industrial Workers of the World, or IWW, called themselves Wobblies. They were an innovative labor union that organized across all industries, all races, and all across the country, inspiring diverse workers to fight for human rights with songs about Solidarity Forever. Read more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_Workers_of_the_World

*Catholic Workers - Young Dorothy Day witnessed decentralized grassroots humanitarian aid in the wake of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. She wrote, *While the crisis lasted, people loved one another.* During the Great Depression, she inspired communities of mercy, hospitality, and dignity. Read more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Worker_Movement*

Black Panthers - The Black Panther Party was called the most dangerous group in America by J Edgar Hoover. Many believe this was because of the guns, but really it was because of their empowering survival programs, including health clinics and childrens free breakfast programs. Read more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Panther_Party

Los Topos - The 1985 earthquake that devastated Mexico City opened wide cracks in the foundations of the corrupt government. As the state neglected to rescue people, courageous youth banded together in brigadas and risked their lives to save others. Calling themselves topos, or moles, they inspired many to be brave, reclaiming their civil society and demanding government accountability. Read more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topos_de_Tlatelolco

9/11 NYC - We've heard the elite history of 9/11, centered on heroic firefighters and soldiers. But regular people were the real first responders at the WTC, cooperating to escape the towers, direct traffic, share food and medicine - some even commandeered yachts to ferry people to safety! Read more: [A Paradise Built In Hell](#), by Rebecca Solnit

Common Ground - In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Malik Rahim called on allies to help to start the Common Ground Collective. Combining the Black Panthers concept of survival programs with the Zapatistas vision of a revolution of everyday life, and utilizing mass mobilization experience gained through the Global Justice movement that the Zapatistas had sparked, a huge group of activists and volunteers brought a utopian hopefulness that dramatically changed the face of disaster recovery in the violently racialized city of New Orleans, by providing diverse services and empowering marginalized residents to rebuild. Because of the unwieldy scale and relative inexperience of this organization, many mistakes were made - we will talk about those at length in the Lessons Learned segment.

Read more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Ground_Collective

*Occupy Sandy - The Occupy Wall Street movement built countless powerful relationships in and around NYC, and when Superstorm Sandy hit shortly after, they were ready to mobilize. They canvassed the neighborhoods that were most damaged and ensured that those who asked for help got what they really needed. Communication technologies were employed in innovative ways, and countless volunteers participated in mobile distribution while even more people outside of NYC donated supplies via Amazon wishlists. Even the Dept of Homeland Security admitted in a report titled **The Resilient Social Network** that decentralized grassroots humanitarian aid was out-performing the centralized state and charity programs every time in every way.*

Read more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupy_Sandy

Mutual Aid All Around Us - These are just a few examples from this part of the world in the last 100 years. It is also important to note, that mutual aid happens all around us all the time. People often survive post-incarceration, unemployment, and severe poverty because of informal networks of mutual aid. This is foundational to our society and this activity rarely makes the news or gets on anybody's resume or linkedin accounts, but it is nevertheless vital.

LESSONS LEARNED

- + We can do this
- + Audacity is our Capacity
- + Do less, do better
- Disaster Patriarchy
- Savior Complex
- Infiltrators & Surveillance
- Colonialism & Gentrification
- Opportunism & Profiteering

Presenter Point

LESSONS LEARNED

Type: Mini-Lecture

Materials:

Time: 10-15 minutes

SUMMARY

Analyze successes and pitfalls we've seen within past grassroots relief organizing.

DETAILS

Many lessons have been learned through past iterations:

Power of the People

Audacity is our capacity; we can imagine new ways of interacting with the world. When a crew of MADR organizers travelled to Puerto Rico (some visiting their families, others bringing medical skills), they found out about a government warehouse that was neglecting to distribute huge stockpiles of supplies. They showed their MADR badges to the guards and said We are here for the 8am pickup. When guards replied that their names were not on the list, they just insisted again, We are here for the 8am pickup. They were eventually allowed in, told to take whatever they needed. After being let in once, aid workers were able to return repeatedly. They made more badges for local organizers, and this source continued to benefit local communities for months.

We have also seen insistence and confidence open many doors in post-Katrina NOLA, post-Sandy NYC; sometimes we joke that it is like a Jedi mind trick - We ARE the droids youve been looking for!

This style of organizing builds power from below. It unites different elements of our movements. Example: Common Ground (itself composed of many different sorts of people) partnered global justice activists with community leaders and teachers to force the reopening of Martin Luther King Jr Elementary School in the Lower 9th Ward, a brand new school which was one of the best-performing in the city, yet was to be abandoned and closed by the city which had sold off the entire school system to an experimental private charter school takeover immediately after the storm. The rescue of this vital community resource was accomplished with volunteers conducting a massive and very public direct action cleaning of the school, while parents and teachers began developing a sustained campaign of shaming the city and starting their own charter school. The school now teaches K-12 and serves as a community center. It is the only school open in the Lower 9th Ward.

Disaster Patriarchy

Definition: “Political, institutional, organizational, and cultural practices that converge before, during, and after disaster to produce intersectional gender injustice.” A sense of crisis and urgency that leads us to cut corners is part of disaster patriarchy. Valorization of hard and constant physical labor, a crisis-laden environment, militant posturing, minimization of emotion and basic human needs - these are all red flags often present in disaster environments that encourage a toxic and unsustainable organizing culture.

It highlights the necessity of caring for ourselves and each other, not just as an afterthought, but integral to how we engage in all aspects of our work. So we share and brainstorm coping skills to reduce burnout and ways to help us heal, have trainings about vicarious/bystander trauma, have trauma counselors on standby, activate massage therapists and other healers to provide service to over-stressed volunteers, and generally still respond with urgency to people’s needs, but with an eye towards fostering an organizational culture of internal support, where it’s ok to take breaks, talk about other things, laugh, be creative.

An important cautionary tale is in Common Grounds experience with Brandon Darby. He was a charismatic and very macho leader who inflated tales of daring rescues to cozy up to CG founder Malik Rahim. He was chiefly responsible for dismissing so-called “allegations” of sexual assault, which truly was commonplace among the large and constantly changing volunteer corps. He also encouraged a culture of toxic masculinity as he took advantage of idealistic young women and actively neutralized and sowed dissension to drive away strong women leaders. Later, it was revealed that he was an FBI agent provocateur, after he entrapped and imprisoned two young activists at the 2008 Republican National Convention protests.

Misogynists make great informants. We don’t need to wait until somebody outs themselves as an agent of the state whose aim is to destroy our movements. If somebody spreads misogyny and violates consent, this is enough to show them the door. The urgency of the work is not an acceptable excuse for perpetrators escaping accountability or groups refusing to take internal protective measures to prevent violence against women.

We now post “We Use Consent Here” posters throughout all our organizing spaces, have a survivor-centric zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual violence, educate new volunteers about consent, sexual violence and sexual harassment, and have designated advocates on standby to bottomline support and advocate for survivors. We work on the basis of active, mutual consent. This extends beyond sexual encounters and informs how we interact with survivors of disasters as well.

Savior Mentality

Tied to the charity approach and “ally politics”, savior mentality is the assumption that wealth, whiteness, or other approximations to power imbue one with moral authority and the ability to “save” oppressed peoples. This kind of relationship generally fosters exploitation between the oppressed and oppressor. “Saviors” have a tendency to create dependency on

themselves and their support. Allies too often carry romantic notions of oppressed communities they wish to “help.” This leads to seeing victims and tokens instead of people.

Bred in our schools by “Great Man” theory of history, it also encourages the emergence of charismatic “hero” leaders, who can seize power and be difficult to critique. We need to refocus our collective lenses away from individual people, regardless of their charisma, and recognize the contributions of the thousands who make up our movements.

Colonialism/Gentrification

New Orleans is whiter now than it was prior to Katrina, and relief workers, even if they were anti-racist, anti-privatization, anti-disaster capitalism, and anti-colonial, played a role in making this a reality. Some people were really thankful for the thousands of non-local people gutting houses, distributing supplies, doing medic work and other programs. However, others saw them as a sort of occupying, colonial force.

Again, moving forward from this lesson, Mutual Aid Disaster Relief is less likely to come into a community from outside, and much more likely to amplify and support local, spontaneous manifestations of mutual aid rooted in the impacted community. We will do our best to help in the ways that communities request, but when there are calls for mass mobilizations of volunteers, we will proceed cautiously and remember to always educate new volunteers about privileges and oppressions and their specific positionality. We strive to build slowly, at the speed of trust, focused on relationships, respect, and solidarity..

Beware the Nonprofit Industrial Complex

Incite! Women of Color Against Violence have a great book out about this subject called [The Revolution Will Not Be Funded](#). The nonprofit industrial complex refers to how our movements can be subverted by funders who don't want revolutionary change. If people are not careful, funders may try to dictate the programs created rather than creating programs based on the self-determined needs of people impacted.

Facilitator Tip: You will notice that this script is formatted differently than the wall notes (which are a little older). This is a work in progress! We recommend that you think about which topics seem most relevant to your community, and expand upon those based on your own experiences. The part about disaster patriarchy is pretty essential though. If you are interested in learning more, there is an excellent scholarly article called [Racialized Disaster Patriarchy: An Intersectional Model for Understanding Disaster](#), by Rachel Luft.

MADRelief: OUR MODEL

A PERMANENT, DECENTRALIZED NETWORK

PREPARATION & BUILDING GRASSROOTS
POWER

GROW SUCCESSES & AVOID FAILURES

REMOVE BARRIERS, BUILD BRIDGES

SUPPORT MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES TO
LEAD THEIR OWN RECOVERY

RESPECT IDENTITIES/AUTONOMY OF LOCALS;
AVOID COOPTING NARRATIVES

SURVIVAL PROGRAMS THAT RECOGNIZE
INVISIBLE DISASTERS

Presenter Point

MADRelief: OUR MODEL

Type: Mini-Lecture

Materials:

Time: 5 minutes

SUMMARY

Based on lessons learned, MADR has agreed on priorities of solidarity, decentralization, and empowerment.

DETAILS

We know that neighbors will step up to help each other in every disaster. But they shouldn't have to start from scratch every time. MADR is a permanent network that can share generational knowledge, create ongoing connections between communities, and help survivors build on successes and avoid failures of previous relief and response efforts. It is a loose decentralized network of many widely diverse types of affinity groups who are eager to aid each other in crises. It is easy to be a part of MADR; just agree to put our principles into practice.

In between disaster moments, we are working in our communities to create opportunities for empowerment. We approach this in two ways: supporting training to spread the idea of grassroots disaster response and skill up our communities; and by creating programs to address the ongoing "invisible disasters", like hunger, racist policing, drug addiction, etc, in our communities. Inspired by the amazing [Ujimaa Medics](#), one MADR founder living in Cleveland organized a crew of young leaders in his housing project to form a trained and practiced specialty street medic crew called [Wolfpack Gunshot Response Team](#).

We need to learn deeply from those lessons. And we want to make sure that those who are building mutual aid programs now do not repeat past mistakes. For example, we don't generally call for massive unlimited volunteer mobilizations like Common Ground did.

Removing barriers and building bridges is all about our principle of intersectionality. All kinds of people are attracted to this work because it demonstrates not only that we need each other to survive, but also that diversity grows strength and resilience and creativity.

Supporting frontline communities is necessary for building power from below. This is essential to principles of solidarity and collective liberation.

MADR's purpose is not to supplant local, spontaneous manifestations of mutual aid, but to compliment and amplify them, and engage a national network to support their efforts.

Invisible disasters surround us every day. Disaster relief is not only something that happens during hurricane season. Practice the skills you need right now, with your neighbors.

WHY NOT CHARITY?

SOLIDARITY WHAT DOES
IT MEAN?

Group Activity

SPEED ROUND 2 -SOLIDARITY NOT CHARITY

Type: Small groups, Competitive

Materials: Markers

Time: 10 minutes

SUMMARY

Defining basic vocabulary, with a competitive twist

DETAILS

Begin by restating that a popular slogan is Solidarity Not Charity. But why Not Charity? Whats wrong with it? And what does Solidarity mean anyway?

Divide into the same small groups. They have a 2 minute time limit to come up with at least 5 responses to each of the 2 categories. The first group to 10 wins! Award more points on the second round, and be really strict about the time limit - thats what makes it fun. Bring the group back to discuss what they came up with and scribe these responses onto the poster sheet. Delve into complex topics as necessary, though this one typically does not need as much discussion time.

EXAMPLES

Charity:

Patronizing, sharp separation between powerful, heroic givers and powerless, needy “victims”.

Top-down models aren't effective responses to the needs of the people

Charity does not question existing unjust relationships in society, and can often reinforce them

Solidarity:

The understanding that we are all exploited by capitalism and the state

Self-determination and personal agency are critical in this process

Disaster relief can be social justice work with a larger aim to achieve liberation from oppression

Breaks down the borders between volunteers and those impacted by disasters with mutual gratitude, listening, and trust

Survivors are involved in and lead their own recovery

Awareness and willingness to use one's privilege to break down barriers for our neighbors

Optional Activity

SPECTRAGRAM

Type: Movement, *Game Break*

Materials: four signs, marker, tape

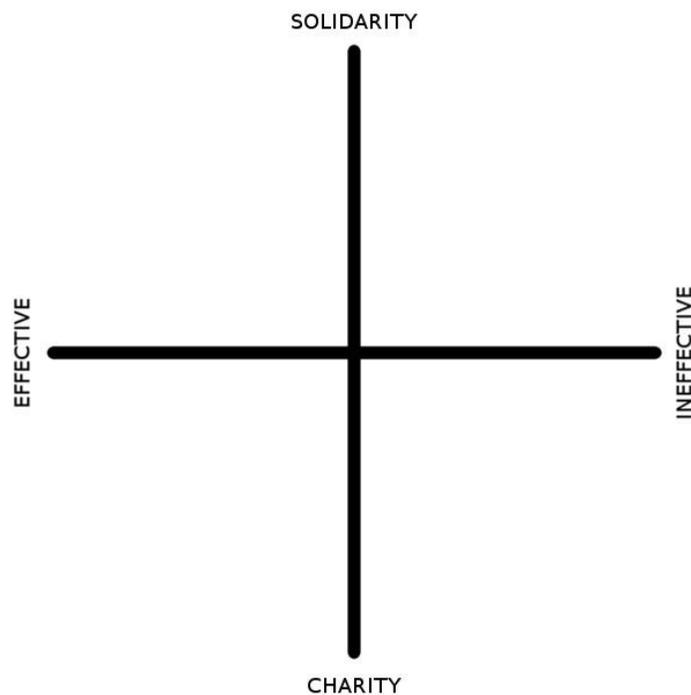
Time: 15 minutes

SUMMARY

The Spectrogram uses short stories to spark discussions about disaster response and challenge our understandings of solidarity. It gets folks up and moving, and is a good opportunity to take a *Game Break*

DETAILS

On four small papers, write SOLIDARITY, CHARITY, then EFFECTIVE, INEFFECTIVE. Tape them up on four walls opposite to each other to create an X-Y axis as in the diagram. Read stories aloud, and encourage the group to think critically about the actions taken by the characters in each scenario. Participants move themselves to points in the room that indicate their feelings about the actions. No right answers here, that's why it's a *spectrum*, or in this case two *spectra*! Remind everyone about which side is which, and when they are settled, ask them to share. Once conversation begins, people may move based on new ideas and feelings. Limit responses to about 3-4 per story, but recognize that these scenarios are complex.



EXAMPLES

After an awful storm, people are in dire need of immediate aid. A supply drive is set up in a middle class suburb to send essential items. There's a number of folks who drop off bags of old clothing that would've otherwise wound up in a local thrift store.

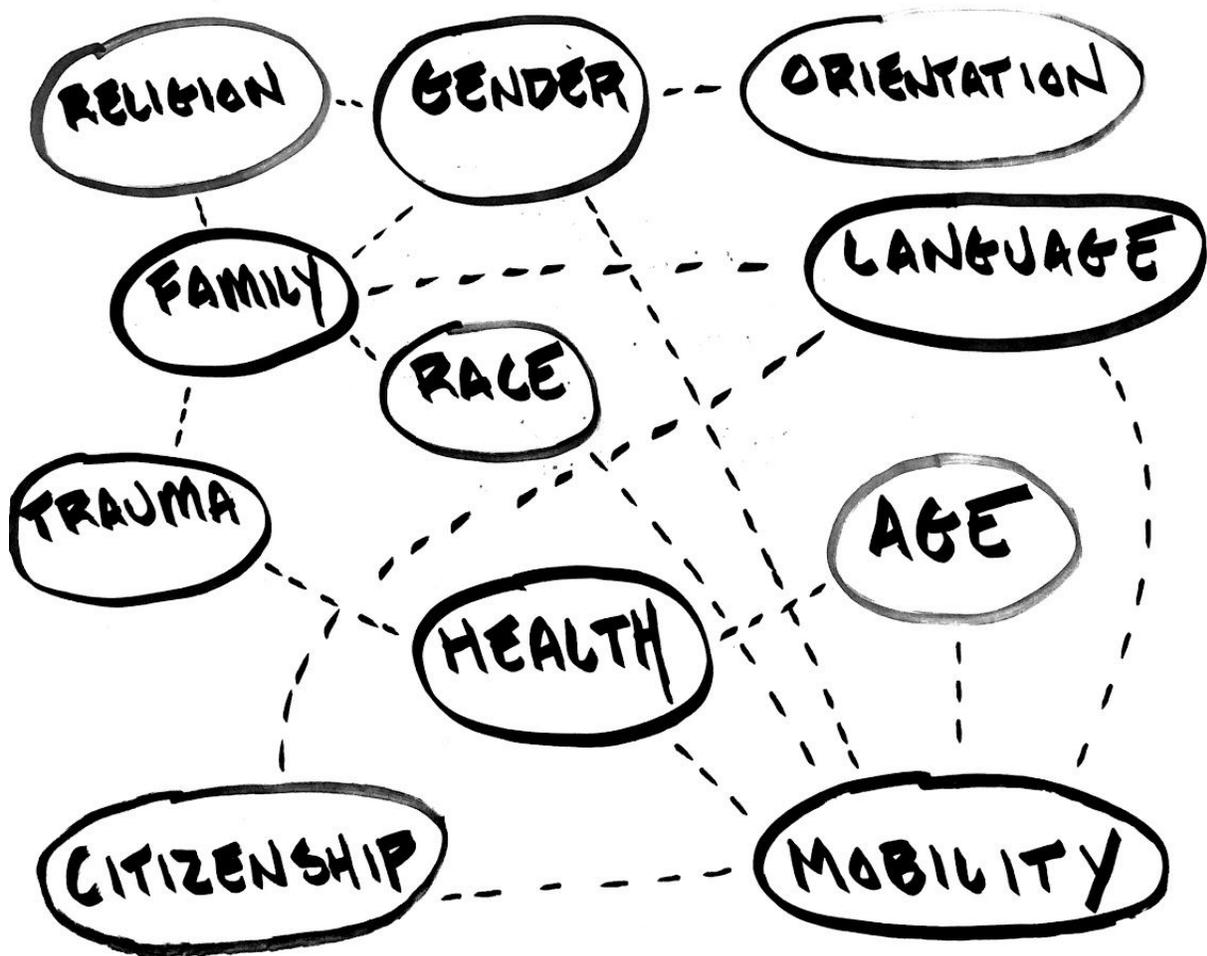
An affinity group has just completed their street medic training and feel passionate about lending aid on an island nation devastated by an earthquake. They pack up and buy flights as quickly as possible. While plugging in, they depend on regular translation from locals in order to navigate and find work.

A few months ago, terrible flooding made many low income homes unlivable. Local neighbors and local activists form a horizontal group to connect with people who were overlooked by large non-profits and state programs. They organize small crews of mostly unskilled volunteers to meet homeowners, gut houses, put up drywall, and install simple fixtures. Their crowdsourced funding and limited experience restrict them to offering partial repairs in each house, but give folks the option of moving back despite the need for more serious rebuilding.

A community kitchen is set up and is feeding tons of people in a disaster zone. The police, however, have decided to shut it down by force. Suddenly, unaffiliated, out of state militants (brandishing their own weapons) step in to confront the cops, who eventually back off. These unexpected militants came to give help where they could within a top down framework.

the MATRIX of -DOMINATION-

|| TO THINK ABOUT MULTIPLE AXES OF OPPRESSION, WE CAN MAP OUT HOW POWER INTERSECTS WITHIN OURSELVES ||



Individual Activity

MATRIX OF DOMINATION

Type: Self-reflection

Materials: small paper and writing utensil for each person

Time: 5-10 minutes

SUMMARY

A quiet writing activity gives a thoughtful break for introverts and an introspective warm-up for the next big conversation. Map & illustrate our complex identities.

DETAILS

Facilitator will read the list below. Participants write down and circle aspects of their personality and positionality in the world in response to these prompts. Spread the words out, then draw connecting lines between those that are related. Take a slow pace, participants will need time to reflect and connect their bubbles. As it seems people are wrapping up, begin to ask the group about how this activity makes them feel, and if mapping their identities and experiences helped to reveal any connections. Nobody has to share what they wrote down, but invite them to do so if they like.

EXAMPLES

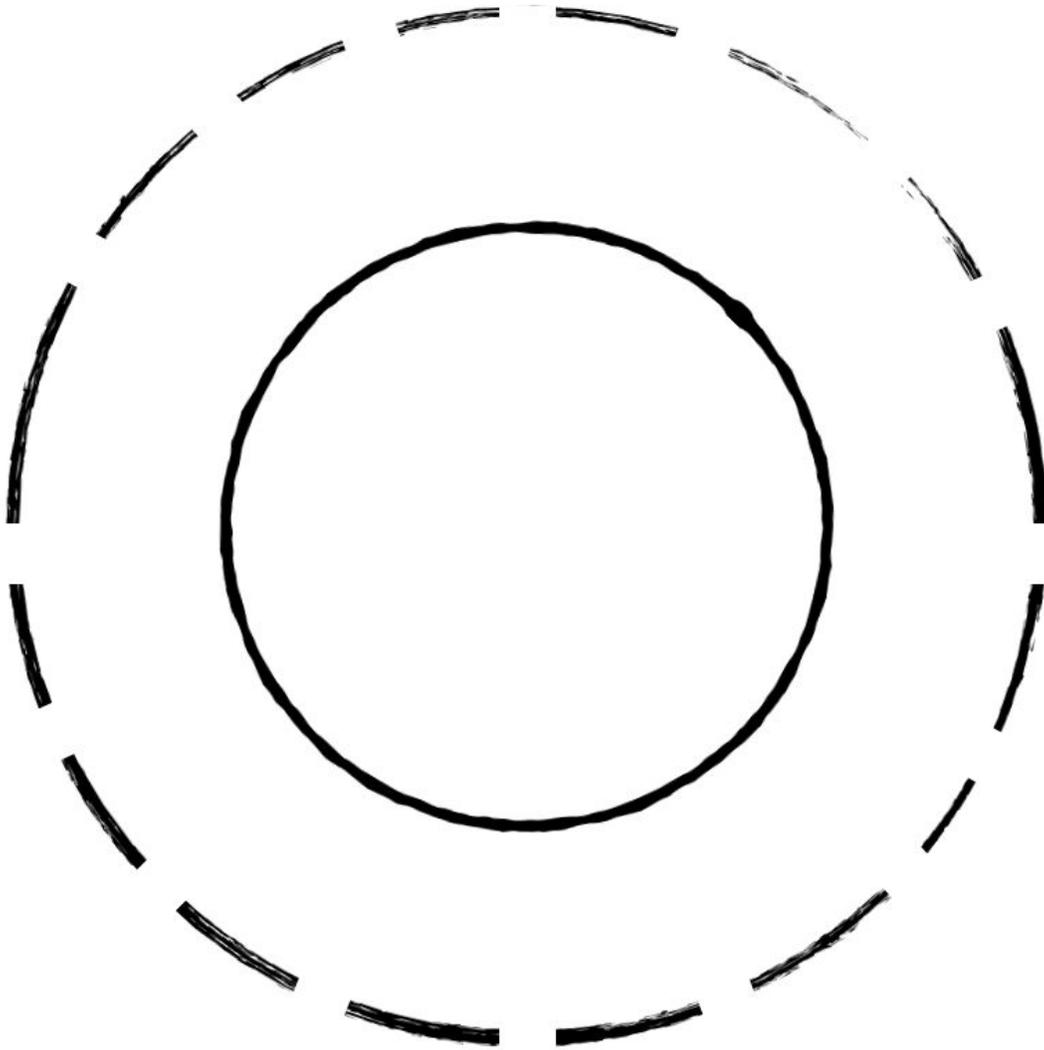
When writing, think about your:

race, gender-presentation, family background, stable family or not, witnessing death, speech impediment, body size, conventional beauty standards, travel internationally, ability-disability, neurodivergence, religion, sexual orientation, class, etc.

When connecting, think of this example:

Speaking english is connected with US citizenship status, and they are both related to college education, as well as relative ease when seeking medical attention or any kind of state benefits.

the FORCE (FIELDS)



* WHAT DO PEOPLE NEED? WHAT KEEPS THEM FROM IT? AND HOW CAN WE CRACK the WALLS?

Group Activity

THE FORCE (FIELDS)

Type: Discussion

Materials: markers

Time: 10-15 minutes

SUMMARY

Drawing from the previous activity, use a step-by-step diagram to discuss barriers to personal freedom and how they can be overcome. This tool is very relevant to discussion of appropriately using privilege.

DETAILS

Explain this exercise as you go. In the solid, center circle, list things people need to thrive every day. Aim for a list of 15+ but don't go overboard - this exercise can easily get long and redundant.

In the larger dashed circle list Barriers that stop people from getting the needs inside.

Last, draw triangular wedges through the dashed line in toward the circle of needs. Ask participants to imagine ways that people can cut through those barriers? Encourage folks to share practical steps they have seen or experienced as well as get creative with new ideas.

This is a good opportunity to talk about privilege, and ways in which it may be used to temporarily break down barriers to provide opportunities for self-empowerment to marginalized communities. And to think critically about the details of circumstance and positionality. This is a challenging conversation!

“The Zapatistas say that we can put cracks in the walls that divide us. Through these, we can see each other and begin to tear them down.”

EXAMPLES

NEEDS: water, food, shelter, physical/mental health, clean air, sleep, warmth, autonomy, family, communication, support, education, meaningful work, childcare, dignity, active listening, trust

BARRIERS: fear, pollution, discrimination, hopelessness, lack of transport, debt, the state, borders, documentation, bad information, prisons, police, jobs, distrust in charities, poor health, criminalizing substances, white supremacy, gatekeeping, bystander effect

BREAKING THROUGH: popular assemblies, education, trainings and skillshares, occupy and open spaces, sharing housing, sharing resources and tools, community gardening, exposing injustices, networking beforehand, finding new ways to communicate, sharing meals, focusing on frontline communities, liberating resources, overcoming language barriers, survival programs

COMING IN A GOOD WAY!

Group Activity

COMING IN A GOOD WAY!

Type: Discussion

Materials: marker

Time: 5 minutes

SUMMARY

Expand upon the previous conversation. Examine how we enter spaces, especially those that are not our own, and understand the importance of coming prepared to care for ourselves and the people around us

DETAILS

Ask the group what it means to come in a good way. Record their responses on the blank poster

EXAMPLES

*Bring enough supplies for your mission; Don't add to the burden, don't create another victim
Listen*

Take time to understand the people you'll be working with, what are their needs/desires/goals?

Practice taking time to recharge and care for yourself

Make diverse relationships in communities build on trust; don't tokenize elders or leader figures.

Have connections in the area before going into a disaster zone

You don't have to go, consider other ways of supporting if on the ground aid isn't being asked for

Be humble

Address poverty and classism! It impacts historically marginalized people's participation

Declare intentions

Confront toxic misogyny

Ask before acting

Follow through

Respect culture/values/territory

Know that you're a guest, act accordingly

Know your skills and lack thereof

Examine your reasons for involvement

Lead by asking/listening

Don't make promises beyond your capacity

ACCESSIBILITY

- * disasters magnify inequities
- * differently-abled people have extensive experience and are experts in their own needs
- * Consultation is good, participation is better
- * don't assume that evacuation is best
- * avoid institutionalization

Presenter Point

ACCESSIBILITY

Type: Mini-Lecture

Materials:

Time: 5 minutes

SUMMARY

Not only do disasters magnify inequities, but most planning efforts are not undertaken in ways that acknowledge the needs of people with disabilities and elders.

DETAILS

We have spent a lot of time talking about some of the intersecting oppressions that most define our society - racism, sexism, classism. Now let's talk about one that many of us never think about, and is especially magnified during natural disasters. People with disabilities and the elderly are 2-4 times more likely to be injured or killed during a disaster. People are experts in their own needs and this applies to people who are disabled as well.

Be aware of potential hazards unique to people with disabilities, including power failures affecting medical equipment, violations of civil rights, separation from personal assistance, lack of accessible transport, and difficulty accessing confusing emergency programs.

Don't automatically assume evacuation is best. People with disabilities generally have support where they are and can be cut off if displaced.

Avoid institutionalization whenever possible. Often people have been struggling their whole lives to stay out of an institution.

*Almost everyone, if we live long enough, will acquire a disability. Community resilience is only possible if accessibility is in every aspect. Be a consistent voice for planning with people, not for them. Support the disability rights mantra, "**nothing about us without us is for us.**"*

Please do further research on this important topic; these websites are a good place to start.

www.ncil.org - find a local *Center for Independent Living*, non-residential disability civil rights and services.

www.disasterstrategies.org - training, technical assistance, advocacy, and coordination and collaboration among thousands of disability inclusive emergency management experts and community-leaders.

www.portlight.org - along with *Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies*, a volunteer-staffed hotline to assist disaster survivors with access and functional needs; incl rescue, medical equipment and assistive devices, help navigating local, state, and federal assistance programs, and short-term housing options.

Call the Portlight Hotline: 1-800-626-4959

Optional Activity

WEALTH INEQUALITY MUSICAL CHAIRS

Type: Movement, Silly, *Game Break*

Materials: chairs, music

Time: 10 minutes

SUMMARY:

A fun way to visualize income inequality in the USA by comparing percentages of people and property. After intense critical thinking its good to take another break, and this one feels relevant.

DETAILS:

Participants are divided up into groups representing the 1%, the rich (20%), the middle class (20%), and the poor (60%); chairs are divided up into the property of those respective groups:

1% of people = 40% of all wealth

20% of people = 50% of all wealth

20% of people = 10% of all wealth

60% of people = <1% of all wealth

These numbers are approximate, to make for easy math (see footnote for real numbers). You can explain it like this. Have the group count off by 5s. Move each person's chair into a pile.

The "5"s they are the luckiest 20% of your participants - they are rich! They get half of all the chairs. Place them in the middle of the room. Those participants are free to stretch out and get comfortable.

The "4"s are the middle class. They get one chair for every two people - a little uncomfortable, but still workable. Put their chairs to the right of the rich. They are also welcome to sit down.

Now announce to the group that, unfortunately for everyone else, all but one of the remaining chairs belongs to the 1%. The 1% are none of us, they are just absentee landlords, but they own 40% of all the

chairs. Set these chairs off to the left of the rich. You may want to make a sign that says "reserved for the 1%" and/or wrap them in caution tape.

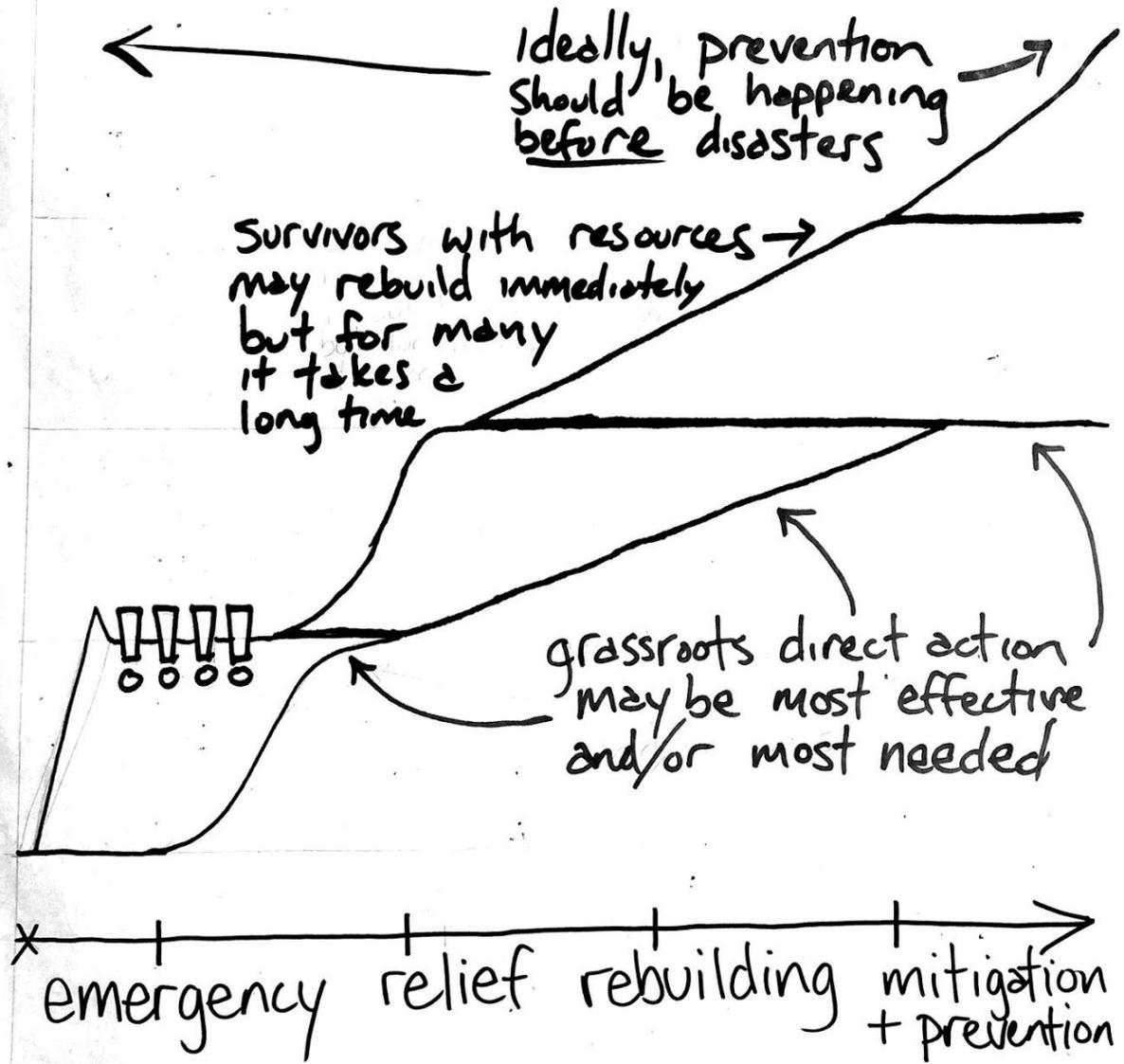
Let the "1"s, "2"s, and "3"s know they are all poor. Pull out the remaining chair, opposite to the others, and tell the rest of the participants that the lowest 60% of the population controls less than 1% of the wealth in the USA. Their task is to figure out how to get all of them onto this one chair before the music stops. Even in a group of 10, six people will struggle to balance and get creative to fit onto 1 chair. You only need the music to play for about one minute, but you may need to encourage them to overcome initial shyness, ask for consent to touch one another, and go for it. Make them feel the time pressure so that they just try something silly and have fun!

Facilitator Tip: Not all participants may be able to comfortably pile onto a chair with others. You can adjust the groups so that elderly or disabled folks are in the "rich" group. The important thing is to divide into 5 equal groups, whether or not you "count off" to form them.

Some may take another message from this activity, noting that this game is unfair and that they can just take the other chairs. Have fun with this. But also note that while in this game the hoarded wealth is free for taking and redistribution, unfortunately real world property is defended by police, private security, and military personnel. We do need to get clever in our efforts to redistribute resources.

Stats about inequality: <https://whorulesamerica.ucsc.edu/power/wealth.html>

PHASES of RECOVERY



Presenter Point

PHASES OF RECOVERY

Type: Mini-Lecture

Materials:

Time: 10-15 minutes

SUMMARY

The need for support continues long after the initial catastrophe. This is a model for identifying the overlapping phases of recovery that a community must go through after a crisis.

DETAILS

Emergency:

Grassroots direct action is most needed. Mutual aid is a constant way of life during emergencies. Rescues and immediate relief efforts are organized within the first days, including digging out collapsed buildings, clearing debris, putting out fires, supplying protective gear. Consider outreach via radio, social media, telephone, posters, etc.

Draw from pre-established connections and relationships. Prioritize face-to-face check-ins with neighbors. Be ready to provide transportation, temporary housing, medical care, emotional care, and to help people find lost items or loved ones. Cataloging who needs or has access to supplies is critical.

Relief:

The beginning of long-term economic and social reconstruction. A common need is case management for people seeking connections to services and other aid. Home mucking and clean-up efforts begin. Survivors with resources can often evacuate and then pay a contractor to rebuild immediately, but for many who become trapped or displaced, this phase can go on for weeks, months, or even years.

Debris cleanup continues. Sometimes after large storms, people who come back to their homes after evacuation return to eviction notices or fines because of debris that landed on their property. Knowing the law and advocating for tenants rights its critical.

Money can sometimes be accessed from non-profits or state programs, but this often requires internet access, english proficiency, or ability to cash a check. After Superstorm Sandy, even those who were eligible for FEMA assistance didn't get it for at least 18 months.

Long-term temporary housing solutions are necessary. FEMA sometimes sponsors hotel rooms for families, but only for a few weeks or months. Address root causes and fill in the gaps where the state and non-profit industrial complex always fail.

Rebuilding:

People in the most marginalized communities will be in the most need of service, and often without safety nets like flood insurance it can be overwhelmingly challenging to even begin the rebuilding phase. After structures have been cleared out fully with appropriate safety gear, reconstruction can begin. Coordinating the transportation and purchase of supplies, sorting and distributing donations continues.

Sometimes, only partial repairs are available because grassroots efforts have limited time, resources, and labor. This means that full reconstruction may be delayed for a long time even if families can technically live in their homes. Learning building codes is important. Getting people connected to state or nonprofit rebuild programs is helpful, while knowing the legal requirements and limits of these.

Mitigation & Prevention:

Future disasters can be mitigated with ecosystem restoration, disaster-ready infrastructure, and changes in planning and disaster response policies. Ideally, prevention and preparation work happens long before disasters hit but it is especially important after a disaster reveals vulnerabilities and threats.

Prevention can take many forms and often requires political organizing in addition to direct support. Hazards can be eliminated through closing or preventing the construction of dangerous facilities like new fly ash or animal waste ponds, pipelines, nuclear plants, etc. Communities can be better prepared by creating community survival programs and cultures of sharing, hosting trainings, stocking supplies, and establishing networks across regions to support each other.

Areas of Most Need:

Grassroots direct action humanitarian aid is most needed and most effective in the areas noted on the diagram.

- 1. A difficult bottleneck happens between the end of the emergency phase and the beginning of rebuilding. Some people may have access to basic relief supplies and services, but feel like it is impossible to begin to truly recover. Help in the form of advocacy, case management, and community organizing is essential here.*
- 2. The long tail of the relief phase is often overlooked. Marginalized neighborhoods, rural villages, or vulnerable individuals may require support long after Red Cross and other large ngos have left, claiming that help is no longer needed.*
- 3. And the prevention and mitigation phase is one where our communities of resistance and resilience can really shine, utilizing alternative technologies and*

innovative designs that encourage conservation, permaculture, connection to land and water, communication, and horizontality.

PHASES: HOUSING

EMERGENCY	
RELIEF	
REBUILDING	
MITIGATION x PREVENTION	

Group Activity

PHASES OF RECOVERY LIST

Type: Discussion

Materials: Markers

Time: 10 minutes

SUMMARY

Deeper understanding of Phases concepts

DETAILS

Drawing from the previous concepts, invite the group to spend a few minutes going through each phase and discussing how they would respond to *housing* needs in the wake of a local crisis. Imagine a real scenario - choose a likely disaster, such as flood or fire, and encourage participants to think of very pragmatic little steps relevant to specifics of their communities. Keep the conversation focused on just housing needs and programs which may meet those needs, to allow the group to hash out who they would contact and how they would organize, rather than being overwhelmed by listing dozens of widespread needs. .

EXAMPLES

Emergency:

*Checking in on neighbors, using radio or walkie talkie apps like Zello to coordinate responses
Map out areas are most affected (flood planes, impoverished areas, etc.)*

Relief:

*Help people access information on getting help from government and nonprofit relief programs.
Generate donations through Amazon wishlists, PayPal accounts, etc. Make specific requests of what you do and don't need and where supplies need to go. Host benefits and fundraisers.
Create spaces for mutual support, emotional care, and free supply sharing*

Rebuilding:

*Organize donations and distribute materials to places and people who need them.
Find local people who have skills and time to teach other safe construction techniques.*

Long Term Prevention:

*Advocate for local regulations and policies that can help protect frontline communities.
Organize tenants unions or neighborhood assemblies*

Presenter Point

HOPES AND FEARS

Type: Pairs

Materials:

Time: 10 minutes

SUMMARY

A heart-to-heart with ones neighbor, to get us warmed up for intellectual and emotional heavy-lifting, a trickier convo coming up next

DETAIL

Ask participants to turn to a neighbor and answer these essential questions: “What are your hopes?” “What are your fears?” Remember, a good organizer is always asking questions, and these are two of the most powerful. Give them only 5 minutes, though that is clearly not enough time to cover it all. We all have a lot of fears... Discuss briefly with the full group, some may like to share what they noticed they had in common, or different, or new ideas they hadnt thought of before, or paths that move us from fear to hope.



DISASTERS + HAZARDS map

Presenter Point

DISASTERS & HAZARDS

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT (HIRA)

Type: Discussion
Materials: Markers
Time: 10-20+ minutes

SUMMARY

Brainstorm possible disasters that are likely to happen locally, and the possible consequences or cascading hazards that might occur. Understand connections between natural and unnatural disasters.

DETAILS

In order to be well-prepared for any possible problem, we must first understand what problems are possible. HIRA is a concept often used by governments and militaries who are seeking to mitigate threats to their power. Here we will integrate a fun mapping activity to make it comprehensible to all.

It is best to start by naming the obvious bad weather-related disasters. Start with whatever you were just talking about during the recovery segment, then add the obvious ones like floods, fires, droughts. It is usually best to list those along one side. Then ask questions that expand the definition of disasters, eliciting responses about unique local dangers, unnatural disasters, invisible disasters, political & social disasters. Introduce cascading hazards to better understand the details.

For instance, wildfires are often followed by floods and mudslides, due to loss of ground cover. Ironically, floods may be followed by fires, because damaged electrical systems spark house fires.

The group will identify numerous diverse cascading hazards - exactly what they focus on depends on who is in the room. As facilitator, focus on restating and making connections. Try your best to plan ahead so that you can strategically place related topics near each other. For most groups it is very easy to fill up two big sheets

See example on the next page (this is relatively very small). More examples below.

EXAMPLES

Polluted water and/or chemical spills

Droughts cause, fires to become more frequent.

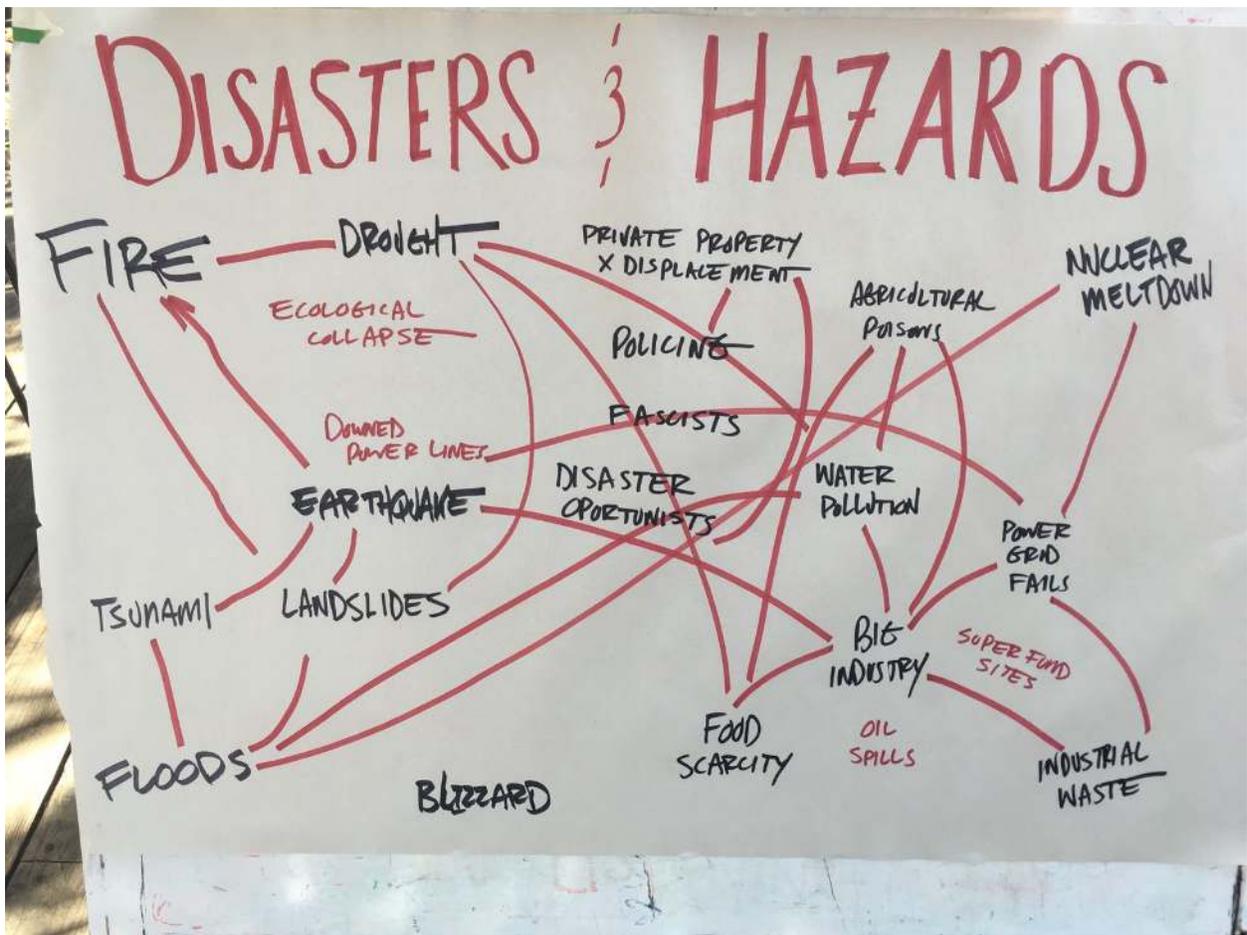
Debris on roads, or downed power lines

Occupation by law enforcement / police violence

Food deserts

Loss of employment/income

Facilitator Tip: Please note that the wall notes above are sideways because we typically used two sheets - even with double the space we filled it up quick! Below is an example from a workshop in California. It was a brief workshop, so this HIRA map is relatively simple. Don't be surprised to get 50+ responses on this activity, it really cracks open a big conversation, especially if it comes after the Phases bit. Also, you may consider placing it before Phases; there are pros and cons either way. The main benefit of discussing Phases first is that it helps the group warm up and be really expansive with the Mapping; the main benefit of Mapping first is that it can help you to identify what type of disaster scenario is most relevant when beginning the interactive part of Phases.



RESPONDING

before you go

Be prepared
→ training, practice
→ affinity groups

Make a plan
→ communication

Scout

in communities

Listen

Comfort

Organize
→ start small
→ remove barriers
→ amplify & support local orgs/MVMTs

Return

NO'S

NO
masters

NO
flakes

KNOW
your limits

Presenter Point

Preparing to Respond

Type: Mini-Lecture

Materials:

Time: 5-10 minutes

SUMMARY

The real first responders are always neighbors. These are our basic protocols for showing up at the site of a disaster, based on lessons learned and recent successes.

DETAILS

This section is set up like a mini-lecture, but depending on the experience levels of your group, it may be more fruitful as an open conversation about specific tactics related to these general recommendations. Begin by getting a sense of what types of response participants already have in their minds.

Ask participants to close their eyes. Read the prompt below, then discuss.

Imagine that you have responded to a call for support after a major disaster. You knock on a door in the affected community. Somebody opens the door and says, “Thank Goodness, you are the first help we’ve seen.” What do you do at that moment, and what do you wish you would’ve done leading up to that moment?

The following protocols are a simple how-to for engaging in grassroots disaster response effectively.

Be Prepared: *Get training, practice needed skills. Share what you know, or reach out to MADR Training Working Group and we can try to help you find an appropriate trainer. Assess capacity and limitations continually - it is so important to understand what situations you are not prepared to handle, and to make wise decisions. Form an affinity group, a small tight-knit crew that trusts and works well together, and grow your team skills strategically and proactively.*

Make a Plan: *Obviously the first step to any successful endeavor, but we must also remember that when systems break down situations can shift quickly and unexpectedly, so your plan must be flexible. A contingency plan can be literally a life-saver. Adaptation requires a solid communication plan. We often use Zello walkie talkie app, but when phone service is out, consider getting real 2-way radios. Schedule comms buddy check-ins or meet up at the end of every day to reassess plans collaboratively. Unilateral decisions in high-stress scenarios can be dangerous or disruptive, especially when related to volunteer management, transportation, or*

meetings/consultations or supplies drop-off/pick-up. If possible, it is wise for one person to stay back but in constant contact, ready to respond to the needs of the team in the field.

Scout/Knowledge: *When a disaster hits a community, local community organizers rooted in that community will be responding. Usually the first step when we hear about a hurricane or other disaster is to reach out via email, phone, facebook, any way we can to: Food Not Bombs chapters, Earth First!/Rising Tide chapters, Black Lives Matter Chapters, Democratic Socialists of America chapters, Anarchist Black Cross chapters, IWW locals, etc. Ask what the situation is and how you can support. Sometimes this is just amplifying efforts already on the ground, and/or directing supplies and volunteers to these local community-rooted first responders. Social media is often used to coordinate decentralized local relief efforts. After Harvey a page surfaced called “Hurricane Harvey 2017 – Together We Rebuild,” others will be “[Insert city name] Strong” - these are portals to spontaneous, locally connected rescue, relief, and recovery efforts.*

Listen: *Neighbors let us know that the person in the apartment next door is in a wheelchair that is motorized and he cannot charge it to leave his house. ‘Can you check on him?’ After Irma we were asked to assist a woman who was unable to get in contact with her primary doctor for a new rescue inhaler she had been prescribed but had no idea how to use. This model continued to guide our work in Puerto Rico from Caguas to Las Marias. This process aided us in getting to the areas with the most need as soon as possible. It helped us know how to get to these areas by knowing which roads were still accessible.*

Comfort: *Part of the listening process includes hearing and honoring the heavy pain and trauma that survivors are feeling, and psychological first aid can help to lift those off their shoulders. You don’t need to know anything fancy, just active listening skills and empathy. Bringing water, food, medics, care packages can feel like an uplifting blessing, and when distributed freely and lovingly these little comforts strengthen survivors resolve to persevere. During distributions in PR, MADR volunteers communicated with neighbors who requested a pop up clinic and then coordinated transport among one another to bring friends in need of access to medical care.*

Organize: *Survivors know what they need to thrive. But they may need your help to get it. Make a plan with each person you talk to. Start small with your projects. You don’t need to build a free clinic from the ground up, instead put together a small first aid station, and then expand when you meet massage therapists, doulas, and herbalists who want to help, and you will have a bustling center of activity which will attract EMTs, nurses, and doctors as well as all the supplies they may need. In the same spirit as starting small and collaboratively building opportunities for others to join, solidarity organizing is often focused on removing barriers, like when we used Mutual Aid Disaster Relief badges and a great deal of persistence to gain access to overstocked government supply warehouses in PR, and then once the door was cracked open, we made more*

badges for local organizers, empowering them to get lots of aid out to marginalized communities. Respect is also essential to solidarity organizing. Dignity at distro centers has been one of the biggest reasons that people have turned to our projects.

Return: *We all have something to offer. This initial gift of basic medical care, food, water, flashlights, or internet can open possibilities for connection, dialogue, and many new relationships. These relationships are what will give us more strength and resilience next time.*

The *3 NOs* are important for avoiding common mistakes.

No Masters: *The horizontal nature of our network is very important. Our heroes and elders are human, with their own inconsistencies, and just because someone started an organization or movement does not mean that they are certain to know what is needed in every specific situation. It doesn't do us any good to put people on pedestals; better to work together across divisions, as equals rooted in our shared vision creating authentic friendships as we struggle together.*

No Flakes: *When our hearts are overflowing with empathetic pain, it is easy to slip in promises that we cannot keep. Imagine what it would feel like to lose everything, but then to your surprise someone shows up and tells you they will return with lots more help (yay!)... but then you never see them again... It can be devastating, depressing, and disempowering. And it damages the reputations of all of us doing grassroots humanitarian aid. Be very careful about this, never offer anything you cannot actually realize.*

Know Limits: *Closely related, it is vital to know what you can and cannot actually do. Communicate your limitations frequently, and ask for help when you need it. Consider your and others mental health, take breaks before you get burned out, and ask for support within your affinity group. If you are present in the beginning stages, be especially conscious of limitations, and think strategically about how they may be overcome. Think about critical infrastructure that you can tap into to build capacity. Is there a church that could act as housing for future volunteers? Is there a location to set up a first aid station that could potentially evolve into a wellness center/clinic? What about a community center to distro supplies?*

COMMUNITY CARE

- Disaster zones have the potential to be inherently unsafe
- Hydration
- Preventing Mold-related injury
- Preventing other serious injuries
- Mental Wellness + Peer Support
- Awareness, Balance, + Connection
- Ring Theory of Support

Presenter Point

Community Care

Type: Mini-Lecture

Materials: (optional) Safety Gear: goggles, respirator, tyvek suit, gloves

Time: 5-10 minutes

SUMMARY

We all know that we are supposed to practice self-care. But relying only on self-care encourages disability - when we tell folks to go home and practice some self-care until they feel better and then can join our movements again, sometimes they never come back because they feel guilty and isolated rather than supported. These are our basic protocols for supporting each other and for staying safe in situations that present dangerous challenges both physical and mental.

DETAILS

Disaster sites have the potential to be inherently unsafe. They may contain physical threats to health and body, emotional traumas, and strained or fragmented social relationships. In the high-intensity environment of a post-disaster situation, there is an inevitability of trauma because we are authentically emotionally engaged with people who experience profound suffering.

Hydration: Your body is already dehydrated by the time you start feeling thirsty. Take a sip every 20 minutes, or every time you see your buddy drinking. Check your pee! The darker your urine the more dehydrated you are. You want clear/light yellow pee.

Mold Safety: Take care when cleaning up! Toxic black mold is extremely deadly, and others can also be dangerous when found in high concentrations. [There are many useful guides on MADR website](#). Consider finding other work if you have a history of lung issues, auto-immune disorders, or other health concerns. Cleaning property is not worth your health/life!

FACILITATOR TIP: We also demonstrated proper mold safety gear, like tyvek suit, gloves, P-100 respirator, and goggles without vents, by dressing up while one facilitator elaborated on mold safety protocols. We have not included that bit here for the sake of brevity, but you can [find an exhaustive list in this guide](#). You are encouraged to adapt for fire safety, boat safety, or anything else that may be relevant in your region.

Diseases/Toxins: After a disaster, there are many normally uncommon diseases and toxins in the environment. Hygiene is CRITICAL after disasters for your health and the health of your

community in often cramped living quarters. Make sure you thoroughly decontaminate yourself and your tools at the end of each day. Make sure tetanus and other immunizations are up to date and clean and bandage all wounds (staph infections are common). Watch for signs of infection.

*Preventing Other Serious Injuries: Safety first, always! Learn how to use a chainsaw *before* you arrive in the disaster zone. Teach every volunteer how to use the tools they need appropriately. Make sure the electricity is shut off before you begin removing damaged walls. NEVER drive through water if you can't see the bottom. Learn about asbestos and other common hazards. Stay aware of your surroundings and other people, especially while doing deconstruction or clean-up. Many injuries are caused by yourself or other volunteers. Be brave, but be smart too!*

Mental Wellness: Develop positive practices. Find ways to feel grounded - focused, active and strong. Check in often, with yourself and your buddy. Practice mindfulness, awareness that deliberately keeps mind and body in the same place. A scent that is calming or grounding, like lavender or jasmine, can help put you at ease and maintain focus.

Peer Support: Peer-support can give us the space to remain whole and intact under tense and scary circumstances. Often, a few people could be located in a medic area to listen to survivors or others who are in crisis. Remember, you're not trying to be a professional or "have it all together". Peer support is about being real and sharing our humanity. People in crisis can't always reach out for the help they need. Be proactive in checking on your comrades, especially if they seem to be struggling or recent events have been traumatic.

Awareness, Balance, & Connection: Try to always be aware of your state of mind, have a healthy balance of work and time off, and consciously seek out people you can connect with. Feeling grounded is essential to achieving these healthy habits. In high-stress environments, develop good coping strategies like intermittent escape, rest, and play. Make taking breaks mandatory. Set boundaries for yourself and make sure that you don't burn yourself out supporting others.

Rings of Support: Comfort those more impacted than you, seek support from those less impacted. This way, everyone feels supported while the stress and trauma is being shared and dispersed.

What are your → **HOPES?**

What are your → **FEARS?**

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, & mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding, accompanied by an array of symptoms including physical depletion, feelings of helplessness & hopelessness, disillusionment & development of negative self-concept & negative attitudes toward work, people, & life. In its extreme form, it is a breaking point beyond which the ability to cope with challenging situations is severely hampered.

**AVOIDING & RECOVERING
FROM BURNOUT** (after Comm core)

HOW DO WE
COPE WITH
BURNOUT?

WHAT HELPS
US HEAL?

Presenter Point

HOW DO WE COPE//HOW DO WE HEAL?

Type: Discussion

Materials: Markers

Time: 5 minutes

SUMMARY

This work often creates high turn-over due to burnout. Our principles of community care help us to prioritize preventing burnout rather than struggling to recover from it.

DETAILS

“Burnout is defined, and subjectively experienced, as a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding. The emotional demands are often caused by a combination of very high expectations and chronic situational stresses. Burnout is accompanied by an array of symptoms including physical depletion, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, disillusionment and the development of negative self-concept and negative attitudes towards work, people and life itself. In its extreme form, burnout represents a breaking point beyond which the ability to cope with the environment is severely hampered.”

How do you cope with burnout? What helps you heal? Respond popcorn style, list.

EXAMPLES

Sleep, relaxation

Meditation and mindfulness

Healthy food, herbal teas

Exercise, sports, fun, escape

Steady schedule, not too many surprises

Alcohol or drugs (may not be the healthiest way to cope, but its real!)

Nature, hiking, camping

Art, music, creativity

Of course, we don't heal alone. One very important way to lessen the impact of trauma associated with this type of work is to do it with the support of an affinity group.

WHAT IS
AN AFFINITY GROUP?

Presenter Point

WHAT IS AN AFFINITY GROUP?

Type: Discussion

Materials:

Time: 5 minutes

SUMMARY

Affinity groups, like mutual aid itself, are a natural way for people to help each other and organize together.

DETAILS

Ask the following questions and note responses. Discuss the value of this organizing model.

What is an affinity group? What is its purpose? What roles are necessary?

If this term is unfamiliar to participants, elaborate with the following description:

An affinity group is a small group of people who come together to prepare for and take direct action. Affinity groups are organized in a non-hierarchical and autonomous way, there are no leaders and everyone has an equal voice and responsibility.

Affinity groups work best when people have something in common (the 'affinity' bit). This affinity might be based on prior friendships and connections, where you live, the issues you want to campaign on, the tactics you want to use or a particular skill you have to offer (e.g. Street Medics, Construction/Rebuilding, Documenting police abuses, Community Kitchens and Community Media Centers), or a mixture of these.

Sometimes, these groups are formed just for one action, but often they are ongoing groups that organize and take part in actions over a number of years. Affinity groups are intended to be autonomous units. Even if you are participating with others in a larger action or part of wider campaigns and networks, all important decisions are made within the group, and ideally the group can take care of its own needs before, during, and after taking action. This supports efficient use of resources and quick, creative decision-making. Having a group of people looking out for one another helps to make sure everyone is cared for.

Multiple affinity groups may form a “Spokes Council”, with one representative from each group, to coordinate collective action. “Spokes” consult with their groups rather than making decisions

Possible Roles: Facilitator, Vibes-watcher/Mediator, Communications, Documentation, Logistics, Medic, Interpreter, Legal, Transportation, Police Liaison, etc.

WHO ELSE IS ~~WANNAM~~
~~WANNAM~~ RESPONDING?

Presenter Point

WHO ELSE IS RESPONDING?

Type: Discussion

Materials:

Time: 5 minutes

SUMMARY

Many diverse groups and individuals show up in the wake of a disaster. When systems break down, the political terrain may shift and, at least temporarily, unlikely allies emerge.

DETAILS

Who are some other people or organizations you might also see? Try to identify them as “potential allies”, “neutral”, or “opponents”. You can make 3 columns, or a spectrum of some sort.

Facilitation Note: This will be difficult to do for many of the examples, which is the point of the exercise.

EXAMPLES

Government Agents: National Guard, potentially other military, mercenaries, police, city government, city services, politicians and media personalities

Other Relief Efforts: Red Cross / NGOs, FEMA, Islamic Relief, local churches, Cajun Navy

Private Industry: insurance agents, real estate developers, crypto-currency colonizers

Other (potentially neighbors): vigilantes, patriot militias, disaster tourists, contractors, dealers

Disasters are unpredictable environments and each one is itself unique. People or organizations may behave very differently than you expect in everyday life. Keep an open mind and gather as much information as you can about the other groups operating in the disaster zone. No friend is always your friend, no enemy is always your enemy.

Example: The National Guard occupied New Orleans after Katrina. They sometimes caused problems, but at other times defended community spaces from being shut down by the police.

Group Activity

BREAKOUT GROUPS

Type: Small Groups
Materials: big papers, markers
Time: 20-30+ minutes

SUMMARY

If you have enough time, participants will really enjoy this break-out group ideation activity. It is an opportunity to synthesize everything we have been learning and discuss how it can be applied to our living and changing communities right now.

Facilitator Note: For shorter workshops, it is usually necessary to drop this part. That's ok, the workshop is very good even without it. But for some groups, this segment was like the icing on the cake, they really got a lot of good ideas. One crew even came up with a plan that they were ready to set in motion immediately, and psyched to get to work!

DETAILS

Let's imagine how our groups would respond to a local disaster. Reflecting on all that we have learned: principles, lessons from the past, types of hazards, phases of recovery, breaking through barriers and red tape, coming in a good way, supporting each other, affinity groups and allies...

The long-feared major disaster in this region just happened. Now is your chance to self-organize a response. What are you going to do? Where? Try to be as specific as possible.

OR, if you prefer, take this time to consider needs in your community today, and how you can take steps toward building empowerment through participation in mutual aid survival programs. You may find that building power now will yield results that make the community better prepared in the future.

☆ Breakdown
can lead to
Breakthrough
↳ opportunity in crisis

☆ Relationships
default to
Mutual Aid
↳ seeing thru
the cracks
↳ tragedy to
transformation



Presenter Point

FROM BREAKDOWN TO BREAKTHROUGH

Type: Closing
Materials:
Time: 5 minutes

SUMMARY

Wrap up the workshop on a positive note.

DETAILS

“Breakdown can lead to Breakthrough” is a common saying in the mental health community. It can also be true of systems and societies. Crisis is a time when difficult choices must be made, a time when important changes may finally come to fruition.

Neoliberal capitalism and colonization is daily disaster - the meaningless drudgery of the work, the loss of authentic social relationships, the destruction of the water, the air, and everything we need to survive. Even though a hurricane or a fire or a flood is immensely devastating, it also in a sense washes away the unnameable disaster that is everyday life under neoliberal capitalism. Without the coercion from above, most disaster survivors default back to meaningful relationships based on mutual aid. After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, Dorothy Day said, “While the crisis lasted people loved one another.” We want that love to last. We want to stretch out these temporary autonomous zones, where people are able to share goods and services with each other freely, where we reimagine new social relationships outside of the dictates of the market, where we work for something real and build something together.

Think of all the things we rely on our opposition to do for us. Our food, water, energy, transportation, entertainment, communications, medical care, trash pickup. If the political establishment takes care of people’s survival needs, they maintain power, but due to capitalism eating itself, the political establishment seems increasingly disinterested and unable to meet those needs. If instead corporations or fascists meet people’s needs, people will probably look to them for leadership. But if grassroots movements for collective liberation facilitate the people’s ability to meet their own needs, the better world we dream of very well may become a reality.

Buenaventura Durruti, antifascist revolutionary in the Spanish Civil War, said “Our opposition might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. But we are not afraid of ruins. We carry a new world, here, in our hearts. That world is growing in this minute.” Disasters open cracks in our societies, our communities, our lives... But we can see each other through those cracks. They may hold opportunities for growing community resiliency, grassroots power, and interconnected solidarity.

Group Activity

NEXT STEPS:

FUTURE TRAININGS & SKILLS TO SHARE

Type: Discussion

Materials:

Time: 5-15 minutes

SUMMARY

Discuss what types of further training feels relevant and exciting, and what skills are already in the room and may be shared. Assess and wrap up the workshop.

DETAILS

Use 3 blank sheets to catalogue a popcorn-brainstorm of next steps. The first is any useful trainings that community members want. The second is skills that those in the room (or the community) already have. Often participants are happy to see a lot of cross-over between these lists!

Finally, conduct some kind of assessment, welcoming feedback and suggestions for improving the workshop next time. We used a simple version, 3 columns: positive, negative, and changes/suggestions.

What skills do you need to escalate your campaigns, defend your communities, build a just transition, and prepare for disaster resiliency by growing community power?

What are your skills that you can bring to disaster response or mutual aid work in general? Which of these can you teach to others?

Feedback? Did we achieve our learning goals? What worked? What didnt?

Group Activity

YARN WEB

Type: Circle, Reflections
Materials: large ball of yarn
Time: 5-15 minutes depending on group size

SUMMARY

An exceptional closer that illustrates connections and the strength in our relationships. It can bring to mind spider webs, fungal networks, synapses in the brain, or other organic systems.

DETAILS

Everyone sits or stands in a circle. Begin by demonstrating the flow yourself. One by one, the person holding the ball of yarn reminds everyone of their name and gender pronoun and states a reflection on their experience. Good prompts include What is one thing you learned? One hope for the future? Your next step? Or for brevity, ask for one word that starts with the same letter as their name (ask everyone else to repeat it back - *Tyler, Transformation* - just for fun). With other groups, open space is better. Folks can feel free to express hopes, fears, and dreams as they're comfortable, *within a reasonable amount of time*.

After unwinding the ball to make some slack, they'll toss it across to someone on the other side of the circle. It's best if the lines are tossed as far across as people physically can manage, since the goal is to build strength within the web for the next part; which is revealed after each person has gone.

After the final reflection, ask the group if they feel the connections they've built are strong enough to hold up a medium weight object - like a folding chair laid flat. Test the web (on a strong spot!), then ask individuals at random to slowly release tension in the string until the object begins to slip or touch the ground. Encourage everyone to work together to lift it back up, and use this as a reminder that when people in our movement are burnt out, we can't leave them behind to do self care alone, but we should think of community care as a core to organizing work. End it on this positive note. Feel free to make this game serious or silly as works best for the group; it is a really good closer, we had good experiences with high schoolers and hardcore anarchists, and grandmas too :)

** We hope that your workshop was a great success! Remember to get everyone's contact info and follow up with any good ideas that emerged during your time together. This workshop is just the beginning of something powerful. Solidarity.

- Mutual Aid Disaster Relief Training Tour Working Group

Facilitator/Organizer Notes - Follow-up: