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# Lay Counselling: a Trainer's Manual



## Lay Counselling

Social and humanitarian organisations provide support to people affected by crisis events across the globe. They assist people affected by disasters or other critical events, people suffering from loss or serious illness, and people living in isolation or being stigmatized. One of the ways they assist is through psychosocial support delivered by lay counsellors. Thousands of lay counsellors provide an important service to vulnerable people – sometimes in areas where no professional counselling is available.

*Lay Counselling: A Trainer's Manual* is designed for trainers of lay counsellors who work with social and humanitarian organisations. Lay counselors may include staff or volunteers who provide psychosocial support, but do not have a mental health background or formal degree in counselling. It is important, therefore, that they are well prepared and well trained in order to be effective. This manual aims to provide trainers a resource for equipping lay counsellors with the knowledge and skills they need in their role, whatever support they provide.



This manual has been developed with funding from the EU Lifelong Learning Programme

**Aim of the Manual:** To equip trainers to provide participants an understanding of what lay counselling is, and the skills and knowledge required to be an effective lay counsellor and do no harm.

**Audience:** Trainers of lay counsellors working in a variety of social service and humanitarian settings.

**Structure of the Manual:** The Manual sets out a 2-day generic workshop with material applicable to diverse counselling contexts, including background theory, activities and powerpoint slides.

**Adaptability:** The material can be adapted to the specific needs of an organisation and different contexts in which lay counsellors work.

## Background:

- The Manual was developed by the Danish Cancer Society, War Trauma Foundation (Netherlands), University of Innsbruck (Austria) and the Centre for Psychosocial Support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Denmark).
- It is based on the collective, evidence-informed practice of the consortium over many decades of lay counselling and psychosocial work.
- It has been researched and field tested before publication in order to extend knowledge about best practice in lay counselling.

*Lay Counselling: A Trainer's Manual is available in English, French, German and Danish. It can be freely downloaded from the following websites:*

[www.uibk.ac.at/psychologie](http://www.uibk.ac.at/psychologie)  
[www.cancer.dk](http://www.cancer.dk)  
[www.wartrauma.nl](http://www.wartrauma.nl)  
[www.pscentre.org](http://www.pscentre.org)

*For further information or to order hard copies of the manual, contact the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support at: [psychosocial\\_centre@ifrc.org](mailto:psychosocial_centre@ifrc.org)*

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This Manual was a collaborative effort of:



Danish Cancer Society

**WARTRAUMA**  
FOUNDATION



Psychosocial Centre  
 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## What Trainers Have to Say...

*"...An extensive manual with relevant ideas for practice."*

*"...It can be perfectly adapted for the needs of different organisations. The materials are very flexible and can be used module-wise."*

