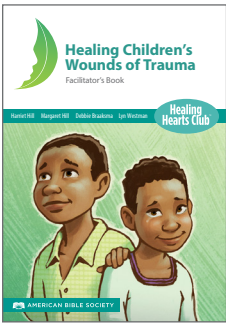


# CHILDREN'S TRAUMA HEALING



## Why is Children's Trauma Healing needed?



Whenever a community is traumatized, children suffer, but often they are without a voice and their heart wounds go untreated. Children have some basic needs: safety, structure, order, protection, comfort, intimacy, adults they can trust, autonomy, control of their lives. Instead, trauma fills their formative years with violence, abandonment, neglect, chaos, unpredictability, danger, cruelty, abuse, boundary violation and exploitation.

Living in the present, children have no backdrop of the past to help them understand what has happened. Because they believe adults are good, often they conclude they are responsible for bad things that happen. They have great difficulty articulating their inner pain because their language skills are still in development. When adults don't know how to help traumatized children, their response is one of frustration, which only increases the child's pain and despair.

**Children who have the opportunity to express their experiences become stronger and more resilient and can recover from the devastation of war or abuse.**

## What does Children's Trauma Healing involve?

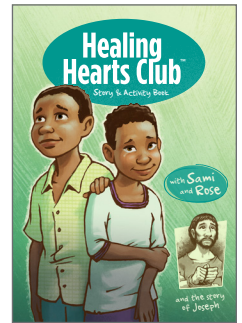
Either at a one-week "camp" or in weekly meetings, caregivers help traumatized children ages 9 to 13 express their pain through stories, games, drawings, crafts, writing laments, songs, and other activities. As they become able to put their pain into words, they are encouraged to bring it to Christ for healing.

## What are the effects?

Here are two testimonies from facilitators of past sessions: "The emotionless faces of the children that greeted me at the workshop was something I had not expected. Initially, my smiles did not seem to have any impact on their sullen faces. . . . I expected poverty, but I was not prepared for the attitude of some parents towards the children. Many children do not have parents or significant adults that they can trust with their brokenness and secrets of the heart. . . . But at the end of the workshop, Piloya was smiling from ear to ear as we said our goodbyes, as were all the other children in my group."

## What is covered?

The curriculum includes a facilitator's book and a child's story and activity book. Each of the ten lessons features a Bible story and a composite "current life" story:



- ❑ I Am Important to God
- ❑ Why do bad things happen?
- ❑ Saying how we feel
- ❑ Feeling lonely
- ❑ Building our life well
- ❑ Loss and grief
- ❑ Bad touch
- ❑ Taking our pain to the cross
- ❑ Forgiveness
- ❑ Rebuilding lives



"I saw the children in my group of eight (4 boys, 4 girls) interact with each other during the workshop and gradually move from being unsure of what they could talk about concerning the hurts and grief in their lives to finding creative and expressive ways to deal with those feelings. They covered topics that are rarely, if ever, discussed—writing songs, creating pictures, drawing simple life maps, talking openly, and asking good questions about suffering, sin, and loss. . . . The message that Christ will always be with you and help you is important for these kids."

## How can a community help their traumatized children?

The Trauma Healing program follows a four-stage process:

- **CONVENING.** Bring together the decision-makers of organizations and churches so they can understand the program and decide if they would like to integrate it into their ministry. Those interested identify facilitators to be equipped, who can then train others.
- **EQUIPPING.** Facilitators are equipped at a three-day orientation to the materials followed by a five-day trauma healing session with traumatized children, where they get first-hand experience using the materials. On the final day, the children's caregivers are invited for an orientation to trauma care and the closing ceremony. Facilitators then use what they have learned in their community and return for an advanced equipping session to complete their training.
- **HEALING.** Caregivers use what they have learned with traumatized children in their communities. In the process, others may learn to be facilitators through the apprentice model.
- **COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE.** An annual "community of practice" meeting gathers facilitators and program administrators for encouragement, learning new skills, problem solving, and prayer.

The training of children's trauma healing facilitators can be organized in tandem with facilitator training for adults. This allows people of all ages in a community to heal from their trauma together and provides a healthy environment in which the children can thrive.

## How can we get started?

Write to us at [traumahealing@americanbible.org](mailto:traumahealing@americanbible.org) or contact your local Bible Society.



Above: Master Facilitator James Covey with children doing the "building a wall" exercise at a pilot equipping session in Entebbe, Uganda. April 2013.

Below: Master Facilitator Beatrice Njoroge reading a composite story with children in a healing session in Malindi, Kenya. January 2013.



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