Circuit Breaker Policies, Procedures & Minimum Standards

Purpose:

The Circuit Breaker program is designed for use in small groups, and is to be conducted by trained group facilitators within a safe working environment. Since the program deals with subject matter related to anger and the early prevention of domestic violence, prospective facilitators need to have a good working knowledge of the nature and inherent risks of domestic violence. This is important in helping them to recognise scenarios beyond the scope of their group, and to be able to provide appropriate referrals in situations of risk.

For this reason, it is a requirement that facilitators of this program first complete Circuit Breaker Facilitator Training, either in person at a training event or online. Every two years, facilitators must also complete a short online refresher to attain their *Circuit Breaker Provider's Licence.* Without this, program delivery or the purchase of course materials will not be possible.

Details of training events, online training and licensing can be found at www.circuitbreakercourse.net

Responsibility of Facilitators:

Facilitators are entrusted with carrying the reputation of the program and are therefore required to represent the program in its intended form, adhering to all policies and procedures. Facilitators are not to add to the program, its content, structure or group delivery in any way, as this creates an inconsistent and confusing experience for participants and the broader community. The author takes the reputation of the program and the safety and wellbeing of participants very seriously. At his own discretion, the author reserves the right to revoke the licence of providers who deliver groups in a manner inconsistent with the policies, procedures or the spirit of the program.

Disclaimer:

Circuit Breaker is a program for the early prevention of domestic abuse and makes no claim to be a tertiary intervention program. Before using course material for groups, it is the responsibility of all facilitators to ensure that the course's proper use complies with any legislation which might be relevant to their particular region, and that they are adequately protected by any relevant insurances in the unlikely event of litigation. The

author accepts no responsibility or liability for consequences of the improper or proper use of this course or its contents in whole or in part. Use of this material shall constitute the facilitator's acknowledgement of its proper use, and acceptance of all responsibility and risk.

Selecting Participants:

The Circuit Breaker program is not suitable for everyone. Before delivering a program, it is important that you put careful thought into the process of selecting participants:

1. Insist on registrations by a specified date

   o A registration deadline needs to allow you time to properly assess all participants and your team of available facilitators.

   o Do not allow participants to simply turn up to a program, register late, or drop in and out of a program. Candidates who cannot keep to a simple boundary like this will be the same people who will go on to destroy your group experience. They are simply not ready for a group yet.

2. Insist that registrations are subject to a short interview

   o A short interview of each candidate will save you from ten weeks of pain and failure. If you are not able to meet face-to-face, a phone interview is often sufficient. Some facilitators like to share this task by splitting up the list of candidates.

   o There are three questions you should ask of each candidate:

     § "Are you able to commit to attending every one of the ten sessions of the course?"

     § "What are you hoping to get out of the Circuit Breaker course?" People can sound serious but have no idea what the course is about. Ensure that they have issues which the course is likely to address, and never accept people who are only there to observe the program.

     § Finally, ask yourself whether you feel that this person is suitable for a group course at all. Do they sound like they would be coming along of their own free will out of a genuine desire for change? Do they sound like they have an issue like mental

illness which might make the group process difficult on themselves and others in the group? Would they perhaps get more out of one-on-one sessions with a therapist?

3. Construct the groups thoughtfully

   o Give careful consideration to which participants might work best with each other in a group.

   o Be thoughtful as to which facilitators might work best to develop each other, and which participants they will be best suited to. Consider the following:

      § Their age and gender

      § Their experience (match trainees with old-hands)

      § Their capacity and resilience

      § Their personal story

   o **Never** put couples together in the same group.

Delivery:

Circuit Breaker is a group course based around material delivered in a series of ten videos. Any number of participants may view the videos and receive the training together at the start of a meeting as a large group. Following this, they will then break into smaller groups; which must each have two trained facilitators. Both the course material and group experience are crucial elements of the program and will require approximately two hours per session to be completed adequately.

Using the Videos:

Except with the express written permission of the author, it is an expectation that all course material is to be delivered by the course videos. This is to ensure that the necessary course content is delivered properly and consistently. Using the videos protects facilitators from omitting important content, or adding content which may be incorrect or unhelpful. This in turn protects facilitators and their participants from potential risks, and protects the integrity and reputation of the program itself.

Session videos are available at the Circuit Breaker website, and may be streamed or downloaded free of charge. The videos are provided at no cost, on the understanding that they are exclusively for the use of the trained facilitator in the delivery of the program. With the exception of session one, each video is password-protected. This is because Circuit Breaker is not a self-help course, and videos are not to be shared for private use outside of a proper group experience with a group facilitator. As the facilitator, it will be a great help to you to view each session before showing it to the participants.

Where possible, it is recommended that sessions be downloaded rather than streamed, as this will protect you in the event of internet failure or buffering issues. Since small improvements and updates are continually made to the video material, it's useful to download these again each time before the commencement of your next program. If delivering the program inside a prison, you will need to download all material to a USB stick containing no other files, and understand that prison staff will need time to examine this material thoroughly before you can even bring it inside.

Conducting the Groups:

Circuit Breaker is fundamentally a group program, and the group's sharing and feedback time is the most important element of each session. After viewing the course material on the video as a larger group, you will break into smaller groups for discussion, feedback and sharing. Each group requires two facilitators and somewhere between two and eight participants (2+5 or 2+4 being ideal). You might find it helpful to break into single-gender groups, but mixed groups can also work quite well (as long as couples are never put together in a group).

The purpose of the small group is to support each other through the application of new learnings from week to week and to encourage and challenge each other towards progress. The most important priority for each group session should not be a rehash of the content, but to allow ample time for each participant and facilitator to check-in and report to the rest of the group. This is something which is discussed in detail in the Facilitator Notes for each and every session. It is unacceptable to "run out of time" for group feedback, since this is to be the first task and top priority of the group session.

Having watched the video together, some participants will have questions, or may wish to discuss content in the group time. It's beneficial to discuss any thoughts or questions (including those in the notes), but to ensure that you save this content discussion until after the group feedback. Participants should be encouraged to read each session again between meetings anyway, and that is often a good time for them to sit and

process any of the set questions which may not have been covered in the group. The Spiritual Perspectives section at the end of each chapter is also intended for <u>optional</u> home reading, and is <u>not to be used during the group time.</u>

Preparing Each Session:

As the group facilitator, you will feel most comfortable and prepared for each session by ensuring you do the following:

- · Go to the Circuit Breaker website and download the session

- · View the session, following along with the manual, highlighting and taking notes as you do

- · Read the Facilitator Notes for that session to ensure you are aware of the session goals and all facets of the group process

- · Contact your co-facilitator to ensure you are both feeling confident with the session

As a Circuit Breaker facilitator, you are required to read, understand and abide by the facilitator notes for each session of the program. Your delivery of the program constitutes your agreement to adhere to all guidelines for the session and to remain true to its intended delivery.

Delivering the Session Content

Once participants have been welcomed and any local housekeeping discussed, each week's session begins with the delivery of the content by video. Links can be found on the Circuit Breaker website. Although these videos can be streamed, it is advisable that they be downloaded in order to avoid issues with buffering or internet failure. If you have several groups, all participants can sit together as a large group for the video session. Encourage participants to follow along with their notes and to highlight any issues they may like to discuss in the group time. Avoid discussing those issues immediately after the video session, since more important group work needs to be prioritised first.

Creating a Safe Group

At the conclusion of the video session, break into small groups; each of which must have two facilitators. Where possible, arrange chairs in a circle. Co-facilitators should ideally be seated across the other side of the circle directly opposite to enable easy eye-contact, and to reduce the psychological barriers between the participants and the

facilitators. If delivering a program inside a prison, endeavour to sit amongst the circle of prisoners where possible rather than creating an *us* vs *them* scenario with your seating.

Participants should be encouraged to work as a team over the ten weeks, not merely reading the same notes, but exploring and growing together on a common journey. Every member of the group should be encouraged to commit to punctuality and full-attendance. Participants should be reminded that their commitment is to the whole team, and not merely to you alone. Every participant should be encouraged to commit to being as open as they can within the group, with the understanding that everything said within the group stays strictly within the group. A commitment that members do not discuss group-related issues outside of the group for the ten weeks is also beneficial to the whole group's experience.

Each organisation must establish its own ground-rules for a safe and confidential group, and must require participants to sign a group agreement to this end. A second copy of each participant's group agreement should be kept on file. It is not advised that the group proceed unless all participants can agree to the group agreement and ground rules. Please see the accompanying Sample Group Agreement document, which provides an example of what your group agreement should look like.

Managing Optional Religious Content

A time of quiet reflection at the conclusion of each session is very beneficial, whilst certain church groups may even prefer a time of prayer. It is a requirement, in the case of prayer, that facilitators allow participants freedom to leave before this time if they choose not to be involved. Similarly, you must explain to the participants that the Spiritual Perspectives section at the end of each session's notes is optional further reading for themselves only, and is not compulsory. In designing this program, great care has been taken to protect participants from being force-fed religious or other spiritual content. Facilitators are asked to also respect this principle and not to add spiritual content to the material or group experience.