

## Suggestions for facilitating post-election group support

- Recognize that the group may include people with differing political opinions. It is probably not a good idea to hold such a group in the next few weeks or months.
- Your best priority is to make the meeting safe for people to express themselves.
- Your best end goal is to guide people toward finding a perspective that restores a sense that they have some control over events.

## Suggested structure for facilitator(s)

- *Introduce yourself as a facilitator – a guide.*
- Each person has a somewhat different view of politics and the election. As facilitators, we want to make it comfortable for you to talk about how you find yourself reacting to the election results. In order to do that, we ask that you absolutely refrain from criticizing or even responding to anyone else's experience. Please speak only for yourself. We would like everyone to have a chance to say what they think is important to them about the election and where it leaves us. This is not counseling, therapy or anything like that. It is a conversation.
- Please limit your words to a couple of minutes so that everyone has a chance to speak. Give others the courtesy of allowing them to finish. If someone is dominating the conversation, please trust the facilitators to gently ask them to give others an opportunity to speak.
- This is a time to take a break from taking sides, so we ask that you don't try to change anyone's mind here. We are only here to support each other in a difficult time for everyone.
- Realize that when you honestly describe how this experience has been for you, you will help others, including those who may not speak, to know that they are not the only ones feeling that way. We are all under a lot of stress, but the stress isn't what hurts us. Isolation – feeling like we are alone with our pain - is what is toxic to us.
- Don't tell yourself or other people reasons that they "should" feel better – that actually just increases the isolation.
- Our goal here is not, as many politicians are saying right now, to come together *politically*. Our goal is to come together as *people* – people who are deeply uncertain about the future, people who quite naturally are worried and perhaps frustrated.
- *When possible, break up larger groups into small groups of no more than 10-12 people. This will increase the participants' sense of safety.*
- *(For smaller, cohesive groups.)* Does everyone agree to only take their own words out of here and not anyone else's? We need that kind of confidentiality for people to feel safe when speaking.
- Here's what we'd like to do. First, we'll open it up for anyone who wants to say how it has been for them – how was it for you when the election results became clear? How did you find yourself reacting? What have you noticed has been different for you since you learned the result?
- *As people speak, facilitators should acknowledge and normalize thoughts and feelings, especially grief, distrust, helplessness or out-of-control, fear about the future. Give people reassurance that it is natural to feel that way.*
- *Summarize what has been said, identifying common themes.*

- *Stress education - Describe typical stress reactions and let people know that these are normal. Let them know you have handouts about stress. Describe other resources that are available to them.*
- It is natural and helpful to take some kind of action in response to emotions like these. “Action steps” help us bring meaning out of chaos. Let’s brainstorm a bit about what kind of actions you would like to take in response to the election. We won’t try to plan something right now, but let’s exchange ideas about what that might be.
- *If broken into smaller groups, bring the whole group back together for the wrap-up.*
- Let’s wrap up by naming what is good and positive in our lives. Even if you are unhappy about the results of the election, please give some thought to what good could come out of it, if you haven’t already done so. Or if you had a new insight – perhaps something that now seems more true – during our conversation, please share it with us.
- *Facilitators – take care of yourselves afterwards! Debrief one another or with your own sources of support.*

Bay Area Critical Incident Stress Management Team