KAIROS PATHWAYS

Trauma-Aware Group Study Resource Kit

The Leader's Roles and Responsibilities

Those who guide the group

If you're leading this group, thank you. What you're stepping into is meaningful, demanding, and — done well — genuinely life-changing for the people in your care. This section's written directly to you.

1. Who This Role's For

Not everyone's ready to lead a group like this, and that's not a judgment — It's wisdom. Leading a trauma-focused group requires a specific kind of readiness that goes beyond good intentions or a compassionate heart.

A leader of this group mustn't be currently working through their own unresolved trauma.

This isn't a permanent disqualification. It's a recognition that leading others through deep pain while carrying unhealed wounds of your own creates real risk — for you and for the people you're serving. If you're in the middle of your own healing journey, the most loving thing you can do for this group is to step into the participant role instead and allow someone else to lead.

A leader of this group should be:

- Someone who has processed their own trauma and is no longer in an active state of crisis or unresolved pain.
- Someone who has completed trauma-aware training through a recognized Christian program (see Trauma-Aware Training Resources).
- Someone who's emotionally stable, spiritually grounded, and able to hold space for others without being destabilized by what they hear.
- Someone who understands the difference between peer support and professional therapy, and who won't attempt to provide clinical care.
- Someone who's committed to the full duration of the group and won't abandon the group mid-study.

2. Your Role

Your role as a leader is to create and maintain a safe, structured, confidential environment in which healing can happen. You're not a therapist, nor a fixer, but a guide.

- You facilitate discussion; you don't direct outcomes.
- You hold the structure of the group so that participants can let go of it.

- You model the kind of listening, non-judgment, and steady presence you want the group to embody.
- You monitor the emotional temperature of the group and respond wisely when someone's overwhelmed.
- You know when to pause, when to redirect, and when to refer someone to professional care.

3. Trauma-Informed/Aware Training Isn't Optional

Before leading this group, you must complete recognized Christian trauma-informed/aware training. This isn't a bureaucratic requirement — it's a matter of genuine care for the people who'll be trusting you with their most painful stories.

This training will equip you to recognize trauma responses in group members, to avoid re-traumatizing participants through careless facilitation, to understand the limits of peer support, and to respond wisely if someone discloses a crisis.

4. The Closed Group Requirement

This must be a closed group. The same people who commit at the beginning must remain through to the end. No new members should join mid-study.

People carrying traumatic wounds have often had their trust shattered by the very people who were supposed to protect them. Every time a new person enters a room where someone's made themselves vulnerable, it can reset the trust that's been carefully built. A closed group says to its members: "You're safe here. These are your people. This circle will not shift beneath you."

5. The Group Confidentiality Agreement

Included with this kit is an example of a Group Confidentiality Agreement (GCA).docx. Before the first session begins, every member of the group — including you as the leader — will sign a GCA. You're responsible for preparing this document, presenting it clearly, and ensuring every person understands what they're agreeing to before they sign.

The GCA must include at minimum:

- Everything shared in this group stays in this group.
- No recording of sessions without explicit consent from **every** member.
- The right to pass on any question, at any time, without explanation.
- No ranking, comparing, or minimizing of anyone's pain.
- A commitment to attend consistently and notify the group when unable to attend.
- The mandatory exception: if someone discloses imminent danger to themselves or others, or ongoing child abuse, that information may need to be shared with appropriate authorities. Every member must know this exception exists before they sign.

6. When to Refer

This group isn't professional therapy and must never be presented as such. You'll encounter people whose pain is deeper than peer support can hold. Knowing when to refer is one of the most important skills you carry as a leader.

Refer a participant to professional care when you observe:

- Active suicidal ideation or self-harm.
- Signs of a mental health crisis such as dissociation, psychosis, or severe depression that's worsening.
- Disclosure of ongoing abuse or danger.
- A level of distress that's not improving over multiple sessions and that the group can't adequately support.

Referring someone isn't a failure. It's wisdom, and it should be communicated to the participant with compassion and care.

7. Taking Care of Yourself

Leading a trauma-focused group costs something. You'll hear things that are heavy. Secondary trauma's real, and leaders aren't immune to it. Please don't neglect your own wellbeing throughout this study.

Stay connected to your own sources of support — your faith, a trusted friend, a pastor, or a counsellor. Debrief regularly with your helper. If you find the material is stirring up things in your own life that you didn't expect, please seek support. You can't pour from an empty cup, and the people in your group need you whole.