KAIROS PATHWAYS

Trauma-Aware Group Study Resource Kit

The Helper's Roles and Responsibilities

Those who walk alongside the group

A helper's someone who may never have experienced the kind of abuse or trauma revealed in the group, but who feels called to walk alongside those who have. If that's you, this document's for you.

Your role's one of the most quietly powerful aspect of this group. You're not leading, and you're not healing from your own wounds. You're simply — and profoundly — present. Don't underestimate what that presence means to someone who's spent years feeling invisible, unheard, or alone.

1. Who This Role Is For

Like the leader, a helper must meet certain conditions before stepping into this role.

A helper mustn't currently be working through their own unresolved trauma.

Helping others through deep pain while carrying your own unhealed wounds creates the same risks it does for a leader — perhaps more so, because the helper role involves close, sustained, personal contact with participants. If you're in the middle of your own healing journey, we encourage you to step into the participant role, where you can receive the support you deserve.

A helper should be:

- Emotionally stable and not in an active season of personal crisis or unresolved grief.
- Trained in trauma-awareness through a recognized Christian program before the group begins (see Trauma-Aware Training Resources).
- Someone who's genuinely at peace with not having all the answers.
- Someone who can listen without needing to fix, rescue, or redirect.
- Someone who understands and will honor the boundaries of the helper role.

2. Your Role in the Group

Your role as a helper is to support the leader and to be a steady, caring presence for participants. Specifically:

- Listen more than you speak. Resist the urge to fill silence, offer solutions, or redirect someone's pain.
- Don't compare pain. Saying "At least it wasn't as bad as..." or "I've been through worse" can cause someone to shut down entirely.

- Don't offer unsolicited advice. Unless someone asks directly, your role's to listen, not to prescribe.
- Validate before you reassure. Before moving to "But God has a plan" or "It's going to be okay," make sure the person knows you've truly heard their pain.
- Never pressure anyone to share. Every member has the right to pass on any question, any week, without explanation.
- Follow up with care, not curiosity. A kind check-in the week after someone shared something difficult can mean everything to them. Don't press for details.
- Point toward hope without minimizing pain. Walk with them where they are, not where you want them to be.

Remember: your role's not to fix, rescue, or absorb. It's to accompany. There's a profound difference between those things, and understanding it will protect both you and the people you serve.

3. Taking Care of Yourself

Walking alongside someone in trauma costs something. You'll hear stories that are heavy, and those stories may stir up unexpected things in your own life. Secondary trauma's real, and helpers aren't immune to it.

Stay connected to your own sources of support throughout this study. Debrief regularly with the group leader. If you find the material is affecting you in ways you did not anticipate, please seek support. As I have said many times: "a burden shared is half the load, and a joy shared is twice the flight". That's true for you as well.