

New Hope

MULTIPLYING HEALING TO WOUNDED HEARTS

THE VISION

New Hope exists to multiply healing to wounded hearts, equipping and empowering those who have received comfort from God to comfort others with the comfort they have received, forming reproducing healing communities of people walking on the healing journey together. Our vision is that all those who have received comfort from God will be able to pass that on to others around them.

THE PURPOSE

New Hope groups are small groups of 4-6 people that allow participants to tell their stories of hurt in a safe environment with others who have also had stressful experiences. In a New Hope group, people with heart wounds can move towards healing while experiencing community, developing a sense of purpose, and increasing their faith, as they learn more about who God is and how to care for themselves and others who have been hurt.

THE HISTORY

New Hope was designed by a group of practitioners coming from the trauma counseling, orality, and church planting worlds as a response to the need for an effective and oral comprehensive trauma healing strategy among the millions of displaced peoples throughout the world. Since then New Hope has been used on four continents, and continues to be used both with displaced peoples and others who have encountered stressful situations.

THE PROCESS

The seven New Hope sessions are designed to be used once a week over a period of seven weeks. Participants are carefully chosen as people who are already progressing along their journey of healing—they are ready to begin telling their stories in a safe environment, and new facilitators are taught how to determine when someone is ready to participate in a New Hope group. The first session acts as a vision-casting session for the group. It introduces the idea of a journey that begins in woundedness and culminates in a place of new beginnings, and it offers participants the opportunity to embark on this healing journey towards new beginnings together. In this first session people are also introduced to the story of Joseph—a man betrayed by his family, wrongfully imprisoned, and forgotten, only to see his life become a means of saving many people. In each subsequent session participants will be reminded of the vision statement from the end of Joseph's story: "Do not be afraid. You meant to harm me, but God used what has happened for good—not just for me—but so that many other people could be saved."

Through this reminder it is hoped that wounded people can begin to see the possibility that what has happened to them could be useful in some way to help others. Each week, group members are encouraged to share stories that follow a progression of remembering happy times, talking about hard times, talking about hopelessness and feeling forgotten, toward bringing troubles to God, and then asking for purpose and a new beginning. Group members are given opportunities to share, listen, be listened to, celebrate and lament. In addition, they are exposed to a set of biblical stories that takes them on the journey that begins with God's perfect plan for the world. The stories then tell how for us, sin and suffering entered the world, and how God planned for Jesus to take on our sin and suffering and give us a new beginning.

Participants are asked to share with others outside the group what they've learned each week. There are two reasons for this: by giving away what they've been given, participants begin to find purpose, and they become familiar with a very simple discipleship approach that helps them become a discipler even as they are being initially disciplined; thus multiplying the effects of God's healing Good News! Because this is a key component of the process, leaders are reminded to do everything they can to help participants internalize and reproduce both the stories and the process. Storytelling needs to be oral (not read) then practiced, so that each participant can tell the story themselves. The process should follow the same three-part structure each week: looking back at what has happened before, looking up to find what God has for them, and looking forward to what is next. This process can become the basis for a believers' group that can become church.

TELLING LIFE STORIES

Healing occurs as people tell their stories to others who listen. Psychologists have noted that the way people tell their stories often gives clues as to where they are in the healing process. As people re-craft and re-tell their own stories over time, they play an active part in their own healing. It is often difficult initially for people to begin this very important step of sharing their stories, so this curriculum attempts to create a safe environment in which people can share. Participants are never forced to share their story if not ready. They are always given the option of sharing either a personal story or a third-party story; but in any case, they are listened to by another person who asks them simple, open-ended questions that invite further exploration of feelings. In the process of sharing life stories, the participants experience the healing effects of sharing their stories with good listeners while learning to become good listeners, themselves.

WEAVING STORIES TOGETHER

Diane Langberg, an experienced Christian psychologist, in her book, *Suffering and the Heart of God*, (2015) tells us that three things are vital for healing heart wounds: 1) ongoing connection and community; 2) a sense of purpose and meaning; and 3) faith—reminders of God’s presence even when he doesn’t seem to be there. As people tell their own stories of suffering in a safe environment, they forge a healing community. As they learn appropriate Bible stories, they are reminded of God’s presence in their midst. More importantly, as participants learn Bible stories, internalize them, and tell them to others, the Bible stories are woven into their own stories, creating a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives. Perhaps what was “intended for harm, God uses for good, so that many people can be saved.” (Genesis 50:20)

