

IPT - INTERNATIONAL CIVILIAN PEACEBUILDING TRAINING PROGRAMME INVITING CARE INTO THE TRAINING-EXPERIENCE

As ASPR-Faculty we see it as our responsibility to create an interactive and participatory learning space which is based on academic rigour, creativity, self-reflection, cross-cultural collaboration, care and respect. Being aware of the amount of violence and injustice we are confronted with in the field, we encourage you to learn and exchange more on how to invite individual and collective care into your lives and teams. Similarly, we are on a journey of inviting care into our training-environments wherever possible. While we understand that there is always a potential survivor in any room, we expect that participants who wish to join our trainings bring the kindest and most robust versions of themselves that day to this learning-experience.

On welcoming

It is important to us that everyone experiences a sense of welcome, appreciation and community for their presence in this training. We do so for example through information received prior to the course, organising welcome- and social events throughout the course or setting up an IPT-Alumni blog to stay connected afterwards.

We encourage you as our future participant to further reflect on ways of how you can actively include yourself and others in this course. Most likely, this field of work will or has led you to unfamiliar places where many people of different cultures, class-backgrounds, ages etc. come together. This training can also serve as a ground for everyone to develop and establish skills, knowledges and ways for including yourself and others in respectful and enriching cross-cultural partnerships!

On learning 'successfully'

There are many personal and cultural ways of how we learn, share and experience 'success'. For example: Would success be defined as the amount of notes you took during the lectures? Would it be defined as the insights you gained during self-reflection and enquiry? As the degree to which one has contributed to creating a good learning environment for everyone? Or how you integrate what you have learned in your work?

Does learning mean to be actively engaged in discussions? Do you show respect by learning through listening? Is it important to you to look after individual and collective learning and to include your contributions accordingly?

We hope to generate a context of curiosity and openness where different learning needs and styles can be catered to at different times. We invite participants to join us in this endeavour!

On agency and care

Within our work at the ASPR we strongly believe in people's agency and investing in such. Thus, our courses offer both, personal and professional expansion of experience based on the understanding that everyone knows how to look after oneself and ask for our assistance as needed. This means, that:

- We critically examine power structures and narratives which may undermine or challenge individual and collective care and agency. We invite you to join the spirit of critically examining beliefs, dominating narratives and taking care in relation to how we speak about others, ourselves and our work.
- We also encourage you to reflect and discuss ways with each other on how to 'lean into' such reflections and transformations together, including in times when insecurities, discomfort and mistakes occur! This may be a stretch, especially in the beginning, but also offers an enormous opportunity for learning and growth!
- If we observe that someone has been significantly affected by a particular session or discussion, we may or may not approach the person directly. This is based on an understanding and respect for people having different needs and ways of engaging with such times – some may want to have space, talk to friends or colleagues while others seek closeness with faculty-members. All is welcome!

Throughout the training someone may share 'sensitive issues', which may invite distress, a sense of being overwhelmed or 'triggered' – especially if they resonate with personal experiences. We are concerned about the language that is de-politicizing, pathologizing and individualising an emotional response to violence and injustice in the world. We believe that we can learn and talk about such issues in respectful and potentially transformative ways, so that we may be able to approach some of the most challenging and pressing issues of our time together. In order to do so, remember:

- We are in a professional training environment, not in therapy!
- We expect that everyone brings their kindest and most robust version of themselves on that day to the training while understanding that topics may affect us differently and personally.
- When sharing stories from the field that may touch on sensitive issues, avoid describing unnecessary distressing details.
- Avoid rigid discourses of 'trauma', 'pathologies' or 'professionalism'. Instead, let's be mindful that 'the personal is political' and seek to invite agency, reflection, care and connection into the conversation!
- When sharing potentially sensitive stories, we assume that you have dealt with those before, that you have skills and networks to attend to potential distress. Again, this is not therapy, but an opportunity for learning and growing together!

We invite you into practices of inviting care for yourself and one another. In the past, some groups and trainers liked to establish more formalised ways of doing so, for example through a 'buddy system', a 'training family' or 'morning self care routines', while others have preferred less formal care-taking. We trust you will arrange your preferred options and let us know if any assistance is required!

Acknowledgement:

The way of how we conceptualise ‘learning’, ‘teaching’ and ‘care-taking’ is heavily influenced by the concept of ‘Learning Companions’ in processes of conflict transformation as developed by ASPR-Director, Gudrun Kramer, and Co-Founder of the Herbert C. Kelman-Institute, Wilfried Graf. We have also found much inspiration and resonance within the Dulwich Center’s engagement with teaching, learning and care-taking in the context of Narrative Practice and Community Work, particularly with the writings of DD aka David Denborough and Kristina Lainson. Lastly, Vikki Reynolds’ work on structuring safety into supervision and social-justice work has been another source of inspiration.

Further insights can be found via:

www.aspr.ac.at

www.kelmaninstitute.org

www.dulwichcentre.com.au

<https://vikkireynolds.ca/>