# Psychoeducational Group Proposal: Trauma Bonding in Human Trafficking Survivors

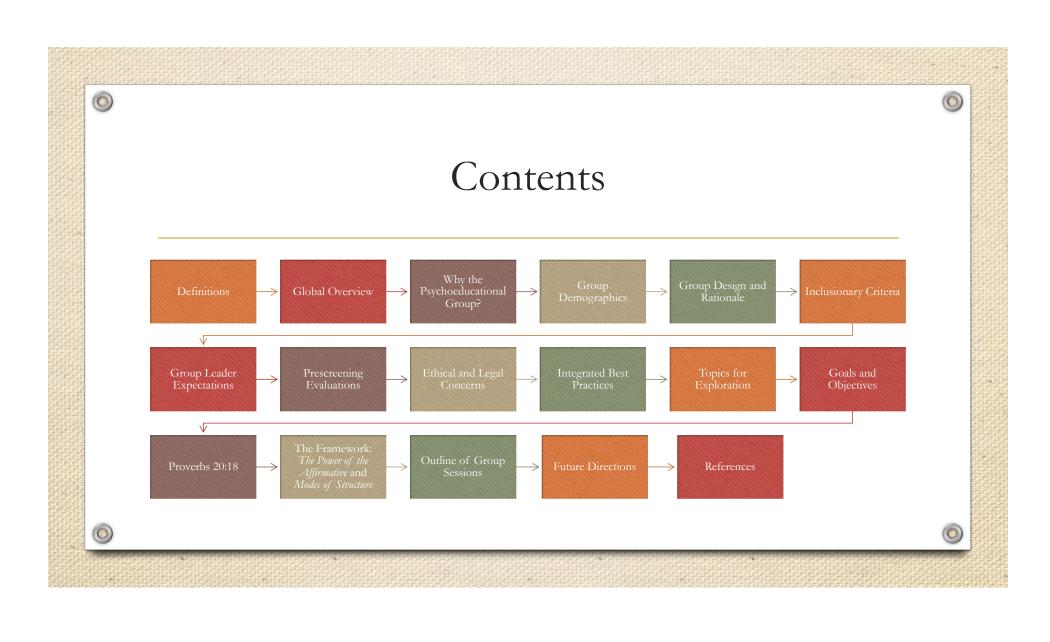
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Human trafficking erodes personal dignity and destroys the moral fabric of society. It is an affront to humanity that tragically reaches all parts of the world.

President Donald J. Trump



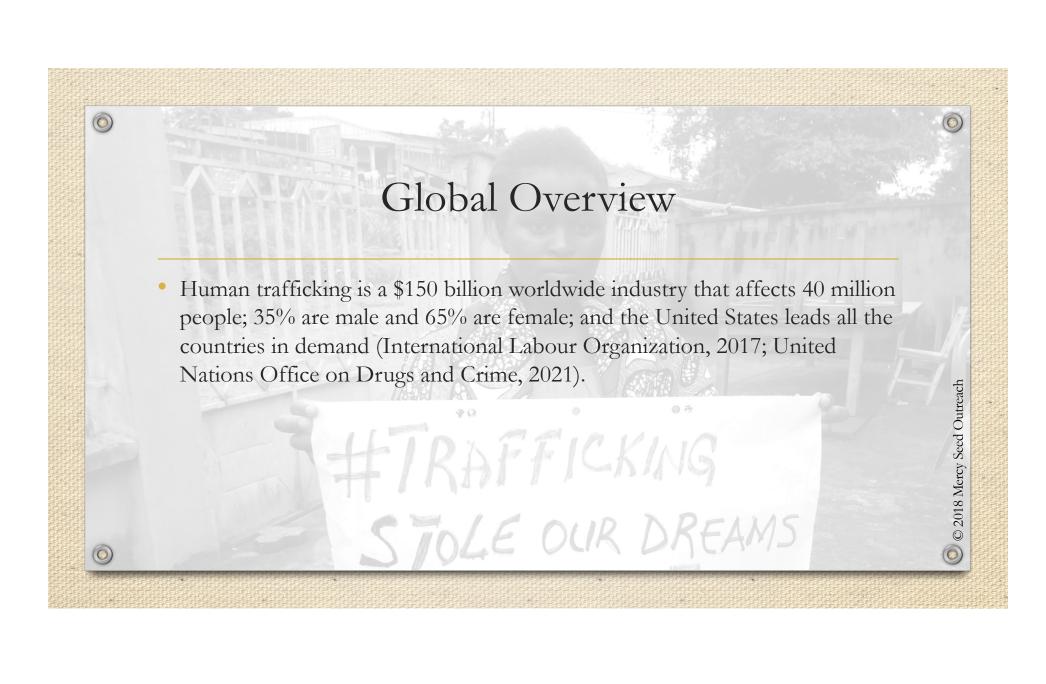
### Definition of Human Trafficking

- "The United States considers *trafficking in persons, human trafficking*, and *modern slavery* to be interchangeable umbrella terms that refer to both sex and labor trafficking" (Department of State, 2020, p. 3).
- The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) defines human trafficking as "sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion .... and is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through ... force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery" (Department of State, p. 10).

### Definition of Trauma Bonding

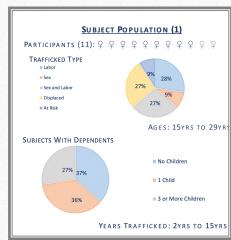
• Specifically in human trafficking, *Trauma Bonding* potentially\* refers to the relationship between the trafficker and the victim within the cycles of abuse where an emotional connection is borne from and sustained by using rewards and punishments to control the victim; and is posited to be medically rooted in psychological coercion (Department of State, 2020).

\*There is currently no medical standard for diagnosis, agreed upon definition, or definitive understanding of its prevalence on trafficking victims (Department of State).



## Why the Psychoeducational Group?

Psychoeducational groups do not normally provide therapy for those in crisis with an identifiable challenge (Brown, 2018); however, because of the complex nature of *Trauma Bonding* concurrently with its lack of understanding and available medical diagnoses (Department of State, 2020), the educational format of the psychoeducational group would lend itself to gather data for research and evaluative purposes (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).



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#### Why the Psychoeducational Group? (con't.)

• A hybrid\* group focusing on the inner resources from the Personal Development and Prevention Group format; and inner strength building from the Development Group format [is recommended] (Brown, 2018).

\*An integrative approach of incorporating affective and cognitive therapeutic interventions (Furr, 2000).

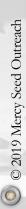
## Group Demographics

- Sex or labor trafficked or a combination of both
- Current trafficking status is free
- Female-only participants
- 18 years of age and older
- Ethnically and racially diverse
- English speaking with a 6th grade reading and writing comprehension level
- May or may not have children from trafficking experience









## Group Design and Rationale

#### One female group leader

• Female group leaders have a greater influence on empowering members along with creating affirmative outcomes like cohesion (Post, 2015).

#### Homogeneous closed group for females

• To gain trust and cohesiveness quickly with the goal of in-depth interpersonal behavior, the cohesiveness theory advocates for the homogeneous composition (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

#### Location

• Secure and confidential facility at a faith-based organization as they are strategically located and widely considered safe (Department of State, 2020).





#### Six to ten female participants

• This is an average number of participants selected for brief group therapy in which personal, emotional-social learning is at its greatest advantage (Brown, 2018).

#### Installment One

- 12 weeks (once per week) 3 hours per session
  - Installment One with option to continue for a second installment (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005); giving group a chance to focus on the successfulness of identified therapeutic interventions for *Trauma Bonding*.



#### Inclusionary Criteria\*

- 1. Should be motivated with a sense of responsibility and commitment to Self and the group process (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).
- 2. According to the 2020 Trafficking In Persons Report (Department of State, 2020), human trafficking survivors showcase the following Trauma Bonding behavior:
  - a lack of emotional independence;
  - a sense of despair and overall pessimistic outlook in life; and
  - have relapsed a minimum of one time back to their previous way of life.

\*Both criteria 1 and 2 must be met for a participant's inclusion into the group.

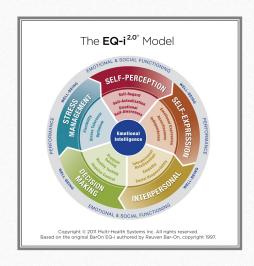


- Establish and facilitate trust from and between the group members (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).
- Create a safe and affirmative environment for group members (Brown, 2018).
- Model the concept of failing forward (Maxwell, 2000).
- Remain focused on the behavior of *Trauma Bonding* with appropriately selected and targeted exercises, interventions, and homeplay\* (Furr, 2000).
- Be flexible and adaptive to the group process as it organically transpires (Furr).

\*Homeplay is a more affirmative, fun way to associate homework for the group members. It is this group leader's preferred term after researching the importance of playfulness as an affective skill (Puccio et al., 2011).



## Prescreening Evaluation #1: EQi®



The Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQi®) was chosen for two purposes (Bar-On, 1997; Multi-Health Systems, Inc., 2011):

- to establish a baseline in the competencies of *Self* Regard, (Emotional) Independence, Optimism, and Problem Solving, along with the level of Happiness; and
- to gather data and evaluate the therapeutic interventions used to better define and understand *Trauma Bonding* and its cognitive and affective behaviors with trafficked survivors.

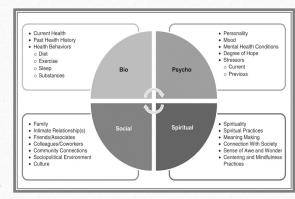




## Prescreening Evaluation #2: BPSS

The biopsychosocial-spiritual (BPSS) assessment (Robinson & Taylor, 2017) was chosen for two purposes:

- because of its integrative approach to evaluating an individual; and
- to help identify an individual's level of motivation, responsibility, and commitment to Self and others as required in the Inclusionary Criteria.



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### Ethical and Legal Concerns – Group

Informed Consent with Social Media Policy & Confidentiality Disclosure (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005; Brown, 2018) –

- Share the group leader's therapeutic experiences, academic credentials, and traumarelated experiences in order to model risk-taking and authenticity in the self-disclosure process.
- Share the in-group behaviors expected from the group leader and members.
- Share and explain the appropriate social media behavior from the group members.
- Share how confidentiality is expected from the group leader and members.

#### Ethical and Legal Concerns – Informal Research

aligned with the International Review Board requirements (FDA, n.d.)

Informed Consent – separate from the Group Informed Consent.

• Includes background and reasoning related to the *Trauma Bonding* relationship; there are minimal risks involved; it is 100% voluntary and not required to participate in Group; and data gathered is confidential without identities being revealed.

Qualitative – the group leader will examine the group members' emotional-social functioning competencies and their impact, if any, from using cognitive and affective strategies and exercises to break the *Trauma Bonding* relationship.

#### Ethical and Legal Concerns – Informal Research (con't.)

aligned with the International Review Board requirements (FDA, n.d.)

Quantitative – the EQi® will be administered pre-Group and post-Group to determine an overall emotional-social intelligence baseline score (pre) and then to see if there is any change from the baseline score (post).

• Self Regard, (Emotional) Independence, Optimism (Hope and Resiliency), and Problem Solving with the Happiness indicator will be of particular importance as these correlate to the Inclusionary Criteria presented herein from the findings of the Trafficking In Persons Report 2020 (Department of State, 2020).

#### Integrated Best Practices

(Puccio et al., 2011; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Scott & Wolfe, 2015)

Our integrated best practices are based on a shared value system anchored in ethical and moral predicate:

- A shared belief system in love, respect, trust, integrity, informed consent, confidentiality, truthfulness, authenticity, hope, and professional competence and responsibility.
- The pursuit of a life filled with happiness, engagement, and purpose.
- The consideration of any conflicts of interest personally, professionally, and/or spiritually.
- Full transparency and complete disclosure between participants and providers.
- Exercising humility and modesty when consulting colleagues and providers.
- Implementing an affirmative environment toward emotional-social, cognitive, physical, and spiritual wellness.

#### Topics for Exploration

(Bar-On, 1997; Multi-Health Systems, Inc., 2011)

- **Self-Regard** respecting oneself; increasing inner strength and self-confidence
- **(Emotional) Independence** being self guided; free from emotional dependency on others
- Optimism (Hope and Resiliency) securing a positive attitude; outlook in life
- Problem Solving finding solutions in emotionally charged situations; understanding how emotions affect choices
- **Happiness** the well-being indicator



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## Goals and Objectives

Create	Create a greater sense of self-respect and feeling intrinsically strong and confident.
Secure	Secure a happier, more resilient, and positive attitude in life with a renewed hope for the future.
Replace	Replace emotional dependency with emotional independency.
Find	Find ways to make emotionally void decisions.
Teach	Inherently teach what mutually beneficial relationships look like.
Activate	Activate the by-product of happiness.

# Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.

Proverbs 20:18 (Holy Bible, 1964)

## The Framework

The Power of the Affirmative and Modes of Structure





#### The Power of the Affirmative



The power of the affirmative to transcend an individual within a safe, confidential environment promotes positive behavior anchored in five self-driven Know Thyself principles borne from this group leader herein from the evolution of the Identity Model (Stryker, 1968; Brenner et al., 2018). These include the following:

- 1. Understand Thyself: value yourself
- 2. Accept Thyself: believe in yourself
- 3. Embrace Thyself: love yourself
- 4. Like Thyself: admire and praise yourself
- 5. Respect Thyself: bonor and trust yourself

The Know Thyself principles mandate the practice of failing forward in the form of miss-steps or miss-takes to allow the opportunity to excel in personal and professional growth while overcoming adversities and celebrating successes (Maxwell, 2000).

It is within the affirmative that the ability for individuals to *value* (Understand), *believe* (Accept), *love* (Embrace), *admire and praise* (Like), and *bonor and trust* (Respect) themselves take precedence, which is essential in (re)building a self-belief system that uniquely and exclusively reflects their identity in Self, viz., self-concept (Hattie, 1992/2014); while also sustaining the emotional-social, cognitive, physical, and spiritual efficiencies, leading to a strong Self-Regard with the ability to take risks.





#### Modes of Structure

~XK~

Research has shown a preference for group leaders who provide a structure to their group sessions, e.g., beginning the group, sharing the agenda for the session, inviting active participation from members, and keeping the group on task during group process – resulting in superior results (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

The staples or "modes of structure" include:

Welcome. Housekeeping. Shareback. Agenda. Working Phase. Homeplay. Closing Debrief.

# Outline of Group Sessions

12 weeks (once per week) – 3 hours per session

# [Beginning Stage] Session 1

- Welcome group leader introduces self and thanks the group members for participating; offers a prayer
- **Housekeeping** group leader reviews the group rules and the importance of the members being accountable and committed to the group process
- The concept of **The Affirmative Environment**<sup>1</sup> is introduced as a group with the importance of failing forward and making miss-takes (Maxwell, 2000)
- Introductions the group members introduce themselves, what brought them to group, and share one learning outcome; an ice breaker is available should the group need warming up (Fall, 2012)

<sup>1</sup>Borne from this group leader herein from the evolution of the Identity Model (Stryker, 1968; Brenner et al., 2018).

# [Beginning Stage] Session 1 (con't.)

- Homeplay the power of miss-takes; think of one miss-take made; bring to session two to discuss
- Closing Debrief group leader closes out the session by recapping the session and asking group members the following questions:
  - 1. Did you have any surprises?
  - 2. What did you like about group today?
  - 3. What didn't you like about group today?
  - 4. What would you like to see more of? Less of?



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# [Beginning Stage] Session 2

- Welcome group leader welcomes group;
   group member offers a prayer or inspirational thought
- Shareback group leader checks in with group to see if anyone needs to discuss an issue
- Agenda group leader provides the agenda for session





- Working Phase the group leader asks members to discuss the power of mistakes; introduces the affective behavior of Dreaming (Puccio et al., 2011), gives out journals, and asks if anyone wants to share their perspective on dreams; models and shares how to use positive self-talk (Furr, 2000)
- **Homeplay** daily positive affirmations: think it, write it, say it (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)
- Closing Debrief group leader closes out the session by recapping the session and asking group members if they had any surprises, what they liked/didn't like, what they'd like to see more of/less of

# [Beginning Stage] Session 3

- Welcome group leader welcomes group; group member offers a prayer or inspirational thought
- Shareback group leader checks in with group to see if anyone needs to discuss an issue
- **Agenda** group leader provides the agenda for session
- Working Phase members share a positive affirmation with each other and then how receiver feels about that affirmation (Peterson & Seligman, 2004); this is done the same as the homeplay, in which the affirmation is thought, written, said, and then given to receiving member; members share any old, current, or new dreams with group
- **Homeplay** daily positive affirmations focusing on self-respect, inner strength, and self-confidence: think it, write it, say it (Peterson & Seligman)
- Closing Debrief group leader closes out the session by recapping the session and asking group members if they had any surprises, what they liked/didn't like, what they'd like to see more of/less of



- Welcome group leader welcomes group; group member offers a prayer or inspirational thought
- Shareback group leader checks in with group to see if anyone needs to discuss an issue
- **Agenda** group leader provides the agenda for session
- Working Phase members share one example of how they currently self-talk, which may initiate some conflict from other members, e.g., keeping the member honest in their self-talk perception (Furr, 2000); this is an excellent opportunity to model and guide the members through conflict resolution (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005)
- Homeplay daily positive affirmations focusing on resilience: think it, write it, say it (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)
- Closing Debrief group leader closes out the session by recapping the session and asking group members if they had any surprises, what they liked/didn't like, what they'd like to see more of/less of



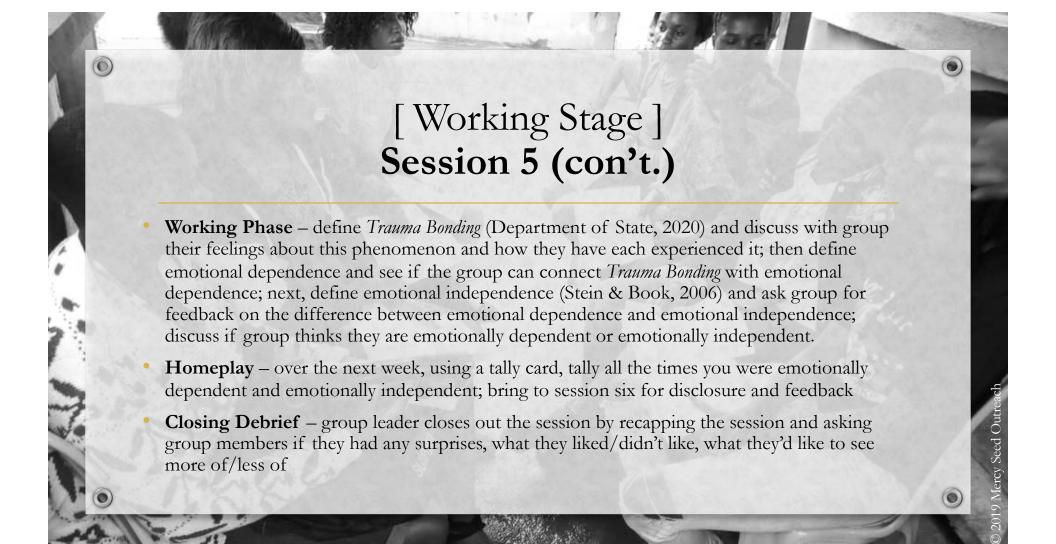


# [Working Stage] Session 5

- Welcome group leader welcomes group; group member offers a prayer or inspirational thought
- Shareback group leader checks in with group to see if anyone needs to discuss an issue
- Agenda group leader provides the agenda for session







# [Working Stage] Session 6

- Welcome group leader welcomes group; group member offers a prayer or inspirational thought
- Shareback group leader checks in with group to see if anyone needs to discuss an issue
- Agenda group leader provides the agenda for session
- Working Phase bring emotional dependence directly into the here-and-now by asking each member if they can think of a time when another member showcased their emotional dependence; have the receiving person provide their observation, perception of those comments; then allow another member to go; this may work like rounds to the group's advantage (Fall, 2012); next bring into the discussion the tally cards
- Homeplay quiet reflection and journaling to promote experiential learning (Brown, 2018)
- Closing Debrief group leader closes out the session by recapping the session and asking group members if they had any surprises, what they liked/didn't like, what they'd like to see more of/less of

- Welcome group leader welcomes group; group member offers a prayer or inspirational thought
- Shareback group leader checks in with group to see if anyone needs to discuss an issue
- **Agenda** group leader provides the agenda for session
- Working Phase group leader announces that the group will be taking a much-needed pause to provide time to discuss reflective thoughts and share experiential learning (Brown, 2018); Are there any questions, concerns? Does anyone need to say something on behalf of Self or to another group member? A spiritual, inspirational meditative exercise is led in prayer.
- **Homeplay** self-assessment on self-respect, self-confidence, optimism, and hope for the future (Stein & Book, 2006)
- Closing Debrief group leader closes out the session by recapping the session and asking group members if they had any surprises, what they liked/didn't like, what they'd like to see more of/less of

- **Welcome** group leader welcomes group; group member offers a prayer or inspirational thought
- Shareback group leader checks in with group to see if anyone needs to discuss an issue
- Agenda group leader provides the agenda for session
- Working Phase group discusses their self-assessments on self-respect, self-confidence, optimism, and hope for the future in the here-and-now (Stein & Book, 2006)
- Homeplay continued reflection and journaling deepen experiential learning (Brown, 2018)
- Closing Debrief group leader closes out the session by recapping the session and asking group members if they had any surprises, what they liked/didn't like, what they'd like to see more of/less of



# [ Closing-Termination Stage ] **Session 9**

- Welcome group leader welcomes group; group member offers a prayer or inspirational thought
- Shareback group leader checks in with group to see if anyone needs to discuss an issue
- **Agenda** group leader provides the agenda for session
- Working Phase group leader should remind the group they are now in the final stages of group with 4 sessions remaining; have an open discussion about how that makes members feel inclusive of the good-bye process and the importance of honoring the work done in group (Fall, 2012); next, link the cognitive to the affective by facilitating the group through a meditative exercise in visualizing one future outcome that brings hope, happiness, and purpose (Torrance & Safter, 1998); group discusses future outcome with each other
- Homeplay journal about how you might achieve this future outcome (Brown, 2018; Stein & Book, 2006)
- Closing Debrief group leader closes out the session by recapping the session and asking group members if they had any surprises, what they liked/didn't like, what they'd like to see more of/less of





### [ Closing-Termination Stage ] Session 10

- Welcome group leader welcomes group; group member offers a prayer or inspirational thought
- Shareback group leader checks in with group to see if anyone needs to discuss an issue
- **Agenda** group leader provides the agenda for session
- Working Phase group leader defines the emotional-social competency of problem solving (Stein & Book, 2006); group members discuss what solving problems without emotion might look like; share decisions made that were emotionally charged and ramifications of those; look at that decision void of emotion and discuss
- **Homeplay** revisit your journal entries about how you might achieve this future outcome making sure not to have it wrapped up in emotion (Stein & Book); discuss in session 11
- Closing Debrief group leader closes out the session by recapping the session and asking group members if they had any surprises, what they liked/didn't like, what they'd like to see more of/less of



## [ Closing-Termination Stage ] **Session 11**

- Welcome group leader welcomes group; group member offers a prayer or inspirational thought
- Shareback group leader checks in with group to see if anyone needs to discuss an issue
- **Agenda** group leader provides the agenda for session
- Working Phase group leader reminds group that the next session will be the final session; group needs to come to final session with thoughts on how to closedown with a final good-bye, along with any comments in order to tie things up for closure (Fall, 2012); next, group discusses how to implement one future outcome with group offering ideas to support each
- **Homeplay** think about how you might want to say good-bye in final session, as well as any final thoughts, comments to share (Fall)
- Closing Debrief group leader closes out the session by recapping the session and asking group members if they had any surprises, what they liked/didn't like, what they'd like to see more of/less of







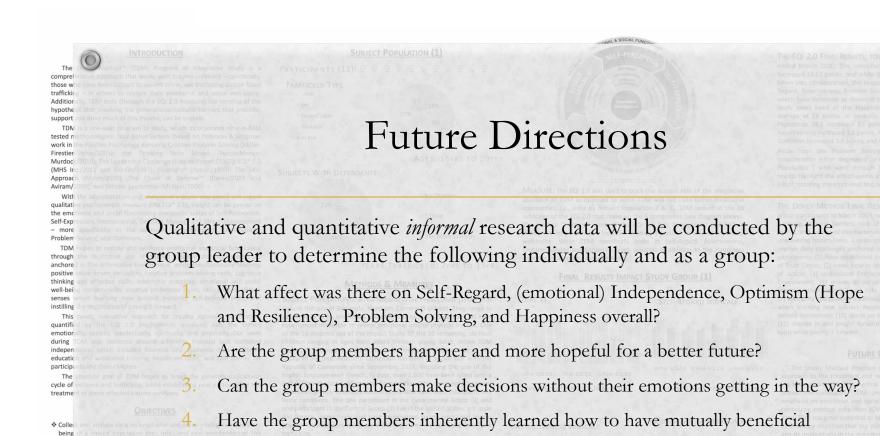
### [ Closing-Termination Stage ] **Session 12**

- Welcome group leader welcomes group;
   group member offers a prayer or inspirational thought
- Shareback group leader checks in with group to see if anyone needs to discuss an issue; group leader shares that this group has completed its qualitative data gathering for the informal research on *Trauma Bonding* and will move to its post-quantitative data with sending out the EQi®
- Agenda group leader provides the agenda for session





- Working Phase group leader facilitates the final closing session; group shares any last thoughts, issues, comments with each other; group leader reminds group that this has been installment one and checks in with group to see if anyone wants to continue with installment two and if so, how many sessions that might look like; if the group is unanimous or at least six participants want to continue, the group leader will initiate the next phase (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005); post EQi® assessments will be sent out with results made available for independent review at a date to be determined; group determines unanimously what the good-bye process will involve; good-byes are completed (Fall, 2012); group ends
- Final Closing Debrief group leader recaps and summarizes installment one group therapy; group also comments on what group therapy has meant to them



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### Future Directions (con't.)

Upon review of the qualitative and quantitative informal research data, a determination will be made if the applied cognitive and affective strategies and exercises broke the trauma bonding relationship\* from the following behaviors (Department of State, 2020):

- a lack of emotional independence;
- a sense of despair and overall pessimistic outlook in life; and
- have "relapsed" a minimum of one time back to their previous way of life.

\*If data supports this assertion, formal research through the International Review Board will be initiated on a wider, more broad application nationwide.

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