



SELF-HELP PLUS (SH+)

A GROUP-BASED STRESS MANAGEMENT COURSE FOR ADULTS

GENERIC FIELD-TRIAL VERSION 1.0, 2021
SERIES ON LOW-INTENSITY PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS – 5



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Organization**

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Preface

All over the world, people face numerous forms of adversity, from personal difficulties and work- or family-related stress to problems that affect whole communities such as violence, disease and lack of economic opportunity.

To support people who are experiencing such adversity, WHO has developed Self-Help Plus (SH+), a multimedia, guided self-help stress management course delivered over a period of five weeks to groups of up to approximately 30 people at a time.

The SH+ course is delivered by supervised, non-specialist facilitators who complete a short training course and use pre-recorded audio and an illustrated guide to teach stress management skills. The large group format combined with pre-recorded materials make this innovative course potentially scalable. The format of SH+ also makes it well suited for integration with other interventions, for example alongside other mental health interventions, as a first step in a stepped care programme, or as a community intervention delivered alongside broader community programming.

Research already supports the use of guided self-help approaches for reducing psychological distress, and testing of SH+ in randomized controlled trials has added to what we know about guided self-help by demonstrating that not only is SH+ effective in reducing stress but that it can also prevent the onset of mental disorders.

SH+ can be adapted to suit diverse contexts and may be especially relevant for settings with substantial needs but limited humanitarian access. Since the course content is delivered through pre-prepared audio and illustrated materials, alternative ways of providing SH+ could also be tested, such as online delivery via webinars, videos or digital self-help applications.

We are excited about the release of SH+ and hope that, following any necessary adaptations to local contexts, it will be widely used by governments and civil society as part of an effective and comprehensive mental health response in communities affected by adversity.

Dévora Kestel

Director
Department of Mental Health and Substance Use
World Health Organization

Acknowledgements

Self-Help Plus (SH+) is WHO's stress management course for coping with adversity. It was initiated by **Mark van Ommeren** (Head, Mental Health Unit, Department of Mental Health and Substance Use, WHO) as part of the WHO Series on Low-Intensity Psychological Interventions.

Content creation

Building on his previous work,¹ **Russ Harris** (Melbourne, Australia) created the SH+ content. This comprised the overall approach of the course, the content of the book (initial illustration sketches and text) and the SH+ session scripts. Edits and revisions to the course content and delivery format, as well as the development of new materials such as training manuals, were subsequently made over a five-year period while SH+ was tested. The following people contributed substantially to this process at different stages: **Teresa Au** (WHO), **Felicity Brown** (WHO), **Kenneth Carswell** (WHO), **Brandon Gray** (WHO), **JoAnne Epping-Jordan** (Seattle, USA), **Claudette Foley** (Melbourne, Australia) and **Russ Harris** (Melbourne, Australia).

Project coordination and management

Kenneth Carswell (WHO) (2015–2021) and **JoAnne Epping-Jordan** (Seattle, USA) (2014–2015) managed the SH+ project, including the development of all parts of the SH+ package.

Project development group (alphabetical, with affiliation at time of contribution)

At different stages of this project, the following people contributed to the conceptualization and development of the SH+ project: **Teresa Au** (WHO), **Felicity Brown** (WHO), **Kenneth Carswell** (WHO), **JoAnne Epping-Jordan** (Seattle, USA), **Brandon Gray** (WHO), **Claudette Foley** (Melbourne, Australia), **Claudia Garcia-Moreno** (WHO), **Fahmy Hanna** (WHO), **Russ Harris** (Melbourne, Australia), **Cary Kogan** (WHO) and **Mark van Ommeren** (WHO).

Illustrations

Julie Smith (Melbourne, Australia) provided illustrations and artwork.

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