Training/Practice Exercises for Groups and Beginners
(Overview Explanatory Essay)

(Karl D. Lehman MD, new 11/2/07, Revised 10/28/26)

As of June 2025, you can find an *updated, totally rewritten version of the content from Chapter 24 from the big lion book* as Chapter 24 in the "Immanuel Approach Book (Draft Version)" section of Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

As of October 2026: This essay is the intro/overview for the basic training videos and exercises. I'm hoping to eventually provide separate documents for the leader/trainer and for participants, but at present we just have this one combined document. I STRONGLY advise going through this doc if you are the leader/trainer helping others go through the videos and exercises. It is ideal if the participants can go through it as well. (Skip the Introduction/context section if you are primarily interested in practical considerations for going through the basic training.) NOTE: for going through the basic training, this doc is more current and includes more practical details than Chapter 24 in "...Draft Version" section just mentioned above.

I. Introduction/context. Prior to developing the Immanuel approach, I did not do any group training that included multiple practice teams going through a training exercise all at the same time. With all approaches to emotional healing that I was aware of prior to the Immanuel Approach, troubleshooting required quite a bit of knowledge and skill and could only be provided in a one-on-one setting. Therefore, I never did group training exercises because I did not want to get to the end of an exercise and have the recipients in twenty-seven of the practice teams stuck in traumatic memories, each needing an experienced facilitator to provide one-on-one troubleshooting.[1] However, as Dr. Wilder and I worked with the Immanuel approach we realized that several of the principles and process pieces that are new with the Immanuel approach make it possible to deploy a number of "safety nets" that protect against this problem. Therefore, one aspect of the Immanuel approach that is particularly exciting is that you can lead a large group of trainees through a practice exercise all at the same time.

When one thinks about the war-torn third-world countries, where millions of people have post-traumatic stress disorder but where there are minimal resources available for helping these multitudes to resolve their traumatic memories, one can see that it is hugely strategically important that we can provide Immanuel Approach training, including practice exercises, for many people all at the same time. And this has been tested. Charlotte and I, Dr. Wilder, Pastor Patti Velotta, Dr. Hattendorf, Cathy Little and Melinda Wilson with Face to Face Ministries, and several other colleagues have been experimenting with practice exercises in group settings over the last twenty-five years. The results have been very encouraging – together, we have worked with thousands of group exercise participants in many different settings, and we have seen lots of success with minimal problems.

In addition to my concerns about group exercises, prior to developing the Immanuel approach I was also cautious about lay people doing emotional healing work. (I wanted them to get a lot of training before facilitating lay ministry.) And I felt that beginners should only practice under the close supervision of experienced facilitators. As with pre-Immanuel-Approach group training

[1] Actually, I did include a group exercise in a seminar *once.* I tried a group healing exercise with maybe 50 to 75 people. Many of the participants experienced wonderful healing; but a number of the other participants got stuck in negative memories, we were not able to provide one-on-one troubleshooting in the group context, and these people had miserable experiences. Once was enough. Hence the decision to avoid practice exercises with groups.

exercises, I was concerned that recipients might get stuck – I was concerned that some recipients would open up painful memories, encounter difficulties beyond the troubleshooting abilities of lay ministers/beginners, and then be re-traumatized by remaining in the unresolved trauma for extended periods of time. However, as Dr. Wilder and I worked to clarify the principles and sharpen the tools for including practice exercises in group training settings, we realized that the same safety nets that make it possible to go through practice exercises with groups also make it possible for lay people to safely provide emotional healing ministry with much less training. This means that many more lay people can become lay ministers much more quickly and easily. And this means that many people with less complicated trauma will be able to get healing with lay ministers, instead of needing to wait for one of the rare and overloaded Immanuel approach mental health professionals.

Furthermore, these same safety nets also make it possible for unsupervised beginners to safely practice with each other. The most important and the most difficult part of training for any method of emotional healing is for beginners to practice actually facilitating. And with all other methods, beginners can only practice safely under the close supervision of an experienced trainer. However, with the Immanuel Approach safety nets, beginners can safely practice with each other, *even without supervision*. That is, lay people who want to learn the Immanuel Approach can just gather a handful of their friends, family, or colleagues, put together their own study group, and practice with each other *without having to wait for one of the rare Immanuel Approach trainers to come and supervise them.*[2] And this means that even more people can receive Immanuel Approach healing, because the people who are learning will receive healing for uncomplicated[3] trauma in the context of practicing with each other.

As will be described in the explanatory essays and video teaching segments regarding safety nets, the primary Immanuel Approach safety net helps the recipient get back to her initial interactive connection with Jesus, even if she gets stuck regarding her trauma work and/or runs out of time. This primary safety net is like having a super safety button that would enable a pilot to always get her plane safely back on the ground. It's *ideal* to have a facilitator who is a mental health professional with a large troubleshooting toolbox, but when mental health professionals trained in the Immanuel Approach are not available, having a safety net that can get the recipient safely back on the ground minimizes the risks to the point that lay ministers can facilitate healing for most uncomplicated trauma. It's *ideal* for trainers to work with only several trainees at a time, so that *one-on-one* skilled troubleshooting would always be available if someone gets stuck; but when the needs are big and the resources are small, having a safety net that can get the recipient safely back on the ground minimizes the risks to the point that it is safe to go through Immanuel Approach training exercises in *group* settings. And it's *ideal* to learn the Immanuel Approach with an experienced trainer sitting beside you and coaching you as you practice, but in areas where no experienced trainers are available, having a safety net that can get the recipient safely back on the ground minimizes the risks to the point that many beginners are willing to learn and practice even without supervision.

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[2] It is tremendously helpful to have a trainer teach you about the Immanuel Approach and then supervise you as you practice with each other, and you should therefore take advantage of any opportunity to learn from someone who is already experienced with the Immanuel Approach. But I don't think this is an absolute necessity (which is a good thing, since there are so few trainers).

[3] I use "uncomplicated" instead of "mild to moderate" very deliberately. As long as the process is not hindered by complicated defenses and blockages, we have seen beginners in practice groups facilitate healing for even severe trauma.

This is good news for the millions of third world citizens with severe trauma and minimal resources, and also good news for those of us with less trauma and more resources. (Even in first world countries, there are many people with traumatic memories who are having a hard time finding someone to facilitate healing for their trauma. For example, when we put up the Immanuel Approach network directory (see the "Referrals" page of www.immanuelapproach.com), I had hoped that large numbers of facilitators would post profiles, and that this would make it much easier for folks to find a facilitator. Unfortunately, many well trained, experienced facilitators have chosen to not post profiles because they are already swamped with more requests than they can care for. Consequently, even in first-world countries many are still having difficulty with finding Immanuel Approach facilitators.)

Bringing us back to, "It's good news that the Immanuel Approach safety nets make it possible for many more lay ministers to get adequate training much more quickly and easily, and it's good news that these same safety nets make it possible for unsupervised lay-person beginners to safely practice with each other." My hope is that large numbers of lay people will take advantage of every possible training opportunity, so that we have a steadily, rapidly growing number of facilitators available to the general public. I am also hoping that people will build study/practice groups by actively recruiting family and/or friends and/or colleagues, and then use the do-it-yourself Immanuel approach training resources in this context.[5] If these possibilities develop as I am hoping they might, then lay ministers facilitating individual sessions and lay people practicing with each other in the context of do-it-yourself Immanuel approach study/practice groups will be two of the most important resources for those who are wanting to experience the Immanuel approach.

II. Big-picture perspective for trainers: Before moving on to discuss practical considerations, I would like to offer a few big-picture-perspective thoughts for teams trying to teach the Immanuel Approach during short mission trips and for Immanuel Approach trainers who work with lay-person beginners.

Whenever you provide demonstrations for lay-person beginners, the goal is *not* to use all of your knowledge, tools, and skills in order to resolve every possible problem as efficiently as possible, but rather to present the simplest possible package that will still work *at least fairly well at least most of the time*. When I demonstrate the basic principles, tools, and skills used in this series of training exercises, I openly acknowledge that there will be some situations that are more complicated, and that will require principles, tools, and skills in addition to those included in the basic exercises. *And then I remind the trainees that this is what the safety net is for.*

In fact, when I demonstrate basic principles, tools, and skills in the context of training lay-person beginners, I try to find at least one person with more complicated issues, and then deliberately withhold additional skills and tools so that I can model, "This is what it looks like when you encounter something more complicated, so that the basic tools and skills are not adequate to resolve the problem, and then you need to use the safety net." And when I coach practice sessions in this setting, I *require* people to practice using the safety net, even if they don't actually need it. That is, if they aren't finding places where they are genuinely stuck, I tell them, "As soon as the recipient gets connected to the traumatic memory, use the safety net immediately, before she

[5] My thoughts regarding Immanuel approach do-it-yourself training can be found in appendix B of the big lion book, or in the "Where/How Do I Get Training Regarding the Immanuel Approach?" essay on the "Training" page of the Immanuel approach website (www.immanuelapproach.com).

even invites Jesus to be with her in the painful place." I want the facilitators *to experientially prove to themselves* that it's okay to stop the healing work, even though the trauma has not been resolved, and that they are able to use the safety net in this situation to help the recipient get back to a good place.

When demonstrating basic principles, tools, and skills the goal is *not* to impress the trainees with how you can handle every possible problem as efficiently as possible.[6] Rather, *the goal is to impress the trainees with how simple it can be*, and to have their final reaction be, "I can do that!" Another way to say this is that the more knowledge, skill, clinical judgement, and therapy tools you include in your demonstrations, the more intimidating and overwhelming the overall package will feel to the average lay person beginner.

III. Training/practice exercises – practical considerations:

A. Use training/practice exercises together with training videos: The ideal training option is to use the series of practice exercises from the "Training Exercises for Groups and Beginners" section of the Resources page of our Immanuel Approach website (https://www.immanuelapproach.com/exercises/) together with the Immanuel Approach Basic Training video series. First, the videos include helpful diagrams, pictures, and text slides. And second, the videos include demonstrations, so that you can see Charlotte and I demonstrate the theory that has just been explained and the exercise that participants will then practice for themselves.

B. Go through the exercises in sequence: It is vitally important that you go through the training segments and practice exercises according to the sequence presented in the basic training video series. Firstly, the later exercises build very systematically on the earlier exercises, with all of the pieces from the earlier exercises coming together to produce the full Immanuel Approach process for emotional healing presented in the final exercises. And even more important, the earlier teaching segments and practice exercises set up safety nets ***which absolutely need to be in place*** before doing the trauma work included in the final three exercises.

C. Confidentiality: The other people in your practice group will share personal, sensitive details, and will have personal, poignant, vulnerable experiences in the context of these exercises. *It is very important that you not talk about other recipients' personal details or Immanuel encounters without asking their permission first.*

And I really, really want to emphasize this point because it is common for recipients to have poignant, profound, powerful, beautiful, amazing, inspiring, life-giving encounters with the Lord, and it is totally understandable that you will want to talk to people about the profound, beautiful Immanuel encounters that the other recipient(s) in your practice group describe. If the other recipient(s) in your practice group describe poignant, beautiful encounters with Jesus (and/or share personal details) that you find especially meaningful and would like to be able to talk about, ***please ask their permission first***. If you have permission, then talking to others about what you see and hear just helps to spread the good news. But *please, please, please don't talk about other recipients' personal details or Immanuel encounters without asking their*

[6] This would initially be very satisfying, but it would also produce a final reaction of, "Wow. You're really skillful and amazing. *But I could never do that myself*."

permission first.

D. Read through the handout instructions *immediately* before each exercise: When I do basic training seminars, *immediately* before each exercise everybody takes 5 minutes to read through the instructions. (Note that we actually take 5 minutes to *read* through the instructions, as opposed to taking less time and just *skimming*.) This will feel a bit tedious as you are actually doing it, but it applies well-established brain science regarding short-term memory and priming memory, and I encourage you to include it.[7]

The research regarding short-term memory shows that information carried in our short-term memory systems will be very clear and usable *immediately* after we learn it, but that it can fade dramatically in the course of hours or even minutes. We are all familiar with this reality in our practical, day-to-day lives. For example, whenever I face a complicated, unfamiliar home-repair or car-repair project, I can feel that it is really important to have the details fresh in my mind, and I therefore review the youtube instruction video *immediately* before attempting the repair.

Furthermore, reviewing the instructions before each exercise will also tap into an unconscious phenomena called priming. The fascinating research regarding priming shows that when we read over a specific piece of text, *unconscious* memory traces are laid down in one of our *implicit* memory systems. And if we then read that same text again at some point in the future, our unconscious minds will recognize the passage even if we have no conscious memory of the specific content. And even though we are not consciously aware of it, we will read and comprehend the text more easily.

Again, it will take a few extra minutes and feel a bit tedious, but I encourage you to include this simple technique throughout your basic training endeavors because the benefits are worth it. My observation is that some participants find these practice exercises to be surprisingly stressful and intimidating,[8] and reading through the instructions for the very first time as they are actually trying to use them makes the whole adventure feel significantly more stressful and intimidating. Thankfully, this simple technique of reading through the instructions immediately before using them really helps with this – as the participants use the exercise handouts to facilitate each exercise, they will read and comprehend the instructions more easily – the exercise handouts will feel *more* familiar and friendly, and *less* stressful and intimidating. The bottom line is that this simple technique will help more participants to have positive, comfortable, satisfying experiences with the practice exercises.

E. The first page of each exercise handout: The points summarized briefly on the first page of each handout are points that I explain in more detail in the teaching portions of the videos, and I include them on the first page of each handout because I want to refresh them, over an

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[7] "*Immediately*" before means *after* the participants have been divided into their practice pairs/teams, have settled into their practice locations, and are ready to actually start the exercise. If your group is smaller and well synchronized (so you don't lose 15 minutes waiting for stragglers to get back from the bathrooms), an excellent option is for the trainer/leader to read the exercise instructions out loud while participants also read along silently.

[8] For example, the simple component of recalling a detailed positive memory and deliberately stirring up strong appreciation will be surprisingly unfamiliar and difficult for some recipients, the component of describing their experiences out loud to others will be surprisingly unfamiliar and difficult for some recipients, and the component of remembering and connecting with traumatic memories will be intense and difficult for most recipients. And many facilitators will find it to be stressful and intimidating to coach recipients through unfamiliar, difficult experiences.

over again, throughout the larger basic-training endeavor. My intention is to make them extra-conveniently available, as short summary points on the first page, so that people will glance at them as they are sitting around waiting for each practice exercise to begin. For the *very first* exercise, present (read/summarize) the material from the first page as you are introducing/explaning the exercise or as the first part of reading through the instructions immediately before participants actually do the exercise. And then for all following exercises, just do this for the **NEW** pieces (clearly indicated by bold all-caps in red).

Also, I do *not* include the opening prayer, closing prayer, or "additional sample coaching" that is sometimes at the end of the coaching instructions in the material I read through together with participants immediately before each exercise.

F. Divide large groups into small practice teams (Third safety net): Whether you are working with a large group of three hundred or whether you are practicing in an Immanuel approach study group of twelve, the first step of every group exercise is to divide the larger group into small practice teams. This provides a third safety net, or maybe I should say that it provides the team that can make sure the first safety net gets deployed effectively. If the recipient gets stuck in a negative place, the others in her practice team can help her return to her initial positive place by coaching her to describe the initial positive memory, to repeat the deliberate appreciation exercise, and then to reestablish the initial interactive connection with the Lord.

Dividing the larger group into small practice teams also provides a setting in which the recipient can report regarding her experience – describing "whatever comes into her awareness" at each step in the process – and thereby benefit from the ways in which our brains work best in community.[9] This significantly increases the effectiveness of the exercise, both increasing good results and decreasing disappointing results.

G. Ideal size for practice teams: When breaking a larger group into small teams for the practice exercises, there are a number of factors that should be taken into consideration:

1. Protection from inappropriate pair bonding: An especially important factor to consider is the need to protect participants from inappropriate pair bonding. According to Dr. Wilder, if a man and woman[10] spend time together as a couple, their neurological bonding circuits will unavoidably move toward pair bonding, and this involuntary, neurological pair bonding inherently includes a sexual component. This pair bond does not grow because the man and woman start out wanting to pursue an inappropriate relationship, but rather because that's what bonding circuits do when members of the opposite sex spend time together as a couple. And this pair bonding effect becomes increasingly powerful as the two people spend regular time together, as might happen with a ministry team that meets together each week for ongoing learning and practice. Furthermore, Immanuel Approach sessions are often especially bonding experiences, since the practice team members are often going to deep,

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[9] Training segment #3 in the video series explains the intriguing ways in which God has designed our brains to function best in community, and especially the importance of each recipient describing "whatever comes into her awareness," out loud to the facilitator. (See *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and for Life*, chapter sixteen, "Describe Everything That Comes Into Your Awareness: Our Brains Work Better in Community," for a much more detailed discussion.

[10] With gay or lesbian participants, these same concerns regarding pair bonding would of course apply to two men working together or two women working together, respectively.

vulnerable places together.

In contrast to the pair bonding that occurs when potential partners spend time together as a pair, when three or more people are together their neurological bonding circuits will usually try to build family bonds (as opposed to romantic pair bonds). So a particularly effective intervention for preventing inappropriate pair bonding is to divide the larger group into practice teams with three or more participants on each team.[11]

2. Time efficiency: Aside from the first consideration, which recommends practice teams of at least three participants for any situations where inappropriate pair bonding might be a problem, smaller practice teams provide the important logistical benefit of moving through practice exercises much more quickly. NOTE: In many training settings, time will be painfully precious.[12] If you are working in one of these settings, and concerns about inappropriate pair bonding can be addressed by other means, then practicing in pairs will save a *lot* of time.

3. Convenience of gathering: Smaller practice teams also provide the important logistical benefit of making it easier to gather. For example, if an Immanuel Approach study group is encouraging the lifestyle component of regular healing/practice sessions over time, it is easiest for two people to schedule and gather, with steadily increasing logistical difficulty with increasing size of the practice team.

4. Less vulnerability: Smaller is also generally preferable because most people will feel more comfortable doing personal healing work in the context of a smaller practice team.

5. Other considerations: Sometimes other factors need to be considered, such as when four or five people come to a training event as a team and it seems right for them to practice together.[13]

In light of these considerations, three is usually the ideal number if inappropriate pair bonding is a concern, since three is the smallest number that protects against inappropriate pair bonding. And two is usually the ideal number if inappropriate pair bonding is not a concern. (For example, pair-bonding would not be a concern if a person's practice partner is their grandmother, or their spouse, or their sibling, or of the same gender (if they are hetero), or if they are practicing together for only a few sessions.)

H. Positive memory prep homework: As just mentioned above, in many training settings

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[11] Dr. Wilder learned about pair bonding versus family bonding in a private conversation with Dr. Allan Schore. Unfortunately, we are not aware of any published research regarding these phenomena. (E. James Wilder [Ph.D. psychologist, director, Shepherd's House], in discussion with the author. 2008.)

[12] Especially with a long retreat for the whole basic training package, or even with a shorter retreat for just the "Lite" version, arranging adequate time (*and keeping with the schedule*) for the practice exercises can be challenging.

[13] In some cultures and on some ministry teams, there is a strong preference for doing everything in larger groups. So in some situations the participants will have a strong preference to work in practice circles of six, eight, or even more. The group exercises will still work with much larger practice teams, but they will go *very* slowly and it will take a *lot* more time for everybody to get a chance to both facilitate and receive. Also, with larger practice circles you will want to pay special attention to the concern that some participants may not feel comfortable working in front of such a large audience.

time will be painfully precious. The first four practice exercises[14] will flow more quickly and smoothly if participants do preparatory homework of going through exercise zero (on their own or with a practice partner/triad) several times in order to identify positive memories that they will use for the practice exercises. The ideal is for each participant to bring 2 God positive memories and 4 non-God positive memories. (Adequate is for each participant to bring 1 God positive memory and 3 non-God positive memories.)

I. Important for recipients to use splinter-free positive memories: Even with the very first exercises, the positive memories that participants work with are the memories they will be using for the safety nets for later trauma-work. And these safety-net positive memories need to be free of splinters -- they must not include any pieces of unresolved trauma, and they must not be sitting right next to unresolved trauma. (If the traumatic memory that the person works on later in the emotional healing process resonates with pieces of unresolved trauma in the positive memory, or unresolved trauma nearby, the positive parts of the initial appreciation memory can get blended together with the negative thoughts and emotions from the now activated splinters. In this scenario, if the recipient gets into trouble later in the session and you try to take her back to the initial appreciation memory, instead of finding a safety net you just find more trauma. Not good.)

Unfortunately, I don't explain this important point about safety-net positive memories needing to be splinter-free until teaching segment #6, in preparation for the first exercise practicing with safety nets. (Bad planning on my part. Sorry about that.) As of Sep 2026 updates, I now include brief comments about the need for splinter-free positive memories on the first page of the instruction handouts even for the first exercises. If participants in your group need more explanation regarding this point for the early exercises, the leader/trainer can provide more teaching from the paragraph above, from pages 101 & 102 of the big lion book, and from teaching segment #6. An additional option for providing more teaching regarding this point earlier in the training is to show training segment #6 immediately prior to training segment #3. (For a number of reasons, I think this is preferable to showing it immediately before or after training segments #1 or #2.)

J. Memory-mapped power vs splinter-free safety net: As will be explained in training segment #2, positive memories *that include a connection with God* are the most powerful resource for preparing a person's brain to connect with the Lord in the present, due to the way in which our relationships are carried in our memories. However, for any situation in which the recipient will be working with traumatic memories, *it is even more important to make sure that a **splinter-free** safety net is in place*. Therefore, for exercises that include working with trauma, or that are preparing for working with trauma,[15] if the recipient discovers that all her positive

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[14] Exercise #1, "Interactive Connection in Context of Non-God Positive Memory" through Exercise #4, "Immanuel Approach Troubleshooting, Basic."

[15] For example, if you are going through one of the early exercises that does not include working with trauma, but you are *preparing for later exercises that work with trauma* by accumulating positive memories for the safety net, then it would still be important to use a splinter-free positve memory. In contrast, if the recipient already has several splinter-free positive memories, so that the material for a strong safety net is already in place, and you are going through the exercise that helps the recipient establish a connection with Jesus so that she can just enjoy hanging out with Him, then it is okay to take advantage of the additional power of memory-mapped relationships by using a positive memory that includes a connection with God *even if the memory includes experiencing God's presence in the midst of trauma*.

memories that include a connection with God also include splinters,[16] then she should start with non-God positive memories and then "upgrade" them.

K. Practice teams should stay the same: When you get to the final three exercises, if the recipient gets stuck in intense negative emotions and needs rigorous coaching to help him get back to his positive memories and appreciation, it is very helpful for the other member(s) of his practice team to know the details of several of his positive memories (from being with him in the previous exercises where he described these details). So it is important for the teams to stay the same throughout the series of training exercises.

L. Important caveat regarding "describe everything that comes into your awareness": The purpose of repeatedly coaching the recipient to "describe everything" is not to push people to describe details they feel uncomfortable talking about, but rather to help people describe details that are being withheld because they don't feel important and/or don't make sense. Therefore, coaching the recipient to "describe everything" always needs to be in the context of "to the extent you feel comfortable doing so."[17]

M. Additional encouragement with respect to troubleshooting: If a participant's difficulty with perceiving the Lord's presence and connecting with the Lord persists, especially across multiple practice exercises, encourage them to get help with Immanuel intervention troubleshooting in the context of individual sessions with an experienced facilitator. In my experience, recipients who initially have difficulty will *almost always* eventually be able to perceive and connect with the Lord *if they persist in working with an experienced troubleshooter*.

N. Additional thoughts with respect to choosing a traumatic memory: The instruction handouts for the safety-net exercises and for the trauma-healing exercises include a section on choosing an appropriate traumatic memory to work on. The purpose for these instructions is to help the recipient find a mild-to-moderate traumatic memory that would not be too complicated and/or too intense for beginners. I included only the most necessary practical points in the exercise instructions, to prevent them from becoming too cumbersome, but I would like to offer here a few additional thoughts.

1. Memories for painful experiences from your recent adult life: In earlier versions of these exercise instructions, I used to include the following as one of the options for finding mild/minor traumatic memories: "One good way to find simple, low-intensity traumatic memories is to look through painful experiences from your recent adult life, and then pick a minor painful event that still feels unresolved. If you are having trouble finding a recent painful event that feels unresolved, look for unpleasant experiences in which you did not perceive the Lord's presence at the time of the original experience, and for which you still do not perceive his presence in the memory. Most of these will turn out to be minor unresolved trauma."

However, I no longer include this option. What I have observed is that many of these minor

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[16] For example, if all of her memories that include a connection with God are memories of God's presence in the midst of trauma.

[17] For additional discussion regarding this important caveat, see the end of chapter sixteen from *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and for Life*.

events from our recent adult lives have felt traumatic and unresolved because they have hooked into underlying, earlier, more important traumatic memories. And this has often turned out poorly in either of two ways. On the one hand, if the recipient does *not* go to the underlying trauma, there is minimal healing shift and the experience is disappointing/ unsatisfying. On the other hand, if the recipient *does* go to the underlying trauma, you can unexpectedly end up in major traumatic memories that are too complicated and/or too intense for beginner practice exercises.

2. Why not just ask the Lord to choose the memory?: Some ask "Why not just ask the Lord to bring forward the memory He wants to work on?" This *is* what I do when I facilitate individual sessions, but my concern in the group setting is that none of us have perfect perception of the Lord's guidance. In the context of a group exercise the leader cannot discern with each participant regarding the accuracy of their perception of the Lord's guidance, and the consequences of mistaken discernment are much greater (for example, multiple recipients getting into overwhelming traumatic memories, without appropriate resources to care for this). Therefore, in the group setting we are usually more conservative and directive, and provide guidelines for selecting memories as opposed to having each person simply ask the Lord what to do/where to go.

3. Do not start with an upsetting symptom and look for the roots: Please *do not* focus on an upsetting symptom and ask, "Lord, take me to the memory where this is coming from." Although this approach is often very effective for finding the roots of puzzling, troublesome psychological symptoms, it may also take you to very intense traumatic memories, it may take you to traumatic memories that you have never before worked with, and it may even take you to memories that you have never before been consciously aware of.

4. Do not use memories where you have gotten stuck or that have caused you to decompensate: Please *do not* use memories in which you have gotten stuck, memories that have overwhelmed you, or memories that have caused you to become so upset that you needed someone else to help you get back to a place where you were okay.

5. Do not use memories that you have never previously talked about: Please *do not* use memories that you have never previously talked about. If you have never previously described the experience to another person, it may be much more important than you feel or perceive. In many individual sessions that I have facilitated, the recipient has reported, "A memory has just come to me, but it's not important—I think it's just a distraction." But when I coached him to describe it anyway, he was surprised by the intense negative emotions that welled up as he started to talk about it. And these memories have almost always been for experiences that the person has never previously talked about. As the reader may recognize, this is an excellent example of the person's brain working better in community. But we do not want participants to demonstrate this phenomenon by being overwhelmed by unexpectedly intense negative emotions in the context of group exercises or in practice sessions for beginners.

6. Do not use a memory that has been emotionally disconnected: Please *do not* use a memory that you have talked about, but with emotional numbness/disconnection. We don't want a major traumatic memory to connect emotionally for the first time in the middle of a group exercise or a practice session for beginners.

7. These precautions are for beginners: The selection criteria included in the safety-net and

trauma-healing exercise handouts, and the precautions just described here, are for people who are just learning to use the Immanuel Approach. If the people in your group have high capacity and are experienced with the Immanuel approach, and they are using the emotional healing exercises for regular, ongoing healing work as a part of an Immanuel lifestyle, you can feel free to work with any traumatic memories that you and your healing/practice group discern to be appropriate. You can also feel free to use the "focus on an upsetting symptom and ask the Lord to take you to the underlying memories" approach.

O. Additional thoughts regarding connecting with traumatic memories: Once the recipient has established an interactive connection with the Lord in the context of her initial positive memory, the next step in the process, for both the safety-net exercises and for the emotional healing exercises, is to help the recipient connect with her traumatic memory. For most recipients, you can help them to re-enter/reconnect with their memory by coaching them to picture themselves back inside of the painful situation, and then to talk about the details until they can feel the negative emotions associated with the original experience. However, some recipients will report that they often have trouble connecting too intensely with painful memories. If you and/or the recipient are concerned that she will connect with her traumatic memory too intensely, you can coach her to describe her memory from an outside-observer perspective (as opposed to picturing herself back inside the painful situation), and/or you can coach her to describe only a few details. These variations will significantly reduce the intensity of negative emotions.

Also, in groups where many of the participants have survived severe trauma, and in which many of the participants share similar trauma, if one group member starts talking about the details of a painful memory the others can quickly become overwhelmed by intense triggering. In these situations, the participants can usually reconnect with painful memories very easily. (Usually, all they need to do is close their eyes and think about the original experience for a moment). In these situations, it will be important for the person leading the overall exercise to specifically coach the participants to describe their trauma very briefly, and in only the most vague and general terms.[18]

P. Using the safety net is not failure: To both the facilitator and recipient: don't fall into the trap of feeling like a failure if you have to use the safety net. Remember, when you are just beginning to practice with the Immanuel approach *it is actually important and valuable for you to use the safety net*, so that you are sure that it really works.

Q. Opening prayer and commands: Whenever I facilitate the Immanuel approach, I start the session with a carefully-thought-out opening prayer and with specific commands to any spiritual forces that might interfere with the process.[19] And if I am coaching Immanuel approach prayer partners or a small study/practice group, I usually encourage the facilitators to start the sessions and practice exercises with my sample opening prayer and commands (or my

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[18] Although we usually instruct participants in group exercises to make sure to use our very specific guidelines for choosing minor traumatic memories, in certain situations it will be right to use group exercises to help participants work with shared/similar severe trauma. In these situations it will be especially important to coach the participants regarding how to avoid overwhelming each other with traumatic details that can be intensely triggering.

[19] For description and discussion regarding each point of my opening prayer and initial commands, see Appendix D in the big lion book, or the "Opening prayers and commands" essay at the bottom of the "Training Exercises for Groups and Beginners" section of the "Resources" page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

sample condensed opening prayer and commands).[20] However, with large group exercises I usually say the opening prayer and commands myself, silently, before we start the group exercise. This is because most of the larger groups I work with include participants who have very little teaching or experience with demonic phenomena, and I am concerned that the prayers and commands dealing with possible demonic interference might confuse and/or trigger them.

Therefore, if you are leading a group exercise and you happen to know that the participants are familiar with demonic phenomena, I think it is ideal for each practice team to start the exercise with my sample opening prayer and commands (or at least something similar). In contrast, if you are leading a group exercise in a situation where you are unsure regarding the participants' perspectives on possible demonic interference, I encourage you to go through my sample opening prayer and commands (or something similar) silently, before starting the exercise.

R. Closing prayer (optional, depending on context): Whenever I facilitate the Immanuel approach I end the session with a carefully-thought-out closing prayer and with specific commands to any spiritual forces that might be associated with the memories we have been working with.[21] And if I am coaching Immanuel approach prayer partners or a small study/practice group, I usually encourage the facilitators to close the sessions and practice exercises with my sample closing prayer and commands.[22] However, with large group exercises I usually say the closing prayer and commands myself, silently, after we finish the group exercise. This is because most of the larger groups I work with include participants who have very little teaching or experience with demonic phenomena, and I am concerned that they might be confused and/or triggered by prayers and commands dealing with demonic spirits.

Therefore, if you are leading a group exercise and you happen to know that the participants are familiar with demonic phenomena, I think it is ideal for each practice team to close the exercise with my sample closing prayer and commands (or at least something similar). In contrast, if you are leading a group exercise in a situation where you are unsure regarding the participants' perspectives regarding the possibility that demonic spirits might be associated with traumatic memories, I encourage you to go through my sample closing prayer and commands (or something similar) silently, at the end of the exercise.

S. Four to six repetitions: Almost everybody will feel a bit insecure and clumsy the first couple of times they go through any new procedure. *This is normal and to be expected.* In addition to providing reassurance for those who are feeling the most insecure, we need to be

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[20] Both the sample opening prayer and commands and the sample condensed opening prayer and commands are included at the end of Appendix D in the big lion book, and as separate documents at the bottom of the "Training/Practice Exercises for Groups and Beginners" section of the "Resources" page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

[21] For description and discussion regarding each point of my closing prayer and commands, see Appendix E in the big lion book, or the "Closing prayers and commands" essay at the bottom of the "Training/Practice Exercises for Groups and Beginners" section of the "Resources" page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

[22] The sample closing prayer and commands is included at the end of Appendix E in the big lion book, and as a separate document at the bottom of the "Training/Practice Exercises for Groups and Beginners" section of the "Resources" page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

aware of this extremely common reality because it is very important to deliberately help people get through it. Studies of the neurology of learning, and also research focusing on observable behavior with respect to learning, both show a dramatic tipping point for most people at four to six successful repetitions. People who go through a new procedure only two or three times will often still feel insecure enough that they will be reluctant to continue on their own (that is, when they no longer have a trainer providing supervision and encouragement). However, *if trainees persist until they have gone through the new procedure four to six times*, most of the people who initially felt uncomfortably clumsy and insecure will feel dramatically more comfortable and confident, *and they will be much more likely to continue using the new procedure,* even after the trainer has left and they no longer have coaching or supervision.

Therefore, whenever possible we should deliberately plan our training so that participants successfully get through the full Immanuel Approach process at least four times. The best-case, ideal scenario is for each facilitator to experience at least four successful journeys through the final practice exercise (that is, the third variation of the basic Immanuel Approach healing process). But four-or-more successful journeys through the full process in any form (any of the last three practice exercises) is a really good start.[23]

T. Some practice groups will move more slowly: In some training cohorts, one or more practice pairs/teams will move much more slowly than the rest. If your training event has plenty of flex time, you can expand the time slots for exercises so that the slow groups can still finish. However, if time constraints for the overall training event do *not* allow for simply expanding the time slots for exercises, you can flex long for individual exercises by simply having one or more of the participants wait until the next exercise time slot to take their turn. *The key for this scenario is to just embrace/accept that the slow practice group(s) will not get through all of the exercises*,[24] and make alternate plans for them to complete the full training. A simple option for retreats/seminars is to have them participate in the next training seminar (where they will usually move more quickly, due to more familiarity with the theory and also the previous practice). A simple option for weekly evening training is for the slow teams to add catch-up sessions between the usual meetings, or to add extra evenings at the end for these teams. Another option is for slow teams who are not able to finish the full training to just facilitate "Lite" version sessions for a season, until (if) they are ready to get the remainder of the training and do trauma work.[25]

For the remainder of a retreat/seminar with one or more slow groups, practice exercises will be a bit more complicated because the slow group(s) will be lagging behind and working on previous material. This is a bit more complicated and stressful for the leader, but usually manageable.

U. Recommendations/Cautions regarding large groups: If you are thinking about using these

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[23] If you pay attention, you will notice this phenomena occurring, *with respect to the first components of the process*, as you go through the sequence of practice exercises. That is, by the time your group has gotten through the basic safety-net exercise, most participants will have *five* successful repetitions of facilitating the process through the initial steps of positive memory recall, deliberate appreciation, and connection with Jesus. And it should be easy to see that most participants are clearly, tangibly more comfortable with facilitating these initial steps.

[24] It is ideal to let participants know ahead of time that this sometimes happens, and then to also help the slow participants make the shift with respect to expectations if it actually does happen.

[25] Again, "Lite" version sessions include coaching the recipient to the point of establishing an interactive connection with the Lord, and then helping the recipient to engage in various ***non***-trauma-work activities with the Lord (such as just enjoying time with the Lord, doing spiritual direction with the Lord, and looking at specific questions or issues with the Lord). But they do ***not*** include the recipient working with the Lord to resolve traumatic memories.

training/practice exercises in group settings:

- I recommend that you do not try leading group exercises until you are comfortable with facilitating the Immanuel approach in individual sessions, *and you have been getting consistently good results*.

- I recommend that you begin experimenting with group exercises in settings where you know the people that will be participating (so that you have a sense regarding the amount of trauma they carry, the strength of their support systems, and the health of their coping skills), and in settings where you will be working with smaller groups (twenty-five people or less).

- Finally, when working with large groups (more than 25 participants), it is ideal to have a few experienced facilitators available to deal with the possibility that a small number of participants may encounter especially complicated difficulties – complicated difficulties that can actually hinder them from cooperating with the safety net intervention.[26]

V. Helpful handouts: Instruction handouts for each of the practice exercises are available as free downloads from the "Training/Practice Exercises for Groups and Beginners" section of the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

W. One page summaries: Once facilitators-in-training have gone through all of the practice exercises, and have gone through the third variation of the basic Immanuel Approach healing process several times and have become comfortable with it, many find that the one page summaries are adequate. Also, there are several different versions of the one page summaries (all provided as free downloads from the bottom of the "Training/Practice Exercises for Groups and Beginners" section). I would encourage you to experiment with all of the options to find the best fit for your personal style and preferences.

X. First half/"Lite" version can be gentle on-ramp for trainers: If leading a training retreat/seminar feels quite intimidating, you might want to try just the first half of the basic training,[27] or the "Lite" version of the basic training,[28] as an easy on-ramp. After two or three times through one of these easy-onramp options, leading a retreat/seminar for the full basic training will be much less intimidating.

Note: If your group/team/cohort is wanting to move on to facilitating Immanuel Approach trauma work fairly quickly, use the first half of this full basic training for the easy on-ramp, since it includes teaching and exercise implementation regarding splinter-free positive memories for eventual trauma work. If your group/team/cohort is wanting to spend a lot of time with just the exercises that do *not* include trauma work, then use the "Lite" version as your easy on-ramp, since it's exercises are simpler and do *not* include teaching or practical steps regarding splinter-free positive memories.

Y. Let us know how it goes: More raw data is helpful as we continue to experiment and learn about the best ways to do training/practice exercises in group settings. If you lead or participate in a training that uses our basic training videos and/or exercises, please let us know how it goes and offer suggestions for improvements (e-mails to drkarl@kclehman.com).

IV. Practical logistics for overall seminar: If you are *not* actually planning to lead a basic training seminar, this section will bore you to tears. Please skip it. If you *are* planning to provide basic training

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[26] For additional discussion of these intermediate and advanced scenarios, in which recipients often have difficulty cooperating with the safety net, see the final sections at the end of the chapter on safety nets in the big lion book and/or the three video training segments addressing intermediate and advanced safety-net scenarios.

[27] The first several segments with practice exercises that establish a connection with Jesus, the basic troubleshooting segment, and (if time allows) the basic safety net segment. (Training segments one through six.)

[28] For the "Lite" version, see https://www.immanuelapproach.com/exercises-prayers-for-groups-and-beginners-lite/

using our videos and practice exercises, this section may be tremendously valuable, depending on whether our experience is applicable to your situation. I encourage at least skimming to assess whether more careful study would be worth it.

Compare and contrast (pros and cons):

A. One long retreat/seminar for the whole basic training package (2.5 to 3 days): Full basic training in a single retreat/seminar is a real marathon with respect to both cognitive learning and practical exercises. The trauma-work exercises can be especially intense, for both recipients and facilitators. It's really important for a full basic training retreat to include adequate time for exercises, transitions, and breaks. Trying to squeeze the training into less than 2.5 to 3 days can result in stressful, exhausting, unpleasant experiences that can discourage participants from continuing with IA work.

Pros:

1. Most efficient with respect to total time required due to much less need to review/refresh material from previous sessions.
2. Easiest to keep the same participants together for practice groups.

Cons:

1. Much more difficult with respect to scheduling. (A two-and-a-half to three day retreat requires time from the workweek and sometimes also time on Sunday.)
2. Most difficult to flex for practice groups that are moving more slowly due to being one fixed training event with the least total time. (See "Some practice groups will move more slowly," above, for flex options.)

B. Two mid length training retreats (Fri evening; Sat morning, afternoon, and evening; and possibly also time on Sunday), as close together as possible: This option is for people/teams who want to get the full basic training as quickly as possible, but aren't able to take time off during the week for a single longer retreat/seminar. The first training goes through the first several segments with practice exercises that establish a connection with Jesus, the basic troubleshooting segment, and (if time allows) the basic safety net and splinter-free positive memory segments (training segments one through 6). The second training should start with a quick refresher summary regarding theory.[29] And then go through training segments and practice exercises from basic safety net[30] to the third trauma-work variation. If practice partners have changed, you will also need an initial long positive-memory exercise so that practice pairs/teams can go through three splinter-free safety-net memories for each participant.

Pros:

1. Less difficult with respect to scheduling.
2. Less difficult to flex for practice groups that are moving more slowly due to more total time. (See "Some practice groups will move more slowly," above, for flex options.)

Cons:

1. Participants can lose momentum if they don't practice during the gap between training events.

C. Two mid length training retreats, with second training following a season of practice, and just for those who are appropriate for facilitating trauma work): This option is similar to the training plan with two smaller retreats as just described, but instead of trying to complete the full training as quickly as possible it deliberately plans for a season of practice between the

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[29] The summary at the beginning of the fifth training segment (*Immanuel Approach Safety Nets: Basic*) should be adequate for this purpose, especially if participants have reviewed the corresponding chapters from the Intro book or big lion book as prep homework.

[30] If your group gets through the basic safety-net in the first training, if time allows it's ideal to overlap and repeat the basic safety-net segment at the beginning of the second training.

two training events.

Pros:

1. Less difficult with respect to scheduling.
2. Less difficult to flex for practice groups that are moving more slowly due to more total time.
3. Lots of practice during the gap between training events can help slow facilitators to catch up.
4. This setup can also flex for slow facilitators by splitting the group and allowing slow facilitators to have a longer practice season before the second training event.
5. This option is an especially good fit for training cohorts with facilitators-in-training across a wide range of knowledge, skill, maturity, discernment, capacity, etc. If there are facilitators in the cohort who are having a lot of difficulty, they can stay with facilitating "Lite" version sessions for an extended season of practice. If needed, their extended practice season can also include regular healing work for themselves, maturity skill and capacity development, and other mentoring and discipleship that seems appropriate.[31] (Or they might decide that their calling is to just provide lite-version sessions.)

Cons:

1. Can be more difficult with respect to scheduling than weekly evening sessions.

D. Weekly evening sessions over several months:

Pros:

1. Least difficult with respect to scheduling. (For some training cohorts, it works very well to treat weekly Immanuel Approach training sessions like a time-limited small group.)
2. Most flexible with respect to time for exercises. Many training cohorts can flex so that slow-moving practice groups can go longer on evenings with longer exercises. Also, if some or all of the practice groups are taking more time than planned for an exercise, it is fairly easy to flex longer by having one or more participants in the slow practice group(s) take their turn(s) the next week (or catch up by meeting between group sessions).[32]

Cons:

1. Participants can lose momentum during the gaps between weekly sessions, requiring more time for refreshing material that has gotten stale.
2. For some people, scheduling weekly evening sessions for several months can be difficult.

V. Summary regarding the "Safety net" intervention (going back to the initial positive memory, appreciation, and interactive connection with the Lord): When encountering any of the difficulties below, the recipient can go back to her interactive connection from the beginning of the exercise, and then get help from Jesus in that positive, safe context. This simple but effective intervention can be a resource and/or "safety net" in various ways at various points throughout the exercise.

During the middle of the session:

- If the recipient connects with a traumatic memory, but then is not able to perceive the Lord's presence inside the traumatic memory;[33]

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[31] For additional discussion regarding facilitators-in-training who have more difficulty, See FAQ question XIII. F: "Can Anybody Learn to Facilitate Immanuel Approach Sessions" (available as free download from the Special Subjects/Advanced Topics section of the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com).

[32] Again, see "Some practice groups will move more slowly," above, for additional discussion regarding flex options.

[33] For basic Immanuel Approach emotional healing variation #3, and for intermediate and advanced work, this safety net application is deployed only after first trying troubleshooting while still in the context of the traumatic memory.

- if the recipient should become stuck at *any* point in working with the traumatic memory, and especially if the recipient becomes stuck and has lost her interactive connection with Jesus;[34]

- if the facilitator and recipient run into trouble, and feel like they are in over their heads for any reason;

- or if the recipient is able to perceive the Lord's presence in the traumatic memory, but does not experience a strong enough connection to be able to receive the help she needs;[35]

– for each of these situations, the facilitator can deploy the safety-net intervention by coaching the recipient to go back to her safe, positive connection with Jesus from the beginning of the exercise. And then in this safe, positive context the facilitator can coach her to ask Jesus for help, and to specifically ask Him about the difficulties they encountered in working with the trauma. If time permits, the recipient can go back to the traumatic memory and apply the new guidance/help she just got from Jesus. This can be repeated as many times as necessary.

At the end of the session:

- If the facilitator and recipient run out of time before the traumatic memory has been fully resolved, the facilitator can deploy the safety-net intervention by coaching the recipient to go back to her positive memory and connection with Jesus from the beginning of the exercise. And then, after she has re-established this safe, positive context, the facilitator can coach her to spend time focusing on Jesus, and stirring up appreciating regarding both the initial positive memory and the Lord's goodness, until gratitude and peace have fully replaced any lingering negative thoughts and emotions from the traumatic memory.

And again, in some situations the recipient will be able to return directly to her initial positive connection with Jesus, and in other situations she will need to repeat the steps of reconnecting with the initial positive memory and deliberately stirring up appreciation before she is able to re-establish her connection from the beginning of the session.

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[34] For basic Immanuel Approach emotional healing variation #3, and for intermediate and advanced work, this safety net application is deployed only after first trying troubleshooting while still in the context of the traumatic memory.

[35] For basic Immanuel Approach emotional healing variation #3, and for intermediate and advanced work, this safety net application is deployed only after first troubleshooting regarding the weak connection while still in the context of the traumatic memory.