For medics who might have trouble keeping up with all the actions, one solution is to teach more than you run. Teach on streetcorners, teach after organizing meetings, teach before marches start or when they’re kettled. Teach at jail support.

I’m teaching a 30 minute training after the next organizing meeting of a network of black lives matter movement groups here in Charlotte. Six to eight hour affinity group medic trainings are also super useful. For affinity group medics, teach first aid and encourage them to use SAMPLE to learn their group members’ health before they hit the street.

Here are objectives, agenda, materials, and details on the learning tasks from a 2.5-hour health and safety training Scott and Andrea and I taught in Ferguson in early November (before the non-indictment of Darren Wilson). Adapt it to your people! Ask us questions! Tell us what worked and didn’t work for you! My # is (504) 710-1604.

This outline is online: agk.wikidot.com/blog:ferguson-health-promotion-training-outline.

Grace Keller,
22 December 2014
CHAPTER 1. TRAINING OUTLINE

Objectives

were unfortunately vague and not achievement-based or particularly evaluable: “promote self-organization, self-determination, and self-support.”

Agenda

1. Intro activities 15 min
2. PEARL activity and debrief: 15 min
3. Best-dressed/best-prepared protester activity: 10 min
4. Violence, cops, and rights lecture/discussion 20 mins
5. Crowds, scene assessment, scene control activities/ discussion 10 min
6. Chem weapons lecture and eyeflush practice 30 min
7. Jail and court reminder 10 min
8. Social health lecture/ discussion; HALTS activity 15 min
9. Directing/diffusing acute stress lecture and check-out 15 min

Resources

- “Strongly agree” sign for human barometer
- Chart paper with PEARL, know your rights, HALTS, “have a buddy, ground, do something” as antidote to “isolation, disassociation, powerless feeling.”
- Local resources and national hotlines, particularly 24/7 peer support line: 513-931-9276.
  - Chicago resources: chicagoactionmedical.wordpress.com/resources
  - Ferguson resources: agk.wikidot.com/blog:notes-and-resources-for-ferguson-protests
- Handouts on other stuff you might teach, like handcuff injury, jail support, or SAMPLE.
Notes

1. Intro
   - Go-round: “Name, are you from here or out of town, and one thing you wish you knew.”
   - Human Barometer: “I got enough sleep last night,” “People come to me to fix their problems” (what kind of problems?), “I have been pepper sprayed or tear-gassed” (people who haven’t: do you have questions for the people who have?).

2. PEARL  (Physical vulnerabilities, Emotional vulnerabilities, Arrest or Assault risk, Role, Loose ends if arrested or in hospital)
   - Maybe do your last human barometer question on buddies, so you can see where people stand, opinion or experience-wise.
   - Tell’em why we dig buddies: (Two heads better than one, not going through anything alone, jail/court support, etc). Tell’em PEARL comes from Atlanta Copwatch (Why would Copwatchers want buddies?)
   - Demonstrate PEARL: Tell your buddy your real vulnerabilities: that makes it safe for everybody else to do it in a minute. Emphasize starting with Roles to see if y’all even want to do the same thing (march, make food, make puppets, do media, do jail support, etc).
   - Group members turn to neighbor and do PEARL.
   - PEARL helps you know yourself and your buddy so you can have each others’ back. It’s like an advance directive: “here’s what I’m like, what I want to do, what I need/like, what I don’t want in my life, and how to talk to me.” We learn this shit through coming back to these questions with a buddy again.
and again, before and after stressful, boring, and thrilling times.

3. Best-dressed
- One trainer reads the weather report for this afternoon/evening off their phone.
- Imagine the Grand Jury announced their decision right now, and we’re going directly from here to the spot and staying out late. We’re going to vote for who here is best dressed with what they came in for whatever may happen.
- Encourage group to nominate 3 people. Sit them in front of group/in middle of circle.
- Nominators say why their candidate should win. Encourage group (and candidates) to add reasons for or against each candidate.
- Ask candidates worst conditions they’ve protested in, and how long they could stay out in those conditions.
- Ask group what we could bring or do to help them stay out longer.
- Give out prizes to all three, or say that when we put our warmth together, we all win!

4. Violence, cops, rights
- Why are there cops? Courts and prisons? (List reasons; don’t let list get too pro or anti. Lets get outside our boxes.)
- What do cops do? Why do people want to be cops?
- Recap: Cops use fear and the THREAT of violence to maintain current power relations.
- Quick know your rights for when you’re caught alone: “Am I being detained?” You only have to provide name, birthdate, and home address. Then: “I won’t talk. I want a lawyer.” (In Chicago, talk about how to use the First Defense Legal number, 1-800-LAW-REP4)
5. Crowds

- Cops have their bosses, legal observers, and (sometimes) media watching them, so they are more disciplined and less lethal. Their power to contain or disperse is still entirely in their ability to scare people.

- We learn about their weapons, training, and strategies so they lose the power to scare us. The difference between a scalp wound from falling down and the same wound from a police baton is just fear. The physical injury is the same.

- What injuries have students gotten or seen from cops in crowds? Expect to hear about blunt force from batons, projectiles, barricades, or vehicles; falling down (palm abrasions, bruises) and twisted ankles from fleeing; and lacrimation from tear gas/pepper spray. “Anybody see someone’s palm burned from picking up a tear gas canister and throwing it back?”

- The point of this discussion is to teach each other where injuries come from so we can think about risk and how to avoid more risk than we want—and how minor physical injuries from streetfighting usually are. Answer a few questions. We’ll cover chem weapons in a minute.

- Show’em how to hang onto your buddy for a 360 degree view; how to make space in a crushed crowd and make a privacy circle for someone who fell down; how to start a chant of “WALK, WALK” (and why you don’t yell “Don’t RUN!”), how to walk with great intention.

- Talk about rumor control, looking for exits, and as much as you feel comfortable about topics like the matrix of force and ranked kettles used to assess the risk preference of a crowd.
6. Eyeflush

- Go outside in the cold with water bottles, LAW bottles, and ponchos.
- Pepper spray and tear gas hurt; for most people the effects go away within 30 minutes in fresh air and no other treatment.
- Danger: can’t see, disoriented. Solution: escorting to safety or “Come toward my voice”
- Danger: asthma/breathing difficulty. Solution: scan crowd for silent sufferers in tripod position, escort to safety, help with inhaler, prepare to go to hospital or home with them.
- Danger: contacts trap chemicals against eyes; eyeflush can make contact slip into eye socket. Solution: Public education. Write “Contacts?” on bottom of eyeflush bottle so you never forget to ask. They take their own contacts out and dispose of them before eyeflush. They can’t be cleaned. Prepare to help them get home or to a safe place they can meet friends later.
- Dangers: Rubbing eyes, losing glasses, getting wet from eyeflush, not paying attention while eyeflushing. Solutions: hands on knees, they hold their glasses, use a poncho, have a buddy who watches the scene.
- Show eyeflush technique. Emphasize gloves, how to get eye open, tilting head so water runs away from tearduct, force of stream. Answer questions.
- They practice.
- Explain LAW: aluminum hydroxide/magnesium hydroxide (Maalox or Mylanta) antacid (plain or flavored, no alcohol, simethicone ok), 50:50 with tap water. Eyeflush works by mechanical force, LAW and milk work by buffering action.
- Bag outer clothes before entering enclosed areas (car, bus, house), 30 minute shower (watch you don’t let it run from hair into eyes or junk), wash clothes with harsh detergent.
7. Jail and court

- Wait for friends to get out (dress warm and bring stuff they like).
- If arrested, friends should call Jail Support with your name and birthdate (make sure everybody has #).
- Don’t lose your paperwork.
- Go to court with your friends.

8. Social health

- Have a buddy, know yourself, know your buddy, ground yourself, have a plan.
- Facilitate brief support group. Purpose: to acknowledge the stress of waiting; how some people can’t sleep and isolate; how people are scared and some are even suicidal. How friends and family might not understand experiences. Get feelings out more than stories.
- 12-step groups identified HALTS (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired, taking self too Seriously) as concrete reasons for relapse. Psych peer-run groups identified prolonged lack of sleep as far and away most common cause of psychosis and suicidality.
- We’re taught to find out if someone in crisis has a plan and the means, and then take away their remaining options by calling 911 without their consent. That’s fucked up. What we should be doing is HALTS for ourself and them: help them figure out how to eat if they’re hungry, how to let go if they’re angry or beating themself up, how to connect if they’re lonely or get space if they’re crowded, how to sleep if they’re tired, and how to laugh at themself.
- We can plan with them, hang out with them, put them in touch with a hotline, or help them get ready to the hospital, but it’s their call. And it’s your call when you need to back the fuck up and do you.
• Check in with your buddy: HALTS?
• Debrief: Learn about any unmet needs? Training’s over in 15 mins so you can go do you.
• Another way to do it: “What did you do to take care of yourself today. What do you need to do?”

9. Check-out
• Standing steady despite scary scenes, cop tactics, shitty weather, feeling isolated, and neglecting needs are what this training is about.
• Acute stress response: adrenaline preps you to fight or flee. When we freeze or feel like we have to wait, it gets toxic: Isolation, dissociation, and feeling powerless.
• Solution, not that hard. Have a buddy (fuck isolation), ground yourself in your emotions and what’s really happening around you (fuck dissociation), and do something (you are not powerless). What you do: that’s between you and your buddy.
• Human barometer: “Someone in my family understands me and why I’m out here.” “I’m ready for the grand jury decision to come back.” “I’m ready for another month of waiting.”
• Check-out: low-point/high point.
• Thank you all!!!!

Acknowledgments  PEARL was invented by Earthworm and Atlanta Copwatch in 2012. The “best-dressed protester” exercise was invented with Greg Rothman for a training we taught in 2014 in Maryland. The facilitated discussion about police was invented by Scott Mechanic of Chicago Action Medical for a training we taught in Chicago in 2014. The wording of the brief know your rights training is from We Charge Genocide (I think they got it from First Defense Legal). Thanks to Black Cross Health Collective for LAW, Ann-Marie in Chicago for the “S” in “HALTS,” Sugar Solidarity from Chicago Action Medical for “What have you done to take care of yourself today?” Ace Allen for acute stress response, and Trenton for Low Point/High Point.