

Having a Community Day

by JanPieter Hoogma

Version 1.0.d



Constructive and positive feedback came from: Anne Denniss, Andy Johnson, Sheila Lochrie, Jim Hill, Mary McCann, Teresa Tinklin & Virginia Holt.

a CornuCopia publication

Topics to be considered

Mark Twain to his friend Ben:

“Dear Ben,

I’m sorry my letter is so long

I didn’t have time to write a shorter one.”

You too are able to host one!

Hosting a Community Day is actually quite simple. And the nice thing is that you don’t need to do everything! It is possible to delegate most of the tasks to volunteers, and see supporting them as your only job. Don’t forget, Co-Counsellors are autonomous folk: they’re able to look after themselves and will often lend a hand, if asked.

Suggestions for making it a success

1. Trust the co-operative spirit of Co-Counsellors

Hosting a Community Day doesn’t mean you are responsible for its success! You only provide the conditions; it is up to the Co-Counsellors to get the best out of the day. And in 99% of the cases they will do just that. They will generously offer you all the support you need.....if you ask for it.

If, as sometimes happens, something goes wrong or you get distressed, share this with the group, ask for attention or for specific support.

2. Have a support person

This can’t be underlined enough. Just knowing there’s someone there in the group especially to support you, is often enough in itself. In addition, doing the preparation together can help you to become clearer, and your support person may come up with some good suggestions. If a problem arises, two heads are better than one. And if this is not enough, what about having a session? For more details about what support you can ask for, see page 4.

3. Prepare yourself & your checklists beforehand

This manual is designed to help you with good preparation. The chapter on ‘Topics’ covers the different aspects of the Community Day, while the chapter on ‘Check Lists’ enables you to make your own check lists.

4. Be aware of the Time Keeping

You are not expected as Community Day host to offer a programme. But time keeping is a different thing, especially when everybody knows everybody. People tend to talk and to extend the coffee time and the shared lunch: there is a big chance that nobody keeps an eye on the time as everybody expects somebody else to do the convening.

Time keeping could be a job for your support person, or be delegated to somebody else. But make sure that it happens....

Building confidence

Before hosting a Community Day yourself, you could try the following ways of building your confidence:

- offer support to somebody who is hosting a Community Day
- when attending other Community Days, take careful note of what goes on and what you think makes the day a success.
- offer to facilitate part of a Community Day
- talk to people who have done it and share any misgivings. Remember that a Community Day is run by Co-Counsellors and that everything will get sorted out anyway

An overview of a Community Day

What does a Community Day look like?

Community days run in different formats: sometimes they are on an afternoon or evening, but more often they take a whole day (a Sunday in Edinburgh or Tayside.) Also there are Community Double Days: Co-Counsellors visit either on the Saturday or the Sunday with the option of staying overnight.

This is the structure of a Community Day. All these things will be explained on the following pages.

- people come in *and have a drink,*
 - opening circle *with or without mini-sessions, bodywork or culture setting*
 - a round of 'needs, wants & offers' *where people decide what they want to do*
 - sessions, *one-to-one, in a group or workshops*
 - closing circle, *sometimes with positive feedback to the host or facilitator(s).*
- Quite often there is a shared meal.

Purposes

Superficially a Community Day may appear to consist merely of Co-Counselling with or without a shared lunch. However, a Community Day serves many more purposes.

For new Co-Counsellors it provides an opportunity to meet a variety of Co-Counsellors. This is important for:

- having sessions with more experienced Co-Counsellors
- learning from other Co-Counsellors who use their sessions differently and who display different styles of counselling
- finding potential partners for future one-to-one sessions
- gaining the experience of working in different sized groups
- getting to know more Co-Counsellors

For 'older' Co-Counsellors it serves purposes other than just having one-to-one sessions:

- meeting new faces other than the regular partner or support group
- picking-up Co-Counselling again and meeting potential partners after having had a spell without Co-Counselling
- working in a group and setting up groups for particular purposes.
Community Days are especially good for this
- trying out workshops by Co-Counsellors who want to develop their facilitating skills
- socialising, meeting old friends and having fun

From the Network point of view Community Days support the development of Co-Counselling skills and maintain and extend the Co-Counselling network fabric.

Organising your own Support

What support you can ask for

You can ask your support person

- to act as a sounding board
- to talk the day through with you. *Quite often it is when you hear yourself speak, that you know what you are thinking.*
 - about the programme
 - about what you want to learn from your facilitation?
 - about which points you want positive feedback on afterwards
- to support you during your facilitation
- to take over some of your jobs:
 - welcoming new people
 - collecting the money & checking the subscriptions
 - time keeping and inviting people to come to the opening circle
 - doing (a part of) the facilitation

Who is doing the facilitation?

The person hosting the Community Day may leave the facilitation of the different parts of the day to other people. You can ask for this at the Community Day itself, but for more peace of mind, it would be better to organise this beforehand.

Before closing circle: Positive Feedback about your hosting the Community Day

Ask for a round of celebrations about how you hosted the Community Day. This round will be more effective if people are specific, or accompany their general appreciations with examples.

Ask your support person to initiate this feed-back circle and to write the celebrations down, as there is a chance you may forget them. Later on you can use this list in a session to reflect on the good things and to let them sink in.

Not only is this round good for you, but also other people can hear what it takes to be a good Community Day facilitator.

Where can you find support?

Go through the address list and ask anyone you think would be appropriate. This is just like asking for telephone sessions. If they don't think they can do it, ask somebody else.

Hosting the Community Day

Your house is OK

What really counts is that people have the opportunity to have sessions and to meet each other. How they get on with each other, however, is not your job. You provide the opportunities; it is up to the Co-Counsellors to pick them up.

It's not necessary to bother about the cleanness or tidiness of your house. If people don't like it at first glance, it provides them with an opportunity to work on it. Thus, clean and tidy your house if you feel like it and feel better by doing it; or if don't, have a session on how it feels to have other people seeing your house as it is.....

Other people in the house?

No problem, as long as they consent to your having a Community Day. It can be helpful to inform them what they can expect in terms of noise.

The visiting Co-Counsellors need to be informed that there are other non Co-Counselling people in the house and which rooms are not accessible for sessions.

Pay attention to new Co-Counsellors!

Have you ever observed what happens when Co-Counsellors arrive? Each Co-Counsellor goes straight to the kitchen to drop off the shared lunch while hugging and greeting the Co-Counsellors they feel pleased to see again.

Not so for new Co-Counsellors, either those fresh from the Fundamentals or those recently moved to Scotland. For them taking up Co-Counselling and doing the Fundamentals may have been a big step. Turning up at a Community Day is another big step and they may not know anyone at all. Quite often the sad fact is, however, that they are left on their own, as everybody else is busy with greeting their old mates or providing drinks and finishing the last preparations for the Community Day. Though this is understandable, it can feel unwelcoming and can create an in-crowd atmosphere.

What can be done to welcome and integrate new Co-Counsellors?

- Appoint a specific Co-Counsellor (e.g. your support person) to take the job of welcoming and introducing them, including telling them how the day will go
- have a clear 'culture setting', (see page 10) explaining what the structure of the day is
- organise a small welcoming ceremony

- in the opening circle ask the new Co-Counsellors if they would like a buddy for the day
- when pairing up for (mini-) sessions, let the new people have first choice of partner

Large numbers

Sometimes 15 to 20 Co-Counsellors arrive which may be too many for one-to-one sessions in the rooms available. Quite often they want to work in groups and that is just what is on offer at Community Days.

However, not all Co-Counsellors are used to working in a group or know how to instruct a group to their greatest benefit. It could be worthwhile to run a workshop on 'Getting the most out of working in a group', especially when there are several new Co-Counsellors. If you don't want to facilitate this, ask somebody else to do it.

Shared lunch

One of the high-points of the day. The key importance of this shared lunch is the sharing, not only of food - regularly a culinary surprise -, but of minds. This contributes enormously to weaving or maintaining the network fabric.

Although Co-Counsellors are famous for their improvising talents, you can support the shared lunch by providing plates, cutlery, cups, a place where people can heat up their food.

You can keep up the East-Coast of Scotland tradition by making soup, as the vegetarian soup on Community Days has become proverbial.

Money Matters

The fee for the day

In the East-Coast the fee for the Community Day for many years has been £2. Unwaged Co-Counsellors pay £1. People who attend for only half a day pay half.

Community Double Days cost double.

Half of the money goes to the Community Day host for providing the house, soup, drinks (teas and coffees) and tissues. The other half goes to the CCIIS Network.

Checking subscriptions for the CCIIS

The Community Days have proved to be an excellent opportunity to collect subscriptions! People *do* see the announcements in the Good&Newsletter, but this doesn't always result in them paying (or cancelling).

Everybody attending Community Days and other workshops organised by the CCIIS is expected to be a subscribing member of the CCIIS. Exceptions are made for people from outside Scotland visiting a Community Day. For workshops they either subscribe to the CCIIS or pay a higher rate.

Membership lists

The membership Administrator will send a list of CCiS members to the host of the Community Day. So that you can see who has already paid and what the rates are for the current year. If this hasn't arrived a week beforehand, please contact the membership Administrator. His/her phone number is inside front cover of the Good&Newsletter.

Facilitating the group process

The timetable

Programme for a full Community Day

This is the timetable of a typical Community Day in Edinburgh and Tayside.

Welcoming the Co-Counsellors & coffee.

The Co-Counsellors arrive between 10.00 and 10.30, the day probably starts around 10.30

The numbers vary from 4 to 10, but especially in the Edinburgh area 15 to 20 Co-Counsellors is not uncommon.

The morning session:

- opening circle
- bodywork and / or mini-sessions
- culture setting
- 'needs, wants & offers'
- sessions in pairs, groups and/or workshops

Shared Lunch

Takes about an hour. See also section 'Topics: Shared Lunch'

The afternoon session

- repetition of culture setting, if necessary, for new-comers
- needs, wants & offers
- sessions in pairs and groups and/or workshops

Closing circle

around 17.00

Culture setting

The more new Co-Counsellors there are, the more important this part, as generally during the culture setting the general structure of the day will be clarified.

The shorter the 'culture setting', the more effective it will be.

Several topics can be addressed:

- the timetable for the day
- what you expect from people using your house and where the rooms for sessions are situated
- how late-comers will be accommodated
- the fee for the day & the subscriptions for CCiS
- a buddy for new Co-Counsellors

‘Needs, Wants & Offers’

During ‘Needs, Wants & Offers’ the group comes to a decision about what is going to happen during the morning, afternoon or evening.

There are two stages:

- first everybody gets a turn to state what they want or have to offer, while the facilitator listens or makes notes. This rarely leads to conflicting wishes, but it does happen
- consequently the facilitator makes proposals in an attempt to try and accommodate everybody’s wants

You as facilitator may find it difficult to hear all the information, to take it in and to produce proposals. Being prepared can make a difference.

How to make ‘Needs, Wants & Offers’ a success

- stress that everybody state what they need *independently* of what others say
- have pencil and paper ready to make short notes of what people want, if it helps you
- ask that nobody leaves the room before a satisfactory solution has been found, unless an alternative agreement is reached
- give a summary of what people want
- ask people who have agreed to work with each other, to stand or sit together, so that everybody can see who is free to choose from
- if you don’t feel like facilitating this, ask somebody else with experience with ‘Needs, Wants & Offers’ to do it

Co-Counsellors who feel rusty

Sometimes Co-Counsellors use Community Days to resume Co-Counselling and to meet potential Co-Counselling partners. Also other Co-Counsellors may feel rusty. At present there isn’t an approach to this, but an awareness of this is, in itself, a step forward. If you have any suggestions, let me know.

On cancelling the Community Day

In the former East of Scotland Community it was agreed never to cancel a Community Day. This is my recommendation: even when only one Co-Counsellor turns up, have at least one (big) session. Or when you can’t be a host, ask somebody else to take over. This policy creates trust in Community Days.

The worst thing is cancelling a Community Day without telling the people who have announced their attendance. Next time people may not bother to go to a Community Day hosted by you or lose their trust in Community Days.

How can you make this manual a success?

By sending your feedback

To: JanPieter Hoogma
32-A Inverleith Place
Edinburgh EH3 5QB ☎ 0131-551 6146
SCOTLAND (UK)

E-mail: janpieter@coco-home.demon.co.uk

If you send in this manual with your suggestions for improvement you will receive the latest version.

For “Suggestions for feedback” see page. 15.

By recommending this manual to other Co-Counsellors

This will have the effect of having Community Days that not only results in well organised workshops, but also are fun and pleasure for the host and facilitators.

Checklist Tips

A series of **suggestions** to put on your own list. As the points on this list come from several people, each of whom has their own preferences, some suggestions will fit you, others not. If you put new items on these lists, please let me know, so I can improve this chapter.

A week or more before

- ask a Co-Counsellor to be your support person
- make a checklist for yourself
- put instructions on paper on how to get to your house by car, bus or on foot
- ensure that you have the membership subscription checklist
- make a list of those who phone you to say they're coming, and ask them whether they can give lifts if necessary.
In the Good&Newsletter they are requested to announce their attendance, so that the organiser will have a rough idea of how many Co-Counsellors can be expected
- inform the other people who live in the house that a Community Day will be happening

The day before

- go shopping, if necessary:
 - tissues
 - teas, coffee and milk
 - some extra bread
 - ingredients for soup
- prepare the house:
 - ensure that the rooms are ready for Co-Counselling:
 - tissues + rubbish bins
 - labels on doors telling which rooms can be used for sessions
 - If possible clear some space in the fridge for food brought in to be shared
- make soup, vegetarian if possible
- if you cancel the Community Day for whatever reason, inform all the people who announced their intention to attend!

Before people arrive

- enjoy yourself!
- check the rooms for usability, tissues and rubbish bins if available
- pull out chairs around the dining table
- lay-out
 - coffee making materials
 - dishes etc. for lunch
- get paper and pen ready for
 - making notes during 'Needs, wants & offers'
 - your celebrations to be written down at the end

Welcoming people

- people arrive between 10-10.30
- offer new Co-Counsellors a drink, or get someone to make them feel welcome
- find out who has not arrived yet
- decide whether to wait for them or not
- opening circles usually start at 10.30
- inform everybody that the opening circle will start at a certain time

Opening circle

- **round of names**
 - if there are many new faces, have some name games
- **round of good & new**
 - ask for a volunteer to facilitate this
- **day-buddies** for new Co-Counsellors
- **body-work**,
 - which means some stretching and awakening physical exercises
 - introduce one yourself or ask other people to facilitate this
- **mini-sessions** (they improve the quality of 'Needs, Wants & Offers')
 - suggest that new people work with somebody they don't know yet
 - suggest that nobody leaves the room before everybody has found a partner
 - for yourself: 'how are things going so far?'
 - other Co-Counsellors may want to work on:
 - 'What's on top?'
 - 'What would you like to get out of the day?'

Culture setting

- **how does the group want to accommodate late-comers?**
 - Who opens door for them?
 - Propose that they wait until sessions are finished
- **explain what you expect from people using your house**
 - noise and neighbours
 - other people living in the house
 - other wishes
- **sessions**
 - which rooms can be used for sessions
 - where to go for walks and sessions outdoors
- **the money**
 - fee for the day
 - subscriptions for CCI S
 - ask for somebody to deal with the money

Needs, Wants & Offers

- if you don't feel like facilitating this, ask somebody else to do it
- have pencil and paper ready to make short notes of what people want
- ask your support person to make notes as well
- be clear about your needs and wants
- stress that everybody states what they need *independently* of what other people already have stated
- give a summary of what people want, including the perceived conflicting wishes

Shared Lunch

- be clear about what is required of tidying and central warming up
- remind everyone to look after themselves
- be clear when the afternoon session will start.
Warn people 10 minutes before the start of the Afternoon session

Closing

- **Ask for positive feedback about your facilitation**
ask somebody to write down the positive feedback on your hosting of the Community Day. Also share what *you* felt was good about the way you did your job
- **The closing circle itself**
check:
 - has everybody paid?
 - ask for help with tidying up !

You could have (telephone) sessions:

- to process what happened and to get rid of left-over restimulations
- to read your list of positive feedback and to acknowledge what was good about your facilitation

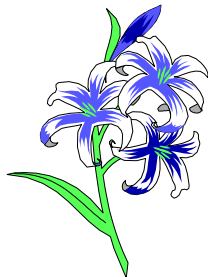
Re-read this manual

- Re-reading the manual can serve several purposes: it can help you to reflect on what happened and it can raise your awareness of missing areas and suggestions for improvement
- Remember to send your feedback to me, JanPieter Hoogma. See page 9 for my address

Money

- send the Community part of the fees to the Treasurer
- send the subscriptions to the Membership Administrator
- send the payment for the use of this manual to me. See page 9 for my address

I hope you have had a wonderful experience hosting the Community Day!



JanPieter Hoogma.

Appendix

Why have a manual for Community Days

The aim of this manual

is to enable Co-Counsellors to feel happy about hosting a Community Day while making use of other people's experience.

Why Community Days need to be 'well' organised

Community Days are important because they provide a space where new Co-Counsellors can meet potential partners for sessions. Community Days encourage people to develop their skills and can inspire people into new areas of life and Co-Counselling. They also support the social fabric of the Co-Counselling Network.

If Community Days are well organised, Co-Counsellors will experience them as worthwhile spending their time on. In the longer run they will feel it is a valuable contribution to organise one themselves. It doesn't make sense to expect Co-Counsellors to host a Community Day, if they themselves and other people have not had good experiences of them.

Paying for this manual

*This manual is SHAREWARE,
not FREEWARE*

Shareware is a distribution method, used in the computer software world. The Shareware system makes fitting your needs easier, because you can evaluate this manual before you buy. Shareware has the ultimate money-back guarantee -- if you don't use the product, you don't pay for it.

You may make as many copies of this manual as you like for the purpose of evaluation.

However, if you decide to use this manual for hosting a Community Day or similar Co-Counselling event, you are required to pay £2.50 (+ £1 p&p) for each copy you are going to use. For address see page 9.

As this manual is SHAREWARE, you are encouraged to give copies to other Co-Counsellors for evaluation purposes only.

Suggestions for feedback

Positive feedback

What is good about this manual?

How was it supportive to you?

Any suggestion that can lead to improvement

How can it be improved? Suggesting sentences, graphics or illustrations. Any other suggestion is welcome.

Test my Success Criteria

I have written this manual with the following 'Success Criteria' in mind:

- **As simple as possible, as complex as necessary**

Which information is superfluous?

Do the topics in this manual cover all aspects and varieties of Community Days?

- **Accessible**

Can you find the information you need quickly?

- **Easy to read**

Is the manual easily readable and are the illustrations clarifying?

Does it cater for people with reading difficulties, like dyslexia or ageing eyes?

- **Empowering**

Does this manual support you in the organisation of a Community Day?

If this manual doesn't meet these standards, can you inform me about the specifics of this so that adjustments can be made?

Publications by JanPieter Hoogma

Available:

Having a Community Day *Version 1.0.d*

Organising (Residential) Workshops *Version 1.0.c*

On becoming an effective Co-Counselling Teacher. (*Article*)

The Rescue Triangle.

Organising Co-Counselling Peer Networks.

In preparation:

Co-Counselling Highway Code. *A proposal.*

Organising Co-Counselling Peer Networks.

Safety issues & Conflicts in the Co-Counselling Network.

Success criteria for Peer Support Groups.

How Co-Counselling can be used in regular counselling.

Facilitating Co-Counselling Workshops.

A Co-Counselling Reference Book.

Applications of Co-Counselling.

Finding your way around this manual

Each part of this manual has been written to be complete in itself and has cross-references.

The section ‘**Topics to be considered**’ is a good place to start. It gives you a good introduction to several aspects of the Community Day. There may also be ideas here that are new to you, even if you are a quite experienced Co-Counsellor.

The ‘**Checklist Tips**’ section puts the information from the ‘Topics’ section into chronological order. I recommend that you make your own checklist by picking out from this section those items which you find personally useful.

Contents

Topics to be considered.....	2
You too are able to host one!.....	2
Suggestions for making it a success	2
Building confidence	3
An overview of a Community Day.....	3
Organising your own Support.....	4
What support you can ask for.....	4
Where can you find support?.....	5
Hosting the Community Day	5
Your house is OK	5
Pay attention to new Co-Counsellors!.....	5
Large numbers	6
Shared lunch	6
Money Matters.....	6
Facilitating the group process	7
The timetable.....	7
Culture setting	7
‘Needs, Wants & Offers’	8
Co-Counsellors who feel rusty.....	8
On cancelling the Community Day	8
How can you make this manual a success?	9
By sending your feedback	9
By recommending this manual to other Co-Counsellors	9
Checklist Tips	10
Appendix	14
The aim of this manual	14
Why Community Days need to be ‘well’ organised	14

Copyright 1996 © JanPieter Hoogma

See also “Paying for this manual” page 14