

Chapter 3. Creating a Morita Therapy–Based Teacher Group:

Aims and Online Methods

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Rationale and Potential Effectiveness of the Ukrainian Morita Therapy Group

The situation in Ukraine and the findings from our nationwide surveys clearly indicate that psychological support for teachers is essential in order to sustain their resilience and reduce psychological distress under prolonged war conditions. In our surveys, 95.5% of teachers agreed with the principles of Morita Therapy, an Eastern psychological approach that most participants had never encountered before, and believed that it could help improve their mental health and resilience.

Within psychotherapy, group learning is widely recognized as an effective format for psychological support. Group-based approaches provide hope, reassurance through the realization that one is not alone, opportunities for learning from others, and mutual support through developing interpersonal bonds (Vinogradov & Yalom, 1989). Morita Therapy itself has a long tradition of group learning, in which participants share experiences and support one another as part of the therapeutic process. In Ukraine, group-based psychological support has also played an important role in maintaining mental health during wartime. Based on these considerations, we decided to establish the Ukrainian Morita Therapy Group.

Our team worked with Ukrainian teachers from various regions throughout 2024. From early 2024 to early 2025, we conducted group trainings for teachers across Ukraine and gradually developed practical methods adapted to Ukrainian realities. In March 2025, we launched a new psychological support project specifically for teachers in Zaporizhzhia. This project was proposed by one of our author, Professor Olha Nikolenko, and implemented with the official support of the Zaporizhzhia City Council. Monthly online sessions based on Morita Therapy are currently being conducted, with approximately 60 teachers participating.

Teachers in Zaporizhzhia face particularly severe conditions, including daily shelling and constant tension. Many strongly wish to control both external circumstances and their own emotions, yet find this impossible, leading to inner conflict and psychological strain. At the same time, these teachers demonstrate remarkable openness to new knowledge and strong motivation to continue developing as educators, even under extreme conditions.

Tasks of the Ukrainian Morita Therapy Group

The main task of the Ukrainian Morita Therapy Group is to help teachers adapt psychologically to the current wartime environment and the future post-war context, while maintaining their ability to teach and support students.

This overall aim can be divided into three interconnected tasks: To help teachers cope with negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, and inner pain; To help teachers enhance confidence, foster positive emotional experiences, and find ways to restore psychological and physical energy; To help teachers better support students through the above processes; Teachers from eastern, central, western, and southern regions of Ukraine, as well as those currently living abroad, were invited to participate. Each region faces distinct challenges, and the group content was designed to be relevant and supportive for teachers across diverse contexts.

Methods of Online Group Work

Group therapy is strongly influenced by the place in which members meet and the atmosphere created within that space. For this reason, online group therapy is often considered challenging. However, under current conditions in Ukraine, online formats are often the only feasible option, as education and many forms of psychological support are already conducted remotely.

Ukrainian teachers generally demonstrate an open and proactive attitude toward learning, which further supported the feasibility of online group work. As a result, we concluded that an online Morita Therapy–based group could be effective.

The group trainings were conducted in English with simultaneous interpretation into Ukrainian. Although interpretation slightly slowed communication, it did not reduce effectiveness. All presentation materials were provided in Ukrainian to support comprehension.

A central feature of the group was not only discussion, but also the sharing of teachers' lived experiences. Each teacher brought unique experiences shaped by war conditions, and participants consistently reported that exchanging practical strategies and emotional insights was highly valuable.

The group sessions followed a flexible structure that included the following elements:

- 1) Preparation before sessions

Teachers' questions were collected in advance, and session content was designed to address real-life challenges relevant to the current Ukrainian context.

- 2) Beginning of sessions

Sessions began with simple body-based relaxation practices. Physical awareness was used to support mind–body integration and enhance a sense of stability.

- 3) Lecture component

While grounded in Morita Therapy, additional psychological concepts relevant to teachers' needs—such as self-compassion and ambiguous loss—were also introduced. Each session included brief review of previous content.

- 4) Practice component

Practical exercises were conducted collectively, fostering a sense of connection and shared presence despite the online format.

- 5) Discussion component

Teachers discussed how to address real-life problems in educational and personal contexts, linking psychological concepts to everyday action.

6) Reflection, documentation, and feedback loop

The content of group discussions was carefully recorded and qualitatively analyzed. Insights and recurring themes were then used to refine the focus and structure of subsequent sessions, allowing the program to remain responsive to teachers' evolving needs.