

Immanuel Approach Exercises for Groups & Beginners, “Lite” (Overview Explanatory Essay, “Lite” Version)

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NOTE: This is an abbreviated version of the Overview Explanatory Essay that has been customized for the “Lite” version of Immanuel Approach Basic Training. If you are going to go through the full version of Immanuel Approach Basic Training, including the segments for safety nets and working with trauma, it is very important that you read the corresponding full version of the Overview Explanatory Essay.

I. Introduction. As I have coached people providing Immanuel Approach training in many different situations, we have repeatedly encountered scenarios for which the full version of basic training just didn’t fit. For example, in some situations there is just no way to arrange adequate time for the full version. Other situations are especially challenging because many of the participants have lots of trauma and impaired maturity skills (for example, inmates in prisons). For these participants, the “Lite” version helps compensate for their special challenges, and gives them an opportunity to build maturity skills and grow capacity before moving on to facilitating trauma work for each other. Finally, Immanuel Approach training Lite can provide a gentle on-ramp for new trainers. After helping many others put together variations of IA training Lite, I realized that I should put together a Lite package that utilizes the Lehman basic training videos.

All “Lite” versions of the Immanuel Approach include the first steps of the process (up to the point of establishing an interactive connection with God), and then engaging in any of the interactive endeavors with God that do *not* include working with trauma.¹ My Lite version also includes basic troubleshooting for those who have difficulty connecting with the Lord.

To be very practical and concrete, my version of Lite training looks like this:

- Session One: *IA Basic Training Introduction* (23 minutes), followed by Practice Exercise Zero Lite (just positive memories).
- Session Two: *IA Basic Training Segment #1 – Positive Memory, Appreciation, and Interactive connection with God* (37 minutes),² followed by Practice Exercise #1 Lite.
- Session Three: *IA Basic Training Segment #2 – Special Value of God Positive Memory* (51 minutes),³ followed by Practice Exercise #2 Lite.
- Session Four: *IA Basic Training Segment #3 – Our Brains Work Best in Community* (67 minutes),⁴ followed by Practice Exercise #3 Lite.
- Session Five: *IA Basic Training Segment #4 – Basic Immanuel Approach Troubleshooting*, with optional supplemental segments 4b and 4c (30, 17, and 21 minutes, respectively), followed by Practice Exercise #4 Lite.

¹ For example, just spending time with Jesus, spiritual direction, intercession, and looking at issues or questions with the Lord.

² The full video includes demonstration of just enjoying being with Jesus. You can shorten the Training Segment #1 video to 25 minutes if you stop after the connection with Jesus has been established.

³ The full video includes demonstration of asking the Lord, “Is there anything else You have for me today?” You can shorten the Training Segment #2 video to 32 minutes if you stop after the connection with Jesus has been established.

⁴ The full video includes demonstration of looking at an issue or question with Jesus. You can shorten the Training Segment #3 video to 32 minutes if you stop after the connection with Jesus has been established.

Each video training segment presents the theory for 12 to 15 minutes, Charlotte and I demonstrate the practice exercise, and then the group splits into pairs or trios to go through the exercise they just heard explained and saw demonstrated. Q&A/discussion/debriefing can be included at the end of each session as time permits.

Practical comments re Q&A somewhere below: Put Q&A at the end of each session: Other than addressing practical/logistical questions about the practice exercises, I advise putting Q&A at the end because it's very easy to let Q&A eat up more time than you expect, and then not have enough time to do the exercises well. Also, Q&A will be a lot more interesting after people have experienced each of the practice exercises.

II. Super-simple healing/training exercises: During the summer of 2012, a mission team spent a week in Uganda doing emotional healing ministry with teens and young adults who had survived horrific war crimes perpetrated by Joseph Kony's Lord's Army. The team had learned about the Immanuel approach just a couple of months before they left. They had already been prepared to use Theophostic-based tools and other emotional healing resources, but they were excited about what they were learning and experiencing with the Immanuel approach, so they threw in some Immanuel approach pieces at the last moment. And I know about this adventure because they contacted me when they returned from the trip, and shared with me regarding the spectacular final results – more than a hundred teens and young adults received powerful healing as they encountered Jesus' living presence in their traumatic memories.

Several months later, I was enjoying lunch with two of the people who had been part of the summer 2012 Uganda mission team. They were describing the amazing things they had witnessed during their recent trip, and we were all talking about the possibility that their team could return to Uganda for more emotional healing mission work in the summer of 2013. Somewhere in this conversation, I popped out with, “You know, if we stripped the Immanuel Approach down to the absolute minimum, I think we could come up with a package of principles, tools, and skills that would still be effective for most trauma, but that would be so simple and so safe that you could leave it behind when you come back to the States—I think you could *teach* the young people in Uganda *to actually use the Immanuel Approach, so that they could continue to facilitate emotional healing for each other after you leave*, as opposed to just giving them the limited amount of ministry that your team could facilitate during the short time that you are there.” And then I threw out a bunch of thoughts regarding how one might go about training a mission team to implement this vision.

When I was finished, they stared at me for a few long moments, and then both responded with, “We're going to bring our team to Evanston so that you can train them to do this.” And thus began my work to develop the series of teaching segments and practice exercises that are now presented in my Immanuel Approach Basic Training seminars and in the Immanuel Approach Basic Training video series.

III. 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.*

When demonstrating basic principles, tools, and skills the goal is *not* to impress the trainees with how you can handle every possible problem.⁵ 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.

IV. Practice exercises – practical considerations:

A. Practice exercises to be used with training videos: The series of training exercises from the “Exercises for Groups and Beginners “Lite”” section of the Resources page of our IA website are designed to be used together with the Immanuel Approach Basic Training videos. Each training video includes a brief explanation regarding the theory that will be applied in the corresponding practice exercise, and then Charlotte and I demonstrate the exercise that has just been explained and that participants will shortly practice for themselves.

B. Go through the exercises in sequence: It is important that you go through the training segments and practice exercises according to the sequence presented above because the later exercises build systematically on the earlier 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 permission first*.

D. Read through the handout instructions immediately before each exercise: When I do basic training seminars, right before each exercise we all read through the instructions together. (I read through the explanation sections of the instructions, out loud, as the participants read along silently; and we all read the sample-coaching sections out loud together.) This will take a

⁵ 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.*”

few extra minutes, and it 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.

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. And 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,⁶ 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.

Note: the material we read through together immediately before each exercise does *not* include 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 and 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. Also, the material we read through together immediately before each exercise does not include the opening prayer, closing prayer, or “additional sample coaching” that is sometimes included at the end of the coaching instructions.

E. Divide large groups into small practice teams: Whether you are working with a large

⁶ 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.

group of three hundred or whether you are practicing in an Immanuel approach study group of twelve, the first step of the group exercise is to divide the larger group into small practice teams. Dividing the larger group into small practice teams 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 better in community.⁷ This significantly increases the effectiveness of the exercise, both increasing good results and decreasing disappointing results.

F. Ideal size for practice teams: When breaking a larger group into small teams for practicing the 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 woman⁸ 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, since the practice team members are often going through poignant, beautiful experiences 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 both the simplest and the most effective intervention for preventing inappropriate pair bonding is to divide the larger group into practice teams with three or more participants on each team.⁹

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 more quickly.

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 group is encouraging the lifestyle component of regular practice sessions over time, it is easiest for

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.)

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 as the group moves from Immanuel Approach Lite to the full version of the Immanuel Approach, since most people will feel more comfortable doing personal healing work in the context of a smaller group.

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.¹⁰

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 if they are practicing together for only a few sessions.)

G. Practice teams should stay the same (if at all possible): This point is not important for the Lite version of Immanuel Approach training, where the practice teams will not be facilitating trauma-healing work for each other.

H. 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.”¹¹

I. 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*.

J. Additional thoughts with respect to choosing a traumatic memory: This section is not relevant for the Lite version of Immanuel Approach training, where the practice teams will not be facilitating trauma-healing work for each other.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ For additional discussion regarding this important caveat, see the end of chapter sixteen from *The Immanuel Approach: For Emotional Healing and for Life*.

K. Additional thoughts regarding connecting with traumatic memories: This section is not relevant for the Lite version of Immanuel Approach training, where the practice teams will not be facilitating trauma-healing work for each other.

L. Memory-mapped power vs splinter-free safety net: This section is not relevant for the Lite version of Immanuel Approach training, where the practice teams will not be facilitating trauma-healing work for each other.

M. Using the safety net is not failure: This point is not relevant for the Lite version of Immanuel Approach training, where the practice teams will not be facilitating trauma-healing work for each other.

N. 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.¹² 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 sample condensed opening prayer and commands).¹³ 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). And if you are leading a group exercise in a situation where you are unsure regarding the participants’ perspective on possible demonic interference, I encourage you to go through my sample opening prayer and commands (or something similar) silently, before starting the exercise.

Note: a careful, deliberate opening prayer is much more important for the full version of Immanuel Approach training, where participants will eventually be facilitating trauma-healing work for each other. Note also that much of the content in the explanatory essay for my opening prayer and commands is not relevant for the Lite exercises, since they do not include trauma-healing work.

O. Closing prayer (optional, depending on context): Whenever I facilitate the Immanuel approach I end the session with a carefully-thought-out closing prayer.¹⁴ And if I am coaching

¹² 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 “Exercises for groups and beginners Lite” section of the “Resources” page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

¹³ 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 “Exercises for groups and beginners Lite” section of the “Resources” page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

¹⁴ For description and discussion regarding each point of my closing prayer, see Appendix E in the big lion book, or the “Closing prayers and commands” essay at the bottom of the “Exercises for groups and beginners Lite” section of the “Resources” page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

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 (or something similar.¹⁵ Note: a careful, deliberate closing prayer is much more important for the full version of Immanuel Approach training, where participants will eventually be facilitating trauma-healing work for each other. Note also that much of the content in the explanatory essay for my closing prayer is not relevant for the Lite exercises, since they do not include trauma-healing work.

P. 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 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 IA Lite training so that each facilitator experiences at least four successful journeys through the process (to the point that the recipient has established an interactive connection).

Q. Recommendations/Cautions regarding large groups: If you are an emotional healing ministry leader and/or an Immanuel Approach trainer, and you are thinking about using these 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, and in settings where you will be working with smaller groups (twenty-five people or less).
- There are additional recommendations/cautions that are not relevant for the Lite version of Immanuel Approach training, where the practice teams will not be facilitating trauma-healing work for each other.

R. Helpful handouts: Instruction handouts for each of the practice exercises are available as free downloads from the “Exercises for Groups and Beginners Lite” section of the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

¹⁵ The sample closing prayer is included at the end of Appendix E in the big lion book, and as a separate document at the bottom of the “Exercises for groups and beginners Lite” section of the “Resources” page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

S. One page summaries: This point is not relevant for the Lite version of Immanuel Approach training.

T. Let us know how it goes: More raw data is helpful as we continue to experiment and learn about the best ways to do group exercises. If you try Immanuel approach group exercises, please let us know what happens (e-mails to drkarl@kclehman.com).

V. Summary regarding the “Safety net” intervention (going back to the initial positive memory, appreciation, and interactive connection with the Lord): This section is not relevant for the Lite version of Immanuel Approach training, where the practice teams will not be facilitating trauma-healing work for each other.