

The EUAA Animation on Psychological First Aid as an Awareness Raising Tool



Instructions for professionals on how to use the animation to educate on the concept of PFA

August 2023

On 19 January 2022, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO, EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.



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In case of questions, need for clarification or to provide feedback on the EUAA animation on PFA and these instructions, please reach out to vulnerablegroups@euaa.europa.eu.

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Introduction

As part of its work on mental health and wellbeing, the EUAA vulnerability team has developed an **animation on psychological first aid (PFA)** targeting the staff in contact with applicants, particularly at arrival stage, to enhance their knowledge of the concept of PFA. The animation is complemented by these **instructions** which support first line officers (FLOs) in **raising awareness on the concept of PFA** among newcomers and volunteers.

As such, the animation and these instructions are a useful tool to transfer knowledge on PFA to new recruits or volunteers. Knowledge on PFA supports the daily work of all those in direct contact with applicants, when trying to identify the persons in need and provide basic support. It allows to reach more applicants in need and to do so in a human, warm and meaningful way. This also helps stabilise the mental state of those who have just arrived.

Applicants arriving in Europe might have faced situations of despair, violence and insecurity. Some individuals might have accumulated trauma over years of enduring hardship while others might feel overwhelmed by the distress caused by a challenging journey to Europe. Hence the importance of a careful approach that also looks at their mental health.

Early identification of applicants in need of immediate support since the moment of arrival is crucial to efficiently mitigate and respond to their needs (including health and mental health related needs) before they deteriorate. As a consequence, a more streamlined processing system can be facilitated as well.

Target group

These **instructions** complement the [EUAA animation on PFA](#)⁽¹⁾ and **support professionals** who are already **knowledgeable of PFA** in introducing the concept to new colleagues or volunteers. The concept of PFA is based on five principles that are also mentioned in the video. More details on PFA can be found in these instructions, together with some examples that can support learning and discussion.

Generally, PFA can be provided by FLOs, volunteers and refugee community members alike, as long as they have received basic training by experts. The animation was developed to bring the concept of PFA closer to all **first line officers working in reception but also to others who are in contact with applicants**, particularly upon arrival. This can include immigration police, medical staff, security personnel and others working at high rotation points such as hotspots, in disembarkation exercises, at the EU external borders or in potentially overcrowded initial reception settings.

(1) The animation belongs to a wider guidance package on the mental health and wellbeing of applicants for international protection. All material produced under this project can be found in the [vulnerability page on the EUAA website](#). It is also integrated in the information provision platform [Let's Speak Asylum](#) which targets asylum and reception professionals and provides guidance and practical tools on information provision to applicants for international protection.





Ideally, all those in contact with applicants for international protection should have a basic understanding of the needs of a person under severe distress. Therefore, teams working at disembarkation, border entry points or initial reception centres should include a few members who can act as PFA focal points and provide crucial support upon need.

PFA can help in reducing tension, anxiety and frustration in applicants since arrival. As a result, applicants can more easily establish a meaningful collaboration with the authorities, particularly at this crucial stage of the asylum pathway.

The animation works as a 'reminder' for staff members who are already familiar with the concept of PFA and its rollout. The animation combined with these instructions can be used to create awareness around PFA in new staff members or volunteers supporting during times of high influx or other challenging situations.



General considerations and safeguards

Although PFA is a low threshold intervention, it is crucial that it is delivered within a certain operational framework.

When **interpreters** or **cultural mediators** are involved, they should be introduced to the concept of PFA and have access to staff welfare support activities where possible in order to reduce the risk of burnout.

When it comes to strictly-speaking PFA providers, the following considerations and safeguards should be observed.

Requirements and safeguards applicable to PFA providers

- Have received a **basic training/awareness-raising on PFA** by a professional who is knowledgeable about PFA.
- Are equipped to address the **basic needs** of applicants as they are identified, for example: food, water to drink/wash, clothes, a place to sit/sleep.
- Have access to an established basic **referral system**.
- Are enabled to provide PFA in the **safest environment** possible, for both themselves and applicants.
- Where possible, can use a dedicated space to sit more calmly with the people in need of initial support. However, PFA should **not** be provided behind closed doors, particularly when children are involved. This is to avoid scaring the children but also for safeguarding and accountability reasons.
- Have information material in various languages and formats to hand out to applicants when the need arises. Such material should provide **relevant information** for applicants who have recently arrived and should be age appropriate (child-friendly versions are recommended).
- Are **identifiable** by other FLOs, volunteers and applicants (e.g. they could carry a badge or wear clothes indicating their role as PFA provider).
- Receive support** to avoid burnout, secondary trauma and re-traumatisation, the latter especially when PFA is provided by refugees who have been trained for this purpose.
- Are reminded that **they are not mental health professionals**. Where a need arises, the PFA provider must refer the person to the relevant services.



1. What PFA is and how to roll it out

PFA is a method to provide support to people in the aftermath of highly stressful events or situations, to help them feel calm and capable of coping with the challenges they encounter. The concept of PFA was developed in the early 2000s. Since then, several international organisations ⁽²⁾ have been endorsing this practice and developing material and training courses on PFA.

The **animation on PFA** introduces **five basic principles** ⁽³⁾ to FLOs who are new to PFA, to help applicants **re-establish a sense of safety, calm down** and **stabilise**.

The five principles are:

safety,
calm,
self- and collective efficacy,
connectedness, and
hope

The animation covers the following topics:

- basic understanding of why applicants upon arrival may be in distress;
- a brief explanation of the five principles and how they relate to PFA;
- basic activities that FLOs can do to support;
- few basic considerations to ensure that applicants are protected.

1.1. How to raise awareness on PFA using the EUAA animation

The EUAA proposes to raise awareness on the concept of PFA through **six short sessions**, for a **total duration of 2 hours**. Depending on the size of the group and educational background of participants, more time can be allocated to each of the six sessions, that could also be held at different times over one day or two half days.

⁽²⁾ For example the World Health Organization, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and Save the Children.

⁽³⁾ See Hobfoll et al., [Five Essential Elements of Immediate and Mid-Term Mass Trauma Intervention: Empirical Evidence](#), 2007.





Facilitation and group composition

The group should not exceed **15 participants** to allow for meaningful discussions.

It is advised to have **one main facilitator** who guides the discussion and a **co-facilitator** who stays more in the background to take notes.

Both **the facilitator and co-facilitator** should have a **sound understanding** of PFA. The co-facilitator also monitors the group dynamics, e.g. if tension or other emotions arise in the participants related to PFA, and flags it to the facilitator when needed.

It is advised to ensure gender balance as well as to train as PFA providers persons from different age groups. A more diverse group of PFA providers can be useful to reach a wider and more diverse target group.



Time, set-up and equipment

The **duration of an awareness raising session on the PFA animation** depends on the participants and their knowledge of the topic. The animation is about 4 minutes. You should allocate approximately **two hours** to allow for a proper introduction to PFA. This will give you time to discuss the five principles and to watch the animation twice for better understanding.

To promote a fruitful discussion on the content of the animation, it is best to arrange for **in-person awareness raising sessions** and show the animation on a wide screen or a wall. If needed, you can always hold remote sessions for participants in hard-to-reach areas.

In terms of **equipment, you will need** a laptop to play the animation as well as a projector or alternative screen-sharing solutions, a white wall or a wide screen. The room should allow for undisturbed discussion. Digital or paper flipcharts as well as notebooks for participants to take notes are useful. If no paper flipcharts are available, you can use whiteboard markers to write on the glass of windows.



Methodologies

- Presentation
- Screening of the animation
- Group work
- Discussion



1.2. Sessions outline

| Session number | Methodology used | Topic covered | Time |
|----------------|--|---|------------|
| Session 1 | Exercise/game | Getting to know the participants. | 10 minutes |
| Session 2 | Discussion on what PFA entails, complemented by a presentation/explanation by the facilitator. | <i>What is PFA?</i> <i>What is it not?</i> <i>What are its benefits and limitations?</i> | 20 minutes |
| Session 3 | First screening of the video , followed by a group discussion and presentation by the facilitator on the steps to take during PFA and the 5 principles. | Reflecting on the animation. <i>Do you think that you have already provided PFA in the past?</i> | 30 minutes |
| Session 4 | Second screening of the video | Discussion on safeguards and do no harm when delivering PFA. | 30 minutes |
| Session 5 | Presentation/exercise | Staff welfare and self-care. | 20 minutes |
| Session 6 | Discussion/exercise | Closing and evaluation of the sessions. | 10 minutes |



2. Tips to facilitate the six sessions

2.1. Session 1: Getting to know each other

The facilitator introduces themselves and the purpose of the session. As warm-up, we suggest an **introduction exercise** in which the group splits into pairs. Each participant tells their partner:

- what their favourite food is and a recent movie/book they liked;
- where they are from, their name, a hobby etc.

After some minutes, each participant introduces their partner by saying what they can remember.



Approximately 10 minutes

2.2. Session 2: Introducing PFA

The facilitator asks the group some questions such as:

- *What is PFA and what is it not?*
- *Why is PFA useful and what are its benefits/limitations?*
- *What is psychological distress and what is trauma?*

Participants answer these questions either within the plenary or in pairs and then share with the group. The facilitator uses the content below to explain areas that have not been covered by the participants or that need clarification.



Approximately 20 minutes



2.2.1. What is PFA and what is it not?

PFA aims at identifying persons in distress and responding to their needs. PFA can be delivered by professionals but also by others who have a basic knowledge of it. It is paramount that PFA providers are able to identify persons in distress and:

- guarantee their safety,
- promote calm,
- try to comfort them as much as possible in the given situation,
- understand their needs and link them with relevant services.

| PFA is | PFA is not |
|--|--|
| Providing non-intrusive, practical care and support | Something that only professionals can do |
| Paying attention to the concerns and needs of persons in distress | Counselling or therapy |
| Helping people to address basic needs (food, shelter, information) | A detailed discussion of the event that caused the distress |
| Listening to people without pressuring them to talk | Asking someone to analyse what happened to them or to put time and events in order |
| Comforting people and helping them to feel calm | About pressuring people to share their feelings and reactions to an event |
| Helping people to connect to information, services, procedures, rights and social support networks (family and friends, also remotely) | Having all the answers to questions or being able to provide everything |

2.2.2. Why is PFA useful?

PFA is about being human and turning to those who seem to have emotional, physical or practical needs. Applicants upon arrival are often in a situation of severe psychological distress. The excitement of having finally arrived and the hope of being safe mix up with anxiety on what to expect and with the unknown about a new country with a different culture, language and customs. The possible loss of family members along the journey add to the situation and might lead to distress.

It is possible to reduce the initial feelings of being ‘**overwhelmed**’ with a kind gesture or word and some basic information. For example, it is useful to inform applicants on where to go and whom to ask for help to meet a certain need, to clarify what will happen next or simply to acknowledge that things are not always easy.



PFA is also about connecting people with others, including family. Feeling connected and not alone can help overcome initial distress. Giving realistic hope that things can get better can be useful as well.

Simply adopting a **human approach can have a great positive impact** and convey a feeling of being acknowledged as a fellow human being and taken seriously. PFA provides exactly that.

2.2.3. Limitations of PFA

PFA is not counselling nor therapy. In certain cases, applicants may have been experiencing severe psychological distress for several weeks. They may be unable to benefit from measures such as information provision and basic healthcare or to communicate with others (including family members). In this case, it is advised to refer the applicant in question to someone who can provide more in-depth counselling to help them reduce their stress level. To identify the persons who need referral to counselling services, it is important to understand how trauma can materialise.

2.2.4. Distress and trauma

Different people experience the same events with different levels of **distress** and **resilience**. Trauma can manifest with various symptoms in different persons and affect their overall functioning at different levels. Reactions to a traumatic event can vary and depend on the nature of the traumatic event itself, the support system available and the duration of the negative events.



Examples of **traumatic events** are abuse, war, accidents, the loss of loved ones or the neglect of emotional needs from a parent. Such events are often experienced as 'life threatening' and one might feel that they have no control over them, which sometimes is indeed the case.

Applicants who experienced traumatic events such as **abuse, exploitation, war, insecurity** pre-migration or during transit or who are survivors of a **shipwreck** might present signs of anxiety, aggression, withdrawal or similar.






Trauma can be understood as a **psychological wound**. It can be caused by several events and is often accompanied by a sense of feeling overwhelmed. This means feeling that the situation is bigger than one can handle or that the impact of the event is impossible to comprehend.

The psychological wounds need time to heal. Although the scares may stay, in most cases the affected person can function again and move on with their life, provided that they receive timely and meaningful support.

The **wounds** created can be **re-opened by certain triggers**. Triggers are often linked to the **five senses** (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch) which can remind a person of past experiences.



Our senses are always on alert. Generally, they help us to sense danger and consequently protect us from it. However, when connecting with negative experiences, they can trigger reactions that can affect the functioning of our brain as well as our behaviour in a certain situation.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Sight | Hearing | Smell | Taste | Touch |

When the memory of past traumatic events is activated, our **impulses** might not be normally regulated (e.g. low frustration tolerance). **Communication** might also be affected (e.g. inability to find the right words to explain what happened or stuttering for no apparent reason). Furthermore, **memory** of certain events might be lost (temporarily or in the long term). Depending on the intensity of the trigger, a person might not function normally for the period of time during which they are under severe distress.

In this context, it is also important to note that triggers and reactions are not necessarily a linear equation. Not every person reacts in the same way after experiencing a traumatic event. The same event can be perceived as traumatic, hence leading to a change in the behaviour and functioning of the person who experiences it, or as unpleasant, sad or painful but still manageable. This is due to the resilience of the affected person.

Resilience is the ability to cope with an adverse experience and realign afterwards. It is based on skills, knowledge, experience, actions and behaviour. Simply put, **resilience is the ability 'to bounce back'**.

The resilience of applicants for international protection can be supported by:

- being approached in a human, calm and caring way;
- receiving information on what can be done to give support (legal, health or psychological support depending on the situation);
- being given time to feel in control again without adding more stress (e.g. allowing an applicant who has just arrived to have a good night sleep in a safe place, access to food and water);
- support by family and/or friends;
- connecting with family/friends in Europe or back home.

During a **situation of distress** (including post migration stressors such as detention) the affected person can develop negative ways of coping, for example self-harm tendencies, suicide attempts, self-medication, substance use.



Find below some examples of how to engage with an applicant who shows signs of distress⁽⁴⁾.

| Applicant's reaction/behaviour | Proper engagement from PFA provider |
|--|---|
| Visibly agitated, nervous and irritated. | Approach the person and tell them that you are there to help . You can offer a glass of water , a place to sit or just to listen to them . If the person is extremely agitated, asking them to sit down might be counterproductive. Walking while talking could be a better solution. |
| Disoriented, somehow not present in the here and now, caught up in thoughts ⁽⁵⁾ . | Try to bring the person back into the here and now , for example by saying: <i>Hello, I am xxx, today is xxx (Monday), you are in xxx (country) etc.</i> (focus on: time, person, place, situation). You can also try to ask something out of context such as: <i>Today it is very hot. Or I feel thirsty, I think I will get myself a glass of water, can I offer you some water as well?</i> This unexpected questions or statements come as a surprise and might bring the person back into the here and now. |
| Hopeless or depressed. | Check if the person can be connected with community members and involved in some structured activities . Talking while walking can be useful when engaging with someone who seems depressed. A frequent reason for feeling hopeless and depressed is a feeling of being 'stuck' without a solution in sight. By literally moving one's body, the sensation of being able to get back control over a situation can materialise. In any case never push the person to walk but propose kindly. |
| Aggressive and agitated. | When the frustration level is high , asking a person to calm down often backfires. Talking while walking might help, but also simply allowing the person to safely let their frustration out. For example, you can suggest to redirect their aggressiveness (e.g. kicking the wall or other objects rather than punching one's own head or hitting one's forehead against the wall; or screaming a couple of times as loud as they can to get their anger out). |
| Makes comments such as ' <i>I do not want to live any longer</i> ' or ' <i>I wish I died</i> ', or attempts to commit suicide. | Respond directly and make sure that the person understands that you take their thoughts seriously and acknowledge their pain . Direct the conversation towards practical safety tips and mention the person(s) whom they may contact in a moment of crisis. Try to find activities that may keep the person distracted from suicidal thoughts. Very often people who speak about suicide do not really want to die but do not know how to continue living. This means that they need support in finding ways and meaning to continue living. |

As a PFA provider it is crucial that you are **aware** of potential triggers and situations that can cause distress. Paying attention to the reactions they produce is important not only to avoid situations of crisis but also to create a sense of knowledge and, consequently, control in the applicants. This can, in turn, strengthen their resiliency. It is paramount that applicants have **time and space** to be listened to and to engage with staff.

⁽⁴⁾ The table provides basic examples only. When working with applicants in severe distress, a 'do no harm' approach needs to be ensured. PFA can be useful but it does not replace the specialised services that an applicant might need as follow-up. Some of the content shared in this document has been adjusted from the information made available by [Trauma Company B.V.](https://www.113.nl/english) For more information on suicide prevention, refer to <https://www.113.nl/english>.

⁽⁵⁾ This can happen when recalling certain events, e.g. during the personal interview.



2.3. Session 3: Watching the animation

The facilitator informs that the animation is 4 minutes and asks the group to watch carefully. Then the facilitator says:

- *Reflect on what you have seen. Do you think that you have already provided PFA, knowingly or not, either at work or in other contexts?*

If a group member wants to share some personal experience using the PFA concept with the group, invite the person to take the floor.

Remark: to safeguard the participants, no personal traumatic experiences are to be shared. Events that happened in the workplace can be discussed but it is important to note that this is not a support session to discuss critical incidents or other crisis situations in detail. If a participant tries to share such an example, the facilitator has to remind them that that conversation can take place outside of this awareness raising exercise on PFA.

- *What part of the animation struck you the most? Which part of the animation can you remember best?*

Remark: there are no wrong or right answers, participants can share freely.

- *Which of the **five principles** can you remember? Why? What do you think is meant by ‘**window of tolerance**’?*
- *Was there anything that especially struck you? For example something **new** or that was of particular **interest** for you?*

Participants answer these questions either within the plenary or in pairs and then share with the group some of their key discussion points. The facilitator reminds participants not to repeat what has already been said by others.

The facilitator uses the content below to explain areas that might have not been addressed or that may need clarification.



Approx 30 min

2.3.1. Explaining the five principles

Before explaining the principles in detail, the facilitator can invite participants to share their experience with PFA, recalling interventions that they actually carried out as well as ideas of possible interventions that could be useful related to each of the principles. Age, gender and diversity should be taken into account in this exercise, which is optional (whether to carry it out or not depends on the needs and knowledge level of the participants).



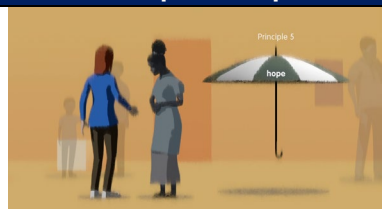
Afterwards, the facilitator can refer to the ideas shared in the PFA animation as well as encourage participants to read more information on the topic ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽⁶⁾ Refer also to Hobfoll et al, [Five Essential Elements of Immediate and Mid-Term Mass Trauma Intervention: Empirical Evidence](#), 2007.



| Principle 1 – Safety | Clarification and examples |
|--|--|
|  | <p>You can provide a sense of safety at different levels: individual, group, organisation and community. To create a sense of safety, it is best to adopt a basic human encounter/introduction. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>My name is xxx. I work for xxx. You are currently in xxx.</i> - <i>Can I help you with anything? If you need information or just someone to speak, I am there to listen.</i> <p>You can help a person realise that they have made it and are now safe (e.g. after a disaster/crisis) by providing a place to sleep, food, water and basic information on where they are and how to get help.</p> <p>From the point of view of the applicant feeling safe could mean: <i>When I start feeling safer, I will allow myself to open my eyes and see where I am... when I can sit down ... I slowly understand that I am not struggling for my survival anymore.</i></p> |
| Principle 2 – Calm | Clarification and examples |
|  | <p>When providing PFA, bear in mind that the calmer you are, the calmer the person in front of you can/will be. Showing calm, interest and engagement to a person in distress helps them realise that you are able to make time and care for the needs that the person has here and now.</p> <p>When a person seems to be having a panic attack and to hyperventilate, make sure that their breathing calms down.</p> <p>Suggesting to breathe consciously together can help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Let's take a deep breath together. Inhale through the nose – one, two, three, four – and slowly exhale through the mouth – one, two, three, four.</i> <p>For children, you can use alternatives such as breathing in images, shapes or similar. Focussing on the breath while counting at the same time slows down the breath and helps reduce the heart rate.</p> <p>In certain situations, a breathing exercise might be counterproductive. For examples if a person suffers from panic attacks following torture by suffocation/waterboarding or if someone has almost drowned or has witnessed others drowning. Therefore, be cautious to ensure a 'do no harm' approach and be careful on when and how to introduce such breathing exercises.</p> <p>In such cases, you can focus on counting rather than breathing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I am here to help you calm down. Now, we will count very slowly up to 10. We will do this together. One, two ...</i> <p>If needed, you can repeat the exercise or continue counting till 15.</p> <p>When counting slowly, the heart rate can calm down thus supporting a more regular breathing pattern. As an alternative, you can point out or name together objects that you can see in the place where you are (e.g. this is a table, it is white, next to the table there is a chair, behind the chair there is a greyish wall etc.). Focussing on the immediate surroundings may help to ground oneself and divert away from a state of panic or pre-panic.</p> <p>From the point of view of the applicant that could mean: <i>I notice that I am calmer when I allow myself to breathe and fill my lungs with air without a feeling of stress or fear.</i></p> |



| Principle 3 – Self- and collective efficacy | Clarification and examples |
|---|---|
|  | <p>It is important that the person you are supporting gains a sense of self-control so that they are able to help themselves and consequently others. Allow applicants to make their own decisions, even with basic things such as where in the room to sit, talking to you, daily routines etc. This can be very helpful for them.</p> <p>From the point of view of the applicant that could mean: <i>I feel able to look out for myself again. When my mind slowly clears up, my thoughts become clearer and more focussed. They do not bring me to places of struggle only ... I might feel able to start caring for others again ...</i></p> |
| Principle 4 Connectedness | Clarification and examples |
|  | <p>Provide information on how to reconnect with family (e.g. family tracing). However, simply being able to communicate with family and friends back home can also be beneficial.</p> <p>Connecting with other applicants and sharing experiences in a safe manner can help applicants to collectively process their burden, overcome and somehow explain traumatic events. It also highlights that they are not alone.</p> <p>From the point of view of the applicant that could mean: <i>I start to feel that I can try to make new connections and allow myself to be curious about where I am or other people ... This also happens when I allow myself to smile and start exploring my environment with less worries.</i></p> |
| Principle 4 Hope | Clarification and examples |
|  | <p>When providing PFA, be realistic but encourage people to be hopeful. It is crucial to give realistic suggestions/information that can help the applicant to get their life back on track. This can mean a place to sleep, information on the procedure, including a timeline so that applicants know what to expect, information on employment or educational opportunities etc. As any other person, applicants need something to look forward to.</p> <p>From the point of view of an applicant that could mean: <i>I start daring to see at least a tomorrow ... soon maybe even a future.</i></p> |

2.3.2. Explaining the window of tolerance

The window of tolerance is a state when intense emotional arousal can be processed in a healthy way, allowing you to function and react to stress or anxiety effectively. The more severe and enduring a stressful situation is (war, insecurity, poverty, abuse and exploitation, grief and loss, disaster etc.), the harder it is to ensure that the window of tolerance stays open and a person can cope in a healthy manner with such events. For comparison, refer also to the section on trauma [above](#).



2.4. Session 4: Watching the animation again

The group watches the animation for a second time. The facilitator invites group members to note down any scenes that might make them feel uncomfortable or concerned. Note: not all participants may have something to share.



To trigger the discussion and if the group has not shared any areas/scenes of concern, the facilitator plays the animation from **principle 2** (starting at minute 2.25, focus on the scene where the FLO touches the child) then moves to **principle 3** (starting at minute 3.05, focus on the scene where the FLO touches the woman).

The facilitator(s) asks the group:

- *Discuss in pairs if you had any experiences where physical contact with an applicant (e.g. patting on the shoulder) could have been misunderstood. If you do not have any first-hand experience, has it ever happened that you have observed a colleague doing so and you have become concerned? Discuss what you think is okay and where to draw a line. Provide an example.*

Remark: make it clear to the participants that they should generally not make any physical contact with the person they are supporting. However, there could be situations where a child/applicant in distress needs to be comforted in a cultural and gender appropriate way. In the animation, the FLO puts her hand for a second on the applicant's shoulder and helps the child to feel their own breath. Both gestures were made respectfully and in public. In any case, one must always ask the applicant's permission before making physical contact.

The facilitator moves to **principle 5** (starting at minute 4.05, focus on the scene where the officer holds the child's hand while talking with the woman). The facilitator explains that, in this scene, the FLO is lending a helping hand to an unaccompanied child who has just arrived and shows the child around so that they can feel safe. In the meantime, the woman applicant approaches the FLO with a query. The child and the woman are not related.

The facilitator asks the participants to look at the image and asks:

- *Could this scene be misunderstood? If so, how?*

Invite participants to brainstorm:

- *How would you feel if the child were actually the son of the woman the FLO is talking to? How would that affect the way you see this scene?*

Remark: it is important for participants to understand that FLOs should never try to take over the role of a parent. Having a friendly encounter is crucial but pretending to be a close friend is counterproductive and not professional. A certain professional distance is needed, while ensuring an empathic, respectful and human approach.



Approximately 30 minutes



2.4.1. Creating awareness on PFA when time is not a constraint

In case more time is available to learn about PFA, the facilitator can:

- **Use the PFA animation as an awareness raising tool in different ways**

Depending on the background of participants and how comfortable the facilitator feels to experiment with the group, it is possible to screen the animation in three rounds: the first time without sound and the second time without visuals (audio only). In between the first two rounds, the facilitator asks different questions linked to how to identify distress in general, to communication, to the safeguards to consider also linked to age and gender, to the importance of a human and ethical encounter and similar. Participants share their impressions.

A question on the importance of communication in PFA could be:

- *In your opinion, what is a good way of communicating and what should you avoid instead?*
- *Take a few minutes to reflect and come up with some do's and don'ts in this regard.*

Lastly, the group watches the animation in the original version. The facilitator and the participants clarify any outstanding questions.

Some **DON'Ts** in terms of communication when providing PFA (?):

- X** Do not interrupt the applicant.
- X** Do not distract or check your phone while the applicant is talking.
- X** Do not interrupt the applicant or give signs that time is over (e.g. start looking at your watch, take over the conversation by saying that you had a similar experience).
- X** Do not promise follow-up support if you are not 100% sure that you can deliver on the promise.
- X** Do not question or doubt what the applicant is saying.

- **Prepare a case study**

The facilitator can prepare a case study relevant to the context in which participants operate. The case study can be used to guide the overall discussion and should present a situation with recently arrived applicants, including some who might find themselves in a situation of distress. Basic information on the background of newly arrived applicants, on the available services as well as on other aspects linked to the context should be integrated in the case study.

The participants are asked to read the case study and to note down in bullet points how they would proceed in identifying/supporting applicants in distress, what safeguards they would put in place and generally what steps a first line officer can/should take to meaningfully support.

(?) For more information, see World Health Organization, War Trauma Foundation & World Vision International, *Psychological first aid: facilitator's manual for orienting field workers*, 2013.



2.5. Session 5: Self-care

It is important that the facilitator touches upon the topic of self-care for staff. Working with applicants who are severely traumatised is stressful and can take its toll on staff members. It entails high workload, often challenging working conditions and exposure to traumatic events experienced by the applicants. All this can affect how staff members feel and behave. Chronic stress at work can lead to burnout and secondary trauma.

It is a responsibility of the employer (asylum and reception authorities) to provide support to their staff. To this end, they should implement a staff welfare plan ⁽⁸⁾ and ensure that those working in the first line have an appropriate work-life balance to stay healthy and safe.

Exercise: the group shares examples of what they do to cope with their daily work in a meaningful and healthy manner. After the discussion, the facilitator hands out to the participants a clean version of the sheet [My personal self-care plan](#) and asks them to fill it in.

Remark: it is not mandatory for the participants to share any of the items they listed in their personal plan. It is their individual self-care plan so there is no need to make it public.

If the facilitator notices that the exercise has created tension or discomfort in any of the participants, this is the time to emphasise that those who would like to take a moment and speak individually with the facilitator can do so after the group session.



Approximately 30 minutes

⁽⁸⁾ See the EUAA three-folded staff welfare support package: EASO, *Practical guide on the welfare of asylum and reception*, [Part I: Standards and policy](#); [Part II: Staff welfare toolbox](#); [Part III: Monitoring and evaluation](#), 2021.



2.5.1. My personal self-care plan

| Area of self-care | Self-care practice to start/continue | Frequency | Additional practices to try |
|--|--|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Physical (eat regularly, exercise, take care of yourself). | E.g.: <i>I schedule my yearly medical check-up visit.</i> | | |
| Emotional/spiritual/mental (engage in what brings calm and balance to your life). | E.g.: <i>I start meditating, spend time in nature, pursue a hobby, acknowledge achievements consciously, if needed, I go to counselling.</i> | | |
| Professional (maintain work-life balance, manage time, engage in capacity building). | E.g.: <i>I actively look for upcoming training sessions and apply to participate.</i> | | |
| Personal/social (meet/call friends and family regularly; set aside time for this activity). | E.g.: <i>I'll try to go for brunch regularly on Sundays.</i> | | |
| Financial (create a budget to improve quality of life etc.). | E.g.: <i>I save for a new comfortable sofa chair.</i> | | |

Find below additional self-care suggestions that you can use in the group discussion.

- Start keeping a diary to release tension and consciously reflect on life events.
- Write a letter to yourself, for example relating to your job satisfaction or private life. Describe what works and what has to change. Open the letter after a certain period (e.g. 6 months or 1 year), notice the positive changes and the areas that need more attention.
- Rediscover old, forgotten hobbies (e.g. cooking/writing/dancing).
- Watch a film that you have always wanted to watch.
- Get enough rest and sleep.

Use technology (e.g. social media) to talk regularly to friends/family who are not close by or are hard to reach due to other circumstances (e.g. during a pandemic, working in another country etc.).



2.6. Session 6: Evaluation and closing

Exercise 1: The facilitator asks the participants to use a smiley card (prepared and cut out before the meeting) to indicate their mood after the session. The cards are available next to a flipchart sheet reading ***'Evaluation of the awareness raising session on PFA – I leave this awareness session today feeling ...'***.

The participants pick the smiley card best describing their current feeling and stick it onto the flipchart sheet. If cards are not available, they can draw the smiley face. Participants can add a comment next to the emoji if they want to.

| | | | |
|----------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| | | | |
| Very satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | A bit disappointed |

Exercise 2: The facilitator asks participants to indicate where their level of agreement with the statement below, which is written on a second flipchart sheet, by ticking the box applicable to them.

'The content shared was useful, practical and makes me feel more confident to provide meaningful support to applicants in need'.

| | | |
|--------------|------------------|------------|
| YES, I AGREE | I SOMEWHAT AGREE | I DISAGREE |
|--------------|------------------|------------|

Exercise 3: The facilitator asks participants to write their thoughts and any additional comment on the flipchart sheet located on the way out, under the headlines:

- *This was the most memorable thing I learnt/heard today*
- *This is an area I would like to hear/learn more about*

The facilitator thanks participants for their active participation and hands out to each of them a copy of [Annex I: PFA in a nutshell](#) before they leave.



Approximately 30 minutes

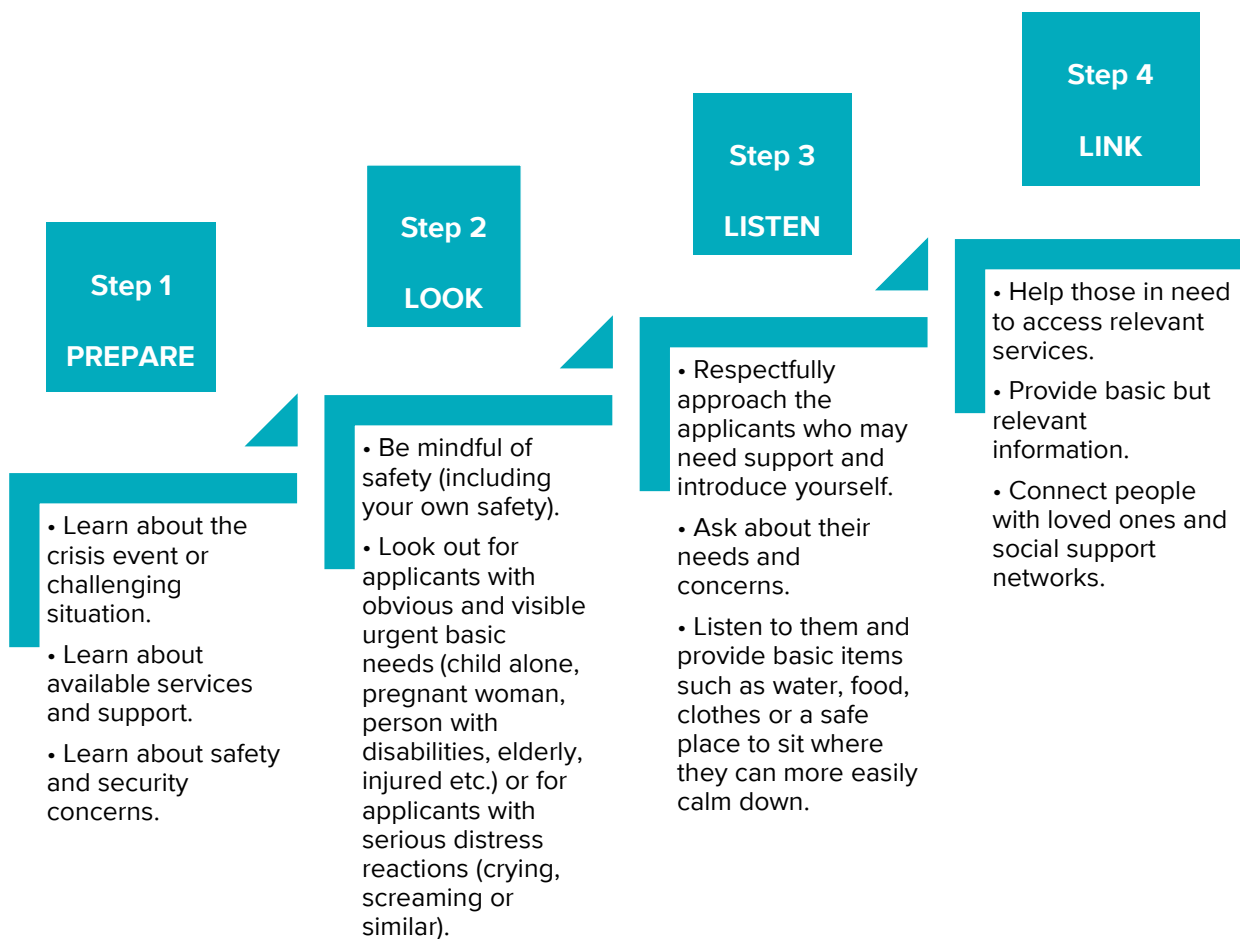
Post meeting reflection: the facilitator takes into account the feedback shared during the closing evaluation as well as the notes taken by the co-facilitator. Any criticism is integrated in the planning of the next awareness session, to ensure improvement and make sure that the exercises that have been rated as useful by the participants are repeated or expanded depending on the needs identified.



3. Annex I: PFA in a nutshell



The [EUAA animation on PFA](#) introduces the **key steps** to identify a person in need and refer/link them to relevant follow-up services to address their main needs and potential vulnerabilities (e.g. healthcare, water, food, family tracing). The video also covers self-care for FLOs.



Certain organisations add to the list above **Step 5 LIVE** linked to resilience ⁽⁹⁾.

To strengthen resilience, it is important to point out healthy ways of coping.

PFA providers working with applicants for international protection need to ensure that all applicants, including those in severe distress, are safeguarded throughout the process.

Finally, FLOs should make sure to take care of themselves in order to be able to continue providing PFA to others who may be experiencing loss or grief after a trauma.

⁽⁹⁾ Refer to Canadian Red Cross, [Psychological First Aid Pocket Guide](#), 2020.

