

## MTS Suggestions for Assessing Dissociation

Do not rush the intake process. Be sure to go thoroughly through the MTS intake form and pay attention to the potential participant's ability to track the conversation, stay focused, and answer appropriately.

Does it seem like the potential participant is staying with you in the conversation or are they staring off into space?

Look at the questions on the intake on prior mental health treatment and diagnosis and look for anything that needs to be followed up on in the intake meeting.

If they are seeing a therapist, request that they sign a release of information at the therapist's office for the therapist to talk with the facilitator. Ask the therapist about the potential participant's readiness.

Pay attention to how you feel when you are with the potential participant and follow up on things that don't sit right with you.

Remember to take time to think and pray before getting back to the potential participant.

No matter how hard you try to get it right in the intake, mistakes happen and sometimes people who are not ready, appear to be ready during the intake. Sometimes a person doesn't know until they have started the group that it is going to be too much. This happens to all of us from time to time. If this happens:

- Refer the participant to a counselor that specializes in trauma.
- Gauge how disruptive this is to the participant and the group.
- Have a private discussion with the participant about the possibility of withdrawing from the group to stabilize and address the mental health issue going on.
- Reassure the participant that this is for their safety and well-being. You want what's best for them and want them to stay safe, not potentially have their symptoms worsen.

If something doesn't "feel right" or there are signs of potential inattention here are a few things to look for and keep in mind:

- Dissociation is common with trauma and happens on a continuum. If someone knows their triggers and what helps to ground them this can be very helpful. (See grounding sheet in the online facilitator training for additional grounding suggestions.)

- Ask some open-ended questions related to the intake. See if they can track and respond appropriately.
- Ask if they ever struggle with staring off into space or not remembering what they are doing.
- Ask if their thoughts ever feel foggy or they arrive somewhere without knowing how they got there.

Adapted from Severity of Dissociative Symptoms Adult Brief Dissociative Scale (DES-B) - Modified