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*Holistic support manual for people  
providing digital protection care to  
individuals and organizations affected  
by spyware and other  
surveillance technologies*

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Special thanks go to the organizations who participated by sharing their experiences, reflections and time, which made the collective construction of this guide possible: SocialTIC (Mexico), R3D (Mexico), MariaLab (Brazil), Colectiva OxChe (Argentina)

**Organization responsible for publication**

Fundación Acceso

**Publication date**

June 2025

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# Introduction

The following is a guide containing a series of methodological strategies, designed to incorporate accessible tools for psychosocial accompaniment and support in digital protection response. The strategies are targeted to the diverse social organizations and individuals who provide care to those who have been affected by digital attacks or digital violence, with a focus on spyware or surveillance technologies.

In this manual, psychosocial accompaniment is understood as follows:

A process intended by a team to accompany truth, justice, reparations and non-repetition processes for human rights violations, that seeks to strengthen the victims in that process, which must be active, using an ethos that meets the needs of the people accompanied.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, the manual has been developed using a participatory, collective process with different people from organizations in Latin America who provide accompaniment on digital protection issues. In contributing to an assessment and sharing their experience, these individuals made it possible to establish a shared framework on what is understood, built, rebuilt and acted on in terms of digital protection accompaniment in the context of these impacts.

This document attempts to contribute to the collectively developed understanding of the topic of accompaniment in the context of spyware. The contribution is made by providing some psychosocial strategies and tools that can be used at different points during the digital protection accompaniment process. However, it must be noted that while a schematic proposal has been designed, each process is different; therefore, the incorporation of these proposals will depend on the context and on the person providing the care.

The document discusses the effects-understood as emotions and bodies embedded in certain social structures-as well as care practices, designed

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<sup>1</sup> Espacio Psicosocial por los Derechos Humanos. (n.d.). Espacio Psicosocial por los Derechos Humanos. <https://espaciopsicosocialddhh.org/>

as tools for resistance in the face of and within the contexts of violence we inhabit. To this end, the manual sets up a body of reference composed of four chapters distributed as follows:

In **chapter 1**, some components of psychosocial accompaniment in digital protection contexts are proposed, specifically those related to spyware or surveillance technologies. They start from a series of collectively developed definitions that give structure to the components, as well as from an approach to their different ethical dimensions and shared perspectives.

**Chapter 2** proposes a series of stages imagined as points along a cycle that, while suggesting an order, can also be stages crossed at any time considered necessary. This takes into account that not all accompaniment processes are alike and each must be situated according to the specific expectations and needs of those involved, as well as the forms and models specific those who provide accompaniment.

**Chapter 3** offers some tools that can be understood at the psychosocial level as operational resources within digital protection accompaniment processes to strengthen the different stages where accompaniment occurs. These are found in a framework of active listening, collective analysis and emotional containment.

A **final chapter**, titled Caring for the Caregivers, offers a series of initial recommendations, as a deliberate approach, from a perspective focused on caring for the individuals and organizations who provide accompaniment on issues related to digital protection. Here, caring is understood as a support network that starts with self-care and ends with collective care in a tapestry of co-responsibility of those involved in these processes.

The manual is thus presented as a living tool whose intention is not to end debate, but rather to foster conversations, strengthen networks and open new pathways in the practice of digital protection accompaniment by incorporating elements of psychosocial support.

This project comes under the auspices of the study headed by Fundación Acceso in collaboration with The Engine Room, titled: Psychosocial impact of and coping with digital attacks (specifically spyware).

# Methodology

To explore the topic of interest more fully, various organizations that provide accompaniment in digital security were invited to share their understanding of how to accompany and, on that basis, to pool some experiences found in different regions of Latin America. The goal was to identify resources, coping strategies, practices, lessons learned and needs related to the topic.

In May 2025, an on-line collective space (CS) was held, whose main objective was to create a comfortable, caring and collaborative space for dialog around experiences of accompanying cases of digital surveillance and monitoring.

This meeting sought, through collective experience, to propose care and accompaniment tools that incorporate the psychosocial dimension in facing these types of digital violence. Affections were proposed as the focus of discussion, making it possible to reconnect with individual and collective well-being, and recognizing that the body and emotions are territories vulnerable to digital violence, as well as sources of resistance. Six people participated in this space: four from organizations that work in digital accompaniment and two responsible for facilitating the meeting.

In addition, two individual interviews (II) were conducted with people who have experience in accompanying spyware cases and who, in sharing their experiences and practices, provided the source data for this manual.

In parallel with the participatory process, the Study on Psychosocial Impacts of and Coping with Digital Attacks (specifically spyware) was reviewed, whose recommendations include incorporating psychosocial accompaniment strategies into digital security care.

In addition to the above, this manual benefited from review and feedback from experts in the area of digital protection accompaniment in its different dimensions from both Fundación Acceso and The Engine Room.

# Chapter 1

## **An approach to psychosocial accompaniment strategies in contexts of digital surveillance and spyware**

### **To accompany: a collective definition for a shared practice**

Talking about and identifying different ways of providing accompaniment is a hefty task since in terms of digital protection, these processes can take on different characteristics in the same scenario. When we refer to the act of accompanying, we have different experiences, each composed of specific dimensions and understandings.

As mentioned in the collective space, these processes also involve "adjusting our approaches to the social and political context, being mindful of the historical and cultural issues of the people we accompany" (CS, 2025).

In digital protection accompaniment contexts, integrating psychosocial strategies and tools should not be understood as a rigid formula or single model offering specific solutions for a given situation. On the contrary, it requires recognizing the specific conditions of each person or organization affected, as well as the technological, political, cultural, psychological and social dynamics that shape the attacks.

In this sense, incorporating psychosocial tools in digital protection accompaniment means walking alongside, respecting rhythms, decisions and feelings. It involves collectively building an "ecosystem composed of a diversity of individuals with a diversity of knowledge and resources" (CS, 2025).

From this perspective, it is also necessary to recognize ourselves as part of the processes. Our participation is neither neutral nor external: it involves our emotions, physical presence, stances and experiences within a context that also influences us. Thus, caring for those we accompany means caring for ourselves, too, setting our own boundaries and making decisions that benefit not only the processes but also our own well-being.

The psychosocial is expressed in the recognition of "what we feel about our boundaries" (II, 2025) within a process that brings together knowledge, tools, technologies and different resources, but also an emotional dimension, based on reciprocity during the shared journey.

Below we present four essential components that can be useful in digital protection accompaniment.



The first is **Flexibility**. This component is seen in the capacity for creative adaptation in facing the needs of each situation. It means using emotional, technological, economic, material and physical resources—both one's own and those of participants—to adapt the accompaniment to the specific conditions of each case.

Although the violence caused by digital surveillance and monitoring shares certain characteristics that make it possible to identify patterns for clearly identifying a potential attack, in each case "people—both individually and collectively—activate different kinds of responses that enable them to resist, adapt and make sense of what happened."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, each experience has a different level of effect, depending on the impact and the coping strategies that the individuals or organizations have developed.

Flexibility means addressing these specificities, recognizing the changes that can emerge throughout the process and adjusting the accompaniment to evolving circumstances. This includes considering the available means—in person or digital—and the point at which help is sought; accompanying someone who suspects a potential infiltration is not the same as accompanying when there is bigger impact that creates a need for urgent containment.

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<sup>2</sup> Paz Bailey, 2024.

Flexibility also requires recognizing the diversity of trajectories, needs and abilities of those who participate in the processes, "knowing that people have their resources, and we engage in an exchange of experiences during accompaniment" (CS, 2025). This may involve the inclusion of new tools, referrals to other spaces or changes in methodology.<sup>3</sup>



A second component is **Affectivity**, in the framework of the relationship that is being built through the processes. "Conditions and affections are that which is necessarily created through the bond with other people and, at the same time, they enable the creation of collective horizons of autonomy"<sup>4</sup> since "during accompaniment, affectivities are continually created through dialogical relationships" (CS, 2025).

Far from being limited to the emotional or intimate, affectivity manifests in the way people relate to one another, recognize one another and develop spaces with shared meaning, trust and transparency.

In contexts of vulnerability where psychosocial risks and impacts are in constant motion, this affective dimension can be a route to reparation, recognition and strength as "a key component within the psychosocial coping mechanisms"<sup>5</sup> of the affected individuals or organizations.

From this perspective, affectivity is expressed through active listening, communication, empathy and respect for other people's words and silence, for the way the feeling-thinking (*sentipensar*) of what is happening is understood, without reducing it to just the technical or to digital infrastructure. Incorporating this component is essential for creating horizontal ties, where people are not objects of intervention, but rather individuals actively giving new meaning to what has happened. In this sense, affective dialogue is also an ethical and political tool that facilitates processes for individual and collective transformation since "accompanying with as much love as I can" (CS, 2025) is also a political stance in the face of violence.

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<sup>3</sup> The glossary found in the appendix to this manual proposes a differentiation between victim and affected person.

<sup>4</sup> Acevedo, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial, 2013 in Paz Bailey, 2024.



A third component is the search for **Horizontality** as a kind of tie that guides the relationship between the person accompanying and the individuals or organizations who are accompanied, recognizing all people and organizations as rights-holders, with their own wisdom, experiences, knowledge and resources. Horizontality is developed when together with the person being accompanied, one "assumes their own narrative as a socially recognized subject, who reacts based on their experience and meaning,"<sup>6</sup> thus generating autonomous affective processes. This component is also a departure from vertical or welfare-based dynamics, promoting interactions based on trust, mutual respect and the joint development of meanings and actions.

Horizontality also means an ethical and political availability of those of us who accompany. By adopting a position of listening without judgment and accompanying with a focus on dignity and humanization that promotes autonomy, we can build individual and collective capacity for facing the psychosocial impacts of situations of violence, since "recognizing the conflict and possible types of violence that are present in the care space, along with power imbalances, biases and misgivings" (CS, 2025) will make it possible to create bonds of understanding, trust building and affectivity in the processes.

Incorporating the horizontal in accompaniment contributes to more sustainable and meaningful processes where the affected individuals and organizations see themselves as protagonists in giving themselves new meaning, thus creating bonds of trust and co-responsibility, essential to achieving transformation in these contexts.



Finally, accompaniment is supported by a logical framework of Network that refers to the set of social, emotional and technological relationships, bonds and support that involve weaving complementary collective fabrics. It is important to be clear that this network is developed with the active participation of the accompanied individual or organization, respecting their time, affectivities and boundaries.

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6 Cornejo, Fortuny & Solís, 2019.

Within digital protection care spaces, it is important to identify, strengthen and activate the networks that can sustain the person in their diverse dimensions. The network becomes a vital resource for daily life, but also a space for resistance in the face of the pain and splintering caused by violence.

Networks can be organizational and/or institutional, offering technical, forensic, legal and/or psychosocial accompaniment where procedures may be based on action protocols and best practices, as well as friend and/or family networks. Both are important to identify collectively, since they make it possible to offer containment, resources, listening and guidance.

## Ethical perspectives

When incorporating psychosocial strategies into digital protection care, it is important to keep in mind that, like any accompaniment, this must be framed by clear ethical principles that protect the integrity and autonomy of those who have been affected by surveillance technologies and which avoid inadvertent re-victimization or reproduction of violence.

"The ethical handling of the issue also means seeking elements that enable us to take measures for prevention, self-care and delayed response to avoid amplifying the psychological effects on those who accompany."<sup>7</sup> The following proposes three ethical principles defined from a psychosocial perspective, and which will be developed and proposed for practice throughout this document.



The first of these principles is **Caring**, not only as an action towards others, but also as an ethics that includes caring for those who accompany and for the environment in which the process is conducted, since "accompaniment can also provoke anxiety and stress for those who provide it due to the weight of the cases" (CS, 2025).

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<sup>7</sup> Erazo, 2018.



The second principle is **Consent**. Every accompaniment process must respect the autonomy of the affected individual or organization, including their right to decide what information to share, what actions to take, whom to involve and when to stop the process. "Asking the affected person what kind of digital information is going to be analyzed, to agree on a protocol or a mechanism prior to retrieving other unwanted information or data from the past is important for avoiding revictimization. Agreeing on or informing of due discretion" (CS, 2025) is another way of integrating consent into the accompaniment.

Every accompaniment involves informed, sustained consent, ideally established at the beginning of the process. This is particularly relevant in cases of digital violence, where there may be a background of leaks or non-consensual exposure of personal data. Consent enables the affected person to assume that, during the digital investigation, data may emerge with the potential to re-victimize, and that it will be handled with full responsibility, confidentiality and respect by the person who provides accompaniment.



A final principle is **Recognition** of what is being experienced and thus felt. "The recognition that even just suspecting involves a psychosocial impact on the person, their context or possible effects arising from the context and their activism" (CS, 2025) is important when handling an accompaniment case, since this acknowledgment may open the door to other kinds of needs.

In turn, recognition protects the dignity of the accompanied person or organization, strengthens their personal resources, acknowledges harm without making it the only possible narrative and validates diverse ways of resisting, naming or processing the lived experience.

## Tapestry of approaches.

Digital protection accompaniment with psychosocial components is enriched when it incorporates other approaches that facilitate a deeper understanding of contexts and experiences, since "when you know the person's context, you can understand what the situation means to the person" (CS, 2025). An intersectional approach helps to recognize how multiple forms of oppression interact to produce specific vulnerabilities to digital violence.

Not every person or organization experiences attacks in the same way, nor do they have the same resources to face them, so it is important to incorporate, as much as possible, an approach with a "critical, social and decolonial perspective" (II, 2025), depending on the case.

Likewise, from a gender perspective, accompaniment is proposed as a political practice that seeks to dismantle hierarchical and patriarchal power dynamics. "When we talk about violent content with gender-based discrimination, the most prevalent are stereotypes of women with machista content, discourses that have historically been used against women."<sup>8</sup> Identifying the ways in which spyware attacks target women, trans and non-binary people and other dissidences, will make it possible to assess the impact in terms of gender and "the elements linked to gender-based violence that heighten risk" (CS, 2025).

Finally, a contextual approach to accompaniment requires a critical interpretation of the local scenarios where the cases occur. This facilitates recognizing that digital violence, surveillance cases and other kind of technological attacks are not experiences disconnected from the territorial, community, organizational, social and historical dimensions of the kinds of organization and collective resistance that may offer support.

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<sup>8</sup> Paz Bailey, 2024.



## Chapter 2

### The pathway of accompaniment

Below we propose three points that can be readily incorporated into digital protection care as psychosocially-based strategies that can constitute a possible route or guide for managing these processes. A sequence is proposed that covers framing, a range of approaches, and closure; however, the process requires regular review of agreements, routes and strategies, as well as their adaptation to the specific needs of each case, based on the times and resources available for all parties involved.

#### Give care to the processes from the start



When starting accompaniment in cases of digital surveillance, whether by referral, request or prior knowledge at the organization, it is essential that the construction of a caring, comfortable and consensual space, whether in person or on-line, be set as the first action. This is because affected individuals and organizations often "feel controlled and have developed psychosocial affections like stress, fatigue, failure to understand what is happening to them, and a rupture of life plans,"<sup>9</sup> as well those related to privacy and digital security. The construction of contained spaces, based on trust and transparency, will allow the accompaniment to develop through assertive communication .

In this process, the work to be done must be clearly presented, identifying the roles of each person or organization involved and creating a defined, mutually agreed upon and consensual space. In addition, it is essential to work on expectations and the specific objectives of the accompaniment. This is all related to organizational, collective and personal limits, which are the foundation for respectful, careful accompaniment.

For this, we propose a tool used in psychosocial processes for individual and collective accompaniment called Framing, which can serve to open

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<sup>9</sup> Paz Bailey, 2024.

the care space, contextualize the process and preserve the quality of relationship from the very first moment.

The framing model described here has been designed based on three main axes: expectations, consent and contexts. These can facilitate the rebuilding of trust and the creation of a comfortable, caring and consensual space during the initial meetings.

The objectives of framing can be:

- **To offer security and clarity regarding the space.**
- **To position the accompaniment ethically and politically.**
- **To avoid revictimization and establish informed consent from the start.**
- **To explicitly name the limits, objectives and scope of the process.**
- **To recognize the autonomy and capabilities of the accompanied person.**

Element: <b>Expectations</b>		
<b>Description</b>	<b>Guiding questions</b>	<b>Containment</b>
At this first point of contact, the expectations of both parties should be made clear. It is explained that accompaniment is a process with different stages. The estimated times, kind of support and existing resources are agreed on and agreement is reached based on the limits of the process and mutual commitment.	<p>What does the individual or organization expect from the care process?</p> <p>What is possible and what is not possible in the process?</p> <p>What is the estimated length of the process according to the parties involved?</p> <p>Towards what end can the process be designed and guided?</p> <p>What resources and tools are available for the individual or organization?</p> <p>What resources does the individual or organization have available?</p>	<p>Clear, realistic answers can facilitate better understanding of the process from the start.</p> <p>Clarity around emotional, technological and material resources.</p> <p>Management of anxiety related to the time and resources involved.</p> <p>Identification of possible routes and networks for accompaniment. clear.</p>

Table 1. **Framing tool. Author's own work, 2025.**

## Element: Consent

Description	Guiding question s	Containment
<p>There must be clear information on what the care to be provided consists of. This includes the use of technologies, digital platforms or other secure tools that do not violate the established trust and which enable understanding and learning in case the tools are unfamiliar. Consent must be explicit, enthusiastic, informed, explained, reversible and voluntary. The person's rights must also be discussed: transparency, confidentiality, access to their information, the possibility of withdrawing from the process, etc. It may also be a space for clarifying referrals depending on the effects of the case.</p>	<p>Is the individual or organization clear about the process ?</p> <p>Has the use of their data and information been explained ?</p> <p>Have they been given time to ask questions and make a free choice?</p> <p>Has verbal or written informed consent been given?</p> <p>Do they know their rights to confidentiality, privacy, security and the voluntary nature of the process?</p> <p>Has mutual agreement been reached?</p> <p>Were management channels established along with secure channels for data and communication ?</p>	<p>Clarity and assertive communication that avoid revictimization.</p> <p>Transparency in the process.Consent regarding any sensitive information shared.</p> <p>Space for listening that helps the individual feel free to make personal and collective decisions.</p> <p>Autonomy in the process itself.</p>

Table 1. **Framing tool. Author's own work, 2025.**

## Element: Contexts

Description	Guiding question s	Containment
<p>It is important to identify the personal, collective, social and digital context in which the situation occurs. This can include family, social, cultural and/or technological factors that affect the problem or influence the form of accompaniment. This preliminary joint review makes it possible to design a more appropriate accompaniment that is sensitive to the individual's reality.</p>	<p>What is the situation requiring accompaniment ?</p> <p>What family, social, community factors may be relevant in the case?</p> <p>Is there is history of vulnerability or high-risk situations ?</p> <p>What resources—internal or external—does the individual or organization identify?</p> <p>What is the individual's or organization's level of technical and/or digital knowledge regarding the issue ?</p>	<p>Establishing closer accompaniment.</p> <p>Enabling the creation of space for autonomy and management of personal resources.</p> <p>Facilitating better understanding of what happened, on different levels.</p>

Table 1. **Framing tool. Author's own work, 2025.**

In this sense, framing not only facilitates greater clarity on how the process is intended to be developed at both technical and affective levels, but it also becomes useful for establishing agreements on resources, meeting formats, timeframes, and support, among other aspects. Furthermore, this is a good time to address any anxieties, doubts, and misinformation, as well as to promote the ethical, personal and political recognition of the accompaniment.

### **Dimensions of affect and alternative approaches**

In contexts where digital violence is mixed with surveillance and monitoring practices, digital protection accompaniment takes on special relevance. Including types of care that acknowledge emotional experiences, the impact on bodies and the need to rebuild relationships can strengthen accompaniment in these processes. This makes it possible to generate resources that support collective resistance and lend continuity to actions for defending rights, denouncing, documenting and seeking accountability in the face of technopolitical violence.

The joint review of effects and risks is a key point for understanding how the types of violence exercised via spyware have had an all-encompassing impact on people's lives and, on that basis, proposing routes for accompaniment or referral.

In this sense:

Understanding the depth of harm caused to people and communities requires distinguishin impact that can be identified based on different dimensions. It bears mentioning that this point in the process can occupy a meaningful place, if required, since, based on the framing and collective construction of agreements, these dimensions may be accompanied gradually, if so chosen, and their handling spread over one or more sessions, depending on the working models and resources of those providing digital protection accompaniment.

Finally, it is pertinent to emphasize that although here we share some affective dimensions, it is up to each person providing accompaniment to decide, in the context of their process and accompaniment model, whether they wish to address them fully, partially or only including those they consider relevant. This material simply offers tools that can facilitate reflection on how to work on each of these dimensions, with no intention of establishing a single pathway.

Affective dimension: <b>Emocional</b>			
Impact	Accompaniment goals	Suggested strategies and actions	Resources needed
<p>Anxiety, fear, sadness, panic, feelings of guilt or isolation, normalization of violence .</p> <p>Autonomy in the process itself .</p>	<p>Recognizing the emotions from personal experiences that are produced by violence as a basis for promoting the expression, containment and new understanding of the experience and of people's resources for responding to the context.</p>	<p>Promote active and empathetic listening in care-oriented spaces .</p> <p>Emotional regulation techniques such as breathing exercises, writing, muscle relaxation, diaries and meditation .</p> <p>Constructing narratives of resistance and speculation based on dignity and non-harmful action .</p> <p>Give space for narratives of resistance, identifying elements based on dignity.</p>	<p>Knowledge of containment exercises.</p> <p>Building safe, comfortable spaces—virtual or physical, as necessary .</p>

Affective dimension: <b>Collective and social</b>			
Impact	Accompaniment goals	Suggested strategies and actions	Resources needed
<p>Isolation, broken ties, distrust .</p>	<p>Rebuilding affective networks to create safe environments of mutual support and listening.</p>	<p>Mapping trust networks .</p> <p>Collective care spaces.</p> <p>Institutional and/or organizational protocols for care, prevention and response to digital attacks</p>	<p>Facilitation of group spaces.</p> <p>Review of holistic care protocols and policies in work environments .</p>

Table 2. **Dimensions of affect and their approaches. Author's own work, 2025.**

Affective dimension: <b>Digital</b>			
Impact	Accompaniment goals	Suggested strategies and actions	Resources needed
Loss of control over technological devices, identity theft or fraud, fear of using technology again .	Recovering digital autonomy and trust in the virtual environment.	<p>Joint assessment with technical facilitators where the operation of digital surveillance can be explained .</p> <p>Establish digital safety routines. Affective reappropriation of the digital space based on trust.</p> <p>Reinhabit the digital space with safety, affection and dignity.</p>	<p>Knowledge of containment exercises.</p> <p>Building safe, comfortable spaces—virtual or physical, as necessary .</p> <p>Psychosocial facilitator and technical and/or forensic facilitator .</p> <p>User-friendly information in language accessible to non-technical individuals or organizations.</p> <p>Tools proven to provide secure communication that enable protection of sensitive information and building trust in digital accompaniment processes.</p> <p>Manuals and resources on digital care and security.</p>

Affective dimension: <b>Physical and body-related</b>			
Impact	Accompaniment goals	Suggested strategies and actions	Resources needed
Physical pain, insomnia, fatigue, muscle tension, digestive or breathing problems.	Listening to the body as container and producer of stress, as well as a source of recovery in one's own ability to contain and transform routines.	<p>Conscious connection exercises—breathing, body scan, gentle stretching.</p> <p>Ritualization and assignment of new meaning to daily spaces for rest and care.</p> <p>Referral to health services, as needed.</p>	<p>Conscious connection exercises—breathing, body scan, gentle stretching.</p> <p>Ritualization and assignment of new meaning to daily spaces for rest and care.</p> <p>Referral to health services, as needed.</p>

Table 2. **Dimensions of affect and their approaches. Author's own work, 2025.**

Working on these strategies is key in psychosocial accompaniment, since it facilitates holistic care that is flexible, situated and sustainable, able to adapt to the evolving realities of the individuals or organizations. Accompaniment is seen not as a solution to the problem, but rather as an ongoing cycle of personal and collective reflection, adjustment and action where each dimension is integrated coherently into the process.

Along these lines, it is important to recognize and remember that there is no one "correct" way to provide accompaniment when integrating psychosocial tools. Each facilitator, based on their experience, training, personal boundaries and available resources, can decide the extent to which they will develop or work on each of the dimensions comprising the psychosocial model presented here.

Far from being a limitation, this decision is necessary for the accompaniment process to be developed based on ethics, caring, affectivity and horizontality. It seeks to promote sustainable practices that acknowledge one's own limits and avoid burnout, while also offering tools for reflecting on and adapting the model to each context.

### **Bringing closure to processes with psychosocial perspectives and strengthening networks**

Some resources are presented below from a psychosocial perspective to accompany process closure, as a complement to what is established in each digital protection response model. This stage is considered particularly important, as it constitutes a transition or review of the process towards other possible pathways.

For this, we must consider the Acknowledgment and reaffirmation of the process experienced. Using exercises that address physical, emotional, digital and collective dimensions, both that which mobilizes and activates and that which sustains are named. This way, coping strategies and the possible restructuring of life plans are validated, along with the creativity and strength deployed to confront digital violence.

It is also important to shine a light on the Consolidation of support networks developed and identified during the process, given that strengthening these networks is essential to the sustainability of care. This may include:

- Sharing directories of allied organizations that share approaches and strategies.
- Links to like-minded collectives or organizations that support similar processes.
- Safe spaces for collective meetings or follow-up, depending on the individual's or organization's choice.

It is critical to emphasize that, if needs are identified during the process that go beyond the scope of accompaniment, a **careful, informed and empathetic referral** should be made. The person should understand the reasons for the referral, what they can expect from the new space and how to access it. As much as possible, facilitating direct contact is recommended, to avoid the person facing this transition on their own.

Finally, the process should come to a Conclusion that not only meets the operational and technical dimensions of the care—such as delivering reports, recommendations or final feedback—but also considers the feelings, ties and affective experiences of the accompaniment. From a psychosocial perspective, concluding means integrating affective, symbolic and relational components of the experience, enabling this moment to be a form of mutual recognition and care.

This must be done without reopening wounds, with neither judgment nor demands. The dignity and capability of the individual or organization must be kept as the center of focus. Care is taken with language, silences, and gestures. Neither narratives nor goodbyes are forced. Closure happens with care, recognizing that the goal is not to transform objective reality, but rather to contribute tools and strategies for resisting, understanding and taking care.

Although the process concludes formally and in line with the initial agreement, the possibility is left open for follow-up, resolving doubts or referrals, depending on each digital protection accompaniment pathway. This moment is key to guaranteeing that the individual or organization feels supported and that the conclusion takes place with no loose ends that could lead to uncertainty or insecurity.

<b>Acknowledgment and reaffirmation of the process as lived</b>	Physical, emotional, digital and collective affective recognition exercises, naming what produces worry and activation, but also the elements that provide support, security and trust.
<b>Consolidation of support networks</b>	Identification of networks developed for sustainability.
<b>Care referrals</b>	Identification of needs that go beyond the scope of accompaniment.
<b>Conclusion</b>	We are careful with language, silences, gestures. We do not force narratives or goodbyes. We bring closure carefully, knowing that the goal is not to transform objective reality, but rather to have contributed tools for resisting, understanding and taking care of oneself in the development of impact and coping.

Table 3. **Process closure and strengthening networks. Author's own work, 2025.**

## Chapter 3

### Practical tools for listening, containment and analysis

The goal of this chapter is to present two practical tools that can serve in different moments of the accompaniment and that are interrelated: active listening and emotional containment.

Although our intent is not to develop an exhaustive manual on the use of these tools, we do seek to share some guidance on how, from a psychosocial approach, they can be useful in both individual and collective accompaniment. However, it is crucial that each facilitator recognize their own personal and organizational limits and abilities, in addition to identifying when it is appropriate to refer cases to other networks, with the goal of ensuring a respectful and careful accompaniment for all involved.

#### Active listening

Active listening is:

Paying adequate attention to the person or people who are expressing their stories. Respect, interest and empathy are the basis for facilitating the analysis and sharing of experiences [...] An important principle in the exercise of active listening is reserving judgment. Prejudices play a role in relationships, since we have a preconceived idea based on social patterns.<sup>10</sup>

In this sense, hearing is not the same as actively listening, given that paying full attention while listening makes it possible to be open to other ways of feeling-thinking (sentipensares), emotions and recognitions. This benefits, on the one hand, the people who accompany, in understanding

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<sup>10</sup> Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial, 2020.

the individual or organization with whom the process is being conducted, and on the other hand, the affected people, in the expression of their experience within a framework of dignity that avoids re-victimization.

Active listening consists of a kind of communication that transmits clear ideas without interrupting the receiver; it is conducted freely, keeping in mind what others think and feel; it demonstrates how attentive a person is during the dialog. It is the kind of communication reflected in the actions of the issuer; in other words, one listens attentively, analyzing, reasoning and understanding the information that is being transmitted in the conversation among one or more people.<sup>11</sup>

Undoubtedly, active listening requires the person accompanying to mobilize cognitive, bodily, emotional and material resources. For this reason, it is important to train this ability with different practices and recognize its central role in responsive care processes. However, it can also lead to significant emotional and physical burnout, so its practice must be accompanied by a conscious exercise of care in different dimensions.

Actively listening involves not only opening oneself to what the other person is saying, but also supporting their silences, their rhythms and the way they narrate the experience. This requires presence and sensitivity, as well as the capacity to set boundaries and recognize when it is necessary to take a break. For this reason, the development of active listening must go hand in hand with strategies for individual and collective care that make it possible to maintain availability without overexposure or placing demands on oneself.

Below, a few playful exercises are shared for practicing active listening, which can lead to better listening in digital protection care spaces.

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<sup>11</sup> Hernandez-Calderón & Lesma-Silva, 2018.

<b>Soundscapes</b>	Listening to soundscapes can help to foster attention while listening. The exercise consists of finding some brief soundscapes (10 to 15 minutes) and paying attention to the sounds they contain. During or after the listening, you can make a list of new sounds that drew your attention or that could lead to imagination exercises.
<b>Reading aloud</b>	Reading short stories aloud can help us to hear ourselves; in other words, to pay attention to our voice, our tone, our expressions and body movements while talking.
<b>Sound diary</b>	Keeping a sound diary can also help us to consciously pay attention while listening. The diary can involve writing during the day, for example, What do I hear when I wake up? What do I hear when I leave my house? What new sound did I hear today?
<b>Listening with others</b>	Affective dialog is always a daily activity. Actively pay attention to the fact that, when we build bonds, active listening is important at all times, not only in accompaniment. Inviting others to listen collectively to daily life can also be an interesting collective exercise on how we listen and share spaces.

Table 4. **Exercises for active listening. Author's own work, 2025.**

These four exercises are useful in different ways. The first has to do with exercising attention in our listening. The second involves holding the resource of listening as a kind of care, by integrating into daily routines, playful activities that involve sounds as a tool that develops sensitivity and affectivity. A third way is the collectivization of active listening as a daily tool in our relationships and bonds as a political act of listening to the person speaking.

## Emotional containment

Emotional containment is a basic practice in psychosocial accompaniment processes and is closely linked to active listening. In many cases, narrating what happened—especially in contexts of violence or surveillance—can provoke an emotional overwhelm that manifests as anxiety, pain, sadness, anger, etc. For this reason, emotional containment does not mean calming, interrupting or minimizing what the person feels. Instead, it involves sharing and implementing tools that can allow expression of the emotion without judging, minimizing, or rushing.

Emotional containment in spaces for listening and dialog means accompanying with an active, empathetic presence, based on the recognition of boundaries that make it possible to express oneself emotionally in a caring, comfortable and consensual space, recognizing that the emotions welling up have a legitimate and necessary place in describing the experience. Containment is offering a space where the emotional is not an obstacle, but rather a part of the understanding, caring and resistance process.

In this sense, emotional containment must be based on understanding and the ethical criteria adopted by the person who accompanies, regarding what the other person is expressing.

When a person is narrating a story that is painful to them, they do not only explain their experiences in terms of "trauma," or what hurt them. Rather, they also display—although perhaps not in a fully explicit manner—the way they reacted and responded to the negative situation. The exploration of responses like coping with the effects of trauma is an intervention strategy that seeks to address, during the individual's narration, not the traumatic experience itself, but the way in which, through actions and thoughts, the person acted to cope with it.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Huerta, 2017.

Reflecting back to the accompanied person the strategies and actions they took and narrated can be a first step for emotional containment. Based on this recognition reflected back by the person accompanying, it is possible to employ an emotional containment that reaffirms the individual's or organization's coping ability in recognizing their emotions. It can enable them to see themselves not just as a person affected by an attack, but also as someone who has made decisions to protect themselves, to resist and to rebuild. This reflection can be key in opening spaces where emotions are not silenced, but rather understood as part of the process, without making the person feel guilty for feeling them.

It is important to acknowledge that, in this aspect, the emotion is not only a biological reaction to what happened. It is something more complex that is built and developed based on a social structure that, often, determines the rules of feeling in facing the experience. Moreover, the emotional is entangled with spaces, bodies, contexts and technologies.

Therefore, we suggest that, in addition to using the narrative as an emotional containment technique, it be complemented with breathing exercises and techniques that help to oxygenate bodies at precise moments as needed, as well as paying attention to the bodies involved. This means observing how these emotional narrations become lodged in our individual and social bodies.

## Chapter 4

### Caring for the caregivers



During the dialogs generated in collective meetings, as well as in the individual interviews that are the basis for this guide, recognition of physical and emotional fatigue, burnout in its different kinds of impact and emotional overwhelm were explicitly expressed and debated based on latent needs that arise in digital protection accompaniment. These needs are not only geared towards the individuals or organizations who are accompanied, but also towards those who accompany these processes.

"The topic generates frustration and anger;" "Sometimes personal anxiety is generated by addressing the topic;" "You feel the same terror that the victim is feeling in their body;" "I feel a lot of stress when I accompany" (CS, 2025). These are some of the impacts identified in the initial approach to the topic. This is why this guide believes it is essential to open a first exploration of the meaning of caring for the people who provide digital protection responsive care.

"Care in work contexts has to be seen as a system of interrelationships that range from the 'micro' (self-care), through the 'meso' (care of teams by and with the organization) and up to the 'macro' level, comprising the social context in general."<sup>13</sup>

In this sense, caring is the responsibility of all parties involved. Caring is collective and done as part of a network. To be able to think about care in these contexts, it is critical to do so from the organizational foundations, whether institutional or personal, on which the accompaniment work will be developed. For this, it is necessary to be familiar with the care protocols and policies of the organizations we belong to or, in their absence, to create spaces that make it possible to develop these policies as a political stake in resistance to the violence faced and which seek possibility-based accompaniment and transformation.

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<sup>13</sup> Duque, 2020.

However, for the purposes of this guide, three levels of attention and care proposed by the Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial (2020) will be used as a reference: the personal, the team's and the organizational. These proposals for care can be interwoven to manage accompaniment processes that are more dignified not only for those who accompany but also for those accompanied.

<p><b>Personal</b></p>	<p>Self-care is a process that is primarily the responsibility of individuals themselves, and they must manage it consciously.</p> <p>This process involves different levels in which the practices or activities performed have a holistic effect on overall well-being.</p> <p>Actions that are performed at one level can have an influence on the others, since they are interconnected.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meditation</li> <li>• Psychotherapy</li> <li>• Proper diet</li> <li>• Hobbies</li> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Socializing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Teams</b></p>	<p>This kind of care is also part of the commitment taken on by those who are part of the work teams. It is essential for each person to identify how their work has an impact on group dynamics, so they can prevent or address possible consequences in the work environment.</p> <p>Taking ownership of one's own process of healing and emotional self-regulation is key to sustaining healthy bonds within the team, which in turn makes it possible to offer respectful, high-quality accompaniment.</p> <p>These responsibilities also include asking for help when necessary and participating in any collective care spaces that are agreed on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychosocial supervision</li> <li>• Collective learning spaces</li> <li>• Collective spaces for analysis and debate</li> <li>• Proposals for collective care plans</li> </ul>
<p><b>Organizational</b></p>	<p>Although well-being is a personal and collective task, it is also the organization's duty to ensure the right to care of those who comprise it. Psychosocial work in contexts characterized by violence produces real impact on people, and this is why it requires an institutional commitment to protecting them.</p> <p>The conditions in which this work is done directly affect the team's well-being, its performance and the sustainability of organizational work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care policies</li> <li>• Care protocols</li> <li>• Best work practices protocols</li> <li>• Economic and material resources for referral and support</li> </ul>

Table 6. **Levels of attention and care. Author's own work, 2025.**

In conclusion, we must remember that care in contexts of physical and digital violence is neither an isolated nor individual act. It must be practiced as an ongoing, collective process that involves both those who accompany and the individuals or organizations who are accompanied. This holistic care approach, which addresses personal, team and organizational levels, offers a solid foundation for preventing emotional burnout and strengthening collective resistance on the basis of caring and affection.

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# Appendices

## I. Glossary

**Affectivity:** relational dimension that permeates accompaniment. It is not limited to the emotional, but also involves bonds of trust, mutual recognition, listening and collective development of meaning. It is considered an ethical, political and social tool.

**Process closure:** the final stage of accompaniment understood not as a final closure, but rather as a conscious, careful and accompanied transition. It includes recognizing the process, delivering the report and consolidating networks.

**Informed consent:** ethical principle by which every individual and organization must decide freely about their participation in the process, what information to share and how to share it. It involves transparency and clear communication.

**Emotional containment:** the practice of emotional support in moments of emotional overwhelm. It seeks not to silence but to accompany with an empathetic presence, respect for rhythms and acknowledgment of agency.

**Caring:** daily organizational and political practices that sustain life, well-being and bonds. In this document, it is described on three levels:

**Collective care:** group bonds and dynamics that enable us to support one another in contexts of violence.

- Organizational care: institutional frameworks that promote work conditions with dignity, rest and the prevention of burnout.
- Self-care: conscious personal actions for taking care of one's own well-being.

**Dimensions of impact:** categories that make it possible to use a psychosocial perspective to address the impacts produced by spyware. Framing: first stage of accompaniment when expectations, agreements, consent and understanding of context are established. It is a key ethical and emotional moment for development of the process.

**Active listening:** ability to pay attention to the narratives of the accompanied people with sensitivity and without judgment. It also involves listening to oneself, and it is essential for understanding and transforming the experience.

**Flexibility:** the capacity for adapting the accompaniment to the specific conditions of each case. It involves the emotional, the methodological and the technical, considering diverse contexts, resources and trajectories.

**Horizontality:** principle guiding accompaniment based on non-hierarchical relationships. It means recognizing all people as rights holders with agency, knowledge and the capacity to act.

**Speculative narrative:** creative tool allows one to imagine possible futures or to reconfigure the lived experience using fiction. It is used as an exercise for caring, agency and affective assignment of new meaning.

**Affected individuals:** term that refers to those who have been the target of digital surveillance or monitoring technology attacks, including emotional, digital, physical and social impact. This term is preferred over "victims" when the goal is to emphasize the agency, resistance and dignity of those who experience these situations.

**Recognition:** validation of what the accompanied individuals have experienced. It means naming effects, resistances, strategies and agency, above and beyond the victim narrative.

**Support network:** fabric of social, technical, emotional and organizational relationships that sustain accompaniment processes. Both formal and informal networks are recognized.

**Spyware:** surveillance software or digital tools used to access the personal information, devices and communication of individuals or organizations without their consent.

**Victims:** category used mainly in legal and human rights contexts to designate the people who have suffered serious violations. Although valid within certain legal frameworks, in this guide emphasis is placed on how the people affected must not be reduced solely to that category, but rather also be recognized as subjects of agency and transformation.

**Digital violence:** set of aggressions exercised using digital technologies that have an emotional, physical, social and collective effect on those who experience them. It includes surveillance, fraud, and threats, among other expressions.

## II. Speculative narrative: thinking differently

Briefly, the suggestion is that, as part of the process, the accompanied individual or organizational fields a proposal to perform some fictional narrative exercises throughout the accompaniment. "Fiction embodies other possible worlds"<sup>14</sup> and there is an invitation for accompaniment to be worked on using imagination, creativity and affectivity to inhabit violent contexts with care. In this sense, speculating, fictionalizing and confabulating can be an exercise that facilitates collectively imagining other pathways that could be taken and other relationships that could be built.

Narrating can take many forms: written, visual, auditory, bodily, poetic, symbolic, technological, material, etc. For this we propose reaching agreement on options for the best way to build this other narrative, depending on the resources, coping strategies identified, time and desire, and even on what one wants to say in the body of the narrative.

Below, a few moments that may help build a narrative are proposed.

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<sup>14</sup> Capliure, 2020.

<b>Experience</b>	Imagine possible scenarios based on the experience as lived, as appropriated and as reconfigured.	Name and propose	Share
<b>Name and recognize the experience based on affect in its different dimensions.</b>	Recover the autonomy of one's own resource; bring to light potential resources using the imagination.	Integrate what has been imagined into the present, recognizing desires, needs, emotions and strengths.	Recognize the autonomy and importance of what has been constructed.
<b>Texts, poems, lists, images.</b>	Images, voice recordings, sound recordings, texts.	Collages, short stories, letters.	Free decision to share.

Table 5. **Moments for constructing fictions. Author's own work, 2025.**

In conclusion, it must be remembered that the work of listening and of emotional containment in digital protection accompaniment is ongoing and that integrating psychosocial strategies or tools can make it possible to address and deeply investigate affective or emotional aspects of the ties. In this sense, containment also involves recognizing one's own boundaries, as well as the management or participation in caring and/or psychosocial supervision spaces where what is heard and felt can be processed. As we will see in the following chapter, in work where violence is constant, emotionally supporting others can lead to burnout that must be addressed collectively.

