

Group Services for Children Affected by Domestic Violence

An Interactive 12-Week Companion Curriculum for Caregivers of Children Participating in Group Services

Prepared by *Northnode, Inc.*



and a Collaborative of Children's Services Providers

for the Massachusetts Department of Social Services
Domestic Violence Unit

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Introduction

This curriculum is a caregiver's companion to an interactive 12-week group curriculum for 8 to 12-year-old children. The children's curriculum was developed by nine agencies and collaboratives funded by the Massachusetts Department of Social Services to provide clinical services for children affected by adult domestic violence.

The purpose of this curriculum is to provide caregivers with a clear understanding of the material that their children will be addressing in their group, to suggest ways that caregivers might respond to questions that children bring home as a result of their participation in their group, and along the way educate caregivers about the impact of adult domestic violence on children. To these ends, each session provides information about the material that children are covering in the same session and suggests exercises that caregivers can engage in to help them understand that material.

As with the children's curriculum, facilitators of the caregivers group are encouraged to use and adapt this curriculum to the particular needs of your groups. We would be interested to hear how it works for you, to learn about any changes you may make, and most especially to hear how the caretakers who participate benefit from the group services you are offering.

For more information (including possible training in the use of the curriculum and/or in conducting an evaluation of your group services), please contact Northnode at 617.522.8755 or email us at indra@northnode.org.

Session One

Welcome to the Group

Note: Caregivers will bring their children to the children's group and will participate in the first part of that group's opening session (until and through the snack). The purposes of including caregivers are: 1) to engage them in the process of providing services for their children; 2) to give them a real sense of how the group will work for and with their children; and 3) to demonstrate, for the children, that their caregivers support their participation in the group.

Goals/Expected Outcomes

Goals

1. To introduce caregivers to the content, purpose, and process of their children's group.
2. To set a safe and welcoming tone for the caregivers' group.
3. To create an atmosphere of mutual support and education for members.
4. To establish group norms.

Outcomes

1. Caregivers will feel comfortable to begin sharing with group leaders and other members.
2. Caregivers will understand, in general, the issues to be taken up in their children's group.
3. Caregivers will begin to understand the importance of their role in helping children respond in healthier ways to what they have experienced.

Outline

After participation in the children's group, caregivers will return to the site of their group with the group leaders.

- I Welcome everyone to the group
 - A) Leader(s) introduce themselves and thank members for their participation in their children's group. Leaders recognize the unique and special role that the members play in supporting the children in their care, stating that this is why we are here. Introduce concepts such as resiliency and protective factors and explain the importance of safe people and positive parenting in helping children recover from trauma.
 - B) Icebreaker: Getting to Know You.

Members introduce themselves to the group. In addition to their names and the names and ages of their children, ask each person to share something about her or his own name. For instance, what is its cultural or ethnic origin, family history, or special meaning? Lastly, if they feel comfortable, they can share whether they like or dislike the name and why. (Example: "My name is Josephine Anne. I am

named after my paternal grandmother. This is an Italian tradition. I do like the name, but my mother did not and gave me the nickname Jo-Anne.")

II Group norms and rules

- A) On a flip chart list the "Rules of Our Group" that are offered to children in Session One of the children's group.
- B) Explore the applicability of those norms and rules to caregivers. Invite participants to add norms and rules, if they want to, and add to the list those norms or rules that all participants support.
- C) Make sure the list includes the concept of passing or voluntary participation. This means members have the right to participate or not participate in any of the group activities that they wish. If there is an activity that someone does not wish to participate in, they may say, "Pass."
- D) Be sure to include a discussion of confidentiality and what it means in this group. Include in the discussion how communication about the children's participation will be handled, and mandated reporting and duty to warn requirements, if relevant.

III How the groups work

- A) Put an outline of the 12 sessions and their content areas on a flipchart. Explain that these are the topics that will be discussed in the children's group each week. Discuss how the adult group will parallel the children's group, addressing the same topics and sharing with caregivers what is being learned in the children's group each week. In addition to sharing content of the session, the caregivers group will address ways in which they can parent and support their children in dealing with this issue.
- B) Leaders also have prepared a flipchart with the components of what each session of the caregivers group will include. These components are as follows:
 - 1) *Introductions and icebreaker.*
 - 2) *Check-in.* Explain that check-in will happen at the beginning of each session. It gives participants a chance to talk about how their past week has been and discuss any issues that came up. The goal is mutual support—members help each other. It is okay to decide not to say anything during the check-in.
 - 3) *Topic of the week.* This is a summary of what the children are working on in their group that week.
 - 4) *Parenting support.* In this part of the session, caregivers will explore how they can be supportive of the children in reflecting on the materials being covered in their group session.
 - 5) *Check-out.* Participants will be invited to share how the material the children are covering is impacting them and will be supported to ask for help or support from other participants (and facilitators) as they work to be supportive of the children. This is a chance to ask questions, find solutions, and get support.

- C) This is a good time for leaders to explain their roles as support persons to the participants, offering availability before and after groups or in between group sessions. Recognize that program topic areas may trigger memories and/or feelings and if people need assistance with this to please let the leaders know.

IV Check-out exercise

This week for check-out we will do an activity called Hopes and Fears. Leaders put up two newsprint papers on the wall, one entitled Hopes and the other entitled Fears. Leaders then give everyone a chance to share at least one hope and one fear she has for her child's participation in the group. Leaders record responses on the newsprint with no commentary. Participants may add more if time permits. Once everyone has finished sharing, the leaders can comment and share some of their own thoughts especially in regard to the fears that were expressed. This exercise gives caregivers a chance to voice some of their concerns for their children's participation that may lead to dropping out.

Materials

- Flipchart
- Magic Markers
- Rules of the Group
- Newsprint: Hopes and Fears

Session Two

Feelings

Goals/Expected Outcomes

Goal

To introduce and begin to explore feelings.

Outcomes

1. Caregivers will have an increased ability to assist children in identifying feelings.
2. Caregivers will become more self-aware of how they experience and express feelings themselves.
3. Caregivers will have an increased ability to validate children's feelings and help them to express them in safe ways.

Outline

I Introductions/icebreaker

Leaders and group members introduce themselves by name to the group. In addition, everyone shares her Internal Weather Report or how she is feeling today. The leader has drawn a weather scene on newsprint entitled Internal Weather Report. (Example: "Today I am feeling sunny" or "Today I am feeling partly cloudy and foggy" or "Today I am feeling stormy.")

II Check-in

- A) Group leader re-explains the purpose of check-in as set out in Session One.
- B) Each member is invited to check in.

III Feelings

Group leader introduces the subject for this session, saying that in Session Two children will be working on feelings—what are feelings, how they can tell what they are feeling, and how they can express their feelings in safe and healthy ways. The leader shares the following teaching points from the children's group (on newsprint):

- A) Everyone has feelings and feelings are okay.
- B) What are feelings?
- C) Feelings can be shared or kept to oneself.
- D) There is a difference between having feelings and acting on them.

IV Feelings activity

Explain that participants will engage in the same activity that children will be taking part in and, in that way, get an understanding of how the children might respond.

Iceberg activity

- A) Draw a picture of an iceberg on a flip chart, or use the one in the Appendix. Note that about 90% of the ice is under water.
- B) Relate this to feelings, noting that sometimes we only show a small part of our feelings.
- C) Ask group members to share some stories that are examples of this.

V Parenting Support

- A) Leaders introduce the idea that caregivers play a major role in helping children experience and express feelings in ways that are healthy. Explain the concept of acknowledging feelings with children.
- B) Lead the group in a discussion, if not touched upon in previous discussions, of how it feels for children to have their feelings understood, the role it plays in healing and reducing acting-out behavior and self-confidence. Talk about how adults in children's lives can take the time to acknowledge children's feelings.

VI Check-out

Leaders will offer the group members the opportunity to share any reactions to today's topic, including any questions or concerns about their ability to support their children around the issue of feelings.

Materials

- Flip Chart
- Markers
- Iceberg for iceberg activity (attached)

Session Three

Defining Abuse

Goals/Expected Outcomes

Goals

1. To explore the prevalence of violence not only in families but also in society at large.
2. To give caregivers an understanding of the kinds of behavior that are abusive.
3. To set the stage for decreasing tolerance for abuse.

Outcome

Caregivers will understand the definitions and concepts of abuse and violence that the children are being taught in their group.

Outline

I Check-in

- A) Group leader invites members to share how their week has been, and anything that has come up for them.
- B) Group leader introduces the subject for this session, saying that, in general, the children's group will be looking at violence in our communities, what we mean when we use the word "abuse," and what kinds of behavior are abusive. Introduce the first exercise by saying that the children will be doing the same exercise in their group today.

II Where do we see violence in our communities?

- A) Leaders invite caregivers to call out the places where violence happens (without judging whether this is a good thing or not a good thing). Put their answers on a flip chart. Here are some answers to look for: movies, schoolyard, the street, home, television, and music lyrics.
- B) Leaders ask group members to look at the list. How does this make us feel? Recognize that this exercise may resonate personally for group members who might express feelings associated with their own experience of or exposure to domestic violence.
- C) Leaders invite group members to consider how the children might be answering this question, supporting group members to try to view the question from the perspective of children.

III What kinds of behavior are abusive?

- A) Put the following definition of abuse on a flip chart and invite someone to read it:
Abuse is any behavior that physically and/or emotionally hurts another person and that is not an accident. Abuse is any behavior that places another person in fear of being physically and/or emotionally hurt.

- B) Explain that we will now see if we can agree on what kinds of behavior equal abuse. Leaders have made two big signs, one saying "YES" and one saying "NO." Hang the signs in two different parts of the room. Call out the following kinds of violent behavior asking the question, "Is this an example of abusive behavior?" People who think that behavior is a form of abuse will go and stand under the "YES" sign and those who do not think that behavior is a form of abuse will stand under the "NO" sign. The leaders can invite members to say why they did or did not think the behavior constitutes abuse. Here are some examples of behavior that might or might not be abusive:
- 1) A 15-year-old boy locks his five-year-old sister in her bedroom while he goes out to meet his friends, even though he is supposed to be babysitting her.
 - 2) A ten-year-old girl shoves another ten-year-old girl who shoves her back in just the same way she was shoved. Then they separate. They are about the same size.
 - 3) A man throws a cup full of coffee at his wife.
 - 4) A child throws a small stuffed teddy bear at his older sister because he is angry with her.
 - 5) A man tells his wife over and over again that she is stupid, that she is a bad mother, and that all of their kids' problems in school are her fault.
 - 6) An eight-year-old child threatens to tell a lie about his sister that he knows will probably get her into trouble with their mother.
 - 7) A husband tells his wife that unless she does exactly what he says, he will smack her.
- C) Leader reminds group members that children will be participating in the same exercises. Questions to explore can include the following:
- 1) Do you think the children are defining abuse the way you have?
 - 2) How might you talk to your child about abuse after she or he has participated in this group discussion?
 - 3) How can you help your child understand the difference between abusive behavior and behavior that is not abusive?

IV Relaxation exercise

Observe that talking about violence and abuse can affect how we feel, making us tense or worried. Leaders invite members to participate in the following relaxation exercise, noting that the same exercises will be suggested in the children's group. This exercise is drawn from *Life on the Edge* by Drs. Ofra Ayalon and Muli Lahad, (translated here by Dr. Ilana Amrani-Cohen). It is designed to help children develop skills for adjusting to stress due to security dangers and threats of war. It can be done in a playful way.

- A) For the arms and shoulder muscles: Think of yourself as if you are a lazy cat, stretching slowly. Stretch your arms forward, then up above your head, then raise your shoulders and let your hands fall slowly to your sides.
- B) For your shoulders and neck muscles: You are now a tortoise, stretching on a rock, calm and peaceful. Suddenly the tortoise feels danger. It sticks its head deep inside its armor. Try to pull your shoulders up to your ears and push your

- head down towards your shoulders as much and as forcefully as you can. The danger has passed! You can now get out of the armor and continue to enjoy the sun on your rock.
- C) For the face muscles: Stretch your face from ear to ear in a big smile. Imagine that on your nose is a fly. Try to remove the fly without using your hands, by moving your nose and your face muscles. The fly has flown away and your face can rest again.
 - D) For the belly muscles: A little elephant is approaching and in a moment will step on your belly. Prepare your belly for the pressure of the little elephant. Stretch your belly muscles as hard as you can. The elephant has left and the belly can now be relaxed.
 - E) For the leg muscles: Imagine you are stepping with your bare feet in mud. Try to reach your foot as deep as you can into the mud. Now, push your feet with your calves until you succeed in getting out of the mud without slipping. The feet are now relaxed and the feeling is pleasant.

V Parenting support

What can caregivers do to help children with this issue? Commit themselves to nonviolent methods of parenting and discipline. Explore this idea with the group, asking if anyone has tried it, is interested in it, or is already doing it, and, if so, how.

VI Check-out

Leaders will offer the group members the opportunity to share any reactions to today's topic, including any questions or concerns about their ability to support their children around this issue.

Materials

- Flip chart
- Markers
- YES and NO signs

Session Four

A Movie about Abuse

Note: This movie can have a strong impact on children and adults. Children may become agitated while watching it and may remain emotionally vulnerable long after the group session is over. Steps that should be taken to ensure children's emotional safety while watching the movie and later at home include the following:

1. Inform caregivers about the content of the movie and let them know that they will be viewing the same movie as their children in today's group. It is not recommended that caregivers and children see the movie together, as this could inhibit free expression of feelings and thoughts that the movie triggers.
2. Be familiar with the movie before you show it. During the movie, watch the members' reactions and, if necessary, give them verbal affirmation and support for their feelings. You might even stop the movie for a brief discussion if this seems appropriate.
3. In the discussion following the movie, allow each member to express feelings and thoughts that the movie provoked.

In addition to acknowledging the existence of violence in their homes, some children who see the movie compare the violence they have experienced to the violence experienced by others in their group. Ironically, by realizing that "it can be worse," children can feel better about themselves and their families. This may be especially pointed when children who witnessed violence between their parents compare their circumstances to those of children who were themselves abused. In these instances, the child who was also abused may conclude that, even in the group environment where the secret of family violence can be shared, she or he is nonetheless different in having still another shameful secret to share. If this is a significant concern, given the make-up of the group, this issue will need to be addressed in a way that makes children who have been abused feel as safe and supported as possible.

Goals/Expected Outcomes

Goals

1. To show that domestic violence happens in many families.
2. To reinforce the definitions of abuse offered in Session Three.
3. To introduce the idea that abuse is not okay.

Outcomes

1. Caregivers will be aware of the content of the movie their children are seeing.
2. Caregivers will have some ideas about how to support their children through this experience.

Outline

I Introduction/icebreaker

Leaders ask members to break into pairs. Leaders partner with group members, if needed, to round out pairings. Give group members five minutes to find out some information about their partners, using items for discussion that are listed on newsprint. Possible items could be favorite food, favorite color, type of music, or last movie seen in a movie theatre. Have members introduce their partners to the group.

II Check-in

- A) Group leader invites members to share how their week has been and anything that has come up for them.
- B) Group leader introduces the subject for this session, saying that, in general, the group will be looking at what it is like to live in a home where violence happens.

III Introduction to the movie

- A) Leaders introduce the subject of the movie, recognizing that it may be difficult for people to watch. Acknowledge that different emotions may surface while watching (such as anger, sadness, guilt, shame, or relief). Leaders will tell the group that the children will also be watching the same movie today.
- B) Leaders will give permission for people to take a break and leave the room during the movie, if necessary. Offer individual support to people, and let them know that there will be time to talk about their feelings after the movie.

IV *It's Not Always Happy in my House* (33minutes)

V Discussion of the Movie

Invite group members to share the thoughts that came up for them during the movie. Leaders can start this off by saying a few things about what they felt as they watched the movie. Give everyone a chance to voice reactions to the movie and accept them without judgment.

VI Parenting support and check-out

Help caregivers think about how they will support their children after watching the movie. Leaders can elicit ideas from the group and add strategies that are not mentioned. Remind caregivers about the importance of listening, acknowledging feelings, and helping children express feelings. Techniques to discuss are talking, drawing, journaling (for older children and adults), relaxation exercises, and physical activity.

Materials

- Video: *It's Not Always Happy in My House*
- VCR, television

Session Five

Responsibility for Abuse

Goals/Expected Outcomes

Goal

To reinforce the principles that victims and children do not cause domestic violence.

Outcomes

1. Caregivers will understand that power differences are often a factor in domestic violence.
2. Caregivers will understand that people make choices about how they will behave and that being abusive is a choice.
3. Caregivers will understand that their behavior does not cause or justify abuse.
4. Caregivers will understand that their children's behavior does not cause or justify abuse.
5. Caregivers will gain insight into how to expand these principles into positive parenting practices.

Outline

I Introductions/icebreaker

Leaders ask members to introduce themselves to the group and share, "One thing that I did over the past week that I am proud of is...." Leaders have the statement on newsprint.

II Check-in

- A) Group leader invites members to share how their week has been, and anything that has come up for them.
- B) Group leader introduces the subject for this session, saying that, in general, the group will be looking at how abuse in families has to do with how much power people have and what choices they make about how they use their power.

III Power among people is not always equal

Leaders will call out configurations such as the ones that follow. Participants will be invited to say, for each configuration, whether one person is likely to be more powerful than the other and, if so, who.

- A) Sleeping person and standing person.
- B) Group leader and a small child
- C) One person using crutches and another person not using crutches.
- D) One person with lots of money and another with empty pockets.
- E) Big kid and little kid.
- F) Strong tall man and short slim woman

- G) Big boy and smaller girl.
- H) Frail elderly man and healthy younger adult child

IV Who is responsible for abuse?

- A) Put up the definition of abuse from Session Three. Note that, by definition, a person who is abusive is a person who uses power to control another person. Group leader will suggest that, in a conflict between two people where abuse happens, if one person has more power than the other, the abuser is responsible, even if the less powerful person did something to contribute to difficulties in the relationship.
- B) Responsibility Quiz
Leader will offer some scenarios (below) asking each time, "Is there abuse here?" and "Who is responsible?"
 - 1) Dinner is taking longer than usual because Mom got home late from work. Dad gets mad and starts screaming at Mom that she is a lousy wife and mother and a rotten cook also. [Is this abuse? Who is responsible?]
 - 2) José comes home from school with his report card, which has lots of F's on it. His father hits the roof, grabs José by the shoulder, drags him towards his room, and shoves him inside, slamming the door behind him. [Is this abuse? Who is responsible?]
 - 3) A bunch of teenagers are surrounding a younger boy in the park, calling him names and threatening to take his watch. Although the younger boy is pretty big, he is outnumbered and it looks like he will get beaten if he does not hand over the watch. [Is this abuse? Who is responsible?]
 - 4) A man comes home in a really bad mood. His wife says (with a bit of an attitude), "Hey, what's your problem...we've all had a hard day." He smashes her into the wall. [Is this abuse? Who is responsible?]

V Check-out

Leaders give participants an opportunity to ask questions about how they can support their children in understanding these concepts of personal power, choices, and consequences for behavior.

Materials

- Flip chart, markers
- Definition of abuse from Session Three

Session Six

Safety Planning

Goals/Expected Outcomes

Goals

1. To introduce the possibility that families can take steps toward safety when violence happens in their homes.
2. To reinforce the principles that children are not the cause of domestic violence and have the right to be safe.
3. To help caregivers understand how they can assist children in the development of safety plans for themselves.

Outcome

Caregivers will be able assist the children in their care in the development of personal safety plans.

Outline

I Introduction/icebreaker

Leaders begin by asking members to introduce themselves and complete the sentence "One person I trust unconditionally is...." Leaders have the statement on newsprint.

II Check-in

- A) Group leader invites members to share how their week has been and anything that has come up for them.
- B) Group leader introduces the subject for this session, saying that the group will be talking about how to be safe when abuse is happening and making personal protection plans.

III Making a personal protection planning card

A personal protection planning card has two sides and looks like this:

Side one:

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____

My Personal Protection Plan:

Side two:

I HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE SAFE
EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER: 911

- A) Leaders explain what the children will be doing to develop their own personal protection plan.
- B) Talk as a group about the importance of having children engage in safety planning for themselves. Elicit caregivers' feelings and levels of comfort with this process.
- C) Talk as a group about the parts of a safety plan/personal protection plan, such as where a child might go when violence erupts, who she or he might call, and so forth.
- D) Help caregivers see how they can help their children articulate what a personal protection plan could contain.

IV Practicing a safety call

- A) Explain that children will be practicing how to make a 911 call.
- B) Explain how to make a 911 call.
 - 1) Find a safe place to call.
 - 2) Dial 911.
 - 3) When you get through say:
 - (a) My name is _____.
 - (b) I need help.
 - (c) Send the police.
 - (d) My address is _____.
 - (e) My phone number is _____.
- C) A group leader will emphasize the following elements:
 - 1) The person should speak as loudly as it feels safe to speak.
 - 2) The person should emphasize that help is needed right away.

V Parenting Support

- A) Leaders invite caregivers to brainstorm some ways that they can help children work on safety planning. Put these ideas on newsprint. Some ideas that may come up are: helping the child memorize her or his name, address, phone number;

helping think of safe adults in their lives; giving permission to hide, to call 911, and to seek help.

- B) Leaders invite caregivers to share some of the thoughts about their own safety and that of their families that come up for them as we discuss the importance of safety planning for children. Talk about the power of modeling safe choices as adults and how important it is that adults and caregivers support children in seeking safety for themselves.

VI Check-out

Give participants an opportunity to talk about how they might engage their children in this safety planning process and where they feel unsure and may need help.

Materials

- Personal protection planning cards
- Newsprint, markers

Session Seven

Family Changes

Goals/Expected Outcomes

Goal

To explore the ways that domestic violence can bring about changes in families, some positive and some very difficult.

Outcome

1. Caregivers will have an increased understanding of the typical consequences of domestic violence.
2. Caregivers will have some strategies to support children through these changes.

Outline

I Introduction/icebreaker

Leaders and participants introduce themselves. Invite participants to share a nickname that they use or have used in the past.

II Check-in

- A) Group leader invites members to share how their week has been and anything that has come up for them.
- B) Group leader introduces the subject for this session, saying that the group will be looking some of the changes that can happen in families where there is abuse and looking at how some of these changes are positive, some feel very difficult, and some may seem to be negative but might really be positive. Children will be exploring the same issues in their session.

III Draw your family

Bring out paper, pencils, and markers and invite each participant to draw a picture of their family. They may draw whomever they consider family, their family of origin, or their current family however it is defined by them. They can include extended family as well as individuals to whom they may not be related by blood but who they consider to be family. Invite those who wish to to describe their drawings.

IV Statement bucket

- A) Pass around a bucket containing statements (see below) written on rolled up pieces of paper. Participants choose a piece of paper and read the statement, finishing it in their own way. Invite discussion among the caregivers. Statements can include the following
 - 1) I wish my family did not

- 2) I wish my family would
- 3) One of my favorite memories about being a kid is
- 4) One of the difficult things about being a parent or caregiver is
- 5) If I could go anywhere I wanted to, I would
- 6) When of my biggest regrets is
- 7) A really neat surprise I once had was when
- 8) A really unhappy surprise I once had was when
- 9) I feel really great when
- 10) I feel really lousy when

V What kinds of changes can domestic violence bring?

Leaders make a list of some of the changes that often take place in families where there is domestic violence and invite participants to explore whether each change is positive, negative, or not clear in the moment? Changes listed can include the following:

- A) Police can be called to our house.
- B) Mom and the kids can move out.
- C) Dad might leave home.
- D) We might have to go to a shelter.
- E) Children might have to change schools.
- F) Children might not know what to expect each day when I get home.
- G) Mom and kids might feel safer.
- H) Children might not be able to have friends over.
- I) DSS might move the kids out of the house.

VI A story about change

This is adapted from a story from ancient China (a Taoist story) that, as it goes along, participants can join:

Once there was a wise woman who lived in China. One day, for no reason, her horse ran away. It was the only horse she and her family had. Her son was very upset and said, "What bad luck." "Good luck...bad luck...who knows," she said very calmly.

About a week later the horse returned and with it came a beautiful and strong stallion. The son was totally happy and said, "What good luck!" "Good luck...bad luck...who knows," said the mother.

The household was richer because it now had two horses and the son loved to ride the stallion. One day, though, he fell off the horse and broke his leg. "What bad luck," he moaned. "Good luck...bad luck...who knows," said the mother. [Instead of just reading what the mother said, Leader might ask, "What do you think the mother said?"]

About a week later, a group of people from another village started a fight with the people from this woman's village and all of the villagers who were able were called to defend the village. But because the son was

injured he could not join the battle and, in this way, was able to avoid being injured or killed.

Good luck...bad luck? What do you think?

Truly, good luck can turn to bad luck and bad luck to good luck. Who truly knows what the future holds?

Invite participants to think about an event in their lives that seemed to be unlucky at the time but that turned out to be lucky. Invite those who wish to share this story.

VII Parenting Support

Leaders can choose one or both closing exercises with caregivers to illustrate strategies that caregivers can use to help their families weather the changes that come their way.

A) Keep Your Eyes on The Prize.

- 1) Leaders explain the importance of intentional and purposeful parenting. Explain that with a vision or dream of how we want our family to be, we can survive the challenges that we face by continuing to work towards our goals.
- 2) Engage participants in a visualization that gets them to "see" the family that they are trying to create. What does it look like, sound like? Who is in it? How do they interact? What are they doing?
- 3) Ask participants to share this family of their dreams. Discuss how being aware of what kind of family they want to create will help them deal with the changes that come along when dealing with violence and trauma.
- 4) Note to leaders: Be aware of possible feelings of shame and guilt that come up when discussing these issues, especially for caregivers who are the survivors of abuse. Validate where they are now in the process, recognizing that creating families is a lifelong journey.

B) Family Traditions

- 1) Ask participants to close their eyes (if comfortable), and think back to their childhood. Ask them to remember a favorite family tradition or ritual that their family did during their growing up years. Ask them to think about how it made them feel as a kid and how it makes them feel now. Some things you might hear are: family dinners, Sunday breakfasts, movie nights, or special holidays.
- 2) Ask members to share one of their favorite traditions with the group and their feelings about it. Leaders may notice the smiles and expressions on peoples' faces when recalling these memories. Leaders explain that these traditions and rituals serve as protective factors for children and are buffers against some of the harsher realities of their lives. These traditions help children feel connected and have a sense of belonging in a supportive group/family.

VIII Check-out

Give participants time to ask questions if needed. Remind them that immediate strategies to cope with family changes and challenges are hugs, pats on the back, acknowledging feelings, reminding them it's not their fault, and "I love you's".

Materials

- Drawing materials
- Bucket with statements written and rolled up inside

Session Eight

Substance Abuse

Goals/Expected Outcomes

Goals

1. To educate caregivers about substance abuse in general and its connection to domestic violence.
2. To reinforce the idea that substance abuse does not cause domestic violence, though it can make domestic violence worse.
3. To teach that substance abuse is an illness and that recovery is possible.

Outcomes

1. Caregivers will understand that substance abuse is an illness.
2. Caregivers will understand that substance abuse does not cause domestic violence.
3. Caregivers will be aware of how to handle concerns about substance abuse in their families.

Outline

I Introduction/icebreaker

Leaders ask members to introduce themselves and share with the group, "Something the group may not know about me is...."

II Check-in

- A) Group leader invites members to share how their week has been and anything that has come up for them.
- B) Group leader introduces the subject for this session, saying that the group will be looking at substance abuse, what causes it, and how it can affect children and families. We will look at the kinds of things that can happen in families where there is substance abuse.

III The elephant in the living room

- A) Put a large line drawing of an elephant on newsprint and post it for all to see. Explain the analogy that is being taught to children about the issue of substance use in families. Like this elephant in the living room, most everyone in the family knows it is there but pretends it is not and does not talk about it.
- B) Invite participants to share other subjects, often taboo, that are difficult to talk about. Put them on newsprint in the elephant. Explain that beginning to talk about these subjects helps us to deal with them in a more healthy way.
- C) Invite anyone who wants to share any experiences with substance use or abuse with the group.

IV What is alcoholism? What is substance abuse?

A) Key points to make:

- 1) Alcoholism and drug addiction are illnesses, just like asthma or heart problems.
- 2) People who study diseases like alcoholism and addiction do not understand what causes it but we know a lot about how it works.
- 3) People who have alcoholism or are addicted to drugs cannot easily stop using these substances, even though they are harmful and even when they seem to want to stop.
- 4) But they can stop with a lot of help.
- 5) Abusing alcohol and other drugs hurts the person with the illness, and that person's behavior can also hurt those around him or her.

B) Note the connections between substance abuse and domestic violence.

- 1) Domestic violence is not caused by substance abuse, though people who have alcoholism or drug addiction may be more abusive when they are drunk or high.
- 2) Just because the drinking or drug use stops, this does not guarantee that the abuse will stop.
- 3) Keeping children safe when parents or other family members are drinking or using drugs is the most important thing you can do.

C) Let caregivers know that children will be learning these concepts:

- 1) You cannot cause a person to become an alcoholic or an addict.
- 2) Having a parent who has alcoholism or drug addiction does not mean that children will automatically get these illnesses.
- 3) Having a parent who has alcoholism or drug addiction does not mean that the parent does not care for his or her children or partner. However, they might not be able to show their love or caring, because of the effects of alcohol and drugs and because being addicted overpowers a person's ability to care for themselves and their families.
- 4) You also cannot control the drinking or drug use of a person with alcoholism or addiction.

V Read the story: *I Wish Daddy Didn't Drink So Much*

Invite caregivers to talk about what feelings came up as the story was being read.

VI Parenting support/check-out

Lead a discussion among participants about how to handle issues of substance abuse in families. Encourage discussion, exploration, and problem solving around the questions that caregivers have. Be sure to include a discussion of these key questions:

- A) How can I talk with kids about drugs and alcohol, especially if adults in their lives use or abuse them?

- B) Should I be concerned about my child using substances? What are the warning signs?
- C) What can I do now, when they are young, to prevent them from getting involved with substances?

Materials

- Drawing of an elephant
- Newsprint, markers
- *I Wish Daddy Didn't Drink So Much*, Judith Vigna. An Albert Whitman Prairie Book.

Session Nine

Getting Along with One Another Solving Conflicts without Violence

Goals/Expected Outcomes

Goals

1. To explore the relationship between anger and conflict.
2. To illustrate and practice nonviolent ways to resolve conflicts.

Outcomes

- I Caregivers will be able to identify one or more strategies for responding to conflict.
- II Caregivers will understand that there is an element of choice in conflict situations.
- III Caregivers will understand their role in modeling positive problem-solving and conflict resolution approaches.

Outline

I Introduction/icebreaker

Leader invites members to introduce themselves and finish the following sentence (which is on newsprint): "You can tell I am angry when...."

II Check-in

- A) Group leader invites members to share how their week has been and anything that has come up for them.
- B) Group leader introduces the subject for this session, saying that the group will be looking at how to handle anger and resolve conflicts without violence.

III The Thermometer

- A) Put up a big sheet with a drawing of a thermometer showing degrees of anger (see materials) with space to one side of the thermometer.
- B) What Does Anger Look Like? Invite participants to make angry faces and angry postures on the count of three. Have everyone look around the room and notice other people's angry faces.
- C) What Does Anger Sound Like? Invite caregivers to make sounds that convey their anger, on the count of three. Ask them, "Notice your body, how does it feel, how has it changed?"

IV Offer this definition of anger

"Anger is a feeling that usually arises when things are not going the way you want. It is a signal that something is wrong."

V What we do when we are angry

Ask caregivers to make a list of the things people do when they are angry, such as yell, cry, hit, sulk, talk to someone, reflect on what happened, and so forth. Have them call their responses out one by one and put them on newsprint.

VI Offer this way of thinking about conflict:

- A) Conflict usually happens between people. A conflict can be a disagreement that does not feel okay. It can be a situation where someone says something or does something that you think is not right. Conflict can happen when two people have different opinions and one person feels that his or her opinion is the right one.
- B) When conflicts happen there are lots of things you can do. The group leader can invite or offer examples, such as the following:
 - 1) You can do nothing and see if the conflict goes away by itself.
 - 2) You can try to convince the other person to change her or his opinion.
 - 3) You can strike out at the person.
 - 4) You can try to see whether there is a way to compromise with the person so that you both feel okay about what happened.

VII Parenting support—a problem-solving process

- A) Ask participants to think about a situation in their lives involving conflict that they would like help with. It could be between two adults, between adults and children, or between children themselves (such as siblings or friends).
- B) Have the group break into pairs and take turns working on each other's conflicts.
- C) Come back to the group and see if anyone is willing to role play her conflict and problem solving process with her partner [The facilitator might offer to take on the role of the person with whom the participant has a conflict. The facilitator can then role play both negative and positive ways of responding to the conflict].
- D) Explore the ways in which conflicts give us options for how to respond. Generate a list of things people can do when conflict arises that can make it more likely that the conflict will not escalate. Some examples include the following:
 - 1) Try to refrain from retaliating.
 - 2) Try to restrain one's words.
 - 3) Breathe.
 - 4) Walk away.
 - 5) Try to understand the other person's point of view.
 - 6) Try to sympathize with the other person's feelings.

VIII Check-out

Give caregivers a chance to ask questions about using a problem-solving approach. Ask them, if they would use it and why or why not. What are some of the other strategies for conflict resolution we talked about?

Materials

- Thermometer
- Problem solving process worksheets
- Pens, pencils, markers

Session Ten

Sexual Abuse

Goals/Expected Outcomes

Goals

1. To educate caregivers about sexual abuse.
2. To teach caregivers safety skills related to inappropriate touching and other forms of sexual abuse.

Outcomes

1. Caregivers will have an increased awareness of personal space, for themselves and others.
2. Caregivers will have an increased awareness of how to protect children from unwanted touching.

Outline

I Introductions/icebreaker

Each member introduces her or himself to the group and shares one of her or his family's cultural norms around touching. For example put on newsprint, "In my family/culture we show affection by...."

II Check-in

Group leader introduces the subject for this session, saying that the group will be talking about personal space and people's right to be touched or not touched. Note that this is what the children will be exploring in their group.

III Personal space exercise

- A) Personal space is the space around your body. When someone comes into our personal space we usually know it. Personal space can be different for each of us.
- B) Ask caregivers to stand up and extend their arms out from their bodies as far as they would feel comfortable having another person close to them. Their personal space is as far as they have extended their arms.
- C) A leader should move close to a participant and invite the person and others to talk about noticing the leader moving into their personal space. Invite individual to say how it feels.
- D) Invite participants to name people who can move into their personal space without making them feel bad or unsafe.

IV A sexual abuse story

- A) Possible books to read:

- 1) *What's Wrong with Bottoms*
 - 2) *My Body is Mine*
- B) After reading the story, invite caregivers to talk about any questions they have or any issues that came up for them. How do they think their children will respond to this story? How can they respond positively to the questions or issues that their children bring to them about this issue?

V Okay and not okay behavior

Make three signs and put them up in a row in the room: "Okay," "Not Okay," "It Depends." Call out the following behaviors and invite participants to stand under the sign that matches their view of the behavior. Discuss their responses inviting them to move to other positions if that is appropriate.

Okay Not Okay It Depends

- A) Shaking someone's hand.
- B) Giving a friend a "high five."
- C) Touching someone's backside.
- D) Holding your grandparent's hand when crossing the street.
- E) Holding hands with a friend.
- F) Touching a person's breasts.
- G) Having your shoulders rubbed.

VI Parenting Support

- A) Invite participants to think about the kind of conversations they have had or want/need to have with their children on this issue. Assist group members in brainstorming language and approach for these conversations about personal safety.
- B) Leaders are prepared to present some information about warning signs to look for in children who are being or have been sexually abused. Present information and conduct coaching on how to respond to concerns or disclosures of abuse.

VII Check-out

Leaders give group opportunity for final questions.

Materials

- Books:
 - o *What's Wrong with Bottoms*, Jenny Hessel. New Zealand: Random House, 1993.
 - o *My Body is Mine, My Feelings are Mine: a Storybook about Body Safety for Young Children* (with an adult guide book). Susan Hoke and Bruce Van Patter. King of Prussia, PA: Center for Applied Psychology, 1995.
- Signs: Okay, Not Okay, It Depends

Session Eleven

Children's Rights

Goals/Expected Outcomes

Goals

1. To introduce the concept of children's rights.
2. To begin the process of closure of the group.

Outcomes

Caregivers will be able to identify two or more children's rights.

Outline

I Introduction/icebreaker

Leaders and participants introduce themselves, their children, and one special quality about each child in their care. On newsprint write, "One special quality about my child is"

II Check-in

- A) Group leader invites members to share how their week has been and anything that has come up for them.
- B) Group leader introduces the subject for this session, saying that the group will address the rights of children and will begin to talk about ending the group.

III Group appreciation

- A) Introduce this exercise by inviting caregivers to think about their time in this group and about the other participants. Invite them to think about something that each member has contributed to the group, or one thing they liked about another member.
- B) Leader begins by naming one of the participants and saying something about that person that the leader really appreciates. Then others in the group are invited to add things they appreciate about that member.
- C) Continue around the room until each participant has heard something that the leaders appreciate about him or her and some things that others have added.

IV Self-appreciation

Invite caregivers to say something they like about themselves.

V Rights in a bucket

The following children's rights are written on pieces of paper that are rolled up and placed in a bucket. Invite caregivers to pick a piece of paper, read the right, and see if she can give an example of this right.

- A) Children have a right to be children.
- B) Children have a right to have fun.
- C) Children have a right to have feelings and ideas and to express them.
- D) Children have a right to ask for what they need.
- E) Children have a right to some secrets.
- F) Children have a right to privacy.
- G) Children have a right to make choices.
- H) Children have a right to be respected.
- I) Children have a right to be accepted for who they are.
- J) Children have a right to be cared for.
- K) Children have a right to be protected from abuse and neglect.
- L) Children have a right to be believed.
- M) Children have a right to be happy.

VI Parenting support

Leaders talk with the group about the importance of recognizing children's strengths, talents, and special qualities.

VII Check out

Leaders remind members that next week is the last week of the group. Invite members to share some initial feelings around this. Put these feelings on newsprint and have participants complete the thought, "One way I usually handle goodbye's is...."

Materials

- Bucket with statements written and rolled up inside
- Newsprint, markers

Session Twelve

Closing

Note: Caregivers will be invited to join the children's group toward the end to participate in the closing ritual and snack.

Goals/Expected Outcomes

Goals

1. To bring a sense of closure to the group.
2. To recognize the growth and efforts of the caregivers.

Outcome

1. Caregivers will have a positive feeling about their participation in the group.
2. Caregivers will feel supported in their parenting journey with their children.

Outline

I Introduction/icebreaker

Leaders and participants introduce themselves. There is a lot to do in a short time this session, so leaders may skip the icebreaker this session.

II Check-in

A) Leaders thank all the members who showed up, recognizing that not showing up is one way people handle goodbyes and that their showing up is to be commended. It is a good model for children in teaching them to deal directly with life's situations. Talk about endings in general and the ending of this group in particular, about how there can be feelings of sadness and also feelings of appreciation for the good times during the group.

B) Invite each participant to say whatever she or he feels like saying about the group and/or about its coming to an end.

III Review of group

Leaders hang on the walls around the room newsprint with subjects discussed. Briefly remind people of the topics that have been discussed.

IV Letters

A) Leaders pass out envelopes and note paper to participants. Ask each caregiver to address one envelope to him or herself. Then, ask them to write letters to themselves with thoughts about the group, what they want to remember about what they learned, how they felt, anything they want to do differently, start doing, stop doing, continue doing, words of encouragement, and so forth.

B) Leaders ask participants to also put the name of each of their children on a separate envelope for each child. Then ask them to write a short note, one or two sentences about how they feel about them and their participation in the group. Leaders may put some ideas on newsprint for caregivers to refer to, such as: "I am so proud of you," "One of your special qualities is....," "I love you," or "You are so special to me because...." Have the caregiver put the note in the envelope and bring it to the children's group. Be aware of language and literacy issues. Be available to assist participants in writing if needed.

V Moms join the children's group

Materials

- Newsprint
- Envelopes and note paper
- Pens, pencils, markers

Rules of Our Group

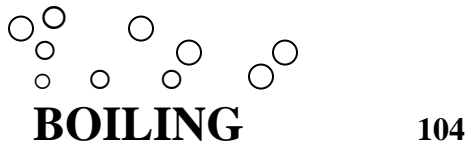
1. Only one person speaks at a time.
2. We pay attention to the person speaking. We do not interrupt.
3. Things people say in the group stay in the group. We keep every person's words confidential.
4. We respect one another and talk in ways that make others feel good rather than bad.
5. Every member of the group has the right to speak or not speak, draw or not draw, take part in group activities or not take part in them.
6. If I choose not to talk or do an activity, I will sit quietly and pay attention to others in the group
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

I agree to these rules.

(Sign your name here)

(Date)





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