
SESSION 6

Objectives:

- To understand personal responsibility, consequences and choices.
- To develop problem-solving skills.
- To identify and develop strategies for the prevention of interpersonal violence and abuse.
- To identify and maximize access to adult resources.

Session Outline:

- Responsibility and Consequences
- Problem-Solving
- Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Prevention

Updating

Did any of you have an opportunity to notice or change your communication patterns regarding passive, aggressive or assertive behavior?

How did you feel?

Did any of you note nice or special things that happened to you in your notebook?

This session we're going to talk about responsibility, taking care of yourselves and solving problems.

Responsibility and Consequences

Who can tell me what responsibility means?

Being responsible for something means you make a choice and accept that the choice was yours. It means dealing effectively with consequences.

What about consequences, what does that mean?

Consequences are what happens as a result of a decision, something that follows an event.

The way you communicate and behave with people definitely has consequences, part of which are determined by the effect you have on people.

There are advantages and disadvantages to all sorts of behavior and you always have to make choices.

Discuss the idea that making a choice to communicate in one manner as opposed to another doesn't mean one choice is better than another. For example, what if someone was touching you in a way that you didn't want them to and you felt that speaking to them assertively might make things worse. You might choose to be passive, but to get away from that person. Then you could tell someone else.

What are the consequences of being too passive?

It could mean that you almost never get what you need or want out of your life, yet we all do it sometimes.

Being aggressive is also something that people do sometimes. At times it even feels good because it helps to get something off your mind. But at other times, it hurts other people's feelings, and we only feel badly afterwards.

The most important consideration when you're choosing a way to communicate something is: does it accomplish what you want in the long term?

Having a friend be hurt and not want to spend time with you might be one of the consequences of aggressive behavior.

Having people not want to spend time with you because you never care about anything may be a price for passive behavior.

Having your classmates be angry with you when they are late for lunch because you "hung out" in the

restroom too long is the price for passive-aggressive behavior.

Being totally ignored can be the consequence of indirect behavior.

Understanding choices and alternatives gives you the most control.

Letting people know assertively what impact they are having on you can sometimes bring remarkable results.

Problem-Solving

Learning to solve problems for yourself, with or without the help of others, is an important part of learning to exercise more control in your life.

Problems are universal — everyone has them. The richest, poorest, smartest, youngest and oldest people all have problems. The problems may differ, but they are painful, frustrating and need attention no matter who you are.

The very first thing to know about problems is that they belong to you.

Even if a problem seems to be caused by what someone else is doing, the affect it has on you individually, makes it your problem.

The worst way to deal with problems is to expect someone else to make it better or make it go away.

This may seem contradictory because often the first thing grownups want to do when you tell them about a problem is solve it for you, explain it away or tell you to forget it. When they do that, they take away your ability to handle the problem for yourself — in a way that meets your needs.

This often makes young people feel angry because grownups are really attempting to take away their ability to take care of a problem themselves. This leaves the kid feeling small and not very capable.

Has that ever happened to you? How did it make you feel?

One way to prevent this from happening is to be clear in the way you ask for help.

For example, "I have a problem that I want to solve myself, but I need someone to listen and help me do that."

At the same time, it is important to remind yourself that as long as you are not yet adults, there will be problems you can solve by yourself and problems that you need help with.

This is really important. Sometimes you can't and shouldn't solve a problem yourself, and that's okay.

Responsible problem-solving includes knowing when to get help.

In order to be a good problem solver, it is important to understand what causes problems.

Looking at the cause often gives you an idea about how to solve a problem

Causes of Problems

Flip chart 16

Problems are caused by one of three things:

1. **undelivered communication** — feelings or ideas we have;
2. **unfulfilled expectation** — actions of others; and/or
3. **objective situations** — an event that happens.

We all have problems, and we have three basic choices:

1. **ignore them, do nothing, pretend they'll go away;**
2. **do anything, act immediately and impulsively; and/or**
3. **apply problem-solving skills.**

What we say to ourselves about problems directly affects how we handle them.

Let's go through the five steps to effective problem-solving:

Select a hypothetical situation and actually go through this as a group activity, discussing details of

the 5 steps. One of the participants may volunteer to share a problem for the group to work with.

Flip chart 17

5 steps to problem-solving:

- 1. stop, breathe and look;**
- 2. name the problem and consider the source;**
- 3. consider the many options available;**
- 4. think through each of the options;**
- 5. select an option and keep an open mind; and notice how you feel about your choice**

Discuss the 5 steps:

1. *Stop, breathe, acknowledge* you're going to look at the problem
2. *Name the problem* — identify exactly what it is in one simple sentence. Be sure the conflict is accurately and simply stated. It's important to tell the truth at this stage. If you fail to see things clearly and tell the truth, the rest of the process will yield a different result than you might want.

It is also worthwhile to look at the source of the problem. If it is, for example, an unrealistic expectation, the solution may be different than if the problem is an undelivered communication.

Separate the people involved from the problem. Misunderstandings are part of life. Look at the problem as much as possible without bringing into it everything you believe about the person, what you think of them and what you believe about what they think about you.

3. *Consider the various options* open to you. Be creative. Don't reject any of them yet. Be aware of what your mind is saying about the various options as they come up.
4. *Think through what would happen if you exercised the options.* Be open — give other people and how they might react a real chance in this process. Acknowledge your worst fears.
5. *Choose the best option for you* given what you want to have happen. Remember to be open about the reactions of others. If you're too sure about how someone might react, the way you talk with them will determine the way they respond.

Be committed to having it work — not to proving that it won't or that someone is a particular kind of person. Be aware of your own agendas. Noticing how you feel about the choice you made provides insight about your agendas.

Family Problem-Solving Styles

Have the group consider how decisions get made and problems get solved in their homes. Home is probably where they got their own ideas about

working out problems. Considering their own problem solving techniques or styles will enable them to adapt to more effective techniques. Discuss this using the following questions as guidelines:

Are your parents ignorers, impulsers or problem solvers?

Do you get to participate in the process?

Is there someone in your family who dominates everyone and makes decisions for everyone?

How do other family members feel about it?

Are you from a family where no one makes decisions and everyone feels uncertain about who is in control and what will happen next?

How do you think decisions should be made in your family?

Are there decisions you feel old enough to make for yourself?

What are the responsibilities that go along with each of those decisions?

Exercise:

Have each group member list decisions they feel they could make for themselves in their notebooks. On the opposite side of the page have them list the responsibilities that go along with making those decisions.

Do you feel you can be responsible for the decisions you'd like to make?

Use some specific examples and discuss the decision-making process or decisions group members want to be responsible in their families.

Prevention of Interpersonal Violence and Abuse

The degree to which you want to include issues related to dating and acquaintance rape should depend on the age and needs of your group. An additional resource for working with issues of interpersonal violence and dating violence is: **DATING VIOLENCE: INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION** by Sherryl Kraizer, Ph.D. It is available from: Domestic Violence Intervention Services, Inc., 1419 East 15th Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74120-5840. TEL: (918) 585-3163

Last time we discussed speaking up when someone touches you in a way that isn't all right with you. But the theory and reality of speaking up are very different. Being assertive in this type of situation can seem almost impossible, particularly when you feel pressured.

Let's look at some of the ways this can happen so you'll be more prepared if you find yourself in that situation. It's important also to look at how other people would feel if you were the one doing the pressuring.

If someone is trying to impose themselves on you or behaving in a way that is threatening to you, communicating clearly is your first line of defense.

A second line of defense is to let the person know you're going to tell someone else about what is happening.

In some situations, the best defense may be to agree to secrecy just so you can get out of the situation and then tell someone.

Pushing, manipulating, pressuring, exploiting and forcing another person is unacceptable. At the same time, it can be very hard to resist.

Do any of you have examples of something that has happened to you, or that you've thought about that might happen, that you would like to role-play?

If not, some possible role-plays follow. Use them with discretion depending on the age and needs of the group.

- ▶ **The father of a child you baby-sit for stares at you in a way that makes you feel uneasy and a little scared. You don't want him to take you home.**
- ▶ **Your boyfriend is taking you to the drive-in even though your parents think you're going to the movies. You feel uncomfortable.**
- ▶ **You're home alone and a man who has been at the house earlier working on the television returns. You weren't expecting him to return and don't know whether or not to let him in.**
- ▶ **You're going to a party with your friends. When you get there, you're friends parents are gone and everyone is drinking.**
- ▶ **You're staying overnight with a friend and his older sister is coming on to you. You don't want to stay but you are afraid maybe you're just imagining it.**
- ▶ **A teacher at school keeps "accidentally" brushing up against you.**
- ▶ **You're on a date and your date drives to a secluded place. You don't feel safe.**

NO IS NOT ENOUGH by Adams, Fay and Loreen- Martin (1984) is another excellent resource for additional work on prevention of acquaintance rape. It is available from: Impact Publishers, P.O. Box 1094, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406.

No Questions Asked & Getting Help

One option many young people work out with their parents is the "No Questions Asked Agreement."

You and your parents agree that you can call and ask to be picked up from an unsafe situation. Even if you were doing something you shouldn't have or have gone someplace you shouldn't have, they agree to come get you, no questions asked. At some later point, you and your parents must deal with the fact that you broke the rules, but your safety and ability to escape from any situation is of the utmost importance.

Who, other than you parents, are the adults you could go to with problems such as these?

Help them begin to explore their own resources, people they might go to when they need help. It is important never to tell children who they can or cannot trust. They must be able to rely on their own instinct or ability to feel confident about an individual.

Part of growing up responsibly means knowing the difference between the problems you CAN solve all by yourself and those that are bigger than your ability to solve them, and require the help of an adult.

Part of having the right to take care of yourself means having to do things that are hard sometimes like speaking up, saying no and telling someone when you need to get help.

These problems are worth thinking about ahead of time, because they are complicated. When you think about them ahead, it can be less confusing when you need to do something for yourself.

Relaxation

To end today, let's close our eyes, and breathe deeply and quietly. Breathe in, count to four and breathe out to a count of eight.

Do this for them three times.

Now see yourself sitting here in this room. Imagine yourself sitting straight and tall. Remember all the things you've learned today that you can use this week to help you in your life.

See yourself speaking up for yourself in an uncomfortable situation.

See yourself looking at a problem, taking a breath, thinking of the options and choices you have.

See yourself thinking about what you want and how to make a choice that is good for you.

Then see yourself making that choice, confidently, having everything turn out just the way you wanted it to.

Feel how strong and competent you are.

Feel your breathing relaxing you and building your knowledge that you can make good choices, that you can solve problems, that you can find people to help you.

Now imagine a smile on your face that feels warm and wonderful.

Feel the warmth of that smile spread over your body like a wonderful blanket.

Now quietly stretch for a moment and take a slow deep breath.

Then open your eyes ready to go on to whatever you're going to do next today.

Session 6 — Self-work Activities

1. Set a goal for the week and notice how you go about moving toward that goal, what gets in the way and how you handle it.
2. Do the "Discovering Insights" Activity sheet. Please bring this back to the next session.

Discovering Insights Exercise

PLACE A CHECK BY ANY OF THE STATEMENTS WHICH YOU THINK ARE TRUE.

- I must be loved and approved of by everyone who knows me but especially by those who are most important to me.
- I should be perfectly competent and successful in whatever I do.
- I have to please others and satisfy their expectations of me.
- I can't ever say what I really think and feel.
- I have no control over my success and happiness. They are totally determined by external circumstances.
- Hurting the feelings of others should always be avoided.
- Others must treat me kindly, fairly and considerately at all times.
- Life must work out just the way I have planned. I couldn't stand it if it didn't.
- Life must make things easy for me and give me what I want without too much trouble or annoyance.
- The world should be fair and justice must always triumph.
- The fearsome things of the world will keep me from being happy and successful.

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Session 6 of the CHALLENGE Program!

Learning to solve problems gives us a way to exercise more control in our lives.

There are five steps to effective problem-solving:

1. Stop, breathe and look
2. Name the problem
3. Consider the options
4. Think through the options
5. Select one of the options and keep an open mind — notice how you feel about your choice.

We are also discussing ways in which young people can prevent interpersonal violence. One of the suggestions is the “No Questions Asked Agreement.” You agree with your children that they may call and ask to be picked up from an unsafe situation. Even if they were doing something they shouldn’t have or have gone someplace they shouldn’t have, you agree to come get you, “no questions asked.” At some later point, you and your child must deal with the fact that the rules were broken, but their safety and ability to escape from any situation is of the utmost importance.

Learning to value themselves and others, to respect individual rights and interpersonal limits is an important part of developing self-esteem. One very nice definition of self-esteem reflects what we’ve been talking about this session: Respect for self — esteem for others.

Sincerely,

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