
SESSION 1

Objectives:

- To establish working agreements for group participation.
- To recognize that you can be a friend to yourself.
- To identify the internal voice.
- To experience the power of that voice to have positive or negative effects in their lives.
- To understand how people make choices.
- To recognize personal patterns in making choices.
- To introduce relaxation exercises.
- To introduce the use of Selfwork.

Session Outline:

- **Getting Started**
- **Introductions**
- **Agreements**
- **Friends**
- **Internal Voice**
 - Exercise: Arm Out
- **Break Or Split Session Option**
 - Optional Exercises for Split Session
 - Relaxation for Split Session
 - Selfwork for Split Session
 - Reentry for Split Session
- **Choices**
- **Giving Choices Away**
 - Exercise: Personal Patterns
- **Relaxation**
- **Selfwork**
- **Handouts**
 - Letter to Parents
 - Journaling
 - Getting to Know Me
 - 17 Questions
- **Materials:**
 - Flip chart or chalk board
 - Journals or Notebooks if you will be providing them.
 - Game pieces if Optional Exercise will be used.

Getting Started

Does anyone know what RECOVERY is about?

Get their ideas — no right or wrong answers.

Each of you has experienced being abused. It wasn't your fault, but you have to decide how what happened will affect your life and what you would do if you were in that situation again.

The RECOVERY Program is to help you with all of that. We will talk about some ways to keep anything like that from happening to you again. We'll talk about how you see and think about yourself and how to have your life be more the way you want it to be.

Introductions

Let's begin to get to know each other. I'd like each of you to introduce yourself.

Tell us your name,
where you go to school,
something you like about yourself and
one thing you're good at.

I'll start. . . .

It may be quite difficult for some participants to think of even a single positive thing to say. If they cannot, even with your assistance, ask them to continue to be open to thinking of something and to let the group know when they do.

Agreements

The success of our group will depend a lot on the agreements we make. Who can tell me what an agreement is?

Discussion and definition. "A mutual understanding, contract, promise."

What are some agreements that you have at home?

In school?

With friends?

Are some agreements unspoken?

There are a couple of agreements we need to have in this group.

The first agreement is that each of you will participate in the group to get value for yourself.

Prompt them to discuss what they think "getting value for yourself" might mean.

The second agreement is that the group will be a "safe place" for everyone, that individual differences and shared communications will be respected, and that what is said and done in the group will not be discussed outside the group except with parents or (if applicable) therapists.

This discussion may be limited for very young groups, but all participants should be able to agree to some limits which will shape the behavior in and outside of the group.

Encourage group members to agree on confidentiality and open expression, including:

1. each member has permission to be who he or she is without judgment or ridicule; and
2. whatever is said stays within the group.

Raise your hand if you will keep these agreements.

If anyone does not agree, discuss and agree upon any exceptions.

Are there other agreements we would like to make?

Allow for discussion of other possible agreements and give the group an opportunity to work out their ideas.

Lengthy discussion of agreements at this point can be valuable. They are the basis of problems in many participants's lives. Understanding what it means to make and keep an agreement may be one of the most important activities of this group.

Friends

Who can tell me what a friend is?

Discuss.

One of the goals for this group is to learn to be a better friend to yourself, to learn to like yourself more, and to be nicer to yourself.

Flip Chart 1

A friend is:

- a person you know, like, and trust;
- a favored companion.

Being a good friend to yourself means that:

- you can stop doing something you don't like;
- you can do something you want to do; and
- you can expect others to stop doing something you don't like.

Who are some of the people you consider friends?

- Do you think of yourself as a friend to other people?
To yourself?

Use the content of flip chart to aid discussion.

Can anyone think of any reasons why you would want to learn to be a better friend to yourself or to like yourself more?

Discuss.

Being a good friend to yourself means thinking and saying nice things to yourself.

Internal Voice

How many of you have a little voice inside your head that talks to you?

Discuss.

If any participants seem puzzled, say, "Maybe you're saying to yourself, 'Do I have a little voice that talks to me?' Well, that's the voice we're talking about — the one asking if you have a little voice or the one saying, 'No, I don't have a little voice.'"

One of the ways some people think about this inner voice is to imagine a little bird sitting on their shoulder watching everything and commenting on everything.

This imagery is especially effective for younger participants.

Even when we're talking to someone else, the voice just keeps chattering away.

This inner voice can be a real friend or a real enemy because it can say things that make you feel good or things that make you feel awful.

Stop and listen for just a minute to what your little voice is saying right now.

Who can think of some nice things your inner voice might say?

This can be extremely difficult for some participants. This will begin to give you a sense of the functional level of self-esteem of group members.

This concept is problematic for those who have experienced or are presently dealing with multiple personalities. Discuss this with the participant's therapist prior to admission to the group. If you should pick up a questionable case unexpectedly, make a referral for evaluation.

If you spent a lot of time on agreements and are short of time, save this exercise for the next session.

If this does not work with one participant, acknowledge what happened and ask for someone else to try the exercise. Individual differences affect the outcome.

Who can think of some awful things your inner voice says?

Do not comment upon what they say or invalidate any of their comments. Again, this is a way for you to gauge their level of self-esteem and negative thoughts.

We're going to learn to use that inner voice to make ourselves feel better, to take care of ourselves.

Exercise: Arm Out

Let's try an experiment. Who wants to help?

Have a volunteer come up and stand with you.

Hold your arm out (at a right angle).

Now hold it as straight and strong as you can and don't let me push your arm down.

Push down on the arm. It should lower without too much effort.

Now close your eyes and listen to what I'm saying. Repeat it to yourself along with me. "I am strong and smart and I can do anything I set my mind to."

See your entire body being strong and powerful and able to do anything you set your mind to. Keep telling yourself how strong you are.

Now push down gently on the volunteer's arm. You should not be able to get the arm to lower.

Now close your eyes, hold your arm out once again and say to yourself, "I am worthless. I deserve everything

bad that has ever happened to me. No one loves me and I don't love myself."

Gently push down on the arm. It should go down easily.

What do you think happened in that experiment?

Elicit group responses.

We don't want to leave him/her feeling weak, so let's go back and repeat once again, "I am strong and wonderful and I can do anything I set my mind to."

Repeat this several times. Then push down on the arm to demonstrate that strength is restored.

What do you think this tells you about your ability to affect what you can and cannot do?

Discuss.

Break Or Split Session Option

Optional Exercise: for Split Session

Play one of the following games or activities. When the game or activity is complete, discuss with the group what role agreements and goals have in the process and what a breakdown in the agreements and goals would look like.

With groups that are old enough, this exercise may be repeated with all participants in pairs so everyone has an opportunity to experience the difference. The group leader should lead the participants through the process. Caution the group not to push down hard enough to hurt anyone. This paired exercise should not be attempted with groups exhibiting poor impulse control or

Participants old enough to read and write should have a notebook or journal for use in the group. They should bring it with them to the next session.

If you are using this exercise, use it prior to the Relaxation Exercise so you end on a quiet note.

musical chairs

dodge ball

jump rope

tag

shooting baskets

Relaxation: for Split Session

Use Relaxation at end of session 1.

Selfwork: for Split Session

Select Selfwork exercises from numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 found at the end of this Session.

Reentry: for Split Session

Do any of you have any feedback on your selfwork activities?

Do you all have a notebook for this group?

Were any of you more aware of spoken and unspoken agreements since the last session?

Did you notice that you make choices about keeping those agreements or not?

Choices

What is choice?

To select out or choose.

Why are choices important?

One of the worst feelings you can have is feeling trapped, feeling that you have no choice.

Everyone has felt that way at some time in their life, but usually, feeling trapped is just a feeling. There are really lots of choices to be made if you stop and look for them.

Flip Chart 2

Making choices isn't picking what you want out of the sky, it is:

- looking at what you want;
- looking at what is possible; and
- looking at what you expect to happen if you make a particular choice.

Making choices can help your life move ahead or keep you stuck.

It's a little like going into a restaurant.

For example, if you order one of the items on the menu, you'll be happy, filled up, and ready to go to the movies.

MENU

Burritos

Enchiladas

Quesadillas

Guacamole

Can anyone tell me why deciding to have pizza or Chinese food at this restaurant may lead you to feel frustrated, upset, or hungry?

Discuss

At the same time, the reality is that you are (were) children, that there are people older, bigger, and stronger than you who definitely have some control over your lives.

Some of that control is healthy, helps you to grow and keep you safe.

Ask group for examples

But, there are also people in the world who use their power to hurt other people. That is why children are sometimes abused.

Each of you has had an experience with someone that abused that power and control.

That is wrong and it is never the child's fault. But, once it happens, children have to make choices.

For example, after some children are abused they choose to tell. Other children choose not to tell. Some children give hints and hope someone will notice or ask. All of these are choices.

Having control in your life means looking at what choices you have, making a choice, and then realizing that there will be consequences (or that something will happen) as a result of that choice.

This does not mean that you will like everything that happens as a result of your choice or that things will necessarily be easy, but choosing feels better than being helpless to make a choice because you did not know how. If you never make choices for yourself, then you will always be a victim and never in control.

Did any of you make a choice to tell about your abuse?

Elicit examples.

How did that make you feel?

Discuss.

Did you like everything that happened after you told?

Discuss.

Was it still better choosing to tell than to let the abuse continue?

Discuss.

Giving Choices Away

Some people give their choices away.

For example, letting your parents order your meals, decide what you wear, etc.

People sometimes give their choice away by asking other people to solve their problems. They become helpless and let other people take care of them.

Can any of you think of some times that you've given your choice away?

Elicit examples.

How did it make you feel?

Discuss.

When you do this a lot in your life, it puts everyone in control of your life but you.

Do we do that when we look outside ourselves for other people to solve our problems? Is that a choice?

Discuss.

Learning to solve problems for yourself does not mean you have to solve them alone. There are many people available to help you solve problems, to help you make choices.

But it's important to look inside yourself, to think about the options that other people suggest.

Having control in your life is partly:

- looking at what choices you have;
- making a choice; and
- realizing there will be consequences that follow from your choices.

Exercise: Personal Patterns

Discuss the following questions in the group. You may also write them out and send them home so participants can answer them in their notebooks, looking particularly at the ways in which they handle choice.

What are some of the choices I make for myself?

What are some choices that other people make for me?

Do I like the balance between choices I make for myself and choices that others make for me?

Are there things I would like to change?

What changes am I prepared to make this coming week?

What do I need to communicate and to whom?

Relaxation

One of the best ways to relax, to lower your feelings of stress or tension or upset is to breathe, to take a few minutes for yourself. So let's do that now.

(Read the following slowly and evenly.)

Let's take just a minute to let everything we've done today settle in.

Close your eyes, sit up in your chair, but be comfortable. Take a slow deep breath.

Pause a few seconds between each instruction.

Now, pay attention to your feet. Tighten the muscles in your feet. . . . , hold it. . . . , hold it. . . . , now let them relax. . . . , let them go, let them relax completely.

Now, leaving your feet relaxed, pay attention to your legs. Tighten all the muscles in your legs. . . . , hold it. . . . , hold it. . . . , and then let them go. . . . , relax.

Now bring your attention to your hands. Tighten them into a fist . . . , hold it . . . , hold it . . . , now let them go, relax.

Keeping your hands and legs relaxed, tighten the muscles in your arms, hold it. . . . , hold it. . . . , now let them relax. . . . , feel all the tension letting go.

Now the muscles in your stomach. Tighten them. . . . , hold it. . . . , hold it. . . . , now let them relax completely.

Now your shoulders and neck. Tighten them, hold it. . . ., hold it. . . ., now relax. Feel all the tightness and tension flow away with every breath you take.

Finally, all the muscles in your face. Squinch them up, tight, hold it. . . ., hold it. . . ., now let them all go, relax.

Now just pay attention to your breathing, feel how relaxed your body is.

Pause for a minute.

You can do this for yourself anytime you feel tense and want to feel more relaxed.

Now, slowly begin to bring your attention into the room, move around a little bit and, when you are ready, open your eyes.

Selfwork

Each session we will have some Selfwork Activities. They are called that because you are doing them for yourself.

You are the only one who will decide whether you will do them or not.

If you don't do them, you won't have the opportunity to learn from them.

If you choose to do them, you may discover some things.

In all sessions, assign Selfwork appropriately for the age and maturity of your group. Giving the Selfwork assignments in writing each session will greatly enhance the likelihood that they will be understood and completed.

Session 1 — Selfwork Activities

1. If you do not already have one, please get a notebook (or journal) for this group. Write down or draw a picture of one nice thing that happens to you every day. We spend so much time noticing what's upsetting, that a daily reminder of something nice that happened or that someone said to you can be wonderful. (Parents should do this, too!)
2. Each day do something nice for yourself that will help you to feel more healthy. It could be going for a quiet walk with someone or by yourself. It could be taking a long bath, brushing your teeth in the morning and evening, cleaning your fingernails, washing your hair, eating less junk food, learning to tell a good joke, or just being yourself. Notice how nice it feels to treat yourself like you are someone special. Remind yourself every day that you deserve to have good things in your life.
3. Listen to what your "inner voice" is saying to you. Each morning and night, take a minute to look in the mirror. Say to yourself, "I am a very special person." You may notice that your inner voice has lots of things to say back. Notice what it says and just tell yourself again, "I am a very special person." Even when you make mistakes or feel angry with yourself, you can say, "I messed up today, and I am still a very special person." This is hard for many people. That's why it is so important to do it every

single day and night, no matter what your thoughts are. (A similar activity appears in *Childhood Comes First* by Helfer.)

4. Take home letter to parents introducing RECOVERY Program.
5. Discuss "Journaling." Handout journaling suggestions sheet. Invite participants to make an agreement with themselves regarding how they will use their journal for the sessions.
6. Complete the answers to the 17 Questions in your notebook.
7. Complete the "Getting To Know Me" Exercise.
(Adapted from: Getting To Know Me Questionnaire, Susan T. Dennison, *Twelve Counseling Programs for Children At Risk* (pg 349).

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the RECOVERY Program!

We will be talking about a wide range of topics and encourage you to participate by following up at home. You will receive a letter every week or two discussing our activities and goals.

This session focused on getting to know one another, making and keeping agreements, and discussed the importance of being a friend to yourself.

We talked about our internal voice — how it can be supportive or damaging to our sense of confidence and self-worth.

Throughout the next several weeks we will be discussing topics and ideas like these in an effort to learn how to feel better about ourselves, how to make better choices and effective decisions in our lives.

You can contribute to the success of this program by sharing and discussing the program ideas and self work assignments with your child. If you want to participate by completing the Selfwork assignments yourself, you will find them personally valuable. You will also find that they enhance the process of growing with your child and that they contribute to your family life.

Sincerely,

Journaling

Keeping a journal is one of the easiest and most effective ways to maximize your participation in this group.

The purpose of journaling is to clarify your thinking and to help you clearly identify your feelings. It can help you discover things about yourself (old and new) and allow you to know what is on your mind (thoughts) and why you react (feelings) the way you do.

There is nothing special about what kind of journal you need, what you write, or how you write. This is a journal for and about you. It is personal and private and should reflect what you want it to be.

Some things you might want to think about including in your journal are:

- selfwork activities;
- dreams (day or night);
- thoughts and/or feelings;
- things you do for yourself or others;
- hunches, inspiring thoughts, or ideas;
- goals (both personal and material);
- letters to yourself or others;
- quotes from books, songs, etc.;
- drawings or pictures.

You might also want to have sections where you keep track of particular things such as:

1. **Goals:** itemizing steps you will take to reach them and keeping track of how far along you are.
2. **Success list:** include everything you are successful at in all areas of your life. Continue to add to this list, especially if you begin feeling you're not successful at anything. For example, can you tie your shoes? Then you are successful at one thing. Keep thinking!
3. **Appreciation list:** name the things that you are thankful for; things you appreciate having in your life. If you're having a hard time, ask yourself if you are hungry, cold, sick? If not, you already have a lot to be thankful for.
4. **Self-esteem list:** write down all the things you like about yourself, all your positive qualities. When you learn to acknowledge how wonderful you are, you feel better about yourself, you are happier, more loving, and more able to contribute to others.
5. **Creative ideas and fantasies:** jot down your ideas, dreams for the future, creative ideas. Don't censor them, no matter how farfetched they may seem. Put them down even if you never intend to do anything with them.

Adapted from *Creative Visualization* by Shakti Gawain

17 Questions

Answer each of these questions in your notebook. This is just for yourself and will not be handed in.

1. What would you like to get out of this group?
2. What would you most like to accomplish in your life this next year?
3. What do you wish for most often?
4. What is the biggest frustration in your life?
5. What do you complain about the most?
6. What would you most like to be able to do for someone else?
7. What makes you angry?
8. What do you do that makes others angry?
9. What keeps you from getting what you want in your life?
10. What would you most like to change about yourself?
11. What do you like the most about yourself?
12. What is most special about you?
13. What would you like to do that you haven't done?
14. Who would you like to be able to get along with better?
15. What changes would you like to make while you are in this group?
16. Are you willing to work for those changes?
17. What support do you need to help you make those changes?

Getting To Know Me

Name _____

1. Name the people in your family.

2. Name three things that you like about yourself.

3. What is the best thing that ever happened to you?
Why? _____
4. Who is your best friend?
Why? _____
5. What would you most like to change in your life?
Why? _____
6. What makes you feel happy?
Why? _____
7. What makes you feel unhappy?
Why? _____
8. When you grow up, what would you like to be?
Why? _____
9. How do the people in your family have fun?

10. What would you like to get out of this group?
Why? _____

A friend is:

a person you know, like, and trust;
a favored companion.

Being a good friend to yourself means that:

you can stop doing something you don't like;
you can do something you want to do; and
you can expect others to stop doing something you don't like.

Who are some of the people you consider friends?

Do you think of yourself as a friend to other people? To yourself?

Making choices isn't picking what you want out of the sky, it is:

looking at what you want;

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