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# SESSION 7

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## Objectives:

- To identify what problems are and what causes them.
- To develop problem-solving skills.
- To develop strategies for dealing with recurrent family upsets.
- To identify sources of interpersonal violence in society.
- To develop prevention of physical abuse skills.

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## **Session Outline:**

- **Updating**
- **Problems**
- **Causes of Problems**
- **Problem-solving**
- **Family Problem-solving Styles**
  - Exercise: Negotiating Privileges
  - Exercise: Dealing with Family Problems
- **Coping**
  - Exercise: Coping, Relaxation, Negative Activities
- **Break Or Split Session Option**
  - Selfwork for Split Session
  - Reentry for Split Session
- **Society and Violence**
- **Physical Abuse and Violence**
  - Presentation for Children
  - Presentation for Adolescents and Adults
- **Reporting Physical Abuse**
- **Prevention of Physical Abuse**
- **Relaxation**
- **Handouts**
  - Letter to Parents
  - Negotiating Privileges
  - Coping, Relaxation, Negative Activities
  - You Are Being Physically Abused If . . .
- **Materials:**
  - Flip chart or chalk board

## Updating

Since our last session, how many of you noticed anything new about the effect other people have on you by what they say or how they behave?

Did you feel you had more choice about the way you reacted or responded to them?

What happened with your special objects?

What kinds of feelings did you encounter?

Were there any negative feelings you remember?

Did you keep the agreement you made?

Were there times when you didn't want to keep the agreement and did anyway?

How did that feel?

What did you learn?

## Problems

There is a saying that can get us started for today's discussion. It is, "If you are not having problems, you are missing an opportunity for growth." (Thomas Blandi)

What do you think this means?

Discussion.

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When there is a difference between the way things are and the way you want them to be, that difference maybe called a problem.

It can also be thought of as an opportunity.

Everyone in the world has problems, and the first thing to know about problems is that your problems belong to you. Even if the problem seems to be caused by someone else or what someone else is doing, the effect it has on you makes it your problem.

There are some problems that you can solve yourself and some problems you will need help with.

Elicit examples.

Child abuse is an example of a problem you should never try to handle alone. Part of being a good problem-solver includes knowing when and how to get help.

The worst way to solve problems is to expect someone else to make them better or make them go away.

This is hard to understand because we often go to someone else with a problem, and they often want to solve our problems for us. They say things like, "Don't worry about it," or "I'll take care of it."

Has this ever happened to you?

Discussion.

How did it make you feel?

Discussion.

One way to prevent this from happening is to be more 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."

## Causes of Problems

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

### Flip Chart 26

#### Causes of Problems

Problems, things that are upsetting, are usually related to a difference between the way things are and the way you want them to be in one of three areas:

1. lack of communication or inadequate communication;
2. expectations that aren't met; and/or
3. change of situation — like family divorce, an accident, etc.

For groups younger than 10 or so, you may want to omit this discussion of causes of problems or cover it briefly.

Most problems are a combination of these three things.

For example, if a favorite teacher unexpectedly moves away from your school in the middle of a science project she was helping you with, it may be hard for you because you didn't have a chance to say goodbye; you were in the middle of the project and feel you may not be able to finish it without her help; and you wish she hadn't gone.

**Who has a problem they would like to share? We can identify the elements underlying the problem.**

Go through this process with two or more problems so the group can begin to see the commonality of problems and underlying elements.

## **Problem-Solving**

**We have three basic choices with problems:**

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

**There are five steps to effective problem-solving. They are:**

**Flip Chart 27****5 steps to problem-solving:**

1. stop, breath, and look at problem;
2. name the problem;
3. identify your choices;
4. think through each of the choices; and then
5. make a choice.

Discuss the 5 steps:

- 1. Stop, breathe look at the problem. Acknowledge what happened.**

For example, the teacher left, you're upset and angry that she left, and you feel like dumping the whole project.

- 2. Name the problem. In one simple sentence, say exactly what the problem is. It's important to tell the truth at this stage.**

Separate the people involved from the problem.

For example, if someone at school is spreading lies about you and you want them to stop, you are not going to solve the problem by thinking, "who cares, they're just a goof anyway." You do care and you do not want people saying untrue things about you.

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

3. Consider the various choices open to you. Think of the many things you can do to solve your problem. Remember there is always more than one choice. Be creative. Don't reject any of them yet. Be aware of what your mind is saying to you about each choice and how they make you feel.
4. Think through each choice and think about what might happen. If you're thinking the worst, really do that. Imagine the worst thing that could happen and the best thing that could happen.
5. Make a choice. Be aware of how you feel about the choice you're making. If you feel good about it, act on it. If you're not sure, think through your choices again.

Let's work on a problem someone has and use these steps to develop a course of action.

For example: My parents won't let me go to a friends after school.



## Family Problem-solving Styles

**How do decisions get made in your home?**

Discussion.

**Are your family members more likely to be: ignorers, impulsers, or problem solvers?**

**Do you get to participate in the process?**

Discussion.

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

**How do other family members feel about it?**

Discussion.

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

This is too often true and can create enormous instability and insecurity.

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

Discussion.

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

Discussion.

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The Confrontation Exercise may be interjected here. For example, "Jenny, this is my group and I'm not going to tolerate any more of your whispering." The issues are not only false accusation, but also the tone of the confrontation, the autocratic style and lack of respect in the way you have addressed her.

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One of the areas where you can use many of the skills we have learned is in the area of negotiating with your parents.

### **Exercise: Negotiating Privileges**

Have each group member list privileges they feel they should have in their notebooks. On the opposite side of the page have them list the responsibilities that go along with having those privileges.

#### **PRIVILEGES**

1.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

1.

2.

3.

Do you feel you can be responsible for the privileges you'd like to have?

### **Exercise: Dealing with Family Problems**

A great deal of the conflict that occurs in families is about the same thing over and over. Are there examples of that from your family?

Example: not making bed, not cleaning room, not doing homework.

One of the things you can do to make your life better is to begin to develop more personal responsibility for making your home life a positive experience.

**Think of some conflicts that occur repeatedly in your home, and let's look at what choices you could make which would have a positive effect.**

**Examples of problems to discuss:**

- You didn't do your homework.
- Your parents are fighting all the time.
- Your parents nag you constantly to clean up your room.

**In each case, you want to name the problem, look at your choices (keeping in mind your goal, which is to reduce conflict) then make a choice and act on it.**

**If you did that, what effect do you think it would have on your home environment?**

**Discussion.**

**Think of one area where you will apply this process this week.**

**Write it down, then later go back and write down what you could do differently, what you will do, and then act on it.**

**Make a note of what happens. (Keep in mind that one result might be that no one notices what you've done differently, BUT if there is no conflict over that issue, you have achieved the desired result.)**

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## **Coping**

Sometimes, you just aren't prepared to deal with a problem, or you want to let a little time go by, or you're just feeling stressed out and you want to turn the world off.

Coping is one way that people do this.

Coping is a stopgap or short-term way of handling whatever is going on.

It doesn't solve problems or make things better in the long-term.

It helps gets you through the day.

People do lots of things to cope, to get some relief from whatever seems to be bothering them.

What are some of these?

Sleeping, eating, exercise, drinking alcohol, using drugs, withdrawing into a book or television or music. Some of these are obviously more healthy than others.

How do you cope with stress and anxiety?

Discussion.

## **Exercise: Coping, Relaxation, Negative Activities**

Some coping activities are healthier than others.

Earl Hipp, in *Fighting Invisible Tigers* uses an exercise to begin to differentiate between coping, relaxation and things which do not do any good, or are destructive.

Put a C (for coping), R (for relaxation), or an N (for negative choice) next to these activities. Put a\* by each of the things you could do when you feel stressed.

Do the first few with the group and then let them complete it at home.

Watch TV.

Throw rocks at a bottle.

Go to sleep.

Eat something.

Breathe; focus attention.

Tease your baby brother.

Lie down and daydream.

Have a soda and some doughnuts.

Go visit a friend.

Clean up your room.

Call your grandmother.

Go for a walk.

Listen to some music.

Cut your hair.

Play an instrument.

Read a book.

Play basketball.

Talk to a teacher.

Do your homework.

Run away.

Go shopping.

Write in a journal.

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## **Break Or Split Session Option**

### **Split Session Selfwork**

Selfwork numbers 1, 2, and 3 found at the end of Session 7.

### **Reentry for Split Session**

Who would like to share about a family problem or upset that you took action on and what happened?

Discussion.

What did you notice about your family's problem-solving style?

Discussion.

## **Society and Violence**

We're going to be spending some time talking about violence and abuse in our society and how that affects relationships.

What do you think of when you think of "violence?"

Write down their responses. Common responses include crime, war, child abuse, television, riots, fighting, murder, and sports.

How are these forms of violence portrayed?

Positively? Negatively?

**How often do we see violence against others?**

Give some examples. Television, movies, advertising, comic books.

**What effect do you think exposure to that level of interpersonal violence on a daily basis has on you?**

**How do you think children feel about this level of physical aggression?**

**How do you think women feel about this level of physical aggression?**

**How do you think men feel about this level of physical aggression?**

**How do you think people decide where to draw the line?**

**Is some violence okay?**

**Are there some times when people deserve it or asked for it or enjoy it?**

**I'd like you to think about your own beliefs and ideas about this. They are shaped not only by you, but by your family, by your peer group, and society.**

**Going back to our list, how many of the examples we've written down are about violence which occurs between people who know one another?**

Put stars by those involving people who know one another.

**What are some other examples of violence among people who know each other or who are in a relationship?**

**NOTATION:**

Following each question asked by the group leader, discussion is invited according to the group's feedback.

The age of the group you are working with and the nature of the abuse they have experienced will shape this discussion. It is important not to give young children more information than they need. It is particularly important not to make children who already feel vulnerable think they have yet another form of abuse to worry about. This is a discussion of effective prevention techniques for the group which should be geared to their maturity and experience. Be conservative if you are not sure.

Examples include: hitting, fighting, rape, murder, child abuse.

**What emotions do you associate with these types of violence?**

Write them down. Common responses include: jealousy, anger, hate, control, sadness, loss.

**Most of us have no idea how enormous the problem of interpersonal violence is. It's not very often reported or talked about, yet it's happening all around us.**

## **Physical Abuse and Violence (Presentation for Children)**

**How many of you think your parents have problems?**

**How many of you can really see your parents struggling to keep things under control, to get everything done?**

**How many of your parents take (took) their problems out on you sometimes?**

Allow discussion.

**Does that mean you deserve what happens or that it is your fault?**

Discussion.

**Do some parents spank or hit their kids?**

Hitting, spanking, slapping are all forms of aggression. They are what someone stronger does to someone weaker. Some parents view this as



discipline. It is not. It is punishment and only teaches further aggression. When parents solve problems by hitting, their children will solve problems by hitting. Nevertheless, for those children who are spanked, or hit, some boundary needs to be established.

**Do you think spanking or hitting is effective?**

Discussion.

**What if someone hits you or hurts your body or does things that leave bruises or marks that are there the next day? Is that too much?**

Yes it is.

**Some people struggle for their entire lives to control their urge to strike out — whether with their words or physically.**

**Skip Adolescent and Adult Presentation and go to Reporting Physical Abuse.**

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## **Physical Abuse and Violence**

### **(Presentation for Adolescents and Adults)**

What are some of the forms physical abuse takes?

Discussion

#### **Flip Chart 28**

**You are being physically abused if someone:**

- pushes or shoves you;
- slaps or hits you;
- kicks or punches you;
- restrains you with force;
- chokes you;
- pulls your hair;
- throws things at you; or
- abandons you in a dangerous place.

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What do you think about this list? Do these all seem like forms of physical abuse?

Discussion.

How do you think you know when a situation has crossed over into physical abuse?

Discussion.

Do you think your feelings about the person doing it might affect your ability to identify when a situation has become abusive?

Have you ever had feelings that made you behave in any of these ways?

Discussion.

Have you ever felt like you'd like to do some of these things or thought about doing them?

What caused those feelings and what did you do with them?

## **Reporting Physical Abuse** (for all Participants)

If you are in a situation where physical abuse or interpersonal violence affects you, there are some things you can do.

The first is to tell someone. If you're getting hurt, it is not your fault, and you must tell someone before it gets worse.

Covering up what's happening or lying to protect the person doing it may seem right at the time, but it only results in everyone feeling worse and may result in serious injuries as the situation gets more severe.

➤ What if you have a sitter who hits you for every little thing? When you say you're going to tell, she

Depending on the group, you may have children who have been returned to abusive homes or who live in foster homes where physical punishment is frequent. You may have adolescents or adults in physically abusive relationships. They may feel they have no way out or, in the case of young children, the way out may not yet be apparent. In any case, there are some strategies which can help to reduce the risk of violence against them as they work toward other avenues of long-term relief.

threatens to tell your parent that you have been misbehaving and uncooperative. What do you do?

How many of you think you would be afraid to tell because things might get worse?

- What if your Uncle hits you with a hanger when you don't do everything he wants perfectly? When you tell your mother, she says "Her father did it to her and it didn't hurt her any." What do you do? Is it all right just because it was done to your mother?

How many of you would not want to tell because you wouldn't want to get anyone in trouble?

- What if the brother of a friend pinches and twists your ear if you don't do every single thing he tells you to. It doesn't leave any marks, and he says he'll deny it. Plus, you don't want to stop going to visit your friend. What do you do?

## Prevention of Physical Abuse

The second thing you can do is look at the situation you're in.

Sometimes people stay in situations where they're getting hurt for reasons that are outside their control.

If you're in a situation where you're being physically hurt, one of the things you can do is look carefully at exactly what is happening. In some situations violence is random and seems to be unpredictable. In most

situations, however, there are some clues as to what seems to trigger the abuse.

**This does not mean it is your fault! But if you can identify what seems to trigger the abusive behavior, you have another tool to help protect yourself.**

For example: In Sandy's house her father comes home every Friday night after having a few drinks with the men he works with. He always finds something Sandy did wrong and uses it as a reason to hit her.

**What do you think Sandy could do to help avoid this situation?**

Visit friends on Friday nights. Stay out of sight.  
Avoid confrontation with her father.

**Is it clear that Sandy's dad is struggling with his life?**

**Is it right that Sandy should have to do these kinds of things to avoid getting hurt?**

No.

**Is it preferable to avoid getting hurt until she can get help?**

Yes.

Another example: Michael's mother expects him to clean the house before she gets home from work including taking out the trash, cleaning up the dishes, feeding the dog, and setting the table. When he doesn't have everything done, she screams at him, hits him repeatedly, and complains the whole time she's doing his jobs.

**What choices does Michael have?**

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**Do you think Michael's mother is struggling with her life?**

**Does this mean Michael deserves to be hit and screamed at when he doesn't get everything done?**

No.

**Is it reasonable for him to make sure he gets his chores done, before he does other things? Is this a choice that might be worth making to avoid the existing situation?**

Example for adults: Jan is trying to finish school so she can get a job and get herself out of an abusive marriage. She knows wearing make-up sends her husband into a jealous rage.

**What choices does she have?**

What do you think if she chooses not to wear make-up, to try to keep things calm until she can finish school and move out?

**What other choices does she have? Are there resources she could call upon to expand her choices?**

**Looking at the other forms of physical aggression, what other ideas do you have for protecting yourself or preventing situations like this from occurring?**

For participants who have found themselves in these situations, they may have good strategies that they can share. They may also have strategies which are not effective and can be discussed.

**All of us have problems and stresses and worries. We can take them out on ourselves and others or we can**

learn new strategies for being more effective and considerate of ourselves and others.

If this is a problem in your life, remember that you must ask for help in order to get it.

## **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.

Pause about 10 seconds between each suggestion.

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.

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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.

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

## **Session 7 — Selfwork Activities**

1. Identify some conflict which occurs repeatedly in your family, and put together a plan for addressing it by changing your own behavior.
2. Complete the Coping, Relaxation, Negative Activities Worksheet.
3. Use the Negotiating Privileges Worksheet to deal with one privilege with your family this week.
4. Write down in your notebook the number of times you witness interpersonal violence this week including television, reading, music, in public places, and/or in your home. Note whether it is violence against children, women, or men.



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Dear Parents,

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. make a choice and make a plan.

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 any unsafe situation. Even if they have done something they shouldn't have or have gone someplace they shouldn't have, you agree to come get them, *no questions asked*. At some later point, you and your children 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 an important part of the RECOVERY Program:

"Esteem for self — respect for others.  
Respect for self — esteem for others."

Sincerely,

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## Coping, Relaxation, Negative Activities

While there are many kinds of relaxation skills, they have to be learned and practiced in order to have value. They can help you — if you use them — to feel less scattered, to understand yourself more fully, to help you settle down and think and act more clearly. And they feel GREAT!!

Earl Hipp, in *Fighting Invisible Tigers* uses an exercise to begin to differentiate between coping, relaxation, and things which do not do any good or are destructive.

Put a C (for coping), R (for relaxation), or an N (for negative choice) next to these activities. Put a \* by each of the things you could do when you feel stressed:

- |                                 |                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Watch TV.                       | Go for a walk.        |
| Throw rocks at a bottle.        | Listen to some music. |
| Go to sleep.                    | Cut your hair.        |
| Eat something.                  | Play an instrument.   |
| Breathe; focus attention.       | Read a book.          |
| Tease your baby brother.        | Play basketball.      |
| Lie down and daydream.          | Talk to a teacher.    |
| Have a soda and some doughnuts. | Do your homework.     |
| Go visit a friend.              | Run away.             |
| Clean up your room.             | Go shopping.          |
| Call your grandmother.          | Write in a journal.   |

You may notice yourself doing other things that are not on this list. Feel free to add them and place a C, R, N, or \* next to any of them. Think about whether or not you want to alter any of your behavior. The first step is becoming aware, and you've already done that with this activity.

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## Negotiating Privileges and Responsibilities

Identify a privilege that you would like to have. Write it down. Then write down all of the responsibilities that go along with that privilege.

### PRIVILEGE

1.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

When you are finished, ask yourself, "Do I feel I can handle the responsibilities that come with the privilege I'd like to have?" If so, take this paper with you when you talk with your parents about the privilege you would like to have. Negotiate with them a clear agreement (usually for a trial period). Remember, if you do not keep the agreements, the consequence is loss of the privilege. You are responsible for what happens as long as you and your parents are clear about and keep the agreement which is negotiated.

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## Causes of Problems

Problems, things that are upsetting, are usually related to a difference between the way things are and the way you want them to be in one of three areas:

1. lack of communication or inadequate communication;
2. expectations that aren't met; and/or
3. change of situation — like family divorce, an accident, etc.

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## **5 Steps to Problem-Solving:**

1. stop, breath, and look at problem;
2. name the problem;
3. identify your choices;
4. think through each of the choices;  
and then
5. make a choice.

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## **You are being physically abused if someone:**

- pushes or shoves you;
- slaps or hits you;
- kicks or punches you;
- restrains you with force;
- chokes you;
- pulls your hair;
- throws things at you; or
- abandons you in a dangerous place.