



# **Parent Group**

**Facilitator Manual**

**Second Edition**

**Lily Anderson and Greg Routt**



**Step-Up Group  
Parent Curriculum**

**Facilitator Manual**



**Lily Anderson and Greg Routt**

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Step Up: Building Respectful Family Relationships

Parent Group Facilitator Manual

The Step-Up curriculum was developed and written by Greg Routt and Lily Anderson with the Step-Up Program, a group intervention program for adolescents who are violent toward family members.

Step-Up is a program of King County Superior Court

Edited by Sakson and Taylor Consulting

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Revised Edition 2016

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# Acknowledgements

The Step-Up Program would not exist without the inspiration and vision of Meg Crager. She provided leadership in establishing and maintaining the program and gaining support from the court system and community. She was a valuable contributor to the development of this curriculum when the program first began.

We would also like to thank Kaki Dimock for her hard work and support in planning and development with starting the program. We owe thanks to Justice Bobbe Bridge for supporting the program and assisting with coordination with the juvenile court system. We also relied on the support of many others in the juvenile court system, including probation counselors and supervisors, diversion staff, the prosecutor's office and victim advocates.

We gratefully acknowledge the support and assistance of King County Department of Judicial Administration staff, without whom we could not operate the program. Paul Sherfey had faith in the program and has supported its development from the beginning. Barb Minor and Teresa Bailey have provided leadership, advocacy and support throughout many years since the program began. We owe special thanks to Mary Taylor, Step-Up Program Manager, for her wisdom and strong advocacy for the program.

We are especially grateful for the clinical supervision of Bill Meyers. His knowledge and insight about working with teens and families has been invaluable. We relied on his wisdom to help us through many challenges.

A special thanks to Mark Wirschem who consistently acknowledged our hard work and gave us support and encouragement all along the way.

We owe enormous thanks to Sakson and Taylor Consulting for editing this curriculum. We could not have completed this curriculum without their hard work and dedication. Special thanks to Noelle Robertson who stuck with us through many changes and revisions.

We want to thank Seth Ellner and Joan Zegree for taking time to do a final edit of first edition of the curriculum.

Finally, we are grateful to the youth and parents who have participated in the Step-Up Program. They have taught us more than anyone about how to create an effective program. We field tested the exercises in this curriculum with many families over the course of its development. We have learned from their hard work and effort to improve their family relationships.



# Introduction

The Step-Up curriculum is designed for counselors who facilitate groups with adolescents who have been violent towards parents or family members. The curriculum uses a cognitive behavioral, skills based approach partnered with restorative practice to help youth prevent the use of violent and abusive behaviors in the family. Teens learn and practice nonviolent, respectful ways of communicating and resolving conflict with family members in a group setting with other parents and teens.

The curriculum employs best practice and evidence based approaches including cognitive behavioral exercises, skill development, solution focused and motivational interviewing strategies to help youth make specific behavioral changes related to stopping violence and abuse in the home, and building respectful family relationships. A collaborative, family based approach is used in the family groups where parents and youth learn and practice skills with feedback and support from others. In parent group, parents learn a model of respectful parenting that balances leadership and positive support, promoting non-violence and respect in the family.

Family safety is a priority of the intervention with development of a 'safety plan' followed by weekly check-ins within the family group to monitor the youth's progress in staying non-violent and safe with family members. Weekly behavioral goals related to non-violence and respect are set by the youth with progress reported each week in group, fostering accountability for behavior and keeping the focus on using skills learned at home.

Step-Up uses a Restorative Practice model of accountability, competency development and making amends to restore family relationships. Restorative inquiry is used to help youth recognize the effects of their actions on others, cultivate empathy and take steps to repair harm done. A restorative practice approach of engaging youth in a collaborative process with the victim (parent) in a community of families, holding a balance of accountability and support, is a key element of the program.

The curriculum is designed to include parents and teens together at the beginning of each group for a 'Check-In' and restorative process, followed by a skill building session, either together or in separate parent and teen sessions.

Step-Up was originally developed for youth involved in the juvenile justice system who are court referred after a domestic violence offense toward a parent or family member. However, the program is also appropriate for non-court involved youth, and most groups are a mix of community and court referred youth.

The focus of the curriculum is twofold: to address the issues of adolescents who initiate violence toward family members, and to address the needs of parents or family members who have been the targets of the violence. In most cases, youth and parents participating in Step-Up continue to live together and if not, they have regular contact with each other. The program is not designed for youth who do not have ongoing contact with the parent or caregiver they are abusive toward. Home practice of newly learned skills is key to integrating the new behaviors and restoring family relationships.

Treating adolescent violence in the family is both intervention and prevention. When families assimilate a respectful family model and youth experience success with using the behaviors that support it, they learn lifelong lessons about relationships. These values carry forward into their future relationships with intimate partners and their own families.

## ***Step-Up History***

In 1996, 63% of the 502 juvenile domestic violence charges filed by the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office were for juveniles who assaulted their mother or father. In 1997, the King County Department of Judicial Administration applied for and received funding from the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (GJJAC) to develop and implement a pilot project for teens who are assaulting their family members. Until the funding of this project, there was no specialized intervention in King County for addressing adolescent violence in the home.

The success of the Step-Up Program has depended largely on coordination with the juvenile justice system. During the initial phase of program development, Step-Up staff collaborated with juvenile probation counselors, judges, prosecutors and other court system personnel to coordinate a plan for referral and follow-up of juvenile domestic violence offenders. The coordinated community response model used for adult domestic violence has provided an outline of key elements in coordinating systems that respond to juvenile DV. Some examples include the development of protocols for consistency in court response and probation follow-up, assessment of violence risk, safety planning and expedited services to the family.

Collaboration with law enforcement has been another important component. Step-Up developed a police training video on juvenile domestic violence to educate responding officers about the issue, how to communicate with parents and understand safety issues for the family. The response of the criminal justice system to teen's who are violent in the home has significant impact on the outcome for the teen and their family. Coordination between the Step-Up Program and the juvenile justice system has been crucial to its effectiveness in helping teen's change their behavior.

## ***Design and Structure of the Curriculum***

The curriculum is designed to be a 21-session program, with one session per week. Sessions are intended to be 1.5 to 2 hours, depending upon the group size. There is an addendum of optional additional sessions at the end of the curriculum. Group facilitators can, of course, change the number of sessions to suit time limitations and select session material they find useful.

The order of the sessions is flexible. Since safety of family members is a primary concern, the sessions that address physical violence should be completed first. After parents have identified their concerns in the first parent session, the group facilitator may decide to change the order of the sessions.

Some of the sessions build on each other and should be taught sequentially. These sessions include: *Making a Safety Plan* and *Understanding Warning Signs*; *Understanding Feelings*, *Understanding Self-Talk and Beliefs*, and *Hurtful Moves*, *Helpful Moves*; *Making Amends* and *Accountability Through Restorative Practice*.

The first edition of the Step-Up curriculum had more separate teen and parent sessions. However, we found it helpful to include parents in some of the teen skill sessions so that parents are able to learn the same skills. Parents can better support their teens' use of new skills at home when they have learned along with them. This change in the curriculum left extra parent sessions that are now in the addendum at the end of the manuals and workbooks. Facilitators are welcome to select parent sessions from the addendum after they have covered the key parent sessions (see Training Manual for more information about Key Sessions).

Every session begins with parents and teens together for *Check-In* and is followed by *Group Activities* that are skill-building sessions either together or in separate teen and parent groups.

The curriculum includes a Teen Group Facilitator Manual, Parent Group Facilitator Manual, a Parent Workbook and Teen Workbook. Each session in the manuals and workbooks includes:

- Background Information - notes and guidelines for teaching the session
- Goals - what the participants should learn when they complete the session
- Important Messages - key points for teaching the session
- Session Overview - schedule for the session
- Group Activities – skill building exercises for the session
- Take Home Activities - activities to work on at home

## ***Check-In***

During the *Check-In* process at the beginning of every group, teens look at the Abuse / Disrespect Wheel and the Respect Wheel in their workbooks and identify behaviors that they used in the previous week. They also report on their progress on weekly goals and make a goal for the following week.

There is a *Check-in* section at the end of their workbooks that includes 20 *Check-In* worksheets and 20 *My Weekly Goal* worksheets.

Teens fill out the Check-In worksheets at the start of the group, along with the *How Did I Do* section on the *My Weekly Goal* sheet. The facilitator then has each teen share with the group, along with input from their parents.

See the Orientation session for specific details about how to facilitate Check-In. The Step-Up Training Manual includes a section about facilitating Check-In, along with a discussion of challenges and tips for a successful process.

## ***Step-Up Training Manual***

For those facilitators who do not participate in a Step-Up training, we strongly advise them to read the Step-Up Training Manual. The manual includes important information about the issue of youth violence in the family, the components of the Step-Up intervention model and the theory and use of restorative practice with families. The training manual provides information on assessment of youth and families and how to determine if youth are an appropriate fit for the program. Assessment tools are included for assessment of violence level and safety issues. Additionally, the manual offers tips for addressing specific challenges in working with these special youth and their parents. Establishing a climate of safety and respect in the group, responding to aggressive or abusive behavior and holding youth accountable in a supportive manner are discussed.

## ***Quality Assurance***

Step-Up has a quality assurance plan for those who would like to deliver the program as it has been evaluated. This includes a three-day training for facilitators, consultations and performance reviews. The full 21-session curriculum is delivered in weekly sessions. Contact the authors for more information about the quality assurance plan.

# Outline of Sessions

Session	Teens	Combined	Parents
1		Orientation to Step Up	
2		Making a Safety Plan	
3		Understanding Warning Signs	
4	Understanding Violence		Introduction to Parent Group: Strengths, Challenges, Changes
5		Understanding Self-Calming	
6		Assertive Communication	
7	Understanding Power		How to Respond When Your Teen Is Violent
8	Making Amends		When Your Teen Is Abusive: Effects on Parenting
9		Accountability Through Restorative Practice	
10		Understanding Feelings	
11		Understanding Self-Talk and Beliefs	
12	Hurtful Moves/Helpful Moves		Guiding Change in Your Teen with Restorative Parenting
13		Safety Plan Review/Open Session	
14		Using "I" Statements	
15	Understanding Responsibility		Empowering Teens to Be Responsible for Their Behaviors
16	Understanding Empathy		What Kinds of Messages Are You Giving Your Teen
17		Guidelines for Respectful Communication	
18		Problem Solving Together	
19		Problem Solving Together	
20		Open Session	
21		Moving Forward	
Extra Sessions	My Family Relationships	How We Change	Listening to Your Teen Making Changes Encouraging Your Teen Supporting Positive Changes in Your Teen



# Session 1: Orientation to Step-Up

## Teen and Parent Session

### ***Background Information***

The orientation prepares youth and parents for the Step-Up program. It is conducted in a group session with parents and youth together at the beginning of a new group series. If you are running an ongoing group with new families joining at different times, the orientation is delivered to the parent and teen in a separate session before joining the group. The orientation may include one or more families at once.

The purpose of the orientation is to introduce participants to the program and begin the engagement process. Orientation informs youth and parents about the structure of the group, the components of the program, how it will help them build skills to prevent violence and restore respectful family relationships. They learn about the *Wheels, the Check-In, Weekly Goal Planning and the Communication Agreement*

### ***Goals***

- To introduce participants to the program and discuss the purpose and goals of the program.
- To begin to establish a safe and respectful climate in the group by discussing the *Ground Rules* for group and the *Communication Agreement*.
- To set participants expectations about the new skills they will learn and the behavioral changes they will make to improve their relationships with their family members.

- To begin to engage youth in talking about their behavior with others, and start to experience the value of being honest and accountable.
- To help families recognize that they are not alone, and begin to experience support from other group members.
- To facilitate the first *Check-In* with youth and parents, and help them begin to experience accountability as a positive experience where they are encouraged and supported by others.
- To teach youth how to plan a personal goal for behavior change and use the Goal Planning sheet to plan their first goal.

### ***Important Messages***

- The purpose of this program is to help you stop hurtful behavior toward your family members and learn safe and respectful ways to communicate and handle problems.
- We all have a part in making this group a safe and respectful place for everyone.
- Your youth is capable of making changes; you have knowledge and wisdom about what you need to do to make positive changes.
- Parents and teens will be learning skills together.
- Even though things seem difficult between you and your parents right now, you can find positive parts of your relationship and build on

## ***Session Overview***

1. Complete the introductions and Warm-Up Exercise.
2. Discussion: What you will learn in Step-Up, Program Components, Acronym and Goals
3. Discussion: How the Sessions Work, the Wheels and Check-In process
4. Exercise: Your First Check-in
5. Discussion: Addressing Violence using Restorative Inquiry and Goal Planning
6. Discussion: Requirements for Completion of the Program.
7. Discussion: Ground Rules for Group

# Group Activities

## *Introduction*

Begin the group by introducing the facilitators and passing out the workbooks. Welcome parents and teens to Step-Up and tell them that during this session the group will get to know each other and learn about the program.

Most families should already be familiar with the purpose of Step-Up from their intake session. However, it is helpful to reiterate the program purpose before the introductions to remind youth that they are not the only ones using violent behavior at home. A discussion of the goals and skills sets an expectation for participants that they will make positive changes. Both parents and youth often feel encouraged to find out that they will learn how to solve problems together.

The orientation is directed primarily to the teen and their behavior change goals, with the parent as a support and participant in learning with them. The parent group orientation is the first session of the parent group. If it is on an ongoing group, new parents can be oriented to parent group in an individual session or at the intake interview session by discussing the main points of the orientation.

If it is an ongoing group with new families joining an established group, begin their first group with the '*Group Member Introductions*' in the next section. The new family introduces themselves last. This demonstrates to the new family the group norm of youth talking about their behaviors in an accountable and direct way. It also helps the youth and parent when they hear the changes group members have made and the behaviors they are working on. It provides encouragement to the youth and parent to see other families who are making progress.

## ***Group as a Supportive Environment***

Facilitators should highlight the importance of group members supporting each other in their learning and encouraging one another through challenges. Orientation is an opportunity to give youth a chance to think for themselves about what they believe is important for them to change in their behavior and begin the practice of making personal goals.

Most teens don't know what to expect when they come to their first group session. Those who are court referred often perceive their attendance at Step-Up as a punishment. Many teens appreciate the chance to speak openly in this first session, and are relieved to find it is a supportive environment. The restorative practice principles of 'working with' the youth, and holding a balance of support and accountability, begins during the orientation session.

It also helps youth when they understand that the primary focus of the program is stopping violence and being safe with their families. When they know this is the reason they are here, and that there is expectation that they will become non-violent, it keeps their attention on taking steps to change this behavior. It also helps them begin to integrate a personal intention to stop using violent behavior.

## ***Suggested Introductory Statement***

Introduce the program with a brief statement about the purpose of the group and why everyone is here:

Step-Up is a program for youth who have been violent in the home. Everyone is here to learn how to prevent hurting their family members, and learn new ways to handle anger and conflict so that everyone in the family is safe and respected. Parents are here to learn along with their teens so they can support their behavior changes at home. Everyone has something to learn. You are all in this together, and you can all support each other in restoring your family relationships and making your homes a safe and positive place to be.

We want the youth to be honest and direct about the behaviors that brought them to the program, and avoid the tendency (common to youth, parents and professionals) to speak indirectly about it. When youth become accustomed to talking about their behaviors, they begin to let go of their denial and develop empathy and accountability. This is a restorative practice theory, and a key to helping youth change.

### ***Group Member Introductions***

Refer to the following questions in the workbooks or write them on the board, and ask teens to introduce themselves by answering these questions.

1. What is your name?
2. What behavior brought you here?
3. What would you like to learn to help you get along better with your family?
4. Or, if you have been coming to the group, what have you learned that is helping you get along better with your family.

Have parents introduce themselves after their teens' introduction and share something they would like to learn in the program to improve their relationship with their teen. If they have been coming to the group, ask them to share something they have learned in the group that is helping them.

### ***Warm-Up Exercise***

The *Warm-Up Exercise* is a relationship-building activity for parents and teens. The purpose is to have parents and teens begin talking with each other in positive ways. Many teens and parents who come to this program are in the habit of communicating negatively with each other. This exercise helps them remember what it is like to relate with each other in a positive way. Feel free to replace or enhance this exercise with other warm up activities that engage youth and their parents in positive communication. It is important to keep the topic simple and positive in the session. Remember that when parents and youth start the program their

relationships are often tense and volatile. Have them take a break if arguing begins, and move on to the next family. Come back to them later and invite them to give it another try, or hold off until another time or possibly in a family session.

Have parents and teens spend a few minutes writing down responses to the *Warm-Up Exercise* questions in their workbooks. When they are finished, go around the group and have each parent and teen share their responses with the group.

### ***Warm-Up Exercise***

Take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

1. A time I couldn't have made it through something difficult without my teen was:
2. A time when I appreciated my teen was:
3. Something I like about my teen is:

When they are finished, go around the group and have each parent and teen share their responses with the group.

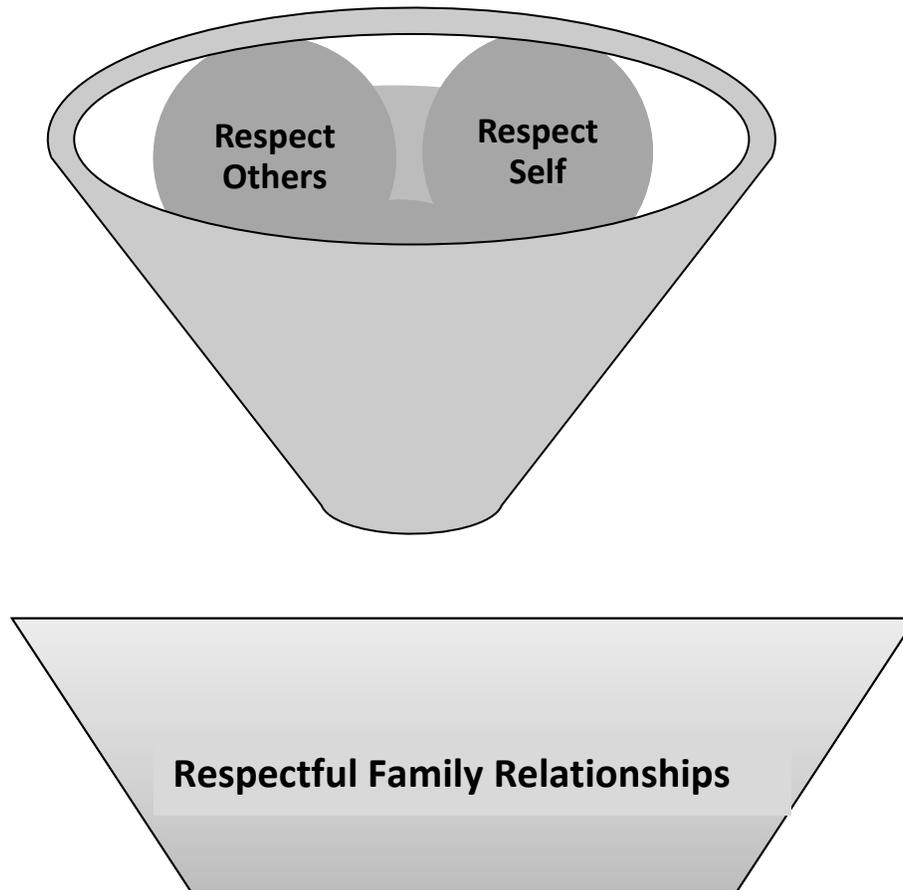
## ***The Three R's***

Refer group members to the Respect page in their workbooks, and explain the following:

Respect is at the heart of everything you learn, and we will be talking about respect in many different ways.

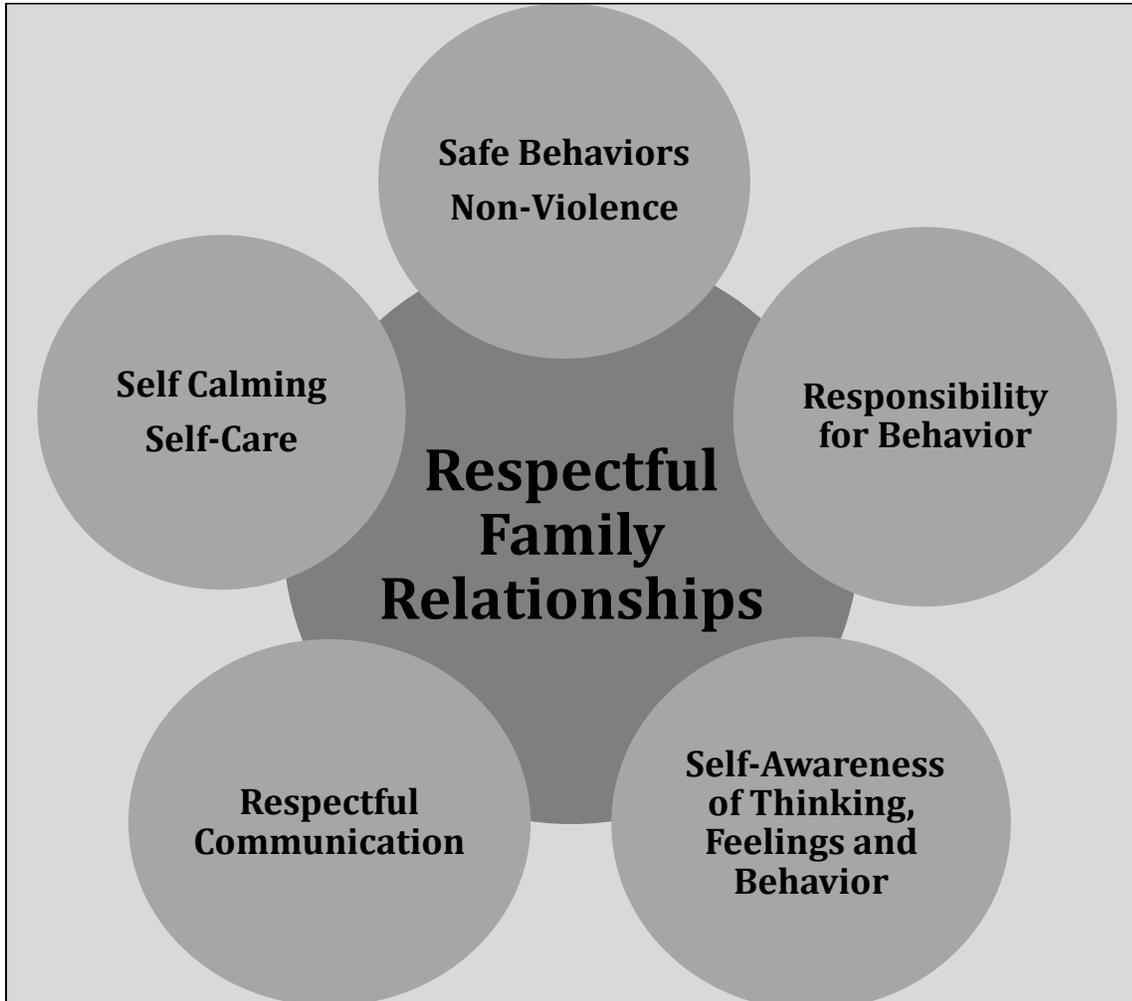
Write the following on the board:

1. Respect for Self
2. Respect for Others
3. Responsibility for All Your Actions



## Step Up Group Components

Refer the group to *Step Up Teen Components* in their workbooks and briefly discuss each component.



### Safe Behaviors

Safety of family members is the first concern of the program. Stopping violence and abuse toward family members is your most important task. All of the skills that you learn in Step-Up help you stay non-violent. The first and most important skill you will learn in Step-Up is making a plan about what you will do when you are getting upset and angry and might become hurtful to family members. We call this a 'Safety Plan' because it keeps your behavior safe.

## **Respectful Communication**

You will learn many different ways to talk to others in a way that is respectful to them and respectful to yourself. You will learn how to stay respectful even when you are angry and upset. You will know how to express your feelings and needs in a way that is not attacking or hurtful. You will learn how to talk about problems, listen and work together to resolve conflict.

## **Self-awareness and understanding of your thoughts, beliefs and feelings**

You will learn about what is going on inside of you when you become violent or abusive. You will learn how you can change your thinking to help you respond in different ways. You will become aware of your negative 'self-talk' and learn how to change it so you see things more realistically. You will learn about the feelings you have beneath your anger so you can express your feelings and needs in a safe and respectful way.

## **Self-Calming**

You will learn many ways that you can calm strong emotions and self soothe your nervous system when you are angry, tense or anxious. We will practice different relaxation techniques and meditations for balancing your mood over all, as well as what to do in the heat of the moment to prevent lashing out at others.

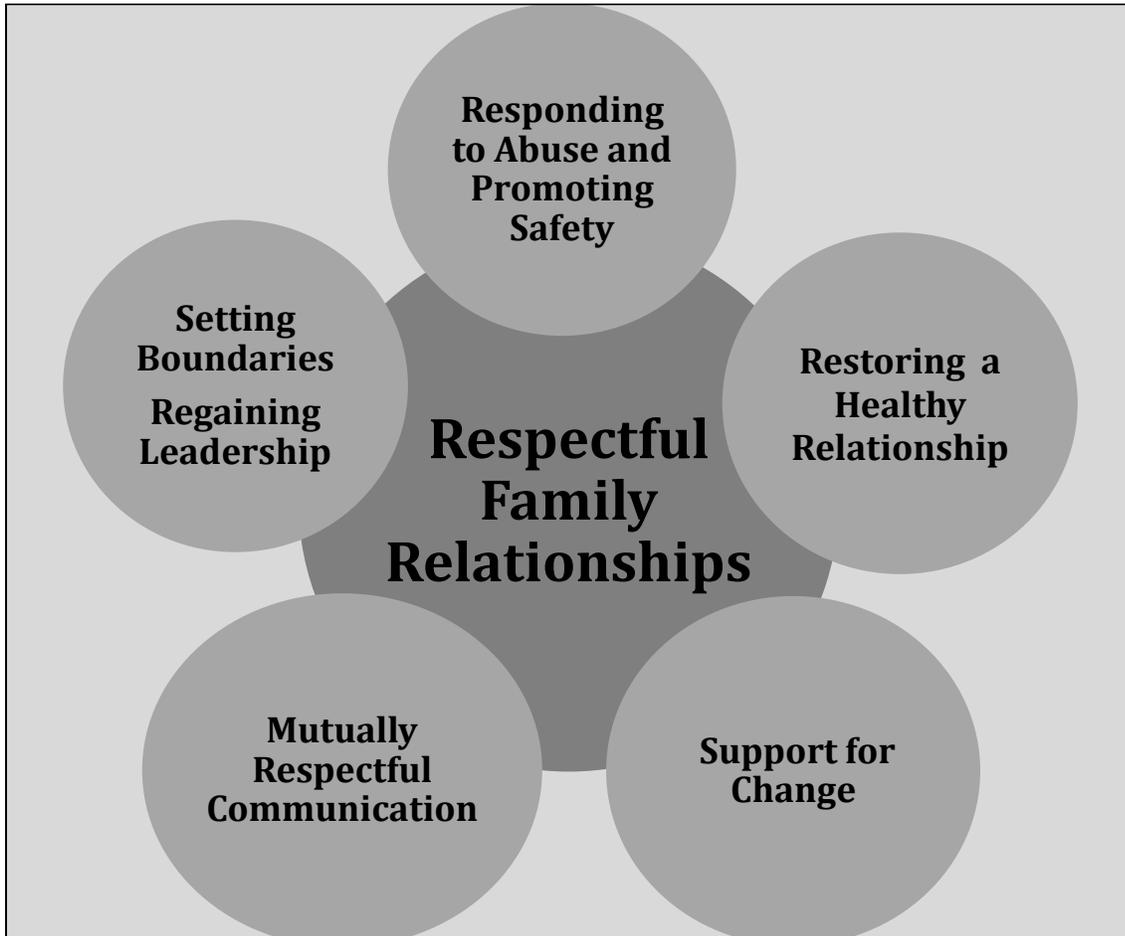
## **Responsibility for Behavior**

You will learn what it means to actively take responsibility for harmful behavior. We will guide you through a step-by-step process that helps you understand the impact of your behavior on others and how you can be accountable through making amends. This process is called 'Restorative' because it helps people restore relationships that have been damaged by hurtful behavior.

You will also write a '*Responsibility Letter*' and an '*Empathy Letter*' to the family member you were abusive or violent toward and read them during your last session.

## ***Parent Group Components***

Refer parents to the *Parent Group Components* in their Workbook and let them know they can read this on their own. They will learn more about them in the parent group.



### **Support for Change**

Many parents come into the program feeling isolated and alone in their experiences with their teens. An important part of the parent group is for parents to get support from each other and know that they are not alone. Parents work together to find realistic and effective ways to handle the day to day power struggles of parenting teens who resist limit setting. Together, parents examine changes they want to make in their own behavior that strengthens their ability to hold boundaries while inviting less opposition and more cooperation from their teens.

## **Mutually Respectful Communication**

In sessions with the teens and parents together, they learn many different ways to listen and talk to each other respectfully. Parents and teens practice communication skills with feedback from the group. They learn how to make it through a conversation about a problem and come to a resolution without a blow-up. Teens in particular will learn how to express their feelings and needs in a way that is not attacking or hurtful even when they are angry. Parents learn how to model respectful communication and support their teens in using their new communication skills at home.

## **Responding to Abuse and Promoting Safety**

Safety of family members is the first concern of the program. The first and most important skill teens learn in Step-Up is making a Safety Plan about what they will do when they are getting upset and angry and might become hurtful to family members. Parents learn how to support their teens in identifying early warning signs and using their Safety Plan. Parents make their own plan about responding to hurtful behaviors and how to talk with their teens about it in a meaningful way.

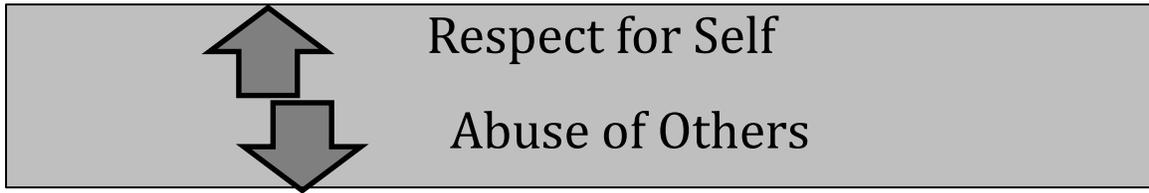
## **Restoring a Healthy Relationship**

For many families coming into Step-Up, the parent - teen relationship has been eroded, and parents often feel hopeless about their relationship with their teen. Some parents describe a household atmosphere of negativity, tension and “walking on eggshells”. Parents can initiate a change in their relationship with their teen by the simple acts of listening even when they disagree, and acknowledging everyday behavior that supports a healthy relationship.

## **Setting Boundaries / Regaining Leadership**

When parents are fearful of their teen responding to limit setting with abuse or violence, it can interfere with their leadership in the family. Accepted parent-adolescent boundaries are ruptured and guidelines set by parents are disregarded. Often conventional consequences are either ignored or become the fuel for more abuse. Parents struggle with establishing and holding effective consequences for hurtful behavior toward family members. Parents learn how to use a ‘restorative practice’ model that is also used in the group, to address violence or abuse at home to help their teens take responsibility for their behavior in a meaningful way.

## ***Goals for the Teens***

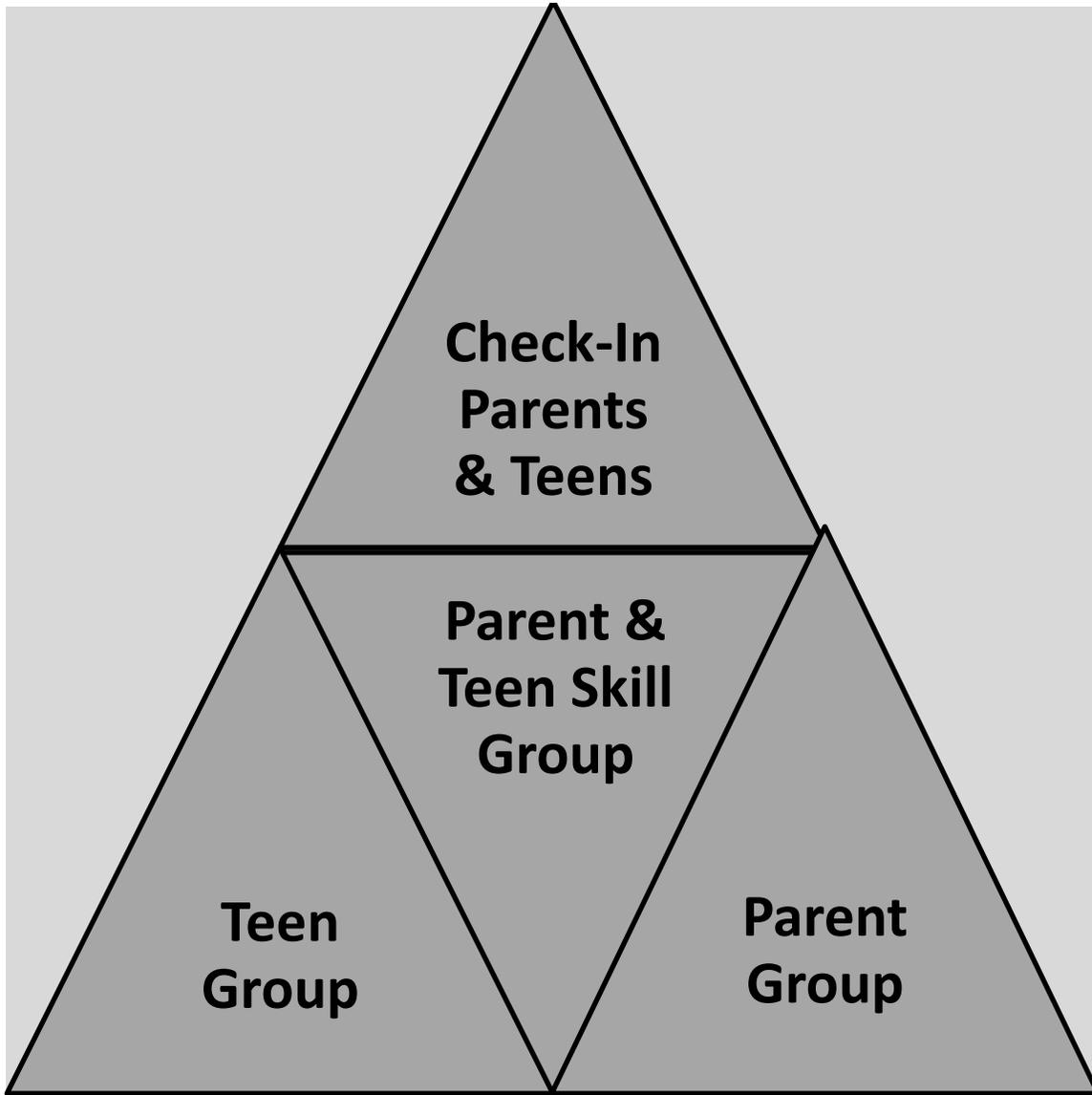


### **After you complete the program, you will be able to:**

- Know how to keep your behavior safe and how to prevent yourself from hurting others by using a personal Safety-Plan
- Know how to talk respectfully even when you are upset or angry
- Learn how to change unhelpful thinking into thinking that supports you in staying safe and respectful.
- Have skills for managing difficult thoughts and emotions; you will know how to de-escalate yourself and calm down
- Understand your feelings and how to communicate them in respectful ways
- Know how to resolve conflict with family members in a respectful way
- Understand the meaning of accountability, and know how to use the 'Six Restorative Steps' to take responsibility for harmful behavior
- Realize you have choices about your behavior

## How the Sessions Work

Refer to *How the Sessions Work* in their workbook. Explain that the program includes sessions with the parents and teens together, and separate teen and parent sessions. Every week when you come to the group, we will begin with parents and teens together for 'Check-In'. After Check-In, there is a skill building session, either with parents and teens all together, or in separate teen and parent groups.



## Communication Agreement

The *Communication Agreement* overview is the first step in the program of defining the concept of 'respect'. During this conversation families begin to learn the basics of a key skill in the program: respectful communication. The goal of the *Communication Agreement* is for youth and parents to make an agreement with each other to follow these communication guidelines in the group, and as they strengthen these skills throughout the program, to use them at home. It is helpful to have the *Communication Agreement* posted in the room during group sessions every week. This provides a tool for re-directing disrespectful interactions in the group. A periodic review of the *Communication Agreement* during the group is a reminder of the elements of interacting in a respectful way.

Refer the group to the *Communication Agreement* in the workbooks. Explain that the *Communication Agreement* is a guideline for how to communicate in the group. Tell the group that the goal is for families to communicate this way at home, too. Group members can help each other follow the *Communication Agreement* by respectfully reminding others when they are not on the agreement. Let the group know that they will be learning skills for each of the guidelines listed during their skill sessions.

# Communication

**R**espectful words, tone and manner

I will speak without blaming, criticizing or putdowns.

**E**xpress feelings and opinions in “I” statements

I will say, “*I feel ... when...*”

**S**top and take a break if I cannot stay respectful.

**P**ause to *THINK* before I *SPEAK*.

**E**ngage in the conversation with an *OPEN* mind

I will let go of what I think the other person means or wants.

**C**lear my thoughts so I can *LISTEN* completely when the other person is talking.

**T**ry to understand the other person’s feelings/opinions  
*EVEN WHEN I DISAGREE.*

## ***Step-Up Acronym***

Refer the group to the *Step-Up Acronym* in their workbooks. Explain the following:

The *Step-Up Acronym* shows how the Step-Up skills work together to help you take a different path when you are headed in a direction toward becoming abusive or violent. You will be learning skills for each of the steps in the acronym.

# STEP UP

**Stop**

**ALL THE ACTION**

Take a time-out &  
Calm yourself

**Think**

What am I feeling?  
Thinking?

**Evaluate**

What is the Problem?  
What are my choices?

**Plan**

How can I deal with this  
problem and stay on the  
Respect Wheel?

**Use skills**

“I” statements, listening,  
Assertive Communication...

**Patience**

... and lots of it, is what  
makes this work.

## ***The Wheels***

Refer group members to the *Abuse/Disrespect Wheel* and the *Respect Wheel* in the *Check-In* section at the back of their workbooks. Explain the following:

These wheels show different kinds of behavior used in relationships with family members. The behaviors on the *Abuse / Disrespect Wheel* are emotionally or physically hurtful or disrespectful toward family members. The ones on the *Respect Wheel* are safe behaviors that show consideration and respect for others.

Go around the wheels and review each of the sections, discussing the behaviors listed and giving some examples of each to broaden their understanding. Ask the group for some examples, such as for the category of 'emotional abuse'.

Ask them if they can think of other kinds of emotional abuse. And, ask them for other examples of 'respectful communication'.

*Important Note:* Make a point that some of the behaviors on the *Abuse / Disrespect Wheel* may not be intended to hurt or disrespect another person. When we ask teens to think about their behaviors on this wheel, we are referring to behaviors that are used purposely to be hurtful or disrespectful to others. We understand that adolescents are not perfect, and sometimes unintentionally violate trust or forget or ignore other family member's needs. Our focus is on behaviors that are intentionally disrespectful or abusive to family members. This is an important point for parents. Point out that we do not want to label annoying teenage behaviors as 'abusive'. Discussing this distinction in the parent group when the youth are not present is helpful to avoid parents inappropriately labeling their teens' behaviors.

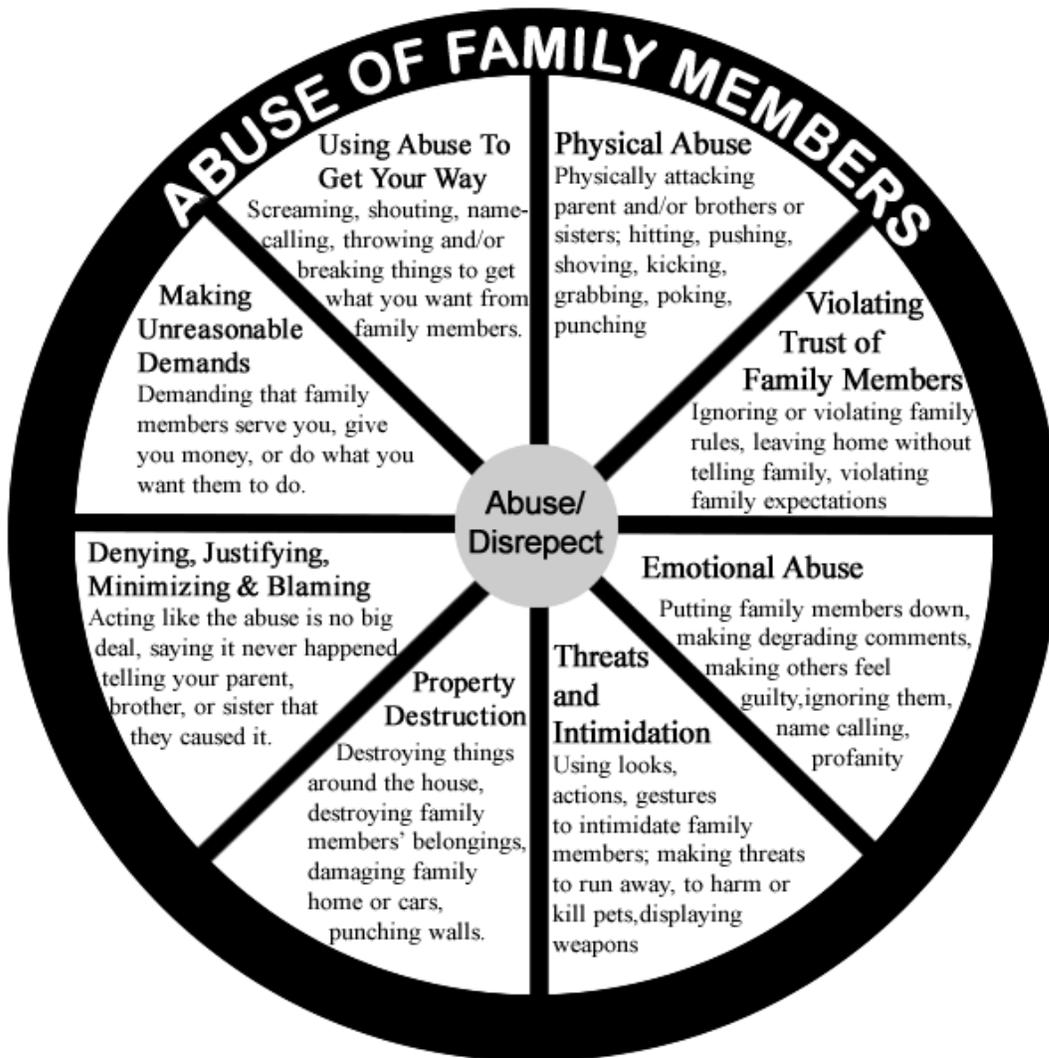
## ***The Wheels***

The purpose of Step-Up is to move from the *Abuse Wheel* to the *Mutual Respect Wheel* in your family relationships. All of the skills you learn in the program help people stay on the *Respect Wheel* and off of the *Abuse/Disrespect Wheel*.

## **The Wheels help teens by:**

- Raising awareness of the behaviors used in families.
- The Respect Wheel shows a model of what a respectful family looks like.
- The Abuse/Disrespect Wheel defines violence, abuse and disrespect in a family.
- The Wheels are a tool to help you recognize your respectful behaviors and be accountable for disrespect, violence or abuse in your family.
- The Wheels give you a new way to think about your behavior. For example, when you think about a conflict at home, you can ask yourself, “which wheel was I on when I talked to my mom about that problem?” and “How can I talk to her about it and stay on the respect wheel?”
- Families can put a copy of the wheels up at home. When there is conflict, someone can say, “let’s try to stay on the Respect Wheel while we talk about this.” You can use the Communication Agreement to guide you.

## Abuse/Disrespect Wheel



## Mutual Respect Wheel



## ***Check-In***

**Check-In has two parts:**

### **1. Check-in on the Wheels**

You will look at the Wheels every week and reflect on behaviors you did at home during the previous week, and fill out a *Check-In* worksheet and share it with the group.

### **2. Goal Planning and Self-Evaluation**

After the *Wheel Check-In*, you will choose one behavior to work on during the following week and fill out a goal worksheet. The next week you share how you did and rate yourself on a scale of 1 – 10.

### ***Check In: How Its Helps***

- Pay attention to your behavior. When you know you will be talking in the group about how your behavior during the week it helps you become more aware of it.
- Be accountable to the group about moving off the abuse/disrespect wheel and onto the respect wheel
- Recognize your respectful and positive behaviors.
- Make a plan every week about how you will use your skills at home to stay on the respect wheel.
- If you have been violent toward a family member in the previous week, you will use a restorative process with your parent to be accountable and make amends.
- Practice respectful communication during check-in discussions
- Learn from each other and give each other feedback and support.

## How do you do Check-In?

- At the beginning of every group session, you will fill out the *Check-In worksheet* and we will go around the group and every teen takes turns sharing what they wrote. Parents add any important behaviors you might have missed, especially respectful behaviors.
- If you have been physically violent or threatening, you will answer six Restorative questions, to be discussed shortly.
- After *Check-In* on the Wheels, you will plan a goal for the following week using the goal planning questions on the backside of the *Check-In* worksheet.

## Your First Check-In

Have teens fill out the *Check-In* sheet about their last week. Go around the group and have them each share what they wrote. Invite parents to add anything important that the teen may have missed.

**Worksheet**

**Check-In Worksheet**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Look at the wheels and write down any behaviors you did in the last week.

Abuse/ Disrespect	Respect

If you did a behavior on the Abuse/Disrespect wheel, what could you have done differently so that you stayed on the Respect Wheel?

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Choose one of the behaviors you did on the Respect Wheel. What helped you stay respectful? What skill did you use?

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## **Addressing Violence: Taking Responsibility for Behavior using Six Restorative Steps**

Refer the group to '*Taking Responsibility for My Violent Behavior Using Six Restorative Steps*' in their workbooks and tell the group:

- In Step-Up, you will learn a meaningful way to be accountable to your family when you have been violent.
- If have been physically violent toward people or property, or threatened to do so, we will guide you through a
- 'Restorative' process for taking responsibility for your behavior as you answer these questions.

### **Read through the questions. Then explain the following:**

These questions are called 'Restorative Inquiry', and they guide you in a step-by-step process that helps you

1. Think about how your behavior impacts the person you harmed, and how it affected other people in your home.
2. Recognize the different ways people are harmed when someone is abusive or violent.
3. Learn how to actively take responsibility for harm caused by making amends.
4. Make a plan to do something to repair damage or harm done.
5. Think about what you could have done differently in the situation so that you stayed on the Respect Wheel.
6. Make a plan to prevent doing the behavior again.

This process is called restorative because it helps you restore relationships damaged by hurtful behavior. It gives you a better understanding of how your behavior impacts people and helps you feel empathy. Empathy motivates you to do something about what happened to show that you care and that you want to fix problems caused by your behavior.

It is lifelong learning that applies to any situation where you have caused a problem for others and want to make amends. It is a meaningful way to take responsibility for your behavior, as opposed to just saying, "I'm sorry".

## ***Goal Planning and Self-Evaluation***

Refer the group to the *Goal Planning* worksheet, on the backside of the *Check-In* sheet.

Before reading the questions, discuss how the goal planning will work:

After *Check-In* on the *Wheels*, you will make a goal to work on a specific behavior during the following week. This will be something on the *Abuse Wheel* that you want to stop doing, and something on the *Respect Wheel* you want to do more. They go hand in hand, because when you decide you want to stop a behavior, it is important to think of a behavior you use to replace it. The questions on the worksheet help you with this.

The questions also help you think through: when do I usually use this behavior? What is going on for me? How can I do it in a different way?

Example: Let's say the biggest problem that you and your Mom talked about at *Check-In* was that you have been yelling at her a lot. So, you and your Mom decide this would be the most important thing to work on this week.

First, think about when you usually yell at her. Your Mom can help out with remembering. Together you figure out that it is usually when she wakes you up in the morning, or when she asks you about your homework.

Then you think about what you will do differently so that you stay on the *Respect Wheel*. If you visualize it ahead and make a plan about how to respond differently, you are more likely to remember to do it.

Here is where your new skills come in. You will be learning new skills in Step-Up to help you achieve your weekly goals. Think about a Step-Up skill you have learned that will help you.

Now ask the group:

From the overview of Step-Up skills we have talked about today, does anyone have a suggestion for a skill to prevent yelling?

Write some ideas on the board.

Read the questions on the *Goal Planning* sheet and use the above as an example as you answer each question. Or ask group members if anyone would like to offer a goal they want to make for the example.

Refer group to *Weekly Goal Planning* in their workbooks and review the *Tips to Succeed with your Goal*.

## **Worksheet**

### ***Weekly Goal Planning***

Every week at *Check-In*, you will choose one behavior to work on at home during the week. As you learn skills in Step-Up, you will be able to use your new skills to help you succeed with your goal.

For example, your goal might be to stay non-violent when you get angry with your Mom. You could decide to use your *Safety Plan* so that you will separate and calm down to prevent getting violent.

#### **Tips to Succeed with Your Goal:**

- Be specific about the new behavior. Exactly what will you do?
- Keep it simple. Don't make huge, overall goals, such as "I will get along better with my mom" or "I will be respectful". Break it down by asking, "What exactly do I do when I am not respectful?" Such as, yell, swear, call names, etc. Then replace it with a specific behavior, such as, talk without putdowns or swearing, and if I'm too angry, take a break and use my safety plan.

- Think about what gets in the way? How can you deal with that?
- Visualize you are doing the new behavior.
- Write it down and put it in a place you will see every day.

The following week at *Check-In*, you will answer the '*How Did I Do*' questions at the bottom of the worksheet.

Read the '*How Did I Do*' questions and ask if there are any questions.

Have teens make a goal for the following week and fill out their worksheets. Offer assistance to them as needed.

### ***Facilitator Tips***

- Parents can help their teens with goal planning if the teen cannot decide what to work on. If it is causing conflict between them, provide guidance with choosing a specific violent or abusive behavior related to a problem that has been going on at home.
- Have them begin with goals pertaining to any physical violence that the youth has been using. They should start with the most serious behaviors. Once those have stopped, they can move on to less serious behaviors.
- Encourage youth and parents by reminding them that it is a 'small step' by 'small step' process. Change takes time. Moving their score up from a 3 to a 5 deserves recognition.
- It is important for the teens to answer all of the questions on the worksheet. Have them fill out their '*How Did I Do*' on the goal worksheet right after they come in the door for group while waiting for group to start. Or take a few minutes to have them all do this at the beginning of group.

## **Worksheet**

### ***Goal for the Week***

**The behavior I will work on is:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Steps:**

1. When do you usually use (or not use) this behavior?
2. What is the new behavior you will use? (try to be specific)
3. What can you say to yourself that will help you do this?
4. My self-statement is \_\_\_\_\_
5. What can you do different to help you succeed with your goal?

**How Did I Do?**

1. Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10 (1=worst, 10=best): \_\_\_\_\_
2. If you had some success, how did you do this? What did you do that was different? Or, what helped you?
3. If you were not successful, what got in the way?
4. What can you do this week so you are more successful?

### ***Ground Rules for the Group***

Refer the group to the *Ground Rules* for the Group in the workbooks. It is important to keep the rules posted on the wall every week. Go over the ground rules, and ask if there are any questions and if anyone thinks we have left out something important. This is a review for most teens because they should have filled out a *Group Participation Agreement* including the ground rules during their intake interview.

## ***Ground Rules for the Group***

To make this group a safe and respectful place for everyone I agree to the following ground rules:

1. Follow the *Communication Agreement* when I talk.
2. Keep information shared in the group confidential. Everything that is discussed in the group stays in the group. Do not identify group members to anyone outside the group.
3. Come to each session sober, not under the influence of alcohol or drugs
4. Do not engage in side conversations while the group is in session.
5. Put away phones and other electronics.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Closing***

Commend everybody for coming to Step-Up. Close by giving them the following take home activity, or if time permits, have them do the activity and share with the group before ending the session.

## **Worksheet**

### ***Take Home Activity or Closing Exercise***

Think of three of your personal strengths that will help you make positive changes.

My Personal Strengths:

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# Session 2: Making a Safety-Plan

## Teen and Parent Session

### ***Background Information***

In this session teens will learn how to make a step-by-step plan for keeping their behavior safe when they are angry or upset and might use hurtful words or behavior. We call it a *Safety Plan* because it helps their behavior stay safe and non-violent. Using this terminology helps teens understand the goal of the plan: keeping family members safe from harm. For youth who have already set up a safety plan at their intake or orientation, this session is a review and gives them time to problem solve any challenges they have had using their plan.

It includes details about where they will go when they separate and what they will do to calm themselves down. Rules are included to address some of the barriers to success. Parents can support their teens by letting them know if they see that the teen is escalating and hasn't made the choice to separate.

The *Safety Plan* is one of the key skills in the program to prevent violence and abuse. Facilitators should help youth and parents keep this skill foremost in their repertoire of skills. If a youth is continuing violence or abuse, it may be helpful to meet with the family for a side session to help them succeed with this skill. Whenever violence or abuse is reported at check-in, the first question should be, "What prevented you from using your *Safety Plan*?" Using the *Safety Plan* should be a weekly goal until it is mastered.

## ***Goals***

- To develop a personal Safety Plan to prevent hurtful behavior toward family members.
- To use the Safety Plan at home as a strategy for disengaging from heated conflicts, de-escalating and calming down before interacting again.
- For parents to support their teens in using their Safety Plan at home.

## ***Important Messages***

- Using the Safety Plan is a step toward better family relationships.
- The Safety Plan will help you stay safe with your family members.
- Using your Safety Plan means you care about the other person.
- The Safety Plan gives you a chance to calm down and think before you act.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Introduction: What is a Safety Plan?
3. Discussion: Overview of the Safety Plan
4. Exercise: Make Your Personal Safety Plan
5. Exercise: Share Safety Plans with the Group

# Group Activities

## *Introduction*

### **Begin by saying the following:**

During this session, teens and parents will work together to develop a plan for the teen to disengage from heated conversations that may be headed toward harmful behavior or words. It is a plan to help your teen's behavior stay safe when you are upset or angry, so we call it a '*Safety Plan*'.

Although this session is about the teens' safety plans, this skill can be used by everyone in the family as a way to disengage from conflict. The most important thing is that everyone supports and respects each other's safety plans. Parents are part of this session so that they can support their teens in using their safety plan. For youth who have already set up a safety plan at their intake or orientation, this session is a review and gives them time to problem solve the challenges they have had using their plan. This session can be reviewed when violence or abuse is reported at check-in, or if they have had difficulty separating from conflicts. Everyone in the group learns when they listen to other families work through their challenges using the safety plan. Invite people to help each other with tips that have helped them to be successful with the *Safety Plan*.

### ***Discussion: What is a Safety Plan?***

#### **Explain the following:**

The *Safety Plan* is a step-by-step plan to take a short break to calm down or re-group and then go back to the conversation and try it again after you have had time to think about it and you are in a calmer state of mind.

It's like a time-out in basketball or football. The game stops. The teams separate from each other to figure out a plan. The game restarts when the team members have a plan. It is not about taking

off from home without telling anyone. It isn't just about leaving. A time-out is a way to try to solve problems within families.

Taking a break from heated arguments is one of the best ways to prevent hurtful behavior. Teens and parents tell us the *Safety Plan* was the most useful skill they learned in the program. It is a lifelong skill people can use in many different situations to prevent saying or doing things they might regret.

Refer the group to the Discussion Questions in their workbooks and guide a discussion using the questions.

### ***Discussion Questions***

1. Have you ever taken a break from heated conflict? What did you do?

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2. How was it helpful?

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3. What was difficult about it?

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4. What gets in the way of it working well?

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5. What makes it work?

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### ***Your Personal Safety Plan***

Refer the group to the Safety Plan in the workbook.

Go over the steps as you explain the *Safety Plan*, and have them fill out their own plan as you explain each of the steps. Invite questions from teens and parents along the way. There may be disagreements between the teen and parent about where the youth can go during their separation, and what they will do to calm down. You may need to help them problem solve as they come up with the plan.

Make the following points as you read each of the steps of the *Safety Plan*.

## **STEP 1**

### **I will take a time-out when:**

- I start to feel angry or upset and might become hurtful.

### **Point Out:**

- If you catch yourself before you start to say or do things that are hurtful it is much easier to separate, and it prevents harmful behavior.
- Do you know the feeling inside when you are getting upset or angry in a conversation before you lash out at the person?
- What does that feel like? Invite the group members to share how they feel before they say or do something that is hurtful. Examples may include: angry, agitated, annoyed, frustrated, or irritated. Others may identify physical sensations, or thoughts.
- We call these feelings, thoughts or sensations 'Red Flags'. They let you know that you could be headed in the direction of becoming hurtful. You will learn more about this in the next session.

## **STEP 2**

**I start to use any hurtful behaviors including the following:**

- Yelling or shouting
- Name-calling or profanity
- Threats or intimidating behavior
- Property damage
- Any unwanted physical contact

**Point Out:**

- Before people become physically violent, they usually start with verbal or threatening behaviors. It commonly starts with raised voices, put downs or swearing.
- If you don't catch yourself when you have the feeling (as we just talked about), the next place to catch it is when your voice raises, or you start to put the person down, call names or swear.
- The minute you start to act mean, threatening or demanding it is time to stop and separate.
- If it gets to the point of becoming physical toward people or property (for some people it happens very fast), stop immediately and separate.
- In order to make your Safety Plan work the best, separate the minute your voice is raised or disrespectful words are used. After you gain more Step-Up skills you will be able to catch yourself and change your behavior without separating.
- Note for parents- a family rule can be: the moment voices are raised or hurtful words are said, everyone stops and separates until things are calm. Then, see What to Do After a Time-Out.

### ***STEP 3***

**I will let the other person know I am separating by saying:**

**Point Out:**

- It is important to let your parent know you are using your Safety Plan so that they will respect this and allow you to separate
- When you separate without saying anything, others do not know you are using your Safety Plan
- Think of something short and respectful to say using an “I” statement, such as: I’m using my Safety Plan, I need a break right now, I need space, I am going to go calm down, ‘Time-Out’
- The moment you let others know you are separating; all talking should stop to prevent continued escalation.

### ***STEP 4***

**I will separate from the other person and go to one of the following places:**

**Point Out:**

- This is a time to be alone and do something to calm down, not socialize with friends or take off to others’ houses
- Make a list of places where you can go to briefly calm down, such as a room where you can be alone, the porch or yard, walk around the block, a bike ride.
- The places on your list need to be okay with your parents

### ***STEP 5***

**While I am separated I will do something to calm myself down, such as:**

## **Point Out:**

Do something to calm yourself.

- Make a list of things that calm your emotions, such as walking, shooting hoops, deep breathing, music, petting your animals, draw, or use self-calming skills you have learned in Step-Up
- Ask group members for their ideas and make a list of
- self-calming activities and put them on the board. This will give them ideas for their Safety Plan. They will learn more in the Self-Calming session and make a personal Self-Calming Plan.
- Once you are calm, think about how you can go back and finish the conversation in a respectful way. Think about what you want to say and how you can stay on the Respect Wheel as you say it.

## **Step 6**

**I will stay away from others for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes, or until I can be respectful to everyone in the house.**

## **Point Out:**

- Most people only need 15 – 30 minutes to calm down
- A time frame helps parents know when they will be able to talk to their teen again. A time out should not be more than 60 minutes.
- The time will vary depending upon your self-calming activity, and plans for the day. If you are going on a walk or bike ride, talk with your parent about where and for how long.
- Plan ahead as you write your Safety Plan to avoid discussions at the time of separation.

- If you are calm in 5 or 10 minutes, you can go back to the conversation. The point of time-out is to calm down. It is not a punishment, but a tool for you to use to help yourself prevent violence and abuse.

## **Step 7**

Read over the final part of the *Safety Plan*

I agree to the following:

1. I will not use this plan as an excuse to leave the house or avoid things I am supposed to do.
2. I will use this plan as a time to be alone, calm down, and think about how to deal with the problem.
3. If the other person separates from me, I will respect their time alone and not bother them.
4. After my separation time I will return and make a plan with the other person about what to do next: finish the discussion, plan a time later to talk about it or let it go.

### **Point Out:**

- It can be tempting to use the Safety Plan any time you are in an uncomfortable conversation, such as discussions about grades, rules or chores. Reserve your Safety Plan for the times you really need it.
- Anyone in your home can use this tool. Every family member should respect each other's time alone when they are in a time-out.
- Returning to the conversation after your time-out is important so that you can decide what to do next, and so that there is closure to the interaction that was interrupted by the time-out.

## ***What to Do After Your Time-Out***

Explain the following:

The *Safety Plan* has a beginning, middle and end:

1. Separate from the person or situation and go to a place where you can take a time-out and be alone.
2. Do something to calm down. Once you are calm, think about how you can talk about the problem respectfully.
3. Go back to the person and talk about what to do next.

It is important to go back to the person after the time out to figure out a plan about what to do next. What happens after taking a time-out is just as important as taking the time-out. Just separating is not a solution to the problem. This is a short term solution to prevent abuse or violence. After taking a time out, it is important to return to the person and decide what to do.

Now we will talk about some of the options for closure at the end of your *Safety Plan*.

Refer group members to: *What to Do After a Time-Out* in their workbooks and discuss each option.

## ***What to Do After Your Time-Out***

### ***Let it go***

After you have cooled down, and you talk to your parent again, you both might decide to drop it. It is your parent's decision whether it can be let go. You might have different opinions about this.

### ***Put it on Hold***

When you get back together it might not be a good time to talk about it. For example, you may be too upset, too tired, or too hungry to talk through the problem effectively. So, you can agree to put it on hold for a while until both people feel calm and ready to talk. Putting it on hold should not be a way to avoid the issue. It should be a way to make sure that the conversation can be respectful. If you decide to put the discussion on hold, make sure to set

a specific time (for example, after dinner, or Saturday morning) when you are going to discuss it.

### ***Discuss it***

If you feel calm after the time-out, you may decide that you are ready to talk about the issue with the other person. You must be ready to listen to the other person, use problem-solving skills, and communicate respectfully. If the conversation becomes disrespectful, you can always take another time-out.

Refer group members to: the *Safety Plan Rules* in their workbooks and discuss.

## **Safety Plan Rules**

### **Your Safety Plan is a Time to be Alone**

It is not okay to go to a friend's house, or take off and your parent doesn't know where you are. When you make your Safety Plan with your parent, discuss where it is okay to go and make a list on your Safety Plan so that your parent knows where you are.

### **Your Safety Plan is a Time to Calm Down and Think "How can I deal with this problem without being abusive?"**

When you are separated, do something to calm down (by using your *Self-Calming Plan*, changing your thinking, taking deep breaths, walking, etc.). Once you have calmed down, think about how you can talk respectfully about the problem.

### **You are Responsible for Your Own Safety Plan, Not Other Peoples'.**

Parents will make their own decisions about when they need to separate from you. Sometimes your parent may need to remind you to use your *Safety Plan* if you are being abusive and are not separating. Think of this as way your parent is trying to support you.

### **Share Your Safety Plan**

Have each teen share their Safety Plan worksheet with the group.

# Take-Home Activities

Ask group members use their Safety Plan this week and to fill out the *Safety Plan Log* in the workbook. Next week, at check-in, they will report on how their *Safety Plan* went.

## Worksheet

### ***Safety Plan Log***

During the following week, you can support your teen in using their *Safety Plan* whenever they are starting to feel upset or angry during a conflict. After the *Safety Plan* your teen will write down how it went in the log in their *Teen Workbook*.

#### **Situation: (describe a situation)**

1. When did you decide that you needed to separate? What were your warning signs?
2. What did you do after your time--out-let it go, put it on hold, or discuss it?
3. How was your *Safety Plan* helpful?
4. How was it challenging or difficult to do?
5. What can you do differently next time so that it works better?
6. Make changes in your Safety Plan, if needed, to make it more successful.

# Session 3: Understanding Warning Signs

## Teen and Parent Session

### ***Background Information***

In this session parents will help teens to identify their 'red flags' that indicate that they are heading in the direction of abusive or violent behaviors. 'Red flags' are personal warning signs that a time-out is necessary in order to avoid using hurtful behavior. The earlier you notice your warning signs and use your *Safety Plan*, the easier it is to separate from the situation.

Parents will also identify their own 'red flags' that let them know they should separate and calm down before finishing a conversation or interaction with their teens.

Self-calming thoughts are used to help de-escalate one's emotions and separate from a potentially difficult situation. Parents and teens will learn more self-calming practices in the *Understanding Self-Calming* session.

### ***Goals***

- To identify personal red flags
- To identify self-calming thoughts

### ***Important Messages***

- The sooner you take a time-out when you start to feel upset, the better. It is more difficult to take a time-out when you are angry or agitated.
- Identify the first red flag that indicates you may get abusive. The goal is to recognize that you need a time-out, and then to take it, before you become abusive.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion: Red Flags
3. Exercise: Identifying Red Flags in Your Teen
4. Exercise: My Own Red Flags: Identifying Parent Red Flags
5. Discussion: Self-Calming Thoughts
6. Exercise: My Self-Calming Thoughts.

# Group Activities

## ***Discussion: Red Flags***

Start by reviewing the definition of red flags provided in the *Red Flags* worksheet.

### ***Red Flags***

If we pay close attention to our bodies, thoughts and feelings, we can find some warning signs that we are getting angry or upset and may become abusive to our family members.

Paying attention to these warning signs in ourselves helps us know when we need to use our *Safety Plan* and take a time-out.

Everyone has his or her own red flags. Here are some examples:

- **Negative thoughts:** “She treats me like an infant!” “She never lets me do anything!” “He’s an idiot!”
- **Difficult feelings:** Angry, frustrated, hurt, jealous, anxious, impatient, unappreciated, neglected, abandoned.
- **Body signs:** Tight muscles in the neck, back or jaw; clenched teeth; upset stomach; flushed face; feeling short of breath.
- **Actions:** Raising of the voice, shouting, saying bad words.

When you recognize these red flags in yourself, it’s time to use your *Safety Plan*.

## ***Exercise: Identifying Red Flags***

Have teens fill out *My Red Flags* in their workbooks.

## **Worksheet**

### ***Teen's Red Flags***

- Body signs:
- Verbal signs:
- Actions:
- Other:

While teens are filling out their red flags, have parents fill out worksheet *Identifying Red Flags in Your Teen* in their workbook. After parents have filled out their teen's red flags, have them fill out *Identifying My Own Red Flags* for themselves.

## **Worksheet**

### ***Identifying Your Own Red Flags (Parent Exercise)***

- Body signs: (Examples: feeling tense, stomach ache, headache, shoulder tension)
- Feelings: (Examples: anger, frustration, revenge)
- Thoughts: (Examples: “he’s not going to get away with this,” “she’s a selfish brat”)
- Verbal signs: (Examples: saying hurtful things, put-downs, criticism, threats)
- Actions: (Examples: pointing your finger, getting too close to the person, slamming your fist)

Have them share their responses in small groups or with the whole group. As group members share their red flags, ask each teen to try to figure out what his or her earliest red flag is. Let them know that it’s important to use your *Safety Plan* at the earliest red flag.

When you see warning signs in your teen, let him or her know that you are seeing ‘red flags’ and it is time for the *Safety Plan*. Give your teen the opportunity to separate, but if he or she refuses, say that you are going to use the *Safety Plan* and separate.

If you are experiencing your own red flags, and want to avoid yelling or saying unhelpful things to your teen, tell him or her that you are going to take your own time-out for yourself. Separate from your teen and let him or her know you are taking a break,

where you will be and how long you will be separated. This helps teens who become anxious when the parent separates and they follow their parents or keep pestering them.

### ***Discussion: Self-Calming Thoughts***

Next, explain to the group that their thinking can affect their feelings and behavior. Point out that some thought patterns get people more

worked up and angry, like dwelling on how stupid they think their parents are. Conversely, people can choose to think about things that help them calm down and deal with the situation, like, “This is getting me nowhere. I need to calm down.”

Self-calming thoughts are things you think about or say to yourself to help you calm down.

You should use self-calming thoughts when:

- You feel yourself starting to get upset or angry.
- You start to use abusive behavior (yelling, name calling, put-downs, or anything physical).
- You are using your Safety Plan and are trying to calm down.

Have the group think of examples of calming thoughts that might help them take a time-out. For example, teens may say, “I need a break; I can talk about this later.” Write their ideas on the board.

Next, have them think of calming thoughts to focus on during a time-out, like, “Things will work out better if I calm down.” If they are having difficulty thinking of examples, ask group members to think of a time when they were about to get violent or abusive and stopped. Ask, “What did you think or say to yourself that helped you stay in control?”

### ***Exercise: My Self-Calming Thoughts***

Refer teens to the list of *Self Calming Thoughts for Teens* in the workbook; and refer parents to the list of *Self-Calming Thoughts for Parents*. Let them know these are examples to give them ideas for their own self-calming thoughts.

Refer parents and teens to *My Self-Calming Thoughts* in the workbook. Ask them to write down three self-calming thoughts for themselves.

## **Self-Calming Thoughts for Teens**

- I'm not going to let this get to me.
- I can stay calm.
- Stop. Let it go.
- I need a break.
- If I stay calm, things will work out better.
- I can take charge of how I act.
- I don't have to get mad, it will go better.
- Step away. Stay calm.
- I'm going to go chill out. I can talk about this later.
- It's okay. I can deal with this.
- I'm not going to yell.
- I can talk calmly about this.
- Go take a walk around the block.
- I don't have to throw a temper tantrum.
- I can handle this.
- I can talk without yelling.
- I can talk about how I feel without being abusive.
- I will take three deep breaths and sit down quietly

## Self-Calming Thoughts for Parents

- He is responsible for his behavior.
- Let it go for now. I can talk about it later when we are both calm.
- I am calm and in control.
- I will go in another room and take some deep breaths.
- I cannot control his behavior, but I can control my behavior.
- I don't have to deal with this right now; it will only make it worse.
- He is responsible for his feelings.
- She is upset and mad and she can deal with that on her own.
- I can't "make" him do anything. I can provide choices and consequences, and then it is his decision.
- I don't have to engage in this battle. I can take a time-out, calm down and think about how I want to communicate.
- I don't have to "win."
- The strongest influence I can have with my child is to model the behavior I want her to learn.
- I will disengage now and go do something relaxing.
- She can figure this out on her own. I will let her be.
- My behavior is not helping the situation. I will stop and be quiet for a while. Later I will talk about it calmly with her.

## Take-Home Activities

During the following week, pay attention to your red flags and add them to the *Your Red Flags* worksheet. Try to notice your earliest signal that you are becoming angry or upset.

Use your *Self-Calming Thoughts* when you notice your red flags and see if it makes a difference.



# **Session 4: Introduction to Parent Group: Strengths, Challenges, Changes**

## **Parent Session**

### ***Background Information***

An important part of the parent group is for parents to get support from other parents who have similar struggles with their teens. Many parents come into the program feeling isolated and alone in their experiences with their abusive teenagers. Many believe that no one else has teens like theirs, and that they are to blame for their difficult situations. When parents learn that others are facing similar challenges, they feel a sense of relief. Parents can give each other support, empathy, and reassurance. They can work together to help find solutions to difficult problems with their teens. During this session parents will begin the process of getting to know each other and building supportive relationships. An important role of the facilitator is to encourage open discussion while keeping the group focused on the goals of the session.

Many parents are feeling powerless and hopeless. A critical function of the parent group is to give parents information and ideas about what they can do. When parents leave the group with a plan about something they can do, whether it is about their own self-care or something in their relationships with their teens, it gives them a sense of having some control in their lives. It also gives them some hope and renewed energy.

During this session, parents will talk about their strengths, challenges they face with their teens, and changes they would

like to make in their own behavior. At the end of the session, they will brainstorm together about what kinds of information and skills they feel they need in order to effectively face their challenges. Usually, the list of skills and information generated by the parents includes much of the content of the parent curriculum. If there are skills and information listed that are not covered in this curriculum, you may want to bring in other curriculum materials or exercises to address these topics.

It is important throughout the curriculum to communicate to parents that they are not to blame for their teens' violent behavior. When we talk about parents making changes in their own behavior, it is not to imply that teens' violent or abusive behavior is a result of parents' behavior. Parents focus on their own behavior because it is the only behavior they have control of. The purpose of making changes in their own behavior is to help them deal more effectively with the teens' difficult behavior.

Some parents may come to the group feeling like they do not need to change their own behavior, and this may be true. It is important to respect this (unless they are being violent or abusive—see *Introduction to the Parent Group* for more information about this).

The teens are coming to the program to change their violent and abusive behavior. Parents are here to support the teens in making changes. Many parents learn over the course of attending the program that they have been responding to their teens' behavior in ways that are not helpful to themselves or their teens, and they welcome ideas for change.

## ***Goals***

- To begin the process of building supportive relationships in the group
- To be introduced to the parent group and begin to get to know other parents
- To understand the goals and ground rules of the parent group
- To identify strengths and challenges as a parent

## ***Important Messages***

- You are not alone.
- You can talk about your challenges safely in this group.
- The group is here to listen and support you.
- We can help each other make positive changes.
- You all have strengths as parents.
- You are not to blame for your child's abusive behavior.
- You are not powerless; there are things you can do.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check-in and review take home activities
2. Separate into parent and teen groups
3. Introduction to the Parent Group
4. Discussion: Safety
5. Exercise: Strengths, Challenges, Changes

# Group Activities

## ***Introduction to the Parent Group***

Begin by passing out parent workbooks. Have group members introduce themselves to each other, if they were not part of the introductory teen and parent group the previous session. Refer the group to *Goals for Parent Group* in the workbook and go over each goal.

## ***Goals for Parent Group***

- To learn skills for safety when your teen is violent.
- To learn how to support your teen in using skills learned in Step-Up.
- To learn how to respond when your teen is violent or abusive.
- To learn ways to build a more positive relationship with your teen.
- To understand the importance of modeling respectful behavior for your teen.
- To learn parenting skills that promote cooperation and responsible behavior in teens.
- To support each other as parents.

Let parents know that the focus of the Step-Up program is to help teens stop using violent and abusive behavior. The purpose of the parent group is to give parents information and support while their teens are working on changing their behavior. We have found that parent involvement in the program increases its effectiveness for teens. Explain that when parents come to the group it helps their teens in several ways:

- Teens are more accountable about their behavior when parents are there for check-in.
- Parents and teens learn some skills together.

- Parents are able to better support their teens in changing when parents are aware of what teens are working on in the group.
- Parents learn how to respond to their teens' difficult behaviors in ways that help the teens change.
- Parents learn that they are not to blame for their teens' violent behavior.
- This knowledge helps parents give their teens responsibility for their behavior.

### ***Tell the group:***

Parents come to the program from a variety of backgrounds and with diverse situations and perspectives. We want to respect these differences, and acknowledge that every family has its own values and beliefs about what is most important and what it needs. Every child is different and has different needs, as well. What will work with one teen may not be a good solution for another teen. We do not have pat answers or single solutions that fit everyone. We offer a variety of tools that you can choose from. Some may work and some may not. We work as a team together in the parent group to learn skills and brainstorm a variety of solutions for different situations. We want to support you to find the best way for you and your family.

What we all have in common is the goal to stop our teens' violent and abusive behavior. The Step-Up program does not support violent or abusive behaviors by any person in the home. It is difficult for a teen to stop using violence and abuse when others in the home are using these behaviors, particularly if it is an adult. It is essential that adults in the teen's life model respectful relationship skills.

If you have concerns about an adult in the home using violent and abusive behaviors, please talk with one of our staff. We are mandated by state law to report any incidents of abuse of a minor (adapt this statement to fit your state laws, as needed).

Ask if there are any questions or concerns about the program or the parent group. Before beginning the class, take the group through Ground Rules for the Group in the parent workbook.

### ***Ground Rules for Parent Group***

- **Maintain confidentiality:** Information that parents share about themselves and their family's needs to stay in the group. Staff may need to make exceptions to this if there are risks to a person's physical safety, or if it is necessary to report an incident to a probation counselor (parents will be informed of this).
- **Show respect for each other:** This includes: not interrupting or talking while someone else is talking, respecting each other's feelings and opinions, and acknowledging that our comments are our own opinions.
- **Show respect for your child:** This includes: not labeling the child, putting him or her down, or calling him or her names. When discussing difficulties with your child, talk about the behavior, not the person.
- **Stay on topic as much as possible:** If you take the discussion in another direction, make a connection with the topic at hand.

### **Tell the group:**

Step-Up's most important concern is the safety of family members. We will be talking a lot about safety in the parent group. The focus of every intervention with the teen is to keep family members safe from violence. Please let us know if you have safety concerns at any time, such as if your teen's abusive or threatening behavior is escalating at home, your teen is violent with a family member, you are feeling more fearful of your teen, or your teen makes any suicidal comments or behaviors that concern you.

During check-in each week you have the opportunity to report abusive or violent behavior by your teen during the previous week. If you feel uncomfortable or fearful talking about your teen's behavior when your teen is present, please let us know. If your teen retaliates about something you

talk about in the group or pressures you to not talk in the group, let us know. We want you to feel safe talking in the group, and we will discuss how you can be part of check-in without compromising your safety. (For more information, see *Safety Issues* within Facilitator Notes for Parent Curriculum in the Introduction).

During the parent group, you can bring up additional information about your teen's behavior that you did not feel comfortable discussing in the large group.

### ***Exercise: Strengths, Challenges, Changes***

Refer the group to *Strengths, Challenges, and Changes* worksheet in the parent workbook.

### **Worksheet**

#### ***Strengths, Challenges, and Changes***

1. One of my **strengths** as a parent is:
2. The biggest **challenge** for me as a parent is:
3. The one change I will make is:

Have parents answer the questions on their own. Ask them to think about their own behavior when they answer the questions (as opposed to their teens' behavior). When everyone has finished, go around the group and have each parent share his or her answers.

As they do this, list their answers on the board under the headings *Strengths, Challenges, Changes*.

When parents have finished sharing their answers, point out all of the strengths listed. Comment on the similarities in the challenges they are dealing with and the changes they want to make. Discuss how they are not alone and they can support each other with facing challenges and making changes.

Ask parents what skills or knowledge will help them face these challenges and make some of the changes listed on the board. List their ideas on the board. Let them know that many of these topics will be covered in the parent group.

## **Take Home Activity**

Ask parents to be aware of their parenting strengths during the following week. They probably have more strengths than they have listed on their worksheets. Ask them to add more strengths to the list as they think of them during the week.

# Session 5 Learning Self-Calming

## *Teen and Parent Session*

### *Background Information*

This session gives teens and parents tools for calming their nervous systems when they feel strong emotion, anxiety or stress. When teens and parents understand how their brain and nervous system work, they are more motivated to use self-calming skills. Providing a brief and simple overview of brain function in relation to their emotions, especially anger and how they have the ability to change their brain helps them feel more optimistic and confident as they implement self-calming strategies.

Participants will make their own personal *Self Calming Plan* including a list of activities they will use when they are feeling stressed, anxious or angry. The *Self Calming Plan* gives them something to do when they use their *Safety Plan* and are taking a time-out from an escalated interaction with a family member. Facilitators can ask teens if they remembered their self-calming plan when they report incidents of abuse or violence at check-in, and using their self-calming plan can be a helpful weekly goal.

This session ends with teaching the group a mindfulness meditation. Each week thereafter, the group will begin with a relaxation technique or calming meditation. It is important to use short activities ranging from 3 to 8 minutes. Using one activity for three or four weeks in a row helps them learn the strategy. If participants do not feel comfortable with the activity, invite them to just sit quietly during this activity.

## ***Goals***

- To gain some understanding about how the brain and nervous system function in relation to emotion, anxiety and stress.
- To realize that they have some ability to influence their brain and nervous system functioning.
- To learn specific strategies to calm the nervous system and improve mood.
- To recognize that when they are escalated and angry, they have options that really work to calm the high emotion and prevent abusive and violent behavior.
- For participants to make their own Self Calming Plan that they will use when they begin to feel escalated, angry or anxious to keep their behavior safe.

## ***Important Messages***

- You can change your brain
- You are already changing your brain when you learn skills in Step-Up, plan your weekly goals and practice using your new skills
- You have the ability to alter the activity in your brain and your nervous system to help you calm down.
- You have many choices when you become upset and angry to help yourself settle down and take care of yourself so that you are not hurtful to others

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check-in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities
2. Introduction / Discussion Questions
3. Discussion: You Can change Your Brain
4. Discussion: Understanding your Brain and Nervous System
5. Discussion: Brian's Story
6. Discussion: Calming Strong Emotions
7. Exercise: How can we activate our Pre-frontal Cortex? How can we activate our Para-Sympathetic Nervous System
8. Exercise: My Self-Calming Plan
9. Exercise: Mindfulness meditation

# Group Activities

## ***Discussion Questions:***

Ask the group:

- How many people feel like they go from feeling upset to rage really fast?
- What does it feel like?
- Does anyone experience this more slowly, like a gradual build up?
- What does that feel like?

When you feel extreme emotions- it can feel like a storm inside that you don't have any control of. For many people it feels like it just 'takes over'. It may happen fast, however, there is a whole process going on in your brain and nervous system that you are not consciously aware of.

Even though there is a lot going on unconsciously, you do have some control of your emotional reactions. We actually have the ability to 'calm the storm' by balancing our brain's mood regulating circuits.

This session will give you information and skills to help you calm strong emotions so you are able to think more clearly, make better decisions, and respond to problems better.

## ***You Can Change Your Brain***

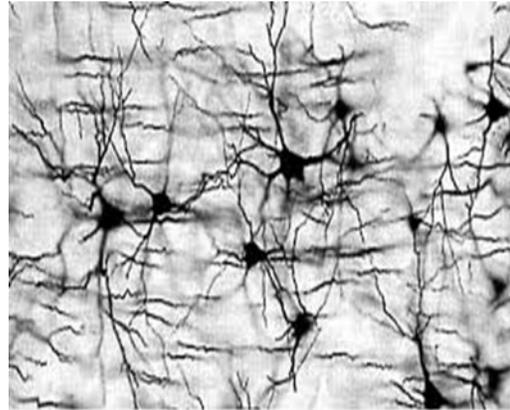
Explain the following referencing the Neural Networks picture in the workbook:

We have the ability to physically change our brains. In fact, we are doing it every day, and we don't even know it. Every time you have a new experience or learn a new skill, your brain grows new neural connections. It's called 'neuroplasticity'.

When you first start using a new skill or behavior, new nerve connections begin to grow, like branches on a tree. At first they are small and thin, and it may be hard to do the new behavior. But as you continue to practice it, the 'branches' become thicker and stronger, and the behavior becomes easier and easier.

## ***Neural Networks in the Brain***

Another way to think about it is to imagine making a line in the sand on the beach. The first time you run your finger or a stick through the sand, it is shallow and some sand falls back in, so it is less visible. The second time, it goes a little deeper and holds better. Every time you do it again, the groove becomes deeper and deeper, making the line more clear and distinct. It is the same with the neural pathways in your brain.



Remember when you learned to ride a bike? First, it was really hard and you fell a lot, but as you kept at it, it got easier and easier. Finally, you did not even have to think about it- you just hopped on your bike and rode, without thinking about the different parts of the skill.

Your brain developed a whole network of neural connections just for that behavior, that you will have forever- you will never have to re-learn it.

Likewise, you are creating new neural connections in your brain as you practice all of the skills you are learning here in Step-Up. The more you use them, the easier it becomes as your brain strengthens the neural networks for that skill. You are re-wiring your brain.

When you do your goal planning each week, as you make a plan about how you will respond to a situation in a new way, you are strengthening the part of your brain that helps you react less impulsively and think through what the outcomes might be for your actions.

The more you use the new behavior, the easier it becomes as your brain strengthens the neural networks for that behavior.

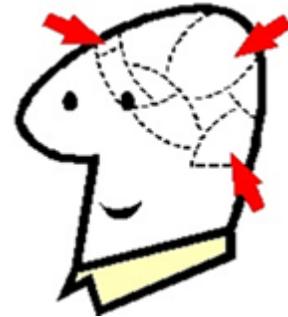
At the same time, the pathways for the old behaviors are 'pruned' away, like pruning branches off of a tree.

This even happens with our emotional states. For example, if you have had a lot of anxiety, your neural pathways become wired for anxiety. If you develop tools to feel calm, as you are calm more of the time the anxiety pathways are weaker and eventually are pruned away from lack of activity. They call it 'use it or lose it'.

**Refer group members to Three Steps to Re-Wiring Your Brain to Change Your Behavior in their workbook and explain:**

In sum, there are three parts to changing your brain and your behavior:

1. **LEARN** - gain information so that you understand how and why it works; learn skills to actually do a new behavior or skill;
2. **PLAN** - how and when you will use the new skill or behavior;
3. **PRACTICE** - do the new behavior or skill over and over



You are doing this every week in Step Up.

## ***Understanding Your Brain and Nervous System***

### ***A Handy Model of Your Brain***

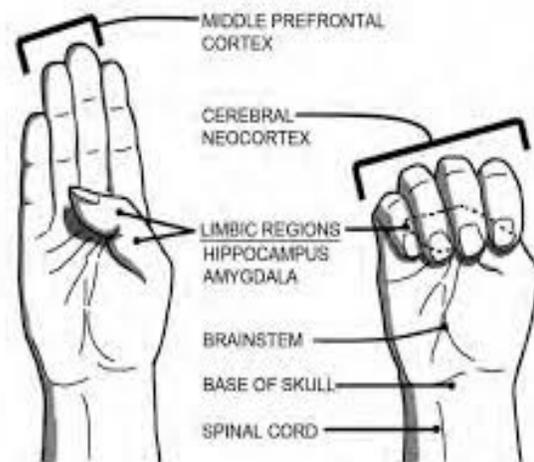
Refer the group to *Understanding Your Brain and Nervous System: A Handy Model of Your Brain* in the workbook.

Explain the following as you model for them how to make a brain model with your hand:

Let's talk more about how our brains work. We are going to make a model of the brain with our hands. Everyone hold up your hand. If you put your thumb in the middle of your palm and then curl your fingers over the top, you have a handy model of your brain (quoted from Dan Siegel, *Mindsight*).

The face is in front of the knuckles and the wrist is the spinal cord connecting to the brain stem. If you lift up your fingers you'll see your thumb, representing the limbic area of your brain, and your palm is the inner brainstem. Now curl your fingers back down over your thumb, and they are your brain's frontal cortex.

So, here you can see the three major regions of your brain- the brainstem, the limbic area, and the cortex. Each of these regions interacts with each other to help our bodies, minds and emotions function together to keep us alive, safe and healthy.



Also point out the picture of the brain in their workbooks so that they can reference the brain areas on the picture as well. (You are welcome to use other visual aids during this session, such as coloring book images for them to color, plastic models, or posters).

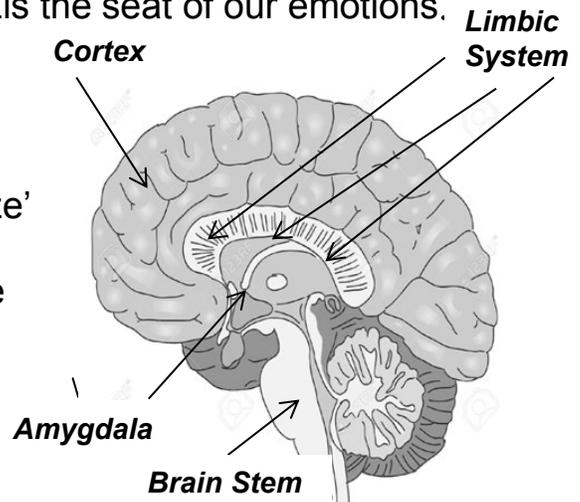
Pointing to the areas of the brain on your own hand model explain:

**The Cortex** is the thinking part of the brain. It helps us with reasoning, planning, thinking things through, especially the pre-frontal cortex in the front part over your forehead. The cortex also has regulatory circuits that

calm our emotional states. When your cortex is activated it can send inhibitory fibers downward into the limbic system which calms and soothes us.

**The Brainstem and Limbic** areas of our brains are more primitive and are responsible for our basic drives, such as food, sleep and safety. The limbic system is also about instinct and survival, is the seat of our emotions.

**The Amygdala**, a small almond size part, receives information and evaluates- "is this good, or bad?". It perceives when there is danger and puts us into 'fight, flight or freeze' response. It triggers the nervous system to release chemicals and hormones that give us energy to fight or flee. It is a good thing, except it can be activated when we don't really need it.



Brain studies show that the amygdala and limbic system can become over-activated, particularly for people who have had ongoing stress or who have had experiences producing high levels of fear or anger. This can result in over-reacting to things that are not worthy of such strong emotions or behaviors. This is thought to be because our bodies and the limbic system hold memories of events that can be unconsciously triggered by another event that produces a similar type of emotion.

We are going to read a story that is an example of this.

**Read the following story:**

### **Brian's Story**

*Brian was bullied a lot when he was in fifth grade. He was a little overweight and kind of shy at school. He had moved to the school as a new student because his family had recently moved to Seattle.*

*Brian felt lonely and kind of depressed because he had to leave his friends. He wanted to make some friends at school, but was having a hard time connecting with anyone. There were a group of kids who taunted him and called him fat and other mean things. He tried to ignore them.*

*One day after school as he was walking home they jumped him and hit and kicked him, calling him fat and stupid. They took his backpack and ran off. He was scared and angry. He was afraid to fight them back, and just tried to get through the rest of the year, knowing he would be at another school the following year. He stayed away from areas he knew they would be.*

*After a while Brian made a few friends and started feeling better, but was still anxious every day when he had to walk home from school, not knowing if those guys would jump him again.*

*At home his mother noticed he was more irritable and often in a bad mood. He seemed to over react to the smallest things. When she asked him about school he would get agitated and not want to talk or yell at her to leave him alone.*

*One day his 10-year-old brother called him fat, and he jumped up, threw his chair against the wall and tackled his little brother. His mother intervened, and got him to go outside.*

*Brian felt like he wanted to pummel anything and anyone. His heart rate was high and he was shaky. His mother told him to walk or run around the block. He didn't want to do this, but he didn't know what else to do, so he ran... and ran.*

*After about 5 minutes he started to feel some settling in his body. He then slowed to a walk. He felt calmer, and walked around the block a few more times and then slowly back home.*

*As he calmed down, he began thinking about what happened. When he came in the house he looked at his mom and brother and felt terrible about what he did.*

**Discuss the following:**

Brian had a past experience of fear for his safety in which his limbic system activated, and then he continued to experience stress and anxiety about whether it might happen again. His amygdala and limbic system on high alert, especially when he was walking home. This sensitized his system to any indication of threat.

While his 10-year-old brother was probably not a big threat, it still triggered a fight reaction because it brought up the same emotions he felt when the bullies called him 'fat' and the anger he experienced when they hurt him.

### ***Calming Strong Emotions***

The end of Brian's story tells us the good news about our brains and our ability to self-regulate and calm strong emotions, even when they feel out of control.

Brian didn't know it, but his mother was very wise when she told him to walk or run around the block. We will talk about why in a moment.

After Brian had been running for a while, he started to feel more settled and calm. He was able to think more clearly. He realized what he had done, and felt empathy for his mother and brother as he recognized what had happened.

Ask the group: Does anyone have any ideas about what helped Brian calm down?

Explain the following:

Brian's amygdala had calmed down and his pre-frontal cortex kicked in.

When your pre-frontal cortex is activated it helps you calm down, think things through, and feel less reactive and emotional. It is our area of higher thinking. We have more empathy and ability to understand others when we are in our pre-frontal cortex.

Adolescence is a time when the pre-frontal cortex not completely developed, but it is working hard on it. During the teen years, there are times when their cortex is beginning to function at a higher level. That's when parents think, "Wow, he is really maturing. That was a smart decision he made." Or, "She is really thinking things through more than ever before." But, two days later that same parent is saying, "What is she thinking? It's like she can't think forward more than 10 minutes." Or, "he seems like he is seven years old again, what the heck?" This is because brain development in teens is inconsistent-the new neural networks are not strong enough yet to hold up all of the time.

The good news is that teens have the ability to help their brains develop and strengthen the new networks by using skills they are learning today and every week in Step Up. .

The first part is to do things that activate your cortex, meaning you are shifting energy into your cortex.

## ***How to Activate Your Pre-frontal Cortex and Calm your Nervous System***

Go over the *How to Activate Your Pre-Frontal Cortex and Calm Your Nervous System* in their workbooks as you explain:

There are a lot of ways to activate the pre-frontal cortex. Even though Brian didn't know it, he was turning on his pre-frontal cortex when he was running and walking because he was breathing deep and moving his body. Breathing and moving are two ways to help your frontal cortex come alive.

This is partly because breathing and moving activates a part of our nervous system that helps turn down the limbic system response fear and anger. It helps the cortex send those inhibitory fibers down into the limbic system to calm down the amygdala. And it signals the calming part of our nervous system to kick in.

We have two parts our autonomic nervous system that work with the different brain regions by secreting chemical or hormones that activate or calm us.

### **1. The sympathetic nervous system**

This part of the nervous system stimulates and activates you. When you have stress, fear, anger and other strong emotions, the sympathetic nervous system, along with the limbic system, kicks in to give you energy to respond and deal with it. And, as we talked about, it usually does not help unless you are in a situation where you need to fight or flee. It makes things worse, generally, because activating chemicals increase your anxiety, making it harder to think clear to deal with the situation.

## **2. The para-sympathetic nervous system**

This part of the nervous system helps you calm down and shift to your pre-frontal cortex.

Body movement in any form, also activates the parasympathetic nervous system.

Ask group members:

What are some other types of body movement people might use? List on board.

### ***Body Movement***

Moving your body in any way- walking, dancing, skateboarding, kicking a ball around, or anything that gets you moving, will kick in your parasympathetic nervous system and calm you. What are some other types of body movement?

### ***Deep Breathing***

Deep breathing is the fastest way to immediately trigger your parasympathetic nervous system and settle anxiety, and stress.

It can be difficult for some people to sit down and focus on breathing when they are in a highly activated state, so running or fast walking is a good way to get started. Body movement gets you breathing without even having to think about it-it just happens. As you settle down, you can begin to focus on slowing and deepening the breath.

### **Breathing Out**

It is the breath out that kicks in the para-sympathetic nervous system. So, doing something that helps you emphasize your breath out, is the best. For example:

Blowing up a balloon, blowing bubbles, or blowing on a pinwheel. What else?

Generate ideas from the group and list on the board.

## ***4X4X4 Breathing Exercise***

Refer group to the *4X4X4 Breathing Exercise* in their workbooks, and explain:

Here is a quick breathing exercise that you can use any time you start to feel anxious, agitated or when you are using your safety plan and taking a break from an escalated situation. It is called *4X4X4 Breathing*.

Facilitate 4X4X4 Breathing Exercise.

Explain that anything (healthy) that calms and soothes you is probably kicking in your parasympathetic nervous system and pre-frontal cortex.

Breathing deep slow breathes, all the way down to your belly and filling up your whole torso with air, and then slowly breathing out, has an immediate calming effect. It kicks in your parasympathetic nervous system and turns down your sympathetic warning system (fight or flight), helping you feel calmer and less amped up.

Try this:

1. Take a deep breath in for a count of 4;
2. As you count, fill up your lungs, belly and whole torso with air;
3. Hold for a count of 4;
4. Then breath out slowly for a count of 4;
5. Hold for a count of 4;
6. Then breath in again for 4;
7. Do this 4 times.

A long, slow breath out is most important. When you breath out, it calms you down. See if you can breathe out very slowly, and when you feel like your breath out is complete, see if you can breathe out even more

## ***Ways to Calm Your Nervous System***

**Ask group:** What helps you feel calm?

Brainstorm some ideas and write them on the board.

After you have generated a list, go over the *Ways to Calm Your Nervous System* worksheet in the workbook.

**Examples:**

- Deep breathing
- Physical exercise
- Music
- Dancing
- Drawing / coloring
- Writing in a journal
- Relaxation exercises
- Meditate
- Rub your feet
- Put your attention on your core center of your body – 2” below naval, 1” inside- breathe into it slowly 12 times.
- Feel the inside of your heart or inside of your abdomen- breathe into it slowly 12 times.
- Squishy ball, play dough, a rock to keep in your pocket and rub
- Get outside and walk, run, kick a ball
- Touch grass with your bare feet
- Sit down near a tree

## ***My Self-Calming Plan***

Have the group members make their own *Self-Calming Plan*, using their *My Self-Calming Plan Worksheet*. Have them make a list of self-calming ideas they would really do. Then fill in the plan with a list of self-calming behaviors they will use when they have strong emotion, such as anxious or angry, and those they will use preventatively to regulate their mood and reduce anxiety overall.

Ask everyone to do at least 3 self-calming behaviors in the following week, and report back to group during check in about how it went.

## ***Meditation***

Let's talk about meditation. Researchers are beginning to learn more and more about what happens to people's brains when they meditate. They have found, through new brain technology, that when people meditate their middle frontal area of the cortex becomes highly activated. The middle frontal cortex is important for emotional balance, cognitive flexibility, development of empathy, and regulation of fear.

Scientists looked at the brains of experienced meditators and found that the amygdala is far less active than in most people. Meditation rewires your brain. It increases and strengthens the fibers that calm strong emotional reactions, especially fear and anger.

There are many different types of meditation. Meditation does not have to be long and it does not necessarily mean sitting still and silent. The main idea is being present in the moment without putting attention on your thoughts.

A meditation called 'mindfulness' has been found to be especially helpful for people with stress, anxiety, and anger issues

## **Mindfulness**

What is Mindfulness?

1. Mindfulness is a form of mental activity that trains the mind to become aware of awareness itself, and

## 2. To pay attention to one's own attention

Mindfulness is defined as paying attention to the present moment from a stance that is non-judgmental and non-reactive.

The benefits of mindfulness:

- Teaches self-observation
- Is a form of 'tuning in' to your self – called attunement, which helps you become more aware of yourself- including your thoughts, feelings and body
- Helps the parts of the brain that regulate mood to grow and strengthen, stabilizing the mind and enabling one to achieve emotional equilibrium and resilience.
- Stimulates the growth and strengthening of the neural connections that we talked about earlier in the pre-frontal cortex that send inhibitory fibers into the amygdala to calm and soothe us.
- Stimulates and strengthens the part of the brain (frontal cortex) that enables us to resonate with others and regulate ourselves

### **Mindfulness Meditation**

Mindfulness can be achieved by paying attention to the present moment. Being mindful is holding yourself fully in this moment in time. We all spend a lot of time thinking about the future and the past, our minds spinning with what we are going to do or what we should have done. What happens when we do this is that we are not present. Have you ever noticed you just walked in the door of your house and have no memory of the walk or ride home? That's because you were off in your mind the whole time- completely unaware of your body in the present as you walked home or sat in the car.

A way to become present in the moment is to pay attention to what you are doing right now – for example, feeling your feet walk down the sidewalk, looking at the cracks in the cement, the grass, the gardens you walk past.... using all of your senses to take in what is around you- smells in the

air, the feeling of the wind on your face, the sounds around you- dogs barking, cars going by, and things you see.

Mindfulness is also observing without judging. It is being an observer of what is- such as a feeling or a thought, and just allowing it to be without deciding it is good or bad, or trying to change it.

So, as you practice being fully present, and feelings or thoughts come along (which they will), allow yourself to just observe without judging them or trying to do something about them. For example, when you realize you are not being present and you're thinking about school tomorrow or what you will do when you get home- instead of deciding "I'm am not doing this right or I have to stop thinking...", just notice it, accept it, and then come back to the present, putting your attention on your body, the chair you are in, the sounds you hear around you, etc.

Let's practice. Start by closing your eyes and put both feet flat on the floor.

- Feel your breath. Feel the sensation of it through your nostrils. Feel your chest and abdomen move out as it fills with air, and move in as the air goes out. Continue to just feel your breath. If thoughts come, just observe them but don't engage. Let them pass by and go back to feeling your breath.
- Feel your body in your chair. Feel the chair against your back. Feel the weight of your legs on the seat.
- Feel your feet. Feel the sensation of the bottom of your feet against the floor. Feel your toes. Feel the bones inside your feet.
- Feel your hands on the table or your lap, just feel these sensations of your fingers. And your arms.
- Feel your chest, and your breath making it rise and fall. Feel your heart. You might feel it pumping.
- Feel your stomach. Feel for sensations inside. Your dinner digesting, or emptiness and hunger.
- Feel your lower belly. Your lower back. Upper back.

- Feel the inside of your mouth. The inside of cheeks. Feel your tongue. And the roof of your mouth.
- Feel your skin.
- Listen to the sounds in the room. The air, sounds outside of the room, people's breath, your own breath. Feel your breath move in and out. Stay with your breath and just feel the air in your nostrils as you breath in, and breath out. Breathe in and breathe out.

Now, without looking up, open your eyes. Look at the table, then look around the room, and then see each other.

What do you feel like now?

You can practice this when you are eating, walking, sitting in your room or in school. It helps calm your mind. It helps bring back focus when your mind is feeling scattered. You can do it during 'time-out' or anytime you feel anxious. When thoughts come as you do this, you just observe the thought and then let it go...

# **Session 6: Assertive Communication**

## **Teen and Parent Session**

### ***Background Information***

The purpose of this session is to help teens learn how to communicate their feelings and thoughts in a respectful manner. Often, teens in the program know only three ways to communicate negative feelings: They become aggressive and disrespectful when they try to get their point across, or they become passive and don't say anything at all to avoid conflict, or they become passive-aggressive. In any case, they do not feel anyone has heard them.

The assertive communication techniques covered in this session help teens and parents communicate respectfully with one another. Parents should practice the same techniques so that they can model assertive communication for their teens.

Be sure to stress throughout the session that assertive communication is not a tactic to get one's way. The purpose is to let the other person know how one feels and thinks about a situation.

You should also encourage the use of assertive communication during the remaining sessions of the program. Point out when a teen or parent has an opportunity to change an aggressive or passive statement into an assertive one. Over time, the whole group will benefit from such reminders.

## ***Goals***

- To examine different styles of communication
- To learn skills for assertive communication
- To learn how to use “I” statements

## ***Important Messages***

- Assertive communication is a way to express your feelings and thoughts respectfully.
- You can respond to a difficult situation without being aggressive or passive.
- Assertive communication helps others hear your point of view, but it is not necessarily going to get you what you want.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion: Styles of Communication.
3. Exercise: Styles of Communication Scenarios
4. Exercise: Practicing Assertive Communication

# Group Activities

## *Discussion: Styles of Communication*

Begin the group with the following explanation:

There are four different ways that a person typically responds when he or she is upset or in disagreement with another person. One way is to respond by verbally attacking the other person and saying why he or she is wrong. It often involves criticism and put-downs, and does not involve listening to the other person's point of view. We call this **aggressive** communication.

The second way to respond is just the opposite of aggressive communication, and is called **passive** communication. The passive communicator does not say what he or she thinks or feels and tries to act like he or she is not bothered by the situation. The person usually acts like this to avoid conflict.

The third way is a combination of these two styles and is called **passive-aggressive** communication. This is when someone responds indirectly about his or her feelings by doing things to let the other person know he or she is mad, but never really saying what he or she thinks or feels. An example would be someone who sarcastically says "fine" and walks out of the room and slams the door.

There is a fourth way of communicating that is not passive or aggressive. Does anyone know what it is?

Guide the group to come up with ideas by asking:

1. Is there a way you can be direct about what you think and feel without criticizing, blaming, or using put-downs?
2. How would you do this?

After the group has discussed some of their ideas, explain the following:

The fourth way of communicating is called **assertive** communication.

When someone communicates assertively, that person shows respect for the other person and self-respect. An assertive person talks about his or her feelings and thoughts in a way that shows respect and consideration of the other person. An assertive person is respectful to himself or herself by being direct and honest.

If you feel the group needs more help understanding these styles of communication, go over the definitions in the *Styles of Communication* worksheet in the workbook.

## ***Styles of Communication***

### ***Aggressive Style***

A person communicating in an aggressive style expresses his or her feelings in a way that violates the rights of another person. The aggressive person uses humiliation, criticism, sarcasm, insults or threats to get his or her point across.

The goal of aggressive communication is to dominate the situation and win at the other person's expense.

The aggressive person is giving the message: I'm right and you're wrong. Your feelings are not important. I don't need to listen to what you have to say. My view is the only one that matters.

### ***Passive Style***

A person communicating in a passive style does not say what he or she is feeling or thinking. The passive person gives in to other people's requests, demands or feelings and does not acknowledge his or her own feelings, concerns or wants. When the person does express his or her feelings, it is usually in an apologetic or timid way so that it's easy for other people to ignore him or her.

The goal of passive communication is to play it safe, not rock the boat, put everyone else's needs first, and avoid conflict at all costs.

The passive person is communicating the message: I don't count. What I need is not important. You don't have to take my feelings into account.

## ***Passive-Aggressive Style***

A person communicating in a passive-aggressive style uses more hidden forms of aggression to express his or her feelings. The goal is to give the other person the message without having to say it directly.

## ***Assertive Style***

A person communicating in an assertive style stands up for his or her personal rights and expresses thoughts, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appropriate ways. The person conveys his or her message without dominating, criticizing or degrading the other person.

The goal of assertive communication is to honestly state your feelings, and show respect for the other person's position as well. The assertive person is communicating the message: The feelings and needs of both of us are important. I am telling you what I need, and I also want to know what you need so that we can both be satisfied.

## ***Exercise: Styles of Communication Scenarios***

Refer the group to *Styles of Communication Scenarios* in the workbook. Have group members read each scenario and identify the responses as assertive, passive, passive-aggressive or aggressive.

This can be done individually or in pairs. When everyone is finished, read each scenario and ask the group to identify the responses.

## **Worksheet**

### ***Styles of Communication Scenarios***

Read each scenario and identify which of the responses is passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and assertive. Write Pa, Ag, Pa-Ag, or As next to each response.

1. Nancy's 15-year-old son, Jeff, is supposed to be home by 9:00 p.m. He shows up at 11:30. Nancy has been waiting up for him and she is upset and worried. She could:
  - a) Greet him and ask him how he's doing. \_\_\_\_
  - b) Start shouting at him when he comes in and telling him he's irresponsible and worthless. \_\_\_\_
  - c) Not say anything, but the next morning leave for work without giving him a ride to school as she usually does. \_\_\_\_
  - d) Say, "I've been really worried about you. I need you to come home on time, and if you're not going to do that, I need you to call me and tell me what you're doing." \_\_\_\_
  
2. Ron is getting ready to go out with his girlfriend. His dad comes in and tells him to mow the lawn. Ron could:
  - a) Say, "I already told you I'm going out with Denise. Why are you always trying to mess with my life?" \_\_\_\_
  - b) Change into his work clothes and get the lawnmower. \_\_\_\_
  - c) Say, "I guess you don't remember that you told me I could go out with Denise today. How about if I mow the lawn at 10 a.m. tomorrow?" \_\_\_\_
  - d) Go out to mow the lawn and run the mower over a rock, ruining the blade. \_\_\_\_

3. Rita is getting ready for work one morning. She picks out her favorite white silk blouse, which her daughter, Lucy, borrowed over the weekend. She notices a big brown stain on the front of the blouse. Rita could:
- a) Put on something else, and send the blouse to the cleaner without saying anything about it. \_\_\_\_
  - b) Wake Lucy up and say, "I can't trust you with anything! Get out of bed right now and take this to the cleaner!" \_\_\_\_
  - c) Say, "When you borrow my clothes, I need you to return them clean." \_\_\_\_
  - d) Not say anything and refuse to give Lucy five dollars that she promised to give her. \_\_\_\_
4. Your friend has borrowed money for lunch from you three times without repaying it, and now he asks you for another loan. You could:
- a) Say, "I don't want to lend you anything now because you haven't paid me back from the last three times." \_\_\_\_
  - b) Just hand the money over without saying anything. \_\_\_\_
  - c) Say, "I'll never help you out with anything again! I don't care if you starve!" \_\_\_\_
  - d) Lend him the money, and then tell all your mutual friends what an idiot he is. \_\_\_\_
5. Olivia and her friend are sitting and talking in the living room. Olivia's son, Jim, is playing a computer game. Jim shouts the "F" word very loudly. Olivia is embarrassed. She could:
- a) Tell Jim, "Shut up!" \_\_\_\_
  - b) Keep talking to her friend, like nothing happened. \_\_\_\_
  - c) Say, "Jim, I need you to speak respectfully in our house." \_\_\_\_
  - d) Walk over and unplug Jim's computer. \_\_\_\_

## ***Exercise: Practicing Assertive Communication***

Refer the group to the *Practicing Assertive Communication* worksheet in the workbook. Have the group divide into pairs, read each scenario, and write an assertive response to each situation. Have each pair share what they wrote with the group when finished.

### **Worksheet**

#### ***Practicing Assertive Communication***

Read each situation below and think of an assertive statement that the person could make.

1. John's son Dave, who is 17, borrowed John's car. When Dave took the car, it was clean and had a full tank of gas. John gets in the car and finds hamburger wrappers and soda cups on the floor, and an empty gas tank. What assertive statement could John make?

- 
2. Lisa just got on the phone with her friend. She has been doing her laundry and her clothes are in the dryer. Her mom comes in and tells her to get off the phone and get her clothes out of the dryer right away. What assertive statement could Lisa make?

- 
3. Pat's son, Frank, left a big pile of dirty dishes in the sink. He is in his room, watching TV. What assertive statement could Pat make?

- 
4. Jay made plans with his friends to meet at the mall Friday night. Friday morning, Jay's mom asks him if he will help that night with preparing for a garage sale she was planning for Sunday. What assertive statement could Jay make?

- 
5. Loretta was planning on going to an early movie and dinner with a friend. Her 14-year-old son, Neil, asks her to give him a ride to a friend's house at about the same time the movie will start. There is no way she can make it to the movie on time if she takes Neil at the

time he wants to be at his friend's house. What assertive statement could Loretta make?

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6. Greg has had a really rough day at school. Things didn't go well at his afternoon job, either. He is exhausted and feeling stressed. He comes home, looking forward to just relaxing in his room and listening to music. His mom tells him she wants him to help her clean the basement. What assertive statement could Greg make?

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7. Craig asked his mom if he could have some friends over for the evening on a night when she is planning to be out. The last time she let Craig have friends over when she was not there, they left a huge mess in the kitchen and living room. What assertive statement could Craig's mom make?

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### ***My Assertive Communication:***

Refer group members to *My Assertive Communication* in their workbooks. Have them think of a situation when they responded aggressively, passively, or passive-aggressively. Then ask them to think about how you could have responded assertively.

## **Take-Home Activities**

Ask group members to practice using assertive communication this week. Suggest that they pay attention to opportunities to tell people their feelings or thoughts in an assertive way.



# Session 7: How to Respond When Your Teen Is Violent

## Parent Session

### *Background Information*

When a teen becomes violent in the home, whether it is hitting a parent, punching a hole in a wall, throwing things or making threats to harm someone, the parent can react in many different ways. Sometimes a parent will try to stop the behavior, physically or verbally. Other times a parent will try to calm the teen down. Another will leave or call the police.

It is important to let parents know that the most effective response depends upon many variables: the teen's reaction to different approaches, past incidents of violence, and the parent's view of the situation. The most important consideration is the safety of everyone in the home. The most important goal of this session is to have parents think about safety before anything else when they are deciding how to respond to their teens' violence.

Most teens in Step-Up will have already developed a *Safety Plan* for themselves with a plan for separating and calming down when they become escalated. The goal is for the teen to learn to follow his or her own plan and take a break instead of the parent separating. The first step for parents is to remind teens of their safety plan. If the teen refuses, parents should tell their teen that they are using the safety plan and separating from the teen.

We provide specific steps for parents to follow when their teens start to use violent behavior. These steps are based on what we consider to be the safest thing to do when someone is being violent. Separating from the violent person is usually the best way to prevent harm. Some parents will say that they have found other ways that are more effective; for example, some parents state that when their teens are escalating and becoming abusive, the worst thing to do is to leave

the room because the teens escalate more. Some parents state that they are able to calm their teens down by talking with them. If parents have found effective and safe ways to respond to the violence, they may not need to change their responses.

Encouraging discussion in the group about the effects of different responses can be helpful. It is important to emphasize that one of the reasons we advocate separating from a violent teen, in addition to safety, is that it gives the teen the message that you will not engage with him or her when he or she is using violent or abusive behavior. Engaging with the teen in any way, even if it is to calm him or her down, is a reward for the behavior. Parents should be aware of this when they plan their responses.

If the teen's behavior is escalating and he or she is physically hurting people or damaging property, calling the police is a way to get immediate help.

Calling the police is not easy, particularly when it is about your own child. It is important not to pressure parents regarding this decision, or to indicate that they are doing something wrong by not calling the police. We want to support parents in making their own choices about how to respond. The objective of the parent group is to provide information to help parents make decisions and provide the opportunity for them to think through and discuss the possible outcomes of the choices they make. Facilitating parents in giving each other ideas and support is important.

## ***Goals***

- To help parents think about their priorities when their teens are becoming violent
- To understand that safety is the first concern when anyone is using violent behavior
- To know how to stay safe and address the issue of the use of violent behavior
- To know what steps to take when there is violence in the home
- To make a safety plan for the home
- To learn how to disengage from power struggles with their teens as a way to prevent escalation that could lead to violence
- To know effective ways to address the violence after the incident

## ***Important Messages***

- Safety is the most important thing to think about when your teen starts to use violent behavior.
- There are steps you can take to stay safe during the violent episode.
- It is more effective, and safe, to address the problem of the violent behavior with your teen after he or she has calmed down.
- There are things you can do to make your home more safe, and to reduce the risk of serious harm.
- Writing down a safety plan will help you think through the details of risk and safety in your home and take action to reduce the risks and make your home a safer place.
- A plan it makes it easier to separate from your teen because you know the behavior will be addressed later

- Disengaging from power struggles with your teen may help prevent escalation and violence

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in and review take-home activities
2. Discussion: Your Priorities When Your Teen Becomes Violent
3. Discussion: How to Respond When Your Teen Becomes Violent
4. Discussion: What To Do After: Addressing Violent Behavior
5. Discussion: Safety Planning
6. Exercise: Safety Plan for Our Home
7. Discussion: Prevention Strategies- Disengaging from Power Struggles with Your Teen

# Group Activities

## ***Discussion: Your Priorities When Your Teen Becomes Violent***

### ***Explain the following:***

We are going to talk about how to respond when your teen is violent. There is not a right or wrong way to respond, and there is not one response that always works. Every teen, parent and household is different. And one situation is different from the next.

Two important things to think about are:

- Safety. What can I do to keep myself and my family safe?
- What message am I giving my teen? How can I let my teen know that violence is not okay and is not tolerated in our home?

These two goals do not always go hand in hand.

- For example, telling your teen that violence is not tolerated and giving him or her a consequence for the behavior at the time he or she is being violent can escalate the violent behavior and compromise your safety.
- Likewise, if you separate from your teen when he or she is violent to keep yourself safe, but then never talk with the teen about it later or establish consequences for the behavior, the teen gets the message that violence is no big deal.

How can you stay safe and let your teen know the violence is not tolerated?

## ***Discussion: How to Respond When Your Teen Becomes Violent***

Refer the group to the *How to Respond When Your Teen Becomes Violent* worksheet in the parent workbook. Read through the information and discuss.

Include the following in your discussion:

- Always start with reminding them to do their *Safety Plan*. The goal of Step-Up is for teens to use their own *Safety Plan* when they need it. If the parent always separates first, they do not have the opportunity to use their skills. If the teen refuses, tell him or her that you are using the *Safety Plan*.
- The earlier the separation, the better. This plan should be used for verbal abuse, threats or other warning signs that the teen is beginning to escalate (unless you are able to help your teen shift their behavior back to the respect wheel in other ways. (See Prevention - *Disengaging in Power Struggles with your Teen.*)

## **Worksheet**

### ***How to Respond When Your Teen Becomes Violent***

When your teen starts to threaten you, to break things or to do anything physically violent, do not try to physically intervene. This can increase their violence. The most important thing is to keep yourself and your other children safe.

#### **Steps to take when your teen becomes violent:**

1. If your teen has a Safety Plan, remind him or her of the Safety Plan.
2. Do not continue the argument or discussion. Don't argue or yell.
3. If your teen refuses to follow their Safety Plan, tell him or her that you are going to follow the Safety Plan. Separate yourself and your other children from the teen. Go to another room, or if necessary, bring your other children with you and leave the house.

4. Call 911\*, if the violence is continuing and/or want immediate help.
5. Do what you can to help yourself stay calm (take a walk, call a friend).
6. Don't talk to your teen again until he or she is calm.
7. When you do talk to your teen again, and he or she is calm and you feel safe, give him/her the following messages:
  - When you are violent we need to use the safety plan separate.
  - Your behavior is not safe and we need our home to be a safe place.
  - Don't get pulled into arguing about why he or she was violent, or who is to blame. When the teen starts to deny his or her actions, justify or minimize his or her actions, or blame you, don't engage in the conversation. Stay with the message that violence is not acceptable, no matter what.
  - Tell your teen that you will sit down together later and plan how he or she is going to take responsibility for the violent behavior (see *What To Do After: Addressing Violent Behavior*).

### ***\*Calling 911***

Calling 911 is the fastest way to get immediate help. Officers respond in different ways, depending upon the situation, the officer, the domestic violence laws, and the juvenile court policy in your community

The officer might just talk to your teen and give a warning, or arrest your teen and take him or her to juvenile detention. The officer might not take your youth, but write a report and send it to the prosecutor's office and you may hear from the court later about the next steps. Officers sometimes take youth to a respite center instead of detention or transport him or her to the hospital when it is a mental health crises

It is important to find out how your local police and court system respond to youth violence in the home. You can call your local police station or juvenile court to get more information.

In Washington State, officers must follow Washington State Domestic Violence Law:

- Officers may arrest a juvenile of any age at their discretion, if a domestic violence crime has occurred.
- When the youth is 16 or 17 years old and there is probable cause that a domestic violence crime has occurred, *officers must arrest if the parent or guardian requests it.*

**The following are domestic violence crimes:**

- Any physical assault, whether or not the injury is observable.
- Any physical action intended to cause another person to reasonably fear bodily injury or death.
- Knowingly and maliciously causing physical damage to the property of another.
- A person knowingly threatens to cause bodily injury, physical damage to property or subject the person to physical confinement or restraint.

In King County, when an officer brings a youth to detention, there is an option to have the youth go to a respite center that is designed for youth who have been violent in the home. It is called Family Intervention and Restorative Services or FIRS that is an alternative to going through the court process if the youth agrees to participate in needed services.

Some communities have crisis response teams for children with mental health issues. In King County, Washington, you can ask for the Children's Crisis Response Team by calling 211. They will talk to you to determine if your youth is eligible.

It is not easy to call the police on your child. You may feel guilty and worried about what will happen to him or her. You may be afraid of how he or she will respond. However, safety is the most important consideration when deciding to call 911.

## ***What To Do After: Addressing Violent Behavior***

Refer parents to *What To Do After: Addressing Violent Behavior* and explain the information and discuss. Ask parents for other effective ways they have addressed violence by their teen.

When your teen has been violent or abusive to a family member, it is important to talk about what happened in a way that helps him or her learn and take active responsibility for harm that was caused.

- Use *Taking Responsibility for My Behavior Using Six Restorative Steps* (see Session 9) to guide a conversation with your teen about the effects of the violence on others and how he or she can take responsibility and make amends for harm done. You and your teen will be learning and practicing these questions in Session 9. We also use these questions during *Check-In* when a teen has been violent during the week. These questions are a valuable parenting tool for addressing violent or abusive behavior at home. As you and your teen become more familiar with them in the group, it will be easier to use them at home.
- Review your teen's *Safety Plan* and talk about what went wrong. Ask your teen: "What got in the way of using it?" Revise the Safety Plan, if needed. Step-Up Facilitators can help you with this at the next group, if needed.
- Put in place any other consequences that are part of your home plan for responding to violence. Some families have a rule of no going out with friends or no computer or phone if there was violence or abuse that day, or until the teen has completed the last 2 Restorative Steps (making amends and making a plan to prevent the violence from happening again).

### ***Discussion: Safety Planning for Parents***

Tell the group:

When you have a teen that has been violent in the home, it is important to think about ways you can prepare for safety. There are things you can do to plan ahead to prevent serious harm.

Ask parents:

What are some examples of things you can do for safety?

Write their ideas on the board. Be sure to include the following:

- Remove all weapons from the home.
- Put cooking knives in a place that is not easily accessible.
- Put away anything that could be used as a weapon (bats, sticks, long pointy objects, crow bars, tools).
- Put locks on doors where you can go for safety (bedrooms, bathrooms, rooms with exit windows).
- Have phones accessible at all times.
- Have a plan about where you and your other children will go if you have to leave.
- Talk with your other children about where to go for safety if there is violence in the home.

### ***Exercise: Planning for Safety in Our Home***

Refer parents to the *Planning for Safety in Our Home* worksheet in the parent workbook. Have them answer the questions and share it with the group. They can also break into small groups to work on this.

### **Worksheet**

#### ***Planning for Safety for Our Home***

1. What precautions (if any) have you taken for safety in your home?
2. What dangerous behavior are you most concerned about that your teen might use?
3. Is there anything you can do to prevent this behavior?
4. What is the safest response to this behavior?
5. What else can you do for safety in your home?

After group members have shared their ideas, explain the following:

With the information on your *Planning for Safety in Our Home* worksheet in mind, now it is time to make an *Action Plan for Safety in Your Home*.

A plan of action should include prevention steps and intervention steps.

1. Intervention Steps: what you will do the next time your teen is violent.
2. Prevention Steps: what you will do now to prevent violence or reduce risk or harm.

Have parents fill out the *Action Plan for Safety in Our Home* worksheet. If time permits, have group members share their plans with each other.

## **Worksheet**

### ***Action Plan for Safety for Our Home***

The following is a plan to increase safety in your home. When someone has been violent in the home, there are things you can do to plan ahead for safety. Think about what will work best for your youth and family to prevent harm to people or property in the event of another violent incident.

#### ***Prevention***

I will do the following things to reduce the risk of harm if there is violence

#### ***Intervention***

I will do the following if my teen is violent, or begins to escalate and might become violent:

### ***Discussion: Prevention Strategies During Interactions with Your Teen***

Parents say that the majority of violent episodes happen during a power struggle with their teens. Arguments about wanting something, or not wanting to do something are the most common. There are times when the argument becomes more about the power struggle and winning or losing than the topic at hand. Learning to know when it is a power struggle and finding a way to disengage is the first step in preventing it from escalating.

Here are some tips for disengaging from power struggles with your teen.

Refer parents to *Tips for Disengaging from Power Struggles with Your Teen* in their workbooks. Go over the tips and invite other ideas from parents.

### ***Tips to Disengage from a Power Struggle with Your Teen***

#### **1. Learn to know when it is becoming a power struggle.**

It is becoming a power struggle when you are feeling controlled or the need to control; when there is arguing, blaming, demanding, or being disrespectful; when you feel the need to win.

#### **2. Don't argue**

When your child starts to argue about the facts—when, why, where, etc.—don't get pulled in. Refuse to argue about details. Instead of arguing just listen, and say: "Oh, hmmm..., I see..". Agree to disagree. Let it go.

#### **3. Diffuse the power struggle by listening for feelings**

Listen for your child's feelings instead of arguing against. Acknowledge their feelings by saying things that let them know you are listening and understand, such as, "Yeah, that sounds really frustrating, you feel left out..." etc.

#### **4. Find out where you can agree in the conversation.**

Listen for what you agree on. "We both want to be able have a break from doing dishes, I wonder how we can both get what we want?" "I agree that you need time with your friends. It's important. Let's work together to see how we can make that happen."

**5. Be clear and specific about what needs to happen and then stop talking. Use as few words as possible.**

Say exactly what needs to happen in a short and clear way; for example, "After your homework you can go out with your friends." Then stop talking. Go to another room or outside to prevent further arguments.

**6. Don't take your child's resistance or anger personally.**

Remember, your child is usually just trying to change your mind so he or she can have/do what he or she wants. He or she is probably trying tactics that have worked in the past.

**7. Ignore attempt to get engaged.**

Let your child know, "I am not going to talk about it anymore. I am going to ignore you if you continue to argue about it." Engage yourself in another activity.

**8. Separate physically from your child.**

If your child continues to try to engage you in an argument, leave the room. Let your child know: "I am finished talking about it for now."

**9. Talk about the problem later when you are both calm.**

Bring up the discussion again later when you have some relaxed time together. Use skills you have learned to talk about the problem, such as problem solving, listening and acknowledging feelings.

**10. Ask yourself: "Is this something I am willing to negotiate about?"**

If the situation is something you are willing to negotiate about, then let your child know: "Let's talk about how we can meet halfway on this."

**11. Most importantly, pay attention to your need to win the power struggle.**

The more we push, the more they push back. Take a break and calm yourself. Relax your defenses. Return to the conversation in a grounded, solid and calm manner.

## **Take-Home Activities**

Ask parents to implement their *Action Plans for Safety in Our Home*. Invite them to report back to parent group how their plans are working, and ask for help from the group or Step-Up Facilitators, if needed.

# **Session 8: When Your Teen Is Abusive: Effects on Parenting**

## **Parent Session**

### ***Background Information***

This session helps parents examine how their parenting has been affected by their teens' abusive behavior and give and receive support around the challenges of parenting teens who respond to limit setting with violence or abuse. Many parents believe they have failed as parents and that they are to blame for their teens' behavior. This session provides an opportunity for them to hear that other parents have similar feelings and experiences, and to help each other learn how their parenting has been affected by their teens' behavior.

Parents will learn how their negative thoughts influence how they respond to their teens' behavior and how they can change their thinking to help them respond more effectively.

### ***Goals***

- To understand how living with a teen who becomes abusive or violent can impact parenting
- To discuss challenges of parenting
- To give and receive support regarding parenting struggles
- To understand how feelings and thoughts affect behaviors
- To learn how to change negative thinking into thinking that supports more effective responses to the teen's behavior

## ***Important Messages***

- My teen is responsible for his or her behavior.
- My thoughts and feelings about my teen affect my parenting.
- I can change the way I think in order to make better parenting decisions.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion: Parenting a Teen who becomes Violent or Abusive
3. Discussion: Challenges for Parents
4. Exercise: Feelings, Thoughts and Responses to Your Teen's Behavior
5. Exercise: Changing Your Thinking

# Group Activities

## ***Discussion: Parenting a Teen who becomes Violent or Abusive***

Explain the following:

Raising a teenager can be challenging all by itself. When your teen responds to limit setting with abuse or violence it is extremely difficult to do your job as a parent. Bringing up a teen today takes a great deal of patience, understanding, firmness and self-confidence. Each of these qualities is difficult to hold on to when your teen is putting you down, calling you names, threatening or hitting you.

### ***Discussion Questions:***

Ask the following questions and write their answers on the board (this can also be done in small groups and come back together to share)

- What are some of the feelings you experience when your teen is abusive or violent?
- How does it affect your thinking? What kinds of thoughts do you have?
- How do you these feelings and thoughts affect the way you parent?

The following are some examples to include in your list:

- Make inconsistent rules and consequences because of fear of an outburst
- Don't ask teen to do things (chores, help)
- Take on responsibility for teen that should be his/hers
- Walk on egg shells around him/her to avoid conflict
- Avoid your teen

- Lose ability to stay rational and “explode” with screaming, yelling
- Get abusive back—put-downs, name calling, physical abuse
- Make threats
- Lose ability to see positive behavior
- Get into pattern of expecting negative behavior

Ask the group:

How can your experiences, feelings and thoughts strengthen your parenting?

Have parents share their ideas and list them on the board.

Examples might be: It can motivate you to learn more parenting skills, seek parenting help, and help you learn to grow as a parent, help you develop skills you would never learn with an easier child, such as, self-calming, assertiveness, and other skills that we learn in Step-Up.

***Exercise: Feelings, Thoughts and Responses to Your Teen’s Behavior***

Refer parents to the *Feelings, Thoughts and Responses to My Teen’s Behavior* worksheet in the parent workbook. Ask them to think about times when their teens were abusive or violent and fill in the worksheet.

## ***Feelings, Thoughts and Responses to My Teen's Behavior***

Think of some times when your teen was abusive to you. Describe how you felt, what you thought, and how you responded to your teen.

<b>My Teen's Behavior</b>	<b>What I Felt/Thought</b>	<b>How I Responded</b>

Say to the group:

Look at how you responded to your teen's behaviors in the exercise you just completed. How do you feel about how you responded? Do wish you responded in a different way? You do not need to answer these questions out loud; they are for you to think about.

What we *think* and how we *feel* about an event influences how we will respond to it. Sometimes we feel good about the way we respond.

We know it was the best way to deal with the situation. Other times we don't like the way we respond and wish we had handled it differently. You can help yourself change the way you respond to a situation by changing the way you think about it. Here is an example:

Read the following scenario:

*Lisa told her son, Shawn, that he needed to do the dishes before he went over to his friend's house. Shawn started arguing with her about how he didn't have time and that he wasn't her slave and how his brother never had to do the dishes. Lisa argued back about how he was nowhere near being a slave because he didn't do any work around the house and that his brother had done the dishes several times that week. Shawn started yelling at her and picked up one of the dishes and threw it at the wall. It smashed into pieces. Lisa started screaming at Shawn and told him he couldn't go anywhere for a month. Shawn went to his room and slammed the door. Lisa did the dishes.*

Ask the group:

What do you think Lisa was thinking and feeling during this incident?

**Thinking:**

- "He's wrong about being a slave and that his brother never does the dishes. I have to convince him that he's wrong and I'm right."
- "I have to make him change his behavior."
- "He could really hurt me."
- "How could I have a child who is so mean? What have I done wrong?"
- "Forget getting him to do the dishes, I'll just do them. I can't deal with him anymore."

**Feeling:**

- Scared, angry, frustrated, defensive, hopeless, responsible for his behavior, inadequate

**How do you think it affected the way she responded to him?**

- Argued with him to convince him that she is right
- Screamed at him to try to make him change
- Impulsively gave him a consequence that may be difficult to follow through on
- Did the dishes for him

**How could she have changed her thinking? What could she have thought instead?**

- “I’m not going to argue with him about this.”
- “I don’t need to try to convince him of anything; I don’t need to defend myself.”
- “I can let him know what he needs to do and then leave the room.”
- “He is responsible for breaking the dish. I will take time to think about a consequence and talk to him later when we are both calm.”
- “We need to do the Safety Plan right now. I’ll leave the dishes for him to do later”
- “His behavior is not safe. I need to separate from him now.”
- “He made the choice to behave this way. He needs to know it is not acceptable. I will talk with him about it when we are both calm.”

**How would this thinking change how she responded to Shawn’s behavior?**

## ***Exercise: Changing Your Thinking***

Explain the following:

Negative thinking is often in one of the following categories:

- Negative thoughts about the other person (criticism, put-downs)
- Negative thoughts about yourself (self-blame, “shoulds,” self-criticism)

Let’s look at some examples of negative thinking, and how we can change it to more realistic thinking.

Refer parents to the *Changing Your Own Thinking* worksheet in the parent workbook and read through the examples.

After going over the chart, have parents turn to the blank chart in the parent workbooks. Have them fill in their own negative thinking about their teens, and then change each one into more realistic thoughts. (This can also be given as a take-home activity).

## ***Changing Your Own Thinking***

The way you think about a situation influences how you respond to it. You can change the way you respond to a situation by changing the way you think about it.

Negative thinking is often in one of the following categories:

- Negative thoughts about the other person (criticism, put-downs)
- Negative thoughts about yourself (self-blame, “shoulds,” self-criticism)

Here are some examples:

<b>Negative Thinking</b>	<b>Realistic Thinking</b>
This is my fault. I am not a good parent.	My teen is responsible for her own behavior. I am doing everything I can.
There is nothing I can do. I've tried everything.	There are some things I can do. I can separate from him when he is abusive, and I can get help.
He's lazy and self-centered.	He's not motivated to do things he doesn't care about (like a lot of teens). An incentive or consequence might motivate him.
I have to make her change her behavior.	I can try to help her make good choices, but it is up to her to make the decision.
He's trying to manipulate me into doing what he wants.	He is using behaviors he knows to get his way. I can teach him other ways to communicate with me about what he wants.
I should be able to control her.	I can influence her decisions about her behavior with rules, incentives and consequences. She is in charge of her behavior.

## Changing My Thinking

Below, write down negative thoughts you have when you are in conflict with your teen. Then change your negative thinking into more realistic thoughts that will help you handle the situation in a more effective way.

Negative Thinking	Realistic Thinking

## Take-Home Activity

Ask parents to pay attention to their thinking this week when they are having conflicts with their teens. Have them add to the chart they started in the group.

# Session 9: Accountability Through Restorative Practice

## Parent and Teen Session

### *Background Information*

In this session teens will learn how to be accountable for their behavior when they have been hurtful to a family member. Step-Up uses a Restorative Practice model to address violent behavior and help youth take responsibility in a meaningful way.

*'Restorative Inquiry'* is a series of questions used to guide youth through six steps of accountability. This process helps them learn a model for how to take responsibility when they have hurt another person. It is based on restorative justice theory that when a person who has caused harm is given the opportunity and guidance to understand the impact of their behavior on others, and is able to actively make amends to 'make things right', he or she is less likely to repeat the harmful act. This process of accountability shows respect to those who have been harmed and helps youth re-gain respect for themselves.

The first step is acknowledging the hurtful behavior. This means being willing to talk about a harmful behavior without blaming the other person, denying it, minimizing the impact or justifying why you did it. The first exercise in this session is a discussion about the ways people are not accountable when they describe their behavior, along with two scenarios for applying the learning.

The restorative steps are introduced along with a scenario to help group members apply each of the restorative inquiry questions to a situation where a teen is violent toward his mom.

The restorative process was introduced to parents and teens during the orientation session. Teens answer the restorative inquiry questions at check-in if they have been violent during the previous week. Some of the teens and parents may have already engaged in

the process and can be invited to share how they felt it was helpful to them.

The *Restorative Inquiry* questions guide youth in a reflective process about the impact of their behavior on others and themselves and what they can do to resolve problems that were caused by the behavior and make amends. The final part of the process is recognizing what they could have done differently and making a plan to prevent repeating the behavior.

When teens have a tangible way to take responsibility for problems caused by their behavior it builds their self-respect and sense of capability. This reduces their shame and the barriers of blame and justification that commonly follow wrongdoing.

The restorative steps teach them life long skills for how to be accountable for their behavior in a purposeful way. It also teaches them how to understand others' experiences and feel empathy and healthy remorse. This motivates a genuine desire to repair the harm, and most importantly, change their behavior.

## ***Goals***

- To understand the true meaning of accountability
- To recognize how we avoid accountability
- To learn the Six Restorative Steps for Taking Responsibility for Behavior.
- To understand how accountability for hurtful behavior is helpful to those harmed and oneself.

## ***Important Messages***

- The first part of accountability is to acknowledge the behavior and be willing to talk about it.
- You are responsible for your own behavior, regardless of what the other person said or did that upset you.

- Accountability is a sign of personal strength and maturity.
- Taking responsibility for hurtful behavior is respectful to others and to oneself

### ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion: What is Accountability.
3. Discussion: What People Do Instead of Being Accountable.
4. Exercise: Avoiding Accountability Scenarios.
5. Discussion: Taking Responsibility for Behavior using Six Restorative Steps.
6. Practice: Applying the Six Restorative Steps.

# Group Activities

## ***Introduce the session with the following statement:***

This session is about how to be accountable when you have been violent or abusive to a family member. You will learn a six step process that helps you understand the impact of your behavior on others and guides you with how to actively take responsibility and make amends. During our next session you will learn more about making amends. Let's start with talking about the meaning of accountability.

## ***Discussion: What Is Accountability?***

Begin the group with the following discussion questions:

1. What does it mean to be accountable?
2. What do people do to be accountable about something they did?  
Example: Just say what you did; be honest.
3. Think of a time when you saw someone be accountable when that person did something wrong. The person could be a friend, a parent, a teacher, or anyone you know. What did you feel about this person?  
Example: "I remember when a friend lost a CD I loaned him. I was glad that he just told me right away and paid me back as soon as he could. I didn't mind loaning him another CD because I knew I could trust him."
4. What are some of the ways our society holds people accountable?  
Examples: Going to court; getting arrested.
5. What is the difference between being accountable for yourself and having accountability imposed on you?  
Example: When a person chooses to be accountable, it shows he or she has personal strength. When a person is forced to be accountable, his or her accountability doesn't carry as much weight or have as much value.

6. Who are you accountable to?  
Examples: Friends, parents, teachers, probation officers.
7. What makes it hard to be accountable when you've done something wrong?  
Examples: fear of punishment, shame, embarrassment.
8. What feelings do you have when you've decided you've done something wrong?  
Examples: Guilt, shame, embarrassment.
9. What do people sometimes do instead of being accountable?  
Examples: deny, justify, minimize, and blame.
10. How does being accountable help someone change his or her abusive/violent behavior?  
Example: Accountability shows that the person recognizes that he or she wants or needs to change.

### ***Discussion: Acknowledging your Behavior using Accountable Communication***

Begin by explaining:

The very first part of being accountable is being honest about your behavior and being willing to talk about it. Saying the behavior that you did- such as, I hit you, I shoved you, I hurt you, I scared my sister, etc., is showing accountability to the other person. It shows that you recognize your harmful behavior. This means a lot to the person who was hurt.

You all practice this every week during Check-In on the wheels when you describe behaviors that you did on the Abuse / Disrespect Wheel.

### ***Discussion: What People Do Instead of Being Accountable***

There are a lot of ways that people avoid accountability for their behavior by the way they talk about what happened and what they did.

Refer the group to *What People Do Instead of Being Accountable* in their workbooks. Discuss the following:

- Deny: Saying the behavior never happened.
- Justify: Giving reasons for the behavior, such as, “I had to hit my brother, he wouldn’t be quiet”, or “She made me really mad.”
- Minimize: Saying the behavior is no big deal. Making it sound less serious than it was, such as, “I barely touched you”, or “I was just moving you out of my way.”
- Blame: Saying that the behavior was caused by another person or by something else besides you.

After going over the examples, ask the group:

Why do you think people blame others, deny, justify or minimize their behavior when they have done something wrong?

After sharing ideas, point out that these are ways that people try to feel better about themselves when they have done something that they know is not okay. It is human nature to want to try to explain our behavior because we don’t want to feel like we are bad or mean or want to hurt others. It can be a natural reaction, however it is not helpful because it does not provide a pathway toward take responsibility and making amends, and it leaves the other person feeling more hurt and upset. Acknowledging your behavior in a direct and honest way opens the door to move forward and talk about it, and then take steps to repair the harm done and restore the relationship.

### ***Exercise: Avoiding Accountability Scenarios***

Refer group to *Avoiding Accountability Scenarios* in their workbooks. Read the scenarios and discuss the questions at the end of each scenario. This exercise can also be done in small groups, and then come back together to share answers.

Read the scenarios and notice how the person is not being accountable by the way they talk about it:

Alex has tryouts for basketball at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday morning. He asks his Mom, Rita, to wake him up at 6:30 a.m. so he can get ready. Rita says, "I will wake you up once, but I have to leave for work at 6:45, so you better set you alarm." Alex says, "OK." He stays up until 1:00pm on his phone and forgets to set his alarm. Rita wakes him up at 6:30 a.m. and leaves for work. Alex goes back to sleep and wakes up at 9:00 a.m. Then he calls his mom at work and yells at her, "Hey, what's up! You didn't wake me up- I missed tryouts! What the... ? !! You wanted me to do basketball so bad. Forget it, I'm not doing it!"

1. How is Alex denying, justifying, minimizing, or blaming?

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2. What could Alex say about his behavior that shows accountability?

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Pete spends a lot of time playing computer games. He just got a new game and has been on the computer for three hours. His mom told him it was time to get off and do his chores. He ignored her. She kept coming into his room and telling him he needed to take a break and come do chores. He got really annoyed by the fourth time she came into the room and he jumped up and screamed at her to get out of his room. He grabbed a hockey stick and swung it toward her. She yelled, "Pete, stop! Put that down! I'm leaving the room- do your safety plan and calm down." She left the room.

She gave him time to calm down. He came out about fifteen minutes later. His mom was really upset by his behavior. He said, "I didn't hit you with it. I was just trying to get you to leave my room. You always barge in on me. I was going to do my chores at the end of the game. You know I can't talk in the middle of a game. You need to just calm down, Mom. It's not that big of a deal. I wasn't going to hit you with it."

1. How is Pete denying, justifying, minimizing, or blaming?

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2. What could Pete say about his behavior that shows accountability?

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### ***Discussion: Taking Responsibility for Behavior Using Six Restorative Steps***

Have group members turn to *Taking Responsibility for My Behavior using Six Restorative Steps* in their workbooks.

Explain the following:

After acknowledging your hurtful behavior in an accountable way, the next part is taking responsibility for the harm that resulted from what you did. There are six steps that include all of the important parts of being fully accountable to the person you were violent or abusive toward and your family. These steps are from restorative justice, and are used to guide a conversation that leads to making amends and preventing the behavior from happening again. When used in families, it helps to restore relationships damaged by hurtful behavior. Go over the six restorative steps and their purpose.

## Worksheet

1. Who was harmed by your behavior?	This helps you understand the ripple effect of your behavior. Think of all of the people who were affected in any way by what happened, such as family members, friends, etc. It helps you understand the larger impact of your behavior?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What was the harm done to them?</li></ul>	Think of physical and emotional harm.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How did it affect them?</li></ul>	Think of how they might feel and how it impacted their life?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What other harm or damage was caused?</li></ul>	Think of physical, emotional, and other ways it may have caused a problem for family members.
	All of the above questions help you understand the impact of your behavior from other's perspectives and help you feel empathy. The person harmed should take part in answering these questions. This information can help you figure out how you can make amends.
2. How did it affect my relationship with my family members?	This helps you think about your relationship and how the behavior impacts trust and feelings in your relationships.

<p>3. How did my behavior affect me?</p>	<p>This helps you recognize that you are also impacted by your behavior. Think about how you feel and your sense of self-respect and competence. Think about the consequences you will experience. On the positive side, ask yourself “What did I learn from this? How will it help me in the future?”</p>
<p>4. What could I have done differently?</p>	<p>This helps you realize that you have a choice and that you have other options for responding to anger. Think about the skills you have learned in Step Up. What skills could you have used so that you stayed on the Respect Wheel.</p>
<p>5. What do I need to do to make amends?</p>	<p>How can I repair the harm damage done? Or fix the problems that were caused? What can I do to make things right?</p>
<p>6. What do I need to do so I don't repeat the behavior again?</p>	<p>What is my plan to prevent repeating the behavior? The most important part of making amends is to make a commitment to changing my hurtful behavior. Tell the person about your plan. Make it a weekly goal in Step Up. For example, using your safety plan.</p>

## **Exercise: Applying the Restorative Steps to a Story**

Refer to Jason's story in the workbook and read it to the group. Ask them to think about the Restorative Steps as they listen to the story.

### **Jason's Story**

*Jason left school early because he was tired and didn't want to go to last period because he didn't do his math homework and was way behind in that class. He went over to a friend's house to hang out until he was supposed to be home at 4:00. He knew his mom was taking him to a counseling appointment that day, and didn't really want to go. He played X Box with his friend for a while. Some other friends came by and they went down to the store to get something to eat. He noticed it was getting dark, and realized it was almost 6 o'clock. He could practically hear his mom's voice in his head freaking out because he missed his counseling appointment.*

*He went home, and sure enough as he walked in the front door his Mom yelled, "Where have you been! It's past 6:00! You were supposed to be home by 4:00 and go to a counseling appointment at 4:30! You know I have to pay for those appointments! What are you thinking! And the school called and said that you left school early and skipped your last class. Isn't that math? The class you are failing? This is not working."*

*Jason looked at her and all he wanted to do was turn around and leave again, but instead he pushed past her to go to his room. As he pushed past her, he said- "Just shut- up!" This made his mom angrier and she followed him to his room, saying, "Jason, we need to talk about this". She started into his room after him, and he turned around and shoved her out the door. The shove was so hard that she fell back onto a table. The table fell over and a glass bowl fell and shattered, and mom fell onto the floor. Jason's little sister came running out of the room and started crying. She yelled at Jason to stop and he yelled at her to mind her own business and slammed the door.*

*Mom got up and decided she better just leave him alone, knowing nothing good was going to come of trying to talk right now. She had a friend coming over for dinner and called and cancelled it. She fixed the table and left the glass on the floor. She took his little sister for a walk to just get out of the house.*

After reading the story tell the group: Now we are going to read each of the restorative questions and think about how Jason could answer them about what happened. This exercise can be done in small groups or as a large group discussion. Group members should fill out the blank *Taking Responsibility for my Behavior using Six Restorative Steps*

## **Worksheet**

### ***Taking Responsibility for my Behavior using Six Restorative Steps***

Answer these questions as if you are Jason.

1. Who was harmed by my behavior?

---

- What was the harm done to them?

---

- How did it affect them?

---

- What other harm or damage was caused?

---

2. How did it affect my relationship with my family members?

---

3. How did my behavior affect me?

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4. What could I have done differently?

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5. What do I need to do to make amends?

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6. What do I need to do so I don't repeat the behavior again?

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***Personal Practice: Taking Responsibility for My Behavior using Six Restorative Steps***

This exercise can be done in the group or as a take home activity, depending on the time. Refer teens to the second blank *Taking Responsibility for my Behavior using Six Restorative Steps* in their workbooks. Ask them to answer the questions about their own behavior when they were violent toward a family member. This could be the incident that brought them to the group or a more recent incident of violence at home.

The teens' parents should participate with them as they answer the questions, sharing their input about how they and other family members were affected and their ideas for making amends. Group members should share their answers with the group. If time is limited, they can share during check-in the following week.

## Take Home Activity

Complete the *Restorative Steps* worksheet for their own behavior if they did not do so in the group. Teens and parents can work on this together, if possible.

# Session 10: Understanding Feelings

## Teen Session

### *Background Information*

The exercises in this session are designed to bring teens to a deeper understanding of anger.

Anger is only one feeling among other feelings that we experience in our lives. During this session, we want to help teens recognize that when they are angry they also have other feelings. The facilitator can help teens understand this by asking them what feelings they are having besides anger when they talk about being angry. You may need to help them with this by giving them examples of feelings they might be experiencing. Most teens have never learned how to talk about their feelings.

### *Goals*

- To identify the relationship between power and anger
- To separate feelings of anger from the behavior a teen chooses
- To recognize feelings, in addition to anger, experienced by a teen
- To understand the relationship between anger and other feelings

### *Important Messages*

- Anger itself is not a bad thing. Anger is a feeling that lets us know that things are not right for us. When we feel anger we know that we need to do something—to figure out a problem, make a change, talk to someone about our feelings, or make a decision to try to let it go. Anger can be a motivator to take respectful action toward a positive change.

- Anger has been the force that changed many injustices in our country's history, and has brought communities together to create positive change.
- It is OK to feel angry; it is how we behave when we are angry that can be a problem. More specifically, anger should not be used to justify violence and abuse, or to intimidate or make other people feel powerless. There are ways to express anger without violence and abuse.
- Anytime you are angry, you also have other feelings.
- When you express feelings other than anger, people are more likely to listen to you and understand you.
- You have a choice about what to do with your anger, and you are responsible for the way you choose to respond.
- You are *not* responsible for someone else who chooses to respond to his or her anger with violence. If you are the victim of someone else's violence, *you are not to blame*.

### ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Separate into teen and parent groups.
3. Discussion: Using Anger to Justify and Gain Power.
4. Discussion: Identifying Feelings
5. Exercise: Identifying Feelings.
6. Exercise: Anger Scenarios.

# Group Activities

## ***Discussion: Using Anger to Justify and Gain Power***

Begin the session with a discussion of the following questions. Be sure to emphasize any important points that come out of the discussion by writing them on the board.

1. How is anger used to justify violent or abusive behavior?
2. How do people use anger to have power over others?
3. Can you be angry and respectful at the same time? How?
4. What can you do to help control your anger so you can stay respectful?

Have the class brainstorm some of the negative ways people behave when they are angry (hitting, yelling, etc.) Then ask what other choices people have for how to respond when they are angry. Have them think of ways to respond that are respectful. Ask participants what advantages there might be to responding in a respectful, non-abusive way when they are angry.

## ***Discussion: Identifying and Talking about Feelings***

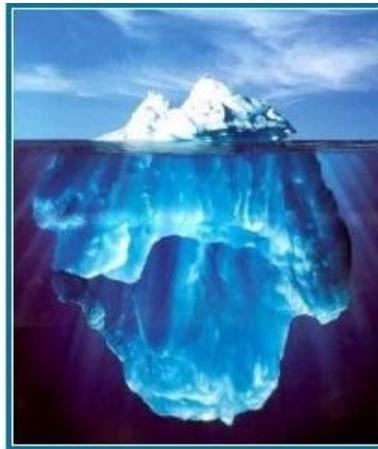
Use the illustration of the iceberg in the worksheet to introduce participants to the idea that anger is used to mask other feelings.

Tell students that anger is the tip of the iceberg. The part of the iceberg under the water is where all the other feelings are. Tell the teens that people often show only anger to the people around them. But just as a captain must know what lies beneath the water in order for a ship to successfully navigate around an iceberg, people need to understand what lies beneath their anger and other people's anger in order to cope effectively with their feelings.

## ***Iceberg of Feelings***

For a lot of people, anger is used to mask other feelings and the iceberg is a way of showing how this works. Anger is the tip of the iceberg. The part of the iceberg under the water is where all the other feelings are. People often show only anger to the people around them. But just as a captain must know what lies beneath the water in order for a ship to successfully navigate around an iceberg, people need to understand what lies beneath their anger and other people's anger in order to cope effectively with their feelings. Talking about the feelings, instead of showing the anger, makes it much easier to understand each other and resolve conflicts.

**Anger**  
**Submerged**  
**Feelings**



## ***Why does putting our feelings into words help?***

Explain the following:

In addition to anger, we have feelings that range in many different directions. When we communicate these other feelings to people, they understand us better. So talking about feelings can make our relationships stronger.

Talking about feelings can also help us stay calm. Brain researchers have found that simply identifying feelings of sadness and anger makes them less intense. Studies at UCLA in 2007\* showed that when people labeled a negative feeling, like sadness or anger, it activated a part of the brain responsible for processing emotions and impulse control. At the same time it calmed down activity in the part of the brain that triggers negative feelings like fear and panic. So, when you say what you are feeling, it calms you down. It also works this way when you identify a feeling in someone else. For example, if your brother looks at you in an angry way and you think to yourself, “he is angry”, you will activate the part of your brain that calms down your own negative feelings and prevents your impulse to react to him.

The next time you are getting angry or upset about something, try thinking about what you are feeling and say it to yourself. You can say it out loud, think it or write it. This is a good thing to do during a time-out.

*\* Lieberman, Matthew D. (2007) Putting Feeling Into Words: Affect Labeling Disrupts Amygdala Activity in Response to Affective Stimuli, Psychological Science 18 (5), 421-428.*

Next, discuss the following situations with the group to examine how we are socialized at an early age to hide our feelings:

- Let’s say a 7-year-old boy gets punched and knocked down by a 9-year-old boy. If the 7-year-old starts to cry, what will the other kids say to him? What will they say about him? What will he learn about showing pain and fear?

- If a five-year-old girl comes into the house crying and tells her mom that her brother said she couldn't play with him because she was stupid, her mom may say, "Oh, he's just being a boy. Stop crying." What will the girl learn about feeling sad?

Point out that it is these types of experiences that teach us that anger is a much safer feeling to show than other hard feelings.

When you are sure the class recognizes that anger is not felt in isolation from other emotions, tell them that it is more helpful to communicate the feelings they are having than to act out the anger. Use the following story to illustrate this point:

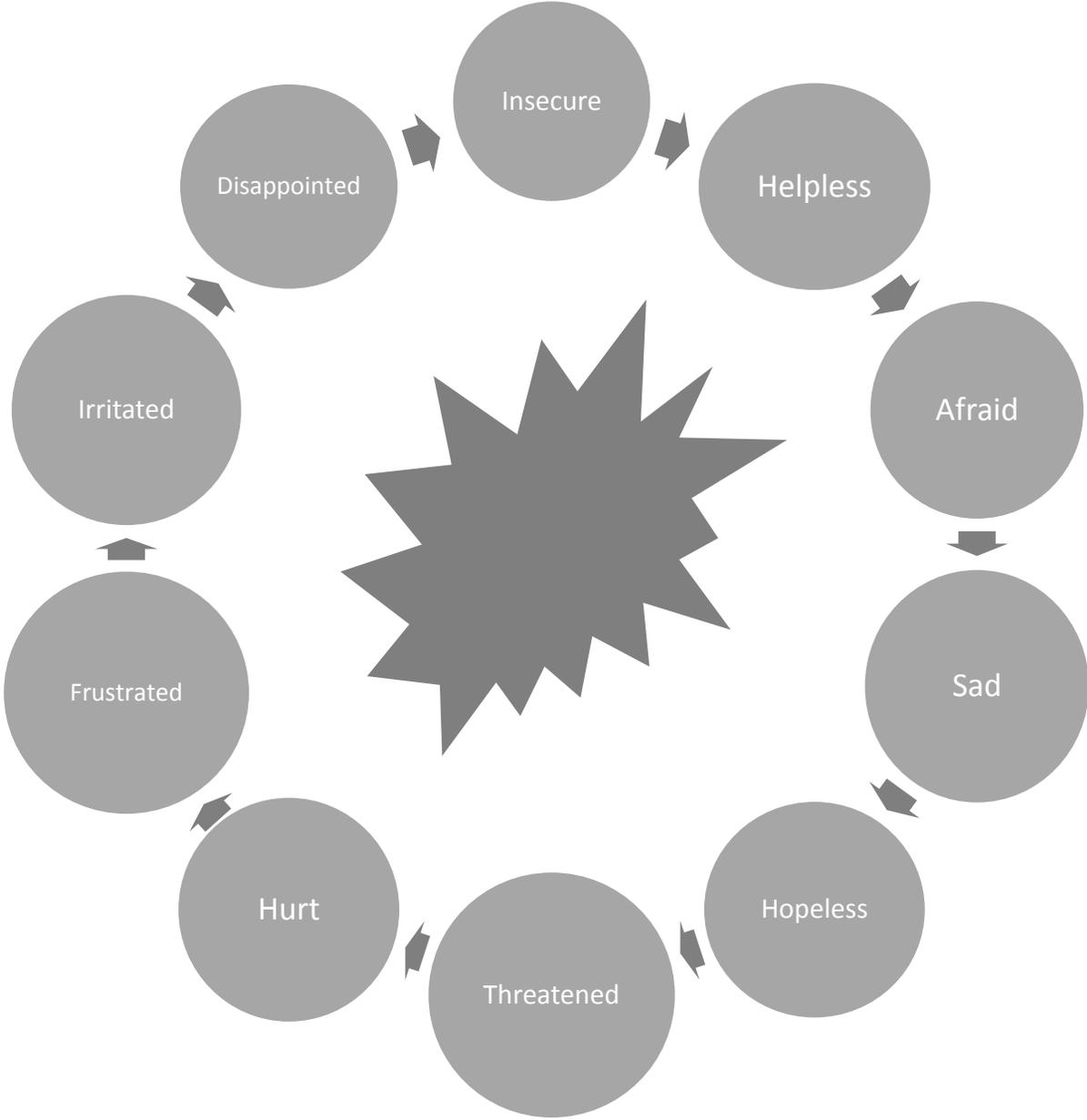
*Let's say you are mad at your mom because she picked you up late. If you think about it, you can figure out what other feelings you are having besides anger. Maybe you are worried you will be late for practice, or something else you had planned to do. Instead of just telling her how mad you are, or acting angry with her, you can tell her how you feel—"I'm worried I will be late for practice." Then your mom can understand why you are upset, and it is less likely to turn into an argument that escalates into blaming and anger.*

### **Exercise: Different Kinds of Feelings**

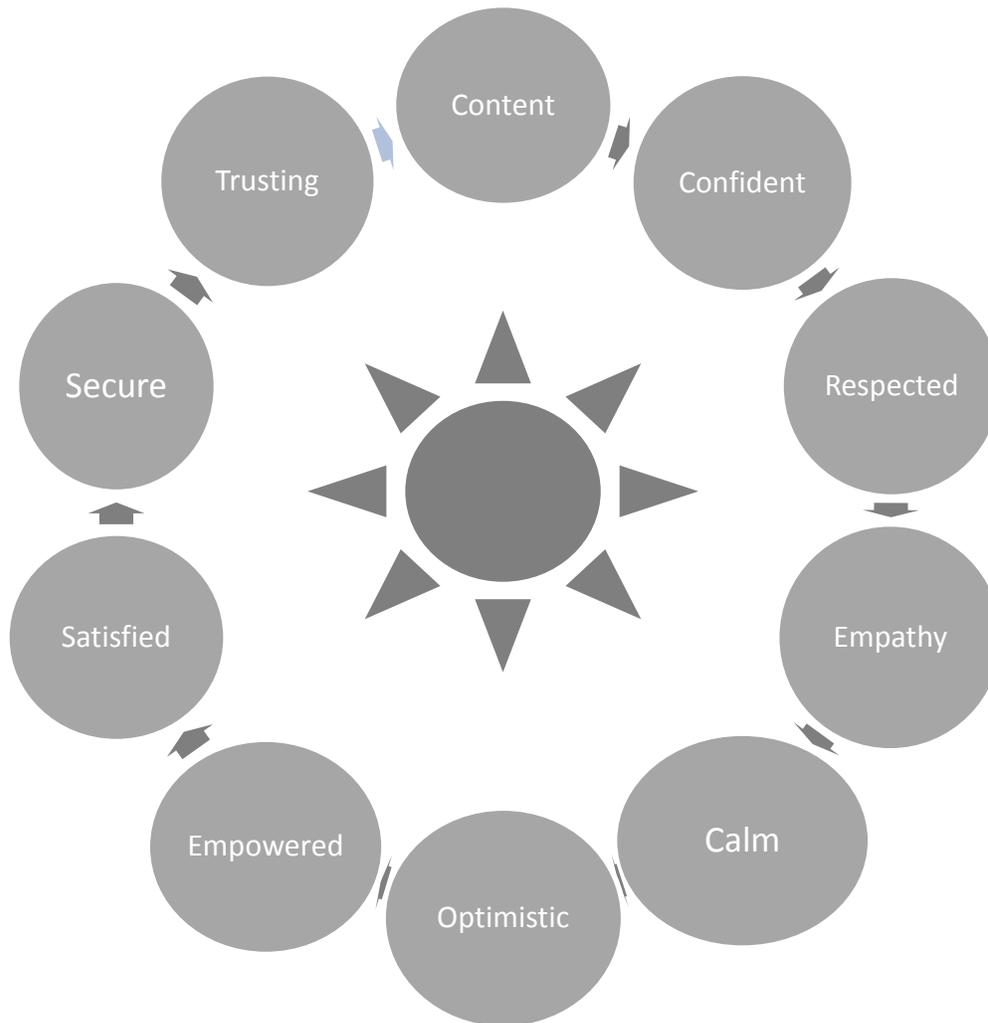
Refer participants to the 'feelings wheels' in their workbooks. On the next two pages, you will see two wheels with feelings. One has difficult feelings that are common when people are having conflict with each other. The other has helpful feelings that describe how you feel when you are able to stay calm and solve problems.

For this exercise, you will look at the two wheels and think about a situation when you felt one of the feelings on the wheel. We will go around the group and share until we have talked about all of the feelings on each wheel.

**Difficult Feelings**



## ***Helpful Feelings***



### ***Exercise: Identifying Feelings***

Have the participants turn to the *Identifying Feelings* worksheet in the workbook. Ask them to read each scenario and think about what feelings the person might be having. They can do this individually, in small groups, or as a large group. Have them share their answers with the whole group while you write down the feelings on the board.

## Worksheet

### ***Identifying Feelings***

Read each scenario below and write down the feelings, besides anger, the person might be having.

1. Barb gets kicked out of math class for arguing with the teacher again. She is sent to the vice principal, who tells her that she'll be suspended for a week because this is the third time she's been kicked out of class. Barb knows that her basketball team has a major game that she's going to miss.

She says to the vice principal, "Well that's just great! THANKS!" She walks out and slams the door behind her.

Barb is angry. What else might she be feeling?

---

2. Jake has been seeing Monica for five weeks. One afternoon he asks her if she wants to go get pizza after school. She says, "No, I don't want pizza, and I really don't want to hang out with you anymore." Jake yells at her, calls her a name and walks off.

Jake is angry. What else might he be feeling?

---

3. Alex spent all the money he saved fixing up his car. He got a new CD player, a new muffler, new rims and a detail job. One morning he goes out to the car and finds his rims gone. He screams and goes into his house to call his friend and tell him about it. His sister is on the phone. He shouts at her to get off the phone. She ignores him. He grabs the phone out of her hand.

Alex is angry. What else might he be feeling?

---

4. Katie just came back from a weekend visit with her dad. When she was at his house, he talked about how he thinks the divorce was all her mom's fault. When Katie gets home, her mom says, "Did you get your homework done this weekend?" Katie screams at her mom, "Why can't you just leave me alone?"

Katie is angry. What else might she be feeling?

---

### ***Exercise: Anger Scenarios***

Finish the session by doing some role-playing. Have volunteers act out various scenarios in which they get angry. Have them think of situations in their own lives when they get angry. Ask the volunteers to try to communicate any feelings they might have other than anger and consider how their choices might change the outcome of the experience. Encourage group members to help each other identify possible feelings and how to communicate those feelings.

### **Worksheet**

Think of a situation when you were really angry and got abusive to another person. Write down the situation and then write down the feelings you were having besides anger.

What happened?

What did you say and do?

Besides anger, what feelings did you have?

## **Take-Home Activities**

Ask group members to pay attention to other feelings they are having when they get angry during the following week. Ask them to try to communicate the other feelings instead of the anger. They will report back to the group about their experiences during check-in.



# **Session 11: Understanding Self-Talk and Beliefs**

## **Teen and Parent Session**

### ***Background Information***

Self-talk is another word for thinking. In any situation, you always have thoughts about what is going on around you. Those thoughts affect how you feel about the situation, and how you respond to it. This is because your thoughts have to do with how you perceive what is happening. During this session you will become more aware of the things you say to yourself in difficult situations and how it impacts your feelings and behavior. You will learn how to change unhelpful thinking to self-talk that helps you respond to stressful events in more respectful and non-violent ways.

You will also learn about the beliefs you have that affect your thinking, feelings and behavior. Beliefs are ideas you have developed in your life about how things should be, what is right and not right, and your capabilities. Beliefs have a strong influence over our thinking, feelings and behavior. You will learn how these all work together to determine the choices you make and your behavior. Once you figure out your unhelpful thoughts and beliefs, you can change them to ones that lead you away from abusive or violent responses to conflict and toward respectful ways to solve problems.

### ***Goals***

- To understand self-talk and beliefs
- To learn that people's thinking and beliefs are not always true
- To learn how to change unhelpful thinking and beliefs to ones that support respectful, non-violent relationships
- To learn how to use self-talk to change behavior
- To learn how to use self-talk to make better choices

## ***Important Messages***

- When I pay attention to the way I think, I can decide if it is helpful or harmful, and I have the ability to change it.
- When I can change my thinking, it changes my feelings and behavior.
- My beliefs influence how I think and act.
- Beliefs are often at work below the surface of our awareness, so we don't often think about them.
- When we learn about our beliefs, we can decide if they are true or untrue, helpful or unhelpful.
- I can change my thinking and beliefs to help me stay safe and non-violent.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Meditation / Relaxation activity
2. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
3. Separate into parent and teen groups.
4. Discussion: Who Controls Our Behavior.
5. Discussion: Self-Talk.
6. Discussion: Changing Negative Self-Talk into Helpful Self-Talk.
7. Exercise: Changing Negative Self-Talk into Helpful Self-Talk.

# Group Activities

## Explain the following:

In this session we help teens become aware of how their thoughts, feelings and beliefs interact with each other and influence their behavior. This gives them self-awareness and insight about what is happening internally for them before they become aggressive.

We explore how peoples' perceptions and thinking about a situation impact how they feel and react, and even more importantly, how perceptions and thinking can be inaccurate. Teens will learn how changing the way they think about a situation can calm or shift negative feelings so these feelings are less intense. Likewise, they will learn how changing feelings can influence thinking.

When people know how to slow down and observe the cognitive, emotive and behavioral process leading to their behavior, it enables them to make more thoughtful decisions about how to respond and act.

Teens will also learn how to notice their overall 'mindset' and shift it to a more positive and helpful mindset.

The primary goal of Step-Up is to learn how to replace abusive behaviors with respectful behaviors. To reach this goal, we need to figure out how to *respond* instead of *react* to troublesome situations. *Reaction* is when strong emotions drive our behavior. When these emotions are negative, people often feel like the other person is causing the difficult feelings, and they *react* and lash out.

Responding is different. If we can step back and observe the situation and how we are thinking about it, we can decide how we want to respond. Noticing our thinking and how we talk to ourselves about the problem gives us information about how we view the situation. Sometimes our perspectives are off, and we need to shift our view of the situation. If we take time to pay attention to this it helps us more 'thoughtfully' respond to interactions in respectful ways.

During this session you will learn how to pay attention to your thoughts and beliefs to figure out if they are realistic or helpful, and change them if they are not. If they are realistic, you will learn that you have a lot of choices about how to deal with the situation. This will help you *respond* instead of *react* to challenges in your life.

### ***Discussion: Who Controls Our Feelings, Thoughts, and Behavior***

#### **Explain the following:**

One of the major roadblocks for people is a belief that they are powerless to change their feelings, thoughts and behaviors.

Lots of times we feel like other people control our feelings and our actions. We might say things like, “My mom makes me mad,” “My sister made me angry so I hit her”, “I’m late for school because my mom puts me in a bad mood and I miss the bus.” Other people definitely influence us, but we are the ones who really have the most influence over how we feel and act.

We always have a choice about how we behave. No one can “make” us behave in a certain way (for example, someone is not raising my hand for me to hit this person—I make the choice and act).

Feelings are a little more complicated. People and situations do influence how we feel. It seems like we have no choice about it. However, we do have some control over our feelings. We can have a bad feeling about something, and then we can change the negative feeling by changing the way we think about it or by looking at it in a different way.

Here is an example of how a person’s thinking can affect the way he or she feels:

Jon is in a supermarket with narrow aisles. He’s in a hurry and he’s trying to move quickly with his cart. He needs to get to the check-out counter and get out of the store to catch his ride. A tall, broad-shouldered man is studying all the different cereal boxes on the shelf in front of him. He and his cart are blocking Jon’s way. Jon says,

“Excuse me.” He doesn’t move. Jon says, “Excuse me,” louder. The man still doesn’t move.

***Discuss the following questions:***

1. What kinds of things might Jon start to think?

Example: Jon might think, “What a jerk. This guy is just trying to make me mad. Who does he think he is? How rude!”

2. How would he feel?

Example: He might feel frustrated, irritated, impatient, and mad.

3. How might he behave?

Example: He might yell at the man to move out of his way.

Now, imagine that a woman comes up to the large man and they start speaking in sign language. Jon then realizes that the man is deaf. How would that knowledge affect:

1. Jon’s thinking?

2. Jon’s feelings?

Jon’s actions?

In the example above, what made Jon mad?

It may seem like the man blocking the aisle made Jon mad. What really made Jon mad was his thinking and his perception about what was going on. When Jon thought, “What a jerk. This guy is just trying to make me mad.” He became irritated and then mad. If he stopped for a second and instead thought, “I wonder what’s up? Maybe he is deaf and doesn’t hear me,” Jon wouldn’t have gotten mad, but instead could have just found out whether the man heard him or not.

Although we may not be aware of it, we have choices in how we think about things.

When we get angry about something that happens, or something a person does/says, there are two parts to what is contributing to our anger:

1. The event that happens—called *external triggers*.
2. The thoughts we have about what happened—called *internal triggers*.

We don't have much control over external triggers, especially when it is another person's behavior. There are lots of things that people do that can make us mad. And there are a lot of situations and events in life that can make us mad. Sometimes we have control over preventing a situation or event from happening, and sometimes not.

We do have some control over internal triggers. We can pay attention to the thoughts we have about what happens, and our perception and beliefs about it. And we can do things to change how we think and talk to ourselves about it.

### ***Discussion: Self-Talk***

Refer the group to the Self-Talk worksheet and explain the following:

We can decide how we are going to think about every situation. We may explain things to ourselves in a way that makes us more and more angry, or we may explain things to ourselves in a way that helps us stay calm and figure things out. Explaining things to ourselves is called *self-talk*.

We talk to ourselves all the time and aren't aware of it. If you start paying attention to it you will hear yourself. You hear your mom's car pull up in the driveway and you think, "Dang, I didn't do the dishes. She's going to yell at me about it." Or you get home and see that your little sister is using your laptop, and you think to yourself, "She is going to mess it up or get in my stuff." If you listen to yourself carefully for a day you will hear all sorts of things that you say to yourself.

In addition to thinking and self-talk, we have feelings and beliefs going on at the same time. Thinking, feelings and beliefs all interact with each other when we respond to something that happens.

## ***Discussion: Beliefs***

Refer the group to the *Beliefs* worksheet in their workbooks and explain the following:

Our thinking and self-talk is shaped by our beliefs. Beliefs are the notions we hold about the way things are, or should be. They have to do with the values and perspectives we learned from our family, community and culture.

Beliefs are below the surface of our awareness, but they have a strong impact on our life perspective. They are learned in childhood and throughout our lives, and may be true or untrue. Some of our beliefs are helpful to us, and others can get in the way of being our true selves and can damage our relationships. They are difficult to change, but it is possible to change them if we can learn what they are.

Some of our beliefs are about what we think is important and what we think is right or wrong. They are often 'shoulds', like 'you should never show weakness', 'children should never talk back to their parents', 'boys should never cry', 'it not okay to speak up when you disagree', or 'you should always stick up for your family.'

Beliefs can be about others, the world, and us. They can be helpful or unhelpful to us.

### ***Beliefs about Myself***

Refer the group to *Core Beliefs about Myself* in their workbooks.

Explain the following:

Core beliefs are about who we are as persons, our capabilities, self-worth and personality. These beliefs are deep and often out of our conscious awareness. They impact our thoughts and self-talk, for example if I have a core belief that I am powerless and incapable, and then when faced with a challenge I might say to myself, "I can't do anything about it; it's hopeless, nothing will ever change."

Some of our beliefs are about who we are as persons, our

capabilities, self-worth and personality. These beliefs can impact our thoughts and self-talk, for example if I have a belief that I am powerless and incapable, then when faced with a challenge I might say to myself, “I can’t do anything about it; it’s hopeless, nothing will ever change

Here are examples of negative and positive core beliefs we have about ourselves:

**Negative Core Beliefs**

I never do things right  
I am not very smart  
I am helpless  
I am bad

**Positive Core Beliefs**

I am a good person  
I can succeed if I try  
I am important  
I am capable

Briefly discuss the following questions:

- How do we develop these Core Beliefs?
- How do you know if they are true or not?
- How can you challenge those that are not true, and change them?

Think of one positive belief and one negative belief you have about yourself.

Positive Belief \_\_\_\_\_

Negative Belief \_\_\_\_\_

***How Self-talk, Feelings and Beliefs Work Together***

Refer the group to *How Self-Talk, Feelings and Beliefs Work Together* in their workbooks.

Write on the board: *Something Happens*

Describe the following scenario:

*Derrick's mom told him she would take him to the store after school so he could buy the new X-Box game that just came out. He was really excited about it as he walked home from school. He couldn't wait to play it.*

*Derrick walks in the front door and sees his mother at the dining room table with his 10-year-old brother. Mom says, "Hi, Derrick. I'm sorry, but I can't take you to the store today. I need to help Sam out with a big project that's due tomorrow. I can take you on Thursday."*

Explain to the group:

When something happens that causes distress, there are usually a series of thoughts, beliefs and feelings that occur as the person thinks it through. It happens really fast. The thoughts, beliefs and feelings impact each other. For this part of the exercise, we will think of all the possible unhelpful thoughts and self-talk, beliefs and feelings Derrick might have that could lead to more distress and hurtful behavior. We will start with the very first thing he might have said to himself when he learns that he can't play the new game today.

Ask the group:

1. What thoughts / self-talk might Derrick have right after his mom told him she couldn't take him to the store? What was his immediate thought?
2. What feelings might he have?
3. What beliefs support this self-talk?
4. How might he behave?

Have them turn to the *Something Happens* worksheet in their workbooks and go over the examples.

Point out how the beliefs foster the self-talk, and they both generate the feelings. Then, in the end, all of it impacts how the person behaves.

## ***Something Happens***

Derrick's mom can't take him to buy the new game today as they had planned because she has to help his younger brother with homework.



**Thought**  
**Belief**  
**Feelings**

"I want to play that game. I have to."  
"I can't wait. I don't have the patience. I can't stand it."  
Disappointed, frustrated, helpless, angry, victimized.



**Thought**  
**Belief**  
**Feelings**

"She said she would take me. She lied."  
"People should keep their word. She's doing it on purpose"  
Betrayed, unimportant, let down



**Thought**  
**Belief**  
**Feelings**

"She cares more about my brother. He gets all of the attention. She always does what he wants."  
"I am not worthy of attention. I'm not good enough."  
Jealous, sad, hurt, angry



**Behavior**

Yells and swears at Mom, kicks the wall

**Thought**  
**Belief**  
**Feelings**

She doesn't care  
"If someone makes me feel bad, I have a right to make them feel bad too. They deserve it if they make you feel bad."  
Revenge, hopeless, shame

## ***Identifying and Changing Self-Talk and Beliefs***

Tell the group:

We can see from Derrick's story, the way we talk to ourselves and the beliefs we hold, affect how we feel and how we act. When something difficult happens, we can think about it in ways that get us more worked up and mad about it, or we can think about it in ways that help us calm down and figure out how to deal with it.

If you listen carefully to your self-talk when you are angry, you might notice that it is exaggerated, unrealistic and even completely untrue. Researchers who study anger have found that people with anger problems commonly have distorted thinking and perceptions that give rise to the anger. Listening to your self-talk will help you learn if this is true for you. The good news is that you are capable of changing your thinking and self-talk if you pay attention to it.

Let's look at Derrick's thoughts, self-talk and beliefs that led to him swearing at his mom and kicking the wall.

- Which of his thoughts and beliefs are really true and realistic?
- Which ones are not true, or are blown out of proportion?

Write their answers on the board, under two headings:

1. True / Realistic and
2. Not True /Unrealistic or Exaggerated

Then ask:

What could Derrick say to himself instead that would shift his view to be more realistic and less negative to help him cope with the distress?

List ideas on the board

We are going to do more practice with figuring out unhelpful self-talk, and changing it into more helpful self-talk.

## ***Changing My Thinking/Self-Talk***

Refer group to *Changing My Thinking / Self-Talk* in their workbooks

Tell group:

We are going to use another scenario to learn how to recognize your self-talk, and explore the different options you have for changing it and coping with the disturbance in a healthier way.

Describe the following scenario, or have a group member read it from the book.

*Jennifer's mom took her phone away because she had been staying on it late into the night and would not get up on time for school in the morning. Jennifer was angry and upset about it and begging her mom to give it back. Mom separated from her and Jennifer sat on the floor in her room not knowing what to do. She was so mad. She started throwing things around her room*

First ask: What does Jennifer need to do before she can figure out what she is thinking?

Point out: First, Jennifer should use her safety plan to stop and do something to calm her strong emotions. She should use her self-calming skills to de-escalate so she is able to think clearly and focus.

When Jennifer was throwing things around her room she was too emotionally escalated to think about her thinking. Her self-calming skills will help her settle down and activate her cortex so she will be able to focus and figure things out.

## ***Steps to Change Thinking / Self-Talk***

Go over the following and apply each step to Jennifer's situation. Have group members come up with ideas about how Jennifer might do this.

### **LISTEN** to myself:

- What am I saying to myself?
- What might Jennifer have been saying to herself?
- Example: "I have to have my phone. She can't take it. I have to get it back- I have to be able to text my friends, and go on face book- I'll lose all my friends, they'll think I don't like them..."

### **ASK** myself

- Is what I'm saying to myself really true? Is it realistic? Is it really this horrible awful and bad?
- Is my thinking helping me? Or making it worse?
- How was Jennifer's thinking affecting her feelings and behavior?
- Was Jennifer's thinking true or realistic?

### **CHANGE** it

- If what you are saying is not really true or realistic, or maybe exaggerated, look at the situation again and change it to something more realistic.
- What kinds of self-statements could Jennifer make that are more realistic?
- If you decide what you are saying to yourself is really true, or parts of it are true, while you don't have control over the problem, you do have control about how you think about it and what you do.

## ***Handling Something I Cannot Change***

Refer the group to *Handling Something I Cannot Change* in their workbooks

Explain the following:

Sometimes we realize our negative thoughts are really true. We are not exaggerating. It is what is happening and it is really challenging. What do you do then?

**FIRST:** Recognize that it is true.

- Jennifer could say: "This really is just the way it is, I don't have control over this one- Mom took my phone and I don't have it. I can't change her mind."

**SECOND:** What can I do? What are my choices?

- Keep thinking about how awful it is and ranting and raving and drive myself and everyone else nuts- and get in more trouble.
- Accept it. Saying: "It is what it is" can sometimes bring some relief because you realize there is nothing you can do to change the situation. Let it go. This alone can help you feel better because you stop fighting it.

Jennifer could say to herself: "Okay, I don't have my phone. All the screaming and yelling in the world is not going to change it. It will just make it worse.

- Switch from thinking about the problem to thinking about the solution.

What do I need to do to get my phone back?

- Tell myself something to help me cope with the distress.

For example, use as your self-calming statements. "It's only a week, time goes fast, I will see my friends at school and tell them what's going on."

What else could Jennifer say to herself?

- Stop thinking

Do a mindfulness activity to bring yourself present (as we have learned about in class) by breathing, being in your body, focusing on your senses and what is happening right now in the room you are in. Go on a mindfulness walk, sit by a tree, or do any of the mindfulness exercises we have learned. When your thoughts come along, just observe and let them pass.

- Feel the feelings

Allow yourself to have your feelings. Cry, get mad, be sad- as long as your behavior is safe and respectful. Do something physical to move the emotions- walk, run, play catch with the dog.

- Talk about your feelings

Talk about how you feel respectfully, to someone who is able to listen. Or just say them to yourself or write them down.

Most of these (except the first one) help to calm strong emotions. Our thinking affects our feelings, and our feelings affect our thinking. If you can shift your emotions to more

positive ones, it helps you have more positive thinking. If you shift your thinking to more positive thoughts, you have better feelings.

Tell the group that next week they will practice these skills more and apply them to their own personal situations

## **Take Home Activity**

Tell teens to be aware of how they have negative self-talk and helpful self-talk in a situation during the next week. They will tell the group about it during their next check-in.



# Session 12: Guiding Change in Your Teen with Restorative Parenting

## Parent Session

### *Background Information*

One of the most effective ways to help teens change their behavior is to give them ownership of problems caused by their misbehavior, guide them in recognizing the impact of their behavior on others and themselves, and learn how to repair harm and make amends.

While parents participate in this session, the teens are participating in the *Making Amends* session where they are learning about the impact of violence and abuse on others and how to actively make amends for harm caused by hurtful behavior.

In session 9, *Accountability Through Restorative Practice*, parents and teens learned and practiced the six-step restorative process for helping teens take responsibility for violent behavior. This restorative practice dialogue is a valuable parenting tool to be used at home. It can apply to any behavior that impacts other family members in a significant way. It is particularly beneficial for hurtful behavior because it engages empathy, which naturally motivates a desire to help repair the harm that was done.

Parents will often say that they don't know how to address the violent and abusive behavior at home. They have tried all sorts of consequences and they don't work. Many parents have given up on consequences. This session re-frames consequences to view them as responsibilities resulting from the problems caused by the behavior.

Restorative Parenting uses the principles and practices of restorative justice to guide children in a conversation where they talk about their behavior in a meaningful way and take responsibility for harm done and learn how to make amends and 'put things right'.

## ***Goals***

- To re-frame consequences as a way of taking responsibility for behavior
- To learn about Restorative Process and how it helps teens engage in taking responsibility for their behavior
- To learn about Restorative Parenting and role play using it with real situations with their teens

## ***Important Messages***

- The manner in which consequences are delivered can take away a teen's sense of responsibility
- Re-framing consequences to be viewed as taking responsibility for behavior is a more helpful perspective for both teens and parents
- Restorative Parenting offers a way to help teens learn how to take responsibility for their behavior in a meaningful way
- Restorative Parenting builds relationship connection, empathy, accountability and mutual understanding

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion: Re-Framing Consequences
3. Discussion: The Purpose of Consequences
4. Discussion: Restorative Parenting
5. Applying Restorative Parenting to a Scenario
6. Practice: Applying Restorative Parenting Role Plays

# Group Activities

## ***Discussion: Re-framing Consequences***

### **Discuss the following:**

A common way to respond to misbehavior is for parents to say to their teen, “You’re grounded”, “I’m taking your phone”, “You’re off the computer for a week, give me your laptop.”

These may be appropriate consequences for some behaviors, but let’s explore what is happening for the teen when we deliver them in this way.

### **Ask the following questions:**

1. How might teens respond?
2. How does it impact their view of the situation?
3. How might they think about their misbehavior in relationship to the consequence delivered?
4. How does it influence their sense of responsibility?
5. How do we feel as parents when we deliver a consequence in this way?

Elicit responses from the group and discuss. Then point out: When parents give a consequence to their teens in this way, it takes responsibility away from the teen. The parent takes the responsibility and is doing all of the work, and the teen is passive and simply receiving it. It removes the opportunity for the teen to feel responsible about their behavior or the ability to feel competence in taking responsibility for their behavior.

There is not a connection between the misbehavior and the consequence when it is delivered in this way.

## ***Discussion: The Purpose of Consequences***

Let’s talk about the purpose of consequences for misbehavior.

What is the purpose of consequences for misbehaviors?

List on board. Be sure to include:

- To help children change their behavior
- To help them learn that there are consequences for misbehaviors
- To motivate them to make different choices in the future
- To give them responsibility for their behavior
- To help them learn about cause and effect
- To help them be accountable for their actions

What do you think teens would say the purpose of a consequence is?

Have the group share ideas. Point out that most teens probably view consequences as a punishment that is done to them. Of course, this makes sense in the mind of a teen because who likes consequences?

Summarize with the group:

If we re-frame consequences to reflect the real purpose- taking responsibility for your behavior, it changes the perspective for our teens, and for parents.

For example, when your teen has been hurtful to a family member and you say, “We will talk about how you can take responsibility for your behavior”, as opposed to, “We will talk about consequences for your behavior”, what is the difference? After parents share their responses, say: We are going to talk about a Restorative Practice model for helping your teen take responsibility for their behavior.

## ***Restorative Parenting***

Explain the following:

Restorative parenting is based on restorative justice theory that wrong doing results in obligations to those who have been harmed or an obligation to fix problems that were caused by the behavior. The focus is on “harms and needs”, which means figuring out the harm that resulted, and

what is needed to repair the harm. This is called ‘making amends’ or ‘putting things right’.

Restorative parenting uses the restorative process as a way to address wrongdoing in a family. It is a meaningful way to help children learn how to take responsibility for their behavior. It is helpful to parents because it offers a way to talk to young people about their behavior in a way that teaches accountability for behavior.

### ***Restorative Parenting***

- Focuses on the effects of the misbehavior – how it caused a problem, rather than the person or the misbehavior
- Focuses on the need to fix problems caused
- Teaches children the impact of their behavior on others, and helps them develop empathy for family members
- Helps children think about their behavior in a new way
- Teaches the true meaning of accountability
- Making amends reduces shame and increases self-respect
- Balances support with accountability
- Is respectful to everyone

### **Point Out:**

Your teens are learning about ‘making amends’ right now in the teen group. They are exploring the effects of abuse and violence on people and relationships, and how to make amends when you have hurt someone physically or emotionally. This is in preparation for our parent and teen group next week where parents and teens will learn and practice using the restorative process to address violent or abusive behaviors.

## ***Addressing Misbehavior using Restorative Parenting***

In session 9, *Accountability through Restorative Practice*, parents and teens learned and practiced the six-step restorative process for helping teens take responsibility for violent behavior. This restorative practice dialogue is a valuable parenting tool to be used at home. It can apply to any behavior that impacts other family members in a significant way, like violating house rules, not doing chores, coming home late, not respecting other family member's needs, etc.. It is particularly beneficial for hurtful behavior because it engages empathy, which naturally motivates a desire to help repair the harm that was done

### ***Taking Responsibility for My Behavior using Six Restorative Steps***

1. Who was harmed by my behavior?
2. What was the harm, damage, or loss done to them?
  - How did it affect them?
  - How did it affect my relationship with my family members?
  - How did the behavior cause a problem?
3. How could I make amends?
  - What do I need to do to repair the harms or problems caused?
  - What do I need to do to restore the relationship?
4. How did my behavior affect me?
5. What could I have done differently?
6. What do I need to do so the behavior does not happen again?

### **Example of Restorative Parenting**

Read through the following scenario and restorative dialogue between the parent and teen:

Tara had a daily chore of doing the dishes before her mom came home from work. Her mom needed a clean kitchen to make dinner. Tara had been slacking on this, and for several days in a row her mother came home from work to find a sink full of dishes and food left out and dirty dishes all over the house. Mom was fed up. She had already told Tara that she couldn't go out with her friends until she did all of the dishes. It didn't seem to be working.

Tara's Mom decided to try out using the restorative questions with Tara to see if it would help. She told Tara that instead of the consequence of not being able to go out with her friends, she wanted her to have a talk about the dishes and figure out a plan to solve the problem.

She asked Tara if she would sit down with her after dinner and talk about the dishes problem.

**Mom:** "Tara, when you don't do the dishes, who do you think it effects?"

**Tara:** Thinks for a while. Then says, "Well, it makes you mad, I know that."

**Mom:** "How else do you think I feel?"

**Tara:** "Probably taken advantage of, because you make the dinner and all the dishes are in the way, so you have to either do them or pile them up for me to do later.... You must be pretty angry by now. I guess I would be pissed. Yeah, sorry mom."

**Mom:** "Who else is impacted by it?"

**Tara:** "Dad and Alisha, cuz they have to wait longer for dinner and it's a mess for them to come home to, too. Alisha tries to help you do them- she must be annoyed by me. I would be yelling at her if she did that to me."

**Mom:** "How does it affect you?"

**Tara:** "Well, I feel pretty lame right now. I guess I feel selfish. I've just been really distracted and busy lately. I think I'm going to do them and then I have to leave.." Sorry, Mom.

**Mom:** “I’m glad you recognize how hard it is on all of us. Are there any other problems caused by you not doing the dishes?”

**Tara:** “We run out of plates and cups. Everyone complains when they can’t find clean stuff. It get’s really crabby around here. Everyone starts pestering me and lately it feels like everyone is mad at me all the time.”

**Mom:** “It doesn’t sound very fun for you, either.”

**Tara:** “No, it’s not...”

**Mom:** “What do you think your responsibility is in this? What do you need to do?”

Tara: “ I need to start doing the dishes. And talk to Dad and Alisha and tell them I’m sorry.”

**Mom:** “That is good. Is there anything more you can do to make amends with me?”

**Tara:** “What do you want me to do to make amends?”

**Mom:** “It would feel really good if you would make dinner with me one night this week so we can enjoy each other again. It’s been rough between us. I want to restore our relationship and feel good together again. Will you do that?”

**Tara:** Smiles at her Mom and says, “Sure, Mom. I would like that. Let’s make spaghetti like we used to. And Chocolate Sundays.”

How is that for relationship restoration? This story might be a little sugar coated, but this process does help to re-connect relationships and feel empathy, remorse and forgiveness. It can be a very powerful process.

Some of the things that helped engage and motivate Tara included:

- Mom’s attitude of respect and support for Tara

- Allowing Tara to have space to think and answer in ways that fit for her- Mom did not push it or try to control it. She adapted the questions to the way the conversation was going
- Mom's supportive attitude allowed Tara to not become defensive and to open up to feeling empathy and remorse, which motivated her to want to make amends.

### **Restorative Parenting teaches teens:**

- That their behavior is their own responsibility, not their parents' responsibility.
- That wrong doing results in obligations to others
- That when their behavior creates a problem, it is their responsibility to fix it or make amends.
- About the real consequences of their behavior, and allows them to make decisions based on the knowledge of these consequences.

### ***Exercise: Practice Applying Restorative Parenting to Your Own Situation***

Have the group divide into pairs and think of a real situation with their teens. Take turns role playing as a parent and teen and use the restorative questions as a guide to dialogue about a problem behavior.

## **Take Home Activity**

Talk to your teen about what he or she learned tonight in the *Making Amends* session. Share your learning with your teen. Invite your teen to practice using the restorative questions on a current problem behavior. You will have more learning and practice next week in group with your teen applying the restorative questions to violent or abusive behaviors your teen has used.

## **Session 13 Safety Plan Review/Open Session**

This session can be used to review the *Safety Plan* and help families make revisions if needed. Youth who have not made a safety plan can make one during this session. This session can also be used to deliver one of the extra sessions that are at the end of the manual.



# Session 14: Using “I” Statements

## Teen and Parent Session

### *Background Information*

In addition to teaching another facet of respectful communication, this session prepares participants for the coming sessions on problem solving. The goal is to teach teens and their parents how to talk about a problem without blaming, criticizing, or judging the people with whom they are in conflict. This is a difficult communicative skill to learn. You can help participants learn this skill by prompting them to change their comments into “I” statements when appropriate in this and the remaining sessions of the program.

### *Goals*

- To learn how to use an “I” statement
- To recognize how “I” statements help people understand each other

### *Important Messages*

- “I” statements help you focus on your own experience of a situation.
- “I” statements help you avoid blaming and criticizing other people.
- Other people usually respond less defensively when they hear “I” statements.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion What is an “I” Statement?
3. Exercise: “You” Statement versus “I” Statement
4. Exercise: Changing “You” Statements into “I” Statements
5. Exercise: “I” Statement Practice

# Group Activities

## ***Discussion: What is an “I” Statement?***

An “I” statement is a way for a person to give valuable information about how an event or situation affects him or her. By beginning with “I,” a person is acknowledging that the statement is how he or she thinks and feels. When you use “I” statements, people usually respond more positively because they are able to hear you and understand you better. When you use “you” statements that blame and accuse, people feel defensive and don’t want to listen to you.

The most important skill for effective problem solving is to be able to talk about a problem in a way that helps others hear your point of view—and without criticizing, blaming, or using put-downs. Learning how to state your feelings and point of view in an “I” statement can be a difficult thing to do. At first, many people tend to start the sentence with “I feel...,” but then go into the usual blaming and criticizing of the other person. A true “I” statement does not include blame or criticism, and only states the experience of the person speaking. It may need to include information about the behavior of the other person, but this information should be stated in as factual and non-judgmental a way as possible.

Refer group to What Is an “I” Statement Worksheet and discuss.

## ***What Is an “I” Statement?***

An “I” statement:

- Describes the behavior or situation that is a problem clearly and specifically, with as few words as possible.
- Describes how a person feels or how the situation affects him or her, through “I” sentences.
- Does not blame, accuse, criticize, or put down the other person in the conversation.

## ***What Is the Purpose of an “I” Statement?***

The purpose of an “I” statement is to give factual information about how an event or situation affects you. When you use “I” statements, people usually respond more positively because they are able to hear you and understand you better. When you use “you” statements that blame and accuse, people feel defensive and don’t want to listen to you.

## ***How Do I Make an “I” Statement?***

**I feel** (feeling)

**when** (behavior or situation)

**because** (how it is a problem for you).

-or-**When** (behavior or situation) **happens**, I (what you experience or how it is a problem).

## ***Exercise: “You” Statements versus “I” Statements***

Refer group to “You” Statements versus “I” Statements Exercise in workbook. Read statements and discuss how they would respond to each statement.

## **Worksheet**

### ***“You” Statements versus “I” Statements***

The following are examples of “you” statements and “I” statements. Consider how you would feel listening to each of these statements. How might you respond to both?

**“You” statement:**

“Why do you always lock the door before I get home? You know I’m not home yet. You make me have to knock and knock and you take forever to open it.”

**“I” statement:**

*“I feel frustrated when I come home and the door is locked. I don’t like knocking and knocking because I start to think no one is home and I won’t be able to get in.”*

**“You” statement:**

*“You always pick me up late from school. You’re never on time. Don’t you know I have to be at practice by 3:00? You always make me late.”*

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**“I” statement:**

*“I feel frustrated when I don’t get picked up by 2:30 because I worry about being late for practice.”*

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**“You” statement:**

*“You never listen to me. You are constantly interrupting and being rude. You really have no clue about how to have a conversation.”*

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**“I” statement:**

*“When you talk while I’m talking, I get really annoyed because I feel like you aren’t hearing anything I’m saying. I’d like to take turns talking so you can listen to me and I can listen to you.”*

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## Worksheet

### ***Changing “You” Statements into “I” Statements***

Refer group members to the next worksheet, Changing “You” Statements into “I” Statements. Tell them they will now practice changing “you” Statements into “I” Statements. This exercise can be done all together as a large group, or in small groups or pairs and come back together and share.

“You are always late. You are so slow in the morning. I’m going to be late again, thanks to you.”

***“I” statement:***

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“You pig. You ate all the chips.”

***“I” statement:***

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“You always come barging into my room. Have you ever heard of the word ‘privacy’ before?”

***“I” statement:***

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### ***Exercise: “I” Statement Practice***

Have group members divide into pairs and have them write an “I” statement for each of the scenarios in the *“I” Statement Practice* worksheet in the workbook. Then, have the pairs come back together and share answers with the large group.

## Worksheet

### ***“I” Statement Practice***

Now, write an “I” statement to respond to each of the following situations:

1. Craig agreed to clean out the garage before going to the mall. Cynthia, his mom, comes home and finds the garage is still a mess. When Craig comes home, Cynthia says:

- 
2. Gregory is watching his two younger sisters while his mother is at a meeting after work. She said she would be home at 4:00 p.m. He made plans to go to a 4:30 p.m. movie with his friend. His mom comes in the door at 5:00 p.m. Gregory says:

- 
3. Bridgett comes home and asks her brother if there are any phone messages because she was expecting a call about when and where to meet a friend. Her brother says that her friend called and said something about where to meet but he can't remember where, and that she left a phone number but he forgot to write it down. Bridgett says to her brother:

- 
4. Lisa walks in the front door with an armful of groceries and starts to trip over a pile of stuff (shoes, a backpack, and a coat) that her son, Mike, had dropped on the floor. Lisa says to Mike:

- 
5. Think of something you would like to say to your teen using an “I” statement. Try to say something that you would normally say in a “You” statement. Take turns each saying something to each other in an “I” statement.

## **Take-Home Activities**

During the following week use “I” statements with your teen when you want to an express an opinion or feeling about something.

# Session 15: Empowering Teens to Be Responsible for Their Behavior

## Parent Session

### *Background Information*

During this session parents will discuss their responsibilities as parents and their teens' responsibilities, and how taking on too much responsibility for their teens affects the teens' ability to face challenges. Many parents take too much responsibility for their teens and become frustrated when their teens seem incapable of being responsible. The exercises in this session help parents identify how they have been either "rescuing" their teens or trying to control them in ways that take away the teens' ability to be responsible for their own behavior. When teens take responsibility for themselves, they begin to feel confident and capable.

### *Goals*

- To identify parent responsibilities and teen responsibilities
- To learn ways to help teens take responsibility for their behavior
- To identify ways that teens are affected when parents take responsibility for their them
- To identify ways teens feel when they take responsibility for themselves

## ***Important Messages***

- Teens will take more responsibility for their behavior when they are given the opportunity to make some decisions and face consequences of their choices.
- Giving teens responsibility is a gradual process as they mature.
- It is not always easy to let go and let teens make their own decisions and face consequences.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion: Who Is Responsible for What?
3. Exercise: Giving My Teen Responsibility
4. Discussion: Empowering Teens to Be Responsible for Their Behavior

# Group Activities

## *Discussion: Who Is Responsible for What?*

Ask the group the following questions. List their answers on the board. (Beneath each question are possible answers to include.)

- **What are you responsible for in your relationship with your teen?**

Providing basic needs: food, clothing, housing, healthcare, safety, education, rules, guidance, discipline, encouragement, love, emotional support.

Teaching life skills: social skills, being a positive role model, support and guidance in taking on responsibilities and becoming independent.

- **What is your teen responsible for?**

Own behavior, making choices, facing consequences of behavior, using skills learned, following rules, doing schoolwork, doing chores, following through on commitments made, fixing problems created by his or her behavior, asking for help.

- **How do parents take too much responsibility in their relationships with their teens?**

Excusing negative behavior, rescuing them from facing consequences, doing things for them that they are capable of doing, fixing problems they created.

- **How does this affect teens?**

Do not feel capable, become dependent on parents, expect parents to do too much for them, do not feel responsible for their behavior, are not accountable, blame others for their own behavior.

- **How does this affect parents?**

Feel resentful, angry, unappreciated, overwhelmed, stressed; do not believe teens are capable.

- **How does it affect the relationship between teen and parent?**

Both get frustrated with each other, teen feels “nagged” by parent, tension makes it difficult to be positive, both lose sight of who is responsible for what.

***Explain the following:***

It is not always easy to know who should be responsible for what in a teen/parent relationship. Teens can be very responsible and self-reliant in many respects. But they also still need support and guidance. Depending on maturity level, some teens need more direction and guidance than others. Every teen is different. You have to make your own decisions about what your teen is ready for based on experience with your teen.

We have been talking about ways parents take on too much responsibility for their teens.

It is also possible to give teens more responsibility than they are ready for.

Refer to the *Giving My Teen Responsibility* worksheet in the parent workbook. These are helpful questions to ask yourselves. Take some time during the next week to answer these questions.

**Worksheet**

***Empowering Teens to Be Responsible for Their Behavior***

Refer parents to *Empowering Teens to Be Responsible for Their Behavior* in the parent workbook and explain the following:

When we take responsibility for other people’s behavior we typically do one of two things:

- **Try to control them—**

Try to *make* them do something by using threats, manipulation, force, or emotional coercion (guilt).

- **Try to rescue them—**

Do things for them to save them from facing consequences of their behavior; fixing problems that are a result of their behavior.

It is common for parents to vacillate between trying to control and trying to rescue their children. Neither approach gives teens responsibility.

When we feel like we are responsible for another person's negative behavior, it is natural to want to try to do something about it (especially when you are a parent). And, as we discussed earlier, it is hard to change another person's behavior. So, we resort to trying to control the person so he or she won't behave that way, or cleaning up the mess that results from his or her behavior.

Instead of controlling or rescuing, it is more helpful to empower the person to be responsible for his or her own behavior.

### ***How Do You Empower Your Teen?***

Refer parents to *How Do You Empower Your Teen?* in the parent workbook. Go over the following:

- Invite the person to think for himself or herself about how to solve a problem.
- Allow the person to take action to solve the problem.
- Allow the person to make the choice to not take action.
- Allow the person to experience the consequences of his or her choice.

The most important part is how you communicate with the person. If you talk with the person in a way that is both caring and firm, he or she will feel more accepting of the responsibility.

## ***Caring and firm means:***

### ***Caring***

- Letting the person know that you care about him or her and love him or her, regardless of the problem or the choice he or she makes.
- Talking in a way that is not demeaning, sarcastic, or critical.
- Telling the person you believe he or she is capable of solving the problem.
- Letting the person know that he or she can ask for help in making his or her plan to solve the problem.

### ***Firm***

- Letting the person know that you are giving him or her the responsibility to take action to solve the problem. You will not do it for him or her.
- Letting the person know that he or she is in charge of the choice and the consequence.
- Allowing the person to face consequences without rescuing him or her.
- Being clear about your expectations. Holding to what you say.

Instead of being caring and firm, parents are often caring and rescuing, angry and firm, or angry and rescuing.

Read the following scenario and each response. Have parents identify how the parent in the scenario is responding.

Brian takes the bus to school every morning. He has been getting in the habit of oversleeping and missing the bus. The school is within biking or skateboarding distance and there is a city bus. This morning

Brian woke up late again and had five minutes to get to school. He asked his mom to call school to tell them he would be late and then give him a ride to school. His mom said:

**Caring and rescuing:** “All right honey. Hurry up. I really need to start waking you up in the morning. You go right back to sleep after you turn off your alarm and before you know it you’re late.”

**Angry and firm:** “Forget it! I’ve had it with you, Brian! You are so lazy and irresponsible. It is not my problem if you get up too late. You’re on your own. You expect everyone else to save you from your stupid mistakes. Well I’m through. I’m not doing it anymore. Figure out your own way to school.”

**Angry and rescuing:** “You’re late again! This is the third time this week! Do you know what an alarm is for? You are unbelievable. You’re not going to make it past the ninth grade. Now get out to the car, and step on it, while I call the school, again!”

**Caring and firm:** “Brian, you’re going to need to solve this problem on your own. I know you have options for how to get to school on your own, and you can figure it out. You are also capable of calling the school to let them know you overslept. If you want help making a plan so this doesn’t keep happening, let me know. Have a good day at school. See you this afternoon.”

The second part to caring and firm is how the parent responds when Brian makes a choice about his behavior. If he acts on solving the problem himself—calls school and gets himself there—Mom can later say, “I like the way you took care of that yourself.” Or, if he goes back to bed, Mom can decide to not say or do anything and let him face the consequence of an unexcused absence from school.

Ask the group the following questions about each of the above responses:

- What feelings do you think Brian had?
- How do you think he might respond to his parent?

- What messages was he getting about himself and how capable he is?
- How do you think he will behave in the future (around this problem)?
- What feelings do you think the parent had?

## ***Practice***

Ask parents to volunteer examples of situations with their teens where they have been frustrated because their teens do not take responsibility. Have the group think of caring and firm responses to the behavior. If time permits, this exercise can be done in small groups, and then the whole group can come back together to discuss responses.

## **Take-Home Activities**

Refer parents to the *Giving My Teen Responsibility* worksheet in the parent workbook. Let them know that these are helpful questions to ask themselves. Ask them to take some time during the following week to answer these questions.

## **Worksheet**

### ***Giving My Teen Responsibility***

1. What is my teen able to do without my help?
2. In what ways does my teen show responsibility?
3. In what areas does my teen still need support and guidance?
4. In what ways am I continuing to take on more responsibility for my teen than he/she needs?
5. How does this affect my teen?
6. How does this affect our relationship?
7. What are some ways I can give my teen more responsibility?

# Session 16: What Kind of Message Are You Giving Your Teen?

## Parent Session

### *Background Information*

Parents usually don't think about how they are communicating with their teens, especially when they are upset or irritated with their teens. When parents talk to their children, they are giving underlying messages about their confidence in the children, along with the children's abilities and strengths. This session gives parents a chance to think about the messages they have been giving their teens when they talk to them. Through scenarios and practice, parents will learn how to phrase communication in ways that give teens the message that they are responsible and capable.

### *Goals*

- To recognize how you give underlying messages whenever you talk to your teen
- To realize how these messages affect your teen's view of himself or herself
- To learn how to phrase communication so your teen feels responsible and capable

### *Important Messages*

- Whenever you talk to your teen, it is as if you are holding a mirror in front of him or her.
- Everything you say to your teen gives an underlying message about who she is and how capable she is.

- You can give your teen a positive view of herself by the words you use.
- You can help your teen feel more responsible and capable through your communication.

### ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion: What Kind of Message Are You Giving Your Teen?
3. Exercise: Messages We Give Our Teens
4. Exercise: Giving Our Teens the Message That They Are Capable

# Group Activities

## ***Discussion: What Kind of Message Are You Giving Your Teen?***

Discuss the following:

When we talk to our children we give them underlying messages along with the words we say. We give them messages about our confidence in them, how capable they are, how much we care for them, and how much we value their ideas and opinions. We give these messages in the way we respond to them and give them information.

Listen for the messages in these two ways of responding to learning that a teen is failing science:

- “You failed science this quarter. You’re never going to make it past middle school.”
- “It looks like you’re going to need to make a plan for how you’re going to pull that grade up in science. If you talk to your teacher you can probably figure out a way to pass next quarter. Let me know what you figure out. I’m happy to help out if you want.”

In each example, what messages is the parent giving the child about:

- How responsible he or she is?
- How capable he or she is?
- His or her ability to figure things out?
- His or her worthiness?
- Is this kid getting the message “I’m smart, I’m capable, I can solve problems,” or “I’m stupid, I can’t do anything right, it’s hopeless”

Even when our children haven't given us very many reasons to feel confident in their decision making, we should still give them messages that we believe they can change and learn. We need to say, "I know you can do it." Kids have to hear this from us before they can believe it for themselves and then act on it.

It is easy to get into a pattern of communicating our doubt in them, and our feelings of hopelessness, especially when they have been making poor choices. We forget how to communicate confidence. When all kids hear is how much we don't trust them, and how hopeless the situation is, they begin to believe it and give up on trying.

### ***Exercise: Messages We Give Our Teens***

Refer parents to the *Messages We Give Our Teens* worksheet in the parent workbook. This exercise can be done as a large group, or in pairs. If they work in pairs, have them write down their ideas in the space below each response. When everyone has completed the exercise, have each pair share its answers with the group.

### **Worksheet**

#### ***Messages We Give Our Teens***

Read each of the following responses. What message is the teen getting in the first response? What message is the teen getting in the second response?

1. a. "You put a dent in the car? Well, you can forget about driving for a long time. It's going to cost me my deductible to get it fixed, which I'll probably never get from you, considering you still owe me money from all the other damage you've done around here. I'm sure not going to trust you with my car again for a long time."

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b. "You put a dent in the car? I'm sure you can make a plan to get it repaired and pay the deductible for insurance. Figure out a plan with a timeline and let me know. Then we can talk about when you can use the car again."

---

2. a. "You said you would be home on time tonight. It's two hours past curfew! You are so irresponsible. I can't trust a thing you say. You're grounded for the weekend."

---

b. "I expected you home at 10:00, because you said you would be. I know you are capable of coming home on time. You lost your privilege to go out this weekend in the evening. Next weekend you will have the chance to be responsible and come home on time."

---

3. a. "You call this kitchen clean? It looks like you flew through here on a 2-minute commercial break from your TV. I give up. A simple request to clean up a few dishes, and you can't even do that."

---

b. "Jake, I'd like you to come finish cleaning the kitchen now."

---

4. a. "You punched a hole in the wall! You are out of control. You're going to totally destroy this house. You ruined my chair, now the wall."

---

b. "You need to make a plan about how you are going to repair that hole in the wall. Let me know by bedtime tonight how and when you plan to fix it."

5. . “You can’t even get to school on time. How do you figure you can hold down a job?”

---

b. “I’m glad to hear you’re going to take on the responsibility of a job. It sounds like a lot of work, but I think you’ll be good at it. Plus, you’ll get experience being punctual.”

---

### ***Exercise: Giving Our Teens the Message That They Are Capable***

Refer parents to the *Giving Our Teens the Message That They Are Capable* worksheet in the parent workbook. This exercise can also be done as a large group or in pairs.

### **Worksheet**

#### ***Giving Our Teens the Message That They Are Capable***

Read each response below, and then think of a different response for each that gives the teen a message that he or she is capable.

1. “How did you manage to get orange juice everywhere? You can’t even make juice without getting the whole floor sticky.” you’ll get experience being punctual.”

---

2. “You lost your homework again? You’ll never make it through this school year, let alone high school. You are so unorganized.”

---

3. “You have no tolerance with your little brother. All you do is criticize him. You don’t know how to be a big brother.

4. "I can't reason with you. All you do is blame and argue. You're impossible to talk to. I'm not even going to try."
- 

## Take-Home Activities

Ask parents to pay attention to the messages they are giving their teens this week. Ask them to listen to the words they use and think about what kinds of messages their teens are getting. *On the Take Home Activity* page in the parent workbook, parents can write down one message they give their teens that they would like to rephrase in a way that conveys the message the teens are capable. On the second line, parents will rephrase their words to convey the message that the teens are capable.

### Worksheet

Pay attention to the messages you give your teen this week. Listen to the words you use and think about what kind of messages your teen is hearing.

1. Below, write down one thing you say to your teen this week that you would like to phrase differently.

- 
2. On the next line, rephrase your words in way that gives your teen the message he or she is capable.
-



# Session 17: Guidelines for Respectful Communication

## Teen and Parent Session

### *Background Information*

The skills covered in this session are critical to successful problem solving. Teens and parents will learn the first two steps of the 10-step problem-solving process: talking about the problem and listening. Because these are the most challenging parts of problem solving, we encourage you to spend an entire session practicing these skills so that participants can successfully complete the problem-solving process covered in the next session.

The purpose of this session is to learn the skill of talking about how a problem affects a person, and then listening and saying back to that person what he or she said. Listening and repeating back what was said is hard for many teens and parents, particularly when they disagree with what was said. Remind them that repeating back what was said does not mean that a person agrees with it. Also, be sure to stop participants from getting off track by talking about the problem (the who, what, and why) or trying to jump into solving the problem.

It is helpful to remind the group to use the “I” statements they learned in Session 16.

### **Goals**

- To learn and practice talking about a problem by using the Guidelines for Respectful Communication
- To learn and practice how to listen and say back what you heard by using the Guidelines for Respectful Communication

## ***Important Messages***

- To resolve conflicts successfully, you must use respectful communication skills. This involves:
- Talking about a problem without blaming or criticizing.
- Listening to the other person's feelings and view of a problem.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion: Guidelines for Respectful Communication.
3. Exercise: Respectful Communication Exercise.

# Group Activities

## ***Exercise: Guidelines for Respectful Communication***

Refer participants to *Guidelines for Respectful Communication* in the workbook. Explain that these are guidelines for how to talk and listen when there is a problem.

Tell the group that each parent/teen pair is going to practice using the guidelines for respectful communication by taking turns talking with each other about a problem. Each pair will think of something that they view as a problem and talk and listen with each other while observing the guidelines from their worksheets. The rest of the group will observe and let them know if they are not following the guidelines (for example, if they start to criticize or interrupt each other).

Important: Do not let parents and teens start talking about solving the problems or about the causes of the problems. Let them know that they will have time to work on solving the problems later, when the group gets to the problem-solving steps in the following weeks.

## ***Guidelines for Respectful Communication When You Have a Conflict***

### ***When you are speaking:***

1. Talk only about the specific behavior of the other person.
2. Talk about what the person said or did that upset you.
3. Describe how you feel.

### ***Do not:***

1. Blame
2. Criticize
3. Put down
4. Bring up the past or other things that bother you (stick to one behavior or problem)
5. Talk about the other person's personality, attitude or motives.

### ***When you are listening:***

1. Don't talk.
2. Listen carefully.
3. Do not interrupt.
4. Listen for the feelings of the other person.
5. Don't think about how you are going to respond (this interferes with listening).

### ***When you respond to the speaker:***

1. Describe what the other person said.
2. Describe what you think the other person was feeling.

### ***Do not:***

1. Correct what the other person said
2. Argue about what happened
3. Deny the other person's feelings
4. Bring up the past or things that the other person does that bother you
5. Criticize
6. Put down
7. Justify your behavior

If you think there is genuine misunderstanding about the behavior or problem, ask if you can take time to explain it. Use the *Guidelines for Respectful Communication* to talk about your own behavior. If there is conflict that cannot be resolved, the next step is to move on to problem solving together.

## **Take Home Activity**

Ask parents and teens to use the Guidelines during the next week. Remind them that the more they practice them, the easier they will be to use.

# Sessions 18 and 19: Problem Solving Together

## Teen and Parent Session

### *Background Information*

In this session teens and parents practice the 10-step process of problem solving.

Be aware that you may need to stop the problem-solving process in some cases. If one person is not willing to try to solve the problem or is unable to follow the communication guidelines, problem solving will not work. Both people must be willing to work on the problem with a cooperative attitude.

Stop the problem-solving process if:

- Either person becomes abusive.
- Either person is unable to follow the guidelines for respectful communication.
- Either person is not willing to negotiate.
- Either person is not willing to try to solve the problem.

Point out that parents should not use the problem-solving process to negotiate the rules, but should use it to negotiate problems that result when teens break the rules.

Depending upon the size of your group, it can take two to three sessions for everyone to complete the problem-solving steps. Do not worry if they do not actually solve a problem during the session. You may want to ask them to continue the process at home and then report back to the group on their success.

## ***Goals***

- To apply respectful communication skills learned in the previous session to solve a problem
- To learn and practice a 10-step process of problem solving
- To understand how problem solving together can improve relationships

## ***Important Messages***

- Negotiating a resolution to a problem involves listening to the other person. You don't necessarily have to agree with the other person to listen to him or her.
- Problem solving is most successful when both people want to come up with a solution.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion: What Is Problem Solving?
3. Discussion: Tips for Problem Solving.
4. Discussion: Ten Steps for Solving a Problem.
5. Exercise: Problem Solving Practice.

# Group Activities

## ***Discussion: What Is Problem Solving?***

1. What are some things that people do that get in the way of problem solving? (Examples: raising voices, cursing, name calling, criticizing, blaming, interrupting, not listening.)
2. If two people were problem solving and one of them started to threaten, criticize or put down the other person, could they continue to work out a solution?
3. If you were watching two people “working out a problem,” what would they look like?

## ***Important Tips for Problem Solving***

- Don't try to solve the problem when either person is angry or upset. Being calm is most important.
- If either person becomes angry or upset during problem solving, take a time out and try it again when you are both calm.
- Follow the *Guidelines for Respectful Communication* (see Session 18 for review).
- Both people must be willing to try to solve the problem and have a cooperative attitude. If either person is resistant, stop and try it again later.
- It needs to be something that both people are able to negotiate and compromise on.

## Ten Steps for Solving a Problem

Review Problem Solving in the workbook and read through the ten steps and examples.

<b>Problem Solving (Teen Starts the Process)</b>		
<b>Step</b>	<b>How to do it</b>	<b>Example</b>
1. Describe the problem.	Use "I" messages Don't accuse, blame or criticize	<b>Teen:</b> "I don't like it when you tell me I have to come home before midnight. When I leave early, I feel like I'm missing the best part of the party."
2. The other person listens and then reflects back what he or she heard.	Listen quietly without interrupting, and then summarize the other person's thoughts and feelings without advising, criticizing or judging.	<b>Parent:</b> "You don't like it when I tell you to be home by midnight. When you have to leave early, you feel like you are missing the best part of the party."
3. Ask the other person for his or her thoughts and feelings about the problem.	Listen quietly without interrupting, asking questions or commenting.	<b>Teen:</b> "What do you think about the problem?" <b>Parent:</b> "I get upset when you stay out after midnight because I worry that you won't get enough sleep or that something bad might happen."
4. Reflect back what you hear.	Summarize the other person's thoughts and feelings without advising, criticizing or judging.	<b>Teen:</b> "You get upset when I stay out after midnight because you worry that I won't get enough sleep or that something bad might happen."
5. Summarize the problem, including both people's needs.	Avoid judging, criticizing and blaming.	<b>Teen:</b> "Seems like the problem is that you want me to come home before midnight, and I don't like to leave parties before my friends."
6. Invite the other person to problem solve with you.	Each person comes up with several possible solutions. Some will be workable, some won't.	<b>Teen:</b> "Let's each try to come up with some ideas to work this out."
7. Take turns listing ideas.	Be respectful of each other's ideas, even if you don't agree with them.	<b>Teen:</b> "Well, just don't worry about me." <b>Parent:</b> "Come home before midnight."

		<p><b>Teen:</b> “How about if I call you if I’m going to be late?”</p> <p><b>Parent:</b> ”On weeknights come home by 10:00. On weekends, you can come home by 1:00 if you call me and tell me exactly where you are, and come home on time,”</p>
8. Take turns commenting on each idea.	Avoid judging or criticizing.	<p><b>Parent:</b> “Until you’re grown, I will keep worrying about you.”</p> <p><b>Teen:</b> “Sometimes I want to hang with my friends and not be at home so early.”</p> <p><b>Parent:</b> “I like it when you call me, but when you call to say you’re staying out all night, it doesn’t solve the problem.”</p> <p><b>Teen:</b> “OK, I can try that But 10 seems kind of early.”</p>
9. Make a plan for how the solution will work.	Include details and what each person needs to do.	<p><b>Parent:</b> “Let’s try this for a week. You’ll come home by 10 on weeknights and by 1 on the weekends. If it works well we can stay with it.”</p> <p><b>Teen:</b> “So if I come home on time for a week, you won’t ask me when I’m coming home every time I go out.”</p>
10. Write the plan down and put it someplace where you both can see it every day.		<p><b>Parent:</b> “Let’s write out our agreement and put it on the refrigerator so we both can see it.”</p>

### ***Problem-Solving (Parent Starts the Process)***

<b>Step</b>	<b>How to do it</b>	<b>Example</b>
1. Describe the problem.	Use “I” messages. Don’t accuse, blame or criticize.	<b>Parent:</b> “I feel frustrated when I ask you to do the dishes, and 20 minutes later they aren’t done.”
2. The other person listens and then reflects back what he or she heard.	Listen quietly without interrupting, and then summarize the other person’s thoughts and feelings without advising, criticizing or judging.	<b>Teen:</b> “You feel frustrated when you ask me to do the dishes, and 20 minutes later I haven’t done them.”

3. Ask the other person for his or her thoughts and feelings about the problem.	Listen quietly without interrupting, asking questions or commenting.	<b>Parent:</b> "What do you think about the problem?" <b>Teen:</b> "It seems you always ask me to do the dishes when I'm in the middle of something, like a good TV show or a video game."
4. Reflect back what you hear.	Summarize the other person's thoughts and feelings without advising, criticizing or judging.	<b>Parent:</b> "You don't like being interrupted and you'd like to finish your TV show or video game before you do the dishes."
5. Summarize the problem, including both people's needs and feelings.	Avoid judging, criticizing and blaming.	<b>Parent:</b> "Seems like the problem is that I need you to do the dishes and you don't like being interrupted to do them."
6. Invite the other person to problem solve with you.	Each person comes up with several possible solutions. Some will be workable, some won't.	<b>Parent:</b> "Let's try to work this out."
7. Take turns listing ideas.	Be respectful of each other's ideas, even if you don't agree with them.	<b>Teen:</b> "I'll do the dishes when I'm done watching TV." <b>Parent:</b> "When I ask you to do the dishes, give me a time that you'll do them." <b>Teen:</b> "Let's eat off paper plates." <b>Parent:</b> "Let's set up a time every day when you'll do the dishes."
8. Take turns commenting on each idea.	Avoid judging or criticizing. <b>Parent:</b> "I need to know more specifically when the dishes will get done."	<b>Parent:</b> "I need to know more specifically when the dishes will get done." <b>Parent:</b> "Paper plates are too expensive and I prefer real plates." <b>Teen:</b> "It depends on when my favorite shows are on. Some nights I'll have them done by 6 o'clock and other nights by seven." <b>Parent:</b> "I like your idea that you'll let me know each night what time the dishes will be done." <b>Teen:</b> "All right, I can do that."
9. Make a plan for how the solution will work.	Include details and what each person needs to do.	<b>Parent:</b> "I'd like you to make a schedule each week, because I don't want to have to ask you

		every night when you'll do the dishes.”  <b>Teen:</b> “I'll get the TV guide and write down the time for each night.”
10. Write the plan down and put it someplace where you both can see it. every day.		<b>Parent:</b> “Let's put your schedule up in the kitchen where we both can see it.”

### ***Exercise: Problem Solving Practice***

Have each parent/teen pair go through the problem-solving steps together while the rest of the class observes. Either person can begin the steps with a problem he or she has identified. If both parent and teen have a different problem they want to work on, they can do the process twice, one time with each problem. The person who has identified the problem starts the process with step one.

Be sure to bring them back to the steps if they get off topic, start arguing, or start thinking of ideas to solve the problem too soon. Ask the group to let the pair know if they are not following the guidelines for respectful communication, and to help them stay on track with the steps. Stop the problem-solving process if necessary (see Background Information). They can try it again next week if necessary.

When the pair gets to step 7, write their ideas on the board. After they have each thought of some ideas, you can invite the group to add any ideas they have. When the parent/teen pair does step 8, cross out ideas that are ruled out and circle ideas that both parent and teen might consider acceptable. The goal is for them to choose one idea to try during the following week. In step 9, help them make a plan that is very clear and specific (that is, who, what, when).

At the end of the problem-solving process, ask the group to give feedback to the parent and teen about what they observed and how they think it went. Group members learn from watching each other and giving each other feedback and support.

## **Take-Home Activities**

Have each parent/teen pair implement the solution they came up with during the problem-solving exercise at home. Check in with each pair in the following session to ask how things went.

## **Session 20: Open Session**

This session can be used to deliver one of the extra sessions that are at the end of the manual.

## **Session 21 Moving Forward**

### **Teen and Parent Session**

#### ***Background Information***

It is important to acknowledge that teens have taken steps toward using respectful behavior. It is often easier to identify how teens have been abusive rather than how they have been respectful. When teens start using new respectful behaviors, they should be acknowledged for the changes they have made.

This last session is a way to assess the progress the teens in the group have made toward using more respectful behavior and look at goals they can continue to work on after they leave the group. This last session is also an opportunity for teens to give feedback to each other and to make statements about how particular group members have impacted them.

#### ***Goals***

- For teens to identify how they have changed their behavior
- For parents to identify how their teens have made positive changes and how their relationships have improved
- For teens to recognize how their behavior changes have affected their relationships with their parents
- For teens and parents to identify how they can continue working on having positive and respectful relationships

## ***Important Messages***

- Changes in behavior can have a positive impact on other people.
- Learning how to change is empowering.
- Both teens and parents have worked hard to learn how to have mutually respectful relationships.
- You can continue to work together to have positive and healthy relationships with each other.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Keep parents and teens together.
3. Complete the Changes I Have Made and Changes My Teen Has Made worksheets.
4. Complete the message exchange.

# Group Activities

## **Exercise: Changes I Have Made/Changes My Teen Has Made**

Refer to *Changes I Have Made* in the teen workbook and *Changes My Teen Has Made* in the parent workbook and have teens and parents answer the questions. Have teens and parents share their answers with the group after they have completed the questions.

### **Changes My Teen Has Made**

1. How has your relationship with your teen changed since you started the program?
2. Rate your relationship on a scale from 1 to 10.

Beginning of Program	Worst									Best
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Now	Worst									Best
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. What has your teen changed in his/her behavior to contribute to the improvement?
4. How have you changed to contribute to the improvement in the relationship?
5. If you and your teen hadn't made these changes, what would your relationship be like today?
6. What behavior does your teen need to continue working on?
7. What do you need to continue working on to support your teen's positive behavior?
8. What strengths does your teen have that will help him or her have positive relationships with family members and others?

### **Exercise: Message Exchange**

#### **Tell parents and teens:**

We are going to end the session by giving the teens positive messages. I will give you each several pieces of paper (the amount

will be the number of teens in the group; for example, 8 if there are 8 teens). Take some time to think of something positive you would like to say to each teen in the group, and then write something for each teen on each piece of paper. Write something positive you have learned about the teen—for example, a strength, a compliment about the changes he or she has made, something you notice about him or her, etc.

Let parents and teens know that only the person receiving the note will read it. They do not need to put their names on the notes they write, unless they choose to do so. The notes will *not* be read aloud in the group.

Give the group members pieces of paper big enough for a couple of sentences. (An 8 ½ x 11 piece of paper cut into 2-inch strips works well.) Have them fold the paper when they finish writing and put the name of the teen on the outside.

When they finish writing, collect the notes and distribute them to the teens. Teens can read their notes now, or can take them home and read them.

### ***Closing***

Thank parents and teens for attending the program. Let them know they have worked hard together to improve their relationships. Congratulate them for completing the program.

# **Extra Sessions**

## **How We Change**

### **Parent and Teen Session**

#### ***Background Information***

We rarely make changes overnight. Often a long period of time passes between the time when we first decide to change and when the change is complete. Understanding what steps we take to make change can help motivate us to move to the next step in making real change in our life. This session will help you understand the stages of change and what you have to do to get to the next step.

#### ***Goals***

- To identify the stages of change
- For each teen to know their current stage
- To understand how the stages of change apply to different personal issues

#### ***Important Messages***

- Personal change takes place in stages or steps
- You do not have to change all at once to be successful
- Small steps are important to making important changes

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion: Two Types of Change
3. Discussion: Stages of Change
4. Exercise: Identifying Stages of Change in Others and Yourself

## ***Discussion Questions***

If we look at positive changes we have made in our lives, we can divide them into two categories:

### **Category 1**

Someone tells us we have to change and if we don't, something bad is going to happen. Your parents say you have to come home by 10:00 PM or you'll be grounded for a week. Your teacher tells you have to complete your writing assignment by tomorrow or you will fail the class. A judge says you have to go to counseling or you will go to detention. In these cases, we change in order to avoid the bad thing that could happen if we don't change.

### **Category 2**

At other times, we change because we want to change. We make the decision to change. We decide to change on our own. No one tells us something bad is going to happen if we don't change. We weigh the pros and cons of changing or not changing in our minds and decide for ourselves what we will do.

1. What are the feelings connected with these two kinds of change?

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2. What is the difference between the two ways of changing?

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3. Which kind of change will last longer?

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4. Which kind of change is more difficult?

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5. Is it possible for one kind of change to crossover into the other?

For instance, maybe someone told you that you had to change and your first reaction was to resist any change. Then along the way you decided it was a good idea. The change you made started when someone told you to change and later you decided it was a good idea.

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Think of a change you made in your life. When did you first decide there was a problem that had to be fixed? Did you realize it gradually or did it happen all at once?

---

Do you remember when you didn't think you had a problem? Do you remember if other people tried to tell you that you had a problem and you didn't believe them or you thought they were exaggerating the problem? Do you think you were even aware you had a problem? What feelings do you have to overcome to recognize a problem? How do they get in the way of really seeing a problem?

---

### ***Discussion: Stages of Change***

People who have studied change created five stages of change that we all go through when we decide to make a positive change in our lives. These are the 5 stages:

**Denial:** not thinking about change; it doesn't apply to me; I have no control over the problem; other people or circumstances beyond my control are the cause of the problem; not facing serious consequences;

John was arrested for hitting his mother. After he was arrested, he said he doesn't think it was his fault and doesn't think he needs to do anything different. He said he wants his mom to stay off his back and quit nagging him.

**Thinking:** weighing the benefits and costs of change; deciding whether it is worth the effort to change;

When John was in detention, he felt bad about what he did. He doesn't want to get arrested again and he is tired of all the arguing between him and his mother.

**Preparation:** experimenting with small changes

John is going to try not to argue with his mother so much. After he got out of detention, John and his mother have had fewer arguments. For the most part, John has been able to stop arguing after he has made his point.

**Action:** taking a definitive action to change with small steps

John has not been abusive towards his mother in any way since his arrest. John agreed to go to counseling. John and his mother decided to eat dinner together at least 3 nights a week so they can spend more time together. John is using the skills he's learned in counseling to problem solve respectfully with his mother.

**Maintenance:** maintaining new behavior over time

John and his mother have continued to eat dinner together 3 nights a week for six months. They have also done some counseling sessions together. John and his mother make time each week to talk through any problems that come up.

**Relapse:** normal part of change; feels demoralizing to return to old behaviors

John yelled at his mother when she asked him to do something at home. John realized how hard he had to work to stop being abusive towards his mother. John tells his mother he was wrong for yelling at her and asks her what he should do to make things right between them.

## **Worksheet**

Read each scenario. Identify the stage for each person and what steps they need to do to get to the next stage.

### **Scenario 1:**

Latisha smokes marijuana 3 or 4 times a week. Her grades are dropping, she and her mother are arguing more and Latisha's best friend doesn't want to hang out with Latisha anymore. Latisha thinks everyone is making a big deal out of nothing and doesn't want to quit.

---

### **Scenario 2:**

James has been thinking about his grades over the summer break. He wants to go to a four year college, but unless he gets better grades, he won't be able to attend one. He thinks if he stays after school to study during the coming year, he may get better grades. If he stays after school to study, he won't see his friends as often as he did last year. James hasn't decided for sure what he'll do.

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### **Scenario 3:**

George's mother works full time and wants him to cook dinner one night a week. At first he gives her lots of reasons why he can't do it, and finally agrees to try it. He looked at cookbook for the first time today to see if there is something easy to make.

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### **Scenario 4:**

Jennifer likes to tease her sister, but her mother gets upset when she hears it. Jennifer said she won't do it as much just to please her mother and has teased her less in the last couple of weeks. Her mother still thought it was too much. For Jennifer, teasing is like a bad habit and she realizes the teasing will be more difficult to stop

than she first expected. She tells her mother she'll really try to stop doing it completely.

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### **Scenario 5:**

A few nights a week, John is on the computer past midnight. When he is up late these nights, it's hard for him to get up the next morning for school and he is often late for his first class. John thinks his first class is boring so he really doesn't care if he's late. His mother is worried about his grades and wants him to go to college.

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### **Scenario 6:**

Ryan often yells and swears at his mom when she wakes him up for school in the morning. When he finally gets up, his mom is upset with him and when he leaves for school there's a lot of tension between him and his mom. He decides he doesn't like starting his days this way. He decides he's going to try not to swear and yell when his mom wakes him up. The next morning when his mom wakes him up, he starts to swear at his mom and then stops himself.

---

### **Where Am I in the Stages of Change?**

Think about the five stages of change we have discussed. When you think about changing your abusive behavior to respectful behavior, what stage are you in now?

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What do you need to do to move to the next stage?

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# Listening to Your Teen

## Parent Session

### *Background Information*

This session helps parents understand how listening can strengthen their relationships with their teens. Parents who have experienced abuse by their teens understandably have a difficult time listening to them. It is important to emphasize that the time for listening is not when their teens are being abusive. The facilitator should spend some time discussing appropriate times for listening, and times when it is best to disengage from conversations.

Parents sometimes feel that if they listen to their teens and acknowledge the teens' feelings, they are agreeing with what the teens are saying. We want to emphasize that you can listen and acknowledge another person's feelings and experience without necessarily agreeing with him or her. This is difficult for parents to do, but can be helpful to the relationship. When teens feel listened to and acknowledged, they tend to be more open and honest, and more willing to listen to other people's ideas. Parents often say that when they started really listening to their teens and acknowledging their feelings, the relationship improved.

### **Goals**

- To understand what listening is and is not
- To learn how to listen and acknowledge feelings
- To understand how listening and acknowledging feelings strengthens relationships
- To practice the skills of listening for feelings and acknowledging them

## ***Important Messages***

- Listening to your teen doesn't mean you agree with what he or she is saying.
- Listening builds trust with your teen.
- Listening gives you important information about your teen's emotional life.
- When teens feel listened to, they feel less defensive and resistant.
- When teens feel listened to, they usually will share more with their parents.
- Listening and acknowledging feelings is not easy; it takes practice.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion: What Is Not Listening
3. Discussion: How to Listen
4. Discussion: Acknowledging Feelings
5. Exercise: Acknowledging Feelings Scenarios
6. Discussion: Tips for Acknowledging Feelings

# Group Activities

## ***Discussion: What Is Not Listening***

Explain the following:

In this session we will learn about listening to our teens. Listening seems like a pretty simple and basic thing we do every day. However, most of us don't truly listen to others very often. We start to listen, and then launch into thinking about what we are going to say back to the person. To define what true listening is, we will start by talking about what is not listening.

Many of us have the tendency to do everything except listen, including telling our own experiences, offering advice, denying the other person's feelings, telling the person why he or she feels that way, etc. There is nothing wrong with any of these responses. But they aren't the same as listening.

**Here are some examples of the ways we don't listen.**

Read the following to the group:

You say to your friend, "My boss is really a jerk. Yesterday he gave me an assignment at 4:00 and expected me to have it done by 5:00, when he knows it takes a whole day to do it. I had to stay late to finish it, and I missed the last bus home. When I came in to work this morning he didn't even say anything to me."

Ask parents to pretend they are the person in the scenario, and tell them you are going to read several different responses from a friend. After you read each response, ask the parents how it felt to hear that response. Write the feelings on the board.

Your friend responds by saying:

**Telling our own experience**—“Yeah, my boss is a real pain too. I was on the phone with my wife yesterday because my son got in trouble in school. So my boss comes in and says that next time he sees me on the phone he’s going to take the time out of my paycheck.”

**Giving advice**—“Just try to forget it. It’s only a job; it’s not your whole life.”

**Denying the other person’s feelings**—“What are you complaining for anyway? You should be happy. At least you have a job. Do you know how many people are unemployed in this country right now?”

**Trying to psychoanalyze**—“You know, you really seem to have problems with authority figures. Maybe you should look at that.”

**Changing the subject**—“Really? So what do you want to have for dinner?”

**Asking questions**—“Why didn’t you just tell him it wouldn’t be enough time? How many hours worth of work was it anyway?”

**Defending the other person**—“He was probably under a time crunch, too, you know. And he probably didn’t think of saying anything to you this morning because he has so much work to do.”

**Pitying**—“Oh, you poor thing. That must have been terrible.”

**Listening**—“That sounds pretty frustrating.”

Tell the group:

Listening is hearing the person’s experience or feeling and simply acknowledging it. There are times when we just want another person to listen to us and hear our feelings without telling us what to do or asking us questions.

As parents, it is very difficult to do this with our children. We want to tell them what to do, ask a lot of questions, or tell them why they feel that way. We want to change the way they feel, fix the problem for them, or help them learn a lesson from it. Sometimes these responses can be helpful and appropriate. Other times, these responses result in teens getting defensive or argumentative, and close the door to sharing more about the problem or figuring out how to deal with it.

We are going to learn how to listen and respond in ways that encourage your teens to continue talking about their feelings and move toward problem solving.

There are times to listen to your child and there are times when it is not helpful to listen. When your teen is being abusive or disrespectful, listening engages him or her further (see *How to Respond When Your Teen Becomes Violent* in Session 4).

When your teen is going on and on trying to convince you of something and attempting to keep you engaged to change your mind, listening encourages the behavior. You can listen and respond at the beginning of the conversation, but there is a point when you need to let your teen know you are finished listening (see *Tips to Help Disengage from a Power Struggle with Your Teen* in Session 7).

The listening and responding skills you will be learning in this session are to be used when your teen is talking with you in a respectful way.

### ***Discussion: How to Listen***

Refer parents to the Listening worksheet in the parent workbook and review.

### ***Listening***

- Don't interrupt.
- How to Listen
- Look at the person who is talking.
- Give him or her your full attention, if possible.
- Answer in a way that lets him or her know you are listening.
- Don't express an opinion or say that the other person is right or wrong.
- Let the person know you heard his or her point of view.

- Try to hear what the person is saying, even if you don't agree. Being a good listener takes effort and practice.

### ***How to Not Listen***

- Don't look at the person speaking.
- Interrupt him or her.
- Give advice.
- Tell the person he or she is wrong.
- Tell the person not to feel what he or she is feeling.
- Change the subject.
- Ask a lot of questions.

### ***Discussion: Acknowledging Feelings***

#### ***Explain the following:***

One way to let your child know you are really listening is to pay attention to the feeling he or she is expressing and let the child know you hear it. You can acknowledge feelings by saying things like: "you seem really disappointed," "you were really excited about that concert," "you really like that music," "you feel really let down." This lets the person know you are listening. It also lets the person know that you accept how he or she feels. You can accept someone's feelings without necessarily agreeing with him or her. You are just letting the person know you hear how he or she feels without giving any judgment or opinion about it.

When you acknowledge and accept your child's feelings about something, it does not mean you will change rules or consequences. You can stand your ground and remain firm and communicate that you understand how he or she feels. For example: "You must be really disappointed. But, our agreement was broken and this is the consequence we discussed. I know you were really looking forward to that concert."

Showing your child that you understand how he or she feels, and that it is okay to have those feelings, can help him or her feel less defensive and resistant. A lot of the struggle between parents and teens is about the teens trying to defend how they feel and what they want, while parents try to tell teens how they should feel and what they should want.

Acknowledging your teen's feelings isn't going to end all of the conflict, but when your teen feels you are listening and trying to understand, it can help him or her calm down and want to talk about it.

Refer parents to *Acknowledging Feelings Scenarios* in the parent workbook. Read the scenarios and ask parents to notice the difference in how the teen responds in each.

### ***Exercise: Acknowledging Feelings Scenarios***

Do this exercise as a whole group or in pairs. Refer parents to *Acknowledging Feelings Scenarios* in the parent workbook. Ask them to read the scenarios and discuss the differences in the teens' responses to the parents. Come back together and have groups share their observations.

### ***Acknowledging Feelings Scenarios***

#### ***Scenario # 1: Not Acknowledging Feelings***

**Teen:** "Mom, I can't take it anymore! Casey keeps barging into my room and taking my CDs. I'm going to barge into her room and steal her stuff!"

**Mom:** "Don't you dare! That won't solve anything. Why don't you just put your CDs away someplace. The way you leave everything lying around all over your room, you're asking for losing things. Are you sure she took it? It's probably under all the heaps of clothes on your floor."

**Teen:** "My room is a mess? Casey's is worse. I can't believe you're siding with her about this! She steals things from me and you try to say it's my fault? I can't believe this!" He storms off to his room and slams the door.

## ***Scenario #2: Acknowledging Feelings***

**Teen:** “Mom, I can’t take it anymore! Casey keeps barging into my room and taking my CDs. I’m going to barge into her room and steal her stuff!”

**Mom:** “You must be mad about that. I wouldn’t like it if someone came into my room and took things.”

**Teen:** “Yeah, it pisses me off. She could at least ask. I would probably say yes. But she just takes them.”

**Mom:** “Hmmm.”

**Teen:** “I’m gonna hide them so she won’t know where they are. Then she’ll have to ask if she wants to use one.”

**Mom:** “Good idea.”

## ***Scenario #1: Not Listening and Acknowledging Feelings***

**Teen:** “Mom, I really, really want that jacket.”

**Mom:** “Anne, there is no way on heaven or earth that I am going to spend that kind of money on a jacket. When I was your age I was happy to have a jacket that was a quarter of that price.”

**Teen:** “Mom, it’s not that much money for a jacket. You should see what some jackets cost these days. This one’s a pretty good deal.”

**Mom:** “Eighty dollars is a good deal? I can’t believe you’re even saying that. Do you have any idea what eighty dollars would buy a family in need? Eighty dollars would buy a whole wardrobe for a family in some parts of the world. You kids have no concept about the value of money. You just want, want, want.”

**Teen:** “All I’m asking for is one good jacket. It’s expensive, but it’s really well made and will last me a long time.”

**Mom:** “Until you see the next one you want, and just have to have. It was the same story with your shoes, that you just had to have. I spent a fortune on them and the next thing I knew you wanted another pair. It just doesn’t end.”

**Teen:** “God, Mom, you are such a \_\_\_\_\_! Just forget it! I don’t care about the stupid jacket! I’ll wear the same piece-of-crap, worn-out thing I always wear!” Anne runs to the car, gets in and slams the door.

## ***Scenario #2: Listening and Acknowledging Feelings***

**Teen:** “Mom, I really, really want that jacket.”

**Mom:** “You really like that jacket. It’s a nice one.”

**Teen:** “Yeah, I love it. It looks so great on me. Can I get it?”

**Mom:** “It looks really good on you. I can see why you want it. I can’t spend that much money on a jacket, though. It’s not in our budget.”

**Teen:** “What do you mean ‘it’s not in our budget’? We have enough money for it.”

**Mom:** “You really, really want that jacket. It’s a nice jacket. But, I can’t afford it. I am willing to pay for half of it if you can pay for the other half.”

**Teen:** “I don’t have that much money, Mom. You should just get it for me.”

**Mom:** “I’m willing to pay for half.”

**Teen:** “How about if you pay for it all today and I’ll pay you back.”

**Mom:** “Anne, I know it’s hard to wait for something you really, really want. But, I’m only willing to pay for half if you can have the patience to save your half of the money and we’ll buy it then.”

**Teen:** “It’ll take me forever to get that much money.”

**Mom:** “I know it seems like a lot of money to come up with—it is a lot of money. But, if you really want that jacket, I bet you can figure out a way to do it. There is always baby-sitting and extra chores. I’m happy to help you make a plan for how to make the money in the next two weeks.”

**Teen:** “All right.”

## ***Scenario # 1: Not Listening and Acknowledging Feelings***

**Teen:** “Mom, Why can’t I stay out until 3:00? All my friends do.”

**Mom:** “3:00 a.m.? I can’t believe their parents let them stay out that late.”

**Teen:** “Everyone stays out that late—3:00 is not that late for a 15-year-old.”

**Mom:** “3:00 is the middle of the night! You would only end up in trouble being out during those hours of the night. I’d end up having to bail you out of jail.”

**Teen:** “Right Mom, all my friends who stay out till 3:00 end up in jail.”

**Mom:** “Rick sure did.”

**Teen:** “That had nothing to do with being out until 3:00 in the morning. God, Mom, you don’t have a clue.”

**Mom:** “I know that I’m not having you out in the middle of the night. And I know that the friends you have who are out during those hours are bad news. I’m not arguing about it anymore.”

**Teen:** “I’m out of here.” Walks out, slamming the door behind him.

## ***Scenario #2: Listening and Acknowledging Feelings***

**Teen:** “Mom, why can’t I stay out until 3:00? All my friends do.”

**Mom:** “I can imagine that it must be hard to have to come home earlier than your friends do.”

**Teen:** “It’s embarrassing. No one else has to get home by 1:00.”

**Mom:** “I remember hating it when I had to be home earlier than the other kids when I was your age. It seemed like I always had to be home the earliest.”

**Teen:** “Yeah, so why don’t you let me stay out later since you know how it feels?”

**Mom:** “Stan, I know you would really like to be able to stay out until 3:00. And I know it’s hard to have to come home earlier than everyone else. I am not comfortable with having you out past 1:00 a.m. for now. When you are 16 we’ll consider a later curfew.”

**Teen:** “1:00 is so early. A lot of concerts don’t get out until 1:00. I’d have to leave the concert early to make it home by 1:00, and if I ride with people they have to leave early, too.”

**Mom:** “Well, I can see how that would be a problem. It makes sense to let you stay out until the concert ends. I’m willing to let you stay out past 1:00 when it is an event that ends at a particular time and you come straight home. I just don’t want you out past 1:00 when you’re just hanging around with your friends. I can make exceptions for some events. Does that sound fair?”

**Teen:** “I think I should be able to stay out until 3:00 all the time.”

**Mom:** “We’ve discussed what the rule is for now.”

### ***Discuss the following:***

Notice in scenario # 2 how Mom just listened and didn’t tell her son what to do. She acknowledged her son’s frustration and then just said “Hmmm,” letting him know she was listening. That gave him support and the ability to calm down and figure out what he needed to do.

### ***Discussion: Tips for Acknowledging Feelings***

Refer parents to Tips for Acknowledging Feelings in the parent workbook. Go over steps and discuss as needed.

### ***Tips for Acknowledging Feelings***

- Listen for the feeling you hear.
- Let the person know you hear him or her. Say: “It seems like you feel \_\_\_\_\_.”

- Don't say anything else. Allow some time for the person to respond.
- Don't tell the person what to do, how to feel better, or why the person feels the way he or she does.
- After the person has had time to respond, you can let him or her know you understand by saying things like:
  - That sounds frustrating (or hard, or whatever is appropriate to the feeling).
  - Sometimes I feel that way, too.
  - I understand.
  - I'm here for you if you want to talk about it now or later.

## Take-Home Activity

Ask parents to listen to their teens this week and acknowledge their teens' feelings. Ask parents to write down how their teens responded on the *Listening to My Teen* worksheet in the parent workbook.

### Worksheet

#### Listening to My Teen

During the following week take time to listen to your teen and acknowledge his or her feelings. In the space below, write down what you said and how your teen responded.

**I said:**

---

**How my teen responded:**

---

# Making Changes

## Parent Session

### *Background Information*

Most parents who have been dealing with difficult behaviors in their children for a period of time have tried many things to get their children to change. They have usually been given all kinds of advice by friends and family. They often feel like they have tried everything. During this session parents will look at ways they have tried to make their teens change their behavior, how those methods have been working, and how it has affected their relationships with their teens. This exercise is not intended to be judgmental about their parenting. Many parents have probably been using very appropriate strategies; those strategies just are not working. It is easy for parents to keep doing the same thing over and over because they don't know what else to do.

### *Goals*

- To recognize that personal change is a choice for yourself and your teen
- To identify how your behavior can influence your child's behavior
- To identify behaviors you can change that will influence your teen's behavior

### *Important Messages*

- You don't have control over another person's behavior.
- The most effective way to influence another person's behavior is by your own behavior.
- When you try to *make* another person change—especially a teen—it can have the opposite effect because the more you try, the more he or she resists.

- It can be helpful to look at how you have been trying to get your teen to change, and ask: Is it working?
- Parents often keep doing the same thing over and over, even when it isn't working.
- One way to try to help a person change a behavior is by changing how you respond to the behavior.

### ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion: Making Another Person Change
3. Exercise: Making Another Person Change
4. Discussion: Changing Our Own Behavior
5. Exercise: What Happens When We Try to Make Our Teens Change
6. Discussion: Goal Planning
7. Exercise: Goal Planning

# Group Activities

## ***Discussion: Making Another Person Change***

Ask the group:

What are some ways you have tried to make another person change? Did it work? Why or why not?

Have participants share their experiences.

Explain that we cannot *make* another person change his or her behavior. We can try to influence the person to make changes, but he or she has to make the decision and make the change.

## ***Exercise: Making Another Person Change***

Have the group divide into pairs. One person in each pair makes a fist. The partner tries to open it without causing harm. After 30 seconds, ask both people in the pairs:

What were your feelings?

What did you notice about your own behavior?

How many of you asked your partner to open his or her fist?

Discuss how sometimes the harder we try to force people to change, the harder they resist. This is especially true with teenagers.

Ask the group:

Think of a time when someone was trying to get you to change. He or she might have wanted you to change your mind about something, or act differently, or do something.

What did the person do that made you not want to change?

What did the person do, or what could the person have done, to help you want to change?

How do you think you can be most influential in helping a person change?

## ***Discussion: Changing Our Own Behavior***

Explain the following:

We don't have the power to make another person change. We don't have control over how others decide to behave. Sometimes, when we make changes in our own behavior, it influences changes in other people's behavior.

For example, your teen swears a lot in conversations with you. Usually you get angry at him and tell him to stop swearing. You have explained to him why you don't want swearing in the house. You have yelled at him. You have even grounded him for swearing. Nothing has worked. Finally, you decide "I don't like hearing it anymore. I am going to stop talking and separate from him any time he swears. We will not finish the conversation and I will not engage with him until he talks with me without swearing." You explain your plan with your son and follow through with your new behavior. Eventually he gets tired of not being able to finish conversations with you, especially when the conversation is about him getting a ride from you or money or things important to him. He starts talking to you without swearing.

In the parent group we will work together on ways you can change your own behavior to influence change in your teen's behavior.

### ***Exercise: What Happens When We Try to Make Our Teens Change***

Refer the group to the *What Happens When We Try to Make Our Teens Change* worksheet in the parent workbook. Have them fill out the worksheet individually and then share with the group.

Point out that this is not a time to problem solve or give each other advice/ideas. We will get to that later. Today we just want to focus on what they are currently doing, if it is working, and how it is affecting their relationships with their teens.

## **Worksheet**

### ***What Happens When We Try to Make Our Teens Change?***

1. What are two things you really like or appreciate about your teen?
2. What are two things you would like to see him or her change?
3. What are some ways that you've tried to make him or her change?  
(Example: I grounded him for a month.)
4. Do these ways work for you?
5.  Yes             No             Sometimes
6. How do your efforts to make your teen change affect your relationship with him or her?

### ***Discussion: Goal Planning***

Explain the following:

To effectively change a behavior, you must:

1. Decide on a specific behavior to change.
2. Choose a new behavior to replace the old behavior.
3. Figure out what you need to do in order to be able to do the new behavior. Break it down into steps.

### ***Exercise: Goal Planning***

Refer the group to the *Goal Planning* worksheet in the parent workbook. Explain that this is a step-by-step process for achieving a goal. The parents will think about some things they would like to do, or change, that will improve their relationships with their teens. They will choose one behavior to focus on; it might be the behavior they talked about in the *Strengths, Challenges, Changes* exercise last week. The worksheet will help them break their goals down into steps. Let them know that they will be using this goal planning

process at different times during the program to make new goals. We will check in with parents at each parent group to see how they are doing with their goals. They can set new goals any time, using the extra goal planning sheets in the parent workbook.

Have parents fill out the *Goal Planning* worksheet. Provide assistance as needed with breaking their goals down into steps. Parents can help each other as well. Have each parent share his or her goal planning worksheet with the group.

## **Worksheet**

### ***Goal Planning***

1. Think of some things you would like to do or change that might help your relationship with your child. List some ideas below.

(Examples: take a time-out when a conflict starts to escalate; spend some positive, relaxing time with my son or daughter each week.)

---

2. Pick one behavior from your list and write it below. Be specific. State your goal in a positive, present-tense form.

(Examples: When my son starts to be verbally abusive with me, I will separate from him.)

---

3. Break your goal into steps. These steps should be specific.

For example:

- I will tell her about my plan to separate from her when she is abusive
- When she starts to say something abusive to me, I will say: "I am going to separate from you. I will talk with you about it when you are calm and not putting me down."
- I will go to another room and do something relaxing.

- I will tell myself something that will help me feel calmer, such as, “It is her responsibility to change her behavior. I am only responsible for how I behave. I can stay calm.”

***Steps for achieving my goal:***

1.

---

2.

---

3.

---

## **Take Home Activity**

Have parents finish their *Goal Planning* worksheets at home, if there was not time in the group. Have parents work on their goals during the following week. Let them know you will have them report back to the group next session about how it went.



# Encouraging Your Teen

## Parent Session

### *Background Information*

An important part of helping teens change abusive behaviors is to provide encouragement and support when the teens are using non abusive and respectful behaviors. Check-in on the respect wheel is as important as check-in on the abuse wheel. Teens need to hear how they are behaving positively and that it is appreciated by family members. Teens also need encouragement for who they are as people, separate from their behavior. During this session parents will learn how to provide encouragement and positive messages that help teens have confidence and improved self-esteem.

When there has been ongoing abuse by a teen, it can be understandably difficult for the parent to feel like being encouraging or positive with the teen. Some parents feel like they are rewarding the negative behavior if they provide any kind of encouragement. The relationship can deteriorate into constant negative interactions and the parent can lose sight of positive qualities about the teen. Both parent and teen lose hope that the teen can change or the relationship can improve. If the parent can find things about the teen to support and encourage, it can improve their relationship and the teen's sense of confidence that he or she can behave cooperatively and respectfully.

## ***Goals***

- Understand how self-esteem is an important part of a teen's development
- Learn different ways to help a teen develop self-esteem and confidence
- Learn how to express encouragement
- Identify positive qualities and strengths in a teen

## ***Important Messages***

- The way you communicate with your teen influences self-esteem and confidence.
- You can help your teen make behavior changes by paying attention to his/her efforts and giving encouragement.
- All teens should be encouraged for who they are as people, regardless of behavior.
- It is important to separate encouragement for behavior and encouragement of the person.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Discussion: Self Esteem
3. Discussion: Self Esteem and Teens
4. Exercise: Helping Your Teen Develop Positive Self Esteem and Confidence
5. Discussion: Encouraging Your Teen

# Group Activities

## ***Discussion: Self Esteem***

Ask the group:

1. Where do we get our sense of self-esteem?
2. How do we develop positive self-esteem? What gives us a positive view of ourselves?
3. Who contributed to your self-esteem when you were growing up? How?
4. What experiences contributed to your sense of self-esteem?
5. Who and what contributed to lowering your self-esteem when you were growing up?

## ***Discussion: Self-Esteem and Teens***

Explain the following:

Developmentally, adolescence can be time of feeling insecure. During the early teen years, beginning at about age 12 or 13, teens become more conscious of themselves than ever before. They become very critical of themselves, comparing themselves to others—especially peers—and have exaggerated ideas about what they perceive as shortcomings. They feel too short, too fat, too tall, too ugly, stupid, dumb, not cool. They get embarrassed very easily, and are sure the whole world is watching them.

Adolescents will often try to cover up these feelings by acting “really cool,” being overly critical of others (especially parents and siblings), and reacting with defense and anger to any words they perceive as critical. A comment that isn’t meant to be critical is often interpreted that way, because of their extreme sensitivity to criticism.

Adolescence is a time of changing into an adult and entering into the world as a person separate from the family. This changing from a child into an independent adult is uncertain, and naturally brings up

feelings of insecurity and fear. Most teens aren't aware of these specific feelings. They experience them as other kinds of feelings, such as worry, panic, pressure, feeling unable to meet expectations, and sometimes wanting to just "give up."

They also have positive feelings about growing up and becoming independent. These feelings are excitement, energy, wanting to explore different things, wanting to take risks, and feeling that they are knowledgeable, with strong opinions and passions about what is right, wrong, fair, etc. They feel a strong desire to have freedom and independence, and believe they are ready for it.

All of these feelings, positive and negative, can be exaggerated and go back and forth, changing from one minute to the next. As parents wanting to build self-esteem in your teens, there are ways you can support the positive feelings and encourage a more realistic perspective.

### ***Exercise: Helping Your Teen Develop Self-Esteem and Confidence***

Refer to the *Helping Your Teen Develop Positive Self-Esteem and Confidence* worksheet in the parent workbook. Tell parents that the title of this list could also be *Ways to Build a Positive Relationship with Your Teen*, because if they do the things on this list they will see an improvement in their overall relationships with their teens. Go over the list and discuss, as needed.

Acknowledge that it can be difficult to do the things on this list when a teen has been using abusive behaviors with a parent. Instead, the parent should use the skills discussed in Session 4, *How to Respond When Your Teen Is Violent*. The parent should use the methods listed in *Helping Your Teen Develop Positive Self-Esteem and Confidence* when the teen is in a non-combative state of mind.

## ***Helping Your Teen Develop Self Esteem and Confidence***

### **1. Encourage your teen.**

Notice your teen's positive qualities and let him/her know that you appreciate these. These qualities include behaviors you like, and things you enjoy about his/her personality.

### **2. Listen to your teen.**

Listen without giving your opinion, giving advice, or making judgments. Don't talk, other than acknowledging you hear him or her and are interested. Listen with a desire to understand your teen's world and perspective.

### **3. Be affectionate.**

Hug, pat, smile. If your teen doesn't like to be physical, you can show affection in many other ways. Use words to express love and affection. Humor sometimes works better than serious words with teenagers.

### **4. Spend time with your teen.**

A lot of parents stop trying to spend time with their teens because of the belief that teens don't want to be with their parents. While teens do want to spend more time with friends, they still enjoy time with parents (although they might not admit it) when it is relaxed, positive time *without* criticism, lectures, advice, questions, etc.

Find time to do things with your teen that he/she enjoys, invite him/her to join in on some of your activities, or just hang out and do nothing together (you don't even have to talk very much). Take ten minutes each day to just be in the vicinity of your teen and chat about little things (the cat, his new shoes, movies; not homework or chores). The idea is to have a positive connection on a regular basis that has nothing to do with problems or behavior. This is a way to give your teen the message "I like you, you are important to me, I enjoy you."

**5. Show respect for your teen's ideas and opinions.**

Even when you don't agree with your teen, you can let him or her know that you have a different opinion *and* that you respect his or her opinion. When your teen expresses an opinion that is completely contrary to one he or she shared the day before, resist the temptation to point this out. A normal process of self-development for teens is to try on many different ways of thinking. Adolescents are like chameleons as they change opinions and ideas, sometimes many times in a day.

**6. Involve your teen in establishing rules and consequences.**

An important task of adolescence is to become more independent and to develop skills in making decisions. The most effective way to establish rules and consequences is to include teens in making them. This gives teens the message that they are mature enough to be involved with setting rules, and are responsible for making decisions about their behavior.

**7. Problem solve with your teen.**

Take time to sit down and use the problem-solving steps (see Session 19) when there is a problem. Listen to your teen's view of the problem and involve your teen in coming up with solutions.

**8. Communicate respectfully.**

Share your feelings, expectations and needs with your teen in a way that is respectful. Take a time-out and separate. This gives a clear message that you will not be disrespectful and you will not be with your teen when he or she is disrespectful.

**9. Allow your teen to solve some of his/her own problems.**

Avoid rescuing your teen from problems that he/she is capable of dealing with. It is surprising what a teen is capable of when the parent doesn't get involved. If you have the attitude "he can handle this" or "she can figure this out," your teen will know this and feel confident.

### **10. Encourage special interests.**

Support your teen in developing interests and hobbies, such as sports, art, music, mountain climbing. Encourage his or her involvement in groups, clubs, community activities and other extracurricular activities.

### **11. Let your teen know he/she is capable.**

Tell your teen that you have confidence in him or her. Say: “You can figure that out,” “You’re really smart about things like that,” or “That’s a tough situation. I think you can handle it, but if you want some help, let me know.”

### **12. Let your teen know he or she is worthy of love just for who he or she is, not related to his or her behavior.**

Give your teen spontaneous words of love, not related to his or her behavior. Tell your teen you love him/her, enjoy him/her, like him/her, missed him/her today, are glad to see him/her, enjoy laughing with him/her.

### **13. When there is a problem-causing behavior, focus on the behavior, not the person.**

Talk about the specific behavior that is causing a problem. Focus on the facts of the situation, how it is a problem, and the behavior you would like to see. Use as few words as possible. Use the *Guidelines for Respectful Communication* in Session 18.

### ***Always Avoid***

- Criticism
- Put-downs
- Name calling
- Comparing
- Humiliating
- Making fun of them
- Negative forecasts (for example, “you’ll never make it to college,” “you’ll never get a job,” “you’ll end up on the streets”).

## ***Discussion: Encouraging Your Teen***

### ***Tell the group:***

Encouragement is number one on your list of ways to help your teens develop positive self-esteem. We are going to spend some time talking more specifically about encouragement because it is especially important for your teens at this time, while they are working on changing their behavior in the Step-Up program.

Use the following questions to begin a discussion about encouragement:

How many of you have struggled to change a behavior that you had been doing for a period of time, such as smoking, eating too much, taking alcohol or drugs, having anger outbursts, using negative language, behaving abusively? Do you remember what helped you change? Do you remember anyone in your life who encouraged you in a way that helped you change? How did he or she encourage you?

### ***Explain the following about encouragement:***

There are two kinds of encouragement:

- Encouragement for behavior
- Encouragement of the person

**Encouragement for behavior** is giving your child positive feedback about behaviors you like to see. It is easy to get in the habit of only giving negative feedback about behaviors you don't like. Giving a positive response to the behaviors you appreciate is much more effective in helping your teen change. Refer parents to Encouraging Your Teen in the parent workbook and tell them that these are some ways to encourage positive change in behavior. Read through each point and discuss as needed.

***Here are some ways you can encourage positive change in your teen's behavior:***

- **Notice your teen's effort.**

Pay attention to when your teen is trying to do better. Notice the small steps and talk about it. For example, if the teen stopped yelling and tried to calm down sooner than he or she usually does, tell him or her you noticed. Let your teen know when you see any small improvements in behavior.

- **Talk about the specific behavior you are encouraging in your teen.**

Avoid general expressions like "You were good today." Instead, say, "You haven't yelled or said any swear words all day" or "You didn't let your little brother get to you, you stayed calm and left the room when he was pestering you."

- **Help your teen recognize and express his or her own feelings of accomplishment.**

Acknowledge when your teen feels pleased or proud of something he/she did. For example, say, "It must feel good to have made it through the day without a single fight" or "You must feel proud of making it to school every day this week."

- **Recognize your teen's efforts and improvements during the group at check-in.**

Talk about any improvements in behavior, no matter how small. Try to find something on the respect wheel to talk about, or think of something positive to say about your teen every week.

Point out that the teens in Step-Up are working on changing behaviors they have been using for a while, and that it is hard work and takes time. Ask parents to remember the previous discussion about how encouragement helped them change a behavior in the past. When others acknowledge this kind of effort and notice small changes, it encourages a person to keep trying and work toward success.

## ***Encouragement of the person is:***

- Giving your child positive messages about who he or she is as a person, separate from his or her behavior.
- Communicating love, appreciation, humor, and that you care about your child. It is a smile, a pat, a hug, or doing something you both enjoy together.
- Letting your child know what you like about his or her personality.
- Not contingent on the teen's behavior or about his or her behavior.
- Teens should be given encouragement as people on a regular basis, regardless of their behavior.
- Find times when your teen is *not* being abusive or difficult to give encouragement of him or her as a person. Some parents withdraw this kind of communication as a punishment for their teens' behavior. Receiving love and encouragement as people is a basic human need of all children. When encouragement is taken away, kids often act out more.
- Even if your teen is difficult to live with 90% of the time, find a moment in the other 10% when you can encourage him or her as a person.

## ***Ask Parents:***

What are some ways to encourage your teens as people?

List the ideas on the board.

## **Take-Home Activity**

Refer parents to the take-home activity in the parent workbook. Ask them to do one or both of the activities listed.

### **A. Encouraging My Teen**

During the following week, pay attention to your teen and notice the following things:

1. One quality I like about my teen is:

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2. One of my teen's strengths is:

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3. A behavior I appreciate in my teen is:

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Find a way to let your teen know about what you have noticed.

### **B. Helping My Teen Develop Self-Esteem and Confidence**

Choose one thing from the list from the *Helping Your Teen Develop Self-Esteem and Confidence* worksheet to do with your teen this week. Write it in the space below. During the group next week, you can describe how it went.

This week I will:



# Supporting Positive Changes in Your Teen

## Parent Session

### *Background Information*

In this final parent session, parents will take time to think about how their relationships with their teens have improved since the beginning of the program, and how they have contributed to positive changes.

Parents often don't realize how significant changes in the relationships are, until they look back at how things were when they began the program. It is encouraging for parents to recognize positive changes, no matter how small.

Parents will examine how they have contributed to the positive changes in their teens and in their relationships with their teens. The progress teens make in the Step-Up program is a combination of effort on the part of the teens and the parents. During this session, we hope parents will feel encouraged by the progress they and their teens have made, and realize their part in that progress.

Parents will also think about their challenges and identify what they need to continue working on in their relationships with their teens. In this process, they have the opportunity to review the skills they have learned over the course of the parent group.

They will make a step-by-step plan for working on a challenging behavior, much like the goal planning exercise they did in Session 3. This gives parents a plan for continuing what they have learned in the program when they leave.

Finally, we want parents to leave with support and encouragement from the other parents in the group. They have been working together for 20 weeks, and have come to know and rely on each other for understanding and support.

Many parents do not have others in their lives who understand their situation or who can provide this kind of support. It is important for parents to have the opportunity in this session to communicate a final message of appreciation and acknowledgement of each other. The message exchange gives them a chance to do this.

Some parents may choose to exchange phone numbers so they can continue communication. The facilitator should support this, but it is important that parents do not feel pressured into exchanging phone numbers.

If possible, it is helpful for parents to leave with a list of community resources in their areas.

### ***Goals***

- To talk about positive changes in your relationship with your teen
- To recognize how you have contributed to positive changes in your relationship with your teen
- To talk about what you have learned in the program
- To identify what you need to continue working on in your relationship with your teen
- To say good-bye to other parents in the group by sharing positive messages

## ***Important Messages***

- You have worked hard to improve your relationships with your teens.
- You have helped each other with the challenges of parenting your teens.
- You can get support from others when you are struggling—you don't have to be alone.

## ***Session Overview***

1. Check in, review goal progress, and review take-home activities.
2. Exercise: Positive Changes
3. Exercise: Supporting Positive Changes in Your Teen
4. Message Exchange
5. Suggested Closing Statement

# Group Activities

## ***Tell the group:***

This is the last parent session. Next week the teens and parents will all meet together for the final session and the teens will talk about what they have learned in the program, how they have changed their behavior and what they need to continue working on.

During this session you will have the opportunity to think and talk about positive changes in your relationship with your teen, what you have learned in the program and what you want to continue working on to support your teen's positive behavior.

## ***Exercise: Positive Changes***

Refer parents to the *Positive Changes* worksheet in the parent workbook and ask them to take some time to write down answers to the questions. When they finish, have each parent share his or her answers with the group.

## **Worksheet**

### ***Positive Changes***

1. How has your relationship with your teen changed since you started the program?
2. What have you done that has contributed to the change?
3. What changes has your teen made?
4. What do you need to keep working on in your relationship with your teen?
5. What have you learned in the program?
6. What have you learned about yourself?

## ***Exercise: Supporting Positive Changes in Your Teen***

Refer parents to the *Supporting Positive Changes in My Teen* worksheet in the parent workbook and explain that this exercise is similar to the *Goal Planning* exercise they did in Session 3. Ask the group to brainstorm together answers to the first question: List ways you can support positive changes in your teen. Have them think about ways to support and encourage their teens to use behaviors on the respect wheel. Write their answers on the board.

The following are some ideas to include. The words in bold are skills parents have learned in parent group.

1. Give **encouragement** when they use respectful behaviors.
2. Separate from them when they start to use abusive behaviors—use **time-outs**.
3. Be consistent with **consequences** for abusive behaviors.
4. Stay **calm and respectful** when communicating with your teens.
5. Use the **problem-solving steps** to resolve problems together.
6. Use **listening and acknowledging feelings** skills when appropriate.
7. Have consistent expectations about **making amends** for abusive behavior.
8. Use skills you learned in Session 11 to help your teen develop **positive self-esteem** and **confidence**.
9. Be clear with the message that **violence is never okay**—use skills from *How to Respond When Your Teen Is Violent*.
10. Give **encouragement for your teen as a person**, not just for behavior.
11. Be **caring and firm**. Stay on the respect wheel yourself.

When you have finished listing on the board, ask parents to list the ideas that apply to them under the first question on the worksheet. Have them continue the worksheet. When everyone is finished, have parents share their answers with the group.

## **Worksheet**

### ***Supporting Positive Changes in My Teen***

1. List some ways you can support the positive changes your teen has made.

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2. Choose one behavior that is the most difficult for you to do and write it below. Be specific. State your behavior in a positive, present-tense form. (Example: *When my son is harassing me to try to get me to change my mind about something, I will stay calm and disengage from arguing.*)

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3. Break your behavior into steps. These steps should be specific.

For example:

1. When Tim starts arguing after I have said “no,” I will calmly tell him why and then stop talking about it.
2. I will think self-calming thoughts, like, “I am calm. I don’t need to argue.”
3. I will tell him I am finished talking about it and will separate from him.
4. If he handles it well (without getting abusive), I will give him positive encouragement.

1.

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2.

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3.

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## ***Message Exchange***

### ***Tell parents:***

We are going to end the session by giving each other positive messages. I will give you each several pieces of paper (the amount will be the number of parents in the group; for example, 8 if there are 8 parents). Take some time to think of something positive you would like to say to each parent in the group, and then write something for each parent on each piece of paper. Write something you have learned from the parent, a strength you have noticed about him or her, a compliment about the changes he or she has made, or anything positive you would like to share with that person.

Let parents know that only the person receiving the note will read it. They do not need to put their names on the notes they write, unless they choose to do so. The notes will not be read aloud in the group.

Give the group members pieces of paper big enough for a couple of sentences. (An 8 ½ x 11 piece of paper cut into 2-inch strips works well). Have them fold the paper when they finish writing and put the name of the person on the outside.

When they finish writing, collect the notes and distribute them to the parents. Parents can read their notes now, or can take them home and read them.

### ***Suggested Closing Statement***

Congratulate parents on completing the program. Commend them for their hard work in the group, and as parents. Encourage them to get support when they need it, whether it is another parenting group, the court system, counseling, or calling another parent or a friend. Encourage them to exchange phone numbers for support, if they feel comfortable doing so.

Pass out a resource sheet with community resources in your area, including other parent education and support groups. Let them know you have enjoyed working with them in the parent group and you will see them next week for the final session with the teens.



## About the Authors

Lily Anderson is a licensed clinical social worker with an M.S.W. from the University of Washington. She has worked with families experiencing youth violence in the home since 1997, developing and improving the Step-Up model to become an effective intervention that is being used nationally and internationally to address this form of family violence.

Lily has worked in the field of family violence since 1978, including work with survivors and parents of children impacted by domestic violence. She developed a Parents' Anger Management Program in Seattle from 1986 to 1998. Lily has authored three other curriculums: *Anger Management for Parents*; *Skills for Respectful Parenting*; and she co-authored a curriculum for parents of children who have experienced domestic violence, *Helping Children Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence: A Guide for Parents*. Lily has conducted trainings and presentations nationally and internationally on adolescent family violence and use of the Step-Up curriculum.

Ms. Anderson co-authored an article published in the Journal for Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma: *Adolescent Violence Toward Parents*, January, 2011. Lily also co-authored one of the first books on this topic, *Adolescent Violence in the Home: Restorative Approaches to Building Healthy, Respectful Family Relationships*, Routledge Press, 2014.

Lily co-authored a chapter, *Building respectful family relationships: partnering restorative practice with cognitive- behavioral skill learning*, in a book edited by Amanda Holt, *Working with Adolescent Violence and Abuse Toward Parents*, Routledge Press, 2016.

Gregory Routt has an M.A. in psychology from Antioch University (1992). He coordinated the Step-Up program from its inception in 1997, establishing the first groups and working with the court and community to bring awareness to this issue and begin developing a specialized treatment model when none other existed. He has worked with colleagues nationally and internationally exploring the issue of youth family violence and effective treatment modalities. He has trained court systems and community agencies throughout the country on the issue of adolescent violence toward family members and implementing the Step-Up curriculum.

Greg has also worked as a chemical dependency counselor with inmates in the King County Jail and with adult perpetrators of domestic violence at Family Services Domestic Violence Treatment Program in Seattle from 1992 until 1996.

Mr. Routt co-authored an article published in the Journal for Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma: *Adolescent Violence Toward Parents*, January, 2011. He also co-authored one of the first books on this topic, *Adolescent Violence in the Home: Restorative Approaches to Building Healthy, Respectful Family Relationships*, Routledge Press, 2014.

Greg co-authored a chapter, *Building respectful family relationships: partnering restorative practice with cognitive- behavioral skill learning*, in a book edited by Amanda Holt, *Working with Adolescent Violence and Abuse Toward Parents*, Routledge Press, 2016.

# **Recommended Parenting Books**

The Explosive Child

by Ross W. Greene

The Art of Talking with Your Teenager

by Paul Swets

An Owner's Guide to Parenting Teenagers

by Pat James Baxter and Cynthia Dawson Naff

Discipline That Works

by Dr. Thomas Gordon

Parent in Control

by Gregory Bodehammer

Taming the Dragon in Your Child

Solutions for Breaking the Cycle of Family Anger

by Meg Eastman

ADHD and Teens

by Colleen Alexander-Roberts

It's Perfectly Normal

by Robbie Harris

For teenagers and parents; provides comprehensive and contemporary information on the mechanics and consequences of puberty, sexual activity, birth control, pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease.

The Seven-Year Strategy

How Families Work Together to Grow Through Adolescence

by Laura Kastner and Jennifer Wyatt

The Co-Parenting Survival Guide

Letting Go of Conflict After a Difficult Divorce

by Elizabeth Thayer and Jeffery Zimmerman

How to Win as a Stepfamily

by Emily and John Visher

Blending Families: A Guide for Parents, Step Parents and Everyone  
Building a Successful New Family

by Elaine Fantle Shimberg