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# SESSION 6

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## **Objectives:**

- To develop problem-solving skills.
- To identify and develop strategies for the prevention of interpersonal violence and abuse.
- To identify and maximize access to adult resources.

## **Outline:**

- Problem-Solving

## **Split Session Option**

- Interpersonal violence and abuse prevention

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## **Updating**

**Did any of you communicate differently since last time?**

**How did you feel?**

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

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

**Let's begin by talking about solving problems.**

## **Problem-Solving**

**Learning to solve problems for yourself, with or without the help of others, is an important part of learning to take care of yourself.**

**Everyone has problems. The richest, poorest, smartest, youngest and oldest people all have problems.**

**The problems may be different, but they are painful, frustrating and need attention no matter who you are.**

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

**Even if a problem seems to be caused by someone else, the effect it has on you makes it your problem.**

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

**This may seem like a strange thing to say, because often the first thing grownups want to do when you tell them about a problem is solve it for you.**

**When they do that, they take away your ability to handle the problem for yourself — in a way that meets your needs.**

**Has that ever happened to you?**

**How did it make you feel?**

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

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

**At the same time, it is important to remember that you're a kid and there will be problems you can solve by yourself and problems that you need help with.**

**This is really important. Sometimes you can't and shouldn't try to solve a problem by yourself.**

**Responsible problem-solving includes knowing when to ask for help.**

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

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

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## Causes of Problems

### Flip chart 21

**Problems, things that are upsetting, are caused by one of three things:**

1. communication that isn't shared;
  2. expectation that isn't met; and/or
  3. change of situation — like family divorce, an accident, etc.
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**Most problems are a combination of these three things.**

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

### Flip chart 22

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

1. ignore them, do nothing, pretend they'll go away;
  2. do anything, act immediately and impulsively; or
  3. apply problem-solving skills.
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**Let's go through the five steps to effective problem-solving:**

Select a situation from the group or use the one above and actually go through this as a group activity, discussing details of the 5 steps.

**Flip chart 23**

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**5 steps to problem-solving:**

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

**1. *Stop, breathe, look at the problem and acknowledge what happened.***

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

**2. *Name the problem* — identify exactly what it is in one simple sentence. Be sure the conflict is accurately and simply stated. It's important to tell the truth at this stage. If you fail to see things clearly and tell the truth about it,**

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**the rest of the process will yield a different result than you might want.**

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

In this example, there are at least two separate problems. One is how you feel about the teacher and her leaving. The other is what you're going to do about finishing the project.

**3. Consider the various options open to you. Be creative. Don't reject any of them yet. Be aware of what your mind is saying about the various options as they come up.**

In this example, develop options for both the problems. Perhaps you could write a letter to the teacher communicating what you wanted to say. For the second problem, you could look at who else might help you finish the project. Choosing to abandon the project is also an option if you choose it rather than just reacting to your anger about what happened with the teacher.

**4. Think through what would happen if you exercised the options. Acknowledge your worst fears.**

**5. Choose the best option for you given what you want to have happen.**

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**Be committed to having it work — not to proving that it won't or that someone is a particular kind of person. Be aware of your own agendas.**

## **Family Problem-Solving Styles**

Have the group consider how decisions get made and problems get solved in their homes. Home is probably where they got their own ideas about working out problems. Considering their own problem solving techniques or styles will enable them to adapt to more effective techniques. Discuss this using the following questions as guidelines:

**Are your parents ignorers, impulsers or problem solvers?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**DECISIONS**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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

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

## **Examples of Problems to Discuss:**

Your parents won't let you go to a friends after school.

You didn't do your homework.

Your parents are fighting all the time.

There is a bully at school who is at you all the time.



## **Split Session Option**

Go to Prevention of Interpersonal Violence and Abuse on page 145 if you are not splitting the session.

If this session will be conducted in two parts, go to Selfwork # 1.

### **Reentry for Split Session**

Who would like to share about a problem-solving process you used since the last time?

What did you notice about your families problem-solving style?

## **Prevention of Interpersonal Violence and Abuse**

We've discussed speaking up when someone touches you in a way that isn't all right with you.

Today we're going to take that discussion a bit further.

Remember from our earlier discussions, the first thing you need to do when someone is making you feel uncomfortable? Speak up, say "Please don't do that." "I don't like that."

The clearer your communication, using voice, eyes and body language, the more effective you will be.

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The age of the group you are working with will shape this discussion. It is important not to give young children more information than they need. This is a discussion of effective prevention techniques for the group. It is not education about interpersonal violence or child abuse. Be conservative if you are not sure.

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These role-plays should be conducted so the child takes the lead in effectively solving the problem.

**The second thing you need to do is to let the person know you're going to tell someone about what is happening by saying something like, "I'm going to tell if you don't stop."**

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

**This is not necessarily easy. When someone is pushing, manipulating, pressuring, exploiting and forcing themselves on you, it can be very hard to resist.**

**Once again, that's where practice helps. If you have some things you can say, that you've practiced, it will be easier to use them if you ever need to.**

Use the following role-plays with discretion depending on the age and needs of the group. Adapt them as needed.

- ▶▶ **The father of one of your friends stares at you in a way that makes you feel uneasy and a little scared. He says he's going to drive you home but you don't want to go in the car with him.**
- ▶▶ **You're home alone and a man who has been at the house earlier in the day working on the television returns. You weren't expecting him to return and don't know whether or not to let him in.**
- ▶▶ **You're going to a party at your friends house. When you get there, you're friends parents are gone and your mother has already driven away.**

► A teacher at school keeps “accidentally” brushing up against you and you feel uncomfortable.

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

## No Questions Asked Agreement

One option many young people work out with their parents is the “No Questions Asked Agreement.” You and your parents agree that you can call and ask to be picked up from an unsafe situation. Even if you were doing something you shouldn’t have or have gone someplace you shouldn’t have, they agree to come get you, no questions asked. At some later point, you and your parents must deal with the fact that you broke the rules, but your safety and ability to escape from any situation is of the utmost importance.

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

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

Part of growing up responsibly means knowing the difference between the problems you CAN solve all by

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The “No Questions Asked Agreement” should be introduced to age-appropriate groups.

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**yourself and those that are bigger than your ability to solve them, and require the help of an adult.**

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

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

## **Relaxation**

**To end today, let's close our eyes, and breathe deeply and quietly. Breathe in, count to four and breathe out to a count of eight. (Do this for them three times.)**

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

**See yourself speaking up for yourself in an uncomfortable situation. (Pause about 10 seconds between each visualization.)**

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

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

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

**Feel how strong and competent you are.**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Session 6 — Self-work Activities**

1. Set a goal for the week and notice how you go about moving toward that goal, what gets in the way and how you handle it.
2. Do the "Discovering Insights" Activity sheet or the "Discovering Insights Sentence Completions" (if the group is old enough). Please bring this back to the next session.

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## Discovering Insights Exercise

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

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

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## DISCOVERING INSIGHTS SENTENCE COMPLETION

1. I am \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. I have problems with \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. My family thinks I am \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. My life would be different if \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. I worry about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What I love to do most is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. My dream is to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. My life \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. My mood is usually \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What I really think about myself is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Dear Parents,

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

There are five steps to effective problem-solving:

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

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

Learning to value themselves and others, to respect individual rights and interpersonal limits is an important part of developing self-esteem. One very nice definition of self-esteem reflects an important part of the REACH Program:

“Respect for self — esteem for others.”

Sincerely,



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are caused by one of three things:**

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

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

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## **5 steps to problem-solving:**

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