
SESSION 9

Objectives:

- To identify additional positive experiences using thought- switching and/or word-switching.
- To recognize specific behavior patterns in others that may create upset and develop strategies for being less vulnerable to those behaviors.
- To recognize and develop strategies for preventing physical abuse.
- To recognize and develop strategies for preventing and/or minimizing the impact of emotional abuse.
- To develop the ability to graciously accept compliments without internal invalidation.
- To develop a list of resource people and to practice asking for help.

Outline:

- Put-downs and Criticism
- Sidestepping
- Fogging
- Crazy-making
- Compliments

Split Session Option

- Prevention of emotional and physical abuse
- Resources

Updating

Does anyone have any experiences or feelings they want to share regarding thought-switches or positive self-talk?

Did any of you use your log to begin to notice patterns in upsets or thoughts?

This session we will look at some of the things other people say and do that have an effect on us and our self-esteem. We'll talk about some things you can do to deal with that and to minimize the negative impact on you.

Put-Downs

It isn't always easy to recognize the things that effect the way we feel about ourselves. One reason is because those things often come disguised as something else like:

"You're a real pinhead."

"If you had a brain, you'd be dangerous."

"You were absent when smarts were handed out."

"You ought to know better."

"You're a spoiled brat."

"You're just trying to be somebody you're not."

"Don't you have any manners?"

Have people ever said things like that to you?

Have you ever said things like this to someone else?

What are these called?

These are called "put-downs."

A "put-down" is a statement that is intended to make you feel badly.

Places where people often focus their put-downs include:

Flip chart 35

Put-downs: a dig, kidding, an insult, sarcasm, teasing or cutting remarks usually focused on:

ethnic background
intelligence/education
social position
age
popularity

physical appearance
sexuality
family relationships
where you live
behavior

If someone puts you down, you can ask yourself some questions about what the person said:

1. Is this meant to hurt me?
2. Did I do something to upset the other person; was I unkind first?
3. Even if what they say is true, could I or would I change it? (age, ethnicity, personal traits)

-
4. Is there something I could do or learn from what they said, even if the way they said it wasn't very nice?

Usually put-downs are about someone else's feelings, not about you and it is helpful to look at why it happened.

Criticism

Criticism is different from a put-down in that it is designed to be more helpful.

That doesn't mean it is always helpful and some criticism can really hurt. It is worth considering because sometimes we can learn something about ourselves from what other people tell us.

Discuss the distinction between a put-down and criticism.

Flip chart 36**Criticism:**

- ✓ can be useful or constructive;
- ✓ another word for unconstructive criticism is a "put-down."

Criticism can reflect:

- ✓ what other people don't like in us;
- ✓ what other people think we should be doing;
- ✓ what is getting us into trouble; and/or
- ✓ why things aren't working out the way we want them to.

Criticism is more about your behavior or your actions than about you as a person:

"I don't like it when you behave that way."

"I would like for you to think about your brother's feelings before you say things like that to him."

"I would feel badly if you said something like that to me."

"I don't appreciate your fighting with your sister while I'm trying to get dinner."

It is important to listen to criticism, to think about it and then to decide for yourself if what has been said is true about you, if it might be helpful to you in the future, and if it is something you want to change.

Flip Chart 37

Remember to:

1. breathe;
 2. listen to what is being said;
 3. ask questions about anything you don't understand;
 4. acknowledge that you will think about it;
 5. think about it; then
 6. decide for yourself what to do with the criticism.
-

The most important thing is that *you* decide for yourself what you want to do with other people's opinions and ideas about you.

Sidestepping

How do you handle the things other people say to you about you?

Get ideas.

One way to handle put-downs and other things people say to hurt you is to simply step aside and let them go by.

Exercise:

Ask for a volunteer.

Wad up a piece of paper and tell the group that this piece of paper is a put-down.

Throw it at the person.

If the person simply stands there, the put-down hits him/her and has the potential to hurt.

If the person steps aside as it is thrown, it goes right on by. .

This also works for things people say that are inconsiderate. We can take it personally or let it go by knowing that it is a reflection of that person, not of us

Fogging

Another way we sometimes handle criticism or put-downs is by saying something hurtful back to the person. Our natural response is to defend ourselves by attacking back.

Example: "That was a really dumb thing to do."

Response: "Not nearly as dumb as the things you do."

Another way you can handle a situation like this is by "fogging."

Fogging is an effective, assertive technique. Here's how it works.

Put Down: "Your hair looks terrible like that."

Response: "You could be right."

Notice, you are not agreeing. You are just saying it is possible.

The important thing is not to engage in fighting or arguing over someone else's opinion.

Practice doing some fogging responses to put-downs.

Allow everyone to practice using the fogging responses. Say something to each one that would be a put-down and let them respond with fogging.

Some people don't give up easily, so just because you use one fogging response doesn't mean that's the end. The trick is to just keep replying with fogging until the other person "gives up" or to remove yourself from the situation entirely.

Crazymaking

Crazymaking is when people keep switching around the way they are acting and talking so you think you understand what they're saying, and then suddenly they say something else.

Some people do this as a way to keep other people off balance.

Other people do it because they simply don't know who they are or what they want.

This is very difficult, especially when the crazymaker is a grownup who is responsible for you.

What are some ways you think you could respond to a crazymaker?

One thing you may be able to do is let the person know when you are confused or upset by their changing all the time.

Another thing to do is talk to another adult about the difficulty.

Sometimes you just have to learn to live with it without letting them make you crazy too.

Kids can be crazymakers too. In fact, one of the ways parents learn not to let kids make choices is by experience.

Crazymaking is when you do things that you know make grownups crazy and then smile as if you didn't know any better or it was an accident.

What are some things that make parents and teachers crazy?

Write down their ideas

What do you get out of being a crazymaker?

Is it worth it?

What other choices do you have?

Compliments

What do you call nice things that other people say to you?

Who can tell me what a compliment is?

Compliments are a gift that someone else gives us that we often don't know how to receive.

The first thing to do with compliments — always — is to accept them and say "Thank you."

What are some of the thoughts and feelings you have when you receive a compliment?

Denial, invalidation, etc.

One of the things you can do when you have those feelings and thoughts which try to deny the compliment is say to yourself, "I know compliments are embarrassing and hard to accept, but I'm a worthwhile person and I deserve to be complimented."

You might also consider having a special place in your mind where you store compliments. They can be very helpful on a day when you're feeling sad or depressed. You can bring them out and remind yourself how wonderful you really are.

This week I want you to be aware of the range of feelings you have, to look at whether they run you or whether you manage them. Also, pay attention to how your feelings help you to take reasonable risks and to make good choices.

Split Session Option

Go to Preventing Emotional Abuse on page if you are not splitting the session.

If the session will be conducted in two parts, introduce Selfwork # 1, 2. Also see optional exercises.

If you will be using the "Special Object" Exercise in the next session, ask each participant to bring a special stuffed animal, doll or other special object to the next session.

Re-entry for Split Sessions

What did you notice since last time about put-downs, criticism, crazymaking and compliments?

Did you find yourself being more careful about the effect you have on other people?

Preventing Emotional Abuse

We talked about taking care of yourselves and speaking up for yourself whenever someone touches you in a way that's not okay with you. But, there are other ways kids can be hurt or made to feel badly.

If someone says to you, "You're stupid." Does that hurt?

What about if they say to you, "You can't do anything right." or "You're a rotten kid." Does that hurt?

If someone hurts you with their words, particularly if it happens so much that you're really starting to think it's all true, you should tell someone.

Who would you tell?

Some young people live in families where this kind of thing happens a lot and it looks like there isn't anything that anyone is going to do about it.

In this case, there are some things kids can do to take care of themselves.

Remember the exercise throwing the paper. This is the most effective tool for keeping other people's words from hurting you.

To make this technique even more powerful for yourself, at the same time say something to yourself such as, "My mother is the one who is unhappy here and taking it out on me. What she is saying is not true about me. I am . . ."

Exercise:

Let's practice throwing some hurtful words at you and you can just let them go by.

Set the group up to do this one at a time or everyone together in a line.

Speak directly to one child at a time, in no particular order so they all continue to pay attention.

Speak to them with emphasis so they get the visceral experience of being able to let the hurtful phrase go by. Some phrases you can use:

"I hate you."

"I wish you'd never been born."

"You're the most stupid kid in my class."

"You can't do anything right."

"You're never going to amount to anything."

"You're worthless, no wonder no one likes you."

"You're a mean, lazy, good for nothing."

If the participants brought special objects, they can practice saying these kinds of things directly to their object. They should then take time to reflect how it felt to say those things and how they felt being on the receiving end.

Preventing Physical Abuse

Do you think your mom and/or dad (or foster or step-parents) have problems?

Most children know their parents have problems and have no reluctance about saying so.

Do your mom and dad ever treat you differently because of their problems? Do they get cranky or mean?

Does that mean you did anything wrong?

What if someone hurts your body, like hitting you too hard, or too often or doing other things that harm you physically?

Who would you tell?

How would you tell?

Actually roleplay this (pretending to hit their arm or yell at them) so they can use all the communication skills they have learned and experience being persistent in asking for help with a problem of this type.

- **What if your dad is really mean to you when he gets home from work. You want to tell your grandma, but she's always watching the television.**
- **What if your uncle yells at you all the time when you're visiting. Who would you tell? What if your mom says, "Oh, she's always like that, just ignore her." Would you tell someone else? Who?**
- **What if your mother hits you every time she gets upset about something else. You've tried everything to make her happier and to help, but she still seems to take everything out on you. Who would you tell? What would you say?**

Special Objects Exercise

It's important to look at how we treat people and how it feels to be taken care of or not be taken care of.

I'd like you to take a minute to look at your special object, to decide if you care about it and are willing to really take care of it, as if it were as special as you are, between now and the next session. What would that mean?

Keeping it safe.

Keeping it warm.

Always knowing where it is.

Elicit their ideas and write them down.

Are you willing to do that?

Make an agreement with yourself now. State exactly what you agree to do.

Make a note of what they agree to do for next time.

Resources

Who are some of the people who can help you if you have a problem?

Who loves you and cares about you?

Have each child make a list.

Who else could you talk to if you were having a problem?

List community resources.

Can the school help with problems at home?

Often young people think school problems are for school and home problems are for home. They rarely think of overlapping their resources.

Can your mom and dad help with problems at school or out in the community?

Do your teachers care about what happens to you at home?

Do your parents care about what happens to you away from home?

No one can answer these questions but you. For some kids the answer will be "yes," for other kids the answers will be "no."

But all kids have some one who cares about them, that they could talk to about a problem.

And remember, if the first person you tell doesn't help, you need to keep telling until someone does.

One other thing to keep in mind, is that you can also be an advocate of help other people in your family. Grownups who take their problems out on kids need help.

Telling about what is happening to you is one way to get help for the people in your family.

But if you don't tell, no one will know or help.

Your self-work activity this week is to look again at how we talk to people, how they talk to us. We want to practice being assertive, notice what works and what doesn't. By practicing, looking at our mistakes and

successes, gradually we learn to get better and better at doing things for ourselves.

Also, don't forget your agreements with your special objects!

Session 9 — Self-work activities

1. Practice “fogging” and dealing with put-downs or criticism this week. Notice how you feel when someone says something about you. Be aware of how you choose to deal with it and how effective it was.
2. Be aware of and write down any compliments you get this week. Practice saying “Thank you” and stopping any thoughts that want to negate the compliment.
3. If someone is hurting you emotionally or physically, make a plan for asking for help and then do it.
4. Turnaround statements for your notebook:
 1. I used to believe that . . .
but now I'm sure that . . .
 2. I used to believe that I could never . . .
but now I know that I can . . .
 3. I used to believe that I wasn't . . .
but now I know that I am . . .
 4. I used to think that . . .
but now I realize that . . .

Dear Parents,

This week our focus is on recognizing and understanding the various ways self-esteem can be threatened by such things as put-downs and criticism and looking at how these relate to emotional abuse.

Children have a number of choices with put-downs and hurtful statements. They can ask:

“Is this something meant to hurt me?”

“Did I do something to upset this person; was I unkind first?”

“Even if what they say is true, could I or would I change it?” (age, ethnicity, personal traits)

“Is there something I could do or learn from what they said, even if it wasn’t very nice?”

Criticism is different from a put-down in that it is designed to be more helpful. We want children to learn to listen to criticism, to think about it and then to decide for themselves if what has been said could be true about them, whether it might be helpful to them in the future and if it is something they want to change.

Many times compliments can be as difficult to accept as criticism. They can lead to feelings of embarrassment, confusion, and anxiety.

Compliments are gifts that someone else gives us that we often don’t know how to receive. Help your children learn to simply accept them and say, “Thank you.”

Sincerely,

**Put-down: a dig, kidding, an insult,
sarcasm, teasing or cutting remarks
usually focused on:**

ethnic background

physical appearance

intelligence/education

sexuality

social position

family relationships

age

where you live

popularity

behavior

Criticism:

- ✓ can be useful or constructive;
- ✓ another word for unconstructive criticism is a “put-down.”

Criticism can reflect:

- ✓ what other people don't like in us;
- ✓ what other people think we should be doing;
- ✓ what is getting us into trouble; and/or
- ✓ why things aren't working out the way we want them to.

Remember to:

1. breathe;
2. listen to what is being said;
3. ask questions about anything you don't understand;
4. acknowledge that you will think about it;
5. think about it; then
6. decide for yourself what to do with the criticism.

