

Teen Support Group

A Guide to Psychoeducational Support Groups
for Teen Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Assault

Guide



A Supplement to Circle of Hope



WASHINGTON COALITION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAMS

Teen Support Group *Guide*



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for Teen Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Assault



WCSAP
Washington Coalition of
Sexual Assault Programs

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INTRODUCTION



This Guide is a supplement to the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs' (WCSAP) general guide to psychoeducational support groups, *Circle of Hope*. *Circle of Hope* provides information about the nature of psychoeducational groups and how they differ from self-help and therapy groups. In addition, there is general guidance on how to select participants, work with a co-facilitator, establish a curriculum, maintain healthy boundaries, and handle the inevitable concerns that arise in the course of running groups. *Circle of Hope* is available on the WCSAP website. <http://www.wcsap.org/circle-hope-guide-conducting-effective-psychoeducational-support-groups>

This Guide expands upon *Circle of Hope* within the specific context of groups for teen sexual abuse and assault survivors, and is intended to be used in conjunction with it. In this Guide we offer extensive practical considerations for working with teens that will inform your use of the eight-week sample curriculum. This Guide will be most useful if it is read in full prior to planning your group.

As with *Circle of Hope*, this Guide provides information specifically relevant to psychoeducational groups that are to be run according to the guidelines provided by the Office of Crime Victims Advocacy for community sexual assault programs in Washington State. Facilitators should review these guidelines (see [Appendix A](#)) in conjunction with the Guide.

Because of the outstanding outreach and prevention work that sexual assault programs do with teens in the community, survivors may come forward to seek help. Young people are vulnerable to sexual violence and often feel isolated and stigmatized. A psychoeducational support group can offer accurate information, a sense of community, and skills for recovery and growth. We hope that this Guide will support all advocates working with teens (whether in a group setting or individually) by providing information and activities that are engaging and developmentally appropriate. Our goal is to help teen survivors access their own strength and courage to claim a healthy and rewarding life.

Note to readers:

For ease in following the hyperlinks in this Guide, you may wish to consult the electronic version on the WCSAP website (www.wcsap.org). Because hyperlinks may change over time, feel free to contact WCSAP for assistance if you are no longer able to access the linked resources. We can also provide alternative and supplementary resources on the topics included in this Guide.



TEEN SURVIVOR SUPPORT GROUPS

SECTION 1

THE TEEN SURVIVOR

Teen survivors are a diverse group, from a 13-year-old boy who was abused as a preschooler to a pregnant 18-year-old who is living with her sexually abusive partner. Survivors may be from any ethnic or cultural group and have diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

The adolescent years are a challenging time of rapid physical, emotional, and intellectual growth for all young people. Teens who have experienced sexual abuse or assault face additional challenges that can divert them from mastering the important developmental tasks of this

stage. For example, a teen who is highly anxious and sleeps poorly in the aftermath of an assault may have difficulty concentrating in school or participating in activities. Many teen survivors feel terribly isolated. Because of the shame and stigma surrounding sexual victimization, they may feel as though they are the only ones who have gone through this trauma, or that their peers lead such different lives that they can't relate to each other. Since most teens long to have friends and to feel accepted by peers, this isolation can be extremely painful.

Support groups can have a powerful healing and restorative effect by providing a safe space where a teen survivor feels accepted, heard, and understood. Since the vast majority of survivors have been abused by someone they know, they may have difficulty knowing whom to trust. However, once trust is established, it is particularly sweet and nourishing for those who have been betrayed. Psychoeducational support groups rebuild self-esteem by giving survivors a place of safety in which they can feel successful. As they participate in activities and are offered the chance to help others as well as receiving help themselves, teen survivors can begin to gain strength and self-worth.

The shame and distress that many teen survivors experience can lead to disrupted relationships (with friends, parents, and partners), distortions of body image, mood disorders, substance abuse, and other concerns that carry their own severe consequences. In the healing atmosphere of a support group, teen survivors can learn that the abuse was not their fault, that they can be whole and happy, and that they can have hope for the future. Teens' natural inclination to bond with their peers can help them to form supportive relationships with other group members.

In general, teens need and want accurate information about healthy relationships and sexuality, and personal safety. Because teen survivors are at risk for revictimization, they have a particular need for the array of information that a well-structured psychoeducational support group can provide. Some survivors, although certainly not all, come from families where there are few models of healthy relationships; they may not have access to supportive and well-informed adults. Support group facilitators may be the first adults they have encountered who exhibit healthy boundaries, demonstrate respect for young people, and offer frank information about topics essential to teen development.



Childhood sexual abuse does not occur in a vacuum, and many teen survivors have experienced multiple traumatic events. A study of more than 17,000 people (Dong et al., 2003) showed that those who were sexually abused as children were much more likely to have experienced other Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as well, such as physical child abuse, exposure to parents' domestic violence, or substance abuse in the home. The earlier the abuse happened and the more frequent and severe it was, the greater the number of additional traumatic events. The cumulative effect of multiple ACEs is related to consequences such as poorer physical and mental health for survivors.

So, we know that teen survivors have faced enormous difficulties and that they often feel unsupported. They may have missed important developmental milestones and they may be lacking basic information about relationships, sexuality, and safety. Yet teens are also resilient and inquisitive. They want to know things, and they want to feel accepted and connected. Within a psychoeducational support group, teens can begin to learn information, on both emotional and intellectual levels, that is essential to their moving toward a healthy future. Naming a problem that has been hidden and undefined, learning how common the experiences of sexual abuse and assault are, discovering some new ways to cope, and linking up with other teens are all pathways to healing.

Reference

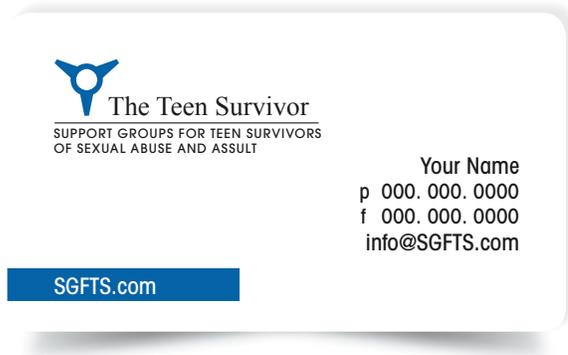
Dong, M., Anda, R.F., Dube, S.R., Giles, W.H., & Felitti, V.J. (2003). The relationship of exposure to childhood sexual abuse to other forms of abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction during childhood. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 27(6), 625-639.

RECRUITMENT AND MARKETING

Getting a group off the ground is not an easy task, especially if you live in a small community. Though you may get some specific requests for a group, you may also need to do some creative networking and advertising to gather enough participants. Here are a few strategies for enhancing your recruitment and marketing efforts:

Be Prepared

Create an attractive, informative one-page flyer that describes your group to give to professionals and the general public. It may be especially important to emphasize that the group is exclusively for teen sexual assault survivors rather than “at-risk” youth. You may also wish to print inexpensive business cards with basic information about the group and contact details.



Tell The Community

If your community does not know that your agency serves teens, they are not going to seek your services. Check your website and agency materials to make sure they highlight your work with teens and have messaging that is relevant and welcoming to young people.

Start Inside Your Agency

Do other staff members know you are starting a group and do they understand its purpose? Advertise and educate at staff meetings or case conferences so everyone is informed. Advocates and therapists may be able to provide referrals; prevention educators and outreach staff can tell others about the group at community events and trainings. If you are a multi-service agency, be sure the information gets out to all departments.

Explore School Partnerships

Facilitators that we interviewed shared that their most successful groups were started in collaboration with the local schools and their staff. Have you already built relationships through your prevention work in the schools? Maybe your agency’s work in this setting can expand to include advocacy and support group services. Talk with school staff about the ways in which your agency’s services can contribute to the school’s mission. This partnership will look different at every school and will require careful planning to clarify staff members’ roles in identifying, referring, and screening group participants. Creating a Memorandum of Understanding can help you navigate these issues and outline your respective confidentiality obligations.

Review Your Client Files

Maybe you worked with someone last year who wasn't quite ready for the group process or able to make the time commitment. Make a quick phone call to see if it would be a better fit this time. Always keep a list of teens who have expressed interest so you can check back with them when a group is getting started. Be sure that you have asked if it is okay and safe to call them – you don't want to create a dangerous or awkward situation with these phone calls.

Use Your Connections

Send the information out to your email list and take some flyers to your multidisciplinary team meetings. Your community and system partners will be happy to have a resource when someone asks them for support services. You can help them make informed and appropriate referrals by providing information about the group and the screening process.

Reach out to these professionals, agencies, and community members:

- Health care clinics and providers, particularly adolescent health specialists
- Clergy
- Youth shelters
- Mental health centers and professionals
- Child protective service workers
- Teachers, coaches, and school counselors
- Law enforcement
- Court personnel, system advocates, and prosecutors
- Social service offices
- Youth group leaders
- Youth mentoring programs, such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Alternative health care providers
- Informal community leaders
- Private multi-service agencies
- Domestic violence programs (if you are not a dual agency)

Tackle Technology

Teens connect to the world through technology, so use tech tools to engage them. This will also demonstrate that you are accessible to teens. Does your agency have a Facebook, Twitter, or Pinterest account? Could you create a video to post on YouTube?



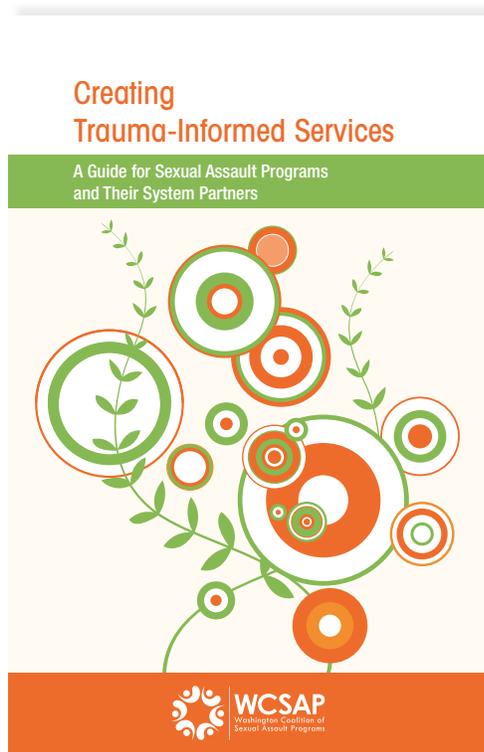
Back to the Basics

Keep your website updated with the latest information about your upcoming groups and drop off some flyers at the local youth shelter, movie theater, coffee shop, mall, rec center, bowling alley, or skate park.

When you promote your agency's ability to serve teens in support groups, you are also (perhaps unintentionally) advertising the value of all advocacy services for teens in your community. It is important to assess your agency's capacity to work with teen survivors along the continuum of services. Teen support group facilitators can take on an important leadership role within sexual assault programs by highlighting the needs of teens, sharing resources and training opportunities with colleagues, identifying gaps in services and barriers to access, and offering feedback from the young people in your groups. Also, be prepared to help your program step up its capacity to serve the diverse needs of teens, including teens with disabilities, LGBTQ and other culturally-specific youth, and pregnant and parenting teens.

CREATING A TRAUMA-INFORMED GROUP

Because we know that teen survivors are coping with the aftermath of trauma, support groups should be carefully designed to promote a sense of safety and empowerment. These are the essential elements of trauma-informed services, which “incorporate knowledge about trauma - prevalence, impact, and recovery - in all aspects of service delivery, minimize re-victimization, and facilitate recovery and empowerment” (Fallot, 2007, as cited in Hudson). In practical terms, this means paying careful attention to building trusting relationships, making sure that participants feel physically and emotionally safe in the group setting, and being alert to potential triggers of traumatic stress. From curriculum design to logistics to confidentiality considerations, all aspects of this support group guide are designed to help facilitators create a trauma-informed group experience.



For more on Trauma-Informed Services, read our WCSAP booklet on this topic.

<http://www.wcsap.org/creating-trauma-informed-services>

Reference

Hudson, E. (n.d.). Trauma-informed care [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from www.wiphl.com/uploads/media/Hudson_WIPHL.ppt.

WHO SHOULD BE IN THESE GROUPS?

How diverse should the group be?

Teen groups can be tricky to put together because teens can vary so widely in their needs and characteristics. As with any support group, facilitators will want to assemble a group whose members have enough similarities that they can connect with each other and benefit from the group's focus, while being realistic about finding enough members to create a sustainable group. Unfortunately, there is very little research available to inform us about the optimal composition of teen survivor support groups. Facilitators must rely on their experience and common sense in deciding who should be in the group. A skilled facilitator can help participants to connect even if they come from different backgrounds. Here are some of the characteristics to consider in assembling the group:

- ▶ **Age and maturity:** Thirteen- and fourteen-year-olds are generally quite different developmentally from seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds, but even two teens in the same age range may be very different in maturity level. Be aware of both age and development when forming a group.
- ▶ **Sexual orientation and gender identity:** Many facilitators find that group members of different sexual orientations can work well together, but there may be some benefit to having a dedicated support group to meet the needs of LGBTQ youth if this is possible in your community. Because teens are exploring their sexual orientations and gender identities, it is always best to assume that you have participants who vary on these dimensions. Potential participants should be screened in or out of a gender-specific group based on self-disclosed gender identity rather than their assigned gender.
- ▶ **Different types of victimization:** Survivors of childhood sexual abuse may have different concerns and needs than teens who have been recently assaulted, although many facilitators combine these survivors successfully.
- ▶ **Factions and gangs:** Are group members from rival cliques or gangs? Can they put aside those differences during the group meetings and maintain respect for each other?

How do you “screen” for the group?

It is a good idea to meet with prospective group members individually to determine whether they are a good fit for the group. You certainly don't want people to feel that they are “auditioning” for entry to the group, so using the term “screening” may not be helpful. This initial interview is an opportunity to build rapport and trust, to clearly state what you expect of group members, and to decide collaboratively whether or not the group is appropriate for that person's needs.

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School counselors are a great referral source and may identify potential group participants but the group facilitators must maintain the responsibility for group screening.

Commitment to the group is an essential requirement for prospective group members. On a practical level, is the teen prepared to make this commitment and able to attend regularly? In general, facilitators should be prepared for more attendance problems in teen groups than adult groups. During the initial interview, the facilitator can explain that regular attendance is crucial. When participants attend erratically, not only do they miss important information, but also the sense of group trust may be broken.

It helps to have a calendar handy during the initial interview and to provide a handout with the scheduled dates for the group. For example, a prospective group member who knows that the requirements of her after-school sports team will interfere with group attendance during the fall season should probably wait for another opportunity to join. Even with the best of intentions, teens don't always have control over factors such as transportation, so be sure to problem-solve logistical concerns during the screening process.

Most facilitators agree that young people whose drug or alcohol use interferes with their daily functioning need to address their substance abuse first. Participants need to know that they cannot attend group “under the influence”; however, disclosure of casual use is not cause for automatic “screen out.” In addition, severe mental health issues may make it difficult for a teen to participate effectively in a group. While it is normal for survivors to feel some anxiety or depression as they cope with the aftermath of abuse, a teen who is too distressed to interact with others, or who is unable to communicate effectively with you during the initial interview may benefit more from individual services.

For a refresher on support group screening, you can access WCSAP’s recorded webinar, *Sexual Assault Support Group Facilitator Skill Building Series: Pre-Screening* <http://www.wcsap.org/sexual-assault-support-group-facilitator-skill-building-series-pre-screening>

How do you know if a teen is ready for group?

Are potential participants prepared for the group process, and can they tolerate hearing the painful stories of others? Do they have the ability to empathize and show compassion? Can they handle the possible “trauma triggers” that may emerge during the group? These are decisions you will want to make together with the teen. Be honest about the challenges they may encounter in group, and don’t try to talk teens into joining if they are hesitant.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN WORKING WITH TEENS

Confidentiality and Group Safety

Establishing confidentiality in the group setting starts with you. Before you facilitate a teen group, you should review your agency policy and talk with supervisors about confidentiality and providing services to minors. Generally, if teens can independently consent to your services, your agency's confidentiality policy should apply to them. Group facilitators must fully explain these policies and procedures to group members, as well as anyone that you are collaborating with to provide the group, such as school staff. Remember, your work with community partners and/or the location of your group meetings does NOT change your confidentiality obligations; any collaborative agreements should clarify that any information shared during the course of the group is confidential and will not be disclosed.

The effort you put into creating and communicating your confidentiality practices will demonstrate to group participants that it is important to you and that it is important to the group process. This is vital, as facilitators we interviewed shared that confidentiality was the primary safety concern for the teens in their groups. Your confidentiality practices and the expectation of confidentiality within the group should be a major focus during screening and the first group session. Confidentiality issues should also be revisited periodically throughout the duration of the group. It is important to discuss why confidentiality is so critical to the group process and individual healing so group members understand that it is more than just a rule.

Remember, your work with community partners and/or the location of your group meetings does NOT change your confidentiality obligations; any collaborative agreements should clarify that any information shared during the course of the group is confidential and will not be disclosed.

Confidentiality is a complex issue and some confidentiality protections do not apply in the group setting; WCSAP is available to sexual assault programs in Washington State for consultation. Please also see our resource, *Confidentiality Considerations When Providing Sexual Assault Advocacy Services to Minors*. <http://www.wcsap.org/confidentiality-considerations-when-providing-sexual-assault-advocacy-services-minors>

Establishing a safe physical and emotional environment is part of providing trauma-informed services:

- ▶ Have you fully addressed all aspects of confidentiality? Can participants feel secure that facilitators and participants will maintain confidentiality? How will you handle breaches?
- ▶ Will the need to rely on someone else for transportation compromise confidentiality for the individual or other group members?
- ▶ How will you address the possibility that group members might use cell phones for audio or video recording? Tip: One facilitator told us she had all group members put cell phones in a box during sessions.
- ▶ Do you and your co-facilitator have a plan for how to handle participants who show up drunk or high?
- ▶ Do you have clear ground rules for managing group conflict and a plan for responding to any violent interactions?
- ▶ If the group is held off-site, such as in a school or other community facility, will other people have access to the area or be intrusive? For example, will a teacher open the classroom door in the middle of session and wonder why you are there?
- ▶ Will group members feel unsafe traveling to and from group? For example, will they have to wait at a bus stop alone in the dark after an evening session?
- ▶ Are all facilitators and group members familiar with the safety policies and procedures of the facility you are using?
- ▶ How will you handle the possibility of abusive partners or parents showing up where group is held?
- ▶ What is the protocol for handling medical emergencies during group? Do you have access to first aid supplies?

“Model a safe and trustworthy environment. Describe the group as a safe zone.”
—Margie Spikes, Prevention, Advocacy, and Specialized Services.

Mandated Reporting

Sexual assault advocates are mandated reporters in Washington State (RCW 26.44.030) <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=26.44.030>. To fulfill your obligation, you must make the report directly to Child Protective Services (CPS) or law enforcement or ensure that a report is made. However, discussing a disclosure of abuse or neglect with someone outside of your agency in the process of making a report, such as a school principal, violates your confidentiality obligations. Providing clear and detailed information about your reporting obligation at the outset of your group will help to establish a foundation of trust and transparency. You will also want to give relevant examples of what constitutes abuse and neglect (RCW 26.44.020) <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=26.44.020>, such as a peer-on-peer sexual assault or a 25-year-old having a sexual relationship with a 14-year-old. A victim-centered approach to mandated reporting also includes:

- ▶ Explaining your obligation in a developmentally appropriate way (avoiding legal jargon and providing relevant examples).
- ▶ Discussing this obligation beyond your initial meeting or conversation--address this issue when sensitive topics arise or just as a reminder in subsequent group sessions.
- ▶ Telling youth what information you need in order to make a report, so they can make informed decisions about what they choose to share. If they subsequently share that information with you, it may be their way of asking you to intervene.
- ▶ Consulting with a supervisor at your agency before making a mandatory report.
- ▶ Informing teens if a report needs to be made and who will have access to the report, offering them the opportunity to be involved in the reporting process, and explaining what may happen following the report.
- ▶ Processing the implications of the report with the youth. For example, how might it affect peer or family relationships? Could the report and subsequent investigation reveal the youth's sexual orientation or gender identity? Could the report jeopardize the teen's safety (because of retaliation) or result in the loss of a place to stay?

Some of the youth in your group may already be involved with CPS or the criminal justice system. However, there may also be ongoing abuse or an emergent assault that could require an additional report. In other words, if you learn of a new assault you need to make a report regardless of whether the teen is already engaged with these systems.

Establishment of Trust

We know that most children and youth are abused or assaulted by someone they know, whether that is an adult or a peer. Additionally, young survivors may feel that the adults in their lives did not protect them from abuse. This betrayal can cause survivors to be reluctant to trust others or to give their trust too easily. As the facilitator, you can model trustworthiness by being honest, reliable, and consistent and by setting healthy boundaries. You can also build trust among the group by establishing a safe environment. Your initial meeting should involve a discussion of the group rules (with their input) and how you will respond if these rules are violated. Clear boundaries, expectations, and consequences are important to youth development, so establish them with the group and be consistent in their implementation.

“Kids know whether you are interested in them or just interested in giving them information.”

—Kim Foley, Yakima Sexual Assault Program

Allowing the participants to have a voice in shaping the group topics and process will demonstrate that you trust their judgment, appreciate their opinions, and are responsive to their needs. Building trust and connection with the teens in your group also requires that you respect and value their unique culture. Be aware of and ask questions about:

- ▶ the language they use
- ▶ the role of technology in their lives
- ▶ what is important to them
- ▶ the pressures and challenges they face

Remember, you are not trying to re-live your teen years! Rather, your goal is to show that you have a genuine interest in learning about their lives. Keep an open mind. As one facilitator shared, approaching the group as a mutual learning opportunity has helped her to grow as a facilitator and has contributed to the success of her groups.

The word "VOICE" is written in a stylized, blue, blocky font. The letters are thick and have a slightly irregular, hand-drawn appearance. The 'V' is the largest, followed by 'O', 'I', 'C', and 'E'.

Parent Involvement (or not)

Your interactions with participants' parents will primarily be dictated by your agency's consent and confidentiality policies. Once again, if teens can independently consent to your services, your agency's confidentiality policy should apply to them. Thus, you would need a release to speak with parents about their child's participation in group. If a parent contacts you with questions, you should ask the youth's preference about communicating with parent(s) and follow the teen's wishes regarding a release of information. You may also explore the option of having a joint meeting with the teen and the teen's parents. Consider how you can talk with parents about the services your agency provides, the purpose of the group, and the value of teens having confidential space. This can calm parents' concerns without disclosing any information about participants.

Support Group vs. Therapy Group vs. Prevention

Many programs across Washington are working with teens to prevent sexual violence by facilitating groups that foster positive development, build skills and knowledge, promote healthy sexuality, and encourage teens to be engaged bystanders. These groups are invaluable to our work but they are also very different from a psychoeducational support group that is specifically designed for youth who have experienced sexual assault. While there may be some overlap in the nature of the content addressed, it must be clarified that the support group is for survivors of sexual violence rather than "at-risk" youth or youth who are engaged in sexual violence prevention work. Additionally, please refer to *Circle of Hope* to distinguish psychoeducational groups from therapy groups.



Multi-abuse Trauma

The facilitators we spoke with all shared that sexual assault was often only one of several issues that the youth in their groups were dealing with. “Multi-abuse trauma is a term used by some advocates for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault when an individual is impacted by multiple co-occurring issues that negatively affect safety, health or well-being” (Slater, 1994, as cited in Edmund and Bland, p. 3). It is possible that the youth in your group may have experienced things such as violence in the home, neglect, societal oppression, intergenerational grief, poverty, or the loss of a parent in addition to one or more sexual assault victimizations. Furthermore, Edmund and Bland (2011) explain that multi-abuse trauma can also involve coping forms of abuse. As a result, teens may be struggling with substance abuse, eating disorders, or self-injury, as well as depression or unintended pregnancy. Facilitators should be aware that teens who meet in group may encourage other group members to engage in destructive coping strategies. If this comes to your attention, seek consultation or supervision to address the issue. By building relationships and collaborating with other service providers in your community, you will be able to provide a holistic, coordinated response to teens’ diverse needs.

One specific concern when working with teens, especially those with a history of trauma, is the issue of self-injury. This can include intentional cutting, burning, scratching, or bruising. Among secondary school and young adult populations, studies find 12% to 24% of young people have self-injured (Whitlock, 2010, p. 2). Although the reasons for self-injury are diverse, it “may best be understood as a maladaptive coping mechanism, but one that works – at least for a while” (Whitlock, 2010, p. 2). Self-injury should be taken seriously; however, it is important not to equate this behavior with suicidal intention. Upon disclosure or discovery, you should work with teens to create a plan for when they have the urge to self-injure, connect them with additional resources, such as therapy and healthcare services, and follow up regularly.

In Washington State, advocates are not mandated to break privilege to report imminent threats of harm to self or others (unless it is a situation of child or vulnerable adult abuse or neglect). Therefore, if you work for a VAWA-funded program, you may NOT break privilege to report these threats. However, you should consult with your supervisor or colleagues to determine your best course of action.

References

Edmund, D., & Bland, P. (2011). *Real tools: Responding to multi-abuse trauma. A toolkit to help advocates and community partners better serve people with multiple issues.* Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Retrieved from http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/RealTools_RespondingtoMultiAbuseTrauma_BlandandEdmund.pdf

Whitlock, J. (2010). *What is self-injury?* [Fact sheet] Cornell Research Program on Self-Injurious Behavior in Adolescents and Young Adults. Retrieved from http://crpsib.com/factsheet_aboutsi.asp

Sexual Exploitation

Experiences of child sexual abuse can make young people especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation and further victimization. Broadly speaking, sexual exploitation can take on many forms but may include trading sex to meet basic needs (survival sex), engaging in prostitution, stripping, or pornography under the control of another person, or being forced to perform sexual acts with others as a form of intimate partner or familial violence. Your session content will help to build participants' protective factors and assist them in identifying exploitative and unhealthy relationships. However, you should also be prepared to identify and respond to sexual exploitation while understanding that some teens may not see themselves as victims or be ready to leave the exploitative situation. Though your immediate response will follow the principles of sexual assault advocacy, a teen's needs regarding safety planning, harm reduction, medical advocacy, and additional support services may require a more intensive and nuanced approach and may necessitate individual advocacy in addition to the group. You can build rapport with this population by being nonjudgmental, consistent, patient, and honest. Contact WCSAP and utilize the following resources to start building capacity in this area:

Commercially Sexually Exploited Children: How to Help

Seattle Human Services Department

http://www.seattle.gov/humanservices/domesticviolence/prostitutedyouth/pdf/How_To_Help.pdf

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Youth

Connections, Summer 2011, WCSAP

<http://www.wcsap.org/commercial-sexual-exploitation-youth>

Teens with Disabilities

We know that people with physical and developmental disabilities experience sexual assault at much higher rates than those without disabilities. “According to a meta-analysis of findings from studies of victimization of people with disabilities, children with disabilities are 2.9 times more likely than children without disabilities to be sexually abused. Children with intellectual and mental health disabilities appear to be the most at risk, with 4.6 times the risk of sexual abuse as their peers without disabilities” (Lund and Vaughn-Jensen, 2012, as cited in Smith and Harrell, p. 1). Among adults who are developmentally disabled, as many as 83% of the females and 32% of the males are the victims of sexual assault (Johnson and Sigler, 2000). Thus, it is imperative that our services are accessible to these survivors and that we are actively reaching out to our partners who work with this population. There are three major factors for facilitators to consider in creating a welcoming and inclusive group environment:

1. ***How knowledgeable and comfortable are you in working with teens with disabilities?*** What kind of information, resources, and support do you need to do a good job of integrating these young people into the group?
2. ***Can the needs of the teen with disabilities be met in the group?*** What modifications or accommodations might you need to make? How clear is this individual about what is needed to benefit from the group?
3. ***How can you manage the reactions of other group members?*** How can you work with the participant to make sure any group reactions are addressed in a way that is comfortable and safe? Many teens with disabilities are treated very poorly by their peers, and you certainly don’t want to replicate the oppression of that social environment in the group. Are you prepared to directly address disrespectful behavior on the part of other group members?

Reference

Johnson, I., & Sigler, R. (2000). Forced sexual intercourse among intimates. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 15 (1), 95-108.

Smith, N., & Harrell, S. (March 2013). *Sexual abuse of children with disabilities: A national snapshot*. Vera Institute of Justice. Retrieved from <http://www.vera.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/sexual-abuse-of-children-with-disabilities-national-snapshot-v2.pdf>

Here are a few things to think about in your efforts to meaningfully engage youth survivors with disabilities in your group:

- ▶ The goal is to include teens with disabilities in mainstream groups if at all possible. This may take extra work on the part of the facilitator, but it is valuable both for the participant with disabilities and the rest of the group.
- ▶ When screening, talk frankly with potential participants about their needs. Theresa Fears of the ARC of Spokane suggests saying, “We just want to make sure that we will be able to provide you with accurate, appropriate information. Are you in any special programs at school, or in special education?”
- ▶ Teens who do not acknowledge their disabilities or feel shame about them and are reluctant to talk about any special needs may do better with individual advocacy. Teens who are straightforward and aware of their needs can often work with the facilitator to make sure they are able to participate fully in group.
- ▶ Teens with disabilities may hide their lack of comprehension because they don’t want to be seen as “different.”
- ▶ Teens with intellectual disabilities and those with Asperger’s Syndrome may take things literally and have difficulty understanding metaphors, particularly with regard to emotions. A facilitator can help, for example, by offering a sheet with images to help the participant identify emotions.
- ▶ For individuals who tend to share too much or to get carried away, you may wish to establish a “cut-off signal” (such as a word or gesture) to remind the teen to wrap it up.
- ▶ Remember that 40% of people with intellectual disabilities also have a major mental health diagnosis that may affect communication styles and skills (see NADD resource, below).
- ▶ Ask the teen during screening, “What will it take for you to be successful here? What do I need to do to make sure you are able to get the most out of the group?”
- ▶ Ask teens with disabilities how they would like to handle things with the group. For example, some teens with hearing difficulties might be comfortable requesting that people speak more slowly and clearly, or face them when speaking.

- ▶ Be prepared to create a simpler version of a workbook or fact sheet if needed. When doing this, remember to consider both the reading level and the emotional level of the participant, so the tone is not condescending. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) offers extensive resources on making written materials more broadly accessible to those with disabilities or literacy limitations (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/developmaterials/index.html>).
- ▶ For a variety of reasons, it may be a challenge for an individual with disabilities to engage for the entire group session. It is important to explore possible accommodations with prospective participants (such as having a support person accompany them to group) and also to consider the impact of these accommodations on the group dynamics.
- ▶ If you have participants with physical disabilities, talk to them about any accommodations that will make group participation more comfortable. Consider how to include everyone in group activities.
- ▶ Some teens with intellectual disabilities may have intense reactions to vivid stories. Check in with them to see how they are handling the experience.

Facilitators who do not have a great deal of experience working with teens with disabilities may benefit from mentoring. The ARC is a nationwide network of community agencies that supports those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Facilitators can make a connection with their local chapter of The ARC (http://arcwa.org/aboutus/local_arc_chapters) and ask for a “go-to” person with whom they can consult. This would be a great partnership for sexual assault programs to develop. It may also be helpful to collaborate with special education teachers in the local schools for cross-training and to enhance referrals of teens with disabilities who could benefit from sexual assault advocacy services.

“Accept your own discomfort in working with this population as part of the learning curve. Just trust the process.”
—Theresa Fears, ARC of Spokane

Resources

Health Literacy - Develop Materials

Centers for Disease Control

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/developmaterials/index.html>

Information on Dual Diagnosis

NADD (National Association for the Dually Diagnosed)

<http://thenadd.org/resources/information-on-dual-diagnosis/>

The ARC - Local Chapters in Washington State

http://arcwa.org/aboutus/local_arc_chapters

The "Teens with Disabilities" section was written in consultation with Theresa Fears from The ARC of Spokane.

Gender and Sexual Identity

Support groups should offer a space where young people can talk freely about and express their gender and sexual identity. As mentioned above, the group environment should not be another source of oppression, misunderstanding, or invisibility for youth who are marginalized because of who they are. Most young people have questions about their sexuality and gender identity or roles and wonder if their feelings and experiences are “normal.” This is particularly true for youth survivors of sexual violence. Youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ), and those questioning their identity, often limit the information they disclose about their lives and may hide experiences of sexual violence that could reveal information about their gender and/or sexuality. As a facilitator, you have a unique opportunity to create a safe environment where LGBTQ youth can talk about their experiences. Inviting conversations about gender and sexual identity will ensure that all youth can participate fully.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- ▶ Learn more about gender and sexual diversity in youth culture in order to improve your knowledge and skills as an advocate. Seek out specific training opportunities, videos/films, and reading materials.
- ▶ During your screening interview, invite all teens to discuss or disclose sexual orientation or gender identity by using nonjudgmental questions and open, gender-neutral language (for example, “Are you dating anyone?”).
- ▶ Ask all teens about how open they are to talking about their gender or sexual identity with others in the group. Discuss any concerns they might have and ask how you can support them in the group setting. Explore the benefits of talking openly with their peers but also discuss the potential risks for LGBTQ youth who disclose and the possibility of being “outed” to family or the broader community.
- ▶ Be aware that youth identities and sexualities develop and change, and this may be reflected in their choice of name or pronoun preference. Pronouns may include “she” or “he” but also the gender neutral pronoun “they” or something entirely different. Set a nonjudgmental tone. Be flexible and attentive.
- ▶ Be conscious of the language and examples you use throughout group. Are you mirroring the language used by participants for their own gender identity, sexuality, and relationships? Is it inclusive of LGBTQ experiences?

- ▶ As you work through the curriculum, make it a priority to debunk myths about the relationship between sexual assault and sexual orientation or gender identity. It should not be assumed that a person's abusive experience will change or determine sexual orientation or gender identity. Misconceptions about this connection can be particularly damaging to LGBTQ youth - or youth questioning their identities - as they can reinforce the idea that there is a "normal" or better gender identity or sexual orientation that may be changed by sexual abuse.
- ▶ Popular narratives often reinforce the idea that only males are perpetrators and only females are victims. Facilitators can dispel these misunderstandings and validate participants' lived experiences by providing accurate information and diverse examples of who perpetrates sexual violence, who survives it, and what it looks like.
- ▶ Familiarize yourself with the culturally competent and LGBTQ-specific resources in your community and online. This will enable you to provide informed referrals to help participants find peer support and a sense of community, and to address needs such as guidance around coming out, mental health issues, or concerns about family relationships.
- ▶ A victim-centered approach to mandated reporting should include consideration of whether a report will inadvertently "out" teens to their family or community. What conversations need to happen in advance of a report to address the implications and promote the safety and self-determination of an LGBTQ teen?
- ▶ In addition to ensuring a comfortable group environment, be prepared to help LGBTQ youth manage institutional barriers and other forms of oppression they may be experiencing outside of group, whether at school, at home, or in the community.
- ▶ Don't assume the labels that teens assign themselves narrowly dictate who their sexual partners are and what their associated needs may be. All young people need information about birth control and safer sex.

Resources

Setting the Stage: Strategies for Supporting LGBTIQ Survivors

Connections, Winter 2010, WCSAP

http://www.wcsap.org/sites/wcsap.huang.radicaldesigns.org/files/uploads/resources_publications/connections/LGBTIQ_survivors.pdf

Culturally Competent Service Provision to LGBT Survivors of Sexual Violence

Sabrina Gentlewarrior

http://vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/AR_LGBTSexualViolence.pdf

The Unique Sexual and Reproductive Health Needs of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth (Fact Sheet)

Healthy Teen Network

http://www.healthyteennetwork.org/vertical/sites/%7BB4D0CC76-CF78-4784-BA7C-5D0436F6040C%7D/uploads/Fast_Facts_Unique_Needs_of_LGBTQ_Youth.pdf

TransWhat? A Guide Towards Allyship

www.transwhat.org

The “Gender and Sexual Identity” section was written in consultation with The LGBTQ Access Project, a collaboration between the King County Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the NW Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse.

“Allow people to process their gender identities and sexual orientations at their own pace. Pronouns and names may change a number of times, or how people identify their sexual orientation may shift. Coming out is not a onetime event. Allow for flexibility in identity, even if it is confusing to you.”

–The Sexual and Gender Minority Youth Resource Center -
15 Ways to Create Safe Spaces for LGBTQ Identified People

Pregnant and Parenting Teens

Pregnant and parenting teens are at high risk of sexual victimization. Girls who have been sexually abused are more likely to become pregnant in their teen years than those who have not, and boys with a history of childhood sexual abuse are more likely to impregnate a girl during adolescence than their peers (Logan et al., 2007). In addition, girls who have been sexually assaulted by a boyfriend are at increased risk of pregnancy (Roosa et al., 1997). Having a child during adolescence may also compound the stigma, shame, and isolation that sexual assault and abuse survivors often experience. Because of this, participation in a support group may be of particular benefit to pregnant and parenting teens.

There are some obvious barriers to participation for young parents. Unless the group is held at school during the school day, childcare may be a primary concern (see “Childcare” under *Logistics*, below). If you are unable to assist in providing childcare, it is particularly important to allocate sufficient time during the group screening process to ask about logistical barriers and help the teen brainstorm solutions. Discuss any policies or practices concerning bringing children to the group. You probably don’t want toddlers running around and distracting participants in a general teen group, but you also don’t want to have to turn away a surprised participant who never considered that it might not be appropriate to bring her child. If the group is composed exclusively of teen parents, you will want to consider the pros and cons of allowing participants to bring children to group. Teen parents may also be more likely to be living with an abusive partner or in an unsupportive environment -- nearly 22% of teens in Washington State report experiencing abuse around the time of pregnancy (Washington State Department of Health, 2010) -- so safety concerns and the ability to get to group should be addressed.

As with any other teen, teen parents should be welcomed and included in the group. If any special arrangements must be made (such as having to leave early on one occasion to pick up a child), teens should take the responsibility of explaining their situation to the group in the interests of transparency and mutual respect. If it becomes clear that a teen parent is not able to maintain the commitment to regular attendance, individual advocacy may make more sense than group participation, or the group may be willing to make allowances that enable the teen parent to continue as a member.

References

Logan, C., Holcombe, E., Ryan, S., Manlove, J., & Moore, K. (2007). *Childhood sexual abuse and teen pregnancy: A white paper*. Child Trends. Retrieved from <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/childhood.pdf>

Roosa, M.W., Tein, J.-Y., Reinholtz, C., & Angelini, P. J. (1997). The relationship of childhood sexual abuse to teenage pregnancy. *Journal of Marriage & the Family*, 59(1), 119-130.

Washington State Department of Health. (2010). *Family violence (DOH 160-015)*. Retrieved from http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/160-015_MCHDataReportFamilyViol.pdf



LOGISTICS

Although facilitators often think first of the content for a group curriculum, remember that careful attention to the logistical details can have an impact on participants' attendance and their overall experience. This may be especially true for teens who often have fewer resources to overcome logistical barriers or resistance from the adults in their lives. As one facilitator shared, you need to bring your group to teens because they are often limited by support systems they can't choose. These are some general considerations for your planning, but flexibility may be necessary depending on your needs and those of the participants.

Group Duration

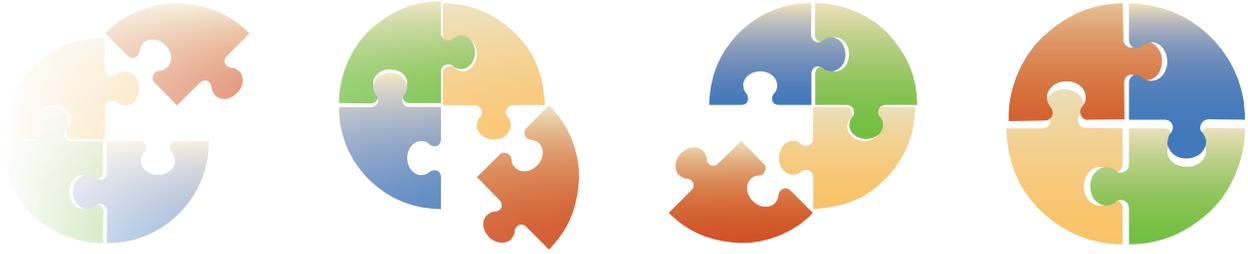
These groups will be most beneficial when they last approximately 8 to 12 weeks. This provides time for participants to develop trust within the group and meaningfully cover the material. The group model described in this Guide is a closed psychoeducational group – that is, all participants start at the same time and end at the same time. No new participants may join the group after the first session. If participants want to stay connected after the group has ended, that can be done independently.

Group Frequency

Weekly meetings will keep participants connected to the group and engaged in the learning and healing process. Regardless of whether your group is held in the school setting, being aware of the school calendar as you plan will help you avoid gaps between sessions and maintain momentum.

Practical tips from group facilitators:

1. Don't schedule a teen group first thing in the morning – teens are sleepy and they may have difficulty getting to group on time.
2. Check the bus schedule before setting the group meeting time.
3. If you are able to coordinate a group during the school day, you may rotate the weekly meeting time so participants (and teachers) do not have to worry about missing the same class repeatedly.
4. If the lunch hour is long enough, this may also be a good time for group.



Group Timing

Just like adults, teens have obligations and obstacles that may impact their ability to attend group. Extracurricular activities, family responsibilities, and transportation considerations may make it difficult for a teen to commit to a group that is held outside of school hours. Are you having trouble getting into the schools? You may want to share with school administrators how the group process and the availability of your services can mitigate the impacts of trauma and potentially contribute to participants' educational success.

Group Length

We generally recommend sessions that last 90 to 120 minutes. This provides sufficient time for education and group discussion but is not so long that participants begin to disengage or cannot commit to the time requirement. The length of your sessions may also be partially dependent on the size of your group, as well as the setting. If your group is held during the school day, session length will largely be dictated by the school's daily schedule.

Group Size

A group of six to eight participants is ideal, as it allows for diverse perspectives and experiences while still being a manageable size. Participants will all have an opportunity to share and learn in a personal way. Depending on your community, however, this may not always be feasible. If a smaller group is necessary, consider the group dynamics if one or two participants are unable to attend. In some circumstances, it may be better to provide one-on-one services in lieu of group or until you have adequate numbers.

Session Structure

A consistent routine within each session will help to create group identity and reduce participants' anxiety. However, this should not prevent facilitators from incorporating a variety of activities and teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning styles. For example, some people respond well to lecture while others learn best when they are doing something with their hands. Be sure to allow time each week for participants to connect with each other and process information through discussion, as this is a central purpose of group work. If your group takes place during the school day, be mindful of how you end each session. Participants should have adequate time to process the content and impact of the group discussion before returning to class or transitioning to the rest of their day.

Childcare

This may be a pertinent consideration for teens who have their own children or for teens who take care of younger siblings. If your group is held during school hours, it is likely that childcare arrangements have already been made. If not, agency volunteers or other staff may be the most convenient option for providing childcare. Be sure to check with your supervisor and refer to your agency's policies regarding any liability concerns or other issues with providing childcare at your agency. As an alternative, you could make arrangements with other organizations in your community to provide this service. You may want to offer to provide information about child sexual abuse and support regarding any behavioral concerns for whomever provides childcare during the group.

Setting

The environment can have a tremendous impact on the group experience. Strive for a trauma-informed setting - a space that feels safe, relaxing, and inviting will help to increase participants' comfort levels and ease anxieties. Holding group sessions at your agency may or may not be the best option given privacy, childcare, accessibility, transportation, and safety considerations. If the group is held in a school, how can you work with the staff to make students aware of your services while maintaining the confidentiality of those who seek them? For additional considerations regarding the safety of the group setting, refer to *Confidentiality and Group Safety*, page 14.

Food

A little food goes a long way in keeping young people happy! Having snacks or providing a meal can help to create a welcoming setting and avoid the distraction of rumbling stomachs. If you are short on funds, check with local restaurants or grocery stores to see if they would be willing to donate.



Interpreters

Be prepared to address language accessibility in your group. If you have a participant who needs interpretation services, you should try to contract with the same interpreter(s) for the duration of the group. Carefully consider any confidentiality implications and process any concerns that the group may have. Interpreters should adhere to the same confidentiality policy as participants and should be prepared for the content of each meeting. It is helpful to give interpreters any handouts or written materials in advance. Provide potential group participants with the name(s) of the interpreter or interpreters, so you can find an alternate interpreter if personal relationships are an issue. During the first session, educate the group about working with interpreters so it is a positive experience for everyone involved.



Including Low-Literacy Participants

Some teens in your group may have limited literacy (which may or may not be related to limited English proficiency). It is important to obtain a rough assessment of literacy levels during prescreening. Be straightforward during prescreening and ask potential group members to let you know if they are having trouble understanding any information or if they would like you to read the materials out loud. People with low literacy levels often mask this because they are fearful of others' reactions. It is important to let potential participants know that this is a common issue, and you will be discreet in helping them participate fully. If you are aware that some teens may have trouble reading group materials, use the following strategies to encourage their participation:

- ▶ Orally review all written materials given to group members.
- ▶ Choose activities carefully, or modify activities that require reading and writing.
- ▶ Have participants "pair up" for activities, matching low-literacy members with participants who are more proficient at reading and writing.

FACILITATORS

Those programs that are offering support groups funded by the Washington State Office of Crime Victims Advocacy must abide by the facilitator qualifications in the Support Group Standard (see [Appendix A](#)). These standards require that “the facilitator must be, or receive consultation on group process from, a Masters level therapist,” along with other training and education requirements. WCSAP’s recorded webinar, *Quality Supervision for Support Group Facilitators*, may be a helpful resource: <http://www.wcsap.org/quality-supervision-support-group-facilitators>. Additionally, it is particularly important that facilitators be knowledgeable about community resources, because the teens represented in these groups often have multiple needs.

Why Have a Co-Facilitator?

While some group facilitators prefer the flexibility and connection to the group that comes with operating solo, most teen support group facilitators prefer to have a co-facilitator, for many good reasons. First, the dynamics of teen groups can certainly be challenging, and having a co-facilitator for support and debriefing can help keep leaders on course. Second, when a teen participant has a crisis of any sort during group, such as a strong trauma reaction or a medical issue, an adult should be available to help. Having co-facilitators ensures that there will be someone to maintain and reassure the group while the participant who needs individual assistance is helped. Third, it is best practice in most youth-serving organizations to have at least two adults present at all times when working with minors, as a protection from abuse or unfounded accusations of abuse. This may be a consideration for teen groups held in locations where other adults may not consistently be present during group meeting times. Finally, it is helpful to have facilitators who reflect the diversity of group participants to the extent possible.

The Co-Facilitator Relationship

When co-facilitators work together, they must have a clear understanding about their roles. Is one the mentor and the other a trainee? Are they clear about who will take the lead in presenting a particular segment of the session? It is particularly important for teen groups that co-facilitators model a mutually respectful relationship where conflict is gently acknowledged and appropriately handled. Above all, co-facilitators need to have open communication with each other and to allow time for planning and debriefing each group session. A supervisor should be available to help co-facilitators work out any conflicts and to offer an additional perspective.

Because teens may respond to adults based on relationships with other adults in their lives who are in the same age group, facilitators should think about how any age disparities will play out in the group. For example, if one co-facilitator is in her twenties and the other in her fifties, will the group perceive the younger one as a peer and the older one as a mother or grandmother figure? If so, what are the implications for group dynamics?

Facilitator Boundaries

Whether there is one facilitator or two, boundaries should be clearly established and communicated to all involved in the group. May group members call facilitators between sessions, even if they have their own individual advocates? How will encounters between facilitators and participants in the community be handled? What about any dual relationships, such as a facilitator and a participant belonging to the same faith community, which may be particularly hard to avoid in rural communities or culturally specific communities? If co-facilitators do not establish clear up-front agreements, first with each other and then with the group, the impact on group dynamics can be disastrous. For example, if one co-facilitator shares her cell phone number with the group and lingers after group to talk to group participants, while the other finds both actions to be inappropriate, they are creating a confusing and dysfunctional dynamic.

Guest Speakers

Programs differ in their approach to using guest speakers. Some facilitators find that inviting a “graduate” of a former group back to speak to group members can serve as a powerful beacon of hope. Additionally, inviting other agency staff members or community service providers may expose group members to helpful resources and keep the group lively. Others believe that guest speakers may compromise the sense of security that the group offers to participants. In any case, if guest speakers are invited, the group should know about this well in advance (preferably during the screening process, when the group topics are discussed, and then again during the prior session). Speakers should be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement, and the group should be made aware of this. If a group member objects to being present when a speaker comes in, perhaps because he or she knows the speaker socially, accommodations should be made.

Challenges and Self-Care

While most facilitators who run teen support groups love doing this work, it is very demanding and challenging. Being with a group of teens may evoke facilitators' own adolescent experiences, good and bad, which may then affect their objectivity in leading the group. Working with these young people may also stir up facilitators' protective instincts, so it is important to be aware of the desire to "rescue" group participants and to deal with it appropriately. Because teens tend to filter their experience less than adults, facilitators may also be exposed to very raw descriptions of abuse and assault, which can lead to vicarious trauma. Additionally, teens in these groups are often still experiencing multiple levels of trauma and may present with co-occurring issues. Teen groups are often very intense, and it is hard for facilitators to avoid being caught up in that intensity. These challenges have some of the same solutions:

- ▶ Don't skimp on planning time for each group session. Having a well-worked-out structure and knowing what your objective is for each session will help you to stay on track.
- ▶ Develop strong, appropriate relationships with co-facilitators, supervisors, and other support professionals (such as consultants) so that you can debrief not only the events of the group session, but also your own reactions and concerns.
- ▶ Before starting a group, make sure that you have developed a self-care plan (that you can actually stick to!). Reflect on your reactions and reach out for any help you may need in dealing with them, such as short-term therapy. This is not a sign of weakness; it is a sign of strength and resilience.
- ▶ Maintaining strong boundaries is important not only for group participants, but also for your own emotional well-being. If you are not sure whether your interactions with group participants are appropriate, ask yourself how you would feel if a trusted supervisor or colleague were standing right there during the interaction.

“It’s always a challenge because you feel like they are still experiencing harm—not in the past, ongoing. You want to protect them. You are hearing about what happened with stepdad this weekend. That’s another reason a co-facilitator helps. We always had the 30-minute drive back to town to discuss how we needed to follow up, debrief. With adult women, they tend to talk about the past, but with kids, they don’t have that luxury.”

—Kim Foley, Yakima Sexual Assault Program

- ▶ The rapport you develop with group members may lead you to feel that you need to be the sole support for teens who are facing especially challenging circumstances. While your role is invaluable, it is in your best interest, and that of the group, to seek out and coordinate with additional service providers when a teen’s needs are beyond your expertise.
- ▶ Acknowledge (to yourself) your own biases from personal experiences in adolescence or as the parent of a teen. We each have particular perspectives based on our experiences, and if you are aware of yours, you can take them into account. This knowledge may also influence your choice of a colleague with whom to debrief.

GROUP EVALUATION

Because support groups take time, energy, and money, it is important to build in an evaluation plan. Effective evaluation helps you to assess the impact of the group, garner feedback to improve the group content and facilitation, and ensure accountability to funders. If you receive Specialized Funding through the Washington Office of Crime Victims Advocacy, there is a requirement that the group be “outcome-based,” which means that you must have a measurement tool. *The Circle of Hope* guide includes a detailed section on “Measuring Outcomes in Closed Psychoeducational Support Groups” (pp. 50-53).

It is important to set and share clear goals and objectives for your group. For example, a goal might be “Participants are better able to cope effectively with the aftermath of their own sexual victimization and can identify resources available to support their recovery.” The objectives should be measurable and specific to your group, such as “Participants will be able to identify and utilize healthy coping skills.” Review your curriculum carefully to ensure that the objectives and outcome measures (i.e. survey questions) accurately reflect the session content. In other words, don’t try to measure it if you didn’t actually do it. Evaluation measures can be relatively simple, but they should be carefully developed so the data gathered meaningfully informs future group content and facilitation.

It is critical to have a pre-test as well as a post-test so you can show changes in participants’ knowledge, skills, and feelings based on their participation in the group. The pre-test can be given once a participant has been accepted as a group member or during the first session, and the post-test should be given during the final session.

APPENDICES

Pre-Test

7. Do you agree with the following statements?
Please check the box which indicates your level of agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am able to take care of myself in healthy ways when I am stressed out or overwhelmed.					
When I think about my abuse or assault, I do not feel alone with my experience.					
I understand what I need to do to keep healing.					
I understand my reactions to the abuse/assault.					
I have enough knowledge about sexual abuse for me to understand what happened to me.					
I know what to do to help myself recover from the abuse/assault.					
I feel able to respond to the reactions of other people such as family and friends.					
I know how to get the help I need for myself.					
I have a sense of hope about my future.					
I feel able to identify the positive people and healthy relationships in my life.					
I am able to communicate effectively about my personal and sexual boundaries.					
Overall, I feel like I am coping well with the abuse/assault.					

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PRE-TEST

APPENDICES

Post-Test

7. Do you agree with the following statements?
Please check the box which indicates your level of agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am able to take care of myself in healthy ways when I am stressed out or overwhelmed.					
When I think about my abuse or assault, I do not feel alone with my experience.					
I understand what I need to do to keep healing.					
I understand my reactions to the abuse/assault.					
I have enough knowledge about sexual abuse/assault to understand what happened to me.					
I know what to do to help myself recover from the abuse/assault.					
I feel able to respond to the reactions of other people such as family and friends.					
I know how to get the help I need for myself.					
I have a sense of hope about my future.					
I feel able to identify the positive people and healthy relationships in my life.					
I am able to communicate effectively about my personal and sexual boundaries.					
Overall, I feel like I am coping well with the abuse/assault.					

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POST-TEST

Evaluation can also happen throughout the group in more informal ways. You will want to make this a meaningful process: Let teens know that you really value their input and that it has an effect on future groups; document the ideas that you implement during the course of the group and share those with participants; and find creative ways to harvest the group's wisdom. At the conclusion of the group, ask for some written and oral feedback about what the group has meant to participants, what they found to be most valuable, and what they might do differently. You may ask for written permission to share appropriate responses (without any identifying information) in order to tell the story of the group to potential participants, referral sources, and funders.

The data gathered from the pre- and post-tests as well as the informal feedback shared throughout the group process will equip your agency with the information needed to provide successful, sustainable groups. (See [Appendix G](#) for sample pre- and post-tests and an end-of-group evaluation form based on this curriculum).

How do I evaluate my group?

- Pre- and post-tests with questions related to group objectives
- Informal feedback throughout the group
- End-of-group evaluation form that asks about the group experience
- Discussion at the last session

SUSTAINABILITY

Screening

Good screening procedures will help you to build a sustainable group. With teen groups, it may be tempting to automatically approve referrals to the group from an outside source such as a school counselor. While it is extremely helpful to receive such referrals, it is still important that you (and your co-facilitator, if you have one) establish the criteria for admission to the group and conduct an independent screening interview to ensure that a prospective participant fits the bill. The screening interview is also an important opportunity for you to begin to break down barriers to trust, provide enough information so that a teen can make an informed decision about whether or not to enter the group, and make the group parameters clear.

Participant Input

Inviting participants to make the group their own always increases buy-in by group members. Some facilitators do this by having an expanded list of weekly topics and allowing group members to decide which ones they would like to address. While essential topics may be fixed (such as the introductory and closing sessions, and the session on understanding sexual assault), you can offer a “menu” that includes two or three more topics than you can address in the remaining sessions, and honor the group’s choices about focus. Similarly, you may offer a choice of activities within a session, as long as you keep the session active and ensure that each possible activity furthers the group objective for that session. While maintaining session structure and broader group goals, be flexible enough to respond to the needs and requests of group members.

Cultural Sensitivity

Invite group members to share how their cultural background affects their experiences both in and out of the group. Remember that youth culture is a true cultural difference, since most co-facilitators are beyond their teen years! Don’t try to be “cool” and use teen jargon if you are not sure of it—since this lingo changes rapidly, you may not be able to keep up. Just ask the group participants to explain. Be cautious about seeming judgmental about practices that are commonplace today, such as communicating with partners primarily via text message.

Reducing Barriers

The logistics of transportation and attendance can be particularly challenging for teen groups (see *Logistics*). As part of your screening process and evaluation plan, be sure to ask group participants what would make it easier for them to attend group regularly.

Commitment to Group

Three months can seem like an eternity to a teen, and attendance at group may be impaired by factors over which they have no control, such as the need to babysit a younger sibling. All you can do is provide clear information to prospective group members, talk with the group about what to do if something comes up that gets in the way of their commitment, and explain how irregular attendance affects the entire group. Then, be flexible and understanding. Occasionally, changing to one-on-one advocacy may be the best option for everyone. It is especially important that your commitment to being there is unwavering, even if you have a co-facilitator. You are serving as a model.

Sustainable Size

You may be so eager to start a group that you begin with too few participants. A group of three or four is likely to struggle for survival because of illnesses and other reasons for absence. It is better to wait for a few more participants than risk having to disband the group.

Supplemental Services

Teen participants may benefit from individual advocacy or therapy in addition to group. For example, a teen who is actively involved in a criminal case against an abuser may need legal advocacy, and a group member who is highly triggered by a group session may want to have the opportunity to talk about this individually. Those with special needs, such as pregnant and parenting teens, may benefit from a customized discussion of available resources. When participants' needs are being met, they will be more likely and able to participate for the duration of the group.

HOW TO USE AND ADAPT THIS GUIDE

Customizing the Guide

Every agency and every group will be a bit different. This Guide is a suggested curriculum, and we operate from the assumption that you will make it your own to fit your community and your facilitation style.

Using Activities

Every session in this Guide contains suggested activities. This is because teen learners, like learners of all ages, enjoy active participation and tend to retain information better when they are highly engaged in the learning process. Using the psychoeducational model, you will be helping participants to learn, but you don't want an excess of "talking at" the group. Rather, you will use well-designed activities to help participants figure things out for themselves. It is empowering and beneficial to teens' development when they have the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience in a setting where this input is valued; session activities and group discussion provide an ideal platform for teens to grow and stretch.

Activities are fun, but they are not necessarily easy to facilitate. They require thought, preparation, and careful structuring. Some group facilitators love activities and enjoy immersing themselves in creative preparation of materials. Others are completely turned off by the nature of activity preparation.

If the preparation for activities -- such as making up handouts, looking for social media examples, or making posters -- is not something that appeals to you, you have some options:

- ▶ Find someone else to help.
- ▶ Keep the preparations as simple as possible.
- ▶ Look up some activities that don't require many materials.
- ▶ Just grin and bear it!

Volunteers or other staff members might really enjoy using their creativity to help you prepare, relieving you of the task. You may even find that you have more fun with preparation once you see how the group actually uses the materials.

Taking Items Home

Some group activities result in products that group participants would ordinarily want to take home and keep. Because some group members may be living in abusive situations, this may not be safe. Teens may also worry about maintaining privacy from family members. Discuss this issue at the first session and help the group members figure out how they would like to handle it. In one group, the facilitator provided distinctive gift bags (to avoid the need for name labels) that participants could use to store materials and handouts. The facilitator kept these bags until the last session; participants had the choice of taking them home at that time if they wished.

Picking and Choosing

Each session outline may include more content than can be covered in eight 90-minute sessions. This is intended to provide flexibility so you can modify, expand, or reorganize the curriculum depending on the size, duration, and needs of each group you facilitate.

If the group is having a great discussion on a particular topic, you may choose to shuffle some topics to another session or to forego them altogether. On the other hand, you may put structured time constraints on the various segments of each session so that you can get to everything you believe to be important. Just be sure that you and your co-facilitator, if you have one, have talked this through and are in agreement about your approach.

You may develop a subtle signal to indicate that it is time to wrap up a particular portion of the session. This can become a point of conflict between co-facilitators, so be sure to talk about it in advance and agree to work things out if time management becomes an issue.

Design your own curriculum by highlighting the points that you believe to be essential for the session, and then prioritizing the other items.



OVERVIEW OF SESSION OUTLINES

Each session outline provided in this Guide contains a structure for the session. Group members will soon become accustomed to this format and will enjoy the sense of familiarity it provides.



GOAL OF SESSION: These goals are carefully designed to align with the stages of group development. If you choose to add topics to a particular session, they should support the session goal.



CHECK-IN: During the *Check-In*, the group facilitators ask each participant in turn to respond briefly to a prompt. This is an opportunity to acknowledge each person and to set the framework and tone for the session. It is important that the facilitators emphasize the brevity of this activity and establish the ground rule that other participants should not comment or interact during this phase of the group.



HANDOUTS: We suggest handouts that can be used during the *Learning and Discussion* portion of the session or given to participants to supplement session content.



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION: Knowledge is power, and shared knowledge is an important aspect of psychoeducational support groups. By encouraging discussion, the facilitators can help participants to connect information to their own lives and situations. Group members are the true experts on their own concerns; *Learning and Discussion* provides the opportunity for teens to integrate their experiences with a wider knowledge of the topic.



ACTIVITY: Sometimes activities precede the *Learning and Discussion* portion of the group, and sometimes they follow it. There may be more than one suggested activity per session. Activities serve to build group cohesiveness, to engage group members in active learning, and to make the sessions more interesting and enjoyable.



SELF-CARE ACTIVITY: A special activity is included in some session outlines to emphasize the importance of self-care and to provide examples for participants. These are brief activities and are designed to help teens cope and care for themselves so they can better handle the challenges they face.



CHECK-OUT: Because participating in a group focused on sexual violence is difficult and challenging, participants need time to decompress prior to leaving the group each week. The *Check-Out* helps group members make the transition back to their everyday lives by providing positive, forward-looking suggestions for the coming week. The structure is similar to the *Check-In*, with a chance for each participant to make a brief comment in turn. This closing activity teaches realistic goal-setting and assists in managing the emotions that may be stirred up by the group. This may be particularly important for school-based groups since teens may need to make a quick transition back to class.



RESOURCES: Reviewing the resources listed at the end of each session outline is an excellent way for facilitators to prepare for the session. Some resources are useful to share with group members; others are intended to enhance the facilitators' knowledge. All books mentioned as resources are available in the WCSAP library for members and OCVA sexual assault contractors.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS: Each session outline contains information to assist facilitators in presenting the information appropriately, handling the group dynamics, and understanding the process of group development.



SUPPORT GROUP CURRICULUM



SECTION 2

SESSION ONE – GETTING STARTED



GOAL OF SESSION: To begin the creation of a safe and healthy group environment and familiarize participants with the group process and content.

1. Welcome group members and acknowledge the strength and courage that it required to come to this first meeting.
2. Introduce members and facilitators. Ask members to share their first names (or nicknames) and an adjective that describes them. To acknowledge the diversity of gender identities, ask participants to share the pronoun they use to describe themselves.

Materials Needed:

1. A notebook or journal for each group member
2. An individual bag, box or envelope for each group member (see “Deciding What to do with Materials”)
3. Don’t forget pens or pencils





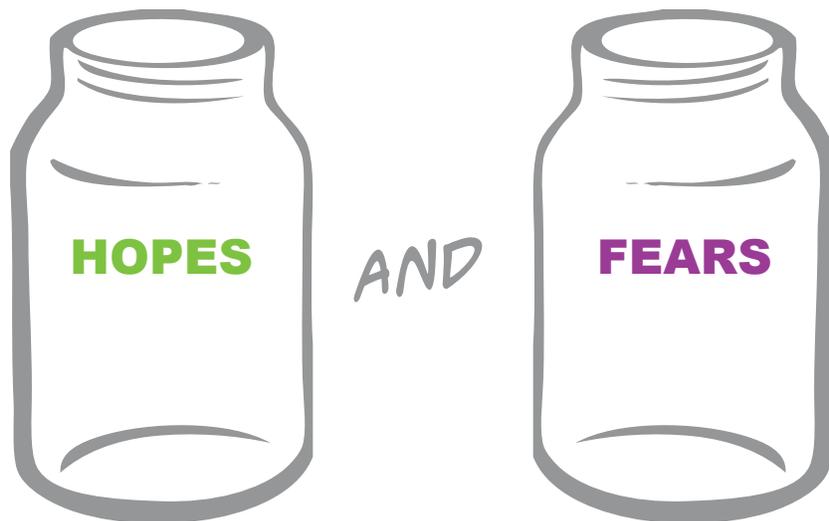
ACTIVITY: Hopes and Fears

(Adapted from "Fears in a Hat" from the *Gamesters' Handbook* by Donna Brandes and Howard Phillips.)

Preparation: Bring two small containers (one labeled "hopes" and one labeled "fears"), paper, and pencils.

1. Ask participants to think about their hopes and fears for the group. What would they like to accomplish? What, if anything, makes them anxious or scared about being in the group? Be sure to tell participants that their answers will be anonymous.
2. Have each participant write one hope and one fear on separate pieces of paper. Participants should not write their names on the papers.
3. Once all of the papers have been deposited in the appropriate containers, pass them around the room and have each participant read a slip of paper from each container out loud.
4. After all of the papers have been read, give group members a few minutes to discuss any observations or feelings about what was shared. Use this discussion as an opportunity to introduce the importance of group ground rules:

"As you heard, each person here has very real thoughts and feelings about being a part of this group. Together, we can create a safe and supportive space that provides everyone the opportunity to explore these hopes and fears. Let's talk about what we can do as a group to build trust and respect and help each other heal and grow in the next eight weeks."



Introduction to Group

1. Development of Ground Rules

Ask the group to brainstorm ground rules and write them on a flip chart. If group members do not raise the following topics, raise them yourself and ask for input:

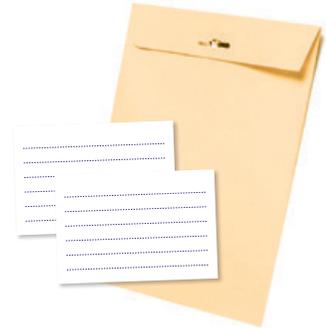
- ◆ **Confidentiality** - Stress that this is the foundation for a successful group process. Use examples to explain what confidentiality looks like at school, in the community, and in the context of their social lives. Asking for input from the group, discuss what the consequences of breaking confidentiality could be. Be clear with the group about how a breach can impact other group members' healing process. Discuss your mandated exceptions to confidentiality.
- ◆ **Attendance policies**
- ◆ **Not bringing outside people to group sessions (friends, siblings, parents, etc.)**
- ◆ **Drug and alcohol use**
- ◆ **Safety considerations**
- ◆ **Respectful and nonjudgmental communication**
- ◆ **Use of technology during group**

2. Format of Each Meeting

- ◆ **Check-In:** Explain that each person should briefly answer the prompt question and that you will give a signal if the answer is too lengthy.
- ◆ **Learning and Discussion**
- ◆ **Activities**
- ◆ **Self-Care Activity:** These are brief activities to help teens cope and practice taking care of themselves.
- ◆ **Check-Out:** This will be similar to the *Check-In* and is designed to help members process the session content and leave on a positive note.

3. Preview of Topics to be Discussed in Subsequent Sessions

- ◆ Bring a handout with the dates and topics of group sessions.
- ◆ Provide the participants with index cards and have one large envelope for the group. Ask them to write down (anonymously) any questions or topics they would like the facilitators to cover during the course of the group. They can slip the cards into the envelope.



4. Choosing a Group Name

- ◆ Offering group members the opportunity to choose a group name can enhance group cohesion and create a sense of group identity.
- ◆ You may want to give examples of group names and guide the group toward a positive title.

5. Deciding What to do With Materials

- ◆ Explain that some of the group activities will result in products that participants may or may not wish to keep.
- ◆ State that you know people may have privacy and safety concerns that make it difficult to take items home.
- ◆ Offer to keep each participant's materials in an individual bag, box, or large envelope. Some group facilitators prepare these for participants while others let participants design these for themselves. One facilitator used colorful gift bags that were unique for each participant.
- ◆ Let the group know that if you keep the materials for them, you will offer them options about what to do with the materials at the last session. They are also free to take anything they have produced home with them at any time.



CHECK-IN: *What is the most positive thing that has happened in your life in the last two weeks?*



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

The Healing Journey

- ▶ Every person's sexual assault/abuse experience is different, and every person's healing process will be unique. The purpose of this group is to help you along your path to healing, whatever that may look like for you.
- ▶ Be patient with yourself and with each other. Explain to the group that the healing process is not always "linear." There will be setbacks; some days will be better than others, but it is all progress.
- ▶ Help the group understand why giving "advice" is not always helpful to the healing process. They can share their thoughts and experiences but they should not tell others what to do or feel. Giving directive advice is not appropriate because other participants don't know the whole story, and what works for one person may not work for someone else. Respecting each other's feelings, which are neither right nor wrong, is a critical element of the healing process in group. Shame keeps people silent around the issue of sexual assault; when we practice non-judgment of others' feelings and choices, we challenge the power of shame.
- ▶ Talk to the group about "triggers" and normalize for participants that group discussions and activities may bring about intense emotional reactions. Let the group know what they can do if they are feeling triggered during session and how other members can respond appropriately.



ACTIVITY: You Are Not Alone

Preparation: If you do not have internet in your meeting room, you can download the videos onto a jump drive or your laptop prior to the session.

YouTube Video, Project Unspoken: You're not just a victim, You're a Survivor (8 mins, 32 secs)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljTE83k1DD0>

YouTube Video, Finding Hope: I am a Survivor (4 mins, 44 secs)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LLXV98HXqs>

1. Show one or both of the video clips to the group. If you are able to show both clips, you may want to show the Project Unspoken video first.
2. Lead the group in a discussion about the videos. How did they make you feel? Was there anything in the videos that especially resonated with you? What does the word "survivor" mean to you?
3. If you choose to show the *Finding Hope* video, you may wish to add a follow-up activity.
 - ◆ Give each participant a sheet of paper and markers.
 - ◆ Ask each person to write "I AM" and then to complete the sentence with a positive statement that reflects how they hope to feel at the end of the group experience.
 - ◆ Be sure to keep these papers and incorporate them into the graduation ceremony at the last session.
4. Discussion wrap-up: ***Knowing that you are not alone and that others believe and support you can be powerful, and we want to offer that to each other through this group. You are all survivors because you are here today. Your participation in this group will help you to gain knowledge, strength, and skills but it can also serve to help others.***



SELF-CARE ACTIVITY: Finding Inspiration

YouTube Video, A Pep Talk from Kid President to You (3 mins, 28 secs)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-gQLqv9f4o>

1. Show the short video clip to the group.
2. Provide each participant with a notebook or journal that they can use throughout the group (and leave with the facilitator if they do not want to take it with them each week).
3. Ask participants to brainstorm in their journal about things, people, stories, books, quotes, etc. that encourage and inspire them.
4. Challenge the group to find ways to integrate these sources of positivity into their daily routine.



CHECK-OUT: *Please share something that you brainstormed during the self-care activity with the rest of the group. Maybe someone else will find hope and encouragement from one of your ideas.*



RESOURCES

Here are a few resources that can help you better understand the teens in your group:

The Amazing Adolescent Brain: What Every Educator, Youth Serving Professional, and Healthcare Provider Needs to Know

Linda Burgess Chamberlain <http://www.multiplyingconnections.org/become-trauma-informed/amazing-adolescent-brain>

Developing Adolescents

American Psychological Association <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/develop.pdf>

Child Sexual Abuse, Child Development and Advocacy: Adolescents

WCSAP Recorded Webinar

<http://www.wcsap.org/child-sexual-abuse-child-development-and-advocacy-adolescents>

Sexual Assault Support Groups: The Importance of Safety

WCSAP Recorded Webinar

<http://www.wcsap.org/sexual-assault-support-groups-importance-safety>



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ This session is intended to be positive, active, and engaging. Even though you want to acknowledge that subsequent group discussions and activities may be difficult, you also want to show participants that the group process is meant to give them the tools and support to grow and heal.
- ▶ Be sure to remind participants of your agency's services and contact information and normalize the possible need for additional support as they go through the group process.
- ▶ Although you will have an opportunity to discuss safety during the ground rule development process, let participants know that you can also address individual safety concerns following the session.
- ▶ Even though it is the first session, be prepared for the possibility that group members may share intense feelings and thoughts during the Hopes and Fears exercise. It is recommended that you keep this activity at the beginning of the session to allow time for processing if necessary.
- ▶ If you are aware of a literacy or learning disability issue that might make it uncomfortable for a teen to participate in the opening activity, consider modifications such as reading the hopes and fears yourself, or design another activity with the same intent.
- ▶ The facilitators we spoke with did not explicitly ask participants to share their stories during the first session. This may differ from other groups you facilitate. Your goal is to create an environment where teens can share their stories at a pace and level of detail that feels comfortable to them.
- ▶ If participants did not complete the pre-test during the screening process, you will need to allow time for this during this session.
- ▶ Prior to Session Two, type up the agreed-upon ground rules and make copies for participants to sign. They may keep a copy if it is safe for them to do so.

SESSION TWO – WHAT YOU REALLY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE AND ASSAULT



GOAL OF SESSION: To establish a foundation of knowledge about sexual abuse and assault that can be built upon in following sessions. Normalize teens' experiences by providing information about common impacts.



CHECK-IN: *How are you feeling about being back here today? Nervous, excited, reluctant?*

Before delving into the session content, revisit the rules established by the group at the previous meeting and ask if there are any additional questions or thoughts. Hand out a typed copy of the group rules and ask each participant to sign them.



HANDOUT

It's Never Your Fault: The Truth About Sexual Abuse

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/the_truth_about_sexual_abuse.pdf



What are the Numbers?

- ◆ It is estimated that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys is sexually abused before the age of 18.
<http://www.cdc.gov/ace/prevalence.htm>




- ◆ More than 33% of women in Washington State have been sexually assaulted in their lifetime. <http://depts.washington.edu/hcsats/PDF/research/sexualassaultexpr2001-11.pdf>
- ◆ Multiple studies indicate that over 50% of transgender people have experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives.
<http://forge-forward.org/wp-content/docs/FAQ-10-2012-rates-of-violence.pdf>
- ◆ Most female victims of rape (79.6%) experienced their first rape before age 25; approximately 42% before age 18. More than one-quarter of male victims of completed rape (27.8%) were first raped when they were 10 years old or younger (NISVS, page 2).
- ◆ 93.3% of male rape victims and 98.1% of female rape victims reported only male perpetrators (NISVS, page 24).
- ◆ More than half of female victims of rape (51.1%) reported that at least one perpetrator was a current or former intimate partner. Four out of 10 female victims (40.8%) reported being raped by an acquaintance and 12.5% reported being raped by a family member (NISVS, page 21).

National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS):
<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/>

Why Does it Happen?

Talk to the group about the root causes of sexual violence and provide examples to help make these concepts tangible for participants:

- ▶ Clarify that the motivation for sexual violence is not simply sexual; it is used as a means to exert power and control over someone else. Discuss the role of inequality and the abuse of power. Reinforce this concept with the knowledge that people who hold less power in our society and/or have less control over their bodies are often more vulnerable to sexual violence—children and teens, women, people of color, people who don't present as heterosexual, etc.
- ▶ Make the connection between sexual violence and oppression (sexism, racism, homophobia, ageism, etc.) for participants. Explain how sexual violence is a tool of oppression and how oppression is also used to justify sexual assault. For example, sexism is discrimination based on the idea that women are inferior to men; sexual assault is justified by this belief and also impacts women's ability to participate fully and safely in our society.
- ▶ Explore the impact of gender norms on sexual violence. It may be helpful to start the conversation with a short YouTube clip from *Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qN5rPAAhSxU>. Expand upon the ideas and examples presented in the clip. Ask participants how the expectations around being a man or woman in our society support and reinforce sexual violence.

**ACTIVITY: Media Messages and Rape Culture**

Preparation: Gather some current media messages that glamorize sexually coercive acts, promote victim blaming and sexual assault myths, conflate sex with violence, encourage rigid gender norms, or show oversexualized images of teens and women. Also find one example of a positive use of media to challenge rape culture. Consider using newspaper or internet news stories, tv shows and movies, songs, or magazines. Read the resource listed below on *Media Savvy Youth* for ideas about how to talk about these messages. Here are a few suggestions of movies, songs, and media coverage that are relevant to teens:

- ◆ *The Twilight Series* (DVD)
- ◆ *Easy A* (DVD)
- ◆ *Killing Me Softly 4* (DVD in the WCSAP library)
- ◆ Coverage from the teen rape case in Steubenville, Ohio
- ◆ *Sociological Images* on Pinterest provides numerous images to choose from <http://pinterest.com/socimages/>
- ◆ *Love the Way You Lie* song and music video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uelHwf8o7_U
- ◆ *10 Year Old Girl Letter to Lil Wayne* (positive example) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pu0SeTXjC74>



1. Now that you have talked about the definitions, dynamics, and root causes of sexual assault and abuse, ask the group to discuss how this information may differ from the messages they have received about sexual violence from their family, friends, and culture.
2. Explain that we live in a “rape culture,” which means that we are surrounded by imagery, language, media, and attitudes that normalize sexual violence and may lead people to believe that it is inevitable and acceptable.
3. Have participants review the materials (individually or as a group depending on what types of media you are using).
4. Ask participants to identify the underlying messages in the media being reviewed. Lead the group in a discussion about how these messages contribute to rape culture and the root causes of sexual violence.
5. Have participants review the example of positive media. Acknowledge that media can be good AND bad and that it is nearly impossible to avoid. The media is a powerful influence; it is important that we are critical consumers of it so we can be more aware of the ways in which it might influence our beliefs and actions.
6. Because of social media, teens are also creators of media messages. Discuss how that power can be used in a positive manner with the group and give examples of everyday actions participants can take to shape the conversation about sexual violence. For example, if a friend posts an offensive comment on Facebook, a teen can challenge and educate through his or her response.



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

Impacts of Sexual Assault and Abuse

- ▶ Each person's healing journey is unique because sexual assault impacts each person differently.
- ▶ The impact of sexual abuse may be influenced by 1) the survivor's previous experiences of trauma; 2) the nature of the abuse, including duration, severity, and relationship to the abuser; and 3) the response a survivor receives from others upon disclosure.
- ▶ It is normal for survivors to experience behavioral, physical, and psychological effects immediately following an assault. These may include: withdrawal from friends, family, and activities; bodily pain or discomfort; headache; fatigue, eating or sleeping problems; anger; anxiety; depression; flashbacks; nightmares; and being overly alert or numb. If these effects are ongoing, it may be an indicator of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is not something that all survivors experience, and it can be addressed through therapy.
- ▶ An experience of sexual assault or abuse may also influence a survivor's understanding of relationships and sexuality. It is normal to wonder, "What does this mean about me, others, and the world I live in?"
- ▶ Sexual assault and abuse does affect you but it does not define who you are. Healing and recovery are possible and we will be talking about coping strategies and resources in future sessions to help you in this process.



SELF-CARE ACTIVITY: Humor as an Antidote to Sadness

Humor is a survival skill. When dealing with tough issues like the ones we talked about today, it is good to think about some ways you can give yourself a break. Take a few minutes and write in your journal about something that makes you laugh or smile, for example a favorite comedy or a funny memory.



CHECK-OUT: *What is the one thing you learned in the session today that was most helpful to you?*



RESOURCES

Washington State's sexual assault statutes:

- ◆ King County Sexual Assault Resource Center has an information page on sexual assault laws. You can also download their teen-friendly age of consent cards from their website to give to group participants: <http://www.kcsarc.org/pop/laws>
- ◆ Washington State statutes are available at: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=9a.44>

Revisioning the Sexual Violence Continuum

Lydia Guy

Partners in Social Change, Fall 2006, WCSAP

<http://wcsap.huang.radicaldesigns.org/sites/wcsap.huang.radicaldesigns.org/files/uploads/documents/RapeCulture2006.pdf>

Media Savvy Youth: Challenging Pop Culture Messages that Contribute to Sexual Violence

Connections, Spring 2010, WCSAP

<http://www.wcsap.org/media-savvy-youth-challenging-pop-culture-messages>

Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up

DVD and curriculum, Available in the WCSAP library

<http://groundspark.org/our-films-and-campaigns/straightlaced>

Steubenville: We're Sick and Tired of Rape Being Treated Like an Unavoidable Joke

Soraya Chemaly

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/soraya-chemaly/steubenville-50-cases-of-_b_2876606.html



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ In your discussion of the sexual violence continuum, you may be naming experiences that participants did not previously understand to be abusive. For some, this may provide clarity and validation; for others, this may be overwhelming. Stay attuned to participants' reactions and debrief as a group or individually as you see fit.
- ▶ Depending on the composition of your group, you may want to highlight some additional statistics. For example, if you are running a culturally-specific group or a group for teens who identify as male, there may be data that is more relevant to participants.
- ▶ It may be helpful to consult with prevention specialists (from your agency or elsewhere) prior to this session. They may have some additional tips on how to engage youth on the topic of root causes of sexual violence.
- ▶ Developmentally, adolescents are thirsty for information. They want to understand why sexual assault happens and how it might affect them. Additionally, the content of this week's session may contradict the beliefs and values of their community. The information you provide during this session may be very powerful for participants, so do not shy away from sharing it honestly and openly. Rather, try to balance the negative with the positive and allow for plenty of discussion time.
- ▶ Some teens may fear that they will be forever scarred by their abuse or that they will experience every possible effect that is discussed. You have the opportunity to reframe such thinking by letting them know that abuse or assault is a risk factor, not a determinant of long-term problems. Just by being in the group, they are showing resiliency and an ability to use the resources that are available to them to facilitate their own recovery.

If survivors ask how long recovery will take, these words of wisdom from Mike Lew may be helpful to share, "It will take longer than they would like, but not as long as they fear."

—Mike Lew, Next Step Counseling and Training,
Brookline, Massachusetts

SESSION THREE – KEEPING YOUR COOL: STRESS AND COPING



GOAL OF SESSION: To help teens learn to identify what stresses them out and increase healthy coping skills.



CHECK-IN: *When you are really upset, what is one thing you do that helps you to calm down?*



HANDOUTS

The COPE Plan: Stress Management for Teens

Jennifer Y. Levy-Peck

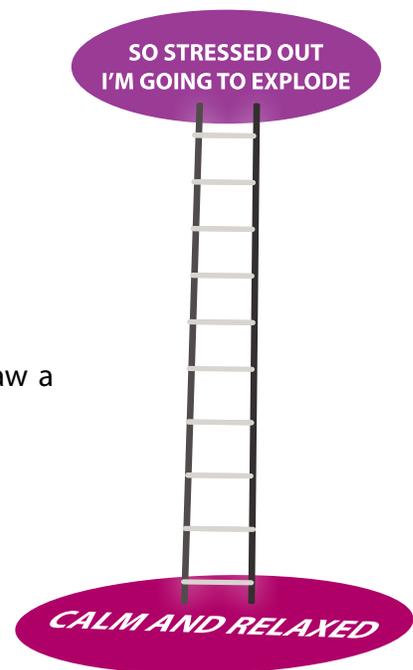
Appendix B



ACTIVITY: The Stress Ladder

Preparation: Using a large poster board or flip chart paper, draw a simple ladder with ten rungs. Label the ground below it CALM AND RELAXED and label the area above the top rung SO STRESSED I'M GOING TO EXPLODE! Then number each rung, with 1 at the bottom and 10 at the top. Provide post-it notes and pens or markers.

1. Have participants write things that are stressful on the post-its, one item on each piece of paper. Ask them to think of a range of stressful things, from slightly bothersome (running out of toothpaste) to incredibly stressful (being in a serious car accident).
2. Ask them to put the post-it notes on or near the appropriate rung on the ladder, depending on how stressful the item seems to them.
3. Read through the post-it notes from bottom to top.
4. Ask the participants if the items seem to be in the order they would put them in for themselves. If they feel that a certain item is less or more stressful than where it is placed on the ladder, remind them that how stressful something might be depends on the individual and the circumstances, and there is no right or wrong. For example, running out of toothpaste might be really stressful if you were on your way to a job interview or a big date!





LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

- ▶ We all have stress in our lives. Sexual abuse and assault are often off-the-charts stressful, and the experiences that happen afterward might be stressful as well. For example, having a parent who doesn't believe you when you disclose sexual abuse might be just as stressful as the abuse itself, or even more so.
- ▶ Stress can also come from day-to-day concerns like conflicts with those we care about; things we have to accomplish at school, home, or work; personal or family issues like health problems; or the expectations we put on ourselves.
- ▶ Stress can affect us physically. It can contribute to headaches, digestive problems, back pain, and more. This doesn't mean that the physical problems aren't "real" or are "all in your head," it just means that our bodies react to what happens to us. For example, your body may react by producing stress hormones which can cause your muscles to tighten.
- ▶ Healthy coping skills can help us reduce the effects of stress in our lives and can make a big difference.
- ▶ Ask the group for examples of unhealthy coping behaviors, and write them on a flipchart or whiteboard. Leave space between the items. Be sure that the list includes:
 - ◆ alcohol or drug abuse
 - ◆ lashing out at friends or family
 - ◆ cutting or other self-harming behavior
 - ◆ avoidance - pretending problems don't exist when they need to be addressed
 - ◆ compulsive behavior – playing the same video game 24/7
 - ◆ sleeping a lot
 - ◆ isolating yourself - staying alone all the time
 - ◆ eating too much or restricting your food intake
 - ◆ excessive risk-taking
 - ◆ dissociating - "checking out"

- ▶ Describe the possible positive purposes and usefulness of these types of behavior, for example:
 - ◆ reduce anxiety
 - ◆ make you feel safer
 - ◆ get your feelings out
 - ◆ keep you from feeling sad or numb
 - ◆ keep you from feeling overwhelmed
- ▶ Have the participants, working in pairs, write one positive effect and one negative effect of each of the listed behaviors below the name of the behavior.
- ▶ Let participants know that even unhealthy coping behaviors serve a purpose, and that if they have used them in the past or are using them now, they can acknowledge that these were survival skills that helped keep them going.
- ▶ Have participants silently identify (to themselves ONLY) or write in their journal about any negative coping behaviors they have used or are using, and have them reflect on these questions:
 - ◆ How did that behavior help me get through sexual abuse or assault or its aftermath?
 - ◆ What problems has that behavior caused for me, or could it cause for me later?
- ▶ Coping skills are healthy behaviors that allow you to do the same things as the negative behaviors—reduce anxiety, feel safer, get your feelings out, feel calm and happy—but without the negative aftereffects.

**ACTIVITY:** The COPE Plan for Teens

Preparation: Have a copy of the COPE Plan handout available for each participant, along with a pen or pencil (see [Appendix B](#)). Make a poster board that says:

COPE

C - CALM

- ◆ health habits
- ◆ exercise
- ◆ nature
- ◆ meditation
- ◆ breathing

O - OPEN

- ◆ safe adult(s)
- ◆ assertiveness skills
- ◆ self-honesty
- ◆ support group

P - PLAYFUL

- ◆ fun activities
- ◆ sense of humor
- ◆ do what you love
- ◆ improve your mood

E - ENCOURAGING

- ◆ positive friends
- ◆ self-encouragement
- ◆ encouraging adults
- ◆ encourage others

You may also want to make postcard size handouts with the information above so that participants can take them and put them someplace as a reminder.

1. Have participants, working in pairs, use the handout to write at least one small thing they will do in the coming week to improve coping skills. Ask them to pair up with someone they don't know very well.
2. Each person has a handout and makes an individual plan, but the other person can give suggestions. Participants should each write at least one action step in each of the sections on the handout that say:
 - ◆ My plan for increasing calming activities
 - ◆ My plan for increasing openness activities
 - ◆ My plan for increasing playful activities
 - ◆ My plan for increasing encouraging activities



CHECK-OUT: *Please share one step from your COPE plan that you are going to focus on in the coming week.*



RESOURCES

Helping Teenagers With Stress

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/helping_teenagers_with_stress

The Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness Skills to Help You Deal with Stress

Gina Biegel



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ This session gives participants some ideas about how to increase their ability to cope before they get into some of the session topics that may temporarily add to their distress.
- ▶ It is important to help participants share enough so that they feel the material applies to them, but not so much that they are over-sharing or getting into trauma topics this early in the group. Notice that when a sensitive topic is brought up, participants are encouraged to reflect on it silently, while less sensitive topics are discussed by the group or in pairs.
- ▶ Having a pairs activity this session can help participants get to know each other and feel comfortable with each other.
- ▶ You are introducing some important concepts, including the idea that negative behaviors served a purpose and should be honored for that, so that teens can begin to let them go without shame or self-blame.
- ▶ Encourage participants to develop healthy coping behaviors in small steps, so it doesn't seem like an overwhelming task.
- ▶ The process of this session should show participants that they have tools and resources at hand to help them overcome adversity.

SESSION FOUR – BE YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND



GOAL OF SESSION: Provide participants with tools to counteract shame and self-blame.



CHECK-IN: *What is one thing a friend has done for you that really made your day?*



HANDOUTS

Ten True Things Teen Sexual Abuse and Assault Survivors Need to Know

WCSAP

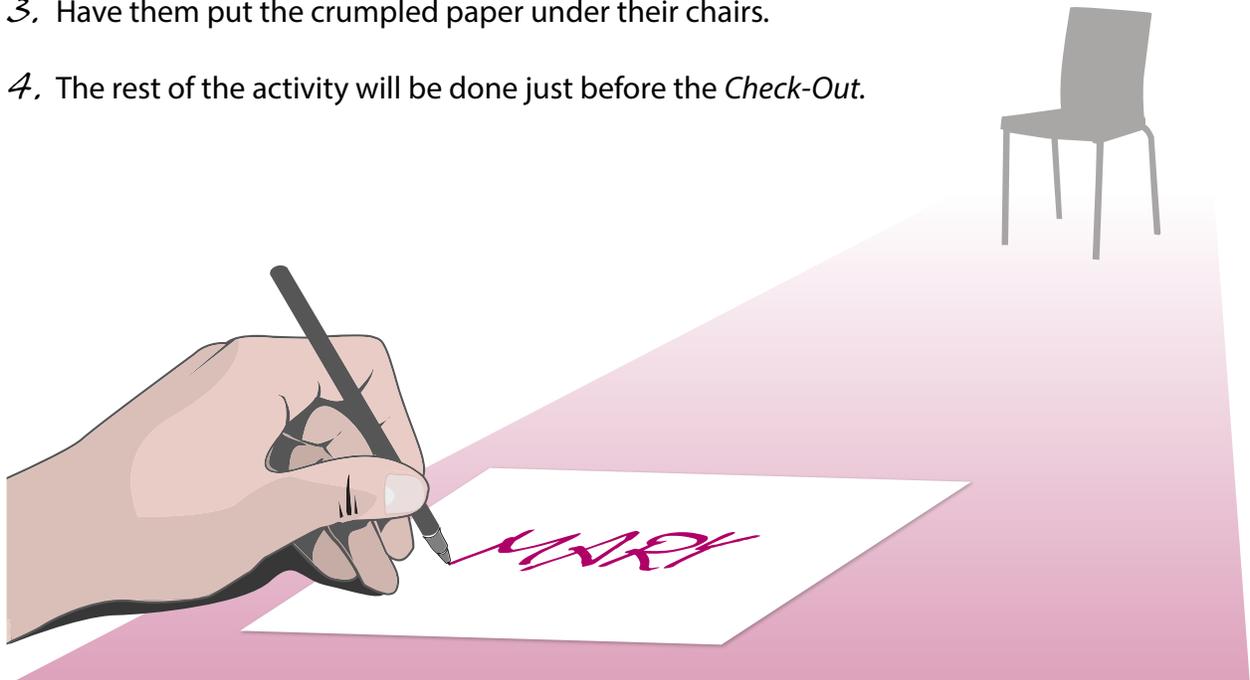
Appendix C



ACTIVITY: Changed, But Still You (Part One)

Preparation: Provide one piece of colored paper and a broad-tip marker for each participant.

1. Give each person a piece of paper and a marker; ask participants to write their first names in large, bold letters.
2. Then ask participants to take their papers and wad them up tightly into a ball.
3. Have them put the crumpled paper under their chairs.
4. The rest of the activity will be done just before the *Check-Out*.





LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

Peer Perceptions

- D Give the group these prompts (use other names if these are names of anyone in the group, and make it clear that these are fictional accounts, not about real people):
 - ◆ Kirsten is sixteen. A boy she knows physically forced her to have sex when she didn't want to do so.
 - ◆ Keith is sixteen. His adult babysitter did sexual things to him when he was ten.
- D Ask participants what are some negative things people might say about Kirsten and Keith. Write the phrases on flip charts.
- D Identify Kirsten and Keith as victims of sexual assault.
- D Ask participants whether they think the perceptions written on the flip chart are fair and accurate.
- D Deepen the conversation if the group seems ready to do so. For example, you could ask how a guy Kirsten would like to go out with might react if she told him what had happened to her, or how Keith's athletic teammates might react if they heard about what happened to him. You can also explore with the group how people might react differently based on the gender of the victim or perpetrator.
- D Explain what "stigma" is and how sexual assault and abuse victims are often unfairly stigmatized as a result of false perceptions. Help the group to understand that these falsehoods are sometimes the only thing we know about sexual assault. Such beliefs are common and can be very harmful. Facilitate a discussion of possible consequences, such as:
 - ◆ fear of disclosure
 - ◆ unsupportive responses to disclosure by friends and family
 - ◆ victim blaming
 - ◆ self-blame
 - ◆ lack of accountability for abusers
 - ◆ secondary victimization--additional harm done to victims by those who don't believe or support them (these can be peers or professionals)



ACTIVITY: Stand Up for Survivors

Preparation: Make copies of the handout *Ten True Things Teen Sexual Abuse and Assault Survivors Need to Know* (see [Appendix C](#)).

1. Review the handout with the group.
2. Referring to some of the negative statements about Kirsten and Keith from the discussion, go around the circle and have each participant stand up and say one thing in defense of Kirsten or Keith. For example, the facilitator could say, "Some people said that Kirsten is a slut because of what happened and because she didn't physically fight off her attacker." The participant can use a fact from the handout to defend her: "Kirsten might not have been able to move because she was too scared." "It wasn't Kirsten's fault, no matter what she did or didn't do."



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

Shame and Guilt

- ▶ How does sexual abuse/assault change how we think of ourselves?
- ▶ We compare our "insides" to other people's "outsides" - we often think we are the only ones with shame and secrets, and that other people are handling things much better than we are, but we can't really know that.
- ▶ Explain the difference between shame and guilt - guilt is feeling bad about something you have done that is against your values, while shame is feeling that if someone really knew what you were like, they would be disgusted with you.
- ▶ Normalize responses to sexual abuse and assault, referring to the information from Session Two, the *Ten True Things* handout, and the *Fight, Flight, Freeze* resource; acknowledge the losses that come with abuse.
- ▶ Ask the group to brainstorm some positive things that might come from a terrible experience like abuse or assault (such as new or stronger relationships with friends/family, or a desire to help other survivors).



ACTIVITY: Changed, But Still You (Part Two)

Preparation: Have an assortment of attractive stickers and markers available.

1. Have participants retrieve the crumpled papers under their chairs and smooth them out carefully.
2. Offer stickers and additional markers and ask participants to take a few minutes to decorate the name paper as attractively as possible.
3. Ask the following questions:
 - ◆ Does your paper look the same as it did before it got all crumpled up?
 - ◆ Will it ever look exactly the same as it did when you first got it?
 - ◆ Can you still read your name?
 - ◆ Does it look better in any way?
4. Draw the parallels between the process the paper went through and the experience of survivorship. Survivors are never exactly the same as they were before, but they are still themselves, they are still whole, and they can grow and develop into strong, attractive people.



CHECK-OUT: *This session has been about being your own best friend. In the Check-In, we talked about how a friend can lift your spirits. What is one way you can lift your own spirits in the coming week?*



RESOURCES

Fighting Invisible Tigers: Stress Management for Teens
Earl Hipp

Fight, Flight, Freeze - Talking About Tonic Immobility
Dr. Rebecca Campbell

<http://joyfulheartfoundation.org/wordpress/?s=fight%2C+flight%2C+freeze>



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ This can be a very powerful session, because it can help teens transform their image of themselves as “damaged goods.” In order to keep this psychoeducational rather than therapeutic, the emphasis should be on providing accurate information and giving participants the opportunity to process it, rather than on delving into individuals’ feelings of shame and guilt. The goal of the session is to help teens see that the negative labels they have placed on themselves may actually have come from community and peer attitudes and things the abuser has said to them in an effort to control them.
- ▶ As you will do throughout the group sessions, you can use this material to emphasize that no matter how a person reacts to sexual abuse or assault, the victimization is NEVER the victim’s fault. The perpetrator must be accountable.



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

Prior to this discussion, read the article on boundaries listed in the *Resource* section to inform your facilitation of this topic.

Start the discussion by asking the group how they would define personal boundaries and what types of boundaries there are. Boundaries are guidelines or limits that guide each person's interactions with others. They are shaped by our values, beliefs, experiences, and needs; they also help to define us. Boundaries can be physical (don't touch me without asking) or non-physical (I choose who I spend time with).

Asking some questions will help participants to understand the concept of boundaries a little better:

- ◆ Is it okay for someone to read your journal? Why or why not?
- ◆ What would you do if I walked into your house and started going through your dresser drawers?
- ◆ Would you go up to a stranger and give them a big bear hug?
- ◆ Would you talk to your math teacher about your latest crush?
- ◆ Have you ever had to pull back from a friendship or relationship?
- ◆ Have you ever felt like someone was standing too close to you during a conversation?
- ◆ Have you ever noticed that people from different cultures have varying comfort levels about physical closeness?
- ◆ Have you ever had a friend who was so needy that you felt suffocated? Have you ever been THAT friend?
- ◆ How do you make decisions about sharing personal information with people?
- ◆ When does attention from someone feel good and when does it feel creepy?

The following YouTube clips may also help to make the concept of boundaries more tangible for participants:

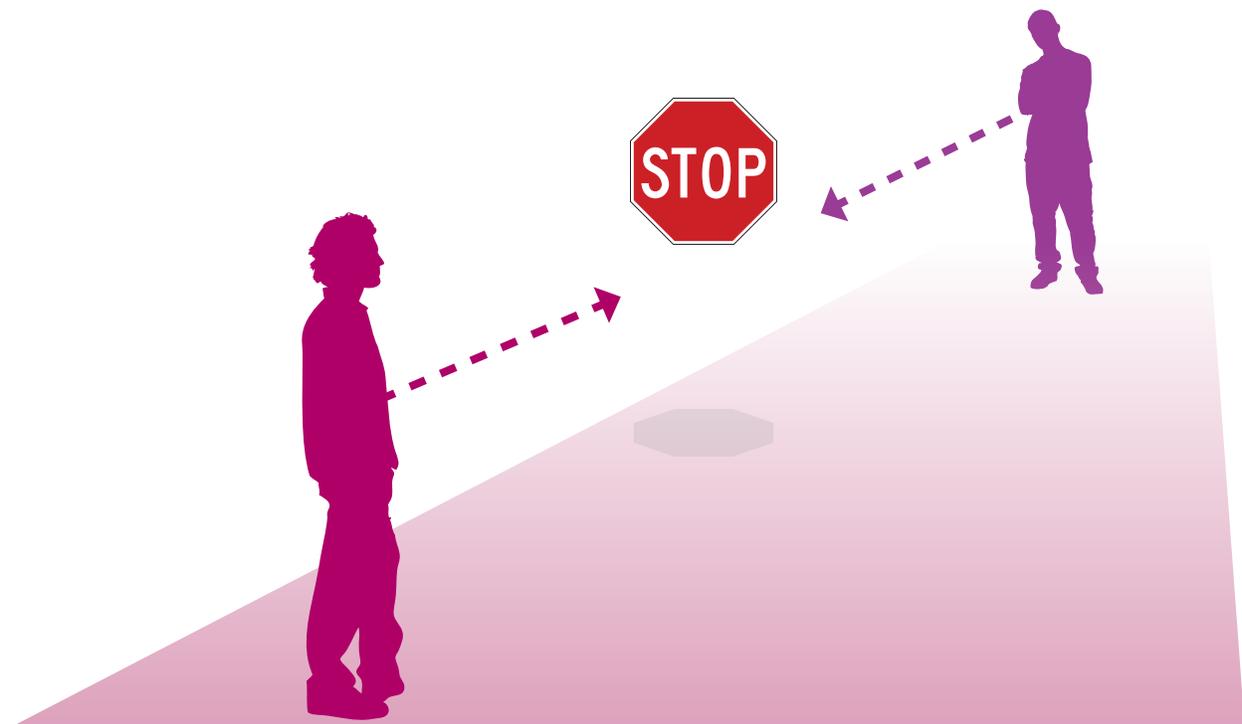
- ◆ **Draw The Line** (1 min, 20 secs)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFvt39-zPwk>
- ◆ **Project SOS Boundaries PSA** (30 secs)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCsUAHjM14k>



ACTIVITY: Stop, You're Too Close!

Preparation: Clear an area large enough for two people to stand at opposite ends of the room and have an unobstructed path to each other (about 18 feet, if you have a larger room).

1. Ask for two volunteers. Have them stand at opposite ends of the room, facing each other.
2. Ask the other participants to back out of the way and not say anything, but to watch the two volunteers.
3. Ask the volunteers to walk very slowly toward each other, looking at each other but not speaking. Instruct Person A to say STOP when the distance between the two people is about to become uncomfortable. Person B is to stop immediately, and the two people should continue looking at each other.
4. Then have the volunteers go back to their original spots and walk very slowly toward each other. This time Person B should say STOP whenever the distance begins to feel uncomfortable.
5. Repeat this with several other pairs of volunteers.



Talking points:

- ▶ If the two people stop and the person who gave the command is obviously feeling uncomfortable, ask them to take a couple of steps back, and then ask the participant, “Were you comfortable with the distance when you said STOP?” If the teen says, “no,” ask why it was difficult to say STOP earlier. Wait until after all participants have done the exercise to discuss this further.
- ▶ Discuss with the group some reasons why people have difficulty setting boundaries. Some possibilities:
 - ◆ not wanting to hurt the other person’s feelings
 - ◆ not having thought about it before, and therefore being unsure of your own feelings
 - ◆ not realizing you are uncomfortable until after it happens
 - ◆ being concerned about what other people may think of your boundaries
- ▶ Talk about some of the variables that make a difference in how comfortable people are with physical proximity, including:
 - ◆ how well the two people know each other
 - ◆ the relative size of the two people
 - ◆ the person’s gender or perceived gender
 - ◆ cultural norms
 - ◆ the perception of the other person’s mood or propensity for violence--in other words, you would not want to get too close to someone who looked angry or dangerous
- ▶ Discuss with the group how people react when you set boundaries. Do they try to make you feel stupid, uncool, or unreasonable?
- ▶ Be sure to explicitly say that power differentials make it very hard to set boundaries and this can lead to victimization. It is never the fault of the victim. As a society, we need to be sure that people learn to respect each other’s boundaries. Often, when boundaries are violated (as in sexual abuse or assault), people blame the victim for failing to set boundaries, when the blame actually lies with the perpetrator for failing to respect those boundaries or even to think or ask about them.



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

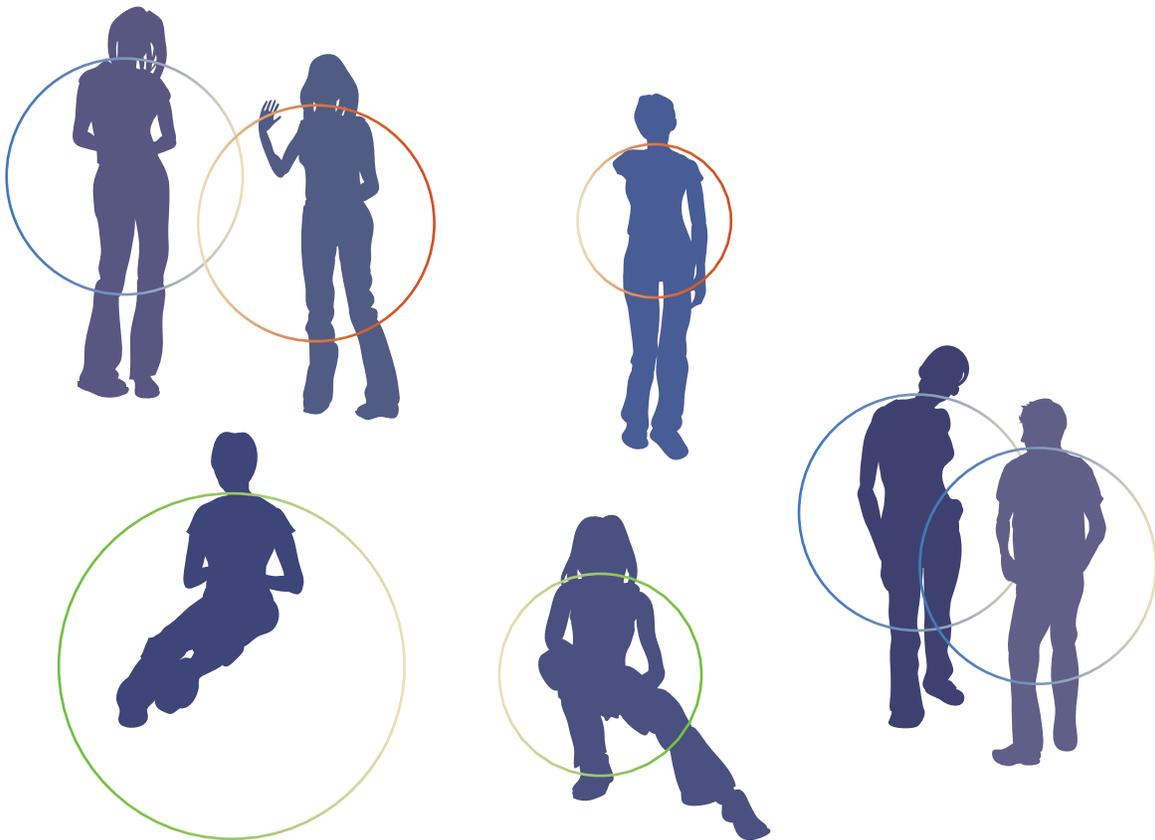
How Do Sexual Abuse and Assault Affect Survivors' Boundaries?

- ▶ Abuse can often cause children and teens to set boundaries that are too open or too closed. You may wish to use the analogy of a burglar alarm system that is either too sensitive or not responsive enough. If it is too sensitive, even a squirrel will set it off; if it is not responsive enough, a gang of burglars may enter the house undetected.
- ▶ Abuse can normalize unhealthy emotional and physical boundaries, making it more difficult to identify inappropriate or harmful interactions and relationships. For example, some child sexual abuse survivors may have difficulty setting physical or sexual boundaries because their abusive experience taught them that their bodies are for others' pleasure and use.
- ▶ Abusers invalidate victims' rights to their own boundaries. The use of manipulation, coercion, or force in sexual assault normalizes the idea that it is okay to disregard others' physical and emotional safety in order to satisfy one's own needs. For example, survivors of sexually coercive relationships may believe that setting limits is futile because their boundaries were always negotiated by the abuser.
- ▶ Survivors may not trust themselves to set and enforce their own boundaries, especially if they feel they complied with the abuser or their efforts to stop the abuse had negative consequences.
- ▶ Sexual abuse may reinforce the cultural messages females and young people receive that minimize their right to have and defend their autonomy. Girls are often taught through gender and social norms that they do not have control over their bodies and/or that they should not assert themselves or question others' actions. Remember, "Act like a lady," or "Children should be seen but not heard"?

Ask the group why they think boundaries are important and what healthy vs. unhealthy boundaries might look like. You may wish to address the following points in your discussion:

- ▶ Boundaries help us to be intentional in our decision making, especially in uncomfortable, unexpected, or difficult situations.
- ▶ Establishing our own boundaries also helps us to be aware of other people's boundaries. Respecting others' wishes and limits while honoring our own is essential to the development of healthy relationships.

- ▶ Setting boundaries that are too open can cause us to prioritize others' needs and wishes over our own safety and well-being. However, it is also detrimental to our happiness and growth if we shut other people out of our lives due to misplaced fear or distrust. Ask the group for examples of boundaries that are too open or too closed.
- ▶ When your boundaries are too open, you tend to feel resentful and as if you are being used. When your boundaries are too closed, you may feel isolated and alone.
- ▶ Boundaries are flexible and may change depending on what is happening in your life.
- ▶ Evaluating and adjusting our boundaries helps us to reflect upon who we are, what we want and need, and how we can meet those wants and needs while respecting ourselves and others.



**ACTIVITY: Setting and Communicating Our Boundaries**

Preparation: Visit the King County Sexual Assault Resource Center's 100 Conversations website (www.100conversations.org) and familiarize yourself with the project. Review Conversation #2 (Figuring Out Personal Boundaries), Conversation #3 (Personal Boundaries), and Conversation #4 (Communicating Your Boundaries) <http://www.100conversations.org/topics>. Choose several discussion prompts from each conversation and create a handout for participants. Make sure group members bring or have access to their journals.



1. Tell participants that you would like to give everyone a few minutes to reflect on their understanding of personal boundaries, how they have defined their own boundaries, and how they communicate these boundaries to others.
2. Distribute the handouts and ask group members to spend 10 minutes writing about the discussion prompts of their choice.
3. Let participants know that they do not need to share their reflections with the group but provide a few minutes to debrief if members are interested in discussing their thoughts or questions.



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

Introduce the concept that boundaries also exist in the digital world. Respectful communication should look the same whether it is in person or via an email or text, and everyone has the right to decide what information they share with others. Provide examples of how participants can establish their own boundaries and respect the boundaries of others in this context, such as:

- ◆ Setting privacy controls on your Facebook account to limit who has access to your personal information, posts, and photos.
- ◆ Not posting information or photos of your friends on social media sites without permission.
- ◆ Setting limits on how much time you invest in digital communication and social media; just because others can contact you does not mean that you have to be available 24 hours a day!
- ◆ Letting friends and partners know if they are texting or calling you too often.
- ◆ Not pressuring others to send you information or pictures they are not comfortable with.

If you have time, you may want to take them through a few pages on the site, www.thatnotcool.com. There are videos, real-life scenarios, and games all related to safety, privacy, respect, and healthy relationships in the digital world.





ACTIVITY: Standing up for Each Other

Preparation: Make copies of the *Personal Bill of Rights* handout for each group member (see [Appendix D](#)). Choose three rights from the handout and create three brief scenarios in which each of the rights is being challenged. These scenarios do not all need to be related to sexual violence. Post the three scenarios around the room alongside a piece of flipchart paper. Bring markers or post-it notes. Read the resource *Engaging Bystanders in Sexual Violence Prevention*.

1. Hand out the *Personal Bill of Rights* to each group member. Explain how understanding your personal rights is part of setting boundaries in your own life and in your community. Just as we can determine what we want and do not want in our personal lives, we also have a role in shaping the community and world we want to live in. Knowing your rights, defining the boundaries that are unique and important to you, and acting on these understandings is an ongoing process.
2. Give them time to review the handout and draw their attention to: “You have the right and responsibility to protect yourself and other people.” Explain the concept of bystander intervention:

This approach to preventing social problems, such as sexual violence, proposes that everyone is a bystander with a role in creating respectful and healthy communities. Since we know that sexual violence affects everyone, not just victims and survivors, we should all be invested in changing the norms and behaviors that contribute to it. Being an active bystander means speaking out and taking action in our everyday lives when we hear comments or witness behavior that is harmful to others and our community.

Darley and Latane (1968) developed *Five Steps Toward Taking Action*:

1. **Notice** the event along a continuum of actions
 2. **Consider** whether the situation demands your action
 3. **Decide** if you have a responsibility to act
 4. **Choose** what form of assistance to use
 5. **Understand** how to implement the choice safely
3. Depending on the age and maturity of your group, you may wish to show the following clip (7 mins, 58 secs) created by the Who Are You? Project. It is a realistic and powerful example of what bystander intervention looks like and will enhance participants’ understanding of this activity: <http://www.whoareyou.co.nz/index.html>

Reference

Darley, J.M., & Latane, B. (1968). Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8, 377-383.

4. Break participants into small groups or pairs. Give each group a few minutes at each scenario to talk about the five steps and brainstorm ways that they could be active bystanders if they witnessed the situation. Ask participants to write their ideas on the corresponding flipchart.
5. After the last rotation, have a spokesperson from each group share what is on their flipchart and debrief.



CHECK-OUT: *If you could say one thing to a friend or family member in the coming week in order to establish or strengthen a boundary, what would it be?*



RESOURCES

Healthy Personal Boundaries and How to Establish Them

<http://www.essentiallifefskills.net/personalboundaries.html>

Engaging Bystanders in Sexual Violence Prevention

Joan Tabachnick

<http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications/engaging-bystanders-sexual-violence-prevention>

Bystanders: Agents of Primary Prevention

Partners in Social Change, Winter 2010, WCSAP

<http://www.wcsap.org/bystanders-agents-primary-prevention>

MVP Playbook Curricula

Jackson Katz

(3 separate curricula in the WCSAP library that include scenario-based bystander intervention skill-building)

Boundaries: A Guide for Teens

Val J. Peter and Tom Dowd

www.thatsnotcool.com

That's Not Cool is a national public education campaign that uses digital examples of controlling, pressuring, and threatening behavior to raise awareness about and prevent teen dating abuse. *That's Not Cool* is sponsored and co-created by Futures Without Violence (formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund), the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women, and the Advertising Council. (Copied from the website)



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ Be careful that the discussion in today's session is oriented towards future actions and behaviors. We do not want to send the message that a lack of boundaries or a person's inability to enforce them is to blame for the abuse perpetrated against them. Rather, we want to support participants' rights to set healthy boundaries and bolster their confidence to do so.
- ▶ In the activity, *Standing Up for Each Other*, participants may give suggestions for bystander intervention that are unsafe or disrespectful. Use this as an opportunity to reiterate the messages from today's session and push the group to identify appropriate alternatives. For example, if a group member suggests a violent or physical intervention, you could provide the following reframe: ***We cannot protect each other's rights by violating another person's boundaries. How else might we intervene in this situation without creating further harm and disrespect?***
- ▶ Bystander intervention is a core principle of primary prevention. Utilize your colleagues and the resources listed above if this is not your area of expertise.
- ▶ Even for adults, the concept of boundaries is not easily understood and explained. Depending on your comfort and knowledge level, you may want to do some additional reading and self-reflection in preparation for this session. Working through some of the 100 Conversations discussion prompts on your own may make it easier for you to facilitate the discussion on this topic, and you may learn some things about yourself along the way!
- ▶ This session is a good opportunity to value and learn from the diversity in your group. Throughout your discussion, create space for participants to explore how their boundaries might be influenced by their religion, values, traditions, families, and communities.
- ▶ In preparation for next week's session, you will need to have the group brainstorm a list of three to five songs that are popular among participants and their friends.

SESSION SIX – HANGING OUT AND HOOKING UP



GOAL OF SESSION: To help participants identify the components of healthy and unhealthy intimate relationships. To reinforce each person's right to set sexual boundaries and provide skills to do so.



CHECK-IN: *Share one thing that is important to you in a dating relationship, whether you are currently seeing someone or not.*



HANDOUTS

Hanging out or Hooking up?

Futures Without Violence

These cards are available in English and Spanish and can be ordered for free or printed here:

<http://fvpfstores.stores.yahoo.net/hanging-out-or-hooking-up.html>

Driver's Ed for the Sexual Superhighway: Navigating Consent

Heather Corinna

http://www.scarleteen.com/article/boyfriend/drivers_ed_for_the_sexual_superhighway_navigating_consent

[Note: This is a lengthy document. You will utilize it for your facilitation of the discussion on consent but you will not necessarily review the entire document with your group. Encourage participants to read this article following the group session and to follow up with you if they have additional questions.]

**ACTIVITY: The Relationship Spectrum**

Preparation: Review the *Relationship Spectrum* exercise that can be found on the home page of www.loveisrespect.org. If you are not able to facilitate the exercise online, you can still utilize the content and concept with the group by reading the statements out loud and giving each participant green, yellow, and red pieces of paper to hold up in response.

1. Explain to the group that this is an activity to get everyone thinking about the topic for today's session. Ask participants to respond honestly to each statement and acknowledge that there may be disagreement within the group as to what is healthy, unhealthy, or abusive.
2. Go through as many of the statements as time permits. Let participants share their thoughts and reasoning when there seems to be less group consensus about the answer.

**LEARNING AND DISCUSSION****Hanging Out**

Build on the *Relationship Spectrum* activity and participants' responses to develop a list of healthy vs. unhealthy relationship characteristics with the group. You may want to reference a few of the sections on the *Hanging out or Hooking up* cards ("How is it Going" and "And on a Bad Day?"), as well as some of the themes discussed in the last session regarding boundaries. The resource, *Healthy Love: What in the World is That?* has great concepts that can be adapted to be more relevant to teens or you can use the *Things To Know Before You Say "Go"* cards to stimulate discussion.



ACTIVITY: Sound Relationships Nutritional Label

This activity was created by the Start Strong teen peer leaders and staff at the Boston Public Health Commission

<http://www.startstrongteens.org/communities/boston>.

Preparation: Read the directions for the Sound Relationships activity and print out a copy for each participant at <http://www.bphc.org/programs/cafh/violenceprevention/Forms%20%20Documents/Start%20Strong%20Sound%20Relationships.pdf>. Review the songs that the group suggested at the end of last week's session and choose the song that is most relevant for this activity. Look online to find the song lyrics and print out a copy for each participant. You may wish to see if there is a music video for the song that could also be used for the activity.

1. *As in other areas of our lives, what we see and hear every day influences the way we think about our relationships. I am sure we have all said, "I don't listen to the words; I just like the music!" But today we are going to look closely at the music that you are listening to and see what messages it sends about relationships.*
2. Hand out copies of the nutritional label and the song lyrics to each participant. Depending on the size of your group, divide participants into pairs or small groups for the activity.
3. Once everyone has completed the label, have participants compare their scores and discuss why they scored the song that way.
4. Encourage participants to start really listening to their music and the conversations around them about relationships. They can use this tool as a guide and as a means of talking about healthy relationships with the friends and trusted adults in their lives.
5. Emphasize that you are not trying to change their taste in music or tell them to stop listening to certain songs. Rather, this activity is designed to help them become critical consumers.



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

Sexual Abuse and Sexuality

- ▶ Emphasize with participants that just as sexual assault does not define a person, it also does not define a person's sexuality. Sexual assault does not take away survivors' power to envision and express their own sexuality and sexual identity.
- ▶ Acknowledge that it is normal to have questions or concerns about sex—some of these questions and concerns may be connected to an abusive experience but it is also just a part of growing up.
- ▶ Address some of the common myths and questions that survivors may have about sex and sexuality:
 - ◆ Abuse does not determine a person's sexual orientation, and experiencing a physical reaction during abuse does not tell you anything about your sexual orientation.
 - ◆ Experiencing physical pleasure during an abusive experience does not mean that it was your fault or that you wanted the abuse. Our bodies are designed to react sexually and may do so even in situations when we are not consenting.
 - ◆ Young children may participate in abuse because they don't believe they have any other choice or because they simply don't understand what's happening. Even if the child seems to be "willing," no adult should ever take advantage of a child's naiveté. This is why children cannot legally consent to sexual activity.
 - ◆ A survivor's sexual boundaries and needs in an intimate relationship may be influenced by an abusive experience. For example, a certain type of touch or sexual activity may trigger memories of the abuse. This is normal, and it is okay to communicate these boundaries and needs to your partner, with or without disclosing why.
 - ◆ No matter what kind of sexual victimization people have endured in the past, they have the right to choose the "what, when, where, how, and with whom" of their sexual lives in the present.
 - ◆ Survivors can have and deserve to have healthy and satisfying sexual lives when they are ready to do so.

Hooking Up

Let the group know that when you are talking about sexual activity, it can be anything ranging from holding hands to “having sex.” Acknowledge that some participants may not be having any sexual activity at all, and that’s certainly okay. Ask participants, ***What is safe sexual activity? What is fulfilling sexual activity? What makes sexual activity safe and fulfilling?***

No matter what kind of sexual victimization people have endured in the past, they have the right to choose the “what, when, where, how, and with whom” of their sexual lives in the present.

Here are a few points that you may want to address regarding the connection between healthy relationships and healthy sexual relationships:

- ◆ Sexual intimacy is one way of showing your care, love, and trust for another person. Just as you should be able to make choices about other aspects of your relationship, you have the choice to engage, or not to engage, in sexual activity.
- ◆ Someone who does not respect your boundaries regarding the amount of time you spend together or respect your requests for privacy may be less likely to respect your physical boundaries.
- ◆ The responsibility of sexual activity includes but also goes beyond pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. It also means being ready to talk with your partner about their wishes, fears, and needs, and accepting the boundaries that are mutually established. When both partners are willing and able to take on all of these responsibilities, sex can be a positive and pleasurable experience.
- ◆ In healthy relationships, partners take the time to clarify their own values about sex and relationships, and to talk about their beliefs as they get to know each other. Some people have religious convictions that affect their sexual decision-making; others have personal values about the circumstances under which sexual activity is or is not okay.
- ◆ Mutual consent depends on communication. In a healthy relationship, you should be able to communicate openly and without fear with your partner, and you should be able to trust that they will listen to and respect what you say.

Consent

Sex and sexual assault are not the same thing, although society and perpetrators may tell us otherwise. The primary difference is the presence or lack of mutual consent. Everyone should ask and be asked for consent prior to any type of sexual activity.

Ask participants what consent is and what it might look and sound like. Make sure to cover the following points (based on the handout, *Driver's Ed for the Sexual Superhighway: Navigating Consent*):

- ◆ Active consent means *freely* choosing to participate in a sexual activity and being able to communicate what you want and don't want. It is communicating "yes" through words and actions. It is not the absence of "no" and it does not involve pressure, force, or fear.
- ◆ Someone who is asleep or intoxicated cannot give consent.
- ◆ Conversations about boundaries and consent should take place no matter what type of relationship you are in and what level of sexual activity you choose to have with your partner.
- ◆ Consent is an ongoing conversation and an ongoing process. This means that you can withdraw consent after starting a sexual act and that consent needs to be given for every act, every time—just because you did something once doesn't mean that you have to do it again.
- ◆ It is *everyone's* responsibility to seek consent, no matter your gender or what type of sexual activity you are engaging in.
- ◆ It is best to communicate consent verbally, especially in a new relationship. Relying on nonverbal cues can be confusing and potentially harmful.
- ◆ Navigating consent is not easy but practice makes perfect! Encourage participants to practice active consent or non-consent in other areas of their lives. For example, instead of assuming you can take a sip of your partner's drink, ask first. If your friend asks to borrow your homework and you would rather not share it, express your feelings and say no. This helps us to understand what active consent is and get comfortable with saying and hearing "no."
- ◆ If sexual activity is mutually exciting, pleasurable, and safe, it should be fun to talk about with your partner.

The Learning and Discussion sections on Sexual Abuse and Sexuality, Hooking Up, and Consent were informed by the work of Heather Corinna and her training for WCSAP entitled, "Youth Sexuality and Culture: What Advocates Need to Know to Best Serve Teen Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Assault."



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

When one or both partners do not respect the other's boundaries, rights, and wishes, seek enthusiastic consent, or have concern for the other's safety and health, the sexual relationship may be abusive.

Provide examples of what sexual coercion may look like:

- ◆ badgering or threatening to harm partners unless they agree to have sex
- ◆ giving alcohol or drugs to "loosen someone up"
- ◆ interfering with a partner's choice to practice safe sex

Provide examples of what reproductive coercion may look like:

- ◆ Pregnancy Pressure: behaviors intended to pressure a partner to become pregnant when that partner does not wish to be pregnant
- ◆ Pregnancy Coercion: threats or acts of violence if a person does not comply with the partner's wishes regarding the decision of whether to terminate or continue a pregnancy
- ◆ Birth Control Sabotage: active interference with contraceptive methods, such as throwing away oral contraceptives or poking holes in a condom



CHECK-OUT: *What is one way that you can practice (nonsexual) consent this week?*



RESOURCES

Healthy Love: What in the World is That?

Sandra L. Brown

<http://saferrelationships magazine.com/healthy-love-what-in-the-world-is-that-2>

Sexual Assault and Coercion in Teen Relationships

WCSAP Recorded Webinar

<http://www.wcsap.org/sexual-assault-and-coercion-teen-relationships>

www.scarleteen.com

This is a highly informative and candid website designed to answer any and all questions that young people may have about sex and sexuality. This is a great resource both for participants and facilitators!

What is Healthy Sexual Development?

Heather Corinna

<http://rhrealitycheck.org/article/2011/06/09/what-healthy-sexual-development/>

Some Tips for Parents and Allies

This tip sheet has helpful considerations for talking about sex and sexuality with teen survivors.

Heather Corinna

[Appendix E](#)

Hanging Out or Hooking Up: Clinical Guidelines on Responding to Adolescent Relationship Abuse

Futures Without Violence

http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/HealthCare/Hanging-Out-or-Hooking-Up_Low_Res_Cropped_FINAL.pdf

Facts on American Teens' Sexual and Reproductive Health

Guttmacher Institute

<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/FB-ATSRH.pdf>

Things to Know Before You Say "Go"

Elsbeth Martindale

These question cards and the accompanying activity guide are available in the WCSAP library.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ If you are conducting more than eight sessions in your group, you may want to consider breaking this topic into two or more sessions. There is a great deal of information to cover and participants may have a lot of questions. If you must cover the material in one session, pick and choose the information that is most relevant to the group's participants.
- ▶ Although we want to give participants the information necessary to identify unhealthy or abusive relationships, we also want the group to know what they can and should expect from intimate relationships. In your discussion, look for opportunities to provide examples of what we DO want rather than always talking about what we don't want.
- ▶ Prior to this session, take some time to assess your own knowledge and comfort level around issues of sex and sexuality. Identify the personal values and biases that may affect your facilitation and prepare for this session with this information in mind. It may be helpful to process these thoughts and concerns with your co-facilitator or a trusted colleague.
- ▶ It is not your role in this session to encourage or discourage sexual activity. As with other boundaries, participants' decisions about intimacy will be informed by their own values, their parents or caregivers, their culture, and their relationships. Rather, it is your goal to reinforce their right to make these decisions and provide them with the information and skills to do so in a healthy way.
- ▶ Participants are going to be at varying levels of sexual and romantic involvement, and it is possible that they have never had a relationship or sexual experience other than abuse. It is important to normalize this range and talk about the fact that everyone moves at their own pace.
- ▶ As discussed in the *Considerations* section of this Guide, many teens are exploring their sexual orientations and gender identities. Use examples in this session that acknowledge this diversity and always mirror the language used by participants.
- ▶ The facilitators in our advisory group shared that some participants may digress during discussion into "sexual storytelling." If this happens you will want to reiterate that everyone moves at their own pace and redirect the conversation. This might also be an opportunity to reinforce and model good boundaries!
- ▶ It is possible that one or more of your group participants may have current or previous involvement with a partner who is much older. Thus, it is important that you revisit the issue of mandated reporting and provide this scenario as an example. You will want to

be familiar with the associated laws in Washington (RCW 9A.44.073 <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=9a.44.073> through RCW 9A.44.096 <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=9A.44.096>). However, discouraging these relationships solely based on the legal ramifications is likely not an effective deterrent. Rather, explain that these laws were created because of concerns with power imbalances and how this impacts the issue of consent. Focus on some of the key points of healthy vs. unhealthy relationships and how age might affect these dynamics.

SESSION SEVEN – WHO’S ON YOUR TEAM?



GOAL OF SESSION: To help participants identify the individuals who can support them and provide positive mentorship while planting the seed that participants can also offer support to others.



CHECK-IN: *Name one person you admire (living or dead, celebrity or everyday person) and the most important thing you admire about that person.*



HANDOUTS

Being Your Own Guide

WCSAP

[Appendix F](#)

Making & Becoming a Good Friend - page 9-3

Karol Kumpfer and MADD

http://support.madd.org/docs/Lesson_9_Handout_MADD_SFP.pdf

[Note: This handout is intended for parents to fill out with their kids but we are using it as a tool for teens themselves to fill out during the session. You may wish to copy it without the two paragraphs that precede the checklists.]



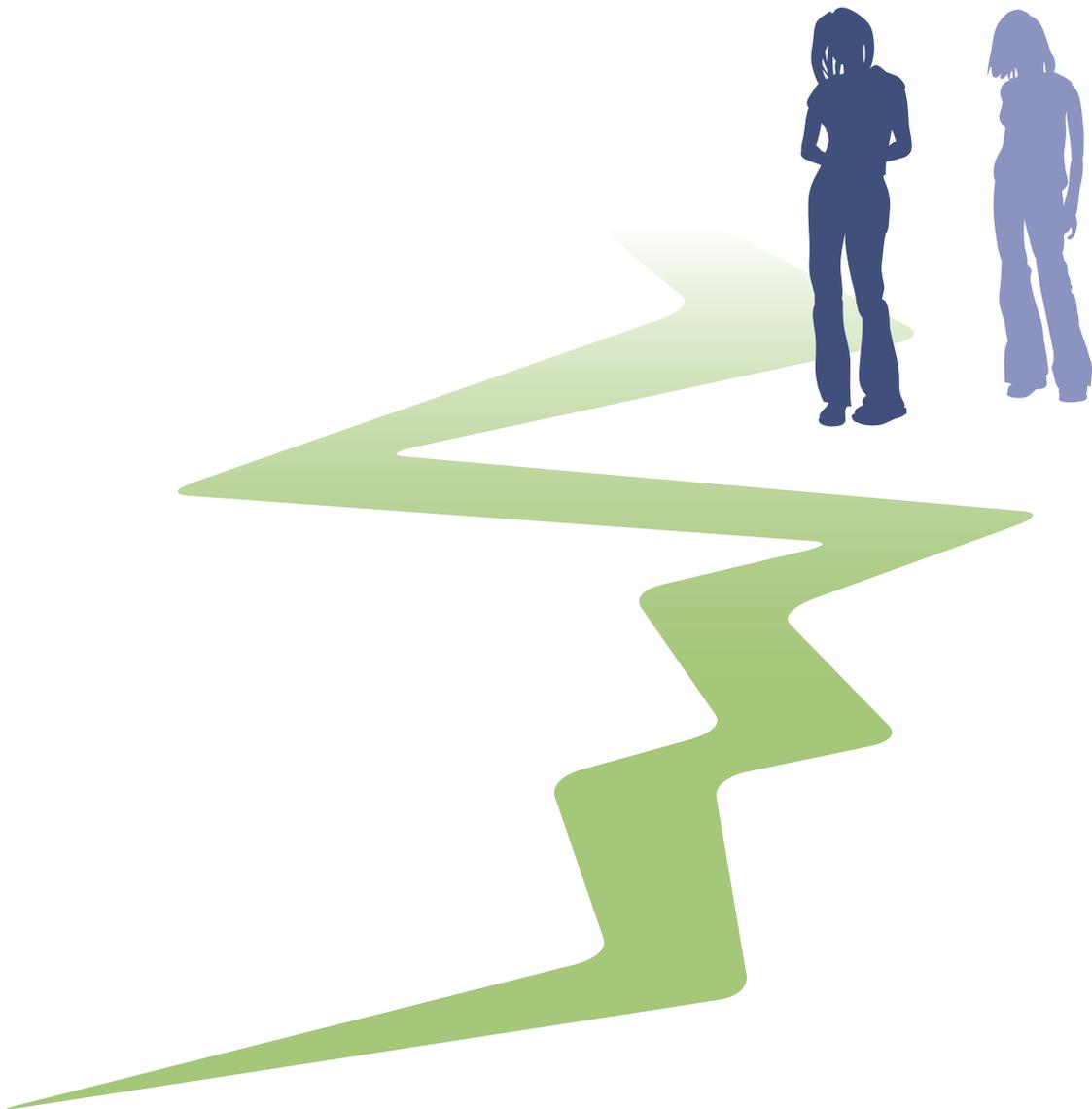
ACTIVITY: The Traveler

Preparation: Set up a small obstacle course, using simple objects, preferably in a separate room or hallway that the participants don't see beforehand. You can use cardboard boxes, beach balls, shoes, stuffed animals, or anything that won't really harm someone who trips over it. Have a starting line (use masking tape on the floor) and a finish line. Have a dark bandanna or scarf to be used as a blindfold.

During this activity, be sensitive to possible self-consciousness or anxiety on the part of a participant who may not want to play the role of Traveler. Be sure not to urge a reluctant participant to play that role since it involves being blindfolded and led. Be sure to explain clearly what the volunteer will have to do so that participants can make an informed decision (and this could even be a teaching point!). Offer explicit upfront information about what kind of touching is involved in the activity: **If you volunteer to be a Traveler, you will wear a blindfold and you will hold the arm of another person just long enough to be guided to the starting point of the activity.**

1. Ask for a volunteer who is willing to be the Traveler, which involves being blindfolded and led to the obstacle course by holding the Guide's arm. Ask for another group member to volunteer as the Guide.
2. Blindfold the Traveler. Have the Guide offer an arm to the Traveler, and slowly guide the Traveler to the obstacle course area starting line.
3. Bring the group to the obstacle course area. Everyone but the Traveler and the Guide should stand back and observe. Observers are not allowed to talk during this exercise.
4. The Traveler stands at the starting line and the Guide stands nearby but out of the way. The Guide does not touch the Traveler and the Traveler lets go of the Guide's arm. Using verbal instructions only, the Guide gives directions to guide the Traveler through the obstacle course. Another group member or the facilitator can stand by as a spotter in case the Traveler trips, but this should not be mentioned to the Traveler in advance.
5. The Guide's goal is to get the Traveler to the finish line without touching or running into any obstacles.
6. After the exercise, have the Traveler take off the blindfold, and have the group sit down together to debrief the activity.

7. Ask the Traveler what the experience was like; ask the Guide what it was like; and ask the group what it was like to observe.
8. Discuss the challenges of each of the roles. For example, Travelers may struggle with concerns about vulnerability, trust, fear, or anxiety. Guides may feel anxious about making a mistake, but may also feel empowered and helpful. Observers may find it frustrating that they are unable to help when they see someone having difficulty.





LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

- ▶ Wikipedia describes a guide as “a person who leads anyone through unknown or unmapped country.”
- ▶ Our lives are always unknown or unmapped territory.
- ▶ A guide doesn’t tell you where to go or criticize you if you make a mistake. A guide simply helps you figure out where you want to go, and then gives you information and tools to get there.

These questions are all potential prompts. Choose those that best fit your group dynamics and prior discussions.

- ◆ Who are the guides in your life?
 - ▲ Parents? Grandparents? Aunts or uncles? Family friends?
 - ▲ Teachers? Counselors? Coaches? Youth group leaders?
 - ▲ Healthy friends? Brothers, sisters, cousins?
 - ▲ Spiritual leaders? Clergy? Any other sources of inspiration?
- ◆ How do you decide whether someone is going to be a good guide for you? What are the qualities of a good guide? (You may wish to use the handout on *Making & Becoming a Good Friend*.)
- ◆ Does a guide need to share certain experiences with a traveler, such as ethnic or cultural background? Why or why not? What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of having a guide who is very different from you?
- ◆ What do you do when the people you look to for guidance let you down? Can you love someone but still decide that you don’t want that person to be your guide?
- ◆ Are you a guide for others? What kind of responsibility comes with that role? Can you be a guide even if you don’t have any kind of formal leadership position?
- ◆ How can you guide or mentor someone without being bossy or pushy? How can you use your painful past experiences to offer guidance to others?



SELF-CARE ACTIVITY: Who Are Your Lifesavers?

Preparation: Purchase a small inflatable swimming ring (a “life saver”) from your local dollar store for each participant. If swimming rings aren’t available or your budget is limited, you can cut them out of construction paper. Gather permanent markers in a variety of colors.

1. Ask participants to write on their life savers the names of all the people in their lives that they can turn to for help.
2. If it is safe for them to take the life savers home, encourage participants to pull them out during times that they are feeling alone or need support.



ACTIVITY: Being Your Own Guide

1. Give group members the *Being Your Own Guide* handout.
2. Have them either fill out the worksheet or use it as a prompt for journaling.
3. Have something for participants to play with when they are done so they don’t interrupt others - pipe cleaners, drawing materials, or puzzles such as word search or crossword puzzles (you can find these online for free).
4. It is important to reinforce that each person is truly one’s own most powerful team member.



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

Wrap-Up

- ▶ We are all Travelers in some aspects of our lives and Guides in others.
- ▶ When you travel over difficult terrain, you gain skills and wisdom that can make you an excellent guide.
- ▶ Choose your guides wisely. Remember that ultimately, you make your own choices and you will know best where you want to go.

Planning for Graduation

- ▶ Remind the group that the next session is the last.
- ▶ Given realistic parameters (time, budget, location), involve the group in planning a graduation celebration.
- ▶ Acknowledge that endings can be bittersweet.



CHECK-OUT: *Share one of the first three items from your Being Your Own Guide worksheet and describe how it can help you in the coming week.*



RESOURCES

Key Qualities of a Peer Mentor

Youth Empowerment Seminars

<http://www.yess.co.nz/QualitiesofaPeerMentor.html>

Knowing Who to Trust

Elizabeth Kupferman

<http://www.expressivecounseling.com/trustworthy-people/>



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ The activities and discussions during this session are designed to build upon the trust that the group has developed to this point.
- ▶ The progression of activities and discussion is designed to help participants see that we may all play a variety of roles in life. Teens' roles are not static; they are dynamic and we don't want participants to be stuck in the victim role. Helping teens to see themselves as guides for others helps build self-esteem and a sense of hope.
- ▶ The discussion during this session will help facilitators gauge participants' needs after the conclusion of group. Be sure to follow-up with participants who may be lacking positive support people in their lives and provide referrals for additional services or individual advocacy.

SESSION EIGHT – MOVING INTO THE FUTURE



GOAL OF SESSION: To provide an opportunity to review and celebrate progress made during the group, reinforce hope for the future, and allow participants to say goodbye.



CHECK-IN: *What will you miss the most about this group?*



HANDOUTS
Post-Test and End-of-Group Evaluation
Appendix G



ACTIVITY: Unanswered Questions

Preparation: Bring index cards, pens, and a box or large envelope.

1. Give each participant a few cards and a pen.
2. Ask them to write down any unanswered questions that they have about anything you have covered in the group sessions, one per card.
3. Tell them that they do not have to identify themselves, so no one will know who asked what question.
4. Tell them that if you are not able to answer all of the questions, they can follow up with you in the future individually and you will do your best to answer.
5. Pass around the box or envelope and have everyone put their cards, filled out or blank, into the container.
6. Look over the questions while participants are doing the next activity. Look for appropriate opportunities to answer the questions throughout the remainder of the session.
7. Be sure to answer any questions that might potentially be triggering or create disturbing feelings early in the group session, saving lighter questions for later.
8. If you feel a question is inappropriate for the group or for the last session, remind people that you will answer questions in the future if they call or come in to see you.



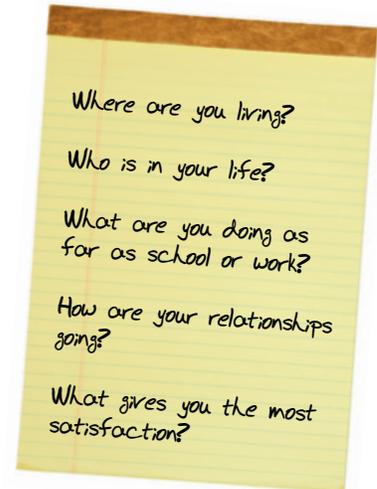


ACTIVITY: A Letter from Myself

Preparation: Bring pens and attractive stationery. Allow participants to choose their own stationery. Create a list that may include the following prompts and provide it to participants on a flip chart or handout: Where are you living? Who is in your life? What are you doing as far as school or work? How are your relationships going? What gives you the most satisfaction?

Directions to participants:

1. Imagine it is now five years in the future (give them a specific date five years ahead). Please write this date at the top of your paper.
2. Start off by addressing this letter to yourself: Dear [your name],
3. Picture in your mind your life going just the way you would like it to, five years from now. [Read the prompts from the flip chart or handout]
4. Write a short letter to your current self from your future self. Tell yourself about all the things mentioned in the questions. Make it as positive and realistic as you can. Focus on what you really want in your life.
5. If participants say they can't write or don't know how to write this, give them the option of making a drawing or just putting words on the page without sentences, like "true love" or "working as a mechanic."
6. Invite participants to share some of what they have written, while making it clear that it is okay for them to keep private whatever they wish.





LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

Setting Goals and Shaping Your Life

- ▶ Referring to the letter-writing activity, tell the group that what they just did was set long-term goals.
- ▶ Sometimes, after a traumatic experience, people have a hard time envisioning their future.
- ▶ Trauma may make us believe that the world is completely unpredictable, and that our choices have no effect.
- ▶ While we certainly can't control everything that happens to us, we do have some choices in how we think, how we approach others, and the standards we live by.
- ▶ Even people who have been through terrible experiences can and do go on to live happy, productive lives. Ask the group for examples from people they know personally, celebrities, historical figures, or literary figures.
- ▶ The only way to achieve a long-term goal is to take small steps toward it on a regular basis. We are all human and we will all mess up, but a great question to ask ourselves is, "Am I moving toward what I want in my life, or away from it?"
- ▶ Give participants genuine praise for their choice to enter, participate in, and stick with this group. Their choices took courage and vision, and the fact that they are here today means they are capable of moving toward the goals in their lives.
- ▶ Going around the group, ask participants to name one small thing they will do in the next week or two to move closer to their goals.
- ▶ Remind them that last week, they identified people who could serve as their guides. If participants get stuck or feel that they are moving away from their own goals, these guides are excellent resources for getting back on track.


ACTIVITY: Harvest of Wisdom

Preparation: Divide the participants into groups no larger than four. For each group, provide a large poster board, lots of magazines of all types (try to find magazines with positive images!), glue sticks, scissors, and markers.

1. *We are going to make collages that represent how things are different for you now than they were when you started this group. These collages can represent changes in your feelings about what happened to you, how you are doing in your everyday life, or the things you have learned.*
2. *You can cut out pictures from the magazines, draw things, or write words on the posters - or do all of these things.*
3. *If this is okay with you, I'd like to keep these posters and use them to help future group members understand a little more about how participating in group can help, and to give them a sense of hope.*
4. While the groups are working, play some positive, upbeat music in the genres they like. Play it softly enough so that participants can talk freely with each other.
5. Give the groups at least 15 to 20 minutes for this activity.
6. Debrief by asking each group to share some thoughts about their posters.


ACTIVITY: Evaluation

Preparation: Prepare evaluation handouts (see [Appendix G](#)) and bring a large envelope for completed forms.

1. Explain that evaluation helps you (the facilitator) and the agency to make improvements for future groups, and that participants' feedback is very important.
2. Ask people to be completely honest.
3. Tell them the evaluations are anonymous and they can put their completed evaluations into the envelope themselves when they are done.



ACTIVITY: Graduation

Preparation: Depending on what the group decided about how they would like their graduation to be (Session Seven), bring supplies as planned.

1. Ask group members what they would like to do with the materials they have produced during the course of the group, such as their journals or worksheets. Since every person's situation is different, make it clear that different solutions are fine. Some participants may want to take their materials home; others may want you to keep them (let them know how long it is reasonable for you to keep them, and how you will secure the materials); others may want you to destroy the materials or may wish to do this themselves.
2. Ask each group member to say something learned from the group that has made a positive difference.
3. Conduct whatever sort of graduation ceremony the group has chosen.
4. Acknowledge that all endings are bittersweet, and remind the participants that they can access help through other sources (their advocate or therapist, their school counselor, friends, and other guides) if they find they are having difficulties.
5. Reinforce their accomplishments, their courage in dealing with tough topics, and the value of learning skills in group that will help them in the future.
6. Give participants your card or agency brochure and let them know you or other advocates are available to help if they need you.
7. Be sure to have some refreshments! What you provide will depend on your budget and the group's preferences.





CHECK-OUT: *This is our last Check-Out. Take a couple of minutes to say whatever you would like to say to the entire group.*



RESOURCES

Leading Psychoeducational Groups for Children and Adolescents

Termination chapter, pp. 129-142

Janice L. DeLucia-Waack



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ Termination can be difficult for group members, particularly if they have come to see the group as a source of emotional support. Validate participants' feelings without discounting them. If a group member says something like, "I'm going to be really sad now that group is over," don't say, "Oh, you will be fine!" Validate by saying something like, "It is difficult to say goodbye. It sounds like you will really miss the group."
- ▶ You can help participants to remember other sources of support, such as the guides they identified in Session Seven, while you also convey your belief that they are better equipped to handle things that come up now that they have learned some skills for coping.
- ▶ You may find that you are also somewhat sad at the end of group. While it is fine to acknowledge that you have enjoyed the experience and will miss the group, remember not to make it about you. Utilize your co-facilitator or other colleagues to process feelings that are not appropriate to share with the group.
- ▶ The collage activity and the group evaluation convey the concept that you value each participant's feedback and perceptions of the group experience.
- ▶ With the collage activity, you can talk about how this is one way group participants will serve as guides for future group members. The idea that these young people have something to contribute to others is an important component in their healing process.
- ▶ This session is activity-laden because you will want to make the most of their last opportunity to interact. Depending on time constraints, you may need to pick and choose among the suggested activities rather than attempt them all.



APPENDICES

SECTION 3

Note to readers:

Please feel free to copy the handouts (including attribution) in the appendices for your work with survivors. For any other purpose, including reprinting or distributing electronically, please contact the individual author for permission.

APPENDIX A

State of Washington Sexual Abuse/Assault Standards

SUPPORT GROUP	
Definition	Regular facilitated meetings of victims and/or secondary victims of sexual abuse/assault with a supportive and educational focus.
Goals	To provide emotional stability and promote the understanding of the impact of sexual abuse/assault.
Duration	1 to 2 hour average length of time per session; 1 to 4 sessions per month; 3 months to a year
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Group meetings with a planned beginning and ending date and an outcome-based, structured agenda with a primary focus on sexual abuse/assault issues.
Service Recipients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Adult or adolescent sexual abuse/assault victims ◆ Non-offending parents of child sexual abuse/assault victims ◆ Significant others who require help/assistance in order to address their own reactions to victimization and to effectively support the victim
Qualifications	<p>The facilitator must complete 30 hours of initial sexual abuse/assault training, plus 12 hours of ongoing sexual abuse/assault training annually. All trainings must be approved by the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs (both the curriculum and the trainer). The provider must be familiar with the dynamics of sexual abuse/assault and relevant community resources, as well as have an understanding of how medical, legal and social services respond to victims of sexual abuse/assault. The facilitator must also have training in group process and interpersonal dynamics, and experience as a facilitator or co-facilitator.</p> <p>The facilitator must be supervised by a paid staff person with a minimum of a BA degree in Human Services or a related field plus two years of relevant experience or a combination of six years of relevant experience, education and training. The facilitator must be, or receive consultation on group process from, a Masters level therapist.</p>
March 1999	

APPENDIX B

The COPE Plan – Stress Management for Teens

By Jennifer Y. Levy-Peck, PhD

C – CALM

- ▶ **When you are stressed, you tend to “climb the stress ladder.”** You are hanging out close to the top, and even if the next stressful thing that happens is a small one, it can make you fall.
- ▶ **The goal is to do regular activities that help you stay toward the bottom of the stress ladder.** That way, if something difficult comes up, you can work your way back down to the ground safely.
- ▶ **Pay attention to your health habits if you want to feel calmer.** It may sound boring, but getting enough sleep, eating three meals a day, and drinking fewer caffeinated drinks (like coffee, tea, or soda) can really help lower your stress level.
- ▶ **Calming activities include**
 - ◆ **Regular exercise** – walking, bicycling, swimming, dancing, or any other aerobic exercise, preferably done on a daily basis. Yoga and tai chi are calming exercises, and you may be able to find a local class.
 - ◆ **Meditation** – this can be as simple as breathing slowly and repeating a simple word, like the word “one.” Try to clear your mind, and if thoughts come up, just let them float by. You can also find books, DVDs, and CDs on meditation.
 - ◆ **Enjoying nature** – simply being outside in a beautiful setting can be calming. Try to find a safe park or any other place where you can pay attention to the natural environment.
 - ◆ **Simple breathing exercises** – breathe in slowly and deeply to the count of four, hold for a count of three, and exhale slowly, releasing all the air in your lungs. Repeat several times.

My plan for increasing calming activities:

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O - OPEN

- ▶ **Holding things in can increase your stress level.** Find at least one adult you can confide in comfortably –a parent, another relative, a family friend, a school counselor, or a mental health therapist. If you worry you might be in an abusive relationship or you have had any unwanted sexual experiences, you can also talk to an advocate at your local domestic violence or sexual assault center.
- ▶ **Develop your assertiveness skills.** Begin by saying how you feel, explain how the other person’s behavior affects you, and ask for change. “I feel really irritated because you showed up an hour late and we planned to see a movie. When you don’t call and let me know what is going on, I can’t make other plans. If something comes up and you are going to be late, please give me a call.” If you don’t feel safe or comfortable talking this way with a friend or someone you are seeing, that’s a sign that the relationship may not be healthy.
- ▶ **Be honest with yourself.** If you are doing things that are increasing your stress level, such as waiting to the last minute to get your schoolwork done or increasing tension at home by not doing your chores, admit it to yourself and make a plan for improvement.
- ▶ [For teens in support groups] **Participate to the best of your ability in your support group.** Show up, be fully present, and speak your mind. Having this safe place to talk about what is stressing you out will help you to cope more effectively.

My plan for increasing openness activities:

P - PLAYFUL

- ▶ **Having fun is a great way to reduce your stress.** Make a list of things you really enjoy doing. Then pick a few items from your list and figure out a way to make them happen this week. Try to use your imagination to think of some things you would enjoy but you haven't done before, like learning to play guitar or trying a new video game, and be sure to include some simple things like calling a friend you haven't seen in a while or watching a movie at home.
- ▶ **Build up your sense of humor.** Humor is one of the best ways to be resilient, which means that you can bounce back when tough things happen. Try to see the funny side of things. When you are feeling down or stressed, watching a comedy or talking to a friend with a great sense of humor can help improve your mood.
- ▶ **Find what you love to do.** When even working hard seems like play, you have found the right activity. It could be drawing, writing a song, making a video, building a website, putting together just the right outfit, learning a martial art, helping build a garden shed, or cooking a great meal. Remember that any new activity can feel a bit awkward or difficult at first, but if you stick with it, it can be really rewarding.

My plan for increasing playful activities:

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E - ENCOURAGING

- ▶ **Hang around with people who lift you up, rather than tearing you down.** When you are stressed, it is especially important to think about the people you spend time with. Who makes you feel good? How can you spend more time with those people?
- ▶ **Encourage yourself.** Pay attention to what you say to yourself. Would you say something like that to a friend who was having a hard time? Think of a simple, encouraging phrase (called “an affirmation”) and repeat it to yourself. It might be something like, “I am a strong person, and I can get through this.”
- ▶ **Make sure you have encouraging adults in your life.** If your mom or dad is going through a tough time, they may not be helping you to feel positive. This is when a grandparent, a teacher, or a coach who believes in you can be really helpful.
- ▶ **Encourage others.** When you make an effort to help others, it makes you feel better about yourself. Volunteer work is a great way to do this. You can also look for opportunities to help friends and family members or to do something positive in your community. Just remember to balance your needs with your desire to help, so you don’t get in over your head or become overwhelmed.

My plan for increasing encouraging activities:

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APPENDIX C

10 True Things

Teen Sexual Abuse and Assault Survivors Need to Know

1. Sexual abuse or assault is NEVER your fault.
2. Even if you did something you should not have done (like drinking or going someplace you weren't supposed to), that NEVER justifies sexual abuse or assault.
3. When people go through an overwhelmingly scary experience, they sometimes just freeze and literally can't move or do anything. This is called "tonic immobility" and it is a biological reaction. If this happened to you, it does not mean you are weak or that you wanted to be victimized.
4. People who sexually abuse or assault children or teens often do sneaky things to gain their victims' trust. This is called "grooming." They make their victims feel special and then they take advantage of them.
5. You may feel there is something wrong with you, that you are dirty or disgusting because of what happened to you. That is just not true. Even if you had some sexual feelings during the abuse, that was just a normal body reaction, and doesn't mean you wanted it to happen.
6. People who abuse or assault children or teens don't usually use weapons like knives or guns. They use their power over the victim, fear and threats, seduction (convincing someone), ridicule, blame, secrecy, and shame. Because it is usually someone you know, they can figure out how to manipulate you.
7. Being forced to have sex does not take away your virginity. If you did not consent to having sex, you can still consider yourself a virgin if that matters to you. No matter what you have done sexually or what has been done to you, you always have the right to make a choice about sexual activity – every time, and with every partner.
8. Lots of people are sexually victimized more than once, often by more than one person. This does not mean that you have done something wrong or that it is your fault.
9. Survivors of sexual abuse and assault can go on to have healthy, loving relationships with people who respect and care about them. If someone you are seeing makes you feel bad about yourself because of what happened, that person is not worthy of a relationship.
10. Look around. One out of every four women and one out of every seven men has been sexually abused in their lifetime. You can't tell which ones. It can happen to anyone. What happened to you cannot be taken away, but it is just a little part of who you are. You are a unique individual, and you are a survivor.

APPENDIX D

Personal Bill of Rights

By Ellen Hohenstein and Arline Kennedy

- ▶ Your body is yours to respect and protect.
- ▶ You have a right to be safe.
- ▶ You have the right to say “no” to anything that does not feel comfortable to you.
- ▶ You don’t have to do anything with your body, no matter whom you are with, whether you have done it before, or what you agreed to earlier.
- ▶ You have the right to say “no” to sex or any other behavior, such as using drugs or alcohol.
- ▶ You don’t have to give explanations, saying “no” or “I don’t want to” is enough.
- ▶ You have the right to trust your feelings.
- ▶ You have the responsibility to respect other people’s right to say no to you.
- ▶ You have the right and responsibility to protect yourself and other people.
- ▶ It is not your fault if someone makes you do something that you do not want to do.
- ▶ You have the right to tell someone if you are hurt or forced to do something you didn’t want to do.
- ▶ You have the right to find an adult that you can trust and tell him/her what happened.
- ▶ You are a valuable person and an important part of your community.
- ▶ You deserve to be treated with respect.

Reference

Hohenstein, E., & Kennedy, A. (2001). *Sexual Assault Risk Reduction Curriculum: A Comprehensive Guide for the Classroom Teacher or Community Educator*. A project of the San Diego Police Department Sex Crimes Unit, San Diego City Schools Intervention Services, and the Institute for Public Health at San Diego State University. <http://www.mysati.com/Downloads/Curriculum.pdf>

APPENDIX E

Tips for Parents and Allies

By Heather Corinna

- ▶ **Be gentle and conservative when identifying sex and sexuality issues that may be connected to previous abuse or assault.** Sometimes they may be, sometimes they will not be, but people often err in connecting previous abuse or assault too much to teen and young adult sex and sexuality. This can send a message to a survivor that because of their assault, they may never have a sexuality or sex life that isn't about being victimized, or because of their assault they are only or all about sex. Not only is that disempowering, it can create a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- ▶ **Remember that this young person is not only an assault survivor: they are also a young person like everyone else.** In other words, they will often be curious about sex and sexuality, may well have desires to pursue or engage in romantic and sexual relationships, may want to experience and explore sexual desires and activities. This is typical personal and sexual development for most young people, not just assault/abuse survivors.
- ▶ **Help them with pacing.** The desire to seek out sex in order to "feel normal" can understandably be strong, and be all the more so for someone who has been victimized. Young people often need help with sexual pacing, period, especially if they have gotten messages that they do not have the agency or right to set limits and boundaries and have them respected. Be clear that if and when we want or need things to go slowly, that is normal, whatever our reasons. Check in with them about how their sexual pace feels.
- ▶ **Be sure not to automatically conflate sexual assault and abuse with sex.** In most cases, abuse or assault may have been sex for the perpetrator, but was not for the victim. However, the perpetrator often presents it to the victim as if it is sex for both, as does our culture. Talk about the differences between sexual assault and mutually wanted, mutually consensual sex. Many people have no real sense of what real, enthusiastic consent looks like or how to go about seeking it out and having it sought out by others. Everyone needs that information, especially those who have been assaulted and may have gotten the message consent does not matter or that it is normal for someone not to seek consent and only move forward sexually with full consent. Make clear how different abuse and consensual sex are and the ways we can tell the difference.
- ▶ **Be supportive of their relationships.** Research shows that unhealthy romantic or sexual relationships occur more often for young people who do not feel supported in any romantic or sexual relationships. If a relationship seems problematic or unhealthy, you don't have to cheerlead it, but work to handle and address it without demonizing the relationship or the partner.
- ▶ **Listen more than you talk.** Ask questions. Ask a young person how they feel and what they want, what they're excited about and what they are afraid of. Ask if they want your anecdotes or feedback before volunteering them, and do not lead with them. Let them lead. They usually want to be heard more than they want to hear, and will be more inclined to keep parents and allies in the loop when they feel heard and do not anticipate lectures. This does not mean to wait for them to bring up sex to talk with them about it, though. They usually are waiting on adults to initiate these talks.
- ▶ **Focus on strength.** Survivors are not broken, just wounded. But healing is a process that creates real strength, and a real sense of that strength supports assertiveness and confidence, the ability to set limits and boundaries, and being active, not passive when it comes to managing sex and sexual relationships.

Heather Corinna

APPENDIX F**Being Your Own Guide**

1. Name one thing you have learned from your painful experiences that has really helped you to cope and thrive:

2. Name one way you have learned to stand up for yourself and your rights:

3. Name one thing you have learned from someone else that has really helped you to get through tough times:

4. How can each of these things you have learned help you in the future when you are having difficulties?

5. How can you share your wisdom with other people who might need it, without telling them what to do or being pushy?

APPENDIX G

Group Evaluation Examples

Goal and Objectives

The following goal and objectives are based on the curriculum in this guide and informed the development of the pre- and post-tests. Remember that the goal, objectives, and pre- and post-tests should be in alignment. If you change one, you will probably need to change the others.

Goal

Participants are better able to cope effectively with the aftermath of sexual abuse and/or assault.

Objectives

1. Participants demonstrate increased knowledge about sexual abuse/assault and how to reduce the risk of revictimization.
2. Participants express increased confidence in their ability to take steps toward recovery.
3. Participants indicate an increased ability to identify and utilize healthy coping skills.
4. Participants indicate decreased feelings of isolation, shame, guilt, and stress.

Pre-Test

7. Do you agree with the following statements?
Please check the box which indicates your level of agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am able to take care of myself in healthy ways when I am stressed out or overwhelmed.					
When I think about my abuse or assault, I do not feel alone with my experience.					
I understand what I need to do to keep healing.					
I understand my reactions to the abuse/assault.					
I have enough knowledge about sexual abuse for me to understand what happened to me.					
I know what to do to help myself recover from the abuse/assault.					
I feel able to respond to the reactions of other people such as family and friends.					
I know how to get the help I need for myself.					
I have a sense of hope about my future.					
I feel able to identify the positive people and healthy relationships in my life.					
I am able to communicate effectively about my personal and sexual boundaries.					
Overall, I feel like I am coping well with the abuse/assault.					

Pre-Test

2. Please identify three goals you would like to accomplish during your time in group.

Goal 1:

Goal 2:

Goal 3:

Post-Test

7. Do you agree with the following statements?
Please check the box which indicates your level of agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am able to take care of myself in healthy ways when I am stressed out or overwhelmed.					
When I think about my abuse or assault, I do not feel alone with my experience.					
I understand what I need to do to keep healing.					
I understand my reactions to the abuse/assault.					
I have enough knowledge about sexual abuse/assault to understand what happened to me.					
I know what to do to help myself recover from the abuse/assault.					
I feel able to respond to the reactions of other people such as family and friends.					
I know how to get the help I need for myself.					
I have a sense of hope about my future.					
I feel able to identify the positive people and healthy relationships in my life.					
I am able to communicate effectively about my personal and sexual boundaries.					
Overall, I feel like I am coping well with the abuse/assault.					

Post-Test

2. Please identify three goals you have accomplished during your time in group.

Accomplishment 1:

Accomplishment 2:

Accomplishment 3:

3. How many support group sessions did you attend? _____

Thanks to Connie Au of the Children's Response Center
for allowing us to use her materials as the basis for this sample survey.

End-of-Group Evaluation

Do you agree with the following statements?
Please check the box which indicates your level of agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The group was a safe place to share my concerns.					
I learned what I needed to learn about sexual abuse and sexual assault.					
The facilitator(s) was (were) knowledgeable and helped the group run smoothly.					
The handouts were useful.					
The activities helped me learn and understand the information.					
I would recommend this group to others.					

1. What did you like most about the group?

2. What would make it easier for people to attend the group?

3. What will you do with the knowledge you gained in the group?

4. Any additional comments or thoughts you would like to share:
