

ADOLESCENT TRAINING - ILLNESS PHASE  
(HRA PROJECT)

SESSION 6: WHAT IF I FEEL ANGRY?

(Day 3, Afternoon. Two hours in length.)

OBJECTIVES:

1. Youths will identify, express, and own angry feelings toward their mothers.
2. Youths will be able to handle their angry feelings toward their mothers.
3. Youths will express understanding of their mothers' situations.
4. Youths will increase their skills in helping each other.

RATIONALE:

It is assumed that at some point the fact that their mothers have AIDS will stimulate feelings of anger in the adolescents. Being able to accept and cope with their feelings of anger will make it easier to deal with the demands made on them in this situation. Rather than spending their energies denying and avoiding unpleasant feelings of irritation, we want the youths to devote themselves to coping with the situations that they face.

Consequently this session tries to provide an environment where it is acceptable to identify and own angry feelings. Also how to handle those feelings is dealt with through appropriate release mechanisms, and the youths practice helping each other as a way of demonstrating what has been learned. Additionally the adolescents try to accept their mothers' situations with empathy and forgiveness.

PROCEDURES:

1. Introduce the participants and the session. Give out Strokes and do a lottery. (10 minutes)
2. Perform a script and have the adolescents identify the feelings that are expressed. (15 minutes)
3. Build a list of reasons why a youth might be angry at his mother in this situation and explore what it means to feel angry toward his/her mother. (20 minutes)
4. Elicit memories of being angry at their mothers when they were a little child. (20 minutes)
5. Have them talk about their feelings to an empty chair representing their mothers. (30 minutes)
6. Do a relaxation sequence. (10 minutes)
7. End with goal setting and group appreciation. (15 minutes)

MATERIALS:

Strokes  
Lottery tickets  
Lottery prizes  
Script: "I'm Not Angry!"  
Paper and pencils

Exercise 1: What's Been Happening?  
(15 minutes)

**[The purpose of this exercise is to increase self esteem, build group cohesion, and reinforce being present. It is assumed that the introductions, reporting on goals and achievements, and doing a lottery will assist in serving the session's purpose.]**

Welcome back from lunch.

I'm pleased to see you here on time.

It is time to do a lottery.

PASS OUT LOTTERY TICKETS.

Here is a lottery ticket.

Write your name on it and put in the bowl.

HAVE SOMEONE MIX THEM, DRAW ONE, AND GIVE OUT THE LOTTERY PRIZE.

Please start this afternoon's session with telling us your first name and one physical characteristic of yours that you like.

It could be your eyes, your profile, your coloring, your hair - whatever.

For example, "I'm Joyce, and I like my fingernails."

To show you what I mean I'll start.

My first name is ..... and I like my .....

HAVE EACH YOUTH GIVE HIS/HER FIRST NAME AND ONE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTIC THAT SHE/HE LIKES.

Thank you.

That was great.

Here are some Strokes for everyone.

HAND OUT 20 STROKES TO EACH PERSON.

Remember to give out Strokes whenever you hear someone say something that you like or do something you like or just for being here.

Today we are going to work on some unpleasant feelings - irritation and anger.

Exercise 2: Am I Angry?  
(15 minutes)

**[The purpose of this exercise is to introduce gently the topic of having angry feelings toward one's mother for having AIDS. It is assumed that trying to figure out what the youth feels in a little prepared scene will accomplish that end.]**

Let's get into today's topic by listening to a little scene from a soap opera.

I need two volunteers to be the actors.

SELECT VOLUNTEERS. GIVE THEM THE SCRIPTS AND HAVE THEM READ THE ROLES. IF NO ONE WILL VOLUNTEER OR IF THE FACILITATORS THINK IT IS BEST FOR THEM TO READ THE SCRIPT, HAVE THE FACILITATORS READ THE PARTS.

"I'M NOT ANGRY!"

JOHN: Irene. Can you keep a secret?

IRENE: Sure.

JOHN: No. I mean really keep a secret.

IRENE: You know me. Of course, I can.

JOHN: Promise you won't tell anyone.

IRENE: I promise.

JOHN: I have to talk to you.

IRENE: Go ahead.

JOHN: My mother has AIDS.

IRENE: John! That's terrible!

JOHN: I know.

IRENE: You must feel awful.

JOHN: I feel sorry for her.

IRENE: What about your little sister?

JOHN: What am I supposed to do? Things were going pretty good for me.

IRENE: What can I do to help?

JOHN: I don't see how she could do this. I was going to go to college. I thought I could get a basket ball scholarship.

IRENE: I bet you could get one.

JOHN: Past tense. I thought my mother was smart. She's always preaching to me about staying out of trouble.

IRENE: Any body can make a mistake.

JOHN: Pretty big mistake.

IRENE: Are you pissed?

JOHN: Don't be stupid, Irene. Of course, I'm not.

IRENE: You sound it.

JOHN: Hey! Wait a minute. I needed someone to talk to, not to criticize me.

IRENE: Sorreeee, John.

THE END

Thank you.

That was some performance.

GIVE OUT STROKES.

How did you two feel playing the parts?

ENCOURAGE SHARING OF FEELINGS.

What feelings did the rest of you think that John had in this scene?

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION. IF ANGER ISN'T BROUGHT UP, DON'T FORCE IT.

Were there feelings that John was trying to avoid?

ENCOURAGE RESPONSES.

Why might John have not wanted to recognize those feelings?

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION.

Exercise 3: Are There Good Reasons for Feeling Angry?  
(20 minutes)

**[The purpose of this exercise is to move a little closer to personal feelings of anger over a mother's living with AIDS. Also it is an attempt to look at the meaning behind feeling angry toward a mother living with AIDS. Does it mean you are bad to have these feelings? It is assumed through listing reasons that a youth might feel irritation and discussing meaning these goals of the session can be met.]**

Before we go further I want to make a comment about feelings.

People don't choose to have feelings.

People can't help how they feel.

Feelings tell you what is going on between you and the situation you are in.

I am going to go around the room and I want each of you to give me one reason why a teenager might feel annoyed, irritated, or angry toward his mother for having AIDS.

AS YOU OBTAIN RESPONSES, WRITE THE KEY WORD IN THE REASON UP ON NEWSPRINT. GIVE OUT STROKES.

I'll go first.

A teenager might feel angry because he or she will have to spend more time taking care of his brothers and sisters.

IF SOMEONE CANNOT COME UP WITH A REASON, WAIT UNTIL EVERYONE IS FINISHED AND THEN ASK THEM IF ONE OF THE REASONS ON THE FOLLOWING LIST WHICH WAS NOT BROUGHT UP MIGHT BE A REASON. EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE REASONS:

MOTHER WASN'T CAREFUL.

MOTHER WILL LEAVE TEENAGER ALL ALONE.

MOTHER WILL MAKE HIM/HER FEEL VULNERABLE.

MOTHER WILL STOP PROVIDING SUPPORT.

MOTHER'S ILLNESS WILL INTERRUPT TEENAGER'S PLANS.

MOTHER'S ILLNESS WILL FORCE TEENAGER TO LIVE WITH PEOPLE HE/SHE DOESN'T LIKE.

MOTHER HAD A RELATIONSHIP WITH A NO-GOOD MAN.  
MOTHER WILL REQUIRE CARE FROM THE TEENAGER AND CUT INTO TEENAGER'S TIME  
FOR HIM/HERSELF.  
MOTHER HAS LET THE TEENAGER DOWN AND ISN'T SO PERFECT OR GOOD ANYMORE.

That's a good list of reasons.

If a person doesn't recognize how she feels and tries to avoid recognizing that the feeling is her own, then she has much less chance of working on the situation that produced the feeling.

One obstacle to accepting a feeling as one's own is how you think of yourself.

What kind of person would a teenager be if he or she felt anger toward his or her mother who had AIDS?

Would it mean that the teenager was bad?

Could the teenager still be kind, smart, honest, and caring?

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION. TRY TO SHAKE THE ASSUMPTION THAT THERE IS SOMETHING  
WRONG WITH THE TEENAGER FOR FEELING ANGER IN THIS SITUATION.

Exercise 4: Can I Remember Being Angry at My Mother?  
(20 minutes)

**[The purpose of this exercise is to link personal anger toward mother in a non-threatening way. Looking at early memories of an anger situation is assumed to be a reasonable vehicle for moving toward personal feelings.]**

Can you remember a time when you were a little kid that you got angry at your mother?

Take a moment and recall that situation.

ALLOW A FEW MINUTES TO REMEMBER.

I would like each person to tell a little story about that event.

Like this...

TELL A STORY OF YOUR OWN OR MAKE ONE UP. HERE IS AN EXAMPLE:

When I was a little kid, I was out playing near dinner time. My mother said she called me, but I never heard her. When I got home, all the dirty dishes from dinner were piled in the sink. She gave me something to eat and a spanking too. I was really mad at her because I thought she was unfair.

Let's hear your stories.

HAVE EVERYONE TELL A BRIEF STORY. GIVE OUT STROKES.

How did you feel telling those stories?

ENCOURAGE SHARING OF FEELINGS.

Exercise 5: What Feelings of Anger Do I Have Now?  
(30 minutes)

**[The purpose of this exercise is to provide a safe opportunity to express angry feelings toward mother. The empty chair approach allows that purpose to be reached.]**

Let's take a look at feelings of irritation, annoyance, and anger that exist today toward your mother.

These are very natural, predictable feelings.

These kinds of feelings are bound to come up over and over again.

If you can accept that you have them, own them, and express them in a safe way, you can do something about the situation.

First, I am going to divide the group in half.

DIVIDE THE GROUP IN HALF. A FACILITATOR GOES WITH EACH GROUP, GIVES INSTRUCTIONS, AND HELPS THE PROCESS ALONG. FORM THE GROUP INTO A CIRCLE. PUT AN EMPTY CHAIR IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CIRCLE. GIVE INSTRUCTIONS.

I want you to imagine that your mother is sitting in this empty chair.

No matter how awful the feelings are I want you to tell her about your negative feelings toward her.

You could tell you are annoyed or irritated or hurt or ashamed or angry or disgusted.

Everyone here has had feelings like that.

One by one I want you to talk to your mother.

HAVE EACH PERSON TAKE A TURN AT TALKING TO HER/HIS MOTHER. BE SUPPORTIVE. ENCOURAGE BUT DON'T FORCE.

IF A YOUTH SAYS THAT HE/SHE HAS NOT A DROP OF IRRITATION, ANNOYANCE, HURT, OR ANGER TOWARD HIS/HER MOTHER, ACCEPT THE STATEMENT AND HAVE THE YOUTH TALK TO THE EMPTY CHAIR, EXPRESSING WHATEVER FEELINGS THE YOUTH CAN ACCESS.

GIVE OUT STROKES. WHEN EVERYONE HAS HAD A TURN, ASK THEM TO RATE ON THE FEELING THERMOMETER THE LEVEL DURING THE EXERCISE AND THEN HOW THEY FEEL RIGHT NOW.

Using the Feeling Thermometer, how much discomfort did you feel talking to your mother?

ENCOURAGE SHARING.

How do you feel now?

ENCOURAGE SHARING.

I want to be clear that I am not suggesting you tell your mother about your angry feelings.

The purpose here is for you to recognize your feelings and accept them as your own.

Then you can do something about the situation.

Nor, are we saying that if you are not aware of any irritations, that there is something wrong with you.

You may face a situation in the future in which you feel annoyed.

BRING THE GROUP BACK TOGETHER.

How did you experience doing that exercise?

DISCUSS

Exercise 6: How Can I Relax After Strong Feelings?  
(5 minutes)

**[The purpose of this exercise is to help the youths feel calm and peaceful. Going through a relaxation sequence is the chosen technique.]**

We have been dealing with a lot of feelings today.

It is time to chill out.

Please get yourself in a comfortable position. PAUSE

If your eyes want to close as we go along, that it up to you.

Can you pay attention only to your breathing? PAUSE

Can you just follow it - not change it? PAUSE

In PAUSE and out PAUSE

In PAUSE and out PAUSE

Can you feel the cool air coming in PAUSE

And the warm air flowing out? PAUSE

Cool in PAUSE

Warm out. PAUSE

Can you pay attention only to the warm air flowing out?

Ouuuuuuuuuuuuuuut PAUSE



The water cools your face.

The water is so fresh and sweet. PAUSE

See yourself floating in the lake. PAUSE

Floating. PAUSE

Feel refreshed. PAUSE

Look up.

The sky above is brilliant blue.

The birds sing in the forest.

It is so peaceful here. PAUSE

Drift. PAUSE Float. PAUSE

Can you come out of the lake now? PAUSE

Dry off? PAUSE

You feel so peaceful, so calm, so at ease. PAUSE

Open your eyes slowly. PAUSE

How do you feel?

ENCOURAGE SHARING OF FEELINGS.

Exercise 7: How Do We End This Session?  
(15 minutes)

**[The purpose of the exercise to bring a sense of closure to the session and to build both individual self-esteem and group cohesion. Goal setting is included as well. Summarizing and showing appreciation to each other is the principal way of doing that.]**

This afternoon we worked on dealing with angry feelings toward your mothers because they have AIDS.

The main points were that these feelings are natural and expected.

Feelings are not something that you choose to have.

They happen, and they tell you what is going on between you and the situation in which you find yourself.

If you don't recognize your feelings and accept them as your own, you will go around spending your energy on avoiding these feelings.

Fixing the situation or making your life better will be more difficult.

Next time we will learn some other approaches to help you deal with angry feelings.

In the mean time if you get hung up on feeling angry and cannot let it go, write a nasty letter and don't mail it or do something physical like play basketball or punch your pillow.

We had two sessions today - one on sadness and one on anger.

Earlier we talked about a goal you could set around sadness.

You could also set one around anger.

Remember that this goal is to be accomplished between today and the next time we meet.

Make the goal realistic, clear, not too much or too little, and easy to tell if completed.

For example, you could agree to sit quietly and relax for five minutes two days next week.

Or, you agree to keep a record for one day of feelings of irritation and anger.

Write down the situation in which you had those feelings.

You choose.

Take a minute and think what your goal is.

WAIT A FEW MINUTES AND THEN GO AROUND THE GROUP ASKING THEM FOR THEIR GOALS.  
AS THEY GIVE THEM, HELP SHAPE THE GOALS TO MEET THE CRITERIA.

Thank you for coming up with good goals.

As we are at the end of the morning's session it is time to show appreciation to each other.

You can appreciate what someone said or did or the T-shirt that a person is wearing or simply that he or she showed up this morning.

By the end of the session it is good not to have any Strokes left in your hand.

HAVE PARTICIPANTS SHOW APPRECIATION TO EACH OTHER. MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS INCLUDED.

I really enjoyed working with you this afternoon.

I'll see you next time.

THE END OF SESSION 3

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