

MOTHERS' TRAINING - ILLNESS PHASE
(HRA PROJECT)

SESSION 14: WHERE AM I IN MAKING A CUSTODY PLAN?

(Day 7, Afternoon. Two hours in length.)

OBJECTIVES:

1. Mothers who have successfully made custody plans will receive reinforcement for their plans.
2. Mothers who have had difficulty completing their custody plans will receive assistance in overcoming barriers and in moving further.
3. Mothers will receive resources to help them continue to complete their custody plans after the session is over.

RATIONALE:

Having effective custody plans remains one of the primary objectives of this workshop. At the very beginning of the workshop for the illness phase there were three sessions for the mothers on custody planning. In the middle of the workshop mothers and their teenagers met to discuss custody planning and work out issues with their children. Now at the end of the workshop it is time again to raise the need for custody planning, to determine where mothers are in the process, and to assist mothers who have not completed a custody plan.

The intent here is to individualize custody planning. Mothers need the opportunity to focus on their own situations. Special assistance is provided, using a skilled legal consultant and the guidance and support of mothers who have completed their planning.

PROCEDURES:

1. Introduce the participants and the topic. Give out Strokes. Do a lottery. (10 minutes)
2. Review what was covered before and the need for custody planning. (10 minutes)
3. Have each mother share where she is in her custody planning, rewarding successful completion and reinforcing any steps taken no matter how small. (15)
4. Problem-solve the situations presented by those mothers who have not completed the process.

(40)

5. Arrange for on-going help for those mothers who need assistance. (10 minutes)
6. Do a relaxation sequence. (5 minutes)
7. Provide free time for sharing. (10 minutes)
8. End with a review of the session and preview of the next one. Set between-session tasks. Give appreciation to each other. (15 minutes)

MATERIALS:

Strokes
Lottery tickets
Lottery prize
Newsprint and marking pens for everyone

Exercise 1: What Is This Session About?
(10 minutes)

[The purpose of this exercise is to build self-esteem, increase group cohesion and introduce the focus of this session. The introduction of participants which includes saying something positive about themselves is assumed to increase self-confidence, and Strokes are to build cohesion.]

Welcome back.

I hope you had a pleasant lunch and feel rested.

This afternoon when you introduce yourself please give us your first name and complete this sentence, "I am a good mother because I..."

For example, you might say, "I am Sherri, and I am a good mother because I am making arrangements to take care of my children."

■HAVE THE MOTHERS GIVE THEIR FIRST NAMES AND SAY WHY THEY ARE GOOD MOTHERS.

Thank you.

It is now time for a lottery.

We are glad that you here and that you are on time for the afternoon session.

■HAND OUT LOTTERY TICKETS.

Please write your name on the ticket drop it in the bowl.

If you have never won the lottery, raise your hand and I will give you three extra tickets.

■GIVE OUT EXTRA TICKETS.

We want to make sure that others get prizes.

■DO A LOTTERY. COLLECT CARDS, MIX THEM UP, HAVE SOMEONE DRAW A WINNER, AND GIVE OUT THE PRIZE.

This afternoon we will focus on custody planning again.

We want to know what plans you have and to help each other move along in working out custody.

Making custody plans is a tough area.

We want to let other mothers know that we appreciate what they have gone through in making these plans.

So, here are your Strokes.

■HAND OUT TWENTY STROKES TO EACH MOTHER.

I hope that by the end of the session you have given away most of your Strokes to other mothers, showing them that you appreciate their contributions.

The objective is to have few if any Strokes left in your pile.

Are there any questions before we get started?

■ANSWER QUESTIONS.

Exercise 2: Why Look At Custody Planning Again?
(10 minutes)

[The purposes of this exercise are to provide incentives, to re-examine custody and to stimulate recall of some the issues involved. A brief presentation is used.]

First, I want to go around the room and have each of you tell us the ages of your children.

■QUICKLY HAVE EACH WOMAN TELL THE AGES OF HER CHILDREN.

Good custody planning is critical for your children.

It will help them feel secure.

And you will know that you did what you could to leave them in good hands.

That's why making custody plans is so important.

Earlier we had three sessions on custody planning.

In those sessions you worked on some key issues.

■WRITE THE UNDERLINED WORDS ON NEWSPRINT AS YOU GO ALONG.

Do remember what they were?

Here is a list of them.

Do you want to keep the family together?

Who is the best person to be a guardian?

What arrangement is best?

How do I make it legal?

How do I get the most money (\$) for my children?

The arrangements we went over were

■PUT THE ARRANGEMENTS ON NEWSPRINT AS YOU MENTION THEM. (MAKE SURE THESE ARRANGEMENTS MATCH WITH WHAT WAS PRESENTED IN SESSIONS 2, 3, AND 4. THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A CHANGE IN THE OPTIONS.)

1. foster parents
2. a guardian
3. adoption
4. a will
5. doing nothing.

You looked at the advantages and disadvantages of each, and we got into how to make the arrangements.

Each of you had to figure out what is best for you.

One mother may have lots of family, relatives, and friends.

For her finding someone might be easy.

But another mother may be isolated with no family and no one she can turn to.

We also touched on problems you could expect to have.

The person you selected as a guardian could change her mind, and the whole thing might fall apart.

Has that happened to anyone in the last two months?

■ENCOURAGE RESPONSES.

In the middle of the workshop there was a session with your children on custody arrangements.

You went over what you were thinking of doing with your children.

We are getting near the end of the workshop, and we really want you to have custody all worked out.

That's why we are going into it once more.

The focus is on each individual family.

If you have already worked out custody arrangements, that is great!

We need your help supporting families that are still struggling with it.

Now we will take some time to hear where everyone is.

Exercise 3: What Are My Custody Arrangements?
(20 minutes)

[The purposes of the exercise are to reward families that have completed effective custody planning and to identify families that need help. Individual family presentations are used.]

I am going to give you a piece of newsprint and a pen.

On the newsprint write who will take care of your children, which arrangement did you choose, and how comfortable are you with the custody plan - what your feelings are.

You can write other comments if you wish.

Then post your newsprint on the wall.

■ALLOW A FEW MINUTES TO WRITE ON THE NEWSPRINT.

Now let's go around the room and have each woman briefly explain what she has written.

The rest of us will ask questions just to make sure we understand the plan.

■HAVE EACH WOMAN EXPLAIN HER PLAN. ASK QUESTIONS TO MAKE SURE THE PLAN IS CLEAR. REALLY REWARD MOTHERS WITH GOOD PLANS - STROKES, PRAISE.

■REINFORCE SMALL POSITIVE STEPS FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO MAKE AS MUCH PROGRESS. PROMPT TO FIND OUT WHAT THOSE STEPS ARE.

Thank you for sharing where you are at this time with your custody plan.

Next there is an opportunity to get some help in order to finish the arrangements.

Exercise 4: How Can I Finish My Custody Plan?
(40 minutes)

**[The purpose of this exercise is to assist families having trouble with custody planning.
Group problem solving is employed.]**

You can see from the descriptions that you just gave that some mothers have run up against barriers.

Let's spend some time seeing if we can problem solve the difficulties that have come up.

Remember the steps in problem solving.

■WRITE "PROBE" VERTICALLY ON NEWSPRINT.

P is for "problem."

What is the problem?

How would you define it?

R is for "results."

What results do you want?

What would things look like if they were fixed?

O is for "options."

What are some different ways to solve the problem?

What are the alternatives?

B is for "best."

Which option is the best one?

Which solution has the most promise?

E is for "enact."

Do it and review it.

Put the solution into action.

Who would like to tell us about the difficulties she is having in making a custody plan?

■SELECT A MOTHER WHO WANTS TO TALK ABOUT HER PROBLEM. AFTER SHE TELLS HER STORY, ASK THE GROUP TO PROBLEM SOLVE IT WITH HER.

■MAKE SURE TO INCLUDE FEELINGS AS BARRIERS OR MOTIVATORS. PAY ATTENTION TO FEELINGS. DON'T MAKE THE PROBLEM-SOLVING TOO INTELLECTUAL.

■TRY TO END UP WITH A CONCRETE PLAN WHERE APPROPRIATE. "I WILL CALL MR. SMITH, THE ATTORNEY, BY 7/1/94." "I WILL REVIEW THE LEGAL PAPERS BY THE END OF NEXT WEEK."

■GIVE OUT STROKES FOR GOOD PROBLEM SOLVING BEHAVIORS.

■WORK ON AS MANY OF THE INCOMPLETE CUSTODY
PLANS AS TIME PERMITS.

Thank you for all of the good ideas, for using effective problem solving, and for helping each other.

Exercise 5: What If I Haven't Finished My Plan?
(10 minutes)

[The purpose of this exercise is to provide on-going supports for mothers who still need it for custody planning. Setting up a sister system and handouts with legal resources are included.]

Some of you may want help with your custody plans after today's session.

First, here is a list of free legal services that you can use.

■GIVE OUT A LIST OF FREE LEGAL RESOURCES THAT LOOKS PERSONALIZED WITH THE NAMES OF ATTORNEYS TO CALL.

Is anyone here going to call a lawyer on the list?

■IDENTIFY WHO PLANS TO MAKE A CALL.

Please tell us which person you are going to call and when you are going to make the call.

■PUSH SLIGHTLY IN ORDER TO OBTAIN A CONCRETE COMMITMENT.

Second, let's set up a sister system.

Will some of you who have finished your plan be willing to call a mother who hasn't and talk about what to do?

■SELECT VOLUNTEERS AND MATCH THEM WITH WOMEN WHO WANT A SISTER TO CALL HER. EXCHANGE PHONE NUMBERS.

If anyone has other bright ideas about how to help get all the custody plans completed, let's hear them.

■ENCOURAGE SHARING OF IDEAS ON HOW TO HELP
WOMEN IN THE GROUP.

Those were useful suggestions.

Now let's deal with feelings that custody planning has brought up.

Exercise 6: How Do I Get Calm Again?
(5 minutes)

We are going to take a few minutes to relax.

Get comfortable in your chair.

Start by just paying attention to your breath.

Don't try to change it. PAUSE

Let your breath flow naturally. PAUSE

In and out. PAUSE

In and out. PAUSE

Feel the breath flowing out. PAUSE

Feel the tension flowing out with the breath.

Out. PAUSE

Out. PAUSE

Don't move.

Feel your feet touching the floor. PAUSE

Feel the way your legs are bent or stretched out. PAUSE

Feel your bottom against the chair. PAUSE

Feel your back against the chair. PAUSE

Feel your hands in your lap. PAUSE

Feel the air on your face. PAUSE

Feel your tongue in your mouth. PAUSE

Feel your eyelids on your eyes. PAUSE

Feel your hair touching your head. PAUSE

Let your thoughts fly away.

Feel the air flowing in and out of your body. PAUSE

Feel your chest rising with the air. PAUSE

The same air that has been here forever. PAUSE

The same air that the plants and animals breathe. PAUSE

The same air that will be here forever. PAUSE

You are everywhere and everything. PAUSE

Your spirit will be here forever. PAUSE

In PAUSE

And out. PAUSE

In PAUSE

And out. PAUSE

In a minute you will feel at peace and refreshed.

Now yawn and stretch. PAUSE

Yawn and stretch.

I hope you feel peaceful and refreshed.

We are near the end of today's session.

Exercise 7: I Want Some Time to Talk.
(10 minutes)

[The purpose of this exercise is provide mothers with an opportunity to bring up anything they want to and get the group's reaction to it. Ten minutes of free time is used.]

As you know, when the mothers meet by themselves, we set aside ten minutes near the end of the workshop for a mother to make any comments she feel like making.

If you wish to bring up something to the group, now is the time to do it.

■ALLOW TEN MINUTES OF FREE TIME, SHARING ABOUT ANY TOPIC THAT IS DESIRED.

Exercise 8: What Is Next?
(15 minutes)

[The purposes of this exercise are to build group cohesion, to prepare for the next day, and to increase self-esteem. Group appreciation and between-session tasks are used.]

In this afternoon's session we took another look at your custody plans because we believe it is really important to have them.

Next time is the last day of the workshop.

In the morning we will meet with the teenagers on the topic of safer sex.

To prepare for that I want you to think of the message that you would give your kids about safer sex.

Teenagers and their mothers don't often talk to each other about sex.

But if you were comfortable, what would you say to them?

What role should sex play in their lives?

In the afternoon we want you to give a legacy to your children.

That means giving them things to remember you by, things to recall the times you had together.

For example, you could select photos, little things you have kept that you want them to have, a letter you wrote to them, a poem, a tiny doll, a necklace, Grandpa's key chain, Grandma's handkerchief, ticket stubs, a baby rattle, a picture album, writing out the family tree - the kinds of things mothers keep.

Write something, if you wish.

Record something on a tape.

Whatever you wish.

Can some of you give examples off the top of your head?

■ENCOURAGE A FEW EXAMPLES OF THINGS THAT MIGHT GO IN A LEGACY TO MAKE SURE THE MOTHER'S UNDERSTAND.

Has everyone got the idea?

■CLARIFY PUTTING TOGETHER A LEGACY AND BRINGING IT WITH THEM.

At the afternoon session we will ask you to share it with your teenagers.

Now it is time to give appreciation to each other.

■ENCOURAGE GIVING APPRECIATION TO EACH OTHER.

I will see you next time.

THE END OF SESSION 14 ON CUSTODY