

THE ACT GAME

ACT: ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION TRAINING

A Social Skills Training Program for Children Grades 3 - 6

MODULE 6: CRITICISM AND MAINTENANCE SKILLS

OBJECTIVES

1. Increase ways to self-reinforce when receiving criticism.
2. Increase giving criticism that is specific and behavioral.
3. Increase assertive options for giving and receiving criticism.
4. Increase understanding of when and how to try to change one's behavior.
5. Develop maintenance skills for application of problem-solving in daily situations.

RATIONALE

Styles of accepting negative feedback are set by the time children are at the third-grade level. Often, either high anxiety or a passive withdrawal is generated. Highly aggressive children have a low tolerance for negative feedback and retaliate instantly, thereby generating even more negative feedback. Passive children respond with intense negative self-statements and withdraw to avoid the problem. This withdrawal leads to frustration of goals and a lower self-esteem. Particularly with negative feedback, the child's belief system and behavioral style need to be addressed. Children are taught to distinguish among making a mistake, behaving in an unacceptable manner, and being an unacceptable person.

In this module, children are taught specific ways to self-reinforce when receiving negative feedback. This facilitates maintenance of high-esteem and assertive behavioral responses. The integration of overt rehearsal of covert self-talk and behavioral role-play is an important step in the development of social competence.

The last session gives students the opportunity to practice all the steps in social problem-solving with real problems. Application to real life is required to maintain skills practiced. During this phase, the learning in previous lessons is consolidated. Problem situations are used from the student's own experiences. For each problem, the entire strategy model for assertive behavior is employed. Students clarify a goal. Emotional states are assessed and relaxation techniques are employed, if necessary.

Counselors, teachers, and other trainers may use the last session as often as required to assure integration by all students. The elements of social problem-solving may be applied to problems that occur in the classroom or school. Role-playing real situations is beneficial when students have trouble solving real problems. If all school staff is familiar with the goals and strategies of assertive communication, they can guide students to take a breath, set goals, and

evaluate alternatives in daily situations that develop. Therefore, repeat the last session as often as needed for your students.

Session 1, Module 6: Giving Criticism

TEACH

Step 1: Introduce the Super Coach, the Trainer, and the content. Wear silly hats. Three of the next four sessions deal with giving and receiving criticism. In the last session, we will give students the opportunity to use real problems. The focus of this session is on giving criticism.

Example:

COACH: I am the Super Coach, and this is the Trainer.

TRAINER: Wait a minute!

COACH: What is the matter?

TRAINER: You always introduce yourself first. “This is the Super Coach and this is the Trainer.” I don’t like it. I’m never first.

COACH: OK. Next time, I will introduce you first. Besides, I don’t like your silly hat. (If Trainer is not wearing a hat, choose a different item that the Trainer is wearing.)

TRAINER: What has that got to do with anything?

COACH: I just felt like saying it.

TRAINER: Well, I don’t like your hat (shirt...) either. It looks ridiculous. I’ll bet you can guess what we are going to work on next. Criticism. How do you give it and how do you receive it? Today’s lesson is on giving it. Most of us find it a lot easier to criticize another person than to be criticized by someone.

Step 2: Select a superstar or local hero or a cartoon character (Michael Jordan, Ricky Martin, the Roadrunner). Have students criticize the character (he is too tall). They may make-up the criticisms. This activity engages students and prepares them for the session lesson. Some youngsters have difficulty criticizing others. Students get actively involved and have fun.

Example: Now we are going to do something that most students like, although for some it may seem a little risky. We are going to pick a superstar --_____. We will go around the classroom, and I want each student to tell the class something they don’t like about our superstar. You may really like Michael Jordan, for example, but you could say he is too tall to walk through a door. We are going to warm-up for our lesson today by saying what we don’t like about this person. Have you got it? If you want, you can make-up answers to what you like and dislike about the character. When we are done, we’ll

have a little skit about criticizing others and how it feels to be criticized.

Step 3: Introduce the play. The play is about giving negative criticism. Super Coach plays the part of the mother, and the Trainer plays the part of the child. The scene takes place in the kitchen.

Example: We are ready for our little play. It is called “The Pain.” Super Coach plays the part of the teenage sibling, and the Trainer is the younger brother or sister. This scene takes place in the kitchen. I want you to listen carefully. When the play is over, I want you to tell us how good a job the Super Coach did in criticizing her sibling.

THE PAIN

TEEN: My friends are spending the night tomorrow.

CHILD: So what!

TEEN: Have you been in your room recently?

CHILD: When?

TEEN: Sometime in the last month.

CHILD: Of course. I slept there last night and got dressed in there this morning.

TEEN: Do you know I can walk from the door to the window without ever stepping on the floor? It is carpeted with clothes. How many pants are on the floor?

CHILD: About 5. What do you care?

TEEN: Because my friends are coming over and you are a slob.

CHILD: Stop calling me names. It’s my room. Stay out of it.

TEEN: Well, you are a slob. My friends tease me about my dorky little brother. Why can’t you be neater? Besides, weren’t you supposed to do the dishes when you came home from school? It looks to me like they have got food stuck all over them. Were you afraid of catching something from them?

CHILD: I forgot.

TEEN: Well, don’t forget tomorrow because we are making pizza and I don’t want the kitchen to be a mess. Didn’t mom tell you to clean this up?

CHILD: All right, I’ll have it clean by tomorrow. I usually remember to do my chores.

And I like my room messy. But I'll keep the door closed tomorrow.

TEEN: Thanks. Listen, just stay out of our way, OK?

CHILD: Okay. Hey, and stay out of my room. (QUIETLY TO HIMSELF, BOY WHAT A PAIN!)

Step 4: Review how to give and receive criticism. In the play, the older sibling calls a name and is a bit aggressive with his/her criticism. He/she does not request a change in a positive and specific manner. Have the students pay attention to how the younger sibling agreed to change and took care of himself/herself. How could this have been acted differently?

Example: The older sibling (teen) had a real concern because his/her friends were coming over. What do you think about the way he/she criticized his/her younger brother/sister? What do you think about name-calling?

How did the brother/sister handle the situation?

Today we are going to talk about how to give criticism, or make requests for change. One thing we know doesn't work is name-calling.

How do you feel when someone calls you a name? Use the Feeling Thermometer.

Step 5: Explain the general organization of the module and how to give criticism. The next three sessions teach how to give and receive criticism. The lessons provide guidelines and practice. A child's reluctance to change behavior is explored. Students explore how to deal with being yelled at.

Example: The next three lessons are on giving and receiving negative feedback. In today's lesson, we will learn about guidelines for giving criticism and then we will practice. The next session is on receiving criticism -- how not to have your day ruined by a put-down. The third session is on yelling, on what it is like to yell at someone and to be yelled at. Also, we will go over what kind of response to criticism is aggressive, assertive, and passive. We will also review how to decide to change when we are wrong or if we think changing is a good goal in that situation.

First, it is important to understand that what a person does could be:

- (1) a mistake - like dropping a bottle
- (2) unacceptable - like throwing a tantrum or cheating on a test.

It is the person's behavior that is unacceptable, not the person. Most of the time you want a person's behavior to change, and you are not trying to change that person.

There are three rules for giving criticism, or saying what you don't like about what someone did.

- (1) FOCUS ON BEHAVIOR. The first is to focus on behavior. "Please don't write on my book." Writing on the book is the behavior.

- (2) **BE SPECIFIC.** Make the criticism very specific. If you don't, the other person won't know what to do. Also, it helps in focusing on behavior and not blaming the person.
- (3) **POINT OF VIEW.** Criticism is always from your point of view. "I get angry when you keep writing on my book." You are expressing what you want. The picture may not be the same from another person's point of view.

If I said, "You are so clumsy. Stay out of the kitchen. I don't want you touching my good glasses," that would not be a good criticism. The statement says that the person is clumsy. That is a quality of theirs. It is not a behavior. The criticism is not very specific. Is the person supposed to stay out of the kitchen forever? Being clumsy is only from one point of view.

How does this sound to you? "I don't like waiting around. Next time we meet, please try to be on time."

Let me summarize the main points in giving criticism:

- First, make your comments about the person's behavior, not about them as a person. By behavior, I mean what they do and say.
- Second, be specific about what behavior you want changed. If what you want changed is general and broad, the other person won't know what to do, and you won't know if the person has done it.
- Last, be clear that the criticism is from your point of view. Use words that communicate the criticism from your point of view. "My opinion is..." "From my point of view..." "I think that another approach is better." "I feel upset when you make fun of me."

Tell me if these negative comments are about behavior or the person. "You dummy! You can do your homework better than that." (ELICIT RESPONSES: Criticism is about the person.)

What about these negative comments? "Tomorrow night, please spend at least 30 minutes on your math homework." This time, the comments were about behavior - spending time on the homework.

I will give you three criticisms. Which ones are specific and which are too general?

- (1) I want you to be a kinder person.
- (2) I want you to stop pulling the hair of the girl in front of you.
- (3) You are a bully, always picking on kids.

(ELICIT RESPONSES: Only Sentence 2 was specific.)

Now let's see if you understand that making a criticism reflects your point of view, not

that you are right. Which criticism suggests that it is from your point of view? “You are not listening to me.” “I get annoyed when I am talking and you are looking all over the room.”

Which of these statements reflects a point of view?

- (1) “You are careless. Always losing your lunch money.”
 - (2) “It is my impression you have lost your lunch money three times.”
 - (3) “I feel irritated when I can’t find where you put the knives and forks.”
- (ELICIT RESPONSES: Sentences 2 and 3 reflect a point of view.)

PRACTICE

Step 6: Divide the class into small groups (6 to 10), and in each small group appoint actors and directors. Have the teams practice giving negative criticism. The focus of this practice is on how to make critical remarks to other people. One actor is the person receiving the criticism and the other demonstrates giving negative responses. Before the role-play, the person giving criticism tells the directors what behavior he/she wants changed. Give each team situations to work on. When each scene is completed, the directors give feedback.

Example: Now the teams will practice giving negative feedback. One actor will play the person giving criticism, and the other will play the person who receives the criticism. First, tell the team what behavior you want changed and then role-play criticizing the other person. Try to follow the guidelines we just went over. At the end of each scene, the directors will give feedback. Ask the actors what they liked about what they did and what they would have done differently. Then have the directors say what one thing they liked and what they would change. Here are the situations.

- Your brother talks with his mouth wide open while chewing his food. You think it is gross. Tell him about it.
- Your little sister leaves the bathroom a big mess. Towels are on the floor. The toilet isn’t flushed. Toothpaste is smeared all over the counter. Tell her about it.
- Your best friend is rarely on time. It bothers you to have to wait and wait for your friend. Your friend was supposed to meet you Friday after school at 3:30, but the friend didn’t get there until 4:00. Ask your friend to be on time.
- After school, this girl gives out gum to a few of her friends, but not to you, even though you sit next to her on the bus. You don’t like being left out. It is rude. Tell her about it.
- Your teacher added up the points on your test incorrectly. How will you tell her?

THE GAME

Step 7: Have the teams prepare to play the Game by giving them a situation to work on.

Place a special emphasis on evaluating outcomes. In previous sessions, the game consisted of solving social problems. The teams defined problems, set goals, generated possible solutions, and evaluated the alternatives: What outcomes went with the different solutions? Considering the consequences are so important in the problem-solving schema, we continue to practice it. Give the teams a situation to work on. Have the actors evaluate the alternatives and have the directors provide feedback.

Example: Now we are going to play the Game. Your task is to evaluate each alternative. What are the consequences? Here is the situation: You are very hungry and open a can of tuna to eat. You add mayonnaise and pickles. Your mother comes in and says you cannot eat the whole can. You keep adding ingredients. She says “no” and you want to say “yes.” You are really hungry and you don’t understand why you can’t have all the tuna. The alternatives are as follows: (a) walk away from the tuna and make something else to eat; (b) tell your mother that you are going to eat the tuna and that is all there is to it; (c) leave the kitchen; (d) ask your mother how much tuna you may have and what else you can eat; (e) leave the house; (f) call your friend and talk about how horrendous your mother was; (g) try to persuade your mother to let you eat the tuna; (h) ask your mother why she wants the tuna saved; (i) leave the tuna on the sink and ride your bike to McDonalds. Remember to decide on your goal and then consider the consequences of each alternative. You can add other alternatives if you wish.

Step 8: Assign actor parts and director tasks and begin the role-play. The actors are to determine what the outcomes might be from adopting the different alternatives. Actor roles might include the child and mother. A friend, brother, or sister may be included. The directors’ tasks are to observe different facets of the situation and to provide feedback.

Example: Now we are going to play the Game. You have the situation to work on. Determine your goal and then determine the consequences of each alternative.

The directors will stop and start the action. Each director will have one behavior to observe. These behaviors are posture (straight, slumped over, leaning toward the speaker), gestures (large, small, threatening, withdrawing), voice level (soft, loud), voice tone (pleasant, whining), and eye contact (direct, away). Pay particular attention to eye contact, positive facial expressions, and posture.

Step 9: Have the students in each team switch roles when the actors have all had a turn. After this situation is completed, provide new situations to role-play. If time is short, switch before everyone has had a chance. Practice is essential. If some actors do not have a chance to try their hand at the skills, make note and assign them roles in the next session.

Example: Now it is time for everyone to switch roles. Actors will become directors, and directors will become actors. Everyone needs to have a chance to practice thinking about the consequences of different alternatives. If you did not get a turn as an actor, we will let

you start in the next session. Please remind the Super Coach.

New Situations (Add other situations as appropriate for your student population. Or, use any situations from previous sessions.)

- You drop and break one of your mother’s favorite glasses. Alternatives: (a) don’t tell her; (b) try to locate another one; (c) apologize; (d) blame the cat; (e) tell her the glass was already chipped; (f) give her a different gift.
- You want to go downtown on public transportation by yourself. Your parents say you are not old enough yet. Your friends do it. Alternatives: (a) sneak it; (b) have a friend tell your parents that it is easy; (c) try to convince your parent; (d) find out what you have to do to be ready to go; (e) see if you can go with an older kid; (f) go with an adult; (g) don’t go at all; (h) accept your parents’ point of view.
- Your mother says that you have to wash your own clothes because you have too much clothing. You find washing clothes a big pain. Alternatives: (a) send your clothes to a laundromat; (b) pay one of your brothers and sisters or a friend to do your clothes; (c) ask if you can trade off doing chores; (d) wear a lot of dirty clothes to cut down on the amount of laundry; (e) tell your mother you will trade off another task if she does the laundry; (f) buy your mother flowers and ask her to reconsider.

REVIEW AND CLOSING

Step 10: End with group affirmations. Reinforce approximations. For example, if a student followed some of the rules for giving criticism but not all of them, praise him/her for following the ones he/she did. Then remind the student of the ones that were forgotten. Catch a student doing something right. Make sure that every child receives some kind of ending affirmation. Continue reinforcing with tokens. Have the group compliment each other.

Example: Now it is time to end the lesson. Everyone did a great job in learning how to figure out the consequences of doing one of the possible solutions.

Today we are going to do something different. Think about one thing you would change about yourself. Turn it into a goal statement. “I want to improve in spelling. I know if I study more, I can improve.” “I want my mom to let me play at my friend’s this weekend. Maybe if I go home and clean up my room today instead of on Saturday like usual, she will let me go on Saturday.”

You set some great goals today. On our last session we will practice solving our own problems and reaching our own goals. We will see you again at the next lesson.

END OF SESSION 1, MODULE 6

Session 2, Module 6: Receiving Criticism

TEACH

Step 1: Introduce the Super Coach, Trainer, and the content. Today's session is on receiving criticism. The intent is to teach children how to react to negative responses in a way that is self-affirming.

Example:

COACH: This person beside me is the Trainer, and I am the Super Coach.

TRAINER: I think today's lesson is one of the most important. I don't like to be criticized.

COACH: Me either.

TRAINER: And that is what we are going to do.

COACH: We are not going to criticize kids, are we?

TRAINER: No, we are going to teach kids what to do when someone criticizes them. We are not going to criticize the kids in the class. We are also going to help decide if we need to change our behavior or not.

COACH: Great, let's get started.

Step 2: Have the students go around and say what one thing an irresponsible friend might do. This activity breaks down some of the fears about criticizing others – particularly friends. The students' comments should be about friendship in general. This activity involves students in the lesson content right from the beginning and it helps them be specific. It also helps them think about friendship and what not to do.

Example: Let's take a minute and think about friendship—like what is a good friend, or how do we like our friends to behave. (Elicit some specific responses about the qualities found in a good friend.) OK, what about the other side? What do friends do that we don't like? I want you to take a minute and think about this. Pick one thing that a friend might do or say that would not make him/her be a good friend. Got it? Now I would like each of you to tell us one thing you thought of that a friend should not do. Don't use any names. We are talking about friends in general. I am looking for specific actions or words. Who would like to start us off? That was a very specific example. Thank you. (Give a token.)

Step 3: Introduce the mini-play. The Super Coach plays the Robin and the Trainer plays the Crow. The mini play has as a sub-theme of dealing with negative criticism. The setting is alongside the road.

Example: Now we are going to do a brief play that has two birds criticizing each other. One of the birds handles the criticism very well. See if you can tell which bird doesn't get too ruffled over a little criticism. The Trainer is the Crow and the Super Coach is the Robin. The scene is along the side of the road. The play is called "I Eat Meat."

I EAT MEAT

ROBIN: Crow, what are you doing there?

CROW: CAW, CAW. What do you think?

ROBIN: Pecking away.

CROW: If it is noontime, I am eating lunch.

ROBIN: You say you are eating?

CROW: That's right.

ROBIN: Well, that makes it gross.

CROW: CAW, CAW. What's gross about it?

ROBIN: You are pecking around in a dead squirrel. Some car must have run over it.

CROW: I eat squirrel most of the time. There isn't much to chipmunks. Raccoon is pretty good. When you get right down to it, I will eat most anything.

ROBIN: It must taste terrible.

CROW: Well, if it tasted so bad, my whole family wouldn't be sitting in that tree behind you waiting for me to finish. They love squirrel. It won't be long when Little Inky and Uncle Black will fly down here and take a few hunks. They were the first ones to find this old squirrel, and then they told all the rest of us.

ROBIN: It is sick to be eating something dead. What if there are maggots in there - those little white worms?

CROW: They are a real treat. I love them. And I eat them alive.

ROBIN: That old dead squirrel must smell.

CROW: Dead squirrels have an odor all their own.

ROBIN: Doesn't eating them make you throw up?

CROW: Nothing makes me throw up.

ROBIN: What's the advantage of eating a run-over squirrel?

CROW: I sure don't have to catch it. And if I had caught it, I wouldn't have to worry about it running away. There are enough creatures run over so you can always find some good fresh guts.

ROBIN: Awful.

CROW: That's the sweetest part.

ROBIN: You crows are always making a racket and crowding around fresh road-kill. You have no manners.

CROW: I'd be careful if I were you. We eat fresh robin kill, too. CAW, CAW. We eat to stay alive.

ROBIN: But like I say, you have no manners.

CROW: Robin, you sure are on my case today. I see you tiptoeing across a yard like a little ballerina. Run a little, stop. Run a little and then stop. You turn your head to one side like you are talking to the grass and listening for a reply. The next thing I know, you are sucking up one big earthworm. It looks like having a milkshake with a straw.

ROBIN: I don't suck them. I pull them out.

CROW: And then what?

ROBIN: I tip my head back and swallow them.

CROW: Raw?

ROBIN: Yes.

CROW: Well, you got to eat. If you like them raw, that's up to you. And let me ask you something. The insides of these worms is nothing but dirt. Is that right?

ROBIN: I guess you could say that.

CROW: I eat guts, but I sure don't eat dirt. Phooey. When the sun stays on them a while, you get fried guts. Now that tastes super.

ROBIN: I'll take worms any day.

CROW: You say we crows have bad manners, but I would rather eat with my family screaming and pushing than to eat all alone like you do.

ROBIN: You are just jealous that we robins are so beautiful. You crows are so ugly.

CROW: Oh come on, this is ridiculous. I like what I eat, and you like what you eat. That's good enough for me.

THE END

Step 4: Have the students decide who received the most criticism - Crow or Robin - and how the birds handled criticism. Keep the attention on the character receiving the criticism. Who received the most criticism - Crow or Robin? Look at the way Crow turned criticism into a positive statement. When Robin was criticized, he/she shifted to name calling such as "ugly." Use these examples of different ways to handle criticism.

Example: In this little play, two birds, a crow and a robin, talked about eating. Who did most of the criticizing? Can you give me some examples of criticism from the play? Robin criticizes Crow for eating road-kill. Crow admits it and mentions what is good about eating dead animals. What did you think of making eating road-kill seem positive? When Crow finally criticized Robin, Robin just criticized right back. Let's think about that – criticizing right back, or finding something positive about what you did.

Step 5: Explain how to receive criticism. First, review the principles of giving criticism as seen in the last lesson. Then indicate that the purpose of learning how to handle criticism is to take responsibility for one's mistakes and at the same time to think well of oneself. Because the child has made an error doesn't mean the child should put himself/herself down. This is a good time for positive self-talk. Model receiving criticism.

Example: Let me review some of the guidelines for giving criticism.

First, it is important to understand that what a person does could be:

- (1) a mistake - like dropping a bottle
- (2) unacceptable - like stealing a toy from a store.

Most of the time you want a person's behavior to change, and you are not trying to change that person.

There are three rules for giving criticism:

- (1) FOCUS ON BEHAVIOR. The first is to focus on behavior. "Please don't write on my book." Writing on the book is the behavior.

- (2) **BE SPECIFIC.** Make the criticism very specific. If you don't, the other person won't know what to do. Also, it helps in focusing on behavior and not blaming the person.
- (3) **POINT OF VIEW.** Criticism is always from your point of view. "I get angry when you keep writing on my book." You are expressing what you want. The picture may not be the same from another person's point of view.

When receiving criticism, you want to take responsibility for your behavior and you also want to continue thinking well of yourself as a good person. Taking responsibility means you admit a mistake or you accept justified criticism. You say, "I was late." But you don't leave it at that. You add on, "I usually am on time." You have switched a negative to a positive. Let me give you some other examples.

- Mother criticizes you. "Your room looks like a pigsty." You reply, "My room is messy today. Most of the time, my pants and shirts are not on the floor."
- Father says, "You lost our new puppy." You reply to your Dad, "I am sorry the leash slipped out of my hand. I have always given good care to our pets." It is very important to remember that switching a negative to a positive won't work if the positive is not true.
- Here is a criticism for you to switch. Your teacher says, "I saw you copying part of Debbie's test paper." What would you say if the accusation was correct? Let's hear the class's suggestions for turning that to a positive. (An example: "I apologize for copying her paper. I have not cheated before, and I won't do it again.")

There are times when someone gives you very harsh criticism. You may want to take a Time-Out. You also may want to use Self-Talk. Your aunt says to you, "You are a mean child. You don't have any respect for others. You think you are the center of the world." You think this is unfair criticism. Using Self-Talk, you could say, "My aunt is really upset today. She doesn't usually talk like that. I'll try to be nice to her today." Most of all, tell yourself, "No matter how somebody criticizes me, I am a good person."

Let's say it together. "No matter how somebody criticizes me, I am a good person." Just because you made a mistake or did something unacceptable, doesn't mean you are a bad person.

If you plan to change your behavior, it is important to be clear on the behavior, and on when, where, with whom, how often. Also, how will you know if the behavior was done and done right? For example, "I will be in my seat in homeroom for the next 5 days at 9:00 am. The homeroom teacher will sign a chart showing that I have done it."

Sometimes it requires being assertive to obtain information from a person who wants you to change behavior. For example:

"Mr. Hart, what exactly do you want me to do in a class discussion?"

“You interrupt my lecture.”

“Mr. Hart, I wait for you to call on me, so what exactly am I doing to interrupt.”

“Don’t keep jumping up and down and waving your hand around. I know you always have something to say. I will call on you even if your hand is not up.”

Step 6: Deciding when we need to change because of criticism and when we are okay the way we are. Do the skit between friends. Talk about how do decide if the criticism is about something we really should change, or if it is about something we can decide to do or not to do. For example, Sheryl in the skit likes her shoes even if her friend doesn’t.

SHERYL: Before we go to the park, I wonder if you would mind changing the clothes you are wearing.

MARIA: Why would I want to do that?

SHERYL: I just don’t like them. The colors are all wrong on you. Please put on something with blue in it. Blue looks good on you.

MARIA: But those clothes make me look too skinny.

SHERYL: That’s OK. The colors are more important.

MARIA: I don’t want to look really skinny. My other friends will all laugh at me. It is not a good idea.

SHERYL: Are you telling me you will not change your clothes?

MARIA: That’s right. I will not change them like you want. If I do make a change, it will be because I want to.

SHERYL: OK, let’s just go to the park. But you do look better in blue.

MARIA: I like red.

Example: In this skit, Sheryl wanted Maria to change her clothes. Sheryl didn’t like them. Was there anything incorrect about Maria’s behavior or attitude? Was there anything she really needed to change?

No, so Maria said she wouldn’t change her clothes. This is like choosing not to change our behavior. This could happen with our friends when they say we are being too good if we don’t smoke with them or something like that. But we don’t have to accept all criticism.

When we receive criticism, first we listen, and we use positive self-talk. We also decide if we need to change. If we need to change, we can set a goal and look at the alternatives. We can practice. We use positive Self-Talk and feel good about ourselves for trying.

But sometimes we realize we don't need to change just because someone criticized us. Then our goal would be to stay the same and feel good about ourselves. We use positive Self-Talk.

PRACTICE

Step 7: Divide the class into small groups (6 to 10), and in each small group appoint actors and directors. Have the teams practice receiving negative criticism. The focus of this practice is on how to receive critical remarks from other people. One actor is the person receiving the criticism and demonstrates changing negative responses to positive ones. When the changing is completed, practice, ask the person criticizing to clarify the behavior change desired. Give each team situations to work on. When each scene is completed, the directors give feedback. The directors will start the practice, using role-plays, and they will signal when to stop the practice. Also, they will interrupt the action to find out what the actors are telling themselves. What Self-Talk are they using? Directors will elicit self-evaluation from the actors and give them feedback. The groups will change roles, so that everyone has a chance to practice. Use tokens throughout.

Example: First, I will divide the class into small teams of 6 to 10 people. There will be an equal number of actors and directors. I will tell you which role you play. After a while, you will switch, and the actors will become directors. The directors will become actors.

Now the teams will practice receiving negative feedback. One actor will play the person giving criticism, and the other will play the person who receives the criticism. The person receiving practices turning a negative into a positive. The negatives to respond to are as follows:

(If the teams are big you can have two smaller groups with two actors and two directors.)

1. You forgot to feed the goldfish. (I know, but I usually don't forget. I'll feed them right now.)
2. All you had for breakfast is a small glass of orange juice. That's not enough.
3. You didn't take the dog out for his evening walk.
4. You didn't take a shower this morning. You must smell.
5. You are not brushing your teeth after meals as you promised you would.
6. The clothes you wore to school are filthy. You are a slob.
7. That is an ugly blouse.
8. I make lunch for you and you keep leaving it at home. Take the lunch today.
9. The sheets on your bed are now gray. It is your job to put them in the laundry basket.
10. I waited 20 minutes for you and you never showed up. Come on time for a

change.

11. Stop talking to Sonia in class. It disturbs people.
12. Don't sit in the back of the class all the time. You act like you are hiding something.
13. When I tell you to sit down, I expect you to sit down. Don't linger.
14. Don't throw paper airplanes in class.
15. You lied to me about how long you stayed up. I am very disappointed in you.
16. You are hanging out with the wrong kids.
17. Your homework papers are really sloppy.
18. You told me I could wear your sweater. Now you changed your mind. I can't count on you.
19. This is the second week when you didn't do your assignments.
20. You always forget my birthday.

At the end of each scene, the directors will give feedback. Ask the actors what they liked about what they did and what they would have done differently. Then have the directors say what one thing they liked and what they would change.

Now have the person being criticized clarify what behavior change is desired by the other person. The critical person has a card with the general change on it. He/she tells the person being criticized what is wanted. Then the criticized person attempts clarification. Here are the situations:

1. You play your music too loud. (Example: How much is too loud? How loud should I play it?)
2. You don't bathe enough.
3. You don't wash the pots and pans so they are clean.
4. You don't go to bed on time.
5. You don't get up early enough.
6. You don't eat a balanced breakfast.
7. You don't put your dirty clothes in the laundry basket.
8. You wear socks with holes in them.

At the end of each scene, the directors will give feedback. Ask the actors what they liked about what they did and what they would have done differently. Then have the directors say what one thing they liked and what they would change.

THE GAME

Step 8: Have the teams prepare to play the Game by giving them a situation to work on. Place a special emphasis on evaluating outcomes. In previous sessions, the game consisted of solving social problems. The teams defined problems, set goals, generated possible solutions, and evaluated the alternatives: What outcomes went with the different solutions? Considering the consequences are so important in the problem-solving schema, we continue to practice it. Give the teams a situation to work on. Have the actors evaluate the alternatives and have the directors provide feedback.

Example: Now we are going to play the Game. Your task is to evaluate each alternative. What are the consequences? Here is the situation: You were supposed to meet your younger sister at 6:00 pm at the corner. She came half an hour late. While you waited, your cousin walked by and said hello. Your parents saw you talking to your cousin and yelled at you - not your sister - when you both got home. They thought it was your fault. Alternatives: (a) tell them your sister was late; (b) take the blame for being late; (c) act like you didn't know you were supposed to be home at a particular time; (d) let your sister answer how come she was so late; (e) ask the cousin to tell your parents you were there on time.

Remember to decide on your goal and then consider the consequences of each alternative. You can add other alternatives if you wish.

You have the situation to work on. The actors are to assess the consequences of doing the alternative solutions. The actors' roles are you, the mother and/or father, the sister, the cousin. Decide what your goal is and then determine the consequences of each alternative.

The directors stop and start the action. Each director will have one behavior to observe. These behaviors are posture (straight, slumped over, leaning toward the speaker), gestures (large, small, threatening, withdrawing), voice level (soft, loud), voice tone (pleasant, whining), and eye contact (direct, away). Pay particular attention to eye contact, positive facial expressions, and posture.

Step 9: Do the role-play and give feedback to the actors. Substitute new situations as needed. Practice and feedback are key elements in skill development. You want students to be able to figure out the consequences of their actions. Do these alternative solutions enable them to meet their goals? Then the directors comment on what they liked and what they would have done differently. Use tokens throughout.

Example: Go ahead and evaluate the different alternatives. Actors practice figuring out the consequences of the alternatives. Directors observe, direct, and give feedback after each role-play.

New Situations

- Your mother asks you to baby-sit your little brother. You had other plans. Alternatives: (a) say no; (b) trade jobs with sister; (c) get sick that day; (d) pay someone to take care of your brother.
- Your friend is upset with you but will not tell you why.
- The teacher will not let you sit next to your friend.

- Your dad works at night and sleeps all day. You have to be totally quiet all the time.
- All of your friends can stay out later in the afternoon than you can.
- The teacher blames you for shouting in the hall.
- You lost your lunch money.
- You left your homework on the kitchen table.

Step 10: Have the students in each team switch roles when the actors have all had a turn. If time is short, switch before everyone has had a chance. Practice is essential. If some actors do not have a chance to try their hand at the skills, make note and assign them roles in the next session.

Example: Now it is time for everyone to switch roles. Actors will become directors, and directors will become actors. Everyone needs to have a chance to practice thinking about the consequences of different alternatives. If you did not get a turn as an actor, we will let you start in the next session. Please remind the Super Coach.

REVIEW AND CLOSING

Step 11: End with group affirmations. Reinforce approximations. For example, if a student followed some of the rules for receiving criticism but not all of them, praise him/her for following the ones he/she did. Then remind the student of the ones that were forgotten. Catch a student doing something right. Make sure that every child receives some kind of ending affirmation. Continue reinforcing with tokens. Have the group compliment each other.

Example: Now it is time to end the lesson. Everyone did a great job in learning how to figure out the consequences of doing one of the possible solutions. Here is a token to remind you of how good you were today.

This time give yourself a compliment about something you do well in problem-solving and social skills.

END OF SESSION 2, MODULE 6

Session 3, Module 6: Yelling

TEACH

Step 1: Introduce the Super Coach, the Trainer, and the content. The focus of this lesson is on aggressive behavior, including yelling.

Example:

COACH: I am the Super Coach, and this is the trainer.

TRAINER: (YELLING) Go away! Go away!

COACH: Why are you yelling?

TRAINER: There is this dog that follows me to school. I get worried that some car will hit it or it will get lost. So I am practicing sending it home.

COACH: Does it work?

TRAINER: If I yell a lot, the dog seems to go home.

COACH: Did you know that today's lesson was on yelling?

TRAINER: Yes, that's why I thought it was OK to practice here. Let's get started.

Step 2: Today, instead of a mini-play, we are all going to practice yelling. Some children are not able to yell. Others cringe when they hear yelling. While we do not endorse yelling as a way to solve problems, there are times when a yell will protect you. There are times when yelling is fun, as at a ball game. There are times when someone yells at us and we will handle it better if we can control our anxiety. To get everyone in the frame of mind and to help passive children yell, we will yell the alphabet together.

Example: Today we are going to practice yelling. We are going to go around the room and yell the alphabet. Each person will yell the next letter. For example, if I am first, I would yell, "A." The Trainer will yell, "B." Now, let's try it. Yell out the letters, let's have fun with this.

Go around the room or group and have the students yell the alphabet.

Step 3: Ask the students about the yelling experience. How do students feel about yelling? Ask questions about when yelling is good or bad. When do people yell and it is okay? When do people yell and it hurts others? What can we do when someone yells at us?

Example: You already know that today’s lesson is on yelling. We usually think of yelling at someone as being aggressive. Let’s talk about it. When is yelling okay? (At ball games, sporting events, on the playground, when we are excited.)

When is yelling hurtful? (When we yell at each other, when we are angry, when we call names.)

Do you ever yell? What happens?

In this session, we will talk about yelling. We will learn what we can do when someone yells at us.

Step 4: Explain yelling and its connection to assertiveness. Yelling is a form of aggressive criticism. Most people have been yelled at and have yelled at others. One person’s yelling can trigger off yelling in others. Many people are uncomfortable with yelling. They feel intimidated when yelling is directed toward them, and they cannot perceive what it feels like to yell at someone else. We argue that increased assertiveness will reduce the vicious cycle stimulated by yelling. Furthermore, being able to yell helps passive people move to assertiveness and takes some of the mystery out of yelling. We are not suggesting that yelling is a desirable alternative, but sometimes a child might need to say loudly and strongly, “Leave me alone,” or “Get away from me.” There are certain times when a good yell can protect a child.

Example: Let me explain why we care about yelling. Most people have been yelled at. Have you? Can you give me some examples?

And most people have yelled at someone else. Can you think of a time when you yelled at someone?

Few people are comfortable with yelling. They are afraid to be yelled at, and they are uncomfortable yelling. When you yell at someone, it increases the chance that person will be angry with you and maybe even start a shouting match. Yelling can trigger off a cycle of screaming at each other.

It is important to see how it feels to yell and to be yelled at. Remember in some of our earlier lessons, we learned that there were three kinds of communication and behavior: **aggressive, assertive, and passive**. Which kind of behavior do you hear?

(YELLING) “You stupid jerk.” What kind of behavior is that? (Aggressive.)

“I get angry when you yell at me. Please stop it.” What kind of behavior is that?

(Assertive.)

“All yelling does is to make me feel like yelling back.” What is it? (Assertive.)

“There is nothing I can do to stop her yelling at me.” What kind of communication is that? (Passive.)

PRACTICE

Step 5: Divide the class into small groups (6 to 10), and in each small group appoint actors and directors. The focus of this practice is on being able to yell at other people and to take being yelled at. This practice session has four steps. First, carefully select the first group of actors to be children who are comfortable yelling. Be sure that more passive students also have an opportunity to practice. Second, one actor will be a friend stepping off the curb to cross the street when a car is coming. The other actor must yell, “Wait, stop! A car is coming.” Third, the yeller and the receiver stop and check their Feeling Thermometers. What did it feel like to yell at your friend? What did it feel like to be yelled at? Third, directors give feedback: How loud was the yell? Was it clear, direct, firm...? Fourth, all team members take slow deep breaths to calm down.

Example: Divide groups into teams. Carefully explain the four steps listed in the box above. Use a fish bowl to demonstrate with one group. Have students act out the role-play. Monitor closely.

The yelling is finished. So, take three deep slow breaths.

Step 6: More practice with determining passive, aggressive, assertive behaviors, and with yelling. Have one half of the team line up facing each other. These actors will deliver statements written on a card to their partner. Both will determine their Feeling Thermometers. Then the directors will tell if the behavior was passive, aggressive, or assertive. At the end, take three deep breaths.

Next each team will determine if the criticisms are aggressive, assertive, or passive. The actors will act out a criticism from a card. Then they will tell how they feel using the feeling thermometer.

Then the directors will tell if the criticism was given passively, aggressively, or assertively.

Here are your cards.

(SAY QUIETLY, WITH SHOULDERS HUNCHED) I wonder if you know where my toothpaste went. (Passive.)

(YELLING AND STANDING VERY TALL AND STRONG) If I find out you took my toothpaste, I'll scratch your face. (Aggressive.)

(SAY CALMLY, WHILE STANDING TALL) When I go to brush my teeth and discover you have used up the toothpaste, I get annoyed. Please don't do that. (Assertive.)

(YELLING LOUDLY) You idiot! Can't you keep the stupid room clean? (Aggressive.)

(LOUD, STRONG, TOO CLOSE TO THE OTHER PERSON) Hey you! I just made the bed. Get off it or I will trash your bed. (Aggressive.)

(CALMLY, BUT STRONGLY) Please sit on your own bed. I want mine to stay neat. (Assertive.)

(LOOK AROUND PUZZLED, MAYBE LOOK AT THE FLOOR, VOICE WHINEY) I just made my bed and someone messed it up. I'll just have to make it up again. (Passive.)

(CALMLY) That is my toy, please don't touch it.

(YELLING) Get your mitts off my toy. Don't touch it again.

(SOFTLY) I wish you wouldn't touch my toy. Well... could you put it down in a minute?

Add other situations as appropriate for your students.

THE GAME

Step 7: Have the teams prepare to play the Game by giving them a situation to work on.

Place a special emphasis on evaluating outcomes. In previous sessions, the game consisted of solving social problems. The teams defined problems, set goals, generated possible solutions, and evaluated the alternatives: What outcomes went with the different solutions? Considering the consequences are so important in the problem-solving schema, we continue to practice it. Give the teams a situation to work on. Have the actors evaluate the alternatives and the directors provide feedback.

Example: Now we are going to play the Game. Your task is to evaluate each alternative. What are the consequences?

Here is the situation: Your grandmother lives with you, and frequently your mother tells you to do one thing, and your grandmother says do something else. Like now. Your mother says to scrub the tub in the bathroom. Your grandmother says to leave it, and help her make an apple pie. The alternatives are: (a) do what your mother asks; (b) do what your grandmother says; (c) leave the house and don't do either; (d) tell your mother and grandmother to work it out and call you when they have made a decision; (e) have a talk with your mother at a different time and ask for her to help you make a plan; (f) ask your father what to do.

You have the situation to work on. The actors are to assess the consequences of doing the alternative solutions. The actors' roles are you, your mother, your grandmother, your father. Decide what your goal is and then determine the consequences of each alternative.

The directors stop and start the action. Each director will have one behavior to observe.

These behaviors are posture (straight, slumped over, leaning toward the speaker), gestures (large, small, threatening, withdrawing), voice level (soft, loud), voice tone (pleasant, whining), and eye contact (direct, away). Pay particular attention to eye contact, positive facial expressions, and posture.

Step 8: Do the role-play and give feedback to the actor. Substitute new situations as needed. Practice and feedback are key elements in skill development. You want students to be able to figure out the consequences of their actions. Do these alternative solutions enable them to meet their goals? Feedback begins with the directors asking the actors what one thing they liked about their performance and what might be changed next time. Then the directors comment on what they liked and what they would have done differently. Use tokens throughout.

Example: Go ahead and evaluate the different alternatives. Actors practice figuring out the consequences of the alternatives. Directors observe, direct, and give feedback after each role-play.

New Situations

- Your father is very grouchy when he first gets up and yells at you for no good reason.
- When your friend Scott comes over, he eats up all your mother's cookies. She gets mad at you.
- You want to watch a special TV show that is past your bedtime.
- When you get up to the check-out counter, you cannot find the \$5 you had with you. You haven't got enough money to pay for the candy you picked out. You are embarrassed so you get nervous. What can you do to calm down and make a good decision on how to act?

Step 9: Have the students in each team switch roles when the actors have all had a turn. If time is short, switch before everyone has had a chance. Practice is essential. If some actors do not have a chance to try their hand at the skills, make note and assign them roles in the next session.

Example: Now it is time for everyone to switch roles. Actors will become directors, and directors will become actors. Everyone needs to have a chance to practice thinking about the consequences of different alternatives. If you did not get a turn as an actor, we will let you start in the next session. Please remind the Super Coach.

Step 10: End with group affirmations. Reinforce approximations. For example, if a student did not yell loud enough, praise the soft ones and ask the student to try some more loud ones next time. Catch a student doing something right. Make sure that every child receives some kind of ending affirmation. Continue reinforcing with tokens. Have the group compliment each other.

Example: Now it is time to end the lesson. Everyone did a great job in learning how to figure out the consequences of doing one of the possible solutions.

This is almost our last session. Let's go around and tell one thing we have learned that we know we will be able to keep doing after the course is over.

END OF SESSION 3, MODULE 6

Session 4, Module 6: Maintaining and Using New Skills

TEACH

Step 1: Introduce the Super Coach, the Trainer, and the content. Wear regular clothes to avoid calling attention to the roles. Explain that the goal is to apply all the problem-solving skills that were learned, to real problems. The Super Coach and Trainer will still help coach the teams, but we are going to try to let the teams set their own goals. We will monitor behavior and progress, and assist as necessary. We will ask for sharing and appreciation at the end of the lesson.

Example:

COACH: I am the Super Coach, and this is the Trainer. Let me tell you what we are going to do today.

TRAINER: Can we sit down now?

COACH: Why do you want to sit down?

TRAINER: From now on, the students are going to problem-solve on their own. They have learned so much. They hardly need us any more.

COACH: That's right. But we are still here to help them with setting goals, finding alternatives, evaluating consequences, and practicing. We have a lot to do this session.

TRAINER: You know, after we are gone, their teachers and parents will be there to help them. But still, I liked being the Super Coach and Trainer with these students. They are great actors. I'm going to miss them.

COACH: Well, don't start missing them yet. We have a lot of work to do today.

Have you got the idea? In a minute or two, the Trainer and I will ask you to pick some of your own problems— little ones, maybe about something happening at school or with a friend. We are going to let you talk about your goals. Then we will help you think of alternatives and monitor the role-play. But mostly you will be in charge. We have been practicing and practicing how to solve problems in an assertive way. Each lesson has covered a different part. The time has come to put it all together.

Step 2: Present an outline of the steps to take in problem-solving. Give the outline to the students and go over the steps. The comments should be kept to a minimum because the list is designed to be a quick review and reminder - no more.

Example: Here is a very brief outline of the steps in problem-solving— the steps you are to follow today.

STEPS IN PROBLEM-SOLVING

1. SELECT A PROBLEM.
2. CHECK HOW YOU FEEL.
3. REDUCE ANGER AND ANXIETY WITH RELAXATION.
4. DEFINE THE PROBLEM.
5. CHOOSE A GOAL.
6. LIST ALTERNATIVES.
7. EVALUATE ALTERNATIVES.
8. SELECT AN ACTION TO TAKE.
9. ROLE-PLAY IT USING SELF-TALK.
10. OBTAIN FEEDBACK.

Let's review what all the steps stand for.

STEPS IN PROBLEM-SOLVING

1. SELECT A PROBLEM. Take a problem from your own experience.
2. CHECK HOW YOU FEEL. Use the Feeling Thermometer.
3. REDUCE ANGER AND ANXIETY WITH RELAXATION. Breathe, tight fist, imagine.
4. DEFINE THE PROBLEM. What is wrong? What is the problem?
5. CHOSE A GOAL. How do you want it to end?
6. LIST ALTERNATIVES. Come up with at least three and preferably five.
7. EVALUATE ALTERNATIVES. What are the consequences? Advantages and disadvantages?

8. SELECT AN ACTION TO TAKE. What is the best solution?
9. ROLE-PLAY IT USING SELF-TALK. Guide yourself through the situation.
10. OBTAIN FEEDBACK. What did you do that you liked? What would you do differently? Benefit from other students' evaluation of what you did.

THE GAME

Step 3: Start the process going (have teams divide into actors and directors) and mention the availability of problems. If a team cannot think of a problem from their own personal experiences, let them select one from the jar containing strips of paper describing problems.

Example: Before starting, I want to mention that if a team cannot think of problem they are experiencing or have experienced, there is a jar here with some problem ideas in it.

First, review the problem. Choose a goal.

Think of lots of alternatives and examine the consequences. What will happen if you choose each alternative?

Select an alternative and role-play.

Now go ahead and get started. Super Coach and Trainer will observe, and help when needed.

Problems for the Jar (Add other problems from previous sessions and problems that are appropriate for your students.)

- Your best friend is angry with you but won't say why.
- You wanted to play on an athletic team but were not selected.
- A friend of the family gave you a box of clothes, but none of them fit.
- Your mother assigned the kids household tasks. You are to clean the toilet, which you hate doing.
- The clerk in the drugstore accused you of stealing a candy bar, which you did not do.

Step 4: Do the role-play and give feedback to the actor. Substitute new situations as needed. Practice and feedback are key elements in skill development. You want students to be able to figure out the consequences of their actions. Do these alternative solutions enable them to meet their goals? Feedback begins with the directors asking the actors what one thing they liked about their performance and what might be changed next time. Then the directors comment on what they liked and what they would have done differently. Use tokens throughout.

Step 5: Have the students in each team switch roles when the actors have all had a turn. If time is short, switch before everyone has had a chance. Practice is essential. If some actors do not have a chance to try their hand at the skills, make note and assign them roles in the next session.

Step 6: Review how the teams experienced the problem-solving. When teams have worked up to the allotted time, have them share common experiences. Ask questions as prompts if needed.

Example: Let's have each team share with the rest of us how the problem solving went. What did you do that you liked and what would you do differently next time?

REVIEW AND CLOSING

Step 7: End with individual and group appreciation. Use opportunities to strengthen self esteem. Have students say something positive about themselves and then give applause to others in the room.

Example: I want to end today's session with appreciating the students here today. First, let's go around the room and have each person complete this sentence: "I am at my best when I....."

Now that you have had the chance to recognize something good about yourself, let's consider the others in the class. I want you to introduce the person your right. Then I want the class to give that person a round of applause. For example, I would say, "This is Kevin. He is a great problem-solver." Then you clap for Kevin. We are going to clap for each person for the way they practiced, the way they acted, the way they directed, and for all that they learned.

Now let's clap for the Super Coach and the Trainer.

Everyone made a contribution to this class. We all learned a lot about being assertive.

END OF SESSION 4, MODULE 6