

ADJUSTMENT PHASE FOR YOUTHS AND CAREGIVERS/PARENTS
PROJECT TALC (TEENS AND PARENTS LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE)

Prepared by Sutherland Miller, Ph.D.

SESSION 16 (JOINT): LOOKING TO THE FUTURE TOGETHER. WHAT CAN WE DO? (Day 8,
Afternoon, 2 hours)

OBJECTIVES:

1. Youths and caregivers/parents will develop a list of their future goals and share them with each other.
2. Caregivers/parents will identify what they want the future to hold for the youths in their care and will share these aspirations with the youths.
3. Youths will feel comfortable being happy and successful even though they have been grieving.
4. Caregivers will produce a list of strategies for helping the youths achieve their goals.
5. Caregivers/parents and youths will develop a list of obstacles to achieving goals and brainstorm ways to deal with them.

RATIONALE:

The basic purpose of this session is to develop a future orientation in which youths and caregivers work together toward achieving the youth's goals. It is hoped that by sharing goals and strategies for achieving them motivation is increased as well.

When the caregiver/parents meet alone, part of the intent is to develop supports by sharing with each other. The other part is to become excited about what the future holds and to see themselves as having the power to make a significant contribution to the youths' lives and goals.

One potential barrier for the youths is the feeling that it is not right for them to feel happy or be successful when their mother or father has so recently died. Attempts are made to deal with that perception through making it explicit and discussing it.

While there is insufficient time to deal in depth with many obstacles and strategies for overcoming them, some obstacles are identified and possible solutions are put forth.

Although the overall theme of the adjustment phase is coping with the death of a parent and its consequences, we want the sessions to end on an upbeat note. This is not to deny that the grieving process will continue for some time, but we assume that looking at the future as well as the past will help the youths refrain from getting stuck.

SUMMARY OF EXERCISES:

1. Have the youths review between-session goals. Do a lottery by family, give out "Thanks," and introduce the session. Have caregivers and youths share goals, and caregivers make a list of goals they have for youths. (25 minutes)
2. Use a script to bring up the idea of needing permission from the deceased parent to be happy and successful. Discuss it. (15 minutes)
3. Identify obstacles to achieving goals and brainstorm solutions. (15 minutes)
- 4a. Caregivers/parents meet separately and develop a list of strategies for helping youths achieve their goals. (15 minutes)
- 4b. Youths meet separately and write a postcard from the future. (15 minutes)
5. Youths and caregivers meet together and share strategies and postcards. (20 minutes)
6. Short-term goals are set, group and family appreciation is given, and good-byes are said. (30 minutes)

MATERIALS:

"Thanks"
Lottery tickets
Lottery prize (family prize)
Feeling Thermometer Chart
Goal Setting Chart
Goal Cards
Goal Summary Sheet
Problem-Solving Chart
Newsprint and marking pens
Pencils
Script: Is It OK To Feel Good?
A Teenager's Goals
Graduation Certificates

NOTES TO THE FACILITATORS: Text in **bold** letters tells you what the purpose of each exercise is. Text in CAPITAL letters tells you what to do. Text in small letters tells you what to say. Once you become familiar with what to say, please put it in your own words. Do not read aloud the text in small letters - make it natural.

The times listed under the headings of each exercise are to help you keep on target and move the session along. Exercises may be lengthened or shortened at your discretion, as long as all the material is covered.

FACILITATOR'S NOTES - REMINDERS AND POINTS TO MAKE

Exercise 1: Introduction and Our Goals
(25 minutes)

[The purposes of this exercise is to create a positive atmosphere, to increase a sense of self-efficacy. Youths and caregivers are to identify future goals in order to motivate them to achieve future goals and reinforce the idea that caregivers need to help youths reach their goals. Introductions of topics, goal review, identifying goals and sharing are the approaches used here.]

It is good to see everyone here for the last session.

We are going to work on a topic and then have a graduation ceremony.

Today we are going to focus on the future.

Even though this is the last session, I want to start with introductions.

Please tell us your name and one positive thing that you have gotten out of these workshops.

For example, you might say, "My name is Thelma Brown, and I really liked hearing my nephew talk about his feelings about his mother. I never knew how much he loved her."

#GO AROUND THE ROOM AND HAVE EACH PARTICIPANT COMPLETE THE SENTENCE, "My name is _____ and one thing I liked about the workshops was..."

Thank you for sharing.

Before we get started I want to do a lottery by family.

If you are the only representative of your family here, you still can play.

#GIVE OUT A LOTTERY TICKET TO EACH FAMILY. HAVE FAMILY NAMES WRITTEN ON THEM. COLLECT THEM, MIX THEM, AND DRAW A WINNER. GIVE OUT THE PRIZE.

Now let me give you your "Thanks" for the day.

That way you can let people know when you like what they say about their goals.

Remember, "Thanks" tell a person that you liked what the person said or did, his or her style, appearance, presence, and any other contributions to the group.

#PASS OUT TWENTY "THANKS" TO EACH PERSON.

Today we are going to focus on the future.

What do you want the future to be like?

In these workshops we have focused a lot on your future goals - both for caregivers and youths.

The youths have met on their own twice to think about their goals and how they can reach them.

Where in your life do you want to be in five years?

Take a few minutes and come up with some important future goals for yourself.

You can set goals in a lot of areas: what kind of person you want to be, what kind of education you want, what kind of job you will have, where you will live, the kinds of friends you will have, etc.

**WRITE GOAL CATEGORIES ON THE BOARD: PERSONAL,
EDUCATION, JOB, LIVING SITUATION, FRIENDS, FAMILY,
PARTNER**

(TO CAREGIVERS) Right this moment the attention is on you and your wishes - not the young person you are caring for.

Young people are not the only ones who have hopes and dreams.

(TO YOUTHS) You can add to the goals you have already been thinking about.

#ALLOW FIVE MINUTES FOR SELECTING GOALS.

Let's go around the room and share with the others here one important goal of yours.

#ASK EACH CAREGIVER/PARENT AND YOUTH TO DESCRIBE AT LEAST ONE GOAL OF THEIRS.

Thank you for sharing.

Now we would like to hear from the caregivers what their goals are for their children.

What are your hopes and dreams for the youth for whom you are responsible?

What do you want them to be doing five years from now?

What kind of education, job, friends, family, lovers, and other things do you want to see them have or achieve?

Let's make a list of what you want for them.

#ENCOURAGE CAREGIVERS TO CALL OUT IDEAS OF WHAT THEY WANT FOR THE YOUTHS. WRITE THEM ON NEWSPRINT. ALLOW FIVE MINUTES TO MAKE THE LIST AND DECIDE ON WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT.

What would say are the most important things?

#ENCOURAGE CAREGIVERS TO DISCUSS WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT.

Your children are going to need your support to reach their goals.

Next let's take a look at how a youth's feelings about the death of his mother or father can make it harder to achieve what he or she wants.

Exercise 2: Is It OK To Feel Good?
(15 minutes)

[The purpose of this exercise is to decrease negative feelings that block a youth's happiness and achievements. A script and discussion are used.]

To explore one barrier to accomplishing future goals I would like you to observe this next scene.

Who will play Chantal and who will play Delbert?

#SELECT THE PLAYERS, GIVE THEM THE SCRIPT, AND HAVE
THEM READ IT ALOUD TO THE GROUP.

IS IT OK TO FEEL GOOD?

CHANTAL: You dog!

DELBERT: What's a matter?

CHANTAL: I hear you did really good on the math test. I messed it up completely.

DELBERT: That's too bad.

CHANTAL: Don't you feel really good?

DELBERT: I don't know.

CHANTAL: You should be happy. I'd be screaming and jumping if I had your grade. That test was hard!

DELBERT: I guess so.

CHANTAL: What's wrong with you?

DELBERT: Nothing.

CHANTAL: Well how come you aren't happy about doing so good?

DELBERT: You know that my mother died.

CHANTAL: Course, I know, stupid. I was at the funeral.

DELBERT: It doesn't seem right to feel happy when she's dead.

CHANTAL: Maybe you do feel happy about the test - just a little.

DELBERT: I wouldn't let myself feel good. I'm surprised I let myself do good on the test.

CHANTAL: I knew your mother. Your mother would want you to feel happy. She'd be proud that you made a good grade.

DELBERT: I keep thinking I need her permission to feel OK.

CHANTAL: Delbert, ask her. "Mama, is it OK for me to feel happy?"

DELBERT: What would she say?

CHANTAL: She'd say, "Of course, it's OK, Delbert. Keep making good grades in math, son. I knew you could do it."

DELBERT: Chantal, you are something else.

CHANTAL: I see a little smile coming on.

THE END

What's happening here?

#ENCOURAGE RESPONSES AND DISCUSSION. PROMPT WITH COMMENTS SUCH AS

"SHOULD DELBERT TRY TO KEEP HIMSELF SAD?"

"WHAT WOULD THAT LEAD TO?"

"ISN'T IT DISRESPECTFUL TO FEEL HAPPY?"

"WHAT SHOULD DELBERT DO IF HIS MOTHER DIDN'T CARE WHETHER OR NOT HE DID WELL IN SCHOOL?"

"WHAT ROLE SHOULD A DECEASED PARENT PLAY IN THE LIFE OF A TEENAGER?"

You can see that how you think about the dead parent and how you think a person is supposed to behave when grieving can effect your current life.

Everyone has personal projects that they are working on.

Exercise 3: What Are the Obstacles to a Satisfying and Successful Future?

(15 minutes)

[The purposes of this exercise are to identify obstacles to success and satisfaction and to consider some ways of overcoming those barriers. Problem identification and problem solving are the methods used.]

Sometimes there are barriers that get in the way of accomplishing a goal or finishing a personal project.

Each youth in this room has some idea of what kind of person he or she wants to be and what he or she wants the future to be like.

It is not unusual for an obstacle to appear which blocks the direction in which you want to go.

I want both the youths and the caregivers to tell me what kind of obstacles the young person may face in trying to achieve his or her goals?

#ENCOURAGE IDENTIFYING OBSTACLES. LIST THEM ON NEWSPRINT.

Let's take a closer look at one of these obstacles.

Which one do you think is the most important?

#HELP THE GROUP SELECT AN OBSTACLE TO WORK ON.

That was very good.

So, we are going to work on _____ (THE OBSTACLE)

Do you remember the steps in solving a problem?

#HOLD UP THE PROBLEM SOLVING CHART.

I want to go over the steps with you.

First, define the problem - what is the problem?

Second, what is the goal?

Third, brainstorm a bunch of possible solutions.

Fourth, evaluate the solutions and pick one to try.

Fifth, do it! Make a plan for doing it. Then try it out.

Sixth, Review it. How did it work out?

What would you do differently next time?

Let's apply the steps in solving a problem to the obstacle you chose.

#COACH THE GROUP THROUGH STEP FOUR AND THE FIRST PART OF STEP FIVE: MAKING A PLAN FOR DOING IT. GIVE OUT "THANKS."

Now let's think about the future a little bit more.

We will work in separate groups, and each group will have a different task.

HAVE THE YOUTHS SIT IN ONE CORNER OF THE ROOM WHILE THE CAREGIVERS AND PARENTS WORK IN ANOTHER PART OF THE ROOM.

CAREGIVERS/PARENTS ALONE

Exercise 4a: What Do I Want From the Future? (15 minutes)

[The purpose of this exercise for the caregivers is to discover ways to help the youths achieve their goals. A self-test on achieving goals is used.]

We are going to take a little time to look at how you can help a young person reach his or her goals.

The way we will do this is that I will give you a questionnaire with what the youth says to you and some different ways you might respond to the youth.

You pick out the best response and then go on to the next statement.

After you have chosen what you would say, we will talk about the choices.

A TEENAGER'S GOALS

1. THE TEENAGER SAYS: I WANT TO BE AN AIRLINE PILOT.

WHICH RESPONSE BY THE CAREGIVER OR PARENT IS BETTER?

- A. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT FLYING?
- B. IT'S A HARD LIFE.
- C. WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT BEING A PILOT?
- D. IT'S TOO DANGEROUS.

2. THE TEENAGER SAYS: I'M POSITIVE THAT BEING A PILOT IS WHAT I WANT.

WHICH RESPONSE BY THE CAREGIVER OR PARENT IS BETTER?

- A. YOU COULDN'T MAKE IT.
- B. IT TAKES TOO LONG TO GET TRAINED.

- C. THAT'S PRETTY FUNNY. YOU! A PILOT?!
- D. IT SOUNDS GREAT. WHERE DO YOU START?

3. THE TEENAGER SAYS: I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START TO BECOME A PILOT.

WHICH RESPONSE BY THE CAREGIVER OR PARENT IS BETTER?

- A. WHY DON'T YOU JOIN THE AIR FORCE?
- B. WHAT SKILLS AND RESOURCES DO YOU NEED TO BECOME A PILOT?
- C. I DON'T KNOW EITHER.
- D. IF YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT'S REQUIRED, YOU'LL NEVER MAKE IT.

4. THE TEENAGER SAYS: I HAD BETTER FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BECOMING A PILOT.

WHICH RESPONSE BY THE CAREGIVER OR PARENT IS BETTER?

- A. YOU GOT TO LEARN HOW TO FLY. WHAT MORE IS THERE TO KNOW?
- B. THERE'S A GUY I KNOW WHOSE BROTHER IS A PILOT. DO YOU WANT TO MEET HIM?
- C. TRY WRITING TO THE AIRLINES AND SEE IF THEY SEND YOU SOMETHING.
- D. THERE ARE A LOT OF PLACES WHERE YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE. SHOULD WE MAKE A LIST AND FIGURE OUT HOW TO APPROACH THEM?

THE END

#ALLOW FIVE MINUTES FOR FILLING OUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

Now let's talk about the answers.

#READ WHAT THE TEENAGER SAYS AND ASK THE GROUP

WHICH RESPONSE IS BETTER. DISCUSS FOR FIVE MINUTES. THE RECOMMENDED ANSWERS ARE 1-C, 2-D, 3-B, 4-D.

#THE POINTS TO MAKE IN THE DISCUSSION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. ACCEPT THE TEENAGERS GOAL NO MATTER WHAT YOUR REACTION TO IT IS.
2. HELP THE TEENAGER EXPLORE HOW WELL THE GOAL FITS HIM OR HER. (THE KIND OF PEOPLE, PLACE, AND THINGS HE OR SHE LIKES.)
3. HELP THE TEENAGER MAKE A PLAN FOR GETTING INFORMATION ABOUT THE GOAL.
4. HELP THE TEENAGER FIND OUT WHAT SKILLS AND RESOURCES ARE NEEDED TO REACH THE GOAL.
5. HELP THE TEENAGER PLAN HOW TO ACQUIRE THE SKILLS AND RESOURCES.
6. SUPPORT THE TEENAGER'S EFFORTS TO SET GOALS.

That was very good!

What are some other ideas that you have about helping your adolescent reach his or her goals?

#ENCOURAGE SHARING. KEEP A LIST ON NEWSPRINT. ASK ONE CAREGIVER TO REPORT TO THE YOUTHS ON CAREGIVER "STRATEGIES" FOR SUPPORTING YOUTH GOALS.

Now we are going back and hear how the youths see the future.

I would like one of you to report back to the group what we have discussed here.

#BRING THE CAREGIVERS AND YOUTHS TOGETHER.

YOUTHS ALONE

Exercise 4b: What Do I Want From the Future?
(15 minutes)

[The purpose of this exercise for the youths is to motivate them by having them describe what a successful and satisfying future would be for them. Writing a post card from the future is the approach employed with the youths.]

I would like you to pretend that you have been away from the family for five years.

The year is _____ (FIVE YEARS FROM THE PRESENT).

If you can't imagine being in the future 5 years from now, take 3 years.

You are going to write your caregiver or parent a postcard, telling them what has happened in those five years.

What life is like for you now.

Tell them the goals and dreams that came true.

#PASS OUT PENCILS AND LARGE CARDS (5X8). GIVE THEM TEN MINUTES TO WRITE THEIR CARDS.

#THEN HAVE THEM COME BACK WITH THE CAREGIVERS AND PARENTS.

Exercise 5: Sharing What I Want From the Future and Strategies
(20 minutes)

[The purpose of this exercise for the youths is to motivate them by having them describe what a successful and satisfying future would be for them. Reading a post card from the future is the approach employed with the youths. Caregivers share their strategies.]

While the caregivers and parents were exploring ways to help an adolescent set goals and reach them, the youths were imagining a successful future five years from now.

Each youth wrote a post card to the family telling them what happened during the five years.

This is our last session together; so, I would like each youth to read his or her post card from the future.

We want to keep up with what has been happening to you.

#HAVE EACH YOUTH READ HIS OR HER POST CARD. GIVE OUT
"THANKS" AND LOT OF PRAISE.

Thank you very much.

Now let's hear from the caregivers. What are some strategies you came up with to help the youths reach their goals.

#HAVE ONE CAREGIVER REPORT ON "STRATEGIES." GIVE OUT
"THANKS" AND LOT OF PRAISE.

It is time to show our appreciation to each other and set some short-term goals.

We are also going to have a graduation ceremony.

Exercise 6: What Is My Short-term Goal? Graduation
(30 minutes)

[The purposes of this exercise are to foster a shared future orientation in both the youths and caregivers/parents, to create positive feelings between youths and caregivers/parents, and to increase self esteem. Setting joint short-term goals, showing appreciation to each other and saying goodbye are employed.]

We are near the end of this final session.

Even though we won't be meeting again, I would like you to set a goal that you can accomplish in the next two weeks.

If both the youth and caregiver or parent are present, then setting a goal to be achieved together is a good idea.

If the youth is here today by himself or herself, then set your own goal.

Today we have worked on the future.

Here are some examples of goals related to today's session.

1. Youth and caregiver/parent meet to discuss the youth's future plans.
2. The youth and his/her caregiver explore what information would help the youth choose a long range goal.
3. The caregiver sets up a meeting with the youth and a friend of the caregiver who knows about a particular school or job.
4. The youth visits the library to learn more about a future goal.
5. The youth makes a list of what he/she would want in a job in terms of the people, the place, the activities, the environment, and the conditions (hours, pay, benefits, chances to move up, and so on).
6. The youth makes an appointment to talk with a vocational or college counselor.
7. The youth joins a new group that could provide fun and support such as Big Brothers, Scouts, church group, hospital volunteer.

#HOLD UP THE GOAL SETTING CHART.

Remember that when you set your goal it needs to meet certain standards.

Make it realistic, clear, not too much or too little, and easy to see if achieved.

Go ahead and select a goal to accomplish in the next two weeks.

#IF THERE ARE FAMILIES PRESENT, HAVE THEM MEET BY FAMILY. IF A YOUTH IS ALONE, HAVE HIM OR HER WORK ON THE GOAL INDIVIDUALLY. ALLOW FIVE MINUTES TO SELECT A GOAL.

Now let's hear what you came up with.

#HAVE EACH FAMILY OR TEENAGER WITHOUT FAMILY MEMBERS SHARE THEIR GOALS. COACH AS NEEDED. ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO COMMENT ON THE GOAL, SUPPORTING THEM AND SUGGESTING WAYS TO MAKE THE GOAL FIT THE STANDARDS BETTER. GIVE OUT "THANKS."

That was very good.

If any of you want to say what coming here for these sessions has meant to you, now is a good time to share.

Does anyone want to comment on your reactions to the meetings with each other?

#ENCOURAGE THE TEENAGERS TO SHARE WHAT THE EXPERIENCE HAS MEANT TO THEM, BUT DON'T PUSH ANYONE TO COMMENT.

As this is the last session, when you show appreciation to others in the group, you may want to say goodbye as well.

First - before showing our appreciation to each other - I want to say that we (THE FACILITATORS) have enjoyed working with you.

You, the young people, have gone through a tremendous amount since we started having sessions together.

There have been enormous changes in your lives, and you deserve great credit for the way you have tried to cope with everything that has happened.

We want to give you recognition for your hard work.

So we have a graduation ceremony.

#HAVE A GRADUATION CEREMONY THAT BEST FITS YOUR GROUP. BE CREATIVE BUT INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

We will start with your certificates.

These certificates indicate that you have completed the workshop on dealing with the death of a parent.

#GIVE OUT CERTIFICATES TO YOUTHS. CALL OUT EACH PERSON'S NAME (ONE AT A TIME) AND HAVE THEM COME UP FRONT TO RECEIVE THE CERTIFICATE. SHAKE THEIR HANDS. WHEN EACH PERSON RECEIVES HIS/HER CERTIFICATE, ASK HIM/HER TO SAY A FEW WORDS TO THE GROUP.

We also want to give special thanks to the caregivers and parents here today for their love and support of these youths.

#GIVE OUT CERTIFICATES TO CAREGIVERS. CALL OUT EACH PERSON'S NAME (ONE AT A TIME) AND HAVE THEM COME UP FRONT TO RECEIVE THE CERTIFICATE. SHAKE THEIR HANDS. WHEN EACH PERSON RECEIVES HIS/HER CERTIFICATE, ASK HIM/HER TO SAY A FEW WORDS TO THE GROUP.

Now let's take some time to show appreciation to each other and to say goodbye.

#START THE GROUP APPRECIATION BY GETTING UP AND GIVING "THANKS," PRAISE, AND SUPPORTIVE GESTURES TO GROUP MEMBERS. ENCOURAGE GROUP SHARING OF POSITIVES. MAKE SURE NO ONE IS LEFT OUT. PAY ATTENTION TO CAREGIVERS/PARENTS.

That's the end of our program.

We hope this is also the beginning of a brighter, happier future for all of you.

THE END OF SESSION 16

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