

# STEP UP

**Building Respectful  
Family Relationships**

## **PARENT WORKBOOK**

Lily Anderson and Greg Routt





# **Parent Workbook**

**Third Edition**

Lily Anderson and Greg Routt

## Step-Up: Building Respectful Family Relationships

### Parent Group Workbook

The Step-Up curriculum was developed and written by Greg Routt and Lily Anderson with the Step-Up Program, a group intervention program for adolescents who are violent or abusive toward family members.

Step-Up is a program of King County Superior Court.

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Step-Up website: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/superior-court/juvenile/step-up.aspx>

# **Welcome to Step-Up!**

**We are pleased you are here and look forward to having you and your family in Step-Up group.**

**This is your own personal Step-Up Workbook. Please put your name in it and bring it to group every week.**

**Name**

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**Session 1:**

**Orientation  
to Step-Up**

**Teen and Parent Session**

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# Background Information

The purpose of this session is to introduce you to the program and to other group members. This session will inform you about the structure of the group, the components of the program, and the skills you will learn to prevent violence and abuse and restore respectful family relationships. In this session, you will learn about the wheels, the Check-In, Weekly Goal Planning, and the Communication Agreement.

## Goals

- To explain the purpose and goals of the program
- To meet other group members who have experiences similar to yours
- To explain Check-In, the Communication Agreement, Agreements for the Group, and Goal Planning

## Important Messages

- The purpose of this program is to help your teen stop hurtful behavior toward your family members and learn safe and respectful ways to communicate and handle problems.
- We all have a part in making this group a safe and respectful place for everyone.
- Your teen is capable of making changes.
- Parents and teens will be learning skills together.
- Even though things seem difficult between you and your teen right now, you can find positive parts of your relationship and build on them.

**WORKSHEET**

# Introductions

Parents will introduce themselves to the group by saying their names and what they would like to accomplish in the program.

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# Warm-Up Exercise

Take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

- 1. A time I couldn't have made it through something difficult without my teen was:

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- 2. A time when I appreciated my teen was:

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- 3. Something I like about my teen is:

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# Respect

Respect is at the heart of everything you will learn. We will be talking about respect in many different ways.

## The Three R's



# Step-Up Components

## TEEN COMPONENTS



### **Safe Behaviors**

Safety of family members is the first concern of the program. Stopping violence and abuse toward family members is your most important task. The first and most important skill you will learn in Step-Up is making a plan about what you will do when you are getting upset and angry and might become hurtful to family members. We call this a Safety Plan because it keeps your behavior safe.

### **Responsibility for Behavior**

You will learn what it means to actively take responsibility for harmful behavior. We will guide you through a step-by-step process that helps you understand the impact of your behavior on others and how you can be accountable through making amends. This process is called restorative because it helps people restore relationships that have been damaged by hurtful behavior.

### **Self-Awareness and Understanding of Your Thoughts, Beliefs, and Feelings**

You will learn about what is going on inside of you when you become violent or abusive. You will learn how you can change your thinking in perspective to help you respond in a different way. You will become aware of your negative “self-talk” that gets you amped up and angry, and how to change it to more helpful self-talk that calms you down and helps you see things more realistically. You will learn about the feelings you have beneath your anger and how to feel those feelings instead of the anger, so you can express your feelings and needs in a safe and respectful way.

### **Respectful Communication**

You will learn many different ways to talk to others in a way that is respectful to them and respectful to yourself. You will learn how to stay respectful even when you are angry and upset. You will learn how to express your feelings and needs in a way that is not attacking or hurtful. You will learn how to talk about problems, listen, and work together to resolve conflict.

### **Self-Calm**

You will learn many ways that you can calm strong emotions and self-soothe your nervous system when you are angry, tense, or anxious. We will practice different relaxation techniques and meditations for balancing your mood overall, as well as what to do in the heat of the moment to prevent lashing out at others.

# Parent Group Components



**Responding to Abuse and Promoting Safety**

Safety of family members is the first concern of the program. The first and most important skill teens learn in Step-Up is making a Safety Plan about what they will do when they are getting upset and angry and might become hurtful to family members. Parents learn how to support their teens in identifying early warning signs and using their Safety Plan. Parents will make their own plan about responding to hurtful behaviors and how to talk with their teens about it in a meaningful way.

**Restoring a Healthy Relationship**

For many families coming into Step-Up, the parent/teen relationship has been eroded, and parents often feel hopeless about their relationship with their teen. Some parents describe a household atmosphere of negativity, tension, and “walking on eggshells” to prevent outbursts by their adolescent. Parents can initiate a change in their relationship with their teen by the simple acts of listening even when they disagree and acknowledging everyday behavior that supports a healthy relationship.

**Support for Change**

Many parents come into the program feeling isolated and alone in their experiences with their teens. An important part of the parent group is for parents to get support from each other and know that they are not alone in their challenges with their teens. Parents feel relief in being able to share their experiences and learn from one another. Parents work together to find realistic and effective ways to handle the day-to-day power struggles of parenting teens who resist limit-setting. Together, parents will examine changes they want to make in their own behavior that strengthen their ability to hold boundaries while inviting less opposition and more cooperation from their teens.

**Mutually Respectful Communication**

In sessions with the teens and parents together, they’ll learn many different ways to listen and talk to each other respectfully. Parents and teens will practice communication skills with feedback from the group. They will learn how to make it through a conversation about a problem and to come to a resolution without a blow-up. Teens in particular will learn how to express their feelings and needs in a way that is not attacking or hurtful, even when they are angry. Parents will learn how to model respectful communication and support their teens in using their new communication skills at home.

**Setting Boundaries/Regaining Leadership**

When parents are fearful of their teen responding to limit-setting with abuse or violence, it can interfere with their leadership in the family. Accepted parent/adolescent boundaries are ruptured and guidelines set by parents are disregarded. Often, conventional consequences are either ignored or become the fuel for more abuse. Parents struggle with establishing and holding effective consequences for hurtful behavior toward family members. In Step-Up, parents will learn how to use a restorative practice model that is also used in the group to address violence or abuse at home to help their teens take responsibility for their behavior in a meaningful way.

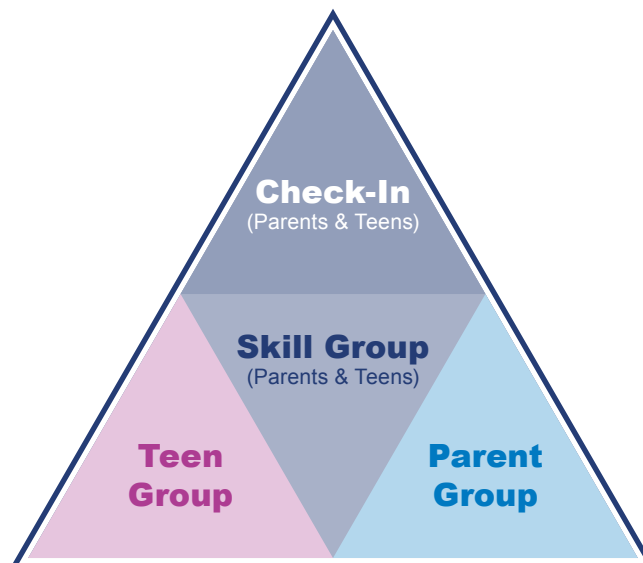
# Goals for Teens

After you complete the program, you will be able to:

- Keep your behavior safe and prevent yourself from hurting others by using a personal Safety Plan
- Talk respectfully even when you are upset or angry
- Change unhelpful thinking into thinking that supports you in staying safe and respectful
- Manage difficult thoughts and emotions, de-escalate yourself, and calm down
- Understand your feelings and how to communicate them in respectful ways
- Resolve conflict with family members in a respectful way
- Understand the meaning of accountability and use the *Six Restorative Steps* to take responsibility for harmful behavior
- Realize you have choices about your behavior

# How the Sessions Work

The program includes sessions with the parents and teens together, as well as separate teen and parent sessions. Every week when you come to the group, we will begin with parents and teens together for Check-In. After Check-In, there is a skill-building session, either with parents and teens together or in separate teen and parent groups.





# Communication Agreement

**R**espectful words, tone, and manner.

*I will speak without blaming, criticizing, or put-downs.*

**E**xpress feelings and opinions in “I” statements.

*I will say, “I feel... when...”*

**S**top and take a break if I cannot stay respectful.

**P**ause to *THINK* before I *SPEAK*.

**E**ngage in the conversation with an *OPEN* mind.

*I will let go of what I think the other person means or wants.*

**C**lear my thoughts so I can *LISTEN* completely when the other person is talking.

**T**ry to understand the other person’s feelings/ opinions *EVEN WHEN I DISAGREE*.

# Step-Up

**S**top  
all the action

Take a time-out and calm yourself

**T**hink

What am I feeling?  
What am I thinking?

**E**valuate

What is the problem?  
What are my choices?

**P**lan

How can I deal with this problem and stay on the Respect Wheel?

**U**se  
skills

“I” statements, listening, assertive communication...

**P**atience

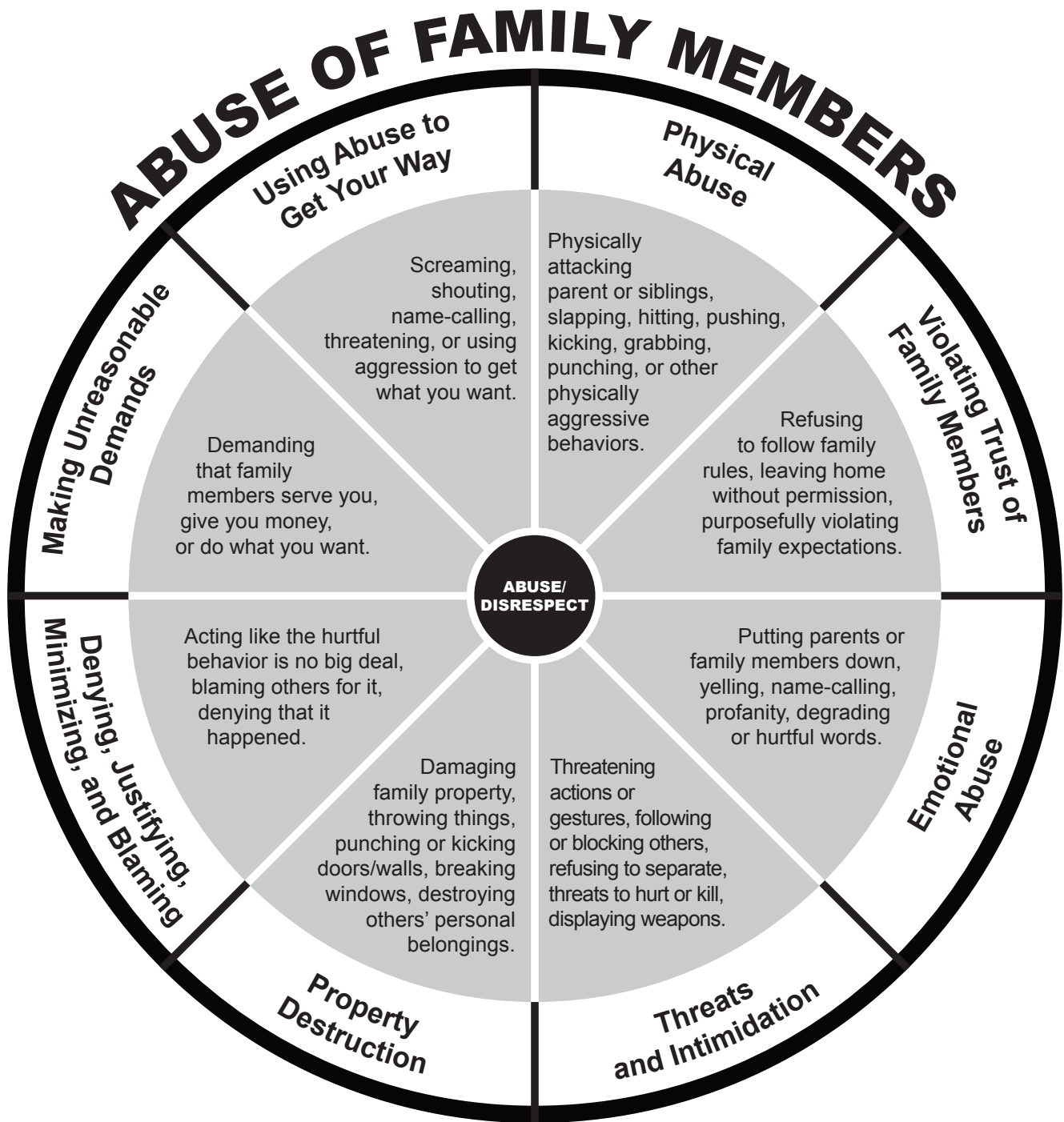
... and lots of it, is what makes this work

# The Wheels

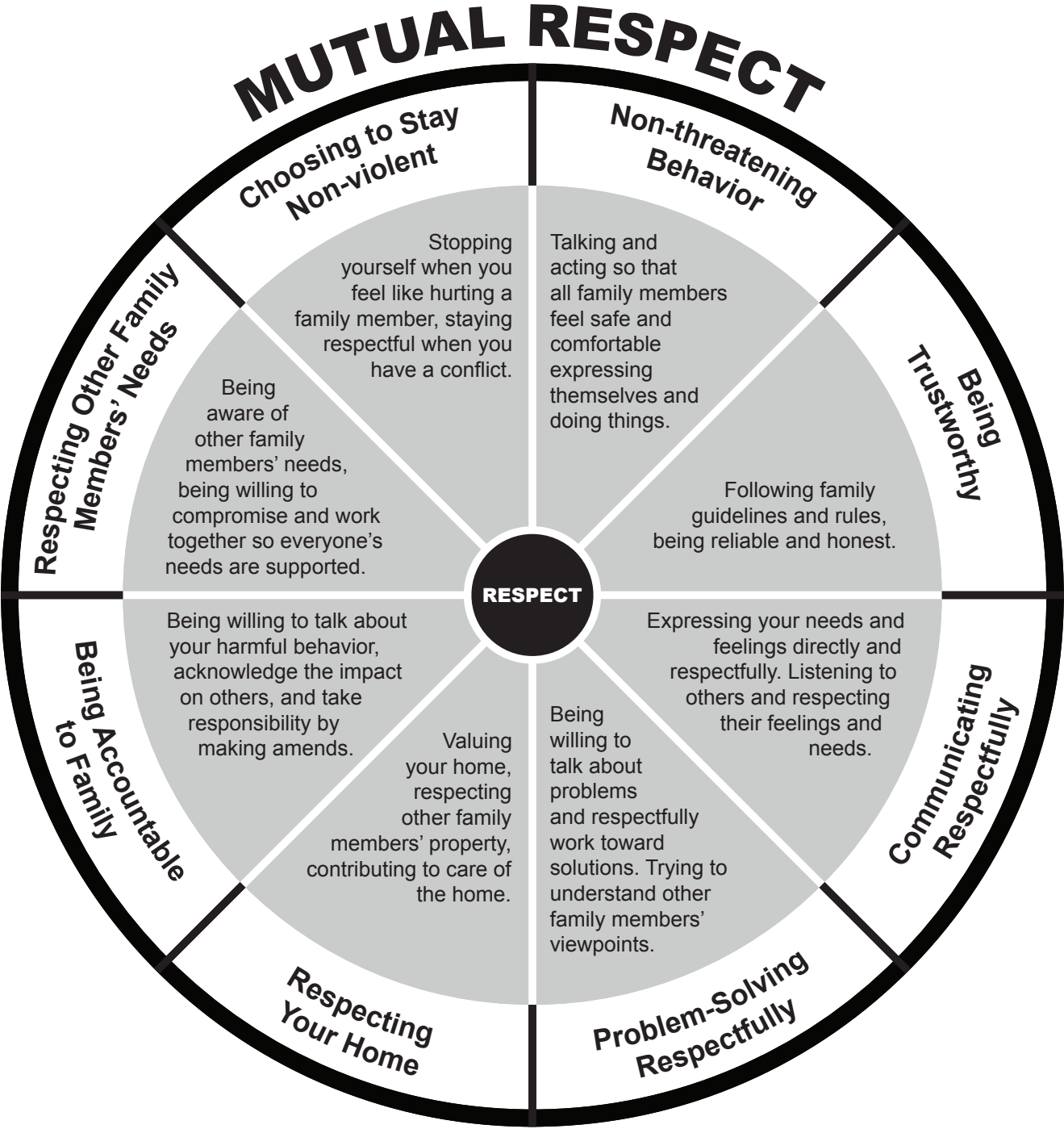
The purpose of Step-Up is to move from the *Abuse/Disrespect Wheel* to the *Respect Wheel* in your family relationships. All of the skills you learn in the program help people stay on the Respect Wheel and off the Abuse/Disrespect Wheel.

- The wheels help you by raising your awareness of the behaviors you use in your family.
- The Respect Wheel shows a model of what a respectful family looks like.
- The wheels are a tool to help you recognize your respectful behaviors and be accountable for disrespect, violence, or abuse in your family.
- The wheels give you a new way to think about your behavior. For example, when you think about a conflict at home, you can ask yourself, “Which wheel was I on when I talked to my mom about that problem?” and, “How can I talk to her about it and stay on the Respect Wheel?”
- Families can put up a copy of the wheels at home. When there is conflict, someone can say, “Let’s try to stay on the Respect Wheel while we talk about this.” You can use the Communication Agreement to guide you.

# Abuse/Disrespect Wheel



# Respect Wheel



## **Check-In: How It Helps**

- Pay attention to your behavior. When you know you will be talking in the group about your behavior during the week, it helps you become more aware of it.
- Be accountable to the group about moving off the Abuse/Disrespect Wheel and onto the Respect Wheel.
- Recognize your respectful and positive behaviors.
- Think about what you could have done differently if you did something on the Abuse/Disrespect Wheel.
- Make a plan every week about how you will use your skills at home to stay on the Respect Wheel.
- If you have been violent or abusive toward a family member in the previous week, you will use a restorative process with your parent to be accountable and make amends.
- Practice respectful communication during Check-In discussions.
- Learn from each other and give each other feedback and support.

**CHECK-IN WORKSHEET**

Date:

Look at the wheels and write down any behaviors you did in the last week.

ABUSE/DISRESPECT	RESPECT

If you did a behavior on the Abuse/Disrespect Wheel, what could you have done differently so that you stayed on the Respect Wheel?

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Choose one of the behaviors you did on the Respect Wheel. What helped you stay respectful? What skill did you use?

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## **Taking Responsibility for My Behavior Using Six Restorative Steps**

If you have been physically violent or abusive toward family members or property, or made threats to do so, please answer the following questions.

1. Who was harmed by my behavior?

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- What was the harm done to them?

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- How did it affect them?

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- What other harm or damage was caused?

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2. How did it affect my relationship with my family members?

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## **Weekly Goal Planning**

Every week at Check-In, you will choose one behavior to work on at home during the week. As you learn skills in Step-Up, you will be able to use your new skills to help you succeed with your goal.

For example, your goal might be to stay non-violent and non-abusive when you get angry with your mom. You could decide to use your Safety Plan so that you will separate and calm down to prevent getting violent or abusive.

### **Tips to Succeed with Your Goal**

- Be specific about the new behavior. Exactly what will you do?
- Keep it simple. Don't make huge, overall goals, such as, "I will get along better with my mom," or "I will be respectful." Break it down by asking, "What exactly do I do when I am not respectful?" such as, yell, swear, call names, etc. Then replace it with a specific behavior, such as talk without put-downs or swearing, and if I'm too angry, take a break and use my Safety Plan.
- Think about what gets in the way. How can you deal with that?
- Visualize that you are doing the new behavior.
- Write it down and put it in a place you will see every day.

**GOAL FOR THE WEEK**

The behavior I will work on is:

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**STEPS**

1. When do you usually use (or not use) this behavior?

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2. What is the new behavior you will use?

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3. What can you say to yourself that will help you do this?

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4. My self-statement is:

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5. Is there a skill you can use to help you succeed with your goal?

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**HOW DID I DO?**

1. Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = worst, 10 = best): \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you had some success, how did you do this?

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- What did you do that was different?

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- What skill did you use?

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3. If you were not successful, what got in the way?

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4. What can you do this week so you will be more successful?

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# Agreements for the Group

To make this group a safe and respectful place for everyone, I agree to:

1. Do my best to follow the Communication Agreement when I talk.
2. Keep information shared in the group confidential.
3. Not identify group members to anyone outside the group.
4. Come to each session sober, not under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
5. Show respect to those who are speaking in the group by avoiding side conversations.
6. Put away phones and other electronics while the group is in session.

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*Signature*

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*Date*







## Background Information

In this session, you will make a plan for keeping your behavior safe when you are angry or upset and might become hurtful. It is called a *Safety Plan* because it helps you stay safe and non-violent.

The Safety Plan is a step-by-step plan you will make about how to separate from conflict and calm yourself so that you can deal with the problem in a better way.

## Goals

- To develop a personal Safety Plan to prevent hurtful behavior toward family members
- To use the Safety Plan at home as a strategy for disengaging from heated conflicts, de-escalating, and calming down before interacting again
- For parents to support their teens in using their Safety Plan at home

## Important Messages

- Using the Safety Plan is a step toward better family relationships.
- The Safety Plan will help you stay safe with your family members.
- Using your Safety Plan means you care about the other person.
- The Safety Plan gives you a chance to calm down and think before you act.



## WORKSHEET

# Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever taken a break from heated conflict? What did you do?

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2. How was it helpful?

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3. What was difficult about it?

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# What Is a Safety Plan?

The Safety Plan is a step-by-step plan that you make for yourself about what you will do when you are upset and angry in a conversation to prevent harmful behavior and keep your behavior safe. You make a personal plan about where you will go and what you will do to help yourself calm down. Once you are calm, you go back to the conversation after you have had time to think about it and you are in a calmer state of mind.

It's like a time-out in basketball or football. The game stops. The teams separate from each other to figure out a plan. The game restarts when the team members have a plan.

Taking a break from heated arguments is one of the best ways to prevent hurtful behavior. It is a lifelong skill people can use in many different situations to prevent saying or doing things they might regret.

Using your Safety Plan with your family will:

- Help you get along with your family
- Keep you from hurting others
- Help you have better relationships

# My Safety Plan

I agree to the following plan to prevent abuse or violence.



*I will separate from my family members when:*

- *I start to feel angry or upset and might become hurtful*
- *I start to use any hurtful behaviors, including the following:*
  - > *Yelling or shouting*
  - > *Name-calling/profanity*
  - > *Threats/intimidating behavior*
  - > *Property damage*
  - > *Any unwanted physical contact*

**I will let the other person know I am separating by saying:**




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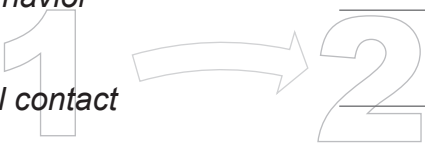
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**After your time-out:**

- **Let it go**
- **Put it on hold**
- **Discuss it**

## My Safety Plan

Your Safety Plan is a time to be alone.

Your Safety Plan is a time to calm down and think, "How can I deal with this problem without being abusive?"

You are responsible for your own Safety Plan, not other people's.

**I will separate from the other person and go to one of the following places:**

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**I will stay away from others for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes or until I can be respectful to everyone in the house.**



**While I am separated, I will do something to calm myself down, such as:**

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I agree that:

- I will not use this plan as an excuse to leave the house or avoid things I am supposed to do.
- I will use this plan as a time to be alone, calm down, and think about how to deal with the problem.
- If the other person separates from me, I will respect their time alone and not bother them.
- After my separation time, I will return and make a plan with the other person about what to do next: finish the discussion, plan a time later to talk about it, or let it go.

I agree to follow this plan to help me stay non-violent, non-abusive, and respectful to my family members.

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*Youth signature*

---

*Date*

## **Parent Agreement**

I also agree to be non-violent and non-abusive and to support my teen in following this plan.

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*Parent signature*

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*Date*

# What to Do After Your Time-Out

## Let it go

After you have cooled down and you talk to your parent again, you both might decide to drop it. It is your parents' decision whether it can be let go. You might have different opinions about this.

## Put it on hold

When you get back together, it might not be a good time to talk about it. For example, you may be too upset, too tired, or too hungry to talk through the problem effectively. So, you can agree to put it on hold for a while until both people feel calm and ready to talk. Putting it on hold should not be a way to avoid the issue. It should be a way to make sure that the conversation can be respectful. If you decide to put the discussion on hold, make sure to set a specific time (for example, after dinner or Saturday morning) for when you are going to discuss it.

## Discuss it

If you feel calm after the time-out, you may decide that you are ready to talk about the issue with the other person. You must be ready to listen to the other person, use problem-solving skills, and communicate respectfully. If the conversation becomes disrespectful, you can always take another time-out.

# Safety Plan Rules

## **Your Safety Plan is a time to be alone.**

It is not okay to go to a friend's house or take off and not let your parent know where you are. When you make your Safety Plan with your parent, discuss where it is okay to go and make a list on your Safety Plan so that your parent knows where you are.

## **Your Safety Plan is a time to calm down and think, "How can I deal with this problem without being abusive?"**

When you are separated, do something to calm down (by using your Self-Calming Plan, changing your thinking, taking deep breaths, walking, etc.). Once you have calmed down, think about how you can talk respectfully about the problem.

## **You are responsible for your own Safety Plan, not other people's.**

Parents will make their own decisions about when they need to separate from you. Sometimes your parent may need to remind you to use your Safety Plan if you are being abusive and are not separating. Think of this as way your parent is trying to support you.

# Take-Home Activity

## Safety Plan Log

During the next week, use your Safety Plan whenever you are starting to feel upset or angry during a conflict. After your Safety Plan, write down how it went in the log below.

Situation:

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1. When did you decide that you needed to separate? What were your warning signs?

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2. What did you do after your time-out: let it go, put it on hold, or discuss it?

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3. How was your Safety Plan helpful?

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4. How was it challenging or difficult to do?

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5. What can you do differently next time so that it works better?

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6. Make changes in your Safety Plan, if needed, to make it more successful.

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## **Background Information**

In this session, teens will identify times when they need to use their Safety Plans and how to use self-calming thoughts. Self-calming thoughts are used to help de-escalate one's emotions and separate from a potentially difficult situation.

Teens will identify their *red flags* – that is, the signs that a time-out is necessary or a situation may get out of control. Parents will think about red flags that they notice in their teens when an argument is starting to escalate. Sometimes parents notice cues that the teens are unaware of. Parents will share their observations with their teens and discuss how they can let their teens know when they see red flags.

Parents will also identify their own red flags that indicate they need to take a break to calm down and think about how they can communicate in a better way with their teens.

## **Goals**

- To identify personal red flags
- To identify self-calming thoughts

## **Important Messages**

- The sooner you take a time-out when you start to feel upset, the better. It is more difficult to take a time-out when you are angry or agitated.
- Identify the first red flag that indicates you may get abusive. The goal is to recognize that you need a time-out and to take it before you become abusive.

# Red Flags

If we pay close attention to our bodies, thoughts, and feelings, we can find some warning signs that we are getting angry or upset and may become abusive to our family members.

Paying attention to these warning signs in ourselves helps us know when we need to use our Safety Plan and take a time-out.

Everyone has their own red flags. Here are some examples.

- Negative thoughts: “She treats me like an infant!” “She never lets me do anything!” “He’s an idiot!”
- Difficult feelings: Angry, frustrated, hurt, jealous, anxious, impatient, unappreciated, neglected, abandoned.
- Body signs: Tight muscles in the neck, back, or jaw; clenched teeth; upset stomach; flushed face; feeling short of breath.
- Actions: Raising of the voice, shouting, saying bad words.

When you recognize these red flags in yourself, it’s time to take a time-out.

# Identifying Red Flags in Your Teen

Paying attention to warning signs that your teen is headed toward abusive behavior will help you know when to separate and avoid the escalation of their behavior.

The earlier you detect behaviors that indicate your teen is going in the direction of becoming abusive, the easier it is to separate from the situation (for you and your teen).

How do you know when your teen is headed toward becoming abusive (verbally abusive, physically violent, destroying property)?

Some examples are:

Body signs: Facial expressions, moving closer to you, pacing, red face.

Verbal signs: Raised voice; pressured voice; starting to put you down, criticize, swear, or name-call.

Actions: Slamming doors, cupboards.

When you see warning signs in your teen, let them know that you are seeing red flags and it is time to use the Safety Plan. Give your teen the opportunity to separate, but if they refuse, say that you are going to use the Safety Plan and separate.

If you are experiencing your own red flags and want to avoid yelling or saying unhelpful things to your teen, tell them that you are going to take your own time-out for yourself. Separate from your teen and let them know you are taking a break. Tell them where you will be and how long you will be separated. This helps teens who become anxious when the parent separates and follow their parents or keep pestering them.

# Teen Red Flags

What are signs you notice in your teen that let you know they may become abusive?

## **Body signs:**

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## **Verbal signs:**

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## **Actions:**

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## **Other:**

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# Parent Exercise: Identifying My Own Red Flags

## Body signs

(Examples: Feeling tense, stomachache, headache, shoulder tension)

## Feelings

(Examples: Anger, frustration, revenge)

## Thoughts

(Examples: "He's not going to get away with this." "She's a selfish brat.")

## Verbal signs

(Examples: Saying hurtful things, put-downs, criticism, threats)

## Actions

(Examples: Pointing your finger, getting too close to the person, slamming your fist)



# My Self-Calming Thoughts

Self-calming thoughts are things you think about or say to yourself to help you calm down.

You should use self-calming thoughts when:

- You feel yourself starting to get upset or angry
- You start to use abusive behavior (yelling, name-calling, put-downs, or anything physical)
- You are using your Safety Plan and are trying to calm down

## Self-Calming Thoughts for Teens

- I'm not going to let this get to me.
- I can stay calm.
- Stop. Let it go.
- I'm going to take a time-out now.
- If I stay calm, things will work out better.
- I can take charge of how I act.
- I don't have to get mad.
- Step away. Stay calm.
- I'm going to go chill out. We can talk later.
- I'm not going to yell.
- I can talk calmly about this.
- I'll go take a walk around the block.
- I'm not a little kid. I don't have to throw a temper tantrum.
- This is no big deal.
- I can handle this.
- I can talk without yelling.
- I can talk about how I feel without being abusive.
- I will take three deep breaths and sit down quietly.

## **Self-Calming Thoughts for Parents**

- He is responsible for his behavior.
- Let it go for now. I can talk about it later when we are both calm.
- I am calm and in control.
- I will go in another room and take some deep breaths.
- I cannot control his behavior, but I can control my behavior.
- I don't have to deal with this right now; it will only make it worse.
- He is responsible for his feelings.
- She is upset and mad, and she can deal with that on her own.
- I can't "make" him do anything. I can provide choices and consequences, and then it is his decision.
- I don't have to engage in this battle. I can take a time-out, calm down, and think about how I want to communicate.
- I don't have to "win."
- The strongest influence I can have with my child is to model the behavior I want her to learn.
- I will disengage now and go do something relaxing.
- She can figure this out on her own. I will let her be.
- My behavior is not helping the situation. I will stop and be quiet for a while. Later, I will talk about it calmly with her.

## **My Self-Calming Thoughts**

In the space below, write down some things you can think about or say to yourself that will calm you down.

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## **Session 4:**

# **Introduction to Parent Group: Strengths, Challenges, and Changes**

**Parent Session**

## **Background Information**

An important part of the parent group is to get support from other parents and know that you are not alone in your struggles with your teen. Many parents come into the program feeling isolated and alone in their experiences with their abusive teenagers. Many believe that no one else has a teen like theirs and that they are to blame for their difficult situations. It can be helpful to learn that others are facing similar challenges. In the parent group, you will give each other support and work together to find workable solutions to difficult problems.

During this session, you will begin the process of getting to know each other and building supportive relationships. You will talk about your strengths, challenges you face with your teen, and changes you would like to make in your own behavior.

Teens are coming to Step-Up to change violent and abusive behavior. You are here to support your teen in making positive changes.

## **Goals**

- To be introduced to the parent group and begin to get to know other parents
- To begin the process of building supportive relationships in the group
- To understand the goals and ground rules of the parent group
- To identify strengths and challenges as a parent

## **Important Messages**

- You are not alone.
- You can talk about your challenges safely in this group.
- The group is here to listen and support you.
- The members of the group can help each other make positive changes.
- You have strengths as a parent.
- You are not to blame for your child's abusive behavior.
- You are not powerless; there are things you can do.

## Goals for Parent Group

- To learn skills for safety when your teen is violent or abusive
- To learn how to support your teen in using skills learned in Step-Up
- To learn how to respond when your teen is violent or abusive
- To learn ways to build a more positive relationship with your teen
- To understand the importance of modeling respectful behavior for your teen
- To learn parenting skills that promote cooperation and responsible behavior in teens
- To support each other as parents

## Ground Rules for Parent Group

### **Maintain confidentiality:**

Information that parents share about themselves and their families needs to stay in the group. Staff may need to make exceptions to this if there are risks to a person's physical safety or if it is necessary to report an incident to a probation counselor (parents will be informed of this).

### **Show respect for each other:**

This includes not interrupting or talking while someone else is talking, respecting each other's feelings and opinions, and acknowledging that our comments are our own opinions.

### **Show respect for your**

**child:** This includes not labeling the child, putting them down, or calling them names. When discussing difficulties with your child, talk about the behavior, not the person.

### **Stay on topic as much**

**as possible:** If you take the discussion in another direction, make a connection with the topic at hand.

# Strengths, Challenges, and Changes

1. One of my **strengths** as a parent is:

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2. The biggest **challenge** for me as a parent is:

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3. The one **change** I will make is:

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**TEEN COMPONENTS****Background Information**

The goal of the Step-Up program is for you to choose behaviors on the Respect Wheel rather than the Abuse/Disrespect Wheel when you have difficult feelings and conflict with family members. The purpose of this session is to define abuse and violence and to recognize violent and abusive behaviors you have done, experienced, or seen in your life. This helps you begin to understand the impact of violence and abuse.

An important step toward choosing non-violent and non-abusive behavior is to recognize the results of violence and abuse. When people are violent or abusive, they are usually acting without thinking about the reality of what will happen afterward. We will explore the immediate payoffs, short-term results, and long-term outcomes of violence and abuse. Understanding how violence and abuse impact the situation, others, you, and your relationships can help you choose behaviors on the Respect Wheel, instead of the Abuse/Disrespect Wheel, when responding to difficult situations.

**Goals**

- To define violent and abusive behaviors
- To identify violent and abusive behaviors you have used, that have been done to you, or that you have seen
- To understand the impact of violence and abuse on yourself, others, and relationships
- To explore the immediate payoffs, short-term results, and long-term outcomes of violence and abuse

**Important Messages**

- Violence is any behavior that physically harms, or intends to harm, a person or property. It also includes making someone feel threatened or scared that you will physically harm them. Physical violence is also emotionally abusive.
- Verbal and emotional abuse includes words or behavior that intend to emotionally hurt, control, threaten, scare, or make someone else feel bad. It may include yelling, swearing, name-calling, saying mean things, humiliating, criticizing, or doing things you know will emotionally hurt another person.
- Violent and abusive behavior has negative impacts on the person who is abusive, as well as the person targeted. Family members are all impacted by violence and abuse in the home.

**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**Discussion Questions**

1. What are violent and abusive behaviors?  
*While brainstorming violent and abusive behaviors with the group, write down the behaviors on the worksheet below.*

**Violent and Abusive Behaviors**

After you have finished listing behaviors, identify ones that you have used, ones that were done to you, and ones that you have seen.

(This is confidential. You do not have to share this unless you choose to.)

BEHAVIORS	YOU HAVE USED	DONE TO YOU	YOU HAVE SEEN

2. Where or how do people learn to use violence and abuse?

3. How do violence and abuse affect:
  - The person who is the target of the violence or abuse?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- The person who is abusive or violent?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Their relationship?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Other family members?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**Payoffs, Results, and Outcomes of Violence and Abuse**

**Payoffs:** The immediate result of being abusive or violent. It is what you get out of being violent or abusive that makes you more likely to do it again – for example, a feeling of power, release of pent-up emotion, or scaring someone so they’ll leave you alone or let you do what you want.

**Short-term results:** How being violent or abusive affects a situation. It is what happens afterward and its impact on you, other family members, and relationships. Usually, the outcome is not what you wanted – for example, an injured family member, police or court involvement, loss of trust, siblings being afraid of you, loss of phone or other privileges, or going to counseling or Step-Up.

**Long-term outcomes:** What happens or what may happen if you continue being violent or abusive to others. What could be the outcome if you continue acting this way? How will it affect you? Your relationships? Your life? Your own family in the future? Some examples of long-term outcomes include continued court involvement, loss of ability to live at home, or loss of important relationships.

As you come up with examples with the group, write them in the boxes below.

PAYOFFS	SHORT-TERM RESULTS	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Now, think of a time when you were abusive or violent (you could use the incident that brought you to Step-Up), and write down the payoffs, short-term results, and long-term outcomes of it (or guess what it will be if you don’t change your behavior).

PAYOFFS	SHORT-TERM RESULTS	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

**Discussion: Making Choices**

How does thinking about payoffs, results, and outcomes affect the choices you make?



## Background Information

This session gives you the tools for calming your nervous system when you feel strong emotions, anxiety, or stress. When you learn how to calm strong emotions, you are also changing how your brain works. You will learn skills that help you calm down so that you can think more clearly, make better decisions, and respond to problems respectfully.

You will make a personal *Self-Calming Plan* including a list of activities you will use when you are feeling stressed, anxious, or angry. The Self-Calming Plan gives you something to do when you use your Safety Plan and are taking a time-out from an escalated interaction with a family member. The end of the session includes a relaxation exercise. Each week after this, we will begin group with a relaxation technique or calming meditation.

## Goals

- To gain some understanding about how the brain and nervous system function in relation to emotion, anxiety, and stress
- To realize that you have some ability to influence your brain and nervous system functioning
- To learn specific strategies to calm the nervous system and improve mood
- To recognize that when you are escalated and angry, you have options that really work to calm the high emotion and prevent abusive and violent behavior
- To make your own Self-Calming Plan that you will use when you begin to feel escalated, angry, or anxious to keep your behavior safe

## Important Messages

- You can change your brain.
- You are already changing your brain when you learn skills in Step-Up, plan your weekly goals, and practice using your new skills.
- You have the ability to alter the activity in your brain and your nervous system to help you calm down.
- You have many choices when you become upset and angry to help yourself settle down and take care of yourself so that you are not hurtful to others.

# Group Activities

## Discussion Questions

? How many people feel like they go from feeling upset to rage really fast?

? What does it feel like?

? Does anyone experience this more slowly, like a gradual build-up?

? What does that feel like?

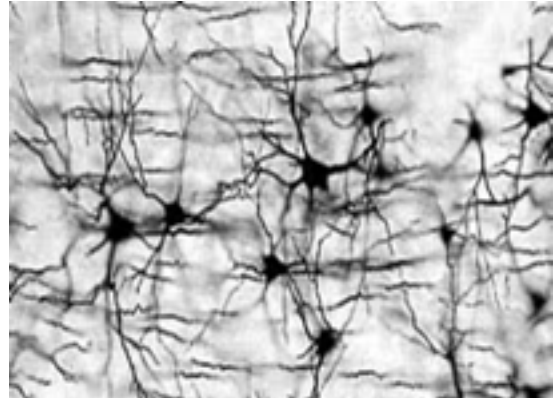
## You Can Change Your Brain

We have the ability to physically change our brains. In fact, we are doing it every day, and we don't even know it. Every time you have a new experience or learn a new skill, your brain grows new neural connections. It's called *neuroplasticity*.

When you first start using a new skill or behavior, new nerve connections begin to grow, like branches on a tree. At first, they are small and thin, and it may be hard to do the new behavior. But as you continue to practice it, the "branches" become thicker and stronger, and the behavior becomes easier and easier.

## **Neural Networks in the Brain**

Another way to think about it is to imagine making a line in the sand on the beach. The first time you run your finger or a stick through the sand, the mark you make is shallow, and some sand falls back in, making it less visible. The second time, it goes a little deeper and holds better. Every time you do it again, the groove becomes deeper and deeper, making the line more clear and distinct. It is the same with the neural pathways in your brain.



Remember when you learned to ride a bike? First, it was really hard and you fell a lot, but as you kept at it, it got easier and easier. Finally, you did not even have to think about it – you just hopped on your bike and rode without thinking about the different parts of the skill. Your brain developed a whole network of neural connections just for that behavior that you will have forever – you will never have to relearn it.

Likewise, you are creating new neural connections in your brain as you practice all of the skills you are learning here in Step-Up. The more you use them, the easier it becomes as your brain strengthens the neural networks for that skill. You are rewiring your brain.

When you do your goal planning each week, you are changing your brain. As you plan a new behavior and figure out exactly how and when you will do it, visualizing the situation and how it will go if you try out a new way of responding, new neural connections are forming.

The more you use the new behavior, the easier it becomes as your brain strengthens the neural networks for that behavior.



# Three Steps to Rewiring Your Brain to Change Your Behavior

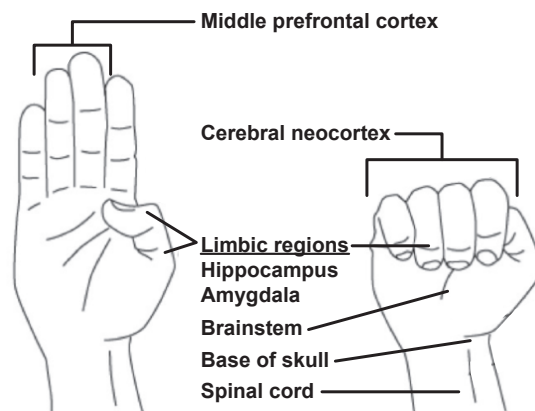
1. **LEARN:** Gain information so that you understand how and why it works. Learn skills to actually do a new behavior.
2. **PLAN:** Figure out how and when you will use the new skill or behavior.
3. **PRACTICE:** Do the new behavior or skill over and over.

## Understanding Your Brain and Nervous System

### A Handy Model of Your Brain

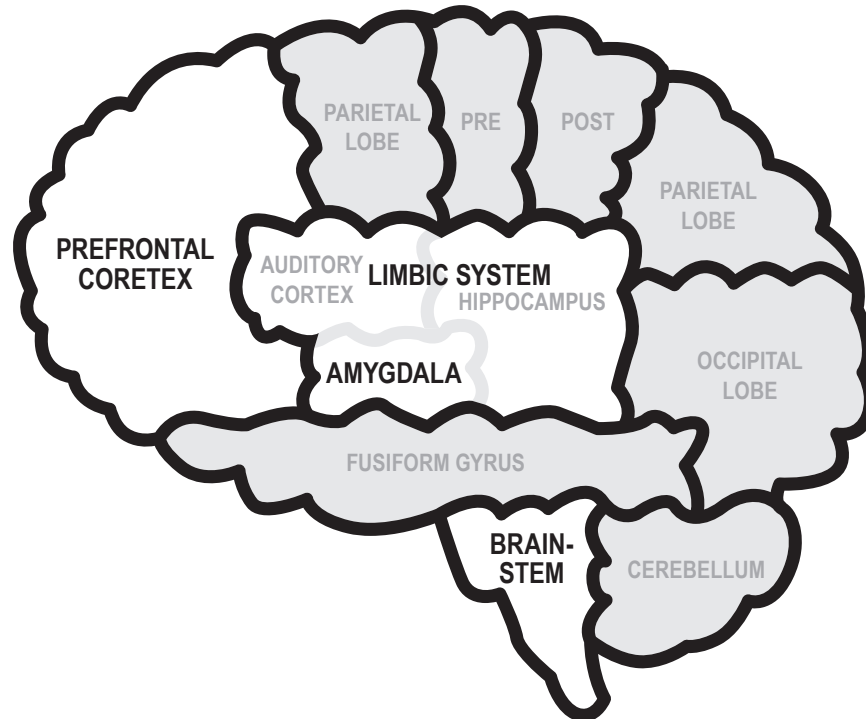
You can make a model of your brain with your fist. Put your thumb in the middle of your hand and close your fingers.

The face is in front of the knuckles and the wrist is the spinal cord connecting to the brain stem. If you lift up your fingers you'll see your thumb, representing the limbic area of your brain, and your palm is the inner brainstem. Now curl your fingers, back down over your thumb, and they are your brain's cortex.



Here you can see the three major regions of your brain: the brainstem, the limbic area, and the cortex. Each of these regions interacts with each other to help our bodies, minds, and emotions function together to keep us alive, safe, and healthy.

# Pre-Frontal Cortex: Thinking, Reasoning, Calming



**Brainstem:** Basic drives, food, sleep and safety.

**Limbic System:** Instinct, survival, and seat of our emotions.

**Amygdala:** An almond-sized part in the limbic system that takes in information and evaluates, “Is this good, or bad?” It perceives danger and triggers the nervous system into “fight or flight.”

The amygdala is a good thing, except it can be activated when we don’t really need it. It can become overactivated for people who have had a lot of stress or fearful experiences.

This can result in overreacting to things that are not worthy of such strong emotions or behaviors. This is because our bodies and the limbic system hold memories of events that can be unconsciously triggered by another event that produces a similar type of emotion.

When people’s limbic systems are overactivated, they might overreact to situations that cause feelings similar to a past distressful or fearful event in their lives.

Brian’s story on the next page is an example of this.

# Brian's Story

Brian was bullied a lot when he was in fifth grade. He was a little overweight and kind of shy at school. He had moved to the school as a new student because his family had recently moved to Seattle.

Brian felt lonely and kind of depressed because he had to leave his friends. He wanted to make some friends at school but was having a hard time connecting with anyone. There were a group of kids who taunted him and called him fat and other mean things. He tried to ignore them.

One day after school as he was walking home, they jumped him and hit and kicked him, calling him fat and stupid. They took his backpack and ran off. He was scared and angry. He was afraid to fight them back, and just tried to get through the rest of the year, knowing he would be at another school the following year. He stayed away from areas he knew they would be.

After a while, Brian made a few friends and started feeling better but was still anxious every day when he had to walk home from school, not knowing if those guys would jump him again.

At home, his mother noticed he was more irritable and often in a bad mood. He seemed to overreact to the smallest things. When she asked him about school, he would get agitated and not want to talk, or yell at her to leave him alone.

One day, his 10-year-old brother called him fat, and he jumped up, threw his chair against the wall, and tackled his little brother. His mother intervened and got him to go outside.

Brian felt like he wanted to pummel anything and anyone. His heart rate was high, and he was shaky. His mother told him to walk or run around the block. He didn't want to do this, but he didn't know what else to do, so he ran...and ran.

After about five minutes, he started to feel some settling in his body. He then slowed to a walk. He felt calmer and walked around the block a few more times and then slowly back home.

As he calmed down, he began thinking about what happened. When he entered the house, he looked at his mom and brother and felt terrible about what he had done.

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## **What Was Happening to Brian?**

Brian had a past experience of fear for his safety when he was bullied. His limbic system activated when this happened, and then he continued to experience stress and anxiety about whether it might happen again. His amygdala and limbic system probably stayed on high alert while he was at school or walking home.

This sensitized his system to any possible threat. While his 10-year-old brother was probably not a big threat, it still might have triggered his amygdala to send him into a fight-or-flight reaction because it brought up the same emotions he felt when the bullies called him fat.

## **Calming Strong Emotions**

### **What helped Brian calm down?**

The end of Brian's story tells us the good news about our ability to self-regulate and calm strong emotions, even when it feels way out of our control.

After he had been running a while, Brian started to feel more settled and calm. He was able to think more clearly. He realized what he had done and felt empathy for his mother and brother.

### **Why did this happen?**

Brian's amygdala had calmed down and his pre-frontal cortex kicked in.

When your pre-frontal cortex is activated, it helps you calm down, think through things, and feel less reactive and emotional. It is our area of "higher thinking." We have more empathy and ability to understand others better when we are in our pre-frontal cortex.

Adolescence is a time when the pre-frontal cortex is not completely developed, but the brain is working hard on it. There are times when your cortex is beginning to function at a higher level and you are really on top of it. Other times, not so much.

The good news is that you have the ability activate your cortex.

# How to Activate Your Pre-Frontal Cortex and Calm Your Nervous System

## Move and Breathe

Even though Brian didn't know it, when he was running, he was doing two important things to help his brain and nervous system calm him down:

- Moving his body
- Breathing deeply

*Moving and deep breathing activate your pre-frontal cortex* and your parasympathetic nervous system – the part of your nervous system that calms and soothes you.

We have two parts of our autonomic nervous system that work with the different brain regions by secreting chemicals or hormones that activate or calm us.

### 1. **The sympathetic nervous system**

This part of the system stimulates and activates you. When you have stress, fear, anger, and other strong emotions, the sympathetic nervous system, along with the limbic system, kicks in to give you energy to respond and deal with it. And, as we talked about, it usually does not help unless you are in a situation where you need to fight or flee. It makes things worse, generally, because activating chemicals increases your anxiety, making it harder to think clearly to deal with the situation.

### 2. **The parasympathetic nervous system**

This part of the nervous system helps you calm down and shift to your pre-frontal cortex.

Body movement in any form also activates the parasympathetic nervous system.

## **Body Movement**

Moving your body in any way – walking, dancing, skateboarding, kicking a ball around, or anything that gets you moving – will kick in your parasympathetic nervous system and calm you.

What are some other types of body movement?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## **Deep Breathing**

Deep breathing is one of the fastest ways to trigger your parasympathetic nervous system and settle anxiety and stress.

It can be difficult for some people to sit down and focus on breathing when they are in a highly activated state, so running or fast walking are good ways to get started.

Body movement gets you breathing and helps to move the emotions through. As you settle down, you can begin to focus on slowing and deepening the breath.

It is the breath out that kicks in the parasympathetic nervous system. So, doing something that helps you emphasize your breath out is the best, such as blowing up a balloon or blowing bubbles.

Deep breathing usually happens automatically when you move your body. So, if it is hard for you to sit and breathe when you are in a highly activated state, just move!

## 4 Square Breathing Exercise

Breathing deep, slow breaths all the way down to your belly, filling your torso with air and slowly breathing out, has an immediate calming effect. It kicks in your parasympathetic nervous system and turns down your sympathetic warning system (fight or flight), helping you feel calmer and less amped up.

Try this:

1. Take a deep breath in for a count of 4.
2. As you count, fill up your lungs, belly, and whole torso with air.
3. Hold for a count of 4.
4. Breathe out slowly for a count of 4.
5. Hold for a count of 4.
6. Breathe in again for a count of 4.
7. Do this 4 times.

A long, slow breath out is most important. When you breathe out, it calms you down. See if you can breathe out very slowly, and when you feel like your breath out is complete, see if you can breathe out even more.

# Ways to Calm Your Nervous System

- Deep breaths
- Physical exercise
- Listen to music
- Dance
- Draw/color
- Write in a journal
- Relaxation exercises
- Meditation
- Rub your feet
- Put your attention on your core center of your body – 2” below naval, 1” inside – breathe into it slowly 12 times
- Feel the inside of your heart or inside of your abdomen – breathe into it slowly 12 times
- Use a squishy ball, play dough, or a rock to keep in your pocket and rub
- Get outside and walk, run, or kick a ball
- Touch grass with your bare feet
- Sit down near a tree
- Write down the feelings you are having or say them out loud
- Press your fingers above your upper lip. This is a pressure point that has a calming effect.
- Wrap your arms around yourself so your hands are holding each shoulder, like you’re hugging yourself. This also has a calming effect.
- Take a warm shower or bath
- Drink warm tea
- Play with a fidget spinner
- Do something that makes you laugh (like watching animal videos)
- Eat food, especially protein
- Do something fun (that does not violate house rules)



## WORKSHEET

## My Self-Calming Ideas

What helps you calm down when you feel angry, upset, or anxious?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

## My Self-Calming Plan

The next time I am feeling angry, anxious, or stressed, I will do the following to calm myself down:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

# Meditation

Let's talk about meditation. Researchers are beginning to learn more and more about what happens to people's brains when they meditate. They have found, through new brain technology, that when people meditate, their middle frontal area of the cortex becomes highly activated. The middle frontal cortex is important for emotional balance, cognitive flexibility, development of empathy, and regulation of fear.

Scientists looked at the brains of experienced meditators and found that the amygdala is far less active than in most people. Meditation rewires your brain. It increases and strengthens the fibers that calm strong emotional reactions, especially fear and anger.

There are many different types of meditation. Meditation does not have to be long and it does not necessarily mean sitting still and silent. The main idea is being present in the moment without putting attention on your thoughts.

A meditation called *mindfulness* has been found to be especially helpful for people with stress, anxiety, and anger issues.

# Mindfulness

What is mindfulness?

1. Mindfulness is a form of mental activity that trains the mind to become aware of awareness itself
2. To pay attention to one's own attention

Mindfulness is defined as paying attention to the present moment from a stance that is non-judgmental and non-reactive.

The benefits of mindfulness:

- Teaches self-observation
- Is a form of “tuning into” yourself – called attunement, which helps you become more aware of yourself, including your thoughts, feelings, and body
- Helps the parts of the brain that regulate mood to grow and strengthen, stabilizing the mind and enabling one to achieve emotional equilibrium and resilience
- Stimulates the growth and strengthening of the neural connections that we talked about earlier in the pre-frontal cortex that send inhibitory fibers into the amygdala to calm and soothe us
- Stimulates and strengthens the part of the brain (frontal cortex) that enables us to resonate with others and regulate ourselves

## Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness can be achieved by paying attention to the present moment. Being mindful is holding yourself fully in this moment in time. We all spend a lot of time thinking about the future and the past, our minds spinning with what we are going to do or what we should have done. What happens when we do this is that we are not present. Have you ever noticed yourself walk in the door of your house with no memory of the walk or ride home? That's because you were off in your mind the whole time, completely unaware of your body in the present as you walked home or sat in the car.

A way to become present in the moment is to pay attention to what you are doing right now – for example, feeling your feet walk down the sidewalk, looking at the cracks in the cement, the grass, the gardens you walk past... using all of your senses to take in what is around you – smells in the air, the feeling of the wind on your face, the sounds around you, dogs barking, cars going by, and things you see.

## SESSION 5: **UNDERSTANDING SELF-CALMING**

Mindfulness is also observing without judging. It is being an observer of what is, such as a feeling or a thought, and just allowing it to be without deciding it is good or bad, or trying to change it.

So, as you practice being fully present, and feelings or thoughts come along (which they will), allow yourself to just observe without judging them or trying to do something about them.

For example, when you realize you are not being present and you're thinking about school tomorrow or what you will do when you get home instead of deciding, "I'm not doing this right or I have to stop thinking..." just notice it, accept it, and then come back to the present, putting your attention on your body, the chair you are in, the sounds you hear around you, etc.

Let's practice.

1. Start by closing your eyes and putting both feet flat on the floor.
2. Feel your breath. Feel the sensation of it through your nostrils. Feel your chest and abdomen move out as they fill with air and move in as the air goes out. Continue to just feel your breath. If thoughts come, just observe them but don't engage. Let them pass by and go back to feeling your breath.
3. Feel your body in your chair. Feel the chair against your back. Feel the weight of your legs on the seat.
4. Feel your feet. Feel the sensation of the bottom of your feet against the floor. Feel your toes. Feel the bones inside your feet.
5. Feel your hands on the table or your lap. Just feel these sensations of your fingers and your arms.
6. Feel your chest, and your breath making it rise and fall. Feel your heart. You might feel it pumping.
7. Feel your stomach. Feel for sensations inside. Your dinner digesting, or emptiness and hunger.
8. Feel your lower belly. Your lower back. Upper back.
9. Feel the inside of your mouth. The inside of cheeks. Feel your tongue and the roof of your mouth.
10. Feel your skin.
11. Listen to the sounds in the room. The air, sounds outside of the room, people's breath, your own breath. Feel your breath move in and out. Stay with your breath and just feel the air in your nostrils as you breath in and breath out. Breathe in and breathe out.
12. Now, without looking up, open your eyes. Look at the table, then look around the room, and then see each other.

What do you feel like now?

You can practice this when you are eating, walking, sitting in your room or in school. It helps calm your mind. It helps bring back focus when your mind is feeling scattered. You can do it during “time-out” or anytime you feel anxious. When thoughts come as you do this, you just observe the thought and then let it go.

## Take-Home Activities

1. This week, practice three of your self-calming skills.
2. This week, take 10 minutes to practice mindfulness.

# Additional Self-Calming Resources

## Emotion Shifting Activity

Here is something you can do to help change or 'shift' your emotional state when you are feeling irritable, annoyed or grumpy.

1. Swing both of your arms at thigh level one side to the other, across your midline. This motion helps break up postural patterns and muscular tension.
2. Using the momentum of swinging your arms, begin to rotate your trunk, from one side to the other, in a fluid, gentle way.
3. Then add in gently moving your head from side to side, rotating your head slowly from side to side and front to back.
4. This movement helps to connect both sides of your body, which calms the nervous system and helps you feel better.
5. As you continue the exercise, add in taking slow deep breaths, in and out. Your breath further moves you from "grumpy" to "emotional neutral" and helps you become more in the present moment.
6. Find your own breathing, pace, duration and movement rhythm. Do what feels comfortable for you.
7. When you feel ready, allow yourself to get playful with your movement, and imagine your cranky feelings inside melting away. Feel them melt down your body and dissolve away. After you let those grumpy feelings go, notice the difference in how you feel.

# Grounding Exercise

1. Sit comfortably in your chair. Put everything down, hands relaxed in your lap. Put both feet flat on the floor.
2. Take a deep breath in, and breathe out slowly, letting go of all your tension.
3. Feel your feet on the floor. Feel the inside of your feet. Feel the bones and muscles - each toe, your arch and heels. Feel the bottom of your feet against the floor.
4. Imagine you have roots growing out of the bottom of your feet into the ground. Imagine and feel them as big, thick roots as if you are a tree. Be inside of these roots as you feel them grow deep into the earth. Feel them dig through the soil, down further and further into the earth.
5. Once you feel your roots deep down in the earth, imagine a big solid rock. This rock can be whatever you imagine, as long as it is solid and strong. It might be in the center of the earth. What is most important is the felt sense of it, and your connection to it through your roots.
6. Now, wrap your roots around that rock.
7. Once you have your roots securely wrapped around your rock – feel the sense of how the earth and the rock are supporting and anchoring you. How does your body feel? If it feels relaxed and securely held, just breathe and relax into this feeling. If it feels too heavy or anchored, you can loosen the roots around the rock, so it feels lighter.
8. Now, as you feel the sense of being ‘grounded’, and as you breathe in and out, send any tension or stress in your body down to your feet and dump it down into the ground through your roots.
9. After you have released tension into the ground, imagine breathing calming energy from the earth up through your roots and into your body. Breathe in earth energy from below, and breathe out back into the earth.
10. Anytime you feel stress or anxiety, or escalated and angry, this grounding exercise can help you feel calmer. Once you practice it for a while, you will learn how to adjust it to work best for you. You will become familiar with what it feels like to be ‘grounded’ and your body will start to automatically respond when you begin the exercise. After awhile, you can just think about your rock in the earth, and your body will relax and ground. Try out different ways and to see what works best for you.

## **Physical Exercise: Why does it help?**

- When we feel anxious, our glands send a hormone called adrenaline into our bodies. It makes our muscles tense and our heart beat faster.
- When we exercise, the adrenaline is expelled, our muscles relax, and our heart rate slows down again.
- Regular exercise is one of the best ways to calm yourself down when you are anxious, stressed or angry.
- It also helps your brain.
- When you do aerobic exercise – any exercise that gets your heart rate up consistently for at least 20–30 minutes, your brain grows more neural connections that regulate your emotions and mood.
- Exercise can be used in the moment when you are escalating to take a break and calm yourself down, and
- It can be used regularly, like 3 or more times a week, to help you stay relaxed overall, and respond better to anxiety and stress.

## **Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise**

The following relaxation exercise will help you feel calm and relaxed. You can do this exercise when you take a time-out from a tense situation, or anytime you are feeling stressed or anxious and want to calm down. Practicing this regularly will help you feel calmer overall in your daily life, so you can deal with stressful situations better.



## Relaxation Steps

1. Get into a comfortable position with both feet flat on the floor and your hands empty.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Let go of all your thoughts. Imagine them drifting away in bubbles until your mind is clear.
4. Take three deep breaths. Inhale slowly through your nose, letting the air fill up your whole torso, then release the air out again through your nose. With each breath feel your body relax.
5. Imagine your body is full of sand, and as you relax, let the sand flow down through your body and out the bottom of your feet into the ground.
6. Now, clench your teeth and tighten the muscles around your eyes and across your forehead. Hold it tight and count to seven. Then release it, and feeling your whole head and face relax.
7. Drop your chin to your chest and slowly roll your head around to your left shoulder, your back, your right shoulder and your front.
8. Take a deep breath in, and as your breath out, imagine the sand flowing down from your head and neck, through your body, into your legs and feet, and out deep into the ground.
9. Draw your shoulders up, and roll them around up and down for a count of seven. Then release and relax.
10. Now, clench your fists and tighten your hands and arms and count to seven. Then release and relax.
11. Take a deep breath in, and as you breathe out, imagine sand leaving your shoulders, arms and hands, out your finger tips into the ground.
12. Tighten the muscles between your shoulder blades and down your back. Count to seven, then release and relax.
13. Tighten your chest and stomach muscles, count to seven, and then release and relax.
14. Take a deep breath in, and as your breathe out, feel the sand flow down from your torso through your legs and feet, deep into the ground.
15. Tighten your leg muscles, and then curl your toes under so your feet are tight, count to seven, then release and relax.
16. Take a deep breath in, and imagine the sand flowing down your legs into your feet and release it into the ground.
17. Take one last deep breath in, and breathe out releasing all of the last bits of sand and tension from your body, sending it down into the ground.
18. Let yourself feel completely relaxed.
19. Imagine a place you find safe, warm and relaxing. Perhaps a place you've been on vacation or a childhood memory. A place that is peaceful and calm. Allow yourself to "see" the place. Remember the sounds, smells and sights here. Just stay in this place for a moment.
20. Slowly open your eyes.

Try to carry the feeling you have now with you. Remember how your body feels right now. Later, you can try to call back that feeling by going to the special place in your mind. This is something you can always carry with you to do when you are feeling stressed or anxious, or when you know you are heading into a stressful situation.





## **Background Information**

The purpose of this session is to help you learn how to communicate your feelings and thoughts in a way that is respectful to yourself and to others. Most people have only three ways they communicate negative feelings and thoughts: they become aggressive and disrespectful when they try to get their point across; they become passive and don't say anything at all in order to avoid conflict; or they become passive-aggressive. In any case, they do not feel anyone has heard them. Assertive communication is a way that you can communicate what you think and feel in a way that makes you more easily heard and that is respectful.

Many people believe that the only alternative to aggressive communication is to be passive. Often, when someone responds passively to a situation in which they have strong feelings, they can stay passive for only so long before they end up getting passive-aggressive or aggressive. Most teens have not learned how to communicate negative feelings or disagreements in an assertive way.

## **Goals**

- To examine different styles of communication
- To learn skills for assertive communication

## **Important Messages**

- Assertive communication is a way to express your feelings and thoughts respectfully.
- You can respond to a difficult situation without being aggressive or passive.
- Assertive communication helps others hear your point of view, but it is not necessarily going to get you what you want.

# Styles of Communication

## Aggressive Style

- A person communicating in an aggressive style expresses their feelings in a way that violates the rights of another person. The aggressive person uses humiliation, criticism, sarcasm, insults, or threats to get their point across.
- The goal of aggressive communication is to dominate the situation and win at the other person's expense.
- The aggressive person is giving the message "I'm right and you're wrong. Your feelings are not important. I don't need to listen to what you have to say. My view is the only one that matters."

## Passive Style

- A person communicating in a passive style does not say what they are feeling or thinking. The passive person gives in to other people's requests, demands, or feelings, and does not acknowledge their own feelings, concerns, or wants. When the person does express their feelings, it is usually in an apologetic or timid way so that it's easy for other people to ignore them.
- The goal of passive communication is to play it safe, not rock the boat, put everyone else's needs first, and avoid conflict at all costs.
- The passive person is communicating the message that "I don't count. What I need is not important. You don't have to take my feelings into account."

## Passive-Aggressive Style

- A person communicating in a passive-aggressive style uses more hidden forms of aggression to express their feelings.
- The goal is to give the other person the message without having to say it directly.

## Assertive Style

- A person communicating in an assertive style stands up for their personal rights and expresses thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in direct, honest, and appropriate ways. The person conveys their message without dominating, criticizing, or degrading the other person.
- The goal of assertive communication is to honestly state your feelings and show respect for the other person's position as well. The assertive person is communicating the message that "the feelings and needs of both of us are important. I am telling you what I need, and I also want to know what you need so that we can both be satisfied."

**WORKSHEET**

# Styles of Communication Scenarios

Read each scenario and identify which of the responses is passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and assertive. Write **Pa**, **Ag**, **Pa-Ag**, or **As** next to each response.

1. Selene's 15-year-old son, Jackson, is supposed to be home by 9 p.m. He shows up at 11:30. Selene has been waiting up for him, and she is upset and worried. She could:
  - A. Not say anything to him about being late.
  - B. Start shouting at him when he comes in and telling him he's irresponsible and worthless.
  - C. Not say anything, but the next morning, leave for work without giving him a ride to school as she usually does.
  - D. Say, "I've been really worried about you. I need you to come home on time, and if you're not going to do that, I need you to call me and tell me what you're doing."
  
2. Noah made plans to go to the beach with his girlfriend. He'd asked his parents about it the day before, and they said it was fine. He's getting ready to leave when his dad comes in and tells him to mow the lawn. Noah could:
  - A. Say, "I already told you I'm going out with Denise. Why are you always trying to mess with my life?"
  - B. Not say anything about it and go out to mow the lawn, feeling stressed and frustrated.
  - C. Say, "I guess you don't remember that you told me I could go out with Denise today. How about if I mow the lawn at 10 a.m. tomorrow?"
  - D. Go out to mow the lawn and run the mower over a rock, ruining the blade.

3. Rita is getting ready for work one morning. She picks out her favorite white silk blouse, which her daughter Lucy had borrowed over the weekend. She notices a big, brown stain on the front of the blouse. Rita could:

A. Put on something else and send the blouse to the cleaner without saying anything about it.

B. Wake Lucy up and say, "I can't trust you with anything! Get out of bed right now and take this to the cleaner!"

C. Say, "When you borrow my clothes, I need you to return them clean."

D. Not say anything and refuse to give Lucy the \$5 that she promised to give her.

4. Your friend has borrowed money for lunch from you three times without repaying it, and now he asks you for another loan. You could:

A. Say, "I don't want to lend you anything now because you haven't paid me back from the last three times."

B. Just hand the money over without saying anything.

C. Say, "I'll never help you out with anything again! I don't care if you starve!"

D. Lend him the money and then tell all your mutual friends what an idiot he is.

5. Olivia and her friend are sitting and talking in the living room. Olivia's son, Ethan, is playing a video game. Ethan shouts the "f" word very loudly. Olivia is embarrassed. She could:

A. Tell Ethan, "Shut up! How many times have I told you: NO SWEARING IN THIS HOUSE!"

B. Keep talking to her friend like nothing happened.

C. Say, "Ethan, I need you to speak respectfully in our house."

D. Walk over and unplug Ethan's computer.

**WORKSHEET**

# Practicing Assertive Communication

Read each situation below and think of an assertive statement that the person could make.

1. Edgar's son Diego, who is 17, borrowed Edgar's car. When Diego took the car, it was clean and had a full tank of gas. Edgar gets in the car and finds hamburger wrappers and soda cups on the floor and an empty gas tank. What assertive statement could Edgar make?

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2. Tanaya is in her room working on math homework that is due the next day, and she doesn't understand it. She's feeling really anxious and frustrated about it because she's trying to get her grade up. She calls a friend for help. As her friend explains the homework to her and Tanaya is just starting to understand it, Tanaya's mom comes in and tells her she needs to babysit her two-year-old brother while she goes to the store. What assertive statement could Tanaya make?

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3. Pat's son, Daniel, left a big pile of dirty dishes in the sink. He is in his room, watching TV. What assertive statement could Pat make?

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4. Jacob made plans with his friends to meet at the mall Friday night. Friday morning, Jacob's mom asks him if he will help that night with preparing for a garage sale she was planning for Sunday. What assertive statement could Jacob make?

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5. Loretta was planning on going to an early movie and dinner with a friend. Her 14-year-old son, Nathan, asks her to give him a ride to a friend's house at about the same time the movie will start. There is no way she can make it to the movie on time if she takes Nathan at the time he wants to be at his friend's house. What assertive statement could Loretta make?

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6. Aiden has had a really rough day at school. Things didn't go well at his afternoon job, either. He is exhausted and feeling stressed. He comes home, looking forward to just relaxing in his room and listening to music. His mom tells him she wants him to help her clean the basement. What assertive statement could Aiden make?

7. José asked his mom if he could have some friends over for the evening on a night when she is planning to be out. The last time she let José have friends over when she was not there, they left a huge mess in the kitchen and living room. What assertive statement could José's mom make?

# My Assertive Communication

Think of a situation when you responded aggressively, passively, or passive-aggressively. Think about how you could have responded assertively. Below, write an assertive statement.

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# Session 7:

# How to Respond When Your Teen Is Violent or Abusive

Parent Session

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## **Background Information**

When a teen becomes violent or abusive in the home, whether it is hitting a parent, punching a hole in a wall, throwing things, or making threats to harm someone, the parent can react in many different ways. Sometimes a parent will try to stop the behavior, physically or verbally. Other times, a parent will try to calm the teen down. Others will leave or call the police.

It is important to let parents know that the most effective response depends upon many variables: the teen's reaction to different approaches, past incidents of violence, and the parent's view of the situation. The most important consideration is the safety of everyone in the home. The most important goal of this session is to have parents think about safety before anything else when they are deciding how to respond to their teen's violence or abuse.

Most teens in Step-Up will have already developed a Safety Plan for themselves with a plan for separating and calming down when they become escalated. The goal is for the teen to learn to follow their own plan and take a break instead of the parent separating. The first step for parents is to remind teens of their Safety Plan. If the teen refuses, parents should tell their teen that they are using the Safety Plan and separating from the teen.

We provide specific steps for parents to follow when their teens start to use violent or abusive behavior. These steps are based on what we consider to be the safest thing to do when someone is being violent or abusive. Separating from the violent or abusive person is usually the best way to prevent harm. Some parents will say that they have found other ways that are more effective; for example, some parents state that when their teen is escalating and becoming violent or abusive, the worst thing to do is to leave the room because the teen escalates more. Some parents state that they are able to calm their teen down by talking with them. If parents have found effective and safe ways to respond to the violence and abuse, they may not need to change their responses.

Encouraging discussion in the group about the effects of different responses can be helpful. It is important to emphasize that one of the reasons we advocate separating from a violent or abusive teen, in addition to safety, is that it gives the teen the message that you will not engage with them when they are using violent or abusive behavior. Engaging with the teen in any way, even if it is to calm them down, may be a reward that strengthens the behavior for some teens. Parents should be aware of this when they plan their responses.

If the teen's behavior is escalating and they are physically hurting people or damaging property, calling the police is a way to get immediate help.

Calling the police is not easy, particularly when it is about your own child. We do not want to pressure you regarding this decision or to indicate that you are doing something wrong by not calling the police. We want to support you in making your own choices about how to respond. The objective of the parent group is to provide information to help you make decisions and provide the opportunity for you to think through and discuss the possible outcomes of the choices you make.

## Goals

- To help parents think about their priorities when their teens are becoming violent or abusive
- To understand that safety is the first concern when anyone is using violent or abusive behavior
- To know how to stay safe and address the use of violent or abusive behavior
- To know what steps to take when there is violence or abuse in the home
- To learn how to disengage from power struggles with their teens as a way to prevent escalation that could lead to violence and abuse
- To make a Safety Plan for the home
- To know effective ways to address the violence and abuse after the incident

## **Important Messages**

- Safety is the most important thing to think about when your teen starts to use violent behavior.
- There are steps you can take to stay safe during the violent episode.
- It is more effective and safe to address the problem of the violent behavior with your teen after they have calmed down.
- There are things you can do to make your home more safe and to reduce the risk of serious harm.
- Writing down a Safety Plan will help you think through the details of risk and safety in your home and take action to reduce the risks and make your home a safer place.
- When you have a plan about how to address violence and abuse after the incident, it makes it easier to separate from your teen because you know it will be addressed later.
- Disengaging from power struggles with your teen may help prevent escalation, violence, and abuse.



# How to Respond When Your Teen Becomes Violent or Abusive

When your teen starts to threaten you, to break things, or to do anything physically violent, do not try to physically intervene. This can increase their violence. The most important thing is to keep yourself and your other children safe.

## Steps to Take When Your Teen Becomes Violent or Abusive

1. If your teen has a Safety Plan, remind them of the Safety Plan.
2. Do not continue the argument or discussion. Don't argue or yell.
3. If your teen refuses to follow their Safety Plan, tell them that you are going to follow the Safety Plan. Separate yourself and your other children from the teen. Go to another room or, if necessary, bring your other children with you and leave the house.
4. Call 911\* if the violence or abuse is continuing and/or you want immediate help.
5. Do what you can to help yourself stay calm (take a walk, call a friend).
6. Don't talk to your teen again until they are calm.
7. When you do talk to your teen again and they are calm and you feel safe, give them the following messages:
  - "When you are violent or abusive, we need to use the Safety Plan and separate."
  - "Your behavior is not safe, and we need our home to be a safe place."
8. Don't get pulled into arguing about why they were violent or abusive or who is to blame. When the teen starts to deny, justify, or minimize their actions or blame you, don't engage in the conversation. Stay with the message that violence and abuse are not acceptable, no matter what.
9. Tell your teen that you will sit down together later to talk about what happened and how they are going to take responsibility by making a plan for preventing violence and abuse and staying on the Respect Wheel and making amends (see *What to Do After: Addressing Violent or Abusive Behavior*, later in this session).

## **\*Calling 911**

Calling 911 is the fastest way to get immediate help if you are concerned for your safety or for the safety of others in the home. Officers respond in different ways depending on the situation. If your child has serious mental health issues, request a CIT officer (crisis intervention officer) who is specially trained to work with the mentally ill. The officer might just talk to your teen and give a warning or may arrest your teen and take them to the juvenile court. If your teen has calmed down, the officer may not arrest them but may file a police report and send it to the prosecutor's office to schedule a court hearing.

It is not easy to call the police on your child. You may feel guilty and worried about what will happen to them. You may be afraid of how they will respond. However, safety is the most important consideration when deciding to call 911.

Although officers do not have to arrest the youth on a domestic violence call in Ohio, it is the preferred course of action by the Toledo Police Department. If an officer has reasonable grounds to believe that the offense of domestic violence has occurred and that the youth is the primary physical aggressor, the youth will likely be arrested and brought down to the Juvenile Court's Assessment Center or the detention center if the assessment center is closed.

After a youth is charged with domestic violence, they will be referred to the Family Violence Intervention Program, which will provide the family with crisis intervention, safety planning, and service referrals.

### **In Ohio, domestic violence is defined as any one of the following:**

- Knowingly causing or attempting to cause physical harm to a family or household member
- Recklessly causing serious physical harm to a family or household member
- By threat of force, knowingly causing a family or household member to believe that the offender will cause imminent harm to the family or household member

It is not easy to call the police on your child. You may feel guilty and worried about what will happen to them. You may be afraid of how they will respond. However, safety is the most important consideration when deciding to call 911.

## What to Do After: Addressing Violent or Abusive Behavior

When your teen has been violent or abusive to a family member, it is important to talk about what happened in a way that helps them learn and take active responsibility for harm that was caused.

- Use *Taking Responsibility for My Behavior Using Six Restorative Steps* (see Session 9) to guide a conversation with your teen about the effects of the violence and abuse on others and how they can take responsibility and make amends for harm done. You and your teen will be learning and practicing this in Session 9. We also use these questions during Check-In when a teen has been violent during the week. These questions are a valuable parenting tool for addressing violent or abusive behavior at home. As you and your teen become more familiar with them in the group, it will be easier to use them at home.
- Review your teen’s Safety Plan and talk about what went wrong. Ask your teen: “What got in the way of using it?” Revise the Safety Plan if needed. Step-Up facilitators can help you with this at the next group, if needed.
- Put in place any other consequences that are part of your home plan for responding to violence and abuse. Some families have a rule, such as no going out with friends or no computer or phone, if there was violence or abuse that day or until the teen has completed the last two restorative steps (“making amends” and “making a plan to prevent the violence or abuse from happening again”).

**PARENT WORKSHEET**

# Planning for Safety for Our Home

1. What precautions (if any) have you taken for safety in your home?

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2. What dangerous behavior are you most concerned about that your teen might use?

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3. Is there anything you can do to prevent this behavior?

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4. What is the safest response to this behavior?

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5. What else can you do for safety in your home?

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## PARENT WORKSHEET

# Action Plan for Safety for Our Home

The following is a plan to increase safety in your home. When someone has been violent in the home, there are things you can do to plan ahead for safety. Think about what will work best for your youth and family to prevent harm to people or property in the event of another violent incident.

## Prevention

I will do the following things to reduce the risk of harm if there is violence or abuse:

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## Intervention

I will do the following if my teen is violent or abusive or begins to escalate and might become violent or abusive:

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# Tips to Disengage from a Power Struggle with Your Teen

- 1. Learn to know when it is becoming a power struggle.**

It is becoming a power struggle when you are feeling controlled or the need to control; when there is arguing, blaming, demanding, or being disrespectful; when you feel the need to win.
- 2. Don't argue.**

When your child starts to argue about the facts – when, why, where, etc. – don't get pulled in. Refuse to argue about details. Instead of arguing, just listen and say, "Oh, hmm...I see..." Agree to disagree. Let it go.
- 3. Diffuse the power struggle by listening for feelings.**

Listen for your child's feelings instead of arguing against them. Acknowledge their feelings by saying things that let them know you are listening and that you understand, such as, "Yeah, that sounds really frustrating that you feel left out," etc.
- 4. Find out where you can agree in the conversation.**

Listen for what you agree on.

  - "We both want to be able have a break from doing dishes. I wonder how we can both get what we want?"
  - "I agree that you need time with your friends. It's important. Let's work together to see how we can make that happen."
- 5. Be clear and specific about what needs to happen and then stop talking. Use as few words as possible.**

Say exactly what needs to happen in a short and clear way; for example, "After your homework, you can go out with your friends." Then stop talking. Go to another room or outside to prevent further arguments.

6. **Don't take your child's resistance or anger personally.**

Remember, your child is usually just trying to change your mind so they can have or do what they want. They are probably trying tactics that have worked in the past.

7. **Ignore attempts to get engaged.**

Let your child know: "I am not going to talk about it anymore. I am going to ignore you if you continue to argue about it." Engage yourself in another activity.

8. **Separate physically from your child.**

If your child continues to try to engage you in an argument, leave the room. Let your child know: "I am finished talking about it for now."

9. **Talk about the problem later when you are both calm.**

Bring up the discussion again later when you have some relaxed time together. Use skills you have learned to talk about the problem, such as problem-solving, listening, and acknowledging feelings.

10. **Ask yourself: "Is this something I am willing to negotiate about?"**

If the situation is something you are willing to negotiate about, then let your child know: "Let's talk about how we can meet halfway on this."

11. **Most importantly, pay attention to your need to win the power struggle.**

The more we push, the more they push back. Take a break and calm yourself. Relax your defenses. Return to the conversation in a grounded, solid, and calm manner.





TEEN COMPONENTS

Lined area for notes or answers

Session 7 Appendix:

Understanding Power

Teen Session Materials

**TEEN COMPONENTS****Background Information**

Power in personal relationships is often defined negatively as getting other people to do things that you want them to do, and this kind of power means having power over people. Violent and abusive behavior is one way to achieve this negative kind of power.

But there are non-violent and non-abusive ways to achieve a positive kind of power. One source of positive power is found in your personal strengths that allow you to achieve your goals. Another source of positive power is found in skills like negotiation and compromise that can strengthen your relationships. You can use your skills, knowledge, and strengths to have positive personal power.

**Goals**

- To identify personal power
- To identify negative and positive uses of power
- To examine how teens can use their personal power in positive ways

**Important Messages**

- Power in itself is not a problem. It is how we use our power with others that can sometimes be a problem.
- Our personal strengths and skills can give us power in positive ways.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What is power?

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2. What are some different ways that people have power?

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3. What are some things people do to have power?

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4. What are some destructive ways to show power?

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5. What are some respectful ways to show power?

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6. Think of someone you know who has a lot of power. In which of the above ways do they have power? How does this person use their power?

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**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**WORKSHEET**

**Personal Strengths and Skills**

All of us have personal strengths that give us the power to make changes in our lives. Match each personal skill with the definition of the skill.

*Courage*

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1. To have sympathy and feelings for people with problems

*Open-mindedness*

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2. Being able to wait; taking your time to do things

*Endurance*

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3. To face danger or difficulties in spite of fear

*Dedication*

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4. To have the ability to work well with others

*Cooperation*

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5. Following through; acknowledging when you are wrong

*Compassion*

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6. To push yourself to meet a goal

*Loyalty*

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7. To stand behind friends and family no matter what happens

*Accountability*

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8. Strength to continue on even though you are tired, stressed, or have a long way to go

*Patience*

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9. Being dependable and consistent

*Reliability*

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10. Being interested in the opinions and ideas of others; being willing to consider new ideas

**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**Personal Skills**

Another source of power comes from personal skills that allow you to assertively communicate your point of view in a respectful way. These skills will get you what you need for yourself and build stronger relationships with your family. Match each personal skill with the definition of the skill.

*Listening*

1. To take action to deal with feelings calmly

*Compromise/  
Negotiation*

2. To figure out a solution to a conflict

*Respectful  
Communication*

3. To express your thoughts and feelings using language that acknowledges other people's dignity

*Empathy*

4. Paying attention to what someone is saying

*Problem-Solving*

5. To put yourself in someone else's shoes

*Coping with Difficult  
Emotions*

6. Being willing to give something up to come to an agreement

**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**Ways We Have Personal Power**

The following scenarios provide examples of personal power. What personal strengths and personal skills could the people in these scenarios use?

1. Neko is failing her math class and her mother is upset. Neko is grounded until she brings her grade up. She agrees to stay after school to get some extra help and makes a list of special assignments that she can do to improve her grade. Neko knows it will take time before her grade gets better and doesn't think she should be grounded. What should Neko do? What skills and strengths could she use to resolve this issue?

2. Jason is babysitting his little brother, who is watching a show on TV. Jason wants to watch a baseball game on a different channel. What can Jason do? What skills and strengths could he use with his brother?

3. Lucia has a 10 p.m. curfew. She has had problems with keeping to her curfew and forgetting to call when she will be late. She wants a later curfew because most of her friends can stay out until 11 p.m. What skills or strengths could she use?

4. Zachery just had an argument with his girlfriend, Lindsey, about their plans for the weekend. Zachery wants them to go to his friend's party. Lindsey wants to go to a free concert. They keep arguing about it. What skills or strengths could they use?

5. Sophia's parents have been checking on her a lot lately because she's been going places she's not supposed to go and often not letting them know where she is after school. Sophia is supposed to call or text her mom if she wants to go somewhere after school. Sophia's mom texts her when she hasn't come home to find out where she is. Sophia is getting really annoyed by this. She wishes her mom would trust her. What skills or strengths could Sophia use?

**What Personal Power Do You Have?**

**STRENGTHS**

**SKILLS**

**Take-Home Activity**

During the following week, think of ways you use your personal power and let us know about it next week during Check-In.



**Session 8:**

**When Your  
Teen Is  
Abusive:  
Effects on  
Parenting**

**Parent Session**

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## Background Information

Raising a teenager can be a challenging task all by itself. When your teen responds to limit-setting with abuse or violence, it is even more difficult to do your job as a parent. Bringing up teens takes a great deal of patience, understanding, firmness, and self-confidence. Each of these qualities is difficult to hold onto when your teen is putting you down, calling you names, threatening, or hitting you.

In this session, you will hear that other parents have similar feelings and experiences, and explore together how your parenting has been affected by your teens' behavior.

You will learn how your negative thoughts influence how you respond to your teen's behavior and how you can change your thinking to help you respond more effectively.

## Goals

- To recognize how your teen's behavior has impacted your parenting
- To give and receive support regarding the difficulties of parenting a challenging teen
- To understand how feelings and thoughts affect behaviors
- To learn how to change negative thinking into thinking that supports more effective responses to your teen's behavior
- To learn how to take responsibility for your behavior when you have hurt someone by doing something to repair the harm that was caused

## Important Messages

- Your teen is responsible for their behavior.
- Your thoughts and feelings can affect your parenting.
- Changing the way you think about a situation can help you respond in more effective ways.



**PARENT WORKSHEET**

# Feelings, Thoughts, and Responses to My Teen's Behavior

Think of some times when your teen was abusive to you. Describe how you felt, what you thought, and how you responded to your teen.

MY TEEN'S BEHAVIOR	WHAT I FELT/THOUGHT	HOW I RESPONDED

## Changing Your Own Thinking

The way you think about a situation influences how you respond to it. You can change the way you respond to a situation by changing the way you think about it.

Negative thinking often occurs in one of the following categories:

- Negative thoughts about the other person (criticism, put-downs)
- Negative thoughts about yourself (self-blame, “shoulds,” self-criticism)

Here are some examples:

NEGATIVE THINKING	REALISTIC THINKING
This is my fault. I am not a good parent.	My teen is responsible for her own behavior. I am doing everything I can.
There is nothing I can do. I've tried everything.	There are some things I can do. I can separate from him when he is abusive, and I can get help.
He's lazy and self-centered.	He's not motivated to do things he doesn't care about (like a lot of teens). An incentive or consequence might motivate him.
I have to make her change her behavior.	I can try to help her make good choices, but it is up to her to make the decision.
He's trying to manipulate me into doing what he wants.	He is using behaviors he knows to get his way. I can teach him other ways to communicate with me about what he wants.
I should be able to control her.	I can influence her decisions about her behavior with rules, incentives, and consequences. She is in charge of her behavior.







**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**Background Information**

The second part of being accountable for abusive or violent behavior is to repair the harm or damage caused by the behavior. In this session, you will learn specific things you can do to make amends for your behavior when you have been abusive and violent.

**Goals**

- To learn how to take responsibility for your behavior when you have hurt someone by doing something to repair the harm that was caused
- To identify specific things that can be done to make amends for abusive/violent behavior
- To learn how to repair relationships harmed by abuse or violence

**Important Messages**

- Making amends is a way to take responsibility for your behavior by repairing damage or problems caused by your behavior.
- Making amends is different from saying “I’m sorry.”
- An important part of making amends is to work on changing your behavior so you do not repeat the harmful behavior.
- Repairing damage in a relationship is a long-term process.

**Discussion Questions**

What are some of the kinds of damage or harm that can be caused by abuse and violence?

Physical

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Emotional

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Relationship

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**TEEN COMPONENTS****Making Amends**

When you hurt someone (physically or emotionally) or you do something that causes a problem for another person, you can take responsibility for your behavior by doing something to make amends.

There are a lot of different ways to make amends. What are some different ways to make amends when someone has been physically or emotionally hurtful to a family member?

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**Examples of Ways to Make Amends**

- Acknowledge that you were wrong.
- Help fix the problem that was created by your actions.
- Repair something that has been damaged or pay to have it fixed.
- Help the person in some way.
- Do something special for the person that shows you care about them.
- Ask the person what you can do to make amends.

**Here are some things to remember when you are making amends.**

- Saying “I’m sorry” is not the same as making amends.
- When you do something to make amends for an abusive or violent incident, it doesn’t mean everything will be just fine and go back to the way it was before the incident.
- It is not always clear what to do to make amends.
- You should ask the person affected by the abuse what you can do to make amends.

**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**Making Amends Scenarios**

How could the people in the following scenarios make amends?

1. Elias was hurrying through the grocery store and accidentally rammed his grocery cart into a woman who was holding an armful of groceries. The groceries fell to the floor.

2. Alex spilled soda all over her brother's paper that he had just completed for homework.

3. Antonio was supposed to be home at 4 to babysit so his mom could go to the doctor. He came home at 5 and his mom missed the appointment.

4. Jasmine and her little brother were arguing because they each wanted to watch a different show on TV at the same time. Jasmine got mad at her brother and pushed him down so hard, he bumped his head on the table.

5. Amir's mom was upset with him because he had not been home very much over the last three days and had not done his chores or any homework. As Amir's mom was telling him what he needed to do, he started yelling at her, called her names, and pushed her.

6. Tamera asked her mom for a ride to a friend's house. Her mom said she was too busy and couldn't do it. Tamera said, "Fine, I'll just walk!" As she was getting her coat out of the closet, she slammed the door really hard and then kicked it, leaving a dent in the door.



**TEEN COMPONENTS****WORKSHEET****How Can I Make Amends?**

Think of a time when you were abusive or violent to a family member. Write down three things you could do to make amends. (Remember that saying you are sorry is not making amends.)

1.

2.

3.





## **Background Information**

In this session, your teen will learn how to be accountable for their behavior when they have been hurtful to a family member. Together, you and your teen will learn and practice the six restorative steps for taking responsibility for behavior. You are included in this session because parent participation is an important part of the restorative process.

Additionally, you will be learning a new way to address violence or abuse with your teen at home. The six restorative steps are a valuable parenting tool to use with your teen when they are hurtful toward family members. Since you are learning it together, your teen will understand the process when you decide to use it at home.

The six restorative steps are a series of questions used to guide youth through thinking about how their behavior has impacted others and themselves, recognize the problems resulting from the behavior, and make a plan to repair the damage or harm and make amends.

The parent role in the dialogue is important. Your input about how you experienced the incident helps your teen better understand the impact of their behavior. If it is communicated in a supportive and gentle manner, teens are more likely to hear it and engage in the accountability process. This can be difficult when you are feeling upset and angry about what happened. Let us know if it is not a good time or you need a break during the dialogue. We want to support both of you so that the conversation is genuine and meaningful.

# Goals

- To define accountability
- To recognize how we avoid accountability
- To learn the six restorative steps for taking responsibility for behavior
- To understand how accountability for hurtful behavior is helpful to those harmed and oneself
- To help youth be accountable and feel supported by the group

## Important Messages

- The first part of accountability is to acknowledge the behavior and be willing to talk about it.
- You are responsible for your own abusive/violent behavior, regardless of what the other person said or did that upset you.
- Accountability is a sign of personal strength and maturity.
- Taking responsibility for hurtful behavior is respectful to others and to oneself.

**WORKSHEET**

# What Is Accountability?

1. What does it mean to be accountable? What do people do to be accountable for something they did?

2. Think of a time when you saw someone be accountable when that person did something wrong. The person could be a friend, a parent, a teacher, or anyone you know. What did you feel about this person?

3. What are some of the ways our society holds people accountable?

4. What is the difference between being accountable for yourself and having accountability imposed on you?

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5. Who are you accountable to?

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6. What makes it hard to be accountable when you've done something wrong?

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7. What feelings do you have when you've decided you've done something wrong?

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SESSION 9: **ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH RESTORATIVE PRACTICE**

8. What do people sometimes do instead of being accountable?

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9. How does being accountable help someone change their abusive/violent behavior?

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# What People Do Instead of Being Accountable

Why do you think people blame others, deny, justify, or minimize their behavior when they have done something wrong?

It is human nature to want to try to explain our behavior because we don't want to feel like we are bad or mean or want to hurt others. It can be a natural reaction; however, it is not helpful because it does not provide a pathway to taking responsibility and making amends, and it leaves the other person feeling more hurt and upset. Acknowledging your behavior in a direct and honest way opens the door to move forward and talk about it and then take steps to repair the harm done and restore the relationship.

There are a lot of ways that people avoid accountability for their behavior by the way they talk about what happened and what they did.

**Denying:** Saying the behavior never happened.

**Justifying:** Giving reasons for the behavior, such as, "I had to hit my brother; he wouldn't be quiet," or, "She made me really mad."

**Minimizing:** Saying the behavior is no big deal. Making it sound less serious than it was, such as, "I barely touched you," or, "I was just moving you out of my way."

**Blaming:** Saying that the behavior was caused by another person or by something else besides you.

**WORKSHEET**

# Avoiding Accountability Scenarios

Read the scenarios and notice how the person is not being accountable by the way they talk about it.

Alex has tryouts for basketball at 8 a.m. on Saturday morning. She asks her mom, Rita, to wake her up at 6:30 a.m. so she can get ready. Rita says, "I will wake you up once, but I have to leave for work at 6:45, so you better set your alarm." Alex says, "Okay." She stays up until 1 a.m. on her phone and forgets to set her alarm. Rita wakes her up at 6:30 a.m. and leaves for work.

Alex goes back to sleep and wakes up at 9 a.m. Then she calls her mom at work and yells at her, "Hey, what's up! You didn't wake me up – I missed tryouts! What the...?! You wanted me to do soccer so bad. Forget it – I'm not doing it!"

1. How is Alex denying, justifying, minimizing, or blaming?

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2. What could Alex say about her behavior that shows accountability?

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Pete spends a lot of time playing video games. He just downloaded a new game and has been playing for three hours. His mom told him it was time to stop and do his chores. He ignored her. She kept coming into his room and telling him he needed to take a break and come do chores. He got really annoyed by the fourth time she came into the room and he jumped up and screamed at her to get out of his room. He grabbed a hockey stick and swung it toward her. She yelled, "Pete, stop! Put that down! I'm leaving the room. Do your Safety Plan and calm down." She left the room. She gave him time to calm down. He came out about 15 minutes later. His mom was really upset by his behavior. He said, "I didn't hit you with it. I was just trying to get you to leave my room. You always barge in on me. I was going to do my chores at the end of the game. You know I can't talk in the middle of a game. You need to just calm down, Mom. It's not that big of a deal. I wasn't going to hit you with it."

1. How is Pete denying, justifying, minimizing, or blaming?

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2. What could Pete say about his behavior that shows accountability?

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# Taking Responsibility for My Behavior Using Six Restorative Steps

After acknowledging your hurtful behavior in an accountable way, the next part is taking responsibility for the harm that resulted from what you did. There are six steps that include all of the important parts of being fully accountable to the person you were violent or abusive toward and your family. These steps are from restorative justice and are used to guide a conversation that leads to making amends and preventing the behavior from happening again. When used in families, it helps to restore connection and trust with each other.

- 1. Who was harmed by your behavior?** *This helps you understand the ripple effect of your behavior. Think of all of the people who were affected in any way by what happened, such as family members, friends, etc. It helps you understand the larger impact of your behavior.*

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- What was the harm done to them?** *Think of physical and emotional harm.*

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- How did it affect them?** *Think of how they might feel and how it impacted their life.*

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- What other harm or damage was caused?** *Think of physical, emotional, and other ways it may have caused a problem for family members.*

All of the above questions help you understand the impact to your behavior from others' perspectives and help you feel empathy. The person harmed should take part in answering these questions. This information can help you figure out how you can make amends.

**2. How did it affect my relationship with my family members?**

*This helps you think about your relationship and how the behavior impacts trust and feelings in your relationships.*

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**3. How did my behavior affect me?**

*This helps you recognize that you are also impacted by your behavior. Think about how you feel and your sense of self-respect and competence. Think about the consequences you will experience. On the positive side, ask yourself, “What did I learn from this? How will it help me in the future?”*

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**4. What could I have done differently?**

*This helps you realize that you have a choice and that you have other options for responding to anger. Think about the skills you have learned in Step-Up. What skills could you have used so that you stayed on the Respect Wheel?*

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**5. What do I need to do to make amends?**

*How can I repair the harm or damage done?  
How can I fix the problems that were caused?  
What can I do to make things right?*

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**6. What do I need to do so I don't repeat the behavior again?**

*What is my plan to prevent repeating the behavior? The most important part of making amends is to make a commitment to changing my hurtful behavior. Tell the person about your plan. Make it a weekly goal in Step-Up – for example, using your Safety Plan.*

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# Applying the Restorative Steps to a Story

## Jason's Story

Jason left school early because he was tired and didn't want to go to last period because he didn't do his math homework and was way behind in that class. He went over to a friend's house to hang out until he was supposed to be home at 4 p.m. He knew his mom was taking him to a counseling appointment that day and didn't really want to go. He played Xbox with his friend for a while. Some other friends came by and they went down to the store to get something to eat. He noticed it was getting dark and realized it was almost 6 o'clock. He could practically hear his mom's voice in his head freaking out because he missed his counseling appointment.

He went home, Sure enough, as he walked in the front door, his mom yelled, "Where have you been? It's past 6! You were supposed to be home by 4 and go to a counseling appointment at 4:30! You know I have to pay for those appointments! What are you thinking? And the school called and said that you left school early and skipped your last class. Isn't that math? The class you are failing? This is not working."

Jason looked at her and all he wanted to do was turn around and leave again. Instead, he pushed past her to go to his room. As he pushed past her, he said, "Just shut up!" This made his mom angrier, and she followed him to his room, saying, "Jason, we need to talk about this." She started into his room after him, and he turned around and shoved her out the door. The shove was so hard that she fell back onto a table. The table fell over and a glass bowl fell and shattered, and his mom fell onto the floor. Jason's little sister came running out of the room and started crying. She yelled at Jason to stop. He yelled at her to mind her own business and slammed the door.

Mom got up and decided she'd better just leave him alone, knowing nothing good was going to come of trying to talk right now. She had a friend coming over for dinner and called and cancelled it. She fixed the table and left the glass on the floor. She took his little sister for a walk to just get out of the house.

Answer these questions as if you are Jason.

1. Who was harmed by my behavior?

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• What was the harm done to them?

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• How did it affect them?

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• What other harm or damage was caused?

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2. How did it affect my relationship with my family members?

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3. How did my behavior affect me?

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4. What could I have done differently?

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5. What do I need to do to make amends?

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6. What do I need to do so I don't repeat the behavior?

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## WORKSHEET

# Taking Responsibility for My Behavior Using Six Restorative Steps

Your teen will answer these questions about an incident when they were violent or abusive. It can be the situation that brought you and your teen to group or something more recent.

Support your teen by sharing your perspective and experience about what happened. Do not engage in arguments about what happened or minor details. This is just practice. Ask a facilitator for help if needed.

1. Who was harmed by my behavior?

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- What was the harm done to them?

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- How did it affect them?

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- What other harm or damage was caused?

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SESSION 9: **ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH RESTORATIVE PRACTICE**

2. How did it affect my relationship with my family members?

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3. How did my behavior affect me?

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4. What could I have done differently?

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5. What do I need to do to make amends?

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6. What do I need to do so I don't repeat the behavior?

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**Session 10:**

# Understanding Feelings

**Teen and Parent Session**

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## **Background Information**

Anger is an emotion that everyone feels, and it often motivates people to make changes in their lives. We feel angry when we feel that we have been wronged or have been treated unjustly. Anger is also used as a justification for abusive or violent behavior. This session can help you make non-violent and non-abusive choices in two ways. The first is by separating feelings of anger from the behavior you choose, and the second is by recognizing you have other feelings when you feel anger.

## **Goals**

- To identify the relationship between power and anger
- To separate feelings of anger from the behavior a teen chooses
- To recognize feelings, in addition to anger, experienced by a teen
- To examine the relationship between anger and other feelings

## Important Messages

- Anger itself is not a bad thing. Anger is a feeling that lets us know that things are not right for us. When we feel anger, we know that we need to do something – to figure out a problem, make a change, talk to someone about our feelings, or make a decision to try to let it go. Anger can be a motivator to take respectful action toward a positive change.
- Anger has been the force that changed many injustices in our country's history and has brought communities together to create positive change.
- It's okay to feel angry; it's how we *behave* when we're angry that can be a problem. More specifically, anger should not be used to justify violence and abuse or to intimidate or make other people feel powerless. There are ways to express anger without violence and abuse.
- Anytime you are angry, you also have other feelings.
- When you express feelings other than anger, people are more likely to listen to you and understand you.
- You have a choice about what to do with your anger, and you are responsible for the way you choose to respond.
- You are *not* responsible for someone else who chooses to respond to their anger with violence. If you are the victim of someone else's violence, *you are not to blame*.

# Discussion Questions

1. How is anger used to justify violent or abusive behavior?

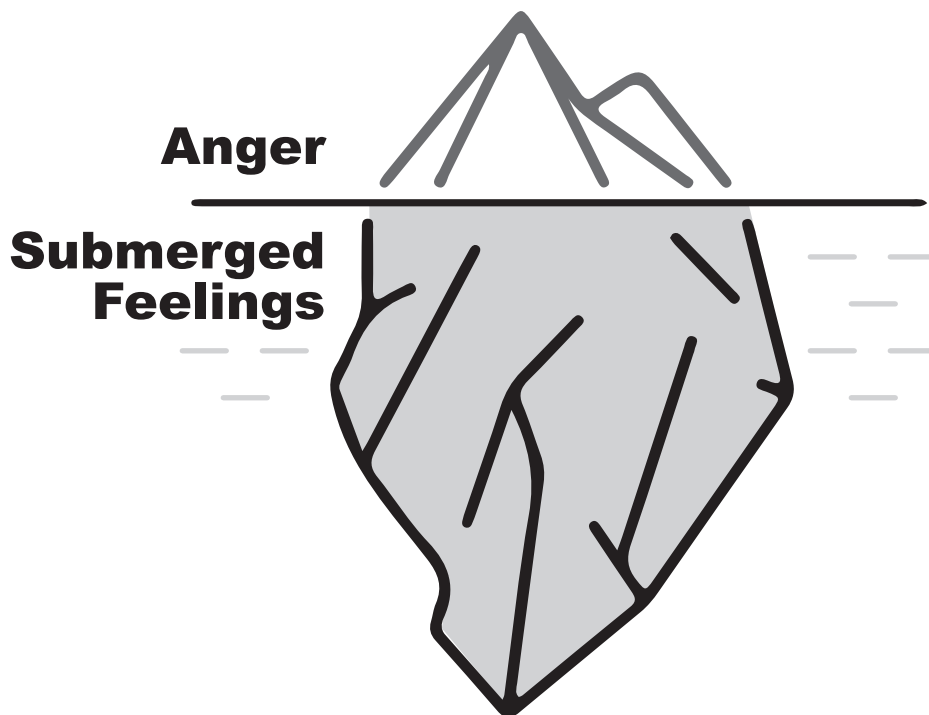
2. How do people use anger to have power over others?

3. Can you be angry and respectful at the same time? How?

4. What can you do to help control your anger so you can stay respectful?

# Iceberg of Feelings

For a lot of people, anger is used to mask other feelings. The iceberg is a way of showing how this works. Anger is the tip of the iceberg. The part of the iceberg under the water is where all the other feelings are. People often show only anger to the people around them. But just as a captain must know what lies beneath the water for the ship to successfully navigate around an iceberg, people need to understand what lies beneath their anger and other people's anger to cope effectively with their feelings. Talking about the feelings instead of showing the anger makes it much easier to understand each other and resolve conflicts.



# Identifying and Talking About Feelings

Why does putting our feelings into words help?

In addition to anger, we have feelings that range in many different directions. When we communicate these other feelings to people, they understand us better and it's easier to work out problems with them. So, talking about feelings can make our relationships stronger.

Talking about feelings can also help us stay calm. Brain researchers have found that simply identifying feelings of sadness and anger makes them less intense. Studies at UCLA in 2007\* showed that when people labeled a negative feeling, like sadness or anger, it activated a part of the brain responsible for processing emotions and impulse control. At the same time, it calmed down activity in the part of the brain that triggers negative feelings like fear and panic. So, when you say what you are feeling, it calms you down. It also works this way when you identify a feeling in someone else. For example, if your brother looks at you in an angry way and you think to yourself, "He is angry," you will activate the part of your brain that calms down your own negative feelings and prevents your impulse to react to him.

The next time you are getting angry or upset about something, try thinking about what you are feeling and say it to yourself. You can say it out loud, think it, or write it. This is a good thing to do during a time-out.

\*Lieberman, Matthew, et al. "Putting Feelings Into Words Affect Labeling Disrupts Amygdala Activity in Response to Affective Stimuli." *Psychological Science*. 2007.



## **Different Kinds of Feelings**

On the next two pages, you will see two wheels with feelings. One has difficult feelings that are common when people are having conflict with each other.

The other has helpful feelings that describe how you feel when you are able to stay calm and solve problems.

For this exercise, you will look at the two wheels and think about a situation when you felt one of the feelings on the wheel. We will go around the group and share until we have talked about all of the feelings on each wheel.

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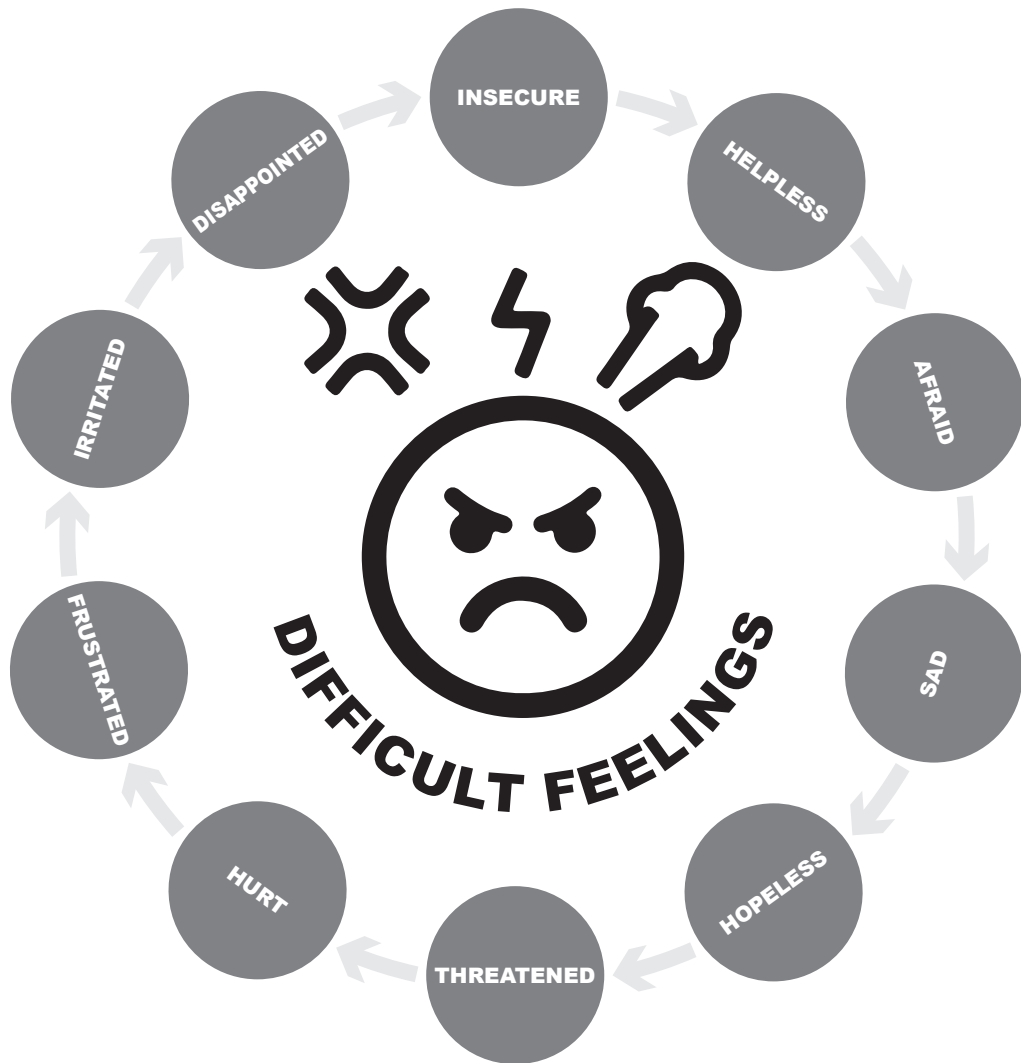
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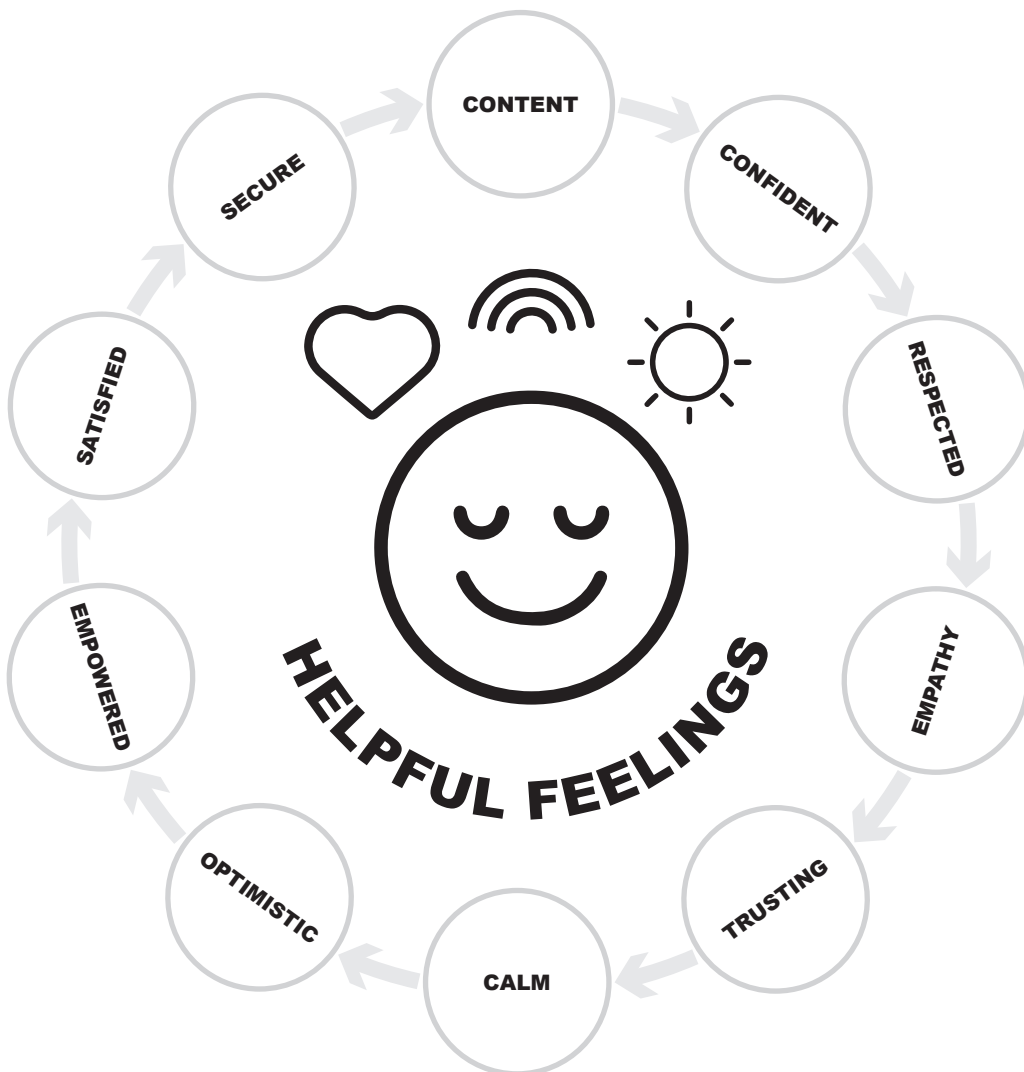
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# Difficult Feelings



# Helpful Feelings



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**WORKSHEET**

# Identifying Feelings

Read each scenario below and write down the feelings, besides anger, the person might be having.

1. Camila gets kicked out of math class for arguing with the teacher again. She is sent to the vice principal, who tells her that she'll be unable to play basketball for the school this week because this is the third time she's been kicked out of class. Camila knows that her basketball team has a major game coming up that she's going to miss.

She says to the vice principal, "Well, that's just great! THANKS!" She walks out and slams the door behind her.

Camila is angry. What else might she be feeling?

2. Jake has been dating Monica for five weeks. One afternoon, he asks her if she wants to go get pizza after school. She says, "No, I don't want pizza, and I really don't want to hang out with you anymore." Jake yells at her, calls her a name, and walks off.

Jake is angry. What else might he be feeling?

3. Alex spent all the money she saved on the latest skateboard from her favorite brand. One morning, she goes out to the garage and finds her skateboard is gone. Alex is very upset. She looks all over and calls the police, but her skateboard is not found. A week later, she tells her parents, "Well, I guess you're just going to have to buy me a new skateboard." When her dad says they'll have to think about it, Alex yells, "What?! What do you mean you'll have to think about it? It was stolen from me!"

Alex is angry. What else might she be feeling?

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4. Zoe just came back from a weekend visit with her dad. When she was at his house, he talked about how he thinks the divorce was all her mom's fault. When Zoe gets home, her mom says, "Did you get your homework done this weekend?" Zoe screams at her mom, "Why can't you just leave me alone?"

Zoe is angry. What else might she be feeling?

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SESSION 10: **UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS**

Think of a situation when you were really angry and became abusive toward another person. Write down the situation and then write down the feelings you were having besides anger.

1. What happened?

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2. What did you say and do?

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3. Besides anger, what feelings did you have?

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## **Background Information**

Self-talk is another word for thinking. In any situation, you always have thoughts about what is going on around you. These thoughts affect how you feel about the situation and how you respond to it. This is because your thoughts have to do with how you perceive what is happening. During this session, you will become more aware of the things you say to yourself in difficult situations and how it impacts your feelings and behavior. You will learn how to change unhelpful thinking to self-talk that helps you respond to stressful events in non-violent and respectful ways.

You will also learn about the beliefs you have that affect your thinking, feelings, and behavior. Beliefs are ideas you have developed in your life about how things should be, what is right and not right, and your capabilities. Beliefs have a strong influence over our thinking, feelings, and behavior. You will learn how these all work together to determine the choices you make and your behavior. Once you figure out your unhelpful thoughts and beliefs, you can change them to ones that lead you away from abusive or violent responses to conflict and toward respectful ways to solve problems.

## **Goals**

- To understand self-talk and beliefs
- To learn that people's thinking and beliefs are not always true
- To learn how to change unhelpful thinking and beliefs to self-talk that supports respectful, non-violent relationships
- To learn how to use self-talk to change behavior
- To learn how to use self-talk to make better choices



## Important Messages

- When I pay attention to the way I think, I can decide if it is helpful or harmful, and I have the ability to change it.
- When I can change my thinking, it changes my feelings and behavior.
- My beliefs influence how I think and act.
- Beliefs are often at work below the surface of our awareness, so we don't often think about them.
- When we learn about our beliefs, we can decide if they are true or untrue, helpful or unhelpful.
- I can change my thinking and beliefs to help me stay safe and non-violent.

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## **What Is Self-Talk?**

We can decide how we are going to think about every situation. We may explain things to ourselves in a way that makes us more and more angry, or we may explain things to ourselves in a way that helps us stay calm and figure things out. Explaining things to ourselves is called *self-talk*.

In addition to thinking and self-talk, we have feelings and beliefs going on at the same time. Thinking, feelings, and beliefs all interact with each other when we respond to something that happens.

## **What Are Beliefs?**

Our thinking and self-talk are shaped by our beliefs. Beliefs are the notions we hold about the way things are or should be. They have to do with the values and perspectives we learned from our family, community, and culture.

Beliefs are below the surface of our awareness, but they have a strong impact on our life perspective. They are learned in childhood and throughout our lives, and may be true or untrue. Some of our beliefs are helpful to us. Others can get in the way of us being our true selves and can damage our relationships. They are difficult to change, but it's possible to change them if we can learn what they are.

Some of our beliefs are about what we think is important and what we think is right or wrong. They are often "shoulds," such as:

- "You should never show weakness."
- "Children should never talk back to their parents."
- "Boys should never cry."
- "It's not okay to speak up when you disagree."
- "You should always stick up for your family."

# Core Beliefs About Myself

Core beliefs are about who we are as people, our capabilities, our self-worth, and our personality. These beliefs are deep and we are often not consciously aware of them. They impact our thoughts and self-talk. For example, let's imagine I have a core belief that I am powerless and incapable. When I'm faced with a challenge, I might say to myself, "I can't do anything about it. It's hopeless; nothing will ever change."

Here are examples of negative and positive core beliefs people have about themselves:

## NEGATIVE CORE BELIEFS

- I never do things right.
- I am not very smart.
- I am helpless.
- I am bad.

## POSITIVE CORE BELIEFS

- I am a good person.
- I can succeed if I try.
- I am important.
- I am capable.

- ?** How do we develop these beliefs?
- ?** How do you know if they are true?
- ?** How can you challenge those that are not true and change them?

Think of one positive belief and one negative belief you have about yourself.

Positive belief

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Negative belief

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# How Self-Talk, Feelings, and Beliefs Work Together

When something happens that causes distress, there are usually a series of thoughts, beliefs and feelings that occur as the person thinks it through. It happens really fast. The thoughts, beliefs, and feelings impact each other.

## Something Happens

Derrick's mom told him she would take him to the store after school so he could buy the new basketball shoes that just came out. He had been looking forward to it all week. He was getting even more excited about it as he walked home from school. He had told his friends he would wear them to his pick-up game that night.

But when Derrick walks in the front door, he sees his mother at the dining room table with his 10-year-old brother. His mom says, "Hi, Derrick. I'm sorry, but I can't take you to the store today. I need to help Sam out with a big project that's due tomorrow. I can take you on Thursday."

Let's think of all the possible unhelpful self-talk, beliefs, and feelings Derrick might be having that could lead to more distress or hurtful behavior. We will start with the first thing he might say to himself when he learns that he won't be able to get the shoes today.

- ?** What thoughts or self-talk might Derrick have right after his mom tells him she can't take him to the store?
- ?** What feelings might he have?
- ?** What beliefs support this self-talk?
- ?** How might he behave?

## Something Happens

Derrick's mom can't take him to buy his new shoes today as they had planned because she has to help his younger brother with homework.

THOUGHT "I want to wear the new shoes to the game tonight. I have to! I told everyone I'd be wearing them."

BELIEF "I can't wait for my new shoes. I don't have the patience. I can't deal with this."

FEELINGS Disappointed, frustrated, helpless, angry, victimized



THOUGHT "She said she would take me. She lied."

BELIEF "People should keep their word. She's doing it on purpose."

FEELINGS Betrayed, unimportant, let down



THOUGHT "She cares more about my brother. He gets all of the attention. She always does what he wants."

BELIEF "I am not worthy of attention. I'm not good enough."

FEELINGS Jealous, sad, hurt, angry



**BEHAVIOR Yells and swears at Mom, kicks the wall**

THOUGHT "She can't do this to me."

BELIEF "If someone makes me feel bad, I have a right to make them feel bad too. They deserve it if they make me feel bad."

FEELINGS Revenge, hopeless, shame

# Identifying and Changing Self-Talk and Beliefs

We can see from Derrick's story that the way we talk to ourselves and the beliefs we hold affect how we feel and how we act. When something difficult happens, we can think about it in ways that get us more worked up and mad about it, or we can think about it in ways that help us calm down and figure out how to deal with it.

If you listen carefully to your self-talk when you are angry, you might notice that it is exaggerated, unrealistic, or even completely untrue. Researchers have found that people with anger problems commonly have distorted thinking and perceptions that give rise to the anger. Listening to your self-talk will help you. The good news is that you are capable of changing your thinking and self-talk if you pay attention to it.

Let's look at Derrick's thoughts, self-talk, and beliefs that led to him swearing at his mom and kicking the wall.

- ?** Which of his thoughts and beliefs are really true and realistic?
- ?** Which ones are not true or are blown out of proportion?
- ?** What could Derrick say to himself instead that would shift his view to be more realistic and less negative to help him cope with the distress?

# Changing My Thinking/Self-Talk

Jennifer's mom took her phone away because she had been staying on it late into the night and would not get up on time for school in the morning. Jennifer was angry and upset about it and begging her mom to give it back. Mom separated from her, and Jennifer sat on the floor in her room not knowing what to do. She was so mad. She started throwing things around her room.

## Steps to Change Thinking/Self-Talk

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### **LISTEN TO MYSELF:**

- What am I saying to myself?
- What might Jennifer have been saying to herself?

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### **ASK MYSELF:**

- Is what I'm saying to myself really true? Is it realistic? Is it really this horrible awful and bad?
- Is my thinking helping me? Or making it worse?
- How was Jennifer's thinking affecting her feelings and behavior?
- Was Jennifer's thinking true or realistic?

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### **CHANGE IT:**

- If what you are saying is not really true or realistic, or is exaggerated, look at the situation again and change it to something more realistic.
- What kinds of self-statements could Jennifer make that are more realistic?
- If you decide what you are saying to yourself is really true or parts of it are true, while you don't have control over the problem, you do have control over how you think about it and what you do.

# Handling Something I Cannot Change

Sometimes we realize our negative thoughts are really true. We are not exaggerating. It's what is happening, and it's really challenging. What do you do then?

## FIRST: RECOGNIZE THAT IT IS TRUE.

Jennifer could say, "This really is just the way it is. I don't have control over this one. Mom took my phone and I don't have it. I can't change her mind."

## SECOND: WHAT CAN I DO? WHAT ARE MY CHOICES?

- Keep thinking about how awful things are and ranting and raving, driving yourself and everyone else nuts and getting in more trouble.
- Accept it. Saying "it is what it is" can sometimes bring some relief because you realize there is nothing you can do to change the situation. Let it go. This alone can help you feel better because you stop fighting it. In Jennifer's case, she could say to herself: "Okay, I don't have my phone. All the screaming and yelling in the world is not going to change it. It will just make it worse."
- Switch from thinking about the problem to thinking about the solution. What does Jennifer need to do to get her phone back?
- Tell yourself something to help you cope with the distress. For example, use as your self-calming statements. Jennifer could say, "It's only a week. Time goes fast. I will see my friends at school and tell them what's going on."
- Stop thinking. Do a mindfulness activity to bring yourself present (as we have learned about in class) by breathing, being in your body, and focusing on your senses and what is happening right now in the room you are in. Go on a mindfulness walk, sit by a tree, or do any of the mindfulness exercises we've learned. When your thoughts come along, just observe and let them pass.
- Feel the feelings. Allow yourself to have your feelings. Cry, get mad, be sad – as long as your behavior is safe and respectful. Do something physical to move the emotions – walk, run, or play catch with the dog.
- Talk about your feelings. Talk in a respectful way about how you feel to someone who is able to listen. You could also just say them aloud to yourself or write them down.

Most of these (except the first one) help to calm strong emotions. Our thinking affects our feelings, and our feelings affect our thinking. If you can shift your emotions to more positive ones, it helps you have more positive thinking. If you shift your thinking to more positive thoughts, you have better feelings.



# Take-Home Activity

Next week, we will practice these skills, and then you will apply them to your own personal situations.

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## Background Information

One of the most effective ways to help teens change their behavior is to give them ownership of problems caused by their misbehavior, guide them in recognizing the impact of their behavior on others and themselves, and learn how to repair harm and make amends. Teens explored these concepts in Session 8, *Making Amends*. In Session 9, *Accountability Through Restorative Practice*, parents and teens learned and practiced using a six-step restorative practice model for taking accountability for behavior.

Step-Up uses six guiding questions of restorative practice to address any violence or abuse reported at Check-In. This process is also a valuable parenting tool to use at home to address hurtful behaviors.

Parents will often say that they don't know how to address the violent and abusive behavior at home. They have tried all sorts of consequences and they don't work. Many parents have given up on consequences. This session reframes consequences to view them as responsibilities resulting from the problems caused by the behavior.

*Restorative parenting* uses the principles and practices of restorative justice to guide children in a conversation where they talk about their behavior in a meaningful way, take responsibility for harm done, and learn how to make amends and "put things right."

## Goals

- To reframe consequences as a way of taking responsibility for behavior
- To learn about the restorative process and how it helps teens engage in taking responsibility for their behavior
- To learn about restorative parenting and role-play using it with real situations with teens

# Important Messages

- The manner in which consequences are delivered can take away a teen’s sense of responsibility.
- The reframing of the concept of consequences as taking responsibility for behavior is a more helpful perspective for both teens and parents.
- Restorative parenting offers a way to help teens learn how to take responsibility for their behavior in a meaningful way.
- Restorative parenting builds relationship connection, empathy, accountability, and mutual understanding.

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## **Restorative Parenting**

Restorative parenting is based on a restorative justice theory that wrongdoing results in an obligation to those who have been harmed or to fix problems that were caused by the behavior. The focus is on “harms and needs,” which means figuring out the harm that resulted and what’s needed to repair the harm. This is called “making amends” or “putting things right.”

Restorative parenting uses the restorative process as a way to address wrongdoing in a family. It is a meaningful way to help children learn how to take responsibility for their behavior. It is helpful to parents because it offers a way to talk to young people about their behavior in a way that teaches accountability for behavior.

### **Keys to Restorative Parenting**

- Focuses on the effects of the misbehavior – how it caused a problem rather than the person or the misbehavior
- Focuses on the need to fix problems caused
- Teaches children the impact of their behavior on others and helps them develop empathy for family members
- Helps children think about their behavior in a new way
- Teaches the true meaning of accountability
- Making amends reduces shame and increases self-respect
- Is respectful to everyone

# Taking Responsibility for My Behavior Using Six Restorative Steps

## WORKBOOK COMPONENTS

Answer these questions about an incident when you were violent or abusive. It can be the situation that brought you to group or something more recent.

1. Who was harmed by my behavior?

• What was the harm done to them?

• How did it affect them?

• What other harm or damage was caused?

2. How did it affect my relationship with my family members?

3. How did my behavior affect me?

4. What could I have done differently?

5. What do I need to do to make amends?

6. What do I need to do so I don't repeat the behavior?

## Example of Restorative Parenting Using Restorative Inquiry

Tara had a daily chore of doing the dishes before her mom came home from work. Her mom needed a clean kitchen to make dinner. Tara had been slacking on this. Several days in a row, her mother came home from work to find a sink full of dishes, food left out, and dirty dishes all over the house. Mom was fed up. She had already told Tara that she couldn't go out with her friends until she did all the dishes. It didn't seem to be working.

Tara's mom decided to try using the restorative questions with Tara to see if it would help. She told Tara that instead of the consequence of Tara not being able to go out with her friends, she wanted her to have a talk with Tara about the dishes and figure out a plan to solve the problem.

She asked Tara if she would sit down with her after dinner and talk about the dishes problem.

**Mom:** "Tara, when you don't do the dishes, who do you think it affects?"

**Tara:** *(Thinks for a while before talking)* "Well, it makes you mad, I know that."

**Mom:** "How else do you think I feel?"

**Tara:** "Probably taken advantage of, because you make the dinner and all the dishes are in the way, so you have to either do them or pile them up for me to do later. You must be pretty angry by now. I guess I would be pissed. Yeah, sorry, Mom."

**Mom:** "Who else is impacted by it?"

**Tara:** "Dad and Alisha, cuz they have to wait longer for dinner and it's a mess for them to come home to, too. Alisha tries to help you do them. She must be annoyed by me. I would be yelling at her if she did that to me."

**Mom:** "How does it affect you?"

**Tara:** "Well, I feel pretty lame right now. I guess I feel selfish. I've just been really distracted and busy lately. I think I'm going to do them and then I have to leave. Sorry, Mom."

**Mom:** "I'm glad you recognize how hard it is on all of us. Are there any other problems caused by you not doing the dishes?"



**Tara:** “We run out of plates and cups. Everyone complains when they can’t find clean stuff. It gets really crabby around here. Everyone starts pestering me, and lately it feels like everyone is mad at me all the time.”

**Mom:** “It doesn’t sound very fun for you, either.”

**Tara:** “No, it’s not...”

**Mom:** “What do you think your responsibility is in this? What do you need to do?”

**Tara:** “I need to start doing the dishes and talk to Dad and Alisha and tell them I’m sorry.”

**Mom:** “That is good. Is there anything more you can do to make amends with me?”

**Tara:** “What do you want me to do to make amends?”

**Mom:** “It would feel really good if you would make dinner with me one night this week so we can enjoy each other’s company again. It’s been rough between us. I want to restore our relationship and feel good together again. Will you do that?”

**Tara:** *(Smiles at her mom)* “Sure, Mom. I would like that. Let’s make spaghetti like we used to and have chocolate sundaes.”

## **? What helped engage and motivate Tara?**

- Mom’s attitude of respect and support for Tara
- Allowing Tara to have space to think and answer in ways that fit for her. Her mom did not push it or try to control it. She adapted the questions to how the conversation was going.
- Mom’s supportive attitude allowed Tara to not become defensive and to open up to feeling empathy and remorse, which motivated her to want to make amends.

## **Restorative parenting teaches teens:**

- That their behavior is their own responsibility, not their parents' responsibility
- That wrongdoing results in obligations to others
- That when their behavior creates a problem, it's their responsibility to fix it or make amends
- The real consequences of their behavior and how to make decisions based on the knowledge of these consequences

## **Practice**

Divide into pairs and think of a real situation with your teen that you would like use to practice using restorative inquiry. Take turns role-playing as the parent and the teen. Use the restorative questions as a guide to discussion about a problem behavior.

# **Take-Home Activity**

Talk to your teen about what they learned in the *Making Amends* session. Share your what you learned with your teen. Invite your teen to practice using the restorative questions on a current problem behavior.



**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**Background Information**

An important part of changing behavior is to think about the choices we make. In earlier sessions, we discussed feelings, self-talk, and beliefs. In this session, you will learn how these work together to impact how you choose to respond to an event. You will identify the feelings, self-talk, and beliefs you have in a difficult situation and how to change them so you can make better choices about your behavior.

**Goals**

- To learn to identify feelings, self-talk, and beliefs experienced during difficult situations
- To learn how to change negative/unhelpful feelings, self-talk, and beliefs to positive/helpful ones and make behavior changes

**Important Messages**

- Feelings, thinking, and beliefs all influence how we choose to respond to a situation.
- When we change how we think about a situation, our feelings change.
- Changing our feelings can help us make different choices about our behavior.
- Our beliefs support our thinking, feelings, and behavior.

**Turning Hurtful Moves into Helpful Moves**

**(Part A)**

Scenario: Jason gets up one hour late and misses his bus. He asks his mom for a ride. She is going to work and doesn't have time.

	HURTFUL MOVES	HELPFUL MOVES
<b>I THINK/ SELF-TALK</b>	<p><i>YOU SHOULD</i> "You should give me a ride."</p> <p><i>BLAMERS/PUT-DOWNS</i> "If you got me up on time, I wouldn't have missed the bus."</p>	<p><i>I CAN</i> "I messed up, but I can figure it out."</p> <p><i>TAMERS</i> "Mom isn't responsible for my being late; she needs to get to work on time."</p>
<b>I FEEL</b>	Resentful, helpless, controlled	Frustrated, anxious, worried, motivated, competent
<b>BEHAVIOR</b>	Jason yells at her and calls her a name.	Jason takes the city bus to school.
<b>I BELIEVE</b>	<p>Other people are responsible when things go wrong.</p> <p>I have the right to yell and call names when someone doesn't do what I want.</p>	<p>I am responsible for figuring out solutions to my own problems.</p> <p>I don't have the right to yell and call names when I don't get what I want. Other people's needs are important.</p>

**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**WORKSHEET**

**(Part B)**

Scenario: It's 11:30 p.m. and Octavio is 30 minutes late for his curfew. He was at a party and didn't want to leave. Octavio is mad at his mom because he thinks 11 p.m. is too early for a curfew.

Complete the following worksheet as if you were Octavio.

	HURTFUL MOVES	HELPFUL MOVES
<b>I THINK/ SELF-TALK</b>	<p><i>YOU SHOULD</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p><i>BLAMERS/PUT-DOWNS</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p><i>I CAN</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p><i>TAMERS</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>I FEEL</b>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>BEHAVIOR</b>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>I BELIEVE</b>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**Turning Your Own Hurtful Moves into Helpful Moves**

Think of a difficult situation in your life and describe it below, then fill out the worksheet for your situation.

	HURTFUL MOVES	HELPFUL MOVES
<b>I THINK/ SELF-TALK</b>	<p><i>YOU SHOULD</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p><i>BLAMERS/PUT-DOWNS</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p><i>I CAN</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p><i>TAMERS</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>I FEEL</b>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>BEHAVIOR</b>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>I BELIEVE</b>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

## Session 13:

# Safety Plan Review/ Open Session

This session can be used to review the *Safety Plan* and help families make revisions if needed. Youth who have not made a Safety Plan can make one during this session. This session can also be used to deliver one of the extra sessions that are at the end of the manual.







## Background Information

Most teens and parents don't think about how they communicate when they are arguing with each other. Both teens and parents are often more interested in getting their point across to the other person and aren't thinking about how they're doing it. Sometimes their frustration results in abusive language and behavior. Learning some basic communication skills can help teens and parents resolve conflict.

## Goals

- To learn how to use an “I” statement
- To recognize how “I” statements help people understand each other

## Important Messages

- “I” statements help you focus on your own experience of a situation.
- “I” statements help you avoid blaming and criticizing other people.
- Other people usually respond less defensively when they hear “I” statements.

# What Is an “I” Statement?

An “I” statement:

- Clearly and specifically describes the behavior or situation that is a problem using as few words as possible
- Describes how a person feels or how the situation affects them by using “I” sentences
- Does not blame, accuse, criticize, or put down the other person in the conversation

## What Is the Purpose of an “I” Statement?

The purpose of an “I” statement is to give factual information about how an event or situation affects you. When you use “I” statements, people usually respond more positively because they’re able to hear you and understand you better. When you use “you” statements that blame and accuse, people feel defensive and don’t want to listen to you.

## How Do I Make an “I” Statement?

*I feel* (feeling) *when* (behavior or situation)  
*because* (how it is a problem for you) .

**OR**

*When* (behavior or situation) *happens, I*  
(what you experience or how it is a problem) .

# “You” Statements Versus “I” Statements

The following are examples of “you” statements and “I” statements. Consider how you would feel after hearing each of these statements. How might you respond? Write down your feelings and responses under each one.

“YOU” STATEMENT	“I” STATEMENT
<p>“Why do you always lock the door before I get home? You know I’m not home yet. You make me have to knock and knock, and you take forever to open it.”</p>	<p>“I feel frustrated when I come home and the door is locked. I don’t like knocking and knocking because I start to think no one is home and I won’t be able to get in.”</p>
<p>“You always pick me up late from school. You’re never on time. Don’t you know I have to be at practice by 3 o’clock? You always make me late.”</p>	<p>“I feel frustrated when I don’t get picked up by 2:30 because I worry about being late for practice.”</p>
<p>“You never listen to me. You are constantly interrupting and being rude. You really have no clue about how to have a conversation.”</p>	<p>“When you talk while I’m talking, I get really annoyed because I feel like you aren’t hearing anything I’m saying. I’d like to take turns talking so you can listen to me and I can listen to you.”</p>

# Changing “You” Statements into “I” Statements

Change the following “you” statements into “I” statements.

“YOU” STATEMENT	“I” STATEMENT
<p>“You are always late. You are so slow in the morning. I’m going to be late again thanks to you.”</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>“You ate all the chips! You’re such a pig!”</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>“You always come barging into my room. Have you ever heard of the word ‘privacy’?”</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

# "I" Statement Practice

Now, write an "I" statement to respond to each of the following situations:

1. Craig agreed to clean out the garage before going to the mall. Cynthia, his mom, comes home and finds the garage is still a mess. When Craig comes home, Cynthia says:

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2. Marcus is watching his two younger sisters while his mother is at a meeting after work. She said she would be home at 4 p.m. He made plans to go to a 4:30 movie with his friend. His mom comes in the door at 5 p.m. Marcus says:

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3. Bridget is planning to paint a mural she sketched on her wall using the paint pens she received for her birthday. She opens the pens to find that they’ve clearly been used and are almost empty. She approaches her brother to ask if he used them. He casually responds that yes, he had a science project poster to make, and his group used the paint pens to make the poster. Bridget says to her brother:

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4. Vanessa walks in the front door with an armful of groceries and trips over a pile of stuff (shoes, a backpack, and a coat) that her son Jackson left on the floor. Vanessa says to Jackson:

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# "I" Statement Practice with Your Teen

Think of something you would like to say to your teen using an "I" statement.  
Try to say something that you would normally say in a "You" statement. Take  
turns each saying something to each other in an "I" statement.



# Take-Home Activity

During the next week, use "I" statements with your teen when you want to express an opinion or feeling about something.

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## **Background Information**

During this session, you will discuss your responsibilities as a parent and your teen’s responsibilities, and how taking on too much responsibility for your teen affects the teen’s ability to face challenges. Many parents take too much responsibility for their teen and become frustrated when their teen seems incapable of being responsible. The exercises in this session help you identify how you have been either “rescuing” or trying to control your teen in ways that take away the teen’s ability to be responsible for their own behavior. When teens take responsibility for themselves, they begin to feel confident and capable.

## **Goals**

- To identify parent responsibilities and teen responsibilities
- To learn ways to help teens take responsibility for their behavior
- To identify ways that teens are affected when parents take responsibility for them
- To identify ways teens feel when they take responsibility for themselves

## **Important Messages**

- Teens will take more responsibility for their behavior when they are given the opportunity to make some decisions and face consequences of their choices.
- Giving teens responsibility is a gradual process as they mature.
- It is not always easy to let go and let teens make their own decisions and face consequences.

# Empowering Teens to Be Responsible for Their Behavior

When we take responsibility for other people's behavior, we typically do one of two things:

## Try to control them

Try to make them do something by using threats, manipulation, force, or emotional coercion (guilt).

## Try to rescue them

Do things for them to save them from facing consequences of their behavior; fixing problems that are a result of their behavior.

It's common for parents to vacillate between trying to control and trying to rescue their children. Neither practice gives teens responsibility.

When we feel like we're responsible for another person's negative behavior, it's natural to want to try to do something about it (especially when you are a parent). And as we discussed earlier, it's hard to change another person's behavior, so we resort to trying to control the person so they won't behave that way or cleaning up the mess that results from their behavior.

Instead of controlling or rescuing, it is more helpful to **empower** the person to be responsible for their own behavior.

# How Do You Empower Your Teen?

- Invite the person to think for themselves about how to solve a problem.
- Allow the person to take action to solve the problem.
- Allow the person to make the choice to not take action.
- Allow the person to experience the consequences of their choice.

The most important part is how you communicate to the person. If you talk with them in a way that is both caring and firm, they will feel more accepting of the responsibility.

## **Caring and firm means:**

### **Caring**

- Letting the person know that you care about them and love them, regardless of the problem or the choice they make.
- Talking in a way that is not demeaning, sarcastic, or critical.
- Telling the person you believe they are capable of solving the problem.
- Letting the person know that they can ask for help in making their plan to solve the problem.

### **Firm**

- Letting the person know that you are giving them the responsibility to take action to solve the problem. You will not do it for them.
- Letting the person know that they are in charge of the choice and the consequence.
- Allowing the person to face consequences without rescuing them.
- Being clear about your expectations, holding to what you say.

Instead of being caring and firm, parents are often caring and rescuing, angry and firm, or angry and rescuing.

**Here are examples of each:**

Brian takes the bus to school every morning. He has been getting in the habit of oversleeping and missing the bus. The school is within biking or skateboarding distance, and there is a city bus. This morning, Brian woke up late again and had five minutes to get to school. He asked his mom to call the school to tell them he would be late and then give him a ride to school. His mom said:

**Caring and rescuing:**

“All right, honey. Hurry up. I really need to start waking you up in the morning. You go right back to sleep after you turn off your alarm, and before you know it, you’re late.”

**Angry and firm:**

“Forget it! I’ve had it with you, Brian! You are so lazy and irresponsible. It’s not my problem if you get up too late. You’re on your own. You expect everyone else to save you from your stupid mistakes. Well, I’m through. I’m not doing it anymore. Figure out your own way to school.”

**Angry and rescuing:**

“You’re late again! This is the third time this week! Do you know what an alarm is for? You are unbelievable. You’re not going to make it past the ninth grade. Now get out to the car, and step on it, while I call the school, again!”

**Caring and firm:**

“Brian, you’re going to need to solve this problem on your own. I know you have options for how to get to school on your own, and you can figure it out. You are also capable of calling the school to let them know you overslept. If you want help making a plan so this doesn’t keep happening, let me know. Have a good day at school. See you this afternoon.”

The second part to caring and firm is how the parent responds when Brian makes a choice about his behavior. If he acts on solving the problem himself by calling the school and getting himself there, his parent can later say, “I like the way you took care of that yourself.” Or, if he goes back to bed, his parent can decide to not say or do anything and let him face the consequence of an unexcused absence from school.

# Take-Home Activity

## Giving My Teen Responsibility

1. What is my teen able to do without my help?

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2. In what ways does my teen show responsibility?

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3. In what areas does my teen still need support and guidance?

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4. In what ways am I continuing to take on more responsibility for my teen than they need?

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5. How does this affect my teen?

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6. How does this affect our relationship?

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7. What are some ways I can give my teen more responsibility?

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**TEEN COMPONENTS****Background Information**

The goal of this session is for you to write a responsibility letter to the person who was a victim of your abuse or violence. The most important thing is for you to write the letter without denying, justifying, or minimizing the behavior, or blaming your behavior on the person you harmed.

**Goals**

- To write a responsibility letter to the victim of your abuse/violence, talking about the abusive/violent behavior without denying, justifying, minimizing, or blaming
- To learn how to take responsibility for your behavior

**Important Messages**

- Taking responsibility for abusive and violent behavior is a sign of personal strength.
- Taking responsibility for abusive and violent behavior is a first step toward changing behavior.
- Taking responsibility is a way to start repairing a relationship.

**What Is a Responsibility Letter?**

An important part of changing your abusive or violent behavior is looking at the choices you made during conflicts in the past. You are going to write a letter to a family member describing an incident when you were abusive or violent toward them. This letter will not actually be sent to the person, but it will be written as if they were going to read it. In it, you will describe the behaviors you used without denying that you used these behaviors, minimizing the impact the behaviors had, or blaming the person for your choice of behaviors.

Here's how you do it:

1. You decide what incident you are going to write about and let your counselor know about it. You may do this during group session time when everyone will talk about what they are going to write about, or you may talk about it to your counselor apart from the group.
2. After your counselor approves the incident you will write about, use the blank letter in the worksheet and answer the questions. The responsibility letter is not meant to be a writing assignment. If you have any problems with spelling or grammar, don't worry.
3. Give your letter to your counselor. They will read it and may ask you to make changes to it. After you make all the changes, you will read the letter to the group.

**TEEN COMPONENTS****Sample Responsibility Letter**

Dear Mom,

*Describe what happened when you were arrested or had an abusive/violent incident. Be clear about what you did on the Abuse/Disrespect Wheel.*

I'm writing to you about what I did on May 5. The argument was about me coming home late. I came home at 11 p.m. and went to my room. You came into my room a couple minutes later. You asked me where I had been. I told you before I left that I'd be home at 10 p.m. I got loud and told you it was none of your business where I was. I told you to get out of my room. You said you were sick of me talking to you that way and you wanted more respect. Tommy (my seven-year-old brother) came out of his room and told me not to call you names. I told him to shut up. Then he said, "I hate you." I kicked my foot toward him and said, "You better get out of here." He left crying. Then I started pushing you toward the door and I raised my hand like I was going to hit you. You screamed, and I said, "Just shut up and get out." You were in the doorway and I pushed you down into the hallway. I slammed the door and locked it so you couldn't get back in. Then I turned on my stereo so loud that the windows were rattling. About 10 minutes later, the police came to my door.

*What negative thoughts were you having that may have led to your abusive behavior?*

I thought you were overreacting. I thought I could make you leave me alone by yelling at you and scaring you.

*What were you feeling?*

When you ask me where I've been or what I've been doing, I feel like a little kid. I get angry and I feel humiliated.

*What did you want your family member to do or stop doing?*

I wanted you to say it was okay that I was late. I wanted you to let me do whatever I wanted without having to answer to you. I wanted you to leave me alone.

*How could you have expressed your feelings in a respectful way?*

I could have told you that I feel like a little kid when you question me and worry about me when I'm late. I could have called you to say that I was okay and told you that I'd be home at 11 p.m. I could have asked you if we could take a time-out and talk about it tomorrow.

*How did your abusive/violent actions affect other people in your family?*

I hurt your back when I pushed you down. I know I scared you when I yelled at you, called you names, and threatened to hit you. I also think you must be sad that your own son would do these things to you. After Dad left, we were so close for a while, but in the last couple years, we've had more and more arguments. I know you have a lot of hopes and dreams for me, and you must feel disappointed that I'm acting this way.

I also know Tommy is scared of me sometimes. When we were playing together the other day, he flinched when I raised my hand. I was just reaching up to get something. I never realized he was so afraid of me until he did that. When you and I argue, I've seen him in his room crying. One time he said, "You're just like Dad." That really pissed me off, but I realized later he was right.

**TEEN COMPONENTS**

*What were the consequences to you?*

I got arrested. I spent three days in detention. I went to court. I have to go to this program and do community service. When I was in detention, I was really pissed off at you. I thought it was all your fault. Now I realize I did some stupid things and might end up living in some foster home somewhere if I don't watch out. I don't feel good about what I'm doing to you and Tommy. I don't want to end up like Dad. He's all alone now.

*What could you have done differently?*

Most of all, I need to think about what I'm going to say before I say it. When I'm upset, I say the first thing that comes to my head. That means I get loud, swear, and start ordering people around. That's not right. You have to give people respect to get it. I'm trying to watch what I say and how I say it. I could have done all this on May 5.

I could have admitted to you that I was an hour late. I could have acknowledged that you had a right to worry about me and want me home on time. I didn't have to turn on the stereo so loud like I did. That was just to piss you off. Just not yelling can make a big difference.

*How have you taken responsibility for your behavior and made amends?*

I know you will want me to do certain things because of what I did. I should be a man and do what you ask. I'll probably be grounded for a while and have extra chores around the house. I have to show that you can trust me again. I'd like to make a plan with you about how to handle this kind of situation in the future.

I should also tell my brother that what I did was wrong. I should do something with him or just spend time with him so he can respect me again. I don't want him to do the things I did to you.

Most of all, I need to show both of you that when we disagree, you don't have to be afraid that I'll yell or swear or break something. I don't want you to be afraid of me.

**Two Versions of Describing What Happened**

**Version 1**

I'm writing to you about what happened on May 5. I can't remember what we argued about except that when I came home, you started nagging me about something. I didn't want to listen to it and just wanted to go to bed so I went into my room. I was really getting fed up with your complaining. I had to raise my voice so you would listen to me.

I went to my room and you followed me there. I asked you to leave my room and let me sleep. You just kept going on and on. Then Tommy got up and he started whining about something. I told him to go back to bed. He started crying like a baby for some reason. I don't know why. He finally went back to bed.

If you would have left, there wouldn't have been any problem. I shoved you a little to get you out so I could go to bed. I asked you to leave again. You didn't look where you were going, and you fell in the hallway. Then you blamed it on me. I couldn't believe it. I turned on my radio to try to calm down, and you called the police. You blew the whole thing out of proportion.

**TEEN COMPONENTS****Version 2**

I'm writing to you about what I did on May 5. The argument was about me coming home late. I came home at 11 p.m. and went to my room. You came into my room a couple minutes later. You asked me where I had been. I told you before I left that I'd be home at 10 p.m. I got loud and told you it was none of your business where I was. I told you to get out of my room. You said you were sick of me talking to you that way and you wanted more respect. Tommy (my seven-year-old brother) came out of his room and told me not to call you names. I told him to shut up. Then he said, "I hate you." I kicked my foot toward him and said, "You better get out of here." He left crying. Then I started pushing you toward the door and I raised my hand like I was going to hit you. You screamed, and I said, "Just shut up and get out." You were in the doorway and I pushed you down into the hallway. I slammed the door and locked it so you couldn't get back in. Then I turned on my stereo so loud that the windows were rattling. About 10 minutes later, the police came to my door.

Answer the following questions:

1. How are these two descriptions different?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. In the first version, which statements in the first paragraph are denying, justifying, minimizing, and blaming? In the second paragraph? In the third paragraph?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How does the second version show accountability?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How would the parent respond to the two different versions?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How would the parent feel about each version?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Which version requires more thought?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Which version would be more difficult to write?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Which version shows more consideration for others?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**My Responsibility Letter**

Dear Mom,

*Describe what happened when you were arrested or had an abusive/violent incident. Be clear about what you did on the Abuse/Disrespect Wheel.*

*What negative thoughts were you having that may have led to your abusive behavior?*

*What were you feeling?*

*What did you want your family member to do or stop doing?*

*How could you have expressed your feelings in a respectful way?*

*How did your abusive/violent actions affect other people in your family?*

*What were the consequences to you?*

*What could you have done differently?*

*How have you taken responsibility for your behavior and made amends?*





## **Background Information**

Parents usually don't think about how they are communicating with their children, especially when they are upset or irritated with them. Whenever parents talk to their children, they are giving underlying messages about their confidence in the children, along with the children's abilities and strengths.

This session gives you a chance to think about the messages you have been giving your teen when you talk to them. Through scenarios and practice, you will learn how to communicate in ways that give your teen the message that they are capable.

## **Goals**

- To recognize how you give underlying messages whenever you talk to your teen
- To realize how these messages affect your teen's view of themselves
- To learn how to communicate in a way that helps your teen feel responsible and capable

## **Important Messages**

- Whenever you talk to your teen, it is as if you are holding a mirror in front of them.
- Everything you say to your teen gives an underlying message about who they are and how capable they are.
- You can give your teen a positive view of themselves with the words you use.
- You can help your teen feel more responsible and capable through your communication.

# Messages We Give Our Teens

Read each of the following responses. What message is the teen getting in the first response? What message is the teen getting in the second response?

1. **A.**

“You put a dent in the car? Well, you can forget about driving for a long time. It’s going to cost me my deductible to get it fixed, which I’ll probably never get from you, considering you still owe me money from all the other damage you’ve done around here. I’m sure not going to trust you with my car again for a long time.”

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1. **B.**

“You put a dent in the car? I’m sure you can make a plan to get it repaired and pay the deductible for insurance. Figure out a plan with a timeline and let me know. Then we can talk about when you can use the car again.”

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2. **A.**

“You said you would be home on time tonight. Its two hours past curfew! You are so irresponsible. I can’t trust a thing you say. You’re grounded for the weekend.”

2. **B.**

“I expected you home at 10 because you said you would be back by that time. I know you are capable of coming home on time. You’ve lost your privilege to go out this weekend in the evening. Next weekend, you will have the chance to be responsible and come home on time.”

3. **A.**

“You call this kitchen clean? It looks like you flew through here on a two-minute commercial break from your TV. I give up. I can’t get any help from you. It was a simple request to clean up a few dishes, and you couldn’t even do that.”

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3. **B.**

“Jake, I’d like you to finish cleaning the kitchen now.”

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4. **A.**

“You punched a hole in the wall! You are out of control. You’re going to totally destroy this house. You already ruined my chair and now you’ve ruined the wall.”

4. **B.**

“You need to make a plan about how you are going to repair that hole in the wall. Let me know by bedtime tonight how and when you plan to fix it.”

5. **A.**

“You can’t even get to school on time. How do you figure you can hold down a job?”

Lined writing area for response A, consisting of 13 horizontal lines.

5. **B.**

“I’m glad to hear you’re going to take on the responsibility of a job. It sounds like a lot of work, but I think you’ll be good at it. Plus, you’ll get experience in being punctual.”

Lined writing area for response B, consisting of 13 horizontal lines.

# **Giving Our Teens the Message That They Are Capable**

Read the responses below and think of a different response for each that gives the teen a message that they are capable.

1. “How did you manage to get orange juice everywhere? You can’t even make juice without getting the whole floor sticky.”

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2. “You lost your homework again? You’ll never make it through this school year, let alone high school. You are so unorganized.”

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3. “You have no tolerance with your little brother. All you do is criticize him. You don’t know how to be a big brother.”

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4. “I can’t reason with you. All you do is blame and argue. You’re impossible to talk to. I’m not even going to try.”

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## Take-Home Activity

Pay attention to the messages you give your teen this week. Listen to the words you use and think about what kind of messages your teen is hearing.

1. Below, write down one thing you say to your teen this week that you would like to phrase differently.

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2. On the next line, rephrase your words in a way that gives your teen the message that they are capable.

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**TEEN COMPONENTS****Background Information**

The goal of this session is for you to write an empathy letter to the person who was the victim of your abuse or violence. Understanding another person's thinking, feelings, and experience of a situation can be the most important part of responding to a conflict with respect and without abuse and violence.

**Goals**

- To define empathy
- To discuss how empathy can have a positive impact on relationships
- To practice empathy through letter-writing

**Important Messages**

- When two people try to resolve a conflict, they will be much more successful if they try to understand each other's feelings and perspectives.
- When you try to think about how another person experiences a situation, you may feel less angry at them and less likely to use abuse or violence against them.
- Having empathy can help you be more respectful.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What is empathy?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How does empathy affect your relationship with another person?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What difference would understanding the feelings and experience of another person make when you are responding to something they did or said to you?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What situations make it hard to have empathy?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Can you have empathy for someone even when you don't agree with their point of view?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What situations make it easy to have empathy?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**TEEN COMPONENTS**

7. Think of a time when someone had empathy for you. When they tried to understand how you felt or how you experienced a situation, how did it make you feel?

8. What does empathy have to do with mutual respect?

9. If a person didn't have empathy, what would they be like?

**Empathy Letter Plan**

Think about what happened when you were abusive or violent to the person(s) in the incident that you have chosen to write about. Think through the whole situation and try to look at it through the other person's eyes and experience it as if you were them. Try to really imagine you are that person. Use what you already know about them to help you know and understand how they might be feeling and seeing the situation.

In your letter, you can also add comments that other family members might have made as they watched or heard what happened.

1. Describe what happened as they might have experienced it and from their point of view as your parent, caretaker, or other family member.
2. What feelings might you be having if you were that person throughout the whole incident? There might be many different feelings, and they might change at different times.
3. What thoughts might you be having at different times during the whole situation?
4. How did the incident impact the person's life? Think about how it affected them in different ways, such as what they had to do as a result of your behavior (such as call the police, go to court, miss work, find childcare for siblings, or fix a hole in the wall or a broken phone).
5. What were the long-term effects of what happened, especially in your relationship with them and your other family members?

**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**Sample Empathy Letter**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

*Describe what happened when you were arrested or had an abusive incident from the perspective of your parent or the person you harmed.*

The argument began because you came home late. You said you were going to be home at 10 p.m. but you didn't get home until 11 p.m. When you got home and I asked you where you were, you started yelling at me and started swearing. You also called me names. When Tommy heard you yelling at me, he came into the room and you kicked your foot at him, swore at him, and told him to go back to his room. Then you came after me. You kept pushing me until I was near the door. You raised your hand at me like you were going to hit me. Then you pushed me down on the floor in the hallway and slammed the door. Then I got up and called the police.

*What was the person thinking and feeling during this incident?*

When you didn't come home on time, I was worried because I didn't know where you were.

When you started calling me names, that really upset me because I just wanted to know that you were OK. I feel degraded when you call me names. I can't believe my own son would call me those names. I was also upset because Tommy heard what you said, and I think he'll start using that language if he hears you use it. When you kicked your foot at Tommy, I was afraid for him.

The first time you pushed me, I was really surprised. You had never done that before. I wasn't sure what you were going to do next. I remember being so scared because you raised your hand at me like you were going to hit me. I thought for sure you were going to do it.

After you slammed the door, I didn't know what to do. I was in shock. I wasn't sure this was really happening to me. My own son. I sat there trying to imagine what I was going to say to somebody if they asked me what happened. I was sure they'd think it was my fault.

*How were they affected by the incident?*

I didn't want to call the police, but I didn't know what else to do to make you stop. I didn't want you arrested; I just wanted them to talk to you. I'm sorry this happened, but I can't live like this anymore.

*What were the long-term effects of what happened, especially in your relationship with them and your other family members?*

It's going to take me a while to trust you again. This isn't the first time this kind of thing has happened.

Tommy looks up to you and wants to be like you. I don't want him to think of you as someone who yells and hits people. I don't want him to start doing those things. Tommy and I shouldn't have to be afraid of you. If getting arrested means you will stop being violent and abusive with me, calling me names, and threatening me, then I think it was worth it.

Love, Mom

**TEEN COMPONENTS****My Empathy Letter**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

*Describe what happened when you were arrested or had an abusive incident from the perspective of your parent or the person you harmed.*

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*What was the person thinking and feeling during this incident?*

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*How were they affected by the incident?*

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*What were the long-term effects of what happened, especially in your relationship with them and your other family members?*

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*What else might the person say to you about it? For example, how might they feel now that you are finishing Step-Up and you have made changes in your behavior?*

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## **Background Information**

The skills covered in this session are critical to successful problem-solving. You and your parents will learn the first two steps of the 10-step problem-solving process: talking about the problem and listening. Listening and repeating back what was said is hard for most people, particularly when they disagree with what was said.

## **Goals**

- To learn and practice talking about a problem by using the Guidelines for Respectful Communication
- To learn and practice how to listen and repeat what you heard by using the Guidelines for Respectful Communication

## **Important Messages**

- To resolve conflicts successfully, you must use respectful communication skills. This involves:
  - Talking about a problem without blaming or criticizing
  - Listening to the other person's feelings and view of a problem

# Guidelines for Respectful Communication

## WHEN YOU ARE SPEAKING:

- **Talk only about the specific behavior of the other person**
- **Talk about what the person said or did that upset you**
- **Describe how you feel**

### DO NOT

- Blame
- Criticize
- Put down
- Bring up the past or other things that bother you (stick to one behavior or problem)
- Talk about the other person's personality, attitude, or motives

## WHEN YOU ARE LISTENING:

- **Listen carefully**
- **Listen for the feelings of the other person**

### DO NOT

- Talk
- Interrupt
- Think about how you are going to respond (this interferes with listening)

## WHEN YOU RESPOND TO THE SPEAKER:

- **Describe what the other person said**
- **Describe what you think the other person was feeling**

### DO NOT

- Correct what the other person said
- Argue about what happened
- Deny the other person's feelings
- Bring up the past or things that the other person does that bother you
- Criticize
- Put down
- Justify your behavior

If you think there is genuine misunderstanding about the behavior or problem, ask if you can take time to explain it. Use the *Guidelines for Respectful Communication* to talk about your own behavior. If there is conflict that cannot be resolved, the next step is to move on to problem-solving together.





## **Background Information**

In this session, you will practice the 10-step process of problem-solving with your parent. Negotiation and compromise are the most important parts of the process. You will use the guidelines that you learned in the previous session to solve a problem.

## **Goals**

- To apply respectful communication skills learned in the previous session to solve a problem
- To learn and practice a 10-step process of problem-solving
- To understand how problem-solving together can improve relationships

## **Important Messages**

- Negotiating a resolution to a problem involves listening to the other person. You don't necessarily have to agree with the other person to listen to them.
- Problem-solving is most successful when both people want to come up with a solution.

# Discussion Questions

1. What are some things that people do that get in the way of problem-solving?

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2. If two people were problem-solving and one of them started to threaten, criticize, or put down the other person, could they continue to work out a solution? Why?

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3. If you were watching two people “working out a problem,” what would they look like?

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4. How would they talk to each other?

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## **Important Tips for Problem-Solving**

- Don't try to solve the problem when either person is angry or upset. Being calm is most important.
- If either person becomes angry or upset during problem-solving, take a time out and try it again when you are both calm.
- Follow the Guidelines for Respectful Communication (see Session 18 for review).
- Both people must be willing to try to solve the problem and have a cooperative attitude. If either person is resistant, stop and try it again later.
- The problem you are working on must be negotiable. It needs to be something that both people are able to compromise on.



# Problem-Solving (Teen Starts the Process)

STEP	HOW TO DO IT	EXAMPLE
1. <b>Describe the problem.</b>	Use “I” messages.  Don’t accuse, blame, or criticize.	<b>Teen:</b> “I don’t like it when you tell me I have to come home before midnight. When I leave early, I feel like I’m missing the best part of the party.”
2. <b>The other person listens and then reflects back what they heard.</b>	Listen quietly without interrupting, and then summarize the other person’s thoughts and feelings without advising, criticizing, or judging.	<b>Parent:</b> “You don’t like it when I tell you to be home by midnight. When you have to leave early, you feel like you are missing the best part of the party.”
3. <b>Ask the other person for their thoughts and feelings about the problem.</b>	Listen quietly without interrupting, asking questions, or commenting.	<b>Teen:</b> “What do you think about the problem?”  <b>Parent:</b> “I get upset when you stay out after midnight because I worry that you won’t get enough sleep or that something bad might happen.”

<b>STEP</b>	<b>HOW TO DO IT</b>	<b>EXAMPLE</b>
4. <b>Reflect back what you hear.</b>	Summarize the other person's thoughts and feelings without advising, criticizing, or judging.	<b>Teen:</b> "You get upset when I stay out after midnight because you worry that I won't get enough sleep or that something bad might happen."
5. <b>Summarize the problem, including both people's needs and feelings.</b>	Avoid judging, criticizing, and blaming.	<b>Teen:</b> "Seems like the problem is that you want me to come home before midnight, and I don't like to leave parties before my friends leave."
6. <b>Invite the other person to problem-solve with you.</b>	Each person comes up with several possible solutions.	<b>Teen:</b> "Let's each try to come up with some ideas to work this out."
7. <b>Take turns listing ideas.</b>	Be respectful of each other's ideas, even if you don't agree with them.	<p><b>Teen:</b> "Well, just don't worry about me."</p> <p><b>Parent:</b> "Come home before midnight."</p> <p><b>Teen:</b> "How about if I call you if I'm going to be late?"</p> <p><b>Parent:</b> "On weeknights, come home by 10. On weekends, you can come home by 1 if you call me and tell me exactly where you are and come home on time."</p>

STEP	HOW TO DO IT	EXAMPLE
8. <b>Take turns commenting on each idea.</b>	Avoid judging or criticizing.	<p><b>Parent:</b> “Until you’re grown, I will keep worrying about you.”</p> <p><b>Teen:</b> “Sometimes I want to hang with my friends and not be at home so early.”</p> <p><b>Parent:</b> “I like it when you call me, but when you call to say you’re staying out all night, it doesn’t solve the problem.”</p> <p><b>Teen:</b> “OK, I can try that. But 10 seems kind of early.”</p>
9. <b>Make a plan for how the solution will work.</b>	Include details and what each person needs to do.	<p><b>Parent:</b> “Let’s try this for a week. You’ll come home by 10 on weeknights and by 1 on the weekends. If it works well, we can stay with it.”</p> <p><b>Teen:</b> “So if I come home on time for a week, you won’t ask me when I’m coming home every time I go out.”</p>
10. <b>Write the plan down and put it someplace where you both can see it every day.</b>		<p><b>Parent:</b> “Let’s write out our agreement and put it on the refrigerator so we both can see it.”</p>

# Problem-Solving

## (Parent Starts the Process)

STEP	HOW TO DO IT	EXAMPLE
<p>1. <b>Describe the problem.</b></p>	<p>Use “I” messages. Don’t accuse, blame, or criticize.</p>	<p><b>Parent:</b> “I feel frustrated when I ask you to do the dishes and 20 minutes later, they aren’t done.”</p>
<p>2. <b>The other person listens and then reflects back what they heard.</b></p>	<p>Listen quietly without interrupting, and then summarize the other person’s thoughts and feelings without advising, criticizing, or judging.</p>	<p><b>Teen:</b> “You feel frustrated when you ask me to do the dishes and 20 minutes later, I haven’t done them.”</p>
<p>3. <b>Ask the other person for their thoughts and feelings about the problem.</b></p>	<p>Listen quietly without interrupting, asking questions, or commenting.</p>	<p><b>Parent:</b> “What do you think about the problem?”  <b>Teen:</b> “It seems you always ask me to do the dishes when I’m in the middle of something, like a good TV show or a video game.”</p>

STEP	HOW TO DO IT	EXAMPLE
4. <b>Reflect back what you hear.</b>	Summarize the other person's thoughts and feelings without advising, criticizing, or judging.	<b>Parent:</b> "You don't like being interrupted, and you'd like to finish your TV show or video game before you do the dishes."
5. <b>Summarize the problem, including both people's needs and feelings.</b>	Avoid judging, criticizing, and blaming.	<b>Parent:</b> "Seems like the problem is that I need you to do the dishes and you don't like being interrupted to do them."
6. <b>Invite the other person to problem-solve with you.</b>	Each person comes up with several possible solutions.	<b>Parent:</b> "Let's try to work this out."
7. <b>Take turns listing ideas.</b>	Be respectful of each other's ideas, even if you don't agree with them.	<p><b>Teen:</b> "I'll do the dishes when I'm done watching TV."</p> <p><b>Parent:</b> "When I ask you to do the dishes, give me a time that you'll do them."</p> <p><b>Teen:</b> "Let's eat off paper plates."</p> <p><b>Parent:</b> "Let's set up a time every day when you'll do the dishes."</p>

STEP	HOW TO DO IT	EXAMPLE
<p>8. <b>Take turns commenting on each idea.</b></p>	<p>Avoid judging or criticizing.</p>	<p><b>Parent:</b> “I need to know more specifically when the dishes will get done.”</p> <p><b>Parent:</b> “Paper plates are too expensive, and I prefer real plates.”</p> <p><b>Teen:</b> “It depends on when my favorite shows are on. Some nights, I’ll have them done by 6 o’clock and other nights by seven.”</p> <p><b>Parent:</b> “I like your idea that you’ll let me know each night what time the dishes will be done.”</p> <p><b>Teen:</b> “All right, I can do that.”</p>
<p>9. <b>Make a plan for how the solution will work.</b></p>	<p>Include details and what each person needs to do.</p>	<p><b>Parent:</b> “I’d like you to make a schedule each week, because I don’t want to have to ask you every night when you’ll do the dishes.”</p> <p><b>Teen:</b> “I’ll get the TV guide and write down the time for each night.”</p>
<p>10. <b>Write the plan down and put it someplace where you both can see it every day.</b></p>		<p><b>Parent:</b> “Let’s put your schedule up in the kitchen where we both can see it.”</p>



## Background Information

During this session, we will acknowledge the positive changes teens have made over the course of the program. You will read and answer some questions, Changes I Have Made, that invite reflection about the behavioral changes you have made and how you were able to make those changes toward more respectful family relationships. You will also discuss goals you can continue to work on after you leave the group. Parents will also answer questions, Changes My Teen Has Made, about how their teen has changed over the course of Step-Up. This session is also an opportunity for teens to give each other positive messages.

## Goals

- For teens to read their Responsibility Letter and Empathy Letter to their parents/family members in the group
- For teens to identify how they have changed their behavior
- For parents to identify how their teens have made positive changes and how their relationships have improved
- For teens to recognize how their behavior changes have affected their relationships with their parents
- For teens and parents to identify how they can continue working on having positive and respectful relationships

## Important Messages

- Changes in behavior can have a positive impact on other people.
- Learning how to change is empowering.
- Both teens and parents have worked hard to learn how to have mutually respectful relationships.
- You can continue to work together to have positive and healthy relationships with each other.



**WORKSHEET**

# Changes My Teen Has Made

1. How has your relationship with your teen changed since you started the program?

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2. Rate your relationship on a scale from 1 to 10.

	<b>WORST</b>										<b>BEST</b>
<b><i>Beginning of Program</i></b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

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	<b>WORST</b>										<b>BEST</b>
<b><i>Now</i></b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

3. What has your teen changed in their behavior to contribute to the improvement?

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4. How have you changed to contribute to the improvement in the relationship?

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5. If you and your teen hadn't made these changes, what would your relationship be like today?

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6. What behavior does your teen need to continue working on?

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7. What do you need to continue working on to support your teen's positive behavior?

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8. What strengths does your teen have that will help them have positive relationships with family members and others?

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## Background Information

This session helps parents understand how listening can strengthen their relationships with their teens. Parents who have experienced abuse by their teens understandably have a difficult time listening to them. The time for listening is not when teens are being abusive. We will discuss times that are appropriate for listening and times when it is best to disengage from conversations.

Parents sometimes feel that if they listen to their teen and acknowledge the teen's feelings, they are agreeing with what the teen is saying. But you can listen and acknowledge another person's feelings and experience without necessarily agreeing with them. This is difficult for parents to do, but can be helpful to the relationship. When teens feel listened to and acknowledged, they tend to be more open and honest, and more willing to listen to other people's ideas. Parents often say that when they started really listening to their teen and acknowledging their feelings, the relationship improved.

### Goals

- To understand what listening is and is not
- To learn how to listen and acknowledge feelings
- To understand how listening and acknowledging feelings strengthens relationships
- To practice the skills of listening for feelings and acknowledging them

### Important Messages

- Listening to your teen doesn't mean you agree with what they are saying.
- Listening builds trust with your teen.
- Listening gives you important information about your teen's emotional life.
- When teens feel listened to, they feel less defensive and resistant.
- When teens feel listened to, they usually will share more with their parents.
- Listening and acknowledging feelings is not easy; it takes practice.

# Group Activities

## Discussion:

### What Is Not Listening?

In this session, we will learn about listening to our teens. Listening seems like a pretty simple and basic thing we do every day. However, most of us don't truly listen to others very often. We start to listen, and then launch into thinking about what we are going to say back to the person. To define what true listening is, we will start by talking about what is not listening.

Many of us have the tendency to do everything except listen, including telling our own experiences, offering advice, denying the other person's feelings, and telling the person why they feel how they feel. There is nothing wrong with any of these responses, but they aren't the same as listening.

#### **Here are some examples of ways we don't listen.**

You say to your friend, "My boss is a jerk. Yesterday, he gave me an assignment at 4 p.m. and expected me to have it done by 5, when he knows it takes a whole day to do it. I had to stay late to finish it, and I missed the last bus home. When I came in to work this morning, he didn't even say anything to me."

Pretend you are the person in the scenario. We'll imagine that the following are several different responses we receive from a friend. After you read each response, think about how it would feel to hear that response. We'll write our the feelings on the board.

**YOUR FRIEND RESPONDS BY SAYING:**

**Telling our own experience:** “Yeah, my boss is a real pain, too. I was on the phone with my wife yesterday because my son got in trouble in school. Then my boss comes in and says the next time he sees me on the phone, he’s going to take the time out of my paycheck.”

**Giving advice:** “Just try to forget it. It’s only a job; it’s not your whole life.”

**Denying the other person’s feelings:** “What are you complaining for, anyway? You should be happy. At least you have a job. Do you know how many people are unemployed in this country right now?”

**Trying to psychoanalyze:** “You know, you really seem to have problems with authority figures. Maybe you should look at that.”

**Changing the subject:** “Really? So, what do you want to have for dinner?”

**Asking questions:** “Why didn’t you just tell him it wouldn’t be enough time? How many hours’ worth of work was it, anyway?”

**Defending the other person:** “He was probably under a time crunch, too, you know. And he probably didn’t think of saying anything to you this morning because he has so much work to do.”

**Pitying:** “Oh, you poor thing. That must have been terrible.”

**Listening:** “That sounds pretty frustrating.”



Listening is hearing the person's experience or feelings and simply acknowledging them. There are times when we just want another person to listen to us and hear our feelings without telling us what to do or asking us questions.

As parents, it is very difficult to do this with our children. We want to tell them what to do, ask a lot of questions, or tell them why they feel that way. We want to change the way they feel, fix the problem for them, or help them learn a lesson from it. Sometimes, these responses can be helpful and appropriate. Other times, these responses result in teens getting defensive or argumentative and closing the door to sharing more about the problem or figuring out how to deal with it.

We are going to learn how to listen and respond in ways that encourage your teen to continue talking about their feelings and moving toward problem-solving.

There are times to listen to your child, and there are times when it is not helpful to listen. When your teen is being abusive or disrespectful, listening engages them further (see *How to Respond When Your Teen Becomes Violent or Abusive* in Session 4).

When your teen is going on and on trying to convince you of something and attempting to keep you engaged to change your mind, listening encourages the behavior. You can listen and respond at the beginning of the conversation, but there is a point when you need to let your teen know you are finished listening (see *Tips to Help Disengage from a Power Struggle with Your Teen* in Session 7).

The listening and responding skills you will learn in this session should be used when your teen is talking with you in a respectful way.

# How to Listen

## HOW TO LISTEN:

- **Don't interrupt.**
- **Look at the person who is talking.**
- **Give them your full attention, if possible.**
- **Answer in a way that lets them know you are listening.**
- **Don't express an opinion or say that the other person is right or wrong.**
- **Let the person know you heard their point of view.**
- **Try to hear what the person is saying, even if you don't agree. Being a good listener takes effort and practice.**

## HOW TO NOT LISTEN:

- Don't look at the person speaking.
- Interrupt them.
- Give advice.
- Tell the person they are wrong.
- Tell the person not to feel what they are feeling.
- Change the subject.

# Acknowledging Feelings

One way to let your teen know you are really listening is to pay attention to the feeling they are expressing and let them know you hear it. You can acknowledge feelings by saying things like: “You seem really disappointed,” “You were really excited about that concert,” “You really like that music,” “You feel really let down.” This lets them know you are listening. It also lets them know that you accept how they feel. You can accept someone’s feelings without necessarily agreeing with them. You are just letting your teen know you hear how they feel without giving any judgment or opinion about it.

When you acknowledge and accept your teen’s feelings about something, it does not mean you will change rules or consequences. You can stand your ground, remain firm, and communicate that you understand how they feel. For example: “You must be really disappointed, but our agreement was broken, and this is the consequence we discussed. I know you were really looking forward to that concert.”

Showing your teen that you understand how they feel and that it is okay to have those feelings can help them feel less defensive and resistant. A lot of the struggle between parents and teens is about the teen trying to defend how they feel and what they want, while parents try to tell the teen how they should feel and what they should want.

Acknowledging your teen’s feelings isn’t going to end all of the conflict, but when your teen feels you are listening and trying to understand, it can help them calm down and want to talk about it.

In groups or pairs, read the scenarios and notice the difference in how the teens respond in each.

## Scenario #1-A: Not Acknowledging Feelings

**Teen:** “Mom, I can’t take it anymore! Casey keeps barging into my room and taking my CDs. I’m going to barge into her room and steal her stuff!”

**Mom:** “Don’t you dare! That won’t solve anything. Why don’t you just put your CDs away someplace. The way you leave everything lying around all over your room, you’re just asking to lose things. Are you sure she took it? It’s probably under all the heaps of clothes on your floor.”

**Teen:** “My room is a mess? Casey’s is worse. I can’t believe you’re siding with her about this! She steals things from me and you try to say it’s my fault? I can’t believe this!” (He storms off to his room and slams the door.)

## Scenario #1-B: Acknowledging Feelings

**Teen:** “Mom, I can’t take it anymore! Casey keeps barging into my room and taking my CDs. I’m going to barge into her room and steal her stuff!”

**Mom:** “You must be mad about that. I wouldn’t like it if someone came into my room and took things.”

**Teen:** “Yeah, it pisses me off. She could at least ask. I would probably say yes, but she just takes them.”

**Mom:** “Hmmm.”

**Teen:** “I’m gonna hide them so she won’t know where they are. Then she’ll have to ask if she wants to use one.”

**Mom:** “Good idea.”

## Scenario #2-A: Not Listening and Acknowledging Feelings

**Teen:** “Mom, I really want that jacket.”

**Mom:** “Anne, there is no way on heaven or earth that I am going to spend that kind of money on a jacket. When I was your age, I was happy to have a jacket that was a quarter of that price.”

**Teen:** “Mom, it’s not that much money for a jacket. You should see what some jackets cost these days. This one’s a pretty good deal.”

**Mom:** “Eighty dollars is a good deal? I can’t believe you’re even saying that. Do you have any idea what \$80 would buy for a family in need? It would buy a whole wardrobe for a family in some parts of the world. You kids have no concept of the value of money. You just want, want, want.”

**Teen:** “All I’m asking for is one good jacket. It’s expensive, but it’s really well made and will last me a long time.”

**Mom:** “Sure, until you see the next one you want and just have to have. It was the same story with the shoes that you just had to have. I spent a fortune on them, and the next thing I knew, you wanted another pair. It just doesn’t end.”

**Teen:** “God, Mom, you are so mean! Just forget it! I don’t care about the stupid jacket! I’ll wear the same piece-of-crap, worn-out thing I always wear!”  
(Anne runs to the car, gets in, and slams the door.)

## **Scenario #2-B: Listening and Acknowledging Feelings**

**Teen:** “Mom, I really want that jacket.”

**Mom:** “You really like that jacket. It’s a nice one.”

**Teen:** “Yeah, I love it. It looks so great on me. Can I get it?”

**Mom:** “It looks really good on you. I can see why you want it. I can’t spend that much money on a jacket, though. It’s not in our budget.”

**Teen:** “What do you mean it’s not in our budget? We have enough money for it.”

**Mom:** “You really, really want that jacket. It’s a nice jacket. But I can’t afford it. I am willing to pay for half of it if you can pay for the other half.”

**Teen:** “I don’t have that much money, Mom. You should just get it for me.”

**Mom:** “I’m willing to pay for half.”

**Teen:** “How about if you pay for it all today and I’ll pay you back.”

**Mom:** “Anne, I know it’s hard to wait for something you really, really want. But I’m only willing to pay for half. If you have the patience to save your half of the money, we’ll buy it later.”

**Teen:** “It’ll take me forever to get that much money.”

**Mom:** “I know it seems like a lot of money to come up with – it is a lot of money. But if you really want that jacket, I bet you can figure out a way to pay for your half. There’s always babysitting and doing extra chores. I’m happy to help you make a plan for how to make the money in the next two weeks.”

**Teen:** “All right.”

### **Scenario #3-A: Not Listening and Acknowledging Feelings**

**Teen:** “Mom, why can’t I stay out until 3 a.m.? All my friends do.”

**Mom:** “3 a.m.? I can’t believe their parents let them stay out that late.”

**Teen:** “Everyone stays out that late – 3 is not that late for a 15-year-old.”

**Mom:** “It’s the middle of the night! You would only end up in trouble being out during those hours of the night. I’d end up having to bail you out of jail.”

**Teen:** “Right, Mom, all my friends who stay out till 3 end up in jail.”

**Mom:** “Rick sure did.”

**Teen:** “That had nothing to do with being out until 3 in the morning. God, Mom, you don’t have a clue.”

**Mom:** “I do know that I’m not letting you stay out until the middle of the night. And I know that the friends you have who are out during those hours are bad news. I’m not arguing about it anymore.”

**Teen:** “I’m out of here.” (Walks out, slamming the door behind him.)

### **Scenario #3-B: Listening and Acknowledging Feelings**

**Teen:** “Mom, why can’t I stay out until 3 a.m.? All my friends do.”

**Mom:** “I can imagine that it must be hard to have to come home earlier than your friends do.”

**Teen:** “It’s embarrassing. No one else has to be home by 1.”

**Mom:** “I remember hating it when I had to be home earlier than the other kids when I was your age. It seemed like I always had to be home the earliest.”

**Teen:** “Yeah, so why don’t you let me stay out later since you know how it feels?”

**Mom:** “I know you would really like to be able to stay out until 3, and I know it’s hard to have to come home earlier than everyone else. But I’m not comfortable with you being out past 1 a.m. for now. When you’re 16, we’ll consider a later curfew.”

**Teen:** “1 a.m. is so early. A lot of concerts don’t get out until 1. I’d have to leave the concert early to make it home on time. If I ride with people, they have to leave early, too.”

**Mom:** “Well, I can see how that would be a problem. It makes sense to let you stay out until a concert ends. I’m willing to let you stay out past 1 when it’s an event that ends at a particular time and you come straight home after. I just don’t want you out past 1 when you’re just hanging around with your friends. I can make exceptions for some events. Does that sound fair?”

**Teen:** “I think I should be able to stay out until 3 all the time.”

**Mom:** “We’ve discussed what the rule is for now.”

## Tips for Acknowledging Feelings

- Listen for the feeling you hear.
- Let the person know you hear them. Say, “It seems like you feel \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Don’t say anything else. Allow some time for the person to respond.
- Don’t tell the person what to do, how to feel better, or why the person feels the way they do.
- After the person has had time to respond, you can let them know you understand by saying things like:
  - “That sounds frustrating” (or hard, or whatever is appropriate to the feeling).
  - “Sometimes I feel that way, too.”
  - “I understand.”
  - “I’m here for you if you want to talk about it now or later.”

# Take-Home Activity

During the following week, take time to listen to your teen and acknowledge their feelings. In the space below, write down what you said and how your teen responded.

**I said:**

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## Background Information

Most parents who have been dealing with difficult behaviors in their children for a period of time have tried many things to get their children to change. They have often been given all kinds of advice by friends and family. They usually feel like they have tried everything. During this session, parents will look at how they have tried to make their teens change their behavior, how those methods have been working, and how it has affected their relationships with their teens.

This exercise is not intended to be judgmental about parenting methods. Many parents have probably been using appropriate strategies; the strategies are just not working. It is easy for parents to keep doing the same thing over and over because they don't know what else to do.

## Goals

- To recognize that personal change is a choice for yourself and your teen
- To identify how your behavior can influence your teen's behavior
- To identify behaviors you can change that will influence your teen's behavior

## Important Messages

- You don't have control over another person's behavior.
- The most effective way to influence another person's behavior is with your own behavior.
- When you try to make another person change, especially a teen, it can have the opposite effect because the more you try, the more they resist.
- It can be helpful to look at how you have been trying to get your teen to change and ask: Is it working?
- One way to help a person change a behavior is by changing how you respond to the behavior.
- Changing behavior is easier said than done. It takes planning and practice.

# What Happens When We Try to Make Our Teens Change?

1. What are two things you really like or appreciate about your teen?

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2. What are two things you would like to see them change?

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3. What are some ways that you've tried to make them change?  
*(Example: I grounded him for a month.)*

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4. Do these ways work for you?

Yes

No

Sometimes

5. How do your efforts to make your teen change affect your relationship with them?

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## Goal Planning

**Think of some things you would like to do or change** that might help your relationship with your teen. List some ideas below.

*(Examples: Take a time-out when a conflict starts to escalate; spend some positive, relaxing time with my son each week.)*

**Pick one behavior** from your list and write it below. Be specific. State your goal in a positive, present-tense form.

*(Example: When my son starts to be verbally abusive with me, I will separate from him.)*

**Break your goal into steps.** These steps should be specific.

*For example:*

- I will tell her about my plan to separate from her when she is abusive.*
- When she starts to say something abusive to me, I will say, "I am going to separate from you. I will talk with you about it when you are calm and not putting me down."*
- I will go to another room and do something relaxing.*
- I will tell myself something that will help me feel calmer, such as, "It is her responsibility to change her behavior. I am only responsible for how I behave. I can stay calm."*

# Steps for Achieving My Goal

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## Background Information

An important part of helping teens change abusive behaviors is to provide encouragement and support when the teens are using non-abusive and respectful behaviors. Check-in on the *Respect Wheel* is as important as check-in on the *Abuse/Disrespect Wheel*. Teens need to hear about it when they are behaving positively and how it is appreciated by family members. Teens also need encouragement about who they are as people, separate from their behavior. During this session, parents will learn how to provide encouragement and positive messages that help teens have confidence and improved self-esteem.

When there has been ongoing abuse by a teen, it can understandably be difficult for the parent to feel like being encouraging or positive with the teen. Some parents feel like they are rewarding the negative behavior if they provide any kind of encouragement. The relationship can deteriorate into constant negative interactions, and the parent can lose sight of positive qualities about the teen. Both the parent and teen lose hope that the teen can change or the relationship can improve. If the parent can find things about the teen to support and encourage, it can improve their relationship and the teen's sense of confidence that they can behave cooperatively and respectfully.

## Goals

- Understand how self-esteem is an important part of a teen's development
- Learn ways to help a teen develop self-esteem and confidence
- Learn how to express encouragement
- Identify positive qualities and strengths in a teen



## Important Messages

- The way you communicate with your teen influences their self-esteem and confidence.
- All teens should be encouraged for who they are as people, regardless of behavior.
- You can help your teen make behavior changes by paying attention to their efforts and giving encouragement.
- It is important to separate encouragement of behavior and encouragement of the person.

## Group Activities

### Self-Esteem

- Where do we get our sense of self-esteem?
- How do we develop positive self-esteem? What gives us a positive view of ourselves?
- Who contributed to your self-esteem when you were growing up? How?
- What experiences contributed to your sense of self-esteem?
- Who and what contributed to lowering your self-esteem when you were growing up?

## **Self-Esteem and Teens**

Developmentally, adolescence can be a time of feeling insecure. During the early teen years, at about age 12 or 13, teens become more conscious of themselves than ever before. They become very critical of themselves, comparing themselves to others – especially peers – and have exaggerated ideas about what they perceive as shortcomings. They feel too short, too fat, too tall, too ugly, stupid, dumb, or not cool. They get embarrassed very easily and are sure the whole world is watching them.

Adolescents will often try to cover up these feelings by acting “really cool,” being overly critical of others (especially parents and siblings), and reacting with defense and anger to any words they perceive as critical. A comment that isn’t meant to be critical is often interpreted that way, because of their extreme sensitivity to criticism.

Adolescence is a time of changing into an adult and entering the world as a person separate from the family. This changing from a child to an independent adult is uncertain and naturally brings up feelings of insecurity and fear. Most teens aren’t aware of these specific feelings. They experience them as other kinds of feelings, such as worry, panic, pressure, feeling unable to meet expectations, and sometimes wanting to just “give up.”

They also have positive feelings about growing up and becoming independent. These feelings include excitement, energy, wanting to explore, wanting to take risks, and feeling that they are knowledgeable, with strong opinions and passions about what is right, wrong, fair, etc. They feel a strong desire to have freedom and independence, and believe they are ready for it.

All of these feelings, positive and negative, can be exaggerated and can change from one minute to the next. As parents wanting to build self-esteem in your teens, there are ways you can support the positive feelings and encourage a more realistic perspective.

# Helping Your Teen Develop Positive Self-Esteem and Confidence

The title of this list could also be *Ways to Build a Positive Relationship with Your Teen*, because if you do the things on this list, you will see an improvement in their overall relationships with their teen.

It can be difficult to do the things on this list when a teen has been using abusive behaviors with a parent. Some of these things (for example, listening and problem-solving) should not be done when the teen is being abusive. Instead, a parent should use the skills discussed in Session 4: *How to Respond When Your Teen Is Violent or Abusive*. The parent should use the methods listed in *Helping Your Teen Develop Positive Self-Esteem and Confidence* when the teen is in a non-combative state of mind.

1. **Encourage your teen.**

Notice your teen's positive qualities and let them know that you appreciate them. These qualities include behaviors you like and things you enjoy about their personality.

2. **Listen to your teen.**

Listen without giving your opinion, giving advice, or making judgments. Don't talk other than to acknowledge that you hear them and are interested. Listen with a desire to understand your teen's world and perspective.

3. **Be affectionate.**

Hug, pat, and smile. If your teen doesn't like to be physical, you can show affection in many other ways. Use words to express love and affection. Humor sometimes works better than serious words with teenagers.

4. **Spend time with your teen.**

A lot of parents stop trying to spend time with their teens because of the belief that teens don't want to be with their parents. While teens do want to spend more time with friends, they still enjoy time with parents (although they might not admit it) when it is relaxed, positive time without criticism, lectures, advice, and questions.

EXTRA SESSION: **ENCOURAGING YOUR TEEN**

Find time to do things with your teen that they enjoy, invite them to join in on some of your activities, or just hang out and do nothing together (you don't even have to talk very much). Take 10 minutes each day to just be in the vicinity of your teen and chat about little things (the cat, his new shoes, movies; not homework or chores). The idea is to have a positive connection on a regular basis that has nothing to do with problems or behavior. This is a way to give your teen the message that "I like you, you are important to me, and I enjoy you."

5. **Show respect for your teen's ideas and opinions.**

Even when you don't agree with your teen, you can let them know that you have a different opinion and that you respect their opinion. This respect gives teens a sense of independence and that they can think on their own. When your teen expresses an opinion that is completely contrary to one they shared the day before, resist the temptation to point this out. A normal process of self-development for teens is to try on many different ways of thinking. Adolescents are like chameleons as they change opinions and ideas, sometimes many times in a day.

6. **Involve your teen in establishing rules and consequences.**

An important task of adolescence is to become more independent and to develop skills in making decisions. This also means teens don't like being told what to do. The most effective way to establish rules and consequences is to include teens in making them. This gives teens the message that they are mature enough to be involved with setting rules and are responsible for making decisions about their behavior.

7. **Problem-solve with your teen.**

Take time to sit down and use the problem-solving steps (see Session 19) when there is a problem. Listen to your teen's view of the problem and involve your teen in coming up with solutions.

8. **Communicate respectfully.**

Share your feelings, expectations, and needs with your teen in a way that is respectful. Take a time-out and separate from your teen when either of you becomes disrespectful. This gives a clear message that you will not be disrespectful and you will not be with your teen when they are disrespectful.

**9. Allow your teen to solve some of their own problems.**

Avoid rescuing your teen from problems that they are capable of dealing with. It is surprising what a teen is capable of when the parent doesn't get involved. If you have the attitude that "he can handle this" or "she can figure this out," your teen will know this and feel confident.

**10. Encourage special interests.**

Support your teen in developing interests and hobbies, such as sports, art, music, or mountain climbing. Encourage their involvement in groups, clubs, community activities, and other extracurricular activities.

**11. Let your teen know they are capable.**

Tell your teen that you have confidence in them. Say, "You can figure that out," or, "You're really smart about things like that," or, "That's a tough situation. I think you can handle it, but if you want some help, let me know."

**12. Let your teen know they are worthy of love just for who they are, not related to their behavior.**

Give your teen spontaneous words of love that are not related to their behavior. Tell your teen you love them, enjoy them, like them, missed them today, are glad to see them, or enjoy laughing with them.

**13. When there is a problem-causing behavior, focus on the behavior, not the person.**

Talk about the specific behavior that is causing a problem. Focus on the facts of the situation, how it is a problem, and the behavior you would like to see. Use as few words as possible. Use the *Guidelines for Respectful Communication* in Session 18.

**Always Avoid**

- Criticism
- Comparing
- Negative forecasts  
(For example, "You'll never make it to college," or, "You'll never get a job," or, "You'll end up on the streets.")
- Put-downs
- Humiliating
- Name-calling
- Making fun of them

# Encouraging Your Teen

There are two kinds of encouragement:

- Encouragement for behavior
- Encouragement of the person

**Encouragement for behavior** is giving your child positive feedback about behaviors you like to see. It is easy to get in the habit of only giving negative feedback about behaviors you don't like. Giving a positive response to the behaviors you appreciate is much more effective in helping your teen change.

Here are some ways you can encourage positive change in your teen's behavior.

- **Notice your teen's effort.**

Pay attention when your teen is trying to do better. Notice the small steps and talk about it. For example, if the teen stopped yelling and tried to calm down sooner than they usually do, tell them you noticed. Let your teen know when you see any small improvements in behavior.

- **Talk about the specific behavior you are encouraging in your teen.**

Avoid general expressions like, "You were good today." Instead, say, "You haven't yelled or said any swear words all day," or "You didn't let your little brother get to you. You stayed calm and left the room when he was pestering you."

- **Help your teen recognize and express their own feelings of accomplishment.**

Acknowledge when your teen feels pleased or proud of something they did. For example, say, "It must feel good to have made it through the day without a single fight," or, "You must feel good about making it to school every day this week."

- **Recognize your teen's efforts and improvements during the group at Check-In.**

Talk about any improvements in behavior, no matter how small. Try to find something on the Respect Wheel to talk about, or think of something positive to say about your teen every week.

**Encouragement of the person is:**

- Giving your child positive messages about who they are as a person, separate from their behavior.
- Communicating love, appreciation, humor, and that you care about your child. It is a smile, a pat, a hug, or doing something you both enjoy together.
- Letting your child know what you like about their personality.
- Not contingent on the teen's behavior or about their behavior.

Teens should be given encouragement as people on a regular basis, regardless of their behavior.

Find times when your teen is not being abusive or difficult to give encouragement of them as a person. Some parents withdraw this kind of communication as a punishment for their teen's behavior. This does not help teens change and can actually escalate their negative behavior. Receiving love and encouragement as people is a basic human need of all children. When encouragement is taken away, kids often act out more. They feel more justified in using negative behaviors when they feel no sense of encouragement as people.

Even if your teen is difficult to live with 90% of the time, find a moment in the other 10% when you can encourage them as a person.

# Take-Home Activity

## A. Encouraging My Teen

During the next week, pay attention to your teen and notice the following things.

1. One quality I like about my teen is:

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2. One of my teen's strengths is:

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3. A behavior I appreciate in my teen is:

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## B. Helping My Teen Develop Self-Esteem and Confidence

Choose one thing from the list from the *Helping Your Teen Develop Self-Esteem and Confidence* worksheet to do with your teen this week. Write it in the space below. During the group next week, you can describe how it went.

This week, I will:

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**Extra Session:**

**Supporting  
Positive  
Changes in  
Your Teen**

**Parent Session**

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## Background Information

In this final parent session, you will think about how your relationship with your teen has improved since the beginning of the program and how you have contributed to those positive changes.

Parents often don't realize how significant changes in the relationships are until they look back at how things were when they began the program. It is encouraging to recognize positive changes, no matter how small.

Parents will examine how they have contributed to the positive changes in their teens and in their relationships with their teens. The progress teens make in the Step-Up program is a combination of effort on the part of the teens and the parents. During this session, we hope you will feel encouraged by the progress you and your teens have made and realize your part in that progress.

### Goals

- To talk about positive changes in your relationship with your teen
- To recognize how you have contributed to positive changes in your relationship with your teen
- To talk about what you have learned in the program
- To identify what you need to continue working on in your relationship with your teen
- To say goodbye to other parents in the group by sharing positive messages

You will also think about their challenges and identify what you need to continue working on in your relationship with their teen. In this process, you'll have the opportunity to review the skills you have learned over the course of the parent group. You will make a step-by-step plan for working on a challenging behavior, much like the goal-planning exercise you did in Session 3. This will give you a plan for continuing what you have learned in the program after you leave.

Finally, we want parents to leave with support and encouragement from other parents in the group. You have been working together for 20 weeks and have come to know and rely on each other for understanding and support.

Some parents may choose to exchange phone numbers so you can continue communication, but there is no pressure to exchange phone numbers if you don't want to.

## Important Messages

- You have worked hard to improve your relationship with your teen.
- You have helped each other with the challenges of parenting your teens.
- You can get support from others when you are struggling – **you are not alone.**

## Group Activities

This is the last parent session. Next week, teens and parents will all meet together for the final session, and the teens will talk about what they have learned in the program, how they have changed their behavior, and what they need to continue working on.

During this session, you will have the opportunity to think and talk about positive changes in your relationship with your teen, what you have learned in the program, and what you want to continue working on to support your teen's positive behavior.

## **Positive Changes**

1. How has your relationship with your teen changed since you started the program?

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2. What have you done that has contributed to the change?

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3. What changes has your teen made?

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4. What do you need to keep working on in your relationship with your teen?

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5. What have you learned in the program?

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6. What have you learned about yourself?

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# Supporting Positive Changes in My Teen

1. List some ways you can support the positive changes your teen has made.

2. Choose one behavior that is the most difficult for you to do and write it below. Be specific. State your behavior in a positive, present-tense form. *(Example: When my son is harassing me to try to get me to change my mind about something, I will stay calm and disengage from arguing.)*

3. Break your behavior into steps. These steps should be specific.

*For example:*

- *When Tim starts arguing after I have said no, I will calmly tell him why and then stop talking about it.*
- *I will think self-calming thoughts, such as, "I am calm. I don't need to argue."*
- *I will tell him I am finished talking about it and will separate from him.*
- *If he handles it well (without getting abusive), I will give him positive encouragement.*

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TEEN COMPONENTS

**Extra Sessions Appendix:**

**My Family Relationships**

**Teen Session Materials**



**TEEN COMPONENTS****Background Information**

During this session, teens will think about their relationships with family members and to examine what they can do to improve their relationships. This is the first teen group session, and many teen group members may still feel uncomfortable talking about themselves. This session is more about teens' families than themselves and can indirectly lead teens to talk about themselves.

The *My Family Relationships* exercise gives teens a chance to think about positive qualities and strengths of people in their families. It also provides an opportunity for group members to get to know each other and to learn about each other's families. It can be very beneficial to learn that other families also have conflict.

**Goals**

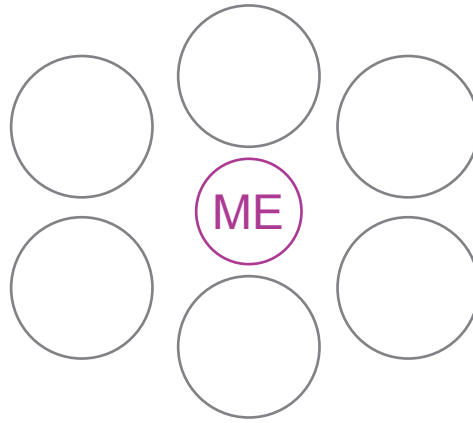
- To identify the strengths of each family
- To learn about the families of the other participants and see that all have conflict
- To identify behaviors that strengthen family relationships and behaviors that destroy family relationships
- To identify ways group participants can impact family relationships in a positive way
- To build relationships among members of the group

**Important Messages**

- Every family has strengths and every individual has positive qualities.
- Conflict is a normal part of family life and can strengthen family relationships.
- Violence and abuse destroy family relationships.

**TEEN COMPONENTS****My Family Relationships**

Write the names of each of your immediate family members in the circles. You can include any other family members you are close to and see regularly. Add circles if there are not enough.



1. Draw a circle around the family member you feel closest to. What does this person do that helps you feel close to them?  

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2. Draw a square around the family member you have the most conflict with. What is the conflict usually about?  

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3. Draw a triangle around the family member you admire the most. What does this person do that you admire?  

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4. Draw a diamond around the family member you respect the most. What does this person do that earns your respect?  

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5. Think of one thing that you can change about your behavior that will help you have a better relationship with people in your family.  

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**Take-Home Activity**

Try making behavior changes (the changes they wrote about in the *My Family Relationships* exercise) during the next week. Notice how the behavior changes affect your relationships. You will report back on this during Check-In next week.



**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**Goals**

- To help you engage with the part of yourself where you feel positive, capable, wise, and good about yourself.
- To learn that this is your ‘true self’, or what we call your ‘Core Self’
- To realize that this is the part of you that makes wise decisions, holds compassion for others, helps you succeed, and is where your personal strengths come from.
- To ‘Explore your Core’, by identifying your positive personal qualities, strengths, values, positive thoughts, beliefs and feelings.
- To take a look at your behaviors that match your ‘core self’, and what behaviors don’t match.
- To understand that when you are doing behaviors that don’t match, you are disconnected from your ‘Core Self’
- To learn ways to engage your ‘Core Self’
- To recognize what disconnects you from your Core Self, how to know you are cut off from it, and how to ‘shift’ back and reconnect with your core self.

**Important Messages**

- You all have a part of yourself that is wise, capable and contains your unique qualities and strengths – your true self, or ‘Core Self’.
- When you are engaged with your Core Self, you are able to make wise decisions, respond to stress and problems better, and respect yourself and others.
- There are ways you can engage your ‘Core Self’ to help you operate from the most capable and wise part of you.
- Some of your behaviors match your core self, and others do not. Learning about these, helps you recognize when you are disconnected from the best part of yourself.
- Staying in touch with the parts of yourself that are healthier can help diminish the unhealthy parts.

## TEEN COMPONENTS

## Discussion Questions

1. What other kinds of things help people engage with their core selves?  
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2. One way to access your 'Core Self' is to think about things you do that help you feel good about yourself. What kinds of things help people feel good about themselves?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. There are certain things that take us out of our Core Self, such as stress, anxiety, anger, or hardships. Can you think of other things that might take someone out of their 'Core Self'?  
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## Explore Your Core Preparation Questions

Answer the following questions to help you prepare for the *Explore Your Core* exercise.

My personal qualities  
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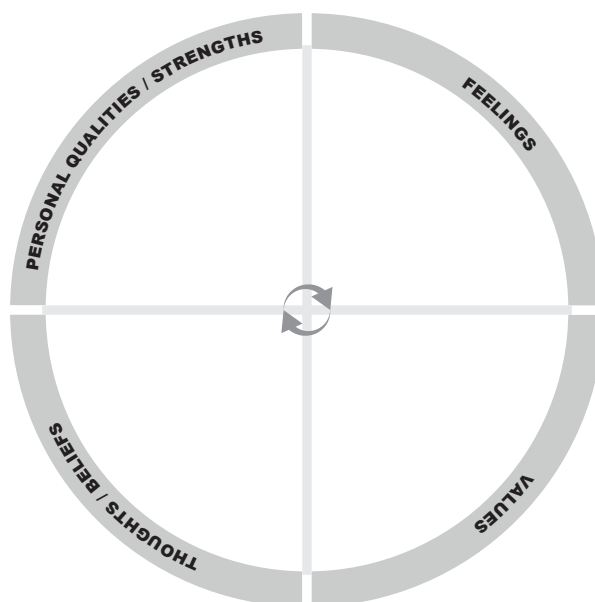
My personal strengths  
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My values (what is important to me?)  
\_\_\_\_\_

What inspires me? What makes me feel happy? What do I love to do?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What makes me feel good about myself as a person? When do I feel a sense of pride in myself?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Explore Your Core



**TEEN COMPONENTS**

**‘Me, Not Me’**

Write down behaviors you do that match your ‘Core Self’.

Write down behaviors that do not match your ‘Core Self’.

And write down behaviors that you want to do more that match your ‘Core-Self’.

**Engaging My ‘Core Self’**

Things that sometimes cause me to disconnect from my ‘Core Self’ are:

Things that help me connect to my ‘Core Self’ are:

How do you know when you are disconnected with your Core Self?

*What are signs that you are out of your ‘Core Self’, such as behaviors or thoughts that don’t ‘match’ with the values, beliefs and strengths you wrote in your ‘Core Self’ circle?*

*Write down three things you can do when you figure out you are disconnected with your ‘Core Self’, to help you shift back to your ‘Core Self’.*

1.

2.

3.



## **Background Information**

We rarely make changes overnight. Often, a long period of time passes between when we first decide to change and when the change is complete. Understanding what steps we take to make change can help motivate us to move to the next step in making real change in our lives. This session will help you understand the stages of change and what you have to do to get to the next step.

## **Goals**

- To identify the stages of change
- For each teen to know their current stage
- To understand how the stages of change apply to different personal issues

## **Important Messages**

- Personal change takes place in stages or steps.
- You do not have to change all at once to be successful.
- Small steps are important to making important changes.



# Discussion Questions

If we look at positive changes we have made in our lives, we can divide them into two categories:

## Category 1

Someone tells us we have to change, and if we don't, something bad is going to happen. Your parents say you have to come home by 10 p.m. or you'll be grounded for a week. Your teacher says you have to complete your writing assignment by tomorrow or you will fail the class. A judge says you have to go to counseling or you will go to detention. In these cases, we change in order to avoid the bad thing that could happen if we don't change.

## Category 2

At other times, we change because we want to change. We make the decision to change. We decide to change on our own. No one tells us something bad is going to happen if we don't change. We weigh the pros and cons of changing or not changing in our minds and decide for ourselves what we will do.

1. What are the feelings connected with these two kinds of change?

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2. What is the difference between the two ways of changing?

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EXTRA SESSION: **HOW WE CHANGE**

3. Which kind of change will last longer?

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4. Which kind of change is more difficult?

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5. Is it possible for one kind of change to cross over into the other?

*For instance, maybe someone told you that you had to change, and your first reaction was to resist any change. Then, along the way, you decided it was a good idea. The change you made started when someone told you to change and you later decided it was a good idea.*

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6. Think of a change you made in your life. When did you first decide there was a problem that had to be fixed? Did you realize it gradually, or did it happen all at once?

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7. Do you remember when you didn't think you had a problem? Do you remember if other people tried to tell you that you had a problem and you didn't believe them, or you thought they were exaggerating the problem? Do you think you were even aware you had a problem? What feelings do you have to overcome to recognize a problem? How do they get in the way of really seeing a problem?

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EXTRA SESSION: **HOW WE CHANGE**

People who have studied change created five stages of change that we all go through when we decide to make a positive change in our lives. These are the five stages.

**Denial:** Not thinking about change; it doesn't apply to me; I have no control over the problem; other people or circumstances beyond my control are the cause of the problem; not facing serious consequences.

*John was arrested for hitting his mother. After he was arrested, he said he didn't think it was his fault or that think he needed to do anything differently. He said he wants his mom to stay off his back and quit nagging him.*

**Thinking:** Weighing the benefits and costs of change; deciding whether it is worth the effort to change.

*When John was in detention, he felt bad about what he did. He doesn't want to get arrested again, and he is tired of all the arguing with his mother.*

**Preparation:** Experimenting with small changes.

*John will try not to argue with his mother so much. After he gets out of detention, John and his mother have fewer arguments. For the most part, John is able to stop arguing after he has made his point.*

**Action:** Taking a definitive action to change with small steps.

*John has not been abusive towards his mother in any way since his arrest. John agrees to go to counseling. John and his mother decide to eat dinner together at least three nights a week so they can spend more time together. John is using the skills he's learned in counseling to problem-solve respectfully with his mother.*

**Maintenance:** Maintaining new behavior over time.

*John and his mother continue to eat dinner together three nights a week for six months. They also do some counseling sessions together. John and his mother make time each week to talk through any problems that come up.*

**Relapse:** Normal part of change; feels demoralizing to return to old behaviors.

*John yells at his mother when she asks him to do something at home. John realizes how hard he had to work to stop being abusive toward his mother. John tells his mother he was wrong for yelling at her and asks her what he should do to make things right between them.*

**WORKSHEET**

Read each scenario. Identify the stage for each person and what steps they need to do to get to the next stage.

**Scenario 1:**

Latisha smokes marijuana three or four times a week. Her grades are dropping, she and her mother are arguing more, and Latisha's best friend doesn't want to hang out with Latisha anymore. Latisha thinks everyone is making a big deal out of nothing and doesn't want to quit.

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**Scenario 2:**

James has been thinking about his grades over the summer break. He wants to go to a four-year college, but unless he gets better grades, he won't be able to attend one. He thinks if he stays after school to study during the coming year, he may get better grades. If he stays after school to study, he won't see his friends as often as he did last year. James hasn't decided for sure what he'll do.

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**Scenario 3:**

Malek’s mother works full time and wants him to cook dinner one night a week. At first, he gives her lots of reasons why he can’t do it. Finally, he agrees to try it. He looked at cookbook for the first time today to find something easy to make.

**Scenario 4:**

Jennifer likes to tease her sister, but her mother gets upset when she hears it. Jennifer says she won’t do it as much to please her mother and has teased her less in the last couple weeks. Her mother still thinks it’s too much. For Jennifer, teasing is a bad habit, and she realizes the teasing will be more difficult to stop than she expected. She tells her mother she’ll really try to stop doing it completely.

**Scenario 5:**

A few nights a week, John is on the computer past midnight. When he is up late these nights, it's hard for him to get up the next morning for school, and he is often late for his first class. John thinks his first class is boring, so he really doesn't care if he's late. His mother is worried about his grades and wants him to go to college.

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**Scenario 6:**

Ryan often yells and swears at his mom when she wakes him up for school in the morning. When he finally gets up, his mom is upset with him. When he leaves for school, there's a lot of tension between them. He decides he doesn't like starting his day this way. He decides he will try not to swear and yell when his mom wakes him up. The next morning when his mom wakes him up, he starts to swear at his mom but then stops himself.

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## Where Am I in the Stages of Change?

Think about the five stages of change we have discussed. When you think about changing your abusive behavior to respectful behavior, what stage are you in now?

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What do you need to do to move to the next stage?

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