

Group Information

Introduction to Groups

Running groups for students within the schools can be a very effective means of both prevention and intervention. We have found that groups in schools are different from typical clinic-based groups. We have discovered ways to help make sure the groups you provide are as effective as possible.

Why Group?

- The group setting can be very effective for students who need to improve their social skills and relate more effectively with peers. The group provides an opportunity to influence the students' behavior based on the specific topic of the group. Groups also provide a setting where students can practice and try out new social skills.
- Groups can be a good way to get a larger number of students connected to a helping adult where they can receive support and be observed for possible signs of needing more intensive intervention.
- Groups tend to be a form of service that schools are comfortable with and support.
- Providing groups for students on psychoeducational topics is a preventive measure for more intensive interventions.

How do you decide on group topics?

The groups you provide in the school are determined largely on the school's identified needs. This might come from specific requests by staff or students, the results of a survey, or a perceived need that you identify and the school agrees would be beneficial. Groups in schools are generally more psychoeducational than psychotherapeutic. This is driven by the limitations at the school on time, space, confidentiality, and consent to provide treatment oriented groups. These groups tend to be topic focused (i.e., anger management, grief and loss, friendships, etc.) and short in duration. If students are in need of a more intensive program, referrals can be made to a community-based agency.

How do you choose students to be in the groups?

There are several ways that students can join groups:

- Students can be referred by school staff who feel they could benefit from participation.
- Parents can refer their own children.
- Students can self-refer for groups in which they are interested.
- Students can be referred by peers.

Note: It is helpful to recruit larger numbers of students than the minimum number you think you would like to have in your group, as there is almost always a percentage of students who ultimately do not join. This happens when the students change their minds about being in group, teachers do not allow them to miss class for group or their parents do not give consent.

How do you get parental consent?

In order for a student to participate in a psychoeducational group with a counselor who does not work for the school district, the student must have a signed consent from their parent/guardian.

These can be difficult to obtain even when parents support their children being in group. We have found that getting these signed takes persistence and creativity in both the ways you attempt and the rewards you might potentially provide for parents who successfully complete the forms. Attempts to get the consent signed include sending the forms through the mail, making phone calls to the parents to get verbal permission and remind them to send in the form, and sending forms home with students and give them several reminders about their return. We have found that a combination of some or all of these methods give you the best chance of getting back the forms signed. If you do not receive a signed consent from the parents, students will not be able to participate in group. Having consent forms translated into parent's language is important in order to obtain consent.

Where do you hold group sessions?

Schools are notoriously overcrowded and space is *very* limited - especially a room where you can have privacy. It is important to be flexible and realize that your groups are one among many important activities at the school competing for the same space. If it is possible, reserve a space and hold the group in the same place consistently. Often you must move to the location that happens to be open and offers the best chance at confidentiality for participants.

Note: Confidentiality among school peers can be difficult even when a private space is available. Students know and see each other in school and keeping the group content from spreading outside of group can be difficult. This risk of a breach of confidentiality varies by age group, and it is important to stress the importance of this not happening to the group.

When should you have group?

It is very important to follow school rules and norms when it comes to taking students out of class. There are usually some times that are better than others to have students miss class for group such as over lunch or during homeroom. It is important to check with the teacher(s) involved and keep the lines of communication very open. Group sessions generally last one subject period but this depends on the structure of your school.



Tips for Success

- Be sure to keep teachers informed about group schedules and when their students will be missing class.
- Be flexible!
- Make the groups stimulating, fun and educational. You need to engage the students.
- Give the students some responsibility for the group regarding group structure and rules.
- Learn about the hall pass system and use it.



Challenges/Pitfalls

- Teachers can be frustrated if students are missing too much class work. Be sensitive to their concerns.
- Sometimes the mix of students can lead to significant behavior problems, which cause you to spend too much time on behavior management. Watch for the mix of students and don't be afraid to get another adult to co-facilitate or send a student out of group.
- The logistics of getting all the students to group each week can take a significant amount of time. Older students can be given passes so they can come on their own. Reminders to teachers about group times also help.
- Group participants may want to take group time to complain about or gossip about teachers or other students. Stop this immediately. A good rule is not to allow names of anyone outside of the group to be used in a group. Again, stress confidentiality.



Tips for Group Transitions: Primary grades (K-2)

Group does *not* begin when the students are seated in the group room and the prepared activity has been introduced by the therapist. Group, for the therapist and students, begins when students are excused from their class to join you. The transition from regular classroom to the group setting needs to be planned for, as it can make or break the group experience for all involved. Make sure you reserve adequate time for the transition in planning group time.

Behaviors that *can* be a problem during the transition from the classroom to the beginning of the group activity are running, pushing, loud voices, grabbing things, and wandering through the school. These problem behaviors tend to increase when students are unaccompanied by an adult. Students may then burst into the group room and continue shoving to get the prime spots to sit or grab at materials the therapist has out. Conflicts erupt between the students and much of the group time can be spent with the therapist trying to gain control of the group, with little to no time left, for the creative activities prepared. In these situations both therapist and students are frustrated and children may complain that group was “stupid because (they) never get to do anything fun.”

Some strategies that we have found helpful include the following:



- Once in the group room students are directed to sit on one of the cushions on the floor or at a specific seat around a low table (Folders with each child’s name on one makes this more fun as the young child is eager to get to his/hers).
- Students remain in their classroom until an adult comes to fetch them and asks them to line up quietly to be accompanied to the group room.
- Rituals: For example, an elaborately carved wooden xylophone was placed at the center of circle. Students were each given a wooden mallet and explained that they would observe one minute of silence, after which they could strike the xylophone to begin group. The students were instructed to watch the clock on the wall and wait for the signal.
- Students then take turns checking-in, sharing a “highlight” and a “low-light” of their week.
- Following the check-in, group rules are quickly reviewed, and the group reward chart commented upon.
- Directions/instructions for a group activity are given and the activity is started.
- After the activity, children are asked to assess their participation in the group and for each standard met, a point was added on the reward chart. Points earned by the group are commented upon and the group praised for the behaviors shown.

- Each child is then asked to line up at the door and given a small piece of candy for participating in a group.
- The students are then accompanied back to their classroom, by the group facilitator, and checks-in *briefly* with the classroom teacher.

Resources Needed:

- Therapist or Teaching Assistant to accompany children to and from group.
- A cushion/ carpet square/seat for each student.
- A folder for each student.
- A xylophone or other object of interest (manipulative toy etc.).
- A clock with a minute hand, visible to the group members.
- A group rules chart (*see Appendix A-57 for a sample*).
- A sticker chart and stickers (*see Appendix A-58 for a sample*).
- Candy (small chewable candy or chocolate is preferable as teachers usually do not allow the student back in class with candy in their mouths).

Group Rules

One person speaks at a time.

Each person has a chance to talk.

You can say "pass".






















No-one makes fun at what someone else says.

What is said in group, stays in group.

Group Rating Form (grades K-3)

How Did I Do Today?

Name _____

1. I took turns.			
2. I followed directions.			
3. I encouraged and helped others.			
4. I shared.			
5. I listened.			
6. I solved problems peacefully.			
7. I used calm, kind words.			

Group Rating Form (grades 4-6)



How Did We Do Today?

- 1. Did we participate?**

- 2. Did we take turns?**

- 3. Did we listen to each other?**

- 4. Did we solve problems peacefully?**

- 5. Did we use respectful words?**

- 6. Did we encourage each other?**



Kindergarten Social Skills Groups

Entering kindergarten can be a dramatic transition for some children while others seem to negotiate it with relative ease. The difference is likely due to a combination of elements i.e. temperament of the child, prior experience in a pre-school or daycare setting, home environment factors, expectations and structure of the kindergarten curriculum. In our experience conducting small social skills groups (6-8 students per group) can be a beneficial way to help the child connect to school, develop skills to enter into play and create friendships, and have more focused adult attention. Listed below is the structure and activities we used for our groups.

Getting Started

The group met for 45 minutes once a week for 6-7 weeks. Teachers helped to identify those students that might benefit most from a group experience. We worked to include children with a variety of personality and behavioral styles. We developed a letter explaining the group written on school letterhead and signed by the teacher. The letter included a parent consent form and an attached release of information (*examples are located in the appendix, A-77 to A-80*). The letters were sent home with the children.

Ritual

Session began with a greeting that varied slightly each time. The greeting consisted of the children sitting in a circle and greeting each other one at a time with words and an action. The group leader demonstrated the action and began the greeting e.g. high five or ten, pinky shake, passing an object, putting on a mask, talking with a puppet. One by one group members would greet each other by saying “hello” and the student’s name e.g., “Hello Latisha” while they passed the object or did the action, and wait for the response from the student being greeted e.g., Latisha responds, “Hello Isaiah” and does the action back to Isaiah. Next Isaiah would turn to greet his neighbor. The greeting continues around the circle ending with the last student and group leader. This ritual helped to start the session with a welcoming tone, give individualized attention and value to each student, and teach the skill of saying “hello” to people.

Session Outlines

Session 1: Appreciating Differences

- Greeting.
- Introductory comments to group – types of things we will be doing, what the group is about, how many times we will meet.
- Introduce differences—no one is exactly the same, we all have things that are different and also things that are similar. Ask questions about likes and dislikes and have kids raise hands or run from one part of the room to the next if they like

something (or if they don't) to illustrate this point. Emphasize that it's okay to like different things and that we can learn about from others.

- Read "*We're Different, We're the Same*" or "*Chester's Way*" and discuss differences and similarities illustrated in the books.
- Play the "Big Wind Game". Squares of paper are taped on the floor (one less than the number of children in the group). One person stands in the middle, the big wind, and says a characteristic about two or more people in the group e.g. people who are wearing glasses. Those that are wearing glasses must then "blow" around and find a new spot. The person left standing becomes the new leader and picks a different characteristic.
- Color and decorate "I am Special" buttons (*See appendix for sample*) and have a group leader write something that the child feels is special about him/herself on the back. .

Session 2: Feeling Identification

- Greeting.
- Read "*Glad Monster/Sad Monster*". In the book several feelings are discussed. There is a monster mask following each feeling page. After each feeling there is a mask that a child can put on. After reading a feeling section pick one child to put on the mask while they make a sound or say something that would corresponds to that feeling. The children like to see themselves wearing a mask; bringing a mirror to this session is helpful.
- Play feeling charades. Write down feeling words and/or draw feeling faces on separate sheets of paper (one per feeling). Have children take turns picking a piece of paper and acting out the feeling for the rest of the group. See if the group can guess the feeling. Ask questions about how they knew what the feeling was, what did the child's face do that was a good clue? Etc.
- Make monster feelings mask. Have the base for the mask cut out and let the children decide what feeling they will draw on it. Provide fun things to glue on and decorate the masks e.g. feathers, craft foam, glitter, tissue paper, sequins etc. Again provide a mirror to have the children look at themselves. Use sticks taped to the back of the masks to hold them up in front of the children's faces.
- Gather together and go around the circle giving each child time to present their mask and talk about how they decided to pick the feeling it represents.

Session 3: Mad, Sad, Scared – What to do?

- Greeting.
- Go around the circle and ask each child to tell about a time they were mad, sad, or scared. (Some kids like to talk into a microphone, if one is available you could "interview" group members asking the question about a time when they felt mad, sad, or scared and letting them respond in the microphone.) Have the group come up with ideas of what kids could do when they feel this way. Add some of your own to the list. It can be helpful to have them practice some of the ideas as a group e.g. bring paper to tear up, take deep breaths, practice what could be said to an adult, think of a relaxing place, or even bring play dough in baggies for them to squish etc.
- Act out 2-3 puppet role plays in which the puppets make poor choices in different situations. Explain to the kids that the puppets will need their help. Ask them to yell "STOP" when they see a puppet making a bad choice, have them identify the feeling(s) displayed and then have the puppet ask the kids what he/she could do instead. Ideas for role plays include: 1) a puppet gets frustrated over trying to put a

puzzle together and starts to throw the puzzle pieces (ideas to do instead: ask for help, take a deep breath, try a different piece, take a break and come back); 2) a puppet is playing with a toy, someone comes up and grabs it(ideas to do instead: have the 2nd puppet ask if they can play, take turns, use a timer, find another toy similar to it, play together); 3) A puppet wants to play with a group of puppets but doesn't know how to ask so begins to bother the group with loud noises or words, (ideas to try instead – ask if they could play, watch what they are doing and find a way to help out).

- Provide materials to make paper bag puppets that will be used next time to act out role plays.

Session 4: Problem Solving

- Greeting.
- Read the book "Mine" stopping to ask how the characters are feeling, why, and what they could do instead.
- Choose scenarios (we used 3 that were depicted on *Second Step* photo cards- see *Appendix bibliography for details*). Show the kids the picture and ask them to describe the feeling, what probably happened and what they could do instead. Have the kids act out the scenarios either using their puppets or themselves, first the "poor choice" way and secondly one of the better ways they had discussed. It works well to have 2-3 kids at a time act out the scenario while the others watch (giving each child a turn per situation).
- Plant grass seed in 1-2 pots, giving each child a role. It will be used in the next couple of weeks.
- Provide a snack, however make sure there is not enough e.g. 4 bags of fruit snacks for 8 kids). Act baffled and disappointed and say "I thought I had enough, but I don't, what should we do?" They are usually able to come up with creative solutions.

Session 5: Friends

- Greeting.
- Read the story "*How to Lose all of your Friends*". Stopping to discuss what happened, how they would feel if someone did that to them, what would they like a friend to do instead.
- Balloon toss. Divide the group into pairs and give one blown-up balloon to each pair. Have them toss it back and forth to keep it from touching the ground. Talk about how friends work together, listen to each other & help one another & how they need to do this for the game. .
- Make friendship bracelets with beads and elastic. Have the kids each make two (one to keep and one to give away -- it can be difficult to give your only creation away). Have kids draw names and give their bracelet to the person on the slip of paper – doing this one at a time is best. .

Session 6: Working Together

- Greeting.
- Use small puzzles such as characters whose bodies are in three sections. Mix up the pieces and hand three that don't match out to each child. Ask them (with guidance) to work together to complete the puzzles.
- Tape a large piece of paper to the wall, bring in drawing chalk, markers or crayons and have the children work together on doing a drawing of their community, city,

school, etc. It might help to pair them up to do different sections. Display the mural in the school if possible.

- Come together and talk about their experiences completing the puzzles and making the mural, what was difficult, what was fun.
- Make tissue paper flowers using pipe cleaners as stems, and construction paper leaves. Bring out the grass that was planted two weeks ago. Talk about how each of the flowers is unique and important and how together they make a beautiful garden. Talk about how communities can be like that too. Have the children place their flower in the grass. Bring the pot up to the classroom(s) for the whole class to enjoy.

Session 7 : Self Esteem

- Greeting.
- Read “*I Like Me*” or “*The Mixed up Chameleon*” and discuss it.
- Bring in a beach ball, have kids throw the ball to each other, as they throw it they must say one thing they like about themselves.
- Have the children gather in a circle. One child stands in the middle with a crown on while the others say compliments to that person. The group leader can write the compliments on a piece of paper for each child to take home.
- Pass out group certificates.
- Make edible play clay that the kids can make together, play with and eat as a fun end of group activity.

References

I Like Me, Nancy Carlson, 1988 Puffin Books.

Mine! A Sesame Street Book About Sharing, Linda Hayward, 1988 Random House.

How to Lose All Your Friends, Nancy Carlson, 1994 Puffin Books.

Glad Monster, Sad Monster: A Book about Feelings, Ed Emberly & Anne Miranda, Little, Brown & Co.

Chester's Way, Kevin Henkes, 1988 Mulberry Paperback.

We're Different, We're the Same, Bobbi Jane Kates, 1992 Random House



Transition to Middle School Group

Many 6th graders feel anxious about their move to middle school. The confidence that goes with being the oldest in the school and familiar with the setting, routines, and peers/staff members is shaken when starting over in a new building, with new rules, and new kids and staff. Add to this the initiation myths as well as very real concerns around greater expectations and safety, and children are often filled with worry. We have found that running a four session group that offers activities to address changes and expectation, and an arena to discuss fears and concerns helps to ease the anxiety. The following are ideas we used for each session.

Getting Started

We passed out a flyer to all 6th grade students with a space for a parent to sign to express interest (*see appendix for sample, A-81*). When these were returned we followed up with a letter, a consent form, and a release of information. At one elementary school the group ran after school for one hour per session (as pull out groups may not be favored by teachers), and at another, during the 30-minute sixth grade lunch period. We provided a snack for each after-school session, and a small treat for those students bringing their lunch to group.

Session Outlines (based on one-hour sessions)

Session 1

- Snack.
- Introduction to group, how many times we will meet, and what we will talk about.
- Have kids introduce themselves and mention one thing they are looking forward to & one thing they are concerned about for next year.
- Introduce a question jar, box, or envelope. We made “question envelopes” in which kids could anonymously write down questions and concerns they have about 7th grade on sheets of paper and put them in the envelopes. We posted these in the classrooms during the week, and discussed the questions inside at each group session. We also allowed time for people to add to the envelopes at each group meeting.
- Practice opening locks in groups of two.
- Locker relay race. Before group starts find two lockers with locks that can be used for the race. Stock the lockers with supplies listed on the relay cards. Divide the group into two teams. Give a card to each team member (the team members who are racing against each other will have the same cards). Explain that each team member must walk quickly to their team’s locker, open the lock with the combination provided (this could be posted on the locker), find the materials listed on their card, lock the locker, and walk quickly back to the next person in line. When they return to the line the next student repeats the process. The first team to finish the relay (with all the correct items listed on the cards) wins.
- Closing, what students liked about the session, and what they want addressed in the future.

Session 2

- Snack.
- Answer questions from question envelopes.
- Play the Carpet Square Game. A grid of carpet squares is laid out on the floor. Divide the group into two teams. The object is for all members of the teams to make it through the grid using the help of teammates.
- Group leaders have a pre-arranged pattern of squares drawn on a key (team members have no prior knowledge of the path on the key). The group leader holds a buzzer. As a member of the team steps onto the grid they are buzzed if they step onto a square not on the key path, and not buzzed if it is a correct square. If the student is not buzzed they can continue until they are buzzed, if they are buzzed it is the next team's turn. As kids begin to memorize the path and get further along in the grid teamwork can be very helpful – different members remember different squares. The trick comes after the first person makes it through the grid, suddenly the path is changed, however the students are not aware of the change. On the leader's key there is a second path marked out. As the rules change so does the reaction of the teams and each player. After the game ends, discuss how they felt about the rules changing without being warned. Discuss how these feelings are similar to what they will be experiencing – knowing the rules well in elementary school and having them change significantly in the fall as they enter middle school. Also, talk about what can help when rules change e.g. continuing to work as a team, knowing the feelings are normal and shared by others, talking to others about how you are feeling and asking for ideas to try.
- Choose role plays of situation that might be difficult in 7th grade. Write them down on note cards. Divide the group into teams. Have each team pick a scenario. They must work as a team to act out a poor way to handle the problem and then a positive way to handle it. We found that they really enjoy getting into the roles with props and dress up clothes. Discuss each role play and brainstorm several ways it could be handled.
- Closing – discuss what was learned today.

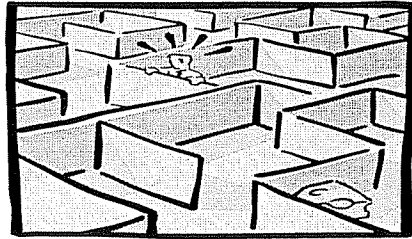
Session 3

- Snack.
- Have a panel of 7th graders come from a nearby middle school to discuss positives and challenges. Have questions written down. The question envelopes can be a good source of these.
- Closing, what students learned from the panel and what questions they still would like answered.

Session 4

- Snack.
- Scavenger hunt in a nearby middle school, or in the elementary school using room numbers and locations students would not usually go to lockers, scenarios they must go to the office to find the correct person to inform, and middle school schedules. The first stop for both teams is to pick up their "Orientation Packet" in the office. In the packet there is the second assignment, a copy of the schedule, a locker number, and combination, and a list of staff people's roles and a description of areas where these people can help.
- After each team has completed the hunt give them a "Good Luck" goody bag. These could be filled with helpful "tools" for next year.

- Discuss what was challenging during the hunt, what surprised them, what was easier than they expected etc.





Anger Management Group: Elementary Grades

This intervention consisted of an Anger Management Pull-Out Group for 3rd and 4th grade students in a regular education setting. The group met for eight 45-minute sessions and included four third grade boys, one fourth grade girl and one fourth grade boy. These six students were referred by their classroom teacher due to their difficulty in controlling anger with adults and peers. Characteristic behaviors identified by the referring teachers, included talking back to the teacher, fighting with peers, getting easily upset and being disruptive to the classroom. A letter was sent to the parents describing the group and requesting written consent for participation (*see Appendix for samples*). Two parents requested a phone call to discuss the group prior to giving consent. Signed consent forms were obtained for all six students.

Group Goals: As participants in Anger Management Group, students will learn

- To recognize when they are becoming angry.
- To identify their anger triggers.
- Learn and practice stop and calm down strategies.
- Problem-solving skills: to think of alternative solutions to keep the problem small, pick a strategy and try it.
- To evaluate the strategies chosen.
- Find ways to help themselves feel good again.

Overall Structure of Sessions:

- Quick ice-breaker game & check-in (5 minutes).
- Review of rules, expectations & sticker chart (2.5 min.).
- Specific topic & activities (approx. 30 minutes).
- Group self-evaluation and sticker chart (5 min.).
- Line-up for transition to class and give out small treat (2.5 min.).

Group Rules:

- Only one person speaks at a time.
- You can say “pass.”
- What’s said in group stays in group.
- No one makes fun of what someone else says.
- Do not hurt yourself, others, or property.

Stickers are earned for:

- Participating in activities.
- Sharing materials & taking turns.
- Following directions.
- Listening.
- Using kind and respectful words.
- Solving problems peacefully.
- Encouraging and helping each other.

A total of seven stickers can be earned for each group session. One sticker chart is used for whole group behavior. The purpose is to reinforce **group cohesion** and **accountability** to each other. Once 20 stickers have been earned, a group reward is planned with the group members' participation (i.e., popcorn and a short video or chips and a board game.)

Individuals receive a treat (small piece of candy or sticker) at the end of each group session for their own positive participation.

Session 1: Ice-breaker/getting to know each others' names

- Go over rules and expectations & sticker chart.
- Check-in.
- Why are we here?
- It's *okay* to be mad – it's what you do with it that matters.
- What happens when we let anger build up – bad day balloon story.
- Group assessment & sticker chart.
- Transition

Session 2: Ice-breaker

- Go over rules, expectations & sticker chart.
- Check-in.
- Not everyone gets angry at the same things.
- Identifying individual triggers.
- There are different degrees of anger.
- Anger thermometer & triggers rating sheet.
- Group assessment & sticker chart.
- Transition.

Session 3: Ice-breaker

- Rules, expectations & sticker chart review.
- Check-in.
- Identifying how your body responds to anger.
- Identify ways to stop and calm down.
- Practice with the Calm Down Bean-Bag game.
- Choose one strategy to practice during the week and write it on an index card.
- Group assessment & sticker chart.
- Transition

Session 4: Ice-breaker

- Rule, expectations & sticker chart review.
- Check-in & discuss strategy practiced during the week.
- Practice: Calm Down Bean-Bag Game.
- Role-play: trigger situations & ways to calm down.
- Choose a strategy to practice during the week.
- Group assessment & sticker chart.
- Transition.

Session 5 Ice-breaker

- Rules, expectations & sticker chart review.
- Check-in & review strategy practiced during the week.
- How to keep put-downs from making you angry.
- How to tell a friend you're mad.
- Role-plays.
- Group assessment & sticker chart.
- Transition.

Session 6 Ice-breaker

- Rules, expectations & sticker chart review.
- Check-in.
- What to do when an adult is angry with you.
- Role plays.
- How to feel good again: identify things that help.
- Group assessment & sticker chart.
- Transition.

Session 7: Ice-breaker

- Rules, expectations & sticker chart review.
- Using Problem-Solving steps.
- Group assessment & sticker chart.
- Transition

Session 8: Ice-breaker

- Rules, expectations & sticker chart review.
- Using Problem-Solving steps in pairs.
- Review of what was learned in group.
- Plan last session's celebration.
- Group assessment & sticker chart.
- Transition

Session 9: Ice-breaker

- Rules & expectations reviewed.
- Bad Day Balloon story revisited.
- Bad Day Balloon story revised by group members using strategies learned.
- Group celebration.
- Autograph & decorate folders.
- Transition.

Tips

- Rules poster should be posted where everyone can see it and you can refer to it as needed during the group. It helps to use large size font, copy it onto brightly colored paper and laminate the poster for longevity.
- If you can make your therapeutic/teaching activity into a game it really helps – kids are often reluctant to simply discuss a subject or answer personal questions. However, if you type your questions and slip them into plastic “Easter eggs”, most students will find it fun to pick an egg and answer the question! We have also had luck using a board game

format where questions-cards are picked when you land on the question square on the board game. Kids learn through having fun – find out what kind of play the kids enjoy and use a similar format for your work with them.

- Markers are *special!* Most writing and drawing tasks done in markers (smelly, fluorescent, sparkly, etc.) are much more fun than using pencils and crayons.
- Elementary aged students like having their own folder to keep their work in. They enjoy decorating it while their peers finish an activity, they like earning stickers to put on it, they like seeing the folder fill up with their work. Collect the folder at the end of each group session – they can choose to take them home when the group is done.
- Fast-paced activities, frequent positive feedback and referring back to the rules helped reduce behavior problems.
- Make sure your ice-breaker activities are flexible, to allow late-comers to join in.
- Don't be surprised if the students want more paper-and-pencil activities in addition to the experiential activities. It could be due to familiarity with the worksheet format, or that they liked having something concrete to keep in their folders, or that the format helps them be less distracted by their peers. Contrary to more popular belief, it seems that worksheets aren't all bad: it's more a matter of purpose, quality and quantity.
- Due to wide variability in reading achievement, read all materials aloud to the whole group. Sometimes a couple of students will volunteer to read for the group.
- Including a physical activity not requiring paper and pencil or group discussion can make a big difference in reducing the testing and silliness of group members who may have anxiety about reading and/or writing.
- Adding a warning system can be helpful if one or two students continue to exhibit silly/disrespectful behaviors in group (i.e. at the beginning of group, write each student's name on the board. If they are disruptive, place a check mark next to their name on the board. 1 check = warning, 2 checks = no treat).
- Be flexible!!! You may have developed the most wonderful lesson-plan and put together great materials – however, you may have to put them aside for the day as you respond to the *group's needs*.

Summary:

It is important to remember that this type of psycho-educational group is a short-term intervention which mainly allows you to better assess a student's needs, strengths and interpersonal style while teaching the student a few basic skills in a positive and safe learning environment. It is hoped that students will have experienced successful interactions with peers and a qualitatively different interaction with an adult at school. It is however, misguided to expect sustained long-term changes in behavior without the classroom teacher using a similar approach or language in the classroom. Eight sessions could work as a *booster* for those needing a little extra help in learning/using a format used by the class, or in catching up new students who entered during the school year. However, if no such integrated system exists at the school, eight sessions are insufficient to ensure generalizability of the skills by the students or of significant changes in their inner working models.

Anger Management Group: Middle School Outline

Purpose: To educate preteens and young teens about anger management and help them develop problem-solving skills.

Overview: This is a six-session group which meets weekly. Students may self-refer to the group, or be referred by parents, teachers, support staff or school administrators.

Session 1 Introduction of the members to the group

- Ice-breaker.
- Purpose of the group will be discussed.
- Group rules established by leader and members.
- Video.
- Discussion.

Session 2

- Review.
- Identifying feelings.
- Understanding the range of feelings.
- Identifying anger cues: Where do we feel our anger? What happens to our bodies?
- Role-plays.

Session 3

- Review.
- Identifying anger styles: stuffing, escalating, and managing.
- Linking self-talk, feelings and reactions.
- Role-plays.

Session 4

- Review.
- Basic communication skills: Saying how you feel – healthy ways & unhealthy ways.
- Role-plays.

Session 5

- Review
- Positive communication skills.
- Developing problem-solving strategies.
- Role-plays.

Session 6

- Review.
- Using personal power in non-abusive ways.
- Responsibility and safety planning: Who can you go to for support?
- Group evaluation/feedback.

Resources for Anger Management Groups

Aggression Replacement Training: A Comprehensive Intervention for Aggressive Youth (Rev. ed.), by A.P. Goldstein, B. Glick & J.C. Gibbs, Research Press, 1998

Esteem Builders: A K-8 Self-Esteem Curriculum for Improving Student Achievement, Behavior and School Climate by Michele Borba, Jalmar Press 1989

Get On Top of It! Teaching Students to Problem Solve, by Laurie Hartwig & Gina Meredith, Sopris West, 2001

Good Thinking: Helping Students to Reframe Their Thinking Patterns, by Orville Clark & Wayne Hull, Sopris West, 1999

Group Exercises for Adolescents: A manual for Therapists, by Susan Carrell, Sage Publications 2000

Life Lessons For Young Adolescents: An Advisory Guide for Teachers, by Fred Schruppf, Sharon Freiburg & David Skadden, Research Press, 1993

Positive Adolescent Choices Training - (PACT). A Model for Violence Prevention Groups with African American Youth. Executive Producer, W. Rodney Hammond, Ph.D., Associate Producer, Betty R. Yung, Ph.D. Research Press

Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum; Middle School/Junior High, Committee for Children, Seattle, WA: Author, 1997

Skillstreaming the Adolescent: A Structured Learning Approach to Teaching Prosocial Skills by Arnold P. Goldstein, Robert P. Sprafkin, N. Jane Gershaw, & Paul Klein, Research Press, 1979

Sociodrama: Who's In Your Shoes? by Sternberg, P., & Garcia, A. NY: Spraeager, 1989

Thinking, Feeling, Behaving: An Emotional Education Curriculum for Adolescents Grades 7-12, by Ann Vernon, Research Press, 1989

See Appendix a for a sample flyer.

Living with a Sick Parent Group (Elementary Grades)

Session 1: Overview

- Introductions.
- Group Rules.
- Ice Breakers.

Session 2: Changes

- Check-in/ Feelings scale.
- Review group rules.
- Life with parent before they got sick.
- Activity about Change.

Session 3: Feelings

- Check-in.
- Activity: When I feel _____, I (do) _____.
- Activity: The Thinking, Feeling, Doing Game.

Session 4: Feelings, continued

- Check-in.
- Review group rules.
- Activity: I feel _____ when my sick parent (does, says, is, etc.).

Session 5: Feelings, continued

- Check-in.
- Review of previous session.
- How to manage difficult feelings.

Session 6: Introduction to *When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness*, by Marge Heegaard

Part I. Changing Times

- Accept change as part of life.
- Identify family changes.
- Discover personal life changes.
- Recognize grief from loss and change.

Session 7: *When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness*

Part II. Understanding Serious Illness

- Define serious and other illness.
- Learn basic cause of illness.
- Identify basic parts affected by illness.
- Assess understanding and misconceptions.

Session 8: When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness

Part III. Feelings About Family Change

- Recognize and name feelings.
- Learn that feelings are all OK.
- Discover defense masks.
- Identify feelings about family changes.

Session 9: *When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness*

Part IV. Drawing Out Difficult Feelings

- Recognize effect of feelings on behavior.
- See family pattern of expressing feelings.
- Identify personal difficult feelings.
- Learn healthy ways to express feelings.

Session 10: *When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness*

Part IV, continued

- Wrap-up, review/ evaluation.

References

The Talking, Feeling, Doing Game, c. 1973 Creative Therapeutics, Cresskill, NJ

Heegaard, Marge (1991) *When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness: Children Can Learn to Cope with Loss and Change*. Minneapolis, MN: Woodland Press

Grief/Loss Group (Middle School)

Purpose-Educate preteens and teens about grief/loss and help them to process their feelings around their own losses.

Overview-This will be a 6 session group which will meet weekly. The goal is to have 6-7 students from the seventh and eighth grades of _____ Middle School participate in the group.

Teachers, assistant principals, guidance counselors, Youth Services Counselor and the social worker are being asked to refer students to the group who have experienced the death of someone significant in their life in the past 2 years. Each student will be seen individually to determine if they want to attend and is appropriate for the group work setting. Releases will be sent home to parents/guardians to gain their permission for the students to participate in group.

Session 1

- Introductions of the members of the group.
- Discuss purpose of the group.
- Establish group rules.
- Each member to briefly talk about people important to him/her who have died.
- No one will be forced to share this information.
- Discussion of “What is grief/mourning?”
- Group activity examples of “what is grief”. Some education about what they could have been experiencing as feelings and behavior of grief/mourning.
- Summary: What was done in group this session and plan for session 2.

Session 2

- Review names, group purpose, and review of rules.
- Plan for session 2 presented.
- Continued education about what grief may look and feel like to them.
- Begin work on memory journal which will be a collection of drawings and/or pictures done by the student in memory of the person or people who have died.
- Summary of session 2 and review of plan for session 3 (leave journal with team leader).

Session 3

- Review group purpose and review of team rules.
- Genogram of family & friends of each student (who is alive and who has died).
- Genogram explained by each student.
- Continue to work on memory journal drawings.
- Summary of group session 3 and plan for session 4 (leave journal with Team Leader).

Session 4

- Review group purpose and rules.
- Discussion of what “bad days” look like with regard to mourning. Draw a picture of a “bad day”. Discussion – Do the “bad days” get him/her in trouble at school or home? How might they change this so that they can mourn and still stay out of trouble?
- More work on drawings for memory book/journal.

- Summary of this session and plan for session 5. Point out to group that there are only 2 sessions left and we need to think about how to end the group. (leave journal).

Session 5

- Review group purpose and rules.
- Discussion – Is the information they are getting in group helping them outside of group? Are they trying out ideas discussed in session 4? How might it help them in other ways? How do they feel on a “good day”?
- Draw a picture of a “good day” to include in the journal.
- Summary of session 5 and plan for session 6. Discuss termination of group and what they have learned.
- Input from team on ceremony for last group session. Possibilities – candle lighting ceremony, share memory journal with other members (leave journal).

Session 6

- Review group rules.
- Review group purpose and members opinions as to what we accomplished.
- Remembrance ceremony & sharing of journals if they are agreeable to sharing them with team members. Group members to take journal with them today,
- Termination – discussion of what group meant to each of them (and leader). Goodbyes.

Supplies Needed: Paper, Pens and Color Markers, Scissors, Magazines for Pictures, Glue, Journals, Sample Genogram, Snacks-Juice.

See Appendix A-84 for a sample flyer