

A SCHOOL-BASED GROUP PROCESS FOR  
CHILDREN WHO WITNESS FAMILY VIOLENCE

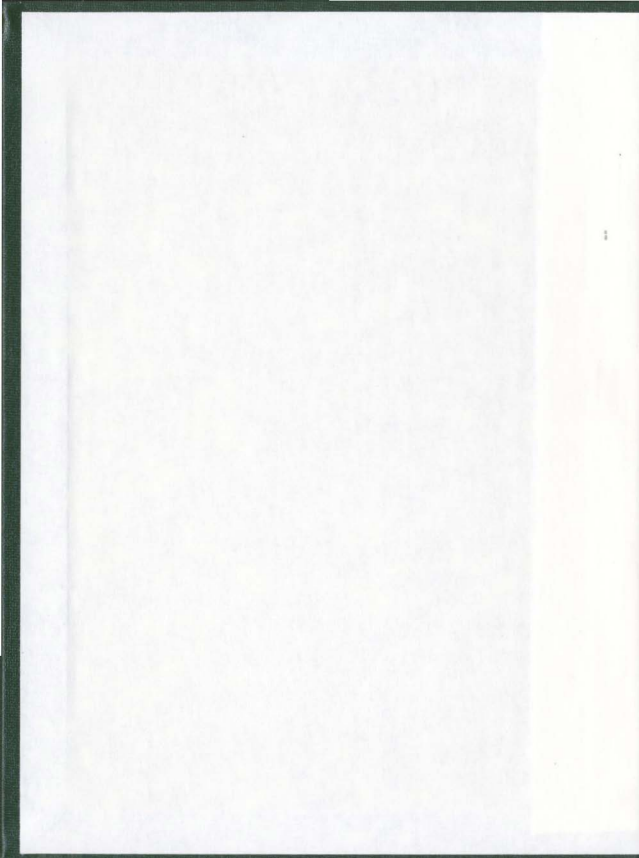
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**A School-Based Group Process for  
Children Who Witness Family Violence**

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
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## Abstract

Historically, groups supporting children who have witnessed violence have been housed in shelters for women and children fleeing abuse. The purpose of this project is to develop a school-based group process which can be co-facilitated by teachers and guidance staff. The program consists of ten group sessions which focus on the cognitive, psychological, and social needs of a child experiencing or at risk of witnessing family violence. Important factors are identification and expression of feelings, building self-esteem, personal safety, and awareness and prevention of abuse. The materials, group structure, and philosophical framework for this process are in keeping with the work of women's shelters and the writer's own experience in group development and shelter work over the past ten years.



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## Chapter I: Introduction

Domestic violence is a wide-ranging, deep-seated problem. According to the Violence Against Women Survey conducted by Statistics Canada in 1993, one-half of all Canadian women have experienced at least one physical or sexual assault since the age of 16, and 29 percent of married women have been subjected to physical or sexual assault at the hands of a marital partner (Statistics Canada, 1994). The 1999 survey shows minor improvement: 40 percent of women and 13 percent of the men surveyed reported that they had experienced domestic violence (Statistics Canada, 2000). Americans are finding that they, too, have much domestic violence. American surveys carried out by Straus and Gelles have indicated that approximately one in six couples report some incident of physical violence in a year, and one out of three married women report at least one incident of physical violence in a marriage (Straus and Gelles, 1986), a figure that is thought to be an underestimated (Straus, 1993). The Domestic Violence Hotline in the United States reports 11,000 calls monthly. Such is the state of the homes on our continent.

On the local level, domestic violence is an equally serious problem. The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has seven shelters for abused women and their children. The largest of these transitional settings is Iris Kirby House in St. John's. Since it opened its doors in 1981, Iris Kirby House has admitted close to two thousand new families. Because many families have returned to the shelter more than once, the facility has performed in excess of three thousand admissions. Although these numbers may seem high, they are not as high as they might be. Most women living with violence, it is

believed, will never go to a shelter; this means that the numbers being used are less than accurate.

Even more startling is the number of children who live with this violence. Every year, more children encounter abuse of women (Suderman & Jaffe, 1999). Children witnessing violence in any one year in Canada number approximately 160,000. This number is based on a yearly rate of 3 percent of women experiencing abuse in a marriage; of these conflicts, 39 percent of the assaults are witnessed by children where there is an average of two children in a family (Johnson, 1996).

The women and children seen at shelters in the province experience many different types of abuse. Physical abuse and emotional abuse are the two more prevalent types; but there are also frequent reports of psychological, economical, and sexual abuse. A few definitions serve to clarify what each kind of abuse entails. Physical abuse is understood as inflicting hurt to a person's body; it involves pushing, holding a person down, slapping, kicking, or assaulting with a weapon; the most extreme kind of physical abuse is murder. Emotional abuse is experienced when someone does or says something to put a person down; this kind of abuse includes: name calling, excessive blaming, humiliation, and ridiculing. Psychological abuse happens when, to gain control, someone threatens and frightens to a person or someone loved by the person; it also includes using children's visitation time for harassment, making the other person feel guilty, or playing any number of mind games. The economical abuse is financial; it includes destroying another's personal property, preventing a person from getting a job, forcing a person to work under stressful conditions, or hindering a person from handling the money needed in the care of a family. The final kind of abuse mentioned is sexual abuse, committed

when someone coerces a person into taking part in unwanted sexual activity, such as, touching in a sexual manner or forcing the person into sexual acts that are painful or humiliating. All types of abuse are damaging and can have serious effects on a person. Physical assault, sexual assault, and uttering threats are against the law (Provincial Association Against Family Violence, 1996). While the other kinds of abuse are just as painful, it is sometimes more difficult to prove their presence in a court of law.

The extent to which children are exposed to domestic violence is not clear; however, research in shelters has indicated that many violent episodes are witnessed by children who often attempt to intervene. Most researchers attribute children's exposure status to the fact that the mother has been battered by her partner (Rossman, Hughes, & Rosenberg, 1999). One inquiry of battered women suggested that 87 percent of children living in violent homes actually observed the violence (Walker, 1984). A research project in Toronto found that 68 percent of 2,910 cases of wife assault had children present at the time of the assault (Leighton, 1989) and a New York study found that children were present at 41 percent of the homes when police made calls (Bard, 1970). The Statistics Canada Report (2000) asserts that children witness 37 percent of the violence in homes. However varied the statistics on children's witnessing violence at home, it is clear that the problem needs fixing.

## Chapter II: Rationale

Schools need to address the problems experienced by children exposed to domestic violence. Jaffe, Wolfe, and Wilson (1990) explore the need for schools to develop prevention programs in order to respond appropriately to family violence. They note that most of those who write on the topic of family violence appeal to school systems to initiate prevention programs. The appeal is usually expressed as a recognition that underlying societal attitudes condone violence and that only a major commitment by school systems to address this problem can lead to any meaningful change (Jaffe et al., 1990).

Schools by their very design provide an opportunity to reach large groups of children with educational and social instruction. The school setting then is also an ideal place to reach children who are at risk of witnessing violence and to provide treatment and support in a safe and structured environment. Many at-risk children will never go to a shelter; however, they will attend school. School-aged children can benefit from learning positive messages about relationships and about family roles and boundaries (Wolfe, & Jaffe, 1999). Suderman and Jaffe (1999) found that 90 percent of the students surveyed wanted schools to play an active role in raising awareness about violence and promoting alternative conflict resolution strategies.

Statistics show clearly that substantial numbers of school-aged children live with violence. Kincaid (1982) noted that estimates of wife battering suggest that anywhere from three to five children in each classroom may be witnessing violence in their homes. Exposure to family violence can lead to a variety of school difficulties. School

achievement and social development are frequently compromised, as is the development of social competence (Moore & Pepler, 1989). Aggression against peers, teachers, and mothers is increased in all children who witness woman abuse; this aggression is more pronounced among boys (Kerig, Feddowicz, Brown, Patenaude, & Warren, 1998). Some children may feel so responsible for the safety of the mother that they may adjust their own lives to protect her. Some children may refuse to go to school or present with somatic concerns in order to return home to their mothers (Jaffe & Geffner, 1998).

Children who are identified as having witnessed family violence need appropriate intervention and counselling. The most widely suggested intervention for children of battered women is a group process (Grusznski, Brink, & Edelson, 1988; Hughes, 1988; Wilson, Cameron, Jaffe, & Wolfe, 1989). Most of the group programs described in the literature are housed in shelters for battered women, but these programs may also involve collaboration with other professionals in child protection or mental health centres (Jaffe, Wilson & Wolfe, 1986). Besides being cared for in shelters, children receive group treatment in safe homes, family court clinics, and outpatient social service agencies (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 1997). The advantage of the group session is that it allows children an opportunity to learn that they are not alone in dealing with their crises and that other children have similar life experiences (Wilson & Martin, 1997).

Group treatment attempts to achieve many definite goals. These goals have been summarized as follows: (a) labelling feelings, (b) dealing with anger, (c) developing safety skills, (d) obtaining social support, (e) developing social competence and a good self-concept, (f) recognizing one's lack of responsibility for a parent or for the violence, (g) understanding family violence, and (h) specifying personal wishes about family



relations (Hughes, 1982; Jaffe et al., 1990).

In Newfoundland and Labrador groups for children who witness violence are offered periodically by shelters, the social work department of the Charles A. Janeway Children's Hospital, and the department of Child, Youth, and Family Services. Despite the recommendations often found in current literature committed to the intervention and future treatment initiatives, the province's schools seem to have failed to offer such a process; at least no information appears to be available on such groups.

### Chapter III: Review of Literature

It has been suggested that at least 3.3 million American children between the ages of 3 and 17 are at risk of exposure to woman abuse (Carlson, 1984). The report of a study led by Silvern (Silvern, Karyl, Waelde, Starek, Heidt, & Min, 1995) states 37 percent of 550 college students experienced violence between their parents; these numbers would, if extrapolated to the general population of the United States of 48 million children, mean that about 17.8 million children may be exposed to marital violence (Holden, 1998). According to Statistics Canada's national survey on transition homes, 2,361 women accompanied by 2,217 children were living in shelters across Canada on May 31, 1995 (Statistics Canada, 1998). Seventy percent of women who go to transition houses have children and 17 percent have three or more children (McLeod, 1987).

One would expect that children who witness violence could experience a wide range of cognitive, psychological, and social difficulties. Serious emotional and behavioural problems are between 10 and 17 times greater for children exposed to domestic violence than for children from non-violent homes (Jaffe et al., 1990). Table 1.1 is a detailed summary and reference list of the research that has been done in this area since 1980.

Table 1.1

**Reported Effects of Observing Interparental Violence on Children (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, Perrin, 1997).**

<b>Internalizing and emotional effects</b>	
Anxiety/temperament	Holden and Ritchie (1991) Hughes (1988) McKay (1987, 1994) Randolf and Cookle (1993)
Low self-esteem	Elbow (1982) Hughes (1988) McKay (1987, 1994)
Shyness	Hershorn and Rosenbaum (1985)
Depression	Christopoulos et al. (1987) Hershorn and Rosenbaum (1985) O'Keefe (1994)
Suicide attempts	Hershorn and Rosenbaum (1985) Hughes (1986) Koski (1987)
Withdrawn	Hughes (1986)
Trauma/stress reactions	Jaffe, Wolfe, and Wilson (1990) Rossman et al. (1990) Silvern and Kasrangan (1989) Terr (1991)
Feeling of loss/ anger/ sadness/ confusion	Alessi and Hearn (1984) Carlson (1984) Cassady, Allen, Lyon, and McGeehan (1987) Jaffe et al. (1990) Layzer, Goodson, and DeLange (1986)
Self-blame	Erickson and Henderson (1992) Jaffe et al. (1990)
Physical problems	Fantuzzo and Lindquist (1989) Keromac, Taggart, Lescoup, and Fortin (1986) Layzer et al. (1986) Mertin (1992) Reid, Kavanagh, and Baldwin (1987)
<b>School and social competence</b>	
School problems	Hilberman and Munson (1978) Layzer et al. (1986) Pfouts, Schopler, and Henley (1982) Westra and Martin (1981) Wildin, Williamson, and Wilson (1991)
Social Incompetence	Hughes (1988) Layzer et al. (1986) Rossman et al. (1993) Wolfe, Zak, Wilson, and Jaffe (1986)
Low empathy	Hinchey and Gavelek (1982) M. S. Rosenberg (1987)

Poor problem-solving, non-violent resolution, and conflict resolution skills	Grossier (1986) Jaffe et al. (1990) Moore, Pepler, Mac, and Kates (1989) M. S. Rosenberg (1987) Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980)
Acceptance/legitimization	Hanson, Sawyer, Hilton, and Davis (1992) Jaffe et al. (1990) Ulrich and Huber (1981)
Poor cognition	Hart and Brassard (1990) Westra and Martin (1981)
<b>Externalizing behavioral problems</b>	
Aggression	Holden and Ritchie (1991) O'Keefe (1994) Randolf and Conkle (1993) Rutter and Giller (1983) Sternberg et al. (1993) Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) Westra and Martin (1981)
Alcohol/drug abuse	Dembo, Williams, Wozke, Schmeidler, and Brown (1992) Farruzzo and Lindquist (1989) Keronac et al. (1986) Layzer et al. (1986)

Although there are no typical patterns of problems manifested by children exposed to marital violence, the particular problem or problems exhibited may be governed in some degree by the children's age and gender (Holden, 1998).

Regardless of the age of the child, the effects of violence in the home are evident. Infants who witness violence often have poor health and poor sleeping habits; they also scream excessively (Davidson, 1978). Infants have shown a failure to thrive and exhibit delays in development. Pre-schoolers can exhibit aggressive acts, clinging, anxiety, and destructive behaviour (Suderman & Jaffe, 1999). Children in earlier school years often show their distress at witnessing woman abuse in aggressive and/or withdrawn behaviour at school; they are prone to have difficulty in concentrating (Jaffe et al., 1990). Adolescents who witness violence often become truant at school, drop out, and run away from home. For this age group depression, anxiety, and suicide are also common. To prevent this reactive behavior it is advisable to take preventive measure before it is too late. Since mid-adolescence is a time of important cognitive and social development, it is an ideal time to learn healthy ways to form intimate relationships (Wolfe and Jaffe, 1999). Table 1.2 outlines the problems associated with the various age groups.

Table 1.2 : Effects of witnessing violence across the age span.(Rhea, Chafey, Dohner, Terragno, 1996, p.9).

Infant	Preschool	School -age	Adolescent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Attachment needs may be disrupted</li> <li>❖ Routines (sleeping, eating) disrupted</li> <li>❖ Risk of physical injury</li> <li>❖ 50% have eating &amp; sleeping problems, decreased responsiveness to adults, increased crying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Their world is not safe or stable</li> <li>❖ Yelling, irritability, hiding, and stuttering -- signs of terror</li> <li>❖ Many somatic complaints and regressive behaviors</li> <li>❖ Anxious attachment behaviors of whining, crying, and clinging</li> <li>❖ Increased separation and stranger anxiety</li> <li>❖ Insomnia, sleepwalking, nightmares, bedwetting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Greater willingness to use violence</li> <li>❖ Hold self responsible for violence at home</li> <li>❖ Shame and embarrassment of the family secret</li> <li>❖ Distracted and inattentive</li> <li>❖ Liability and hyper-vigilance</li> <li>❖ Limited range of emotional responses</li> <li>❖ Psychosomatic complaints</li> <li>❖ May be unco-operative, suspicious, or guarded</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Feelings of rage shame and betrayal</li> <li>❖ School truancy, early sexual activity, substance use/abuse, delinquency</li> <li>❖ May be unresponsive</li> <li>❖ May have little memory of childhood</li> <li>❖ Short attention span</li> <li>❖ On the defensive</li> </ul>

Besides the age factor, gender must also be considered. Male children who witness violence between their parents are, it is believed, at higher risk of being abusive to their partners in adult relationships. Sons of battered mothers are frequently described by researchers as disruptive and aggressive toward people, as rough with objects and property, and as given to throwing severe temper tantrums (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981; Wolfe, Jaffe, Wilson, & Zak, 1985; Wolfe, Zak, Wilson, & Jaffe, 1986). Female children witnessing violence may be less likely to question dating violence (Carlson, 1990) and may have difficulty leaving abusive adult relationships. Girls exposed to family violence often display symptoms of clinging, dependent behaviour, withdrawal, and passivity; they are also inclined to have an increasing number of somatic complaints. One study found that one out of three boys and one out of five girls in transition houses had symptoms in the clinical range (Wolfe et al, 1985). In addition, the effects of family violence are passed to the next generation. The vast majority of batterers witnessed their own mothers being battered when they were children. The rate of wife beating is dramatically higher for the sons of batterers as compared to the sons of non-violent batterers (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980).

Children who witness violence of one parent against the other often suffer emotional trauma, difficulties in their interactions with others, increased aggression, an absence of close emotional ties to their parents, as well as disrupted parenting (Statistics Canada, 1998). Jaffe (1990) presents the following beliefs:

- ❖ A boy who witnesses his father assaulting his mother is learning that violence is

acceptable behavior; that is, it is an integral part of intimate relationships.

- ❖ A girl who witnesses her mother being assaulted by her father is learning about victimization and the extent to which men can utilize violence and fear to exert power and control over family members.
- ❖ Boys and girls who live with violence are experiencing significant emotional trauma.

Rather than having a family that can offer security and nurturance for their positive development, these children experience fear, anxiety, confusion, anger -- the disruptions in lives that are the aftermath of violent episodes. More recently, these experiences are being labelled by many child specialists as emotional abuse or psychological maltreatment (Brassard, Germain, & Hart, 1987).

Gender findings may be related to age as well as to mechanisms of gender. Socialization, coping, experiencing personal verbal or physical abuse are perceived as threats to all ages and to each gender. What varies is the severity of the threat. Thus, the role of gender as a protective or vulnerability factor remains unclear (Rossman, Hughes, & Rosenberg, 1999).

Children living with violence are also at high risk of being physically harmed. Physical assaults on a woman by her partner often occur during pregnancy. The 1993 Violence Against Women Survey found that 21 percent of women abused by a marital partner were assaulted during pregnancy; and of these, 40 percent indicated that the abuse began during pregnancy (Rodgers, 1994). In 1996, children under 18 years of age made



up 24 percent of the Canadian population and were the victims in 22 percent of all incidents of violent crime reported to police forces. Eighteen percent of physical assaults reported to the police were against children under 18 years of age. One-fifth of these were carried out by a family member (Statistics Canada, 1998). Children can be injured during violent outbursts, and it is possible that partners who cannot deal with their situations can turn their anger and frustration toward the children. Threats of harm, abduction, and abandonment may also exist when a high level of psychological abuse is directed toward the mother. Based on the histories and symptoms of battered women and their children in transition houses research reveals a 30-40 percent overlap between wife assaults and child physical or sexual abuse (Hughes 1982; Straus et al, 1980). The violence directed against the parent shows up in the younger generation. Having a battered mother has been correlated with the development of delinquency in children and criminal behavior in adults; incidents of assault, attempted rape, kidnapping, attempted murder, and murder, seem to be tied to domestic violence (McCord, 1983).

Children are often more aware of the violence and abuse in the home than the parents realize. In a survey of battered women residing in shelters, fewer than 25 percent thought their children had been exposed to marital violence within the home. (Tomkins et al., 1994). Yet police report that children are aware of the conflict in as many as half of the domestic disputes to which they are called (Statistics Canada, 2000). Children say they know more. Based on data using a different measurement strategy in which children provided reports of their attempts to intervene in marital conflicts, at least 71 percent of a

sample of English-speaking children living in maritally violent homes were exposed (Jenkins, Smith, & Graham, 1989). When children are asked about family violence, close to 90 percent of them indicate exposure to such conflicts (Hilton, 1992; Jaffe et al., 1990). Over time, some children will blame themselves for the violence, feeling that it is their duty to protect their mother by defusing their father's anger (Jaffe & Geffner, 1998).

#### Chapter 4: Broad Goals

This project was designed to achieve a number of broad-based goals relating to a desired decrease in the violence in children's lives and our communities in general through education and self esteem building. The following list represents the goals which have ultimately led the development of the project to break the intergenerational cycle of violence for the children involved in the program.

- ❖ to decrease the likelihood of violence against female children and adults
- ❖ to enhance the self esteem and self concept in the children that participate
- ❖ to provide a process that can be offered in a school settings
- ❖ to create a process that can be offered by a variety of professionals
- ❖ to decrease the level of violence in schools
- ❖ to increase the awareness of family violence and its effects among school personnel and the school population in general

**Part II: The Manual**  
**Twelve Sessions with Children**

## **The Design for the Group**

### **Facilitators:**

The group process requires two co-facilitators at all times. One of the facilitators should be a guidance counsellor or school psychologist with a good knowledge base about the dynamics of family violence and child development. Ideally the other facilitator should be a teacher who has examined family violence and the effects on children who witness such violence. Ideally also, there should be one male and one female facilitator. To ensure the success and safety of the participants, facilitators would be required to familiarize themselves with the Child, Youth, and Family Services Act (1999) and its reporting requirements.

### **Participants:**

Children identified as experiencing, or at risk of witnessing, family violence would be the participants. Each child should have an active file and a primary caseworker with Child, Youth, and Family Services to ensure adequate monitoring and support for the child and the child's family.

### **Age of the Participant:**

The program process targets school-age children between the ages of 8 and 12. Facilitators are encouraged to build groups composed of children of similar ages; for

example, a group consisting of 8 to 10 year olds or a group of 10 to 12 year olds.

**Gender of Participants:**

This program is designed for co-ed participants. It is helpful to balance the number of males and females.

**Group size:**

The program is designed to accommodate a maximum of 10 children.

**Time Location of Group Sessions:**

The program should be held in a comfortable, spacious, private area of the school. After school dismissal is the best time for the group. It should take place in the same place at the same time each week.

**Session Length:**

Each session should be 90 minutes long with 30 minutes set aside for a nutritional snack and check-in. The time allotted for group may not be sufficient to cover all objectives. It is important to be flexible and allow topics to extend into the next sessions. If children are open to speaking about their feelings or experiences, it is important to provide time and encourage discussion.

**Letters to Parents:**

Before Session I, two letters are presented to parents or guardians. One letter introduces the group and asks for the commitment of the parents in facilitating the child's attendance. The other letter asks for information needed in case of an emergency; in this way, facilitators ensure the child's well being during their participation in the group. (See Appendixes A and B for sample letters).

**Snack and check-in:**

During snack time a large plastic tablecloth is spread on the floor, and food is placed on trays in the centre. Beverages are provided on a table nearby. There is ample food available so children do not have to feel limited in what they can eat. Children sit around the room wherever they feel most comfortable.

As the children enjoy their snack a facilitator will ask for a volunteer to start roll-call or check-in. The child picks someone and begins asking the check-in questions that are posted on the wall. Each child and facilitator takes a turn asking and answering until everyone has shared thoughts on the following points:

1. How is your day going?
2. How was your week?
3. Tell us about something good that happened this week.
4. Tell us about something that happened that didn't make you feel so good.
5. Is there anything you would like to talk about in our group today?

The group is told that it is acceptable to "pass" at any time. From time-to-time a facilitator will pass on a question in order to show the children that passing is acceptable; this action by the facilitator provides a sense of security. "I can pass but not feel out of place or embarrassed."

The check-in serves several purposes. First, it encourages children to talk about themselves and the experiences they have had during the week. Second, it allows the children to share ups and downs and enhances the informality of the group. Third, it gives the child an opportunity to approach a topic or concern without having to initiate the discussion. Finally, the check-in gives the facilitator an opportunity to raise suggestions and provide information for the group in a non-threatening way.

The check-in consists of the same questions each week. This consistency allows the children to feel confident and at ease with the process as they will rarely forget the sequence and will always know what to expect.

**Facilitator Debriefing:**

Directly after each group session, holding a short debriefing session allows the group leaders to review the group process, make process notes, and give each other constructive feedback.



### **Individual Group Components**

Each group is described in detail using the specific components designed by the writer to help facilitators deliver the program with ease and with minimal preparation time. These components are:

1. **Session Title:** This is a simple title that is presented at the beginning of each group.
2. **Objectives:** Each group session has a list of objectives used to guide the group process itself as well as subsequent debriefing process.
3. **Content and Process:** There is a detailed account of the session with examples and suggestions to help move the facilitators through the process.
4. **Materials:** Each session plan provides a list of the materials that will be necessary for that session. This list will include such things as art supplies, films, and handouts.
5. **Notes to facilitators:** There are notes for the group leaders concerning challenges specific to the group sessions.

### **Group Objectives:**

During the sessions held with the children, the facilitators will work to accomplish the following goals:

- ❖ to create a safe place for children to talk openly about themselves;
- ❖ to help children learn to identify and express a wide range of feelings in a constructive way (close attention will be given to expressing anger in a non-violent way);

- ❖ to enhance children's feelings of self-esteem and of trust in themselves;
- ❖ to alleviate any sense of responsibility the children may have for parental problems;
- ❖ to increase awareness of children's rights and responsibilities;
- ❖ to develop alternative problem-solving skills and the opportunity to practice these skills in the group setting;
- ❖ to help increase a personal support system and personal safety; and
- ❖ to help children work through ambivalent feelings that they may have towards their families

## Session 1: Introduction

### Objectives:

1. To begin the process of creating a safe place where children can work as a group.
2. To introduce children to the objectives and rules of the group.
3. To explain confidentiality, limits of confidentiality and to provide examples.
4. To create a safe place for children to talk openly.

### Content and Process:

#### 1. *Leader's Introductions:*

Leaders talk to the children about themselves, their work, and their hobbies.

Leaders talk about themselves to allow the children to get to know them better and to show children, by demonstration, how one can talk openly about oneself, with comfort and ease.

#### 2. *Group Rules:*

Brainstorm with the children what they want to have as rules for the group. Group rules will be expressed simply in clearly understood terms, such as:

- a) no hitting
- b) no swearing
- c) no interrupting

- d) no leaving the group room without permission
- e) no name calling
- f) stop rule: If someone is doing something that doesn't make you feel good, say "stop". That person is supposed to stop what they are doing. Stopping happens immediately.

Children are encouraged to participate in choosing rules for the group for the following reasons:

- ❖ to develop a sense of ownership of the group;
- ❖ to set clear boundaries leading to a sense of safety; and
- ❖ to let them know their feelings and needs are important and necessary.

### 3. *Confidentiality:*

Define confidences using the following dialogue:

"When we have confidence in someone, we trust that person to understand what we are saying and feeling. We trust that person to respect our opinions and feelings.

It is important to remember that everybody owns his or her own feelings. That's why we have the rule "Don't tell anybody outside the group what someone else says in the group." It is not fair to tell someone else's feelings. We can share our own feelings but not the feelings of another person. Remember: those are his or her feelings, not yours.

#### *Limits of Confidentiality:*

There is an exception to this rule for group leaders. Sometimes a child is physically or emotionally hurt by an adult. When that happens and the child tells about it

during the group session, the leader has a responsibility by law to report the offence to the agency in charge of protecting children. All children deserve to be protected.

4. *Painting a Group Picture:*

**Materials:**

- ❖ Sheets of paper
- ❖ Paints/Markers/ or Crayons

The group picture is an exercise which encourages co-operation and inclusion. The children share something while they continue to get to know each other.

Each child and leader will paint on a sheet of paper which is passed along until each individual has added to the picture. Once completed, the painting is posted on the wall.

5. *Group Purpose:*

Begin a discussion about why the group was created and talk about what will be the common traits of the children who come to the group.

Give a history of the group telling:

- ❖ when it began,
- ❖ how many children have participated,
- ❖ why the group was formed, and
- ❖ how long this particular group will gather (number of weeks)

When presenting what the children in the group have in common, it is important to be non-specific. To cite a few examples:

- ❖ "All of the children who have participated in this group have witnessed

problems at home at one time or another."

- ❖ "There might be a lot of fighting."
- ❖ "Someone might drink too much."
- ❖ "There may be separation or divorce."
- ❖ "Things may happen to frighten you or make you unhappy."

The task of the facilitators is to touch on something familiar for each child; yet, the comments made should be general enough that the child never feels threatened or singled out.

Children choose whether or not to attend group. This freedom strengthens the message that they have ownership of the group and that their feelings are important. A child may test this freedom of choice by sitting out on a group. It is important that both parents and facilitators are consistent in their reaction to this; it is the child's choice, and whatever choice he or she makes is acceptable.

#### 6. *Snack Time and Check-In:*

Set out the tablecloth and serve the food and beverage. Use the check-in poster on the wall to help the children share their feelings, their experiences, and their concerns.

#### 7. *Naming the Group:*

The purpose of the children's participation in naming the group and choosing rules is to encourage ownership of the group. A child can "pass" at any time during check-in or in other activities.

**Examples of group titles:**

- ❖ Our Group
- ❖ Kids Group
- ❖ Kids Like Us
- ❖ Fun-Time
- ❖ No Violence Group

**Notes to Facilitators:**

Any pictures, paintings, flip chart sheets and crafts created in group are displayed in the group room. Children are also given an opportunity to take their creations home.

Facilitators should check in with the children when defining confidentiality to ensure they understand the terms and language used.

**Session 2: Getting To Know Each Other****Objectives:**

1. To help children become more comfortable with the group.
2. To share personal similarities and differences with each other.
3. To explore different family structures and identify each as a "real" family.

**Content and Process:***1. Creating a Mobile***Materials**

- ❖ Construction Paper
- ❖ Scissors
- ❖ Markers
- ❖ Hole Punch
- ❖ String

- a) The children cut out shapes of paper and on one side of each piece they write something they "like".
- b) On the opposite side of each shape they write something they "dislike".
- c) The shapes are attached to a cardboard base using the hole punch and different lengths of string. The mobiles are hung from the ceiling in the group room.
- d) Once the mobiles are completed the children have the opportunity



to read aloud their "likes and dislikes". Similarities and differences are noted.

2. *Snack Time and Check-In:*

Set out the tablecloth and serve the food and beverage. Use the check-in poster on the wall to help the children share their feelings, their experiences, and their concerns.

3. *A Family Portrait:*

**Materials:**

- ❖ Heavy Construction Paper
- ❖ Paint
- ❖ Large Drop Cloth
- ❖ Paint Brushes
- ❖ Smocks

- a) The children are asked to paint a picture of what their family looks like.
- b) When the pictures are finished each person describes their picture to the group. The facilitators start in order to model the process.
- c) Once each picture has been explained, the differences are noted and the facilitators send a very clear message that each family is different but each is a "real family". For example, "A mom and one child is a family just as much as a mom and a dad with children make a family. Some parents live together. Some live apart. Some parents are married, some are not. Some kids have brothers and sisters, some do not. Some kids have step-brothers and sisters or step-parents. Children can live with parents or grandparents, foster parents or other loved ones".

**Session 3: Naming Our Feelings****Objectives:**

1. To encourage the children to identify and label feelings.
2. To identify different ways people express feelings.

**Content and Process:**

1. *A collage of feelings is created.*

**Materials:**

- |            |                           |
|------------|---------------------------|
| ❖ Scissors | ❖ Magazines               |
| ❖ Glue     | ❖ Two large poster sheets |

- a) The children are asked to use magazines and find pictures of people expressing feelings. The children then paste these pictures on the large poster.
- b) Once the collage is completed the children take turns pointing to different pictures and naming what the person appears to be feeling. Each feeling noted is written on a second poster sheet attached to the wall. Children are encouraged to do the writing.
- c) Ask the group to name other feelings. Each feeling named is written on the poster.

- d) Prepare "feeling cards" for the Sponge Game (explained in next session) by cutting poster paper into 3" x 5" rectangles. Have the
- e) children cut the paper and write the feelings on the cards. (One feeling per card).
- f) Feelings Poster: The poster with the feelings written on it is kept on display throughout the group sessions. It can be referred to and added to whenever the children identify a new feeling or discuss a feeling previously noted.

Examples of feelings that could be generated by group participants for the sponge game:

fearful	sorry	sad	successful
bad	scared	jealous *	loved
free	hurt	lonely	unhappy
worried	hopeful *	frustrated *	funny
peer-pressured	sick	embarrassed	silly
excited	unloved	pressured	confused *
loving	careless	helpful	crazy
joyful	responsible *	heart-broken	proud
mad	safe	cheated	guilty
upset			

\* these words are generated by co-leaders.

**2. *Snack and Check-in:***

Set out the tablecloth and serve the food and beverage. Use the check-in poster on the wall to help the children share their feelings, their experiences, and their concerns.

**3. *Name that Feeling***

Using the poster made before snack-in, children choose a feeling and remember it until their turn comes around. They are asked not to share their choice with anyone and to "act out" the feeling without talking. The remaining group participants are given three minutes to guess the feeling. If the feeling has not been named after three minutes, the child names the feeling. In any case, after each turn the actions are discussed. The two-fold purpose of this exercise is to identify different ways people can express feelings and to show that it may not be clear what someone is feeling.

### Session 4: Expressing Our Feelings

#### Objectives:

1. To enable children to understand what they are feeling and to identify how they express themselves.
2. To explore the feeling of anger.
3. To explore appropriate and inappropriate responses to feelings of anger.

#### Content and Process:

##### 1. *Wet sponge game:*

##### Materials:

- ❖ Water
- ❖ Colored sheets of paper
- ❖ Sponges
- ❖ Cards with colors corresponding with paper

Children throw a large wet sponge at a wall which is scattered with large coloured sheets of paper. The sheets they strike have corresponding coloured cards scattered on the floor. Each card has a feeling printed on the down side. The child chooses a card of the corresponding colour and reads the feeling aloud. For example, if a child hits the blue paper then he or she picks up the blue card from the floor. The child then says the feeling aloud and answers the following questions about that feeling:

- a) What is the feeling? Describe it. Where might you feel it in your body?

Example, "When I am afraid, I feel it in my stomach."

- b) When was the last time you felt this feeling?
- c) Think of a man or woman you know. How would that person act upon having this feeling?
- d) As with any participation in the group session, the child can stop or pass the feeling card at any time.

**Note to Facilitators:**

Group leaders play the sponge game with the children; this provides the leaders with an opportunity to give examples of adults expressing feelings in inappropriate and appropriate ways.

*2. Snack and Check-in:*

Set out the tablecloth, and serve the food and beverage. Use the check-in poster on the wall to help the children share their feelings, their experiences, and their concerns.

*3. A discussion about Anger:*

- a) Ask the group to generate a definition of anger and write it on a flipchart. Note words used such as mad, bad, sad. These words will give facilitators an idea of what children have learned about anger.
- b) Ask what is good about anger and what is not so good about anger. Explain that anger is a useful, normal emotion if it is expressed in the right way.
- c) Ask, "What are some helpful ways to let someone know you are angry?"

- d) What are some hurtful ways to let someone know you are angry?

**Notes to Facilitators:**

The purpose of this exercise is to teach children that they will be angry at times. They must understand that anger is a natural emotion. It is important for everyone to learn how to express that anger in an acceptable way.

Use an analogy to explain the negative effects of not expressing your anger. For example, you could say that anger is like a balloon inside you. If you do not express your anger, it can grow. The balloon expands until finally someone or something as small as a needle point can pop a hole in the balloon and BANG all of the anger that has been building comes out at once. Sometimes the person who is near may get the brunt of all of anger even though it may not be that person you are really angry with.

Every-day scenarios can be used. Conflict with school mates or siblings are good examples. Examples are written by facilitators ahead of time and presented for the children's consideration during this discussion. You can pose the question: "What would you do if ....?"

This exercise also validates the children's feelings experienced when they witness violence at home. Children learn that there are alternatives to violence.

A discussion is started about ways people can show their feelings. The group is encouraged to generate examples. The ideas are also noted on the poster paper attached to the wall.

Children generate examples of ways people show their feelings. A table of possible answers is given in the following list.

- |                  |                  |                 |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| ❖ fooling around | ❖ slamming doors | ❖ lying around  |
| ❖ smiling        | ❖ laughing       | ❖ joking around |
| ❖ getting sick   | ❖ crying         | ❖ being quiet   |
| ❖ yelling        | ❖                | ❖ hitting       |

The facilitators can add examples, such as: drinking, walking away, leaving the house.



**Session 5: Relaxation/Guided Imagery****Objectives:**

1. To teach children how to relax.
2. To provide an opportunity for children to image themselves succeeding and to see themselves in a positive light.

**Content and Process:***1. Read Guided Imagery #1, entitled "Fantasy" (on page 39).*

- a) Note: Children are reminded that they can keep their eyes open if they do not feel comfortable closing them during the guided imagery.

**Materials:**

- |              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| ❖ Drop cloth | ❖ Brushes |
| ❖ Paint      | ❖ Smocks  |

Children will paint a picture of their safe place. During this exercise, it is important to encourage children to stay as quiet as possible so as not to distract the others.

*2. Snack and Check-in:*

Set out the tablecloth and serve the food and beverage. Use the check-in poster on the wall to help the children share their feelings, their experiences, and their concerns

### 3. *Guided Imagery #2:*

Using the relaxation techniques for introducing guided imagery, guide the children through an imagery exercise. You will create your own scenario using one or more of the following themes:

- ❖ the child doing well on a test;
- ❖ the child solving a problem in an effective way;
- ❖ the child doing something helpful for another or, him or herself.

#### **Note to Facilitators:**

*Guided Imagery* has been found effective in helping children relax as it incorporates both breathing exercises and muscle relaxation. A child who lives in a violent home often does not receive acknowledgement of his or her coping abilities. All too often the adults in their lives are focussed on their own problems; struggling to cope, these adults are often unable to recognize that their child is experiencing problems.

Through guided imagery, children learn new skills to cope when there is tension. Children learn best when stress is low and when they are happy. They can then apply those skills during high-stress periods in their lives. These exercises can help them develop a positive self-image and self-confidence.

### 4. *Debriefing:*

It is important to debrief after a guided imagery. Following the exercise and any related art work, ask children to answer the following three questions: 1. What thoughts

were going through your mind during the exercise? 2. What did your body feel like?

3. How do you feel now?

### **"FANTASY"**

"In a minute I'm going to ask all of you in the group to close your eyes and I will take you on an imaginary fantasy trip. When we are finished you will open your eyes and draw something that will be at the end of this trip. Now, I'd like you to get as comfortable as you can, close your eyes, and go into your space. When you close your eyes, there's a space that you find yourself in. It 's what I call your space. You take up that space in this room and wherever you are, but you don't usually notice it. With your eyes closed, you can get a sense of that space--where your body is, and the air that's around you. It's a nice place to be, because it's your place, it's your space. Notice what's going on in your body. Notice if you're tense anywhere. Don't try to relax these places where you might be tight and tense. Just notice them. Run down your body from your head to your toes and take notice. How are you breathing? Are you taking deep breaths or are you breathing with small, quick breaths? I would like you to take a couple of very deep breaths now. Let the air out with some sound. Haaaaah. O.K. I'm going to tell you a little story now, and take you on a make-believe trip. See if you can follow along. Imagine what I tell you, and see how you feel while you're doing it. Notice if you like going on this little trip, or if you don't. When you come to parts you don't like,

you don't have to go there. Just listen to my voice, follow along if you want to, and let's just see what happens. I want you to imagine that you're walking through the woods. There are trees all around and there are birds singing. The sun is coming through the trees, and it's shady. It feels very nice walking through these woods. There are little flowers, wild flowers, along the side. You're walking along the path. There are rocks along the sides of the path, and every now and then you see a small animal scurrying away, a little rabbit maybe. You're walking along, and soon you notice the path is rising and you're going uphill. Now you know you are climbing a mountain. When you reach the top of the mountain, you sit on a large rock to rest. You look around. The sun is shining; birds are flying around. Across the way, with a valley in between, is another mountain. You can see that on the mountain there is a cave, and you wish you could be on that mountain. You notice that the birds are flying over there easily, and you wish you were a bird.

Suddenly, because this is a fantasy and anything can happen, you realize that you have turned into a bird! You test your wings, and sure enough you can fly. So you take off and easily fly to the other side. (Pause to give time for flying.)"On the other side you land on a rock and instantly turn back into yourself. You climb around the rocks looking for an entrance to the cave, and you see a small door. You crouch down and open it and enter the cave. When you are inside there's plenty of room to stand

up. You walk around examining the walls of the cave and suddenly you notice a walkway—a corridor. You walk down this corridor and soon you notice there are rows of doors, each with a name written on it.

All of a sudden you come to a door with your name on it. You stand there in front of your door, thinking about it. You know that you will open it soon and go to the other side of that door. You know that it will be your place. It might be a place you remember, a place you know now, a place you dream about, a place you don't even like, a place you never saw, an inside place, or an outside place. You won't know until you open the door. But whatever it is, it will be your place. So you turn the knob and step through. Look around at your place! Are you surprised? Take a good look at it. If you don't see one, make one up right now. See what's there, where it is, whether it is inside or out. Who is there? Are there people, people you know or don't know? Are there animals? Or is no one there?

How do you feel in this place, notice how you feel. Do you feel good or not so good? Look around; walk around your place. (Pause)"When you are ready you will open your eyes and find yourself back in this room. When you open your eyes, I would like you to get some paper and crayons, or felt pens or pastels, and draw your place."

Source:

Oaklander, V., (1988). Windows to Our Children. Highland, New York: The Centre for Gestalt Development, Inc.

**Session 6: Taking Care of Our Feelings and Children's Rights****Objectives:**

1. To instill the belief that children have rights and to identify some of these rights.
2. To facilitate a discussion about situations that produce negative feelings.
3. To develop coping skills during negative situations that are beyond a child's control to change.

**Content and Process:***1. A definition of "Rights"*

- a) Present this definition to the children aloud; rights are things and feelings in your life that are fair and necessary to make you feel safe and cared for.
- b) Ask the children to brainstorm "rights" that they have. Add others to the list generated by children. Put at end of sentence:

"I have a right to \_\_\_\_\_."

Examples of rights the children may give:

- |                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| ❖ eat well                | ❖ be safe                  |
| ❖ go to school            | ❖ be free                  |
| ❖ live in a house         | ❖ have fun                 |
| ❖ have a family           | ❖ be heard                 |
| ❖ be treated with respect | ❖ be treated with kindness |

2. *Snack time and Check-in:*

Set out the tablecloth and serve the food and beverage. Use the check-in poster on the wall to help the children share their feelings, their experiences, and their concerns.

3. *Bad Feelings:*

- a) Ask the children to describe situations that produce bad feelings such as fear, worry, anger or unhappiness. Situations that they have no control over.

Facilitators give one example: If a teacher and a student in your class are arguing and you feel uncomfortable. Other examples :

- ❖ when Mom and Dad are fighting
- ❖ when my brothers and sister are fighting
- ❖ when someone makes fun of me
- ❖ when someone tries to hurt me
- ❖ when there is a big storm

b) *Coping with difficulties:*

*To cope with a problem* means to handle the problem in a good way. Coping with a problem won't always make it go away. Coping with a problem will make it easier to live with.

\*Reference: Hastings, T. M. and Typpo, M.H. (1984). An Elephant in the Living Room. The Children's Book Minneapolis, MN: Compcare Publishers [Also available to accompany this book is a Leader's Guide published in 1994 by Hazelden Information and Educational Services in Center City, Minnesota.]

- c) Ask the children what they can do to feel better, more at ease in difficult situations.

Examples generated by children:

- |                 |                 |                                   |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| ❖ call a friend | ❖ talk it out   | ❖ go to your room                 |
| ❖ get a massage | ❖ lie down      | ❖ think good thoughts             |
| ❖ yell out      | ❖ get fresh air | ❖ try to figure out why I'm upset |
| ❖ sleep         | ❖ go on a trip  | ❖ walking, go out doors           |
|                 | ❖ play music    |                                   |

This discussion provides children with new coping skills and it acknowledges what they have already learned to do to cope with negative feelings.

4. *Guided Imagery # 3:*

End with the short guided imagery on page 46 called "The Ally Within". This will give the children an opportunity to practice relaxation techniques and focus on something positive. There is time for check-out prior to closing to allow the children to talk about how they feel.



### THE ALLY WITHIN

Age: 5 through adult

Exercise: 5-10 minutes

Follow-up: 15 minutes

*Note: The children are told that ally means friend. Children are reminded that they do not have to close their eyes if it makes them uncomfortable.*

Close you eyes and focus your attention on your breath moving in ... and ... out... of your nostrils. As you continue to breathe at your own rate, imagine that you are on a path in a very thick forest. All around you are beautiful green trees, and you walk down this path toward the sound of water. You come upon a small stream, and you walk over to the stream and look at your reflection in the water. (pause)

Soon you feel another presence standing next to you, and you feel completely safe. You see another reflection join yours in the water. This other presence may be that of an old, wise being, an animal, or an imaginary being who you feel is your ally, someone whom you have known for a long time, someone whom you can trust. Your ally beckons to

you to follow across a small bridge that crosses the stream. You follow and find yourself climbing a hill that leads to a cave. Your ally enters the cave, sits down, and gestures for you to follow. You enter the cave and sit down, and your ally begins to tell you about yourself. (pause for 1 minute)

You may have a particular question you wish to ask your ally, and you do that now. You listen closely to the answer. (pause 1 minute)

Your ally tells you that you may return at any time you wish. He or she will always be there waiting for you to help you with anything that you need. You thank your ally, walk back down the path over the bridge, looking once again at your reflection in the water. You notice how you feel as you walk up the path, out of the forest, and become aware of sitting here, fully present. Count to three to yourself and slowly open your eyes.

\* Murdoch, M. (1987). Spinning Inward: Using Guided Imagery with Children for Learning, Creativity, and Relaxation. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications

**Session 7: Personal Safety**

**(Allow at least two sessions for this experience)**

**Objective:**

1. To explore good and bad feelings using the videos noted below.
2. To identify community resources that can be used if a child needs help, i.e., who to call on for help.
3. To create a personal directory of helpers.

**Content and Process:**

*1. Film: "Feeling-Yes, Feeling-No" series:*

a) Show the film.

This VHS film series is in three parts, It is put out by the National Film Board and Health and Welfare Canada. The writer is Wendy van Riessen.  
(1984)

b) Activity based on the film:

**Materials:**

- ❖ Colored Construction Paper      ❖ Scissors
- ❖ Markers                                      ❖ Glue

Provide ample time to brief and debrief before, after and during the films

2. *Snack and Check-in:*

As always set out the tablecloth and serve the food and beverage. Use the check-in poster on the wall to help the children share their feelings, their experiences, and their concerns.

3. *People to Contact:*

- a) Have the children make a personal list of people whom they can approach if they have the "no" feelings or if they are in trouble. Write the common names and numbers generated by the group on a large poster attached to the wall. Numbers of the local shelter, police, hospital and family neighbours, teachers, friends and Kid's Help Line are included.
- b) Have each child create a pocket-size directory of names and telephone numbers of helpers. The children can cut, paste, and decorate a small booklet with important safety information.
- c) Be sure to include the Kids Help Line: 1-800-668-6868

**Session 8: Abusive Behaviour and Responsibility**

**Allow at least two sessions for this experience**

**Objectives:**

1. To clearly define types of abusive behaviour.
2. To instill in children the idea that they are not responsible for abuse and violence in their homes.
3. To validate feelings children have for a loved one who is abusive: they can love a person but dislike what the person sometimes does.

**Content and Process:***1. Types of Abusive Behaviour:*

- a) Ask the group: What other ways can you hurt someone without hitting them?
- b) List answers on a flip chart. Attach the paper on the wall for the remainder of the group.

Some examples :

- |                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| ❖ calling names        | ❖ sexual abuse       |
| ❖ not letting you play | ❖ saying mean things |

2. *Define "Abuse":*

"When someone does something to you to hurt your body, to make you feel stupid, or to frighten you., you know that you are being abused. Sometimes someone says, "It was an accident." Sometimes that is true; it is an accident. However, hurt may not be an accident especially when the other person is older than you."

3. *Define types of Abuse:*

You can refer to the poster made in this session listing ways you can hurt someone without hitting them.

4. *Types of abuse:*

Sexual Assault:

*Sexual assault* happens when someone gives you the "no" feeling by touching us on the breast, vagina, or bum if you are a girl or on the penis or bum if you are a boy; sexual assault also happens when someone makes you touch these parts of his or her body. A person who shows these parts of the body to others in order to scare them is called an "exposer". Exposing is a type of sexual assault.

Remember: You need to know the difference between abuse and a touch given by a loved one or a touch made by someone who wants to help you. For example, if you need medical attention or if a parent or guardian helps you wash, that kind of touch is right. But if you have the "no" feeling during these times, it is still something you should tell someone about. If you are not comfortable with someone helping you care for your body, say "No, I can do it myself" or ask someone you trust to help you. There is never a

good reason for a child to touch an adult's private parts.

**\*Reference:**

Feeling Yes, Feeling No (VHS), Van Riesen, W. (Writer), NFB, National Clearing House on Family Violence, Health and Welfare Canada (1984). This is a three-part series.

**Physical Abuse:**

Someone hurts your body or puts you in danger of being hurt especially when that person is bigger. Examples of physical abuse include pushing, shoving, kicking, slapping, using other objects, such as a belt, to hit you. Other types of physical abuse include breaking things, smashing furniture, and punching holes in wall

**Emotional Abuse:**

When someone says mean things to you to make you feel stupid or worthless, that person is abusing you emotionally.

**Psychological Abuse:**

Psychological abuse happens when you are threatened, when someone tells you they will hurt you or your loved ones if you do not do what they want you to do. When someone, especially an adult, does something to make you afraid of them -- that is psychological abuse.

The definitions of kinds of abuse must be explained clearly. Children are

encouraged to ask questions and to give examples. This will allow facilitators to ensure the children have understood the definitions.

5. *Snack time and Check-In:*

Carry out as always.

6. *Responsibility:*

a) *Define Responsibility*

*Responsibility* means being in charge of your own actions.

b) *Examples of taking responsibility.*

- ❖ You take all of your toys into the living room to play with. When you are finished playing, you show that you are being responsible by putting your toys away.
- ❖ You get a pet from your uncle. You show that you are responsible for your pet by making sure there is always fresh water and food in its dish. This shows that you are a responsible pet owner.

7. *Discussion:*

Facilitate a general discussion about people taking responsibility for their actions and holding people responsible for their actions. Children are encouraged to give examples about school, groups they have joined, and family situations.

8. *Role Playing:*

Develop a scenario in which someone blames another for their abusive behaviour.

Ask the children "What is wrong with this story?"



*Example of a story line:*

A family is out for a Sunday drive ... A parent is driving ... The kids are upset ...Parent drives very fast, misses a turn and hits a fence ... Parent blames the kids' acting up for the fender bender ...

Acknowledge the fact that you can be hurt by strangers or by someone close to you and that you can still care about someone but hate their behaviour.

**Note to Facilitators:**

It is difficult to define sexual abuse to children as the concept of sexual activity may not be clear. The preceding discussion may be confusing. Be clear and encourage questions.

**Session 9: Building a Dream Catcher****Objectives:**

1. To introduce a positive aspect of proper rest and self-nurturing
2. To present the Dream Catcher as a symbol of good dreams and to open discussion about bad dreams.
3. To encourage the selection of personal coping skills and introduce the idea that children can do good things for themselves.
4. To increase feelings of security and happiness.

**Materials:**

- |                                      |                |                         |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| ❖ Coat Hangers                       | ❖ Dental Floss | ❖ Coloured Beads        |
| ❖ Clear Beads                        |                | ❖ Heavy Coloured String |
| ❖ Coloured Tape or Strips of Leather |                | ❖ Feathers              |

A diagram to show one way of making of a dream catcher is shown on the following page. Keep in mind that this is only a suggestion; there are many ways to make a dream catcher.

### How to make a dreamcatcher



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



**Content and Process:****1. Dream Catchers:**

- a) Introduce the Dream Catcher explaining its history and purpose.

**Dream Catchers**

Dream catchers originated with aboriginal people. They are usually made with natural things like wood, sinew, animal hide, birds feathers, stone beads, crystals and fur.

- b) Describe the process of making it by drawing one on a flip-chart and showing the children a picture or an actual model. The description attached will be helpful.

**A Dream Catcher**

A hoop is made with a wooden branch and the sinew is woven inside the hoop creating a weblike design. A crystal is attached to the centre of the web. Beads, feathers and fur are hung from the hoop. The dream catcher is hung in the owner's bedroom. At night the dreams of the sleeper pass through the dream catcher; the bad dreams get caught in the web and the good dreams flow through the feathers and fur and reach the dreamer. In the morning the sunlight hits the crystal and burns the bad dreams away.

- c) Use the time to construct the Dream Catcher as a forum to discuss the importance to restful sleep and to explore the source of bad dreams. Introduce the idea

that if you have a lot on your mind, if things are bothering you, you may not sleep well. Stress the fact that dreams are not omens i.e., they do not predict the future but rather they are a product of your mind's activity while you are asleep.

Provide one-on-one assistance in building the dream catcher as it can be tedious work. The end product can be as unique as children choose to make it, this allows for a sense of ownership. The children are reminded that the Dream Catcher is not magic, but if you believe in its function, it might help you sleep better.

2. *Snack and Check-in:*

Integrate snack and check-in during the group activities.

### Session 10: Sex Roles and Stereotyping

#### Objective:

1. To explore children's attitudes about the roles of males and females.
2. To explore children's beliefs about differences between males and females in the expression of emotion/feelings.
3. To dispel myths or biases about role and differences that exist within the group.

#### Content and Process:

##### 1. *Role of Boys and Girls:*

- a) Write the following headings on one flip chart.

#1. Boys are supposed to:.. Examples: be strong, play sports	#2. Boys are not supposed to... Examples:cry, babysit
#3. Girls are supposed to.... e.g., look nice, baby sit	#4. Girls are not supposed to... e.g., swear, fight

- b) Ask children to complete the statements on the flipchart starting with #1 and moving in order to #4.
- c) Review the statements and acknowledge any biases that occur. For example, boys are not supposed to cry. Challenge such statements

and encourage children to discuss why it is challenged.

**Note to Facilitators:** Focus on the importance of all types of equality:

- ❖ physical strength and endurance
- ❖ intellectual capabilities
- ❖ emotional expression.

*2. Writing our attitudes:*

Using a large poster, draw a circle diagram (See diagram 10.1). Ask the children to take turns writing in each circle. The statements generated will reflect any changes in attitudes helped by the previous exercise. It will also help to identify attitudes that may still need to be challenged.

*3. Facilitate a discussion about the importance of gender equality.*

*4. Snack and Check-in*

*5. "Media Search"*

**Materials**

- ❖ Fashion Magazines
- ❖ Movie Magazines
- ❖ Scissors
- ❖ Markers

Children are asked to search through magazines for pictures or images of women which they feel are: negative; show women as objects or show violence towards women.

The group leaders guide the children through this process. Leaders give examples

that they have found and provide reasons for their choices. The children are then asked to repeat the same exercise finding images of men which have the same negative messages. The children are then asked to repeat the same exercise finding images of children which have the same negative messages.

The purpose of this exercise is to encourage the children to think about the power that the media has. Negative messages are pointed out. For example, men have to be powerful and strong to be successful or women have to be beautiful, thin, passive to be worthwhile. Movies, television, music lyrics and video are discussed at length, examples of negative images and messages are given by the co-leaders and children are encouraged to add to the list.



**Session 11: Review and Beginning to Say Goodbye****Objectives:**

1. To explore what the children have learned from group
2. To provide a detailed review of material covered in the previous weeks.
3. To begin closure with children, exploring safety plans and re-introducing community supports.

**Content and Process:***1. Painting a picture of what I learned:*

The children paint or draw pictures about what they have learned from the group.

Topics are given:

What I have learned about.....me, staying safe, anger, abuse, males and females, etc.,

*2. Snack and Check-in**3. Overview:*

- a) The co-leaders give an overview of topics covered during the group sessions. Children are encouraged to ask questions or add information.
- b) Children are asked to recall the different people or places they can turn to for help.

- c) A list is generated on the flip chart. Children are encouraged to do the writing.

## **Session 12: Saying Good-bye**

### **Objectives:**

1. To congratulate the children's success in the participating in the group.
2. To explore how children are feeling about the group ending.
3. To present the children with a written acknowledgement of their success and their importance as individuals. (written by co-leaders to each child) (See Appendix C).
4. To have fun.

### **Content and Process:**

#### *Check-in:*

Do a check-in prior to social activities. Add the following:

- ❖ What word would describe how you feel about your participation in the group?
- ❖ What word would describe how you are feeling about the group coming to an end?

### **Notes to Facilitators:**

The primary focus of this session is to allow the children to socialize. They are informed in the early sessions of the group that they will have a party when the group ends.

Children are given time to chat, listen to music, receive acknowledgement about their success in the group and to say good-bye.

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**Appendix A****Consent Form**

To be sent to parents/guardians

[Address]

[Date]

Dear Parent or Guardian:

High self-esteem is one of the most important qualities a child can have. When a child feels confident, he or she can enjoy relationships with peers and relate more positively to adults. In addition, the overall attitude towards school improves.

We are offering your child the opportunity to take part in our children's group.

We will be exploring the following issues:

1. Building self-confidence, self-esteem
2. Understanding feelings
3. Family Violence
4. Relaxation
5. Personal Safety

This group provides a safe, supportive environment, a place where your child can share similar ideas and experiences with his or her peers. It is important for your child to be present at each session that he or she wishes to attend.

If you feel your child would benefit from this group and you are willing to help in his/her attendance, please call us for further information. Your commitment is important.

Thank-you.

Sincerely,

Names of Group Leaders

**Appendix B**

Information Form: To be filled out by parent/guardian

**Personal Information Form**

Dear Parent or Guardian:

It is important to do all we can to ensure the safety and well being of your child during his/her participation in group. Please answer the following questions in as much detail as possible:

1. How will your child be transported from group after school? Who will provide transportation? List names or taxi service. Note: Please inform the group leaders if anyone other than those listed will be picking up your child.

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2. Does your child have any medical problems we should know about? For example, diabetes, allergies, epilepsy, etc. Please specify medical problem listing special needs.

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3. Please list the name(s) and phone numbers of counsellors or other workers involved with your child.

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Please contact us if your child has been exposed to or is suffering from a contagious illness during his or her participation in group.

Thank you for your help.

Signatures of Facilitators: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Appendix C**

#### **Letter to the Child on Completion of the Sessions**

[Address]

[Date]

Dear Michael:

Congratulations, you have been successful in finishing the Children's Group.  
Before we say good-bye, we would like to thank-you for being a part of our group.

You are a very special person and you were an important member of the group.  
The thing we will remember most about you is your wonderful sense of humour.

Best Wishes,

[Signatures of Facilitators]





