

## ◆ Introduction:

Have kids introduce themselves by sharing their favorite food, music and TV show.

## ◆ Group Focusing Exercise (10 mins)

*Ages 10 - 13*

Match your number game: List 7 exercises on a chart and number them. Number the group members (i.e, 1,2,3, etc). Call the group number and the exercise number. Group members have to focus and know their number then match it to the exercise number then do the exercise.

*Ages 13 -15*

Tray game: put 7-10 objects on a tray and cover it with a towel. Allow kids to view objects for one minute. Cover tray again and have kids write down what they remember was on the tray. They have to focus to do well.

## ◆ Describe the general group

- Talk about stressors that people have experienced and show list of possible stressors. Explain that this changes your body and brain and that we are going to learn how to better manage stressful situations.
- Discuss confidentiality and that you are a mandated reporter.
- Have group recognize what group rules they need to have a good group. Write them out and display them.

## ◆ Psychoeducation Session (30 mins)

Use handouts to discuss Extreme stress; the symptoms associated with extreme stress reactions and teach about the body and the alarm mode when under extreme stress.

*Example:* Use losing homework book as normal stress and getting money taken out of your wallet as extreme stress.

## ◆ Experiential Sections (20 mins)

Show kids how their brain works differently under different levels of stress.

- Prepare two lists of 6 unrelated objects. (Umbrella, glasses, cat, salt, bike soda & hair, spoon, coat, pencil, light, chair). Have loud distracting music playing when you read the first list then wait 2 minutes with music playing and have them write down what objects they remember. Turn music off, let kids take a break, do a breathing exercise after the break to calm kids down and repeat exercise with second list.

This can help kids understand how their brain works when it is in alarm mode and when it is not.

## ◆ Homework

Have kids keep track of any time in the next two days that they feel they are in alarm mode.

## ◆ **Group Focusing Exercise** (5 mins)

Tray game: put 7-10 objects on a tray and cover it with a towel. Allow kids to view objects for one minute. Cover tray again and have kids write down what they remember was on the tray. They have to focus to do well.

## ◆ **Psychoeducation Session** (30 mins)

Review the body's alarm system and ask if they remember feeling alarmed since last group.

- Show sheet with examples of Possible Stress Reactions that impact their stress Temperature.
- Discuss Coping strategies for stress (both good and bad coping)
- Create a Coping sheet for the group to use if someone gets stressed in group.
- Introduce FREEDOM steps as way of coping with stress.

## ◆ **Experiential Sections** (15 mins)

### Focusing exercise

To emphasize the idea of changing automatic reaction do the following: Give each child a bite size candy bar (no peanuts in case of allergies) or potato chips. Let kids enjoy eating the candy/chips any way they like. Once they are finished give them one more piece of candy/chip and tell them to place it on the napkin in front of them. This candy/chip they will eat in a slow, controlled manner guided by the leader. This exercise is to show them that the body and brain is used to reacting to and doing things in certain ways and we have to teach it to do it slower and calmer. Have kids take tiny bites and return the candy/chip to the napkin after each bite with an instruction not to swallow the candy/chip in their mouth until they are told. Their reflex will be to eat it fast and swallow it quickly just as when under alarm their reflex may be to get angry or act out in other ways. Managing stress involves catching that automatic reaction and doing things more calmly and slower. This helps them see that it is difficult to change automatic reactions.

## ◆ **Temperature Check Out**

Have clients report temperature scores at this time. Address any scores >7 on stress or urges before leaving group.

## ◆ **Homework**

Have kids keep track of when they are stressed and what coping mechanisms they use to reduce the stress. Also keep track if they think to slow down and orient during stressful situations.

## ◆ **Group Focusing Exercise** (5 mins)

Mirroring exercise: First have group members follow group leader's body movements without talking. Have group members pair up and take turns following each other's body movements. Group leader can do three movements and then see if the group members can focus and repeat the exact movements (e.g., dance steps to music, Karate moves). Help kids have fun without getting carried away and physically intruding on one another or triggering each other's alarms. Ask kids to pay attention to how close or far from each other they feel most comfortable, and to respect "personal space" in the exercise.

## ◆ **Psychoeducation Session** (30 mins)

Briefly review material from last session.

- Post FREEDOM steps and let them know we will be working through them one by one and today is *Focusing*.
- Discuss focusing and why we need to learn to do it.
- Teach SOS.
- Teach group about the temperature gauge and how it relates to Focusing/SOS.
- Practice self-checks.

## ◆ **Experiential Sections** (25 mins)

### Slow Down

Breathing exercises: teach the group to listen to their breathing and focus on how it sounds and how fast it is. Play loud music or make loud noises that are unexpected, and then guide group members in quietly listening to their own breathing.

Create individual lists for focusing skills. Have group go through magazines and find pictures they feel would be self-soothing or calming. Have each member explain the pictures and how that activity would help them focus or self-sooth. Discuss creating a script or poem to help you focus.

### Orient

To teach the group to orient you can have them close their eyes and spin them around a few times and see how long it takes them to stand straight and walk in a straight line after being spun around. This lets them know that when the alarm is on it is like they are spinning, and getting oriented is like stopping the spinning. Ask them to not spin each other around, unless they are asked by the other person to do so. When they are getting oriented after spinning, ask them again to describe their comfortable personal space zone (how close is too close to you, how far away is too far).

## ◆ **Individual Art Expression** (20 mins)

Using magazines and art supplies have group members decorated a poster board that they can mount their focusing lists, scripts or poems onto. These can be used in group as well as taken home for their rooms.

## ◆ **Temperature Check Out and Focusing** (10 mins)

After putting away art project have clients report temperature scores at this time. Address any scores >7 on stress or urges before leaving group.

## ◆ **Homework**

Have each member track what they do to calm themselves whether it is breathing or something else on a daily basis.

## ◆ Temperature Check In

- Have each person identify how he or she used SOS in past week or days.
- Review scales for each person and invite those with extreme scales to share.
- Use FREEDOM scales to address extreme scales.

## ◆ Group Focusing Exercise (5 mins)

Identify the details in a picture: pass around a magazine picture or a photo that has an active scene. Have each group member take time to look it over. Put the picture away and have each group member write down details they remember about the picture. Do not tell group members they will be asked to do this while they are looking at the photo.

## ◆ Psychoeducation Session (30 mins)

Briefly review material from last sessions.

- *Stressors*: use handout on types of stressors to teach where stress can come from and what can raise your temperature.
- *Triggers*: are stressors that are link to traumatic experiences. Teach what could be a trigger from Trauma Trigger handout. Help group members recognize what their triggers might be. Use Trapped handout to emphasize how they might feel when they are triggered.
- *Focusing or Self-Soothing*: Review the activities they may like to do when they are triggered or feel trapped. Use Pleasant Activities handout to review focusing/self-soothing skills.

## ◆ Experiential Section (25 mins)

Do word associations to illustrate how you can get triggered to a memory. Create a list of words and have members write down what images that word triggers for them. Pick memorable but not traumatic trigger words (e.g., Halloween, snow, apple pie, waves).

## ◆ Individual Art Expression (20 mins)

Finish decorating and preparing focusing/self soothing posters.

## ◆ Temperature Check Out and Focusing (10 mins)

After putting away art project have clients report temperature scores at this time. Address any scores >7 on stress or urges before leaving group.

## ◆ Homework

Have them take home and fill out The Things That Make Me Happy sheet.

## ◆ **Temperature Check In** (20 mins)

- Have each person identify how they used SOS in past week or days
- Review each kid's current self-check scores.
- Use FREEDOM steps to address scores >7 on stress or urges.

## ◆ **Group Focusing Exercise** (5 mins)

Have group do a simple focusing exercise of going through the alphabet and thinking of either names, places or a category of things that start with each letter of the alphabet. Go around the group and have each person give an example of the chosen category that matches the letter they get. IE A=Anne, B=Barb, C=Carol. This is something they could use in the future to manage stress reactions and calm themselves down.

## ◆ **Psychoeducation Session** (20 mins)

Briefly review material from last sessions.

- Discuss self-soothing again and have kids review their list of self-soothing practices so that they can illustrate them on a paper during the art session.
- Discuss the importance of support people and safety to help you self soothe.
- Have each group member outline 10 practices that work for him or her. Have them fill out and discuss *The Things That Make Them Happy* handout (if they did not do it for homework). Use self-soothing list on handouts to give them ideas.
- Have them fill out support sheet and safety plan sheet so they know whom they can go to when they are feeling stressed.

## ◆ **Experiential Sections** (15 mins)

Do ABC game but this time do it with self-soothing techniques. A=arrange my room, B=bike ride, C=call a friend.

## ◆ **Individual Art Expression** (20 mins)

Work on frame for self-soothing list, poem or script. The frame will be made of magazine clippings, drawings and any other art material available. Each child will decorate a border on a poster board with pictures that reflect their ways of self-soothing. In the middle of the board they will write the top ten ways they like to self soothe.

## ◆ **Temperature Check Out and Focusing** (10 mins)

After putting away art project have clients report temperature scores at this time. Address any scores >7 on stress or urges before leaving group.

## ◆ **Homework**

Journal freedom steps F and R, keep track of when using SOS to report to group, introduce attuning exercises to family or friends.

## ◆ **Temperature Check In** (20 mins)

- Have each person identify how he/she used SOS in past week or days.
- Review each kid's current self-check scores.
- Use FREEDOM steps to address scores >7 on stress or urges.

## ◆ **Group Focusing Exercise** (5 mins)

Have group fill out face sheet by labeling each face with the emotion they think it is expressing. Review the group's labels and see how they differ.

## ◆ **Psychoeducation Session** (20 mins)

Briefly review material from last sessions.

- Explain the ideas of Reactive emotions and the one main emotion.
- Use handouts on stages of emotions and emotion awareness to teach these concepts.
- Practice F R E

## ◆ **Experiential Sections** (15 mins)

- Listen to rap music or a poem and have them try to figure out what the one main emotion is behind the music or poem.

Or

- Have group act out skit of a boy/girl going to a corner store to buy milk. Have a grocer and a boy/girl and have each of them pick out of a hat what emotion they will play the character as. See how different emotions can impact the outcome of the same skit. Have each person take a turn playing each character and see how the scene is impacted by the different emotions.

## ◆ **Individual Art Expression** (20 mins)

Continue working on frame for their self-soothing techniques.

## ◆ **Temperature Check Out and Focusing** (10 mins)

After putting away art project have clients report temperature scores at this time. Address any scores >7 on stress or urges before leaving group.

## ◆ **Homework**

Have group members pay attention to their reactive emotions. Have them explain the different stages of emotions to someone at home.

## ◆ **Temperature Check In** (20 mins)

- Have each person identify how he/she used SOS in past week or days.
- Review each kid's current self-check scores.
- Use FREEDOM steps to address scores >7 on stress or urges.

## ◆ **Group Focusing Exercise** (5 mins)

### Thought patterns:

Have the group consider a difficult situation listed on the *First Thoughts* handout and write down what their first thoughts are related to each situation.

## ◆ **Psychoeducation Session** (20 mins)

Briefly review material from last session.

- Review the answers to the *First Thoughts* handout questions. Use these answers to introduce the ideas on the *Evaluating Thoughts* handout about first reactive thoughts and underlying or main thought. Try to get group members to see what underlying thoughts they may have related to these situations.
- Discuss the list of possible reactive thoughts and main thoughts.
- Discuss handout on how they can recognize when they are in a negative shut down thought pattern. Ask them which of the phrases relate to when they are in the Shut Down mode.
- Practice F R E E using a recent stressor from one of the group members.

## ◆ **Experiential Sections** (15 mins)

Use the idea of rap freestyling music to illustrate the difference between a thought process that is focused and clear and one that is disorganized and unclear (*Handout: Extreme Stress Thoughts Exercise*). When you listen to good freestyle rap you can understand it but bad freestyle rap does not make sense. When your brain is under alarm it is like bad freestyling and sometimes you cannot think clearly. When you are calm and focused you can think clearly and recognize your main thoughts. When you are under alarm you have more shut down and reactive thoughts.

## ◆ **Individual Art Expression** (20 mins)

Have group finish frame and art project and glue self-soothing lists, poems or scripts onto frame.

## ◆ **Temperature Check Out and Focusing** (10 mins)

After putting away art project have clients report temperature scales at this time. Address any raised scales before leaving group.

## ◆ **Homework**

Have kids keep track of stressful situations and whether they had reactive thoughts or clear thoughts during it. Have them teach someone at home about this concept.

## ◆ **Temperature Check In** (20 mins)

- Have each person identify how he/she used SOS in past week or days.
- Review each kid's current self-check scores.
- Use FREEDOM steps to address scores >7 on stress or urges.

## ◆ **Group Focusing Exercise** (5 mins)

It is important to identify supports in your life that can help you achieve your goals. Take a minute and reflect on people in your life that have supported you in the past. Have group members review the social support sheet from session five and add additional supports if they can. When discussing goals later in the group have members keep in mind those people that can support them in their goals.

## ◆ **Psychoeducation Session** (20 mins)

Briefly review material from last sessions.

- Review FREEDOM steps and use example to illustrate how each step is used.
- Review what skills they have learned in this group so far.
- Discuss the concepts of goals and how you go about achieving them. Why do we need goals? Goals guide your future and present behavior. What goals have they already achieved?
- Practice F R E E D using a recent stressor from the group.

## ◆ **Experiential Sections** (15 mins)

- On chart paper or individual pieces of paper go around the group and help each person to recognize goals in their life that they have already attained.
- Have group members fill out "working towards your goal" handout.

## ◆ **Individual Art Expression** (20 mins)

Have group members do a collage, painting or drawing that represents their past and future goals.

## ◆ **Temperature Check Out and Focusing** (10 mins)

After putting away art project have clients report temperature scales at this time. Address any raised scales before leaving group.

## ◆ **Homework**

Journal freedom steps, keep track of when using SOS to report to groups, attuning exercises with family.

## ◆ **Temperature Check In** (20 mins)

- Have each person identify how he/she used SOS in past week or days.
- Review each kid's current self-check scores.
- Use FREEDOM steps to address scores >7 on stress or urges.

## ◆ **Group Focusing Exercise** (5 mins)

Have each group member bring to mind a difficult decision that they had to make in the past. (IE ending a relationship). Have them think about what steps they went through in making that decision. Ask for group members to share their experiences.

## ◆ **Psychoeducation Session** (20 mins)

- Review FREEDOM steps and skills they have learned so far.
- Discuss the idea of having three ways of approaching options: refer to Options handouts.
- Discuss the support sheets from session five complete them if they were not completed.
- Discuss and the need for support to identify options and achieve goals in life.
- Do example goals and options on handout.
- Practice F R E E D O

## ◆ **Experiential Sections** (15 mins)

Have group members think of the following scenario and identify the options that this person has.

*Pat is a hardworking student who works part-time at a fast food store. She really likes the job and hopes to become assistant manager. Kim (the present assistant manager) told Pat she is pregnant and will be leaving town soon. Pat has a test to study for when her boss leaves a message on her phone asking her to stand in as assistant manager that night because Kim is out sick.*

## ◆ **Individual Art Expression** (20 mins)

Finish up and prepare art to be shown at graduation with title labels etc.

## ◆ **Temperature Check Out and Focusing** (10 mins)

After putting away art project have clients report temperature scales at this time. Address any raised scales before leaving group.

## ◆ **Homework**

Send flyer or invitation home to parents to attend graduation and participate in post test.

## ◆ **Temperature Check In** (20 mins)

- Have each person identify how he/she used SOS in past week or days.
- Review each kid's current self-check scores.
- Use FREEDOM steps to address scores >7 on stress or urges.

## ◆ **Group Focusing Exercise** (5 mins)

Start by having group do a relaxation exercise and focus on their breathing. Once they get focused have group members each think of contributions they are making to their friends and family when they use their SOS skills.

## ◆ **Psychoeducation Session** (20 mins)

- Review FREEDOM steps and use example to illustrate how each step is used.
- Review what skills they have learned in this group.
- Discuss what contribution they will make to their family and friends if they use the FREEDOM Steps when in stressful situations.
- Discuss what contributions they will make if they choose not to use the skills.
- Using a recent stressor example from the group, practice FREEDOM and for the M have them identify what contribution they made when they responded to this stressor.

## ◆ **Experiential Sections** (15 mins)

- Discuss what they want to present at graduation.
- Practice speeches and how they will present their art and the FREEDOM steps to the parents at graduation.

## ◆ **Individual Art Expression** (20 mins)

Finish up and prepare art to be shown at graduation with title labels etc.

## ◆ **Temperature Check Out and Focusing** (10 mins)

After putting away art project have clients report temperature scales at this time. Address any raised scales before leaving group.

## ◆ **Homework**

Send flyer or invitation home to parents to attend graduation and participate in post-test.