

PARENTING BETTER TOGETHER GROUP PROGRAM

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Dedication

This final project is dedicated to the many parents with intellectual disabilities who have demonstrated perseverance and enthusiasm in providing the best care for their children. It is also dedicated to my father, William Nathaniel Gilbert, and my husband, Raymond Jin Yip Chiu. You both have inspired and supported me to fulfill my greatest potential.

Abstract

Parenting Better Together is an eight-week psycho-educational group counselling program designed to decrease the risk for child maltreatment and apprehension in families headed by single mothers who have intellectual disabilities. Based on a literature review that identified best practices for serving the needs of vulnerable and single parents with and without intellectual disabilities, the Parenting Better Together Group Program was developed to provide single mothers the opportunity to share common concerns, develop relationships, learn from one another, practice stress management techniques, and learn about parenting strategies. A group leader's guide is provided for organizing, marketing, and facilitating the Parenting Better Together Group Program.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The Parenting Better Together Group Program was developed to respond to the unique needs of single mothers with intellectual disabilities for information, skill development, and social support. Single mothers with disabilities often face social isolation, stigma, and socioeconomic disadvantage which affect their parenting abilities and stress levels (Heinz & Grant, 2003; Llewellyn & McConnell, 2002; McConnell, Llewellyn, Mayes, Russo, & Honey, 2003; McGaha, 2002; McGaw, Ball, & Clark, 2002; Murphy & Feldman, 2002). Assistance with improving social networks, social skills, and parenting skills is considered an essential service for empowering parents with intellectual disabilities to fulfill their parenting roles competently (Heinz & Grant; Kroese, Hussein, Clifford, & Ahmed, 2002; McGaha; McGaw et al.; Murphy & Feldman; Tarleton, Ward, & Howarth, 2006). The Parenting Better Together Group Program is designed to provide mothers with intellectual disabilities an opportunity to share common concerns, develop relationships, learn from one another, practice stress management techniques, and learn about parenting strategies. This paper will begin by offering a rationale for this group program project. An overview of research identifying the need for and benefits of group counselling for vulnerable parents and single mothers with and without intellectual disabilities follows. Based on this research, a proposal for the Parenting Better Together psycho-educational group program is presented. This proposal includes a thorough description of the goals, membership criteria, structure and organization of the group, marketing plan, and ethical issues for consideration. The group

leader's manual, presented in Appendix H, consists of ten lesson plans, including pre-session and post-group sessions.

Rationale for the Project

Single mothers have historically faced systemic and social barriers that impact their capacity to provide a nurturing and healthy family home for their children. These parents often struggle with issues stemming from poverty (Fudge Schormans & Brown, 2004; Jarrett, Diamond, & El-Mohandes, 2000; Lipman & Boyle, 2005; Lipman et al., 2007; Mayer, Dufour, Lavergne, Girard, & Trocmé, 2003), a lack of education (Jarrett et al.; Lipman et al.; Mayer et al.), abuse (Fudge Shormans & Brown) and neglect, and substance use (Anderson-Butcher, Oliver Khairallah, & Race-Bigelow, 2004). These barriers can create additional life challenges for families headed by single mothers, such as inadequate childcare (Lipman et al.), threats to the family's physical and mental health (Jarrett et al.; Lipman & Boyle; Lipman et al.; Mayer et al.), isolation (Lipman et al.; Mayer et al.), unemployment (Anderson-Butcher et al.; Mayer et al.), family instability (Anderson-Butcher et al.; Lipman & Boyle), and continued or increased substance use (Anderson-Butcher et al.). Consequently, single mothers may feel mentally and emotionally exhausted, overwhelmed, vulnerable, incompetent, and angry (Jarrett et al.). It has been reported that families headed by single mothers are at increased risk for child maltreatment (Anderson-Butcher et al.; Fudge Schormans & Brown, Mayer et al.). One Canadian study revealed that female-led households were involved in 39% of all substantiated cases of child maltreatment (Trocmé et al., 2005). In comparison, families headed by both biological parents were implicated in 32% of all substantiated cases of maltreatment and two-parent blended families were implicated in 16% of all

substantiated cases (Trocmé et al.). In this study, cognitive impairment was found to be a concern for caregiver functioning in 6% of physical abuse cases, 3% of sexual abuse cases, 17% of neglect cases, 12% of emotional maltreatment cases, and 6% of cases where the children were exposed to domestic violence (Trocmé et al.).

Single mothers with intellectual disabilities experience a double disadvantage as a result of their single status and their disability. Both single parents and parents with intellectual disabilities are much more likely to be investigated for child maltreatment (Mayer et al., 2003). Studies have estimated that children are removed from homes headed by parents with intellectual disabilities at a rate 15-50 times higher than homes headed by parents without intellectual disabilities (Feldman, Varghese, Ramsay, & Rajaska, 2002; McGaha, 2002; Tarleton et al., 2006; Ward & Tarleton, 2007). Across the world, the rate of child apprehension for parents with learning disabilities is as high as 40-60%. (McConnell & Llewellyn, 2002; Ward & Tarleton). Concern over the child's development is often a reason for child protection and appears directly linked to the intellectual disability of one or both parents (McConnell et al., 2003). In a study of 400 child protection cases in Australia, McConnell, Llewellyn, and Ferronato (2000; as cited by McConnell et al.) found that workers were concerned about a child's risk for developmental delay in 41% of cases involving parents with intellectual disabilities and only 6% of cases involving parents without an identified disability (McConnell et al.)

Researchers have identified that service provider assumptions about the abilities of parents with intellectual disabilities to understand their children's needs and develop the skills to respond to those needs contributes to the higher incidences of child removal from homes led by parents with intellectual disabilities (McConnell & Llewellyn, 2002;

Tarleton et al., 2006; Ward & Tarleton, 2007). This “presumption of incompetence” has been identified by many researchers in the field of intellectual disability (McConnell & Llewellyn; Tarleton et al.; Ward & Tarleton) and demonstrated in reports that showed a much higher involvement of parents who have intellectual disabilities (60%) in child protection cases as compared to parents who have disabilities that do not affect cognitive functioning (20%; Kroese et al., 2002). It has been speculated that parents with intellectual disabilities are held against a higher standard than parents without intellectual disabilities (Tarleton et al.). And yet there is considerable variation and little agreement about what constitutes good parenting (Kroese et al.; Tarleton et al.). The term “good enough” parenting (McConnell & Llewellyn; Voigt, Tregeagle, & Cox, 1996; Ward & Tarleton) has been used to differentiate between childcare situations that are adequate but not ideal and childcare situations that warrant removal of the child from the family home. Voigt et al. suggested that “good enough” parenting can be assessed by investigating such variables as the family’s history of child maltreatment; the child’s desire to remain or leave the home situation; the family’s willingness to access support services; the behavioural norms of the culture, class, or community with which the family associates; the family’s adherence to minimal standards in nutrition, safety, supervision, clothing, education, physical discipline, social and emotional development; and protection from sexual abuse.

Researchers agree that relying on IQ in and of itself as a measure of parenting competency is erroneous and prejudicial (Llewellyn & McConnell, 2002; McConnell & Llewellyn, 2002; McGaha, 2002). There are many additional factors that contribute to challenges in parenting for mothers with intellectual disabilities which may or may not

relate to IQ (Feldman et al., 2002). Women with disabilities experience various forms of abuse, most notably sexual abuse, at a much higher rate than women without disabilities (Heinz & Grant, 2003; McConnell et al., 2003; McGaha; McGaw et al., 2002; McGaw et al., 2007; Peckham, Corbett, Howlett, McKee, & Pattison, 2007a; Seiler, 2001; Tomasulo & Razza, 2006). Childhood abuse may have negative effects on a parent's self-image, self-esteem, and stress levels, all of which have been shown to contribute to poor parenting skills (McGaha).

Associations between childhood trauma and mental health issues have been made for individuals with intellectual disabilities (McConnell & Llewellyn, 2002; McGaw et al., 2007). Some studies suggest that people with intellectual disabilities are two to three times more likely to experience mental illness than those without intellectual disabilities (McConnell & Llewellyn; McGaw et al.; Pattison, 2005; Sams, Collins, & Reynolds, 2006; Tomasulo & Razza, 2006; Wolfensberger, 2000). Studies suggest that as many as 70% of mothers with intellectual disability present with a depression and/or anxiety disorder (McGaw et al.). In a study of 49 parents with an average full-scale IQ of 72.8, McGaw et al. found that 45% showed symptoms of psychopathology. Histories of childhood trauma were reported by 79.6% of the parents (McGaw et al.). Parental diagnosis of mental illness has been linked to the removal of children from the home (McGaw et al.). Yet, despite being known to have a higher risk for mental disorders and child apprehension, people with intellectual disabilities continue to be excluded from mental health services (Pattison; Sturmey, 2004; Tomasulo & Razza) due to a long standing trepidation among counselling professionals regarding whether people with

intellectual disabilities are competent enough to engage in psychotherapy (Bütz, Bowling, & Bliss, 2000; Ryan, 2001; Sams et al.; Smith, 2005; Sturmey; Willner, 2006).

It is not uncommon for people with intellectual disabilities to have few friends. Nor is it uncommon for those friendships to be short-term and primarily involve other individuals with intellectual disabilities (Llewellyn & McConnell, 2002). The experience of parenthood may further isolate individuals with intellectual disabilities as they contend with the demands of raising a child (Llewellyn & McConnell). Research studies have consistently identified poor or limited social support networks in the lives of parents with intellectual disabilities (Heinz & Grant, 2003; Llewellyn & McConnell; McConnell & Llewellyn, 2002; McGaha, 2002; McGaw et al., 2002; Murphy & Feldman, 2002; Tarleton et al., 2006; Tomasulo & Razza, 2006; Ward & Tarleton, 2007). Mothers living alone have been found to have primarily service-centered networks as opposed to family-centered networks (Feldman et al, 2002; Kroese et al., 2002; Llewellyn & McConnell; McConnell et al., 2003; McGaw et al.). Service centered networks are characterized by short-term relationships with service providers with whom the parent has infrequent contact (Llewellyn & McConnell). Mothers have reported feeling uncomfortable with asking or receiving support from service-centered networks (Llewellyn & McConnell). Insufficient and/or inadequate social support has been linked to poor parenting skills, social skills deficits, and child apprehension (McGaw et al.; Tarleton et al.). Conversely, parents who experienced higher levels of satisfaction with their social support networks demonstrated higher self-esteem, lower stress levels, and more positive interactions with their children (Kroese et al.; Murphy & Feldman).

Although having an intellectual disability does not in and of itself preclude an individual from being a competent parent (McConnell & Llewellyn, 2002; McGaha, 2002), it may indeed present unique challenges to single mothers. Due to learning and memory deficits, these mothers may have more difficulty making appropriate decisions about parenting, initiating and maintaining positive interactions with their children, or providing adequate safety and health-related care (Heinz & Grant, 2003; McConnell & Llewellyn; McGaha). As a result, children of parents with intellectual disabilities may be more likely to exhibit delays in their development as well as challenging behaviour (Heinz and Grant; McConnell et al., 2003). Yet, neither parents with disabilities nor their children are a homogenous group (McConnell & Llewellyn) and research findings regarding these families in general should not be applied to children and parents individually (McConnell & Llewellyn; McConnell et al.). As it is widely accepted that given training and support, parents with intellectual disability can learn the skills required for “good enough” parenting (Heinz & Grant; McConnell & Llewellyn; McGaha; Tarleton et al., 2006; Ward and Tarleton, 2007), it is vital that comprehensive support services are provided according to the unique situation and needs of the individual parent and child (McConnell & Llewellyn; McConnell et al).

Minimizing the Barriers Experienced by Single Mothers

Social support has been shown to attenuate the effects of stress in a variety of situations (Kroese et al., 2002; Llewellyn & McConnell, 2002; Sarafino, 2006). Social support – the caring comfort and acknowledgement that one receives from people or groups in times of duress – has been shown to serve four basic functions. Sarafino described these four functions as emotional support (showing concern and

encouragement to contribute to the person's feelings of belonging), informational support (providing facts about parenting or community resources), tangible support (offering material resources or practical assistance), and companionship support (spending time with the person). Social support has been demonstrated to lower stress levels (Kroese et al.; Llewellyn & McConnell; Sarafino) and improve health outcomes, parent-child relationships, and family functioning (Feldman et al., 2002; Kroese et al.; Lipman & Boyle, 2005). Single mothers with and without intellectual disabilities often experience limited social support (Campbell-Grossman, Brage Hudson, Keating-Lefler, & Ofe Fleck, 2005; Feldman et al.; Heinz & Grant, 2003; Llewellyn & McConnell; McConnell & Llewellyn, 2002; McGaha, 2002; McGaw et al., 2002; Murphy & Feldman, 2002; Tarleton et al., 2006; Tomasulo & Razza, 2006; Ward & Tarleton, 2007). Poverty, unemployment, lack of education, and the responsibilities of parenthood, combined with poor social skills, the stigma of having a disability, and lower literacy levels, often results in single mothers with intellectual disabilities lacking the informational resources they need to parent effectively (Campbell-Grossman et al.; Llewellyn & McConnell; McGaw et al.; Peckham, Howlett, & Corbett, 2007b; Tomasulo & Razza). Consumed with the overwhelming complexities of parenting and surviving, these mothers are often isolated from others who can share parenting strategies, community resource information, and stories of struggle (Campbell-Grossman et al.; Llewellyn & McConnell). Services that do exist are inaccessible, unavailable, or too expensive (Lipman & Boyle). Stress, fear, low self-esteem, and child apprehension are common outcomes of parenthood for low-income single parents (Campbell-Grossman et al.; McGaw et al.; Tarleton et al.; Ward & Tarleton).

Group therapy has been found to be as effective as individual therapy in its power to effect change in people's lives (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Yalom and Leszcz's therapeutic factors of group therapy offer compelling justification for the use of group therapy that can be applied to the population of single mothers who have intellectual disabilities. Hope – in one's capacity and expectation for change – is instilled as group participants regularly witness change in others and receive validations about their own change efforts (Yalom & Leszcz). Attention is paid to the strengths of participants rather than on pathology and participants are treated as experts of the group (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2004). As participants share common experiences and concerns, they develop a sense of oneness and realize they are not alone in their life struggles (Yalom & Leszcz). Given the opportunity to be helped and to help, group therapy empowers participants to feel important and useful in their own and others' change processes (Yalom & Leszcz). In group, single parents gain a better understanding of the knowledge and skills required for fulfilling their parenting role competently by sharing information and advice, practicing social skills, and watching others work through their problems (Yalom & Leszcz). Affiliation with others in group therapy allows a client to both benefit from and provide the basic functions of social support (Sarafino, 2006; Yalom & Leszcz). Research has shown that support groups that provide single mothers with and without intellectual disabilities an opportunity to share common concerns about raising children independently, as well as opportunities for education and skill development, have been successful in serving the unique needs of these parents (Anderson-Butcher et al.; Heinz & Grant, 2003; Jarrett et al., 2000; McGaw et al., 2002; Tarleton et al., 2006; Ward & Tarleton, 2007). It is recognized that support groups are effective in decreasing feelings

of isolation, improving coping skills, and increasing levels of self sufficiency for participants (Anderson-Butcher et al.).

The Parenting Better Together Group Program proposed herein and included in Appendix H is an eight-week group program for single mothers with intellectual disabilities. The Parenting Better Together Group Program is intended to be offered in conjunction with an in-home parenting service that further decreases the family's risk for child maltreatment and child welfare involvement. A literature review was conducted to obtain an understanding of the research regarding the efficacy of group therapy in serving the needs of vulnerable parents and single mothers without intellectual disabilities as well as parents with intellectual disabilities. Based on this research, the goals, objectives, session themes, and evaluation methodologies for the closed eight-session psychoeducational-counselling group were developed. Factors for group membership and screening were elucidated as were structural and organizational variables for running and marketing the group program. Finally, ethical issues in facilitating the group program were addressed.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Procedure

As there is a paucity of academic research regarding the efficacy of psychoeducational-counselling groups for single mothers, and even less so for single mothers with intellectual disabilities, associations were made between information available on group work for vulnerable and/or single mothers without disabilities and group work for parents with intellectual disabilities. Research studies were selected and analyzed based on the following questions: (a) what is the effectiveness of group work for vulnerable and/or single mothers, (b) what is the effectiveness of group work for parents with intellectual disabilities, (c) what components must be included in order to ensure group counselling is effective and meaningful for vulnerable and/or single mothers without disabilities, and (d) what components must be included in order for group counselling to be effective and meaningful for parents with disabilities? For this literature review, a total of six research studies were analyzed. One research study involved vulnerable mothers (marital status unidentified), two research studies involved single mothers without intellectual disabilities, and three research studies involved parents with intellectual disabilities (a study was considered a research study by this author when it included five or more academic references). Under the interpretive/constructivist paradigm, two descriptive studies and one case study were analyzed. Under the positivism/postpositivism paradigm, one study utilized a correlational design and two used an experimental design. Information for this literature review and group leader's manual was obtained from academic textbooks, parenting books/manuals,

websites (such as CMAJ.ca and www.baringfoundation.org.uk), and online journal databases including Ovid and EBSCO Host. Studies used in the literature review were found with search query terms including one of more of the following, separately and in combination: parent*, disab*, group*, counsel*, and therapy.

Efficacy of Group Work for Vulnerable Mothers

In their phenomenological study of mutual support groups for long-term recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Anderson-Butcher et al. (2004) conducted qualitative interviews with nine vulnerable mothers. Interviews were based on the mothers' attendance in a no-cost and open-ended support group which met weekly for 90 minutes. While parents attended the support group, children attended an activity group where life and social skills were integrated into snack and play activities (Anderson-Butcher et al.). Feedback from these parent interviews suggested that mutual support groups improved participants' attitudes, knowledge, parenting and social skills, self-esteem, and responsibility (Anderson-Butcher et al.). The authors noted that the most important quality of the group was to the atmosphere of support. The authors contended that despite the limitations of their study, including a small sample size, mutual support groups are a successful strategy for meeting the needs of vulnerable mothers.

Efficacy of Group Work for Single Mothers

Jarrett et al. (2000) investigated the effects of a group intervention model that combined a parent support group with a developmental play group following four months of an in-home visiting program delivered to mothers and infants. Program participants (who were predominantly unmarried African American mothers) were randomly assigned to either an intervention group or a control group (Jarrett et al.). Members of the

intervention group attended the support group every two weeks with in-home visits conducted alternate weeks for a total of 16 weeks. The parent support group met for 45 minutes and the developmental play group met for another 45 minutes for a total of 90 minutes. Transportation, sibling care, and meals were provided (Jarrett et al.). Mothers were provided with a telephone or verbal reminder of an upcoming group session (Jarrett et al.). Praise for attending the group was offered by way of letter, phone call, or group photograph (Jarrett et al.). Exit interview data collected from 62 program participants revealed that mothers found group discussions regarding poverty and related issues to be most important. Also, in addition to child-care specific topics, mothers rated stress-management, self-esteem, budgeting, life goals, and health to be the most significant topics covered in the group program. Data also revealed that mothers valued the social connections and support they received from group leaders and fellow group participants. Participants suggested that parenting programs include both a support group component and a home visitation program.

In an experimental study, Lipman and Boyle (2005) studied the impact of a 10-week support and education group program on the mood and self-esteem of single mothers. While 116 mothers participated in the study, 59 participated in the intervention group and 57 were assigned to the control group (Lipman & Boyle). The group program was held at a community location and focused on topics relating to child care and maternal self-care (Lipman & Boyle). Mothers were provided with a reminder phone call, bus tickets or taxi fare, and snacks (for those who attended the morning group) or dinner (for those who attended the evening group; Lipman & Boyle). While parents attended the 90 minute weekly session, children participated in an activity-based group (Lipman &

Boyle). The parenting group included two group leaders and six to ten participants (Lipman & Boyle). Analysis of the data collected through interviews at baseline and at three follow-up visits (immediately following group termination, three-month, and six-month periods) revealed that the group program did not improve parenting skills or social support (Lipman & Boyle). The researchers also found that although the group program improved the mothers' mood and self-esteem immediately following the program, the effects were short-lived (Lipman & Boyle). Despite the limitations of this study, including sampling bias (all participants were single mothers with low-income living in an urban area) and a 28% attrition rate, these authors suggested that group programs alone may have limited positive outcomes for single mothers (Lipman & Boyle).

While other studies have documented the benefits of support groups in effectively serving the needs of single mothers, these groups have often been offered in combination with other support services, including employment services (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2004), developmental play groups (Jarrett et al., 2000), and in-home family visits (Jarrett et al.). These findings seem to suggest that the effectiveness of parenting groups may be dependent on the co-existence of complementary support services for the vulnerable or single mother.

Efficacy of Group Work for Parents with Intellectual Disabilities

McGaw et al.'s (2002) research study provided evidence that the needs of parents with intellectual disabilities would be more fully met with a combination of home-based support and group therapy. In their experimental study of 22 parents (14 female and 8 male) with intellectual disabilities (IQ ranged between 53 and 85), the researchers studied the effect of group therapy on the perceptions of parents regarding relationships with

their children, significant others, their own self-concept, and changes in their social networks over the study period (McGaw et al.). The study employed an experimental group and a control group and while both groups received home-based support during the time of the study, only the experimental group received the additional support of group therapy (McGaw et al.). Group sessions were held weekly for two hours over a period of 14 weeks (McGaw et al.). Research data was collected through assessment scales (Judson Self-Rating Scale, Behaviour Problem Index, The Malaise Inventory, and the Social Changes Questionnaire) administered through interviews with the parents at baseline, immediately following the final group session, and at follow-up (McGaw et al.). The researchers found that although positive results were not identified immediately following the group program, parents did report a much higher self-concept as a result of participation in group therapy at follow-up (McGaw et al.). Interestingly, improved self-concept did not have immediate positive effects for the children as parents in the experimental group did not report changes in their feelings about their children, judgments about their children's capabilities, or perceptions of their children's behaviour (McGaw et al.). The authors noted that although positive changes in parent-child interaction could not be substantiated in this study, research linking lower parental self-esteem with higher risks for child maltreatment and neglect may lead one to believe that the improvements in self-concept would be beneficial for the children (McGaw et al.). The authors also found that all parents involved in the group therapy component of this study developed new friendships within and outside of the group program and consequently reported less reliance on professionals for emotional support (McGaw et al.). Given the finding that parents in the control group reported improvements in

judgments about children's capabilities, the authors proposed that the combination of home-based support and group therapy is necessary for parents with intellectual disabilities (McGaw et al.). While home-based support focuses on the improvement of child care skills, group therapy allows parents the opportunity to improve self-concept and increase their social support networks, all of which contribute to the ability to fulfill one's parenting role competently (McGaw et al.).

Heinz and Grant (2002) conducted a case study of the Parents Forever group parenting program that focused on promoting a supportive and comfortable environment, teaching parenting and self-care skills, and assisting parents through crisis. Qualitative data was collected through observations of the group process and interviews with group facilitators and group participants (Heinz & Grant). Of the 34 group participants interviewed, 82% were female and 18% were male. Fifty-six of the participants were single or separated, all lived in poverty, and 85% had experienced sexual abuse (Heinz & Grant). Over 70% of group participants had an intellectual disability, 21% had a learning disability, and 9% had ADHD (Heinz & Grant). Twenty-one percent of group participants had a dual diagnosis (Heinz & Grant). Data collection revealed that parents were motivated to attend the Parents Forever program because it provided them with emotional support, connection with other parents, and information about practical parenting skills (Heinz & Grant). Parent feedback indicated that they were integrating the information learned from group sessions into their parenting interactions and self-care routines (Heinz & Grant). Recognizing the limitations of this study, including the use of group interviews as opposed to individual interviews and the absence of observations of parent-child interactions over the course of the group program, the authors contended that

group approaches for teaching parenting skills to individuals with intellectual disabilities are warranted (Heinz & Grant).

The importance of parenting groups for individuals with intellectual disabilities was also highlighted in the descriptive study results collected by Tarleton et al. (2006). These researchers employed a variety of data collection formats, including interviews with parents, consultations with professionals, questionnaires, and case study visits, to identify examples of best practice in services provided to parents with intellectual disabilities (Tarleton et al.). The researchers found that parenting groups were regarded by parents and professionals alike to be a valuable means for increasing parents' social skills, social networks, and self-esteem (Tarleton et al.). It was generally agreed that best practices in parenting groups included being held at a location not associated with child or family services, being held at a consistent day and time, providing transportation to and from group, having structure and ground rules, providing a relaxing and safe atmosphere, allowing parents to share experiences and connect with each other, involving parents of school-age children, and empowering parents to take increasingly more responsibility to facilitate the group program (Tarleton et al).

Summary

There is a lack of academic research on the efficacy of psychoeducational-counselling groups for single mothers with intellectual disabilities. Research on parenting groups for parents with intellectual disabilities suggests that these groups are successful in fulfilling the social support functions that these parents often lack in their multi-barriered lives. However, studies also suggest that parenting groups should be provided in tandem with other support services, such as in-home parenting support or developmental

play groups, to truly be effective over the long-term. The following proposal for the Parenting Better Together Group Program is based, in part, on the findings from this literature review.

Chapter III

*Parenting Better Together Group Program Proposal**Group Goals and Objectives*

The ultimate goal of the Parenting Better Together program is to decrease the risk for child maltreatment and apprehension in families headed by single parents who have intellectual disabilities. Long-term and short-term goals for achieving the ultimate goal are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Goals and Objectives of the Parenting Better Together Group Program

Long-Term Group Goals	Short-Term Group Goals	Related Objectives	Session Theme(s) to Address The Goal & Corresponding Objectives	Measurement of the Goal & Corresponding Objectives
1. To increase parenting competency	To learn ways to decrease parental stress	a. To practice one relaxation strategy every day b. To identify 3 reframing statements for managing the stress of parenting	Session 1 – Perceptions of Parenting Session 2 – Stress Management Strategies for Parenting Better Session 3 – Positive Thinking Strategies for Parenting Better	i. Client decreases her total score on the Parental Stress Scale post-test to a score of 45 or lower ii. Client identifies three strategies for decreasing stress related to parenting.
	To learn ways to increase successful use of parenting skills	a. To identify 3 positive parenting practices. b. To use at least one positive parenting	Session 5 and 6 – Parenting Strategies for Parenting Better	i. Client describes 3 positive parenting practices. ii. Client provides examples of her

		practice successfully every day.		use of one or more parenting strategy covered in group (praise, planned ignoring, warnings, and consequences)
2. To improve perceptions of and experiences with informal support networks	To learn ways to increase social support within the group program	a. To identify 2 people within the group with whom one can talk openly and honestly	Session 4 – Relationships and Social Support Session 7 – Community Resources for Parenting Better	i. Client gains 2 additional social supports, as indicated on the Social Support Questionnaire post-test
	To learn ways to increase social support outside of the group program	b. To identify 1 new person outside of the group with whom one can depend on for help		ii. Client gains a 17% increase (minimum) in the overall satisfaction of her social support as indicated on the Social Support Questionnaire post-test
3. To increase feelings of self-efficacy and self-determination	To achieve one's personal goals through participation in the group program	a. To initiate or pursue discussion relevant to one's personal goals within each group session. b. To complete all homework activities relevant to one's personal goals in preparation for discussion in following group sessions.	Pre-Group session, Sessions 1 – 7, Session 8 – Ending the Parenting Better Together Group Program, and Post-Group Meeting	i. Client self-rates her achievement of personal goals between a level of 0 and +2 on the Goal Attainment Scaling ii. Weekly counselling progress notes demonstrate client has initiated or pursued discussion relevant to her

				<p>personal goals within each group session.</p> <p>iii. Client completes all homework activities relevant to her personal goals in preparation for upcoming group sessions.</p>
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Group Membership

The purpose of delineating group membership and establishing screening guidelines is to ensure the Parenting Better Together Group Program offers a safe and supportive environment for all participants (Corey & Corey, 2006). Whereas the diverse experiences, worldviews, and skill levels of parents are valued and welcomed in this group, some individuals may be experiencing life circumstances that may hinder their productivity and interpersonal abilities within a group setting (Corey & Corey). For these individuals, individual therapy may be necessary prior to, or in place of, group therapy.

To be accepted for the Parenting Better Together Group Program, mothers are required to be at least 18 years of age and the primary caregiver of at least one child who is 17 years of age or younger. Mothers are identified as having an intellectual disability with IQ reported between 55 and 85. Mothers are able to speak English and provide informed written consent to participate in the group program (as well as guardian consent, if applicable). Those accepted for the group program shall not be experiencing acute psychiatric crisis or threat of violence by others (Corey & Corey, 2006).

Group Screening

Once a potential member has expressed interest in attending the Parenting Better Together Group Program and has either contacted, or been referred to, one of the group leaders, she will be asked to complete an intake form. This intake form will explain the eligibility requirements (as described above) and solicit information for assessing the potential participant's eligibility for program participation (see Appendix A).

Once the group leaders review the intake form and determine the potential member's eligibility for the group program, a face-to-face meeting will be scheduled (Corey & Corey, 2006). Using a set of screening questions as a guideline (see Appendix B), this meeting will provide the potential member and the group leaders an opportunity to share information about the group program, get to know each other, and better assess the appropriateness of fit between the group program and the potential member. The potential member may choose to attend this screening interview alone or with a supportive other. The potential member will be encouraged to ask the questions that are on her mind, including questions about the group leaders' experience, the group process, and the topics to be explored in group. This meeting is also an opportunity for the group leaders to assess the potential member's level of interest in the group, motivation for change, and her ability to work within, and benefit from, a group setting (Corey & Corey).

Potential participants who are not suited for the current Parenting Better Together Group Program, despite being otherwise eligible according to the intake form, and having a need for the program, are those who (a) are not applying to the program of their own free will, but to please or receive benefits from someone else, (b) are living in shelter,

transitional housing, or are homeless, (c) are currently living apart from their children for any reason, (d) are married, living common-law, or living with an intimate partner, (e) are not able to commit to attending and being punctual to all eight scheduled sessions of the group program, as well as the pre-group and post-group sessions (Corey & Corey, 2006), (f) are extremely aggressive, hostile, or self-centered (Corey & Corey), or (g) do not identify the motivation to change (Corey & Corey). The group leaders will meet separately with these individuals to discuss the reasons for which the Parenting Better Together group may not be the best resource for them at this time (Corey & Corey). The group leaders, however, will be open to clarification and reconsideration in the case of misunderstanding (Corey & Corey). When necessary, a referral to more appropriate community resources will be offered (Corey & Corey).

Assessments

Parental stress scale. Parenting Better Together Group Program participants will complete the Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones, 1995) during the pre-group and post-group meetings (Corey & Corey, 2006) to allow for an assessment of their parenting stress levels before and after group intervention. According to Berry and Jones, this scale has been demonstrated as a “brief, valid and reliable measure of the important construct of parental stress” (p. 471). It consists of 18 statements describing emotions and perceptions regarding the parenting experience (Berry, n.d.) such as “I am happy in my role as a parent”, “The major source of stress in my life is my child(ren)”, “It is difficult to balance different responsibilities because of my child(ren)”, and “Having child(ren) has meant having too few choices and too little control over my life” (Berry & Jones, p. 466). As parents in this group program may have reading and comprehension skill

deficits, group leaders will read the statements aloud to the participants and provide additional explanation when required. Participants will rate each of the statements according to a Likert scale ranging from 1 - strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. Lower scores on the scale indicate lower stress levels (Berry). It is hoped that participation in this Parenting Better Together Group Program will help alleviate levels of parental stress by increasing knowledge and practice of relaxation skills, effective parenting strategies, communication skills, and social skills. The Parental Stress Scale was found to have adequate internal reliability (0.83 coefficient alpha for the total sample) and test-retest reliability of 0.81 over a 6-week period (Berry; Berry & Jones). The scale was found to have satisfactory convergent validity (Berry). The Parental Stress Scale is reprinted in its entirety and available in the research article written by Berry and Jones as well as on Judy Berry's University of Tulsa website (www.personal.utulsa.edu/~judy-berry/parent.htm). Additionally, it can be found as a pre-session handout in this group program leader's manual.

Social support questionnaire. Group program participants will also complete the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ; Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983) as a pre-test prior to the commencement of the group program and as a post-test at the completion of the group program (Corey & Corey, 2006). As this questionnaire is significantly lengthy and detailed, one or both group leaders will schedule an assessment meeting to administer the questionnaire to each program participant on two occasions: (a) following the screening interview and prior to the pre-session group meeting, and (b) following the eighth group session and prior to the post-group meeting. This questionnaire assesses both the number of social supports a person believes he/she has in

his/her life, and the degree to which he/she perceives these supports to be personally satisfying (Sarason et al.). Participants are asked to identify up to nine people in their life with whom they can count on to, for example, listen to them when they need to talk, help them out in a crisis situation, console them when they are really upset, and feel more relaxed when they are under pressure (Sarason et al.). For each of these 27 questions, participants are also asked to rate, generally, their level of satisfaction with the social support in their lives using a Likert scale ranging from 6 – very satisfied to 1 – very dissatisfied (Sarason et al.). It is hoped that participation in this Parenting Better Together program will improve participants' perception of and experiences with social support both within and outside of the group environment. The SSQ was found to have stability over a four-week period and high internal consistency among items (Sarason et al.). The SSQ is reprinted in its entirety and available in the research article written by Sarason et al. It can also be found in Appendix D in this group leader's manual.

Goal attainment scaling. Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) is an informal method of assessing the outcome of the counselling process and will be used in this group program to measure the amount of personal growth the client has achieved as a result of her participation in the Parenting Better Together Group Program (Hiebert, 1996). Due to the highly individualized nature of this assessment, it will be completed between group participants and one or both group leaders during the assessment meetings. A form for completing the GAS with group participants is included in Appendix E of this group leader's manual. During the first assessment meeting, the group leader will encourage the client to clearly describe the personal goal(s) she would like to accomplish as a result of the group program (Hiebert). The group leader will assist the client to describe the goal(s)

in observable and measurable terms (Hiebert). This description is identified as the “0” point (Hiebert). Next, the client will be asked to describe a reasonable outcome of the group program that would substantially exceed her expectations (Hiebert). This description is identified as the “+2” point (Hiebert). A “+1” point description is also elicited to represent an outcome that represents a mid-point between the client’s expected outcome of group involvement and her exceeded expectations (Hiebert). Following this, the group leader will ask the client to describe a group program outcome that would be extremely disappointing to her (Hiebert). This description is represented by “-2” (Hiebert). The last description requested is one that is in between the expected outcome and the most disappointing outcome (Hiebert). This description is labelled as “-1” (Hiebert). During the second assessment meeting, the group leader and the client will revisit this GAS and identify the level to which the client’s personal goals were achieved as a result of participation in the Parenting Better Together Group Program (Hiebert).

Structure and Organization of the Group

Program length. The Parenting Better Together Program is an eight-week psychoeducational-counselling program comprised of weekly group sessions of two hours in length. These sessions are offered from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. to allow flexibility for those mothers who work during the day. However, participants are encouraged to arrive with their children at 5:30 p.m. as a meal will be served prior to the beginning of the group session. The assessment meeting will be scheduled two weeks prior to the pre-group meeting and the pre-group meeting will be scheduled two weeks prior to the commencement of the Parenting Better Together Group Program sessions. A final assessment meeting will be scheduled with each group member prior to the post-

group meeting and the post-group meeting will be scheduled one month following the final session of the group program (Corey & Corey, 2006).

Location and set up. The program is offered at a community hall accessible to single mothers across the city by c-train. Parking is available, nearby, and free for those who drive. However, in acknowledgement of the transportation and financial barriers that exist for single mothers with intellectual disabilities, bus tickets, gas coupons, or taxi fare will be provided to enhance consistent attendance in group sessions. The community hall and its parking lot are accessible for those who use wheelchairs and/or have limited mobility. The hall has kitchen facilities, tables and chairs sufficient for sitting up to 30 people, a small gym, three meeting rooms, and two washrooms. Preferably, the Parenting Better Together group has sole access to the community hall during this time to allow for full privacy (Corey & Corey, 2006). At the very least, the group uses the entire upper or lower floor to accomplish this end.

Dinner is provided to program participants, children, and group leaders prior to the beginning of the group session. Group leaders are responsible for planning the meals, purchasing required ingredients, making dinner, and cleaning up. Information about allergies or relevant health conditions is solicited during the screening interview and accommodated in meal planning and preparation. During dinner, group participants, their children, and the group leaders will sit at tables in one of the meeting rooms. At the completion of dinner, the children will follow the childcare providers to the gym and the group participants will accompany the group leader to the group meeting room. This room will be set up so that participants are sitting in chairs in a circle formation (Corey & Corey, 2006). Tables will be set behind the group and against the walls. The group leader

will sit amongst the group participants. A flipchart and stand will be placed just outside the group circle.

Childcare services. Free childcare services are available to the children of group participants in recognition that single mothers with intellectual disabilities may lack the financial and social support resources required to attend an evening support group without their children. Childcare is primarily unstructured and play-based and provided by staff who have some formal training and at least one year of experience working with children.

Group characteristics. Participants of the Parenting Better Together Group Program are single mothers at least 18 years of age who are the primary caregivers for at least one minor child (under 18 years of age). Mothers are not currently married, living common-law, or living with an intimate partner. Participants have an intellectual disability with an IQ between 55 and 85. Although participants may represent a diverse range of cultural and ethnic worldviews, all participants speak English. Mothers may identify as heterosexual, lesbian, or bisexual. There may be between six and ten participants. This range is to accommodate for flexibility in the communication styles and needs of the participants that may be interested in and screened as eligible for this group program (i.e. age, parenting experience, group experience, or learning style).

Group program fees. There are no fees associated with participation in the Parenting Better Together Group Program for single mothers. This program will be delivered to single mothers in tandem with an in-home visiting service intended to prevent child maltreatment and/or child apprehension. A Calgary-based organization providing this group program may apply for funds to cover program costs from their

primary funding body or for project funding through the Calgary Foundation (<http://www.thecalgaryfoundation.org>), the United Way of Calgary (<http://www.calgaryunitedway.org>), or Social Ventures Partners of Calgary (<http://www.svpcalgary.org/default.aspx>). Individual funding may also be available from Alberta Seniors and Community Supports, Persons with Developmental Disabilities (<http://www.seniors.alberta.ca/css/pdd/>).

Expectations. Although participants received preliminary information on group expectations during the screening interview, the group leaders facilitate discussion about the ways in which group participants can obtain maximum growth from group sessions during the pre-group meeting (Chen & Rybak, 2004; Corey & Corey, 2006). They also facilitate discussion regarding the importance of participants feeling safe and comfortable within this group environment in order to achieve their group and personal goals (Corey & Corey). To cultivate a safe and comfortable group environment, group leaders ask participants to share their expectations of how this may be achieved for them. It is important to outline participants' expectations regarding attendance and punctuality (Chen & Rybak), managing interruptions from the children, use of cell phones, sharing space within group discussions (Chen & Rybak), socializing outside the group with other participants, managing gossip within or outside of the group, getting involved intimately with other participants, and managing conflict within or outside of the group (Corey & Corey). The group leaders, however, must also share information about the definition of and expectations for confidentiality as well as the limitations of confidentiality (i.e. although confidentiality is expected of participants, it cannot be assured, so participants are advised to share only what they feel comfortable; Chen & Rybak; Corey & Corey).

The group leaders must also clearly delineate the reasons for which they would have to break confidentiality for ethical or legal reasons (Chen & Rybak; Corey & Corey). At the end of this pre-group session, each group member will be provided with a handout outlining ways to get the maximum benefit from the group experience and the definition of confidentiality (including expectations for and limitations of) in preparation for the first group session (Chen & Rybak). Two weeks later, at the beginning of session 1, the group leaders will provide each member with a handout outlining the expectations between group participants as discussed within this pre-group meeting (Chen & Rybak).

Assessment of client satisfaction. Research findings suggest that a positive therapy alliance is one of the best predictors of counselling outcome (Duncan et al., 2003; Horvath, 2000; Johnson, 1996). As such, it is important to assess program participants' satisfaction with both the group leader and with the psychoeducational-counselling program. To do this, program participants are asked to complete a Session Evaluation form at the end of each group session and at the conclusion of the group program. The Session Evaluation form used in the Parenting Better Together Group Program has been modified from a four-item measure of the working alliance developed by Duncan et al. to enhance the ability for mothers with intellectual disabilities to complete it independently. This assessment provides a measure of client satisfaction in the areas of relationship (feeling listened to), goals and topics (talking about things that are important to the client), approach or method (feeling comfortable with the group leaders), and, overall (feeling better about things as a result of the group program; Duncan et al.). For each measure of the working alliance, program participants are asked to circle the picture and word that best fits their level of satisfaction. In the area of client-therapist relationship,

for example, program participants may circle the picture of a smiling face with a thumbs up and the word “yes!”, the picture of a grinning face with the word “sometimes”, or the picture of a frowning face with a thumbs down and the word “no!” (see Appendix F). During debriefing and preparation meetings, group leaders will review all feedback obtained on the Session Evaluation forms and discuss feedback, while maintaining participant confidentiality, with the larger group. This will allow group participants to provide ongoing and collaborative input about methods for improving the group process and culture.

Note: A copy of the original version of the SRS V.3.0. may be downloaded and used for free at www.talkingcure.com/asures/htm (Duncan et al., 2003)

File notes. The group leaders will use an adaptation of Hackney and Cormier’s (2001) counselling progress notes to maintain documentation on program participants’ activity throughout the group program. Documentation will be taken at the end of each session to allow for continual monitoring of program participants’ progress towards personal and group goals. Information from these progress notes will influence the group leader’s decisions about how to structure future group sessions to enhance, guide, or support group participants involvement to better achieve group and/or personal goals. See Appendix G for a copy of these counselling progress notes.

Group leaders. Although the Parenting Better Together Group Program can be effectively facilitated by one group leader, it is ideal that two individuals are involved in this role. Using the co-leadership model, the group gains the knowledge and skills of two trained group leaders who can work collaboratively to keep all participants of the group actively participating and building off the ideas of others in the group (Corey & Corey,

2006). This model is also advantageous as it allows group leaders to regularly debrief their reactions to a session or member together, brainstorm ideas to improve group process, and model effective interpersonal communication skills for the group (Corey & Corey). Yet, despite these great benefits, co-leaders should be chosen carefully to increase the likelihood of a successful working relationship (Corey & Corey). Mutual respect, trust, a common understanding of the structural issues of group, an openness to discuss the working relationship, and availability to meet on a regular basis is essential for the co-leader model to be successful (Corey & Corey).

As all participants of the Parenting Together Group program are female, group leaders should also be female. At least one of the group leaders should have her Masters of Counselling degree or equivalent post-secondary credential. Both group leaders should have experience working with parents and individuals with intellectual disabilities and at least one should have prior experience leading psychoeducational-counselling groups. It is not necessary that group leaders are parents themselves nor that they have had personal experience within a group counselling program (Corey & Corey, 2006). Group leaders should have regular access to supervision by an individual with his or her Master's or Ph.D. (preferably) level of education in psychology or counselling. Group leaders are strongly encouraged to access personal counselling services to support their own emotional processing and emerging self-awareness in becoming skilled group therapists (Corey & Corey).

Preparation and debriefing time. Group leaders should schedule time together every week to both prepare for upcoming sessions and debrief completed sessions. While debrief and preparation sessions may be combined, this may make for a long and

exhausting meeting. When possible, these meetings should be scheduled separately.

Preparation meetings should be scheduled far enough in advance of the upcoming session to allow for group leaders to organize and obtain necessary materials for the session, such as markers, flipchart papers, photocopies, and dinner ingredients (McBride, 2008). Two or three working days prior to the scheduled program session should be sufficient.

However, group leaders should also meet one to two hours prior to each group to discuss any last minute preparations and/or issues that need attention.

Preparation meetings should be scheduled to last at least one hour. During this time, group leaders should refer to the session plan to (a) identify the materials that need to be purchased, collected, photocopied, and brought to the session (McBride, 2008), (b) discuss the objectives for the session and the activities that will be facilitated to meet these session objectives (McBride), and (c) discuss how the activities will be shared among the group leaders. In addition, group leaders should be prepared to (a) discuss any new issues that need to be integrated in the session (e.g., issues that arose during last session or feedback obtained on the Session Evaluation forms), (b) discuss how group leaders will involve program participants in the activities in order to best meet group and personal goals, (c) identify potential problems that may arise in the group and brainstorm ways to manage these, (d) plan the dinner meal, (e) ensure childcare has been arranged, and (f) ensure all program participants have been provided with bus tickets, taxi fare, and/or gas coupons. Group leaders should also use this preparation meeting time to discuss any personal, group, or co-leader issues that may affect their performance within the group (Corey & Corey, 2006). This may be an issue to be discussed solely between

the group leaders, or it may be beneficial to discuss it with the group participants in session (Corey & Corey).

Debriefing meetings should be scheduled soon after the end of a session and in tandem with the completion of session progress notes to allow for optimal recall of one's experiences within the session. If debriefing sessions are not possible in the evening after the group has ended and dinner has been cleaned up, they should be scheduled for the next morning. A minimum of one hour should be set aside for discussing (a) the outcomes of the session, (b) each of the co-leader's opinions about the participants' level of involvement in the session and progress towards group and personal goals as a result, (c) the dynamics between the co-leaders and plan for resolution of any issues that may have arisen during session, (d) any countertransference issues that may have arisen for the program leaders and plans for addressing these, and (e) strategic planning around issues brought up during this session and methods for addressing these issues in future sessions.

Supervision. Group leaders are supervised by a senior member of the agency who has a Master's or, ideally, a Ph.D., in psychology or counselling. Group leaders meet with the supervisor weekly for one hour as a team (DeLucia-Waack, 1999). These supervision meetings provide a safe and confidential forum for group leaders to discuss (a) their own developing self-awareness around parenting, parenting stress, and parents with intellectual disabilities (DeLucia-Waack), (b) issues of countertransference that arise in the group work and the responses of program leaders (DeLucia-Waack), (c) group leaders' reactions to group participants (DeLucia-Waack), (d) issues that arise between co-leaders and the processes being used to resolve these issues, (e) personal issues of the

group leaders' as these influence group processes (DeLucia-Waack), and (f) goals and plans for future sessions (DeLucia-Waack).

Honouring multicultural diversity. As explained by Arthur and Collins (2005), culture may be defined narrowly as one's ethnicity or it may be defined broadly by one's membership within a group based on shared variables including worldview, values, experiences, histories, geographical roots, traditions, and religion. As such, age, sexual orientation, level of ability, and gender form one's cultural identity (Arthur & Collins). Participants of the Parenting Better Together Group Program may identify with a diverse array of cultural groups.

To respect and honor cultural diversity within the Parenting Together Better Group Program, program leaders will:

- Continually assess their own attitudes, knowledge, and skills in relation to culture in order to better understand how these impact their relationship with group participants (Collins & Arthur, 2005)
- Discuss the process of learning about cultural competence with group participants, co-leaders, and supervisors
- Use cultural inquiry within group discussion to identify whether cultural influences are related to the group participants' presenting issues (Collins & Arthur)
- As much as possible, ensure that group session dates respect cultural holidays of all participants
- Nurture a mutual respect for culturally different parenting values, philosophies, and practices within the group, keeping within the laws of Canadian society

- Ensure that the dinner meal honors multicultural and vegetarian choices, as well as religious or traditional mores
- Ensure that the community hall and its rooms (washrooms, meetings rooms, childcare rooms, and kitchen) are accessible for those participants who use wheelchairs and/or have limited mobility
- Obtain sign language interpretation services for parents who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Ensure that pictures and images used in handouts and around the room depict the realities of the parents being served, including parents of colour, parents with disabilities, and parents of all ages
- Provide the children with toys that are age-appropriate and culturally diverse. This offers the children an opportunity to learn about each other's culture and family dynamics within an environment that is made more safe and comfortable with familiar items.

Additional Considerations

Enhancing attendance in the group. As mentioned earlier in this paper, single mothers with intellectual disabilities contend with a multitude of barriers and responsibilities. As a result, parenting groups often integrate additional supports to increase the likelihood that mothers will regularly attend and complete the group program. These supports include weekly phone reminders (Lipman & Boyle, 2005; Lipman et al., 2007), reminder visits (Jarrett et al., 2000), and assistance with getting organized in time for taxi or van pick-ups (Jarrett et al.). Other supports have included

commendations by postcard, letter, and telephone for attending the group regularly and intermittent group photographs sent by mail to participants (Jarrett et al).

Group participants of the Parenting Better Together program will be reminded two days prior to upcoming program sessions by telephone and/or e-mail. Also, program leaders will acknowledge and express pleasure at participants' attendance at each session. Postcards and/or emails thanking participants for their continuing commitment to the group and their own change efforts will be mailed twice during the group program.

Countertransference risks. While the presence of female co-leaders within an all-female therapy group allows for a deeper connection and identification between participants and co-leaders, there are risks for countertransference (DeLucia-Waack, 1999). Female group leaders who over identify with the single mothers in the Parenting Better Together group, either because of family of origin or family of creation experiences, may find themselves avoiding certain issues as a result of their own discomfort with unresolved similar issues (DeLucia-Waack). They may also respond by being overly nurturing or competitive with clients; feeling angry, helpless, or stressed; or experiencing a change in their own cognitive processes or behavioural patterns (DeLucia-Waack).

Supervision and regular consultation with colleagues has been shown to be invaluable in helping group leaders cope with the dangers of countertransference (DeLucia-Waack, 1999). In doing so, group leaders must be prepared to analyze their personal beliefs, attitudes, and values regarding parenting, parenting stress, and parents who have intellectual disabilities (DeLucia-Waack). In their journey towards greater self-awareness and reflection, group leaders are encouraged to access books (DeLucia-

Waack) and professional development workshops to develop a better understanding of the social stigma, barriers, and pressures confronting single mothers with intellectual disabilities in our society. However, group leaders are also well-advised to seek out personal counselling to identify and process biases, triggers, and assumptions that may negatively influence her competency in group therapy. Continual monitoring of the leaders' reactions to issues raised within the group process and debriefing between group leaders will help attenuate the negative affects that may arise from unchecked countertransference (DeLucia-Waack).

Marketing the Group

This program will be offered to single mothers already involved in an in-home visitation program through an organization offering this service. Marketing to this clientele will commence three months prior to the scheduled start of the Parenting Better Together Group Program. Flyers advertising the group program will be posted in the common areas of the organization (reception and waiting room, washrooms, kitchen area, meeting rooms, and library). Flyers will also be mailed out to single mothers who are currently participating in the organization's in-home visitation program. To enhance the capacity for in-home support staff to conduct preliminary screening of potential program participants (Corey & Corey, 2006), group leaders will offer to attend team meetings to inform in-home staff of the goals of the Parenting Better Together program, the eligibility of potential group participants, and the dynamics of psychoeducational-counselling groups. A minimum of six program participants is required to run the group.

Group leaders may circulate the posters to outside organizations also providing in-home visitation services to single mothers with intellectual disabilities when there is

insufficient interest in the Parenting Better Together program from within the host agency. In this case, group leaders will be sure to circulate the poster equally to organizations who work with mothers with intellectual disabilities of diverse (a) cultural backgrounds, (b) sexual orientations, (c) ages, and (d) physical ability levels. Group leaders will also offer to deliver presentations regarding the goals of the Parenting Better Together program, the eligibility of potential group participants, and the dynamics of psychoeducational-counselling groups to their colleagues within these organizations to allow in-home visitation staff to assist with the screening process (Corey & Corey, 2006).

Ethical Issues in Group Work

Group leaders are responsible for facilitating group work in an ethical, responsible, and professional manner. Group leaders of the Parenting Better Together Group Program will adhere to the ethical guidelines of the American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA; 2002) and the Canadian Counselling Association (CCA; 2007). These guidelines will inform all written and verbal information shared by group leaders to assist Parenting Better Together program participants in making informed choices about participating in the group, developing trust and safety with other participants of the group and with group leaders (Corey & Corey, 2006), and adhering to group expectations. Information shared will cover potential risks of group counselling, confidentiality, discrimination, referral, group leader competence, and informed consent.

Potential risks of group counselling. During the screening, assessment, and pre-group meetings, group leaders will outline the nature of group counselling and the potential benefits and potential risks of participating in a psychoeducational-counselling group program such as the Parenting Better Together Group Program (AGPA, 2002;

CCA, 2007). This information will also be included on the informed consent form. Strategies for obtaining the maximum benefit from a group program will be discussed with program participants (AGPA, Chen & Rybak, 2004; Corey & Corey, 2006) and provided in written form (included in this program proposal as a Pre-Session Meeting handout).

Confidentiality. Group leaders will define confidentiality, describe the expectations for confidentiality, and outline the limitations of confidentiality (i.e. although confidentiality is expected of participants, it cannot be assured, so participants are advised to share only what they feel comfortable; AGPA, 2002; CCA, 2007; Chen & Rybak, 2004; Corey & Corey, 2006). The group leaders will also clearly identify the reasons for which they would have to break confidentiality for ethical or legal reasons (AGPA; CCA; Chen & Rybak; Corey & Corey). Group leaders will provide information about the type of documentation they are required to keep as an ongoing record of the progress each participant is making as a result of the group program (CCA; Corey & Corey). Written information about the limits of confidentiality and record keeping requirements will also be provided to group participants on the informed consent form (see Appendix C). Group leaders will also inform participants that identifying information (including name, diagnosis, living situation, and parenting concerns) may be shared during weekly meetings with the program supervisor to ensure program leaders are responding most effectively to participants' needs within their group leader roles (CCA). When a program participant has a legal guardian, permission will be sought by the program leaders to share information with the guardian only with the expressed consent of the program participant (CCA). If permission is not granted, the client will be

asked to consider her participation in the group in light of the guardian's right to be informed of her progress. Further, information about group participants (what they say or do within group sessions) will not be shared with in-home support staff within or outside of the host organization, as this may deter group participants' participation within the group. Also, group leaders will not share identifying information for teaching, presentation, or other purposes outside of the group sessions (AGPA). Permission will be requested from program participants in the case where group leaders would like to share information about her with others outside of the group (AGPA).

Discrimination. Group leaders will explain that it is unethical to discriminate based on race, ethnicity, gender, ability, or sexual orientation (AGPA, 2002; CCA, 2007; Corey & Corey, 2006). That this is a group open only to single mothers with intellectual disabilities is not discriminatory: it is responsive to the unique needs and experiences of these single mothers.

Group leader competence. Group leaders of the Parenting Better Together Group Program are committed to continually developing their level of self-awareness, knowledge, and skills for leading psychoeducational-counselling groups. Group leaders engage in regular debriefing, supervision, professional and personal development to increase their competencies for leading groups (AGPA, 2002; CCA, 2007; Corey & Corey, 2006). When program leaders deem themselves to be unqualified or incompetent to adequately serve the needs of a program participant, they will refer that program participant to a more appropriate service or resource (AGPA; CCA).

Informed consent. Informed consent allows program participants to be fully aware of their rights and responsibilities as participants of a group program (CCA, 2007; Corey

& Corey, 2006). This enhances their ability to decide whether the Parenting Better Together Group Program will be a good fit for them. In order to participate in the Parenting Better Together program, program participants must sign a consent form. When program participants have a legal guardian, the legal guardian must also sign the consent form. The informed consent form is included in Appendix C.

Summary

The Parenting Better Together Group Program proposal has been developed based on the most current and relevant research available to this author. Recommendations from research studies of parenting groups for vulnerable mothers, single mothers without disabilities, and parents with disabilities have been incorporated in this proposal to minimize the barriers and maximize the benefits of group counselling for single mothers with intellectual disabilities. The Parenting Better Together Group Program also adheres to best practices recommended by leading professionals in the field of group psychotherapy. While this group program proposal has its strengths and its limitations, it does address and minimize the barriers to social support and counselling often experienced by single mothers with intellectual disabilities. It is anticipated that offering the Parenting Better Together Group Program to single mothers with intellectual disabilities will enhance their parenting skills, their sense of competency, their circle of social support, and their achievement of “good enough parenting” (McConnell & Llewellyn, 2002; Voigt et al., 1996; Ward & Tarleton, 2007). Most importantly, it will contribute to the decrease in child maltreatment and apprehension in families headed by single parents who have intellectual disabilities.

Chapter IV

Conclusions

Strengths of the Proposal

The Parenting Better Together Group Program was written in consideration of the most recent and relevant research available to this author regarding parents and single mothers with intellectual disabilities. Best practices identified in the research of parenting groups with vulnerable mothers, single mothers without disabilities, and parents with intellectual disabilities were merged and incorporated in this proposal. Single mothers, parents with intellectual disabilities, and single mothers with intellectual disabilities experience common challenges and share common needs. These commonalities were incorporated in the development of the Parenting Better Together Group Program proposal and manual. However, noting the unique challenges that single mothers with intellectual disabilities face socially, financially, and emotionally, and the resulting barriers they experience to fulfilling their parenting potential, this counselling program proposal and program manual addressed and minimized these barriers. It is anticipated that, as a result, the Parenting Better Together Group Program will help to minimize the risk for child maltreatment and apprehension in families headed by single mothers with intellectual disabilities.

Limitations of the Proposal

This author was unable to find research studies regarding the efficacy of psycho-educational group counselling programs specifically for single mothers who have intellectual disabilities. Research available on the efficacy of support groups for vulnerable and/or single mothers without disabilities and parents with disabilities was

limited in number. That this program proposal was informed by the scant research available on the efficacy of support groups with vulnerable and/or single mothers without disabilities and parents with intellectual disabilities leads to the question of whether the recommendations made herein can be generalized to a group of single mothers with intellectual disabilities. While the recommendations made in this proposal based on the commonalities between vulnerable mothers, single mothers without disabilities, and parents with intellectual disabilities may be relevant and effective in producing desirable outcomes for single mothers with intellectual disabilities, there may also be discrepancies that confound or prevent this program from being successful.

Implications for Practice

Given the paucity of research that exists to inform the provision of psycho-educational counselling groups for single mothers with intellectual disabilities, the Parenting Better Together Group Program fills a dire need in the counselling field. It provides a much needed guide to organizing, structuring, marketing, and facilitating an opportunity for single mothers with intellectual disabilities to share common concerns, develop relationships, learn from one another, practice stress management techniques, and develop their parenting competence. Yet, it is important that facilitators of this program acknowledge both the strengths and limitations of this program proposal and manual. In addition, facilitators are reminded of the caution put forth by McConnell & Llewellyn (2002) and McConnell et al. (2003) regarding the uniqueness of parents with intellectual disabilities. Research findings and the recommendations included in this program proposal and manual should not be applied to work with single parents with intellectual disabilities without due consideration to their unique situations and needs.

Modifications to the program proposal and manual included herein may be required to appropriately address the unique personalities, learning styles, lifestyles, and needs of the single mothers being served.

Implications for Further Research

Research regarding the efficacy of psycho-educational group counselling programs for single mothers with intellectual disabilities is sorely lacking. In the least, further descriptive research, similar to the study conducted by Tarleton et al. (2006), which studies the efficacy of psycho-educational group counselling with single mothers who have intellectual disabilities specifically, is needed. Experimental research that demonstrates a correlation between the elements of group counselling that produces an increase in parenting competency and a decrease in the risk for child maltreatment is especially warranted. In addition, the assessment measures used in this program proposal, namely the Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones, 1995) and the Social Support Questionnaire (Sarason et al., 1983) have not been studied for validity and reliability with people who have intellectual disabilities. Further research on the use of these important assessment tools with this population would enhance the accuracy with which they can be used to measure the perception of social support of group program participants before and after their involvement in the Parenting Better Together Group Program.

Summary

Despite the limitations of the Parenting Better Together Group Program proposal and manual, it fills a dire need in the counselling field. It provides an opportunity for single mothers with intellectual disabilities to reap the benefits of counselling and social support so necessary for effective parenting yet so often lacking from the lives of this

population. While this program proposal and manual have been developed in consideration of the most recent and most relevant literature available on parenting support groups for vulnerable and/or single mothers as well as parents with intellectual disabilities, the success of the Parenting Better Together psycho-educational group counselling program will be enhanced when the unique needs and circumstances of the group participants are accommodated.

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Appendix A

Intake Form

Intake Form***Parenting Better Together Group Program***

Date of Application: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Guardian Name (if applicable): _____

Guardian Address: _____

Guardian Phone Number: _____

Who told you about the Parenting Better Together Group Program? _____

Why are you interested in the Parenting Better Together Group Program? _____

Eligibility for Parenting Better Together

To participate in the Parenting Better Together Group Program, you must be 18 years old or older. You must live with and be the primary caregiver for at least one child who is 17 years of age or younger. You have an intellectual disability and an IQ between 55 and 85. It is important that you can speak English and provide informed written consent to attend the group program (if you have a guardian, the guardian will also have to consent to your

participation in this program). You are not involved in a violent relationship or having trouble managing your mental health.

1. How old are you? _____
2. How many children do you have? _____
3. How old are your children? _____
4. What is your marital status? _____ single _____ married _____ common-law
_____ separated _____ divorced
5. Are you living with a partner? _____ Yes _____ No
6. Do you have an intellectual disability? _____ Yes _____ No
7. Do you speak English? _____ Yes _____ No
8. Can you provide informed written consent to participate in this group program?
_____ Yes _____ No
9. Are you involved in a violent relationship? _____ Yes _____ No
10. Are you having difficulties managing your mental health? _____ Yes _____ No

Thank you for your application.

One of the Parenting Better Together group leaders will contact you to set up a time to meet and talk about the group. You may come to this meeting alone or you may bring a support person. This meeting will help you and the group leaders decide if the Parenting Better Together Group Program is right for you. If you are accepted to the group, you will be asked to sign a form saying that you understand the risks and benefits of participating in the group.

Appendix B

Screening Questions

Screening Questions***Parenting Better Together Group Program******Offering Date:***

Name:

Date:

Interviewed by:

1. Why do you want to join the Parenting Better Together Group Program?

2. Have you participated in a group program before? _____

If so, what did you like about the group program? What did you not like?

3. How would you describe your parenting skills right now?

4. How do you think the Parenting Better Together Group Program can help you be a better parent?

5. How do you usually behave in a group setting? How do you usually feel in a group setting?

6. How much stress do you have in your life?

7. How do you cope with stress in your life?

8. Do you have any allergies or health conditions that we should be aware of in planning dinner?

9. Are you able to attend the Parenting Better Together Group Program every week?

Comments:

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form***Parenting Better Together Group Program***

This form contains important information about the Parenting Better Together Group Program.

Parenting Better Together is a group program for single mothers with intellectual disabilities. Mothers who attend this program are living with and caring for at least one child who 17 years old or younger. The group is held every week for a total of 8 weeks. We hope this group will help you:

1. feel less stress as a parent
2. receive more support from others, and
3. accomplish the goals that are important to you. Examples include learning how to manage your stress or increase your self-esteem.

In this group, you will participate in discussion, group activities, and individual activities to help you accomplish your goals. You can decide how much you participate in group discussions and activities. However, the more you participate in group sessions, the more you will learn and grow.

Group leaders of the Parenting Better Together Group Program are responsible for your safety in the group. They make decisions about your safety using the ethical guidelines set out by the American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA, 2002) and the Canadian Counselling Association (CCA, 2007). These associations tell counsellors how to make decisions that keep all group participants safe.

It is important that you know your rights and responsibilities before deciding whether you want to join the Parenting Better Together Group Program.

Risks and Benefits

There are risks and benefits to participating in group counselling.

Some of the risks might be:

- It might be uncomfortable for you to share information about your life with others in the group, and
- People in your life may treat you differently when you make changes in your life.

Some of the benefits might be:

- By talking with others in the group, you might learn better communication skills, social skills, and problem-solving skills, and
- You might gain new friendships as a result of participating in the group.

Rights

You can choose to participate in the group program or you can choose not to participate in the group program. Even if you decide to join the group program and you come to a few sessions, you can decide at any time to stop coming to the group program. If you do not like what is happening in the group program, it is important that you talk to the group leaders. It is important that you have the information you need to feel comfortable and safe in the group.

Attendance

It is important that you try to come to every group session. If you cannot come to a group session (if you have another appointment), please tell the group ahead of time. If you cannot come to the group at the last minute (if you are sick or your child is sick), call one of the group leaders. If you don't want to come to the group program anymore, please talk about this with the group participants and/or the group leaders.

Confidentiality

To make sure everyone in the group feels safe and comfortable talking about problems, it is important that confidentiality is respected.

This means that group leaders and group participants should not share information about other group participants with people outside of the group.

Group leaders will remind group participants about the importance of keeping each other's information private. But sometimes group participants will not follow the rules about confidentiality. So, it is important that you only share the personal information that you feel comfortable sharing with others in the group.

Group leaders will only share information about group participants during team meetings with each other and their agency supervisor. We will only share information that will help us learn how to help you meet your parenting goals.

If you have a guardian, he or she may also want to know how you are doing in the group program. Before the group program starts, the group leaders will contact your guardian to discuss what information about you will be shared. The group leaders will ask for permission to only share information with your guardian when you say it is o.k.

You may share information about your own participation in the group with your guardian as long as you don't talk about personal information about other group participants.

In addition, there are times when group leaders must share private information in order to keep you or other group participants safe. Group leaders must share private information when:

- A group member talks about wanting to hurt herself
- A group member talks about wanting to hurt someone else
- Group leaders think that a child is in danger of being abused
- A judge in a court of law is asking for private information to be shared

Documentation

To help you meet your parenting goals in the Parenting Better Together Group Program, group leaders have to collect and keep written information about your participation in the group program. We

keep the information you shared during the screening interview, the information you provided during the assessment meeting, and the notes we take every week to remember how you are doing in the group program. You can ask to see this information at any time. A group leader will meet with you and help you understand the information in your file.

Complaints

If you are having a problem with the group counselling program, please talk to one of the group leaders. We want to help you with your concerns. If you are uncomfortable talking about your problems with one of the group leaders, you can talk to the agency supervisor, (name of agency supervisor). You can reach (name of agency supervisor) at (phone number of agency supervisor).

Consent Form

I agree that I understand the information included in this informed consent form and I know my rights, responsibilities, and learning opportunities with the Parenting Better Together program. I agree to participate in the Parenting Better Together Group Program.

Group Member's signature

Date

Guardian's signature (if applicable)

Date

References:

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Appendix D

Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ)

Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ)***Parenting Better Together Group Program***

The following questions ask about people in your environment who provide you with help or support. Each question has two parts. For the first part, list all the people you can count on to support you in the way described by the question. Give the person's initials and their relationship to you. Do not list more than one person next to each of the letters beneath the question.

For the second part, circle how satisfied you feel with the support you have from everyone.

If you have no support for a question, check the words "No one" but still rate your level of satisfaction. Do not list more than nine persons per question.

Please answer all questions as best as you can. All your responses will be kept confidential.

1. Who can you really count on to listen to you when you need to talk?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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2. If a good friend insulted you and told you that he/she didn't want to see you again, who could you really count on to help you?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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3. Whose lives do you feel you are an important part of?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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4. If you were married and had just separated from your husband, who do you feel would help you?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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5. Who could you really count on to help you out in a crisis situation, even though they would have to go out of their way to do so?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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6. Who can you talk with honestly, without having to watch what you say?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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7. Who helps you feel that you truly have something positive to share with others?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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8. Who can you really count on to distract you from your worries when you feel stressed?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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9. Who can you most depend on when you need help?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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10. If you had just been fired from your job or kicked out of school, who could you really count on to help you out?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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11. With whom can you totally be yourself?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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12. Who do you feel really appreciates you as a person?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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13. Who can you really count on to give you useful suggestions that help you to avoid making mistakes?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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14. Who can you count on to listen openly and non-judgmentally to your innermost feelings?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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15. Who will comfort you when you need it by holding you in their arms?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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16. If your good friend had been in a car accident and was hospitalized in serious condition, who do you feel would help?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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17. Who can you really count on to help you feel more relaxed when you are under pressure or tense?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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18. Who do you feel would help if a family member very close to you died?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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19. Who accepts you totally, including both your worst and your best points?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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20. Who can you really count on to care about you, regardless of what is happening to you?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
--------------------	----------------------	------------------------	---------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------

21. Who can you really count on to listen to you when you are very angry at someone else?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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22. Who can you really count on to tell you, in a thoughtful manner, when you need to improve in some way?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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23. Who can you really count on to help you feel better when you are feeling generally down-in-the-dumps?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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24. Who do you feel truly loves you deeply?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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25. Who can you count on to comfort you when you are very upset?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
--------------------	----------------------	------------------------	---------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------

26. Who can you really count on to support you in major decisions you make?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
--------------------	----------------------	------------------------	---------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------

27. Who can you really count on to help you feel better when you are very irritable, ready to get angry at almost anything?

No one	1)	4)	7)
	2)	5)	8)
	3)	6)	9)

How satisfied?

6 – very satisfied	5 – fairly satisfied	4 – a little satisfied	3 – a little dissatisfied	2 – fairly dissatisfied	1 – very dissatisfied
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SSQ SCORING:

1. Add the total number of people for all 27 items (maximum is 243)
Divide by 27 for per item score. This gives you the SSQ Number Score, or SSQN.
2. Total Satisfaction scores for all 27 items (maximum is 162)
Divide by 27 for per item score. This gives you SSQ Satisfaction Score, or SSQS.
3. You can also add up the total number of people that are family members and that can give the SSQ Family score.

Reference:

Sarason, I. D., Levine, H. M., Basham, R. B., & Sarason, B. R. (1983). Assessing social support: The social support questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44 (1), 127-139.

Appendix E

Goal Attainment Scaling Form

Goal Attainment Scaling Form***Parenting Better Together Group Program***

Name:

Date:

Client's Goal:

1.



-2 point	-1 point	0 point	+1 point	+2 point

Reference:

Hiebert, B. (1996). Using informal methods to assess client change. *Guidance and Counseling, 11*(4), 3-12.

Appendix F

Session Evaluation Form

How did group go today?

Parenting Better Together Group Program

Session:

Date:

The group leaders listened to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

We talked about things that are important to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

I felt comfortable with the group leaders today.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

The group is helping me feel better about things.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

References:

Clipart obtained from Microsoft Office Online for educational purposes only. Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/results.aspx?CategoryID=CM790019251033>
 Duncan, B. L., Miller, S. D., Sparks, J. A., Claud, D. A., Reynolds, L. R., Brown, J., et al. (2003). The session rating scale: Preliminary psychometric properties of a “working” alliance measure. *Journal of Brief Therapy*, 3(1), 3-12.

Appendix G

Counselling Progress Notes – Pre-group Session

Group Leader(s): _____ Date: _____

Supervisor: _____ Client: _____

Briefly describe the client's presenting problem(s).

Describe the dynamics in the session.

Describe other important information that was learned during the session, including contextual information.

Describe relevant cultural/developmental information as it relates to the presenting problem(s).

What is your initial theoretical conceptualization of the client's issue(s)?

To the extent possible, describe how group session goals and objectives will help client to work on her presenting problem(s). Will you make any changes to the group plan or activities to better enable the client to work on her presenting problem(s)?

What are your objectives for the next session?

Question(s) you would like answered by your supervisor:

Group Leader's Signature

Group Leader's Signature

Reference:

Hackney, H. L., & Cormier, L. S. (2001). Client assessment forms. In H. L. Hackney, & L. S. Cormier. *The professional counsellor: A process guide to helping* (4th ed., pp. 320-329). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Counselling Progress Notes – Continuing Sessions

Group Leader(s): _____ Date: _____

Supervisor: _____ Client: _____

Provide a summary of the member's involvement in today's session.

Describe the dynamics between the client, other participants, and co-leaders in this session

Describe any barriers expressed or observed to the member's active participation in today's session (e.g., recent critical events in her life, conflicts with others in the group, anxiety around disclosing information to others).

To what extent were the client's objectives (goals) for this session achieved?

Explain changes (or expansions) you will make to the group plan or activities to help the client work on her presenting problem(s).

Question(s) you would like answered by your supervisor:

Program Leader's Signature

Program Leader's Signature

Reference:

Hackney, H. L., & Cormier, L. S. (2001). Client assessment forms. In H. L. Hacnkey, & L. S. Cormier. *The professional counsellor: A process guide to helping* (4th ed., pp. 320-329). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Appendix H

Parenting Better Together Group Leader's Manual

Parenting Better Together: A Group Program for Single Mothers

Pre-Session Meeting Plan

Parenting Better Together: A Group Program for Single Mothers

Pre-Session Meeting Plan

Session Objectives:

1. Develop an understanding of the group counselling process (Yalom, 1995, as cited in Corey & Corey, 2006)
2. Begin developing comfort with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with the group leaders (Corey & Corey)
3. Develop group agreement (Yalom, 1995, as cited in Corey & Corey)
4. Explore the expectations of group participants (Corey & Corey)
5. Lead participants towards the initial stages of group process (Corey & Corey)

Preparation and Materials Required:

- Chairs in circle formation with tables set behind the group circle and against the walls. Ensure there is sufficient space around and within circle formation for participants who use wheelchairs
- Group leaders sit amongst the group and across from each other to allow for observation of all participants (Corey & Corey, 2006)
- Flip chart and stand set just outside the group circle
- Names tags and pens set on a table for each participant
- Flipchart markers available on/near stand
- A variety of coloured paper pieces available for participants
- A culturally and nutritionally diverse dinner prepared in the kitchen with consideration to dietary and allergy restrictions
- Sufficient copies of:
 - the Getting the Most of your Group Experience Handout
 - the Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones, 1995)
 - the Session Evaluation form

Pre-Session Meeting Plan

TIME	SESSION OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITY	NOTES	MATERIALS and PREPARATION
10 min	1. Develop an understanding of the group counselling process (Yalom, 1995, as cited in Corey & Corey, 2006)	Introductions & Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group leaders introduce themselves • Provide an overview of the Parenting Better Together Group Program, group counselling process, and specifically the goals and purpose(s) of the pre-group meeting • Provide an overview of the purpose and agenda for today's pre-session meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite participants to ask questions/make comments at anytime during the session (Chen & Rybak, 2004) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be familiar with Corey and Corey's (2006) stages of group therapy. • Know Yalom's (1995; as cited by Corey & Corey) goals of pre-group meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write "Today is our pre-session meeting – we have 8 sessions left" on flipchart paper and hang on wall • Write today's agenda on flipchart paper and hang on the wall for all to see
15 min	2. Begin developing comfort with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with the group leaders (Corey & Corey)	Check-In: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite each group member to introduce herself and provide a one-word description of how she is feeling about being in the group at this moment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment briefly on the one-word description without delving deeply into individual situations (Chen & Rybak; Corey & Corey, 2006) • Briefly link participants according to similar one-word feeling descriptors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead into the purpose and importance of 	

			discussing group expectations	
30 min	<p>3. Develop group agreement (Yalom, 1995, as cited in Corey & Corey)</p> <p>4. Explore the expectations of group participants (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>5. Lead participants towards the initial stages of group process</p>	<p>Develop Group Agreement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the purposes and importance of group agreements • Review the Getting the Most from Your Group Experience handout. Discuss ways participants can obtain maximum benefit from the group experience (Corey & Corey, 2006) • Ask participants to identify the expectations they have of themselves, the group leaders, and group participants for creating a safe and comfortable group atmosphere where everyone can express and explore feelings • Group leaders will also identify the expectations they have for themselves and others in the group (Corey & Corey) • Be sure to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definition, expectation, and limits of confidentiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is another opportunity for linking similar expectations between participants • Obtain group consensus prior to documenting a group agreement on the flip chart paper • Ensure the group agreement is written in plain language. Use the exact words of the group participants whenever possible—enhances ownership and compliance • Be prepared to talk about cultural norms regarding confidentiality, interpersonal relationships and communication, expressing emotions and thoughts, and disclosing personal information. Normalize, and remind participants about their right to choose how much and what to share with others • Inform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide each member with Getting the Most from Your Group Experience handout • Flip chart stand with paper set outside the group circle; flip chart markers available on/near flip chart stand

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attendance & punctuality - Managing interruptions from the children - Use of cell phones - Sharing space within group discussions - Socializing outside the group with participants - Managing gossip within or outside of group - Intimate involvement between participants - Managing conflict within or outside of the group (Chen & Rybak, 2004; Corey & Corey) 	<p>participants that copies of the group agreement will be provided to them at the beginning of Session 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that the group agreement is flexible: can be modified as the group progresses and as requested by participants 	
15 min		Social Break with the Children		
30 min	<p>2. Begin developing comfort with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with the group leaders (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>4. Explore the expectations of group participants</p>	<p>Assessment: Parental Stress Scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the assessment and Likert items to the group participants as they complete the Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones, 1995). Provide additional explanations or examples as required • Once everyone has completed the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link the common experiences, emotional responses, and personal goals of participants to develop a sense of commonality, trust, and comfort within the group. • Be prepared to facilitate discussion about the influences of culture on one's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide each group member with a copy of the Parental Stress Scale

	(Corey & Corey) 5. Lead participants towards the initial stages of group process	scale, participants will choose 2 scale items on which they scored the highest (or lowest for items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, and 18). Discuss feelings around these 2 statements with the person to your left <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the large group, discuss experiences with and emotional responses to completing the scale. Ask each member to identify one personal goal relating to parental stress they would like to achieve within this group program 	parental stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure each participant has a turn to speak; refrain from delving deeply into one person's experiences/goals (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 2000) Be prepared to guide participants to turn "fuzzy" goals into clear and observable goals (Corey & Corey) 	
20 min	1. Develop an understanding of the group counselling process (Yalom, 1995, as cited in Corey & Corey, 2006) 2. Begin developing comfort with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance	Check-Out and Evaluation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask participants to choose a color that symbolizes how they are feeling as the group session comes to a close (Salvation Army, 2004). To make this activity more concrete, you may want to have a variety of coloured paper available for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure each participant understands that information collected on the Session Evaluation form is anonymous. However, if there are concerns noted on the form, these will be discussed in the next session to find ways to make the group better for everyone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of coloured paper pieces Ensure each participant has a copy of the Session Evaluation form

	<p>with the group leaders (Corey & Corey).</p>	<p>participants to choose from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite participants to share how the color represents their feelings with the group • Explain the importance and purposes of evaluating group sessions. • Provide each participant with a Session Evaluation form to complete • Read the assessment and Likert items to participants as they complete it • Provide additional explanation and/or examples when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to leave the Session Evaluation forms on the table closest to the door of the group room. • Invite verbal feedback and questions from participants 	
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Pre-Session Meeting

Questions for Group Leader Debriefing:

- At this initial stage of the group process, how and how well are participants building trust in each other, the group leaders, and in the group process (Corey & Corey, 2006)?
- Who was actively engaged in today's discussion and activities? Who was less involved? What might be the reasons some participants are less involved? How might we plan to increase the engagement of these participants (Corey & Corey)?
- To what degree were participants engaged in today's discussion? What might have been the barriers or incentives to participation? How might we capitalize on these incentives or decrease these barriers in the next session?
- What group and personal goals were elucidated by the participants as a result of today's discussion and assessments? Have we planned ways to help participants achieve these goals in upcoming sessions? If not, how and where could we build this in?
- What might we anticipate as the barriers to group agreement compliance in forthcoming sessions? How might we plan to improve group agreement compliance so that all participants feel safe, comfortable, and respected in the group?
- How did we do for time? Is there anything we rushed through today that we should incorporate more fully into next week's session? How might we plan to decrease time constraints for upcoming sessions?

- How are we working together as co-leaders (Corey & Corey)? How well did we take turns, build off each other's statements, and collaboratively address observations made within the group? What might we do differently next time to improve our collaboration as co-leaders?
- What feedback was obtained in the Session Evaluation forms? How might we address and incorporate this feedback in the next sessions?

References:

- Berry, J. (n.d.). *Parental stress scale*. University of Tulsa. Retrieved May 24, 2008, from <http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~judy-berry/>
- Berry, J. O., & Jones, W. G. (1995). The Parental Stress Scale: Initial psychometric evidence. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 12*(3), 463-472.
- Chen, M., & Rybak, C. (2004). *Group leadership skills: Interpersonal process in group counseling and therapy*. Toronto, ON: Thomson Nelson.
- Corey, G., Corey, M. S., & Haynes, R. (2000). *Evolution of a group: Student video & workbook*. Scarborough, ON: Nelson Canada.
- Corey, M. S., & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and practice*. Toronto, ON: Nelson.
- Salvation Army. (2004). *Families learning together group manual*.

Getting the Most From The Parenting Better Together Group Program

Participate in group

It is easier to achieve your parenting goals when you share your experiences and talk about your opinions in group. Even if you are shy, try to participate in the group discussions and activities. It might feel uncomfortable at first, but it will become easier as you practice and get to know the other participants in your group.

Only share the information that you feel comfortable sharing

There are risks to sharing personal information with other participants in the group program. Even though group leaders will explain the rules about keeping information about group participants private, some group participants might break the rules. They might share your personal information with people outside of the group. You should only share the personal information that you want to share with group participants. The group leaders will not make you share information you do not want to share.



Be prepared to give and receive feedback

In a group program, giving feedback is important. Telling people how you feel about what they are saying or doing helps people learn about themselves and their relationships with others. This is called feedback. You can also give feedback to the group leaders about what you like and what you don't like about the group program. The group leaders want to hear this information so that they can make the group better.



Group leaders and group participants might also give you feedback on what you are saying or doing in group. This information will help you make positive changes in your behaviour and your parenting skills. Try to listen and think about this information without getting angry at others.

Practice what you are learning



When you learn new skills in the group program, try to practice these new skills at home. Practicing your new skills at home will help you make positive changes in your life. The program leaders might also ask you to do some homework. Try your best to do this homework before the next group session.

It is important to remember that people in your life might behave differently with you when you are learning new skills and making changes in your life. If you are having troubles in your relationships with people in your life, you can talk about it in group or in private with a group leader.

Confidentiality

To make sure all group participants feel safe and comfortable talking about problems, it is important that privacy and confidentiality is respected. This means that group leaders and group participants should not share information about other group participants with people outside of the group.

Group leaders will remind group participants about the rules for keeping each other's information private. But sometimes group participants will not follow the rules about privacy and confidentiality. So, it is important that you only share the personal information that you feel comfortable sharing with group participants.



Group leaders will only share information about group participants during team meetings with each other and their agency supervisor. We will only share information that will help us learn how to help you meet your parenting goals.

If you have a guardian, he or she may also want to know how you are doing in the group program. Before the group program starts, the group leaders will contact your guardian to discuss what information about you will be shared. The group leaders will ask for permission to only share information with your guardian when you say it is o.k.

You can talk to your guardian about what you did in the group as long as you don't share personal information about other group participants.

In addition, sometimes group leaders must share private information in order to keep you or other group participants safe. Group leaders must share private information when:

- A group member talks about wanting to hurt herself
- A group member talks about wanting to hurt someone else
- Group leaders think that a child may be or is being abused
- A judge in a court of law is asking for private information to be shared

References:

Chen, M., & Rybak, C. (2004). *Group leadership skills: Interpersonal process in group counseling and therapy*. Toronto, ON: Thomson Nelson.

Clip Art images obtained from Microsoft Office Online for educational purposes only. Retrieved July 6, 2008, from

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/results.aspx?CategoryID=CM790019251033>

Corey, M. S., & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and practice*. Toronto, ON: Nelson.

Parental Stress Scale

The following statements describe feelings and perceptions about the experience of being a parent. Think of each of the items in terms of how your relationship with your child or children usually is. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following items by placing the appropriate number in the space provided.

1=Strongly Agree

2=Disagree

3=Undecided

4=Agree

5=Strongly Agree

- _____ 1. I am happy in my role as a parent.
- _____ 2. There is little or nothing I wouldn't do for my child(ren) if it was necessary.
- _____ 3. Caring for my child (ren) sometimes takes more time and energy than I have to give.
- _____ 4. I sometimes worry whether I am doing enough for my child(ren).
- _____ 5. I feel close to my child(ren).
- _____ 6. I enjoy spending time with my child(ren).
- _____ 7. My child(ren) is an important source of affection for me.
- _____ 8. Having child(ren) gives me a more certain and optimistic view for the future.
- _____ 9. The major source of stress in my life is my child(ren).
- _____ 10. Having child(ren) leaves little time and flexibility in my life.
- _____ 11. Having child(ren) has been a financial burden.
- _____ 12. It is difficult to balance different responsibilities because of my child(ren).

- _____ 13. The behavior of my child(ren) is often embarrassing or stressful to me.
- _____ 14. If I had to do it over again, I might decide not to have child(ren).
- _____ 15. I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a parent.
- _____ 16. Having child(ren) has meant having too few choices and too little control over my life.
- _____ 17. I am satisfied as a parent
- _____ 18. I find my child(ren) enjoyable.

Scoring:

Reverse score items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, and 18 should be reverse scored as follows: (1=5), (2=4), (3=3), (4=2), and (5=1).

Then, add up the scores from items 1 to 18.

References:

- Berry, J. (n.d.). *Parental stress scale*. University of Tulsa. Retrieved May 24, 2008, from <http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~judy-berry/>
- Berry, J. O., & Jones, W. G. (1995). The Parental Stress Scale: Initial psychometric evidence. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 12(3), 463-472.

How did group go today?

Parenting Better Together Group Program

Session:

Date:

The group leaders listened to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

We talked about things that are important to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

I felt comfortable with the group leaders today.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

The group is helping me feel better about things.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

References:

Clipart obtained from Microsoft Office Online for educational purposes only. Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://office.microsoft.com/enus/clipart/results.aspx?CategoryID=CM790019251033>
Duncan, B. L., Miller, S. D., Sparks, J. A., Claud, D. A., Reynolds, L. R., Brown, J., et al. (2003). The session rating scale: Preliminary psychometric properties of a "working" alliance measure. *Journal of Brief Therapy*, 3(1), 3-12.

**Parenting Better Together:
A Group Program for Single Mothers**

Session 1 Plan:

Perceptions of Parenting

Parenting Better Together: A Group Program for Single Mothers

Session 1 Plan: Perceptions of Parenting

Session Objectives:

1. Develop an understanding of the group counselling process (Yalom, 1995, as cited in Corey & Corey, 2006)
2. Begin developing comfort with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with facilitators (Corey & Corey)
3. Explore the expectations of group participants (Corey & Corey)
4. Initiate or pursue discussion relevant to each participant's personal goals
5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress

Preparation and Materials Required:

- Chairs in circle formation with tables set behind the group circle and against the walls
- NOTE: ensure there is sufficient space around and within circle formation for participants who use wheelchairs
- Group leaders sit amongst the group and across from each other to allow for observation of all participants
 - Be familiar with the initial stages of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)
 - Name tags and pens set on a table for each participant
 - A culturally and nutritionally diverse dinner prepared in the kitchen with consideration to dietary and allergy restrictions
 - Copies of the Parental Role Cards
 - Sufficient copies of:
 - the Group Agreement handout
 - the Parenting Schema Questionnaire (Elliott & Smith, 1999)
 - the Session Evaluation form
 - Pictures of a variety of weather patterns

Session 1 Plan: Perceptions of Parenting

TIME	SESSION OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITY	NOTES	MATERIALS and PREPARATION
20 min	<p>1. Develop an understanding of the group counselling process (Yalom, 1995, as cited in Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Begin developing comfort with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with group leaders (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>3. Explore the expectations of group participants (Corey & Corey)</p>	<p>Overview & Check-In:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite each group member to take a moment to look around the room and attend to how they are feeling in the moment (Corey et al., 2000) • Ask participants to notice which participants they are already drawn to and why, and which participants they feel more intimidated by, and why (Corey & Corey, 2006) • Ask each participant to check-in with a two-word description of how she is feeling about being in the group at this moment • Debrief the pre-session group experience and initiate discussion on any feedback obtained from the Session Evaluation forms, if necessary • Provide copies of the Group Agreement to each member for review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment briefly on the two-word description without delving deeply into individual situations (Chen & Rybak, 2004; Corey & Corey, 2006) • Briefly link participants according to similar two-word feeling descriptors • Describe the importance of sharing feedback about group sessions, changing what is not working, and building on what is working • Remind participants that the Group Agreement is flexible: it can be modified at any time as per participant request and group consensus • Encourage questions and comments from participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be familiar with the initial stages of group process (Corey & Corey, 2006) • Write “Today is our 1st session – we have 7 sessions left” on flipchart paper and hang on the wall • Write today’s agenda on flipchart paper and hang on the wall for all to see • Be prepared with feedback (positive and negative) from last week’s Session Evaluation forms to discuss with group participants • Have sufficient copies of the Group Agreement handout

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an overview of the purpose and agenda for today's session 		
30 min	<p>2. Begin developing comfort with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with the group leaders (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>3. Explore the expectations of group participants (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>4. Initiate or pursue discussion relevant to each participants' personal goals</p> <p>5. Learn ways to decrease parental stress</p>	<p>Parenting Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Randomly provide each member with a Parenting Role Card • Ask participants to think about the challenges and rewards associated with the designated parenting role • Ask participants to pair up with another person in the group with whom they have not yet worked. Participants will discuss any challenges or rewards they may share in common as a result of the parenting role on their card • Ask participants to report back to the large group on the common challenges and rewards they experience as a result of the parenting roles they discussed • Then, invite participants to engage in "card trading": if the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that each participant has equal time to share • Invite participants to share other parental roles they are involved in. In fact, it would be okay to quickly make up additional cards according to participants' unique situations or cultures. What are the challenges and rewards associated with these roles? <p>Process the experience of "card trading": What feelings or thoughts did you have while holding a card that represented a challenge for you in your parenting role? What was it like to trade cards with another participant?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient copies of the Parenting Role Cards (one card for each member) • Flip chart stand with paper set outside the group circle; flip chart markers available on/near flip chart stand

		<p>role card a member is holding does not represent her strengths in parenting, invite her to trade this card with another member who is holding a parental role card that does represent her strength in parenting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process the experience 	<p>How do you feel when holding a parental role that is a strength for you, rather than a challenge? How did it feel for a participant who was asked to trade their card in to another participant?</p>	
15 min		Social Break with the Children		
35 min	<p>2. Begin developing comfort with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with the group leaders (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>3. Explore the expectations of group participants (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>4. To initiate or pursue discussion relevant to each participants' personal goals</p> <p>5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p>	<p>Parenting Schemas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the notion of parenting schemas and how these inform one's parenting behaviours/style • Provide each group member with a Parenting Schema Questionnaire to complete (with parenting schema titles removed; Elliott & Smith, 1999). Read the questions and Likert items to the group. Be prepared to provide explanations or examples for each question • Invite participants to discuss experiences with and emotional responses to the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sure to link participants according to shared schemas • Encourage participants to talk to each other rather than to the group leaders (Chen & Rybak, 2004; Corey & Corey, 2006) • Begin to delve more deeply into emotional responses identified by participants to encourage transition into the working stage (Corey & Corey) • Be prepared to help participants turn "fuzzy" goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of Parenting Schema Questionnaire sufficient for each group member • Be familiar with Elliott and Smith's (1999) Parenting Schema Questionnaire • Be prepared to describe each of the 14 schemas

		<p>Parenting Schema Questionnaire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to share one parenting schema for which they obtained surprising results and describe why these results were surprising: how might this item relate to her parenting goals? • Explain the nature and purposes of schemas (Elliott & Smith) • Provide parents with the Parenting Schema titles to insert into the rows above each parenting schema description (Elliott & Smith) • Discuss the costs and benefits (to both parents and children) of the schemas that were particularly problematic for group participants. • Identify how schemas may be adapted to change problematic parenting patterns and elicit positive parenting behaviours. Provide examples based on the schemas identified as problematic by 	<p>into concrete, observable, measurable goals (Corey & Corey)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage each participant to ask significant others (parents or friends) to complete the Parenting Schema Questionnaire on the participant's behalf to provide a comparison between how she perceives herself, and how others perceive her parenting schemas (Elliott & Smith) • Ask participants to bring the Parenting Schema Questionnaire back to group next week to discuss responses and outcomes 	
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		<p>participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is time, provide group participants with individualized assistance to identify the costs and benefits of those schemes for which they rated 3 or higher • Homework: Reflect on the costs and benefits of parenting schemas, and finish completing the table on the handout prior to next session 		
20 min	<p>1. Develop an understanding of the group counselling process (Yalom, 1995, as cited in Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Begin developing comfort with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with the group leaders (Corey & Corey)</p>	<p>Check-Out and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to identify and describe a weather pattern to symbolize how they are feeling about the group as this session comes to a close (e.g., “stormy” or “sunny and warm”; Salvation Army, 2004). You may want to have pictures of various weather patterns available for participants to choose from, to make this activity more concrete • Explain the importance and purposes of evaluating group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind participants that the group evaluation is anonymous • Ask participants to leave the Session Evaluation forms on the table closest to the door of the group room • Invite verbal feedback and questions from participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have pictures of a variety of weather patterns available for participants to use for check-out • Ensure each participant has a copy of the Session Evaluation form

		<p>sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide each participant with a Session Evaluation form to complete prior to leaving the group• Be prepared to read the assessment and Likert items to participants as they complete it• Provide additional explanation and/or examples when required		
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Session 1: Perceptions of Parenting

Questions for Group Leader Debriefing:

- Initial Stages of Group: Are all participants taking an active role in group activities and discussions (Corey & Corey, 2006)? What might be the barriers or incentives of participation being experienced by participants? How might we capitalize on these incentives or decrease these barriers in future sessions?
- What are the levels of comfort and trust apparent in the group (Corey & Corey)? Does there seem to be any hidden agendas (Corey & Corey)? Are there any indicators of conflict arising within the group, between participants or between participants and co-leaders (Corey & Corey)? If so, how might this conflict be addressed in future sessions?
- Is there an appropriate amount of structure within the group (Corey & Corey)? Should there be less or more structure incorporated into future sessions?
- Is cultural or sexual diversity being respected amongst participants and group leaders? How is cultural or sexual diversity impacting people's perceptions of and goals in parenting? Does this need to be addressed more overtly in the next session?
- As co-leaders, how well are we collaborating to engage participants in discussion, observe and respond to participant reactions, and keep the group session running smoothly? Are there areas in which we could improve our collaboration? Are there any points of difference we need to address?
- How are we working together as co-leaders? What is the level of trust between us? How could we increase the level of trust and collaboration between us?

- What feedback was obtained in the Session Evaluation forms? How might we address and incorporate this feedback in the next sessions?

References:

- Chen, M., & Rybak, C. (2004). *Group leadership skills: Interpersonal process in group counseling and therapy*. Toronto, ON: Thomson Nelson.
- Corey, G., Corey, M. S., & Haynes, R. (2000). *Evolution of a group: Student video & workbook*. Scarborough, ON: Nelson Canada.
- Corey, M. S., & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and practice*. Toronto, ON: Nelson.
- Elliott, C. H., & Smith, L. L. (1999). *Why can't I be the parent I want to be?* Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.
- Salvation Army. (2004). *Families learning together group manual*.

Parenting Role Cards

Doctor

- diagnosing your child(ren)'s illnesses, cuts, and bruises
- finding the right medication to help your child(ren) get better
- treating cuts and illnesses with cream, syrups, band-aids
- arranging doctor's appointments



Teacher

- helping child(ren) with homework
- helping your child(ren) learn the difference between right and wrong
- teaching your child(ren) manners, responsibility, patience, healthy decision-making
- finding your child(ren) the right preschool or school
- meeting with your child(ren)'s teachers



Taxi Driver

- Driving your child(ren) to/from school
- Driving your child(ren) to/from leisure activities
- Driving your child(ren) to/from birthday parties



Housekeeper/Cook

- Keeping the house clean
- Doing Laundry
- Making dinners, lunch, breakfasts, and snacks
- Supervising your child(ren)'s completion of household chores
- Grocery shopping
- Making nutritious meals and ensuring your child(ren) eat well



Banker

- Putting money away for your child(ren)'s future
- Making sure your child(ren) has enough money for school lunches, field trips, or friends' birthday parties
- Deciding how much money to pay a child(ren) for chores or a lost tooth
- Teaching your child(ren) money management skills and values



Police Officer

- Teaching your child(ren) to obey the rules and tell the truth
- Intervening when child(ren) are arguing or fighting
- Identifying and following through with consequences for inappropriate behaviour
- Watching for and rewarding appropriate behaviour



Playmate

- Participating in stimulating activities with your child(ren) throughout the day/week (swimming, crafts, playing with toys)
- Arranging appropriate leisure activities/summer camps for your child(ren)
- Arranging play dates between your child(ren) and other children



References:

Clipart obtained from Microsoft Office Online for educational purposes only. Retrieved December 7, 2008, from <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/results.aspx?CategoryID=CM790019251033>
Gilbert, M. (2008). *Parenting Role Cards*.

Parenting Schema Questionnaire

Record the number between 0 and 4 that best describes your beliefs and feelings as a parent.

0 = almost never describes me

1 = occasionally describes me

2 = sometimes describes me

3 = usually describes me

4 = almost always describes me

1. Anxious-Attachment	2. Avoidant-Attachment
_____ I often worry about whether my child loves and likes me. I also worry about whether I could go on if anything happened to my child.	_____ I believe kids are to be seen and not heard. I am uncomfortable with hugging and kissing. I don't feel my child needs to hear "I love you". I don't spend a lot of time with my kid.
3. Blameworthy	4. Blameless
_____ I never feel like I do a good job of parenting. If something goes wrong, I feel like it's all my fault. When my kid gets in trouble, I feel like it's all my fault.	_____ I hate admitting I made a mistake. When someone blames me for something, I usually find someone or something else to blame. When my kid gets into trouble, it's usually someone else's fault, certainly not mine.

5. Naive	6. Distrust
<p>_____ I never worry about my kid getting hurt or into trouble. Everything always works out for the best. There's no reason not to trust people. I trust my child completely.</p>	<p>_____ I am a worrywart. The world is a dangerous place. People are out to get you. I can't easily trust my kid. Even if I could trust my own kid, other kids are likely to get him or her into trouble.</p>
7. Other-Centered	8. Self-Centered
<p>_____ I can't do enough for my kid. My kid's needs are far more important than my own.</p>	<p>_____ My needs come first. Raising my child often feels like an intrusion in my life.</p>
9. Perfectionist	10. Unambitious
<p>_____ I think if something is worth doing, it is worth doing perfectly. There is a right way and a wrong way to do things. I expect my child to hold to the same high standards I have for myself.</p>	<p>_____ I don't worry at all about how well my kid does at school or anything else. As long as my kid gets by, that's good enough for me. It's stupid to put more effort into something than you have to.</p>
11. No Play	12. All Play
<p>_____ Life is serious. Play is a frivolous waste of time. My child's worth will come from work.</p>	<p>_____ The focus for my family is on having a good time. We play as much as we can. We only work to get the absolute essentials done. Life is meant for fun.</p>

13. Excessive Control	14. No Control
_____ Nothing is more important than having strict discipline. Otherwise, a family would be utter chaos. My kid toes the line or else.	_____ I can't say no to my kid. When I do make rules, I have a very hard time enforcing them, especially when my kid gets upset.

Scoring and Interpreting the Results:

Any item that you may have scored as 1 is likely not problematic for your parenting.

Any item that you may have scored as 2 or higher may present a problem for your parenting, at least on occasion.

Any item that you may have scored 3 or 4 probably requires attention.

Cost/Benefit Analysis

Schema	Benefits	Costs

Reference:

Elliott, C. H., & Smith, L. L. (1999). *Why can't I be the parent I want to be?* Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

How did group go today?

Parenting Better Together Group Program

Session:

Date:

The group leaders listened to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

We talked about things that are important to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

I felt comfortable with the group leaders today.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

The group is helping me feel better about things.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

References:

Clipart obtained from Microsoft Office Online for educational purposes only. Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/results.aspx?CategoryID=CM790019251033>
Duncan, B. L., Miller, S. D., Sparks, J. A., Claud, D. A., Reynolds, L. R., Brown, J., et al. (2003). The session rating scale: Preliminary psychometric properties of a "working" alliance measure. *Journal of Brief Therapy*, 3(1), 3-12.

**Parenting Better Together:
A Group Program for Single Mothers**

**Session 2 Plan:
Stress Management Strategies
for Parenting Better**

Parenting Better Together: A Group Program for Single Mothers

Session 2 Plan: Stress Management Strategies for

Parenting Better

Session Objectives:

1. Build comfort and trust with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with the facilitators (Corey & Corey, 2006)
2. Lead participants through the transition stage of groups (Corey & Corey)
3. Pursue discussion relevant to each participant's personal goals
4. Identify participants' current stress management resources
5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress
6. Share strategies for increasing social support

Preparation and Materials Required:

- Chairs in circle formation with tables set behind the group circle and against the walls. NOTE: ensure there is sufficient space around and within circle formation for participants who use wheelchairs
- Group facilitators sit amongst the group and across from each other to allow for observation of participants
- Be familiar with the initial and transitional stages of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)
- Box of figurines: place figurines on the table at the side of the room
- Name tags and pens set on a table for each participant
- A culturally and nutritionally diverse dinner prepared in the kitchen with consideration to dietary and allergy restrictions
- Additional copies of the Parenting Schema Questionnaire (Elliott & Smith, 1999)
- Diaphragmatic breathing and guided visual imagery scripts
- Equipment for recording stress management exercises for later transfer onto a CD
- Sufficient copies of:
 - the Weekly Relaxation Schedule handout
 - the Session Evaluation form

Session 2 Plan: Stress Management Strategies for Parenting Better

TIME	SESSION OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITY	NOTES	MATERIALS and PREPARATION
20 min	<p>1. Build comfort and trust with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with the group leaders (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Lead participants through the transition stage of groups</p> <p>5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>6. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<p>Overview & Check-In:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite each group member to look around the room and attend to how they are feeling in this moment (Corey et al., 2000) • Ask participants to identify one fear they have of being in the group today (Corey & Corey) • Once everyone has had a turn identifying and describing a fear, ask participants to identify one person in the group with whom they feel comfortable talking. Explain your reasons to that person • Initiate discussion on any feedback obtained from the Session Evaluation forms, if necessary • Review session 1 activities and homework • Debrief emotions and experiences participants had from Session 1 or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link common fears between participants • Be prepared to delve more deeply into emotions expressed by participants, to guide them through the transition stage of groups • Be prepared to talk about how it might feel for a group member who is not chosen as someone other group participants feel comfortable talking to. Explore the fears and consequences. You may also want to explore things that group member can do to help increase the sense of comfort and safety in group discussion • Encourage questions and comments from participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write “Today is our 2nd session – we have 6 sessions left” on flipchart paper and hang on the wall • Write today’s agenda on flipchart paper and hang on the wall for all to see • Be prepared with feedback (positive and negative) from last week’s Session Evaluation forms to discuss with group participants • Have extra copies of the Parenting Schema (Elliott & Smith, 1999) Questionnaire in case some participants didn’t remember to bring their copy to this group session

		<p>the homework activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an overview of the purpose and agenda for today's session 		
20 min	<p>2. Lead participants through the transition stage of groups</p> <p>3. Pursue discussion relevant to each participant's personal goals</p> <p>5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p>	<p>Areas of Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referring to the Parental Roles activity and the Parental Schema Questionnaires (Elliott & Smith, 1999) completed during session 1, ask participants to identify major areas of parenting stress • Ask participants to identify 1-3 things that cause them to feel stress in their parenting role • Ask participants to also identify the underlying reasons for this stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link common stressors between parents • Be prepared to discuss the schemas (values, attitudes, and experiences) that underlie the feelings of parenting stress • Also discuss the external factors that contribute to stress (financial situation, employment, expectations of family and friends, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be familiar with Chapter 4 of Elliott and Smith (1999) • Have extra copies of the Parenting Role cards to help participants remember the roles they discussed last week • Flip chart stand with paper set outside of the group circle; flip chart markers available on/near flip chart stand
15 min	<p>1. Build comfort and trust with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with the group leaders (Corey & Corey, 2006).</p> <p>2. Lead participants through the transition stage</p>	<p>Stress Management Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will share one strategy they already use to alleviate stress in their lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunity to process barriers and challenges to alleviating stress and changing behaviour 	

	of groups 3. Pursue discussion relevant to each participant's personal goals 5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress			
15 min		Social Break with the Children		
15 min	5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress	Diaphragmatic Breathing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the purposes and processes of relaxation strategies for managing stress • Guide participants through the practice of diaphragmatic breathing for stress management purposes • Process the experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider recording today's diaphragmatic breathing session and provide participants with a CD for use at home • Participants may practice the strategy in a chair, or lying on the floor (depending on comfort and physical ability) Process the experience: how often do people breathe this deeply? What does it feel like to engage the diaphragm while breathing? What differences do you feel in your body after having engaged in diaphragmatic breathing? How easy/difficult would it be to use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared with a diaphragmatic breathing script • Be prepared to record this stress management exercise for transfer to a CD

			this strategy to de-stress at home, at work, at the grocery store?	
15 min	5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress	<p>Guided Imagery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief introduction to guided imagery • Guide participants through a guided imagery exercise • Process the experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider recording today's guided imagery session and provide participants with a CD for use at home <p>Process the experience: What differences did you note in your body during and after the guided imagery exercise? How easy/difficult was it to reach a stage of relaxation? What did you like/dislike about this exercise? Which of the stress management strategies do you prefer and why? Which do you see yourself using?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared with a guided visual imagery script. Ensure it is appropriate for culturally diverse clients. • Be prepared to record this stress management exercise for transfer to a CD
20 min	2. Lead participants through the transition stage of groups 3. Pursue discussion relevant to each participant's personal goals 5. Share strategies for decreasing	<p>Check-Out and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the person they identified as feeling most comfortable talking to at the beginning of the session, participants will describe how they are feeling at the end of the session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to leave the Session Evaluation forms on the table closest to the door of the group room • Invite verbal feedback and questions from participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a copy of the weekly relaxation schedule handout to each participant • Ensure each participant has a copy of the Session Evaluation form

	<p>parental stress</p> <p>6. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<p>as compared to the beginning of the session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to identify one thing they will work on this week to move themselves closer toward achieving one of their goals <p>Homework: provide participants with the weekly relaxation schedule handout. Ask participants to record their use of relaxation strategies throughout the week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide each participant with a Session Evaluation form to complete prior to leaving the group • Read the assessment and Likert items to participants as they complete it • Provide additional explanation and/or examples when required 		
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Session 2: Stress Management Strategies for Parenting Better

Questions for Group Leader Debriefing:

- Initial/Transitional Stages of Group: did participants demonstrate any “resistant” behaviour during group discussions and/or activities (Corey & Corey, 2006).
What might be the underlying reasons for this resistant behaviour (Corey & Corey)? How might we plan to address these resistant behaviours so that group participants can move past them and onto the working stage (Corey & Corey)?
- What are the signs that trust is high/low in this group? How can we nurture the building of trust between group participants in the next session (Corey & Corey)?
- How well are participants interacting with each other? Are participants spontaneously initiating discussion with other participants? Do participants show a willingness to provide feedback to each other and work through conflict (Corey & Corey)? How might we build on this progress in future sessions?
- Is there conflict arising or evident between group participants (Corey & Corey)? What might be the underlying reasons for this conflict? How might we address this conflict in the upcoming group session?
- How well are participants interacting with the group leaders (Corey & Corey)? Is a supportive and trusting therapeutic relationship developing (Corey & Corey)? Are participants interacting equally with both group leaders? Are there any transference issues emerging (Corey & Corey)? How might we address this?
- How are we, as co-leaders, interacting with each other? How well are we sharing the functions of group facilitation? How well are the processes of briefing and

debriefing proceeding? Do we need to change anything? Are there any issues that we need to discuss to increase our collaboration and effectiveness in group?

- Is countertransference a problem between either group leader and a group member? How might we as co-leaders address this and minimize its impact on the group process? Should we address this within group or outside of group (Corey & Corey)?
- How will we work together to transfer the relaxation scripts onto CD for the participants? Who will do what and what are our timelines?
- What feedback was obtained in the session rating scales? How might we address and incorporate this feedback in the next sessions?

References:

- Corey, G., Corey, M. S., & Haynes, R. (2000). *Evolution of a group: Student video & workbook*. Scarborough, ON: Nelson Canada.
- Corey, M. S., & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and practice*. Toronto, ON: Nelson.
- Elliott, C. H., & Smith, L. L. (1999). *Why can't I be the parent I want to be?* Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Weekly Relaxation Schedule

Date	How did you feel before you started the relaxation strategy?	What relaxation strategy did you use?	How did you feel after using the relaxation strategy?

Reference:
Gilbert, M (2008). *Weekly relaxation schedule*.

How did group go today?

Parenting Better Together Group Program

Session:

Date:

The group leaders listened to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

We talked about things that are important to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

I felt comfortable with the group leaders today.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

The group is helping me feel better about things.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

References:

Clipart obtained from Microsoft Office Online for educational purposes only. Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/results.aspx?CategoryID=CM790019251033>
Duncan, B. L., Miller, S. D., Sparks, J. A., Claud, D. A., Reynolds, L. R., Brown, J., et al. (2003). The session rating scale: Preliminary psychometric properties of a "working" alliance measure. *Journal of Brief Therapy*, 3(1), 3-12.

**Parenting Better Together:
A Group Program for Single Mothers**

Session 3 Plan:

**Positive Thinking Strategies
for Parenting Better**

Parenting Better Together: A Group Program for Single Mothers

Session 3 Plan: Positive Thinking Strategies for

Parenting Better

Session Objectives:

1. Build comfort and trust with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with the facilitators (Corey & Corey, 2006)
2. Lead participants through the transition stage of groups (Corey & Corey)
3. Address various forms of anxiety and defensiveness by discussing here-and-now interactions (Corey & Corey)
4. Pursue discussion relevant to each participant's personal goals
5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress
6. Share strategies for increasing social support

Preparation and Materials Required:

- Chairs in circle formation with tables set behind the group circle and against the walls. NOTE: ensure there is sufficient space around and within circle formation for participants who use wheelchairs
- Group leaders sit amongst the group and across from each other to allow for observation of participants
- Be familiar with the initial and transitional stages of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)
- Name tags and pens set on a table for each participant
- A variety of photo images for participants to choose from (beach scene, crowd of people on busy street, war photo, two people laughing together)
- Box of figurines: place figurines on the table at the side of the room
- A culturally and nutritionally diverse dinner prepared in the kitchen with consideration to dietary and allergy restrictions
- Sufficient copies of:
 - the Positive Thoughts handout
 - the Session Evaluation form

Session 3 Plan: Positive Thinking Strategies for Parenting Better

TIME	SESSION OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITY	NOTES	MATERIALS and PREPARATION
30 min	1. Build comfort and trust with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with the group leaders (Corey & Corey, 2006) 2. Lead participants through the transition stage of groups 3. Address various forms of anxiety and defensiveness by discussing the here-and-now interactions (Corey & Corey) 4. Pursue discussion relevant to each member's personal goals 5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress 6. Share strategies for increasing social support	Overview & Check-In: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite each group member to think about their experiences in the Parenting Better Together Group Program so far • Ask participants to choose one photo image that represents their opinion about the group • Ask participants to take turns in explaining how the photo image describes their opinion of the group thus far • When participants identify negative opinions about the group, ask for ideas on how the group process could be improved for everyone • Negotiate a plan for making the group better for everyone • Initiate discussion on any feedback obtained from the Session Evaluation forms, if necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link common opinions participants may have about the group • Be prepared to delve more deeply into emotions expressed by participants, to guide them through the transition stage of groups • Be prepared to process concerns participants are having about group dynamics. For instance, if a member identifies a concern about people who monopolize the conversation, you may want to process the feelings and barriers to group process this elicits for people. It is also important to be prepared to talk directly to the person accused of monopolizing to gain a sense of underlying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be familiar with the characteristics of the transition stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006) • Write “Today is our 3rd session – we have 5 sessions left” on flipchart paper and hang on the wall • Write today's agenda on flipchart paper and hang on the wall for all to see • Have a variety of photo images available for participants to choose from (beach scene, crowd of people on busy street, war photo, two people laughing together) • Be prepared with feedback (positive and negative) from last week's Session Evaluation forms to discuss with group participants

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review session 2 activities and homework • Ask participants to identify which relaxation strategies they used over the past week and in what situations these were most helpful. Discuss effects of using relaxation more regularly • Provide an overview of the purpose and agenda for today's session 	<p>issues/needs. Explore how this behaviour is preventing this member, and others, from reaching their personal and group goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage questions and comments from participants 	
20 min	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build comfort and trust with sharing personal information, getting to know each other better, and developing a working alliance with the facilitators (Corey & Corey, 2006) 2. Lead participants through the transition stage of groups 3. Address various forms of anxiety and defensiveness by discussing the here-and-now interactions (Corey & Corey) 4. Pursue 	<p>Sharing Circle: Symbols of Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a figurine from the table that symbolizes a quality you highly regard in yourself (e.g., Turtle: independent and self-protective, or Superman: strong and caring) • Share your reasons for selecting this figurine with the person to your left • In the large group, share one quality identified by your partner • Process the experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group leaders will also choose a figurine and describe the qualities it symbolically represents in them. This allows group leaders to model the activity and for participants to get to know the group leaders better • Link participants according to the strengths they have in common • Be prepared to address cultural norms relating to "boasting" about one's strengths • Make connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assorted Figurines: Place collection on a table at the side of the room • Flip chart stand with paper set outside of the group circle; flip chart markers on/near flip chart stand

	<p>discussion relevant to each member's personal goals</p> <p>5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>6. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>		<p>between strengths outside of group and strengths within group setting (Corey & Corey 2006)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate discussion on how the strengths identified by participants help to manage the stress of parenting <p>Process the experience: what was it like to share your strengths? How often do you boast about your strengths? What keeps you from celebrating your strengths more regularly? How might these strengths help you to get the most out of this group program (Corey & Corey, 2006)? How do your strengths help you to cope with the stresses of parenting?</p>	
15 min		Social Break with the Children		
35 min	1. Build comfort and trust with sharing personal information, getting to know	<p>Using Positive Thinking to Parent Better</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefly summarize the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make connections between group participants according to the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be familiar with Chapter 6 of "The Feeling Good Handbook" by David Burns

	<p>each other better, and developing a working alliance with the facilitators (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Lead participants through the transition stage of groups</p> <p>3. Address various forms of anxiety and defensiveness by discussing the here-and-now interactions (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>4. Pursue discussion relevant to each member's personal goals</p> <p>5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>6. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<p>tenets of cognitive-behavioural therapy: you can change the way you feel and behave by changing the way you think (Burns, 1989)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to think about some of the negative thoughts they have about themselves as parents • In a circle round, each participant will share one negative thought with the group • Briefly describe some of the cognitive distortions people commonly engage in (e.g., all-or-nothing thinking and self-blame; Burns) • Identify the cognitive distortion that applies to each of the statements shared by group participants • Discuss the relationship between the strengths participants identified for 	<p>common cognitive distortions they are exhibiting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to address participants' reluctance to take risks, to share personal information, and to address their maladaptive thoughts in group (Corey & Corey) • Discuss how it feels to reveal negative thoughts about oneself as a parent – validate the fact that this admittance requires courage and risk • Remind group participants of the group agreement regarding confidentiality and respect for others • Be prepared to invite group participants to provide feedback to each other on the accuracy and validity of negative thoughts (as per the Double-Standard, Experimental, 	<p>(1989)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure each participant has a copy of the Positive Thoughts handout
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		<p>themselves earlier in session and the negative thoughts they have about themselves as parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help participants process these cognitive distortions and develop alternative thought statements that are more adaptive, accurate, and positive. • Ask participants to write their positive, adaptive statements on the Positive Thoughts handout 	<p>and Survey methods proposed by Burns, 1989)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how the strengths identified by each group member can inform new, alternative, and adaptive thoughts for oneself 	
20 min	<p>2. Lead participants through the transition stage of groups</p> <p>3. Address various forms of anxiety and defensiveness by discussing the here-and-now interactions (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>4. Pursue discussion relevant to each member's personal goals</p> <p>5. Share</p>	<p>Check-Out and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will be asked to choose a photo image that represents their opinion about the group as it comes to a close • Participants will explain how this photo image represents their opinion about the group at this moment • If participants identify changes in their opinions of the group since the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to leave the Session Evaluation forms on the table closest to the door of the group room • Invite verbal feedback and questions from participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure each participant has a copy of the Session Evaluation form

	<p>strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>6. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<p>beginning of this session, explore the factors that brought about this change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If participants do not identify changes in their opinion of the group since the beginning of this session, ask if there are other changes that need to be made to the group in addition to the plan negotiated at the beginning of session • In a circle round, ask each participant to identify one thing she can do to contribute to improving group dynamics • Provide each participant with a Session Evaluation form to complete prior to leaving the group • Read the assessment and Likert items to participants as they complete it • Provide additional explanation and/or examples when required 		
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Session 3: Positive Thinking Strategies for Parenting Better

Questions for Group Leader Debriefing:

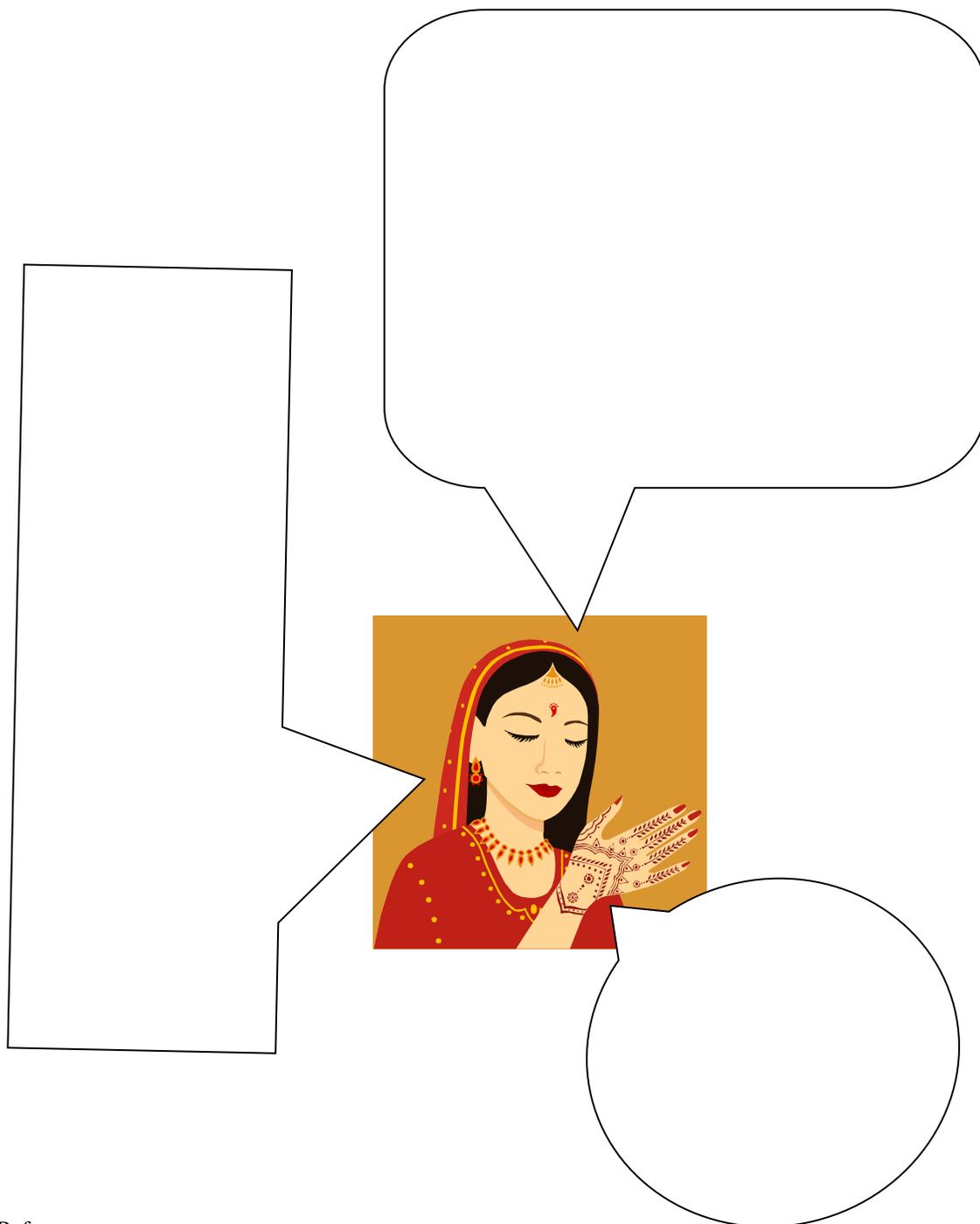
- Transitional Stages of Group: did participants demonstrate any fear, anxiety, or defensiveness during group discussions and/or activities (Corey & Corey, 2006). What might be the underlying reasons for these feelings/behaviours (Corey & Corey)? How might we plan to address these feelings/behaviours so that group participants can move past them and onto the working stage (Corey & Corey)?
- Are participants taking risks to disclose personal information and address personal barriers to change (Corey & Corey)? How can we nurture the conditions required for risk-taking? How can we gently challenge participants to engage in self-analysis and discussion even when it is uncomfortable (Corey & Corey)?
- Are group participants engaging in any behaviours that impede group process (Corey & Corey)? What are the motivations underlying this problem behaviour (Corey & Corey)? How can we gently address these behaviours in group? How can we involve the “difficult” member and her group participants in addressing the problem behaviour?
- Are participants interacting with each other on a regular basis? Do participants seem to be comfortable being truthful with each other (Corey & Corey)? Are participants gently confronting each other when necessary to deepen the discussion and achieve both personal and group goals? How might we help participants use confrontation in a sensitive and caring way to move the group to the working stage (Corey & Corey)?

- What are the indications of trust between group participants and group leaders (Corey & Corey)? What are the indications of mistrust? What have we done to impede the process of building trust between group participants and ourselves? What can we do to increase the level of trust between group participants and ourselves?
- Have participants confronted the group leaders in this session? How have these confrontations been handled? How might we handle confrontations in the future in a way that builds trust, models a non-defensive reaction to feedback, and allows participants to become less dependent on the leaders' approval (Corey & Corey).
- Is countertransference a problem between either group leader and a group member? How might we as co-leaders address this and minimize its impact on the group process? Should we address this within group or outside of group (Corey & Corey)?
- How are we working together as co-leaders to address the more difficult stages of group process? What can we do differently to improve the trust and collaboration between us?
- What feedback was obtained in the Session Evaluation forms? How might we address and incorporate this feedback in the next sessions?

References:

- Burns, D. (1989). *The feeling good handbook*. New York: Plume.
- Corey, M. S., & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and practice*. Toronto, ON: Nelson.

Positive Thoughts



Reference:

Clipart obtained from Microsoft Office Online for educational purposes only.

Retrieved December 8, 2008, from

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/results.aspx?CategoryID=CM790019251033>

Salvation Army. (2004). *Families learning together group manual*.

How did group go today?

Parenting Better Together Group Program

Session:

Date:

The group leaders listened to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

We talked about things that are important to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

I felt comfortable with the group leaders today.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

The group is helping me feel better about things.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

References:

Clipart obtained from Microsoft Office Online for educational purposes only. Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/results.aspx?CategoryID=CM790019251033>
Duncan, B. L., Miller, S. D., Sparks, J. A., Claud, D. A., Reynolds, L. R., Brown, J., et al. (2003). The session rating scale: Preliminary psychometric properties of a "working" alliance measure. *Journal of Brief Therapy*, 3(1), 3-12.

**Parenting Better Together:
A Group Program for Single Mothers**

**Session 4 Plan:
Relationships and Social Support**

Parenting Better Together: A Group Program for Single Mothers

Session 4 Plan: Relationships and Social Support

Session Objectives:

1. Lead participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)
2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)
3. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside of group (Corey & Corey)
4. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress
5. Share strategies for increasing social support

Preparation and Materials Required:

- Chairs in circle formation with tables set behind the group circle and against the walls.
NOTE: ensure there is sufficient space around and within circle formation for participants who use wheelchairs
- Group leaders sit amongst the group and across from each other to allow for observation of participants
- Be familiar with the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)
- Name tags and pens set on a table for each participant
- A culturally and nutritionally diverse dinner prepared in the kitchen with consideration to dietary and allergy restrictions
- Sufficient copies of:
 - the Social Support Circle handout
 - the Session Evaluation form

Session 4 Plan: Relationships and Social Support

TIME	SESSION OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITY	NOTES	MATERIALS and PREPARATION
30 min	<p>1. Lead participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>3. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside of group (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>4. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>5. Share strategies for</p>	<p>Overview & Check-In:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind group participants that this is the 4th session and, as such, the group program is at its halfway point • Invite group participants to think about their experiences in the Parenting Better Together group so far • Tell participants that for today’s check-in, each person will identify one goal she has achieved since the beginning of the Parenting Better Together Group Program. Other participants are encouraged to give feedback • Once each member has had a turn, another circle round will be completed with each member identifying a goal that she would like to achieve by the end of this group program • Group leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find ways to encourage participants to become involved in each other’s work • Encourage participants to engage in a deeper level of self-analysis by asking them to identify factors that have impeded their ability to achieve personal goals in this program • Be prepared to encourage participants to be authentic and thoughtful in both their own self-analysis and their feedback to other participants • Be prepared to focus on the here-and-now if participants are demonstrating behaviours that impede the group process • Group participants should be interacting with each other and relying less on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be familiar with the characteristics of the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey) • Write “Today is our 4th session – we have 4 sessions left” on flipchart paper and hang on wall • Write today’s agenda on flipchart paper and hang on the wall for all to see • Be prepared with feedback (positive and negative) from last week’s Session Evaluation forms to discuss with group participants

	increasing social support	<p>will ask the member, and her co-participants, to identify what may be impeding her from achieving this goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group leaders will then ask the member and her co-participants to identify what the member might do to facilitate achievement of this goal before the end of the group program • Initiate discussion on any feedback obtained from the Session Evaluation forms, if necessary • Review session 3 activities and homework • Invite participants to discuss their experiences with using positive thinking strategies over the past week • Provide an overview of the purpose and agenda for today's session 	<p>the co-leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage questions and comments from participants 	
25 min	<p>1. Lead participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Encourage participants to</p>	<p>Social Support Circle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the Social Support Circle Activity • Provide each member with a copy of the Social 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group leaders may provide an example of their own social support circle to make this activity more concrete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient copies of the Social Support Circle handout • Flip chart stand with paper set outside of the group circle; flip

	<p>“engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>3. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside of group (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>4. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>5. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<p>Support Circle handout</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the factors that may characterize relationships in the inner, middle, and outer circles of the social support circle (e.g. inner circle: relationships that are very close, long-term, reciprocal, and dependable) • Participants will identify relationships in their lives for each rung of the social support circle. Participants will write the names of people (or initials, to protect privacy) on the respective rung of the social support circle • Process the experience • Participants will discuss the characteristics and rewards of the various relationships included in their social support circles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the commonalities between participants regarding the characteristics of relationships for the three rungs of the social support circle • Discuss the common opinions among participants regarding what factors create a close and dependable relationship • Discuss the differences between paid and non-paid close relationships <p>Process the experience: how do you feel when you look at your social support circle? How do you feel when you see how many people you have in your inner, vs. middle, vs. outer circles? What do you think about the balance between paid and non-paid support in your life? What changes, if any, would you like to make to your</p>	<p>chart markers available on/near flipchart stand</p>
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			social support circle?	
15 min		Social Break with the Children		
35 min	<p>1. Lead participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>3. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside of group (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>4. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>5. Share strategies for increasing social</p>	<p>Developing Social Support Networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate a discussion about the changes participants would like to see in their social support circle, including (a) increasing the numbers of unpaid support people in their lives, (b) bringing people from the middle and outer rungs into the inner rung of their social support circle, or (c) increasing the amount of people in their social support circles • Depending on the changes desired by participants, discussion may focus on (a) the characteristics that participants require in their close relationships, (b) the qualities and gifts participants can offer to others with whom they have a relationship, (c) the places where participants may meet others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify common themes that arise in discussion between participants regarding desired changes to social support circles • Encourage participants to think about the ways they have built relationships with people in this Parenting Together group program. These examples provide opportunities for both validation and critical analysis on the participants’ skills in relationship with others • Help participants apply theoretical knowledge about relationships to practical tips for making desired changes in their social support circles • Be prepared to facilitate a role-play or 	

	support	with whom a relationship may be possible, (d) the skills involved in starting a new relationship, or (e) the skills involved in maintaining or enhancing an existing relationship	<p>dialogue between participants to allow participants to experiment with new ways to establish, maintain, or enhance relationships with others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to confront participants who are reluctant to be honest about her skills in relationship with others – invite the member to discuss how her social skills have impeded her in this group program (if applicable). Also invite other participants to provide feedback on the member’s skills in relationship with other group participants 	
15 min	<p>1. Lead participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration”</p>	<p>Check-Out and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a circle round, ask participants to identify one change they would like to make in their social support circle, and one thing they will 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to leave the Session Evaluation forms on the table closest to the door of the group room • Invite verbal feedback and questions from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure each participant has a copy of the Session Evaluation form

	<p>(Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other's work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>3. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside of group (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>4. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>5. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<p>do this week towards making that change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide each participant with a Session Evaluation form to complete prior to leaving the group • Read the assessment and Likert items to participants as they complete it (if required) • Provide additional explanation and/or examples when required 	<p>participants</p>	
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Session 4: Relationships and Social Support

Questions for Group Leader Debriefing:

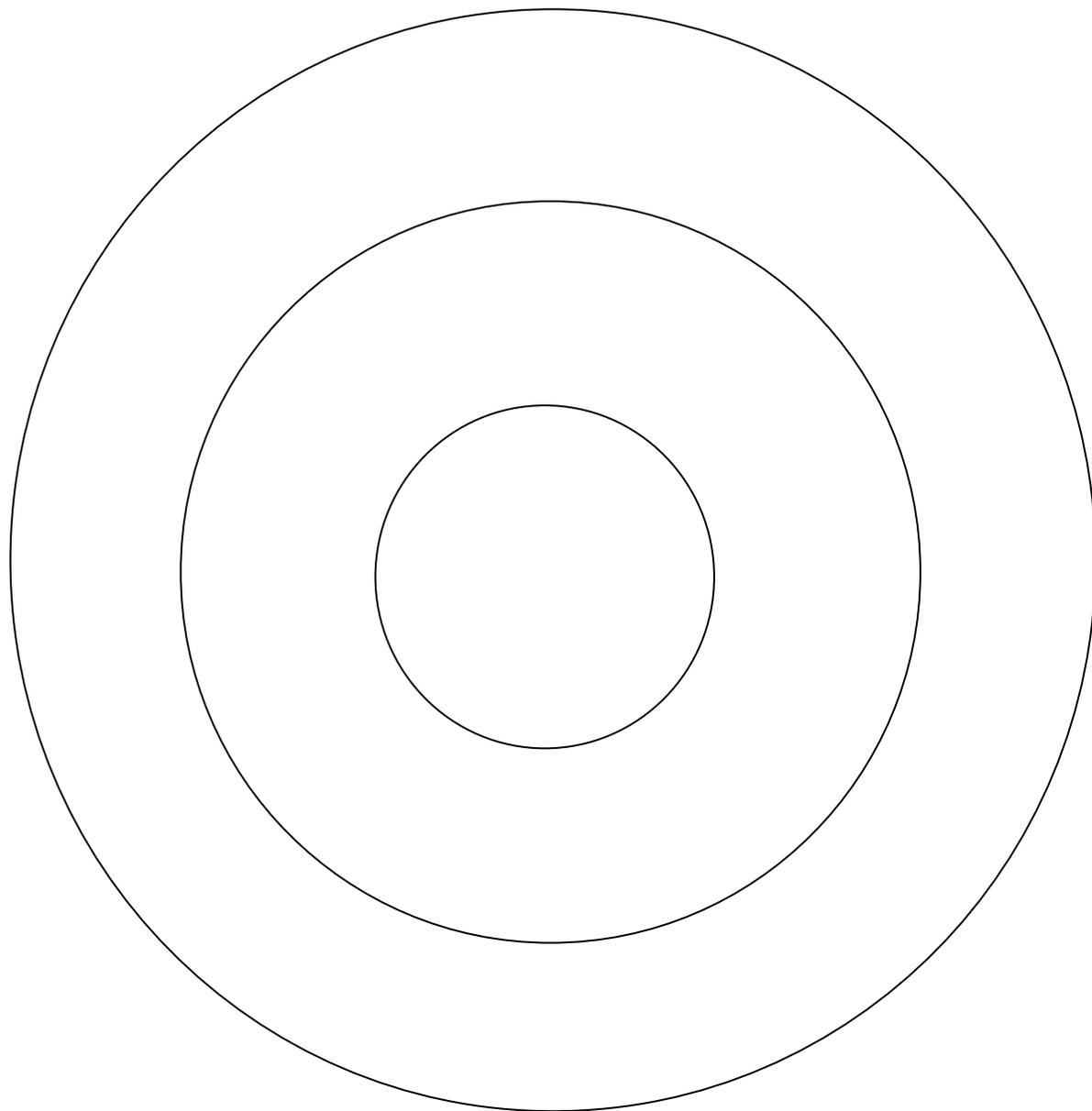
- Working Stages of Group: did participants engage in the work of other participants (Corey & Corey, 2006)? For example, did participants provide honest feedback to other participants about the way in which they have developed or avoided building relationships with others in this group? If so, how can we keep this momentum going? If not, what can we do to encourage participants to participate in each other's change processes (Corey & Corey)?
- Are participants providing feedback to each other on their own initiative or are they still relying on group leaders (Corey & Corey)? How can we help participants start, or continue, to engage with each other spontaneously (Corey & Corey)? Is there a balance between positive and constructive feedback (Corey & Corey) How can we help participants provide feedback in caring and constructive ways (Corey & Corey)?
- Are participants disclosing their true feelings and thoughts about the group topics, activities, and process? What are the barriers to this authentic disclosure? How can we stimulate participants express their feelings and thoughts our loud, instead of keeping these to themselves (Corey & Corey)?
- Are participants dealing with conflict openly, productively, and with little reliance on the group leaders (Corey & Corey)? If so, how can we ensure this continues? If not, how can we support the participants to take responsibility for resolving their conflicts (Corey & Corey)?

- Are group participants showing a commitment to personal change? Are they showing a willingness to translate theory to practice (Corey & Corey)? If not, what may be the barriers to this? How can we address this within the group sessions? What can we, as co-leaders, do to further encourage the participants to apply the skills and knowledge obtained from the group to situations outside of group (Corey & Corey)?
- Are group participants engaging in honest, gentle, and constructive confronting with each other or the group leaders (Corey & Corey)? What have been the participants' responses to confrontation? How effective has this been in helping them meet their personal and group goals? How might we use confrontation more effectively, or support the participants' use of more effective confrontation?
- How much work are we doing as co-leaders at this stage of the group? If we are doing more work than we should, what can we do to encourage the participants to do more work (Corey & Corey)? What factors seem to motivate participants to do more of the work in group (Corey & Corey)? How can we use these factors to increase the amount of work participants are doing?
- As co-leaders, what are we learning about ourselves and this group? How well are we working together to meet the goals of this group? Are there any issues we need to discuss and/or steps we need to take to work better together?
- What feedback was obtained in the Session Evaluation forms? How might we address and incorporate this feedback in the next sessions?

Reference:

Corey, M. S., & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and practice*. Toronto, ON: Nelson.

Social Support Circle



How did group go today?

Parenting Better Together Group Program

Session:

Date:

The group leaders listened to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

We talked about things that are important to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

I felt comfortable with the group leaders today.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

The group is helping me feel better about things.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

References:

Clipart obtained from Microsoft Office Online for educational purposes only. Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/results.aspx?CategoryID=CM790019251033>
Duncan, B. L., Miller, S. D., Sparks, J. A., Claud, D. A., Reynolds, L. R., Brown, J., et al. (2003). The session rating scale: Preliminary psychometric properties of a "working" alliance measure. *Journal of Brief Therapy*, 3(1), 3-12.

**Parenting Better Together:
A Group Program for Single Mothers**

**Session 5 Plan: Parenting Strategies for
Parenting Better**

Parenting Better Together: A Group Program for Single Mothers

Session 5 Plan: Parenting Strategies for Parenting Better

Session Objectives:

1. Lead participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)
2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)
3. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside of group (Corey & Corey)
4. Begin preparing participants for the ending stage of the group
5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress
6. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills
7. Share strategies for increasing social support

Preparation and Materials Required:

- Chairs in circle formation with tables set behind the group circle and against the walls. NOTE: ensure there is sufficient space around and within circle formation for participants who use wheelchairs
- Group leaders sit amongst the group and across from each other to allow for observation of participants
- Be familiar with the working and ending stages of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)
- Name tags and pens set on a table for each participant
- A culturally and nutritionally diverse dinner prepared in the kitchen with consideration to dietary and allergy restrictions
- Sufficient copies of:
 - the 101 Ways to Praise your Child handout
 - the Choosing My Battles handout
 - the Session Evaluation form

Session 5 Plan: Parenting Strategies for Parenting Better

TIME	SESSION OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITY	NOTES	MATERIALS and PREPARATION
30 min	1. Lead participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006) 2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey) 4. Begin preparing participants for the ending stage of the group 5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress 6. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills 7. Share strategies for	Overview & Check-In: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind group participants that this is the 5th session and there are 3 sessions left • Initiate discussion on any feedback obtained from the Session Evaluation forms, if necessary • Ask the first participant to check-in by describing one wonderful thing that happened between her and her child(ren) this week • Then, ask the next participant to provide specific and objective feedback to the member about the disclosure (e.g., praise, caring confrontation, or probing for more information; Corey & Corey, 2006), prior to describing one thing that happened between her and her child(ren) this week • Continue around 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage questions and comments from participants • Be prepared to discuss the cultural implications of providing feedback to others Process the experience: As the person who shared, how did it feel to receive feedback? What was your initial reaction? What did you do to be able to accept the feedback? How do you feel about the person giving you the feedback? Has your relationship with her improved or suffered as a result? As the person who gave feedback, how did you feel about giving feedback? Do you believe this helped or hindered your relationship with the person you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be familiar with the characteristics of the working and ending stages of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006) • Write “Today is our 5th session – we have 3 sessions left” on flipchart paper and hang on wall • Write today’s agenda on flipchart paper and hand on the wall for all to see • Be prepared with feedback (positive and negative) from last week’s Session Evaluation form to discuss with group participants

	increasing social support	<p>the circle in this manner until each member has had a chance to both share and provide feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process the experience • Review session 4 and ask participants for further thoughts on the social support circle activity • Debrief emotions and experiences participants had from Session 4 • Provide an overview of the purpose and agenda for today's session 	gave feedback to?	
30 min	<p>1. Lead participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other's work towards achieving personal goals</p>	<p>Praise: The Golden Rule:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to think about their experience of praise in childhood: do they remember being praised as children? If so, how were they praised? Who praised them? How did participants respond to praise as children? • Discuss the importance of praise in nurturing parent-child relationship, developing a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use here-and-now observations to challenge those participants who reveal little to reveal more about themselves and their parenting styles (Corey & Corey, 2006) • Be prepared to initiate discussion around cultural values and differences regarding praising children for appropriate behaviour • Guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be familiar with Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 8 in Whitham (1991) • Sufficient copies of the 101 Ways to Praise your Child handout (Critchell, 2003) • Flip chart stand with paper set outside of the group circle; flip chart markers available on/near flip chart stand

	(Corey & Corey) 5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress 6. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills 7. Share strategies for increasing social support	child's self-esteem, and implementing positive discipline (Latham, 1994; Whitham, 1991) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to talk about how and how often they praise their child(ren) • What barriers do participants experience to praising their child(ren) more regularly? • Ask participants to identify how they may improve the way and frequency with which they praise their child(ren) • Provide each participant with the 101 Ways to Praise your Child handout (Critchell, 2003) • Invite comments • Ask participants to identify two things they will work on to improve the way and frequency with which they praise their child(ren) 	participants to make a connection between the group and real-life: how might participants begin to practice new ways of praising their child(ren) with their fellow participants in this group program (Corey & Corey)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to provide participants with an opportunity to experiment with new ways to praise children (Corey & Corey) through role-playing with group leaders or participants 	
15 min		Social Break with the Children		
30 min	1. Lead participants through the working stage of	Dealing with Negotiables: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to think about the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link members according to common ideas about negotiable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient copies of the Choosing My Battles handout

	<p>groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>6. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills</p>	<p>challenging behaviours their child(ren) demonstrates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the importance of choosing one’s battles: identifying which behaviours require a parent’s greatest attention and time • Discuss differences between negotiable and non-negotiable behaviour • Provide participants with a Choosing My Battles handout to complete. Discuss and process the results • Process the experience • Ask participants to bring their Choosing My Battles handout to next week’s session to discuss further 	<p>and non-negotiable behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to process the differences in opinion that participants may present as a result of diverse cultural values regarding negotiable and non-negotiable behaviours <p>Process the experience: What surprises did you find while identifying negotiable and non-negotiable behaviour? Which behaviour do you notice occurring more often? Which behaviours consume more of your energy and time – negotiables or non-negotiables? How do you feel after having identified negotiable and non-negotiable behaviour? How is/might this affect your stress levels? How might it affect your relationship with your child(ren)?</p>	
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15 min	<p>1. Lead participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>7. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<p>Check-Out and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a circle round, ask participants to choose one person in the group to praise. Participants may choose to praise each other for work done in this session, general personality characteristics, or work done in previous sessions • Provide each participant with a Session Evaluation form to complete prior to leaving the group • Read the assessment and Likert items to participants as they complete it (if required) • Provide additional explanation and/or examples when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to leave the Session Evaluation forms on the table closest to the door of the group room • Invite verbal feedback and questions from participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure each participant has a copy of the Session Evaluation form
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Session 5: Parenting Strategies for Parenting Better

Questions for Group Leader Debriefing:

- Working Stages of Group: are participants freely expressing their feelings and thoughts in relation to the group topics and disclosures of fellow participants (Corey & Corey, 2006)? If there is resistance on the part of participants to self-disclose, what are the possible reasons for this? (Corey & Corey). How might we help the member move past this resistance by involving other group participants?
- To what degree are participants solving group issues on their own (Corey & Corey)? How well are they doing this? What support could we provide to improve the participants' ability to solve group issues collaboratively?
- To what level do participants seem to be achieving their personal goals? What is the evidence of this within the group? Do participants seem to be generalizing their learning to contexts outside of the group? What factors may be hindering personal goal achievement? How might we better support participants to work on and achieve their goals within the next three sessions?
- How do the participants seem to be responding to the upcoming ending of the group program? Is there a need for a deeper discussion around the emotions of ending this group relationship? How can we incorporate this in the next session?
- How well is our co-leadership style working for this group (Corey & Corey)? How do we feel about each other's techniques and style (Corey & Corey)? How can we better collaborate so as to provide a seamless approach to co-facilitation?
- What feedback was obtained in the Session Evaluation forms? How might we address and incorporate this feedback in the next sessions?

References:

- Corey, M. S., & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and practice*. Toronto, ON: Nelson.
- Critchell, L. (2003). 101 ways to praise your child. Retrieved July 9, 2008, from <http://www.kinderteacher.com/101WaysToPraise.htm>
- Latham, G. I. (1994). *The power of positive parenting*. No. Logan, UT: P & T Ink.
- Whitham, C. (1991). *Win the whining war & other skirmishes: A family peace plan*. Glendale, CA: Perspective Publishing, Inc.

101 Ways to Praise your Child

WOW	WAY TO GO	SUPER
GREAT	OUTSTANDING	BRAVO
GOOD	WELL DONE	GOOD JOB
NEAT	REMARKABLE	HOT DOG
NICE WORK	I KNEW YOU COULD DO IT	DYNAMITE
SUPER STAR	I'M PROUD OF YOU	GOOD FOR YOU
LOOKING GOOD	YOU'RE ON TOP OF IT	I LIKE YOU
YOU'RE CATCHING ON	NOW YOU'RE FLYING	SPECTACULAR
HOW SMART	HURRAY FOR YOU	YOU'RE PRECIOUS
HOW NICE	YOU'RE ON TARGET	A+ JOB
YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL	YOU'RE UNIQUE	GREAT DISCOVERY
YOU'RE DARLING	REMARKABLE JOB	FANTASTIC JOB
YOU FIGURED IT OUT	YOU'RE SPECTACULAR	BINGO
YOU'RE SENSATIONAL	YOU'VE DISCOVERED THE SECRET	TERRIFIC
MAGNIFICENT	CREATIVE JOB	SUPER WORK
MARVELOUS	SUPER JOB	PHENOMENAL
EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE	YOU'RE A REAL TROOPER	YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE
YOU ARE EXCITING	YOU LEARNED IT RIGHT	WHAT AN IMAGINATION

BEAUTIFUL SHARING	WHAT A GOOD LISTENER	A BIG HUG
YOU'RE GROWING UP	YOU TRIED HARD	OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE
I TRUST YOU	YOU'RE IMPORTANT	YOU'RE A GOOD FRIEND
YOU CARE	YOU MAKE ME HAPPY	YOU BELONG
YOU MAKE ME LAUGH	YOU BRIGHTEN MY DAY	THAT'S CORRECT
I RESPECT YOU	YOU MEAN THE WORLD TO ME	YOU MEAN A LOT TO ME
YOU'RE A JOY	THAT'S THE BEST	YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND
YOU'RE A-OK-MY BUDDY	A BIG KISS	YOU'RE PERFECT
YOU'RE A TREASURE	YOU MADE MY DAY	YOU'RE WONDERFUL
AWESOME		NOW YOU'VE GOT IT
YOU'RE SPECIAL	YOU ARE FUN	YOU'RE FANTASTIC
EXCELLENT	FANTASTIC	BEAUTIFUL
YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY	YOU'RE INCREDIBLE	I LOVE YOU!
THAT'S INCREDIBLE	NOTHING CAN STOP YOU NOW	YOU'RE A WINNER
BEAUTIFUL WORK	HIP, HIP, HURRAY	YOU'RE IMPORTANT
FANTASTIC JOB		

Reference:

Critchell, L. (2003). 101 ways to praise your child. Retrieved July 9, 2008, from <http://www.kinderteacher.com/101WaysToPraise.htm>

Choosing My Battles

Child Behaviour that is NEGOTIABLE (it may be annoying, but it is not hurtful, harmful or potentially harmful, immoral, or illegal. It does not require immediate attention.)	Planned Responses to NEGOTIABLE behaviours

Child Behaviour that is NON- NEGOTIABLE (it is hurtful, harmful or potentially harmful, immoral, or illegal. It requires immediate attention.)	Planned Responses to NON-NEGOTIABLE behaviours

Reference:

Gilbert, M. (2008). *Choosing my battles*.

How did group go today?

Parenting Better Together Group Program

Session:

Date:

The group leaders listened to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

We talked about things that are important to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

I felt comfortable with the group leaders today.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

The group is helping me feel better about things.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

References:

Clipart obtained from Microsoft Office Online for educational purposes only. Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/results.aspx?CategoryID=CM790019251033>
Duncan, B. L., Miller, S. D., Sparks, J. A., Claud, D. A., Reynolds, L. R., Brown, J., et al. (2003). The session rating scale: Preliminary psychometric properties of a "working" alliance measure. *Journal of Brief Therapy*, 3(1), 3-12.

**Parenting Better Together:
A Group Program for Single Mothers**

**Session 6 Plan: Parenting Strategies for
Parenting Better**

Parenting Better Together: A Group Program for Single Mothers

Session 6 Plan: Parenting Strategies for Parenting Better

Session Objectives:

1. Lead participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)
2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)
3. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside of group (Corey & Corey)
4. Begin preparing participants for the ending stage of the group
5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress
6. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills
7. Share strategies for increasing social support

Preparation and Materials Required:

- Chairs in circle formation with tables set behind the group circle and against the walls. NOTE: ensure there is sufficient space around and within circle formation for participants who use wheelchairs
- Group leaders sit amongst the group and across from each other to allow for observation of participants
- Be familiar with the working and ending stages of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)
- Name tags and pens set on a table for each participant
- A culturally and nutritionally diverse dinner prepared in the kitchen with consideration to dietary and allergy restrictions
- Sufficient copies of:
 - the Choosing My Battles handout
 - the Praising and Planned Ignoring: How well am I doing? handout
 - the Session Evaluation form

Session 6 Plan: Parenting Strategies for Parenting Better

TIME	SESSION OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITY	NOTES	MATERIALS and PREPARATION
30 min	1. Lead participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006) 2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey) 4. Begin preparing participants for the ending stage of the group 5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress 6. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills	Overview & Check-In: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind group participants that this is the 6th session and there are only 2 sessions left Encourage participants to maximize their participation and growth in the remaining 2 sessions In a circle round, ask participants to respond to the following question “If this were the last group session, how would you feel about the progress you have made with achieving your goals?” (Corey & Corey, 2006) Initiate discussion on any feedback obtained from the Session Evaluation forms, if necessary Review session 5 and ask participants for further thoughts on the praise and “choosing my battles” activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be prepared to address any remaining barriers to participants’ personal and group goal achievement Encourage members to be honest and open when analyzing their feelings and thoughts about their own progress in group (Corey & Corey) Be prepared to discuss ways that participants can work to achieve their personal goals prior to the completion of this group activity. Generate ideas for how goals may be accomplished in the next two weeks and obtain commitment from participants Encourage participants to be hopeful about their ability to accomplish their goals before the final group session (Corey & 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be familiar with the characteristics of the working and ending stages of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write “Today is our 6th session – we have 2 sessions left” on flipchart paper and hang on wall Write today’s agenda on flipchart paper and hand on the wall for all to see Be prepared with feedback (positive and negative) from last week’s Session Evaluation form to discuss with group participants

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief emotions and experiences participants had from Session 5 • Provide an overview of the purpose and agenda for today's session 	<p>Corey)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to discuss participants' concerns and reactions to the group ending • Encourage questions and comments from participants 	
30 min	<p>1. Lead participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other's work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>3. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside of group (Corey & Corey)</p>	<p>Planned Ignoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to review the Choosing My Battles handout from the previous session • Review the behaviours for which participants identified the use of praise as a planned response • Ask participants to reflect on and talk about the discipline they experienced as a child. What behaviours were considered negotiable and non-negotiable as they were growing up? What were the consequences for negotiable and non-negotiable behaviour? As a child, how did participants experience the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to discuss the cultural implications of ignoring children and to process the feelings and thoughts participants have about this parenting strategy • Be prepared to provide corrective or constructive feedback to participants on their practice of planned ignoring. Group leaders may provide this feedback, or may ask group participants to provide each other with this feedback • Encourage participants to both provide and accept feedback freely and honestly <p>Process this experience:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be familiar with Chapters 9 – 12 in “Win the Whining War & Other Skirmishes” (Whitham, 1991) • Sufficient copies of the Choosing My Battles handout for those participants who may have forgotten to bring their copies to this session • Sufficient copies of the Praising and Planned Ignoring handout • Flip chart stand with paper set outside the group circle; flip chart markers available on/near flip chart stand

	<p>5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>6. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills</p> <p>7. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<p>discipline methods used by caregivers? Which discipline methods do participants feel comfortable using with their own children? Which methods do they not feeling comfortable using?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the purposes and procedure for using planned ignoring” with behaviour that is negotiable (Latham, 1994; Whitham, 1991). What are the challenges and rewards associated with ignoring negotiable behaviour? • Ask participants to join in pairs to practice ignoring behaviour. One participant will engage in an annoying behaviour while the other participant will practice the skills of planned ignoring • Ask participants to report back to the group on the experiences of 	<p>What was it like to ignore the other person’s behaviour? What feelings arose in you that were difficult to deal with? Which of the steps of planned ignoring did you find most difficult to execute? Why? What strategies might you use to overcome these difficulties? For the person being ignored, what did it feel like to be ignored? What components of planned ignoring allowed it to be a firm and supportive strategy as opposed to a punishing one?</p>	
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		<p>planned ignoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to provide feedback on their group partner's use of planned ignoring and identify one thing about their partner's performance that they would like to incorporate into their own use of planned ignoring • Ask participants to return to their Choosing My Battles handout and identify the behaviours for which planned ignoring would be appropriate • Ask participants to identify one thing they will do to practice planned ignoring with their child(ren) this week • Provide participants with a copy of the Praising and Planned Ignoring: How well am I doing handout to complete this week as homework 		
15 min		Social Break with the Children		
30 min	1. Lead	Enforcing	• Be prepared to	• Be familiar

	<p>participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>3. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside of group (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>6. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills</p> <p>7. Share strategies for increasing social</p>	<p>Consequences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warnings and consequences may be used for non-negotiable behaviour • Using the behaviours participants identified as non-negotiable on their “Choosing My Battles” handout, guide participants to work through the following steps for warning and consequenceing non-negotiable behaviours: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell the child what you want him/her to do 2. Remind the child what you want him/her to do 3. Warn the child about the consequences of not doing what you’ve asked him/her to do 4. Enforce the consequence 5. Praise appropriate behaviours • Ask participants to role-play the steps for enforcing consequences with each other • Ask participants to identify how they will practice using warnings 	<p>discuss the differences between logical and natural consequences (Whitham, 1991)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to also talk about the importance of matching the consequence to the behaviour • Be prepared to talk about cultural differences regarding appropriate and inappropriate consequences to non-negotiable behaviour • Be prepared to talk about consequences that are not appropriate or accepted in Canada (i.e., physical punishment or locking a child in his room) • Encourage participants to provide open, honest, and direct feedback to each other as they role-play warnings and consequences 	<p>with Chapter 21 of “Win the Whining War & Other Skirmishes” (Whitham, 1991)</p>
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	support	and consequences with their children this week		
15 min	<p>1. Lead participants through the working stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>3. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside of group (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>4. Begin preparing participants for the ending stage of the group</p> <p>5. Share strategies for decreasing</p>	<p>Check-Out and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to reflect on the content of this session • In a circle round, ask participants to choose one word that describes how they feel about using their new knowledge and skills with their child(ren) this week • Remind participants that there are only 2 group sessions left until the program is finished. Invite participants to think about how they might get the most out of the remaining sessions • Provide each participant with a Session Evaluation form to complete prior to leaving the group • Read the assessment and Likert items to participants as they complete it (if required) • Provide additional explanation and/or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If participants identify that they feel negatively about using their new knowledge and skills with their child(ren) this week (for e.g., scared, unprepared, or incapable), validate these feelings. Ask the group for ideas about the ways they can overcome the barriers that negative thoughts impose on our self-improvement efforts • Encourage participants to maximize their participation and growth in the remaining 2 sessions • Ask participants to leave the Session Evaluation forms on the table closest to the door of the group room • Invite verbal feedback and questions from participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure each participant has a copy of the Session Evaluation form

	parental stress 6. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills 7. Share strategies for increasing social support	examples when required		
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Session 6: Parenting Strategies for Parenting Better

Questions for Group Leader Debriefing:

- Working Stages of Group: what is the level of self-disclosure in this group (Corey & Corey, 2006)? Do members seem to be authentic and willing to discuss more difficult situations in their lives (Corey & Corey)? Why might participants be avoiding self-disclosure? How is trust and safety in this group? What can we do, as co-leaders, to move clients towards a higher level of authenticity and openness to talking about the real issues in their lives?
- How were cultural differences integrated in this group? How did participants respond to cultural differences and how did this deepen the discussion and learning? Is there a need to discuss the responses to cultural differences in this group? If so, how might we do that in upcoming sessions?
- Do participants seem to be committed to achieving their personal goals within the last two sessions of this group program? What barriers may exist for those participants who seem to lack commitment? How might we, as co-leaders, help to decrease these barriers and increase the likelihood that participants achieve their goals prior to the group's end?
- How do the participants seem to be responding to the upcoming ending of the group program? Is there a need for a deeper discussion around the emotions of ending this group relationship? How can we incorporate this in the next session?
- How well is our co-leadership style working for this group (Corey & Corey)? How do we feel about each other's techniques and style (Corey & Corey)? How can we better collaborate so as to provide a seamless approach to co-facilitation?

- What feedback was obtained in the Session Evaluation form? How might we address and incorporate this feedback in the next sessions?

References:

Corey, M. S., & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and practice*. Toronto, ON: Nelson.

Latham, G. I. (1994). *The power of positive parenting*. No. Logan, UT: P & T Ink.

Whitham, C. (1991). *Win the whining war & other skirmishes: A family peace plan*. Glendale, CA: Perspective Publishing, Inc.

How did group go today?

Parenting Better Together Group Program

Session:

Date:

The group leaders listened to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

We talked about things that are important to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

I felt comfortable with the group leaders today.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

The group is helping me feel better about things.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

References:

Clipart obtained from Microsoft Office Online for educational purposes only. Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/results.aspx?CategoryID=CM790019251033>
Duncan, B. L., Miller, S. D., Sparks, J. A., Claud, D. A., Reynolds, L. R., Brown, J., et al. (2003). The session rating scale: Preliminary psychometric properties of a "working" alliance measure. *Journal of Brief Therapy*, 3(1), 3-12.

**Parenting Better Together:
A Group Program for Single Mothers**

**Session 7 Plan: Community Resources for
Parenting Better**

Parenting Better Together: A Group Program for Single Mothers

Session 7 Plan: Community Resources for Parenting Better

Session Objectives:

1. Lead participants through the ending stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)
2. Help participants work through feelings evoked as a result of the group ending (Corey & Corey)
3. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)
4. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside of group (Corey & Corey)
5. Encourage participants to work through any unfinished business (Corey & Corey)
6. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress
7. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills
8. Share strategies for increasing social support

Preparation and Materials Required:

- Chairs in circle formation with tables set behind the group circle and against the walls. NOTE: ensure there is sufficient space around and within circle formation for participants who use wheelchairs
- Group leaders sit amongst the group and across from each other to allow for observation of participants
- Be familiar with the ending stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)
- Name tags and pens set on a table for each participant
- A culturally and nutritionally diverse dinner prepared in the kitchen with consideration to dietary and allergy restrictions
- Sufficient copies of the Session Evaluation form

Session 7 Plan: Community Resources for Parenting Better

TIME	SESSION OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITY	NOTES	MATERIALS and PREPARATION
30 min	<p>1. Lead participants through the ending stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Help participants work through feelings evoked as a result of the group ending (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>3. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>4. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside</p>	<p>Overview & Check-In:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind group participants that this is the 7th session and there is only 1 session left <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a circle round, ask each participant to provide a one-word check in about how they are feeling about this being the second last session of the group program Encourage participants to maximize their participation and growth in the remaining sessions Initiate discussion on any feedback obtained from the Session Evaluation forms, if necessary Review session 6 and ask participants to discuss how they used planned ignoring, warnings, and consequences with their children this week Invite participants to share strategies for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be prepared to process the feelings participants are having about the last two sessions of the group program Facilitate discussion between participants regarding common fears and concerns Encourage participants to identify the personal skills and strengths that have allowed them to succeed, and will continue to allow them to succeed, once this group program is complete Encourage participants to be hopeful about their ability to sustain the changes they have made as a result of this group program (Corey & Corey) Encourage members to be honest and open 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be familiar with the characteristics of the ending stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write “Today is our 7th session – we have 1 session left” on flipchart paper and hang on wall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write today’s agenda on flipchart paper and hand on the wall for all to see Be prepared with feedback (positive and negative) from last week’s Session Evaluation form to discuss with group participants

	<p>of group (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>6. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>7. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills</p> <p>8. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<p>improving their use of planned ignoring, warnings, and consequences with their children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an overview of the purpose and agenda for today's session 	<p>when analyzing their progress with implementing parenting strategies with their children (Corey & Corey)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage members to commit to applying knowledge and skills learned from the group to real-life practice • Encourage questions and comments from participants 	
30 min	<p>3. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other's work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>6. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>7. Share strategies for increasing</p>	<p>Community Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to think about the community resources that have been particularly helpful in their parenting role • Participants will identify and describe the community resources they have used and found useful • Invite participants to further identify community resources they currently need, but lack • Invite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may want to record the names and brief descriptions of community resources identified by participants on flip chart paper. You may categorize the various community resources according to those that are related to (a) financial resources, (b) food resources, (c) information resources, (d) parenting skills resources, (e) psychological 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flip chart stand with paper set outside the group circle; flip chart markers available on/near flipchart stand

	<p>successful use of parenting skills</p> <p>8. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<p>participants to share information about resources that may be helpful in fulfilling the support needs of other participants</p>	<p>resources, and (f) medical resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sure to integrate culturally relevant community resources • Be prepared to discuss the cultural implications of soliciting assistance from community resources 	
15 min		Social Break with the Children		
30 min	<p>3. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>4. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside of group (Corey</p>	<p>Accessing Community Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to reflect on the barriers that interfere with their ability to access community resources (including physical, attitudinal, and financial barriers) • Ask participants to share stories of overcoming barriers to access community resources • Encourage participants to think about the skills they have developed in this group regarding problem-solving, communication, and self-advocacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to guide participants through the problem solving process to identify ways to access community resources • Be prepared to work through difficult feelings that arise as a result of inaccessibility of services (especially attitudinal barriers such as racism, ableism, and ageism) • Validate and celebrate participants’ stories of strength and perseverance in 	

	<p>& Corey)</p> <p>6. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>7. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills</p> <p>8. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<p>How might this knowledge and these skills be used by participants to access community resources?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to identify one community resource they would like to contact/access as a result of today's discussion • Then, ask participants to identify a plan for managing any barriers they may encounter to accessing this community resource 	<p>overcoming barriers to community support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to facilitate role-plays between participants to practice strategies for overcoming accessibility barriers • You may want to develop a tip sheet for participants to refer to outside of the group. This tip sheet may include the names and descriptions of community resources identified by participants. It also may include the strategies participants identified for overcoming barriers to accessing community resources • Be sure to talk about community resources that may be helpful for maintaining the growth and change participants have experienced as a 	
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			<p>result of this group program. If they experience a setback, where could they go for help? If they have additional questions, who could they talk to? What other parenting groups may be available for participants?</p>	
15 min	<p>1. Lead participants through the ending stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Help participants work through feelings evoked as a result of the group ending (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>3. Encourage participants to “engage in a deeper level of self-exploration” (Corey & Corey, p. 263), give and receive feedback openly, focus on here-and-now interactions, and involve themselves in each other’s work towards achieving personal goals (Corey &</p>	<p>Check-Out and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind everyone that last week is the last session of the Parenting Better Together Group Program • In a circle round, ask participants to identify one thing they want to make sure they talk about in the last session of the program • As participants share this item, ask if there are any barriers that she may have to overcome in order to meet this goal for the last session • Solicit suggestions from other participants regarding ways to overcome barriers identified by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participants to maximize their participation and growth in the last session of the program • Be prepared to address any negative feelings participants may have in facing the ending of the group program • Be prepared to identify the skills and strengths you have witnessed in participants as the group brainstorms strategies for overcoming barriers to meeting their goals in the last session of the program • Ask participants to leave the Session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure each participant has a copy of the Session Evaluation form

	<p>Corey)</p> <p>4. Encourage participants to apply information learned in group to the demonstration of skills outside of group (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>5. Encourage participants to work through any unfinished business (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>6. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>7. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills</p> <p>8. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<p>participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek a commitment from the participant to using a strategy to overcome barriers for meeting her goals in the last session of the group program • Remind participants that there will be a post-group meeting scheduled one month after the 8th group session. Explain the purposes and goals of this post-group meeting • Provide each participant with a Session Evaluation form to complete prior to leaving the group • Read the assessment and Likert items to participants as they complete it (if required) • Provide additional explanation and/or examples when required 	<p>Evaluation forms on the table closest to the door of the group room</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite verbal feedback and questions from participants 	
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Session 7: Community Resources for Parenting Better

Questions for Group Leader Debriefing:

- Ending Stage of Group: do participants seem to be addressing their fears and concerns about the group ending next week (Corey & Corey, 2006)? Do participants seem to be coming to terms with this inevitability? How might we better address these concerns (Corey & Corey)? What can we do next week to help participants accept and celebrate the end of the Parenting Together group program?
- Does there appear to be unfinished business for any of the participants (Corey & Corey)? How is unfinished business affecting group dynamics and group participation (Corey & Corey)? What may be the reasons for this unfinished business? Is there a way we can encourage and support participants to address this unfinished business in next week's session?
- How well are participants recognizing and celebrating the skills and strengths they have developed as a result of the group program (Corey & Corey)? Do participants take full responsibility for their personal growth, or do they attribute it to the co-leaders or other group participants (Corey & Corey)? What can we do, as co-leaders, to help participants take ownership of their successes and feel confident in sustaining these positive changes even after the group is finished (Corey & Corey)?
- Have we prepared participants for the possibility of skill set-backs following completion of the group program? Have members identified the individual and

organizational support sources that exist for when they may need additional information or assistance in sustaining or improving their parenting skills?

- As co-leaders, are we sharing responsibility for leading this group (Corey & Corey)? How are we perceived by participants (Corey & Corey)? Does this have a bearing on our work with participants (Corey & Corey)? What elements of our co-leadership are working well for us? What elements require improvement?
- How well are we, as co-leaders, managing the ending of the group program and our relationship as co-leaders? What are our personal feelings about this? Are these feelings getting in the way of our responsibilities for helping group members work through their own feelings about separation (Corey & Corey)? How will we keep our own anxieties about termination from interfering with the work of the participants (Corey & Corey)? Are there feelings or thoughts that we could share with the group about our own experience with the group ending (Corey & Corey)?
- What feedback was obtained in the Session Evaluation form? How might we address and incorporate this feedback in the next sessions?

Reference:

Corey, M. S., & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and practice*. Toronto, ON: Nelson.

How did group go today?

Parenting Better Together Group Program

Session:

Date:

The group leaders listened to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

We talked about things that are important to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

I felt comfortable with the group leaders today.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

The group is helping me feel better about things.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

References:

Clipart obtained from Microsoft Office Online for educational purposes only. Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/results.aspx?CategoryID=CM790019251033>
Duncan, B. L., Miller, S. D., Sparks, J. A., Claud, D. A., Reynolds, L. R., Brown, J., et al. (2003). The session rating scale: Preliminary psychometric properties of a "working" alliance measure. *Journal of Brief Therapy*, 3(1), 3-12.

**Parenting Better Together:
A Group Program for Single Mothers**

**Session 8 Plan: Ending the Parenting Better
Together Group Program**

Parenting Better Together: A Group Program for Single Mothers

Session 8 Plan: Ending the Parenting Better Together Group

Program

Session Objectives:

1. Lead participants through the ending stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)
2. Help participants consolidate their learning and make plans to apply this knowledge outside of group (Corey & Corey)
3. Help participants work through feelings evoked as a result of the group ending (Corey & Corey)
4. Encourage participants to work through any unfinished business (Corey & Corey)
5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress
6. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills
7. Share strategies for increasing social support

Preparation and Materials Required:

- Chairs in circle formation with tables set behind the group circle and against the walls. NOTE: ensure there is sufficient space around and within circle formation for participants who use wheelchairs
- Group facilitators sit amongst the group and across from each other to allow for observation of participants
- Be familiar with the ending stages of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)
- Name tags and pens set on a table for each participant
- A culturally and nutritionally diverse dinner prepared in the kitchen with consideration to dietary and allergy restrictions
- Squares of white paper
- Large sheet of fabric (large enough to hold the number of squares produced by the group)
- Thumb tacks, tape, coloring markers, craft items (sparkles, pipe cleaners, beads & string), magazines, and glue (Paisley, 2006)
- Small slips of paper
- Sufficient copies of the Session Evaluation form

Session 8 Plan: Ending the Parenting Better Together Group Program

TIME	SESSION OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITY	NOTES	MATERIALS and PREPARATION
30 min	1. Lead participants through the ending stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006) 2. Help participants consolidate their learning and make plans to apply this knowledge outside of group (Corey & Corey) 3. Help participants work through feelings evoked as a result of the group ending (Corey & Corey) 4. Encourage participants to work through any unfinished business (Corey & Corey) 5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress 6. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills 7. Share strategies for	Overview & Check-In: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite each group member to look around the room and then attend to how they are feeling in this moment (Corey et al., 2000) • Ask participants to think about the way they felt about this group and each other on the first day of the group program (Corey et al.) • Process the experience • In a circle round, invite participants to identify how they are feeling about the group right now • Encourage participants to talk about the one thing they wanted to make sure they talked about in the last session of the program (identified in last week's check-out) • Initiate discussion on any feedback obtained from the Session Evaluation forms, 	Process the experience: how have your perceptions about others in this room changed? How did these changes come about? How does it feel to be in the group now, as compared to that first day? What has motivated this change for you (Corey et al., 2000; Corey & Corey, 2006) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind participants that the changes in feelings and thoughts about the group process and each other has occurred because of the participants' commitment to personal change and group cohesion (Corey & Corey) • Remind participants of the importance of keeping information about other participants private even after the group has 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be familiar with the characteristics of the ending stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write "Today is our 8th session – we have 0 sessions left" on flipchart paper and hang on wall • Write today's agenda on flipchart paper and hand on the wall for all to see • Be prepared with feedback (positive and negative) from last week's Session Evaluation form to discuss with group participants

	increasing social support	<p>if necessary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review session 7 activities • Debrief emotions and experiences participants had from Session 7. Ask participants to identify the steps they took to access community resources over the past week • Provide an overview of the purpose and agenda for today's session 	<p>ended (Corey & Corey)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage questions and comments from participants 	
30 min	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lead participants through the ending stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006) 2. Help participants consolidate their learning and make plans to apply this knowledge outside of group (Corey & Corey) 3. Help participants work through feelings evoked as a result of the group ending (Corey & Corey) 4. Encourage participants to work through any unfinished 	<p>Unfinished Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite participants to think about and explore any emotions, thoughts, or conflicts they may have not addressed yet during group sessions (Corey & Corey, 2006) • Allow participants an opportunity now to address this unfinished business with the group (Corey & Corey) • Ask participants with unfinished business to identify personal change goals in relation to this unfinished business, particularly in 	<p>Process the experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the reasons why some participants neglected to deal with their emotions, thoughts, or conflicts until the last session? How does this relate to the way they deal with things in daily life? What learning has the member(s) done in recognizing this unfinished business was left to the last session? How might the member transfer this learning to daily life (Corey & Corey, 2006)? • Be prepared to 	

	<p>business (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>6. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills</p> <p>7. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<p>relation to how they will apply and skills obtained through the group program to situations outside of group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process the experience 	<p>provide an opportunity for participants to engage in brief role-plays in order to work through unresolved issues (Corey & Corey)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite other participants to provide feedback to participants with unfinished business 	
15 min		Social Break with the Children		
30 min	<p>1. Lead participants through the ending stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Help participants consolidate their learning and make plans to apply this knowledge outside of group (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>3. Help participants work through feelings evoked as a result of the group ending (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>5. Share strategies for decreasing parental stress</p> <p>6. Share</p>	<p>The Paper Quilt (Paisley, 2006): As a review and consolidation of their learning together, ask participants to use color and drawing to represent what they have learned in the group, how they learned it, and group participants who were instrumental in their learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will share information about their square creations, identifying what they have learned from the group, how they have learned it, and who has been instrumental in this learning (Paisley, 2006) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participants to be creative in their square designs • Encourage participants to work together to support each other in this activity • Remind participants to include themselves on the square as they have been most instrumental to their own learning!! • Encourage participants to provide each other with feedback on their squares and learning <p>Process the experience of sharing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squares of white paper • Large sheet of fabric (large enough to hold the number of squares produced by the group) • Thumb tacks, tape, coloring markers, craft items (sparkles, pipe cleaners, beads & string), magazines, and glue (Paisley, 2006)

	<p>strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills</p> <p>7. Share strategies for increasing social support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process the experience • Ask participants to place their squares on the large piece of fabric, essentially making “the quilt” • Process the experience 	<p>squares: Describe the experience of designing your square (Paisley). What are you most proud of? How have the participants in the group contributed to your learning? Ask you look at or hear about the squares of other participants, is there anything you wish you could now include on your square (Paisley)? What would that be and why?</p> <p>Process the experience of combining all the squares into a quilt: How are you feeling as you look up at the quilt and see the collaborative efforts of all group participants (Paisley)? What do you notice about these squares/our learning when you see them joined together (Paisley)? Any common themes or messages? How does the</p>	
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			process of making this quilt relate to our work together in this group program (Paisley)? How might the process of making this quilt relate to the work you are planning to outside of this group, as a result of this program?	
15 min	<p>1. Lead participants through the ending stage of groups (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>2. Help participants consolidate their learning and make plans to apply this knowledge outside of group (Corey & Corey)</p> <p>6. Share strategies for increasing successful use of parenting skills</p>	<p>Check-Out and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a circle round, ask participants to identify one thing that will keep them strong and attentive to their continued learning/goal achievement following the ending of this group session (Corey & Corey) • Provide a brief overview of the purposes and time-frame for the final assessment meeting and the post-group session (Corey & Corey) • Provide each participant with a Session Evaluation form to complete prior to leaving the group • Read the assessment and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank and congratulate participants for their hard work during this session • Remind participants about the importance of continued confidentiality even after the group is finished (Corey & Corey) • Ask participants to leave Session Evaluation forms on the table closest to the door of the group room • Invite verbal feedback and questions from participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure each participant has a copy of the Session Evaluation form

		<p>Likert items to participants if required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide additional explanation and/or examples when required		
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Session 8: Ending the Parenting Better Together Group Program

Questions for Group Leader Debriefing:

- Ending Stage of Group: were participants able to work through unresolved issues prior to the ending of this group (Corey & Corey, 2006)? What were the barriers to having this happen? What conditions allowed this to happen? What have we learned from this experience?
- What contributed to the group's success or failure (Corey & Corey)? In hindsight, how might this group program have been more successful?
- How well did we collaborate in co-facilitating this last session of the group program (Corey & Corey)? Did we work collaboratively in guiding the participants to deal with unfinished business, as well as the emotions provoked by endings?
- How well are we dealing with loss and separation as a result of this group ending (Corey & Corey)? Are there emotions or thoughts we need to process on our own, with each other, or with our supervisor?
- How well did we do overall in co-facilitating this group program (Corey & Corey)? How did our leadership styles blend and how did this influence the group process (Corey & Corey)? What did we like and/or find challenging about co-facilitating this group together (Corey & Corey)? What did we learn from each other (Corey & Corey)?
- What feedback was obtained in the Session evaluation forms? How might we address and incorporate this feedback in our future work?

- What elements might we want to include in the upcoming post-group session?

What assessments need to be completed during this future session (Corey & Corey)?

References:

Corey, G., Corey, M. S., & Haynes, R. (2000). *Evolution of a group: Student video & workbook*. Scarborough, ON: Nelson Canada.

Corey, M. S., & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and practice*. Toronto, ON: Nelson.

Paisley, P. (2006). The paper quilt. In J. L. DeLucia-Waack, K. H. Bridbord, J. S.

Kleiner, & A. G. Nitza (Eds.), *Group work experts share their favourite activities: A guide to choosing, planning, conducting, and processing* (pp. 160-161). Alexandria, VA: The Association for Specialists in Group Work.

How did group go today?

Parenting Better Together Group Program

Session:

Date:

The group leaders listened to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

We talked about things that are important to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

I felt comfortable with the group leaders today.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

The group is helping me feel better about things.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

References:

Clipart obtained from Microsoft Office Online for educational purposes only. Retrieved November 21, 2008, from <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/results.aspx?CategoryID=CM790019251033>
Duncan, B. L., Miller, S. D., Sparks, J. A., Claud, D. A., Reynolds, L. R., Brown, J., et al. (2003). The session rating scale: Preliminary psychometric properties of a "working" alliance measure. *Journal of Brief Therapy*, 3(1), 3-12.

**Parenting Better Together:
A Group Program for Single Mothers**

Post-Group Meeting

Parenting Better Together: A Group Program for Single Mothers

Post-Group Meeting

Session Objectives:

1. Evaluate participants' progress towards achieving their personal goals since the end of the group program (Corey & Corey, 2006)
2. Process participants' feelings and thoughts about their experience in the group program (Corey & Corey)
3. Complete the Parental Stress Scale as a post-test (Berry & Jones, 1995)
4. Share ideas for overcoming barriers to creating and sustaining changes outside of the group program (Corey & Corey)

Preparation and Materials Required:

- Chairs in circle formation with tables set behind the group circle and against the walls. NOTE: ensure there is sufficient space around and within circle formation for participants who use wheelchairs
- Group facilitators sit amongst the group and across from each other to allow for observation of participants
- Be familiar with the goals and purposes of post-group sessions (Corey & Corey, 2006)
- Name tags and pens set on a table for each participant
- A culturally and nutritionally diverse dinner prepared in the kitchen with consideration to dietary and allergy restrictions
- copies of the Parental Stress Scale completed by participants as a pre-test
- Sufficient copies of:
 - the Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones, 1995)
 - the Session Evaluation form

Post-Group Meeting Plan

TIME	SESSION OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITY	NOTES	MATERIALS and PREPARATION
40 min	2. Process participants' feelings and thoughts about their experience in the group program (Corey & Corey)	<p>Overview & Check-In:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief description of the purposes and goals of the post-group meeting (Corey & Corey, 2006) • Provide an overview and agenda for today's session • Invite each group member to look around the room and then attend to how they are feeling in this moment (Corey et al., 2000) • Ask participants to reflect on how their thoughts and feelings about the group have changed over the past month • In a circle round, invite participants to identify how they are feeling about the group right now • Process the experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind participants that the post-group meeting is not intended for work on new issues. It is a vehicle through which participants can process their feelings and thoughts about the group experience, their progress towards goal achievement, and their future work (Corey & Corey) • Remind participants of the importance of keeping information about other participants private even after the post-group meeting has ended (Corey & Corey) <p>Process the experience: How have your feelings and thoughts about the group program changed since the group ended one month ago? What factors may be</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be familiar with the purposes and goals of the post-group meeting (Corey & Corey, 2006) • Write today's agenda on flipchart paper and hand on the wall for all to see

			<p>responsible for a change in the way you feel about the group now as opposed to before? How are your thoughts and feelings more positive than before? How are your thoughts and feelings less positive than before? What regrets are you having? What positive memories are you having? What factors may be responsible for these thoughts and feelings?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participants to share feedback and reflections directly with other participants • Encourage participants to identify how other group participants have influenced their thoughts and feelings about the group experience 	
20 min	1. Evaluate participants' progress towards achieving their personal goals since the end of the group	<p>Assessment: Parental Stress Scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide participants with copies of the Parental Stress Scale (Berry & 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify common changes experienced by participants. Discuss common factors responsible for these changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient copies of the Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones, 1995) • Copies of the Parental Stress Scale (Berry &

	<p>program (Corey & Corey, 2006)</p> <p>3. Complete the Parental Stress Scale as a post-test (Berry & Jones, 1995)</p> <p>4. Share ideas for overcoming barriers to creating and sustaining changes outside of the group program (Corey & Corey)</p>	<p>Jones, 1995)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the assessment and Likert items to the group participants as they complete the Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones, 1995). Provide additional explanations or examples as required • Provide participants with copies of the Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones) they completed as a pre-test • Ask participants to compare and contrast their responses to these two Parental Stress Scales (Berry & Jones) • Process the experience 	<p>Process the experience:</p> <p>What changes have you made in your parental stress levels? What results were surprising? What results were positive? What results were disappointing? What factors may have influenced the changes you made? How did this group program influence any changes you have made? What barriers may have stood in the way of making other important changes to your parental stress levels?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind participants that the changes they have created and/or sustained since the ending of the group program is a result of their hard work and commitment 	<p>Jones) completed by participants as a pre-test</p>
15 min		Social Break with the Children		
30 min	<p>4. Share ideas for overcoming barriers to creating and sustaining</p>	<p>Assessment: Parental Stress Scale (cont'd)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to share stories of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage group participants to exchange feedback on the 	

	changes outside of the group program (Corey & Corey)	<p>success and struggle in creating and sustaining changes outside of the group program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participants to share ideas for overcoming barriers to creating and sustaining personal changes outside of the group program • Ask participants for a commitment to pursuing the personal goals they set for themselves in this group program 	<p>changes made by fellow participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind participants that they are responsible for creating and sustaining personal changes outside of the group program 	
15 min	4. Share ideas for overcoming barriers to creating and sustaining changes outside of the group program (Corey & Corey)	<p>Check-Out and Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a circle round, ask participants to identify one thing they have learned in this post-group meeting that will help them create and/or sustain personal changes outside of the group program (Corey & Corey) • Provide each participant with a Session Evaluation form to complete prior to leaving the group • Read the assessment and Likert items to participants if 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind participants about the importance of continued confidentiality even after the group is finished (Corey & Corey) • Ask participants to leave Session Evaluation forms on the table closest to the door of the group room • Invite verbal feedback and questions from participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure each participant has a copy of the Session Evaluation form

		required • Provide additional explanation and/or examples when required		
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Post-Group Meeting

Questions for Group Leader Debriefing:

- Post-Group Meeting: what thoughts and feelings did participants have about the group program now that they have had a month to reflect on their experiences (Corey & Corey)? Were these thoughts and feelings related to their own issues within the group or were these related to the structure, organization, and session plans of the group program? What can we, as co-leaders, do to integrate this feedback into future offerings of the Parenting Better Together Group Program?
- What changes did participants make to their parental stress levels between the pre-test and post-test assessments (Corey & Corey)? To what extent did participants attribute these changes related to their involvement in this group program? How might we modify the session plans to allow for a greater positive influence on parental stress levels?
- What barriers did participants identify as preventing them from creating and/or sustaining personal changes outside of the group program (Corey & Corey)? To what extent can we prepare future participants for overcoming these barriers? To what extent can we facilitate skill development for overcoming barriers to goal completion outside of group sessions?
- How satisfactory was this post-group meeting for group leaders and group participants overall? Are there any changes we should make to the post-group meeting plan?

- How well are we, as co-leaders, dealing with the ending of this group program (Corey & Corey)? Are there emotions or thoughts we need to process on our own, with each other, or with our supervisor?
- How well did we do overall in co-facilitating this post-group meeting (Corey & Corey)? Did we share equal responsibility for processing the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of group participants? Were there any conflicts or countertransference issues experienced between group leaders and group participants? How might we deal with this? How are we feeling about the ending of our relationship as co-facilitators? How might we work through these feelings?
- What feedback was obtained in the Session evaluation forms? How might we address and incorporate this feedback in our future work?

References:

- Corey, G., Corey, M. S., & Haynes, R. (2000). *Evolution of a group: Student video & workbook*. Scarborough, ON: Nelson Canada.
- Corey, M. S., & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and practice*. Toronto, ON: Nelson.

How did group go today?

Parenting Better Together Group Program

Session:

Date:

The group leaders listened to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

We talked about things that are important to me.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

I felt comfortable with the group leaders today.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

The group is helping me feel better about things.



Yes!



Sometimes.



No!

References:

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Duncan, B. L., Miller, S. D., Sparks, J. A., Claud, D. A., Reynolds, L. R., Brown, J., et al. (2003). The session rating scale: Preliminary psychometric properties of a "working" alliance measure. *Journal of Brief Therapy*, 3(1), 3-12.