
Overcoming Tough Emotions and Being Your Own Advocate

TODAY YOU ARE YOU! THAT IS TRUER THAN TRUE! THERE IS NO ONE ALIVE WHO IS YOU-ER THAN YOU!

-DR. SEUSS

SESSION PARTICIPANTS: Foster-Adoptive Child

SESSION TIME: 60 minutes

Objectives:

1. To introduce emotion regulation skills and coping when experiencing upsetting emotions
2. To provide them with effective communication skills to be able to communicate with others in a non-defensive manner in order to get the support they need

Materials:

- Videp: [Moving is very hard, I learned to take it slowly](#)
- Worksheet: [Feeling Thermometer](#)
- Worksheet: [Getting to Green](#)
- Worksheet: [The Value of "I" Statements](#)
- Video: [You have to be your own voice](#)

Materials for the Participant's Folder:

- Worksheet: Feeling Thermometer
- Worksheet: Getting to Green
- Worksheet: The Value of "I" Statements

Introduction (10 minutes)

- General welcome and facilitator introductions
- Introduction of today's topic on managing emotions in order to communicate effectively with others
- If conducting in a group format, ask each member of the group to share the following:
 - Name
 - Child's age
 - Child's hobbies (What is one activity you like to do for fun?)
 - One personal goal the group member has for today's session (Note: The facilitator should give a few minutes for everyone to be able to think about the goal before asking them to share)

Skills of the Day: Managing emotions and learning how to communicate (40 minutes)

Say: Being a foster (or adoptive) child can be challenging at times and the purpose of this group today is to help you manage the challenges as they come. We are going to start today with one challenge that many of you may have faced while in foster care – being moved around to multiple homes. Today we will hear from the perspective of other foster children who have shared similar experiences as you and the ways they have managed these experiences in order to reach their goal.

- **Exercise 1: Video: Moving is very hard, I learned to take it slowly**

<https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/mod/page/view.php?id=1150>

- *Say: Sarah, a first year UCLA Bruin Guardian Academy student and foster youth, describes how moving from home to home can be difficult. Let's watch this video together and see what Sarah has to say about her experiences.*
- *Ask: What is it like hearing Sarah describe her experiences of moving? Do you relate to her experiences? Do you agree with what she had to say about it?*

- **Exercise 2: Worksheet: Feeling Thermometer**

https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/2443/mod_folder/content/0/FeelingThermometer.pdf

- *Say: Sarah had to move from home to home. When Sarah first found out she had to move, she may have experienced a range of emotions. This is a Feeling Thermometer that provides a visual for identifying and communicating your emotions on a scale of comfortable (green) to uncomfortable (red).*
- *Ask: Let's brainstorm together what some situations that would be in the green zone (yellow zone, orange zone, red zone). Ask participants to identify feelings words that are associated with the situation (e.g., if a participant says "I was in the orange zone when I got in a fight with my foster sister." Write this on the Feeling Thermometer, then say "Great example. What's a feeling that you were experiencing?" Provide examples if needed or use a feelings chart).*

- Ask: *Where do you think Sarah would be on the Feeling Thermometer when she found out she had to move? Where would you be on the Feeling Thermometer if you were Sarah? What are some of the feelings you would have?*

- **Exercise 3: Getting to the Green**
https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/2443/mod_folder/content/0/GettingtoGreen.pdf
 - Say: *When we are in the red zone, it is difficult to communicate to others what we are feeling. It is difficult to even understand what we are feeling because we are feeling SO many feelings! Sometimes all we see is red in the red zone!*
 - Ask: *But in order for us to advocate for ourselves and communicate with others, we need to bring ourselves to a calmer level on the thermometer – somewhere around yellow or orange. [Facilitator can provide personal example if necessary of a time they were in the red zone and how they couldn't communicate to others because they were so upset so they had to find a way to bring themselves down to the yellow/orange zone]. What are small things you could do in the moment to bring yourself down the thermometer?*
 - Examples include: Watch a funny video on Youtube, take a deep breath, look through pictures on my phone, listen to music, look out the window, take a break away from the situation
 - Ask: *What are other things you could plan out for yourself to do that help you feel better?*
 - Examples include: Going for a hike, call your best friend, write in a journal, drink some hot chocolate or eat some ice cream!
 - Say: *This Getting to the Green handout includes things you could do to help bring yourself to the green zone. Sometimes we call these activities “self-care” activities, meaning that it is important to take some time to figure what the things are out there that help us feel better and take care of ourselves. Take some time and look through this list. Circle the ones you have already tried and put a star next to the ones you would like to try. Feel free to write in additional strategies as well.*
 - Ask: *Who would like to share one of the Getting to the Green strategies they would like to try this week? Let's help plan a day and time to make sure it happens!*

- **Exercise 4: Worksheet: The Value of “I” Statements**
https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/2443/mod_folder/content/0/IStatements.pdf
 - Say: *It can be difficult to describe to someone how you are feeling when are in the orange or red zone. For example with Sarah, in the video who was given the news that she had to move, it may have been difficult for her to advocate for herself and her needs as she had to simultaneously process the news of the move. Emotions can cloud us and make it difficult for us to speak our truth. That's why we have talked about “Getting to Green” strategies today. Now you know things you could do in the moment to help you feel better. We also want to teach you communication skills so you can speak up for yourself when you are feeling a certain way and get the support you need.*

- Say: *The Value of “I” Statements worksheet is a valuable tool that you can use to convey your message in a clear, non-defensive manner. When used properly, “I” statements help you communicate your needs and feelings without blame, while also helping others understand your perspective.*
- Demonstrate: Here is an example of Sarah NOT using an “I” statement with her social worker after she found out about the move.
 - Sarah: *You are ruining my life by moving me around! You are the worst and I am so over this.*
 - Ask: *What could be improved?*
 - Ask: *What do you think that was like for the social worker?*
 - Ask: *Do you think the social worker will help Sarah next time?*
 - (Perhaps because it is the social worker’s job, but she may not have a good impression of Sarah because of her tone and attitude)
- Ask: *What do you think Sarah was trying to communicate?*
- Demonstrate: Here is a good example of how Sarah could express herself using “I” statements:
 - Sarah: *I see that I have to move and I feel frustrated and sad by this news. I wish I had known this news earlier so I could have had more time to process it, but I trust that next time you [social worker] will give me more of a heads up if you can.*
 - Ask: *What did Sarah do right here?*
 - Ask: *What do you think that was like for the social worker?*
 - Ask: *Do you think the social worker will help Sarah next time?*
- Think, Pair, Share: Let’s pair up and practice “I” statements. Please use the example of Sarah and find an alternative “I” statement Sarah could have used.
- **Exercise 5: Video: You have to be your own voice**

<https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/mod/page/view.php?id=1158>

- Say: *We are going to wrap up today with an incredible message from Justin really summing up what we have learned today. Justin will discuss how it is important to speak up for yourself in order to get the support you need. Now, with these skills, we hope that you can communicate your emotions and advocate for yourself to get the support you need.*
- Ask: *What are your thoughts about Justin’s message? How do you think these skills we talked about today will help you be your own voice?*

Wrap Up (10 minutes)

- Remind the child of the key takeaways of this session:
 - There are moments in life that happen that take us to the red zone, but it is important for us to find ways to bring ourselves down to the yellow/green zone in order to communicate effectively with others and get the support we need
 - There are strategies out there like hiking or listening to music that seem mundane, but actually help us feel better when we are upset. Find out what works best for you and make sure to incorporate it into your weekly routine!
 - It is important to use “I” statements when wanting to communicate our needs with others because they will listen to us when we express ourselves in a non-defensive manner
 - Utilize the Feeling Thermometer, Getting to the Green, and The Value of “I” Statements in order to advocate for yourself
- Ask the child to set and share a personal goal to practice during the next week
- Ask the child to discuss one thing they will take away from today’s session