

# **Introduction To Groups, Groups, Groups!**

## **The Nuts & Bolts Of Running Groups**

Organization is vital when running groups. Here are some ideas that have worked for us:

- ◆ If you can convince your school district to hire a secretary for you, even part-time, do it! We have found it helpful to have our secretary make student services passes for us and track down kids who forget appointments. We recruit students to deliver TLC passes each morning, and our secretary divides them according to floor or hall area. It's a great opportunity to get more kids involved and seems to work better than asking our very busy teachers to keep track of one more thing.
- ◆ Though family concern or grief groups sometimes need more time, most groups run for 4–6 weeks. That's long enough to build great skills without frustrating teachers by taking kids out of class too often.
- ◆ Vary meeting times so students don't miss the same class every time they attend.
- ◆ Forty-five minutes seems to be a perfect length for groups. It gives you time for a warm-up, group task(s), and a closing activity. If you can, allow 10–15 minutes between scheduled meetings to prepare for the next group, handle other things that may have come up, answer phone calls, etc.
- ◆ A great size for an effective group is 8–10 students. Balance the number of boys and girls whenever possible.
- ◆ Have students sign up for groups early in the year. Introduce counseling services during class, then describe group choices. Give each student a sign-up sheet (*Small-Group Sign-Up A* page 54 or CD or *Small-Group Sign-Up B* page 55 or CD) to fill out even if he/she is not interested in joining a group. Make sure every student has an opportunity to sign up.
- ◆ Sending home a parent newsletter (*A Word About Small Groups*, page 56 or CD) describing groups and offering families the opportunity to sign their children up for a group is good public relations. When the parents' permission slips are signed and returned, the secretary compiles a list of students who wish to be in groups and checks to see if parents have asked that any of these children not participate.

- ◆ When the final list is compiled, divide the students into groups. Consider potential personality conflicts and nurture new relationships by keeping best friends apart whenever possible.
- ◆ Begin groups throughout the year, running the number of weekly groups that work for you. Many counselors find that 8–10 groups per week works well.
- ◆ When the group begins, make or have your secretary make a list (\_\_\_\_\_ *Group List Record*, page 57 or CD) filling in the name of the group on the blank line. This is a great way to keep track of attendance and each group session's accomplishments. It's helpful to note topics that arise or names of students who may need individual time.
- ◆ During the first group session, have the students complete a pre-test of the skills to be taught. In this age of accountability, counselors must demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs. Pre/post tests are included for each group.
- ◆ Rules should be established during the first group session. It's best to have the group decide the rules. (See *Group Rules*, page 58 or CD for suggestions.)
- ◆ Remember that if a group isn't working, you may discontinue it. Give it a few sessions to see if the atmosphere improves, but realize that some kids don't work well together. It's important to use group time well, not just get through it! Feel free to place the students in other groups so they'll have the opportunity to develop group skills.
- ◆ Keeping all group activities in one place will help you stay organized. Divide a file cabinet or other container by type of group and clearly label copies of activities. New activities can always be added.
- ◆ Keep group outlines up to date and file old ones. Nothing is more frustrating than being unable to remember a great idea.
- ◆ As new students arrive at your school throughout the year, offer them the opportunity to join groups.
- ◆ We've included A, B, and C versions of several groups to meet the needs of middle schools with different grade configurations. Mix, match, and make them your own. Each group is divided into several sessions and identifies the group's purpose, lists necessary materials, and includes a step-by-step lesson plan. Each group also includes *Processing Questions*, which may be used at any time the leader considers appropriate.
- ◆ Evaluate the effectiveness of groups from the students' points of view (page 59 or CD), as well as having students complete the group's post test.

## Middle School Conflict

### Purpose:

To help students learn conflict-resolution skills

### Materials Needed:

For each student:

- We Can Work It Out—Middle School Conflicts* (page 87 or CD)

### Pre-Session Preparation:

Print or reproduce *We Can Work It Out—Middle School Conflicts* for each student.

### Nuts & Bolts:

Discuss the meaning of *conflict*, making sure it includes:

- Inevitable
- Found in all human relationships
- Friendships ebb and flow
- Solid relationships develop when people work through their differences

Have the students role-play each conflict on the *We Can Work It Out—Middle School Conflicts* handout, then discuss different ways to resolve the problem.

Ask the students to think of one friendship issue they're facing. Brainstorm ways to resolve the conflict.

### Processing Questions:

- ❓ What conflict-resolution skill did you learn today?
- ❓ How did it feel when someone was angry with you during the role-play?

## We Can Work It Out—Middle School Conflicts

You've just moved up to middle school. You're meeting lots of new people you'd like to hang out with. Your best friend from elementary school is jealous and wants you to eat lunch with only him/her. **What do you do?**

You go to a convenience store with one of your new friends. You're having fun looking at new videogames when he asks you to put a game in your pocket. **What do you do?**

Your friend tells you her dad has to go to jail. She is embarrassed and asks you not to tell anyone. You don't mean to, but you tell another friend, and soon it seems everyone at school is talking about it. **What do you do?**

You're having a birthday party in two weeks and you've been planning fun things. Because you're staying overnight in a hotel, your parents say you may invite only five friends. You have seven friends you'd like to invite. **What do you do?**

Your little brother can be a real pain. He wants to hang around with you all the time and won't leave you alone when your friends come over. **What do you do?**

All your friends are talking about going to a concert next spring. You'd really like to go, but your parents don't have any extra money and can't buy a ticket. **What do you do?**

You and your friends tried out for the school play. One of your friends wasn't chosen to be in the play. She asks you to drop out so she won't be by herself. **What do you do?**

You've made a new friend. The next time you walk down the hall, she calls some other people very unkind names. **What do you do?**

Your parents are very strict and won't let you watch PG-13 movies. Your friends want you to lie to your parents and go with them to a movie you know your parents won't let you see. **What do you do?**

A friend tells you a bad rumor about a mutual friend. **What do you do?**

# Coping Skills

**Purpose:**

To help students learn to cope with situations they can't control

**Materials Needed:**

For the leader:

- Board or chart paper
- Marker
- Activity from Chapter 3 (pages 38-49)

For each student:

- Caring For Me* (page 130 or CD)
- Sticky notes
- Pencil

**Pre-Session Preparation:**

Print or reproduce *Caring For Me* for each student.

**Nuts & Bolts:**

On a scale of 1 (*very poor*) – 10 (*very good*), have each student rate how his/her week is going and explain the reason for the rating.

Give each student *Caring For Me*, several sticky notes, and a pencil. Have the students complete the handout, then share their thoughts with the group.

On sticky notes, tell students to write what they do when they're frustrated with their family or things at home are out of control. Have the students share what they wrote.

On the board, draw two columns. Label them *Healthy* and *Unhealthy*. After students share their ideas, work together to decide in which column each idea belongs.

Close with a fun activity from Chapter 3.

**Processing Questions:**

- ❓ What did you learn today about someone in the group?
- ❓ What coping skill that you learned today might you like to try?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Caring For Me

When I feel sad, I \_\_\_\_\_

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When I feel angry, I \_\_\_\_\_

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When my parents are fighting, I \_\_\_\_\_

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When I need someone to talk with, I \_\_\_\_\_

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These are some things I can say to myself when I feel bad about my family: \_\_\_\_\_

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I am an  
important person!