

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This manual was developed as part of Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) Grant 1 HD8 T11119-01007, The Salvation Army First Choice Program for Drug-Addicted Women with Children and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Grant RO1 DA06162, Drug Abuse Treatment Assessment Research (DATAR).

The ***Partners in Parenting*** manual was researched and compiled by Norma Bartholomew and Dr. Danica Knight. Appreciation is expressed to development team members Dr. Barry Brown, Dr. Lois Chatham, and Dr. Dwayne Simpson for their editorial suggestions, and to Linda Houser and Charlotte Pevoto for their valuable assistance with layout and design.

The ***Partners in Parenting*** training module and all related data collection forms may be used for personal, educational, research, and/or information purposes. Permission is hereby granted to reproduce and distribute copies of these materials (except reprinted passages from copyrighted sources) for nonprofit educational and nonprofit library purposes, provided that copies are distributed at or below costs and that credit for author, source, and copyright are included on each copy. No material may be copied, downloaded, stored in a retrieval system, or redistributed for any commercial purpose without the express written permission of Texas Christian University.

For more information, please contact:

Institute of Behavioral Research
Texas Christian University
TCU Box 298740
Fort Worth, TX 76129
(817) 257-7226
(817) 257-7290 (FAX)
Email: ibr@tcu.edu
Web site: www.ibr.tcu.edu

© Copyright 2002 Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas. All rights reserved.



Self-Care for Parents

Session Length: 2 hours

Objectives

Participants will:

- Explore issues of personal rights and self-esteem
- Review affirmations and positive self-talk
- Identify self-care strategies
- Explore a hopeful future using the “miracle question”

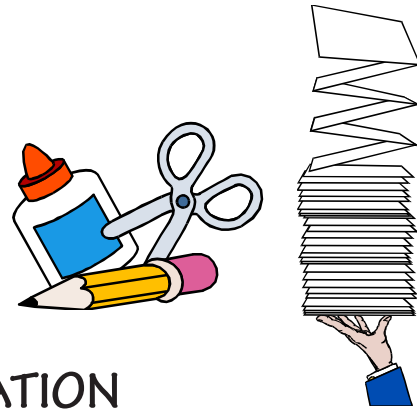
Synopsis

Stress, low self-esteem, and poor attention to self-care are issues that may contribute to parents feeling depressed, overwrought, or hopeless. This session is designed as a “parents day out,” and group members are encouraged to focus on their feelings and needs, and on strategies for meeting those needs. Participants are introduced to the concept of personal rights and to the importance of affirmations and positive self-talk. A plan for self-care is explored and participants are guided in a “miracle question” exercise (Berg & Miller, 1995) that focuses on a hopeful tomorrow.

Session Outline



Procedure	Time
Welcome/Session overview	10 minutes
Homework review	15 minutes
Personal rights	20 minutes
Talk nice to yourself	30 minutes
Miracle question	35 minutes
Concluding discussion	05 minutes
Homework	05 minutes
Total Time for Session 7	120 minutes



MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

- ▶ **Here's what you will need to have ready for the group:**
 - **SELF-STUDY** – The Appendix (pp. 197–) contains short articles on child development and parenting issues for additional reading. Likewise, the Resources (pp. 187–190) and References (p. 191) sections can direct you to other materials for self-study.
 - **COPIES OF MATERIALS** – Make copies of the following hand-outs, located at the end of the session:
 - *Personal Rights* (p. 158)
 - *Positive Focus* (p. 159)
 - *Negative Self Talk* (p. 160)
 - *Challenging Negative Self Talk* (p. 161)
 - *Changing Negative Self Talk* (p. 162)
 - *Miracle Question* (p. 163)
 - *The Miracle Method Ready Reference* (p. 164)
 - *Letter From Myself* (p. 165)
 - *Session Seven Evaluation* (p. 166)
 - **SUPPORT MATERIALS** – Equip meeting room with a flipchart and easel, eraser board, or chalkboard. If you are using a flipchart, have masking tape or push pins available to hang completed pages for easy reference. Have extra pens, pencils, and paper available in case participants need them.

PROCEDURE



10 Minutes

WELCOME / SESSION OVERVIEW

1 Welcome participants as they arrive.

2 Introduce the session:

- In today's session, we'll take a slightly different approach to parenting. We've already talked a lot about your child's needs and feelings, and what you can do as a parent to guide and comfort your child. Today we'll ask "and what about you?" How can you pay attention to yourself and your needs?
- One of the most important factors in good parenting is feeling good about yourself. The pain, frustration, and sense of failure we can carry when we don't feel good about ourselves can lead us to choose less-than-effective parenting strategies. When these strategies backfire, they add to the feelings of failure and a vicious cycle is perpetuated. The trick is to break the cycle.
- So today's session is just for you. We'll explore some ideas for feeling good about ourselves, taking care of ourselves, and looking into the future.
- Before we get started, let's review the homework task.



15 Minutes

HOMework REVIEW

3 Review homework. Encourage a brief discussion using some of the following questions:

- The homework assignment was a worksheet that asked you to think about an important quality you would like your child to develop in order to have a successful life. Of course, there is no "right" or "wrong" answer to this kind of question. Whatever your opinion, it's "right." Let's talk about the assignment.

- ? *What quality did you identify?*
- ? *What makes this quality important for a successful life?*
- ? *What does your child do now that exhibits this quality?*
- ? *How do you help your child work on this quality? What works?*
- ? *What did you learn or discover from this exercise?*

4 Thank participants for their willingness to try the assignment. Point out that the quality they identified for their child may be one they themselves possess or would like to possess.



20 Minutes

PERSONAL RIGHTS

5 Introduce the discussion with some of the following ideas:

- When we talk about taking care of ourselves, one good place to start is to think about ways of reducing stress.
- One major contributor to stress is feeling like we have little or no control in our lives. Often, these stressful feelings are based, in part, on how we think about things. We may worry or fret too much, be afraid to speak up, make assumptions about how other people view us, or deny ourselves the right to say “No.” These kinds of thoughts and behaviors are stressful because they ignore some of our basic rights as human beings.
- Let’s begin by reviewing some of our personal rights. A personal right is something that all people possess. You have personal rights, I have personal rights, our friends have personal rights, and our children have personal rights. We have the right to stand up for our personal rights, and we have the responsibility to always be respectful of the personal rights of others.



Handout,
p. 158

6 Distribute *Personal Rights* handout. Read the handout aloud. Review and discuss each of the rights. Discuss how these rights might enhance self-esteem, reduce stress, and help people be more honest and in control of their lives.

7 Ask participants to circle 2 of the rights they believe are most important for them personally. (E.g., “Circle the 2 rights that you value the most or that seem the most important to you.”) Use some of the following questions to lead a discussion:

- ? *What rights did you circle? Why are they important to you?*
- ? *What usually gets in the way of you being able to act on these rights?*
- ? *What about the times you have been able to act on these rights? How did you do it? How did you feel?*
- ? *When we accept these rights for ourselves, what responsibilities do we have to others?*
- ? *How do we balance paying attention to our rights and our role as parents?*
- ? *How can we teach our children about their personal rights?*

8 Thank participants for their input. Conclude with the following points:

- Asserting a right does not mean that others will take heed or respect it. In other words, we all have the right to ask for what we want; however, the answer might be “no.”
- We have the right (theoretically) to be treated with respect, but others still may treat us disrespectfully. If we observe that certain people frequently ignore our personal rights, we may choose not to associate with them.
- Personal rights is an abstract or adult way of thinking about things. It is most helpful as a framework for helping you deal with other adults. Don’t expect your children to completely understand the idea until they are older.
- The best way to teach children about respecting the rights of others is by modeling your own respect for the rights of others. This is one area in which children learn by observing, rather than by simply being told. This also involves respecting your children’s rights as well.



30 Minutes

Worksheet,
p. 159

TALK NICE TO YOURSELF

9 Distribute the *Positive Focus* worksheets. Introduce the discussion with some of the following ideas:

- Most people would agree that people get along better when they remember to talk “nice” to each other. Talking “nice” means being polite, kind, gentle, calm, reasonable, and avoiding insults, put-downs, and “mean” words.
- Have you ever wondered why we may bend over backwards to talk “nice” to people we like, and yet we will talk “mean” to ourselves?
- “Self-talk,” or what we “hear” ourselves saying to ourselves about ourselves inside our heads can be anything but nice sometimes. Negative self-talk, as it’s called, can have disastrous effects on our self-esteem, our self-confidence, our motivation, and our relationships.
- Negative self-talk is not only bad for ourselves, it’s also bad for our children. When we model it too frequently, children may get the idea that they, too, should think negatively about themselves.
- The good news is that we can learn to challenge negative self-talk when we “hear” it, and replace it with self-talk that is more helpful, realistic, and, well – nice!
- One simple way to begin this process is through affirmations.

10 Instruct participants to write 15 positive sentences about themselves on their paper, as follows:

5 things about your body/physical self

5 things about your personality

5 things about your skills, successes, talents

11 Instruct them to begin each sentence with the word “I.” For example, “*I have a good sense of humor,*” “*I like the color of my hair,*” or “*I am very good at helping others learn.*”

12 When everyone has completed the exercise, discuss some of the following questions:

- ? *How did it feel to write positive things about yourself?*
- ? *Was it easy or difficult?*
- ? *Which of the 3 categories was the most difficult?*
- ? *What thoughts came to mind as you wrote?*
- ? *Did you “hear” any negative self-talk trying to break through?*

13 Wrap-up the exercise with some of the following points:

- The sentences you wrote for this exercise are called “affirmations.” We all need affirming messages everyday. It’s nice to get them from others, but we can learn to give them to ourselves, too.
- We often censor our affirmations, because we wrongly believe that such thoughts are vain, egotistical, or conceited. Remember, we all have the right to feel good about ourselves. In fact, we need to feel good about ourselves. Affirmations can help.
- Not only is developing a healthy self-esteem good for us, it’s good for our children as well. Children can learn from us that it is okay to feel good about ourselves, our talents, and our dreams.



Handout,
p. 160

14 Distribute *Negative Self-Talk* handout. Introduce a discussion using some of the following points:

- In addition to affirmations or positive self-talk, it’s also important to pay attention to how frequently we engage in negative self-talk.
- Negative self-talk may involve (1) harsh or condemning thoughts about ourselves, (2) blaming or critical thoughts about others, or (3) thoughts about how awful or unfair life is.
- The end result of these types of thoughts includes low self-esteem and frequent, unwarranted worry, anger, frustration, and disappointment. In other words, lots of stress.

15 Read *Negative Self-Talk* handout aloud and discuss what negative self-talk “sounds” like when we experience it at the level of thought.



Handout,
p. 161

16 **Distribute *Challenging Negative Self-Talk* handout. Review points and discuss ways to manage negative self-talk. Cover the following points:**

- The first step in dealing with our negative self-talk is to become aware of it. Strong, stressful feelings such as anger, frustration, guilt, or resentment may be due to harsh and negative thinking. Ask yourself “Am I putting myself down?” “Am I blaming others?” “Am I demanding that my life should be trouble-free?”
- The next step is a reality-check. Once you’ve identified your self-talk, ask yourself if what you are thinking is really helping you or if it is really good for you. For example, “Is my self-talk helpful?” “Is it helping me feel better or worse?” “Is my self-talk good for my relationships with others?”
- If your self-talk is not helpful and is making you feel bad or angry, then you must change it. Develop positive (or at least neutral) self-talk and substitute it for your negative thoughts. Some simple things to say to yourself might include “Calm down. Take it easy.” “People are not perfect. I can accept that other people have faults.” “This is a difficult situation, but I can handle it.”
- The last tip is to remember to speak up for yourself. If the situation that’s troubling you involves another person, you will need to communicate about it. You can use the skills we discussed earlier in the workshop (I-Messages and listening) to express your feelings and needs, and to request changes.
- For many people, negative self-talk may have become a habit. Patience and practice are the best ways to begin changing the negative self-talk habit.



Worksheet,
p. 162

17 **Distribute *Changing Negative Self-Talk* worksheets and ask participants to complete them. When everyone has finished, ask for volunteers to share how they changed the negative self-talk statements. Provide praise and encouragement. Process the exercise with some of the following questions:**

- ? *Did anything surprise you about this exercise?*
- ? *Was it easy or difficult to change the self-talk?*

- ? *Have there been times before this when you caught negative self-talk and changed it?*
- ? *How did it make you feel?*
- ? *What will you need to do in order to remember to challenge your negative self-talk?*

18 Thank participants for their contributions, and encourage them to pay close attention to their self-talk. Point out that it's important to help children develop a sense of positive self-talk as well. When it comes to self-talk, we can be our own worst enemy, if we are not careful.



35 Minutes

MIRACLE QUESTION

19 Introduce the activity with some of the following points:

- We're going to spend the rest of the session on an activity that may sound a little strange at first. I'm going to ask you to think about how you would like for things to be different in the future and to visualize how it would be.
- In order to help us stay focused on this picture of the future, we'll use a technique called the "miracle question."
- In a moment I'll show you the miracle question and I'll give you a copy on a handout. After we all read the question and feel like we understand it, I'll ask you to relax and concentrate on how you want to answer the question.
- As you'll see, there are not right or wrong answers to the question. It's simply a guide to keep you focused.

20 Lead participants through the exercise using the following steps:

- First, I want you to think of a problem you have been dealing with that you would like to find a solution for.
- Choose a problem that you have the power to solve and that is important to you. Some types of problems won't lend themselves to this activity, and others will.

- Examples of types of problems to consider include your behavior, a problem with your partner or child, a problem in your recovery, a problem with a friend.
- Examples of problems that would not be suitable for this activity include changing someone else's behavior, money or job problems, child custody problems, or legal problems. Not that these aren't legitimate problems, but they are types of problems that often must involve other people's decisions to be solved.
- Take a few minutes to decide on a personal problem you'd like to be able to seriously think about and begin to resolve.



Handout,
p. 163

21 **Distribute copies of the *Miracle Question* handout, and also have it written out on a large piece of flip chart paper or poster board. Read the question aloud and continue with the exercise:**

MIRACLE QUESTION

“If you were to go to sleep tonight, and while you were asleep a “miracle” happened that solved the problem you’ve been thinking about today, when you wake up, what will be the first thing you notice that tells you the problem has been solved? What would be different?”

- The purpose of this exercise is not to suggest that only a miracle can solve your problems. The idea is to help you focus on a vision for the future. In other words, if somehow a problem that troubles you today were solved, what would be different in your life?
- Sometimes people try to put a religious slant on the question because of the word miracle. The question is not really about “faith” but about envisioning change.
- The main idea behind the question is not in a “miraculous” intervention, but in the very last part of the question – what would be different? What would you notice that would let you know the problem was gone?
- As you relax and think of your answer, focus on specific actions, and attitudes that you would notice were different or new when you first realize the problem is gone. In other words, how would you be

acting? What would you be doing? Who else would notice that the problem was gone?

- Here are some other questions to ask yourself to guide your thinking. Relax, concentrate on the questions, and really attempt to see a picture of that future.

22 Present questions slowly so that participants can reflect on them.

- ? *What would you be doing that is different?*
- ? *What would others in the household notice about you?*
- ? *How would you be feeling?*
- ? *What other things might also begin to change once the problem is solved?*
- ? *What would your friends notice about you that would tell them the problem was solved?*

23 Process the exercise by asking for volunteers to share the problem they chose to work on and their vision of what the future might look like when the problem is no more. Work with one person at a time, asking several follow-up questions before moving on to the next volunteer. Use some of the following questions to guide the discussion:

- ? *If the problem disappeared, would that make a difference for you?*
- ? *What will you notice that is different about yourself when the problem is gone?*
- ? *What will others (friends, children, partner) notice that is different about you when this happens?*
- ? *After the “miracle” happens, what will you be able to do that you could not do before?*
- ? *On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being where you are today and 10 being where you’d be the day after the “miracle”, what will be different when you move up the scale to a 2 or 3? How about a 4 or 5?*

- ? *If this miracle that could make your problem disappear were to really happen tomorrow, how would you know it had happened?*
- ? *Who would be the first person (after you) to notice that the miracle had happened? What would that person say that he/she noticed first?*
- ? *Who will be most surprised when your problem is solved?*
- ? *What will that person see you doing that he/she would have never thought possible?*

24 Thank participants for their honesty and their willingness to tackle a new and different way of thinking about problems. Encourage them to reflect on some of the things they thought about and heard. Encourage them to look for pieces of their miracle that are happening now.



5 Minutes

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

25 Provide wrap-up and closure for the session. Highlight the following points:

- There are a couple of things to summarize from today's session. The simplest and most important is to encourage you to keep figuring out ideas for self-care and stress reduction. All work and no play makes Jack (or Jill) a dull, tired person. Taking care of yourself and finding ways to feel good about yourself will help you be a better parent.
- Our "miracle" exercise provided an example of a technique you can use (maybe try it with your family) to focus on solutions, changes, and how you want your future to be.
- There's a quote in the AA Big Book that says: "When I focus on what's good today, I have a good day, and when I focus on what's bad, I have a bad day. If I focus on a problem, the problem increases; if I focus on the answer, the answer increases."
- The purpose of the miracle question is to help you stay focused on the answers.



Handout,
p. 164

26 Distribute copies of *The Miracle Method Ready Reference*. Take a moment to read the points aloud.



5 Minutes

HOMework



Worksheet,
p. 165

27 Distribute *Letter from Myself* worksheets and give the following homework suggestion:

- Between now and the next time we meet, write a letter to yourself from the “older and wiser you of the future.” In the letter, let the “you” of the future give you advice about a particular problem that’s been causing you worry.
- Imagine that the “older, wiser you of the future” has your best interests at heart, and has already successfully handled the problems that burden you today.
- The letter doesn’t have to be long or clever. Let your imagination take over. The idea is simple. If you could talk with yourself in the future about coping with the challenges that face you today, what would you tell yourself?

28 Thank group members for coming and for their participation. Invite them to return to the next session.



Session
Evaluation,
p. 166

29 Ask participants to complete a *Session Evaluation* form before leaving.





PERSONAL RIGHTS

In order to appreciate myself and have more control in my life, I have the right to...

Ask for what I want.

To say "No" and not feel guilty.

To make mistakes.

To express my ideas and thoughts.

To express my feelings.

To ask questions.

To change my mind.

To say "I don't know."

To think before I act.

To ask for help.

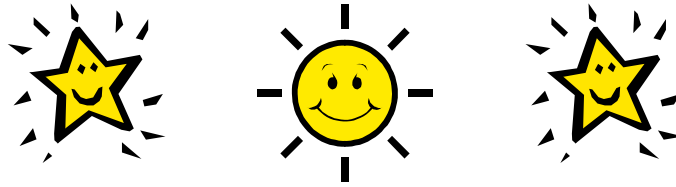
To be treated with respect.

To feel good about myself.

To decide if I want to assert a personal right.

POSITIVE FOCUS

Worksheet



Write some positive sentences about yourself, using the topics below. Begin your sentences with the word "I." For example, "I have a great sense of humor."

Body/Physical

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Personality

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Skills/talents

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Negative Self-Talk

WATCH OUT FOR THESE TYPES OF NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

1. Self-talk that puts you down. This includes harsh, critical, negative thoughts about yourself or thoughts that tell you that you're "no good" or "hopeless."

Everybody thinks I'm stupid.
 I'll never amount to anything.
 I always get it wrong.
 I deserve to be unhappy because of my past.
 If something goes wrong, it's always my fault.
 I'm just no good.

2. Self-talk in which you blame, condemn, resent, or put-down others. This includes thoughts that try to make other people responsible for your problems or mistakes. It may also include thoughts that other people are "no good" or out to get you.

He's really stupid.
 She shouldn't treat me that way.
 If he really loved me, he'd act differently.
 She thinks she's so much better than me.
 He's trying to hurt me on purpose.
 It's all her fault that I'm so upset.

3. Self-talk that keeps you stewing over life's normal ups and downs. This includes thoughts that it is awful, terrible, unfair, or unbearable when you run into problems.

Life should always be fair.
 I shouldn't have to deal with hassles.
 People who disappoint me are awful.
 I just can't cope when things don't go perfectly.
 It's absolutely horrible if I make a mistake.
 People should give me what I want when I want it.



Challenging Negative Self-Talk

Follow these steps

1. **Awareness.** Be aware of the “voice inside your head” and what you hear it saying. When you experience stressful feelings such as anger, frustration, guilt, worry, or resentment, ask yourself:

Is my self-talk putting me down?
Is my self-talk putting others down?
Is my self-talk telling me I should never have problems?

2. **Reality-check.** Once you have identified your self-talk, answer these questions honestly. If the answer to any of them is “No,” then start working on positive self-talk:

Is this self-talk helpful?
Is this self-talk helping me feel better?
Is this self-talk good for my relationship with others?
Will this self-talk help me solve my problems?

3. **Develop positive self-talk.** If your self-talk is not helpful or is actually making you feel bad about yourself or others, then replace it. Develop positive self-talk and substitute it for the negative. For example:

Calm down. Take it easy.
Don't be so hard on yourself.
I'm angry, but anger is not going to solve this problem.
People are not perfect. I'm not going to cast stones.
I don't like this situation, but I can handle it.

4. **Communicate.** If the stressful situation involves another person, speak up about your concerns. Talk about your feelings and ask for what you need. Use I-Messages and active listening to help you communicate clearly.



CHANGING NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

For each negative self-talk sentence below, rewrite it so that it is more positive.

1. I just can't do anything right!!

2. Nobody cares about me or how I feel.

3. I have too much work to do!!. It's not fair!!

4. How dare that jerk pull out in front of me like that!!

5. I never learn. I just keep making the same mistakes.

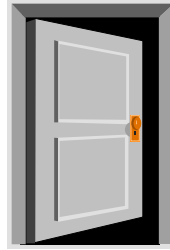
6. I know she's thinking that she's so much better than me.

Miracle Question

"If you were to go to sleep tonight, and while you were asleep a "miracle" happened that solved the problem you've been thinking about today, when you wake up, what will be the first thing you notice that tells you the problem has been solved? What would be different?"



The Miracle Method Ready Reference



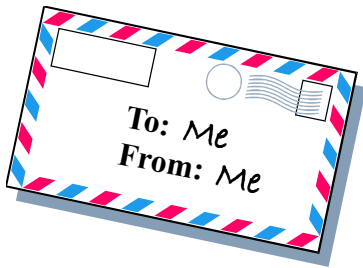
**Finding the door to solution begins with the choice:
I want my life to be different.**

**Opening the door to solution begins with considering
how you want your life to be different once your prob-
lem is solved: Suppose a miracle happened...**

**Unlocking the door to solution is accomplished with six
keys:**

- ❖ **Make sure your miracle is important to you.**
- ❖ **Keep your steps small.**
- ❖ **Make it specific, concrete, behavioral.**
- ❖ **State what you will do rather than what you won't do.**
- ❖ **State how you will start your journey rather than how you will end it.**
- ❖ **Be clear about who, where, and when.**

*Source: The Miracle Method: A Radically New Approach to Problem Drinking. © 1995, Scott Miller & Insoo Kim Berg. Reprinted by permission of author. All rights reserved.
Available from <http://www.norton.com>*



LETTER FROM MYSELF

Pretend you are able to travel into the future. In this future world you meet yourself. You are older and wiser. Part of your wisdom is the knowledge of how you successfully handled the problem that's been troubling you lately.

Instructions:

Write a letter to yourself from your older and wiser self of the future to guide you in dealing with the problem. Use the following questions:

- ***What would your older, wiser self suggest to you to help you resolve the problem?***
- ***What would your older, wiser self ask you to remember?***
- ***What would your older, wiser self tell you to keep doing more of?***
- ***What would your older, wiser self say to comfort you and encourage you?***

Source: Exercise based on an approach originated by Yvonne Dolan, <http://www.solutionmind.com>

Session Evaluation Partners in Parenting Session 7

INSTRUCTIONS: Please take a minute to give us some feedback about how you liked this session.

1. Use one word to describe your feelings about today's class _____

2. What was the most important thing you learned today?

3. What personal right or choice is most important to you?

4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how do you rate today's class? (Circle your rating.)

01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
Poor				Pretty Good					Excellent

5. Do you have any suggestions to help make this class better?