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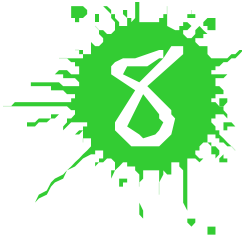
8 Tomorrow and Beyond

Objectives

Session Length: 2 hours

Participants will:

- Explore factors for building resilience in children
- Identify steps in a problem solving model
- Revisit group goals and identify future goals
- Recognize group accomplishment (graduation)

Synopsis

The last structured group is designed to address ways that parents can help guide their children toward resilience. In addition, parents are introduced to a problem solving model for working through future parenting challenges (Crary, 1993). The session also is intended to provide closure by reviewing goals established in the first session, weighing progress, and establishing new goals. Time is allowed for a recognition ceremony to mark "graduation," and parents are encouraged to continue meeting informally as a support group.

Session Outline

Procedure	Time
Welcome/Session overview	10 minutes
Homework review	15 minutes
Resiliency	20 minutes
Solving problems	25 minutes
Goals then and now	15 minutes
Concluding discussion	10 minutes
Graduation	25 minutes
Total Time for Session 8	120 minutes
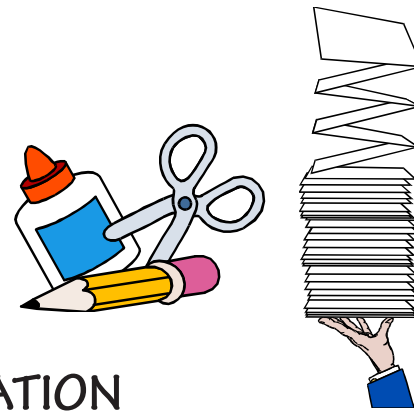
MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

▸ **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:

● *Building Resilience in Children* (p. 180)
● *Problem Solving Checklist* (p. 181)
● *Problem Solving Worksheet* (p. 182)
● *Problem Case Studies* (pp. 183-184)
● *Certificates of Recognition* (p. 185)
● *Session Eight Evaluation* (p. 186)

■ 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

WELCOME / SESSION OVERVIEW

10 Minutes

1 **Welcome participants as they arrive.**

2 **Introduce the session:**

- Today's session will be the last "formal" session of the workshop. Group members often express interest in continuing to meet as a support group to work on parenting and recovery issues. This is an option we'll discuss later.

- We'll save the last part of the group for a recognition ceremony, with certificates for graduation and refreshments.

- Today we'll talk about what parents can do to help their children develop resilience. We'll look at how parents can use many of the parenting skills we've covered in this workshop to help toward that end . We'll also explore a model for using problem solving skills.

- And we'll look back on the group goals developed during the first meeting. This will give us a chance to evaluate progress and set down plans for the future.

- Before we get started, let's review the homework task.

HOMEWORK REVIEW

15 Minutes

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

- The homework assignment was to complete a worksheet by writing a letter to yourself from the "older, wiser you of the future." This older, wiser self of the future was to give you some advice. Let's talk about the assignment.

? *What advice did your "older, wiser self" give? What did "that self" suggest that you keep on doing? What words of support/encouragement were given?*

? *How are you already putting "your wiser self's" advice into action? How did you realize that's what you should be doing?*

? *What did you learn or discover from this exercise?*

4 **Thank participants for their willingness to try the assignment. Point out that their "stronger, wiser self of the future" is always available for consultation when they need advice or encouragement.**

RESILIENCY

20 Minutes

5 **Introduce the discussion with some of the following ideas:**

- One of the most interesting characteristics that people are capable of having is resiliency. Resilience involves the capacity to bounce back after disappointment, to move forward after a setback, to take life in stride, to forgive, to keep on going, to roll with the punches.

- Children are almost naturally resilient, and there are things parents can pay attention to that help preserve and build resilience in children.

Handout,
p. 180

6 **Distribute and review *Building Resilience in Children* handout. Encourage questions and cover some of the following points:**

- There are several factors that contribute to children's resilience on which parents can have a direct impact.

- <u>Self-respect</u> and <u>self-esteem</u> are factors in resiliency. When children like themselves they are better able to show respect for others, develop positive relationships, and accept positive attention. These things provide a "cushion" for children during stressful times and contribute to resilience.

- Independence and self-reliance are factors that contribute to self-esteem and also to resiliency. Confidence and self-discipline in doing tasks, solving problems, and figuring things out help buffer children from feeling hopeless or helpless when faced with difficulties.

- A positive outlook makes resiliency happen. A sense that things have meaning and value, that problems can be solved, that others can help, and that the world is basically a good place can help motivate children to "stick it out" or work harder to solve a problem.

- Sociability or openness to other people is an important resiliency factor. Being open to others helps children develop a support system of people they can count on (family, friends, teachers, neighbors). Social support helps kids recover faster from setbacks and provides them with a source for advice and comfort when they are discouraged.

- A sense of responsibility encourages resilience because, like sociability, it's related to having a connection to others. When children feel they are a part of something, that their contributions are important, and that they are valued, they are better able to persevere.

- Good relationships with peers is another factor in resiliency. Friendships help children feel understood, accepted, and cared about. Having friends and being able to make new friends gives children a sense of belonging and confidence.

7 **Go back over each of the factors associated with resiliency (for example, self-esteem, independence, a positive outlook, openness, etc.) and lead a discussion on strategies parents can use to encourage resiliency in their children. Provide clarification as needed. Include some of the following questions:**

> ❓ *What are some things parents can do to help their child develop _____ (resiliency factor)?*

> ❓ *What are you already doing to help your child develop _____ ?*

> ❓ *How do you make yourself remember to do that for your child?*

> ❓ *What skills covered in this group might be most useful in helping your child develop _____ ?*

8   Repeat this general line of questioning for each of the factors discussed in the handout.

9   Thank members for their participation. Encourage them to continue using strategies that help build resilience.

SOLVING PROBLEMS

25 Minutes

10   Introduce the utility of using a formal problem-solving process for addressing parenting concerns:

- As children grow and change, strategies for guidance and discipline that worked well during one age may become less effective.

- Another headache faced by many parents is that strategies that worked well with one child fail miserably with another.

- When strategies for parenting fail to produce the results parents want, frustration, anger, and a sense of incompetence or hopelessness may begin to muddy the waters.

- Rather than giving up, a parent's best tactic is to re-group. By identifying the problem (without blaming <u>anyone</u>) and focusing on developing alternative solutions, parents can begin to rethink and regain control of the situation.

- Let's look at the steps in the problem solving process, and examine how they would be used with a couple of very common problems.

Handout, p. 181

11   Distribute *Problem Solving Checklist* handouts. Briefly review each step in the process. Encourage questions and cover some of the following points:

- A problem solving model works because it helps you focus your mental energy on <u>solving the darn problem</u> rather than spinning your wheels, blaming yourself or your child, or giving up and labeling yourself or your child as "bad" or "hopeless." When all you <u>really</u> want is for your child to go to bed peacefully, why waste time and energy on anything other than figuring out how to make that happen.

■ When you've tried the things that usually work with your child and there's still a problem, invest some time tapping into your own creativity and inner resources to find a solution.

■ Enter this process with a few things in mind.

(1) There may be more than one problem. You'll need to assess whether this is the case and be prepared to solve each problem separately.

(2) There are no "right" or "wrong" solutions. If it seems like it may work and it is not physically or emotionally harmful to the child or to yourself, go for it.

(3) Solutions are not set in stone. Remember, if it works, do more of it. If it doesn't work, try something different.

■ Here are some steps to follow:

◆ **Describe the problem without <u>blaming</u>.**

Focus on behavior. Describe the behavior that your child is doing that is a problem for you. Avoid labels. For example, "My child is lazy," does not describe the problem well enough to enable you to find a solution; however, "My child refuses to help her sister with her assigned chores," does. The second example is more specific and allows you to address the problem.

◆ **Think about the problem.**

Make mental notes about when and where the problem <u>behavior</u> happens.

Does it happen everyday, only on certain days, or only at certain times of day? What sets the problem off, and what have you been doing that hasn't worked? By taking time to just <u>observe</u> the problem behavior, you may get clues about handling the situation.

After gathering information, decide what <u>behavior</u> you want the child to do in place of the problem behavior. You must be <u>specific</u>. It's not realistic to expect the child to "just know" what you want him to do instead of the thing that's driving you nuts. "Don't interrupt me on the phone" might best be

stated as "If you must talk to me while I'm on the phone, I'd like you to touch my arm to get my attention, then wait until I stop talking before you talk."

◆ **Brainstorm options and possible solutions.**

Let your creative juices flow. As you generate a list of options, think about your child's strengths and your own. DO NOT censor yourself during this part of the process. Too many potentially good solutions die on the planning table because the parent thinks "Oh, this would never work." Don't limit yourself to only practical ideas or solutions. The silly ones often clear the air so the good ones can emerge. If it might address the problem, and if it is not physically or emotionally damaging to you or your child, put it on the list. The following questions may help you organize your thoughts for generating solutions:

● **How can I encourage the behavior I want?**

We've covered some of these in this group – for example, praise, rewards, reinforcers, and acknowledging your child's efforts. Decide on a couple of ways you can encourage or reinforce the behavior you want. For example, you might thank your child for waiting before speaking while you're on the phone and say: "I like it when you wait quietly until I finish talking. Each time you wait patiently, I'm going to put a big star on your star chart."

● **Will active listening help with this problem?**

The problem behavior may have its roots in a problem or frustration the child is experiencing. Remember that active listening makes no judgment about the "okayness" of the feeling nor does it attempt to change the child's feeling. In some cases, just listening to your child for awhile may resolve the problem. For example, "You're really furious that Mommy went to a movie and you had to stay home."

● **Are there ways to simply avoid this problem?**

Your options list might include two or three ways to <u>avoid</u> the problem, such as changing the environment, changing schedules, or even changing your expectations. For example, 4-year-

old Billy dawdles in his room while he dresses in the morning (throwing everyone off schedule), so Dad brings Billy's clothes into the kitchen and has him dress there (supervised) while Dad finishes fixing breakfast. Or, Janey and Mom frequently get into a fight over Janey's color choices in clothes (green socks worn with a bright pink skirt). Mom solves the problem by changing <u>her</u> expectations and stops interfering in Janey's clothes choices. In this case, there's an added benefit— letting children choose their own clothes is a good, safe avenue of self-expression.

- <u>**How will I offer my child alternative choices?**</u>

When there is a problem, it is usually because your needs and your child's needs are not the same. On your list of possible solutions, include several alternative choices you might offer the child so he can meet his needs. One way to do this is to ask the child to change the timing, approach, or location of the activity that's causing you a problem. For example, "Please don't interrupt. You may ask your brother for help (suggest new approach) or you can wait until I'm off the phone (suggest new time). Or "I'm trying to read. You may play quietly beside me (activity) or you can go play in your room" (location).

- <u>**What kind of consequences are fair and enforceable if the unacceptable behavior continues?**</u>

Most children will test limits. It's sometimes helpful to tell your child in advance the consequences of testing. Remember, consequences must "fit the crime," must be do-able, and must be stated calmly, kindly, and firmly (not in anger). For example, "If you and your brother continue to fight over that toy, I will put the toy in time-out." Or "I will not listen to whining. If you whine, I will ask you to say it again in a nice, clear voice." As we discussed earlier about applying consequences—you must remember to follow-through <u>every</u> time.

- ◆ **Choose a plan of action.**

Choose an idea and give it a try. When you choose your plan, keep your child's personality and the impact of the plan on you and other family members in mind. Begin by explaining to your child what you have decided. For example, "I want you to speak

more quietly when you're in the house. If you yell, I will send you to time-out." Know ahead of time how you plan to respond if your child tests the limits or ignores a rule. Remember, when you tell a child to do something and don't follow-through, you are inadvertently teaching that child to disregard you and what you say.

When your child ignores a rule, remind her once, then follow-through immediately. For example, "You can walk beside me or ride in the grocery cart," then if she starts running down the aisles, pick her up and put her in the cart.

◆ **Evaluate the plan. If needed, revise it. If not, repeat what works.**

Few parent-child problems are completely resolved on the first try. Track the problem behavior to see if it's improving. If nothing is moving ahead after several days, you'll need to choose another idea. Continue making revisions until the situation is resolved.

Worksheet, p. 182; Handout, pp. 183-184

12 **Distribute *Problem Solving Worksheet* and *Problem Case Studies*. Briefly review the case studies to provide concrete examples. Then ask participants to think about a current parenting problem and fill in their worksheets.**

13 **When everyone has finished, ask for volunteers to give a capsule summary of their problem and their plan of action. Make sure each volunteer states the problem behaviorally and makes a specific statement about what she/he wants the child to do, before moving on to the strategies the parent plans to use. Process with some of the following questions:**

❓ *What did you find most helpful about this process?*

❓ *Without realizing it, have you already been using some of these problem solving steps?*

❓ *Which step do you think is the most useful?*

❓ *What did you learn or realize from using this model?*

14 Thank participants for their willingness to try something new. Encourage them to use this problem-solving process often. The five major steps—<u>describing the problem</u>, <u>gathering information</u> and <u>describing what you want</u>, <u>generating ideas</u>, <u>making a plan</u>, and <u>revising the plan</u> as needed—can be taught to children to help them work on solutions to their problems.

15 Offer extra copies of the *Problem Solving Worksheet* for future use.

GOALS THEN AND NOW

15 Minutes

16 Use the allotted time to review the goals the group listed as important during the first session. Display the poster board or flip chart list of goals or provide participants with transcribed copies. Encourage participants to focus on progress. Normalize setbacks ("progress often involves two steps forward and one step back"). Encourage revising important goals, as needed. Use some of the following questions to lead the discussion.

? *On which goal(s) do you think you've made the most progress? How did you make that happen? What will you do to make sure it keeps on happening?*

? *Which goal has proved to be the most challenging? How are you continuing to work on it?*

? *What goal turned out to be easier than you first thought it would be? What's made it easy for you to make progress on this goal?*

? *Are there goals that maybe should have been on the list but we didn't think to put them there?*

? *What 3 goals do you plan to take with you and keep working on? Do you want to revise any of them? What revisions do you think are needed?*

? *What has been the biggest benefit to your child from the goals you have made progress on?*

17 **Praise participants for their good work in the group, and for having the courage to set goals and work toward them. Thank them for their good ideas and their team spirit.**

CONCLUDING IDEAS

10 Minutes

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

■   Before we move on and enjoy "graduation," let's stand for a minute and reflect back over the time that has passed since our first meeting.

■   We've had a lot of interesting conversation, a few differences of opinion; we've learned many new things, and we've had some good laughs.

■   Let's take a moment to say "goodbye" to this phase of the group. Those of you who are interested in continuing to meet each week or every other week are invited to stay for a minute after group to formalize how and when you want to meet. Future meetings would focus on practicing what we've learned, and more importantly, supporting each other as we take on ever-changing parenting challenges.

■   Let's stand in a circle for a minute. I'd like to go around the circle and have each member share with the group one important thing he/she learned in this group, and one thing he/she will always remember about this group.

19 **Thank participants again for their contributions to the group. Ask members to complete a *Session Evaluation* form before leaving.**

GRADUATION

25 Minutes

Handout,
p. 185

20 **In a manner appropriate for your group and your program, hold a brief graduation or recognition observance for participants. This may include special refreshments and presenting each participant with a certificate or other token. A sample certificate of**

accomplishment is included in the materials section of this session.

21 **The following activities may be incorporated into the graduation protocol, as time and interest allows:**

■ Have participants redo the **Tower of Strengths** activity (see Session 1, pp. 14-15). Discuss changes in choice and positioning of strength words, compared to how the activity was completed in Session 1. This may be done by comparing the worksheets from Session 1 (if available) or by memory. Encourage discussion and help participants verbalize goals and ways to work on desired strengths.

■ Provide poster boards, markers, paints, stickers, and other decorations. Lead participants in constructing "reminder" posters based on skills covered in the workshops. Participants can be encouraged to display their posters on the refrigerator or other convenient place to prompt them to remember to use skills from the workshop. For example, posters may be created that:

  ➢ Highlight guidance and discipline strategies from Sessions 5 and 6 (pp. 101-143).

  ➢ Outline rules and strategies for Family Meetings (p. 119).

  ➢ Highlight key communication strategies discussed in Sessions 3 and 4 (pp. 53-100).

  ➢ Emphasize self-care ideas from Session 7 (pp. 145 – 166).

■ Help participants organize an ongoing parenting support group. Participants can discuss and decide on the structure and format of such a group, meeting times and locations, membership, and other related issues. If appropriate, participants can draft an informal charter or agreement for their ongoing support group.

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN

Resilient Factor	Definition/Demonstration	Building Skills
Self-respect	Children like themselves, show respect for peers, accept positive attention.	Acknowledge achievement by citing specific efforts. Correct behaviors, not personality. Model empathy, responsibility, reliability.
Independence, self-reliance	Children show initiative, self-discipline.	Establish clear procedures and specify consequences. Have children participate in developing family rules. Acknowledge appropriate behaviors. Increase level of performance and offer help and encouragement to reach high goals.
Positive outlook	Children know that their lives have meaning and value. They are optimistic and can ask for help.	Show children they deserve trust and respect. Give examples from the parent's life and from the lives of other adults, children, and historical figures who handled trying circumstances.
Sociability	Children have support systems of teachers, relatives, peers, neighbors. They develop new relationships, pursue academic activities and hobbies.	Help children identify people they can turn to for companionship, guidance, and support.
Sense of responsibility	Children perform family tasks that give them a sense of responsibility and connection to others.	Give children tasks that demand responsible behavior and recognize the accomplishment. Give children a chance to have fun in the home.
Good peer relationships	Children feel understood, accepted by peers; they have close peer relationships and can find and make new friends.	Give children a chance to interact with other peer groups. Help children explore ways to make friends, express affection or displeasure, state needs and stand up for themselves, and say "no" when pressured to do something inappropriate. Participate in a support network, which helps members build self-esteem and a sense of responsibility, fosters positive coping skills, and encourages members to express feelings.

Problem Solving Checklist

✏ **Describe the problem without blaming.**

> Focus on behavior. Describe the <u>problem</u> <u>behavior</u>, not the child. Say "My child refuses to do her chores" instead of "My child is lazy."

✏ **Think about the problem behavior.**

> When, where, how often does it happen?
> What hasn't worked so far to solve it?
> What exactly do I want my child to do? (Desired behavior instead of problem behavior.)

✏ **Brainstorm options and possible solutions.**

> Consider these questions as you make your plan:
>
> How can I encourage the behavior I want?
> Will active listening help me with this problem?
> Are there ways to avoid the problem?
> How will I offer my child alternative choices?
> What consequences would be fair and logical if the problem behavior continues?

✏ **Choose a plan of action.**

> Explain your decision and your expectations to your child.
> Explain consequences.
> Follow-through consistently and calmly, every time.

✏ **Evaluate.**

> If the problem behavior doesn't improve in a few days, modify your plan or try something else.

Problem Solving Worksheet

1. Describe the <u>problem</u> <u>behavior</u>: _____
_____

2. Think about the problem:
    How often does it happen? _____
    What sets it off? _____
    What do you want your child to do (desired behavior)? _____
    _____

3. Brainstorm options and solutions:
    Ways to encourage desired behavior?

    How can I listen, understand child's feelings?

    What might help avoid the problem?

    What choices might I offer my child?

    What consequences are fair and logical?

4. Choose a plan of action:
    I'll try this: _____
    I'll explain it this way: _____

5. Evaluate:
    Did the plan work? _____
    How can I modify or change plan? _____
    What else might work? _____

Problem Case Studies

Five-year old Gina frequently yells at her baby bother (age 3). She has started "tattling" to you about every move her brother makes. You have been hearing constant cries of "Mommy, he won't sit down," "Mommy, he's picking up dirt," "Mommy, he pulled my hair," "Mommy, he touched my doll." You have tried to reason with her, and have scolded her for annoying you, but she keeps on like a town crier.

_____

Whenever 4-year old Eric wants anything, he starts pulling on your shirt tail and whining. You have tried saying "No," and telling him not to whine, but when Eric gets on a "roll," you eventually give in to get some peace and quiet. Later you feel angry.

_____

Ten-year old Mattie has been talking on the phone to her friends when she should be doing her homework. You've set fair limits about her use of the phone and the amount of time she can be on the phone. But more and more recently, you have caught her "sneaking" extra phone time when she should be studying. You're about to lose your patience.

Problem Case Studies

Tyrone (age 7) refuses to help his sister with their assigned chores. He has a way of "disappearing" every Saturday morning when chores are suppose to be done, later saying "he forgot" that he was suppose to help. You've tried talking to him about responsibility and being fair to his sister, but he still "forgets."

_____

No matter how early you start, 6-year old Shauna refuses to get dressed on time. You end up reminding her, scolding her, yelling at her, and sometimes even dressing her yourself in order to get out of the house on time. Yesterday, you got so mad you called her "a baby."

_____

Nine-year old Doug has taken to staying outside playing ball with his friends way beyond the time he's due home for dinner. He's late almost every night. You've tried scolding him, lecturing him, and even going out to the playground to "escort" him home – nothing seems to work.

Certificate of Training
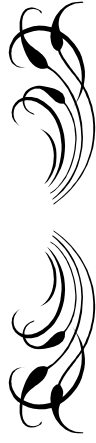
Be It Known That

_____

has successfully completed _____ hours of

Parenting skills training entitled "Partners in Parenting"

Developed by the DATAR and First Choice Projects

Institute of Behavioral Research

Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas

AWARDED _____ , _____ at _____

Training Coordinator

Program Director

Session Evaluation
Partners in Parenting
Session 8

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 is one thing you plan to change in order to improve your problem solving skills as a parent?

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

<u>01</u>   <u>02</u>   <u>03</u>   <u>04</u>   <u>05</u>   <u>06</u>   <u>07</u>   <u>08</u>   <u>09</u>   <u>10</u>

Poor   Pretty Good   Excellent

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