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# 8

## Making Relationships Work

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**Session Length: 2 hours**

### Objectives

Explore techniques for enhancing self-esteem

Review skills for improving communication in relationships

Identify solutions to common relationship problems

### Rationale

A healthy sense of self-esteem is important in maintaining close, intimate relationships. This session seeks to increase participants' awareness of the importance of self-esteem and to introduce affirmations as a positive self-help technique. In addition, the session provides closure for the workshop by reviewing relationship skills and discussing the application of those skills.

### Session Outline



Procedure	Time
Welcome and Process Homework	10 minutes
Self-Esteem and Affirmations	20 minutes
Review: Communication and Relationships	15 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Handling Problems in Relationships	25 minutes
Workshop Closure	10 minutes
Graduation and <i>Client Survey</i> (posttest)	30 minutes
<b>Total Time for Session 8</b>	<b>120 minutes</b>

## Materials

Easel and flip chart (or erasable board)  
 Magic markers; pencils, pens, writing paper  
 Prepared flip chart *Affirming Yourself*  
 Prepared flip chart *An Assertive Attitude* (from Session 2)  
 Prepared flip chart *Good Listening Habits* (from Session 3)  
 Prepared flip chart *Talk It Over Formula* (from Session 4)  
 Prepared flip chart *Fighting Fair* (from Session 5)  
 Copies of handouts  
 Prepared certificates

## Preparation Notes

*Prepare  
flip charts*



### **Affirming Yourself**

Write out key points on a large piece of flip chart paper or poster board, as shown:

**Affirming Yourself**

**Write out 15 positive statements about yourself:**

**5 about your body/appearance**

**5 about your personality/character**

**5 about your successes and accomplishments**

*Assemble  
flip charts*



Assemble prepared flip charts from Sessions 2, 3, 4, and 5. They'll be used to review key skills from the workshop.

*List of  
relationship  
problems*



Make a list of common relationship problems that can be described in one sentence. For example, one person in the relationship is more interested in sex than the other; one person in the relationship shuts-down and won't talk; one person in the relationship gets jealous easily and without cause. You'll use these example problems as the basis of a discussion exercise during the session.

**Prepare certificates**

Prepare a graduation certificate for each participant. Use the example shown at the end of this session, or purchase generic certificates from an office supply store.

**Plan party**

Make arrangements for invited guests, refreshments, decorations, etc.

**Photocopy handouts**

*E is for Esteem* (handout, p. 152)  
*Session Evaluation* (form, p. 153)  
*Client Survey* (posttest, pp. 225-227)  
 Graduation certificates (sample original, p. 154)

## Procedure



### ***Welcome and Process Homework***

**Welcome participants as they arrive.**

- 1 Use the first 10–15 minutes to review and process the homework assignment. Begin by reviewing a few key ideas from the previous session.**

We started this workshop 8 weeks ago, and we've covered a lot of ground. We've been getting together each week because we're interested in learning how to make our relationships closer and more rewarding. A healthy, stable relationship is good for you, good for your family, and good for your recovery.

Along the way we've covered new ideas, learned some skills and techniques for improving communication in our relationships, and tackled some of the mysteries and myths about sex. Let's talk for a few minutes about the homework assignment:

- 2 Ask for volunteers to share their experiences with the homework.**

**Here are a few ideas for questions:**Process  
questions

**What's one change your partner says she's noticed for the better since you started coming to this workshop?**

**What's one thing your partner says she appreciates about you?**

**What did she ask you to work on a little more?**

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

- 3 Thank volunteers for their input.** Encourage participants to keep up the good work.

***Self-Esteem and Affirmations***

- 1 Use the next 15–20 minutes to lead a discussion about self-esteem and affirmations.**

**Here are some ideas to include in the discussion:**

Since today is our last session, we're going to try and keep everything on a "feel good" level. When it comes to your relationships, your family, your recovery—all those things—the most important thing you can work on is feeling good about yourself. That's what we want to spend some time doing today—breaking down some of the barriers and hang-ups that keep us from realizing how valuable and special we really are. The fact that you are here today, coming to this workshop and working on your recovery, says a lot about just how courageous and special you are.

Self-esteem refers to the feelings, beliefs, and perceptions we have about ourselves. Simply put, self-esteem is our own opinion of ourselves. This sense of self (self-concept, self-esteem) is learned, and the most critical time for that learning is during childhood and the teen years. We learn through being told that others (usually parents, friends, other adults) perceive us to be good/bad, sweet/mean, lazy/a good worker, cheerful/grouchy, smart/stupid. Very often we accept these perceptions of others without question.

If we are lucky enough to hear mostly positive assessments (or at least an even balance of positive strokes) we are likely to grow up with a fairly healthy self-concept. On the other hand, if we receive mostly critical or negative feedback from others as we grow up, then we may

need some help in gaining a healthy sense of self-esteem. The good news is that we can learn to feel better about ourselves, and to not judge ourselves so harshly that we stay down most of the time.



Flip chart

## 2 Write the following quotation on flip chart or erasable board and ask participants to think about its relationship to self-esteem.

***“Whatever you believe to be true either is true or becomes true in your mind.” (John Lilly)***



Process questions

**What does this quotation mean to you?**

**What does it tell us about our self-esteem?**

**What’s an important point you’ve learned about improving self-esteem?**

## 3 Wrap up with the following ideas:

If we are living with painful or confusing memories from childhood or adolescence that center on having been told a lot of critical, rejecting, or negative things about ourselves, the most important thing we can learn to do is let go of them. This may be difficult to accept, but the truth is, it wasn’t your fault. Just because you didn’t fit your parents’ ideal doesn’t mean you were bad, worthless, or that you deserved rejection and harsh treatment. If you struggle with these issues, you may want to schedule some time for individual counseling so that you can begin working through your feelings.

As adults, our mature sense of who we are, as well as our sense of being able to succeed and accomplish things contributes to maintaining our self-esteem. One way we can get in touch with these things is through practicing affirmations, or positive thoughts and reflections about ourselves. Affirmations can help us contradict thoughts and feelings of worthlessness that can pull down our self-esteem.



Flip chart

## 4 Distribute paper and pencils and lead the group in the affirmations exercise. Use the *Affirming Yourself* flip chart of instructions for the affirmation exercise. Provide participants with examples of affirmations for each of the three areas. Tell them to write their affirmations as sentences that begin with the word “I.” For example, “I have a strong chin,” “I have a great sense of humor,” “I am a good listener,” “I came to all 8 workshop meetings,” “I’ve been clean for 5 years,” etc. Encourage

participants to think about their affirmations, and not to be afraid to be open and honest about themselves. Anticipate that some group members may find this exercise difficult.

## 5 When everyone has finished, process the exercise with some of the following questions.



Process questions

**How did it feel to write positive things about yourself?**

**Was it difficult or easy?**

**Which of the three areas was the most difficult?**

**What thoughts came to mind as you did this exercise?**

**In what ways could this type of exercise improve self-esteem?**



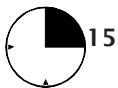
Handout, p. 152

## 6 Go around the room and ask each person to share one or two statements from each of the three areas.

Model support and encouragement after each participant reads his statements in such way that the group joins in. In other words, each statement should be met with applause, cheers, and other positive “strokes.” (Pump each other up.) Distribute the *E Is For Esteem* handout.

## 7 Thank participants for their input.

Encourage them to keep their lists and to consider adding to them. Point out that it’s often difficult for people to give themselves permission to think and say good things about themselves. This may be because we grow up hearing that we’re not supposed to be “conceited” or “big-headed.” Remind participants that building positive self-esteem is healthy and good for themselves, their relationships, and their recoveries. We have the right to feel good about ourselves. Practicing affirmations can help.



## **Review: Communication and Relationships**



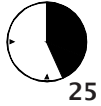
Flip charts

### 1 Use the next 15 minutes to briefly review communication skills and relationship issues.

Use the prepared flip charts for *An Assertive Attitude*, *Good Listening Skills*, *Talk It Over Formula*, and *Fighting Fair*. Review the key points and invite participants to discuss their experiences in beginning to use these skills over the past few weeks.



## ***Break***



## ***Handling Problems in Relationships***

- 1 Use the next 20–25 minutes to lead a discussion exercise on handling problems in relationships.** Most people can come up with good ideas for solving problems in relationships. The idea behind this exercise is to create a “think-tank” atmosphere about what makes relationships work. Participants are encouraged to think about and share ideas that may be helpful to the entire group.

### **Exercise instructions:**

- 1. Divide the participants into work teams of 2 or 3 people.**
- 2. Distribute sheets of paper and pencils to each work team.**
- 3. Assign each work team a specific relationship problem, or let them come up with their own.**

(For example, one person in the relationship is more interested in sex than the other; one person in the relationship shuts down and won't talk; one person in the relationship gets jealous easily and without cause. Keep the scenarios simple, but true to life.)

- 4. Tell the work teams to discuss these problems and to write down possible solutions to the problems, steps that should be taken for the solutions, and the skills that could be used to put the solutions in action.**
- 5. Allow time for the work teams to finish.**
- 6. Ask for a volunteer from each team to come to the front of the room, explain the problem his team worked on, and describe the solution they recommended.**
- 7. Encourage the “rep” to use the flip chart or erasable board to list the steps and skills needed to help work on the problem.**
- 8. Allow time for the group as a whole to discuss each problem and solution.**



## 2 Process the exercise with some of the following questions.



Process questions

What feelings came up for you during this exercise?

Did any of the problems sound familiar? Which ones?

How confident did you feel when working on your solutions?

What did you learn from this exercise?

## 3 Conclude by noting that the group was able to come up with a lot of really fine ideas for making relationships work.

## 4 Thank participants for their input. Point out that in only 8 weeks they've started to think like relationship "experts."



## Workshop Closure

**Provide closure by wrapping up on some of the key points raised in this workshop.**

### 1 Here are some ideas for closing comments:

Learning to make our relationships stronger and happier is important for our well-being and for our recovery. We've spent the last few weeks talking about ideas and skills that we can use to make our wishes of happiness a reality.

We believe that deep down, we all want closeness and intimacy with another person. Sometimes, though, we get stuck. We get into "bad" habits of relating to each other, we feel hopeless, confused, and lost—we feel afraid. This workshop was designed to help you set some goals, learn some new skills, and begin feeling better and more confident about your ability to make a close, intimate relationship work. Sometimes it seems safer, easier, and more comfortable to just continue with old attitudes and ways of doing things. Change is always a little bit scary and difficult. Change requires courage. And you guys are some of the most courageous I've met. The fact that you're here today, and that you've been coming to this workshop tells me you're all going to make it happen, and make it work—not just in your relationships, but in your recoveries as well.

Remember that practice is the key. It's very easy to drift back into old patterns and habits. One way to overcome this is to review the materials from this class from time to time, and to encourage your partner to be open to reviewing materials and making changes when needed. As with all things related to living a good life—strive for progress, not perfection.

- 2 Thank participants again for their involvement in the workshop.**
- 3 Go around the room and ask each person to state the most important thing they learned in the workshop and the one skill they plan to keep on using.**



30

## ***Graduation and Client Survey***

**Use the remainder of the session time to complete evaluation forms and to hold a graduation “party.”**



Evaluation,  
p. 153

Posttest,  
pp. 225-227

- 1 Ask participants to complete an evaluation form.**
- 2 Then ask them to complete the *Client Survey* (posttest).**



Certificate,  
p. 154

- 3 Distribute graduation certificates or some other form of recognition.**
- 4 Provide refreshments and allow time for socializing and chatting.**



## "E" IS FOR ESTEEM

**E**nergize yourself! At least once a day practice affirmations, which are positive healthy thoughts about yourself. Use the word "I", and learn to cherish it. "I am lovable and capable!"; "I am worthy and strong!"; "I can decide my own destiny!"; "I have the right to love and feel good about myself!"

**S**top-out negative thoughts! Whenever you hear a negative thought about yourself inside your head, stomp it out! Learn to rebel against the tyranny of these negative thoughts—they were most likely taught to you by others. If you hear yourself thinking thoughts like: "I can't do anything right," or "I'll never be able to change," stomp them out! Inside your head, replace those thoughts with positive ones. "I am learning how to improve my life and improvement takes time," or "I am powerful and I can change."

**T**rust yourself! Accept that you are the best person and the most able person to know what is right or wrong for you. Trust in your own strength, and in your own ability to manage your life. Trust that you can change your life, that you can develop positive self-esteem, and that you can be happy.

**E**ndear your body! Learn to love and hold dear your body and your person. Take care of your health. Develop good health habits, such as diet, rest, exercise, and medical care. Respect your body. Avoid people or substances that harm your body.

**E**nd destructive relationships! (Or at least limit the amount of time you spend with destructive people.) Don't keep company with anyone who puts you down, hurts you, or tries to destroy your self-respect. Never accept mental or physical abuse from anyone. Don't let other people lay their negative trip on you!

**M**ove on! Find ways to leave the past behind. Don't dwell on past problems, failures, disappointments, or relationships—let them go! Imagine you are packing for a long journey. Carefully pack all of your positive memories, and leave the rest behind. Think of past mistakes the way the Japanese do: they are "golden nuggets," and they represent an opportunity to learn and improve, rather than a mark of failure.

**SESSION EVALUATION**  
***Time Out! For Men***  
**Session 8**

**THIS BOX IS TO BE COMPLETED BY DATA COORDINATOR:**

SITE #  __ __	CLIENT ID#  __ __ __ __	DATE:  __ __  __ __  __ __	COUNSELOR ID#  __ __
[1-2]	[3-6]	MO DAY YR [7-12]	[13-14]

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

1. Use one word to describe your reaction to today's class. \_\_\_\_\_

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

3. List 3 affirmations about yourself you plan to be more aware of in the future.

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	__ __
			Pretty Good							[15-16]
Poor							Excellent			

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

# Certificate of Training



*Be It Known That*

\_\_\_\_\_

*has successfully completed \_\_\_\_\_ hours of*

*communication skills training entitled "TIME OUT! FOR MEN"*

*Developed by DATAR Project, Institute of Behavioral Research,*

*Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas*

**AWARDED** \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Training Coordinator*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Director*