



CARRERA
ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY
PREVENTION PROGRAM

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Power Group

CURRICULUM



NINTH GRADE | FALL & SPRING

THE POWER GROUP CURRICULUM FOR NINTH GRADE

FALL & SPRING



CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY **Carrera Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

POWER GROUP LESSON PLANS FOR NINTH GRADE FALL & SPRING

Chapter 1: Setting the Stage	Lesson 1: Purpose of Power Group/Setting Expectations	9
	Lesson 2: Committing to Goals/Perseverance.....	11
	Lesson 3: Communication DOs and DON'Ts	14
	Lesson 4: Self-Perception.....	17

Chapter 2: Self	Lesson 1: Who I AM	20
	Lesson 2: Hand Portrait, Part I	25
	Lesson 3: Hand Portrait, Part II	28
	Lesson 4: Feelings Jenga	31
	Lesson 5: Decision Making— Thinking through the Consequences	33
	Lesson 6: Decision Making Technique	48
	Lesson 7: Decision Making—Substance Use.....	50

Chapter 3: Home/Family	Lesson 1: Communication with Parents.....	52
	Lesson 2: Values and Beliefs	55
	Lesson 3: Exploring Family Cycles	58
	Lesson 4: The Anger Iceberg	60

Chapter 4: Peers	Lesson 1: Accepting Differences.....	66
	Lesson 2: Gender Roles: “Real Men, Real Women”	69
	Lesson 3: Emotions in Relationships	71
	Lesson 4: Improving Communication with Sensitivity to Non-Verbal Cues.....	74
	Lesson 5: Healthy Relationships/ Is it healthy for the relationship if	77
	Lesson 6: Developing the Skills to Resolve Conflict	80

AN INTRODUCTION TO POWER GROUP

PURPOSE AND GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Facilitated by a licensed mental health provider, Power Group is a weekly, theme-based group about the social and emotional life of program participants. The curriculum is based on a preventive, strengths-based model of social work practice. All Carrera program participants attend Power Group weekly. This innovative integration of mental health services into our overall youth development approach offers a unique opportunity to provide preventive mental health services to 100% of our target population. This is in addition to the crisis intervention, individual case management, short term/supportive counseling, and referral services provided to those young people and families in need of additional support.

The goal of Power Group is to encourage, support, and empower adolescents as they learn to negotiate the world around them successfully. Relationships with self, peers, family, and community are central to a young person's ability to master developmental challenges and emerge from adolescence with an integrated identity. Power Group is intended to impact the quality of these relationships and an adolescent's ability to establish and maintain them. These issues associated with the age and stage development of a young person and the overall developmental milestones of adolescence are central to the work of Power Group.

A predominant and unique feature of Power Group is its focus on the "whole person"—their assets, talents, and gifts—rather than on identified problems and pathologies. Young people are seen as competent. With the guidance and sustained involvement of caring adults, they have the capacity to develop effective solutions to problems they face. This view is consistent with the overall Carrera program philosophy, which views youth as "at promise" rather than "at risk."

Power Group provides youth with encouragement and support as they negotiate the normal psychosocial tasks of middle childhood (developing a sense of competence) and adolescence (developing a sense of identity). The group provides a safe and constructive forum for young people to identify and process issues with the guidance of a trained professional, as well as to compare their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors with those of their peers. As they share their stories, their perspectives, and their feelings about themselves and the world around them, Power Group provides an opportunity for those feelings to be normalized. Furthermore, the group teaches skills for effectively managing emotions and life challenges. The regular meetings increase self-awareness and understanding and help program participants gain an understanding of how their behaviors may impact others.

Historically, social work services have a negative connotation for many members of the populations we serve. The way in which mental health is expressed in our program model de-stigmatizes the provision of mental health services. This allows the social worker to make connections with youth and their families based on positive interactions; interactions are not solely driven by pathologies or identified problems. The Mental Health/Power Group component also provides opportunities for young people to:

- Improve communication with parents and/or caregivers;
- Uncover hidden competencies and learn new ones;
- Learn about establishing and maintaining healthy relationships;
- Correct misinformation in their knowledge base;
- Have more opportunities for healthy social interaction and participate in a positive peer culture;
- Learn about problem solving;
- Learn how to identify and express their feelings in a constructive fashion;
- Improve their ability to communicate their needs;
- Experience the universality of their thoughts and feelings;
- Embrace differences;
- Increase their self-awareness;
- Contribute to their community.

POWER GROUP TOPICS AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Power Group (and the Power Group Curriculum) is designed to address a broad spectrum of topics and issues impacting young people at each age and stage of their development; these universal topics relate to self, peers, family, and community. Topics and related Core Activities (as highlighted in the curriculum), assist young people in exploring important issues within the context of their local environments. It is the expectation that social workers, through guided implementation of the Power Group curriculum and professional competencies, will understand and appropriately introduce and integrate key topics and skill development. The following is illustrative and not exhaustive in terms of group topics and skills:

POWER GROUP TOPICS

- Self-Perception (self-esteem, self-image or concept, self-efficacy, racial and/or cultural pride and identity)
- Problem Solving/Effective Decision Making
- Effective Communication with Parents and Peers
- Healthy Relationships, Peer Pressure, and Friendship
- Understanding and Accepting Differences and Diversity
- School Expectations
- Family/Community Violence
- Loss, Grief, and Trauma

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- Effective Communication and Active Listening
- Giving and Accepting Feedback
- Identifying, Sharing, Expressing Feelings
- Managing Life Transitions
- Conflict Resolution/Management Skills
- Practices for Self Control
- Assertiveness
- Anger Management Skills
- Coping with Anxiety/Stress
- Problem Solving Skills
- Decision Making/Choices/Values Clarification Skills

CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

The Power Group Curriculum is designed to provide social workers with lesson plans reflecting the range of topics above, as well as guidance on effective implementation. The curriculum is structured to facilitate initial group building: Setting the stage for building cohesion and trust within the group. Subsequent lessons focus on key concepts associated with self, peers, family, and community.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

This resource is designed with the intention of:

1. Providing a chronological approach to introducing Power Group and group life to a new cohort and ongoing implementation of relevant lessons.
2. Establishing a routine during the session.
3. Creating an environment that nurtures and appreciates the participation of the young people.
4. Assisting social workers in their planning and implementation of group activities.
5. Highlighting the importance of session and process goals.

IMPLEMENTING POWER GROUP: CONSIDERATIONS FOR CLINICIANS

STRUCTURING POWER GROUP

Because social interaction is a key aspect of adolescent development, the Power Group setting provides an ideal venue for work with this population. At the same time, adolescence is a period that involves significant change, including increased emotional vulnerability and often limited impulse control. Providing and clarifying group structure, process, and expectations are essential. In initial Power Group meetings, ground rules are established. Members discuss and agree on group rules and process. They also engage in an activity to get to know something about each other and each other's goals, concerns, or interests.

Power Group sessions are structured to have a recognizable and meaningful **beginning**—a “Do Now” and/or “Go ‘Round,” a **middle**—the “Core Activity,” and an **end**—“Wrap-Up and Closing Activity.” All are described in detail below:

BEGINNING: DO NOW AND GO ‘ROUND

Power Group Sessions typically opens with a **Do Now**. This is an activity that is intended to engage program participants immediately upon entering the room; it also introduces them to the Power Group topic of the day. Do Now activities may be in the form of oral or written questions or directions. Depending on the time allocation and the overall tone of the group, social workers may also incorporate a “Go ‘Round,” which is a brief opportunity for young people to say a word or sentence that describes what's on their mind and/or what they are feeling. The social worker may lead with a question like: “What did you do this weekend?” or “On a scale of one to 10, how do you feel today?” Go ‘Rounds are not intended as a time for feedback or group discussion. This process may, however, require some flexibility on the part of the social worker, depending on what occurs or what issues are identified.

MIDDLE: CORE ACTIVITY AND REVIEW OF WORDS

The **Core Activity** is the central portion of the Power Group session; it is a carefully constructed activity centered on a key theme with identified objectives. This activity serves to enhance understanding on a topic and/or reinforce newly acquired skill sets. Power Group incorporates a range of creative and engaging activities. These Core Activities may be conducted as a large group or in several small groups. This provides an opportunity for the social worker to give positive reinforcement and feedback to group participants and to ensure that every member of the group has an opportunity to participate in the activity or exercise. Activities may range from facilitated dialogue to team building projects, skits, and plays. These Core Activities use a variety of media, such as music, art, and technology to support group objectives. They may be designated for single or multiple Power Group sessions. Whatever the activity, a significant portion of time should be spent in small or large group experiences and/or sharing.

The reviewing of key words allows the student to develop a working definition for concepts that are sometimes abstract. Although definitions are provided for the word(s) of the day, the social worker may decide to provide a different working definition that is more applicable to the group.

END: SESSION WRAP-UP/CLOSING ACTIVITY

A **Closing Activity** is an opportunity for social workers to develop and implement a routine that wraps up the session for the day. It may take the form of guided group reflection on the Core Activity or reinforcement/review of key concepts or learning objectives. It is also an opportunity for the social worker to share feedback on group process and observations, as well as group progress and accomplishments. The Session Wrap-Up/Closing Activity is also the time to set the stage for the next Power Group session.

CHAPTER 1: SETTING THE STAGE

LESSON 1: PURPOSE OF POWER GROUP/SETTING EXPECTATIONS

SESSION GOALS:

- To alleviate anxiety about new grade/school
- To identify possible roles of Power Group
- To establish ground rules for the group
- To enable students to set reasonable expectations of themselves, others, and their Power Group leader for the year

MATERIALS:

- Flip chart
- Markers

WORD(S) OF THE DAY:

- Alleviate
- Anxiety

SOCIAL WORKER/MENTAL HEALTH WORKER NOTES:

It is important to review the guidelines for group participation that have already been established in the program with past participants. These guidelines include, but are not limited to, confidentiality, timeliness, participation, and respect for other people's opinions. Regarding expectations, ask the group what they can do to make Power Group—and their school year—a success.

DO NOW:

Think about the most exciting thing about being in a new grade and/or new school and be prepared to share.



Power Group

CORE ACTIVITY:

1. Have students share the best and worse things about returning to school and write the responses on the flip chart.
2. Identify any similar responses.
3. Have students share their expectations for themselves, their peers, and the group leader and write the responses on the flip chart.
4. Identify any similar responses.

QUESTIONS TO FACILITATE DISCUSSION:

1. What are some of the differences you have noticed, or what differences do you expect to see, from your last grade to this grade?
2. If this school is new to you, what differences (positive and negative) have you noticed between this school and your previous school?
3. Which positive habits, attitudes, or behaviors from last year would you like to continue into this school year?
4. Which habits, attitudes, or behaviors from last year would you like to change this school year?
5. What types of things might get in the way of your meeting the expectations you have for yourself?
6. What do you think should happen if students are not meeting group expectations?
7. How can we as a group help when people are not meeting expectations?
8. Why do you think it is important that Power Group leaders have expectations of the students?
9. Why do you think it is important to have expectations of yourself?

CLOSING ROUTINE:

Give a general overview of what will be covered in the upcoming semester. Remind students that they can connect with you through individual appointments as well.

CHAPTER 1: SETTING THE STAGE

LESSON 2: COMMITTING TO GOALS/PERSEVERANCE

SESSION GOALS:

To help students set personal goals for the year and reflect on who they want to be this coming school year

To understand the concept of overcoming a challenge and why it is important

To identify way in which we can overcome obstacles

MATERIALS:

Index cards

Core Activity worksheet

WORD(S) OF THE DAY:

Perseverance

SOCIAL WORKER/MENTAL HEALTH WORKER NOTES:

DO NOW:

On one side of an index card, have students write the best thing about the previous school year. On the opposite side, they should write the worst thing they remember about the previous school year.



Power Group

CORE ACTIVITY:

Students will write a short letter to themselves stating how they would like the new school year to be for them, e.g.: "I want to make the honor role" or "I want to be a good friend." In this letter, they should write about what they would like to accomplish, what kind of a person they want to be, and how this can happen during this school year. Encourage the students to set personal goals and use the lessons of last year to make changes for this new school year. Ask students to find a spot in the room where they feel comfortable and away from the distractions of other students. Once finished with their letters, ask students to each share one goal that they have set for this school year.

Next, write this quote on the board:

"I've missed over 9,000 shots in my career. I've almost lost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I've been trusted to take the game's winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over again in my life. And that's why I succeed."
— Michael Jordan

The social worker/mental health worker should ask a few students to share their thoughts about what this quote means. You can then define and discuss perseverance with the class. Be sure to touch on what happens when you don't make an effort to overcome a challenge.

Definition of perseverance: Steady persistence in a course of action or a purpose, especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement.

The social worker/mental health worker should talk about how positive self-talk is an important part of overcoming challenges. You should then instruct the group to interview two classmates using the worksheet on the next page. Let the students know that they will be reporting to the class regarding one of the interviews and what was inspiring to them about it.

CLOSING ROUTINE:

Ask students to reflect on key concepts of the day.

INTERVIEW 1

GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF A CHALLENGE YOU HAVE FACED IN YOUR LIFE.

What efforts did you make to overcome this challenge?

What was the outcome?

Describe some of the feelings you experienced throughout this challenge (i.e., how you felt when the obstacle was first presented, when you were trying to overcome it, and after the outcome).

If you were going to give someone advice on dealing with a similar challenge, what would it be?

INTERVIEW 2

GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF A CHALLENGE YOU HAVE FACED IN YOUR LIFE.

What efforts did you make to overcome this challenge?

What was the outcome?

Describe some of the feelings you experiences throughout this challenge (i.e., how you felt when the obstacle was first presented, when you were trying to overcome it, and after the outcome).

If you were going to give someone advice on dealing with a similar challenge, what would it be?

CHAPTER 1: SETTING THE STAGE

LESSON 3: COMMUNICATION DOs AND DON'Ts

SESSION GOAL:

To create a list of communication guidelines for the entire group to follow

WORD(S) OF THE DAY:

Communication

MATERIALS:

Flip chart

Markers

Copies of the Communication DOs and DON'Ts Worksheet

SOCIAL WORKER/MENTAL HEALTH WORKER NOTES:

DO NOW:

On a sheet of paper, list the three parts of "communication." Is there one part that is the most important?



Power Group

CORE ACTIVITY:

Distribute copies of the Communication DOs and DON'Ts worksheet and ask the students to complete it. After they are finished, go through each word with the group; ask them to vote on whether each term is a "DO" or a "DON'T." Have the group talk about why they put the word or phrase into a given category. Facilitate a discussion around this list.

MOVEMENT ACTIVITY:

Create two signs. One says Communication DOs, and the other says Communication DON'Ts. Have students move to one side of the room or the other as you read out the options from the list on the worksheet.

QUESTIONS TO FACILITATE DISCUSSION:

Are there other things that you think belong on the "DO" list?

Are there other things that you think belong on the "DON'T" list?

Is there a Communication DON'T that you feel occurs a lot in school?

Have any of these Communication DON'Ts occurred in Power Group in the past?

How can we improve our communication?

Do you think people are aware that they are not communicating well?

How can the group help?

CLOSING ROUTINE:

Ask students to reflect on key concepts of the day.

COMMUNICATION DO'S AND DON'TS

Directions: Put the word or phrase into the column that YOU think it belongs in.

Word Bank: "Listen" "Assume You Understand" "Blame" "Be Open-Minded"

"Resist Distractions" "Ask Questions" "Call Names or Label" "Interrupt"

"Look the Person in the Eyes" "Raise your Voice or Yell" "Force or Threaten"

"Laugh at People" "Hear a Person Out" "Make Snap Judgments"

"Offer Advice when It's Not Asked for" "Say 'Always' or 'Never'"

COMMUNICATION DO'S	COMMUNICATION DON'TS