The SKILLS Program: Group Behavioral Activation Therapy for Anxious and Depressed Youth

Group Leader Manual

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Pilot Study:
Chu, B. C., Colognori, D., Weissman, A. S., & Bannon, K. (2009). An initial description and pilot of group behavioral activation therapy for anxious and depressed youth. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, 16,* 408-419.

Initial randomized controlled trial:
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Additional readings:

Chu, B.C. (Special Series Editor) (2012). Translating transdiagnostic approaches to children and adolescents. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, 19,* 1-86.
Chu, B. C., Merson, R. A., Zandberg, L. J., & Areizaga, M. (2012). Calibrating for comorbidity: Clinical decision-making in youth depression and anxiety. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, 19,* 5-16.
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Introduction to the SKILLS program

The SKILLS program is a group-based behavioral activation therapy (GBAT) designed to help youth develop coping skills to deal with feelings like anxiety, sad mood, and anger. These feelings are natural, particularly in the tumultuous and potentially stressful time of middle school and high school. There are a lot of transitions during this time: changing schools, making new friends, finding your place socially, increasingly challenging and demanding class work, adjusting to new responsibilities and expectations at home, etc. Balancing all the challenges at home, school, and with friends can be a challenge. How a youth responds to these challenges makes a big difference. If they give in to the stress, they may freeze or avoid responsibilities because they feel overwhelmed. They figure, "How can I get started when there's already so much to do?" Or they avoid people or fail to stand up for themselves because they figure, "Why say anything, it'll just make things worse?" Or even worse, they may shut down, quit, withdraw or isolate because they have reached their breaking point, "Why bother when nothing I do will help?" When kids feel stuck like this, it's important they detect it early and respond pro-actively. Because no matter how stressful or distressing the situation is, handling it pro-actively is usually better than hoping it just goes away.

This manual describes the SKILLS program as it is designed to be delivered in group format with pre-teens and teens (suggested age range: 11 – 16 years; 6^{th} – 10^{th} grade) in school settings (either middle school or high school). It is recommended that group size is limited to 5-8 students but groups can include both boys and girls. Group leaders can be professionals with psychology training, but pilot testing shows that school professionals, like school counselors, health teachers, and school psychologists can be group leaders as well.

The SKILLS group will help group members: (a) identify how mood, anxiety or anger are getting in the way of things they want to achieve, and (b) set meaningful goals that everyone can achieve with the right approach. Having your eyes set on personally meaningful goals helps keep people moving when they get stuck. Some personal goals the program is most suitable for include:

(a) Helping students cope with stressful family, school, or friend situations.
(b) Improving confidence
(c) Improving ability to "handle" challenging situations.
(d) Making more friends and improving quality of friendships & family relationships
(e) Improving school attendance, participation and performance
(f) Finding activities and hobbies that enhance each member's life

Conceptual Background and Description of the SKILLS

The SKILLS program uses a "behavioral activation" case formulation and strategies developed for adult depression (Addis & Martell, 2004; Jacobson, Martell, & Dimidjian, 2001; Martell, Addis, & Jacobson, 2001), combined with potent behavioral exposure exercises developed for anxiety [For more detailed description and case examples, see Chu, Colognori, Weissman, & Bannon, 2009]. SKILLS specifically targets functional

outcomes (social, academic, individual functioning) that impact long-term developmental trajectories. The program is designed to be completed in 10 weekly, hour-long meetings but is flexible to accommodate various schedules. The program begins with students evaluating how they are doing in various functional domains and identifying goals they would like to achieve (e.g., Lang et al., 2006). The group discusses how behaviors affect mood and vice versa, and that negative mood-behavior cycles can lead youth to feel stuck (i.e., a "distress loop"). These negative cycles can produce undesired outcomes in multiple life domains, including: (a) psychological distress, (b) family, peer, and teacher relationships, (c) self-esteem and confidence, (d) school attendance, participation and performance, (e) extracurricular life and activities, and (f) health and self-care. Students evaluate their own performance along a "normal curve" continuum to identify both areas of strength and domains in which they are under-performing. Group members then brainstorm and choose goals they expect could have the greatest impact on current functioning. In an individual leader-student meeting between groups 2 and 3, each member completes a "Goals Ladder" that prioritizes their goals and allows them to track progress over time.

SKILLS next teaches four core behavioral activation principles: (1) psychoeducation, (2) functional analysis, (3) problem solving, and (4) graded exposures/behavioral activation tasks in 10 meetings. Graded exposures/tasks are intended to start as early as session 3 and continue throughout treatment, providing ample time to practice program skills. Students also receive one individual meeting with a group-leader to individually tailor lessons to the student's life. The treatment manual is meant to be implemented flexibly in a clinically sensitive manner to ensure a diversity of problems can be addressed (see Kendall, Chu et al., 1998). Treatment materials include a student workbook for in-session activities and for the youth to complete homework assignments.

The acronym, "SKILLS," was developed to capture core BA skills and is taught from sessions 1 – 4 and session 10. The SKILLS acronym does not have to be specifically used in group meetings, nor do students have to memorize them. In many ways, the **SKILLS acronym is a set of overarching principles** that helps organize the group leaders. It helps you to conceptualize the overall goal of the group and keep you on track. There are already a number of acronyms for the students to remember (TRAC, TRAP), so we don't want to confuse them with more than are necessary. Instead, the SKILLS acronym is presented at the beginning and can be referred to throughout, but students do not have to memorize it.

"S" (See where I'm stuck): Teaches students to self-assess and figure out where they want to improve to set appropriate goals.

"K" (Keep active and keep approaching): Teaches students that getting stuck is self-perpetuating – we avoid the things that bother us, and the things we avoid end up bothering us more and more (distress loop). We get increasingly stuck the longer we avoid the original problem.

"I" (Identify goals I want to achieve): Students complete a Goals Ladder to identify specific goals based on their earlier self-assessment.

"L" (Look for ways to accomplish my goals): Students learn to dissect and change the sequence of events that get them into trouble (the distress loop).

They use the "**TRAP**" acronym (**Trigger, Response, Avoidance/Anger Pattern**; Addis & Martell, 2004) to identify the specific events that **Trigger** anxious/depressed reactions, how the student **Responds** emotionally (sad, anxious, angry) to the trigger, and how they typically **Avoid** the situation as a way to deal with it. Students will get practice examining how avoidance often appears to be the easiest (or only) solution but it rarely resolves the circumstances associated with the initial trigger. Students will discuss real-life examples of times when they feel stuck and how their avoidance perpetuated distress and further avoidance. In this way, students learn to conduct a "functional analysis" of their own avoidant behaviors and how their reactions and choices maintain this loop.

After several pilot groups, we added **"Angry Patterns"** in addition to avoidance patterns because we found that anxious and depressed youth often responded to complex/frustrating situations with anger. In many ways, anger can be seen as a form of avoidance. When a student re-acts in an impulsive, angry manner, it is often the easiest, most intuitive response, but it fails to solve/resolve the originating trigger/problem. In this way, students are choosing to "act," but in a way that avoids the more important issue (e.g., confronting social problems in an assertive, prosocial manner). Nevertheless, the students in early groups didn't relate to the term "avoidance" when they responded like this. Instead, they could understand their anger as an automatic response (that didn't reflect how they actually felt), was typically unhelpful, and that they didn't know how else to react. Adding anger to the TRAP acronym helped students identify most situations where they reacted emotionally as a way to get out of, end, or respond most intuitively (if not most helpfully) in a distressing situation.

Students use the "**TRAC**" acronym (**Trigger, Response, Alternative Choices**; Addis & Martell, 2004) acronym to help generate alternatives to avoidant solutions. TRAC is an overarching principle used to prompt students to get find ways to get "back on track" (Addis & Martell, 2004). Students brainstorm alternative solutions to problems and weigh the pro's and con's. The "STEPS" acronym (Weisz et al., 1997) is included in the appendix if extra help with problem-solving is needed. However, we found that students could weigh the pro's and con's without formal problem-solving steps when time was tight. We also provide several exercises to help students hone their decision-making.

"L" (Lasting change): Teaches students to identify barriers that may get in the way of behavioral change and refers to the BA concept of barriers-identification. In any behavior change, one can expect both internal resistance and external barriers. Group members are taught to anticipate barriers and to problem-solve through them. Students are reminded of the problem-solving STEPS throughout exposure trials and in preparation for extra-session homework.

"S" (See what's worked): Prompts students to re-assess their success in the functional domains they identified in session 1. This principle reinforces the notion that change is an ongoing process of assessment, attempts at coping, and re-

assessment. Successful strategies are kept and unsuccessful strategies are re-evaluated. Goals that are achieved can enter into a maintenance phase while unachieved goals can move up the priority list.

While learning SKILLS strategies, significant session time is dedicated to active **exposure tasks** (imaginal, in vivo) and behavioral exercises (role plays, practice runs for homework). The extensive in-session exposure interventions perhaps sets this BA program apart from others to the extent that it encourages ***in-session practice*** rather than relying on outside-session homework. We'll cover more about what exposures are and how to do them in session 6. Exposures focus on encouraging anti-depressant/anxiety behaviors that have interfered with accomplishing meaningful goals. Group members bring examples from their life (and as reported in homework) describing the external events that triggered distress (anxiety or depression) and their ineffective (avoidant/angry) attempts to cope. Students help each other examine how they are falling into the distress loop by using TRAP and then jointly problem solve to identify creative alternatives. This process lends itself well to the group format which encourages diverse perspectives and a greater range of potential alternatives.

Each exposure session tries to have at least one student complete an in-session role play, practice trial, or in vivo exposure. Exposures can target the goals of more than one student at a time when student goals and problem areas are similar. Even when one student is serving as the "lead player," group leaders try to involve every member as role players, objective observers, feedback providers, etc. For specific fears, the group can enact classic exposure exercises. For example, role plays, assertiveness tasks, and mock social interactions (e.g., class speech, socializing at a party) can be used to address fears associated with social anxiety. For more diffuse problems (e.g., anhedonia), sessions can focus on problem-solving and role plays to practice alternative coping the child will enact at home. For example, if a child feels exhausted after school and isolates himself from friends, the group can problem solve ways to contact friends prior to "crashing" in his bedroom. In-session role plays can be used to help identify and problem-solve around common barriers ahead of time. At the same time, behavioral activation can be enacted right in session. In the same situation, the student might be encouraged to make arrangements during session instead of waiting for after school. This might help avoid the common pitfalls associated with isolating oneself once at home. For example, the student could text message his friend to call him after school so they can arrange an activity (theoretically, one would like to assume his friend's cell phone is turned off so as not to interrupt any class!).

Group Meeting Organization

Goals and activities for each group meeting are described using the same parallel outlines described below:

A. Objectives: Describes the main objective of the meeting and how it relates to the SKILLS acronym.

B. If time is tight: Describes which activities take priority if time is tight.

C. Materials needed: Describes the typical materials needed for the meeting.

D. Lesson plan: Describes the specific activities with examples for how to engage the group.

E. Practice Assignment: Describes recommended homework for group members to complete in between meetings.

F. Session Review: If time permits, group leaders can help students consolidate lessons by reviewing session lessons.

I. Meeting 1

A. Objectives

1. Review confidentiality agreement [5 minutes]
2. Discuss basic ground rules [5 minutes]
3. Introduction: Ice-breaker and partner interviews [10 minutes]
4. Provide a description of the group and the goals most suitable for the program [10 minutes]
5. Help the students identify situations that cause them to feel “stuck” [5 minutes]
6. Introduce the concept of “getting active” to improve mood [5 minutes]
7. End of session review of main lessons of session [5 minutes]
8. Assign take-home practice

B. If time is tight/priorities

1. Review the confidentiality agreement and basic ground rules for the group
2. Introductions to the group leaders, other members, and the overall goals and purpose of the group
3. Introduce what it means to feel stuck so that everyone is working off of the same definitions as they prepare to do the homework.

C. Materials needed

1. Group Leader Manual and workbooks for students
2. Dry erase markers
3. Camera (recharged), tripod

D. Lesson plan

1. Quick introductions, group description, and snack

First, it’s time to welcome students to the group! Group leaders should introduce themselves to the students and hand out the SKILLS workbooks. Students should quickly introduce themselves, stating only their names for now.

Give a quick overview of the program, checking in to see if the students know why they are there. Group leaders can explain briefly that the group aims to help kids deal with transitions (e.g., from elementary to middle school) and feelings of anxiety, sadness, and anger. We all get stressed from time to time and the goal is to find ways to keep ourselves from getting “stuck” in a bigger hole by letting our mood get to us. There will be additional time to discuss group goals, but it is recommended to cover confidentiality and group rules first (discussion of group goals often bring up personal stories – we want to make sure the ground rules for sharing and keeping privacy are stated up front).

2. Confidentiality Agreement

Next, group leaders cover issues of confidentiality and privacy. It's important to stress that everything discussed within the group is confidential.

a. Highlight key reasons confidentiality is crucial:

(1) Maintaining confidentiality is important because group members will be sharing personal and private information.

(2) Group members will feel more comfortable discussing personal feelings and experiences if they know it will remain confidential and that personal information will not be discussed outside of the group.

b. Read confidentiality agreement.

Read agreement aloud and have students sign and date the page, acknowledging that they have read and understood the expectations set forth in the agreement and are willing to comply with them.

c. What are the limits of confidentiality?

Most importantly, if a youth says anything that would make leaders suspect the youth may hurt him/herself or hurt anyone else, then the group leaders will have to break confidentiality and discuss the issue with appropriate adults (e.g., the youth's parents, school officials, police). However other issues deserve discussion. There are no right or wrong's to these. Each group will have their own preferences. But the group leaders should steer the group towards greater privacy and confidentiality whenever possible. Some of these issues include:

(1) Can group members talk to each other outside of group? Can they discuss issues that came up during the group? We find it is natural that group members become friends and may talk with each other outside the group. And, inevitably, these group members may want to reference events that happen during the group. It is essential to remind group members that if they are going to discuss (with each other) topics that came up in group, that they make sure no one else (who is not a group member) is around or can hear.

(2) Can group members talk about other kids who are not in the group during group time? During group, leaders will be asking students for examples from their life. Students will often cite examples of events that involved other kids at the school. These can be situations where they were nervous around, bullied by, argued with, or even aggressed upon these other students. These are helpful examples, but these other students (outside the group) may be friends with another student in the group. We do not want the group to become a place for gossip to breed, and we do not want anyone in the group to be put in the position of defending their friend because of events that happened outside the group. For these reasons we recommend that when group members describe personal examples that involve other youth at the school, they omit the names of people that others may know.

3. Basic Ground Rules

The focus of this activity is to discuss basic ground rules listed in the workbook (**WB, p. 2**) and identify additional rules that may be useful.

a. Attendance

Regular attendance benefits the individual student and the group as a whole. The group leader might say: “In order to get anything out of the group, first, you have to be here! Not only that, but if you’re absent, others may miss out on what you have to bring to the group. So, attendance is a must. If you know you’ll be absent, please tell a group leader. If you miss a meeting, come to your group leader and ask for a catch-up.”

b. Participation

Being an active participant in the group can help students solve problems they may be dealing with by allowing other group members to help brainstorm solutions. Active participation can also be helpful for others who are experiencing similar difficulties in the group. The group leader can explain: “Once you’re here, it is very important you do your best to share your experiences and participate in activities. During group, we’ll ask you to share examples from your life and from homework. The more people share, the more everyone will get out of it since we can all learn from each other. If talking in a big group sounds intimidating, that’s okay – let us know. We’ll help you get a little more comfortable each time.”

c. Homework

Completing homework on a regular basis provides invaluable practice to compliment the work done during session. “The best way to learn the skills we’re going to teach you is to practice them at home. The “homework” we assign won’t take long, but it’s crucial – so get ‘er done!”

d. Rewards/Recognition

Students can receive both individual and group rewards for having good attendance, participating in discussions, and completing homework. “Your effort in the group will always be recognized. As you complete homework and attend meets, you can work toward both individual and group rewards!” Group leaders should refer to the workbook (**WB, p. 1 before Group 1**) to explain how the reward bank works.

e. Additional rules

The group leaders can solicit suggestions from the students. If the students have a difficult time coming up with ideas, the group leader can suggests the additional rules listed here and have an open discussion with the students about these new rules. Some examples include: respecting others, not interrupting each other, not using names of other kids in the school during discussions, what kind of information you can share with each other outside of group, etc.

4. Getting Acquainted

The ice-breaker entails giving the kids an opportunity to become more acquainted with one another and warm up to sharing information with other group members.

Students are paired up in groups and asked to take turns interviewing each other. They should use the "Warm-Up Activity" in the workbook (**WB, p. 3**) to guide their interview, but should feel free to ask additional questions. After they have had a chance to interview each other, the students are asked to take turns sharing what they've learned about each other. This activity may provide some initial insight about the students, particularly about how comfortable students will be in sharing in front of other group members.

5. Group Description

a. Refer to (**WB, p. 4)** and provide an overview of what it means to feel stuck and the different domains that may be affected when a person is feeling stuck.

There are lots of times when we feel stuck. Things may not be going well, we may have been taking a lot of hits lately, and things with parents, family, friends or school may not be going well. That can make us feel down and in the dumps. Because of that, we let ourselves fall "into a hole." We find ourselves in a bad mood and we let ourselves fall deeper and deeper into the hole and just hope things will pass. Sometimes things do not seem fair, or things just do not seem to go our way. When this happens, we react with anger and maybe lash out at others or push people away. Maybe we do not think people will understand or care, but we just end up digging ourselves deeper.

Other times, we feel like we hold ourselves back. We feel scared, nervous, or lack the confidence to face the challenges in front of us. Things like approaching people, making friends, taking tests, getting involved after school. Everyone feels nervous around these situations, but it feels like you're the only one who really struggles with this. We let our nerves get the best of us, so we hold ourselves back, quit or avoid.

b. Try to highlight the following points:

(1) Everyone has bad days and we all get into situations where we feel stuck. The key point is that we need to identify those times quickly and get ourselves out of the hole or else it gets harder to dig ourselves out.

(2) The program will help students identify personal goals that are meaningful to them and they'll spend time in group gaining a better understanding of how emotions and behaviors may interfere with achieving goals.

(3) The group will work towards achieving goals by learning and practicing different skills both in and out of session. Emphasize that the focus of the program is really on skill-building to help kids achieve goals and overcome hurdles. Hence, the title of the workbook, The "SKILLS" Program.

6. When Do We Get Stuck? (WB, pp. 5-7)

a. Have students develop more personal definitions of "being stuck."

Use examples of falling into a hole or falling on your face and being unable to get up. Solicit from students the terminology they use to describe getting stuck, explaining that some people call it a "rut" and others a "funk." Alternate phrases for "feeling stuck," include, feeling in a funk, rut, feeling down, out-of-it, spinning your wheel, etc.

By the way, we think that the term, "rut," perfectly captures what we're trying to get across. The goal of SKILLS is to help youth identify when they are falling into "ruts" and to prevent themselves from spiraling further. However, from experience, most kids HATE this term and don't relate to it. Some sports fans could relate to "being in a rut" (e.g., when a baseball hitter gets "stuck in a rut"), but these were the minority. Seventh and eighth graders from our early groups preferred the term, "stuck," much better. Falling into a "trap" is another good term, and it sets up our later TRAP acronym. But make a point to solicit different terms that feel right for the kids in the first group (and beyond).

Have students think about what feelings are most associated with their ruts (e.g. anxiety, sadness, anger). Explain how different people experience being stuck in different ways (e.g. isolating from friends or family versus lashing out and arguing with friends), and often it depends on the emotion we are feeling at the time.

Point out that all of the feelings below are natural and expected sometimes. The feelings become a problem when they lead you to get stuck in a rut that prevents you from doing the things you would like to do and achieving your goals.

b. Depressed mood

Allow the students to think about their own definition of depressed mood and then share with the group.

Provide a definition of depression. "Depression is a feeling you get when you feel sad, down, and unable to lift yourself up. When we feel sad or down, it feels impossible to get yourself moving or push yourself to do things you want to." Group leaders should provide further explanation, perhaps explaining that sometimes people who are depressed feel like they have no energy to do the things they used to enjoy doing and not even want to try. It is also helpful to clear up common misconceptions of depression, such as beliefs about laziness, weakness, etc. Once the students have a better understanding of depression, have them identify times when sad or depressed mood cause them to feel stuck.

c. Anxiety

Give the students an opportunity to think about and share with the group how they define anxiety, fear, or worry.

Provide students with a definition of anxiety. "Anxiety is a feeling you get when you do not want to do something. You may feel frozen or stuck and you cannot

push yourself to do something you either want to do or are supposed to do. You might also be worrying yourself sick – thinking about something negative over and over instead of trying your best shot whatever's making you nervous." Some kids mistake anxiety for excitement, so the term, "nervousness," works better. After anxiety has been clearly defined, the students should identify times when anxiety causes them to feel stuck.

d. Anger

Explain how sometimes people will feel stuck, and instead of feeling sad or anxious, they get irritable, angry, or show a short temper. People feel trapped, don't feel like they can do anything about the situation, and so get mad and lash out at others.

Provide students with a definition of anger. "Anger is a natural feeling you get when someone does you harm. But sometimes, it comes out when things do not work out our way, or we don't get what we want, or we think someone has offended us. A lot of times, it comes when we're simply disappointed. But when we automatically react with anger, we can push away people who can help and do things we will regret later. Or we do things we will regret later. In that way, we get stuck into an endless loop because of our angry reactions in the moment. Another way to look at it is: is there any time where you got angry but later regretted it?" Once the definition of anger has been clarified, have the students identify times when angry feelings caused them to feel stuck or vice versa – times when feeling stuck made them feel angry.

7. Getting Active (WB, pp. 8-10)

a. Mood Improvement Through Action

This section provides basic skills that can be taught quickly to students and orients them towards the idea that actions can be taken to improve moods.

b. Basic training for sad feelings (**WB, p. 8**)

(1) Have students identify and **describe how they act** (not look or feel, but act!) when they are **stuck** because of sad feelings. For youth dealing with depression, they tend to withdraw, isolate, and become inactive. It's "easier" to crash on their beds than to deal with what's going on. As simple as it sounds, physical activity is the first thing we can do to improve mood and break a negative cycle. To show this experientially, we start by teaching students the value of Behavioral Activation using the Jumping Jacks exercise. The goal of this is to show that people can change their mood relatively quickly either by relaxing or activating. "The first thing we want to teach you is that simply getting active may help prevent you from hiding away or falling into a hole."

(2) First, have everyone stand up and give "energy" ratings. "Okay, we're going to try something to test this concept out. First, shake out some of the

stiffness. Now before we do anything, I want you to write down in your book how energized/awake you feel on a 0-10 scale with '0' being really tired and '10' being really energized. Go ahead." Typically, students will rate themselves as relatively low on the scale (if the group is being held in a typical school context!). Next, the group leaders lead the students in a set of 10 jumping jacks; to make the point hit home, go for another 10 jumping jacks as the students are just about stopping. After the second set, have the students write down how energized/awake they feel on the 0-10 scale again. Once students write their ratings down, ask students what ratings they had at the beginning? At the end? How many went up (more energized)? Down (less energized)? Stayed the same? How many went up by 1 point? 2? 3?

(3) Note how simple activities like these can change your mood and energy in a very short time (like, 20 seconds). Imagine how much they could improve their mood if they chose to do something personally meaningful and gratifying!

c. Basic training for anxious feelings: Practice makes… Better! (**WB, p. 9**)

(1) Have the student identify and describe how they ***act*** when they are stuck because of anxious feelings. Explain that we often avoid things that make us scared or nervous. We'll define avoidance later, but it basically means we push away or escape from things we don't like. Is this approach really helpful? In the end, avoidance often makes situations more scary and anxiety-provoking. We want to encourage people to try new and scary things, even when they make us nervous. Of course, trying something new or doing something that makes us nervous may feel uncomfortable at first. But practice can help increase comfort and boost competence and confidence. The students should be encouraged to think of a time when they tried something new, asking how the students felt over time. Did it get easier? Did they get better at it? Even if they didn't, did the initial nerves wear off? This should further emphasize the importance in using practice to reduce anxiety.

(2) To help students understand the importance of practice: First, have everyone raise their arms out in front of them and shake out their hands. Now ask the students to clasp their hands together as quickly as they can such that their fingers interlock. "Notice when you do this, that one of your thumbs (left or right) naturally ends up on top. In fact, do it again. [Wait for students to complete]. Did the same thumb end up on top? If you're like most people, the same thumb ended up on top. It's actually a genetic thing – we all have a favorite thumb that ends up on top.

Now, I want you to do it again. But this time, try to clasp your hands together again, and try to make your *other* thumb on top. [Wait for students to complete. Students will naturally have a difficult time with this and may be giggling at how difficult this simple task is]. Feels weird, doesn't it? But let's try it a few more times – start slow, make the other thumb come out on top, and just keep doing it. [Let the students practice this, encouraging to start slow]. Okay, try speeding it up. [Have the students repeat this about 10

times]. Okay – now you've done it a bunch of times. How did it feel by the end? More natural? [Get experiences from the group]. If you're like most, you noticed that it was hard at the beginning, but with practice, it got a little easier and felt less strange. The same goes for practice of any sort. The more you do things, the easier and more natural it gets."

d. Basic training for angry feelings (**WB, p. 10**)

(1) Have the student identify and describe how they ***act*** when they are stuck because of angry feelings. Explain how anger can be a form of avoidance, preventing you from dealing with the actual situation. "When we get angry, we tend to act out, pick fights, lash out, hold grudges, and pick fights that seem important at the time, but you regret later. Or you pick fights that you don't even care about, but you can't stop yourself. None of this actually helps solve the original problem. Basically, when we act out of anger, we are often taking the *easiest* route (making the easiest choice) to make us feel good. But it usually doesn't solve much."

(2) "Of course, when you're feeling angry, that usually isn't the best time to work on a problem either. Any solution you come up with may be "clouded" by your hurt and angry feelings. So, when you're feeling angry, usually it's best to (a) take a breath, (b) step away from the situation, and then (c) come back later to try and solve the original problem. Hurt feelings tend to fester, so, it is important to come back to the original problem after you've allowed some time for things to cool down. Letting things lie can lead to problems in the long-run. So, we'll help you figure out when it's good to 'step away' from a problem and when to return. Right now, we just want you to get a feeling for how you're angry feelings feel."

(3) Teach students a simple experiment about tension, anger, and problem-solving:

(4) **Demonstration 1 (Feeling Tense and angry doesn't feel good):** "Okay, this is called the **Bear Hug**. First, rate how "tense" or "angry" you feel on a "0" (not at all) to "10" (about to explode) scale. Now, everyone, stretch your arms out in front of you and then wrap them around your back like you're giving yourself a giant bear hug! Now don't hold back! Squeeze yourself tightly and tuck your head down into your arms. [Have students squeeze for at least 10 seconds, encouraging them to squeeze as hard as they can]. Okay, think about how tense you feel now – rate it from "0" to "10." [Keep students squeezing until most students have a high rating].

Now let go! Just dropping your arms loosely by your side. [Have students shake out their tense arms]. Now rate your tension again from "0" to "10."

What do you notice? When you're holding your tension in, it's like when we get angry, and stew on something, but don't "do anything" about it. It's also the feeling we get when someone makes us angry and we're about to explode! But notice the difference between keeping it tense, and letting it go.

The tension leaves your body and leaves you free (literally, it leaves your arms free) to do new things. If we choose to hold things inside instead of letting it go, notice how tense it can become and how unpleasant it is to retain that tension."

The goal is to demonstrate how "holding it in:" (a) takes a lot of energy to maintain and (b) squeezes the life out of you eventually! "Letting go" may seem difficult when you have something invested in it, but letting go "releases you" so that you can relax and think out what you really want in the situation. Group leaders can also repeat this exercise several times to show that "letting go" becomes easier each time you squeeze and let it go.

(5) **Demonstration 2 (Feeling angry is no time to do problem-solving):** Now, make the point that it is difficult to do rationale problem-solving while angry.

"Before you relax too much, let's do it again! But this time, when you're squeezing hard, I'm going to ask you do a word problem. To increase your incentive, we'll give you an extra point in your reward bank for every person who gets the answer correct."

Have the students squeeze themselves in a bear hug again and maintain it for the duration of the word problem.

Then, present a word or logic problem or riddle. It might be helpful to write this on a dry erase board ahead of time or a piece of paper and then "reveal" it while the students are doing a bear hug. We provide some examples of word problems and brain teasers below. However, the specific word problem is irrelevant; the goal is to show them that it is difficult to concentrate on a problem and solve an ordinarily easily solvable problem when they are tense or angry. In fact, it should be a word problem that, developmentally, should be easy for them to solve. [In fact, when we work with 7th graders, we choose problems designed for 4th or 5th graders so that the students get the point that even easy problems become difficult when they're holding onto anger. We have found a good resource at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences: http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/riddles/index.htm. But you could also just Google "word problems" or "brain teasers"].

As students are squeezing hard, have them rate their tension from "0" to "10" to make sure they are feeling tense and focus them on anger: "Think about something that made you angry this week." Next, present the word problem either on a white board or paper so that everyone can see. Then, read aloud. While the students are trying to figure out the problem, make sure to keep pushing them to squeeze at the same time. One should note that students are having trouble thinking through the problem.

After about 15-20 seconds of trying, you can ask students to relax. "Okay, shake it out. Rate your tension again. Does it feel good to let it go? Now, do you want to try the problem again?" Let the students give another guess at

the answers. The students may or may not get the answer right, but they probably will acknowledge it was easier to think through the problem when they weren't distracted by tension and squeezing (i.e., holding the anger in). After you have revealed the answer, lead a discussion about which state was easier for the students to think through the problem.

Arithmetic examples:

- Count backwards from 100 by 11.
- Multiply 1969 by 10. And then subtract 10.

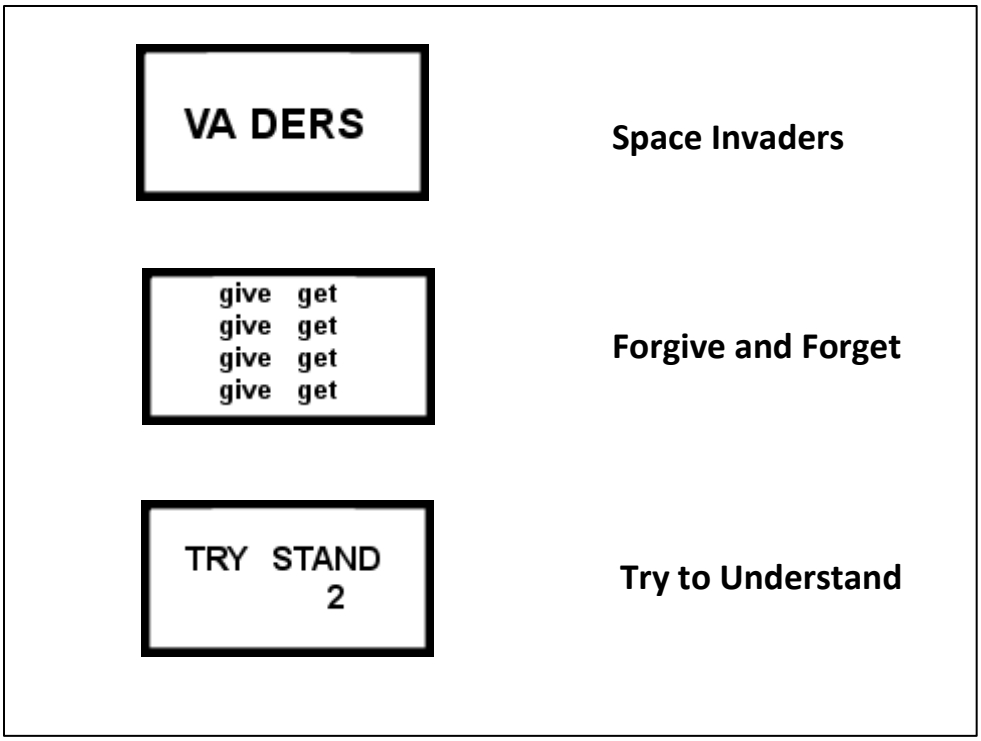
Word problems/Brain Teasers:

- During the summer break, your brother earns money mowing lawns. He mows 6 lawns an hour and has 20 lawns to mow. How long will it take him?
- What word, when written in capital letters, is the same forwards, backwards, and upside down? ANSWER: SOS.
- What time of day, when written in capital letters, is the same forwards, backwards, and upside down? ANSWER: NOON.

Riddles:

- Where do fish keep their money? ANSWER: a riverbank!
- What do you get when you cross an automobile with a household animal? ANSWER: carpet!
- Mary's father has 4 children; three are named Nana, Nene, and Nini. So, what is the 4^{th} child's name? ANSWER: Mary. ["Nono" would be the logical extension of the series, but if the father has 4 children, and three names are given, then the fourth has to be Mary!]

Frame Games (Rebus: picture representation of a saying):



Take-home message:

All of these exercises for sadness, anxiety, anger are just quick demonstrations to help students notice that emotional moods can change quickly, and that behavior – ways that they act, ways that they re-act to situations – is among the quickest and direct ways to have a positive effect on things.

E. Practice Assignment

1. Describe the first Practice Assignment (**WB, p. 12**). Students will describe how anxiety and sad moods impact their lives in different domains, including at school (or work), in relationships with family and friends, or with health or day-to-day functioning.

F. Session Review

1. Group Leaders review the main lessons of the session and help the students process what they learned. Go around the room, allow students to share something they learned in session. “What did you learn that was new? What did you learn that might be helpful?” Have the students take turns identifying how they can be more aware of when they are stuck or pick an appropriate time or situation when they can use one of the new skills.

II. Meeting 2

A. Objectives

1. Review the homework
2. Identify positives and negatives of different areas of the student's life
3. Explain the activity/mood chart
4. End of session review of main lessons of session

B. If time is tight/priorities

1. Reviewing homework
2. Help the students identify things that are going well and areas that need improvement in each of the domains so that the students can start thinking about goals they would like to work towards

C. Materials needed

1. Manual
2. Handouts (for students who forgot their workbook)
3. Dry erase markers
4. Camera (recharged), tripod

D. Lesson plan

1. Positive and Negative Functioning

a. Review the homework and identify which life areas the student is doing well in or needs attention. If the student has not completed the homework, have that student use the first in-class exercise, which replicates it. Students should be encouraged to try to identify positives and negatives in each of the domains. A student may choose to focus on a particular area that is causing the most distress. This is ok since the treatment is intended to be individualized and the goals identified in session 4 should be those most important to the individual student.

2. Functional Domain assessment: How am I Doing in Things that are Important to Me?

a. Assessing how anxiety and depression are affecting everyday functioning in important life domains (e.g. social, family, school, etc.) is a critical component of the program. In order to improve overall functioning, we must first understand where anxiety and depression are interfering.

b. How are you doing in important life domains (things that are important to you)? (WB, pp. 15-17). The goal of this exercise is to help students evaluate how they

are doing in various "functional domains." The goal of this is to focus on things that impact their lives (e.g., relationships, attainment of important goals), as opposed to a strict focus on anxious and depressive symptoms (Lang et al., 2006). This focus helps orient youth to concrete goals they can *directly change*, as opposed to feelings and thoughts which can sometimes be abstract.

Begin by defining what "*under-performing,*" "*just right*," and "*maxed out*" mean. *Under-performing* means that a student isn't living up to their own potential – even to a degree that she or he would want to. This can be in grades, quality of relationships, or how they approach school (see examples below).

Maxed out means that a student is over-loaded with obligations they've taken on, or the amount of pressure they put on themselves, or expectations that others have for them. Even if they look like they're doing okay from the outside, they may not be.

Just right means that the student feels sufficiently challenged, engaged, and enjoying life – they feel like they're striving for goals (and not getting stuck), but they don't feel overwhelmed by them. Confirm the students understand what these terms mean. Then help the students to rate their performance in each of the domains. It might be helpful to use the dry erase board to demonstrate an example, giving details of what would make a person "x" under-performing instead of just right or maxed out instead of just right. But once the students understand the definitions of each, then they should place an "x" on the Assessment Curve where they think they are in each domain.

(1) Let's take a look at the ***school*** domain. Imagine that Sally is mostly a B student, or could get all B's in her classes, but she's not doing the work, or getting the extra help she needs. So, she's getting a few C's and D's in classes where she used to do better. She might rate herself as under-performing in the school domain. On the other hand, what if Sally is getting straight A's in all of her classes, but she is feeling stressed out about it? For example, she might be neglecting her friends, not participating in after-school activities, and not getting enough sleep at night, she might rate herself as maxed out. It's important to do well in school, but there has to be a balance.

(2) Here are some examples for ***extracurricular activities***: Imagine Sally is a member of many sports teams or other activities in school. She has at least one extracurricular activity almost every day of the week, and struggles to get her homework finished in time for bed during the week. She might rate herself as maxed out in the area of extracurricular activities. On the other hand, if Sally quits activities before trying or refuses to join activities because she is too nervous, then she might be under-"performing." She is *restricting* her activities because of fears or down mood.

(3) Next, let's take a look at the ***friends*** domain. Let's say Sally is having a difficult time making friends and feels too shy to approach new people. As a result, she doesn't have many friends at school and only really has acquaintances. She might rate her performance as underperforming. Again, it's not for outsiders to judge necessarily. Sally, herself, seems unsatisfied

with her number and quality of friendships. Now, let's take a look at the other side of the spectrum. Let's say that Sally has a lot of friends at school (and so she appears successful with friends), but she worries about keeping them all happy. They are always seeking advice, they compete for her time, and she feels obligated to keep them all happy. She neglects her extracurricular activities or schoolwork because she wants to be "a good friend." Sally might rate herself as maxed out in the friends domain.

(4) In the ***family*** domain, imagine that Sally fights with her siblings often, doesn't participate in family activities (e.g. stays in her room during dinner), and resents their questions and curiosity. In an honest moment, she might rate herself as underperforming in the family domain (or at least that the family domain is "unsatisfactory" to her). If instead Sally is taking on a lot of responsibilities at home (e.g. chores and caring for siblings) and it is interfering in other areas (e.g. schoolwork), she might rate herself as maxed out.

c. Setting goals (briefly!): Next to each Domain Curve, students should also start to consider how they might be able to get to the "just right" zone. This should be brief as we'll detail individual goals ladders later. These are just preliminary ideas to get the students thinking, "Where do I want to improve?" and "What would I do to get there?"

(1) How might Sally get to the "just right" zone if she were underperforming in the *school* domain? Since she is not doing as well as she would like to/can do, Sally might try to structure her time better for studying, setting aside study time or saying, "No," to other obligations. She might also seek extra help from a parent, older sibling, or tutor. If she's feeling "maxed out," she might set aside time to do something fun or relaxing. For example, she might schedule an hour or two to hang out with a friend or play video games.

(2) What about the ***extracurricular*** domain? If Sally is underperforming here because she gives up easily or is too nervous to try out, she might start by picking an activity where a friend is already involved. Here, she might feel more comfortable and more likely to stick it out because she has company. On the other hand, if Sally is feeling maxed out and extracurricular activities are interfering with other domains, she might consider dropping some activities for the time being.

(3) If Sally does not have as many ***friends*** as she would like to have, she might start taking initiative to make more friends/improve relationships with old friends (e.g., identify a new person to sit next to at lunch). On the other hand, if Sally feels maxed out with friends, she could talk with her friends and set some limits on when she can be available (because it is "schoolwork or extracurricular time").

(4) Let's think about how Sally might improve her functioning in the ***family*** domain. If Sally is underperforming in the family domain because she is

fighting with siblings, she might brainstorm solutions – like walking away or using the bear hug technique to calm down. On the other hand, if she is "maxed out" because she has too many chores or is watching over her younger siblings, she might speak to her parents to see if some of the responsibilities can be shared during the week, when she has a lot of homework or extracurricular activities.

(5) The goal here isn't to go into these things in as depth as they are explained here. But this gives you an idea of where you are headed – we will be encouraging the student to find *active* ways that they can deal with both underperforming (getting stuck) or feeling maxed out (overcommitted).

3. Activities Tracker: Where am I getting stuck?

a. This is an essential skill for the SKILLS program. In fact, *if you have less than 10 minutes* to complete this exercise, you might consider postponing it to another meeting. The Activity-Mood chart (**WB, p. 18**) gives an example of a girl (Jazmin) keeping track of meaningful events that occurred during the week and giving ratings of her mood (from 0 "The worst mood I've ever felt" to 10 "The best I've ever felt"). The goal of this exercise is to help students see how certain kinds of events and activities trigger certain moods. It also aims to show that if a youth is feeling stuck, some kinds of activities are better at helping them get out of the down mood than others.

b. How to run this exercise:

(1) First, have the students take a look at the Activities Tracker (**WB, p.18**). Introduce it like: "This next exercise is to introduce our first important skill to staying un-stuck. We need to be able to (a) track our moods and (b) know what kinds of situations (events) and activities trigger different moods. Finally, (c) we want to see what helps us get out of bad moods when we're stuck.

Here is an example of a girl (Jazmin) who filled out this calendar for the week. Notice how she tracked different events in each box for each day. Also notice that she made a rating in the smaller box for each time period. Here, she's rating her mood (from 0 "The worst mood I've ever felt" to 10 "The best I've ever felt"). Okay, now everyone take a moment to look over the tracker and see if you can notice any patterns. What things trigger good or bad mood?"

(2) Allow students time to review the calendar to look for any trends or patterns. It can foster engagement if you pair students up and have them identify patterns before sharing with the group.

(3) When the students are done, help the students identify important trends: "Okay, can anyone identify the things that got Jazmin down?" The main goal is to identify specific triggers but also to identify how moods were made worse by periods of low activity, isolation, withdrawal or getting stuck. Allow students to give open-ended thoughts. <u>And then be sure to cover the following topics</u>:

(a) What ***specific events*** triggered strong positive or negative moods for Jazmin? Notice on Tuesday how low Jazmin's mood (2) after the math teacher yelled at her. Also notice that her mood stayed low (2) when she decided to just skip choir practice and go home.

(b) Were there ***types of events*** or activities that triggered changes in positive or negative moods? Does Jazmin feel better or worse around other people (social triggers)? When participating in physical activity? Feeling accomplished in school or sports? Helping out at home or in the community? Notice that Jazmin's mood tends to pick up after social contact (Monday: sitting with friends at lunch), doing something enjoyable (Monday: choir practice), or being rewarded for hard work (Thursday: getting a solo in choir). Also notice that Jazmin's mood decreases when she has negative social experiences (Wednesday: fake girls staring at her), feeling stupid (Tue: Math teacher yelling at her), or feeling overwhelmed (Sat: watching sister). Definitely notice that isolating herself and avoiding doesn't help (Mon: alone in house; Tue: skipped choir, skipped dinner) but felt much better when she made plans (Thur: called friends about solo; Fri: made plans with friends; Sat: went to friend's house).

(c) Did they notice trends ***across the week***? Did they notice a particular time of day that was easier or harder every day of the week? Was there a kind of event that repeated itself every day (a certain class, being on the school bus, lunch time) and contributed to positive or negative mood? Notice Jazmin consistently stressed out when she gets up late and runs for/misses the bus. Notice that certain classes (math) always trigger a down mood.

(d) Did they notice shifts in mood ***within a day***? What kind of events made Jazmin feel positive or negative over the course of a day? Just like in the previous point (across the week), notice how different kinds of activities can *change* a bad mood to good or a good mood to bad in a relatively short period of time.

E. HW: Assign Activities Chart Monitoring

1. The homework activity consists of monitoring their mood in the same way the example of Jazmin did.

   a. Explain how having more awareness of your patterns will help you to understand which situations may lead to feeling stuck.

   b. Start filling out the tracker IN GROUP BEFORE THEY LEAVE. This will help make sure the students understand the assignment and will reduce some barriers to completion. Start by completing the activities/mood for the current day. If it's first thing in the morning, fill out the previous day.

Then, you can brainstorm other problems likely to come up. Some kids may have difficulty remembering to complete the activity-mood tracker, since it is something that needs to be completed multiple times a day for the entire week. Therapists should encourage child to complete as much of the chart as they can remember. If time permits, it may be helpful to brainstorm ways to help the students remember to complete the chart (e.g. filling in a photocopy of the chart that is paper-clipped in their daily planner for school).

F. Session Review

1. If time permits, it is probably best spent on reviewing the activities tracker exercise and making sure students are clear about their practice assignment.

III. Session 2a (Individual Meeting 1)

A. Objectives

1. Build rapport
2. Ensure that student understands the goals of the group
3. Assess student's motivation for treatment and whether the student thinks the group will be helpful
4. Complete Motivational Interviewing (MI) sheet to help increase commitment to treatment (if necessary)

B. If time is tight/priorities

1. This is an individual meeting. Try to arrange a time where you can cover the objectives.

C. Materials needed

1. Manual
2. Handouts (e.g. MI forms)
3. Dry erase markers
4. Camera (recharged), tripod

D. Lesson plan

1. Building rapport and checking in

a. Purpose: Sometimes it's difficult to get to know individuals in a group setting, particularly with anxious and sad youth. The goals for this individual meeting is to get a more personal (develop individual bond) with the kid and to also get a better idea (functional assessment) of where that child's anxiety and/or depression manifests.

b. Spend a few minutes casually talking with student (e.g. ask what child likes to do for fun outside of school; favorite television shows, music, etc.). If you can remember particular things about the child from the "getting acquainted" exercise from session 1, sharing that information and asking more questions about those areas may be helpful in building rapport. "I remember you saying that you play baseball, which position do you play?"

c. Next, transition to the topic of group and individual goals. This group has many goals, some include working towards a group reward by following the basic rules and others are individual goals that the student identifies as meaningful and important to him/her. Group leader should review the basic rules of the group, reiterating the importance of them. Praise the student for doing well with particular rules, engagement, self-disclosure, etc.

2. Assess motivation and commitment to treatment

a. Key point: individual motivation is often difficult to assess in a group format. These individual meetings can help you assess how valuable the student feels the group is and likelihood that they will participate actively/fully in group activities and complete homework.

b. Find out if the student is having any difficulty with any other aspect of the group (e.g. understanding the material being discussed in group). If student is having a hard time, see what can be done to help make it more comfortable/easier for the student (e.g. inviting the student to ask more questions when confused).

c. Assess whether the student thinks group will be helpful or not. Why or why not? Some students may be ambivalent about changing their behavior because it has become routine or seems too difficult. If the student does not seem very motivated or committed, it may be worthwhile to complete the MI sheet together. This form can be found in the back of the book, with the supplemental forms (**WB, pp. 70-71**).

3. Motivational Interviewing (WB, pp. 70-71)

a. NOTE: Leader has discretion of how much of sheet to use. By now, you should have formed some ideas as to how motivated the student is for treatment. If you determine that the motivation is low, it might be helpful to proceed with the questions on the supplemental form.

b. Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a technique used to help individuals explore and resolve uncertainties about therapy that may arise over the course of treatment that can hinder engagement and/or lead to premature termination. By using MI, group leaders increase motivation through encouraging personal awareness and exploration about goals and values. While using this technique, the group leader should remain collaborative and friendly, open to the student's feedback and concerns. The group leader should be empathic, providing support when the student is expressing uncertainties and concern about the group or behavior change. The goal is not to coerce the child or even "sell" them on your goals. Rather, MI is designed to engage the child in the process and understand real potential barriers and attitudes that may impede treatment. Often these are misunderstandings about what the student was expected to do (e.g., how extensive the homework should be). To the extent that that is true, try to clarify. Other times, MI can reveal actual practical barriers (e.g., a child has difficulty completing his homework because he is expected to watch his little siblings for a lengthy time after school). When this happens, the group leader uses problem solving to help generate ideas. Still other times, it helps to simply lay out the pros and cons of one's choices. With these laid out, one can make an informed choice. The child might not always make the choice the group leader would like, but if the child engages a realistic weighing of pro's and con's, we can live with that.

c. Introduce the worksheet as something that can help determine how the group can be helpful when you are feeling confused or unsure about the program. Complete the form together, soliciting the student's thoughts about what he/she believes could interfere with the change plan (e.g. at home, in school, with friends, and/or in

activities). Does the student believe it will be too much work? Is lack of support a problem? Or does the student believe the skills will not work at home? Help the youth think potential problems through, coming up with possible resolutions and ways to overcome these obstacles.

d. Give examples of typical obstacles/objections the child might bring up. Give examples of way to respond.

Obstacles:

1. Too busy. Won't have time to do the homework/practice.
2. I'm not anxious/sad.
3. I'm already participating in other groups.
4. Don't want to miss class.
5. Forget to do homework.
6. Too much effort.
7. Other people won't change/listen (parents, friends) so what's the point?

Ways to respond:

1. Discuss time commitment (relatively small in comparison to real homework).
2. Determine if there are any times child feels stuck, even if it doesn't feel like "anxiety" or "depression." There must be some reasons child was referred or picked for group. Use those situations to help child see the potential benefits. Normalize "getting stuck" and discuss how these are skills that would be useful for most people.
3. Help child prioritize responsibilities. What are the other groups? How much time do they take up? This group is time-limited and will not take the entire school year, as opposed to some other group the child is participating in. Is there another group that child can hold off on participating in?
4. Again, discuss the time-limit to the group. Child will only be missing 10-12 weeks or so. Discuss how work can be made up.
5. Importance of practicing, just like any other skill or activity (e.g., sports, playing an instrument, learning a language). What would happen if you didn't practice playing baseball and only showed up for the games? Discuss the amount of time homework practice should take.
6. Same as above.
7. Discuss what the child has tried in the past. How does he/she know his/her parents/friends won't change? Maybe the group can help him/her think of new solutions to some of the old problems he/she's been struggling with.

IV. Session 3

A. Objectives

1. Review HW: Activities/Mood Chart [10-15 min]
2. Getting Active [7 min]
3. Introduce the Distress Loop [7 min]:
4. Downward Distress Spiral/Tornado [7 min]
5. Assign Distress Loop take-home practice [2 min]

B. Prioritizing: If time is tight

1. Go in order. If you run out of time, you can catch up in the next meeting. The Activities/Mood Chart does take some time, but it's well worth it because it communicates key skills of connecting behaviors and moods.

2. The Distress Spiral probably needs the least explanation because it covers the same concept as the Distress Loop. So, you can skip the personal example using the Distress Spiral if you need.

C. Materials needed

1. Group Leader Manual and workbook
2. Handouts for members
3. Dry erase markers (or pens and flip chart to write on)
4. Camera (recharged), tripod

D. Lesson plan

1. Review HW: Activities/Mood Chart [10-15 min]

a. Check completion of homework. Assign individual and group points.

b. Ask if there are any general questions or if anyone had any general comments about their experience.

c. Ask the group if they noticed any trends in their week like we discussed when we introduced the activities tracker, looking specifically for:

(1) Were there any big ***events*** that ***triggered*** strong positive or negative moods?

(2) Were there ***types*** of events that triggered changes in positive or negative moods? Does being around people help them feel better? Engaging in physical activity? Feeling accomplished in school or sports? Helping out at home or in the community? On the other hand, what types of activities/events trigger negative moods? Being around certain people? Doing certain activities?

(3) Were there any ***trends across the week***? Did they notice a particular time of day that was easier or harder for them? Was there a kind of event that repeated itself every day (a certain class, being on the school bus, lunch time, football practice)?

(4) Did they notice shifts in mood ***within a day***? What kind of events made them feel positive or negative over the course of a day?

d. These topics can be discussed as a group, but be sure to ask at least one volunteer to discuss how they tracked their mood over one day (#4 above) and another to discuss how they tracked their activities/mood at one time (e.g., morning) over the week (#3 above).

e. You can use the "Homework 2 Review" sheet in the workbook to help you organize the group's thoughts, but an open discussion of the students' observations is fine if it covers the above topics.

2. Getting Active [7 min]

a. From the activities/mood chart, hopefully some important themes and trends emerged. The main goal of reviewing the activity/mood chart was to identify specific triggers, but also to identify how moods were made worse by periods of low activity, isolation, withdrawal or getting stuck? Even in "positive" situations, did the student isolate him/herself or not engage fully? In "negative" situations, did the student withdraw, become passive or avoid the situation (get in a funk, get stuck)?

b. This transitions nicely into our first "solution" to getting out of funks: getting active! Sometimes you just need to do something active to get yourself un-stuck. It doesn't have to be complicated, expensive, involved or even "meaningful." Sometimes, when you're down in the dumps, it's best to just get active with simple, fun activities just to get yourself moving again. Use the "Ten things I can do to feel good" worksheet (**WB, p. 22**) to help them identify 10 things each student could do that are simple and free, that they could do any time, and that they know usually make them feel good.

c. After they've taken a few minutes to fill out this worksheet, ask for examples from the group. Ask them if they've done any of these activities recently. If not, why not? Have they noticed feeling down or missing these activities from their lives? If they have done these activities, have they noticed their moods improving afterward?

d. Other times, it's important to involve other people. We don't want to get in the habit of doing all our activity (even if we like the activity) all by ourselves. Depressed and anxious youth tend to find themselves in isolated activities – they feel more comfortable in these situations because it keeps them out of stressful situations. Prolonged periods on the internet, video-gaming, and even texting with friends can feel "active" but over the long-run perpetuate the child's isolation.

e. Have the group fill out the "Finding people you like to do things with or talk to" (**WB, p. 23**). It's important to identify people whom the youth is already associated with so that there is not a huge barrier in initiating any new activities. Pick activities that the student and his/her friends already do naturally. The trick is to access interpersonal resources that are available to the student but that the student isn't taking advantage of.

3. Introduce the Distress Loop [7 min]:

a. Introduce the idea of Triggers. As students identify activities and people they want to spend time with, you (or they) may notice that they also begin to cite barriers that impede their doing these activities. When you ask, "Why haven't you been doing these things as much as you would like?" you may get responses like, "It's too much effort;" "My parents won't let me;" "My friend's not into those things." Anxious and depressed youth will often cite reasons that, at first glance, *sound like* reasonable pragmatic barriers – barriers which they have no control over. While, there are indeed some real pragmatic barriers (money, parental permission, family demands) that exist, it doesn't take much detective work to realize that more often than not, anxious and depressed youth go on a lot of *assumptions* about what they can and can't do, what others want and don't want to do, and how feasible activities are. These assumptions get in the way of their doing the activity that would help their mood. Or, when they're facing a real problem, these assumptions get in the way of acting in a pro-active way that would solve these problems.[1]

b. To help students identify patterns that get them stuck, introduce the ***Sad Loop*** (**WB, p. 24**). In this first general example, discuss how a Trigger (which could be any event, person, place, or thing) can evoke feelings in us. Come up with some examples of triggers that produce sadness. Make use of examples from students' activity/mood trackers. Then ask the group how they tend to "react" when they are sad.[2] If all things go well, students may list a whole bunch of positive, pro-active coping reactions (e.g., talk to a friend, work on the problem, get help from a parent). But also expect students to offer reactions more typical of depressed mood – feeling bad about oneself, keeping things inside, withdrawing, thinking negative thoughts. Basically shutting down. Ask the youth what would happen if they reacted in these depressive ways. It should be evident from the "Sad Loop" that, more often than not, these types of reactions only worsen feelings of

[1] If we were doing cognitive therapy, we might spend a lot of time identifying and analyzing the specific type of assumptions that get in the way of acting. Here, we want to simply focus on the *patterns* that exist between trigger → response → and consequence. This keeps it more straightforward and hopefully gives them a quicker path to doing something about their problem.

[2] This is a good time to highlight a distinction. For conceptual clarity, it might be better to refer to the initial *emotional* response to the trigger as the "response" and the *behavioral* response in the loop as the "reaction." This will help later when we introduce the TRAP acronym where the "R" stands for emotional response, not the behavioral avoidance that follows. In some ways, "reaction," is a better word for the behavioral response because it includes the word, "action," in it!

sadness, discouragement, and loneliness. Highlight the fact that once they're in this loop, it can become a vicious cycle (hence the term, "loop!").

c. The next figure (**WB, p. 25**) describes a concrete example of how this Sad Loop operates. In this example, the initial trigger is a student getting teased. The immediate emotional response is feeling sad or alone. If the child *chooses to avoid the problem*, what kind of behavioral reactions can we expect? Keeping to him/herself, being self-critical, hiding out from everyone. What's the typical outcome of this kind of reaction? Does it change the situation? Solve the problem? Make the student feel better? More often than not, it leads back to more sad feelings.

d. The ***Anxiety Loops*** on WB pp. 26-27 demonstrate a similar loop. Anxious responses to scary events often lead to freezing, escape, or paralyzing worry. This perpetuates the cycle. The example on **WB, p. 27** shows that the (normal) response to studying for a hard test is to feel nervous. But if one *chooses to avoid the problem* by procrastinating, half-heartedly studying, or purposely trying to forget about it, then, it only makes the problem worse and likely leads to more anxiety.

e. ***Anger*** can work the same way. The behavioral reaction to feeling angry or annoyed may not feel like avoidance or escape. In fact, when people feel angry or annoyed, they often lash out, argue or actively push people away. These feel very active to the person and look "active" to the outsider. But are they really approaching their problem head-on? A lot of the times, when a child yells, lashes out, or gets angry, they often have a quick burst of anger… and then storms off. This hardly solves the problem. It doesn't communicate what they wanted to get across and it doesn't give anyone a chance to solve any problems. The person on the receiving side of the outburst certainly isn't going to be any more receptive to helping the youth or trying to actively problem solve when they're being yelled at. So, quick bursts of anger and escape don't solve anything. Even in cases where a youth engages in prolonged conflict, even something that leads to aggression, there's no active problem-solving. Getting into a fight doesn't address the original problem; it simply puts more distance between you and the other person. In many ways, it's the easy way out! It's often easier yelling or fighting than it is to figure out multiple ways to solve a problem. In this way, it is a clear example of avoidance.

f. Understanding anger as "***avoidance***" is sometimes hard for kids to understand. We usually emphasize that anger is "the easy way out," because it may feel good in the moment but it doesn't change anything about the original problem. It's the short-term solution to what's usually a long-term problem. The example on **WB, p. 29** illustrates this point. A sister doing annoying things (e.g., talking loudly on the phone while you're watching TV) can lead to angry feelings. The quickest/easiest solution is to yell at her, hit her or sit and stew about how annoying she is. But these don't solve the initial problem of her talking loudly.

g. Right now, we don't brainstorm solutions to these problems in the examples. We simply want to get everyone on the same page that avoidance (or easy solutions) are often short-term "non-solutions."

h. The "Getting Stuck" worksheet on **WB, p. 30** is then used to have students think up a situation that made them either sad, nervous or angry during the week. Have them follow the loop filling in each box with (1) the trigger (what happened), (2) emotional response (how they felt), (3) an evaluation of whether they reacted with avoidance (or anger), (4) a description of their behavioral reaction (what they did), and (5) an evaluation of whether it made the problem better or worse? In the end, did they go right to the beginning – back to their original sad/nervous/angry mood? Note areas where there's misunderstanding.

4. Downward Distress Spiral/Tornado [7 min]:

a. The Downward Distress Spiral (or tornado) gives an alternate visual to the "Distress Loop," but it conveys the same message. A (1) Trigger elicits a (2) feeling, which leads to a (3) behavioral reaction. Was the reaction an example of avoidance or anger? If so, what kind of impact did that have on your feelings then (4)? Then how did you act (5)? And what was the final impact on your feelings. Again, this just conveys that the Distress Loop just keeps going down a downward spiral if one keeps using avoidance or anger to respond to feelings. If time permits, have the group fill out another example using the Distress Spiral.

E. Take-Home Practice Assignment

1. Downward Distress Spiral [2 min]:

2. Students are to fill in the Downward Distress Spiral with a personal example that occurs over the week. Any example where they are sad, nervous, or angry will do.

F. Session Review

1. Go around the room allowing students to share something they learned in session. What did you learn that might be helpful?

2. Have the students take turns identifying an appropriate time when they can use one of the new skills.

V. Session 4: Identify Goals I want to Achieve

A. Objectives

1. Review HW: personalized Distress Spiral [5 min]
2. Define Avoidance and anger [5 min]
3. Introduce the TRAP acronym and explain how our distress loops are maintained by avoidance and other easy way outs (e.g., anger) [15 min]:
4. Introduce Goals ladder: [15 min]
5. Assign TRAP take-home practice [5 min]

B. Prioritizing: If time is tight

1. You always want to review homework to show its importance.
2. Define avoidance, see if there are any instances of avoidance in the examples from homework review.
3. Introduce TRAP acronym and go over at least one student's example.
4. The Goals Ladder can be sacrificed here because you will be meeting individually with students to generate individual goals. If necessary, just introduce the idea of the Goals Ladder and explain that you will review in individual meetings.

C. Materials needed

1. Group Leader Manual and workbook
2. Handouts for members
3. Dry erase markers (or pens and flip chart to write on)
4. Camera (recharged), tripod

D. Lesson plan

1. Review HW: personalized Distress Spiral [5 min]

a. Check completion of homework. Assign individual and group points as appropriate.

b. Ask if there are any general questions or if anyone had any general comments about their experience.

c. Ask for at least one volunteer to discuss their example. Look for instances where avoidance contributed to more distress or more avoidance (shutting down, withdrawal). Alternatively, look for instances where anger ended up shutting people out or led you to do things the student regretted. The goal here is not to problem solve yet! It's fine if group members offer solutions, but don't spend much

time debating them here. The goal is to help develop awareness about the role of avoidance. “What got in the way of you solving that problem?” “What made things worse?”

2. Define Avoidance [5 min, WB, p. 34]

a. This is probably the most important definition of the entire program. And probably the most difficult! Most people – even teens – have a general sense of what “avoidance” is, but they also might be confusing it for a lot of things. What we want to communicate is that it’s those things you do against your better judgment.

b. Technical definition: *Avoidance* = any behavior where the outcome is that you have escaped or avoided ahead of time something (person, situation, activity) that is distressing or stressful.

c. Layman’s definition: “Avoidance is staying away from a situation, or keeping clear of a person, place or situation because it makes you feel nervous, sad, upset, angry, or distressed. You can avoid something ahead of time (e.g., telling your mom you’re sick to avoid going to school) or after you’ve already found yourself in a sticky situation (e.g., leaving a birthday party early because you’re not fitting in). People “avoid” situations even when they think it would be better to handle it straight on because it is easier to avoid. The problem is that most of the time avoiding things doesn’t solve the original problem. We want to identify those times and figure out if there’s something better to do.”

d. Define anger: You can use your judgment about whether anger is a common reaction amongst your group. If so, you can define anger as such: “Anger is almost the exact opposite. It’s when you use snap judgment or do something you might regret later simply because it may feel like the easiest thing to do. If you look at it this way, it’s not so different from avoidance. It’s one thing to express anger when you feel something is truly unfair, but a lot of the times, we get angry because we can’t figure out how to say what we want or ask for what we want. In those times, getting angry is the easiest way out. We want to identify those times and figure out if there’s something better to do.”

“But remember our experiment in our first meeting? When you’re truly angry, it makes sense to step away, because it’s hard to make good decisions when you’re angry. However, *after you’ve had a chance to cool down*, it makes sense to try to re-approach the situation and try and solve the original problem.”

e. Examples of Avoidance:

(1) Telling your mom you’re sick to avoid going to school. Here, you may have a big assignment due or have to talk in class, so you’re feeling anxious. You may actually be feeling sick, but it’s hard to tease apart from anxiety. Avoiding school seems like the easiest way out. But it doesn’t fix the problem. (You’ll have to do the assignment eventually!)

(2) You're at a party. You're not fitting in, so you stay to yourself, hang out by yourself, and spend the whole time texting someone who's not at the party. Here, you're ignoring everything around you because it seems too hard to get involved. Texting your friend keeps you from having to put yourself out there, but then you never know if you could've made new friends!

(3) You got into a fight with a friend. The last thing they said really hurt your feelings. At first, it makes sense to walk away and let things cool down. But afterwards, thoughts may begin to go through your head, both sad, "Maybe I really am a bad friend," "Maybe I don't listen;" and mad, "Why doesn't she apologize?" "Why do I always have to give in?" Instead of calling her to work things out, you hole yourself up in your bedroom and write angry or sad notes in your journal.

3. TRAP [15 min]: Define TRAP acronym and practice with personal example.

a. The goal of the TRAP acronym is to teach students how to do a functional assessment of the situations that get them stuck. By functional assessment, all we mean is that to understand problematic behavior, you have to get a good sense of the situations that trigger a behavior, and then what happens after that behavior. In behavioral therapy, we use a simple system, called the "A→B→C" method, where A = Antecedent (trigger), B = Behavior (how someone responds to the trigger), and C = Consequences (what happens after the behavior). The goal of ABC is to develop awareness of an individual's tricky situations and how they tend to respond. We then highlight how their typical responses lead to undesirable consequences. For example, a teen who is (A) offended by a friend, and (B) withdraws from the friend and never tells them why they're mad, may end up (C) losing that friend or becoming more distant. Seems simple, but people (adults and teens!) aren't always (usually) very aware of some of the most obvious consequences to their behavior.

b. In SKILLS, we decided to communicate the ABC method adapting the "TRAP" acronym used in adult BA therapy (Addis & Martell, 2004). We feel like this acronym may be easier to remember and reminds students that we are trying to identify times they get stuck (i.e., "traps"). The acronym covers the same principles as the ABC acronym but focuses on Avoidant (and angry) Responses. First, explain the TRAP acronym using the definitions on **WB, p. 35**. Highlight the following points:

(1) **T: Trigger:** This can include any people, places, or events that trigger sad, anxious, or angry feelings. One easy way to identify triggers is actually to work backwards. "Where have I gotten into trouble?" And then work backwards to see what started it all. With increased practice students will be able to start seeing the triggers as soon as they pop up!

Sometimes, a negative feeling can act like a trigger all by itself. You might be sitting there, doing your homework, thinking about how hard it is, and you feel hopeless. Feeling hopeless might act like a trigger and lead someone to feel greater hopelessness and subsequently avoid their homework more. In these cases, we usually find it easier to label the specific event or activity as the trigger. In this case, it would be either "doing homework" or "thinking about how hard it is." This is just more concrete and easier for most teens to understand. However, some very cognitive and emotionally in-tune teens feel more comfortable talking about their feelings. In these cases you can talk about the feeling of hopeless being the starting point.

(2) **R: Response**: After a trigger presents itself, a person has an automatic emotional response. This can be sadness, fear, anger, nervousness, "worry." It's important to emphasize that the "R" refers to emotional response. Most often, teens will skip right over their emotional response and go right to the behavioral response (which is step 3). However, it's important for students to recognize how important that emotional response is – how someone is feeling in the moment is usually what motivates them to avoid or act angrily. It's essentially the "emotional engine" that's under the hood of the "stuck loop." You don't always see it, but it keeps that loop running! If students skip over this step, they miss an important opportunity to figure out why they avoid things and are more likely to keep falling into the same old traps.

(3) **AP: Avoidance/Angry Pattern**: By this point, students will start to catch on, especially after group leaders have defined and given examples of avoidance earlier on in the meeting. This should almost be an "unveiling" that everyone is in on. Group leaders can say, "Okay, now we've been talking a lot about avoidance. Now if we're looking for Triggers and emotional Responses that get us into trouble, what's the final step? That's right, we think that what gets you stuck (and keeps you stuck) is avoiding problems after you've been triggered to feel sad or anxious."

Certainly, if students need more discussion of avoidance, provide it here. This is a key concept. If you haven't already, you can discuss how anger can be an alternate form of avoidance. It doesn't seem like avoidance because acting angrily can be so "in your face" and seem pro-active. But in most cases, it's meant to trade in a short-term victory for long-term solutions. Angry actions shut down relationships and problem-solving even if you feel victorious in the immediate present.

c. After explaining basic definitions, use the "stuck loop" on **WB, p. 36** to show how TRAP produces a circular loop that doesn't go anywhere. In the example, "keeping to myself" may seem easiest, but it leads the student right back to "feeling alone/sad."

d. If it fits the group, lead the students through an example of TRAP using angry feelings, **WB, p. 37.** Here, avoidance can lead to prolonged hurt feelings. A second type of "avoidance" might be indirect acting out and angry feelings like spreading rumors, or excluding one's friend. While these seem "active," they really

serve to avoid the initial argument and prevent resolving hurt feelings. Such retaliation also breeds additional retaliation, perpetuating the angry loop.

e. Next, use the "**TRAP Flowchart**" on **WB, p. 38** to help students identify a personal example of where they've fallen into a trap. Introduce the topic: "Okay, now it's your turn to identify your personal "traps." Think about a time over the past week where you might have gotten stuck. Can you all think of one? Good. Now look at the definitions in your workbook and try to figure out each step in the TRAP flowchart. What was the Trigger? How did you emotionally respond (what was your automatic response)? How did you avoid (or get angry)?"

Select a couple of volunteers to describe their TRAP Flowchart and highlight where the students got the concepts right and correct misconceptions. Don't forget to give lots of praise for sharing!

4. Goals ladder: [15 min, WB, p. 39]

a. At this point, you've likely run out of time. If you have time, you can introduce the Goals Ladder and tell students you'll discuss this more in individual meetings (which the group-leaders will arrange with students according to school policies).

b. The purpose of the Goals Ladder is simple. Now that students have identified individual TRAPs and are beginning to understand how avoidance affects them, we now want to get them back "on track." To do that, we like students to pick goals that they can work towards. So, instead of focusing on just figuring out times they feel sad/anxious and eradicating feelings of sadness/anxiety, we feel that the way to feel good about oneself is to identify meaningful goals and work towards them. Often times, people feel like you need to "feel good" before you can act. We actually believe in the opposite. To feel good, you have to act first. Good feelings will follow. We have tried to send this consistent message in meeting 1 (see "Getting Active" and "Busting your Ruts with Practice") and in this meeting by focusing on avoidance. Coming up with meaningful goals can help someone push through negative feelings to accomplish something even when they don't feel like it. We'll return to this concept when we introduce "TRAC" skills.

c. First, introduce the goal of generating a goals list: "Now that you've gotten a good sense of where you get stuck, let's figure out where you want to be instead."

d. Second, define good goals and give some examples: "Before we brainstorm our individual goals, let's go over what makes a good goal. A good goal will be meaningful to you, but will also be concrete and simple.

(1) By concrete, we mean that it should be clear what you want. Saying you want to be "happy" is nice, but it's not very clear what would have to change to make you happy. What would you want to actually see in your life if you were happy – would you have a better relationship with your parents? Would you be better at Math? Would you join an after-school club you've always wanted to? Let's start by trying to be specific.

(2) By simple, we mean that you should be able to break down your goal into small steps. That way you know where to start. If your goal is to "be a better student," it's harder to know where to start than to say, "I want to do my math homework everyday." So, let's try to think as simple as possible.

e. Next, have group members (privately) generate goals they might want to work on. If you have time, you can have some members volunteer their goals and discuss how much their goals conform to the above ideals.

f. Let students know you will be arranging individual meetings with each group member and they should continue working on their individual goals.

E. Assign Practice Assignment

1. TRAP Worksheet [5 min]:
2. Students are to identify 4 TRAPs they encounter over the week and break down each situation into Trigger, Response, and Avoidant/Anger Patterns.

F. Session Review

1. Group Leaders review main lessons. Highlight different ways that avoidance manifests itself (i.e., how the kids avoid in response to triggers).

G. Arrange Individual Student Meetings

1. Between meeting 4 and 5, group leaders should meet individually with each group member. Leaders can arrange the meetings to occur before, during, or after school hours depending on school policy and availability of students and leaders. Goals and format of these individual meetings are described next.

VI. Session 4a (Individual Meeting 2)

A. Objectives

1. Check in with student about progress and/or difficulties
2. Help student to identify personalized and meaningful goals

B. If time is tight/priorities

1. This is an individual meeting. Try to arrange a time where you can cover the objectives.

C. Materials needed

1. Manual
2. Goals Ladder handout
3. Dry erase markers
4. Camera (recharged), tripod

D. Lesson plan

1. Check in

a. Discuss student's progress in group thus far. Acknowledge areas where student does well. Praise student for continued efforts and particular areas where improvements may have been made. "I noticed that you are sharing more personal experiences in group. You're doing a great job practicing, just the way we talked about it in our first meeting." Identify areas where the student may be having new or continued difficulty, discuss obstacles that may be hindering improvement, and come up with new solutions if necessary. "It seems like you're still having a hard time remembering to do your homework, and writing a reminder in your academic daily planner didn't help. What do you think is getting in the way? What other ways can we help you remember to do it?"

2. Identifying goals

a. Group leader should refine goal ladder with students individually to make sure they are personalized and meaningful. Group leader should also obtain a good background on why these goals are important to the youth.

b. The goals identified by the student should be personalized and meaningful goals that can help promote lasting, positive behavioral changes. It is important that the goals be small and attainable to allow for easier mastery, which will increase motivation and provide the student with a sense of accomplishment. Group leader should help the student break down long-term goals into smaller steps. For example, if the student is anxious about meeting new people and has the long-term goal to make new friends, some small goals might include: introducing

yourself to someone new, starting a conversation with someone new, asking someone to sit with you at lunch or asking if you can sit with another person, etc.

c. Qualities of good goals:

(1) Set Small, Attainable Goals
(2) Work very Gradually toward long-term goals
(3) Build in rewards for following through
(4) Record progress on a regular basis
(5) Consider including others in the activity

d. The student should be encouraged to work gradually toward long-term goals. This means practice! Group leaders should discuss the importance of practicing a smaller goal until the student is comfortable and confident before moving on to the next step along the road towards the long-term goal.

e. Rewards should be built into the goals, to make it more likely the student will follow through with them. Rewards can provide incentive for practicing and continued efforts. Students should be encouraged to reward themselves in some way for any efforts or progress. [What would help them take the first step? Is there some way to reward yourself for trying?]

f. Progress should be recorded on a daily basis. Keeping track of progress helps to increase self-awareness, keep kids focused on their goals, and holds kids accountable for their actions. It helps bring about awareness regarding motivating factors and barriers to obtaining goals. The Tracking Sheet for Behavioral Challenges, which can be found in the sessions 6-12 of the workbook, can be used to help kids record their progress. This is a good time to go over the sheet with the student, explaining why it is important for people to record their progress. Group leader can explain that just like we used Jazmin's Activity-Mood chart to help us identify patterns, recording our progress on a daily basis can help us learn more about what factors might motivate or discourage us. Group leader might want to use other real-life examples (e.g. report cards, athlete statistics, etc.). Group leaders might want to use (and encourage students to use) blank copies of the Goals ladder (**WB, p. 39**) to periodically re-evaluate progress on each student's goals.

g. Group therapist should discuss with student different ways others can be included in the practice activities. For example, how could the student practice some of these skills outside of school?

VII. Session 5: Look for Ways to Achieve Your Goals

A. Objectives

1. Review HW: TRAP worksheet. [10 min]
2. Introduce the TRAC acronym and explain how we can make alternative choices that can get us out of our traps. [10 min]
3. Practice generating and choosing alternative choices. [10 min]
4. Assign TRAC take-home practice [5 min]

B. Prioritizing: If time is tight

1. Reviewing HW is important, but you will also have opportunities to use personal examples later in session. If necessary, you may check completion quickly, get general impressions, and then move on to the daily lessons.
2. Defining TRAC and Making Choices is the heart of the lesson, so you will want to cover this.
3. The TRAC Flowchart can be covered quickly if necessary because group members will get practice in their HW. However, this lesson is so important that if you can't finish this in one meeting, consider going over it in the next meeting.

C. Materials needed

1. Manual
2. Handouts
3. Dry erase markers
4. Camera (recharged), tripod

D. Lesson plan

1. Review HW: Personalized TRAP worksheet [10 min]

a. Check completion of homework. Assign individual and group points as appropriate.

b. Ask if there are any general questions or if anyone had any general comments about their experience.

c. Ask for at least one volunteer to discuss their example. Look for any confusion in identifying Triggers or in distinguishing between emotional Responses and behavioral Avoidance. When you discuss Avoidance Pattern, check to make sure students are understanding avoidance and (shutting down, withdrawal, escape, procrastination) and not just any old negative response – we want to hone students into avoidance. Although the goal was not to problem solve yet, you can segue into today's meeting by saying, "Did you consider what else you could do instead of avoiding?"

2. TRAC [10 min]: Define TRAC acronym and practice with personal example.

a. The goal of the TRAC acronym is to teach students how to take the next step in reaching their goals. Students have learned how to do a functional assessment (TRAP) of their problems and have identified goals they want to achieve (Goals Ladder). Now, we teach them an approach to reaching their goals through problem solving and active choices.

b. In SKILLS, we adapted the "TRAC" acronym used in adult BA therapy (Addis & Martell, 2004) to remind students how to get "back on track" and out of their traps. The "T" (Trigger) and "R" (Response) refers to the same steps in the TRAP acronym. What we want students to do now is to replace their Avoidant Patterns by making **Alternative Choices** (or **Active Choices**). Consistent with our overarching approach, we want to promote choices that are ***active*** and encourage ***pro-active*** solutions to deal with problems instead of avoidant solutions. In fact, you could replace "Alternative Choices" with "Active Choices," or "Approach Choices," or "Active Coping." Whatever fits best for your group. You can introduce the topic exactly as above: "Now that we've figured out where your TRAPs are, and you know what you want to accomplish, let's figure out how you approach your problem – how can you make different choices?" Introduce the **TRAC** acronym using the definitions on **WB, p. 42**. Highlight the following points:

(1) **T: Trigger:** Refers to the same triggers students identified in TRAP.

(2) **R: Response**: Refers to the same emotional responses identified in TRAP.

(3) **AC: Alternative Choices**: We've now seen how avoiding problems or reacting impulsively can just keep the "stuck loop" going. How do we break out of our TRAPs and get back on TRAC? Instead of avoiding problems, we look to get active. When we're sad and feel like giving up, this may mean pushing ourselves to get up and do the thing that feels impossible. When we're anxious and fear failure, it means approaching whatever it is that's scaring us. Sometimes, just getting through it can make us feel more confident about the next time. When we're angry, sometimes taking a deep breath, taking a break, and considering your other options is the best way to doing something constructive, instead of what just feels right in the moment.

c. After explaining basic definitions, use the "stuck loop" (**WB, pp. 43-44**) to demonstrate what kind of active choices can break the circular loop that keeps us in TRAPs. In the example, this time the student uses an active approach like "talking to a friend," "telling a teacher," or "standing up to the [other kids]." Have the group brainstorm how the outcome can be different when the student tries something active. Does it break the student in the example out of his/her stuck loop?

3. Making Choices: Your choices make a difference! [10 min]

a. The next activity helps group members think through the potential consequences of picking different choices. The table on **WB, p. 45** ("Making Choices") describes

three potential triggers, representing tricky social, school and family situations. The second column provides three different possible choices, some that represent avoidant responses (motivated by anxious, sad, or angry feelings), and others that represent active, approach actions. Read through each situation and each possible choice. Then, solicit feedback from the group: "What would happen if you chose Choice 1?" Have the group brainstorm possible outcomes if they chose Choice 1. "How about Choice 2? Choice 3?" Each example has at least one pro-active choice. Alternatively, you can have the students break up into small groups to discuss which choice makes sense and report back to the group.

b. After the group generates likely outcomes for each choice, group leaders should make sure to emphasize the benefits of making pro-active, approach choices and how they can keep members from getting into stuck loops. Several important benefits that come from approach behaviors include: (1) Active solutions actually can change the initial problem (as opposed to avoidance which rarely changes anything); (2) Active solutions block all the negative "side-effects" that come with avoidant solutions (e.g., feeling bad about yourself because you didn't do anything; feeling hopeless about the situation; having other people think you don't care); (3) Even if things don't work out exactly how you want, being active makes it more clear to other people what you want; and (4) You never know what will happen if you just put yourself in the right situation. For example, in the example on **WB, p. 45,** let's say the student chooses an active choice (e.g., standing up for him/herself), but the bullies don't care. In fact, they insult the student more. But what if another student who is watching gets fed up with these bullies and stands up for the student being picked on. Now that student learns that they might have a friend, or at least that other people might stand up for what's right. These are valuable lessons that one might never learn if the student just ran the other way and never said anything. These are just some of the positive benefits that come with choosing active versus passive/avoidant solutions. There are many others, but these usually make the point.

4. TRAC Flowchart: [10 min]

a. The next activity helps group members brainstorm alternative choices and use pro's and con's listing to pick a choice. Use the "**TRAC Flowchart**" on **WB, p. 46** to help students try to work their way out of a personal TRAP. Introduce the topic: "Okay, you remember how we used this Flowchart to identify our personal TRAPs. Now we want to brainstorm alternative ways to handle those traps. Think of a situation where you felt stuck this week (or use one from your homework). Fill in the first two boxes. Now, let's brainstorm Alternative Choices. Think out both good and bad – both passive and active. Don't judge them now. Let's throw it all out on the table first." Let students generate alternate choices on their own for a few minutes.

Select a couple of volunteers to describe their TRAC Flowchart and to describe the Alternative Choices they generated. Have the whole group discuss the pro's and con's of each Alternative Choice. Which ones are active? Which ones are

passive/avoidant? Invite the group to brainstorm additional Alternative Choices. Repeat the pro's and con's process. Now have the group come to some consensus about which Choice the member should choose. Have the group member commit to trying that choice over the upcoming week to test out how it works. Don't forget to give lots of praise for sharing!

(1) Examples of Active Choices when sad:
- (a) Typical Avoidant Patterns: Isolate, withdraw, ruminate, blame self and others, become irritable.
- (b) Active choices to counter AP's:
- Do something you enjoy – strictly for fun: computer games, sports, art
- Doing something fun to distract yourself: listen to music, watch TV, call friends, talk to parents, take a walk outside, exercise, play with pet, eat favorite food.
- Do something gratifying that builds mastery/self-efficacy (makes you feel good about yourself): sports, art, any extracurricular activity
- Do something to help others
- Surround yourself with people: go out, see friends, go to extracurricular groups.
- Ask for help and support from others

(2) Examples of Approach Behaviors when anxious:
- (a) Typical Avoidant Patterns: avoidance, escape, un-assertive behaviors.
- (b) Active choices to counter AP's:
- Take one step at a time. If you're nervous about something, take the smallest step toward that thing. For example, talk to someone new at school, raise your hand in class, tell a joke to a group of friends.
- Stay for as long as you can. If you're nervous about a situation, go for a little while. Stay as long as you can.
- Push yourself to do something you never have. Take mental notes. Did you make it through? Were people friendly? Did anything unexpectedly good happen while you were there?

(3) Examples of Alternative Choices when angry:
- (a) Typical Angry Patterns: Shout, sarcasm, negativity, physical aggression, name-calling.
- (b) Active choices to counter AP's:
- Take a breath, step away, distract yourself from the anger.
- Instead of feeding into it, simply step away. If you just let it drop for a little while, the angry feelings will subside.
- If you need to, get the support you need. Vent to a friend, talk to a teacher or parent, write your frustrations down.
- When ready, try to resolve the problem: write out your solution, ask friends for suggestions, take small steps to resolve the problem. Resist the temptation to feed the anger (e.g., think up vengeful solutions, plot rumors with friends)! Be ready to make multiple tries to resolve the situation.

5. Extra help in Problem Solving:

a. The key process described in the TRAC Flowchart is one of problem solving. Generating alternative choices, weighing the pro's and con's, choosing one to try, is the process of problem solving. We have found that this process can be described within the context of the TRAC Flowchart relatively easily. Students often understand how to do this once group leaders prompt them for pro's and con's. However, there is a more formal system that group leaders can use to teach problem solving if they require more instruction. Students identify specific solutions by employing problem-solving "STEPS" (Say what the problem is, Think up solutions, Evaluate the solutions, Pick one, See if it worked), developed for individual child depression treatments (Weisz et al., 1997). A STEPS worksheet is included in the Appendix of the SKILLS workbook that can be used at the group leaders' discretion.

E. Take-Home Practice Assignment

1. TRAC worksheet [5 min]:

2. Students are to identify 2 TRAPs they encounter over the week and instead, group members should generate Alternative Choices that they can try.

VIII. Session 6: Lasting Change – Practicing Approach Behaviors and Overcoming Barriers

A. Objectives

1. Review HW: TRAC worksheet. [5 min]
2. Describe what exposures/behavioral practice and describe how they're done. [10 min]
3. Practice a simple exposure. [10 min]
4. Assign TRAC take-home practice. [5 min]

B. Prioritizing: If time is tight

1. Your key mission is to explain exposures and to demonstrate what one will look like. You should be able to accomplish this in 20-25 minutes.
2. If time permits, discuss how individual Goals Ladders can be tested in exposure exercises. You can then plan out the exposures for next meeting.

C. Materials needed

1. Manual
2. Handouts
3. Dry erase markers
4. Camera (recharged), tripod

D. Lesson plan

1. Review HW: Personalized TRAC worksheet [5 min]

a. Check completion of homework. Assign individual and group points as appropriate. Ask if there are any general questions or if anyone had any general comments about their experience.

b. Ask for at least one volunteer to discuss their example. Check that the student brainstormed several possible solutions and ask what made them pick the choice they did (how did they weigh the pro's and con's). Then, check whether they followed through with actually doing the option they chose. How did it work? Even if it didn't solve the initial problem, did it have positive secondary effects?

2. Exposures: Conceptual Background (for group leaders)

a. Now that group members have learned how to identify their TRAPs, have identified personalized goals, and have learned how to brainstorm alternative choices, it is now time to put all these skills in practice. We do this with a technique called "*in vivo* exposures." In vivo exposures are behavioral experiments or practice sessions designed to help youth approach a situation that is difficult so

that they can learn to (a) tolerate the distress they feel when they're in that situation, (b) practice skills that will help navigate that situation, and (c) learn that they are more competent in that situation than they believed. The term, "in vivo," means "in life." And that's what we try to do as much as possible. We try to make these behavioral experiments as close to real life as possible, and in fact, when possible, we conduct the experiments in real-life situations.

b. Exposure tasks will be conducted in a hierarchical fashion such that members attempt easier tasks before they attempt more difficult tasks. The situations will be based on the students' Goal Ladders they completed after Meeting 4, and they will rank order them in order of difficulty to start with the easiest ones first. One student is usually the target for each exposure, but the whole group gets to play a supportive role. But sometimes you can organize an exposure that targets multiple student concerns at once. You'd like to aim to have two students do an exposure each meeting, so that students will have multiple chances to be the target over the course of group. Early exposures often take the form of role plays. This helps members get the feel for how exposures work and allows everyone to practice in well-controlled environments (e.g., your usual group meeting room). However, whenever possible, it is encouraged that the group look for ways to practice skills outside the usual meeting room. If you're at school, try making use of the other kids, the administrative offices, teachers, even hall monitors. But we'll get back to this – it'll make more sense after we describe how exposures are done. For now, the basic thing to know is that exposures are active, behavioral practice. For example, if a student has a significant fear of public speaking, and they usually call in sick on days when they have to talk in class, we would create an "exposure" in the group where that member would give a speech in front of the other group members as a way to "approach" their fears rather than avoid. In the process of this behavioral practice, several things happen:

(1) Habituation: Youth learn to tolerate the distress they feel when they're in the challenging situation. Unpleasant feelings are the primary thing that prompts people to avoid difficult situations. If they get to practice "sticking with it" in a supportive, safe environment, they'll find it easier to handle the distress when they're in the real-life situation. You can communicate this concept to students with terms like, "handling, managing, tolerating, or accepting distress," "riding the waves," "letting things roll off your back," etc.

(2) Practice Skills: One reason people avoid difficult situations is because they don't feel like they know what to do in those situations (e.g., they don't know how to start a conversation at a party). Practicing these situations will give them a chance to "try out" different skills (e.g., different ways to start and maintain a conversation) and figure out which ones work best for them.

(3) Increased Self-efficacy: Another outcome of active practice is that usually one learns that they were a lot more competent in their feared situation than they originally believed. The feeling of confidence they receive by successfully

navigated a previously feared/avoided situation can help them approach it the next time.

(4) Positive and Constructive Feedback: Positive feedback from fellow group members builds one's confidence. Constructive, objective feedback also helps to identify individual ways in which the student is perpetuating TRAPs by either avoiding or getting angry.

(5) "The Pleasant Surprise:" Sometimes the most rewarding outcomes are those that we aren't expecting. Youth go into feared/distressing situations expecting so many catastrophic outcomes, that they can't imagine anything going right. They avoid the situation because the "reward" doesn't seem to match the risk. However, it's impossible for any of us, particularly youth who are prone to anxiety or depressed mood, to anticipate all the possible positive outcomes that await us in any given situation. The truth is, none of us know exactly what will happen in any given situation. You could go to a party expecting to not know anyone and to be left in a corner all by yourself drinking punch. What you couldn't know is that they'd be playing your favorite game and everyone would be asking you to show them how. Or maybe someone else is new to town and you spend the whole time talking to this one other kid and realize you have so much in common. None of these pleasant surprises could've happened if you decided to let your fears get the better of you and you just stayed home. A famous sportscaster always says, "That's why they play the games." Peter Lewinsohn (Lewinsohn & Libet, 1972; Lewinsohn & Graf, 1973) referred to this as taking advantage of "opportunities for reinforcement found in natural environments." However you convey this concept, the idea is the same – half the contest is simply putting yourself in the game.

3. Introduce Exposures/Behavioral Practice to the group [10 min]

a. You can use the following script to describe exposures: "Now that you have learned how to identify your TRAPs, identified personalized goals, and learned how to brainstorm alternative choices, it is now time to put all these skills in practice. We do this with actual behavioral practice. Sometimes we call this, 'exposures,' because we're going to now start exposing you to the things that are difficult for you."

b. "The main goal of this group has been to get you more active and to keep you out of your individual TRAPs. Some TRAPs may have been easy to avoid. (*Give some examples from the group of members who have addressed TRAPs and increased their activity and approach behavior*). For a variety of reasons, others may seem harder. (*Give some examples from group where members keep getting stuck in their TRAPs)*. For example, "Bill," you've been having difficulty trying out for baseball because you don't think you're good enough. In this next series of meetings, we're going to explore more about what makes getting started difficult. And most important, we're going to practice *doing it!*

c. “We’ll do two different kinds of exposure here. At first, we will do exposures as a group right here in our meeting room. Each week, two participants will choose a situation that is difficult for them and we will role play that situation in group. We will set up specific goals that you want to accomplish during that role play and we will use our acronyms, TRAP and TRAC, to help us identify what would make that task difficult. For example, if one of you had a significant fear of public speaking, we would create an “exposure” where that person would give a speech in front of everyone else to practice being brave in the face of their fears. Later, we’ll try to make the exposures even more real. If possible, we’ll move OUTSIDE our meeting room. We’ll choose challenging situations that require us to leave here and actually accomplish those activities in situations that come as CLOSE AS POSSIBLE to those situations in real life. For example, if one of you has trouble talking to a particular teacher, maybe we can arrange for you to open up about your concerns with that teacher and try out some of the skills we have practiced so far. In both the group exposures and outside exposures, we will start with easier situations and build up to more challenging situations. This way we can build upon skills that we learn in the previous sessions. These exposures are meant to challenge you – but they are also the most direct way to get out of those individual TRAPs that have been holding you back.”

d. “Why are we doing this? (Here, group leaders can describe some of the benefits and intended goals of exposure exercises as described above: Habituation, Skills Practice, Self-Efficacy, Feedback, Pleasant Surprises. Habituation is sometimes more difficult to explain, so we give an example of how to explain it here:). One of the main reasons we are keen on practicing is because approaching fearful situations is difficult. As we’ve talked about, avoidance is usually the easiest way out, but it usually doesn’t help. Why is that? Well, let’s look at the picture on **WB, p. 49** in the workbook **[Sticking it Out: Getting over the Hump]** and use an example. Take a look here. Imagine on this horizontal line (the x axis), we have time. And on the vertical line (y axis), we have some measure of distress, say 0 – 100, with 100 being the worst distress.

e. Now, let’s talk about a situation where you’re really upset. Say, you have to go to some class you really don’t want to. You always feel stupid in this class and the teacher always calls you out. So, you try to get out of it and go to the nurses office whenever you can. Now imagine you’re in the class right before this hated class, and you’re thinking about how much you hate this class. What do you think will happen with your distress rating? It’ll go higher right? And as you get closer to that class, what will happen? It’ll get higher, right? Now, what would happen if you forced yourself to class and just sat there and let the anxiety run wild? What would happen over time? Any guesses? [Solicit suggestions]. We actually know because of lot of science has studied this. When you’re body is put in front of something it thinks is a threat – it has an initial spike – just like you see in the picture. But we also know the body will bring itself down. Your body has a natural defense mechanism – it’s called, “equilibrium.” Your body always wants to get back to neutral. It’s like a car in the red forcing itself to get back to under the red line. So, your body will naturally bring itself back to baseline and you’ll feel naturally more

relaxed over time. Your body simply can't stay stressed indefinitely! We call this the "worry hill" (or habituation curve for advanced kids). Stressful things get us trudging up the worry hill, but there's always a downside to the hill, and your body wants to go up, and then down the hill.

f. Okay, so now let's go back to the beginning. Imagine you're here right before your class [at the start of the curve] and you start getting upset. You start thinking more and more about it and you start working up the worry hill – right close to your peak in distress. Right at this "x" here [point to "x" on the figure]. What would happen if you just skipped out and went to the nurse? [Solicit guesses from the group]. It would shoot down right? [Draw a straight line right from the "x" to the bottom]. So, what do you learn? We learn that escaping/avoiding class makes you feel better, right? That makes sense! So, all this time you've been avoiding, it's not some weird quirk with you. It's actually biological. Your body is making a very smart choice. However, what else happens? What do we fail to learn? [Solicit answers]. That's right, we never learn that if we just stuck it out, that things would get better naturally on their own. And so we teach ourselves that the only way out of tough situations is to escape. We never learn that we can get through it. And we also miss out on tons of opportunities. Something good may be on the other side of the hill, but you'd never know. So, the best bet is to push through and just get over the hump. By the way, this shape never changes – it's biological. So, no matter how many times you practice, you'll always get a little spike. But what we hope for is that, with repeated practice, the peak gets lower and lower, so that this worry hill gets smaller and smaller with time.

g. As added demonstration, review **WB, p. 50**, to discuss what opportunities each teen in the photos might miss. In the "shy teen" example, the more one shies away from social situations, the more chances one misses to meet people she might like (and who like her). In the "angry teen" example, walking away in the short-term might be helpful, and keep her from saying something she did not mean. However, if the teen stays angry and never tries to reconcile things, she may lose those friends forever.

4. Demonstrate How Exposures will be Set Up [15 min]

a. Group leaders demonstrate the set-up and format of a group exposure (see Step-By-Step Set-Up below). Leaders choose a mock situation that is relevant to the group simply to demonstrate how exposures will be set-up, what roles people will play, and how the exposure will be done. If there's time, practice a "practice run" using the example you use here.

b. Here's the basic set-up for an exposure:

Step-by-Step Guide to Doing Exposures: **Demonstration Version**

Take a look at the "Set-up for Behavioral Challenge" worksheet on **WB, p. 51.** Use the worksheet to work through the points below. Notice that it's just a detailed way to walk students through the TRAP and TRAC acronyms that should now be familiar to them.

1. **Select a Trigger**: In this demonstration, it's best if the group leaders come up with a generic situation that seems applicable to a number of students in the group. From experience, it's easiest to demonstrate exposures using an anxiety-based trigger. Common exposures might be giving a speech in front of a class, sitting down next to an unfamiliar group at lunch, going to a party where you don't know anyone else. These are useful because these situations are familiar to most people and they elicit anxiety in most of us. They also allow you to assign one student as the "lead" role player while others play supporting roles (the kids in the class or at the lunch table or at the party). For this demonstration, you might throw out 2-3 ideas to the group and see which one they would want to role play. But try to stay away from a personal situation just yet. You don't want the first exposure to personally identify one kid as the target.

1a. **Set the Scene:** To make the situation as real as possible, you want to get as many details about how this scene (trigger, situation) would play out. Even in this demonstration where you're picking the trigger, you want the group to be active in giving you ideas about how it would occur in their lives. So, say you pick the "Going to a party where I don't know anyone" situation. You want to then, get input from the group to tell you what kind of party this would be (birthday, graduation, Halloween), why the student would be there (it's a cousin's party, your parents arranged it, the kid invited everyone in the class), and what the party would be like (everyone is just sitting around talking, there's music and singing/dancing, there are games or sports).

2. **Response:** Solicit from the group what kind of emotional responses they would expect to feel in the situation (party).

3. **Distress Rating:** Have students each think about how distressing this situation would be for each of them from 0 "not at all" to 10 "extremely distressed."

4. **TRAP (Usual Avoidance Pattern):** Have the students brainstorm the typical actions they would take in this situation that fall into the Avoidance Pattern category. Would they hang out in a corner by themselves and not interact with anyone? Would they spend the whole time texting another friend? Would they even spend more time helping the adults set up the party instead of hanging out with the kids? Would they participate in the activities, but only half-heartedly, not really saying anything just hoping it will end? Have the group come up with at least three Avoidance Patterns.

5. **TRAC (New Alternative/Active Choices):** Next have students brainstorm alternative actions they could try. Could they come up with come up with conversation topics to push themselves to start a conversation? Could they push

themselves to participate in the game/sport even when they've never played it before (in fact, even ask someone for instructions for how to play)? Could they make sure they made comments throughout the activity to show how engaged they were to the other kids? Have the group come up with at least three Alternative Choices, matched to the Avoidance Plans.

5a. **Identify Pro's and Con's:** This isn't listed on the worksheet, but it's important that the group brainstorm and weigh the pro's and con's of the alternative choices. You can list these on the right side of the column that identifies Alternative Choices.

6. **Outline Goals:** In an experiment like this, it's always helpful to identify concrete, observable goals that the lead student is aiming to accomplish. Use this section to break down the identified TRACS into simple, concrete behaviors that everyone can observe. For example, when going to a party with unfamiliar people, you may have three specific goals: (1) you want to approach three different people; (2) you want to use three different opening lines (e.g., "How do you know [the guest of honor]?" "Do you go to [name of your school]?"; make some comment about the party, like "This cake is good"); and (3) you ask some question about the other kid you're talking to. Remember not to pick goals that will seem overwhelming to the group members. Choosing goals that require long, involved steps will distract the group away from the main mission – to identify specific, accomplishable behavioral goals that can be observed by others. Notice here, we do not create goals that call for some *ideal success* that we can't control. We would ***never*** make the goal: "make a friend." We can't control whether or not another kid will like the target child. All we can control is how the target child behaves. The rest is up to chance, though, if you behave in a positive and proactive manner, over time, chances are things will work out for that child.

Identifying concrete goals is helpful for two reasons. First, the goals should be consistent with the Alternative Choices. By outlining concrete, simple, and specific behaviors that the student can enact, it gives them a very concrete "road map" on what they should do. Having a generic, abstract goal like, "be positive," doesn't give any clear directions on what to do when you're at a party. Having concrete goals like, "smile, make eye contact, ask questions," gives better instructions on how to behave in a way that will set you up for likely success. The second utility to concrete goals is that it gives a basis for positive and constructive feedback from the group. If the group knows what the student's concrete goals are, they can tell them if they have reached their goals or not. This is important both to giving positive and constructive feedback. Often, anxious/depressed youth will be unrealistically negative and minimize their successes. However, if they list observable outcomes they want to achieve and they actually achieve them (!), then, group members can give them this positive feedback and counter this unrealistic negativity. It also gives group members a basis for giving constructive feedback. If the lead target is thinking they are enacting an Alternative Choice, but they are really falling into old TRAPs, the group can give them this feedback.

The group leader solicits specific, concrete behavioral goals and writes these on the blackboard so people can see them.

7. **Now do the Exposure!** Now, that everyone knows what the goal of the exposure is, you can actually do it. In this demonstration exposure, group leaders should solicit one volunteer to be the "lead student." This will be the student who is trying to implement a TRAC and avoid their TRAPs. In the above example, they will play the role of the youth going to a party where they don't know anyone. Next, group leaders solicit volunteers to play other roles in the situation (e.g., other kids at the party, parents). The group discusses how each person should act given their role (e.g., whether the other kids at the party should be welcoming or stand-offish). Once the situation is set-up and roles describe, the exposure begins. Not every group member has to play a role *in* the role play. Some can be "observers" on the outside checking if the lead student is meeting their objective goals.

   Exposures can be quick (3-4 minutes) or last a good 10-15 minutes depending on your goals. Quick exposures can be repeated several times in order to have a lead student get initial feedback, try it again, get additional feedback, and try it again. It's not uncommon for the group to repeat the same exposure 3-4 times before moving on to the next exposure (with a different lead student in a new situation).

   Group leaders also can play a number of roles in an exposure. One could play more of an outside observer role in which s/he is tracking accomplishment of observable goals. The other leader can play more of a facilitating role – kind of like a director. This one sets the scene, assigns roles, yells "action!" and "cut!" This leader can also be acting as a "coping coach" to the lead student. The group leader can whisper in the student's ear and remind them of what TRAPs they want to avoid and what TRACs they had agreed to try. The second group leader could meanwhile focus on directing the other role players – how should they be reacting based on the lead student's performance? Should they be getting tougher? More sympathetic?

8. **Result (How did it work?):** The leaders solicit general experience from the group – how did the exposure work? Was it like they expected? How would they do it differently? Like described above, if there were some easy-to-modify technical issues that interfered with the exposure, feel free to re-do the exposure. Next, get the lead student's experience of the exposure. Did s/he fall into any TRAPs? Were they able to enact their Alternative Choices? What was easy about it? What made it difficult? What would they do differently next time?

8a. **Distress Ratings:** At the end of the exposure, ask the lead student to re-rate their Distress rating on a 0 to 10 scale. Also, ask them to rate how Difficult it was for them to enact the Alternative Choices from 0 "Not Difficult at all" to 10 "Extremely Difficult." Also rate how Helpful the Alternate Choice was from 0 "Not Helpful at all" to 10 "Extremely Helpful."

8b. **Group Feedback**: Constructive and supportive feedback is solicited regarding the specific goals defined at the beginning. Did the lead student achieve their behavioral goals? Did they fall into any TRAPs? Did they enact their Alternative Choices? In general, did the lead student seem comfortable? The group explores what made accomplishing certain goals difficult. The group also

provides feedback about the lead student's evaluation of their own performance. Is the lead student being overly harsh? The group trouble shoots alternate ways to meet their goals next time.

9. **Take Home Message:** At the end of the exposure, it's good for the lead student (with the help of other group members) to generate a "Take Home Message." This helps consolidate the experience so the lead student can draw upon the experience in the future. So, for example, if the lead student realized via the exposure that "Other people are as nervous as me," or that "People don't expect you to say something genius, you just have to say something to show you're interested," then the Take Home Message might be: "Just be yourself – the rest will work itself out," or "Everyone's just as nervous as you," or "You lose nothing by giving it a try." It doesn't matter really what the message is as long as it helps the student remember how being pro-active is the better place to start (even if it doesn't produce perfect results every time!).

10. **Example of Completed Worksheet** (next page):

Set-up for Behavioral Challenge

1. **Trigger:** (What situation set you off?)
   Going to a party where I don't know anyone.

2. **Response** (Emotional): *Nervous, afraid, down on myself*

3. **Distress Rating** (0 "none" – 10 "extremely distressed"): *8*

4. **Usual Avoidance/Anger Pattern: TRAP**
   (What do you usually do in this situation?)

   a. *Don't decide if I'm going until the last minute. Don't let anyone know if I'm going or not.*

   b. *Get down on myself thinking no one would notice if I'm not there.*

   c. *If I go, I'd just hang out by myself and not talk to anyone.*

5. **New Alternative (Active) Choices: TRAC**
   (What else can you try?)

   a. *RSVP right away (even if I'm undecided). Tell a friend that I'm going.*

   Pros and Cons? Friends will get excited for me to be there. We can get excited together. If I RSVP, then I'm committed.

   b. *Don't let your thoughts stop you from doing something you want to do. Go to the party and see what happens.*

   Pros and Cons? I'll never know unless I try. Maybe my thoughts are telling me something.

   c. *Think of who will be there. Go with them. Make a point to talk to two new people.*

   Pros and Cons? Going with someone will make it easier. And forcing myself to talk with new people will let me not rely on that one person.

6. **Achievable Behavioral Goals: (What are you trying to achieve?)**
Let the host know I'm coming. Talk to two new people when I'm there. Plan a couple of conversation topics.

7. **Now try one of your TRACs!**
A. Let the host know I'm coming. C. prepare to talk to 2 new people at party.

8. **Result: (How did the NEW Alternative Choice work?)**
   Good. The host told me that Jake, my good friend, was going, so I could go with him. And then, having a couple of conversation topics prepared helped break the ice.

   Distress Rating After (0-10): *5*

   Difficulty (0-10): *7*

   Helpfulness (0-10): *7*

9. **Take Home Message:** (What have you learned from this experience?)
   I was thinking way too much about it. You just have to do it.

Tracking Sheet for Behavioral Challenges

Goal 1:

Tell host you're coming to the party.

Accomplished?
(more than once?)

Comments:

Goal 2:

Prepare two conversation topics.

Accomplished?

Comments:

Goal 3:

Ask Jake if I can go with him.

Accomplished?

Comments:

Goal 4:

Accomplished?

Comments:

5. Plan for future exposures:

a. Now that students have practiced one exposure, you can brainstorm with the group ideas for future exposures. Have them think about their own Goals Ladders and have them think about how they'd make that into their own exposures.

b. Ask for volunteers for the next group meeting. Who wants to be the first to do an exposure?

E. Take-Home Practice Assignment

1. TRAP-TRAC worksheet [5 min]:

2. Students are to identify 2 TRAPs they encounter over the week and instead, generate Alternative Choices that they can try.

F. Session Review

1. Group Leaders review the main lessons, particularly issues around the goal and execution of "exposures." If time permits, solicit ideas for future exposures.

IX. Sessions 7 – 9: Behavioral Practice (Exposures)

Note about sessions 7 – 9. These sessions take a similar form in each session and so are described in just one outline below. Group leaders should take the same approach to each session and focus on implementing exposure practice. In fact, *if a group leader wanted to extend the number of meetings in a group*, she or he can do so by adding additional exposure sessions like this one. Adding sessions keeps the overall structure in place but provides more active practice for group members.

A. Objectives

1. Review HW: TRAP – TRAC worksheet. [5 min]
2. Practice two exposures:
    a. Exposure prep 1 [5 min]
    b. Exposure implementation 1 [10 min]
    c. Exposure prep 2 [5 min]
    d. Exposure implementation 2 [10 min]
3. Plan exposures for next meeting.
4. Assign TRAP-TRAC take-home practice [5 min]

B. Prioritizing: If time is tight

1. Your key mission is to get as much practice as possible. Jump into exposures as quickly as possible. If necessary, handle the homework quickly. Try to get at least two different exposures completed with two different lead students. Try to involve different members in different roles.

2. You can then plan out the exposures for next meeting.

C. Materials needed

1. Manual
2. Handouts
3. Dry erase markers
4. Camera (recharged), tripod

D. Lesson plan

1. Review HW: Personalized TRAP – TRAC worksheet [5 min]

a. Check completion of homework. Assign individual and group points as appropriate. Ask if there are any general questions or if anyone had any general comments about their experience.

b. Ask for at least one volunteer to discuss their example. Check that the student brainstormed several possible solutions and ask what made them pick the choice they did (how did they weigh the pro's and con's). Then, check whether they followed through with actually doing the option they chose. How did it work? Even if it didn't solve the initial problem, did it have positive secondary effects?

2. Set up and Complete Exposure 1 [15 min]

a. To leave enough time, jump right into exposures as quickly as possible. If necessary handle the homework quickly. Group leaders solicit a volunteer to be the "lead student" for the first exposure. Leaders use the "Set-up for Behavioral Challenge" worksheet and walk through the "Step-by-Step Guide to Doing Exposures."

Step-by-Step Guide to Doing Exposures:

Take a look at the "Set-up for Behavioral Challenge" worksheet in the workbook (**WB, p. 55**). Use the worksheet to work through the points below. Notice that it's just a detailed way to walk students through the TRAP and TRAC acronyms that should now be familiar to them.

1. **Select a Trigger**: Solicit a volunteer to be the lead student. Throughout each of these steps, always solicit ideas and gather details from the lead student first. This is meant to target his/her individual trigger. However, involving the other group members will be essential to keep the group engaged and to make the exposure more generalizable. After you have secured a volunteer, help the lead student identify a situation that could be used for an exposure. The ideal way to select a situation would be to have the student look at his "Goals Ladder" and pick a situation. In the earlier exposures, start with something that's lower on the list (a situation that provokes less anxiety, is less distressing, or less challenging). In later group meetings when the student has gained some experience in exposures and developed confidence, you can choose harder situations on the list. Help the student think out which situation it would be best to start with: is there a goal ladder item that is currently an important issue to him/her? Is there something they've been wanting to overcome for a while? Sometimes, looking at the most recent events that the student disclosed on the homework (TRAP-TRAC worksheet) can give ideas.

1a. **Set the Scene:** To make the situation as real as possible, you want to get as many details about how this scene (trigger, situation) would play out. Now that you're using a personal situation, you want the lead student to give as many details about how this event would occur (or has occurred) in the real world. To keep the group involved, solicit input from them and see if others experience similar situations. This can help normalize the experience for the lead student and make the exposure more detail-rich and engaging to the whole group.

2. **Response:** Ask the lead student what emotional response she/he would have. How would others in the group respond? Similar? Differently?

3. **Distress Rating:** Have students each think about how distressing this situation would be for each of them from 0 "not at all" to 10 "extremely distressed."

4. **TRAP (Usual Avoidance Pattern):** Have the students brainstorm the typical actions they would take in this situation that fall into the Avoidance Pattern category. It is ideal if the lead student is providing many/most of the avoidance patterns, but it can also be nice to get examples from the entire group. This helps normalize struggles the lead student has and also ensures the group stays involved. Have the group come up with at least three Avoidance Patterns.

5. **TRAC (New Alternative Choices):** Next have students brainstorm alternative actions they could try. Here it is useful to have the whole group involved. This ensures creative solutions. Have the group come up with at least three Alternative Choices, matched to the Avoidance Plans.

5a. **Identify Pro's and Con's:** This isn't listed on the worksheet, but it's important that the group brainstorm and weigh the pro's and con's of the alternative choices. This is also a time when a group is useful because the different viewpoints can help ensure a balanced weighing of pro's and con's. You can list these on the right side of the column that identifies Alternative Choices.

6. **Outline Goals:** As described in session 6 (also see examples in appendix), it's helpful to identify concrete, observable goals that the lead student is aiming to accomplish. Use this section to break down the identified TRACS into simple, concrete behaviors that everyone can observe. Remember not to pick goals that will seem overwhelming to the group members. Choosing goals that require long, involved steps will distract the group away from the main mission – to identify specific, accomplishable behavioral goals that can be observed by others. Notice here, we do not create goals that call for some *ideal success* that we can't control. All we can control is how the target child behaves. The rest is up to chance, though, if you behave in a positive and proactive manner, over time, chances are things will work out for that child. But outlining concrete, simple, and specific behaviors gives them a very concrete "road map" on what they should do. It also gives a basis for positive and constructive feedback from the group.

The group leader solicits specific, concrete behavioral goals and writes these on the whiteboard so people can see them.

7. **Now do the Exposure!** Now, that everyone knows what the goal of the exposure is, you can actually do it. The lead student will play the central role. Next, group leaders and the lead student solicit volunteers to play other roles in the situation. The group discusses how each person should act given their role. Once the situation is set-up and roles described, the exposure begins. Not every group member has to play a role *in* the role play. Some can be "observers" on the outside checking if the lead student is meeting their objective goals.

Just as a reminder: Exposures can be quick (3-4 minutes) or last a good 10-15 minutes depending on your goals. Quick exposures can be repeated several times in order to have a lead student get initial feedback, try it again, get additional feedback, and try it again. It's not uncommon for the group to repeat the same exposure 3-4 times before moving on to the next exposure (with a different lead student in a new situation).

Group leaders also can play a number of roles in an exposure. One could play more of an outside observer role in which s/he is tracking accomplishment of observable goals. The other leader can play more of a facilitating role – kind of like a director. This one sets the scene, assigns roles, yells "action!" and "cut!" This leader can also be acting as a "coping coach" to the lead student. The group leader can whisper in the student's ear and remind them of what TRAPs they want to avoid and what TRACs they had agreed to try. The second group leader could meanwhile focus on directing the other role players – how should they be reacting based on the lead student's performance? Should they be getting tougher? More sympathetic?

8. **Result (How did it work?):** The leaders solicit general experience from the group – how did the exposure work? Was it like they expected? How would they do it differently? Like described above, if there were some easy-to-modify technical issues that interfered with the exposure, feel free to re-do the exposure. Next, get the lead student's experience of the exposure. Did s/he fall into any TRAPs? Were they able to enact their Alternative Choices? What was easy about it? What made it difficult? What would they do differently next time?

8a. **Distress Ratings:** At the end of the exposure, ask the lead student to re-rate their Distress rating on a 0 to 10 scale. Also, ask them to rate how Difficult it was for them to enact the Alternative Choices from 0 "Not Difficult at all" to 10 "Extremely Difficult." Also rate how Helpful the Alternate Choice was from 0 "Not Helpful at all" to 10 "Extremely Helpful."

8b. **Group Feedback**: Constructive and supportive feedback is solicited regarding the specific goals defined at the beginning. Did the lead student achieve their behavioral goals? Did they fall into any TRAPs? Did they enact their Alternative Choices? In general, did the lead student seem comfortable? The group explores what made accomplishing certain goals difficult. The group also provides feedback about the lead student's evaluation of their own performance. Is the lead student being overly harsh? The group trouble shoots alternate ways to meet their goals next time.

9. **Take Home Message:** At the end of the exposure, it's good for the lead student (with the help of other group members) to generate a "Take Home Message." This helps consolidate the experience so the lead student can draw upon the experience in the future.

B. **Set up and Complete Exposure 2** [15 minutes].
1. Repeat the steps to conduct Exposure 1.
2. Sometimes it's helpful to pick a topic/trigger that's complementary to the first exposure. That way the group doesn't have to "shift gears" too much. You can work more quickly when the exposures represent "variations on a theme." For example, switching from a social anxiety exposure (e.g., going to a party) to a social performance exposure (e.g., answering questions in class; doing a dance performance in front of others). When you take this approach, some of the ideas about TRAPs and TRACs are already primed, so the set-up process can move along quicker.

C. **Plan for future exposures**:
1. At the conclusion of the second exposure, get some general feedback about how the exposures went today. Were they relevant? Was it easy to picture yourself in the situation? Were there any technical/logistical problems that could be resolved?
2. Next, solicit volunteers for next meeting. If the volunteers already have ideas for an exposure, get a sense of what they are so you can plan ahead for them. If they don't have ideas yet, ask the students to get ready over the week by thinking of a trigger/situation and how they would do the exposure.

D. Take-Home Practice Assignment
1. TRAP-TRAC worksheet [5 min]:
2. Students are to identify 2 TRAPs they encounter over the week and instead, generate Alternative Choices that they can try.

Group Exposure Examples:
(See sample exposure worksheets in Appendix)
[Editor's note: we're still working on this!]

A. Social anxiety/embarrassment
1. Attending a party where you really don't know anyone.
2. Giving a presentation
3. Participating in class: asking a question, answering questions, group projects
4. Making plans with a classmate you've never hung out with outside of school.

B. Bullies/assertiveness:
1. Getting bothered on the school bus
2. Kids bothering you in the lunch room
3. Dealing with peer pressure (e.g., asked to give your homework, money)
4. Dealing with bullies
5. Dealing with cyber-bullying, rumors being spread
6. Feeling excluded from groups
7. Dealing with cliques at school

C. Fight with friend
1. Approaching friend after an argument.
2. Practicing active listening and problem solving.
3. Asking for an apology; granting an apology when called for.

D. Family:
1. Too many responsibilities
2. Fight with family
3. Asking for more privileges
4. Asking for permission to do something special (stay out late, go to a party)
5. Dealing with parents arguing
6. Dealing with parent separation/divorce
7. Don't like parent's new boyfriend or girlfriend.

E. School:
1. Poor grades,
2. Bad relationship with teacher,
3. Taking on too much
4. Falling behind in homework
5. Low motivation to do work
6. Dealing with procrastination: feeling stuck because you want to be perfect or don't know where to start.

F. Editor's note. We're building a list of more, hopefully with more details about how to set the scene, what roles people would play, what the goal would be, and fill out the set-up sheet.

X. Session 10

A. Objectives

1. Review HW: TRAP/TRAC sheet
2. Reassess functional domains
3. Assess what helped and how gains can be maintained
4. Discuss relapse prevention and plan for the future

B. If time is tight/priorities

1. It's the last meeting, so try and wrap up any loose ends.

C. Materials needed

1. Manual
2. Handouts
3. Dry erase markers
4. Camera (recharged), tripod

D. Lesson plan

1. Review HW: Personalized TRAP – TRAC worksheet [5 min]

a. Check completion of homework. Assign individual and group points as appropriate. Ask if there are any general questions or if anyone had any general comments about their experience.

b. Ask for at least one volunteer to discuss their example. Check that the student brainstormed several possible solutions and ask what made them pick the choice they did (how did they weigh the pro's and con's). Then, check whether they followed through with actually doing the option they chose. How did it work? Even if it didn't solve the initial problem, did it have positive secondary effects?

2. Reassess functional domains

a. The point of reassessing functional domains is to determine the degree to which improvements have been made across important life domains. This will help with planning for relapse prevention.

b. In order to do this, you should use the forms on **WB, pp. 67-70**. First, remind the students what under-performing, just right, and maxed out mean. Then help the students to rate their performance in each of the domains. After they have rated their performance, you might have them look back to their earlier ratings (**WB, pp. 15-17**) to see how they rated their performance in each domain in the first meeting. You're going to want to have each student *evaluate any progress they*

have made from the beginning of the group and to *identify what actions they took to help make this change*.

c. You can remind them of the early examples we used to explain this concept. "Let's take a look at the ***school*** domain. Remember when we imagined that Sally was underperforming in school. She was getting a few C's and D's in class, even though she was mostly a B student. Sally was able to get some extra help in areas where she was having the most difficulty, structure her time better so that she was studying/doing homework with little to no interruptions, and keep track of her homework assignments in her agenda. In rating herself now, she would say that she is in the "just right" zone. On the other hand, when we imagined that Sally was getting straight A's in all of her classes, but she was feeling stressed out, we decided she was maxed out. To balance herself, Sally cut back on her extracurricular activities – she kept dance and the service club, but cut out the school newspaper because it demanded work every day. She then scheduled short homework breaks and made a plan to hang out with her friends after school at least once per week. Now she would rate herself as "just right."

d. Now, let the students evaluate their own progress in each domain and then share with the group. Point out their progress and how far they have come. Praise them for their hard work.

e. Next, have the group members think about the actions they took to help them get closer to the just right zone. They might have tried a few different solutions, but maybe only certain ones really seemed to have an impact.

f. Have the students think about what they want to continue working on. Help them to think of a plan for maintaining and improving their functioning in each of the domains. Maybe they can continue the techniques they have been using or use a technique that was successful in one domain to improve functioning in another domain.

g. Help the students think of ways they can continue to monitor their progress. Perhaps, they can make copies of the extra forms at the back of the book or keep a journal.

h. Discuss expectations for future coping.

(1) "Even though you have these skills and have been doing a good job of using them, it's important to remember that everyone gets stuck sometimes." Describe differences between "lapse," "relapse," and "collapse." Everyone will have momentary lapses (bad days). Sometimes, we even have what we can call a "relapse" (several bad days in a row). In these cases, remember your SKILLS and review your workbook. If you feel like you're having a complete "collapse," where you feel like the skills aren't helping you, talk to a parent or other helpful adult who can help guide you.

(2) "It's also important to keep in mind that these skills take practice, so keep yourself moving and working on your skills."

(3) “Remember the top 3 things that really seemed to help (e.g. calling a friend, basketball practice, keeping a daily planner).

3. Review Key Concepts

a. Review TRAP: Remind group members how they can use TRAP to identify key triggers and how avoidance gets them (and keeps them) stuck.

b. Review TRAC: Remind group members how they can use TRAC to brainstorm alternative (particularly active) choices that can help get them un-stuck. Even when the solutions don’t get the students everything they want, being pro-active gets them closer to solving the original problem.

c. Keep track of your goals – it’s helpful to keep re-assessing your goals periodically. This will help you know if you’re on track or not. You might print out a couple of blank goal ladders for group members to take with them so that they can adjust their goals and monitor them in the future.

4. Party: End-of-Group Celebration

a. Group leaders should have graduation certificates made out for each student. It is also nice to plan to say a few nice words about each student as the certificates are being handed out.

XI. Appendix: Extra forms

Below, we provide a description of the extra forms provided in the Workbook Appendix, starting on WB, p. 72.

A. Motivational Interviewing (**WB, pp. 72-73)**

1. See Session 2a (Individual Meeting 1) for background.

2. Group leader can use the GBAT Change Plan Worksheet if it will help structure the conversation.

B. Keeping Active Worksheets (**WB, pp. 74-76).**

1. Three sheets are provided to help with planning pleasant activity schedules: Activity scheduling, planning social activities, and joining organized groups (Weisz et al., 2005).

C. Problem-solving STEPS (**WB, p. 77)**

1. If group members are having trouble understanding problem solving using TRAC, it might be helpful to introduce STEPS (Weisz et al., 2005). Just like TRAC, STEPS is an acronym used to guide youth through problem solving. It involves:

   S - Saying what the problem is
   T - Thinking of solutions
   E - Examining each one (entails weighing the pros and cons of what might happen if you were to try each solution)
   P - Picking one and trying it out
   S - Seeing if it worked (If it worked, great. If not, then pick another solution from the list).

D. Assertiveness Module (WB, pp. 78-79)

1. Objectives

a. Define assertiveness
b. Explain the importance of being assertive and discuss communication styles
c. Distinguish between being aggressive and being assertive
d. Teach specific assertiveness skills
e. Practice scenarios

2. If time is tight/priorities

3. Materials needed

a. Manual
b. Handouts
c. Dry erase markers
d. Camera (recharged), tripod

4. Lesson plan

a. Activity 1:

(1) Rationale for assertiveness training: Our experience with kids who have anxiety or depression problems has been that many are lacking assertiveness skills. As we have stated throughout this manual, avoiding problems or reacting impulsively can keep kids stuck in a TRAP, and this holds true for communication problems. There are three main communication styles: aggressive (being reactive), passive (being avoidant), and assertive (being proactive). If we are not expressing ourselves in an assertive way, then we are likely communicating in a way that is either passive or aggressive, which can negatively impact our relationships and cause unnecessary stress. We encourage group leaders to spend an exposure session on teaching assertiveness skills, but again, this is dependent on the needs of each individual group.

(2) Define assertiveness: Assertiveness is a way of communicating that allows us to *express our feelings and rights* while still *respecting the feelings and rights of others*. Assertiveness allows us to do what is important to us, stick up for ourselves in an honest and comfortable way, and communicate with others respectfully and effectively. Many people are nervous about being assertive because they worry about hurting the feelings of others and causing conflict in their relationships. Sometimes people believe they do not have the right to be assertive. Others lack the skills needed to express themselves effectively. Assertiveness is a skill that can be learned and, with practice, it can boost self-confidence and promote positive relationships.

(a) Some “rights” that might be important to highlight:
i. The right to ask for more information when you don’t understand
ii. The right to make mistakes

iii. The right to ask for help
iv. The right to be listened to and taken seriously
v. The right to say no to a request and not feel bad or guilty about it
vi. The right to be treated with respect
vii. The right to ask for what you want or need

(b) *Aggressive Style*: People who tend to communicate in an aggressive way may get their needs met, but typically through negative interactions, such as arguments or fights with others. They may be described as "pushy" or "bossy." They may lose friends or have difficulty making friends and not understand that their behavior is interfering with developing relationships.

(c) *Passive Style*: When people act in a passive manner, it usually means that in some way their needs and feelings are being unmet or unrecognized. They try to avoid conflict with others and in doing so also avoid communicating their feelings. People who are passive tend to be described as "shy" and are thought of as "pushovers." Over time, passive people may feel victimized and become angry. This can eventually lead to an angry outburst (aggressiveness), problems with relationships and more passivity.

(3) *Distinguish between aggressiveness and assertiveness*: Sometimes aggressiveness is confused as assertiveness. People also mistakenly think being assertive has to do with "getting their way." Having an aggressive communication style often involves being disrespectful, demeaning, or spiteful towards others. People with aggressive communications styles will do what they can to get their way without thinking of the feelings or viewpoints of others. In contrast, people who are assertive take into account the needs and viewpoints of others. They communicate respectfully and are open to compromise.

(4) *How to be assertive*: Assertiveness involves both verbal and nonverbal communication.

a) Make sure your body language is expressing confidence
b) Stand up straight but remain relaxed
c) Make eye contact
d) Don't make assumptions
e) Listen to the other person and try to understand their viewpoints
f) Be honest, clear, and direct
g) Talk in a firm but friendly tone of voice
h) Use "I" messages when possible - "I am/feel ____ about/when ____ because _____."

(5) Below are some sample situations with different response styles. These examples can be practiced and role-played in session. Group leader should introduce one scenario at a time and elicit typical responses the kids might have to the situation. Group leaders can then have kids vote on which option

they think fits with what they now know about assertiveness. Then, students can take turns acting out the situation, presenting their best assertive self (both nonverbally and verbally).

(a) Your friend borrows your favorite (book, game, shirt) and returns it damaged.
   i. Aggressive: “You’re such an idiot! You better give me money for this!”
   ii. Passive: “It’s okay. I’ll just buy a new one.”
   iii. Assertive: “I am upset that you ruined my book. I think it would only be fair for you to get me another one.”

(b) Your brother/sister keeps talking to you while you’re trying to finish your homework
   i. Aggressive: “Can’t you see I’m busy!” “You’re so annoying. Leave me alone!”
   ii. Passive: Don’t say anything. Allow him/her to keep distracting you.
   iii. Assertive: “I have a hard time concentrating on my work when you talk to me. Can this wait until I’m done?”

(c) You’re teacher assigns a group project and one of the group members isn’t doing their part of the project.
   i. Aggressive: “You haven’t done anything! You’re such a selfish person! You better do some work, or else!”
   ii. Passive: Do the work for the other person.
   iii. Assertive: “I am upset that you haven’t done any of the work because it’s not fair for others to do your work. If you’re having a hard time, we should figure out a way to resolve this.”

(d) Your teacher blames you for something you didn’t do
   i. Aggressive: “You always blame me!”
   ii. Passive: Apologize for something you didn’t do.
   iii. Assertive: “I am upset that I was blamed for something I didn’t do. I want to make sure you know it wasn’t me.”

(e) An older kid calls you names and makes fun of you when you walk down the hall
   i. Aggressive: “You’re a jerk! You better leave me alone!”
   ii. Passive: Just take it.
   iii. Assertive: First, walk away. If it doesn’t stop, stand up for yourself – “I don’t like the way you’re talking to me. If you don’t stop, I’m going to tell the principal and my parents.” If it persists, take action and tell someone!

E. Relaxation

1. **Rationale for using relaxation techniques:**

a. Relaxation training is a skill commonly taught to youth dealing with anxiety and depression. People experiencing anxiety often have an increase in physiological arousal, such as increased heart rate, respiration rate, and raised body temperature. This can also occur in depressed youth, particularly when the depression is manifested as irritability and the youth experiences angry outbursts. The reaction to stress and anxiety that causes these physiological changes is known as the "fight-or-flight" response. While research has shown that using relaxation techniques can result in a reduction in physiological symptoms, some researchers are concerned that engaging in relaxation techniques can be a form of avoidance. Although there are uncertainties about whether or not relaxation is actually beneficial for treating anxiety and depression, it is a skill that some youth find helpful. They also tend to enjoy it and seem to remember it easily. We did not include relaxation as one of the main skills in this program because our emphasis is on taking a more active approach to dealing with difficulties stemming from anxiety and depression.

2. Types of relaxation strategies:

a. There are different forms of relaxation including deep breathing, guided imagery, and progressive muscle relaxation.

b. Deep breathing involves taking very slow, deep breaths by inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. Tell the students to sit with a relaxed posture, with hands facing up on their laps. They should focus on their breathing, noticing the air as it is slowly drawn in through the nose and slowly let out through the mouth. Between breathes, the students should take brief pauses. This should be repeated over and over for a few minutes or until he/she is feeling calm.

c. Guided imagery is a technique in which people use visualization and deep breathing to help them relax. The students should be told to sit in a comfortable position, close their eyes, and engage in deep breathing. Next, they should imagine a scene that is relaxing and peaceful. They should try to imagine this scene as vividly as possible, incorporating sensory detail from each of the senses. For example, if a student was imagining a beach scene, he/she would imagine seeing the clear blue sky and sun over the ocean, hearing the sound of the waves crashing on the shore, smell the salty air, feel the breeze coming off the ocean, and taste the fresh, clean air. After a few minutes (or when the individual is ready) they should slowly come back to reality. They should feel relaxed and refreshed.

d. Progressive muscle relaxation consists of the tensing and relaxing of different muscle group. The students should sit in a relaxed position with their eyes closed. "Now, raise your left arm in front of you and make a fist. Clench your fist as tight as you can, as if you were trying to squeeze all of the juice out of a lemon. Pay attention to the tight feeling. Now drop your hand onto your lap. Notice how relaxed you feel when you just let go." Repeat this a couple of times, then switch hands. "Next, I want you to pull your shoulders up towards your ears and squeeze

your head into your shoulders. Notice the tension in your neck and shoulders. Relax your shoulders. Notice how much better it feels when you are relaxed." Repeat this a couple of times. Then move onto other muscles, focusing on one muscle group at a time (scrunching up your face, clenching your jaw, tightening up the stomach muscles, tightening the muscles in the legs, curling up the toes, etc.). Make sure to have the students repeat each muscle group a few times and have them notice the difference between feeling tense and relaxed.