

Dealing with Authority Figures

Theme: Dealing with Authority Figures

Through physical sculpting, group discussion, and role-playing, girls will begin to explore how to communicate and relate to the authority figures in their lives and increase their understanding of the differences between assertive behavior, passive behavior, and aggressive behavior.

Activity: Physical Sculpting, Discussion, and Role-plays

Materials: Three cardboard signs labeled "Assertive," "Passive" and "Aggressive," paper and pens, "Characteristics of Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive People" worksheet (provided at the end of this week's unit), blank pieces of paper cut in half.

- Purpose:**
- To define the authority figures in their lives and the nature of their relationships
 - To explore the impact that an authority figures has in their lives – what's good about these people and what's not so good
 - To develop healthy methods of communication with authority figures and explore how these relationships can be helpful in the short and long term

PROCESS –

Facilitator Preparation

1. Make three cardboard signs (8 ½ x 11). Writing in large print, label one sign as "AGGRESSIVE," the second sign as "ASSERTIVE," and the third sign as "PASSIVE" Make enough copies of the "Characteristics Worksheet" for each participant.

→ Opening Ritual, Theme Intro. and Check-in

Activity 1: Physical Sculpting

This activity will involve having the girls physically “sculpt” what their relationship looks like with an authority figure in their lives.

1. Ask the girls to think about a main authority figure in their lives with whom they have a relationship. Ask, “What does that relationship look like?”
2. Decide who will go first and have them pick one girl from the group who will be part of their sculpture along with themselves, OR they can pick two girls from the group if they themselves do not want to be part of the sculpture.
3. Have each girl, one at a time, go up and sculpt a “pose” of herself and the authority figure. Suggest that they do this with the least amount of talking. They can first experiment with different poses and once the pose feels right, have them freeze it (as a frozen sculpture) and allow the group to observe. *(For example, one girl might pose herself in the squatting position with her hand over her ears and sculpt the authority figure standing over her with her hands on her hips.)*
4. Encourage the girls to play around with the sculpture until it feels right to the “sculptress.” Allow them to sculpt themselves as the authority figure if they like.
5. After the sculpture is complete and frozen and the group has observed it, move on to the rest of the group so each girl gets an opportunity to create her own sculpture.
6. Debrief the experience. Ask:
 - ✓ What was that like?
 - ✓ How was it to be part of the sculpture?
 - ✓ What was it like observing the sculptures? Any surprises?
 - ✓ What did you notice?

Activity 2: Discussion

Topic: “Dealing with Authority Figures”

Introductory Remarks: *(To be made by the facilitator to begin the discussion)*

- Many girls are angry at the authority figures in their lives, don’t feel connected to them or feel they can’t relate to them or trust in them.
- These relationships can be confusing because on one hand the authority figures in their lives can help them, and on the other hand, they can hurt them.
- Sometimes adolescents don’t tell the truth to authority figures because they’re scared of the consequences – whether they are immediate or long-term.
- Because authority figures have power, relationships with them can affect girls’ lives – positive and negative. It is beneficial for girls to learn how to interact with them to get what they need in the short and the long term.

Objectives: *Introduce the objectives of the discussion to the group. Try to make it natural and informal – feel free to use your own words.*

1. To define the authority figures in girls' lives – who they are.
2. To explore the impact that authority figures have in girls' lives – what's good about it and what's not so good.
3. To identify possible problems or barriers that prevents good relationships with authority figures.
4. To explore healthy ways to relate and negotiate with authority figures in order to have a good relationship and get their needs met.

Shape Discussion:

(Ask questions relating to Objective #1)

1. Who are the authority figures in girls' lives? What is their relationship with them? Who are the main authority figures in your own lives?

(mini-summarize)

(Ask questions relating to Objective #2)

2. When have you seen authority figures impact a girl's life in a good way? A not so good way? How do the authority figures in your own lives affect you? What's good about it? What's hard about it? How do they exert their power? How can your relationship with them affect your life? What do you need from them? What do they need from you?

(mini-summarize)

(Ask questions relating to Objective #3)

3. What prevents good relationships between girls and the authority figures in their lives? What do these adults do to prevent good relationships with girls? What do the girls do to prevent good relationships with authority figures? What problems have you had when communicating with authority figures? What do you think the heart of the problem was? What was your part? What was their part? Can dishonesty or story telling affect the relationship? If so, how?

(mini-summarize)

(Ask questions relating to Objective #4)

4. What is your best guess as to what a good relationship with an authority figure would look like? What do they have to do? What do you have to do? Who do you want to improve your relationship with and how would you do it? If they don't change, how can you change to improve the relationship and get your needs met? When dishonesty occurs, how can you turn that around to develop trust so you can get what we need? How does it help you in the short term and the long term to have good relationships with these people?


(mini-summarize)

Summarize:

Take time to summarize all of the key points that were made and the discussion as a whole. The facilitator can summarize or the participants can. *Tell them what THEY said.*


Application Question:

Name one thing you can do differently when relating to a main authority figure in your own life over the next week or so.

 *Tell the girls you'll check in with them next week to see how it went.*


Activity 3: Role-plays

1. Present each person with a copy of the "Characteristics" worksheet on "Passive," "Aggressive" and "Assertive" behavior and discuss it with the group. Review typical characteristics of each.
2. Give examples that are appropriate to the group regarding the three types of behaviors.
3. Hand out blank ½ sheets of paper and ask each girl to write one scenario or situation when they wished they would have behaved more assertively with an authority figure in their life. Or you can ask girls about a time that was difficult dealing with an authority figure and if they'd like to work on it. Allow at least 5-10 minutes for girls to think of a situation and write it down. They may write down more than one situation if they wish.
4. Have girls fold their scenario in half. Collect all written scenarios.

 *Optional: You may use the Suggested Situations below if you wish to skip the step of having the girls write their own scenarios. However, using personal scenarios can be more powerful.*


Suggested Situations

- The police catch you after you're past your curfew and they want to tell your probation officer.
- Your teacher is mad at you because you didn't do your homework.
- You broke an agreement with your probation officer about attending school and she wants to possibly lock you up for the weekend.
- You missed school and are in trouble with your probation officer. Choose one of the following reasons why you missed school and use it in the role-play:
 1. You were not feeling well.
 2. You were babysitting for a family member.
 3. You didn't want to go to school because a teacher is being mean to you.
 4. A girl at school wants to fight with you.
- Your probation officer wants to punish you because your mom told her that you were out all night with your friends. She wants to lock you up for the weekend.

 *Preface activity by telling girls that the purpose of the activity is to help each other relate better to authority figures. Tell them that although the role-plays may seem different, that it is important. Ask them to be as serious as they can.*

1. Divide the group into groups of three. Distribute a different cardboard behavior sign to each group.
2. Randomly choose one of the scenarios that the girls wrote or one of the suggested scenarios.
3. Read the scenario to the whole group.
4. Have each group decide how the situation should be played according to the behavior sign they have using the "Characteristics" worksheet as a guide. Have the group decide who will act out that particular role-play.
5. Give each group 3-5 minutes to figure out their act and call time.

6. Name the first behavior to be demonstrated and have that group play out that behavior according to the scenario you just read. (Save the "Assertive" scene for last.)
7. After each behavior is presented in role-play, ask each girl how she felt in the scene. Ask for the input from the group about the behavior they observed. Ask if it fits the role they were to play and then move to the next behavior role-play.
8. After all three behaviors have been played, discuss the differences.
9. Select another situation/scenario that the girls wrote and proceed as above.

 Give each group the opportunity to work on all three behavior roles. Have them trade cardboard signs so each group gets to play all three roles of "Assertive," "Passive," and "Aggressive."

10. Thank the role players for their participation and risk taking.

→ Closing Ritual

TYPICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PASSIVE, ASSERTIVE AND AGGRESSIVE PEOPLE

Behavior	Passive	Aggressive	Assertive
Characteristics	Lets others make her decisions for her. Doesn't express feelings, ideas, wants, puts self down, in a conflict runs away or gives in, uses apologetic words, hedges, uses an indirect manner (hoping someone will guess what she wants), cries, pleads, is hesitant, has downcast eyes.	Is inappropriately honest, puts others down, ignores rights of others, dominates, chooses for others, attacks and blames, overreacts in situations, uses 'loaded' and superior words, is sarcastic, loud, makes rigid demands, points finger.	Is appropriately honest, expresses wants and feelings directly, chooses for herself, is empathetic, evaluates and acts, is spontaneous, exercises her personal rights and respects rights of others, uses objective words, listens, makes direct eye contact, has firm and warm voice, uses 'I' statements.
Reasons	To avoid conflict and unpleasant risky situations.	To express hostility and anger, to achieve objectives (in the short run at least).	To achieve objectives, to have positive feelings about herself.
Feelings about self that accompany this behavior	Low self-confidence and low self-esteem, hurt, helpless, anxious, powerless, possibly resentful and angry (at a later time), guilty, inhibited.	High or low self-esteem, hostile, superior, righteous, alienated, defensive, frustrated, bitter, tense.	Self-respect, confident, self-sufficient, powerful, relaxed.
Feelings of others when a person engages in this behavior	Guilty, angry, disrespectful, irritated, frustrated, superior.	Hurt, humiliated, defensive, vengeful, angry.	Respectful, respected, threatened (occasionally).

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