



SESSION 5: DEVELOP A SENSE OF SAFETY

The purpose of this group is to learn more about how youth, families, and your community are impacted by trauma and violence and what you can do to help. Each week we will review a new topic or theme. Our sessions will begin with a brief check-in and video about the session. We will then have a discussion and activity connected to the theme for the week. There will also be some activities that you can work on at home to practice the skills learned in the session or to prepare for the following week's topic.

There are a few important rules and reminders for the group! Important things to remember are that no one has to share if they do not want to, be generous to others in the group and active listeners, do not share information heard here with others outside of the group, and that group facilitators are mandated reporters.

Today's session *Develop A Sense of Safety* is about attending to our emotional safety and also about having a concrete plan to support our physical safety. It is critical that children have a place or a person with whom their sense of safety remains.

Often-times children and youth who have experienced trauma have difficulty identifying behaviors as dangerous or recognizing the signals their own body offers in a potentially dangerous environment. The statistics about violence can be daunting, but it is up to us to create a feeling of safety moment to moment. When children and youth do not have a safe and have solid "base" from which to explore, it is like trying to play hide-and-seek with their eyes closed.



Each week you will be encouraged to take time to reflect on what has been discussed in the group and examine how it relates to your current situation or experiences. As violence in some neighborhoods continues to increase, it is important that families have discussions about how to stay safe. What are some concrete strategies you use to keep you and your family safe at home and in your community? What have you taught your child about keeping safe? How have your strategies changed as your child has gotten older?

Think about if you have recently experienced difficulty maintaining a feeling of safety and stability in your home. Do you feel that your sense of safety is often in danger or that you are constantly fighting for survival?

At-Home Activity

- Review the group safety plan created during today's session. Modify the plan so that it fits the safety needs of your family.
- Have a conversation with your child(ren) about places, people, and situations that cause them to feel unsafe.
- Upcoming session: *Change the Message-Changing rules and expectations in society (cultural norms) that support violence*

BEST PRACTICE 4: FEELING SAFE

Promote a safe environment in the community.

Youth Action Statement

Learn to prioritize safety for yourself in all situations.

Caregiver Action Statement

Be a safe “base” for your child. Model how to keep yourself safe at home and in the community.

In areas where there is frequent violence, it is important to work towards creating communities or places where individuals can feel safe. Often-times children and youth who have experienced trauma have difficulty identifying behaviors as dangerous or recognizing the signals their own body offers (fight, flight, or freeze) in a potentially dangerous environment – sometimes because their system is taxed from over-use and other times because they have learned to “numb out” when things get scary.

Accepting that we are not invincible and that we are valuable is challenging for youth (and some adults). Just as challenging for young children is the idea that our parents and caregivers cannot always protect us from scary things that happen. The statistics about violence can be daunting, but it is up to us to create a feeling of safety for our family. When children and youth do not have a safe and solid base from which to explore, it is like they are playing hide-and-seek with their eyes closed.

What are some of the things that we can do to remain safe?



Enhance community resources by taking steps to improve the positive relationships and peaceful activities in communities



Increase monitoring and response capacity, including a monitored and safe space for children and families



Plan for what to do and who to contact to protect your family when violence happens



Advocate through outreach to local law enforcement, hospitals, elected officials, etc.

