



## SESSION 6: CHANGE THE MESSAGE

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 *Change the Message* is about understanding and challenging the actions, messages, expectations, and implicit ways that violence is perpetuated in our society.

As a society, we seem to be developing an acceptance or normalization of violence. Changing the message is about getting clear on our own messages about violence, learning more about the experiences of others, becoming open to other perspectives, and modeling behaviors that speak against violence.

Important things to think about: Do our actions promote violence? What messages about violence are we modeling to our children? Are there things we can do to help end community violence?



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. Important things to think about include what you would like to teach your child about how they can create peace in their life and what messages about violence prevention could you share with your child and your community?

Community violence is a big issue to tackle and it will take the effort and hard work of many people in our community. What type of support or resources do you think you might need to start changing the message about violence in your home and in your community? Are there currently activists in your community that are promoting messages about violence prevention?

### **At-Home Activity**

- Have a conversation with your family about the importance of creating a culture that does not support or encourage violence.
- Work together with your child to make a sign with the new message about violence that you want to promote in your family and community.
- Upcoming session: *Putting it Together-Final group session*

## BEST PRACTICE 5: CHANGE THE MESSAGE

*Change rules and expectations in society that support violence.*

### Youth Action Statement

Help to break the cycle of violence with peaceful solutions.

### Caregiver Action Statement

Model a healthy response to everyday interactions. Promote and model tolerance, patience, and acceptance.

When children are living in areas with high community violence or are constantly bombarded by messages in the media that make violence seem normal, their perception of what is acceptable may vary and they may begin to demonstrate negative behavior. It is important to identify the current norms within your home or community that may promote or perpetuate violent behaviors. Once identifying those norms, you can work with your child to identify rules and patterns of behavior that are more adaptive and acceptable. While working to address negative behaviors, remember that many youth have experienced multiple traumas and even if they are trying to change, they may be dealing with considerable amounts of distress, feelings of uncertainty, and discomfort. In situations such as this, acting out, emotional outbursts, or violent behaviors may occur and it is important that you continue to provide support and understanding.

Changing the message is about getting clear on our own messages about violence and modeling behaviors that show tolerance of differences, curiosity about other perspectives, and patience with ourselves and with those around us when we make mistakes. When it comes to working with our youth who have experienced violence and trauma, it is also about changing from the judgment and isolation of “what is wrong with you?” to the curiosity and community-building of “what happened to you and how can I help?”



***What can you do to help  
change rules and expectations  
in society that support  
violence?***

- Promote equality, education, and safety
- Serve as a role model in language use and mutual respect
- Engage in community activities around the message of changing violence norms
- Participate in conversations whenever possible to promote peace and discourage retaliation
- Promote conflict resolution skills and restorative justice approaches

## **BE THE CHANGE IN YOUR FAMILY!**

The way violence is experienced or talked about in families can influence perceptions and behavior, which can also sometimes *encourage* violence, or make it seem accepted or expected. It is important for caregivers to model a healthy response to conflict. Promote and model tolerance, patience, and acceptance of different points of view. Monitor and discuss media content with your child.



## BE THE CHANGE IN YOUR COMMUNITY!

The rules or expectations of behavior (cultural norms) in our society can sometimes *encourage* violence. Early exposure to verbal and physical aggression can influence youth to accept violence or become aggressive. Having the wrong impression about other people's intentions can lead to violence (an accidental bump interpreted as intentional). Violence in the neighborhood, media, and on the internet can make people more accepting of violence in the community.

**What are some examples in the media, at school, or within your community that glorify or encourage violence?**

**How do you think people's assumptions about violence and the people in your community affect how youth feel about themselves?**

**What are ways that you can help change the messages about violence in your community?**

