

# Children & Youth Advocate Manual

## Section 10: Age Appropriate Support Groups



### Introduction & Importance

This is one of the longest sections in the manual because each activity gives detailed instructions based on age groups. Informal support groups are a well-established way to support resilience in children and youth who have experienced abuse. Group facilitation skills that are helpful to children and youth advocates are; choose support group topics that promote resilience, choose activities that support outcomes of the program, give all group members voice, make group members feel comfortable to share, manage negative behaviors in group settings, etc.

### Establish Group Norms, Guidelines, etc.

Establishing group norms or guidelines in the beginning helps group participants understand, recognize, and take ownership of how everyone is expected to be in the group space. Below is an example activity of how to set up group norms.

#### Materials Needed

- Flipchart or large sheet of paper
- Markers

#### Preparation

- Before activity write NORMS on the top of the flipchart paper.

### Instructions

#### Introductions

- Facilitator asks the whole group to answer the following, one at a time:
  - Their name, school, grade, and something else about themselves (it can be anything)

#### Beginning Discussion

- Facilitator has anyone answer (being mindful to not have any one person dominate the conversation):
  - What comes to mind when you think of support group?
  - What challenges might we face as a newly formed support group (meaning we have newcomers)?
  - What are some things we should learn about each other so we can work together well?
- Facilitator: We want to get to know each other and set norms that can help us work together well as a group!

#### Creating Norms for the Year

Facilitator explains, “We want to make sure that this space is a safe and brave environment for each of us to try new things, make mistakes, and grow because of them.”

- Facilitator asks the whole group to answer, one at a time:
  - Where is a place you feel like yourself?
- Facilitator has anyone answer (being mindful to not have any one person dominate the conversation):
  - What makes that place feel safe? What do you like about being there?
  - How do you act when you’re feeling like you can be yourself?
  - What’s it like to hang out in a place that’s the opposite of that?
  - How do you act differently when you’re uncomfortable?
  - What kinds of things do people do to make a place feel uncomfortable or awkward?
    - How would you like someone here to address those behaviors?
  - How can we behave to make this a safe and brave place where we can be ourselves?
    - Begin writing these responses on the NORMS paper
    - Ask them to clarify by asking “What does that look, sound, feel like?”

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### Closing

- Have all of the participants sign the norms list if they agree to the norms or guidelines
- Review them at the beginning of the meeting
- Have new people review and add to norms or guidelines (if applicable) then sign them if they agree with them

### Example Activities by Age Group

When thinking of activities for groups the number one piece of advice is be **FLEXIBLE**. Having back up activities in case the group dynamic changes or the youth are not willing/understanding the activity. Checking the developmental charts (see [Child & Youth Development](#)) might help create activities for your groups. All activities listed are for you to use and edit to make fit the populations you are working with. Remember the attention spans of youth when you are creating an activity that will fit their needs. Having a game or free time at the end of group can be helpful for the younger ages. Utilizing technology is great too; many advocates have suggested using website's like [Pinterest](#) to find support group ideas!

#### Infant (Birth-1) & Toddlers (1-3)

For this age group make sure that you have plenty of volunteers/staff to help take care of the many needs of the infants. Make sure that you are PRESENT and making positive connections with the youth as a positive role model. Be sure to be engaged with the youth by talking with them and truly listening to what they say. Model the behavior you want the youth to display. Having a space that is closed off is also helpful for this age group as they are learning to crawl and walk.

Providing toys with no small pieces that they would be able to choke on is essential. The focus for this age group should be on promoting development (see [Child & Youth Development](#)) and resiliency (see [Children & Youth Resiliency](#)). A suggested activity is to provide story time with topics you want the youth exposed to. Giving the youth language to not be aggressive or passive. Another activity is to work with protective caregiver and toddler and how they interact with one another. Above all make sure the room is [child proofed](#) for safety.

#### Preschooler Activity (3-5)

As with infants and toddlers; for this age group make sure that you have plenty of volunteers/staff to help take care of the many needs of the infants. Having a space that is closed off is also helpful for this age group as they are learning to explore their environment by crawling and walking. Provide toys with no small pieces that they would be able to choke on. Below is an emotional body mapping activity to aid children in understanding how their body reacts to emotions.

### Materials Needed

- Large pieces of paper/cardboard or sidewalk
- Crayons, colored pencils or chalk

### Instructions

1. Have the youth lay down and outline their backs.
2. Have a partner or adult trace the outline of their body OR their shadow.
3. Then have them decorate their bodies to make them look like themselves.
4. Have them think of a time they felt an emotion and have them color where they would feel it in their bodies.
5. Once they have filled in all the emotions go through the following questions
  - a. What is something that you see on your project?
  - b. What did you like about this activity? What didn't you like about this activity?
  - c. Where do you feel some of your emotions?
  - d. Who is someone you can trust to talk to when you are feeling [insert emotion]?

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### School-Aged Activity (5-11)

Below is a 3-session respect-peacemakers activity to build support and community around how to respect each other.

#### Day 1 Respect Posters

##### Materials needed

- Poster sized paper
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- Painters tape

##### Instructions

1. Discuss what peace & respect means and how we can all be peacemakers as a large group
  - a. Write down on poster paper the ideas the youth are coming up with to use on Day 2 & Day 3 activity
2. Split youth into 5 groups and have them think of ways they could show respect for one of the following ways:
  - a. To the earth
  - b. To their family
  - c. In school
  - d. For people
  - e. For animals
3. Then have each group create a poster of what they came up with
4. Each group shares their poster with the whole group
5. Hang posters in or around the common space

#### Day 2 Peace Quilt

##### Materials Needed

- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Puzzle piece outline
- Pencils
- Colored pencils, markers
- Laminator
- Painters tape

##### Instructions

1. Discuss ways to be a peacemaker
2. Give each child a puzzle piece cut out of construction paper
3. Have youth draw on their puzzle piece how they would be a peacemaker
  - a. Hang ideas from Day 1 as a refresher
4. Have youth connect the puzzle pieces together in any way they like
5. Make a heading for the puzzle pieces with the name of the class and year
6. Laminate puzzle pieces all together as a whole
7. Hang up where it will be seen by everyone

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### Day 3 Ice Cream Activity

#### Prep for Activity

- Make sure that you ask if any youth have food allergies before doing this activity!

#### Materials Needed

- Bowls
- Spoons
- Napkins
- Ice cream (enough for the group)
- Ice cream toppings
  - Cherries
  - Strawberries
  - Chocolate chips
  - Blueberries
  - Sprinkles
- White/Opaque containers

#### Instructions

1. Fill each container with a topping
2. Label each container with a way to be a peace maker that the youth came up with from Day 1.  
Examples below:
  - a. Using I messages in communication
  - b. Helpfulness
  - c. Compromise
  - d. Take turns
3. Label the ice cream bucket as RESPECT.
4. Explain to the youth that the biggest thing needed to be a peacemaker is respect (ice cream) and how we show respect (toppings)
5. Have youth go through a line to make their sundaes using the toppings they want.
6. Then have youth explain why they chose their toppings as it relates to how they will be peacemakers.

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### Middle School Activity (11-14)

Below is an activity to help youth to understand the importance of non-verbal communication.

#### Prep Before Activity

Print & cut out feeling statements in advance and place them in a non-see-through container

#### Materials Needed

- Feeling statements
- Small container
- Markers. Pencils, pens
- Scissors
- Board or paper to keep score
- Watch or other time keeper

#### Instructions

1. Form two teams with the youth
2. Each team member will take a turn picking a slip of paper from the container and act out the statement for their teammates
3. You can only use facial expression, body language, and actions
4. You may not speak or make noise of any kind
5. You will have 60 seconds to guess the statement correctly for one point
6. If your team does not guess it correctly the other team has 30 seconds to guess the statement correctly for one point
7. Then it will be the other teams turn
8. Try to play until each person has had a chance to act out a statement
9. Conclude the activity with the following discussion
  - a. What is something that stood out to you from this activity?
  - b. Which statements were hardest to act out (or guess)?
  - c. Which statements were easiest to act out (or guess)?
  - d. What is the importance of being able to understand body language?
  - e. What have you learned about non-verbal communication from this activity?

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### Feeling Statements

I feel sad	I am disgusted
Leave me alone	I feel proud
I am thrilled	I don't want to do it
I feel worried	I don't want anyone to see
I am determined	I am bored to death
I am furious	I feel terribly embarrassed
I am very sorry	I feel anxious
I am doubtful	I am super excited
I love it	I am pleased to be here

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### High School Activity (14-18)

Below is an activity to have the youth start to think about qualities they want to have in their relationships whether it be with friends and family or with dating partners.

#### Materials Needed

- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- Post-its

#### Must Have List

Decide which of these qualities are the most important to you. These are things that you consider to be the most important qualities or values to have in a relationship. They are your non-negotiables.

##### Traits

1. Chemistry
2. Communicator
3. Sense of Humor
4. Verbal Intimacy
5. Emotionally Healthy
6. Strong Character
7. Artistic
8. Kind
9. Educated
10. Organized
11. Exciting
12. Patient
13. Tolerant
14. Conflict Resolver
15. Attractive
16. Affectionate
17. Industrious
18. Energy Level
19. Emotionally Generous
20. Intellectual
21. Self-Confident
22. Unassuming
23. Able to Accept Help
24. Curious
25. Loyal
26. Adaptable

##### Values

27. Family Life
28. Shared Interest
29. Style and Appearance
30. Shared Political Views
31. Spirit of Volunteerism
32. Abstinence

##### Family

33. No Children
34. Family
35. Step-Children
36. Parenting Style
37. Parent Care

##### Social Life

38. Staying in
39. Sociable
40. Autonomy

##### Spirituality

41. Faith
42. Spiritual Growth

##### Financial/Career

43. Responsible
44. Ambitious
45. Relaxed

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### Will Not Tolerate List

Now, on the flip side decide which of these traits or qualities are deal breakers for you. These are things that you consider to be qualities or values you cannot and will not stand for in a relationship.

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1. Vanity                  | 26. Gambling                                       |
| 2. Dependent               | 27. Drugs  |
| 3. Lying                   | 28. Intruding Family/Friends                       |
| 4. Depressed               | 29. Punctuality                                    |
| 5. Cheating                | 30. Flirts   |
| 6. Cynical                 | 31. Racist   |
| 7. Angry                   | 32. TV/Technology Junkie                           |
| 8. Self-Centered           | 33. Poor Hygiene                                   |
| 9. Rude                    | 34. Gossips  |
| 10. Unhappy at Work        | 35. Judgmental                                     |
| 11. Materialistic          | 36. Addictions (Food, Drugs, Alcohol, Pornography) |
| 12. Denying                | 37. Sloppy   |
| 13. Workaholic             | 38. Undependable                                   |
| 14. Lazy                   | 39. Cheap  |
| 15. Worrying               | 40. Foul-mouthed                                   |
| 16. Intolerant             | 41. Arrogant                                       |
| 17. Victim Mentality       | 42. Extremely Shy                                  |
| 18. Grudges                | 43. Pessimism/Negative                             |
| 19. Mean-Spirited          | 44. Political Correctness                          |
| 20. Childish               | 45. Recklessness                                   |
| 21. Fiscally Irresponsible | 46. Sexually obsessed                              |
| 22. Petty                  | 47. Uninterested                                   |
| 23. Hypochondriac          | 48. Infidelity/Unfaithful                          |
| 24. Boorish                | 49. Abusive (Verbally, Sexually, Physically)       |
| 25. Excessively Overweight |  |



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### Follow-Up Discussion & Questions:

Ask participants to write down their top THREE must haves on post-it. Repeat for the will not tolerate side. Collect post-its and group them in front of them; one side with must haves the other will not tolerate. Then go through the following discussion questions.

1. Have everyone answer the following question
  - a. What is one thing you notice about the post-its?
2. Have anyone answer the following questions (making sure you ask for those that have not responded a chance to answer the questions)
  - a. What was easy about this activity?
  - b. What was difficult about this activity?
  - c. What do you think the purpose is of this activity?
  - d. What is the importance of going through this activity?
  - e. What other things do we need to consider when we are talking about relationships?
  - f. How will we make sure to continue to stick to the things we want in a partner and things we don't want in a partner?
  - g. What does it mean to have experienced this?

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### Family Activity

Below is a timeline activity to show the historical journey a family has taken together.

### Materials Needed

- Lined paper
- Blank white paper
- Butcher paper or wide roll of paper
- Rulers, yardstick, other straight edge
- Tape

### Instructions

1. Explain that timelines are often used to show the progression of historical periods and chronological order. Some timelines show the important people, events, and ideas that identify particular time and space. You are going to create your own family timelines.
2. Have the families free-think significant family events that have occurred each year since they were born.
  - a. Birth of siblings
  - b. Family trips
  - c. Moves
  - d. New jobs
  - e. Going to school
  - f. Special family events and activities
3. Have families make their timelines
4. Have the families add drawings or symbols to highlight their most favorite events
5. Once the timelines are completed have the families extend their timelines ten years into the future.
6. Have each family member write or draw what they think their life will be like in ten years
7. Have the families decide to share one to three events with the whole group

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### Mixed Ages Activity

Below is an aid to safety planning by critically thinking about the people in our lives that we trust to talk to about a wide variety of topics. When trauma occurs (or has been occurring) isolation can feel safer because of various power & control tactics to feeling you are the only one going through your current situation. In these situations it is our jobs, as advocates, to connect victims & survivors of trauma to their formal & informal supports & resources.

### Materials Needed

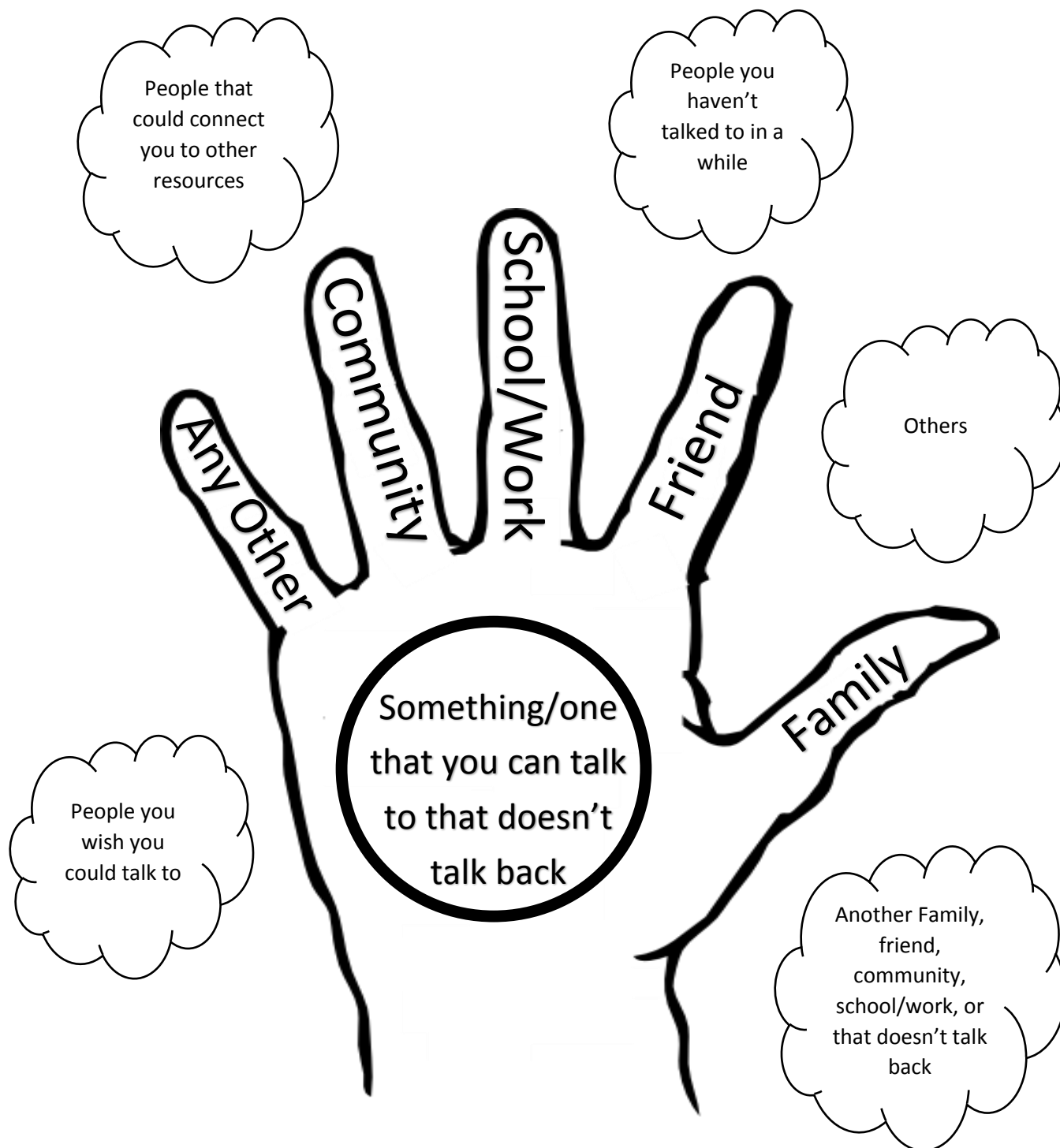
- Paper
- Writing Utensil

### Instructions

1. Have the participant trace their hand (kind of like making a hand turkey).
2. Have the participant think about someone they trust to talk to no matter how **BIG** or how small.
  - a. Use the words big or small as to not confuse participants on the concepts of good or bad.
  - b. The person you want to talk to when you are having the worst day ever and the person you want to talk to when you have the most exciting & happy news to share.
3. Start at the Thumb and have them write one person in their family that they can trust, immediate or extended.
  - a. Immediate family: Anyone that they live with that they consider family.
  - b. Extended family: Anyone that they do not live with that they consider family.
4. In the Index finger write one person who they consider to be a friend they trust.
5. In the Middle finger write one person they go to school with or work with that they can trust.
  - a. Depending on if the participant is in school or not they can choose someone who they work with. It is also a good option if they cannot think of anyone they trust at school.
  - b. Examples: Teacher, school staff, supervisor, co-worker, boss, manager, etc.
6. In the Ring finger write one person from their community that they can trust.
  - a. Examples: Emergency Staff, neighbor, coach, doctor/nurse, therapist/psychologist/psychiatrist, store worker/staff, social worker, teammate, etc.
7. In the Pinky write one person that may not have fit in a previous finger OR they have more than one for a particular finger.
8. Have them draw a circle in the middle of their palm and write the name of something or someone that they can talk to but doesn't talk back
  - a. Examples: Imaginary friend, religious figure, baby, someone who's passed away, security blanket, stuffed animal, themselves.
9. Who else do they trust to talk to that's not in your network?
  - a. Write their name above the finger that they can trust

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### Resources

[A Window Between Worlds \(AWBW\)](#) (all ages): This is a scholarship program that you would need to apply for before utilizing their resources. Through Windows Programs participants are able to express feelings in a different way, empowering them to reclaim self-worth and make meaning of their journeys. As they make art — by drawing, sculpting, painting, collaging, writing and more — participant's voices are heard and future potential is seen, often for the first time.

[Break the Cycle: Activity Guides](#) (middle school and high school): This resource offers 10 different activities to facilitate with high school aged students around domestic violence and intimate partner violence.

[Bringing Back Unity & Communication Into the Family: 20 Family Dynamics Activities by Bryan Wright](#) The link will take you to an example activity on their website. The activities within the book are set up in a chronological order to help address key issues that need to be talked about before you can move onto rebuilding the trust that has been lost. The book helps to implement the program as it allows for families to work on: Creating and establishing a new foundation of trust, communication and respect. Promoting family time where the parents and kids can talk freely amongst one another in an open, nonjudgmental atmosphere. Teaching the families about emotions and how to cope with them. Learning about self-respect, self-esteem, peer pressure, team work and feeling safe within the home.

End Domestic Abuser Wisconsin's New Advocate Manual: [Support Group Facilitation](#) offers further information for support groups like open or closed groups, needs assessment, screening, confidentiality, facilitation, structure, and evaluation. This resource also provides different support group manuals and other educational components. *You will need a log-in to view this resource.*

[Elementary School Small Counseling](#) (K-6): This is a blog that offers small group counseling activities based on specific topics like anger management, grief, self-esteem, and much more.

[West Virginia Department of Education: School Counseling](#) (K-12): Offers group lessons for specific age ranges and a wide variety of topics. Some of the topics are anger management, divorce, grief, self-control, and self-awareness. They also provide any handouts needed for the lesson.

[Youth and Child Advocate and Educator Manual of Activities and Exercises for Children and Youth](#) This PDF has 50+ different activities from body image to sexual violence. Each activity comes with instructions that include age level, activity description, and handouts needed!

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*Please notify the Children & Youth Prevention & Outreach Coordinator, [Cody Warner](#), if ANY of the links are no longer working.*

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