

SESSION 1: Becoming Effective Parents

Well a lot of people keep asking me don't you think you were too young to have a baby, don't you think you made a mistake. It actually really bothers me when people say that especially people that I don't know. I'm not saying that I regret having my daughter but I do regret that I didn't wait. I could've continued going to school, graduate, get prepared for my license. I also would have been able to go to beauty school without having to work. Don't get me wrong I love my daughter but by having my daughter at a young age makes me feel like I lost my teenage years. But at least by having my daughter I don't do a lot of stuff that I did wrong like getting high all the time and stealing. I think that if I didn't have my daughter to make me realize I would've had the worst name out in the streets and I wouldn't be as mature as I am now.

17-year-old participant

RATIONALE

The transition to motherhood is a life-altering event regardless of when it occurs in the developmental cycle, but for high-risk youth, the experience can be particularly challenging. Adolescence is a time of self focus and centers on questions such as “who am I,” “what will I do with my life,” and “who will I spend it with?” But parenting by its nature is “other-focused” requiring constant acts of selflessness. Effective parenting demands not just time, resources, and energy, but a willingness to sacrifice one’s own needs and wants in service of one’s child. The selfless stance parenthood requires can be difficult for the subgroup of teens who enter the role of parenthood prematurely. Not uncommonly, these adolescents come from families where their own nurturance needs went unmet. Many have babies for “someone to love them unconditionally,” for a chance to have a “real family” or to re-engage a parent who has been absent (Musick, 1993). What many young parents don’t anticipate, but which becomes clear almost immediately, is that having a child is about giving rather than receiving.

In Power Source Parenting (PSP) a key aspect of becoming an effective parent entails learning how to consistently recognize and place children’s needs first. At the same time, it is important to take into account that most high-risk youth feel as though their own needs for attention, love, support, and nurturance have been largely ignored and unmet by their caretakers. Substance abuse, mental illness, emotional unavailability, incarceration and other factors interfered with their caretakers’ ability to be emotionally present, leaving many young parents still trying to fill this nurturance void. Therefore messages about putting one’s child’s needs first must be tempered by efforts to identify ways that adolescents can attend to their own emotional and social needs. In session one, participants are guided in specific cognitive and behavioral strategies to help balance the desire to engage in developmentally appropriate activities such as being with friends and developing romantic relationships with the role of motherhood. Participants are guided in identifying situations in which the mother and child have “competing needs” and learn to conceptualize their own delay of gratification as part of effective parenting.

For extended rationale see: <http://lionheart.org/youth/psp-guide>

Session Goals

- Introduce members to one another and to the facilitators, give a short description of the purpose and objectives of the group, and discuss basic rules and confidentiality.
- Introduce the concept of Effective People and Effective Parents and discuss the behaviors and pay-offs associated with effective parenting.
- Explore with participants how early parenthood impacts typical adolescent developmental experiences and the feelings associated with the social losses associated with off-time parenthood.
- Introduce participants to the concepts of cognitive reframing and behavioral modifications through the model of Cool Thoughts and Good Moves.
- Explore with participants the ways they can use cognitive and behavioral skills taught in PSP to balance the needs of their child with their own needs.
- Create a parenting pledge to reinforce participants' role as caretaker, nurturer, protector, and teacher of their young children.
- Introduce participants to a grounding technique using the breath.

Outcomes

By the end of this session, members will be able to:

- Describe the purpose of the PSP program, know other group members and the facilitators, be able to identify the basic rules and confidentiality procedures.
- Know the definition of Effective People and Effective Parents and be able to provide examples of them.
- Be aware of the social and emotional impacts of premature parenthood on their development and be able to identify the feelings associated with those changes.
- Utilize the PSP skill, Cool Thoughts and Good Moves to self soothe, while placing the needs of their child first.
- Use the Comfort Pose breathing exercise to increase emotional regulation.

Exercises in Session

1.1	Introduction to the Power Source Parenting Group	10 minutes
1.2	Review of Confidentiality and Group Rules	5 minutes
1.3	Icebreaker Exercise	10 minutes
1.4	How Life Changes After Becoming a Parent	5 minutes
1.5	What I'm Missing Out on and How I Feel About It	10 minutes
1.6	What Babies Need and What Teens Need Exercise	10 minutes
1.7	Introduction to Cool Thoughts and Good Moves	10 minutes
1.8	Balancing Act Game	10 minutes
1.9	The Power Source Parenting Promise	10 minutes
1.10	Comfort Pose and Mindful Breathing	5 minutes
1.11	Texting Review	5 minutes

Time: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Materials Needed

- PSP Books
- Chips/tokens/pennies for game
- Cups for game
- Regular and dry erase markers
- Folders for handouts

Hand Outs / Worksheets

(S1H1) Effective Parents and People Worksheet

(S1H2) What I'm Missing Out on and How I Feel About It

(S1H3) Who Needs What?!?!? Worksheet

(S1H4) Cool Thoughts and Good Moves to Put Your Baby's Needs First Worksheet

(S1H5) PSP Promise Worksheet

(S1H6) PSP Contact Sheet

ACTIVITY 1.1 Introduction to the Power Source Parenting Group *(10 minutes)*

OBJECTIVE

The primary goal of the exercise is to introduce members to one another and to the co-leaders, as well as to orient participants to the structure and purpose of the group. The concept of effective parenting, the skills associated with it and potential benefits will also be introduced.

OUTLINE

- **Once everyone is sitting, hand out PSP books.** Share the following information with participants:
- *Please bring the book to group every week.*
- Sometimes we'll do the exercises in them, sometimes we'll read stories written by other teen moms.
- Every week you'll read a chapter or two in the book for homework. If you want to read ahead, that's fine.
- Explain that in this group we will:
 - Learn how to become effective parents and effective people
 - Find healthy ways to deal with **stress of parenting and life**
 - Uncover the **power of who we really are**
 - Learn **positive discipline** so our kids grow up strong and decent
 - Plan for the type of **future** we want
 - Figure out how to deal with **relationships** so that we keep our power
 - Teach our babies and children how to **deal with their feelings** so they become happy and successful people
- **Hand out Effective People/Effective Parent Sheets (S1H1)**
- Read through together.
 - ✓ Does anyone know what the word "**Effective**" means?
 - Getting the job done in a good way

Brainstorm: Why is it important to become effective parents and effective people?

- Write a T-chart on the white board with the headings Effective Parents/Effective People.
- Allow participants 3 minutes to generate answers on their own.
- Add the answers provided in the T-Chart below.

- Stress that becoming effective parents and people can be done by learning the kinds of skills we will be working on in PSP.

Effective People	Effective Parents
Can deal with the problems that come up in life without losing their power and control.	Have happier babies and children with better self-control.
Effective people have an easier time in life - especially at work and in relationships.	Break the cycle. Don't repeat many mistakes and problems of their families.
Are happier people.	Feel less guilt and have fewer regrets later on.

ACTIVITY 1.2 Review of Confidentiality and Group Rules *(5 minutes)*

OBJECTIVE

Clarify the purpose and limits of confidentiality and establish basic group rules.

OUTLINE

Confidentiality

- Ask group if they know what the word “confidentiality” means.
- People “own” whatever they say in group. Only they can repeat it outside of group.
- **Four situations that would cause us to break confidentiality**
 - If we are concerned **someone might hurt you.**
 - If we are concerned **someone might hurt your baby.**
 - If we are concerned that **you might hurt someone** (including your child).
 - If we are concerned that **you might hurt yourself.**
- The only reason we break confidentiality is to **keep you and others safe.**
- We will try and tell you before we tell anyone else.

Group Guidelines

- Discuss how in PSP we'll talk about how rules in a house make things run smoothly and peacefully.
- Rules will help the group run more smoothly as well.

Brainstorm Group Guidelines

(Include the following)