



MODULE 1

Introduction to the Course

Read chapters 2 and 14 in *Power Source*.

Rationale

The first session is intended to orient members to the purpose of the group and to establish a safe environment. Trust and personal safety are typically significant issues for at-risk youth and should be considered carefully when planning a course. Adolescents coming from abusive backgrounds are often hypervigilant about their environments. One way that safety cues are transmitted is through the physical characteristics of the meeting place. Choose a well-lit room that is large enough to comfortably seat all the members of the group.

Creating a climate of warmth and acceptance is essential to this type of personal work. We find that adolescents respond positively to group leaders shaking each member's hand and referring to him or her by name as he or she enters the room. It conveys the message that they are expected, welcome, and respected. It is surprising how far even small gestures of recognition and warmth go in setting the tone of the group.

Goals

Introductions The primary goal of the session is to introduce members to one another and to the co-leaders. Go around the room and have each member say his name. Co-leaders can take this opportunity to say something about themselves.

Group Name State the name of the group or program or spend a few moments creating your own name for the group. The simple process of naming reinforces the shared goals of the members and clarifies the purpose of the group.

Folders It is often helpful to make a folder for each group member, which can be held by the co-leaders between sessions. Personal folders provide a place for the members' work and handouts to be kept from week to week. They also provide something tangible that the members can take with them upon the group's completion.

Dates and Times Take care of the details. Tell members how many sessions the course consists of, whether there will be any missed sessions due to holidays, and how long each session will last. Passing out calendars or sheets with this information can facilitate the process.

Introducing the Material to Group Members

There are many ways to introduce *Power Source* to group members. Of course, these choices depend on the type of setting in which the program will be facilitated. In general, we find it most helpful to stress the concrete benefits that participants will hopefully derive from their involvement. These include:

- A chance to get *real* control over their lives so they don't end up handing their power over to other people (i.e., getting into trouble that results in negative consequences and potentially a loss of freedom)
- Anger management tools
- Ways to reduce stress in their lives that don't require drugs or alcohol
- A chance to start figuring out who they *really* are
- A way to let go of the anger, frustration, and disappointment they feel toward their family for letting them down or causing them pain

Tying attendance and group participation into members' court or program reviews is a powerful reinforcer. We find that participants are greatly motivated if their progress is conveyed to judges, probation officers, and other individuals monitoring the members' progress.

If you are running a group in a juvenile detention center or with adolescents serving sentences, it is often very powerful to indicate that the point of the group is to help ensure that they **never come back to this place again**. Let them know that by participating in

this group, they are dealing with the issues and problems that land many people in detention centers and jails. Taking the course is a step in taking control of their lives.

Module 1 Outline

Introductory Exercise: Tell members that you would like to ask them a simple question they may have never asked themselves before. Then go around the room and ask people to answer this question:

Who Are You, Really?

Write down all of the responses on a dry erase, blackboard, or the like so that all the members can see. This exercise not only serves as an icebreaker, but allows the co-leaders to inform the group that this is one of the fundamental purposes of the course—beginning to discover who they really are.

An additional part to this exercise could include asking group members to identify how they think others see them or label them. This allows group facilitators the opportunity to help members distinguish between who they really are and how they are perceived.

Meditation

A core component of the Power Source program is meditation. We think of it as the “quiet motor” that drives the program in terms of creating personal change, managing intense emotions, and facilitating relaxation. We have found that doing the meditation at the beginning of the session helps set a relaxed and inner-focused tone for the remainder of the group. Of course, you are free to conduct the meditation at any point in the session. The most important thing is that at some point during each session, members have the opportunity to meditate.

Introducing Meditation

We like to introduce the concept of meditation by asking if anyone in the group has ever meditated. If no one has, you might ask if anyone has any idea about what meditation is. After exploring members’ ideas, we tell them that meditation is a way to help them relax and focus their minds. Meditation makes them more aware. It helps them see the world more clearly.

Good Enough for the NBA. . .

We always like to tell kids that for years Phil Jackson (former Chicago Bulls coach and

head coach of the Los Angeles Lakers) has asked his players to meditate. Why? Because he knows that meditation brings each player's entire mind to the game. They aren't thinking about fights with their girlfriends or what they'll eat for dinner. Their whole awareness is on the game. They are 100% present. They find their flow. Most kids love the idea of this. It makes meditation seem less foreign to them—and maybe even cool.

Tips for the Facilitators

The more comfortable you are with the idea of meditation, the more relaxed and natural it will feel when you introduce it to the group. Even if you have never thought of meditation before, it's not an obstacle to your being able to effectively lead meditations in the group. However, it is very difficult to convince group members of meditation's merit as a stress reducer and technique for increasing awareness if you are skeptical. Adolescents are skillful at picking up on adults' reservations. Meditation works. But it only works as well as people's willingness to engage in the process.

Let Go of the Little Stuff

Although the adolescents in your group might initially resist the meditation process, these reservations typically fade once the actual meditation begins. In fact, by the second or third time, most kids will admit that they enjoy it. For the first few times you meditate with a group, you might hear giggles or whispers and see people looking around the room trying to make eye contact with someone else. Most adolescents are probably thinking, "What is this? And if I do it, will they laugh at me? I better open my eyes to make sure I'm not the only one doing it." We find it helpful to ignore the smaller disturbances. Sometimes gentle statements like, "James/Amy, just a few more minutes. Hang in there and do the best you can," really work. Remember, if you convey confidence in the meditation, the members will likely follow suit. Soon it will become just something they expect to do—and maybe even look forward to.

The Nuts and Bolts of Meditation

For the actual meditation practice, we suggest initially splitting the time into two segments. The first part of the meditation consists of a guided meditation with you leading the members through it. The remainder of the time can be used for a more formal meditation in which group members meditate on their own. Leading the members through the initial segment of the meditation focuses them and gets them clear on their task. Once the group becomes more practiced, it might be feasible to simply ask them to meditate on their own for five to ten minutes. Groups will vary in their ability to do this. Four guided meditation scripts are presented next. You can use these as templates or make up your own.

Guided Meditations

1. General Meditation

Find a place where you're sitting comfortably. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don't want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting. Now, take four deep breaths. Feel your chest rise and fall as you take the air in and let it out. Each time you breathe in, imagine taking in a calm, peaceful feeling. As you breathe out, let all the stress leave your body. Let your shoulders relax and soften. Let your eyes relax and soften.

Meditation is simply paying attention to your breathing. One place in your body to follow your breathing is your nose. Notice how the air feels as it comes in through your nostrils. Perhaps the air is cooler as you breathe in but slightly warmer as you exhale. Follow the breath completely as you breathe out.

Another place to become aware of your breathing is in your belly. It sometimes helps to gently place your hands across your stomach—almost like you're holding a basketball. Notice how your belly expands or gets bigger as you take a breath in and the air fills your lungs. As you breathe out, you'll feel your chest and belly sink—just like letting the air out of a basketball. Let your breath come in and go out naturally. You don't have to "try" and take deep or regular breaths. Just let your body's natural breathing rhythm happen. Your job is not to change your breath; it's just to pay attention to what's going on already.

As you meditate, your mind will naturally wander. This is just how the brain works. Each time this happens, your job is simply to bring your attention gently back to your breathing. If you hear a sound, just say "sound" to yourself and return to your breathing. Your mind might wander many times as you meditate. That's okay. Each time you notice it happening, gently turn your attention back to the breath.

2. The Breathing Guard

(Begin with some guided breathing exercises
or a few minutes of meditation.)

As you pay attention to your breathing, imagine that you are a guard at a castle. You have been told that your only responsibility is to guard the gates in the wall that surrounds and protects the castle. To do this, you must pay attention to each breath that comes in through your nose and each breath that leaves. This is your only job. As the guard, you must follow each breath carefully as it enters the castle gates and as it goes out.

If you feel your mind wander, gently bring it back to the gates of the castle where it can guard each breath. Focus your total awareness on each breath. One at a time. Feel the breath enter through the gateway (nostrils) of the nose and leave back through the same gates. Almost as soon as the last breath leaves, a new one is ready to enter the castle. Once again, your only job is to pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves the castle gates.

Sometimes your mind will wander. When this happens, just gently move your attention to the breath entering and leaving the gates of the castle. At times the sensations in your body or sounds around you might draw your attention away. Simply notice them and return to your breathing.

3. Big Sky Meditation

(Begin with a few minutes of a meditation focusing on the breath.
Then proceed with the big sky meditation.)

After you have focused on your breathing for a little while, imagine a big, blue sky. Try picturing a wide-open space that seems to go on forever with nothing else in sight. The emptiness is calm and peaceful. There are no trees, houses, or people. There are no sounds to interrupt the silence of the big sky. For miles and miles

there is nothing but wide-open blue sky. Now imagine that your mind is just like that sky—large, peaceful, and calm.

Sometimes a small cloud appears overhead and floats through the big sky. Although you can see it, it is just a tiny object compared to the vastness of the big sky. The cloud makes its way across the open space above until it gets smaller and fainter and then vanishes. As you meditate, think of yourself as the big sky. Thoughts may pop into your head—just like a little cloud—but they don't stay forever. Soon they disappear just as they arrived. But no matter what, the endless, calm sky is still there. You may notice sounds as you meditate. No problem, just another small cloud soon to fade away. Thoughts, memories, or great ideas might come up, but this is no big deal. Just tell yourself, "Hey, another small cloud in the big sky," and return your focus to your breathing and to the peace and calm of the big sky.

Occasionally we lose our perspective on the big sky. We look up expecting to see a calm, wide-open space but see thunderheads and darkness instead. But this is just an illusion. Above the clouds the same big sky is there—blue, endless, and filled with light. The clouds may cover the big sky temporarily, but above it all, the perfect calm of the big sky is there.

As you go through your day, take some time to remember the big sky that surrounds you. If something upsetting or annoying happens, picture the clear, calm, expansive big sky. Stay with this image until you feel ready to handle whatever situation is in front of you.

4. Mountain Meditation

(Begin with a few minutes of a meditation focusing on the breath.
Then proceed with the mountain meditation.)

Find a place where you are sitting comfortably. Feel your back and legs touching the chair. Feel your feet resting firmly on the floor. Place your hands comfortably on your lap or across your belly if you prefer. Now take four deep, relaxing breaths. As you breathe

in, feel a calmness enter your body. As you breathe out, imagine any stress or tension that you might be feeling leave along with the breath.

When you are ready, imagine that you have become a large mountain sitting far away from civilization. From a distance, you rise like a giant, almost scraping against the sky. Perhaps you are a mountain whose top is covered in deep layers of ice and snow. Or maybe you are found in the deep region of the rain forest and dense trees, bushes, and plant life grow on your surface. Maybe you are a desert mountain whose sides are made of sand and rock. Whatever you look like as a mountain, know that you are ancient and magnificent. You are deeply rooted beneath the earth so that nothing can move you from where you stand. For thousands of years you have rested there as calmly and peacefully as the stars above you. You have no company, yet you are not lonely.

Over time, many changes have happened on and around the mountain. Day turns to night, but still you stand. The temperature changes as the seasons move from summer to winter, but none of this affects you. Storms come and go. Animals make their homes on you. They are constantly on the move looking for food and shelter, but still you stand as firmly and powerfully as the day you were created. The creatures who make their home on you see only the ground before them, but you rise high above the earth. You see for miles.

No matter what happens around the mountain, you remain as you have always been. Your strength comes from being who you are—something that remains constant from day to day, year to year.

As you go through your day, imagine that you are this great mountain. Minor annoyances or small problems might come up, but they do not have the power to shake the mountain. No matter what happens, keep it in perspective. See it like the mountain would.

If you still find yourself reluctant to lead a meditation, the tips below might serve to make it a more natural process.

- Before teaching meditation, allow yourself ample time to practice it yourself and become comfortable with the process.
- If you're interested, read up on meditation. There are a lot of great books out there. For starters see: Larry Rosenberg's *Breath by Breath: The Liberating Practice of Insight Meditation*, Stephen Levine's *A Gradual Awakening*, Soren Gordhamer's *Just Say Om: A Teenager's Guide*, or read the chapter on meditation in *Houses of Healing: A Prisoner's Guide to Inner Power and Freedom* by Robin Casarjian, one of the authors of this program.
- Even if meditation does feel awkward the first few times, practice builds comfort. Perhaps try leading some friends or colleagues through a meditation before trying it in group.

Facilitators' Notes