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Module One, Session One—

Understanding and Assessing Self-Esteem

Session One Competencies and Objectives

Competencies

The foster parent:

- Understands factors affecting self-esteem.
- Can assess self-esteem and create necessary conditions for positive self-esteem.

Objectives

Session One will enable participants to:

1. Get acquainted with the co-trainers and each other;
2. Understand the relationship between this Foster PRIDE module and the entire PRIDE training program;
3. Describe the meanings of self-concept and self-esteem;
4. Explain how self-esteem is developed;
5. Identify factors that affect a child's self-concept and self-esteem;
6. Assess a child's self-esteem and the factors affecting it; and
7. State why children in need of family foster care are at risk in the area of self-esteem.

Resource 1-2

Session One—Agenda

Part I: Welcome and Introductions (50 minutes)

- A. Welcoming remarks and participant introductions
- B. Use of the PRIDEbook
- C. Purpose of this Foster PRIDE Module
- D. Review of session objectives and agenda
- E. Discussion of teamwork agreements

Part II: Understanding and Assessing Self-Esteem (1 hour and 50 minutes, including 15-minute break)

- A. Understanding Self-Esteem
- B. Assessing the Child's Self-Esteem and the Factors Affecting It

Part III: Closing Remarks (15 minutes)

- A. Summary
- B. Preview of next session
- C. Taking PRIDE Activity
- D. End session

Developing a Sense of Self-Esteem

Please circle one response to show whether you agree (A) or disagree (D).

- | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|
| a. | Much of our self-esteem is inherited. | A | D |
| b. | Children's self-concepts are shaped mostly by what their parents and other people important to them say to and about them. | A | D |
| c. | To find out if children have positive self-esteem, listen to what they say about themselves in comparison to others. | A | D |
| d. | Changing a child's self-concept is very difficult, especially after age 10. | A | D |
| e. | You can never praise a child too much. | A | D |
| f. | Criticism always undermines a child's self-esteem. | A | D |
| g. | A foster parent's ability to build a child's self-esteem depends on his or her own self-esteem. | A | D |
| h. | Children and youths needing family foster care are at risk in the area of self-esteem. | A | D |

Assessing Self-Esteem

Think of a child you are taking care of now. Read the questions and try to answer them, based on your experiences with this child. Then take turns discussing your answers with your partner.

1. What is the child's age? _____
2. How long has the child lived with you? _____
3. Why does this child need family foster care?

4. Who, if anyone, has talked to you about the child's self-esteem?

5. Did this discussion happen before the child was placed with you?
Yes _____ No _____
6. Did this discussion happen since the child was placed with you?
Yes _____ No _____
7. Based on what you were told and what you have seen, does this child appear to:
 - i. Feel "I am lovable and worthwhile"?
Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know _____
 - ii. Believe "I am competent, I am responsible"?
Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know _____
8. a. What does the child say or do to make you think the child feels that way (for 7a)?

- b. (for 7b?)

9. What do you think are the possible causes or factors affecting the child's self-esteem?

10. How do you think you could better understand his/her self-esteem?

Understanding Self-Esteem and Risk Factors

I. Understanding Self-Esteem

- A. We can meet the developmental needs of children by assessing and building their self-esteem.
- B. Self-esteem is one part of children's self-concept (all the beliefs and attitudes they have about themselves).
- C. Self-esteem is a feeling that reflects the regard or respect a person has for himself or herself.
- D. It's important to understand self-esteem because the attitudes, beliefs, and feelings children have about themselves powerfully influence their lives.
- E. Self-concept is learned by interacting with other people over a long period of time.
- F. We can assess self-concept by listening and watching for how children express feelings of being lovable, worthwhile, competent, and responsible.
- G. A foster parent's ability to enhance a child's self-esteem depends on his or her own self-concept.

II. Risk Factors for Children in Need of Family Foster Care

Reasons why children in need of family foster care are at risk in the area of self-esteem include:

- A. The trauma of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, or maltreatment directly diminishes self-esteem.
- B. Children may begin to feel worthless and powerless. They may view parents, caregivers, and all adults as unreliable, unresponsive, and rejecting. They develop a world view in which they are unlovable, and their parents or caregivers are hurtful.¹
- C. Children with damaged parent-child attachments often think poorly of themselves. Being attached to parents lets children accept themselves as competent and lovable persons. When children and their parents must be separated, children tend to criticize themselves.
- D. Children who need family foster care are often confused, insecure, and uncomfortable about who they are because of the separation from family, the placement experience, and the reasons for the placement.
- E. Children have difficulty separating themselves from their parents. If they learn that their parents are not valued, they will feel devalued.

- F. In most cases, these children lack information. They may not know why they must leave their families, or for how long. They may have no idea what has to change in order for them to return home. Children may not know what the foster family expects, whom to trust, and whether they are to blame. When children lack information, it is difficult for them to feel worthwhile and competent, and to act responsibly.
- G. Abuse, neglect, and separation affect the child's development. As a result, the child may not experience the satisfaction that comes with accomplishing physical, emotional, social, and intellectual tasks. This can lower a child's self-esteem.
- H. Multiple moves from one family to another increase children's confusion and insecurity.
- I. Cultural identity may suffer if children are placed out of their own culture. Children who are placed with even one family of a different culture can feel confused. Differences may be seen as negative, rather than appreciated and respected.²

Children need a sense of history and pride in their culture and heritage. They need skills to cope with prejudice and racism. Foster parents need to make special efforts to help a child, whose culture is different from their own, stay connected to and value his or her own culture. (Foster PRIDE Core Modules 5 and 7 provide suggestions on how this can be done.)

- J. Not all children in need of family foster care display low self-esteem. Some may be more competent and responsible than children who weren't maltreated. These children have high resiliency, the capacity to bounce back from adversity. Some may demonstrate increased insight, independence, initiative, and creativity.

A Close Look at Self-Esteem

We can help meet the developmental needs of children by building their self-esteem. However, before we can explore ways to build self-esteem, we need to be sure we share an understanding of what self-esteem is and how it develops.

1. What is self-esteem?

Self-esteem is one part of our self-concept. Self-concepts are our beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about ourselves. They represent the picture we have of ourselves, and how we think and feel about who we are. Self-esteem is the evaluative component of one's self-concept, the way we assess our worthiness. It is the regard and respect we have for ourselves.

2. Why is it important to understand self-concept and self-esteem?

The beliefs, attitudes, and feelings we have about ourselves powerfully influence every aspect of our lives. They shape who we are, what we think we are, what we do, and what we can become. How we behave, learn, relate to others, meet our needs, work, solve problems, and play are all shaped by our beliefs and feelings about ourselves. The perceptions and feelings you have about yourself make you an individual, unique and separate from all other people.

The essence of self-esteem and its influence over our lives is expressed in the statement, "When I like myself, I don't hurt myself or others." When we don't like ourselves (when our self-esteem is low or negative), we do things that hurt people. We do not act in ways that would make us better or happier.³ As members of a professional team working to meet children's needs, we must value self-esteem, and understand how a person's self-concept grows and changes.

3. How is a child's self-concept developed?

Self-concept is mostly learned by interacting with other people over time. Children begin to gather information about themselves and their world from the earliest moments of life. Their feelings about themselves are learned through interactions with people important in their lives. Children gain their sense of self from the attitudes they see in the faces of those who care for them. Parents and caregivers are the child's first mirrors. When they pay attention, cuddle, smile, sing, talk, and provide food, clothing, and safety, the child begins to feel valued.⁴

These communications can help the child feel "I am worthwhile; I am lovable."⁵ A child's sense of being loved, valued, and secure depends upon how the parent or caregiver expresses caring. When children's basic needs are not met, when children are neglected or abused, treated indifferently or ignored, they will view themselves as unworthy and unlovable.

4. How do words affect self-concept?

As children grow, they react to people near them such as parents, brothers and sisters, friends, relatives, neighbors, and teachers. They may hear spoken messages such as "I love you," "I like the way you listen," "I can trust you," "You're a cry baby," "You idiot!," "Why can't you be like_____." The messages children hear can be positive or negative. They may be attached or unrelated to a child's behavior.

Verbal messages can convey praise, encouragement, or criticism. Children will take what they hear and weave these messages into a total picture of themselves. They will begin to value themselves to the extent that they have been valued by others. They may conclude that they are lovable and worthwhile, or just the opposite, based on "what they say about me is what I am."

5. What else makes a difference in children's self-concepts?

A child's self-concept also includes a belief about his or her competence and responsibility. Just as children learn they are lovable and worthwhile human beings by what they hear from parents and other important people, they also learn whether to see themselves as competent and responsible human beings. Feelings of self-worth shape children's behavior, and so do beliefs about their competence and sense of responsibility.

A sense of competence means feeling that we have enough skill, knowledge, or experience to cope with situations adequately.⁶ It is developed through repeated interactions with people and the environment. At birth, infants have certain capabilities: for example, they can learn to walk and talk, and get others to respond to their actions. As children grow they gain competence in other areas. However, they must be given the chance to develop additional skills, and the resources and help they need to master them.

Responsibility goes hand-in-hand with competence. Just as children should have opportunities to develop competence, they should be given responsibilities. Children learn responsibility as they become aware that behavior has consequences. As they develop competence, they will realize that they are in control of certain events. They will see that their behavior can affect outcomes. In other words, they are responsible for many things that happen in their lives.

When children develop competence and gain responsibility, they will tend to feel that others believe in their abilities. This will encourage children to do more of the same. This is an example of a "self-fulfilling prophecy," or the idea that children will behave as we expect them to behave. Children may act out the labels they have been given verbally (such as "liar," "bad boy," "thief"). And they may not want to take risks or assume responsibilities if they see others controlling or not trusting their abilities.

Children's self-concepts are shaped by verbal messages and by opportunities to develop competence and responsibility. When these opportunities occur in a climate of love, acceptance, and respect, children will begin to feel, "I am worthwhile, I am lovable." They will come to believe, "I am competent, I am responsible."

6. How does discipline relate to a child's self-concept?

The ways adults try to change a child's unacceptable behavior affect the child's self-concept. Frequent use of physical punishment is strongly associated with a low self-concept. However, discipline that is meant to teach and advance development helps form a positive self-concept. A healthy self-concept results in a child or youth who is self-disciplining.

7. How can I tell if a child has positive self-esteem?

Children who have high self-esteem respect themselves, consider themselves worthy and competent, and feel they belong. When children's self-esteem is low, they do not respect themselves. They believe they are incapable, insignificant, unsuccessful, and not very worthwhile.

Children's behaviors provide a clue to their self-esteem. When they are sure of themselves and like themselves, they are friendly, poised, outgoing, and self-confident. They have no need to misbehave, make trouble, annoy, or destroy. Their social relationships are generally good, they are less likely to be influenced by peers, and they tend to make better decisions.

Children with low self-esteem, on the other hand, may feel isolated, unloved, and defenseless. They view themselves as powerless to get what they want. Often, they become withdrawn and passive.

If we watch overall patterns in a child's life, rather than single events, we can begin to see clues to the level of a child's self-esteem. Over time, people with high self-esteem will be proud of their accomplishments, assume responsibility, tolerate frustrations and misfortunes, and approach new challenges with confidence and enthusiasm. They will take care of and respect personal possessions, practice good hygiene, accept compliments, and show a broad range of emotions.

Children with low self-esteem will avoid situations that provoke fear or anxiety. They will demean their own talents, blame others for shortcomings or failings, be influenced easily by others, be defensive and easily frustrated, and feel powerless and victimized. Children with low self-esteem will provoke situations that bring negative consequences such as rejection, and generally will not comply with established rules or procedures.

8. How difficult is it to change a child's self-concept?

Children interpret new experiences in light of all their beliefs and attitudes. If new experiences match what they believe, these are included in their self-concepts. On the other hand, if experiences do not match their images of themselves, new information may be ignored or rejected. Sometimes this is good, especially when the child rejects negative messages that do not fit with the child's perceptions of who he/she is. However, this consistency makes change in self-concept extremely difficult, because to change anything significantly, the entire belief system must change.

9. Is giving the child a lot of praise the best way to develop positive self-esteem?

Giving praise is one way to build a child's feelings of being worthwhile, competent, and responsible. However, there are helpful and unhelpful ways to praise, just as there are effective and ineffective types of questions. For praise to work, it must be concrete and specific. It should not be overdone—too much poorly focused praise can backfire.

10. Will criticism always damage a child's self-esteem?

While constant criticism from caregivers will harm a child's self-esteem, what really matters is the *kind* of criticism given. There are positive and negative forms of criticism. Unhelpful criticism attacks children, and doesn't teach what they did wrong or could have done differently. Helpful criticism involves describing the behavior and its consequences. For example, a foster parent might say to a youth, "When you cursed and hit Jimmy, you hurt him and made him feel bad, and you didn't solve your problem. What's another way for you to express your anger?"

Some people believe it is wrong to say anything negative to a child, and that it is almost abusive to say you are disappointed. Others see children as self-adjusting, but in need of accurate feedback. Because these points of view differ in how to give feedback, we will examine this skill later.

11. Is there anything we should know about our self-concepts so we can help children develop positive self-esteem?

Some experts say that if you think well of yourself, you're likely to think well of others. Those who accept themselves tend to accept others. Our self-concepts are evident to others around us. This can have a great impact on children who see us as models and mentors. As members of a professional team we should model positive self-esteem. We can show children, by how we speak and act, how people with a high regard for themselves live their lives.

12. Do all children in need of family foster care have low self-esteem?

Self-esteem is harmed by physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, or maltreatment. Often, children and youths believe that they are responsible for these actions because they are not lovable or worthwhile. These negative feelings make them feel incompetent. They lead to irresponsible ways of getting their needs met.⁷

However, not all children in need of family foster care possess low self-esteem. Some may be more competent and responsible than children who weren't maltreated. Research on resiliency, the capacity to bounce back from adversity, has shown that children of mentally or emotionally disturbed, or chemically dependent, parents learn to watch out for themselves and grow strong in the process. In fact, they may demonstrate increased insight, independence, initiative, and creativity.

The key point is that resiliency doesn't emerge in a vacuum. Caregivers can and must help children develop their strengths. During our next session we will focus on what we can do to develop resiliency and reduce risk in the area of self-esteem.

Taking PRIDE Activity One—Getting To Know Me

INSTRUCTIONS:

Insight into ourselves can emerge when we say whatever "pops into our heads first." Take a few moments to complete these sentences by writing whatever comes to mind. There are no right or wrong responses, just honest ones. We will discuss this activity the next time we meet. And, when we do, you may choose to share only the information you feel okay about sharing.

1. What I want most out of any friendship is _____
2. I feel significant when _____
3. I take pride in my role as _____
4. What I cherish most about my past or heritage is _____

5. What makes me different from anybody else is _____

6. What people admire most about me is _____
7. I feel competent when _____
8. I have the power to _____
9. I would like to have the responsibility of _____
10. I value _____
11. To be considered a "role model" a person _____
12. One thing about me that I hope a child will respect and try to imitate is _____

End Notes

¹R.J. Delancy, Fostering Changes: Treating Attachment Disordered Foster Children, 1991, p. 21.

²Ibid.

³S. Meltsner, "Building Positive Self-Esteem." Foster Care Journal, February, 1987, p. 16.

⁴K. Kersey, Katherine, The Art of Sensitive Parenting, January, 1987, p. 27.

⁵R.Abidin, Parenting Skills Trainer's Manual, 1982, p. 10.

⁶Ibid. p. 19.

⁷E. Pasztor, M. Polowy, M. Leighton, Ultimate Challenge, 1992, p. 75.

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Module One, Session Two—

Building Self-Esteem and Understanding Behavior

Session Two Competencies and Objectives

Competencies

The foster parent:

- Can assess self-esteem and create necessary conditions for positive self-esteem.
- Can create a supportive, accepting environment,
- Can provide unconditional positive support.
- Can help child identify and build upon personal strengths.
- Can help child develop social relationships.
- Can use community resources to promote child's positive social relationships.
- Understands the relationship between behavior and meeting needs; can assist child in meeting needs responsibly.
- Can promote child's positive sense of identity, cultural norms and values.

Objectives

Session Two will enable participants to:

- Identify the four basic conditions necessary for high self-esteem;
- Use an instrument to assess the presence of the four conditions for high self-esteem;
- Describe ways to create a sense of connectedness, uniqueness, power, and models;
- Define the meaning of behavior;
- List the needs that motivate or underlie behavior; and
- Explain the relationship between self-concept, self-esteem, the four conditions for self-esteem, and meeting needs through purposeful behavior.

Resource 2-2

Session Two Agenda

Part I: Welcome and Building Bridges (45 minutes)

- A. Welcome and review of objectives and agenda
- B. Building bridges

Part II: Building Self-Esteem (1 hour 10 minutes, including 15-minute break)

- A. Conditions necessary for high self-esteem
- B. Creating conditions for building self-esteem

Part III: Understanding Behavior (55 minutes)

- A. A look at some behaviors
- B. The meaning of behavior

Part IV: Closing Remarks (10 minutes)

- A. Summary
- B. Preview of next session
- C. Taking PRIDE Activity
- D. End session

Developing and Maintaining the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem

A. Sense of Being Connected

Connectedness means that a person gains satisfaction from significant associations, and these associations are affirmed by others. When we are connected, we identify with a significant person or group of people. We feel part of a past or heritage, including people and places, traditions and customs. Connected to significant others, a group, or a role within a group or family, we tend to feel worthwhile.

Connectedness satisfies the need for personal and cultural identity, both crucial to positive self-esteem. Being connected to others brings recognition, knowing our presence is valued. Probably the greatest of all human needs is to be considered significant, and we may be the only creatures on this planet whose need to be needed is greater than our will to survive. When we don't believe we matter to anyone, we tend to give up, become depressed, turn to self-destructive behavior or hurt others.

Ways to Build a Sense of Being Connected

Identification with a significant person or group

- Encourage and maintain contact with birth parents, siblings, other family members, friends, and others.
- Find out about the child's earlier attachments to significant people. If possible, help maintain those attachments.
- Help the child contact significant persons.
- Prepare the child for visits with family.
- Work with the child's family to gather material for the Lifebook (more information on Lifebooks is included in Foster PRIDE Module 7).
- Invite the child's family to school, recreational, and social events (more information on working with birth families is included in Foster PRIDE Module 5).
- Talk with children about their relationships with family and friends.
- Involve children in your family's group life.
- Help children think through the types of relationships they would like with others.
- Build relationships with children, and use these relationships to teach them about positive relationships.
- Talk with children about what they think a "best friend" is.
- Explore with children why they think people like them. Ask, "What do you do that makes you feel important to others?"
- Encourage children to join groups where they can practice cooperation and teamwork.
- Explore opportunities for joining clubs, sports teams, or band.
- Recognize children for their membership in a group.

- Talk with the child about groups you belong to, and point out the benefits.
- Discuss "team" and "teamwork" with children, encouraging them to identify the qualities of a "good team."
- Suggest ways children can volunteer their time and talents.
- Work with children to identify the tasks and responsibilities they can do around the house.
- Recognize the child's contributions to family, group, and home life.
- Use family discussion time to share needs and feelings, discuss interests, solve problems, promote cooperation, and plan family life.
- Encourage and help the child to participate in school and community activities
- Let children know how pleased you are when they relate well to others.

Feeling part of a past or heritage

- Encourage the child to keep in touch with former friends, support people, and caregivers.
- Develop and maintain Lifebooks (covered in another PRIDE session).
- Use books, pictures, stories, and conversation to help children value the events and experiences of their lives.
- Help children recognize and appreciate their cultural heritage.
- Observe cultural traditions, holidays, and rituals. Support the child's role in these occasions.
- Support the child's involvement in religious organizations. Respect the observance of special religious events and dietary restrictions associated with religious practices.
- Use a world map or globe to show children where their ancestors may have lived.
- Encourage the child to talk about favorite places.
- Show an interest in the personal treasures or mementos that children bring with them. Encourage children to tell you about them, and listen attentively.

B. Sense of Uniqueness

Uniqueness is a special sense of self. People who have it acknowledge and respect qualities that make them different. In turn, they are respected and admired by others for having those qualities. People who possess this special sense of self believe there is no one else on earth who is exactly like them. They don't spend time or energy trying to be like anyone or everyone else.

Having a sense of uniqueness means that you have a high regard for your own individuality. You feel there is something special about you, and you know that others think so too. The sense of uniqueness builds your feeling of being worthwhile, and adds to your belief that you are competent, especially when you believe you can do something no one else can do.

Ways to Build a Sense of Uniqueness

- Encourage differentness.
- Find an area in which each child can excel. Support and encourage the child to build upon it.
- Avoid comparing children, or asking them why they can't be like someone else.
- Treat each child as an individual with his or her own strengths and needs, and unique characteristics. This validates the child as a separate person.

- Avoid “group blame.” Don’t automatically lump everyone together when one or a few children behave in a certain way.
- Give each child some special chore or task important for family life.
- Encourage children to seek to improve their skills week by week. If they can excel in something that is different from what others choose, competition and discouragement can be reduced.
- Support the child's interest and hobbies.
- Avoid showing disappointment if the child doesn't enjoy the same things you do.
- Enjoy and encourage a child’s positive differences.
- Spend quality time alone with each child every day.
- Affirm the child by what you say (for example, "I like you," "You're special," "I care about you," "You're important") and what you do (hugs and pats). Do this independently and apart from the child's behavior.
- Focus on talents and manage non-talents. When you try to develop non-talents you turn them into weaknesses.
- Allow children to personalize their bedroom or space.
- Communicate acceptance (unconditional positive regard) of the child, even at times when the child's behavior must be limited
- Provide immediate, specific, and sincere praise as a positive reinforcer.

C. Sense of Power

Feelings of power come from knowing that you have the capacity and opportunity to influence your own situation, and the circumstances of your life. People with a sense of power feel that they have a substantial amount of control over their lives, and believe that they can use special skills in challenging situations. They realize that they have choices, can make decisions, and are responsible for their decisions and their behavior.

Having a sense of power makes us more willing to take risks, and risk-taking helps us feel competent and responsible.

Ways to Build a Sense of Power.

- Encourage children to take risks.
- Avoid doing for them what they can do for themselves. Let them have the satisfaction and pride that come as a result of growing independence and self-sufficiency.
- Invite and consider a child's thoughts, feelings, and opinions.
- Encourage children to think for themselves and to figure things out.
- Allow children to make mistakes.
- Encourage their efforts.
- Offer children a broad exposure and many options.
- Create opportunities for a child to demonstrate competency and responsibility.
- Encourage "stick-to-itiveness."
- Involve them in solving problems.
- Praise accomplishments.
- Communicate support (i.e., "you can do it," "great going," "keep on trying").
- Teach self-help skills.

- Help children become effective decision makers.
- Assist children in weighing their choices and examining the consequences.
- Ask children for their views on family life, and activities such as household chores and recreational events.
- Increase a child's responsibilities.

D. Models

Models provide us with examples for our lives by helping us establish values, goals, ideals, and standards. Models are people we know whom we feel are worth imitating. They help us tell good from bad, right from wrong, by embodying the values we hold. These values guide us, and provide a sense of order in our lives.

Models are often mentors who teach us something we need to know, and inspire us. Mentors teach us how to like ourselves, make decisions and be responsible for our lives; they model positive self-esteem.

Foster parents can model positive self-esteem, help children establish values, goals and standard, and teach children how to be competent and responsible.

Ways to Provide Children with Models

- Be an example; act according to your beliefs and principles.
- Introduce children to people you admire.
- Let children interact with noteworthy teachers, religious, and community leaders.
- Discuss the lives of historical leaders.
- Talk with children about their values.
- Let children know where you stand on philosophical, moral, and social issues. When they ask what you think, tell them honestly.
- Help children think through what's important to them.
- Help children face the consequences of their behavior.
- Help children resolve value dilemmas.
- Hold family discussions of values, interests, and beliefs.
- Avoid the trap of "Do as I say, not as I do." Children are influenced less by what we tell them, and more by who we are and what we do.
- Live by the values that you try to teach children.
- Encourage a sense of order and purpose in the family environment. Establish order-keeping tasks or jobs for all family members.
- Do and say things that show the child you feel lovable and worthwhile, and that you believe you are competent and responsible.
- Create and maintain the conditions of being connected, of uniqueness, and of power for yourself. Teach children how to satisfy these conditions for themselves.

Behind Behavior

Read the vignette assigned to you and answer the question: **Why is this child behaving this way?**

Dee

Dee is 9 years old and is in the fourth grade. She has been falling asleep in school the past few days, and was sent to the principal's office today for stealing another student's lunch. Dee's teacher told the principal that "Dee doesn't pay attention in the classroom," and that she "hits other children with the wrappers from the candy bars she sneaks into the room and devours in seconds." The teacher told the principal that Dee is the youngest of six children in her family, and seems to keep to herself. She seems to have few friends in school. Every time Dee has misbehaved she has been disciplined.

Jay

Jay is 15, and lives with his grandmother. His mother was murdered during a botched burglary in their home when he was three years old. His father, whom Jay has never lived with, is in the state prison after the latest of many convictions, some for the sale of illegal drugs. Recently, Jay has joined a gang, and has been suspected of stealing from his grandmother. Although he moves in and out of friendships, those who have known Jay always could depend upon him for things like cigarettes, DVDs, or whatever they enjoyed. Jay's grandmother reacts by making him pay back the money she accuses him of taking from her.

Kay

Kay was physically abused as a young child. She was separated from her family and placed in family foster care at an early age, and has moved several times from one foster family to another. The moves were caused by a severe illness of one foster parent, the harsh discipline of another, and the relocation of a third foster family. As she has grown older, Kay has become aggressive. She starts fights with peers by calling them names and saying bad things about their families. She usually picks on smaller or younger children in school and in the neighborhood. She does whatever she can to avoid unfamiliar tasks, and new or different people or places. She has defaced school property and comes home later than curfew quite often. The school officials want to suspend her from school.

Al

Al is a 13-year-old honor student who has lived with the See foster family for five months. He and his two younger brothers were placed in family foster care when their mother entered a residential drug treatment program. Their father is dead. Al has always worked hard to take care of his brothers, to help around the house, and to complete his school assignments. He gets extremely upset when anyone, especially his teachers and foster parents, suggests what he should do or what he should like. Recently, his teachers have complained that he isn't as serious as he should be about school, and that he's becoming the "class clown." He has been told to straighten up or he'll lose his extra "free time," earned by students who excel in their studies. Although his foster family enjoys his sense of humor, they're getting tired of the late night pranks he plays on the other children and on them. They have reacted by not letting him watch TV and by sending him to bed early. He still "clowns around."

Underneath Behavior

Read the vignette assigned to you and answer the question: What is the purpose of this behavior?

Dee

Dee is 9 years old and is in the fourth grade. She has been falling asleep in school the past few days, and was sent to the principal's office today for stealing another student's lunch. Dee's teacher told the principal that "Dee doesn't pay attention in the classroom," and that she "hits other children with the wrappers from the candy bars she sneaks into the room and devours in seconds." The teacher told the principal that Dee is the youngest of six children in her family, and seems to keep to herself. She seems to have few friends in school. Every time Dee has misbehaved she has been disciplined.

Jay

Jay is 15, and lives with his grandmother. His mother was murdered during a botched burglary in their home when he was three years old. His father, whom Jay has never lived with, is in the state prison after the latest of many convictions, some for the sale of illegal drugs. Recently, Jay has joined a gang, and has been suspected of stealing from his grandmother. Although he moves in and out of friendships, those who have known Jay always could depend upon him for things like cigarettes, DVDs, or whatever they enjoyed. Jay's grandmother reacts by making him pay back the money she accuses him of taking from her.

Kay

Kay was physically abused as a young child. She was separated from her family and placed in family foster care at an early age, and has moved several times from one foster family to another. The moves were caused by a severe illness of one foster parent, the harsh discipline of another, and the relocation of a third foster family. As she has grown older, Kay has become aggressive. She starts fights with peers by calling them names and saying bad things about their families. She usually picks on smaller or younger children in school and in the neighborhood. She does whatever she can to avoid unfamiliar tasks, and new or different people or places. She has defaced school property and comes home later than curfew quite often. The school officials want to suspend her from school.

Al

Al is a 13-year-old honor student who has lived with the See foster family for five months. He and his two younger brothers were placed in family foster care when their mother entered a residential drug treatment program. Their father is deceased. Al has always worked hard to take care of his brothers, to help around the house, and to complete his school assignments. He gets extremely upset when anyone, especially his teachers and foster parents, suggests what he should do or what he should like. Recently, his teachers have complained that he isn't as serious as he should be about school, and that he's becoming the "class clown." He has been told to straighten up or he'll lose his extra "free time," earned by students who excel in their studies. Although his foster family enjoys his sense of humor, they're getting tired of the late night pranks he plays on the other children and on them. They have reacted by not letting him watch TV and by sending him to bed early. He still "clowns around."

Needs that Motivate Behavior*

All human beings have needs, and these needs must be met in order to live more stable, satisfying lives. These needs drive or motivate our behavior, as we attempt to find a level of satisfaction.

In addition to meeting basic human survival needs, we are driven to meet several psychological needs. Since members of the family foster care team will spend a great deal of time dealing with the behavior of children and youths, all team members involved should have a common frame of reference.

Belonging

We have a strong desire to love and be loved. The need to belong drives us to seek connections to people, groups, roles, and our past or heritage. When we belong we feel lovable and worthwhile.

Power

Probably the most difficult need to meet, it drives our energy to control the environment around us, to make or be involved in decisions which affect our lives, and to leave some impression on this world. It drives us to be heard, to have our ideas recognized, and to have influence and authority.

Freedom

This need revolves around our desire to have choices, to exercise options, and to practice our values. We meet this need when we are not bound to someone or something and when we make decisions.

Enjoyment

This need drives our pursuit of happiness. It directs our actions to seek laughter, recreation, relaxation, and purposeful diversions. Doing things we *don't have to do* helps satisfy this need.

Recognition

This is what drives us to experience praise, notice, admiration, and appreciation. When others let us know that we make a difference, and that what we say and do is meaningful and worthwhile, we meet this need.

* Adapted from W. Glasser, *Control Theory: A New Explanation of How We Control Our Lives*, (NY.: Harper & Row, 1985), pp. 5-18.

Taking PRIDE Activity Two—Building Self-Esteem and Assessing Behavior

Part One: Building the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem

Please record examples of ways in which you attempted to build the four conditions of self-esteem for any of the children in your care. Refer to Resource 2-3 for some suggestions.

CONDITION

MY EXAMPLE

A. Being Connected

B. Uniqueness

C. Power

D. Models

Part Two: Assessing Behaviors

1. Please record at least three "unacceptable behaviors" of a child for whom you provide care. These behaviors may have happened either before or after the last PRIDE session.
2. In the middle column, write the possible needs that the child may have been attempting to meet through these behaviors.
3. In the last column, record how you or others responded to these behaviors.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR**POSSIBLE NEED****REACTIONS**

1.

2.

3.

FOSTER

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Module One, Session Three—

Communicating with Children and Youth (Part I)

Session Three Competencies and Objectives

Competencies

The foster parent:

- Can provide unconditional positive support.
- Understands the relationship between meeting needs and behavior; can assist child in meeting needs responsibly.
- Knows the elements of, and barriers to, effective communication; can promote effective communication.

Objectives

Session Three will enable participants to:

1. Describe what they did to build the four conditions for positive self-esteem with children in their care;
2. Identify the needs motivating the behaviors of children in their care;
3. Describe the relationship of communication skills to other interpersonal skills, and to building and maintaining relationships;
4. Define effective communication;
5. Identify the components of the communication process;
6. Identify their personal experiences with the communication process;
7. Identify roadblocks to effective communication; and
8. Explain ways to improve communication.

Resource 3-2

Session Three Agenda

Part I: Welcome and Building Bridges (40 minutes)

- A. Welcome and review of objectives
- B. Building bridges

Part II: An Introduction to Communication (2 hours 10 minutes, including 15-minute break)

- A. Looking at personal experiences with communication
- B. The relationship of communication skills to other interpersonal skills and to building and maintaining relationships
- C. Definition of effective communication
- D. Communication roadblocks
- E. Identifying ways to promote effective communication

Part III: Closing Remarks (10 minutes)

- A. Summary
- B. End session

A Look at My Experiences with Communication

1. Think about your own habits and experiences with communication. Was there ever a time when you communicated a message to another person, but the other person did not understand the message the way you meant it? Explain.

2. Have you ever had an incident when you did not understand a message the way another person meant you to? What was the outcome? Explain.

3. What is most difficult about communicating with children and youths?

4. What do you think about your ability to communicate with children and adolescents? What specific skills do you use which you think make you an effective communicator?

5. What would you like to improve or change about the way in which you communicate in general with others?

*Adapted from Child Welfare League of America, *Foundation Training for Child Care Workers*, (New York State Department of Social Services, 1992, unpublished)

Ways to Promote Effective Communication

- Use words and phrases that children understand.
- Convey trust, respect, genuineness, and empathy.
- Make your messages complete and specific.
- Organize your thoughts before you speak.
- Take into account the child's perspective so you can phrase your message effectively.
- Avoid including too many (and sometimes unrelated) ideas in your messages.
- “Own” your messages by using pronouns like “I” or “My” when conveying your feelings, thoughts, or ideas.
- Make sure your nonverbal messages don't interfere with or contradict your verbal messages.
- Check with the child (ask for feedback) to see if your messages are being received as you intended to send them.
- Listen, listen, listen.
- Understand that it's okay when there is silence during your communication.
- Pay full attention, maintaining eye contact, but avoiding staring.
- Be sensitive to the child's “space comfort zone.” Don't intrude in it, but don't be too far removed from the child.
- Try not to interrupt or distract the child.
- Avoid thinking about your reply before listening to everything the child has to say.
- Avoid evaluating whether the child or youth is right or wrong before you fully understand the message.
- Listen for and reflect the child's feelings.
- Paraphrase what you heard the child express.
- Avoid criticism, blame, and labeling.
- Avoid lecturing, giving orders, diagnosing, and preaching.
- Understand and be responsive to the child's nonverbal communication.
- Use effective questions.

FOSTER

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Module One, Session Four— Communicating with Children and Youth (Part II)

Session Four Competencies and Objectives

Competencies

The foster parent:

- Can provide unconditional positive support.
- Can use interpersonal skills to build relationships, help child cope with feelings, meet developmental needs, instill discipline.

Objectives

Session Four will enable participants to:

1. Describe attending behaviors;
2. State how passive listening demonstrates acceptance;
3. Use noncommittal responses and door openers to encourage communication;
4. Describe the reasons why reflective listening is a valuable communication technique;
5. Identify the feelings that underlie messages;
6. Use reflective listening;
7. Identify the elements of nonverbal communication; and
8. Use various questioning techniques.

Resource 4-2

Session Four Agenda

Part I: Welcome and Building Bridges (30 minutes)

- A. Welcome and review of objectives and agenda
- B. Building bridges

Part II: Communicating Your Understanding (1 hour 50 minutes, including 15-minute break)

- A. Linking attending behaviors with involved listening
- B. Use of passive listening to convey acceptance and understanding
- C. Use of noncommittal responses and door openers to encourage communication
- D. Reflective listening
- E. The importance of being aware of nonverbal communication

Part III: Questioning as Part of Communication (30 minutes)

- A. Overview
- B. Other ways to ask "Why?"

Part IV: Closing Remarks (10 minutes)

- A. Summary
- B. Instructions for participant evaluation
- C. End session

Reflection of Feeling and Content

Below are a number of statements and three possible responses. Select the best example of a reflective listening response. Discuss what was wrong with the other two answers.

1. Can you believe this? I got picked to play on the team that I really wanted to play on, but I didn't think I would be chosen.
 - a. It's great that you did.
 - b. You must be very happy about that.
 - c. It sounds as though you're really excited about getting picked.

2. I don't care what you think, my mother and I can take care of ourselves. I don't need foster care, and I'm not staying.
 - a. Why don't you want to be in a foster family? What do you think will happen?
 - b. You're feeling pushed and it's making you angry.
 - c. Maybe you don't want to stay because you don't understand why your mother can't take care of you.

3. I don't have any real friends. Sometimes I don't even want friends. It gets a bit lonely, but I can't find anybody I really want to be my friend.
 - a. Maybe your not wanting friends is just because you haven't found anyone you can trust.
 - b. You're feeling really lonely. You're almost ready to give up because you're so discouraged.
 - c. It is pretty hard to be without friends. I would really work on that.

4. How can I ever live up to my brother and sister? They can do everything better than me.
 - a. You must feel frustrated.
 - b. I hear you saying that you feel inadequate when compared to your brother and sister.
 - c. Their accomplishments seem to overwhelm you.

5. I don't know what is going to happen next. Nothing's going my way, and I'm confused and can't make up my mind what to do now.
 - a. That feeling will disappear in time. For now, just take it one day at a time.
 - b. Things are probably not as bad as you think. I understand that it is all very confusing to you.
 - c. You're confused and upset about what is happening in your life.

6. I'm not really sure why you want to talk to me unless it's because I've been late a few times.
 - a. I'm sure you know why I want to talk with you.
 - b. You think your being late is causing problems.
 - c. Don't you think we should talk about your coming home late?

7. My daughter is 15 and we're having trouble with her. She stays out all night.
 - a. Has your daughter been in trouble with the law?
 - b. I guess you've had a lot of problems with your daughter.
 - c. The fact that your daughter doesn't come home at night is a major problem.

*Adapted from Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Common Core Training. Child Welfare League of America, 1993, unpublished.

Understanding Reflective Listening

What Is It?

Reflective listening is the process of understanding another person's feelings, needs, and experiences. It involves listening to the words and feelings of the sender's message, observing the sender's nonverbal behavior, putting your understanding of what the sender is feeling or experiencing into your own words, and feeding it back to the sender for verification.

The listener feeds back only what he or she understands the sender's message to mean; nothing more, nothing less. The listener does not judge or evaluate and does not tell the sender how the sender should feel.

Why Is It a Valuable Technique?

- It promotes a relationship based on warmth, empathy, and acceptance.
- It helps a child gain perspective by allowing him or her to think through an upsetting situation.
- It facilitates problem-solving by the child.
- It assists the child in developing self-awareness.
- It promotes trust, and conveys concern and respect.
- It encourages the child to continue talking and to self-disclose.
- It influences the child to be more willing to listen to the adult's thoughts and ideas.
- It is a way to identify the child's needs. Behavior is a means to meeting needs. The first step in changing behavior is to identify the needs the child is attempting to meet.

What else should I know about reflective listening?

- You must want to hear what the child has to say.
- Be willing to take the time to listen.
- Accept the child's feelings, whatever they are, even if they differ from yours.
- Trust that the child has the ability to handle his or her own feelings.
- Trust in the child's ability to attempt to find his or her own solutions to problems.
- Put aside your own feelings temporarily.
- Reflect both verbal and nonverbal messages.
- Use a variety of phrases, such as "you feel," "it sounds like," "you look_____."

Nonverbal Communication

Body Language

Orientation, positioning, and motion of the body (for example: moving toward or away from someone, crossing arms over chest, or constant foot tapping)

Gestures

These add expression to verbal content (for example: hand movements and head nods)

Facial Expressions

Eye contact, gaping mouth, raised eyebrows, biting lip, smile.

Environmental Language

Messages sent with clothes, jewelry, and makeup or the arrangement of the space

Vocal Cues

Tone of voice, pace of speech, vocal irregularities like stuttering or repetition of words, loudness of voice.

Points to Remember:

- Nonverbal behavior is subject to cultural standards, values, biases, and experiences. Cultural aspects of communication include the use of personal space, touching, eye contact, body movement, and the timing of verbal exchanges.
- Nonverbal behavior is often ambiguous, so interpreting it is difficult. Be cautious about making assumptions.
- Be aware of your own nonverbal behavior and the messages it may convey.
- Make a conscious effort to pay attention to the nonverbal behavior of others.
- Keep your nonverbal communication consistent with your verbal message. Reflect any inconsistencies between the child's verbal and nonverbal communications.
- Remember that reflective listening includes reflecting nonverbal elements as well as the child's verbal messages.

Why Not Why?

Change the following list of “why questions” into questions with “what” or “how.”

1. Why did you do that?
2. Why are you so quiet?
3. Why haven't you visited your son?
4. Why are you so disorganized?
5. Why don't you do your homework?
6. Why did you lie to me?
7. Why do you hit other kids?
8. Why would you say such a thing?
9. Why don't you talk to her and find out?
10. Why are you looking at me that way?

*Adapted from Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Common Core Training. Child Welfare League of America, 1993, unpublished.

Types of Questions

Effective Questions

Open-ended questions allow the child a variety of responses—expressions of fact, feeling, motivation, concerns. They cannot be answered with a yes or no. They encourage openness and disclosure, but may involve a lot of time. Open-ended questions may begin with "what," "how," "could," or "can."

Example: How do you feel about your teacher?

Closed-ended questions ask for a fact and can generally be answered with a "yes," or "no," or a simple statement. Closed-ended questions take less time to gather information than open-ended questions, but limit the child's response options, and the opportunity to expand upon his or her reply.

Examples: Do you like your teacher?
 How old are you?"

Statement questions imply the need for information, but do not actually ask the question. They are best used when the issue is sensitive, and a direct question might offend the child. However, it risks confusing the child.

Example: I was wondering how you feel about your teacher.

Reflective questions restate what you think you heard the child express. This is similar to reflective listening in that you put your understanding of the message in the form of a question for clarification. Reflective questions are helpful when a sensitive issue is being discussed, but may be more time-consuming than direct questions.

Example: You really miss your family, don't you?

Ineffective Questions

These put the child “in a box,” or invite defensive responses.

Double/multiple questions are usually two questions separated by “and” or “or.” The child may feel forced in his or her response, and may give a confusing answer.

Example: Are you afraid of him, or are you glad he’s gone?

Bombarding questions ask the child more than one thing at a time. The child will usually answer only one, generally the last or least sensitive question. Sometimes this is caused by our own anxiety to obtain all the information all at once.

Example: How is school? Do you like your teacher? Are the kids friendly? What don’t you like about it?

Why questions virtually guarantee a defensive response from the child. Why questions imply a judgment and may cause the child to lie in order to supply a reason or excuse for a behavior or feeling.

Example: Why don't you just talk to her about it?

Loaded questions masquerade as questions, but are really judgments and opinions of the person asking the question. They are manipulative, create defensiveness, and may damage your relationship with the child.

Example: Have you always had trouble telling the truth?

Leading questions try to force a particular response from the child. They imply the answer and lead the child into agreement. Later, the child may be accused of lying when his behavior contradicts his answer to this “question.”

Example: Don't you think this school is the best?