

THE HAPPY HELPING HAND MANUAL

For Teachers / Psycho Social Staff /
Facilitators

Dr. Solfrid Raknes



What is The Helping Hand Program?

This manual is providing tips and advices on how to use the Helping Hand, a digital game for adolescents, created to increase social and emotional skills and prevent mental health disorders.

In The Helping Hand the player helps virtual friends to master challenges, such as fear of giving presentations, dealing with criticism, suicidal thoughts, and bad memories. By groundbreaking learning technology, the game takes players through a series of life-like scenarios to reinforce positive decision-making, facilitate talking about feelings and thoughts, and asking for help when needed. Simultaneously, the players learns a flexible cognitive behavioral problem solving system that can be applied in all emotional challenging situations in all life phases.

The game-playing element is popular and suitable for young people, a familiar arena to play, learn and explore, and also facilitates dialogues about themes that typically are avoided, but important to address. The Helping Hand is also exceptionally scalable in that the content is universal, accessible on any mobile device, and can be distributed digitally at a minimal additional cost per user. It works good as a standalone solution and is great tool for teachers and psychosocial staff.

The game is based on Psykologisk Forstehjelp (Raknes, 2010), a psychosocial program for children and adolescents developed and broadly disseminated in Norway. The concept has won a number of awards, has been translated into several languages. User involvement has been crucial in developing the game and the associated material. The evidence base demonstrates that the Helping Hand can lead to increased wellbeing, improved social and emotional skills, and significant reduction of anxiety and depression symptoms across economic, cultural and religious divides.

My warmest greetings

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The Helping Hand Problem Solving System

The Helping Hand can give an overview that can make the situation easier to deal with.

Thumbs - What's up?

Identify the problem. Try to describe the situation in a neutral and precise way.

The index finger - Feelings

Put words into emotion(s) and their intensity on a scale from 1–10, and describe how you know this feeling in your body.

The middle finger - Red thoughts

Not helpful thoughts that might make the situation more difficult to deal with.

The ring finger - Green thoughts

Helpful and rational thoughts that make coping easier.

Little finger - What can I do?

All kinds of ideas on what can make you happy and confident in the longer perspective. Advices you would give to a friend in the same situation.

Palm - Who can help me?

Who can you talk to, get advice from, who can give you comfort? Who are your supporters?

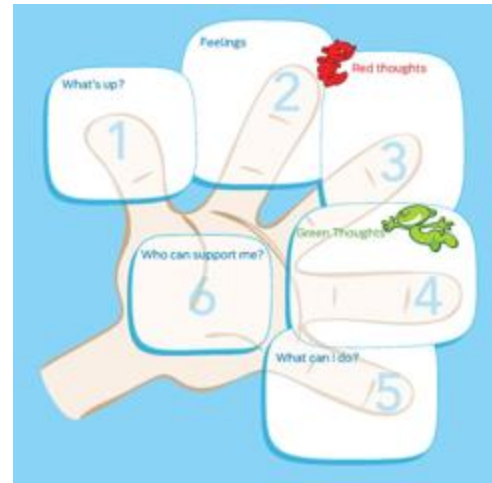


Figure 1 The Helping Hand problem solving system

SESSION BY SESSION

Table 1. Ten scenarios in HH application and associated learning goals.

Session	Theme	Main learning goals
All sessions	The Helping Hand	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raising awareness on identifying the emotions and the way of sharing them. 2. Raising awareness of the relationship between situation, feelings, thoughts and behavior. 3. Raising awareness of automatized thinking, and learning about negative automatic thoughts (<i>red thoughts</i>) and helpful thoughts (<i>green thoughts</i>). 4. Improving coping strategies and skills for use in emotional difficult situations by using The Helping Hand problem solving system (see Figure 1). 5. Improving social skills, communication skills included.
1	Presentation anxiety	Learn that fear of presentations can be reduced by practice, and that making mistakes is a necessary part of improving presentation skills.
2	Dealing with criticism	Learn how to give and receive criticism in ways that facilitate learning and strengthen relationships.

3	Rejection	Increase awareness on your inner dialogue, and how we can talk ourselves up and down. Strengthen skills to initiate and develop healthy relationships.
4	Depressed mother	Increase health literacy, and decrease stigma about depression. Learn to identify pessimistic and optimistic thought patterns. Learn that unhelpful thoughts can be questioned, and that destructive thought patterns can be challenged.
5	Heartbroken	Increase awareness of social support and active coping strategies when suffering from painful loss.
6	Good enough?	Identify what you like with yourself and others, and get experiences in talking about that. Practice giving and receiving compliments.
7	Bullying and racism	Empower adolescents to stand up against bullying, harassment and racism.
8	Suicidal thoughts	Increase awareness of the need for support when suicidal thoughts appear, and practice how to support friends in very hard times.
9	Bad memories	Increase awareness of how traumatic memories can create hardship, and learn that a non-judging attitude towards emotions can make it easier to live in peace with the past.
10	Daring to tell your opinion	Learn about group pressure, and reflect on the value of standing up for what you think is right.

SCENARIO 1: PRESENTATION ANXIETY

Giving a presentation is the situation most frequently feared by adolescents at school. Skills to support anxious friends, and to face activities and situations we want to master, can make a difference for well-being, health and learning for each and every adolescent, and for the community. Society needs brave young people who dare to speak up, and all voices are important!



Summary of the story

Nora is anxious about giving a school presentation. She is considering not going to school to avoid the presentation, and is talking to Adam about what makes her so scared. The gamer can support Nora to choose to give the presentation, and to make a plan to become less afraid of giving presentations. Her mother, her teacher and her friends can be good helpers when she is working on reducing her anxiety for giving presentations.

Main learning goals, Session 1

Learn that fear of presentations can be reduced by practice, and that making mistakes is a necessary part of improving presentation skills.

Questions to repeat content

What physical symptoms can be experienced when fearing presentation? Answer: Stomach pain, nausea, difficulties of concentration, shivering

How should you talk to a person who is anxious about something? Answer: Be supportive and explorative, provide your advices, use open ended questions

What are red thoughts? Answer: Thoughts that make us more scared, embarrassed, insecure, or sad than we need to be. Red thoughts typically make the emotions go higher and the situation more difficult to handle.

What are green thoughts? Answer: Helpful thoughts. Green thoughts make you feel safe, happy, confident and caring. Green thought can help you do what you want and to achieve your goals. Green thoughts are helpful in the longer run.

Typical red thoughts when you are afraid of giving presentations

- I'm going to make a fool of myself
- Everyone in the class will think I'm stupid
- I will get a bad grade
- I will fail
- Everybody will laugh
- Everyone will notice how sweaty and red I look
- Everyone will notice my stuttering and bad pronunciation

Useful green thoughts when one is afraid to giving presentations

- It will be fun!
- I will be successful!

- Everyone who is good at giving presentations has made a lot of mistakes
- If things don't go well, I can stand that too
- I'm brave when I'm doing something I'm scared of
- Giving presentations will be easier when I have done it many times
- Practicing often will make me feel safer and also will help me to improve my skills
- Learning how to cope with this anxiety will also help me to cope with similar situations
- Normally when I feel stressed, it is not visible
- Those who are listening to my presentation will be interested in what I say

FOR DISCUSSION

- How do identify that you are scared? What do you feel in your body?
- In what situations other than at school is it good to be able to cope with giving presentations or speeches?
- What advantages does coping with giving presentations give people?
- Tell about something you used to be been anxious for, and how your anxiety was reduced.

ACTIVITIES

Complete a Helping Hand. Identify a situation that made you feel afraid, but that actually was not dangerous. Complete a Helping Hand to get an overview of how you coped with the situation.

Create a training plan to reduce anxiety about giving presentations.

Use these following advices when making your plan:

- Instead of avoiding your fears: Face them, step by step, practice a gradual approach
- Practice often, preferably every day
- Practice tolerating mistakes! Everyone who is good at something has made many mistakes

Thoughts from the psychologist

Support and positive expectations and knowledge about how to practice to reduce anxiety, is enough for most adolescents to develop. Receiving a bit more support to accept challenges, can crucial for adolescents to get mastery experiences. Anxious adolescents typically need steady support to face their fears. Accepting challenges, and gradually doing more of these things the anxiety tells the adolescent to avoid, is the standard way to reduce anxiety and increase self-confidence.

Anxiety in adolescence is associated with poor school outcomes, increased risk of dropping out of school and working life, as well as anxiety, depression, suicide and substance abuse in adulthood. Research shows that anxiety can be reduced through psychosocial programs. When anxiety is reduced in adolescents, associated adulthood difficulties are prevented.

Some anxious adolescents live with the burden of very painful experiences, and can be in need of help to deal with post traumatic memories.

Some anxious adolescents are living with ongoing threats. When people are facing potentially traumatizing situations, focusing on reducing the risk and changing the situation is usually much more crucial and timely than focusing on how the adolescent deals with it.

Box 1

Nora's Training Plan

Every day for the next time

Answer at least one question each school session/ say something at least once every day I'm at school

Once until we meet in a week

Give a presentation without a script for Adam

Give a presentation for my class. Talk loudly and clearly, as freely as I can

Reminders

Install my own green thoughts on a poster above my bed and on my cell phone so that they are every morning

Box 2

The term *anxiety* is used for fear that is exaggerated in relation to amount of danger in the situation in which it arises. The term *anxious adolescents* is used about adolescents who are troubled with anxiety and frequently worried. Anxious adolescents will typically avoid situations they find challenging, and often interpret unknown situations as dangerous. Facing challenges is important for the adolescent's learning, well-being and development.

Teacher's practical corner

First I placed myself on a chair in the midst of the classroom and introduced myself. Then I invited the students to go into "the hotspot" and present themselves for the other students. Two students accepted the challenge, the others did not want to.

Then I divided the students in groups of 3 – 4, and they played the game about Nora who was scared of giving presentations. After they had played the scenario, I drew the Helping Hand on the whiteboard. The students used their own hand to share their feelings and thoughts about giving presentations. Then I asked them to make a presentation of themselves from "the hot spot". Before the session was completed, they had all presented themselves. It was a wonderful start of the program!

SCENARIO 2: HANDLING CRITICISM

The way criticism is handled can affect relationships, learning and well-being. Learning from criticism, and offering friendly, constructive criticism is something that can be practiced. Learning how to deal with criticism in a constructive way, is important for developing close relationships, for collaborative, strong relationships at school and work, and for long lasting good friendships.



Summary of the story

Nora is harshly criticized by her father, and responds with feeling angry and hurt. By thinking "behind" the words her father, she manages to see that he gives criticism because he loves her. In the next talk between Nora and her father, she tells him about her reactions to the criticism. The relationship between them Nora and her father improves when he learns about Nora's feelings and understands how he can help her.

Main learning goals, Session 2

Learn how to give and receive criticism in ways that facilitate learning and strengthen relationships.

Summary points at the end of the story

- It's normal to get upset and angry when criticized
- Learn from the criticism and try to see the intention behind it
- Use gentle words when offering criticism

Questions to repeat content

What factors can influence whether or not you are close to criticism? Answer: Whether it comes from a person you love, how the criticism is communicated, whether one feels it is fair or not.

How can one be better at coping with criticism? Answer: Remember that there is usually a thought behind the criticism given. Try to understand the person who criticizes you, confront the person if you feel hurt.

Feedback. If the "wrong" option is chosen in this scenario, the following feedback appears:

- Normally it is not smart to say ugly things about your friends' parents
- When a friend is upset: Give support until you can tell that your friend is calmer. Do not give criticism while somebody is very upset.

Other tips for constructive criticism

- Listen actively to criticism
- Ask for clarification by questioning: What do you mean by that?
- Choose appropriate time and place when you offer criticism; Choose a place where you have time to talk without being disturbed

- Give the criticism while it is still relevant. Don't wait for months to offer people you care about the opportunity to learn!

Typical red thoughts when criticized

- I'm stupid
- S/he doesn't understand anything
- S/he doesn't like me
- S/he will become nasty towards me
- I'm not able to do anything, I'm a fool
- It's my fault

Useful green thoughts to benefit from criticism

- There is always something that can be learned from criticism
- Everyone makes mistakes, including these who are offering criticism
- Criticism is a sign that someone cares
- What good intentions can be hidden behind the criticism?
- The fact that the criticism was not given in a good way does not mean that I cannot learn anything from it
- I don't have to take all critical comments seriously

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Is criticism necessary?

What is criticism?

How can feedback be offered with a low risk for hurting anybody?

Is there any types of criticism that should be ignored?

Is there anything people should not be criticized for?

ACTIVITIES

Roleplay: Ask the students to work in groups to create a small play where criticism is given in various ways: Firstly, criticism offer criticism as if you are not interested, then angrily, then with sarcasm, then as if you were a victim. Secondly: give criticism in various positive ways!

Walk & Talk: Encourage the students to write a note with a red or green thought that can occur when criticized is received, with the factual answer (whether it is a red or green thought) on the back of the note. Ask the students to walk around in the classroom and tell their thoughts to each other, and then guess if the thoughts they hear are red or green. If a student answers incorrectly, the student who write the thought should explain the answer.

Talk or write.

1) Think about a time in your life someone criticized you, and you want to talk with them about the way the criticism was given and what actually was the intention of it. How would you start the conversation? What points would you bring to the table?

2) Think about a situation where you was giving criticism to somebody. What was the purpose of the criticism? Could you have articulated yourself in a better way, chosen a better place for the conversation, or a better time?

Complete a Helping Hand. Think about a situation you were criticized or offered criticism to overview all emotions and thoughts.

Make an information brochure digitally about criticism. The students can work individually or in groups.

Write a short story or poem on criticism.

The psychologist shares thoughts

Receiving and giving feedback is a part of everyday life - more or less consciously - when people are together. Feedback is given both by body language and words. Feedback is needed to develop thoughts, attitudes and to become aware of our own and other people's feelings. Being completely ignored, *not* getting feedback, is typically very difficult to handle. People who do not get enough *positive* feedback, can be pushed into destructive behavior just to get any kind of response. Receiving criticism can trigger feelings of guilt, shame and inferiority, especially for young people with low self-esteem. Practicing how to give and receive criticism constructively is both demanding and important for young people and are essential skills for creating more healthy communities in a modern, fast changing world.

Teacher's practical corner

I started the session with pretending I was an angry father at home, yelling and accusing my children for wasting all their time on their phones. All my students could identify with the theme, my role play created energy and my group gladly wanted to share similar stories from their homes. Not being understood by parents is high frequent among my students. The introduction was a wonderful way to introduce the theme of how to handle criticism, and made the adolescents eager to play the scenario about Nora and her father. They played groups wise. After the game, they completed a Helping Hand individually on paper, based on a situation where they had received critique. Then we roleplayed bad and good ways to offer and receive critique. A fun and important session!

SCENARIO 3: DEALING WITH REJECTION

Who we dare to try to make friends with, and how we go along when creating friendships, affect our feelings and opportunities for fun, learning and wonderful experiences. To be ignored and rejected will happen to everybody, and can be painful and sad. Initiating contact with people and coping with rejection are skills that can be practiced and encouraged, and can make the community more welcoming and safe.



Summary of the story

Adam is afraid that nobody likes him. He resolves his fear by withdrawing from social life. When Nora does not greet him in the school yard, he becomes embarrassed and sad. The gamer helps him to speak more friendly to himself, and encourages him to take more social initiatives.

Main learning goals, Session 3

Increase awareness on *the inner dialogue*, and how we can talk ourselves up and down.
Strengthen skills to initiate and develop healthy relationships.

Questions to repeat content

What are normal feelings when being rejected? Answer: Shy, scared, confused, sad.

Why does it feel so painful to be rejected? Answer: Human beings are social beings by nature. Rejections can be just as painful as physical pain.

How does the way you speak to yourself affect how you respond to being rejected? Answer: How we interpret what has happened a situation, affects our feelings and what we want to do. Red thoughts make situations where we are rejected more difficult to cope with, green thoughts help us to cope with rejection in constructive ways, in ways that are better in the longer perspective.

Summary points at the end of the story

- Remember that YOU are valuable
- Practice talking friendly and supportive to yourself
- Try to live well with not being liked by everyone all the time. Nobody is liked by everybody!

Typical red thoughts when rejected

- Nobody likes me
- I'm worthless
- I have no friends
- I'm not popular
- I am not valuable

Green thoughts that can be comforting when rejected and encourage contact

- I will find somebody else who is more fun to be with
- I am a valuable human even if I am rejected now

- I will not let other people decide my value
- I'm a good friend for my friends
- Nobody is liked by everybody all the time
- Nobody are invited everywhere
- Other people will need me and like me – I just have to find them!
- I have nothing to lose by talking to strangers
- A stranger can be a friend I do not know yet
- It's always a bit demanding at first when you don't know each other, but it's worth a try!
- Making new friends is fun!

STATEMENTS & PROPOSALS FOR DISCUSSION

What might be the reason why somebody feels the need to reject others?

Can rejection be bullying?

Can it be okay sometimes to reject others?

You should tell adults if you or others are being bullied.

Making new friends is hard work.

Making new friends is fun.

ACTIVITIES

Think about a time when you rejected someone else. What was the reason why?

Think about a time when you were rejected. Complete a Helping Hand to get an overview of the situation, your feelings, thoughts and coping behavior.

Roleplay: Pretend that you do not know each other, and initiate a dialogue. What can be good first sentences to say to initiate a dialogue?

Write five things you like about yourself, and that can be helpful reminders when you get rejected.

Make the students work in groups of 3-5. Create a video that demonstrates three different situations where one can be rejected, followed by advices on how to deal with the rejection for each situation.

Draw a line in the middle of the classroom. One side stands for "Agree" and the other stands for "Disagree." Read statements from the topic (for example, drawn from claims of rejection and bullying in the section above), and allow students to stand to the right or left of the line. The further out you place yourself, the stronger you agree / disagree, and the more towards the middle you place you are uncertain. Ask students explain why they chose that point of view before reading the next statement.

The psychologist shares thoughts

"The fundamental attribution error" is a term used to explain the cause to a *person* rather than a *situation*; and that people and not circumstances are given too much weight. Causal explanations, or attributions, can be made based on person or situation, and they can be categorized as stable over time, or random. When people feel rejected and when people are in conflicts, attributions about how "a person always is" often increase the conflict level, and intensify feelings. It is more difficult to find good solutions and smarter things to do if you think "I am a person nobody likes" than if you think "right then, I did something they did not like".

Teacher's practical corner

After we had played the scenario about Adam, I created a red and a green big space on the whiteboard. I wrote statements about rejection on sheets of paper, and asked students to do the same. After collecting the statements, we read them, and the adolescents categorized them on the whiteboard as red or green thoughts. This activity led to movement and energy in the classroom, and also to engaged discussions. I think the students got a deeper understanding of what red and green thoughts are through this session. The session ended by us completing a Helping Hand about an event where I received few likes when I posted something on Facebook, and I felt upset and got red thoughts about my social status. The adolescents helped me identifying green thoughts, smart things to do, and who could help me. Actually I think this session was helpful and fun for all of us!

SCENARIO 4: MUM IS DEPRESSED

Parental illness affects the whole family. If a parent is sick for a longer period of time, adolescents in the family often get the burden of doing tasks that parents normally are doing, and typically get other concerns than their peers. How can adolescents support each other and themselves when parents are ill? Can *thinking patterns* be trained to cope with illness and other difficulties in life?



Summary of the story

Adams's mum is depressed. When he comes home from school, she is still in bed. The gamer is helping Adam to attribute what is happening based on the mother's situation and to use his caring capacity not only to care for his mother, but also to care for himself.

Main learning goals, Session 4

Increase health literacy, and decrease stigma about depression.

Learn to identify pessimistic and optimistic thought patterns. Learn that unhelpful thoughts can be questioned, and that destructive thought patterns can be challenged.

Questions to repeat content

Do you have any tips for producing green thoughts when life is tough? Answer: Think about what you had said to a friend in the same situation, or what a role model would be thinking in such a situation.

How can it affect a person to have a mentally ill parent? Answer: Some adolescents feel shame if their parent(s) are sick. Irritation, disappointment sadness and worries, and associated sleep problems and concentration difficulties are also normal.

Should you tell your teacher at school if there are ongoing difficulties at home? Answer: If, for example, your school performance is affected due to your situation at home, it may be beneficial for you to let your teacher know about your family situation. Tell an adult at school, one of these you trust, about your situation at home and how you react to it.

Why can it be difficult to tell friends about mentally ill parents? Answer: Fear that friends will not understand the situation, fear that they say bad things about your parents such as "s/he is crazy!", and fear that friends will not provide support and empathy can make it more difficult to talk about mental illness in the family.

What are the reasons why it can be beneficial to share openly with family and friends about a parent's mental illness? Answer: It can increase your friends and families understanding of your situation, their empathy for you. And if and have someone to go to if you need help, you do not carry the burden about the problems all alone.

Summary points at the end of the story

- Doing what you can to help, is good enough
- Try to be open with family and friends about difficulties
- Many adolescents whose parents are depressed, blame themselves for family problems, even if the mental illness of a parent never is the child's fault.

Typical red thoughts when a parent is ill

- It is my fault that mother / father became ill
- There is something wrong with me
- S/ he is better off without me
- S/ he will never get better
- The worst has not happened yet, but is coming...
- No one can be trusted
- Nobody understands how I feel
- I am odd
- I can become like my father / mother
- Nobody has faith in me
- Others will bully me or laugh at me if they know / see what mother / father is now
- Mum / Dad are stupid and bad who gets mental illness
- Mum / Dad doesn't care about me

Green thoughts that can help and comfort when a parent is ill

It is NOT my fault that s/ he is ill

I can accept the illness and learn from it

I am a pleasure for my mum / dad

I can help my mum / dad

Treatment for mental illness is helpful

My friends love me whatever my family situation is like

Life is not simple, but it will become better soon

I can do what I can to feel better

Look at the picture of me and mum/dad when we had a good time

Think of something nice we can do together now or later

The fact that Mum / Dad do no longer stand up for me, is about the illness not about me, nor about them, nor about our relationship

PROPOSAL FOR DISCUSSION

Is it possible to choose whether to let optimistic or pessimistic thoughts dominate your pattern of thoughts?

What can make it more difficult to take care of your own health if your parents are ill?

What can you learn from living with a sick parent, and from a friend who is living with a sick parent?

How can friends be helpful in such a situation?

How are habits created? What do we actually decide ourselves?

What can make it easier to be open about illness in the family?

What can make it more difficult to be open about illness in the family?

ACTIVITIES

Complete at least five Helping Hands based on situations you've experienced the last two days. Focus on the thoughts you have identified. Are your thoughts more negative or more positive?

Ask the adolescents to write notes anonymously about whether they have been affected by someone else's unhappiness during their lifetime. Discuss in the class / group what you can do if your mom or dad is mentally ill.

Write three green and three red thoughts that can occur if a parent is ill.

Invite the students to create an individual art project where they interpret the theme of depression. The finished work can be painting, drawing, photography or sculpture.

Invite students to choose a painting that tells about depression (for example, Munch's "Scream", Picasso's "The Blue Room" or van Gogh's "At Eternity's Gate"). Ask the students to write their interpretation of the painting.

The psychologist shares thoughts

Optimism is associated with better learning, well-being and health. Optimistic thinking can also prevent depression. Optimistic thinking can be trained. The way you talk to yourself is learned in childhood, and can be affected by teachers at school, by the family and by friends. Adolescence is an important time where good habits for thinking can be developed and changed. By actively questioning pessimistic thoughts and taking the chance to work for what you *want* to happen, you train optimism. Dr. Seligman has for decades done research on learned helplessness and learned optimism, and has written good books based on his research, and you can find good podcasts where he is sharing his thoughts too!

Box 1

Teacher's practical corner

After they had played the scenario group wise, two of my students, a girl and a boy, used the possibility to talk with their classmates about their parent's illness. They shared their personal experiences in a way that made their classmates listen to them. Their classmates were very empathic, and I felt that the group came closer after this session. Actually my adolescents knew a lot more about depression than I thought they would do. One of them said that depression can happen to anybody, and that it is good to talk about how to deal with that, even if it is painful. We had a very interactive session, and the engagement in the group told me that they needed to talk about this theme. What I also did in this session, was to divide the class into groups that focused on different fingers on the Helping Hand. That led to more elaborated answers, and excitement when we put it all together. Some of my students really liked the drawing exercise, and several of them used time finishing their drawings back home. I gave them the chance to share the drawings with the group in our next session. Finally, we also talked about how religion can be helpful when there is illness in the family. The good comments and advices students gave each other on accepting life as it, was heartwarming.

SCENARIO 5: A BROKEN HEART

Everybody will experience losses in life. To lose somebody you love, is painful and can paralyze people over time. Losses can trigger depression. To support friends and yourself through grief is important, but can be hard.

Therefore, let us talk about what might be good strategies in dealing with painful losses. Let us address how emotions such as sorrow, meaninglessness, hopelessness, loneliness and powerlessness can be dealt with in a healthy way.



Summary of the story

Nora experiences that Jonas, who she has fallen in love with, doesn't want to become her boyfriend. She responds to the rejection by becoming very upset, and is staying in bed for days. Letting go is painful, and she struggles.

Main learning goals, Session 5

Increase awareness of social support and active coping strategies when suffering from painful loss.

Questions to repeat content

How can you react when you lose someone you love? Answer: Pain, sadness, feeling empty inside, tired, losing appetite

What can be helpful when you are heartbroken? Answer: Being met with understanding, and remembering that all people experience some losses can actually help. To ease the grief, keeping up with everyday routines, attending school, meeting friends, exercising or at least moving a little, talking to friends and using time on hobbies may be helpful.

And what can make the situation worse? Answer: To isolate yourself, to avoid school work, and to avoid doing the things you normally do

Who can you talk to if you have a love affair? Answer: Friends, family, possibly the Helpline

End of story summary points:

- Love is important, that's why losses of our loved ones are so painful
- Don't carry the burden of painful thoughts alone
- When heartbroken, it is extra important to be active and to do something that can give you a feeling of mastery or pleasure

Typical red thoughts if heartbroken

I will never get over this loss

I can't stand this

I will never become happy again

Everything is meaningless

I can't bear to be with anybody

Life is not worth living without this person in my life

Life is too painful

Green ideas that can help and comfort

Eventually it will get better

The feeling of loneliness will fade

Being heartbroken makes me more human

I have the ability to love. I'll take good care of that capacity until I can use it again

Something good will come out of this pain

I learn more about my values from dealing with pain

My experience with pain will help me to meet friends and keep up good routines

PROPOSAL FOR DISCUSSION

- What is good about the capacity to feel sorrow?
- Is it more okay for girls to show emotion than it can for boys?
- Is there any advice you wish you would get if you get heartbroken?
- Why can it be difficult to talk about being heartbroken?

ACTIVITIES

Listen to a song about being heartbroken.

Create a playlist of songs about being heartbroken - and a playlist about overcoming the feeling of being heartbroken or other sorrows.

Present red and green thoughts that may come during periods of broken hearts from lyrics.

Team competition where a group will come up with red thoughts to stay under the duvet in the morning, one will come up with green thoughts to help one win the battle against the duvet in the morning – when feeling tired and sad.

Make a list of activities you enjoy doing - and talk about which of these activities you think can cheer you up when you're tired or sad.

Complete a Helping hand based on a time you or a friend were heartbroken.

Role play to practice how to provide comfort and support to progress. Check out the following advices during the role play: 1) by breaking them, 2) by following them.

- When someone feels very sad, comfort is needed first. Provide support and understanding!
- If you want your friend to tell what s/he is feeling and thinking, show acceptance and interest is a good start.

- Negative focus and co-ruminating can make matters worse.

- Ask if advices or suggestions are wanted before eventually bringing your ideas to the table.

Let the class/group role play in pairs. One pretends to be heartbroken, and the other has the role of comforting.

Find each other game. Prepare small pieces of paper with red and green thoughts that can pop up if heartbroken. Hand out a note to each student. Let the students walk around the classroom and say what's written on their note. If both think they have thoughts of the same color, they form a group. Let this game continue until there are two groups; one of red thought and one of green thoughts. The groups present what is written on the notes and explain why this way of thinking is favorable (green) or unfavorable (red)

Create an 8 week training program aimed at a heartbroken adolescent, focusing on simple and fun activities being, with gradual escalation of activities. Physical activity can help to overcome grief.

The psychologist shares thoughts

To be heartbroken is a type of grief that many young people might experience. Psychologically grief is about losing someone you love, or losing a good relationship with someone who has been important to you. Losing a dear one, like a sweetheart, a good friend, or like we do when you move: Many friends and a much of these things, places and relationships that are known and dear to us, can trigger grief. Losses of people very close to you are relatively rare during childhood, but losses will sooner or later affect virtually all people. Grieving is not a disease, most people will feel better without professional help, and some are actually growing as persons due to the loss. Importantly however, some people are responding to losses through extreme pain and prolonged grief. Grief reactions can be complicated, and are associated with depression, post traumatic stress disorder, suicide and a number of somatic illnesses. Depression is a major public health problem, and costs many young lives. Grief and depression cannot be solved primarily by treatment, prevention is a key to reduce the number of people affected. Young people need to support each other, support themselves and get support from the community around them to do meaningful activities that support their self-esteem, self worth, and provide an experience of belonging.

Teacher's practical corner

To make this scenario relevant and easier to think and talk about, I have learnt to choose my words carefully when introducing the theme. Instead of talking about the heart brokenness connected with romantic love only, I talk about the sad fact the quality of relationships dear to us can change. I use examples like "maybe your best friend has to move out of your town, maybe your sister or brother is leaving to stay somewhere else, or maybe somebody you love is dying. Girls from conservative Syrian families often can find it difficult to talk about romantic love, especially if there are boys in the room. When I help the adolescents to connect with losses that resonate with experiences they already have, and that are culturally more accepted to talk about, this scenario has facilitated very beautiful moments of sharing on how to deal with grief, and how good it feels with friends who care. Be prepared for both tears and smiles in this session! Last time we played this scenario and talked about it in my classroom, a boy was leaving the classroom with a big smile on his face, saying: "This was the best session so far, I love these sessions!"

SCENARIO 6: BEAUTIFUL?

A good self-image is important for well-being, relationships and health. The fashion- and beauty industry, as well as social media, can give wrong and biased images of what it takes to be beautiful. Body pressure and self-image can be actively questioned. Talking friendly to yourself as well as practicing critical thinking in meeting industries with



interests in narrowing the scope of beauty, can make it easier to see what is beautiful in you, accept yourself the way you are, and to focus on your strengths.

Summary of the story

Mona is going to a wedding, looking for a new dress for the party. She is unhappy with what she looks like. We help her to open up for what she is happy with - both in terms of what she looks like and other characteristics of herself.

Main learning goals, Session 6

Identify what you like with yourself and others, and get experience in talking about that.
Practice giving and receiving compliments.

Questions to repeat content

Is it normal for young people to be happy with their bodies? Answer: Most young people are not totally happy with their bodies.

How to increase your self-image? Answer: Evaluate yourself to the same standard and factors as you evaluate friends: Identify what you like or are proud of, realize that appearance is not everything.

Are people with a poor self-image and affected by body pressure weak people? Answer: No, there are very strong forces in the modern society that dictate ideal look and ideal appearance, so this can affect anybody.

What is the difference between body pressure and poor self-image? Answer: Body pressure is society's expectations of what to look like. Negative self-image is the perception of not being good enough. Body pressure can lead to poor self-image, and poor self-image can make you more vulnerable to body pressure.

End of story summary points

- Identify something you really like about yourself
- Evaluate yourself to the same standards and factors as you evaluate friends
- Appearance doesn't mean everything

Typical red thoughts when stressed with a negative self-image

I am ugly
Nobody likes me
I'm fat and thick

I am worth nothing
With my body, I will never get a sweetheat
I can't go out and be there the way I look
To hide as much as possible of myself is the only way

Green thoughts that can contribute to more positive self-image

I accept myself the way I am
No one is as focused on what I look like that I am myself
I should stop looking for mistakes in myself - I'd rather look for what makes me happy, confident and brave
I am as valuable as everybody else
True love is not about what a person looks like
I'm beautiful enough!
I have good friends!
The way I look doesn't stop me
I'm cool, I have style!
The beach and the sun don't care what I look like!
I look like (identify somebody I can identify with and who I think is nice or beautiful)
I have pretty eyes, they mirror my soul
I'm kind and good

PROPOSAL FOR DISCUSSION

What makes a person beautiful?
How important is appearance?
Who contributes to poorer self-image and body pressure for young people today?
Do you have the same standards for yourself and other people when it comes to being good enough and beautiful?

ACTIVITIES

Make the students watch the dance video "Love Yourself - Moving Souls" by Vika Kozáková <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=L6iweb6lUxc> – or another dancing video the students would like to dance to. Group work for 3 - 5 students:

- a) Create a dance that interprets body pressure and poor self-image to the same song, or to Mary Lambert's "Beautiful together" or a song of their choice
- b) translating the lyrics of the song from English to Arabic, French or another language they know.

What do you like best about yourself?

- Write down at least three things and talk about the points with each other two and two
- Write down five things you are proud of yourself.

Giving and receiving complements. Compliments can be given both for looks, skills and character. What types of compliments do you appreciate the most?

- a. Divide the adolescents in groups of 3 – 4. Ask each group to choose a name after flower or butterfly.
- b. Ask them to create a compliment-card for each of the other students in the group

- c. Give compliments knowing that it is a valuable gift – and train on receiving compliments knowing that it is a beautiful gift.
- d. Make a poll on what type of compliments that means the most to you: a) compliments for my skills, b) compliments for my looks or c) compliments for my character?
- e. Talk about what the different types of compliments do to you (full class discussion)

Anonymous survey: Make the class anonymously respond to whether they are satisfied with their body or not. Then, let them calculate the percentage of how many in the class are satisfied with their body. Then have the students find a study about self-image on the internet group wise (practice source criticism) and compare their classrooms' with studies found.

Run the debate! Find volunteers who will represent the advertising industry on the one hand, and activists *against* body pressure on the other, e.g. three per team. Teach them the rules of debate (one finger for posts, two for comment), and let the rest of the classroom watch and ask questions. Afterwards, the class can discuss argumentation techniques together and who the class meant won the debate.

Role play in pairs to test the following feedback that is also used in the game in this scenario:

- When someone talks themselves down, it is more kind to show that you do not agree
- A good friend says something nice when it's needed
- It is more supportive to comment on something you like than on what you do not like
- Usually it's more supportive to compliment the person than to the garment
- Harsh criticism can make a poor self-image even worse
- Open questions and positive focus are usually perceived as more friendly
- It is more supportive to compliment to *the persons inner values* than his/her looks

The psychologist shares thoughts

In the modern society and on social media, getting lost in what is actually important in life is easy. To stay happy and healthy, establishing good and healthy habits, practicing activities you like, nurturing good relationships with friends and family can inspire to cultivate healthy attitudes towards yourself, others and life itself.

Teacher's practical corner

In this scenario I help the boys to connect with the theme through giving examples that many boys can identify with: not having big enough muscles, or not being tall enough or tough enough. Further, I try to expand their understanding of what it means to be a beautiful human being by moving from body focus, to focusing on the soul, inner values, kindness and thoughtfulness. I have encouraged all my adolescents to write down what they like with themselves and what they are proud of, and then to present that list for the group. This is an activity that has helped me to understand some of my students better, and also the group to reflect on their common values, and reflections on what values they really want to navigate by.

SCENARIO 7: BULLYING AND RACISM

Bullying and racism are destructive power techniques. If someone at a school or in a community is bullied, exposed to racism or harassed by religious affiliation, it is everybody's problem. To create good communities, systematic misconceptions should be addressed, and systematic work should be implemented to prevent bullying and racism to flourish. In a healthy school or community, everybody feels safe and included.



Summary of the story

Mona is bullied by a group of boys at her school. We support her to understand what is happening, and to take her own feelings and experiences seriously, and to talk about her experiences with her teacher. The teacher is busy at first, but when Mona explains clearly that she needs help, the teacher takes her seriously, and takes responsibility.

Main learning goal, Session 7

Empower adolescents to stand up against bullying, harassment and racism.

Questions and statements to repeat content

What can bullying lead to? Answer: Bullying can make the person who is bullied to feel lonely and of low self-worth. Bullying can also make you feel sad, scared or angry. Further, bullying can lead to lack of trust in relationships more generally. Lack of trust in people can make it you to become poor at setting boundaries and not dare to say what you mean. Bullying can also create concentration difficulties, learning difficulties and increase the risk of a number of health problems.

Can bullying happen digitally? Answer: Yes.

Everyone should be able to go to school without being bullied. Answer: True.

The best thing to do is to ignore the bullies. Answer: Wrong!

End of story summary points

- Tell adults you trust about ongoing bullying
- Bullying can make you feel less worth, and can make setting boundaries more difficult
- Don't bully yourself or others!

Typical red thoughts when bullied / observed that someone you care about are bullied

There is nothing I can do to stop the bullying

The bullying will stop if I try to hide it

I'm never safe anywhere

The world is unsafe anyhow

Nobody likes me

The bullying will get worse if I defend person who is bullied

People are bad and do bad things, it can never be stopped

I am worthless

Green thoughts that can help people who are bullied and / or observe bullying

I should do what I can to end bullying

There are good people with a lot of power who can help

There is strength in asking for help

Ending bullying, harassment, and racism is possible

No one should be bullied, we have laws against it!

Although some people do terrible things, most people are good and trustworthy

If I have experienced or observed bullying, I should make sure that adults know

Maybe I need help to process these bad experiences?

I am strong, valuable and a good decision maker!

It's smart to join up with good people

ACTIVITIES

A. Complete a Helping Hand based on observing someone you care about being bullied or subject to racism. The purpose of the assignment is to prepare yourself for what you can do if you witness bullying and/or racism or if you experience it directly yourself.

B. Group work. Show each other the completed Helping Hands.

C. Whole class.

- **Make a list of motivating green thoughts** for doing something good, smart and important when someone is being bullied and / or exposed to racism

- **Make a list of what is good, smart, caring and important to do** when someone is bullied and / or exposed to racism

Internet search / Writing task: Identify what "prosocial behavior" means, and talk about times you have experienced somebody doing prosocial behavior to you.

Internet search / Writing task: Identify what racism is and what "bias" means!

Creative task: Make a short film, write a short story, or a poem about harassment against black people, refugees, or other groups.

Write about "bias" and racism.

Internet search / Writing task: Identify what discrimination of religion means and find examples of it.

Talk / write. Define the words "bullying", "teasing" and "to be offended by".

Task in pairs. Tell about once you did something kind and courageous towards someone you love or care for.

Write a short story, poem or song text where the main character changes from feeling lonely, hopeless, anxious and driven by red thoughts to connecting with somebody and feeling more hopeful, happy and proud.

Roleplay. Create roleplays, in pairs, where one addresses a problem (a real or fictional problem, choose something you are comfortable talking about here and now), and the classmate follows up with

a. closed questions

b. open questions

FOR DISCUSSION

How to define the line between teasing, being offended and bullying?

Give examples of biased thinking!

Talk with the class about what "microaggression" is based these pictures:

<https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/microaggressions-in-our-lives.pdf>

In what way does implicit bias differ from obvious racism and gender discrimination?

The psychologist shares thoughts

The lesson is designed to encourage students who witness bullying, racism or harassment, or are directly exposed to such experiences, to reach out for help to stop them happening. To make smart decisions and strategically change situations that are bad for both individuals and the community as a whole is demanding, but possible. The leadership at the school and in the bigger community is central for reducing bullying and racism. When preparing this theme for your group/class, link to the discussions that are going on about bullying, racism and harassment in the media in your local community to create engagement. Identify good role models in how important fights have been won to create a more fair society where you live.

Teacher's practical corner

This is a very relevant and important theme in our context, where we are living as Syrians in Lebanon. After having played this scenario, my adolescents have shared a high variety of personal stories about bullying. One adolescent, who was the only Syrian girl in her classroom and among Syrians only in our HH group, used the chance to talk about how she had felt when her class mates have been laughing about her way to speak and dress. I have also had a girl who shared her story about being bullied for using glasses. Further, I have had boys sharing thoughts about how unfair it is that they get paid much less as refugees than if their family was from this country. I have had adolescents sharing experiences of doing hard work and not getting paid at all. My role as a group facilitator in this session, is to make room for adolescents who want to share their experiences, and to make room for empathy between the adolescents when hard experiences are shared. Additionally, it is crucial that we use time to identify green thoughts that can reduce the tension between groups in this session, and at the same time encourage the adolescents to stand up for their rights. Green thoughts my adolescents have come up with to stand up for refugees, include:

- I am able to defend myself... and I will get out of this problem!
- We all have the right to live, we are all valuable
- I am entitled to ALL rights, even as a refugee
- Unfortunately the war forced us to leave Syria and live in camps, but that doesn't make us into bad people

To use time together to identify good decisions in very concrete problems, have created good discussions and lots of positive engagement.

SCENARIO 8: SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

During hard times, suicidal thoughts can appear. Worldwide, one person dies every 40 seconds due to suicide, and suicide rates have been increasing the recent years. For a person with suicidal thoughts shame can be reduced through sharing these painful thoughts. Sharing these thoughts can also allow the person in despair to see better options, and increase hope. Even though suicidal thoughts is a difficult theme to address, it can be life saving.



Summary of the story

Mona has stopped feeling that life is good. She has not received much support at home, was bullied at school, and was plagued by suicidal thoughts. A good friend of her helped her to call the helpline. We meet her when she is feeling better, and is looking back on what helped her to find meaning in life again. She is telling us that the most important thing she learned from her struggles, was the gift of talking freely about things she used to be ashamed of.

Main learning goal, Session 8

Increase awareness of the need for support when suicidal thoughts appear, and practice how to support friends in very hard times.

Questions and answers to repeat content

Why can it help to share how you feel? Answer: The feeling of shame will be reduced when you share painful thoughts. Further, talking about difficulties can help you to solve problems, and strengthen relationships.

If someone tells you about suicidal thoughts, how to respond? Answer: Take it seriously! Make sure the person you talk with is safe, talk to him/her, ask how serious they think these thoughts are, help them to call the helpline.

What can help when to reduce the impact of suicidal thoughts? Answer: Knowing that help exist, knowing about a helpline, changing the way of thinking, talking to somebody, getting professional help.

Should talk about suicide always be taken seriously? Answer: Yes! It is always best to be on the safe side when it comes to suicidal thoughts.

Are some things too dark to talk about? Answer: No! All types of thoughts can shared.

End of story summary points

- Take suicidal thoughts seriously
- Seek help when needed

Common red thoughts when suicidal thoughts are impactful

It's better if I die
Nobody really cares
Life will never be good
I'm a loser

I have hurt someone I love
No one needs me, I'm a burden
Everything is hopeless
I can't bear to look people in their eyes after this
There is no point in seeking help

Green thoughts that can be helpful

It will get better
People I love need me
I can take one moment at a time
Suicide is not urgent
Although everything feels so dark right now, light will come later
All lives are valuable
I can get help
Failure is human

PROPOSAL FOR DISCUSSION

Why is it important to support each other when life is tough?
Why do people want to commit suicide?
Can there be disadvantages of talking with many people about suicidal thoughts?

ACTIVITIES

Complete a Helping Hand. Imagine that a friend is telling you about his/her suicidal thoughts. Complete a Helping Hand to get an overview of how you would have reacted successfully.

Imagine a friend is calling you, revealing suicidal thoughts. Identify and write bullet points you would have included in how to support your friend.

Describe positive memories and experiences you have had. Emphasize describing details of what you liked. Write in "I-form", present, start with: "I like to ..."

Write / draw cards with green thoughts that represent hope and joy and which can be nice to give to a friend who is having a tough time.

Roleplay. Make an empty chair to represent a person with suicidal thoughts, and have students speak to the chair based on these advices:

1. Talk about it if you are worried that someone you love will take their own life.

- a. Be yourself in the conversation, listen.
- b. Be sympathetic and non-judgmental
- c. Offer hope!
- d. Take the person seriously

2. Respond quickly in crisis.

- a. If a friend or someone in the family is revealing suicidal thoughts, adults with competency on mental health should quickly be engaged to make a suicide risk assessment. Contact adults you trust, or the helpline.

3. Offer help and support.

Make sure you are not the only supporter, and don't carry heavier burden than you are able to. Supporting a suicidal person takes courage and can be exhausting. Take care of yourself too, identify someone who can support you!

The psychologist shares thoughts

Suicidal thoughts are relatively common, but fortunately suicides are relatively rare. Expressing suicidal thoughts can be a way to describe that life difficult to deal with, a way to describe an experience of meaninglessness, about a wish for understanding, support or attention, or about wanting help to deal with a difficult situation.

Suicide is considered to be haram in Islam, and is forbidden in many countries.

The topic of suicide can trigger fear and bad memories in some adolescents. Please show understanding and make it possible for adolescents who express that they don't want to participate in the conversation to do something else while the class is working on this theme. Having said that, what we have learnt from groups and classrooms where this scenario have been used, is that most adolescents rate this session as very helpful and important. Many have said that this is a situation they have been in several times, but never spoken with adults about before. I usually explain what that means, focusing on that reaching out for support is important and can be life saving.

Suicidal thoughts can be part of a depression. Thinking negatively about yourself, other people and the world are core symptoms of depression. Often such dark thoughts are unconscious, hence, one does not identify them as destructive thoughts.

The practice of telling about detailed, positive memories, in the present tense, has been proved useful in reducing depressive symptoms. The activity can also be a great way to end the session with increased hope.

Teacher's practical corner

I started this session with saying to my group that this is a very serious session, and that I want them to be serious. I also said "Unfortunately I think all of you will get into a situation where what is talked about in this session becomes relevant – sooner or later, as a friend, in your own life or in your family." I have found it helpful to introduce the session with "What is the biggest of all red thoughts?"

I let the adolescents play the scenario individually, and then opened the room for reflections.

I have learnt that this session can be very important for my students, also these who are quiet listeners during this session.

A roleplay on what to do if somebody tells you about suicidal thoughts, combined with completing a Helping Hand on the theme, has been a good way to engage the students in deep reflections. Further, I always use time in this session to increase awareness on what helpers that can be involved. I use the whiteboard to write down the helpers my students identify, such as people in the family, friends, somebody from the bigger family, a teacher, the school health nurse, the church or the mosque, numbers to our local helplines and health services that can be contacted.

SCENARIO 9: BAD MEMORIES

Most people will get experiences that potentially can create very unpleasant memories. The way bad memories are dealt with, can affect how much trouble and pain the memories create. To put effort into what can be learnt from bad memories can lead to personal growth, and with time make it easier to live in peace with the past.



Summary of the story

Rami is having dinner with his friend Yüsuf. The smell of the food served, triggers bad memories of how he traumatically lost his father, and Rami runs away from the table. Yüsuf helps him get back to the here and now. Rami talks about what helps him to gradually become less negatively affected by painful memories.

Main learning goals, Session 9

Increase awareness of how traumatic memories can create hardship, and learn that a non-judging attitude towards emotions can make it easier to live in peace with the past.

Questions to repeat content

What can trigger traumatic memories? Answer: Situations, smells, sounds, visual impressions, words, or other aspects similar to a traumatic experience.

How to react when someone tells you about their bad memories? Answer: Give them time to talk, do not be pushy, be understanding and empathetic.

Is it best to leave people who get flashbacks alone until it goes over? Answer: Try to explore if you can do anything to help.

What can help somebody out of flashbacks and into here and now? Answer: Eye contact, talking, describing the surroundings; feeling the ground you are on here and now, describing what is different from when the trauma happened. Generally focus on things that can get them back to the present and safe situation.

Typical red thoughts when plagued by bad memories

It's happening again right now!

I'm weak

It is dangerous to be alone

I can never stop thinking about what happened

I can not fall asleep

I will never be myself again after this

If I think about it, I will go crazy

If I talk about it, I will go crazy

It is better avoiding everything that reminds me of the incident(s)

Green thoughts that can make bad memories easier to live with

It is different now than it was at that time

I can tolerate my memories
I will grow from experiences that has not broken me
I can put the memories away now, and write about them this afternoon
I can rest first, sleep later
Flowers need dirt to grow
Memories are nothing but memories
Every time I talk and write about the hurt that happened, I process it, and it will help me.
I can tell, write and draw about what I know now, aspects I did not know while the incident happened, aspects that can help me to become less scared

FOR DISCUSSION

What thoughts and feelings make it difficult to ask about friends' painful experiences?
How can you show your wish for talking and supporting your friend, without being pushy?
The term "trigger warning" is sometimes used as a warning for material that can trigger bad memories. What themes do you think deserve a "trigger warning"?

ACTIVITIES

Draw a bad memory that has plagued you, and try to change the elements that you find most challenging to deal with by drawing them into something funny, small or powerless.

Complete a Helping Hand about a bad memory that has plagued you in the past, a memory you are living well now. Show and share hands in pairs.

Competition between two teams. One team represents red and the other team represents green thoughts. Let a person (for example the teacher) have a bad memory about a difficult situation - for example from being attacked by the Police. The green team get points for identifying and saying out loud thoughts that makes it easier to live with the memories (green thoughts), the red team gets points for identifying and saying out loud thoughts that makes it harder to deal with the memories. Points can be collected on the whiteboard, or can be used to move the teacher closer towards the green line or the red line.

The psychologist shares thoughts

Smaller and bigger crises can be used as a source to growth. Conversations where young people express feelings and talk freely about their thoughts, and are important in areas were bad memories are involved. When experiencing to be listened to when revealing difficult experiences, shame can be reduced. Sharing difficult stories can also promote empathy for the listener, as well as self-acceptance for those who share their story. Empathy is a constructive force! Young people who use their empathy to help, typically experience it as meaningful. To feel meaningful is fundamentally important, and linked to feeling worthy. At difficult stages and phases of life, it is extra important to feel that you can mean a difference for somebody.

Bad memories are often associated with strong feelings such as anxiety, guilt, and shame. When the time is right after a trauma, help to see connections between painful experiences and what has been learned from these, can also be very useful. When struggling with bad memories, it can be helpful to attribute the traumatic events the memories stem from, in a way that reduces blame. Further, help is often needed to actually see that situations that are reminders of the trauma are not dangerous. Sometimes the most important help teachers, friends and family can give, is to facilitating therapy and being patient.

Teacher's practical corner

I started this session with telling the adolescents about when I walked from Syria over the mountains, my father was in pain, he was bleeding. All the adolescents listened very carefully as I shared these painful memories, and I saw that some got some tears in their eyes. Then I divided the adolescents into groups, 3 – 4 at each tablet, and helped them to find the scenario with Rami who has bad memories. After they had played, I asked them to draw one good and one bad memory from their own life, before I opened up for sharing stories. I was surprised, there was so much activity – the adolescents are so engaged! One adolescent from Aleppo told me he needed to talk to me in private about what happened to him. We found a time to talk later, and that was a very helpful talk that made me understand his reactions better.

Textbox

"Flashbacks" is a concept used to describe brief glimpses of experiences, usually of something that has been very threatening or intimidating. The experiences can be linked to all senses, such as taste, smell, vision and bodily sensations. The re-experiences are associated with bodily symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, unease, and a strong motivation to avoid all situations that can trigger the memories.

SCENARIO 10: DARE TO SPEAK OUT

When we tell our opinion and act in accordance with what we think is right to do, our self-confidence grows. Telling your opinion knowing it is contrary, might be difficult – but your ability to stand against group pressure and to stand up for your own view can be trained. Why is it important that we support each other to tell our true opinion and how can encourage friends to speak their mind?

Summary of the story

We first meet Rami, a Syrian boy, and some Lebanese friends of his, as they backbite Amir, his people and the way they are living. Rami pretends not to be a Syrian refugee himself, and joins backbiting his own group. The gamer supports Rami to stand up for his friend, for himself, and for his group.



Main learning goals, Session 10

Learn about group pressure, and reflect on the value of standing up for what you think is right.

Questions to repeat content

Why interfere with things that do not affected you personally? Answer: Injustice and misuse of power, it is a problem for the society.

What can make it hard to speak your mind? Answer: If you have to stand out from your friends, or they criticize something that also applies to yourself, it can get more emotional.

What can make expressing one's own opinion easier? Answer: Practicing! Every time you speak up for yourself and others, there is a chance you will get a positive experience, grow confidence.

What to do if friends backbite other people? Answer: Talk with your friends and/or discuss the situation with adults you trust, or with other friends.

End of story summary points:

- Practice to tell your mind
- Discuss complicated situations with friends and adults you trust
- Don't tolerate injustice

Red thoughts about telling your mind

Fighting for yourself is selfish

Saying or thinking good things about oneself is boasting

I'm of no value

I'm stupid, bad, weird

Nobody will listen to me anyway

Other people are more important than I am

Being self-assertive is not good

What I have in mind, is probably wrong or bad

I should not participate if what I bring to the table is not perfect

Green thoughts about telling your mind

I have much to contribute with

All people are of the same value

I am the one who knows most about what I can contribute with

I should take good care of myself so that I also can help others

Put on your own mask before helping others

Every time I practice, I will learn important lessons

All voices are important, also mine

It's natural to feel afraid when standing up against others, especially when that is not your habit

Feeling insecure doesn't mean I'm wrong

PROPOSAL FOR DISCUSSION

Why is it important to be able to tell your mind?

Why is it important to challenge yourself and your friends to contribute?

In this story, Rami's friends looked down on refugees. What other groups can be looked down upon?

What would you do if your friends had said negative about ... (groups the adolescents just mentioned, for example, people of color, girls, immigrants, gays, low-income people, the mentally ill, people with disabilities, people from the country, people with red hair, etc.)

Has anyone experienced that people around you talk negatively about others? Did you intervene, and if so, why? To facilitate sharing stories telling, make it possible to share stories anonymously via writing in addition to orally.

ACTIVITIES

Four corners. Hang a note in each of the four corners in the classroom. One corner is marked with "Yes," one with "No," one with "Maybe," and one with "I don't know." The teacher reads out statements about the topic. For example, one can address discussion questions/tasks outlined in the story about Rami, or use other situations actual for this group where you are. At least one student per corner must explain why they have been there. It is allowed to change seats during the exercise.

Lyrics analysis. Find a lyric about self-assertiveness – and write a poem analyses

Create a list of good reasons for intervening and for not intervening when people are talked badly about.

Reflection task: What situations in your own life could you use to learn from the skills you learned in this session?

Who are people talking about unfairly?

Write about three situations where you identified people were backbited, and what you could have done in these situations

Complete sentences

"Since I am self-assertive today, I will ..."

"If I'm self-assertive towards my friends today, I will ..."

"Since I'm assertive in class today, I will ..."

"If I am self-assertive at home today, I will ..."

The psychologist shares thoughts

Self-assertiveness includes asserting your opinion and rights positively and clearly, initiating a change, presenting oneself, and resisting negative peer pressure. People may have high self-esteem in some areas, while low self-esteem in other areas. Somebody can think "I am worthless" and compensate with being as good, diligent and kind. Strategies used to cover low self-esteem can become psychologically "expensive" in the long run. Practicing self-assertiveness is demanding. But every time an adolescent with low self-esteem dares to take the floor and experiences being listened to and respected for his/her contributions, there are opportunities for positive growth.

Teacher's practical corner

When I have done this session with my groups of Syrian boys, they have been so furious. They have lived this experience. They need time to talk about these experiences, how unfair it feels, and that part of the session always takes more time than I plan! After they have shared experiences, we are working collaboratively on identifying green thoughts and what to do in such situations if they appear again. We have completed a Helping Hand together, on the white board. Also, I have found it helpful to teach them an exercises for relaxation in this session. To transform the energy in the anger to positive energy is the key. We are strong together.

Research on The Helping Hand

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- Raknes S (2020). The Happy Helping Hand used by Syrian displaced adolescents in Lebanon: a Pilot Study of Feasibility, Usefulness and Impact. [White paper.](#)
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- Townsend, D., Raknes, S., & Hammoud, M. (forthcoming, Oct 2022). Psychosocial support for Syrian refugee youth: Comparing delivery modes of a digital mental health game. In S. Moeschberger & L. Miller-Graff (Eds), *Psychological Research on Violence Against Children: Towards Building Cultures of Peace*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

