

Module III **SESSION 10** *The Power of Stories*



Objectives:

- To increase the families' ability to share trauma stories.
- To co-construct a shared trauma narrative.
- To express and share trauma pain.



Threads:

- Module III is meant to use the skill sets that the family has learned and practiced to help them cope with and move beyond their trauma history.
- Important components of this session include joining with the family facilitator, psychoeducation about distress symptoms related to high stress and trauma, education about family narrative skills and trauma narratives, and planning the narrative process with the family as the "expert" on how to proceed.
- Family collaborative communication is stressed in the activity and the planning of the family narrative process.



Preparation:

- Send out reminders of group to families.
- Prepare all materials.
- Food and facilities planning and preparation.
- Decide on facilitators' roles.
- Update on the status of each family in the group.
- Anticipate any problems that might arise during the session.
- Review the Narrative Guide for each family.
- Facilitator team discussion about each family's narrative plan.



Homework Due:

- Record of Family Activity Carried Out



Session Overview:

Activity 1	Family Meal	30 Minutes
Activity 2	Communicating without Words	10 Minutes
Activity 3	Understanding our Reactions	20 Minutes
Activity 4	Planning the Narrative	40 Minutes
Activity 5	SIT Practice	10 Minutes
Activity 6	Closing	10 minutes



Homework to be Assigned:

- Using Your Coping Resources

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Materials:

Tables (1 for each family)
Centerpieces
Nameplates and session schedules (1 for each family)
Place settings/Napkins
Nutritious meal/Drinks
Phones for recording
Wooden dowels (1 for each member of each family)
Paper
Pens
Crayons/Markers
Toys
Chore charts and star stickers (1 pack for each family)



Handouts:

Conversation Prompts	M3.S14.Prompts
Narrative Guide	M3.S10.Narrative.Guide
Using Your Coping Resources	M3.S12.Using.Coping.Resources
Phone Tree	M3.S14.Phone.Tree
Contact Sheets	M3.S14.Contact.Sheets
Family Rating Form	M3.S15.Feedback
Participant Log	M3.S15.Log
Clinician Rating Form	M3.S15.Clinic.Measures



Posters:

Rules Poster	Group.Rules.Poster
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Books:

A Terrible Thing Happened
Healing Days: A Guide to Children Who Have Experienced Trauma

Activity 1: Family Meal



30
Minutes



Goals:

- To facilitate an intimate family interaction.
- To increase awareness of the importance of routine within each family.



Materials:

Tables (1 for each family)
Centerpieces
Nameplates and session schedules
(1 for each family)
Place settings/Napkins
Nutritious meal/Drinks



Handouts:

Conversation Prompts



Posters:

Rules Poster



Instructions:

Facilitators prepare the room by setting tables (one for each family). A simple centerpiece for each table is a nice touch. A nameplate and schedule for the session's activities are also placed on each table. Hang poster with group rules listed in a prominent place where all the families can see it.

Food should be pre-cooked and ready to serve. Food can be served buffet or family style.

Parent(s) gather their children around a table and share a meal together.

Before serving the food:

Lead Facilitator: *We are so happy to have you back with us tonight. Let's begin.*

Co-Facilitator _____: *First let's thank name of cooks for fixing this wonderful meal. Please help yourselves to some food. Parents, why don't you serve your children first and then make a plate for yourself. Parent(s) should be encouraged to serve their children and then themselves.*

Co-Facilitator _____: *To help your family have a good time during dinner, you might want to ask each other these questions or talk about the ideas on these cards. Hand out conversation prompts.*

After the Meal:

Co-Facilitator _____: Refer to the rules poster and review.

Ask each family the following question: *So, is there anything going on right now that might get in the way of your family taking part in today's group?*

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This session focuses on planning the storytelling and narrative work that your family will do. So, let's get started.

Note 1: Facilitators encourage and model appropriate conversation, sharing, and supervision of children. Facilitators try several methods to stimulate conversation including joining the family and modeling or use of conversation prompts. A facilitator might stop at the table of a family and offer encouragement, praise, and suggestions for managing different situations (behavior management, cueing, discipline). Work with families on interactions/behaviors occurring “in the moment”. Remember to be sensitive to and empowering of the parent(s).

Note 2: One facilitator should take on the role of process monitor making sure that the session runs smoothly and proceeds in a timely fashion. The process facilitator should encourage families to start finishing their dinner and cleaning up their tables after about 20 minutes to make sure that this activity is finished within 30 minutes and the group is ready to begin the next activity on time.

Activity 2: Communicating without Words*



10
Minutes



Goals:

- To illustrate attunement and communication theory.
- To let families experience a collaborative communication process.



Materials:

Wooden dowels (1 for each member of each family)



Lead Facilitator: *We hope you enjoyed your dinner. It is now time to begin our activities for tonight. If you will look at that schedule now, I will tell you a little bit about tonight's group.* Proceed with introducing each activity briefly.

Before we start the first activity tonight, I want us to take time for families to tell us about the activity that you carried out this week. We asked you to bring a record of this back with you tonight. Let each family that brought theirs back show the group and talk about their activity. Ask the other families why they did not bring a record back. If they just forgot but carried out the activity, have them describe it. If they did not carry out the activity, ask what got in the way.

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Co-Facilitator _____: Hand out dowels (one for each family member). *This first activity for tonight is done in silence. It does not take any words for you to work together as a family and understand each other. First divide up into pairs. On your table are wood sticks. Watch what we do with these [Two facilitators demonstrate by using the palms of their hands to hold the sticks between them. They can then demonstrate moving their hands around, watching each other to see how they move together. They can then use their fingertips to hold the sticks up between them. Finally, a third facilitator can join and show how multiple people can do this together.] Now you try. We want you to work together to keep the sticks up, so don't let go.* Let the pairs try this, and then instruct the families to try it with everyone all together. While the families do this activity ask them about “How they are letting each other know what they are going to do next?” “How are they working together to keep the sticks from falling?”, “Who is taking the lead, and can everyone be a leader?” etc. This activity should last about 10 minutes. Let the families know how good they are at communicating with each other and that communicating is an important skill for a family!

Lead Facilitator: *It is now time to break into smaller groups. Remember, each facilitator will take a different group, only tonight each family is going to be a small group.* Facilitators should join their assigned family at this time. Facilitators move one family at a time to their designated areas.

**This activity was presented by The Cirque Du Monde in a workshop at the All Network Meeting of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network in March 2007 in Anaheim, CA.*

Note 1: Facilitators who are not talking should spread around the room, monitoring families' reactions and level of participation. A facilitator might stop at the table of a family and offer encouragement, praise, and suggestions for managing different situations (behavior management, cueing, discipline). Work with families on interactions/behaviors occurring “in the moment”. Remember to be sensitive to and empowering of the parent(s).

Note 2: Families with babies can do this activity by placing the baby in the middle of the circle created by the family. Toddlers can be part of this activity by holding the wood sticks in their fists. Facilitators should watch that the dowels are not used as weapons or pretend sword fighting.

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Activity 3: Understanding our Reactions



20
Minutes



Goals:

- To educate families about common reactions to trauma.



Materials:

Paper Pen/markers/crayons



Handouts:



Books:

A Terrible Thing Happened
Healing Days: A Guide to Children Who Have Experienced Trauma (for older children and young adolescents)



Instructions:

Family Facilitator: *First, let's spend some time talking about some common ways that people feel after bad things have happened.*

Ask the family what they know about the word “trauma” and what it means to them.

Read or have a family member read *A Terrible Thing Happened* or *Healing Days: A Guide to Children Who Have Experienced Trauma* (for older children and young adolescents) and just talk about how trauma makes children feel. Use this discussion to provide psychoeducation about trauma and reactions and to lead into a discussion of how they feel.

Explain to the family about anticipating that more bad things will happen, reminders of bad things that have happened and how people react to these reminders, re-experiencing what happened, avoidance, arousal/dysregulations, expectancies about self and the world, and problems with relationships/trust. Have family members talk about their own experiences with each of these reactions to make them real.

Talk about avoidance and how avoidance makes it hard to talk about what happened but is a common reaction. Anticipate their avoidance by letting the family know that they may not want to come back next week or for the 2-3 weeks that involve talking together to heal. Problem-solve by asking the family to come up with ways that they will work together to overcome their avoidance and come back each week.

Note 1: Facilitators should not become part of the family conversation but might want to gently encourage families to elaborate, to get everyone’s point of view, to talk about how they felt at the time, etc.

Activity 4: Family Narrative



40
Minutes



Goals:

- To understand and plan the family narrative process.



Materials:

Phones for recording (1 for each family)
Paper
Pen/markers/crayons



Instructions:

Family Facilitator: *We have spent a lot of time over the past weeks getting ready for this activity.* Use the Narrative Guide to help the family develop a plan regarding their narrative sessions.

Before beginning this session, remind families about safety procedures that were discussed in the consent process and during earlier sessions including use of safety plans, confidentiality, and reporting responsibilities.

Talk to the family about their narrative style and about how families can talk to each other about difficult things that have happened. Work with the family to set some ground rules, such as who gets to talk, what the family is prepared to talk about, what the family is willing to talk about first, whether the family wants to/needs to engage in a narrative process about communication or exposure.

How do you feel your family would do talking about the bad things that have happened? Some reasons that a family might not want to proceed with a family trauma narrative include significant avoidance and dysregulation of some family members, legal issues involving the trauma, etc.

For families planning to do narrative work: *Talking together is an important and necessary step towards feeling better and coping with stressors or bad things that happen to your family in the future. If you do not believe that all family members are ready for that, we have some options for how to use this time together to make sure your family continues to use the skills you have developed to feel safe and secure.*

Provide information to the family about why telling their talking together is important. Talk about studies that have shown that telling family stories and developing skills such as talking about difficult issues has been shown to help families feel better and move on in a healthier manner.

Talk to the family about how families can talk with each other in ways that will help the family build new skills such as taking different points of view or telling family stories or talking about how the family has been resilient in the past.

One strategy for helping the family decide on their readiness to do a trauma narrative is to complete a Family Trauma Timeline. Instructions for this activity are provided

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(Session 10 folder).

Once a plan has been agreed upon, start the narrative process. About 10 minutes before time to return to the group, the facilitator should assess where the family is in beginning their narrative work. If the family is close to a stopping point, the facilitator should do nothing. If the family is not near a stopping point, the facilitator should help the family reach one and regain emotional balance before ending the session. It is important that the session ends with the family able to rejoin the group, continue to participate in the closing activities, and leave the group to go home in a healthy manner.

Facilitators should end by recapping the family's plan for their narrative sessions and remind the family that they have all the skills necessary to do it.

For families planning to do a trauma narrative: Talking together about the bad things that have happened to your family is an important and necessary step towards feeling better and coping. Now, you have a new set of skills for having this family conversation. Remember all the things that you have learned about talking together as a family, about sharing feelings, and about dealing with scared and anxious feelings. You are ready to do this.

Provide information to the family about why telling their trauma story is important. Talk about studies that have shown that talking or writing about what happened has been shown to help trauma survivors feel better and move on in a healthier manner.

Talk to the family about how families can talk to each other about difficult things that have happened. Some families may have experience with child-centered trauma narration in other therapeutic contexts and it can help to differentiate this family-centered trauma narrative process when developing this plan.

Many families benefit from completing a Family Trauma Timeline at the start of their trauma narrative. Instructions for this activity are provided (Session 10 folder).

Once a plan has been agreed upon, start the narrative process. About 10 minutes before time to return to the group, the facilitator should assess where the family is in beginning their narrative work. If the family is close to a stopping point, the facilitator should do nothing. If the family is not near a stopping point, the facilitator should help the family reach one and regain emotional balance before ending the session. It is important that the session ends with the family able to rejoin the group, continue to participate in the closing activities, and leave the group to go home in a healthy manner.

Facilitators should end by recapping the family's plan for their narrative sessions and remind the family that they have all the skills necessary to do it.

Talking about stress, hard things that have happened and trauma is very difficult. Many times, when families start to share about bad things that have happened, stress goes up. When stress levels go up, both children and adults can feel angry, irritable, sad, or can feel bad physically. We have worked a lot on things that you can do when this happens. Here is a sheet to help remind you of all the skills you have learned. You know that you can also always reach out to your therapist or one of group leaders if you are having trouble during the week. Because this is hard work, you may not want to

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come back every week. Remember that not wanting to talk about or think about what happened is a symptom of traumatic stress. But it is important that you do come back each week and that you work together as a family to make sure that happens.

Note 1: Facilitators should not become part of the family conversation but might want to gently encourage families to elaborate, to get everyone's point of view, to talk about how they felt at the time, etc.

Note 2: For some families, it might be necessary to have a session with the adult caregivers in the family prior to beginning the family trauma narrative. This discussion might focus on planning a safe experience for the family including work to help them set boundaries, decide who will be included in the narrative sessions, etc.

Note 3: Each family will process their narrative at different rates. Some families may need only 3 sessions while others may need more. Be sensitive to the pace of the family more so than the structure of the group.

Activity 5: SIT Practice



10
Minutes



Goals:

- To shift the energy from the narrative work to closing group.
- To practice letting go and returning to safe spaces in the family.



Materials:

As needed



Handouts:

As needed



Instructions:

Co-Facilitator _____: Lead a brief activity (calming or mindfulness or fun circle game) to transition from the narrative work to the close of group. You can do whatever activity that fits the families and shifts the energy while acknowledging that everyone just did hard work.

Activity 6: Closing

10
Minutes**Goals:**

- To increase the sense of group cohesion.
- To practice planning and implementation of rituals and routine.
- To assure continuity from one session to the next.

**Materials:**

Chore charts and star stickers (1 pack for each family)

**Handouts:**

Using Your Coping Resources
Phone Tree/Contact Sheets
Family Rating Form
Participant Log
Clinician Rating Form

**Instructions:**

Lead Facilitator: *We want to thank everyone for taking part in tonight's group. It is now time to finish this session and at the end of every group, we do a few things to end the group and to get ready for the next group.*

Co-Facilitator _____: *Is there anything that we still need to do to finish tonight's activities?*

I want to let each family know what a good job they did. Tell each family, or a family member, one thing that they did especially well.

Co-Facilitator _____: *Introduce and review the topic for next week. Remember that this is hard work that you are doing. Use your coping skills during the week to take care of yourselves. Hand out Using Your Coping Skills. Reach out for support if it gets too hard.*

Lead Facilitator: *We want to make sure that we stay in touch during the week, so let's continue to try the Buddy System or Phone Tree. Now, let's end by closing rituals. Cue families to acknowledge the end of group to other family members as well. Before you leave every week, we have a short form for you to fill out to let us know how the group went. Please complete your family rating form now and hand it in. Thanks.*

Facilitators complete participant log and clinician rating form.

**Homework to be Assigned:**

- Using Your Coping Resources