

## **STRENGTHENING FAMILY COPING RESOURCES**

### **Module Three: Session Eleven – *When Bad Things Happen***

Date:

Facilitators Present:

1. Family Meal – Facilitators encourage and model appropriate conversation, sharing, and supervision of children. Remember to be sensitive to and empowering of the parent(s).

\*Include conversation prompts for those families who are not being video recorded

#### 2. Opening activities (Lead Facilitator)

- Welcome
- Rules (Facilitator)
- Give thanks for those who helped prepare the food and get the room ready
- Check in with each family
- Review schedule for the evening
- Opening ritual:

#### 3. Gears (Facilitator; 15 minutes)

- Hand out gear sets. Ask families to work together to build something with the gears. They should build something so that when they turn the handle, all of the gears work together.
- Then, ask them to take out one of the gears. Have them turn the handle – what happens? Do all the gears turn? Take out another gear. Do all the gears turn? Now add a gear some place and see what happens. Do all the gears turn?
- Talk with families about how their family works something like the gears. When something happens, no matter if it is something good or bad, it affects everyone.
- Something really bad, like a trauma, could happen to any one member of the family, sending ripples throughout the family. This is called indirect trauma when the trauma experienced by only one family member creates distress or a traumatic stress reaction in other family members. “Family trauma” also happens when trauma is experienced directly by the whole family. A traumatized family reacts as a unit even though not everyone in the family will have the same reaction.
- Also, reactions to bad things that happen change over time. The way their family responds right after the event may not be the same as the way their family responds after some time has passed. Whole families can develop trauma-related symptoms and these symptoms can last for a year or longer. Even after that, trauma-related symptoms may re-occur or get worse when the family is under a lot of stress or when things in the family are changing.

**\*This guideline is not intended to replace the comprehensive instructions provided in the manual**

#### 4. Telling about the Trauma (65 minutes) (Facilitator-Family Assignments)

- Check in with families about their avoidance in coming to session. Can ask them “Did you feel reluctant to come today, like I talked about last week?” Have them rate reluctance on a scale from 1-10. Ask them why they felt reluctant and what they did to overcome it?
- Guide the family through telling their story about the bad thing(s) that happened. Name the trauma or traumas that the family is dealing with using the words that the family uses to talk about it. Remember to help the family choose a trauma to start talking about that they are prepared to discuss without getting overly distressed. Remind them to consider that everyone in their family has different experiences when bad things happen and every one of them may remember what happened differently. That’s fine. It’s just fine for each member of the family to have their own piece of the story.
- Ask if someone in the family would like to write down the story as it is being told. Young children in the family may want to draw the story as it is being told. Having some toys available for them to play quietly is also helpful.
- Monitor the level of family members’ stress and anxiety closely. Cue family members to use SIT skills if needed during the narrative.
- After about 40 minutes, assess where the family is in their conversation about the trauma(s). If the family is close to the end of the story, the facilitator should do nothing. If the family is nowhere near the end, the facilitator should help the family reach a stopping point 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.
- Can praise families for their progress with such a difficult task and being able to share with one another. Describe the family’s process and reflect on what the family learned, not content, but the process of telling the family story.

#### 5. Closing Activities (10 minutes)

- Thank everyone for taking part in tonight’s group (Lead Facilitator)
- Check that everything was covered/summary of session (Lead Facilitator)  
Tell the families that talking about trauma can be difficult. When families share about trauma, stress levels go up. Remind families about all the skills they have been working on to cope with stress and hand out *Using your Coping Resources* worksheet.
- Share a good thing about each family (Team)
- Introduce topic for next week (Facilitator) – Next week, we will continue to talk about the bad things that your family has experienced.
- Review tasks/homework for the following week – Using your coping resources
- Planning contacts for the week – **Continue system for families to contact one another**
- Closing ritual (Lead Facilitator):