

Girl's Friendship Group

Proposal: I would like to offer an empowerment/friendship group for female students based on the book Strong, Smart & Bold by Carla Fine.

Group Goals:

1. Create a safe place where young women can speak about difficult issues that affect their lives.
2. Teach and model communication and listening skills.
3. Teach and model problem-solving skills.
4. Offer opportunities for self-discovery and friendship.

Group format: The group will meet weekly during the home base period for eight weeks. Group participation is voluntary. A reminder/pass will be given to students in homeroom the morning the group meets.

Recruitment: I will talk about the group to classes during homeroom and home base. I will also ask teachers for names of student's who they feel may benefit from this group. Students interested in or recommended for the group will be screened and informed about the group's purpose and goals.

Evaluation: An evaluation will be completed at the end of the eight-week session. In addition, I will meet with each student individually to assess whether group goals have been accomplished.

Week One - Introductions

1. Each group member will introduce herself and share one fact (i.e. I like pizza, I have two cats). I will introduce myself and talk briefly about group purpose and goals.
2. Set group ground rules collectively. Some rules I feel important for this group include respecting one another, having one person speak at a time and having the option to pass. We will also discuss confidentiality and decide if group discussion should be kept within the group. I feel confidentiality is needed for the group.
3. Have each student create a folder for worksheets. Complete "What's In a Name?" activity on page p. 19 of Strong, Smart & Bold. Each girl will create an acrostic using the letters of her name. She will spell out her name vertically and complete each letter by identifying some of her best qualities or by listing what she does well or what she likes. Bring folders and markers for this activity.
4. Have each student share her folder and what's she written about herself. Each person will pick one letter to explain in greater depth.
5. Introduce the next week's activity.

Week Two – Getting to Know Another/Leadership skills checklist

1. Complete a "get to know each other" activity. Go around circle and say names and answer, "What is your favorite cartoon character?" Play the Toss A Name Game. Stand up in a circle. Toss the ball and say the person's name. After a minute or two add a second ball (or have them switch to the person's cartoon favorite – was anyone really listening?).

2. Pair students by having them line up in birthday order. Hand out the leadership skills checklist (p. 56-57) from Strong, Smart and Bold (attached). Have each student read the checklist and check off the activities that she has done.
3. Discuss the following questions in dyads and then bring the discussion back to the full group.
 - a. Were you surprised at the number of skills you checked?
 - b. What's the hardest skill listed?
 - c. What's the easiest skill?
 - d. What one skill would you like to try?
 - e. What do you think about the statement, "People don't think girls are good leaders."?
4. Two homework assignments. First, think about trying a new skill this week. Second, bring in one or two magazines that you enjoy.

Week Three – Media Messages

1. Follow-up on the homework. Did anyone try a new leadership skill since we met? Would anyone like to share the new skill they tried the past week?
2. Introduce today's topic, which is how women are portrayed in the media. Go around the circle: How do you feel about how women are portrayed in magazines or on TV?
3. Put students in pairs again using Jolly Ranchers. Pass around a basket of candy and have each student take a piece. Students with the same color candy will pair up. Give each pair several magazines and ask them to look at the images of women.
4. Discuss the following questions in dyads and then bring the discussion back to the full group.
 - a. Do the women in the magazines look like the people around us (our moms, teachers etc.)? Do they look like "real" people?
 - b. We get messages from the media about how we should look and act. What are the images telling us?
 - c. Do we, as women, need to follow the media's suggestions?
5. Go around the circle. "After today's discussion about the media's portrayal of women, I feel...."
6. Introduce next week's topic.

Week Four – Problem Solving Part I

1. Go around the circle. Would anyone like to share any thoughts/concerns before we begin? Did anyone think about last week's discussion of how women are portrayed in the media? What are your thoughts?
2. Introduce problem solving. Hand out the problem solving outline (attached) to students and go over problem solving steps.
3. Read Dilemma #1- Stay in the Game or Quit? (p. 77): Brianna, who is in eight grade, tried out for the middle school's softball team as a beginner and made the team. Now that practices have started, she is having more trouble than she thought she would. She really likes some of the other girls on the team and feels she will be as good as they, if not better, after she gets more experience. But she gets so frustrated and mad at herself for not doing better, sometimes she wants to quit. What should Brianna do? Use problem-solving steps to come up with a possible solution to Brianna's problem.

4. Read Dilemma #2 - Be responsible and miss an opportunity? (p. 77-78) if time allows (otherwise save until next week): At age thirteen, Nikki is the oldest of four children. Her brother is twelve, and her two sisters are four and two. Both her parents work away from home during the day, and to save money, the baby-sitter leaves as soon as Nikki gets home from school. Then Nikki takes over watching the little ones. Today Nikki heard about a free after-school program that takes girls to a college campus three afternoons a week to study advanced science and astronomy. Nikki loves astronomy. She wants to help her parents, and usually enjoys taking care of her sisters (even though they can be wild sometimes), but she doesn't want to miss this opportunity. What should Nikki do? Use problem-solving steps to come up with a possible solution to Nikki's problem.
5. Talk about the next week's activity which will be a continuation of problem solving. Ask students to bring in a real life problem (their own or someone else's) for the group to problem solve.

Week Five – Problem Solving Part II

1. Remind students that we working on problem solving. Go over the problem solving steps briefly. Hand out index cards to students. At the end of the last group meeting, I asked them to think of real problems. Have each student write down one situation that they would like solved. Students can remain anonymous and change names if desired.
2. Depending on the number of real problems presented, I may skip dilemmas from the book and focus on the girl's problems.
3. Read Dilemma #2 (if not done last week).
4. Read Dilemma #3 – An Unexpected Turn of Events (p. 78): Abby, seventeen, is at a party that was supposed to be fun, but it's boring. None of her friends came when they said they would, and the girl whose house this is has disappeared. It seems pretty clear that there are no adults at home – even though the girl said they were upstairs. Kids are acting stupid, opening the cabinets and drawers to find liquor and messing with stuff that doesn't belong to them. The worst part is, Abby fought with her Mom and Dad just to be allowed to come to this party. They trusted her and now it's turning out exactly the way her parents suspected it would. Her parents told her to call if anything went wrong, but Abby is afraid of admitting she made a mistake and possibly getting in trouble. Still, she wants to go home. What should Abby do? Use problem-solving steps to come up with a possible solution to Abby's problem.
5. End with the question, "Can you see yourself using the problem solving steps to solve a real problem? Why or why not?"

Week Six – Values Voting

1. Introduce today's topic. This week we are going to look at some controversial topics that don't have a right or wrong answer. Remind the girls about respecting each other's opinions and that it is OK if we don't agree on these topics. Have each student complete the values worksheet (p. 46) from Strong, Smart and Bold (attached) independently. Have each student pick out one or two value statements that she would like to talk about/discuss with the group.
2. This meeting will be discussion with the group leader facilitating.

Week Seven - Passive, Aggressive and Assertive Behavior

1. Begin by reading the definitions of passive, aggressive and assertive from the dictionary.
2. Discuss the differences between the three behaviors.
3. Read dilemmas 1, 2 and 4 (p. 129-132) from Strong, Smart and Bold and allow the girls to determine what behavior (passive, aggressive or assertive) was exhibited in the story. Discuss how to change inappropriate behavior (i.e. how to change aggressive behavior into assertive behavior) for each of the dilemmas.
4. Talk about how next week is our last week and that we will complete an activity where we tell each person something positive about herself (so they should start thinking). I'll also bring snack, so I'll ask what they would like me to bring.

Week Eight – Closing Activity

1. Have the snack set up so group members can snack when they like.
2. Complete an “appreciations” activity. Have a 9 x 12 envelope for each member of the group with the person’s name listed on the outside. Hand out index cards to members so each person has one for each group member. On each card, the girls should write positive messages to the other members of the group. For example, “I like the way that you....” Or “When you said/did ____, I felt ____.” Once complete, put the index card in the appropriate envelope.
3. Allow the girls to read their “appreciations”.
4. Discuss. How did it feel to read your appreciations? Was anyone surprised by what they read?
5. Give students an evaluation form and complete the form in the group (bring pencils). Let students know that I will be meeting with them individually next week. Thank students for participating.

Girls Empowerment Group Ideas from Strong, Smart and Bold: Empowering Girls for Life by Carla Fine

What's In a Name? (p. 19)

Help a girl create an acrostic using the letters of her name. Spell out her name vertically and have her complete each letter by identifying some of her best qualities or focusing on what she does and what she likes.

Media Messages: Reality Reading (p. 30)

Gather up magazines, catalogs etc. and look at the images of women. Do they look like the people around us (mother, teachers etc)? What does that say? We get messages from the media about how we should look and act. Do we need to follow them? Along the same lines, talk about favorite TV shows. Do the characters have jobs? Realistic problems? Look like "real" people?

Values Voting (p. 45)

Read a list of statements and have each girl decide whether she agrees, disagrees or is undecided about each statement. Discuss each one. One or two would probably take 30 minutes. Encourage girls to talk about their beliefs.

Leadership Skills Checklist (p. 56-57)

This checklist covers the area of communications, relationships, planning and creativity. The girls will check off activities that they have completed (i.e. I've called someone I don't know). This would be good to do in the start of the group and at the end to see how one accomplishes leadership skills over time.

Rating Risks (p. 66-67)

Labeling examples of healthy risk taking behavior as easy, maybe or no way based on whether she feels they are a high or low risk endeavor.

Problem Solving and Dilemmas (p. 77-78)

Read each situation and make a decision. I would teach basic problem solving first.

Values Voting about one's body and appearance (p. 96-97)

Read a list of statements and have each girl decide whether she agrees, disagrees or is undecided about each statement. Discuss each one. Watch video "Dying to be Thin" available at Bethlehem Public Library. Also see ways to empower a girl to appreciate her body on p. 110-111.

Comeback lines – How to get out of a difficult situation (p. 109-110) How to respond to comments that will push girls into being sexually active.

Language of Boundaries (p. 125-126).

A Girl's Castle (p. 120-124). This exercise has each girl write down the things (abilities, important people, goals, strengths etc.) that she treasures, whom she will invite into her castle and what she doesn't want in the castle (being yelled at, drugs etc.)

Passive, Aggressive and Assertive Behavior (p. 129-131). This exercise discusses the differences between the three behaviors and offers four dilemmas that allow girls to determine what behavior was exhibited in the story leading to a discussion of how to change inappropriate behavior (i.e. how to change aggressive into assertive).

Self-defense (p. 139-141) – This section suggests ways to protect oneself in a potentially dangerous situation.

Life on 100 pennies (p. 153–154). This exercise helps girls think about how money is spent (housing, transportation, utilities, clothes, entertainment etc.) and helps students talk about the different expenses and prioritizing.

Paying Bills (p. 154-155). Show student how to read and pay a bill.

Power shopping (p. 157-158). Have student pretend they have \$500 to buy school clothes and supplies with the mission to get as many items as possible with the money. This could be done with advertisements or by taking a field trip to the mall.

Career Charades (p. 159-160). Describe different careers and have the girls guess what you are describing. Use OOH to find descriptions of traditional and non-traditional careers. Possibly tie in education needed for career and salary information.

Sandwich Maker (p. 163-165). Create a plan for a small business using your favorite sandwich. Learn how to create your own web page on <http://www.girlsinc.org/gc/page.php?id=3>

Wall Street and My Street (p. 167-168). Introduce money management. Explain the concept of stocks and have students pick and follow stock prices for several weeks.

My Future (p. 174-177). Plan for the future. Have students think about where they want to live, what type of career they wish to pursue, what role family will play in their lives and what the world around them will be like.

Leadership Skills Checklist

Communications

- I've called someone I did not know.
- I've led an activity in a group, school or club.
- I've worked in a group to make a decision.
- I've explained my ideas to someone.
- I've used the library to do research.
- I've used the computer to do research or send a message.
- I've interviewed someone.
- I've made a presentation to a group.
- I've listened to others in both small and large groups.
- I've learned new words.
- I've written a letter asking for something (for example, to invite a community leader to a meeting or to request information from a newspaper, library or other organization).
- I've called on local community leaders to support an issue or program that I cared about.
- I've spoken out in a group my first time there.
- I've introduced myself to someone from a different neighborhood, city or country.

Relationships

- I've gone out of my way for someone in trouble.
- I've helped someone else meet her goals.
- I've made a decision within my group of friends.
- I've done something a little bit scary but important for me to do.
- I've talked with others in my community about my concerns.
- I've found other people to work with me to make a change.

Planning

- I've developed a plan of action.
- I've completed my group assignment on time.
- I've revised a plan to meet the goal of a group.
- I've revised a plan to meet my own goal.
- I've reflected on those things that are hard for me to do and those that are easy.
- I've kept notes about a meeting I attended.

Creativity

- I've made up a game or activity for a group.
- I've made up a story or song and shared it with the group.
- I've kept a journal.
- I've written a song or poem or made a picture or created some object about girls and women and connected it to my own life.

This list was reproduced from Strong, Smart and Bold: Empowering Girls for Life by Carla Fine (2001), p. 56-57.

Problem Solving Worksheet

- 1. What is the problem? The problem should be clearly defined.**
- 2. What are some plans? This is a brainstorming time where we think of as many possible solutions as we can.**
- 3. What is the best plan? Is this plan doable?**
- 4. Do the plan.**
- 5. Did it work?**

Value Statements

Read each statement and choose one of the following responses:

1. I agree with this statement (A).
2. I disagree with this statement (D).
3. I am undecided about this statement (U).

Pick one or two that you would like to discuss with the group.

Female athletes are not feminine.

A D U

A woman is not complete until she has a baby.

A D U

It's better to say what you really feel, even if it means hurting someone's feelings.

A D U

Couples who fight are going to break up or get a divorce.

A D U

People who cry when they're upset are more healthy than people who don't cry.

A D U

You should always think before you speak.

A D U

If there were more professional women's sports teams, they would probably have as many fans as the men's teams.

A D U

Women should make as much money as men make for doing the same job.

A D U

The president has to be a man, because women are not as strong in making decisions.

A D U

