



The Foundation for Meeting Development Needs of Children and Youth

In-Service e-Learning (PRIDE)

Course Description

This module explains two foundational concepts of child wellbeing for children and youth. The first two sessions are focused on how to recognize and understand the importance of self-esteem and self-concept in a child or youth. Topics covered include; how to support a child or youth to build both self-esteem and self-concept in a positive way; how a caregiver can develop an understanding of some of the factors that influence self-esteem; how to recognize a child or youth's level of self-esteem, and recognizing that children and youth in care are at risk of low self-esteem and self-concept. Caregivers are presented with information on how to create a supportive and accepting environment that provides unconditional positive support, how to assist a child or youth in building upon their personal strengths, and how to help them develop their social relationships. This training also addresses how to promote a child or youth's positive sense of identity, cultural values, and supports participants in recognizing the link between meeting needs and behavior. The final two sessions focus on communication with children, youth and the case team. The sessions focus on components of the communication process and provide ways to improve communication. The sessions also discuss topics such as reflective listening, non-verbal communication, helpful questions vs unhelpful questions, and the importance of communication with children/youth in your care.

Learning Objectives

Session One: Recognizing and Understanding Self-Esteem

- Describe what self-concept and self-esteem mean.
- Explain how a child or youth develop their self-esteem.
- Identify the factors that can affect a child or youth's self-concept and self-esteem.
- Understand how to recognize healthy self-esteem in a child or youth.
- Know what factors affect a child or youth's development of healthy self-esteem.
- Understand how prior experiences impact a child or youth's self-esteem.
- State the reasons why children and youth in care are at risk in the area of self-esteem.

Session Two: Building Self-Esteem and Understanding Behavioral Responses.

- Identify four basic conditions to support a child or youth in the development of positive self-esteem.
- Recognize whether or not the four conditions of self-esteem are present, and respond to the child or youth's specific needs in each area.
- Describe how to support a child or youth's sense of connection, uniqueness and personal agency.
- Understand the importance of mentorship, for children and youth, in the development of positive self-esteem.
- List the needs a child or youth may be communicating through their behavioral responses.

Session Three: Communicating with Children and Youth, Part 1

- Describe what you can do to build the four conditions for positive self-esteem with children/youth in your care.
- Identify what needs a child or youth is communicating with their behavioural responses.
- Describe the connection between: communication skills and interpersonal skills in building and maintaining relationships.
- Define effective communication.
- Identify the different parts of the communication process.

- Understand your own personal communication style and needs.
- Identify barriers to effective communication.
- Explain ways to improve communication.

Session Four: Communicating with Children and Youth, Part 2

- Describe attending behaviours.
- State how passive listening demonstrates acceptance.
- Use noncommittal responses and door openers to encourage communication.
- Describe the reasons why reflective listening is a valuable communication technique.
- Identify the feeling(s) that underline messages.
- Use active and reflective listening.
- Identify the elements of nonverbal communication.
- Use open questions to invite discussion.

Resources

Resource 1-2:

Developing and Maintaining the Four Areas of Self-Esteem

A Sense of Meaningful Connections

Meaningful Connection is a bond with another human being that allows us to be vulnerable and still be accepted and loved by the person on the receiving end. When we have a sense of connectedness, we identify with a significant person and/or a group of people. We feel part of a past or heritage, including people, places, traditions, and customs. When we are connected to significant others, a group, or even a role within a group or family, we will tend to feel worthwhile.

Personal and cultural identity is further supported when we have connectedness. When we are connected to others, we know our presence is valued. Probably the greatest of all human needs is to be valued by others. We might be the only creatures on this planet whose need to be needed is greater than our will to survive. When we don't believe we are significant, our mental, physical and emotional well-being can become compromised.

Ways to Build a Sense of Connectedness:

As a caregiver, you will work with the child or youth's caseworker and their support team to ensure that the child or youth maintains the important connections their life. Some of these connections might include, but are not limited to:

- Encouraging and maintaining contact with the child/youth's parents, brothers and sisters, other family members, friends, and others who matter to the child.
- Finding out about the child/youth's earlier attachments to significant persons and if appropriate, help maintain those attachments.
- You may be asked to help the child/youth contact significant persons, either by writing letters, telephoning or through virtual visits like FaceTime or Zoom.
- Prepare the child or youth for Family Time.
- You may be asked to work with the child/youth's family to gather material for the child or youth's Memory Book.
- The child or youth's family may be invited to school, recreational, and social events (more information on working with a child or youth's family is included in Foster PRIDE Module 5)
- Creating opportunities for children or youth to be able to talk about their relationships with family and friends.
- Creating opportunities to involve children or youth in the events of your family's life.
- Help children or youth think through the types of relationships they would like with others.
- Building relationships with children or youth, and use these relationships to teach them about feelings and experiences that come from positive relationships.
- Talking with children/youth about what they think a "best friend" is.

- Explore with children/youth why they think people like them. Ask, “What do you do that makes you feel important to others?”
- Encourage and support children or youth to join groups where they can practice cooperation and teamwork.
- If applicable explore opportunities for the child or youth to join cultural groups, clubs, sports teams, or band.
- Find ways to recognize children/youth for their membership in a group.
- Share with the child or youth about some of the groups you belong to, and highlight some of the benefits you have gained.
- Demonstrate what “teamwork” looks like by encouraging them to identify the qualities of a “good team.”
- Help to identify ways children or youth may be able to volunteer their time and talents.
- Work together with children or youth to identify the tasks and responsibilities they can do around the house.
- Recognize the child or youth’s contributions to family, group, and home life.
- Provide various opportunities for children or youth to share their needs, feelings, their interests, to solve problems, to promote cooperation, and to plan family life.
- Encourage and help the child or youth participate in cultural, school and community activities.
- Find ways to let children/youth know how pleased you are when they relate well to others.

Feeling part of a past or heritage

- Supporting ways for the child or youth to connect with former friends, support people, and caregivers.
- Using books, pictures, stories, and conversation to help children or youth value the events and experiences of their lives.
- Creating opportunities for children or youth to recognize and appreciate their cultural heritage.
- Find meaningful ways to mark cultural traditions, holidays, and rituals. Support the child or youth’s role in these occasions.
- Respect the child or youth’s observance of special spiritual or religious events and dietary restrictions associated with their religious practices.
- If applicable, a world map or globe might be used to show children where their ancestors may have lived.
- Provide opportunities for the child or youth to talk about favorite places.
- If children or youth have brought personal treasures or mementos with them, encourage them to tell you about them, and listen attentively.

A Sense of Uniqueness

As a caregiver, it is important to nurture the unique qualities of the child or youth in your care. Through conversations with the child or youth’s caseworker, you can find many ways to assist in the development of their uniqueness. Nurturing and supporting their feelings of being worthwhile and competent builds a sense of uniqueness.

Ways to Build a Sense of Uniqueness may include but are not limited to:

- Finding ways to celebrate ways in which people are different.
- Supporting and encouraging the child or youth in finding areas where they can excel.
- Avoid comparing children or youth, or asking them why they can’t be like someone else.
- Treating each child or youth as an individual with their own strengths and needs, and unique characteristics. This validates the child as a separate person.
- Avoid “group blame” by lumping everyone together when only one or a few children or youth have behaved in a certain way.
- Think about giving each child or youth something special to do as a chore or task needed for family life.
- When possible, encourage children or youth to seek to improve their skills week by week. If they can excel in something that is different from what others choose, competition and discouragement can be reduced.
- Encourage and support the child or youth’s interest and hobbies.
- Avoid showing disappointment if the child or youth doesn’t enjoy the same things you do.
- Spend quality time alone with each child or youth every day.
- Show the child or youth that you recognize their uniqueness by saying things like, “I care about you.” Or, “You are important.” You may also give them gestures like “high fives”, “thumbs up” or if they feel comfortable, “a hug.”
- Allowing a child or youth to personalize their bedroom or space.
- Communicate acceptance (unconditional positive regard) of the child or youth, even at times when you are putting limits around choices or their behavioral responses.

- Provide immediate, specific, and sincere praise as a way to provide positive reinforcement.

A Sense of Agency

Having a sense of agency refers to the feeling of control over actions and their consequences. Feelings of personal agency come from knowing that you have what you need to influence your own situation, and the circumstances of your life. People with a strong sense of personal agency feel that they have a substantial amount of control over their lives. They believe that they have the ability to use special skills in challenging situations. When people have a sense of agency they realize that they have choices, can make decisions, and are responsible for their decisions and their behavioral response that result.

Having a sense of personal agency makes us more willing to take risks to learn new skills, which can then lead us to feel competent and responsible.

Ways to Build a Sense of Agency:

- Create opportunities for children or youth to have a variety of experiences.
- Avoid doing for them what they can do for themselves. Let them have the satisfaction and pride that come as a result of growing independence and self-sufficiency.
- A child or youth's thoughts and feelings matter. Create opportunities for the child or youth to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions.
- Encourage children and youth to think for themselves and to figure things out.
- Allow children and youth to make mistakes and recover from them.
- Encourage their efforts not only their results.
- Offer children/youth a broad exposure and many options of experiences.
- Create opportunities for a child or youth to demonstrate competency and responsibility.
- Encourage "stick-to-itiveness."
- Involve them in solving problems.
- Praise accomplishments.
- Communicate support (e.g., "you can do it," "great going," "keep on trying").
- Teach self-help skills.
- Help children and youth to become effective decision makers.
- Assist children and youth in weighing their choices and examining the consequences. Allow them to choose.
- Ask children and youth for their views on family life, and activities such as household chores and recreational events.
- Increase a child or youth's responsibilities based on their capability.

Sense of Connection to Role Models

Role Models provide us with examples for our lives by helping us establish meaningful values, goals, ideals and standards. Role models are people we know, whom we feel are worth imitating. They help us feel confident that we can distinguish good from bad, right from wrong, based on the values we have been shown. These values guide us, and provide a sense of order in our lives.

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

Caregivers can be effective models for children or youth by demonstrating these traits.

Ways to Build a Sense of Models:

- Be an example by acting according to your beliefs and principles.
- Introduce children and youth to people you admire.
- Let children and youth interact with noteworthy teachers, Elders, religious, and community leaders.
- Talk with children and youth about their values.
- Let children/youth know where you "stand" on philosophical, moral, and social issues. When they ask what you think, tell them honestly and non-judgmentally.
- Help children and youth think through what's important to them. Be accepting of any differences.

- Help children/youth face the consequences of their behavioral responses.
- Help children and youth resolve value dilemmas.
- Hold family discussions of values, interests, and beliefs.
- Avoid the trap of, “Do as I say, not as I do.” Children and youth are influenced more by who we are and what we do rather than by what we tell them.
- Live by the values that you try to teach children and youth.
- Encourage a sense of order and purpose in the family environment by establishing “order- keeping” tasks or jobs for all family members.
- Do and say things that show the child or youth that you love yourself and feel worthwhile, and that you believe you are competent and responsible.
- Continue to find ways to create and maintain the conditions of connectedness, uniqueness, and personal agency for yourself. This can then help you in teaching children or youth how to satisfy these conditions for themselves.

Based on: M. A. Clark, H. Clemes, and R. Bean, *How to Raise a Teenager’s Self-Esteem*, (San Jose, CA: ENRICH, 1983).