

ISOLATION



Introduction to the theme 1 - Isolation

Victims and survivors of domestic violence or abuse often suffer from isolation. It appears as a segment on the Duluth power and control wheel and has continually been flagged as an issue relating to the abuse of women. The Duluth wheel describes this abuse as

...controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes. Limiting her outside involvement. Using jealousy to justify actions (Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, Isolation- Understanding the power and control wheel, 2017).

This behaviour will isolate both the woman and her children making the world in which they live a very small one. Once a family reaches a place of safety it is not always possible or safe to regain their lost connections with family and friends. Many of their relationships and friendships will have broken down, leaving the family very isolated. This controlling behaviour has a direct impact on children within the family especially with regards to their involvement in after schools activities, clubs and groups and limited opportunities to socialise with friends in their home or to attend parties. Once children are in places of safety, they can still be isolated by the rules of the place of safety, which prevents social visits and limits their contact with friends and family to ensure their safety.

This situation is not improved by many women in the UK and Europe needing to flee their home and their already diminished support networks, schools and families to access places of safety. According to Women's Aid, in the UK 'nearly 70% of survivors have to leave their local authority area to find a refuge place' and spaces to accommodate larger families are in very short supply, meaning that some families may need to move hundreds of miles away from their original home.

Whilst escaping abuse is generally a positive situation and allows more freedom than before, many families remain isolated and are reluctant to forge new connections to the area because of fear, threats to safety and concern that if found they may need to move again.

This session sets out the group rules and sets the tone for the following sessions. The focus is on the woman and their family as a unit and the Supporting Exercise and Extension Activity focus on their surroundings in a positive way. The Supporting Exercise encourages the family to get out and about in their community, to discover new things and to make plans for activities they can do together.

The family scrap book provides an opportunity to collect and remember fun experiences and memories throughout what may be a very difficult time for them. Creating positive happy memories for those living in places of safety is a key aim of the "Our Time" Programme. Session 1 seeks to introduce the structure of the programme and build an environment which is safe and supportive, to help individuals recognise their own strengths and skills and to encourage each family to reflect on positive improvements and fun family times whilst in a place of safety.

Trips, Cultural Activities, Celebrations, Parties, Workshops

Below are some suggestions for ideas to support families experiencing isolation. You might want to incorporate some or all of these into your broader package of support. You could also choose to add your own, which may be culturally specific to your town, region or the families who are attending the programme.

Teddy Bears Picnic

Invite families to join in a picnic; this could be indoors if the weather is not good. Ask them to bring along their favourite teddy bear. You may want to ask each family to make some food for the picnic or you could ask families to work as a team to make items for the picnic. You could also arrange some games to encourage families to communicate with each other, for example a teddy bear hunt- hide teddy bears or pictures and ask the families to find them - read a story involving a teddy bear, ask the children (and mothers too if they have brought a bear) to introduce you to their teddy telling you its name and something fun about it.

Trip to the local park

Invite families to walk to the local park or open space together; get them to interact with other families and to find out more about their local area. You could arrange a nature hunt with a list of things to find (an oak leaf, a daisy, a smooth stone etc) or ask them to make a list of all the different wildlife they have spotted (ants, beetles, ladybirds, bees, birds etc).

Sports day

Arrange an interfamily sports day with obstacle races, skipping, an egg and spoon race etc.

Cultural cooking

Ask each family to make a meal which is specific to their family; it could be an old family recipe or something the family enjoy making or eating together. Share the food and ask each family to talk about where their dish comes from and why they like it. It is important to be aware of any allergies and you should ask families to provide a list of ingredients for each meal.

Isolation

Communication
& Respect

Building Trust

Managing
Emotions

Positive &
Healthy Futures

SESSION 1: OUR FAMILY

Isolation

Session 1 Objective

To introduce the programme and to help families to feel more integrated into their local community.

Communication & Respect

Introduction

5-15 minutes

Welcome the families into the group. Inform the group of the programme aim: To create happy, positive memories for families living in places of safety.

Explain the programme structure:

- How many sessions will there be?
- When will they be?
- How long will each session run for?
- Supporting exercise to complete as a family outside the session
- Extension activity available to complete with a key worker if you and your family need a little extra support in this area

Give a brief description of the exercises you will be doing and what might be involved for example- "We will be getting creative later with some cutting, gluing and sticking".

Building Trust



Standard Activities

Managing Emotions

Activity 1.1. Ground Rules

10-20 minutes

The rules will be agreed in a group and should include some basics. Although they should include some basic rules. Please refer to the Ground Rules sheet¹ for some ideas.



Materials needed:

- Flip chart and Marker pens
- Ground rules sheet to sign

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¹ The Ground Rules sheet is on the page 24

Activity 1.2. Ice Breaker**10-20 minutes**

Ask the group to each think of a positive adjective² that describes an aspect of their personality and starts with the first letter of their name eg: Genuine Gemma

**Tip: You could provide a list of options for the group to help them choose more quickly*

**Materials needed:**

- Sticky labels/badges that can be written on
- Pens

Activity 1.3. 10 Good Things about My Town**10-20 minutes**

Ask those in the group to name good things about where they live and the surrounding areas. Add as many as you can, but try to rate by consensus the top 10 things.

**Materials needed:**

- A5 card or paper
- Pencils
- Examples

**Low Level of Literacy Activities****Activity 1.4. Family Scrapbook****20-30 minutes**

Give each family a laminating pouch folded in half and scored down the centre. Explain that the right half will be the front and the left the back of their book. Ask the families to work together to make a scrap book which represents them, their personalities and interests. Ask them to choose paper, drawings, pictures etc. to decorate their family scrap book. Show some examples of what materials they could use and what they may want to include such as all their names, just their surname, nicknames, ages etc.

**Materials needed:**

- Laminating pouches
- Laminator

² The List of Adjectives is on the page 25

- Coloured cards and papers
- Scissors
- Stickers
- Examples

Activity 1.5. Getting to Know Me

15-25 minutes

Give each person a list of five things they need to find out from someone they don't know very well. Questions could include: name, age, favourite subject, hobby, one thing they are good at, their most proud moment, their favourite feature, favourite song, favourite animal etc.

Get each person to tell the group about the other person.



Materials needed:

- A5 card or paper
- Pencils
- Examples

Activity 1.6. My Town Poster

20-30 minutes

Ask the group to make a poster advertising the best things to do in your town/area. Use as many colours and images as you like.



Materials needed:

- Laminating pouches
- Laminator
- Pens/felts/pencil crayons
- Coloured cards and papers
- Scissors
- Stickers



Advanced Activities

Activity 1.7. My family

15-25 minutes

Hand out an A5 piece of paper/ card to each person. Ask them to draw a self-portrait on one side.

On the reverse ask them to write down a list of things which they are good at and which they enjoy. Encourage the families to help each other think of things they are good at. Remind them that we are being positive about each other and point out good examples to give them encouragement when you hear or see them.



Materials needed:

- A5 card or paper
- Pens/felts/pencil crayons
- Pencils
- Examples



Relaxation Activities

Activity 1.8. Letting Go

Sitting comfortably feet on the floor if you can and with your eyes closed if you feel able to, listen to the sound of your breathing; concentrate on how it feels to breathe in and out. Take a deep breath in for a count of 5, hold it there for a count of 3 then exhale for a count of 5. Continue this until it becomes a pattern.

On the next breath in, scrunch up your toes, hold them there while you hold your breath and on the out breath release them. As you release them to the count of 5, you feel all the negative energy flowing out of your toes and notice how they now feel.

On your next breath in, scrunch up your toes and clench your calf muscles, notice how tight they get. Hold them for 3 and then release them feeling all the negative energy and tension leaving your body.

On your next breath in, tighten your toes, clench your calves and tighten your thighs. Hold them in for the count of 3 then release them feeling all the negative energy and tension leaving your body.

On your next breath in, scrunch your toes, clench your calves, tighten your thighs and tense your bottom muscles. Hold for 3 and then release them as you breath out, feeling all the tension and negative energy leave your body.

Isolation

Communication & Respect

Building Trust

Managing Emotions

Positive & Healthy Futures

On your next breath in, scrunch your toes, clench your calves, tighten your thighs, tense your bottom muscles and pull in your stomach muscles. Hold them for the count of 3 then release them, feeling all the negative energy and tension leave your body.

On your next breath in, scrunch your toes, clench your calves, tighten your thighs, tense your bottom muscles, pull in your stomach muscles and pull your arms and shoulders up tightly towards your chest. Hold them for the count of 3 then release them, feeling all the negative energy and tension leave your body.

On your next breath in scrunch your toes, clench your calves, tighten your thighs, tense your bottom muscles, pull in your stomach muscles, pull your arms and shoulders up tightly towards your chest and screw up your face as much as you can. Hold them for the count of 3 then release them, feeling all the negative energy and tension leave your body.

On your next breath in, concentrate on how your body feels now. Hold your breath for the count of 3 and release any remaining tension from your body as you breathe out. Repeat this a few more times until you feel ready to open your eyes and begin to breathe normally again.

Some people may want to have a stretch or shake after this exercise.

Plenary

10-20 minutes

Remind the families of what has been covered in the session and today's objectives. Ask them to reflect on what they have learnt in this session.

Suggested questions:

- What have you enjoyed doing most today?
- What have you learnt about someone else in the group?
- Have you found out something about this area you didn't know before?
- What are you going to do to find out more about your area?
- Introduce the supporting exercise

Invite those who feel they would like an extra session to approach the facilitator or key worker at the end of the session or before the next session to take part in the extension activity.

Isolation

Communication
& Respect

Building Trust

Managing
Emotions

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INDEPENDENT FAMILY ACTIVITIES



Supporting Exercise 1: Name 3

Ask families to complete this³ together before the next session.

**Tip: You may want to offer an incentive or prize for the family who find the most information, this could be a small food treat, a sticker or a star on a reward chart where over the eight weeks the family with the most stars wins.*



Materials needed:

- Name 3 exercise sheet.



Extension Activity 1: Conversation Starter

**Key workers can decide beforehand which extension activity they are offering. Only experienced practitioners should use the advanced extension activity.*

Advise families that there is the opportunity to complete an Extension Activity⁴ as a family with the key worker. This activity will be a fun and informal look at how to start conversations with new people.

**Tip: You may want to approach families who you feel would benefit most from this Extension Activity.*



Advanced Extension Activity 1: Key worker Led

Advise families that there is the opportunity to complete an Extension Activity as a family with the key worker. This Advanced Extension Activity⁵, is only to be completed by experienced practitioners who are skilled in supporting families who have experienced domestic violence.

Isolation

Communication
& Respect

Building Trust

Managing
Emotions

Positive &
Healthy Futures

³ Supporting Exercise 1 worksheet is found on page 26

⁴ Extension Activity 1 worksheet is found on page 27

⁵ Advanced Extension Activity 1 worksheet is found on page 28

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Worksheet: Ground Rules

- 1 Confidentiality
- 2 Time keeping
- 3 Good listening
- 4 Talk about your experiences from your own perspective- I feel, I think, I am
- 5 Accept how others feel
- 6 Validate others feelings
- 7 Be honest
- 8 No name calling
- 9 Discrimination. Everyone should work towards creating an atmosphere of respect and kindness to each other. Discriminatory language regarding colour, race, age, sexuality or disability will not be tolerated in the group.
- 10 Rude language or swearing will not be tolerated as this is a family group and such language is inappropriate.
- 11 Mobile phones off or on silent
- 12 Commit and engage in the sessions and any extension activities or supporting exercises
- 13 Give everyone an opportunity to speak. Each person should avoid dominating the discussion, and should try not to interrupt.
- 14 Take responsibility for your own behaviour.

I agree to these rules and am aware that if I break them me and my family may be asked to leave the group.

Family:

Signed:

Worksheet: Ice Breaker – Positive Adjective List

- A** Amazing, Accomplished, Able, Active, Adored, Affable, Amusing, Assertive, Awesome
- B** Beautiful, Bodacious, Brave, Bright, Brilliant, Bountiful, Bubbly
- C** Caring, Calm, Captivating, Creative, Charming, Chirpy, Colourful, Comical, Compelling, Considerate, Cool, Creative
- D** Daring, Dazzling, Decisive, Delightful, Dependable, Devoted, Diplomatic, Dynamic
- E** Eager, Easy-going, Eclectic, Empowered, Enchanted, Energetic, Enthralling, Exceptional, Extraordinary
- F** Fabulous, Fantastic, Fair, Fancy, Fearless, Fiery, Flamboyant, Friendly, Funny
- G** Generous, Genuine, Gifted, Glamorous, Goodhearted, Graceful, Gutsy
- H** Handsome, Happy, Hardworking, Healthy, Honest, Humble, Helpful, Heroic
- I** Illuminating, Imaginative, Impassioned, Incredible, Infallible, Intrepid
- J** Jaunty, Jovial, Jolly, Joyful, Jubilant
- K** Kind, Kooky, Kind-hearted, Knowing, Keen
- L** Loveable, Laughing, Lavish, Legendary, Lively, Luxurious, Lucky
- M** Magnificent, Marvellous, Majestic, Masterful, Mighty, Musical
- N** Natural, Nurturing, Nice, Normal
- O** Optimistic, Observant, Orderly, Original, Outgoing
- P** Patient, Powerful, Persuasive, Pioneering, Poetic, Polite, Positive, Practical, Precious, Prestigious, Productive
- Q** Quaint, Queenly, Quirky, Quick
- R** Radiant, Rapturous, Rational, Reasonable, Reflective, Remarkable, Resolute, Resilient, Respondent, Revolutionary
- S** Special, Sensitive, Sensational, Super, Sassy, Scintillating, Scrumptious, Sentimental, Scandalous, Shrewd, Sincere, Skilful, Sociable, Splendid, Sporty, Stylish
- T** Tactful, Talented, Tenacious, Tremendous, Trustworthy, Truthful, Triumphant
- U** Ultimate, Unafraid, Unbeaten, Understanding, Unusual, Useful
- V** Victorious, Valiant, Valued, Virtuous, Vivacious, Vivid, Vital
- W** Warm, Welcoming, Whimsical, Willed, Wild, Witty, Wonderful, Worthy
- X** Xenial
- Y** Yearning, Youthful
- Z** Zeal, Zest, Zealous, Zesty

Worksheet: Supporting Exercise 1

Name 3



Name **3** activities in this area that you can do for free:

Name **3** fun things you could do as a family:

Name **3** local groups or clubs:

Where is?

- Your local library:
- Your nearest park:
- Your nearest leisure centre:
- Your GP surgery:

Worksheet: Extension Activity 1

Conversation Starter



Materials needed:

- Key worker led
- A safe quiet and private space big enough for the whole to sit comfortably around a table or on the floor
- 1 large sheet of paper or 1 smaller piece each
- Several different coloured pens: at least one per person
- Slips of conversation starters

Ask the family to think about starting conversations with someone who is a stranger or who they do not know very well. Ask them to think when they might want to talk to someone new. This could include: at a new school, new resident in a place of safety, at a new workplace, at the park, at a group or club, when you want to find information you think someone else will know.

Ask them to think about the type of person they might ask and get the family to identify approachable people: e.g. eye contact, posture, similarities (age, gender, interests).

Discuss their fears; these could include: rejection, being mean to them, being ignored, saying something silly.

Emphasise that we all have these worries and fears about talking to new people but if we don't, then we might be missing out on making a new friend.

Discuss good ways of starting a conversation with someone new. You could write these down or print them out on slips of paper for the family to discuss.

- Excuse me, do you know where (the bank, the park, supermarket, toilet, cafeteria) is?
- Do you know where I can (ride my bike, go swimming, buy sweets, find a park)?
- Do you like (football, cycling, art, music, fashion ...)?
- Hi my name is ... what's yours?
- You are really good at (running, football, cycling, art, singing)
- Could you teach me/ show me how you did that?

Ask the family to think of any ideas they have. They might want to think about how others have started conversations with them in the past.

Worksheet: Advanced Extension Activity 1

Key worker Led



Materials needed:

- A key worker who has experience of working with domestic abuse
- A safe quiet and private space big enough for the whole to sit comfortably around a table or on the floor
- 1 large sheet of paper or 1 smaller piece each
- Several different colour pens: at least one per person

Ask the family to write down the things they have missed since their move into a place of safety.

Discuss with each member of the family what they have written and how they feel about losing or missing the things they have written down. Use 'I' statements and make sure that the perpetrator remains responsible for his/her behaviour and for the situation the family are in.

Ask the family to think of ways to overcome the feelings of sadness or loss.

These could include:

- Writing letters or e-mails to loved ones and where appropriate sending them
- Making a memory box, printing out pictures of loved ones
- Writing down why you are angry or upset
- Drawing pictures or writing down happy memories
- Having family discussion time where each member of the family shares a happy positive memory

Now ask the family to write down what they like or enjoy about their new situation and about things they are looking forward to as a family.

Future. Some families may find this really difficult. Try to encourage them to think about new opportunities, new rules, new traditions (you could suggest agreeing on new traditions for celebrations, it's a fresh start), new homes, new friends, new communities, increased independence, freedom, safety, acceptance and, hopefully, safety.

Make a list of five things with the family that they will do to help them feel more positive about their future. These may include:

1. Holding family meetings
2. Implementing a suggestion or comments box checked weekly
3. Making a list of free activities and allowing everyone in turn to pick one they would like the family to do together
4. Make a family charter with the rights and responsibilities of the family
5. Make a family wish list of the things they want to do together and an action plan of how to achieve this
6. Make a list of meals they can cook together
7. Start compiling a family tree

