



Introduction to the theme 3 – Building Trust

Through witnessing and experiencing domestic violence, trust between mothers, children and siblings can be damaged. Research suggests that children not only witness the abuse but also experience its effects directly and indirectly:

There is a growing awareness of children’s experiences of domestic violence. This has sometimes been referred to as ‘witnessing’ the violence, but this fails to capture the ways in which children become caught up in incidents of abuse. It also fails to acknowledge that far from watching passively children experience the violence with all of their senses (Devaney, Research Review: The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children, 2015, pp. 82).

Children sometimes feel angry or resentful towards their mothers for failing, as they perceive it, to prevent the abuse, kept them safe or left the abusive environment soon enough.

Mothers can often be at the receiving end of their children’s anger and frustration when there are no other adults present in the immediate family. This can be the result of several conflicting issues. Some children simply feel more able to vent their feelings with their mother, who was the ‘safe’ adult in the context of an abusive family home; some children may feel that as the only adult in the family, their mother holds responsibility for all that happens within it. In situations where the perpetrator is not the children’s father, there can often be feelings of resentment and anger that their mother has chosen this man who has then abused them. The dynamics of perceived power in the adult-child relationship can influence reactions towards the mother because children may see their mother as having the power to alter or end the abuse and this often results in a lack of trust within the family.

Trust is often undermined by the perpetrator. There are many examples where perpetrators co-opt one child to also abuse the family or have a favourite child who is treated differently from the others and this can result in difficult family dynamics. Recovery from abuse is even more difficult because of the resentment that is caused between different family members. Perpetrators of abuse are regularly persuasive, confident in their beliefs and derogatory of the mother and are often able to persuade children to believe their false narrative and to blame the mother for the abuse they have experienced.

Children who have lived in abusive situations often experience inconsistency in the way boundaries to their behaviour are set, broken promises and failed attempts at reconciliation and these sometimes help to damage trust in their mothers. It is therefore vitally important to help families to begin to rebuild their trust through consistency, open honest (age appropriate) dialogue and seeking positive affirmations.

Sessions 4 & 5 seek to identify and expand on positive bonds already existing within the family, reassure and promote sharing concerns between mothers and their children. The sessions identify both internal and external avenues for supporting families in a fun environment.

Trips, Cultural Activities, Celebrations, Parties, Workshops

Below are some suggestions for ideas to support families experiencing isolation, you may 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 program.

Gardening

Plant some seeds to grow in pots or in a communal space if you have room. Ask for volunteers or make a rota for people to take the responsibility to water the seeds.

Make a mural

Ask the families to create a mural together. You could give them an overall theme such as families or favourite things and provide the materials to make it. You might decide to use paint, junk modelling or fabric depending on the resources available to you. You could ask each family to take responsibility for a section of the mural and join them together when they have finished. The completed mural should be displayed for everyone to enjoy.

Nature Walk

Go on a trip to a local place of interest and give each family a list of things to see or collect. You could ask the families to take pictures of the things they find encouraging them to work together as a team.

Treasure Hunt

Divide the families into groups or keep them in their family teams and set them a list of things to find. They could be things which you have hidden or they could be general things which you find within your area. You could do this activity indoor or outside. A variation of this would be to ask each team or family to find a specified item and bring it back to the allotted space, either the front of the room or an area where you can gather outside.

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Team Building games

Set up a series of team building games, puzzles and activities, one for each family and then the families move around each task completing it together. Ideas for activities include the following:

1. Set out a set of wooden planks with gaps between them: families must cross the gap without anyone touching the floor;
2. Set out a plastic drain pipe standing upright with some small holes drilled into the sides randomly spaced and a ping pong ball at the bottom. Provide the family with a jug and some water, they must fill up the pipe with water to get the ping pong ball out. They will need to work as a team to cover the holes so that the water can rise.
3. Provide a jigsaw puzzle.

You could also arrange the activities so that each challenge provides a family with a word or letter which when all are collected makes a positive word or phrase.

Touch, Taste or Smell

Set up a box with holes to place your hands through but without the participant seeing what is in the box, people take it in turns to guess in secret what they think is in the box; read out the guesses afterwards. Blindfold one person at a time and give them a food to taste (ensuring that they do not have any allergies). Then give them a second food that they smell. Tell them to secretly write down or tell the facilitator what it was they ate and smelt.

The writing on my back

Pair up the groups and ask them to use their fingers to write a word on the other person's back. Do this a few times and swap over so the writer now has to guess what is being written.

Musical Hugs

This is played like musical statues but when the music stops you find a family member or friend and hug them.

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SESSION 4: OUR AVENUES OF SUPPORT

Session 4 Objective

To look at what trust is and to build trust within the families

Introduction

5-15 minutes

Re-cap on the activities covered in the last session:

- Invite the group to discuss any positives that have happened since the last session (remember to record these in your chosen way)
- Discuss the “Respect Bingo” activity- You could ask for the group to tell you about new things they learnt from doing this.
- If you completed the relaxation exercise you could ask if anyone tried it again at home
- Briefly introduce today’s activities



Standard Activities

Activity 4.1. My Struggle with Trust

20-35 minutes

Explain to the group that sometimes we struggle to trust people. This is often because we have had previous negative experiences. The facilitator and other staff in the group should begin by naming what worries or reasons stop them trusting people.

These should be personal but can include ideas such as:

- I worry that the other person won’t understand
- I worry that I might get into trouble
- I feel the other person won’t listen to me

Give each person three strips of paper each and ask them to write down three things that are barriers to them trusting people. Advise them that if they can’t think of three of their own, they can imagine what barriers other people might have

Collect in all the responses, mix them up and read them out to the group and discuss them. You could have groups of answers which are similar to each other. This should show the group that a lot of our worries are the same.



Materials needed:

- Slips of paper
- Pens

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Activity 4.2. Fun Facts**20-35 minutes**

Mix up the group so that everyone is partnered with someone they do not live with. Ask them to talk to that person and to tell them one fact about themselves which most people do not already know.

You can expand this exercise by asking each pair to tell the other person the following things:

- Their proudest moment
- Their happiest memory
- Something they have done which surprised themselves
- Their favourite song
- The best meal they have ever had
- The most fun place they have ever been

Once you have given the pairs time to discuss these facts, begin a discussion on how it felt to tell someone about these happy and positive moments. Ask the pairs how it felt to listen to the other person talking about their happy and positive moments. Ask what they learnt about each other aside from the fun facts they were told. You could note these down on a white board or flip chart.

**Materials needed:**

- Flip chart or white board

**Low Level of Literacy Activities****Activity 4.3. Trust Walk****10-20 minutes**

Divide the families into teams and set up a path around the room with a sheet of paper marked 'start' and one marked 'finish'. Blindfold one member of the first family and ask that person to stand at the start line. Ask the family, using only their voices, to guide the blindfolded member to the 'finish' point, and stand there. Repeat this with each family. Ask the people who were blindfolded what it felt like, what their biggest fears were and whether they thought their families did a good job in directing them.

**Materials needed:**

- Blindfold
- Objects such as chairs and tables for the obstacle programme
- Paper for the finishing line

Activity 4.4. Trust Fall

10-20 minutes

One member of the family stands in front with their back to the rest of their family who stand in a line or semi-circle around them. The supporting family members put their arms out and fingertips facing towards the ceiling ready to catch the family member in front of them. The member at the front slowly leans back and let's themselves fall, the family behind catch them and gently push them back to standing. Repeat the exercise with the children in the family. Discuss how they felt and how easy it was to trust their family.

Activity 4.5. Lift it Up

15-25 minutes

The family form a circle with their index fingers flat on the ground place a hula hoop on top of their fingers and ask them to raise it without dropping it. Discuss the difficulties and successes.



Materials needed:

- Hula hoop



Advanced Activities

Activity 4.6. Sharing the Worry

20-30 minutes

Ask the families to sit in a semi-circle or circle. Give everyone a slip of paper and ask them to write down one thing which they are worried about which they feel comfortable sharing anonymously with the group. As the group facilitator you should also take part. Tell the group that the worries will be read out and discussed as a big group, sharing our worries helps us to put them into perspective and also helps us to realise that we are not on our own and others often share the same worries we do. The worries will be read out one at a time and discussed as a group, advice on how to minimise, remove or reduce the worry will come from the group's experiences and from the facilitator. Remind the group that no worry is silly, stupid or not worth discussing because it is something which is affecting them. Reiterate the group rules and advise them to respect others experiences and feelings. Depending on the group size and how willing the group are to share their real worries you may want to add in some from the list¹, this may also help the group to feel comfortable as worries won't all be from within the group.



Materials needed:

- Slip of paper
- Pens/ pencils, enough for one each
- Examples



Relaxation Activities

¹ The Examples of the Worries are found on page 65

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Activity 4.7. The Cat

Lie down in your own space on the floor if you can and keep 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 your next breath in, imagine a big fluffy cat. Keep picturing this cat as you hold your breath and then as you exhale for the count of 5.

As you take your next breath in, imagine you are the big fluffy cat that you saw. Think about how soft and furry you are now and imagine your whiskers as you hold for a count of 3. As you breathe out for a count of 5, let all the worries, thoughts and feelings you have as a person leave your body as you are now a cat.

On your next breath in, notice how your body feels against the floor. Hold your breath while continuing to think about this. On your next out breath, stretch out like a cat, arch your back and extend your paws.

On your next breath in, curl up tight in a ball. Stay in that position while you hold your breath for a count of 3. On your out breath, stretch out again, reaching your paws up to the sky or to either side but differently to how you stretched before.

On your next breath in, return to a relaxed position. Hold for a count of 3 and on your next out breath, feel all the tension and strain leaving your body.

Continue breathing in the same way until you feel ready to sit up.

Plenary

10-20 minutes

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

Suggested Questions

- Why is it important to trust some people?
- What makes someone deserve your trust??
- Who can we trust?
- Introduce the Supporting exercise: Trust Log

Remind participants that they have the opportunity to complete an Extension Activity, this is called and will look at communicating and working as a team.

INDEPENDENT FAMILY ACTIVITIES



Supporting Exercise 4: Trust Log

Keep a log of examples² of when you have needed to trust someone. How did this feel? Were they trustworthy?



Materials needed:

- Trust Log sheet
- Pens/pencils, enough for one each



Extension Activity 4: My Animal Mask

**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 Activity³ 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 4: Time for Trust

Advise families that there is the opportunity to complete an Extension Activity as a family with the key worker. This Extension Activity⁴ is only to be completed by experienced practitioners who are skilled in supporting families who have experienced domestic abuse.

² Supporting Exercise 4 worksheet is found on page 66

³ Extension Activity 4 worksheet is found on page 67

⁴ Advanced Extension Activity 4 worksheet is found on page 68

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Worksheet: Sharing the Worry

 That I won't be safe when I leave the refuge / place of safety

 That when I go to a new school no one will like me

 That I will be like the perpetrator

 That all men are abusive / violent

 That the abuse was my fault

 That this happened because I was naughty or misbehaved

 When someone shouts or gets angry at me

Reassure the group that worries are normal and that when we trust someone and share those worries it often makes them a little bit easier to live with. It is important to talk about what measures are there to keep them safe like safety planning, court orders etc.

Worksheet: Supporting Exercise 4

Trust Log



Trust log

Day.....

What happened:

Who did I trust:

How I felt:

What happened:

Who did I trust:

How I felt:

What happened:

Who did I trust:

How I felt:

What happened:

Who did I trust:

How I felt:

Worksheet: Extension Activity 4

Animal Mask

My



Materials needed:

- Key worker led
- A safe quiet space big enough for the whole family to sit comfortably, preferably at a table
- Mask templates or blank masks (could use cardboard or thick paper, cereal boxes make good masks)
- Pictures of animals faces
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Coloured paper
- Paints
- Glue
- Felt tip pens or colouring pencils
- String/ elastic/ stick for attaching to the mask

Begin the session by discussing with the family what characteristics they associate with each animal, there is no right or wrong answers, just opinions For example a picture of a bear might evoke feeling of being cuddly, fierce or protective. Ask each family member to choose an animal to make a mask of which they think shares characteristics with themselves, ask them to explain to the group why they have chosen that animal. Younger children may choose an animal which they like, this is ok but it is important to try to ask them what about the animals imagined personality it is that they like.

Give each family member a template to cut out or provide them with a blank mask to decorate. If you are able, allow the families to use a mixture of materials, this is not always possible so you can just use pens and coloured pencils if not.

The idea of this exercise is for the family to identify characteristics within themselves which they like and to share them in a safe way with the rest of their family. You can encourage positive thoughts and feelings about each family member and if you know them well enough offer examples of when you have seen them showing this behaviour or characteristic.

Worksheet: Advanced Extension Activity 4

Time for Trust



Materials needed:

- A key worker who has experience 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
- The extension activity worksheet
- A large piece of paper or 1 smaller piece
- Several different colour pens, at least one per person
- Coloured markers
- Wooden spoon, ball or teddy bear

In this session it is very important to set clear ground rules, no one should interrupt, everyone should speak about themselves and their own experience only and the other person's views should be respected. All family members will have their turn. If this is proving to be a problem you can have a wooden spoon, a teddy bear or a ball and only the person with that object or the facilitator should speak. Advise the family that you must pass the object onto the next person who wants to speak once your turn is finished.

The facilitator should act as mediator. Ask the family to have the names of each member of their family on a piece of paper and under each name they write down about a time when that person was trustworthy and a time when that trust was broken. It is not an accusation and family members should use the "I message" to explain how someone's actions made them feel. Once everyone has finished begin with the youngest member of the family and get them to talk about the positive and negative for each member in turn. While it is one member turn everyone else must respect them and not make any comments until they are invited to by the facilitator. After each turn the facilitator should ask how the person felt hearing both the positive and negatives using the "I message". The objective of this session is to understand what has helped to build trust and what has diminished it within the family.