

## Working with Adopted Teens in Group Setting



mdolfi@nycap.rr.com  
(518) 281-8884  
www.adoptioncounselingny.com

## Power of Group

- Feelings validated
- Support provided without judgement
- Feedback is from peers
- Opportunity to work through rejection, fitting in and identity with positive group experience
- Role models

## Different Types of Groups

- Discussion Group / Support Group
- Group Therapy / Task Orientated
- Group Therapy / Process Group

## Screening Group Members

- Therapy group must screen/prepare to help group members to understand group process and identify what they want to work on
- Open discussion group—need kids to be developmentally at teenagers

## Normalize the Adopted Person's Experience

- Being adopted is a minority that is rarely understood
- Natural for adopted individuals to spend a lot of time thinking about birth families & relinquishment
- Need to talk about birth parents vs. loyalty issues with adoptive parents

## Group Leaders

- Helpful to have 2 leaders
- Group Members do the work
- Leaders job to:
  - Promote group discussion
  - Safe place to talk
  - Normalize the adoption experience

### Sample Open Ended Questions

- What would you want to ask your birth parent if you could talk to them?
- Has anyone being bullied about their adoption or race? Does this make you not like being a minority?
- Do you think parents understand what it feels like to be adopted?

### Group Dynamics

- Quiet Members— Ask everyone in group to comment on a topic
  - i.e. What is the hardest thing about being adopted?
- Side conversations—ask teen to share what was said to entire group
- Overly talkative group member—ask if others feel that way

### Common Themes

- Lack of information on birth family
- Reasons for relinquishment
- Adoption Microaggressions
- Adoptive parents lack of understanding of issues & older parents
- Minority identity
- Issues of fitting in within family & peers

### Education on Adoption Issues

- Internalized racism
- Anxious pregnancies impact on children
- Political climate of their birth country

### Safe Place to Talk About Difficult Stuff That Can't Discuss With Parents

- Fears going to have same problems as birth parents
- Racism
- Not being the “idealized” child their parents want
- Fantasy vs. Reality of Reunions
- Being a Facebook voyeur of birth parents

### Room Set-Up

- Chairs in circle
- Group leaders opposite sides of circle
- Information Table:  
sign-in sheet, registration card, name tags, flyer next meeting, donation box
- Table for snacks & drinks

## AFCR Group Introduction

- Purpose of Group
- Teens introduction
- Ice breaker
- Open forum
- Group leaders available after meeting
- Group Rules
  - Feedback must be constructive & polite
  - Confidentiality
    - Parents disclosure
  - Food & bathroom brakes
  - Cell phones

Teen Discussion Group	
If this is your first meeting please complete a registration card.	
NAME	DATE: _____
	Have you attended before?
	Y/N

Sign In Sheet

### Registration Card Teen Discussion Group

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Teen's Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Teen's Email \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s) Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s) Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s) Email \_\_\_\_\_

I do / do not want email reminders for upcoming discussion group meetings

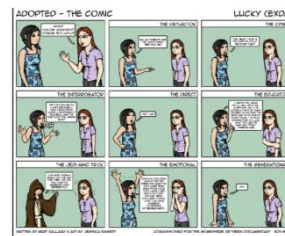
## Feeding Kids

- Cookies & drinks
- Opportunity to socialize
- Nurturing
- \$2 donation to cover cost

## Examples of Introductions

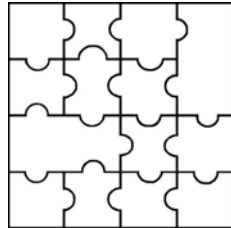
- Share something you are proud of
- Share a talent
- Share something you find enjoyable
- Share a stereotype of yourself and how you feel about it
- Share something you do on a regular basis that is taking care of yourself

## Examples of Ice Breakers



## Examples of Group Exercises

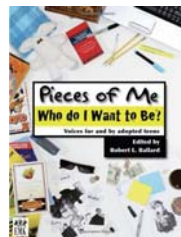
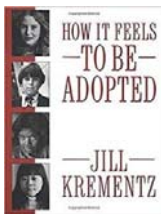
- Helpful Hints for Parents
- Inherited personality traits
- Puzzle Pieces



## Adoption Microaggressions



## Bibliotherapy



### Additional exercises:

- Who Am I ?
- Board game
- Decorate Mask
- Loss box

## Letter Writing



## Closing Meeting

- Go around ask everyone what they thought of the group, liked, disliked, something helpful
- Group leaders are available to talk after the group
- Mindfulness exercise
- Music
- Complement teens for sharing and working on taking care of themselves

## Marketing Group

- 1<sup>st</sup> group AFCR email list and invitations to teens knew
- AFCR website
- My Work Facebook & LinkedIn
- Flyers around town
- Email:
  - Guidance Counselors, adoption agencies, counselors
- Adoptive & Foster Family Coalition NY Website



- Attached to emails
- Next meeting flyer at group

## Adults Who Want to “Share”

- Adult adopted persons
- Special education advocates
- College students fulfilling class requirement

## Starting A Group

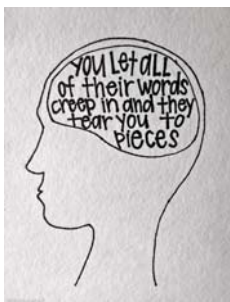
- Type of group
- Group sponsor
- Meeting location
- Fees for attendees
- Age range
- Screen members?
- Frequency of meeting
- Marketing flyer with clear purpose of group
- Recruitment of members

## Group for Elementary School Children

- Hands on activities
- Help them identify feelings
- Limit size
- Set # of meetings

## Concurrent Parent Groups

- Opportunity for parents to be educated about adoption issues and share their concerns about their children
- Opportunity to practice dialogues on adoption, birth parent, relinquishment issues
- Learn of resources



**A Safe Place to Go**