

Youth Activities & Support Group Ideas for Families Who Experienced Domestic Violence



"I need to restore my family now and come through what happened to all of us. My kids have been through so much."

Parent of Two Children



www.odvn.org

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Promoting Play, Bonding, and Restorative Moments

Why Family Centered Support is Vital

Group work can be a powerful technique to propel family members towards moments of bonding, sharing positive experiences, and fostering basic communication. However, group work can disappoint family members and advocates alike, feeling like an exercise in futility without careful planning.

Use these suggestions to help implement group work successfully in your shelter programming. Trauma-informed approaches and themes are vital in going beyond "crafts and activities."

Groups designed for families can be a profound healing experience for children, their parents, and other shelter residents. The design is grounded in the fact that partners who batter within their family create isolation for the family victimized. Likewise, babies, toddlers, school-agers, and teens experience isolation within their families. Therefore, planning family activities can amend the isolation experienced and provide moments of relief and hope while residing in shelter programming.

Family Centered Groups Guided by Trauma-Informed Approaches

Rooted in the Impact of Domestic Violence

Partners who batter in intimate partner relationships create upset, fear, harshness, and instability for children and their partners. Each is experiencing victimization, survival, and safety planning while the abusive partner/parent is unpredictable and, at times, dangerous. The family experiences ever-changing rules, often from moment to moment. Playing and parenting include risks and can be emotionally costly and unsafe when a partner/parent is controlling and violent. Feeling emotionally and physically safe is precarious and fleeting for children, teens, and adults.

Young children and teens are exposed to cruelty and witness the harm to their other parent. Chronic stress creates feelings of distress. Batterers use intimidation, creating chronic worry for what might happen next to them, their pets, toys, siblings, and their parent who is victimized.

Chronic stress and repeated exposure to physical violence and intimidation can set young people on high alert: high alert means "scanning for danger," as Dr. Bruce Perry describes. (<https://www.childtrauma.org/>)

This resource provides guidance and suggested practices in your agency design and structure of youth activities and family groups. The content includes possible themes and techniques for facilitating group work. The facilitators must consider current events in the shelter among residents and recent experiences in the lives of parents and children and adjust group offerings accordingly to meet the needs of families.

Advocates as facilitators of family groups are expected to prepare for the group experience and have all supplies ready before gathering families to participate. Ethical approaches include determining the group theme and activities anchored in the climate of the shelter. For example, at times, creating group space to promote empathy is most needed, while at other times, creating a group experience that brings joy, playfulness, and laughter might be most needed. Best practices include asking the families what activities or topics they would like and then making their requests a priority.

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Offer Family Centered Groups

Intentional, Trauma-Informed Support through Family Groups

Families come to shelters to flee the abuse they are experiencing. However, residing in the shelter can cause distress for children and parents despite it being a refuge. Consider new surroundings, unfamiliar residents, and advocates asking many questions to name a few changes.

Domestic violence programs have a fantastic opportunity to provide hope and healing for the whole family while staying in a shelter or participating in a community-based support group through family group experiences.

Key Sharing: This resource has eight family-centered groups, which will help your program provide space for continued bonding between the parent and their children.

Implementing family groups provides opportunities to play, sing, and laugh together with other families in the shelter, eliminating the fractures of isolation and harmful tactics while creating inclusiveness and hope.

The themes include:

1. **On Purpose Breathing**
2. **Caring & Connections**
3. **Where Do I Notice Upset in my Body?**
4. **It's Okay to Play**
5. **Coming Here Made Me Feel?**
6. **Tapping to Help Myself**
7. **Family Strengths Banner**
8. **Family Rituals: Play, Yoga & More**

All content is rooted in an understanding of the impact of:

- exposure to a batterer,
- experiences of trauma,
- witnessing harm,
- trauma reactions,
- adjusting to change and loss, and
- strengthening skills in resiliency.

All designed content provides directions in emotional regulation through play, imagination, singing, art expression, and breathing practices. Some groups offer additional handouts, which allow for adjusting content to suit family needs and shelter climate.



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"Providing activities centered in opportunities for families to connect counteracts how the batterer fractures the family within. Shelters can offer space for healing and being together."

Sonia Ferencik,
Youth Advocate

Family Group Structure

How to Set Up a Family Group

Tips for Facilitating:

- Personally invite each parent and child to group on the day it is scheduled
- Have your group organized and ready to go before group time including all supplies needed
- Secure space and reduce clutter
- Seek co-advocates, interns, or volunteers to co-facilitate the group
- Consider 60 to 90 minutes as a group timeframe
- Model care, connection, and empathy to all ages
- Have a beginning, middle, and ending to the group, so families leave having closure
- ODVN's Play, Move, Imagine: I Matter, I Belong Youth Journal is your companion resource
- Be flexible within the group structure to accommodate needs

It is vital to structure their group to have a beginning, middle, and end. It ensures that you properly conclude the group before families leave the group. In addition, always seek supervision and peer support by debriefing following each group.

Using ODVN's Youth Journal is helpful. Content from the Youth Journal is included within this resource. Offering families and youth their own copy of the Youth Journal is highly recommended so they may co-create their moments together.

Access by downloading a copy at ODVN's website at https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Imagine_Play_and_Breathe_ODVN_Youth_Journal_final-1.pdf

Or you can order copies from ODVN by completing the request form at <https://www.odvn.org/order-print-materials/>

The following page, "Group Structure Tips," describes how to move through the group process. Following through with these steps is recommended as it creates a "safe" space within the group.



Family groups create connections with children, parents, and other families in the shelter. It is a way of breaking down isolation caused by the batterer by giving people a sense of belonging.

Family groups can provide positivity and inclusion within the communal shelter.

Careful Planning

Family Group Structure Tips

Domestic violence programs can provide family connectedness and positive communal living through group work experiences.

During the 60 - 90 minute group, there will be moments of joy, laughter, playing, and discovery for families and other residents who participate.

Promising practices would suggest holding family groups consistently each week. In addition, consider running weekend family groups, accommodating their busy schedules.

This vital service requires advocates to honor the space they are about to provide families in shelter.

Resiliency and calming skills include movement and practicing "on-purpose breathing" throughout group time.

Consistent structure with flexibility built-in is trauma-informed care.

A family group's beginning, middle, and closing should have the following structure.

- 1- Greeting Each Person
- 2- Circle Guidelines
- 3- Checking In Question
- 4- Pause & Breathe
- 5- Move & Stretch
- 6- Introduce the Topic
- 7- Activity
- 8- Space for Sharing
- 9- Pause & Breathe
- 10- Closing Out Circle

Your role as a facilitator requires that you notice and continuously monitor all group members' emotional and physical safety, including how children are doing.

Recall you can pause and then model with the group "on purpose breathing" to demonstrate how to calm, if big emotions arise or folks feel stirred up.

If facilitators change from week to week, keeping this structure helps families experience a sense of consistency, which is a trauma-informed approach.



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"Truth be told: facilitating a group for families in shelter takes work.

Yet, the process is incredible, potentially life-changing for the parents and children who attend".

Sonia Ferencik
Youth Advocate

Applying Group Structure Concepts in Real Time

- 1) Greeting Each Person:** It's vital to see each person entering the group, both youth, and adults. As a domestic violence advocate, seeing each person matters. Saying hello with a warm, genuine tone creates a space for all to feel included.
- 2) Circle Guidelines:** Stating several guidelines for emotional respect and safety helps the members to know the expectations of interacting with one another. See appendix A for ODVN Youth Institute Guidelines.
- 3) Checking In Question:** A checking-in style with a question allows the facilitator to set the group's tone, allowing each person's voice to be heard including children attending the family group. Consider asking check-in questions that are open-ended and serve the theme. Or you can make it fun by including commonalities among residents in the shelter.
- 4) Pause & Breathe:** The key to "teaching" concepts of resiliency skills is achieved through modeling a group practice of deeper belly breathing. For example, you can use feathers or pretend to blow bubbles. Repeating six patterns of breathing in and exhaling out longer is strongly suggested. Again, your voice guides the group through this practice.
- 5) Move & Stretch:** The key to demonstrating emotional regulation and resiliency concepts is modeling how movement and stretching can help release tense energy out of the body for both children and adults. Again, your voice guides the group through this practice. You can use songs, movements, and poses during this time. Get creative by using holla-hoops or music.
- 6) Introduce Topic:** The key to introducing the family group topic includes your pre-work in understanding the intent of the family group time. (Each of the eight groups within this resource describes your sharable trauma-informed topic).
- 7) Activity:** The key to introducing the activity includes your prep work by having enough materials for all in the group. Offer clear statements describing the activity. Be genuine, walk around the group space, and support parents and children by noticing the positive work they create as a family. Support those who may need an extra lift. Ask the parent for permission to help if one of their children is distressed. Offer families the timeframe of the activity. Consider offering reminders of how many minutes remain during the allotted time.
- 8) Space for Sharing:** The key to creating space for sharing is gathering people to listen to each other. Sharing is by individual choice and always an option. Children and adults can pass or perhaps show their "work" without saying words. The expectation during this time is to witness one another, validate and make connections.
- 9) Pause & Breathe:** Just as you began the group with a practice of "on purpose breathing," you need to conclude the group in practice together. Your voice guides them. Try hand tracing breathing or view Support in Stressful Times on ODVN's website to learn more breathing practices or visualizations from ZENworks Yoga. (www.odvn.org under the resources tab)
- 10) Closing Out Circle:** Ending the group with closure is essential because you offer space for each participant to leave with emotional closure. For example, you can use a check-out question or another way to end the circle time together. Using a group cheer such as "I can use my "on purpose breathing" is one idea.

#1 Family Group

"On Purpose Breathing" - How to help settle inside when overwhelm or distress occurs

Experiencing domestic violence can cause a child, teen, or adult to be on high alert even after leaving the violent partner/parent. This is true in the shelter, during visitation, and throughout their days and nights.

Information is Power:

The more a parent knows about how traumatic experiences affect the body, the more they can help their child manage through moments of big emotions, distress, or when children's behaviors seem extreme to the present circumstances.

Key Sharing:

Youth and adult survivors are often in survivor mode or flight, fight, or freeze reactions. Emotional regulation is achieved by calming internal reactions through using deeper belly breathing and exhaling out longer.

Diaphragmatic breathing stimulates the relaxation response, and calming hormones flood the body. The relaxation response occurs when the body is no longer in perceived danger,

and the autonomic nervous system functioning returns to normal.

Simply put, the relaxation response is the opposite of your body's stress response—your "off switch" to your body's tendency toward fight-or-flight-or-freeze. Deep breaths are the only access to the body's autonomic nervous system, automatically lowering our heartbeat and blood pressure.

Utilize ODVN's Play, Move, Imagine, I Matter I Belong as a companion to your family group.

Materials:

- Just Breathe
- Star Breathing
- Snake Hissing Breathing
- Blowing Bubbles
- Leaf Breathing
- Hand Tracing
- Support in Stressful Times Flyer (found in appendix)
- Support In Stressful Times Resource (ODVN website) & projector
- Markers, Crayons, Feathers
- Relaxation music



Stimulating the vagus nerve through deeper breathing and longer exhaling is key to flooding the body with "calming hormones." This allows the parasympathetic nervous system to regulate the body, calm the heart rate and lower blood pressure, which "puts the brakes on the stress response system."

#1 Family Group Structure

"On Purpose Breathing"

1) Greeting Each Person: It is vital to see each person entering the group, young and old. As a domestic violence advocate, seeing each person matters. Saying hello with a warm, genuine tone creates a space for all to feel included.

2) Circle Guidelines: Stating several guidelines for emotional respect and safety helps the members to know the expectations of interacting with one another. See appendix A for ODVN Youth Institute Guidelines.

3) Checking In Question: How would you help someone feel better if you had a magic wand?

4) Pause & Breathe: Pass out copies of the Star Breathing to each person in the family group, including copies for youth, parents, advocates, and interns. Your voice guides the group through the Star Breathing practice. Repeat 5 - 6 times.

5) Move & Stretch: Ask everyone to stretch their arms up and down a few times in a row, breathing in and out. Then, you can add other movements that might be fun for children, like pretending to jump an invisible rope.

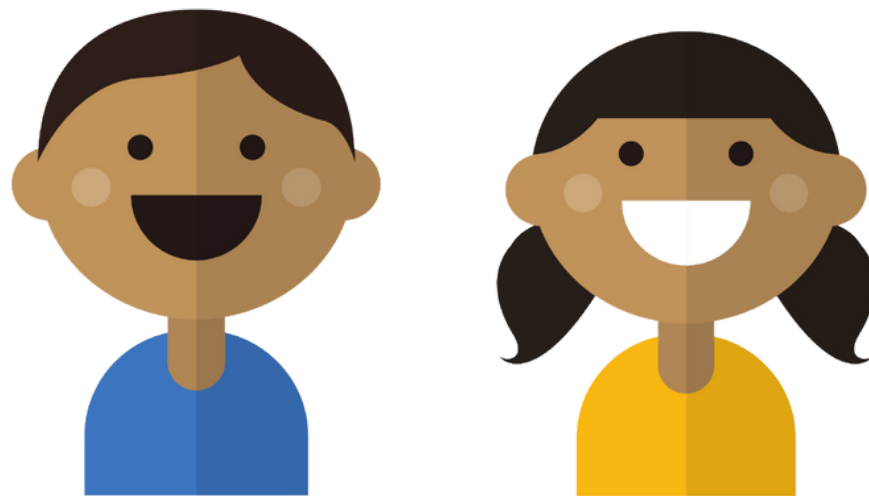
6) Introduce Topic: The key to introducing the "On Purpose Breathing" family group is to share the science behind breathing and movement and how it calms the body down (for all ages, babies to adults). Get creative depending upon what ages are in your family group. See the handout on the following page to share with group members. You are normalizing the impact of hyper-vigilance and stress responses on parents and youth by describing the impact of domestic violence and chronic stress inside the body, including physiological internal trauma reactivity, grief, and loss. Deeper breathing by inhaling in and exhaling out longer, repeating 5 to 6 times, allows the body to release calming hormones in the body.

7) Activity: Offer clear statements describing the activity. Offer families the timeframe of the activity. Offer a reminder of how many minutes they have several times during the time allotted. Group work includes reviewing the handouts of the types of breathing. You can ask the family members which one they like most. Pass out the handouts with markers so families can personalize them.

8) Space for Sharing: The key to creating space for sharing is gathering people to attend to each other. Sharing is an option. Children and adults can pass or show their "work" without saying words. The expectation during this time is to witness one another, validate and make connections.

9) Pause & Breathe: Just as you began the group with a practice of "on-purpose breathing," you will conclude the group in practice together. Show via projector or on phones ODVN's Support in Stressful Times Resource. Connects parents to this free resource by allowing them to view one of the 20-plus breathing practices or visualizations from ZENworks Yoga.

10) Closing Out Circle: Ending a group with closure is essential because you offer space for each participant to leave with emotional closure. Offer a checking-out question such as "I feel better because I learned that"



JUST BREATHE

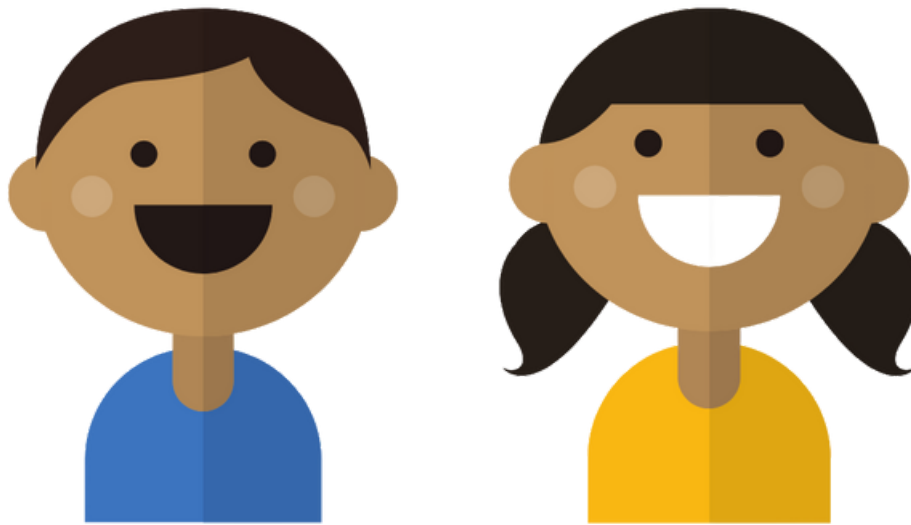
Did you know that we breathe without even thinking about it?

Over and over again, our brain tells our body to keep breathing. We use our lungs, nose, and mouth to bring oxygen into our body and out of our body.

Sometimes when we play, we might breathe faster so we can run, while other times when we are tired, we might yawn so we can wake up. Then there are times when we might shallow breathe because we might feel scared, worried, or upset. Shallow breathing means that we aren't taking deeper breaths in and out.

Did you know you could use your breathing to help you?

It's true! You can use your breath, **on purpose**, like magic to help you when big feelings come up or if something happens that causes you to feel upset, worried, excited, or even sad. **On purpose breathing** helps to calm you on the inside by slowing you down.



JUST BREATHE

What does on purpose breathing look like?

On purpose breathing means you tell yourself to think about breathing in and out. Telling yourself to do this makes your breath help your body, to feel calmer when big feelings come up or if something happens.

It works because you are paying attention to breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth, repeating this 4 or 5 times in a row.

The next few pages give you some helpful ways to remember **on purpose breathing** called:

- Star Breathing,
- Leaf Breathing,
- Hand Tracing Breath,
- Snake Hissing Breath, and
- Blowing Bubbles Breathing.

You might have already created one that works for you! What do you call yours? _____

Just Breathe

You can come back to your deeper breathing many times a day.



Breathing deeply calms your body by sending a message to your brain to feel calmer inside. Some need to breathe and move to feel less upset inside. Try Tapping.

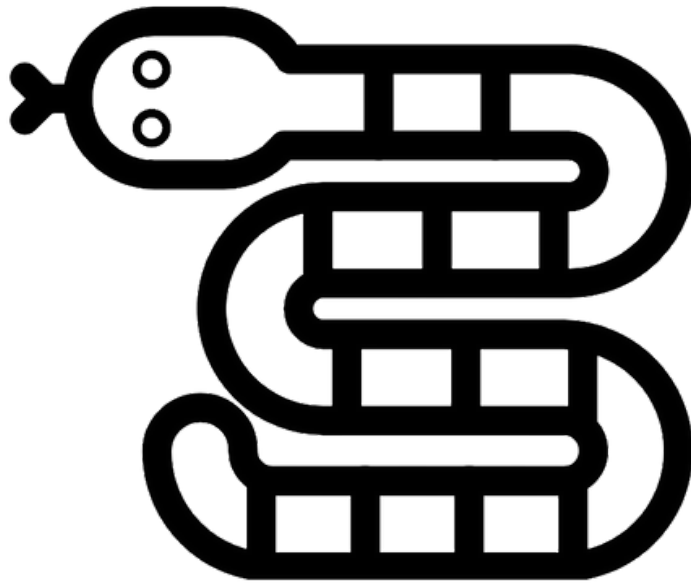


1. Breathe in through your nose
2. Exhale out longer through your mouth
3. Try this 5 or 6 times in a row



You can lessen reactions of upset felt inside your body because you are taking charge through your deeper breathing.

Snake Hissing Breath



Breathe in through your nose slowly counting to 3.
Then with a long, slow breath, out of your mouth,
make the hissing sound. Repeat 5 times.
Color your snake how you would like it to look.



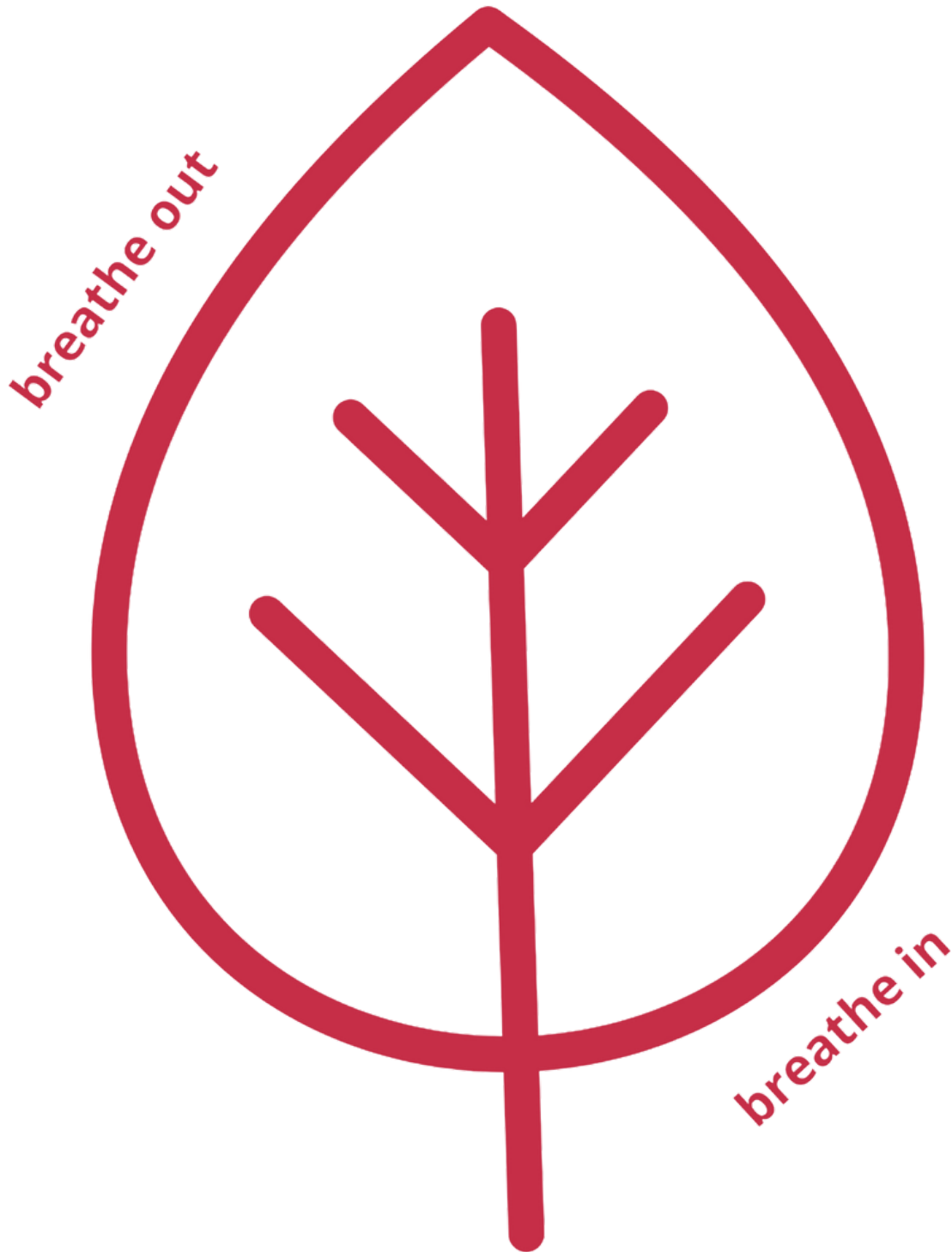
Blowing Bubbles Breathing

Take a deep slow breath in through
your nose.

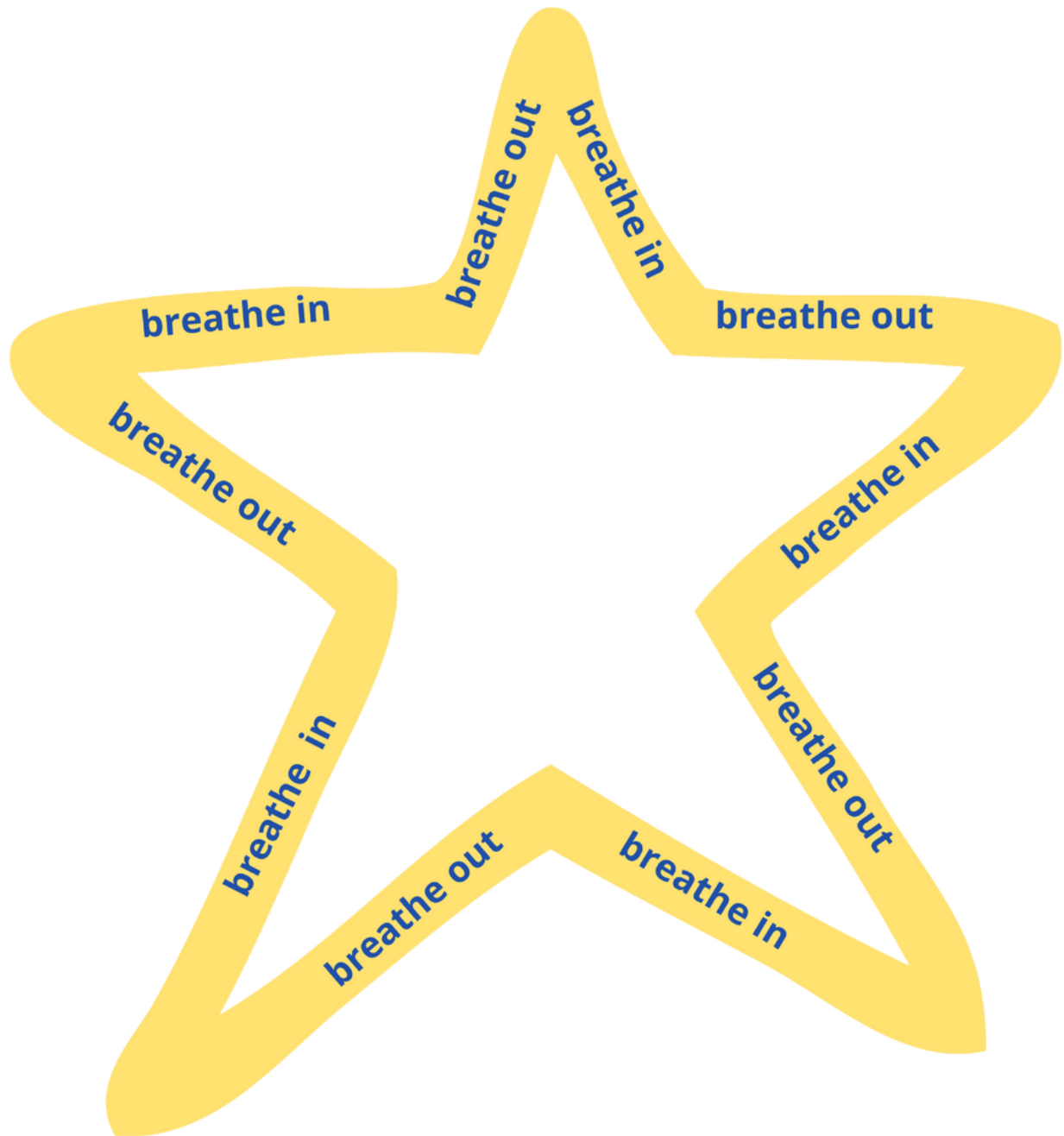
Blow a long exhale out of your mouth,
pretending to blow as many bubbles as
you can.

Try this 5 more times.

Leaf Breathing



While tracing the right side of the leaf breathe in. Breathe out while tracing the left side of the leaf.
Repeat 3 to 5 times.



Star Breathing

Slowly trace the star with your finger.

Breathe in through your nose while tracing the right side -

Breathe out through your mouth while tracing the left side -

Go around the star 3 to 5, repeating your on purpose breathing.

Adapted from consciousdiscipline.com



Tracing Hand Breathing

Trace your fingers, breathing in as you go up
and breathing out as you
go down. Go around your hand 3 to 5 times.

#2 Family Group

Caring & Connections

When a partner/parent batters in a family, unpredictability is constant. Children and teens are unsure when someone will get hurt or yelled at again. They experience the tactics of the batterer's harm, intimidation, and violence by seeing it, hearing it, or walking into the aftermath of an emotional or physical assault.

Witnessing domestic violence by a battering parent is considered an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs). These experiences can affect how a child feels, thinks, trusts, responds, and behaves.

Information is Power:

As Nerissa Bauer, MD, MPH, FAAP, states, "The good news is that parents can help buffer children from this stress before it becomes toxic. In addition providing safe, secure, and nurturing relationships helps reset the body's stress system."

Key Sharing:

Your agency's programming is where hope and healing begin for families. That is when you provide intentional groups for these moments between children and their parents.

Never underestimate the power of play! Connecting with someone is proven to make a difference in a person's life. This positive difference is true for adults, children, and teens alike.

Refer to Childhood Adversity: Buffering Toxic Stress and Building Resilience for more information at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/ACEs-Adverse-Childhood-Experiences.aspx>

Materials:

- Ways My Family Cares About Me - Handout
- Markers and Crayons



Sparking moments of connection are vital for healing and bonding.

These experiences between parents and children while in shelter are essential for families.

#2 Family Group Structure Caring & Connections

1) Greeting Each Person: It is vital to see each person entering the group, young and old. As a domestic violence advocate, seeing each person matters. Saying hello with a warm, genuine tone creates a space for all to feel included.

2) Circle Guidelines: Stating several guidelines for emotional respect and safety helps the members to know the expectations of interacting with one another. See appendix A for ODVN Youth Institute Guidelines.

3) Checking In Question: "What things does a person do to show someone they care?"

4) Pause & Breathe: Decide which type of "on purpose breathing" exercise you would like to share with this family group. Then, your voice guides the group through the breathing practice. Repeat 5 - 6 times.

5) Move & Stretch: Sparking moments of connection is part of this family group. Be playful, leading a game of "Simon Says." Spend 10 -15 minutes playing together. Or play "Duck, Duck, Goose" if your space allows. If you have outdoor space; think about holding this group outside.

6) Introduce Topic: The key to introducing the topic of "Caring Connections" is to have people discuss what it is they like for others to do on their behalf. Pose the questions: What is caring? How does someone show they care? Allow for youth and parents to share: prompt for more details. Part of discovering caring is to determine the kind actions that children and parents can show to one another. You can give examples of pictures (pre-determined) that may help generate discussion. You can ask when someone feels upset - how can someone show they care about them? What are some ways to offer support? Consider including photos of baby animals and parents as a way to generate conversations.

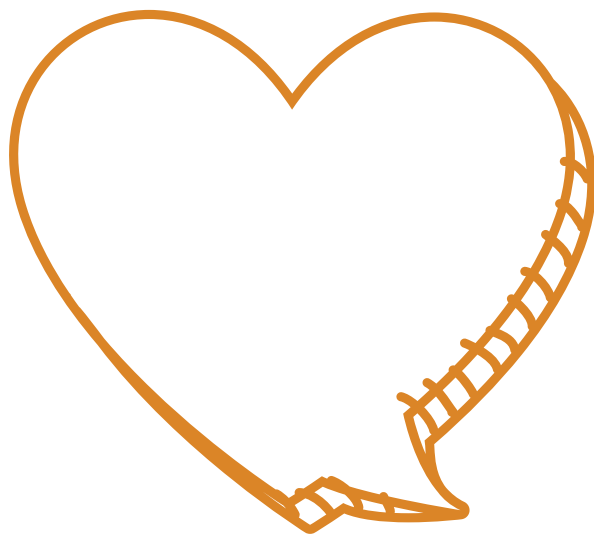
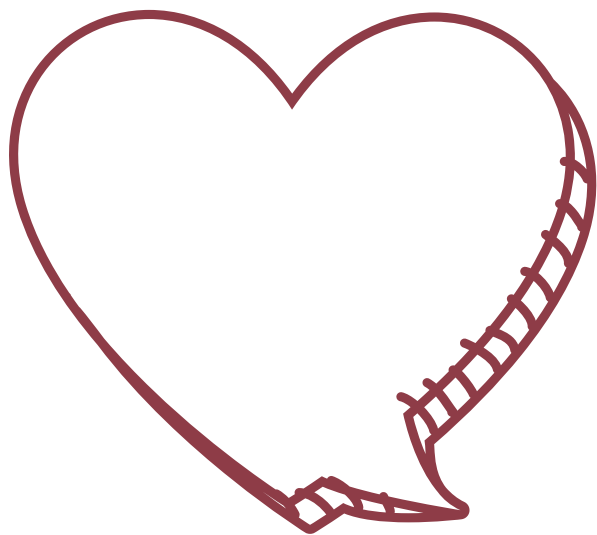
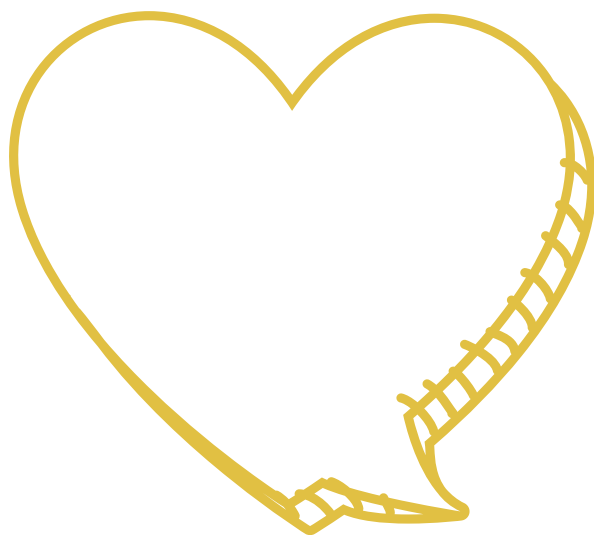
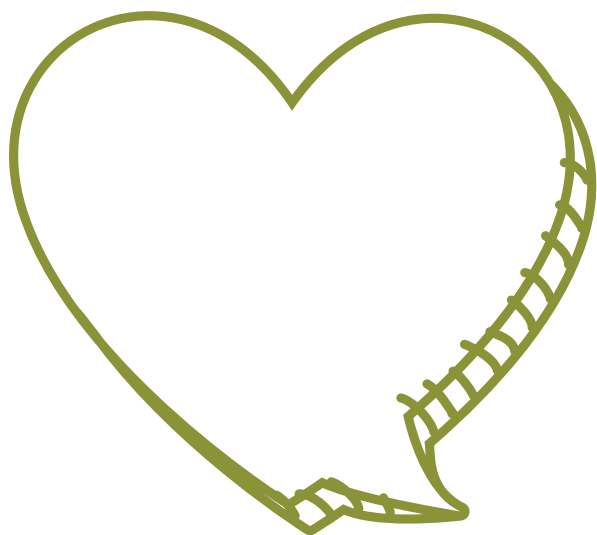
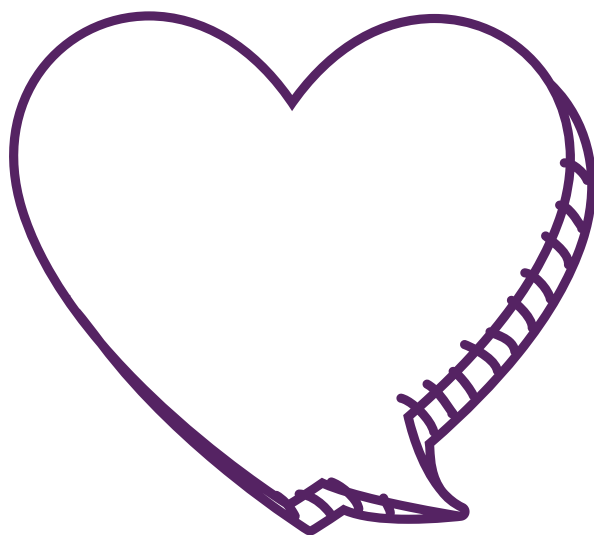
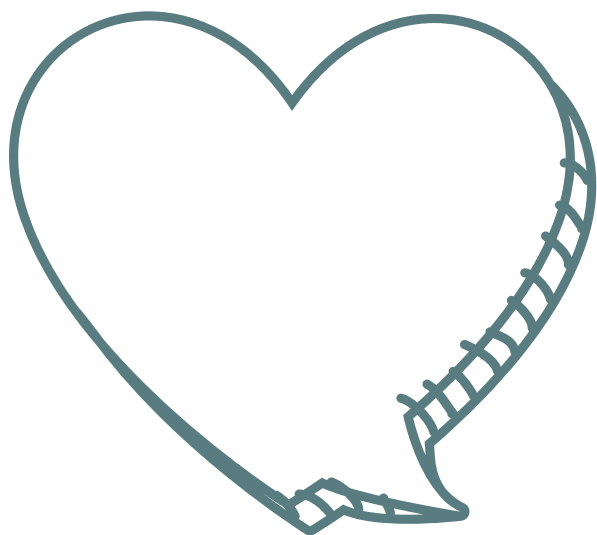
7) Activity: Offer clear statements describing the activity. Offer families the timeframe. Their activity includes creating a "Caring Heart Message" that the family writes together as one. Use the handout or they can create their own design. Encourage the family members to include ways they can show how they care within their family. Families can include activities they like to do with each other to promote bonding and fun.

8) Space for Sharing: The key to creating space for sharing is gathering people to listen to each other. Sharing is an option. Children and adults can pass or show their "work" without saying words. The expectation during this time is to witness one another, validate and make connections.

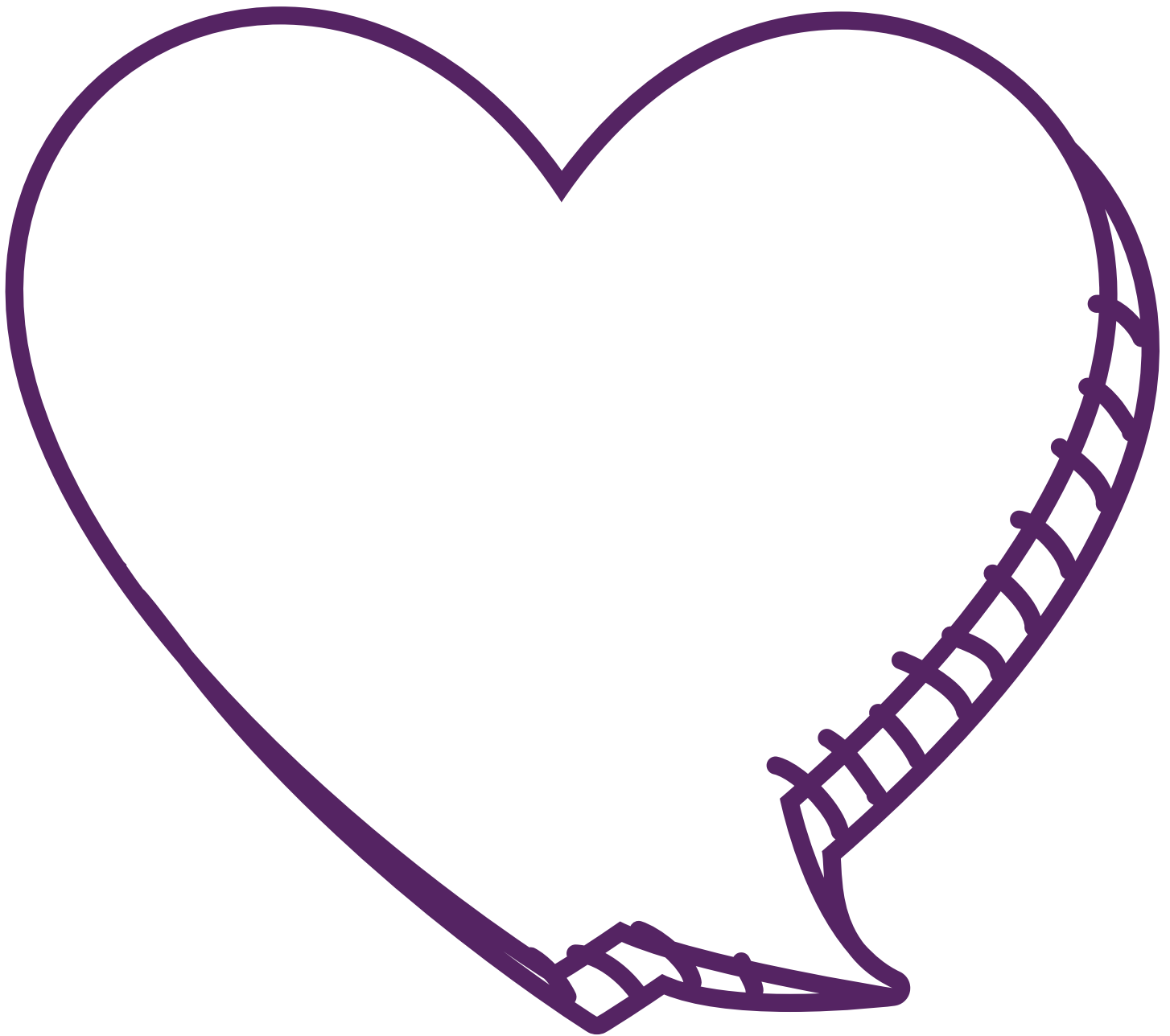
9) Pause & Breathe: Just as you began the group with a practice of "on purpose breathing," you are going to conclude the group in practice together. Select a breathing activity from the Youth Journal.

10) Closing Out Circle: Ending a group with closure is essential because you offer space for each participant to leave with emotional closure. Have each family break and share what their favorite activity is to do together.

List some ways
I know my family cares for me



List some ways
I show my family
I care by...



#3 Family Group

Where Do I Notice Physical Sensations in My Body

Parents, advocates, and others often misread or misunderstand a child's and teen's behaviors. Traumatic experiences like domestic violence, grief, and loss are felt inside the body. As a result, youth can appear clingy, disrespectful, and even disruptive.

Recall that experiences of domestic violence create chronic stress, which likely results in traumatic reactions. Something in the present environment may cause trauma reactivity that may be unrelated to what's happening. A child may experience a trauma reaction to a trigger, causing them to go to a stress response in flight, fight, or freeze. Triggers can be sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, or many others.

A core, trauma-informed approach is to reduce the arousal the child is experiencing; accomplished by a genuine empathetic response. This means one is **"beside the child"** creating opportunities for the child to learn to **"manage through"** the upset while doing breathing and movement techniques to "calm" the body towards safety and regulation.

Key Knowledge: As humans, by design, we possess a stress response system in our body that protects us so that when encountering a frightening situation, we can respond by hiding, running, freezing, or defending. This "fight, flight or freeze" response can be triggered whenever a person feels scared by something, someone, or by the environment.

Key Sharing:
The key to emotional regulation of a person's physiological internal reactions is to tap into the power of the vagus nerve by using deeper belly breathing and exhaling out longer. Movements and deeper breathing soothe the body in moments of distress. The brain and vagus nerve work together to flood the body with the "rest and digest hormones," thereby putting the brakes on the stress response system. Understanding what happens on the inside can help us to manage through and feel calmer and better.

Materials:

- Story in Youth Journal
- Or read Listen to My Body by Gabby Garcia



The gift given to parents is rooted in the discovery & understanding that a youth's behavior is likely a stress response or feeling dysregulation on the inside. When we understand the body's felt sense - we have the power to invite children to shift into states of calm and safety.

#3 Family Group Structure "Where Do I Notice?"

1) Greeting Each Person: It is vital to see each person entering the group, young and old. As a domestic violence advocate, seeing each person matters. Saying hello with a warm, genuine tone creates a space for all to feel included.

2) Circle Guidelines: Stating several guidelines for emotional respect and safety helps the members to know the expectations of interacting with one another. See appendix A for ODVN Youth Institute Guidelines.

3) Checking In Question: "Give a thumbs up, a thumb down, or thumbs sideways to show how you are feeling right now." Then, go around the room to allow all a chance to share and see.

4) Pause & Breathe: Decide which type of "on purpose breathing" exercise you would like to share with this family group. Then, your voice guides the group through the breathing practice. Repeat 5 - 6 times.

5) Move & Stretch: This family group is about noticing what happens inside the body. The human experience includes feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and internal psychological sensations. Invite family members to act out or illustrate through movement and sounds the following emotions: First, ask the family members to show happiness, then sadness, then tiredness, and then the feeling of mad. Once complete, then end by singing "If You Are Happy and You Know it Clap Your Hands" as a group.

6) Introduce Topic: Read the book written by Gabby Garcia, *Listening to My Body: A Book about Understanding Different Sensations and Feelings* to introduce the concept of happens inside the body. Or play this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-B6Rik-TA-Q>.

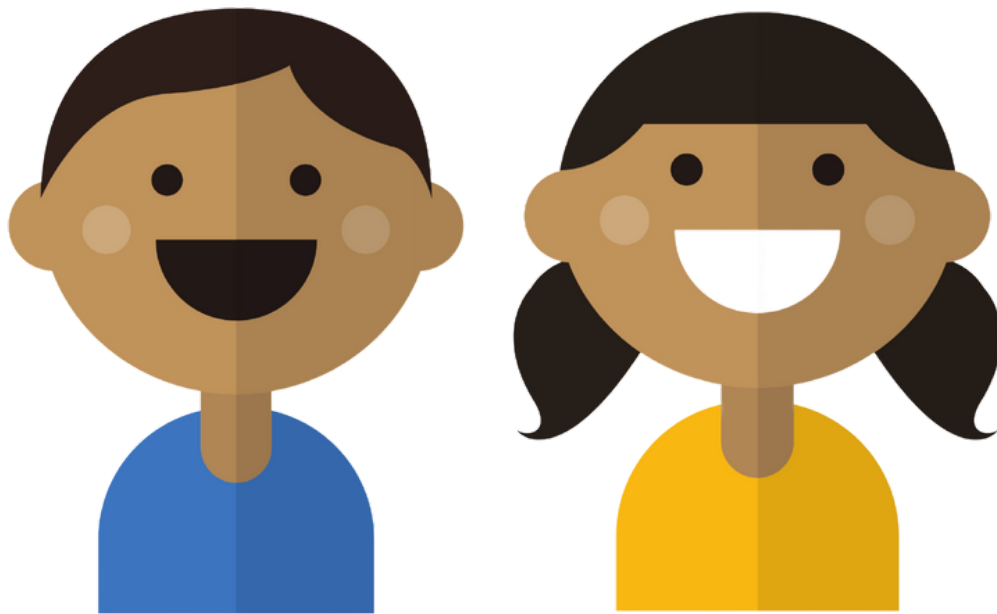
7) Activity: This activity includes creating a plan for emotional safety achieved by completing the "coping handout." Families can spend time identifying what is happening inside their body and practice breathing or tapping to help them through those moments of big emotions or upset. Remember to provide clear statements describing the activity and timeframe. Offer a reminder of how many minutes they have remaining during the time allotted.

8) Space for Sharing: The key to creating space for sharing is gathering people to attend to each other. Sharing is an option. Children and adults can pass or show their "work" without saying words. The expectation during this time is to witness one another, validate and make connections.

9) Pause & Breathe: Just as you began the group with a practice of "on-purpose breathing," you are going to conclude the group in practice together.

10) Closing Out Circle: Ending a group with closure is essential because you are offering space for each participant to leave with emotional closure. For example, close their family group with another round of head, shoulders, knees, and toes, or another option is a check out a question such as "What do I think is important for others to know?"

Noteworthy: You can mix and match or change the group experience by utilizing other handouts in ODVN's Youth Journal. Refer to Learning to Notice Physical Sensations and Cues handout for parents.



TAKE GREAT CARE OF YOU

Have you ever heard anyone say that our brain, body, and feelings are all connected or linked together? Do you wonder what that means?

It means that when we experience something - we feel it in different ways. Our brain and our body always send messages to each other. These messages tell our brain and body to make changes to the way they are working.

Our thoughts and feelings can affect our body. Almost at the same time, physical sensations or reactions are happening on the inside of our body too. These have an effect on what we think, how we feel, and what we do. We can learn to watch for cues to help us. Sometimes, if we need to feel calmer inside and less stressed, we can notice the cues and change how we respond by doing breathing, mini moves, or maybe singing, or humming.

For example, if someone goes to school on the first day, they might feel worried and that feeling of worry might show up inside their body as a stomach ache. Their belly might feel tight, like knots, or even sick. They might not be able to eat breakfast because they are feeling worried. They might express their worried feeling by sitting close to their parent or by not wanting to talk to anyone even if others are being nice to them. They may seem shy to other people until they feel safer.

Learning to Notice Physical Sensations and Cues



As humans, by design, we have a stress response system in our body that protects us so that when encountering a frightening situation, we can respond by hiding, running, freezing, or defending. They are a built-in system in our body, called the Autonomic Nervous System, known as "fight, flight, or freeze responses."



Quick Fact: The body's "fight, flight, or freeze" responses are our survival instincts governed by the body's nervous system. These responses help us survive and stay alive when we feel in danger or helpless. In times of experiencing threat, adrenaline and cortisol, known as stress hormones, are released in the body to activate the "fight, flight, or freeze."



Once the stressor, threat, or harmful event is over, stress hormones are meant to stop so we can go back to a balanced functioning that's less alert and on guard. We are not meant to stay on guard 24/7. However, if we aren't physically or emotionally safe, this leads to scanning for danger 24/7 and what will happen.



Important: The parent/partner who is abusive creates constant worry, fear, emotional distress, and injury. On-going traumatic experiences of domestic violence can cause a child, teen, or adult to be on high alert even after leaving the violent partner/parent, as they are constantly scanning for when something bad or scary might occur again. Other experiences can trigger a "fight, flight, or freeze response."



These events or reminders are often called "triggers," which can cause trauma reactivity. It is about the physical sensation felt inside the body -- sensations like feeling butterflies, tension, pain, headaches, dizziness, and many more. Growing awareness of these sensations is key to helping calm the upset through engaging the vagus nerve to signal the brain to lower the heart rate through practices of 1) Identifying how I feel inside my body. 2) Engaging in activities that reduce the "fight, flight, freeze response." 3) Allowing the person (parent and child) to feel emotionally safe again. 4) Repeating when an upset or distressed behaviors arises.



All ages experience these physical sensations that are prompted by feelings, thoughts, experiences, or triggers that remind the body of possible past experiences or present moment distress. This is true for babies, toddlers, children, and teens while they are in a shelter, during visitation, and through their days and nights. The key is to remember that to bring a sense of safety back to the child, teach them to breathe deeper and exhale out longer, or through movements like tapping, rocking, moving, combined with humming, or singing. Your goal is to help them calm the internal flood of stress hormones by replacing them with calming ones.



Information is Power! The more you understand how traumatic experiences affect the body, the more ways you can comfort your child. For example, teaching them how to manage moments of big emotions and distress using deep breathing can calm the parasympathetic nervous system and soothe a child's distress or when children's behaviors seem extreme to the present circumstances.

NOTICING CUES HELPS TO COPE



#1


Learning about cues or reactions in the body can help you and your children use approaches to feel emotionally safer.



#2

How do we do this? Notice what comes first when something happens to you or your kids. How does your body feel inside?

#3





By noticing what occurs in your body you can notice cues like a racing heart, feeling jumpy, and other kinds of physical sensations.



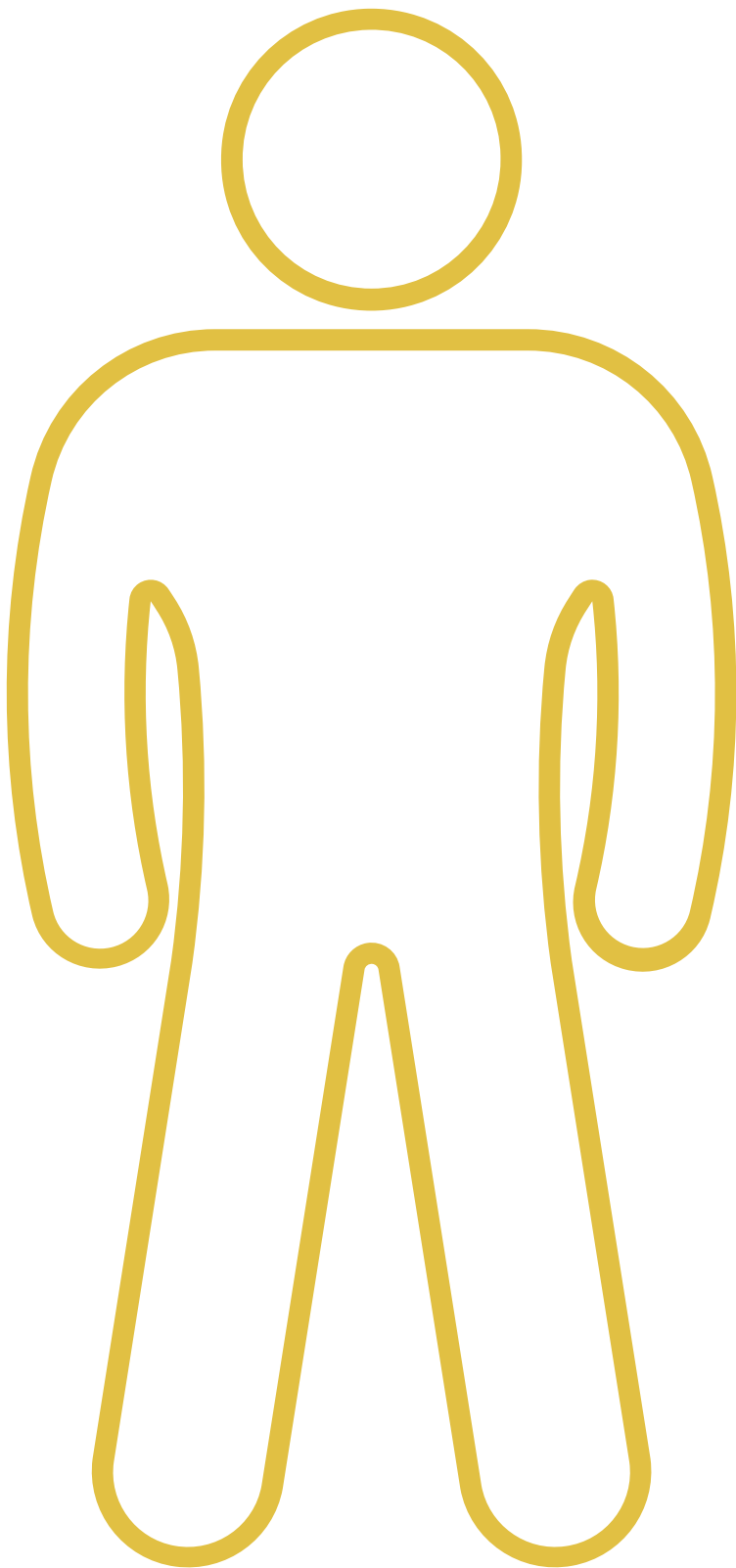
#4

You can learn to notice these cues and then do calming activities to help manage through upset, feelings, and difficult moments.

#5



Breathing, moving, rocking, humming, and tapping are some approaches you can do with your children to help gain calm and safety.



Where do you notice the cues?

Use colors to show where you have noticed sensations in your body.

What feeling might you remember having?

What do you remember thinking?

What does the sensation feel like?

What can help you cope with this?

- Breathing in and out?
- Moving?
- Humming?
- Seeking someone to talk with?
- Tapping through the upset?
- Something else?

An overview

Internal Body Sensations

What and where do I feel
this in my body?

Feelings & Emotions Brought About

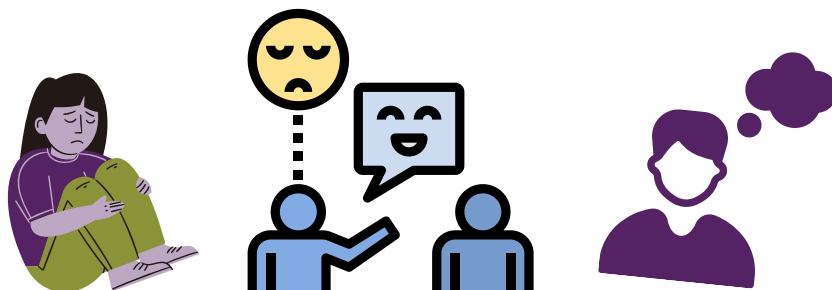
What are the feelings I am
having?

Behavioral Response

How am I acting or
behaving?

Cognitive Response

What am I thinking about
this?



MY OWN COPING WAYS

COPING MEANS

you find positive ways to help you deal or get through hard stuff that has already happened or is happening.

POSITIVE SELF -TALK

I will tell myself that I

THE SONG I SING OR HUM TO MYSELF TO HELP ME COPE

I AM GRATEFUL FOR



3 WAYS I COPE ARE



I THINK TODAY I FEEL

- ☐ AMAZING
- ☐ GREAT
- ☐ GOOD
- ☐ OKAY
- ☐ NOT OKAY

Taking care of me matters!

#4 Family Group

"It's Okay to Play"

It is a bold statement to declare that domestic violence programs are responsible for creating opportunities for families to play together. Domestic violence services are driven by safety planning, case management, and goal-setting tasks. Indeed these are aspects of serving survivors. Yet, is there a focus on helping the whole family, meaning going beyond the occasional childcare service?

Research describes the impact of exposure to a batterer in the lives of children and teens. Survivors tell us how a battering partner undermines their parenting role. Therefore, when DV programs embrace diversity and inclusivity as foundational programming, it should mean bringing the whole family in the room together and receiving services.

So much change, hurt, and upset has happened in their lives. Yet, here in programming, we can shift our approach and create family groups that provide

moments of play—sparking connection, joy, and even bonding between parent and child.

Information is Power:

When a parent plays with their children and teens, it is in these moments that this exchange deepens bonds and relieves stress.

The more a parent knows and understands the importance of play to their children's well being and how these experiences affect the body, the more they can help their child manage through moments of big emotions, distress, or when children's behaviors seem extreme to the present circumstances.

Key Sharing:

Youth and adult survivors are often in survivor mode or flight, fight, or freeze reactions. Emotional regulation can calm internal reactions by using deeper belly breathing and exhaling out longer.

Group Materials:

- Copies of handouts
- Various toys and games (age and culturally sensitive)



PLAY

"Play is the work of childhood."
Jean Piaget

"An abusive partner within a family often takes the freedom to play away from children, teens, and the family. There can be risk and a cost to playing freely for fear of upsetting the parent who batters."

Sonia Ferencik
Youth Advocate

#4 Family Group Structure "It's OK to Play"

1) Greeting Each Person: It is vital to see each person entering the group, young and old. As a domestic violence advocate, seeing each person matters. Saying hello with a warm, genuine tone creates a space for all to feel included.

2) Circle Guidelines: Stating several guidelines for emotional respect and safety helps the members to know the expectations of interacting with one another. See appendix A for ODVN Youth Institute Guidelines.

3) Checking In Question: "Share what you like to play? Please share what you really like about it." Then, go around the room to allow all a chance to share and see.

4) Pause & Breathe: Decide which type of "on purpose breathing" exercise you would like to share with this family group. Then, your voice guides the group through the Bubble Blowing practice. Repeat 5-6 times. (Share bottles of bubbles for the parents to use with their children!)

5) Move & Stretch: Because this family group is about play, you can be creative in how you do this activity. Play 6 rounds of "Simon Says". First, though ask each family to fill out on a card writing what is their family's move they want Simon to include in the game.

6) Introduce Topic: The key to introducing the topic of play is asking the group's youth to talk about it for a few minutes. Offer some questions that get them started. Then talk about what is fun about playing together? Ask each family to share if they have an activity that they like to do together. In this group, it would be essential to share that sometimes others in a family can make it worrisome to play because they get upset or want people to do as they say. Here, right now, we are going to play together for the next 30 minutes, and you are safe to enjoy.

7) Activity: You will have already prepared a selection of games, toys, and Uno cards for this group. Have enough for each family to select. Pre-planning for ages and stages will be necessary for this experience to be successful. Think outside the toy box by including Hot-wheel cars, LEGOs, play dough, puzzles, Uno, and other games.

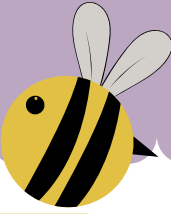
8) Space for Sharing: The key to creating space for sharing is gathering people to attend to each other. Sharing is an option. Children and adults can pass or show their "work" without saying words. The expectation during this time is to witness one another, validate, and make connections.

9) Pause & Breathe: Just as you began the group with a practice of "on-purpose breathing," you will conclude the group in practice together.

10) Closing Out Circle: Ending a group with closure is essential because you offer space for each participant to leave with emotional closure. For example, close their family group with another round of head, shoulders, knees, and toes, or another option is a check out a question such as "What was fun about this time we spent together?"

Noteworthy: You can also create an obstacle course or a walk noticing nature: handout included.

Ways We Play Together as a Family



list our favorite

fun for all

what we used to do...

we want to...

outside fun



WE CAN USE NATURE TO HELP US FEEL CALMER, CENTERED & CONNECTED

Look Up at the Sky

What color is the sky?
Do you see the shapes
of clouds or do you see
stars and the moon?

See Trees & Flowers

Do you see the trees or
flowers? How high is the
tree growing? Notice
the colors that you see.

Listen to Sounds Outside

Do you feel vibrations,
hear noises like birds
chirping or some other
sound? Maybe cars
driving by or the wind
blowing?

Plant Your Feet on the Ground

The earth beneath you
holds you up. Let
yourself feel the
ground beneath your
feet. We are connected
to others.

Feel the Warm Sunshine

Do you notice if you
sense a warm feeling
from the sunshine or is it
cold outside? Might you
feel a breeze?

Breathe in the Fresh Air

As you breathe in—use
your nose to see what
you can smell outside.
Do you notice different
kinds of smells?



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#5 Family Group

Coming Here Made Me Feel?

Children, teens, and adults arrive at a domestic violence shelter fleeing someone who has hurt them and leaving behind what belongs to them. They enter a shelter where they borrow what belongs to them now.

A DV shelter can be a safer place for families to stay. Yet, living in a shelter brings with that experience many adjustments and changes for children, teens, and adults.

Traumatic experiences, grief, and loss are a part of a family's experiences. It is important to validate how it feels to live in a communal residential space.

Children, teens, and adults encounter different people, sounds, smells, foods, and bedrooms, to name only a few. In addition, we, the advocates, work where people live. Therefore, advocates must account for this loss of home, belongings, familiar spaces, pets, and so much more.

Information is Power:

Shelter environments can be a significant change for

children. For example, babies may not sleep the same because their bedding feels different, and children aren't able to bring their toys with them. In addition, teens can experience losses from not being in the same school, having their clothes, or being able to connect with others they know.

Key Sharing:

This group allows families to acknowledge how coming to the shelter has made them feel.

The more a parent knows about how traumatic experiences affect the body, the more they can help their child manage through moments of big emotions, distress, or when children's behaviors seem extreme to the present circumstances.

Utilize art as an expressive exercise providing:

Materials:

- Pre-cut houses or printed blank faces
- Markers
- Music



We, as advocates, work where families live. So it's critical for us to be aware of their journey and the losses they go through when someone has hurt them.

It's caring to ask youth and adults what they miss and if there is anything we can do to help support them during this adjustment.

#5 Family Circle Structure Coming Here Made Me Feel?

1) Greeting Each Person: It is vital to see each person entering the group, young and old. As a domestic violence advocate, seeing each person matters. Saying hello with a warm, genuine tone creates a space for all to feel included.

2) Circle Guidelines: Stating several guidelines for emotional respect and safety helps the members to know the expectations of interacting with one another. See appendix A for ODVN Youth Institute Guidelines.

3) Checking In Question: Give a thumbs down and share what bugs you about staying here. Then, give a thumbs up and say what you might like about being here.

4) Pause & Breathe: Decide which type of "on purpose breathing" exercise you would like to share with this family group. Then, your voice guides the group through the breathing practice. One option: give feathers to each person, then watch the feather move, and they inhale and exhale. Repeat 5 - 6 times. (inquire about allergies)

5) Move & Stretch: Because this group is about living in a shelter, utilize movements that get people moving like butterfly tapping and sun salutations. Feel free to add in other movements the group suggests. (Handout included.)

6) Introduce Topic: The key to introducing the topic of "coming here made me feel" is to express empathy and kindness when sharing. Your narrative can include sharing such as, "tonight we are going to spend a few minutes talking about changes and how they make us feel. Change can be rough, and it can also be okay. Coming to stay here is a big change. Many parents and kids come to stay here for a while to feel safer because it wasn't always safe to live where you were before. Sometimes, some things are nice about staying here, but sometimes some things make it hard to stay here. Grown-ups and kids can go through lots of feelings. Tonight is a chance to talk about them.

7) Activity: You will have already prepared a large pre-cut house page, makers, and other supplies, should you desire. Provide 10 - 15 minutes to draw or write out their feelings and thoughts for each person. It is vital to share that if someone wants to "pass" on this activity, they may. They can free draw with other art paper supplied. Option 2: Pass out blank feelings faces and invite them to draw and write how they feel about staying here (shelter.)

8) Space for Sharing: The key to creating space for sharing is gathering people to attend to each other. Sharing is an option. Children and adults can pass or show their "work" without saying words. The expectation during this time is to witness one another, validate, and make connections. This activity allows parents to listen to their children and vice versa. Another benefit is families see commonalities.

9) Pause & Breathe: Just as you began the group with a practice of "on purpose breathing," you will conclude the group in practice together.

10) Closing Out Circle: Ending a group with closure is essential because you offer space for each participant to leave with emotional closure. For example, offer a check out a question such as "Share one thing you would like to do while staying here?"



moving & stretching



butterfly tapping



Butterfly tapping is an immediate stress-reducing technique, and is something you can do right now to decrease anxiety and lower your heart rate. Here's how to butterfly tap yourself:

1. Cross your hands across your chest, with your middle fingers resting on your collarbones.
2. Raise your elbows to create your butterfly wings.
3. Slowly tap hands on your chest, alternating left and right.
4. While tapping, breathe in through your nose and exhale through your nose until you start to feel some relief.



stretching + moving



1. Stand with feet firmly on the floor, breathing in and out
2. Inhale up sweeping up above head, pause, breathing in and out - 3x.
3. Exhale as you lower arms to the floor, slightly bending knees and touching ankles, toes, or a chair.
4. Inhale, and halfway lift to hands on thighs
5. Exhale lower hands down to ankles, chair, or toes.
6. Inhale bring arms above head.
7. Repeat entire sequence 2x more.



Pre-Cut House Activity



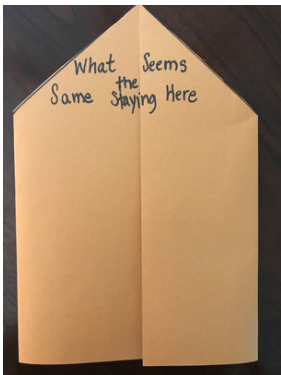
- Use 11" by 15" art paper to make each house



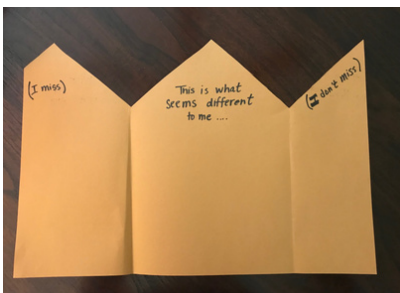
- Fold left side to the center of the art paper
- Fold right side to the center of the art paper



- With scissors, cut angles as shown in the illustrated photo

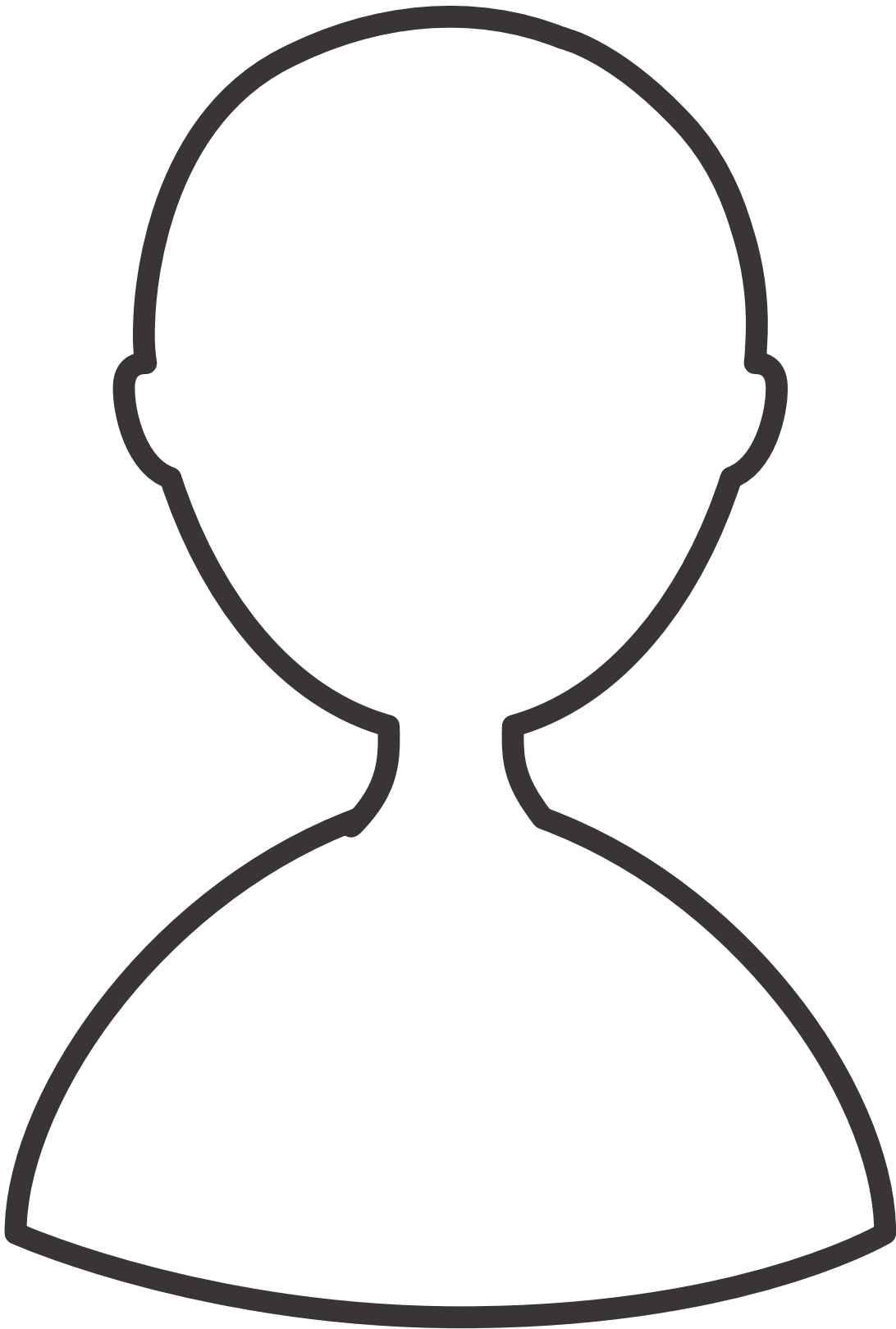


- On the outside of the house write:
 - What seems the same about staying here?



- Then, on the inside write:
 - I miss...(on the left inside section of the house)
 - This is what seems different to me...(in the center)
 - I don't miss...(on the right section of the house)

Coming here made me feel...

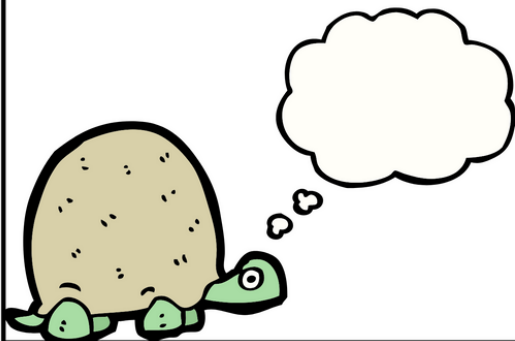


JOURNAL WRITING

Reflection and Realization

A journal allows you to freely express yourself without fear of disapproval or criticism. Not only is it a good outlet, but it is also a way to release feelings and record how you are physically feeling.

On this page, write about what changes have happened.



#6 Family Groups

Tapping to Help Myself

Tapping is effective in stress reduction: also known as the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT).

Tapping empowers individuals to support them through many emotions and traumatic memories.

Tapping has been researched as is an evidenced based practice.

It is free to do and works well with people of all ages. Schools across the country utilize the technique as well as others like teachers, trauma practitioners, and everyday people.

Information is Power:

According to the Tapping Solution Foundation, the practice utilizes tapping with your fingertips on specific meridian points while talking through memories or emotions.

Key Sharing:

The Tapping Solution Foundation describes that the *"the basic technique requires you to focus on the emotion at hand: a fear or anxiety, a bad*

memory, an unresolved problem, or anything bothering you. While maintaining your mental focus on this issue, use your fingertips to tap 5-7 times each on 9 of the body's meridian points.

Tapping on these meridian points – while concentrating on accepting and resolving the negative emotion – will access your body's energy, restoring it to a balanced state."

Dr. Maria Ortner, ED of The Tapping Solution Foundation presented a training with ODVN teaching advocates how to use Tapping with Survivors. The two-hour training is on ODVN's online learning portal. In addition, all Ohio's DV agencies received copies of Alex Ortner's book, Gorilla Thumps and Bear Hugs, as a gift from Dr. Ortner in 2019.

Materials:

- Tapping Scripts & Diagram
- Access to video
- Tapping Book for Children



"Studies find Tapping balances activity between the sympathetic and parasympathetic regions of the brain, producing a neutral emotional state."

The Tapping Solution
Foundation

#6 Family Circle Structure Tapping to Help Myself

1) Greeting Each Person: It is vital to see each person entering the group, young and old. As a domestic violence advocate seeing each person matters. Saying hello with a warm, genuine tone creates a space for all to feel included.

2) Circle Guidelines: Stating several guidelines for emotional respect and safety helps the members to know the expectations of interacting with one another. See appendix A for ODVN Youth Institute Guidelines.

3) Checking In Question: Share what helps you feel better when you feel upset. Then, go around the room to allow everyone a chance to share and listen.

4) Pause & Breathe: Decide which type of "on purpose breathing" exercise you would like to share with this family group. Then, your voice guides the group through the practice. Repeat 5 - 6 times.

5) Move & Stretch: Because this family group is about Tapping, you can be creative in how you do this activity. You can stretch from head to toe, twist right to left, and then allow the group to guide you through what they would try. Maybe have a mini dance party with music to create laughter and silliness.

6) Introduce Topic: Perhaps ask people if they recall ever tapping a pen or even tapping the side of their head when trying to think or focus. You can include how when little ones are upset, people rock, hum, and tap the babies back gently to soothe them. Then, you can introduce the practice of Tapping by reading the story *Gorilla Thumps and Bear Hugs* by Alex Ortner or watching a video illustrating how to tap with children. (Refer to handout for video link and book title)

7) Activity: Pass out the illustrated Tapping diagrams for each child and parent in the group. Demonstrate how to tap on the meridian points showing people where to tap. It's okay to acknowledge that this may seem weird or silly to try. Use one of the scripts provided by the Tapping Solution Foundation.

8) Space for Sharing: Inquire how this practice felt for family members. The key to creating space for sharing is gathering people to attend to each other. Sharing is an option. Children and adults can pass or pass without saying words. The expectation during this time is to witness one another, validate, and make connections.

9) Pause & Breathe: Just as you began the group with a practice of "on-purpose breathing," you will conclude the group in practice together.

10) Closing Out Circle: Ending a group with closure is essential because you offer space for each participant to leave with emotional closure. For example, Will you try this Tapping a few times? Or what do you already use that works to settle yourself down from big feelings?

Show this video to families as a way to introduce and model the practice of Tapping. It is helpful for the parents and youth to see that Tapping is an international evidenced-based practice for regulating internal upset the body may be reacting to.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0NUNNhosPU>



Offer:

- Print the Tapping diagrams and scripts from on the following two pages for each family member.
- Then, model how to move through the script one time allowing people to follow you.
- Finally, give families time to practice this on their own.
- You can create blank scripts for families to fill in to help them say more positive things about themselves.



Material Referenced from the Tapping Solution Foundation

<https://www.tappingsolutionfoundation.org/howdoesitwork/>

TAPPING GIVES YOU THE POWER TO HEAL YOURSELF, PUTTING THE CONTROL OVER YOUR DESTINY BACK INTO YOUR OWN HANDS.

The practice consists of tapping with your fingertips on specific meridian points while talking through traumatic memories and a wide range of emotions.

What is a Meridian Point?

Put simply, meridian points are certain points that can be mapped throughout the body. Energy circulates through your body along this specific network of channels. You can tap into this energy at any point along the system.

All negative emotions are felt through a disruption of the body's energy. The body, like everything in the universe, is composed of energy. Restore balance to the body's energy, and you will mend the negative emotions and physical symptoms that stem from the energy disruption. Tapping restores the body's energy balance, and negative emotions are conquered.

How Does Tapping Work?

The basic technique requires you to focus on the negative emotion at hand: a fear or anxiety, a bad memory, an unresolved problem, or anything that's bothering you. While maintaining your mental focus on this issue, use your fingertips to tap 5-7 times each on 9 of the body's meridian points. Tapping on these meridian points – while concentrating on accepting and resolving the negative emotion – will access your body's energy, restoring it to a balanced state.

According to Dr. Dawson Church, "Acupoint tapping sends signals directly to the stress centers of the mid-brain, not mediated by the frontal lobes (the thinking part, active in talk therapy)." Because EFT simultaneously accesses stress on physical and emotional levels, he adds, "EFT gives you the best of both worlds, body and mind, like getting a massage during a psychotherapy session." In fact, it's EFT's ability to access the amygdala, an almond-shaped part of your brain that initiates your body's negative reaction to fear, a process we often refer to as the "fight or flight" response, that makes it so powerful.

Think of your amygdala as a personal alarm system. When you experience trauma or fear, the amygdala is triggered and your body is flooded with cortisol, commonly known as the "stress hormone." This intricate chain reaction – your stress response – significantly influences and sometimes even causes whatever it is that troubles you, whether that's an illness, injury, emotion, or even an external problem such as an issue with a friendship.



Karate Chop Point



Eyebrow Point



Side of Eye Point



Under Eye Point



Under Nose Point



Chin Point



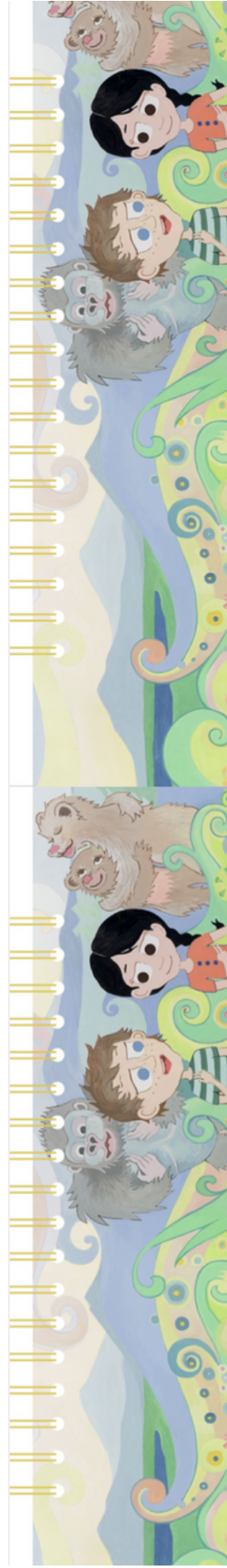
Collarbone Point



Underarm Point



Top of Head Point



Tapping Scripts to use with Gorilla Thumps & Bear Hugs

Quick Tips:

- It is always recommended that you use the language, feelings, expressions, etc. that your student(s) is(are) expressing. The following Tapping scripts are meant as a sample to guide you, but they can (and should!) be changed to meet the needs in your classroom.
- You will notice all Tapping scripts begin with an acknowledgement of the child's feeling, such as "I'm so worried about my presentation." Tapping does appear at first to focus on the negative, but this is because it is important to name the feeling and allow the student to feel justified in his or her emotions. It is often possible to move into the positive language faster than you would with an adult.
- You will also notice the language shared with students indicates that it is okay to have the feelings they have. It is important that students don't think that feeling "worried" or "mad" is a bad feeling that needs to be rid of. Instead, after acknowledging these feelings, share with students that we need to develop ways to problem solve and become resilient when these feelings build up. It is okay to be mad about something, but the actions that follow will determine whether a student lingers in this place, or begins to move forward in their healing.

Introduction to Tapping

Say: Have you ever heard of Tapping? It is something you can use to help you feel better. Raise your hand if you've ever felt mad, worried, or even had trouble solving a problem with a friend or making friends. Have you ever become so upset that your face begins to feel warm? Or been so nervous that your stomach hurts or your hands shake? Well, you aren't the only one! When you have those feelings of your stomach feeling queasy, or your face feeling hot, there's a reason. Your body may respond to stress, or problems, this way. Tapping can help you get rid of these negative feelings by sending relaxing signals back to your brain. Your brain and body work together!

Begin demonstrating Tapping using the following language. Are you ready to Tap along with me? It's easy, just copy the moves that I do. You can Tap using either hand and either side of the body. First take a deep breath in and let it out.

We start with the side of the hand, called the **Karate Chop** point. It's easy to remember, because it's just like a karate chop!

Next is the **Eye brow** point. We can remember it by calling this the **Hairy Eyebrow** point. I pretend that I have eyebrows so big that birds can land on them and sing songs to make me feel better.

Then there's the **Side of the Eye** point, which I remember by calling it the **Super Eagle Eye** point. When I tap here, I pretend I have super eagle eyes that let me look at things in a different way.

Next is the **Under Eye** point, or the **Lion Cry** point. This reminds me that even if you're strong like a lion, it is okay to cry and let bad feelings out.

Then there's the **Under the Nose** point, the **Dragon Fire** point! I breathe out my bad feelings just like a dragon breathes fire out of its nose.

Next is the **Chin** point, or the **Wolf's Chin** point. When I tap here I'm like a wolf howling away the bad feelings.

Then comes the **Collarbone** point, which I think of as the **Gorilla Thump** point. When I tap here, it's like I'm a big proud gorilla beating on my chest.

Next is the **Underarm** point. I like to call this the **Bear Hug** point because when I tap here I think about giving myself a lot of love with a bear hug.

The last Tapping point is the **Top of Head** point, I call this the **Monkey** point. This one's a silly one that makes me feel like a monkey - and then I laugh!

Those are all of the Tapping points!

#7 Family Group

Family Strengths Banner

The victimized parent is parenting their children amid harm and violence with an abusive partner who decides to undermine their parenting and twist family relationships. They are protecting their children and trying to mitigate the abuse. All the while they are never the one in control of the abusive behavior. The abusive partner is accountable for their actions and the environment they create.

The victimized parent is surviving while parenting their children, and all are experiencing trauma and chronic stress.

Yet, parents and children possess many strengths.

Key Sharing:

Shelter programming has the opportunity to create space to celebrate families by inviting them to create a family banner that describes what makes them resilient and unique. This activity honors them and offers space to highlight their gratitude and more.

The National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network has an essential resource for advocates to review, highlighting family resiliency and traumatic stress for providers. This resource provides helpful knowledge that bolsters reasoning for shelter programs to celebrate and honor families.

Family Resiliency and Traumatic Stress: A Guide for Mental Health Providers
https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/family_resilience_and_traumatic_stress_providers.pdf.

Materials:

Option 1

- Banner Handout
- Art materials
- Banners triangles
- String or yarn
- Other craft decorations

Option 2:

Create a family gratitude jar offering families a chance to have a container filled with messages that lifts heart and hope. See handouts.



National Childhood Traumatic Stress Networks providers can support resilience with interventions that help families to:

- Reduce the number and intensity of stressors.
- Increase/improve their coping strategies.
- Increase access to resources.
- Reappraise the situation and adjust expectations of the situation and/or themselves.

#7 Family Circle Structure Family Strengths Banner

- 1) Greeting Each Person:** It is vital to see each person entering the group, young and old. As a domestic violence advocate, seeing each person matters. Saying hello with a warm, genuine tone creates a space for all to feel included.
- 2) Circle Guidelines:** Stating several guidelines for emotional respect and safety helps the members to know the expectations of interacting with one another. See appendix A for ODVN Youth Institute Guidelines.
- 3) Checking In Question:** "Give a thumbs up, a thumb down, or thumbs sideways to show how you are feeling right now." Then, go around the room to allow all a chance to share and see.
- 4) Pause & Breathe:** Decide which type of "on purpose breathing" exercise you would like to share with this family group. Then, your voice guides the group through the breathing practice. Repeat 5 - 6 times.
- 5) Move & Stretch:** Because this family group is about celebrating their family's resiliency or strengths, offer a mountain pose as the action. Then direct the family into a tree pose, allowing the branches to wobble and move.
- 6) Introduce Topic:** Introduce the topic of how each family is unique and help each other through "tough times" by showing empathy (caring about one another) and by offering support. Support includes being respectful, helpful, kind, and being a good listener. Invite family members to select colors and write or draw on each banner illustrating what they value and what makes them strong. They can include what is special about them, or perhaps describe their family motto or mantra.
- 7) Activity:** Offer clear statements describing the activity. Offer families the timeframe of the activity. Offer a reminder of how many minutes they have several times during the time allotted. This activity will likely take the majority of the group time.
- 8) Space for Sharing:** The key to creating space for sharing is gathering people to attend to each other. Sharing is an option. Children and adults can pass or show their "work" without saying words. The expectation during this time is to witness one another, validate, and make connections.
- 9) Pause & Breathe:** Just as you began the group with a practice of "on-purpose breathing," you will conclude the group in practice together.
- 10) Closing Out Circle:** Ending a group with closure is essential because you offer space for each participant to leave with emotional closure. Close their family group with another round of head, shoulders, knees, and toes, or another option is a check out a question such as "What is the best part of doing this family banner together?"

Noteworthy: Option 2 is providing supplies to make a family gratitude jar. Adapt the handout offered.



Creating a Family Strengths Banner

- Provide large cutouts of triangles as shown above.
- Offer pictures, words, markers, and glue sticks.
- Offer glitter pens and other decorative supplies.
- Allow the family time to process and talk about what they share that helps them through adversity or "rough times."
- Provide string or tape to link the banner together.

~ Gratitude Jar ~



Making a gratitude jar can be fun, creative and inspiring for you.

Pausing, thinking and writing a statement about what you are appreciative of or grateful for has many benefits to your feelings, outlook, and emotional well-being.

What You Need

Use a favorite glass jar, container or even a colorful bowl or box.

Cut small pieces of paper to record your gratitude statements on.

Decorate your container with ribbon, yarn, or tissue paper.

Make a Daily Ritual

It's simple to do.

Take a note card, your favorite marker or pencil and write a statement beginning with....

In this moment, I am grateful for....

Today, I appreciate....



Did you know?

"Gratitude...can be an incredibly powerful and invigorating experience. There is growing evidence that being grateful may not only bring good feelings. It could lead to better health." says researcher Jeff Huffman

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/is_gratitude_good_for_your_health

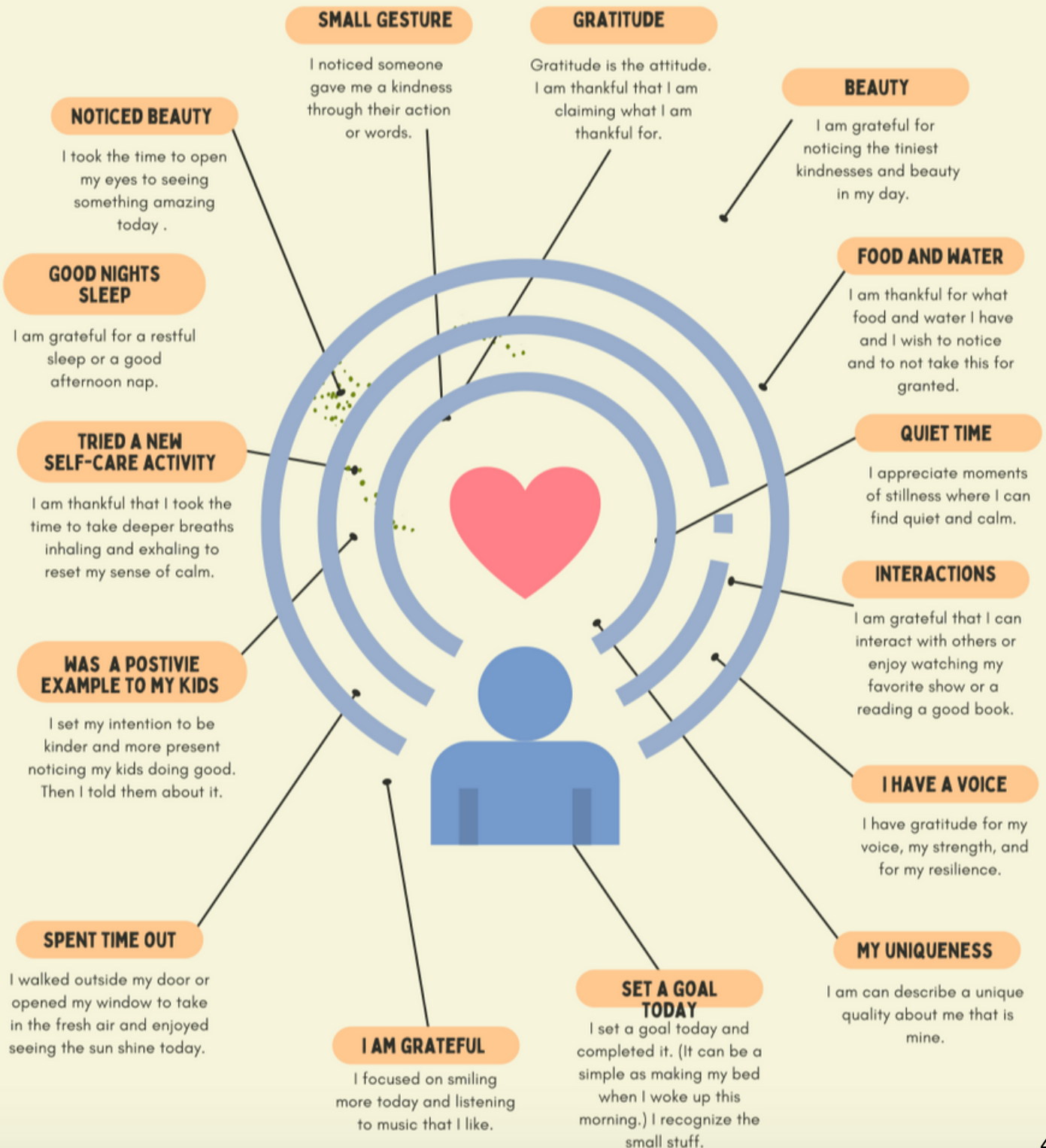
Gratitude Changes Everything

CLAIMING THANKFULNESS

Share Your Gratitude Daily for Yourself & with Others

Continue to try this even when you might be struggling.

There are benefits to your well-being.



#8 Family Group

Family Rituals: Play, Yoga, & Rhythms

The shelter environment can be overstimulating. Families residing in DV communal living are managing many changes, and finding equal footing in a different space can be challenging. They are hurting, adjusting to sharing with strangers, and meeting with a case manager who works where they live. But, in turn, the shelter environment can be filled with golden opportunities where parents and children are seen and listened to, where kindness is the approach, and it feels like a safe space to stay. Consequently, shelters can foster opportunities for families to think about creating new rituals or habits now that they have escaped the abusive partner.

Information is Power:

Traditions and rituals are a part of a person's culture, family, and community. Holidays are the most common ones we celebrate. Still, we create individual ones for ourselves or those rooted in religion, community, or culture. In times when life shifts, it can be helpful to pause and restore family

habits anchored in hope.

Simply put, rituals can become daily practical activities like playing, expressing gratitude before children fall asleep, and taking the time to move, walk, and try stress-reducing techniques.

Key Sharing:

This family group is about wrapping it all together, focusing on playing, moving, and regulating practices that can positively benefit families while staying in shelters and beyond. They get to write their own new script! Please consider sharing with parents and children that "trying" new habits and ideas might take a while and that it is okay to come back to a new day if one day proves difficult or too busy. For example, they attempt to build new habits while living in a temporary shelter or to focus on their future.

Materials:

- Illustrated yoga poses
- Parachute if available
- Handouts for family discussion
- Markers
- Music & Bubbles



Rituals are about routines, customs, habits, or practices of an individual or family.

A tradition is a belief or behavior passed down within a group or society with special meaning.

Offering a family group centered on rituals allows families to let go of some habits that were imposed on them and invite new ones that focus on hope and restoration.

#8 Family Circle Structure

Family Rituals: Play, Yoga, & More

- 1) Greeting Each Person:** It is vital to see each person entering the group, young and old. As a domestic violence advocate, seeing each person matters. Saying hello with a warm, genuine tone creates a space for all to feel included.
- 2) Circle Guidelines:** Stating several guidelines for emotional respect and safety helps the members to know the expectations of interacting with one another. See appendix A for ODVN Youth Institute Guidelines.
- 3) Checking In Question:** "What helps you to feel hopeful?" Then, go around the room to allow all a chance to share and see.
- 4) Pause & Breathe:** Decide which type of "on purpose breathing" exercise you would like to share with this family group. Then, your voice guides the group through the breathing practice. Repeat 5 - 6 times.
- 5) Move & Stretch:** Because this family group is about creating rituals or habits, you can make these moments playful. For example, you can offer parents bubbles, and their children can try and catch them. Be sure to allow this activity to last at least 5 minutes.
- 6) Introduce Topic:** The key to introducing the topic of family rituals (or new habits) is to validate that they lived by the rules of other people, and they have an opportunity to adjust and restore some positive daily practices which anchor their family in hope and being flexible. (The concept is not to disparage the other partner but to validate the stressful environment they experienced.)
- 7) Activity:** Utilizing the handouts, walk parents and children through how to "do" the yoga poses. Use music and spend at least 20 minutes for families to get a "felt sense" of this inside their bodies. Sitting in stillness for many will be difficult: trauma-informed approaches honor this. Add in movements like rocking, butterfly tapping, or even humming. Once practicing different poses and actions, they can spend time completing their handouts. Offer families the timeframe of the activity.
- 8) Space for Sharing:** The key to creating space for sharing is gathering people to attend to each other. Sharing is an option. Children and adults can pass or show their "work" without saying words. The expectation during this time is to witness one another, validate and make connections.
- 9) Pause & Breathe:** Just as you began the group with a practice of "on-purpose breathing," you will conclude the group in practice together.
- 10) Closing Out Circle:** Ending a group with closure is essential because you offer space for each participant to leave with emotional closure. For example, close their family group by checking out with a question such as "What are two habits you want to try now that can become your family rituals/traditions?"



Sometimes, yoga poses are practiced in a group with others.

No worries, if you don't have a group or a mat because many of us use a blanket and the floor. You can even go outside to do yoga, if you are allowed to.

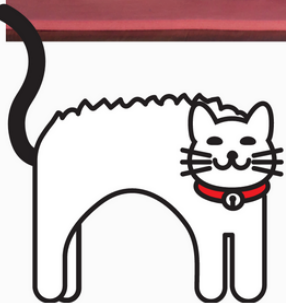
Try sitting, placing your hands upwards, and find a place of calm by doing your on purpose breathing.



Try showing your parent how to practice yoga and on purpose breathing! They might really like doing it with you!

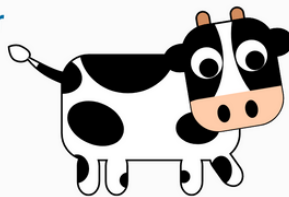
Sit Cross-Legged Pose - rest hands on your knees. If you are having a hard time sitting flat, prop up on a folded blanket or place a pillow under your hips.

This pose helps strengthen your back and calms you down.



Cat Pose - round your back and tuck your chin into your chest, breathing in ... Then do cow pose ...

MEOWING IS FUN!



Cow Pose - sink your belly towards the floor and then arch your back while looking up, Breathing out ...

MOOING IS FUN, TOO!



Legs Up the Wall Pose - do this pose to help you feel settled and safe inside.

Place you bottom close to the wall. Then put your legs up. You can relax your arms on the ground.

Stay for awhile - maybe like 5 minutes. This pose really helps!



Tree Pose - while standing on one leg, bend the other knee, place the sole of the foot on your inner thigh or on the inside of the calf.

Raise your arms into the air and sway like a tree.

This improves balance and strengthens your core. You can stand against a wall for support.



Child's Pose - on your mat, start by sitting up and then leaning forward allowing your hands to rest above your head.

This pose is great for resting and feeling calmer.

Our Family Plan

Our family is learning more ways to help one another when we notice one of us is getting upset or not kind.



We made this positive plan together. We are going to use song, breath, and moving when things feel difficult.

We know we can sing this song to help us get through tough times! What is our family song?

Blank pink area for writing the family song, with a musical note icon in the top left and a musical note with two hearts in the bottom right.

This is our family's code word. We can say it when need help, or a break, or to share.

Blank grey cloud shape for writing the family code word.

WE BELIEVE IN

acting kind toward each other!



Here is our exercise or yoga poses that we will do when we feel stirred up or want to calm down.

Blank grey area for writing exercise or yoga poses.

What type of breathing will we use together?

- Star Breathing
- Snake Hissing
- Bubble Blowing Breathing

Blank yellow area for writing breathing techniques, with a cloud of blue dots above it.

Here are our Tapping words...

Blank light blue area for writing tapping words, consisting of three horizontal lines and two vertical lines.



Reset, Restore



Our Family

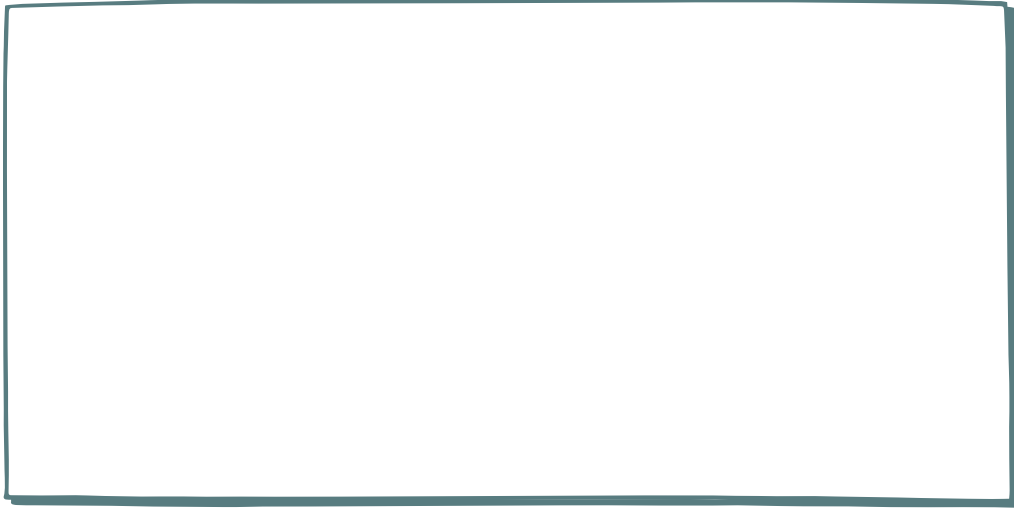


Let's slow down and allow yourself to take some time to think about your family's plan for creating hope, being flexible, and responding to upset when big feelings arise.

What we want to see more of in our family?

What we want to see less of in our family?

How do we want to talk one another?



How do we recognize upset and help?



Write a few sentences explaining your choices.

Name

Name

Name

Date



Family Group Guidelines

Feelings are a part of us.

I know that feelings are a part of being a person.
Some feelings feel okay and some don't feel okay.

I can think about what feeling I have and listen to my body and how it feels. I can use breathing & tapping if I need to be okay.

I will choose safe ways to express my feelings, even the difficult ones.



Show We Care

I will include others and
not do or say anything
that will hurt someone.

Share Kindness

I will show kindness to each
other.

I will show empathy by
caring about what they feel.

Each Person Belongs

I know each one of us in our
family matters!

We are each unique.

Sharing or Not Sharing

In this group, I can share or
not share what I am thinking
and feeling.



Additional
Handouts

Appendix

Resources
& References

Links to Videos

ODVN Downloadable

THIS IS BRIEF REVIEW OF
UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA
WHICH MAY VALIDATE
WHAT YOU MAY BE
EXPERIENCING

What can happen when someone has gone through an experience that was overwhelming, upsetting, or frightening?

- This experience is called trauma. A traumatic experience is known as a "whole-body experience."

When experiencing trauma in the moments it occurs, an individual's body goes into flight, fight or freeze in order to survive what is happening to them. Some of the experience might be recalled, pop into a person's head, or some might not be remembered at all. Experiencing trauma can cause hypervigilance, intrusive thoughts, and/or flashbacks.

- A person's body is responding to survival by going into flight, fight or freeze during the traumatic event.

Traumatic experiences can occur one time or many times. It is said that living through a traumatic experience is a "whole-body experience" meaning that an individual experiences the trauma on the inside of their body and on the outside. Feelings of upset can occur after the assault is over such as nightmares, trouble sleeping, loss of appetite, feeling numb, and/or trouble concentrating to name a few. There are many others that survivors have described. Research concurs with survivor's experiences.

- A person's senses are heightened, adrenaline surges, and the stress hormone, cortisol, floods the body in order to prepare for surviving.

In the moments of the traumatic experience an individual's heart rate increases, blood pressure rises, and the five senses of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste are acute. This information is important to understand because sometimes there are things that happen later, which may "trigger" or cue a person to feel overwhelmed and upset again. When there is a trigger, a person can go into flight, fight, or freeze. The physical sensations happen inside again. This is where we can learn to calm them down when we are aware and notice the cues of what is happening inside.

- Understanding the types of trauma reactions is important because sometimes there are things that happened which can "trigger" or cue a person to feel overwhelmed or upset again.

It is important to share the link between the mind-body connection so you may learn to calm down and manage through upsetting moments by using your **"on purpose breathing"** or intentional breath work. There are other centering activities that work with your body and the vagus nerve to bring regulation back to your parasympathetic nervous system. Intentional breathing, movement, and other activities can lower your heart rate, and help you to calm down inside.



Did you know that we breathe without even thinking about it?

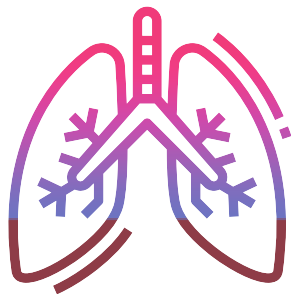
Over and over again, our brain tells our body to keep breathing. We use our lungs, nose, and mouth to bring oxygen into our bodies and out of our bodies.

Sometimes when we are active, we might breathe faster so we can keep up, while other times when we are tired, we might yawn so we can wake up. Then there are times when we might shallow breathe because we might feel scared, worried, or upset. Shallow breathing means that we aren't taking deeper breaths in and out.



Did you know you could use your breathing to help you?

It's true! You can use your breath, on purpose, like magic to help you when big feelings come up or if something happens that causes you to feel upset, worried, excited, or even sad. "On purpose breathing" helps to calm you on the inside by slowing you down.



What does "on purpose breathing" look like?

"On purpose breathing" means you tell yourself to think about breathing in and out. Telling yourself to do this makes your breath help your body to feel calmer when big feelings come up or if something happens.

It works because you are paying attention to breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth, repeating this 4 or 5 times in a row.

The next few pages give you some helpful ways to remember "on purpose breathing" like hand tracing breathing.

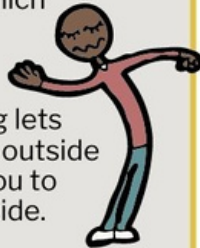
MINI MOVES

**Moving
Helps Us Feel
Better**

Wiggling and Motion

Let your brain tell your body what it needs and which ways it wants to move around.

Wiggling and moving lets stored up energy go outside of you. It may help you to feel more settled inside.



Singing Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes

Singing this song while doing the motions will get your body moving to help you cope with your feelings. It's fun to sing it slow and then faster.



Stand with Hands in Your Pockets and Breathe...

This simple move allows you to feel your feet on the floor, lets you put your hands safely next to you. You can do your on purpose breathing, too.



"I am Okay" Tapping

Using each of my hands—touch my thumb to my pinky finger, then my thumb to my index, then my thumb to my middle finger, then my thumb to my ring finger. As I am doing this motion I am saying to myself, "I am OKAY", repeating 3-5 times.



Raise Your Arms Up...

When you notice your shoulders feeling heavy or tight, reach your arms up to the sky, then bend over to touch the ground.

Add in other moves like tensing up and letting go where you notice tight muscles.



Drumming & Marching...

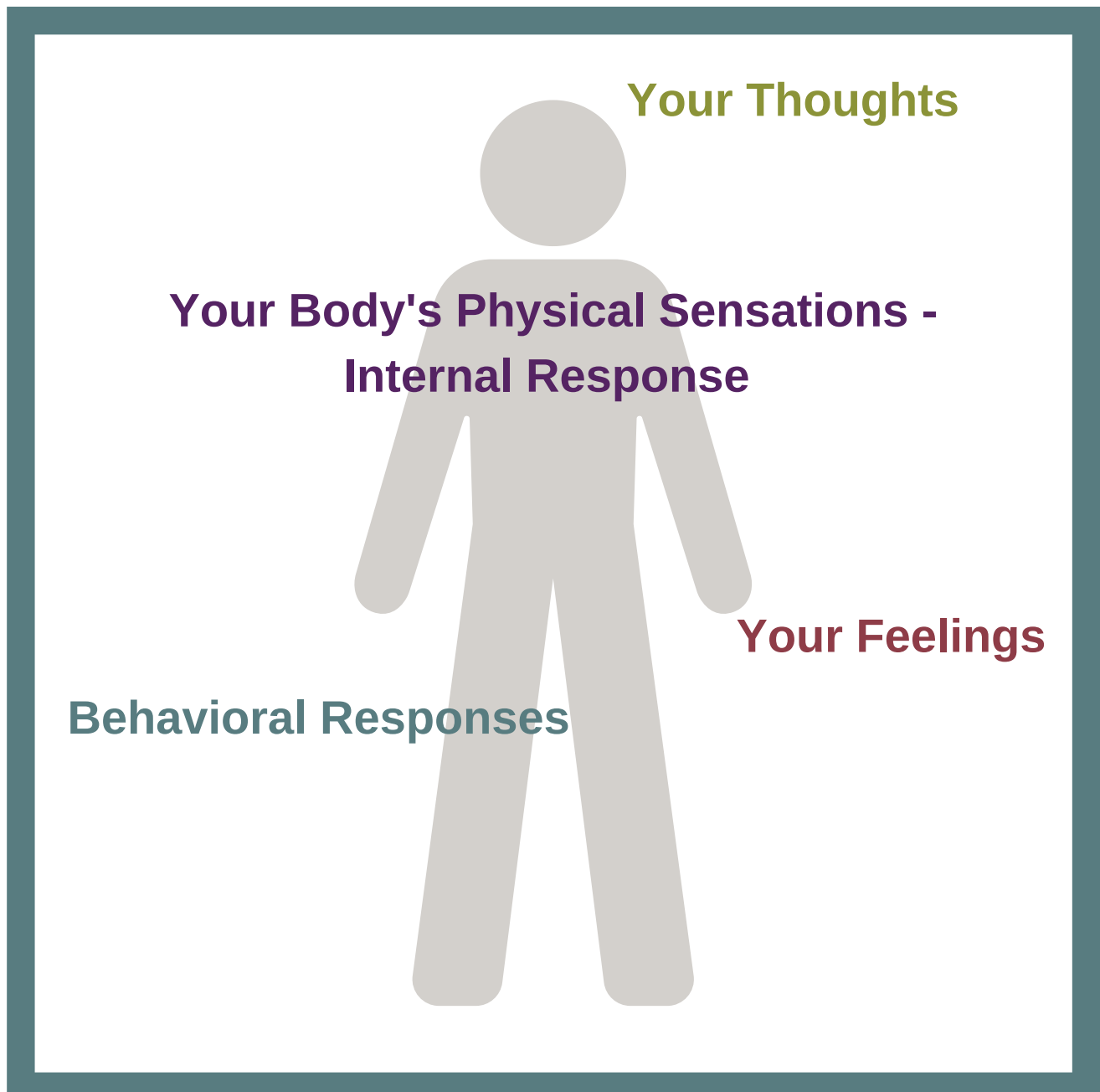
If you don't have a drum, no worries—clap your hands on your knees. Make a beat, speed it up then slow it down.

Create patterns and rhythms. Try humming a song or making up your own.



**When a human experiences "something,"
it is felt in different ways in split seconds.**

Our body and brain send messages to each other.



Resources

ODVN is a resource for your agency and service to youth and adult survivors.

Check out ODVN's On-Line Learning Academy for more webinars and recorded trainings at

- <https://odvn.talentlms.com>

Visit ODVN's website for upcoming live trainings as well announcements regarding quarterly Youth Advocacy Caucus meetings.

- <https://www.odvn.org/training>

Downloadable Resources: Youth, Domestic Violence and How Trauma Affects...

Play, Move, Imagine. I Matter! I Belong! (Youth Journal)

- https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Imagine_Play_and_Breathe_ODVN_Youth_Journal_final-1.pdf

Trauma & Domestic Violence Affects Youth and Resilience Focused Youth Support (Families of Color)

- https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ODVN_Experiencing_Trauma_POC.pdf

Trauma & Domestic Violence Affects Youth and Resilience Focused Youth Support (Families who are Spanish)

- https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ODVN_Experiencing_Trauma_Spanish.pdf

Trauma & Domestic Violence Affects Youth and Resilience Focused Youth Support (Families who are White)

- https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ODVN_Experiencing_Trauma.pdf

Set of 5 Resiliency Posters by ODVN Youth Institute

- Poster 1: You & Your Children Matter
- Poster 2: Noticing Cues Helps You Cope
- Poster 3: Just Breathe: Coming Back to Your Breathing
- Poster 4: Using Nature to Help
- Poster 5: Moving Helps us Feel Better



Contact

training@odvn.org

to learn more about ODVN's Youth Institute, schedule a training , or if you wish to be added to ODVN's Youth Advocacy Listserv.

Contact Sonia at soniaf@odvn.org

Links & Videos

Resources referenced within group design:

YOUTUBE: Listening to My Body

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-B6Rik-TA-Q>

Tapping

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0NUNNhosPU>

National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network's Resource Guide:

- https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//family_resilience_and_traumatic_stress_providers.pdf

References

Child Trauma Academy, Dr. Bruce Perry

- <https://www.childtrauma.org>

Tapping Emotional Freedom Technique

- <https://www.tappingsolutionfoundation.org/howdoesitwork/>
- <https://www.tappingsolutionfoundation.org/tapping-teachers-students/>

The Harvard Center on the Developing Child

- <https://developingchild.harvard.edu>

Benefits of Belly Breathing

- <https://www.doyou.com/5-physiological-benefits-of-belly-breathing-45647/>



Contact

training@odvn.org

to learn more about ODVN's Youth Institute, schedule a training , or if you wish to be added to ODVN's Youth Advocacy Listserv.

Contact Sonia at
soniaf@odvn.org

Children of all ages demonstrate breathing techniques found at ODVN's website under the Resources tab: click on Support in Stressful Times

You will gain free access to the "Mind Jar" video and other breath work videos from ZENworks Yoga. (<https://www.zenworksyoga.com>)


You can share with parents for their time while in shelter and beyond. Here is a flyer that you can share with families and co-workers.



ODVN's Support for Stressful Times

A virtual center of ideas that will connect you to positive ways to support you and/or your chosen family during stressful times. Discover ways to manage through feelings of upset by practicing breathing, movement, and more to help your body feel calmer and less stressed.

Resources will highlight links to updates on COVID-19, information on public benefits in times of financial stressors as well as links to yoga videos, tips on resiliency, and doable ways to enhance your health, safety and well-being.

 Ohio Domestic Violence Network
ODVN

Go to <https://www.odvn.org/support-for-stressful-times/>