

Self-help groups Neighbor to Neighbor

Session 3—Personal strengths and self-esteem

To get ready
 Obtain the following:

1. Session 3 leader guide/discussion materials* (one per group member)
2. (Optional) Session 4 leader guide/discussion materials* (one copy for next leader)

This session will help people recognize personal strengths and encourage using strengths during difficult times.

* Also available on the World Wide Web:
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs>

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... and justice for all

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Stanley R. Johnson, director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.

File: Family life 3

This ISU Extension publication was formerly published as FE-F-270e.

Activities	Materials	Time
• Greetings and settling in.		10 minutes
• Introduction to session (leader reads out loud)	<i>Tough times... tough people</i> (3A)	1 minute
• Individual activity, Leader asks everyone to quietly record several personal strengths and how they acquired these strengths. If people are “stuck,” call their attention to the examples given in the introduction.	<i>Interview yourself</i> , p.2	5 minutes
• Group discussion Leader asks group members to respond in “round robin” style, giving each person a chance to talk.	Question 1, p. 2	15 minutes
• Group discussion Discuss the question in the same manner.	Question 2, p. 2	15 minutes
• Group discussion Discuss the question in the same manner.	Question 3, p. 2	15 minutes
Note: Choose question 2 or 3 if time is limited.		
• Individual activity Leader reads instructions; then individuals diagram their support systems.	<i>My support system</i> (3B)	15 minutes
• Activity Leader directs each person to write his or her name in the blank at the top of 3C. Each group member then places his or her folder on the floor in the center of the group. Without speaking each person will pick up the folders, one at a time, and write something positive about the person whose name is at the top. When each person has written on everyone else’s sheet, everyone picks up his or her own and reads the positive comments from group members.	<i>Recognition and appreciation</i> (3C)	10-14 minutes
• Stretch time and refreshments		5 minutes
• Structured sharing time Allow all group members a chance to speak by using a kitchen timer. Each person in turn gets the timer for approximately 5–10 minutes depending on the size of the group. Be flexible on those occasions when someone may need to take more than his or her share of the time.		40 minutes

Respond: How can personal strengths help us when we are caught in times of great change or uncertainty?

Approximate total = 2 hours, 15 minutes

Tough times ... tough people

Activity 3A

Introduction

If you were to interview someone middle aged or older and ask what life experiences strengthened him or her the most, chances are that person would recall comfortable times and trying times.

No matter what your age or situation, think about your own life up to the present. Focus on the qualities, traits, behaviors, skills, and attitudes you feel are your strengths.

What strengths flash through your mind? Has life taught you to hang on and not give up easily? Have you learned to “pull together” with family members? Do you know how to manage stress? Have you come to be more flexible when necessary? Have you had experiences that taught you to reach out to others?

What is your philosophy of life? Where did you acquire it? Do you get strength from spiritual life/religious beliefs?

Interview yourself

List one to four strengths and how these strengths came to be.

Personal strengths	How I came to have these strengths
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Discussion

1. Share one of your strengths and how you acquired it.
2. Did you list any “tough times” as strengthening experiences?
3. Good times ... let’s not sell them short! What strengths are born of good times?

My support system

Activity 3B

Think about yourself or your family and who you can rely on for help and support. Using a quarter, a nickel, and a penny, construct a model of your own support system.



Instructions

1. Place a quarter in the center of the box, and draw a circle around it.
2. Tracing the outline of a nickel, draw four or five overlapping circles around the perimeter of the 25-cent circle.
3. Use a penny to trace small overlapping circles around the ring of 5-cent circles.
4. Label the 25-cent circle either “me” or “the (your family name) family.”
5. Across the face of the 5-cent circles, write the names or initials of trusted, intimate others. These are people you or your family can be open with. These are safe, caring people. They may be friends, relatives (spouse?), neighbors, clergy, and/or colleagues. They may live nearby or at a distance.
6. Label the penny circles with names or initials of people, families, or agencies you know you can turn to for help in tough times. This ring represents support groups less intimate than the 5-cent circle folks, but helpful none the less.

Group discussion questions

1. Do you feel your support system is adequate, or does it need attention/change in order to serve you or your family well? What changes?
2. What makes certain people trusted intimates (those in the 5-cent circles)?
3. What’s the value of having backup support (those in the 1-cent circles)?
4. Could your backup support become trusted intimates? How?

Recognition and appreciation

Activity 3C

Recognition and appreciation for _____
(write your name here)

To help you get started:

- I appreciate you for ...
- I think you are good at ...
- I see as one of your strengths ...
- You add to this group by ...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

If there are more than 10 people in the group, add more comments below.