Using Adlerian and Narrative Therapies to

Inspire Young Girls to Become the Creator of their Story

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By:

Kadie Natasha Ellestad

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Abstract
Adlerian and Narrative psychotherapy are similar in that they both view human beings from a holistic framework. Both assert that social influences play an essential role in human development and change. Adlerian theory is grounded in the belief that human behavior is goal oriented, and that individuals can be best understood in terms of how they move through their lives trying to achieve their goals. Narrative theory affirms that stories shape each individual's identity. Self-Discovery, as it will be understood in this discussion, is found in one's search for, and discovery of, his or her life purpose. Adlerian theory will serve as the foundation for the development of this group model, with the additional use of concepts and techniques from Narrative theory as they support or expand the model. The goal of this project is to create a group therapy model in which adolescent girls are afforded the opportunity to explore and learn more about themselves and their patterns of relating to others and identifying their self-concept. Additionally, the goal of this paper is to create a model in which the members of the group will be able to make meaning of past experiences by using the Adlerian concept of the “Creative Self” to: (1) revise their stories of those experiences, (2) engage in building their self-esteem and discovering their purpose in life, and (3) identify how to live out that purpose in socially interested ways in their communities.

Keywords: Adlerian Therapy, Narrative Therapy, Group Therapy, Adolescent Girls
Poem by Dorothy Law Nolte

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.
If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.
If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.
If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.
If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy.
If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy.
If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.
If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.
If children live with tolerance, they learn patience.
If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.
If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.
If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.
If children live with recognition, they learn it is good to have a goal.
If children live with sharing, they learn generosity.
If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.
If children live with fairness, they learn justice.
If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect.
If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and in those about them.
If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.
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This paper and model are primarily addressed to Adlerian therapists who work with adolescent girls in group therapy.

Today, adolescent girls have more possibilities and choices to actualize their life visions. They can develop their talents, get an education, follow their hearts, set and attain goals, plan their futures, and much more. However, despite the vast opportunities for life and personal development, at the heart of these possibilities lay un-clarity, confusion and the foundation to developing good self-esteem. Adolescence marks a time of accelerated and intense emotional and physical changes. The cost of low self-esteem is sorely obvious as girls try to deal with the many pressures of fitting in, achieving, competing for the attention of boys, feeling misunderstood, and living up to society’s expectations of what and who they should and should not be. As a licensed professional counselor, encouraging adolescent girls to evolve and become confident people has the power to change the trajectory of their lives and can be done by strengthening their self-concept and building social interest.

**Statement of Problem**

For various reasons, most of what is known about adolescent girls focuses on the plethora of challenges they face regarding physical appearance, education, dating, sex, friendship and bullying issues. The fact that many adolescent girls show extraordinary strength, resilience, and endurance while navigating adolescence calls for further research. Rather than focusing on the perplexing stressors of adolescence, a different perspective of adolescent girls which affirms their strength and flexibility needs to be given attention. Yes, it is important to be mindful of the current-day risks, challenges, and stressors in the lives of adolescent girls; however they should
not be the definitive factors in discussions of adolescent girls. As one adage states, you draw in your life whatever you focus on. Therefore, there must be a focus on what is working for adolescent girls and how to assist them in negotiating this transitional time to become the women they are destined to be, rather than focusing on what is not working for them.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this paper is to create a group therapy model in which adolescent girls are afforded the opportunity to explore and learn more about themselves and their patterns of relating to others and identifying their self-concept. The goal of this paper is to create a model in which the members of the group will be able to make meaning of past experiences by using the Adlerian concept of the “Creative Self” to: (1) revise their stories of those experiences, (2) engage in building their self-esteem and discovering their purpose in life, and (3) identify how to live out that purpose in socially interested ways in their communities. This will be explored through using Narrative Therapy tools to uncover hidden talents, abilities, and strengths in the participants in this therapy model.

**Research Questions**

1. How can adolescent girls influence the world around them through the use of social interest and sharing their narratives?

2. How can the combination of Adlerian and Narrative psychotherapies in a group setting encourage girls to thrive during adolescence and develop positive self-esteem?
Definition of Terms

Adolescence - The period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages 10 to 19. It represents one of the critical transitions in the life span and is characterized by a tremendous pace in growth and change that is second only to that of infancy. – WHO (World Health Organization)

Theoretical Framework

Adlerian Theory

The overall goal of Adlerian psychotherapy is encouraging individuals to develop social interest by solving problems in their lives more cooperatively, confidently, and with a greater sense of contribution to their community. To do this, an individual must identify and work toward uncovering their mistaken beliefs, private logic, and lifestyle. Adler stated that people are to be understood holistically rather than divided into separate parts. Moreover, he viewed people as creative, socially motivated, and goal oriented (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

According to Alfred Adler (1969), Individual Psychology tries to see individual lives as a whole and regards each single reaction, each movement and impulse as an articulated part of an individual’s attitude towards life. Such a science is, of necessity, oriented in a practical sense, for with the aid of knowledge we can correct and alter our attitudes. Individual Psychology is thus prophetic in a double sense: not only does it predict what will happen, but like the prophet Jonah, it predicts what will happen in order that it should not happen. The science of Individual Psychology developed out of the effort to understand that mysterious creative power of life—that power which expresses itself in the desire to develop, to strive and to achieve— and even to compensate for defeats in one direction by striving for success in another (Adler, 1969, p. 31-32).
The main strategies that this model will focus on for Adlerian Therapy are 1) The creative self, 2) Holism, 3) Social Interest, 4) Feelings of Inferiority, and 5) Everything can be different.

**Narrative Theory**

Narrative Therapy is a strength-based conceptual framework pioneered by Michael White and David Epston, using their integration of the narrative metaphor and the externalization of problems. Narrative Therapy is a form of psychotherapy that attempts to separate the person from the problem through the use of externalizing conversations. According to Michael White (2007), “The form of inquiry that is employed during externalizing conversations can be likened to investigative reporting. The primary goal of investigative reporting is to develop an exposè on the corruption associated with abuses of power and privilege. Investigative reporters are not usually heatedly engaged with the subjects of their investigations. Rather, their actions usually reflect a relatively cool engagement” (p. 27-28).

Essentially, the goal is for the therapist and client to co-investigate the problem by focusing on the problems’ effects on the client’s life rather than on the problems as inside or part of the person in order to create distance. This objectifies the problem and makes it easier to investigate and evaluate the problem’s influences. This approach to counseling subsequently invites clients to begin a journey of co-exploration with the therapist in search of talents and abilities that have become hidden or disguised by life problems and to re-author their lives around these preferred experiences.

Gay Becker (1997) describes narratives as the stories people tell about themselves, reflecting people’s experience as they see it and as they wish to have others see it. “Through stories people organize, display and work through their experiences.” She argues, “Narratives
can be a potent force in mediating disruption whether the disruption is caused by illness or personal misfortune” (p. 25).

Moreover, Narrative Therapy encourages people to rely on their own skills, principles, and knowledge to help them reclaim their life from a problem. It holds the belief that a person’s identity is formed by their experiences or narratives. Because the problem is seen as a separate entity from the person, a therapist can help a client externalize sensitive issues. This objectification dissipates resistance and defenses and allows a client to address this entity in a more optimistic manner.

Narrative approaches to counseling and community work center people as the experts in their own lives and views problems as separate from people. Narrative approaches assume that people have many skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments, and abilities that will assist them to reduce the influence of problems in their lives. The word ‘narrative’ refers to the emphasis that is placed upon the stories of people’s lives and the differences that can be made through particular telling and retelling of these stories. Narrative approaches involve ways of understanding the stories of people’s lives, and ways of re-authoring these stories in collaboration between the therapist/community worker and the people whose lives are being discussed (Dulwich Center, 2009, “What are Narrative Approaches,” para. 1).

The primary strategies from narrative therapy that will be incorporated in this model are 1) Re-authoring new stories 2) Externalizing conversations and 3) Reinforcing new story.

Narrative and Adlerian approaches have several common underlying assumptions. For example, both approaches stress the importance of working with an individual’s preferred ways of expressing themselves. Additionally, both therapies are based on a belief that it is important to
develop a therapeutic relationship between therapist and clients to have success (Daigneault, 1999). Adlerian therapy assists individuals in uncovering the idea that they may not be able to control or change the behavior of others, however they do have the power to change their reactions and thoughts towards others. Adler believed that what an individual is born with is not as important as how they use what they are born with. He also believed that an individual’s attitudes in dealing with the social world through social interest, is connected to a sense of identification and having empathy with others. Being of service to others is a powerful way of stoking resilience. Furthermore, receiving and appreciating kindness from others may be just as important as offering it up and has the power to increase feelings of meaning and purpose.

Adler believed that humans have a strong desire and need to feel connected and united with others. Narrative therapy is grounded in the belief that knowledge is socially constructed. Another emphasis in narrative therapy is for the therapist to encourage the individual’s sense of autonomy and personal strengths and abilities. When used in conjunction with Adlerian therapy, the techniques and language of narrative therapy can complement a treatment approach for working with adolescents (Daigneault, 1999).

Assumptions & Limitations

The author assumes that adolescents utilizing this model will be forthcoming with sharing their narratives. In order for this model to work, they have to be honest about their experiences and feelings, and open to creating alternative narratives. It is also assumed that participants using this model will not have personality or eating disorders. Furthermore, it is assumed that participants using this model are victims of bullying, have low self-esteem, and, or experiencing familial difficulties. In advising membership of the group, a very careful assessment will have
been made as to whether individuals would benefit from group work and great care is taken in cultivating the group membership.

Possible limitations of this review is the lack of information on adolescent girls exemplifying extraordinary strength, resilience, and endurance while navigating adolescence. Furthermore research on the use of combining both Adlerian and Narrative therapy as a treatment modality to working with adolescent girls is also lacking. These two limitations could hinder this study.

**Background and Need**

As teen years approach, many girls are faced with the pressure of learning how to feel significant in their world. There is a shift in focus and it is all about their appearance and their changing bodies which can be an all-consuming measurement of worth. Furthermore, teens are besieged with a constant stream of media, societal, and peer pressures related to body image, appearance, and behavior. The outer world sets the standard for beauty and messages regulate their personal ideals by setting unrealistic expectations. If a girl is confident, she is labeled as being bossy; if a girl is assertive, she is labeled as being aggressive; if a girl is beautiful, she is labeled as being a tease. These stereotypes impact girls’ self-esteem as they grow and mature.

According to the NYC Girls Project (2014), even as women have made enormous strides in education, politics, and the workplace, girls report struggling with body image and self-esteem at younger and younger ages. Girls’ dissatisfaction manifests around body image, particularly weight, at an alarmingly young age: Over 80% of 10 year old girls are afraid of being fat (Andrist, 2003). By middle school, 40-70% of girls are dissatisfied with two or more parts of their body, and body satisfaction hits rock bottom between the ages of 12 and 15 (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Furthermore, girls’ self-esteem plummets at age 12 and doesn’t improve until
age 20, an unhappiness attributed to body shape, as females first experience a decline in self-esteem between the ages of 12 and 13, a time when most females have entered puberty (Baldwin & Hoffman, 2002).

While there are organizations and community programs that advocate and provide support for adolescent girls, there is a great need to foster resilience, encouragement, and individuality in young girls. The effect of these struggles on adolescent girls may be incalculable. Nonetheless there are additional real and measurable health consequences that create urgency in formulating therapy interventions. Adolescents depend on their families, communities, schools, and mental health services to learn a wide array of important skills that can assist them in coping with life pressures that come with transitioning from childhood to adulthood successfully. Parents, members of the community, service providers, and social institutions are entrusted with the responsibility to both promote adolescent development and adjustment and to intervene proactively rather than reactively. Promoting purpose in young girls and enlightening them on social interest is important and beneficial to their mental health and other positive outcomes.

**Self Esteem and Adolescent Girls**

Self-esteem is viewed by many mental health professionals as the foundation of positive emotional well-being. Rosenberg (1965, p. 30) defines self-esteem as a “positive or negative attitude toward the self” and it can be viewed as a key indicator of psychological well-being, at least among people in Western cultures. Dubois, Burk-Braxton, Swenson, Tevendale, and Hardesty (2002) state that self-esteem in adolescence is a complex construct which is, in most cases, associated with positive youth development. Self-esteem is important for promoting both mental and physical health, as well as for preventing behavioral and emotional problems such as
aggression and delinquent behavior (Dubois, Burk-Braxton, Swenson, Tevendale, & Hardesty, 2002).

With adolescence comes puberty, expanded intellectual abilities, a new sense of self identity and often new and increased expectations at school, in the community, and within interpersonal relationships. More importantly, adolescence is an especially important developmental period for the formation of self-esteem (Impett, Sorsoli, Schooler, & Tolman, 2008). Research on female psychological development identifies adolescence as the most pivotal and vulnerable time for females (Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999). The 1990 AAUW poll, Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America, documents a loss of self-confidence in girls that is twice that for boys as they move from childhood to adolescence (Gilligan, Goldberger, & Ward, 1991).

Developing from a girl to a young woman is a time filled with anxiety and confusion. Girls experience many changes including their level of self-esteem and understanding the influence of their own evaluation of their worth. Oftentimes, the expression of “high self-esteem” or “low self-esteem is used to describe a person’s evaluation of their worth. When people have high self-esteem, they tend to view life from an optimistic or confident perspective, seeing their potential value. When people have low self-esteem, they tend to view life from a pessimistic or doubtful perspective. From a narrative viewpoint, externalizing or naming low or high self-esteem separates the person’s identity from which they seek assistance.

Although positive emotions are worth cultivating, problems arise when people start believing they must be upbeat all the time (Rodriguez, 2013). Undesirable emotions are just as vital as the enjoyable ones in helping adolescents make sense of life's ups and downs. Adlerian therapy encourages individuals to learn to acknowledge and express a full range of emotions.
Furthermore, it stresses that one of the primary reasons we have emotions in the first place is to help us evaluate our experiences and make necessary adjustments in order to thrive and grow in life. In fact, anger and sadness are an important part of life, and new research shows that experiencing and accepting such emotions are vital to our mental health. Attempting to suppress thoughts can backfire and even diminish our sense of contentment. “Acknowledging the complexity of life may be an especially fruitful path to psychological well-being,” says psychologist Jonathan M. Adler of the Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering (Rodriguez, 2013, para 3).

According to Morgan (2000, p. 24), externalizing conversations begin to disempower the effects of labeling, pathologizing and diagnosing that are commonly experienced by people as impoverishing of their lives. They open possibilities for people to describe themselves, each other and their relationships from a new and non-problem-saturated position. Externalizing conversations facilitate the re-naming of the problem-saturated story that once dominated their lives. In this way, ‘the problem becomes the problem and then the person’s relationship with the problem becomes the problem’ (White & Epston 1990, p. 40). Narrative therapy assumes that events in life are unclear and the ways in which people form meaning are largely influenced by family, culture, and society.

The reactions that people construct are greatly influenced and shaped by personal narratives and dominant narratives. Dominant narratives are problem-saturated stories proffered by society in which the “problem” plays the leading role and the individual plays a secondary role, or that of the victim. Encouraging teenagers to externalize their problems would put them as the master of their life. This would provide an opportunity for them to create unique outcomes and provide openings to different possibilities and rich descriptions of their lives.
Stereotypes of girls not being good enough to a great extent is born out of the dominant societal narratives. People have the tendency to internalize dominate messages that they hear and Narrative therapy with adolescents attempt to encourage adolescent girls through the sharing of narratives to choose to tell themselves a different story from the negative ones they are used to hearing. Narrative therapy acknowledges that there are problems, however focuses on the surrounding context of the problem. Focusing on the surrounding context of the problem allows an opening to understand the story or how the internalized messages manifest into the problem. The act of storytelling empowers the adolescent to be the expert of their own life.

From an Adlerian viewpoint, self-esteem is neither high nor low, but an individual is encouraged or discouraged. Adler would describe an individual with low self-esteem as being discouraged, and one with high self-esteem as feeling encouraged. Discouragement is the basic condition that prevents people from functioning. However, Adlerian therapy encourages individuals to recognize that they have the power to choose and to act differently. The encouraged person demonstrates faith in self and life. The encouraged person is usually willing to rely on self to meet the tasks of life and is willing to rely on self in assuming risk if one either does not know the consequences or faces potentially negative consequences (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999 p. 148).

Adler believed that during the formative period of early childhood influences, a style of life is adopted. Some negative influences have high chances of provoking discouragement, but none can actually cause a child to choose a negative direction in life. A child has the freedom to use their creative power, adapting influences and circumstances, to their own idea about the best way to live. Children look for the strongest person in their environment and make him or her their model or their goal. It may be the father, or perhaps the mother, for we find that even a girl
may be influenced to imitate her father if he seems the strongest person (Adler, 1969). The presence of a positive adult role model, a common factor in healthy teenage development, has shown to impact teen self-esteem and academic achievement. Working from a preventive model, positive role models provide a foundation for young girls to learn to be respectful, responsible individuals in and outside of their normal setting.

Adlerians believe that individuals have the capacity to be creative in solving the problems that confront them and that all behavior serves a purpose. Adlerian therapy encourages individuals to increase their personal values through creating alternatives that allow them to maximize their self-worth. Mosak and Maniaci (1999, p. 61) state, the lifestyle is a creative, artistic production of the individual. It is a cognitive map that leads to the creation of goals in childhood. It is both flexible and adaptable to life and rigid and maladaptive to change. It is neither good nor bad; it simply is. Collaboratively identifying exceptions to self-defeating patterns and encouraging adolescent girls to challenge destructive cultural influences they have internalized has the capacity to instill hope and positive expectations and increase self-esteem.

According to Adler (1969):

Our whole task is to train such persons away from their hesitating attitude. The proper treatment for such persons is to encourage them—never to discourage them. We must make them understand that they are capable of facing difficulties and solving the problems of life. This is the only way to build self-confidence, and this is the only way the feeling of inferiority should be treated (p. 76-77).

Adlerian therapy would understand the individuals by exploring their mistaken goal and creating meaning of how it influences their life and how decisions are made. The goal is to encourage young girls to have balance in all areas of the task of life. This could be done by using
early recollections to explore major events that occurred between the ages of 4 and 9 that left an imprint on their relationships with themselves or with others or the way that they view life. This would offer insight into the individual’s style of life.

Adolescent girls with a profound sense of disconnection and alienation from themselves and others, can be a reflection of impoverished stories they tell themselves. Therefore, a key goal of Narrative Therapy is to support them in moving back into connection with themselves and others. In particular, fostering hope and the belief that they can be themselves and feel confident in overcoming barriers to building their self-esteem is a method of creating unique outcomes. In group therapy, participants are narrators of their own stories, audiences for others’ stories, and protagonists in a new story of group life in which they arrive at new interpretations of their histories and construct new tales of their futures (Laube & Janet, 1998). Group therapy can be a space to assist adolescent girls in making meaning of their lives and choices, in specific through strategies of naming, educating and encouraging. Assisting girls with maximizing their strengths and creating alternative narratives that accommodate unique outcomes can be life changing and healing.

Connecting with Others

For adolescent girls, building connections and feeling accepted by others play a vital role in their lives. It can have either supportive or damaging effects on their self-esteem. Girls with low self-worth and feelings of isolation reported greater friendship jealousy and thus led to aggressive behaviors and broader peer adjustment difficulties (Parker, Low, Walker, & Gamm, 2005). Encouraging teenage girls to be socially engaged can increase the likelihood of better mental health, quality of relationships, and their self-appraisal. Parker et al. (2005) found that adolescent girls’ increased importance of social belonging and identity formation places
friendships in larger social contexts. Larger peer groups allow for increased competition and feelings of jealousy. Sharing friendships is difficult while transitioning into larger social groups, however, what is important is how the messages are perceived by individuals and how they choose to incorporate them in their lives.

From the perspective of Adlerian therapy, all behavior is goal directed or purposive. Adler had an optimistic, encouraging view of human nature and believed that individuals are the architect of their own fate. He believed that individuals pursue goals without being consciously aware of them based on their final fictional goals. Having control of one’s fate incorporated the ability to give back and engage in social interest by connecting with others. Adler contended that an individual’s early interactions with family members, peers, and teachers help determine the role of inferiority and superiority in their lives. The inferiority complex is an isolating element which plays a fundamental role in personality development. He considered human beings as an individual whole, therefore his psychology was focused on individuality and holism.

On the other hand, one of the central concepts of narrative therapy is the belief that all people are exposed to a broad range of societal messages and expectations that influence how a person makes meaning of their personal experiences (White, 2007). In the context of connecting with others, narrative therapy practices influence individuals to understand how their experiences may be shaped by larger social discourses, such as messages received from family members, friends, or larger cultural meanings regarding stereotypes of girls or women.

These stories can be investigated, dissected, or highlighted to promote meaningful interpretations that have the power to positively influence an individual’s life and bring about significant change in their sense of identity. Moreover, Narrative therapy encourages individuals to consider others who would support them or their new meanings and changes they experience.
(White & Epston, 1990), which assists with increasing their community feeling. The overarching goal is to encourage a sense of personal accountability and connection to others.

Because of Adler’s basic assumption of all-important social nature or social interest of human beings, he was interested in working with clients in the group context. Adler believed that individual problems are social problems which can only be solved upon winning an individual’s cooperation and helping them anticipate success (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Group therapy offers benefits that individual therapy may not. Groups can act as a support network and a sounding board.

Group therapy also provides the environment to exercise social skills, encourage alternative possibilities to handle difficult situations or life challenges, or a place where like-minded individuals can hold one another accountable. Regularly talking, listening and sharing narratives with others in group will provide adolescents with a chance to use their voice in a safe environment or to help them put personal problems in perspective. Diversity is another important benefit of group therapy. People have different personalities and backgrounds, and they look at situations in different ways. By seeing how other people tackle problems and make positive changes, members can discover a whole range of strategies for facing personal concerns and navigating life as an adolescent girl.

Self-confidence, the firm belief in one’s own abilities is rooted in the power to know how to handle situations effectively. It is not a vague feeling or guess, it is acquired through experience. Confidence is gained by doing what is believed to be right and not absorbing negative criticism and condemnation from others; also by being willing to take risks and go above and beyond to achieve better and greater things in life. Teens are very well capable of not following the crowd and trusting their evaluations when they feel confident and supported.
Teens who experience their own competence and know they are safe and protected develop a deep-seated security that promotes the confidence to face and cope with challenges. Teens cannot become competent without first developing a set of skills that allows them to trust their decisions, make responsible choices, and face challenging circumstances. When parents, adults, and role models support teens in finding their own islands of competence and building on them, they prepare teens to gain enough confidence to try new ventures and trust their own abilities to make sound choices.

**Identifying Individuality of Self and Peers**

All teenagers struggle with identifying who they are, where they belong, what their values and beliefs are and what path they are interested in taking in regards to their education and career. It is the beginning of self-discovery and stepping into themselves; they are in the stage of testing out various roles. During this process, they must learn to determine how they are similar and different than their parents, siblings, peers, role models, etc. Teenage years are a central time for individual self-expression and the opportunity for deciphering how they are unique. Narrative Therapy is about understanding how individuals make sense of their lives through sequences of events overtime. Humans are interpreting beings and seek to make sense of their world and experiences in order to add meaning.

For teenage girls, it is easy to feel alone, misunderstood, and experience negative situations as an isolated event. Teenage girls need a fundamental sense of right and wrong to ensure they are prepared to make wise choices, contribute to the world, and become established adults. Teens with character enjoy a strong sense of self-worth and confidence. They are more comfortable sticking to their own values and demonstrating a caring attitude toward others.
Much of educating adolescent girls on creating a positive self-image is simply giving them words for what they already know and helping them see patterns where no patterns existed for them before. The primary task of re-education and narrating stories involves a change in the person’s self-perception. Increasing awareness increasing by affirmation, emphasizing safety, and teaching skills to manage feelings are crucial steps to take in creating an environment that can handle the crucial work of processing feelings and difficult circumstances. Alone, changes in knowledge, values and beliefs won’t result in changes in behavior unless they are grounded in a changed perception of the self and situations.

Externalization allows an individual to separate themselves from their problem, thus acknowledging that “the problem” is the problem rather than the patient (White, 2007). In narrative therapy, a number of concepts can be externalized such as behaviors, feelings, relationship problems, and sociocultural experiences (Morgan, 2000). When working with adolescents who are experiencing identity crisis or trying to define who they are, what their goals are, or what they stand for, the process of externalization easily begins with the “problem’s” name (“How has my personal beliefs’ impacted my life?”). Externalization can also be used to explore other aspects of their life experiences. As adolescents talk about these problematic experiences as being separate they have the opportunity to consider the broader context of their experience and can begin to deconstruct the influences and expectations of those experiences. Through this process, they can begin to better understand their experience and begin to discover more resources promoting ways to respond to their problems.

Adler captured the essence of holism by focusing on the goals and purposes of human behavior. Adlerian therapy views the behavior of a person as being goal oriented. Nothing happens in isolation, and it is all about the unity of behavior. All behavior is seen as goal directed
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and an important part of motivation that propels behaviors. Narratives certainly play a role in exposing possibilities and embracing opportunities, nonetheless it is up to the individual to move in a particular direction that reflects their goals and ability to direct their own lives. Daigneault contended that through the therapeutic process, people discover which stories are limiting them from leading fulfilled lives and begin to “generate new and more adaptive narratives” (as cited in Strand, 1997, p. 325).

Narrative therapy can assist with setting teenagers as the expert of their lives, encouraging them to view their negative struggles and problems as separate from who they are. This teaches them that they are innately resilient and possess the strength, skill, ability, and insight necessary for them to overcome their struggle or problem. By encouraging teens to view their problems as separate, they learn to evaluate the broader context of their lives and begin the process of changing their narrative to fit their ideal, unique outcome.

Narrative therapy assesses the habits, thought patterns, and actions of an individual to understand their story. Similarly, Adlerian therapy uses the lifestyle assessment to identify an individual’s core repetitive pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting that characterizes their unique attitude towards life. In general, Adlerians attempt to understand people’s and their movements toward them. The lifestyle is seen as an attitudinal posture people take to life and represents the core of the personality. The lifestyle is concerned with the long range movement of individuals (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999, p. 143).

Using these two techniques in a group setting with teenage girls would offer a safe environment to discuss their concerns with the support and understanding of their peers undergoing similar experiences. The dynamics of group therapy would allow for interpersonal growth and subjective awareness within the group and would create a feeling of safety in
numbers and therefore become more involved at the encouragement and example of their peers. Through teenagers exploring their lifestyle and the stories they tell themselves and others, they would be able to understand how their past experiences influence their life and identity. The hope would be for them to realize how the thought patterns and beliefs they believe to be true limit them and change that narrative and grow.

**Finding Personal Strengths and Gifts**

The stereotypical adolescent girl is often portrayed by the media, at best, as uncertain and overly concerned with her appearance and, at worst, as a victim of eating disorders, declining self-esteem, and risky sexual behavior. These stereotypes fail to capture the richness and diversity of adolescent girls’ experiences (Johnson & Roberts, 1999). Stereotypes influence dominant societal narratives about the appropriate roles for males and females in society and our behaviors toward males and females. This creates a fear for adolescent girls to step outside of the shadow of societal expectations and live life on their own terms.

The fear of being different or a failure increases anxiety and the desire to fit in. From the Narrative and Adlerian perspective, reality and meaning are created over time in social context and extend to all aspects of life. Narrative therapy says the ways in which we understand our lives are influenced by the broader stories of the culture in which we live (Morgan, 2011). Narrative Therapy provides a foundation that is useful in providing an increased understanding of resilience through creating unique outcomes. This would create a freeing experience from the influence of problematic stories and promote the re-authoring of an alternative story.

The group therapy model can be useful along the continuum of creating and developing personal gifts and strengths in that it offers support and encouragement. The most elementary aspect of creating an environment to promote resilience is through education and support. For
Adlerians, group therapy provides a mirror of person’s behavior, participants benefit from feedback from other members and the facilitators, participants have the opportunity to receive and give feedback which perpetuates social interest, and the group context encourages participants to make a commitment to take action to change their lives.

This is an educational experience and can assist with helping group members understand how they function at home and in the community and can meet their need for belonging. Educating adolescent girls about how to use their strengths and resources through Adlerian and Narrative therapy is an encouraging way to create a dynamic with a shared and coherent organizing framework that does not stigmatize but instead allows a much closer and empathic understanding between group members. Through group therapy, the girls will focus on how personal strengths are part of what makes them unique individuals, and part of the value they offer to the world around them. Being aware of personal strengths fosters strength, resiliency, and personal fulfillment in life.

**Creating a Positive Self Image**

The media, including the internet, television, movies, videos, song lyrics, magazines, video games and advertisements, frequently portray girls and women in a sexual manner—by way of revealing clothing, body posture and facial expressions. These images become the prototype of femininity that girls—from a very early age—learn to mirror. Girls are constantly bombarded by these messages. Women in our society learn early on that their valued is based on their physical attractiveness. This is in part of the dominant narratives they are accustomed to. Narrative therapy encourages individuals to externalize their problems by experiencing their problems as separate from themselves.
Seeing the problem as a separate factor empowers autonomy and can encourage an individual to be more solution oriented. Morgan asserts that when people are separated from problems, their skills, abilities, interests, competencies and commitments become more visible. The more visible these skills become, the more available they are for people to access.

Externalizing conversations reduce guilt and blame and yet leave room for responsibility (Morgan, 2000, p. 24). The goal is to encourage young girls to look beyond societal expectations of who they should be and move towards creating or engaging in conversations that break away from the influences of the negative images and stereotypes. This would lead to them forming alternative stories which can reduce the influence of the negativity and open up new possibilities for living.

As humans, we are interpreting beings. We all have daily experiences of events that we seek to make meaningful. The stories we have about our lives are created through linking certain events together in a particular sequence across a time period, and finding a way of explaining or making sense of them. This meaning forms the plot of the story. We give meanings to our experiences constantly as we live our lives. A narrative is like a thread that weaves the events together, forming a story (Morgan, 2000). Various conceptualizations of meaning in life exist, encompassing an understanding of relationships among people, things, and events to a general sense that one’s life is significant (Steger, 2009). Despite these various definitions, empirical findings have consistently indicated that meaning in life predicts well-being, happiness, and life satisfaction (Steger, Oishi, & Kashdan, 2009). Thus interventions aimed at facilitating the construction of meaning and purpose can contribute to individual happiness.

Narrative therapy contends that humans are interpreting beings (Morgan, 2000, p. 5). The stories we have about our lives are created through linking certain events together in a particular
sequence across a time period, and finding a way of explaining or making sense of them. This meaning forms the plot of the story. We give meanings to our experiences constantly as we live our lives. A narrative is like a thread that weaves the events together, forming a story. Similarly, Adlerian therapy postulates that human beings live a realm of meanings and individuals have the ability to influence and create events in their lives. Every individual represents both a unity of personality and the individual fashioning of that unity. The individual is thus both the picture and the artist. They are the artist of their own personality, but as an artist, they are neither an infallible worker, nor a person with a complete understanding of mind and body; instead, they are a weak, extremely fallible, and imperfect human being (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 177).

Learning to deal with difficulties, transitions, and fluctuations in self-esteem is important, but figuring out how to amplify strengths and coping mechanisms is equally integral for life satisfaction. Adlerian therapy contends that “every individual represents both a unity of personality and the individual fashioning of that unity. The individual is thus both the picture and the artist. He is the artist of his own personality, but as an artist he is neither an infallible worker nor a person with a complete understanding of mind and body; he/ she is rather a weak, extremely fallible, and imperfect human being” (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 177).

Adolescents who are in an active phase of identity exploration have been found to generate more “possible selves” than adolescents who have made a commitment to a particular identity (Dunkel & Anthis, 2001). Individuality is an innate characteristic all individuals have; however, sometimes, it is a struggle to locate it. For teenagers, the journey to individuality can be filled with anxiety and self-doubt, nonetheless, it is a very influential part of being a teenager. Due to their identities being enveloped in their family’s identity, school, sports, their community,
etc., they have little opportunity to express their own sense of self. But as they become teenagers, they have a greater need to establish their unique identity among their family and peers.

According to Adlerian therapy, encouragement is one of the most important ingredients of life that can contribute to a child’s sense of emotional well-being. Children begin life seeking encouragement and significance from their caregivers and their environment. Furthermore, Adler also stressed the importance of instilling social interest in children, “to see with the eyes of another, to hear with the ears of another, to feel with the heart of another” (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 135).

Raising awareness of social interest by reaching out to others through self-acceptance heightens and increases awareness around self-image, self-esteem, and belongingness. Furthermore, research shows that performing acts of kindness releases serotonin in the brain which has incredible health benefits, including increasing feelings of happiness. Selflessly helping others is a powerful way to be a leader and increase self-esteem. Narrative Therapy can challenge group members to rewrite their own lives according to alternative and preferred narratives. Sharing experiences and finding out about how others have dealt with challenges in identifying their individuality and accepting their uniqueness may encourage participants to work with issues that previously seemed impossible. Individuals often find that group participants are able to offer useful feedback and insight to each other. Although expertise is important, the facilitator(s) is not the only person with something to contribute. This process of giving and receiving allows individuals in the group to experience relating in a way which can be helpful in everyday settings.

It is a powerful lesson when teenagers realize that the world is a better place because of their contributions. Teens who understand and live the concept of social interest gain a sense of
purpose that can motivate them. This encourages them to not only take actions and make choices that improve the world, but to also enhance their own abilities, individuality, and sense of connection. Teens who contribute to their communities will be surrounded by reinforcing appreciation and validation instead of the low expectations and condemnation they at times endure.

Adlerian therapy is holistic and stresses choice, responsibility and striving for significance. Adler believed that every behavior is purposeful and understanding an individual’s attitude from the world in which they live in offers insight on what they are striving for. Furthermore, Adlerian therapy stresses that encouragement is one of the most effective means to changing a person’s attitude. Encouraging young girls to explore their strengths and goals is an effective way to inspire them to focus on dreams that allow them to live a fulfilling life.

**Support & Inspiration**

According to Adler, psychotherapy is essentially an exercise of cooperation. Cooperation between patient and consultant, as the first, serious scientifically conducted attempt to raise social interest, is of paramount importance, and from the start, all measures should be taken to promote the cooperation of the patient with the consultant (Dinkmeyer & Sperry, 2000, p. 19).

Adler believed that it was essential to become thoroughly familiar with a person’s social context by exploring factors such as birth order, lifestyle, and parental culture. Adler firmly believed that each person strives to belong and feel significant. A person’s culture affects a range of thoughts and behaviors, and unquestionably affects the way an individual sees the world. Their maps, their blueprints about how to move through life provide practitioners with rich sources of information through which to understand them and, possibly, assist in changing them. This is half the picture, however (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999 p. 97).
Teens with close bonds to family, friends, school, and community are more likely to have a solid sense of security that produces strong values and prevents them from seeking destructive alternatives. Family is the central force in any teen’s life, but connections to civic, educational, religious, and athletic groups can also increase a young person’s sense of belonging to a wider world and being safe within it. Adlerian therapy is widely used in childhood and young adolescence to encourage healthy relationships, individuality, and healthy self-concept. Adlerian interventions have been widely applied to diverse client populations, with all ages, and in many different settings—but especially in schools (Sonstegard & Bitter, 2004).

At the most basic level, sharing narratives and the telling of unique stories is a means of transmitting ideas from one person to another, or from one person to a group. Storytelling is a part of life and intrinsic to most cultures. They help people make sense of the world and life’s experiences, dilemmas, and hardships. Stories can educate, inspire and build rapport. They are a means of communicating, recreating, and a way to make meaning of life. Sharing narratives can provide the opportunity for teen girls to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and self.

Each person has a unique story, unlike any other. These stories are constantly changing and being rewritten, reconstructed, even discarded from the moment we are born until we die. Stories can help people explore other ways of doing, feeling, thinking and behaving. Forming a story about one’s life experiences improves physical and mental health and opens up avenues for recreating unique outcomes. Storytelling can be regarded as one of the oldest healing arts; it has been used for centuries as a universal, useful way to personal discovery and means to transform relationships with others and ourselves.
Going through puberty and adolescence is a great part of life and is a time that forces teen girls to re-evaluate their life priorities. During this significant life change, learning to adapt can be difficult hence the importance of sharing narratives. Developing a narrative allows a person to weave together their life changes into a new more cohesive story. People are 100 percent relational beings and live in a continuous state of relating. The influence that friends exert over one another as teenagers can be very powerful. Furthermore, healthy behaviors and leadership skills can also be very contagious. The sharing of narratives provides contextual detail and person-revealing characteristics that can encourage teenagers to create and embrace new stories, draw new assumptions about themselves, and open themselves to future possibilities by re-authoring their stories. Narrative therapy opens up the door for people to recreate themselves, to write new myths, and most importantly, to evolve.

We are a society many adolescent girls believe physical appearance is a major part of their self-esteem and their body is a major sense of self (Gilligan et al., 1991). Hearing this is difficult, but it requires adults and providers to stand up and encourage adolescent girls to share their narratives and fight against this epidemic. We are unsure what to say, how to act, what to do. In our fast-paced, efficiency-focused society, people often do not recognize the benefit of telling or listening to the story.

Narrative Therapy in a group dynamic can assist with helping participants to see the problem as a separate, influential unit rather than an inseparable part of who they are. Things are not always as they seem or appear to be on the surface. Many girls who are in the process of navigating adolescence have misunderstandings about themselves and their difficulties. Participants in the group can help one another to see themselves and their problems from a different perspective. The group can help each other to see more clearly, to be aware of unseen
areas, to recognize problems. When someone can discover and accept previously unseen or unaccepted parts of themselves, it can be a real help and often a relief.

**Body-Mind & Spirit**

Self-confidence is not something to be pursued, but a feeling that comes from trusting one’s self and own actions. Healthy self-esteem is not a value to pursue, it is a value to develop. Teenage girls often times ask, “How do I develop high self-esteem”? The answer is developing high self-esteem requires dedication, commitment, and discipline. Most importantly, having faith in one’s own abilities and continuously working towards eliminating self-imposed limitations that stunt mental, spiritual and physical growth. Grounded spiritual and ethical values will encourage to build a strong foundation underneath the quest for developing strong self-esteem.

Trying to maneuver life without experiencing difficulties, challenges, or “negative” emotions are impossible, and in fact, it is unhealthy. Mental well-being is how people think, feel, and act as they face life's circumstances. It affects how individuals handle stress, relate to one another, and make decisions. Mental health effects the ways individuals look at themselves, their lives, and others in their lives. Like physical health, mental health is important at every stage of life. Educating girls on wellness and how to navigate feelings associated with depression or low self-esteem will equip them with the tools to navigate personal relationships and foster their health. Emotional health is at the center of success. You can’t give what you don’t have. In order to successfully master social interest, one must learn how to give to themselves. Change and growth starts from within.

Adler emphasized the importance of viewing individuals holistically. He insisted that the whole person included biological issues, psychological attitudes, and family, social and
community ties. To Adler believed that it was difficult, if not, impossible to understand any person’s problems apart from all of these contexts.

Additionally, Adlerian Therapy looks for a continuity in an individual’s life. Adler believed that an individual’s decisions are based on what they experienced in the past, present, or future goals. According to Ansbacher and Ansbacher, “the goal enables us to understand the hidden meaning behind the various separate acts and to see them as parts of a whole” (1956, p. 92-93). Adlerian therapy states that one of the most important dynamics in individual psychology and the force behind all activity is a striving from a felt minus situation towards a plus situation, from a feeling of inferiority towards superiority, perfection, and totality (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Adlerian Therapy is based on individual psychology which is based on a holistic view of an individual. The goal of the therapist is to understand the individual’s social situation and their attitudes about it. The individual cannot be considered apart from his social situation. “Individual Psychology regards and examines the individual the individual as socially embedded. We refuse to recognize and examine an isolated human being” (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p.2).

The body and mind work together and for the mind to have the energy to strive, the body should be in as good shape as possible. Additionally, mental health is an essential part of teenagers overall health and has a complex collaborative relationship with their physical health and their ability to succeed in school, at work and in society. Both physical and mental health affect how one thinks, feels and act on the inside and outside. According to research, teenagers who focus on nurturing their mind, body, and spirit are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors, and are more likely to thrive. All children and youth have the right to happy and healthy lives and deserve to nurture their body, mind, and spirit.
Planning for the Future

The combination of Narrative and Adlerian therapy can be a powerful approach for engaging clients in describing their lives and providing them with opportunities to gain insight into their life stories and to change those "scripts" they find lacking. Storytelling is a way of articulating a personal, experiential truth, and it is an important tool in understanding the significance of the story being told and its potential therapeutic value. Adler stressed the importance of individuals identifying and working toward becoming their best self with the goal of increasing their feelings of social interest.

Encouraging adolescent girls to lead healthy lives and to see themselves in a healthy way will inspire them to thrive in the world.

Unrealistic academic, social, or family expectations can create a strong sense of rejection and can lead to deep disappointment. When things go wrong at school or at home, adolescents often overreact. Many young girls feel that life is not fair or that things "never go their way." They feel "stressed out" and confused. The natural progression of life includes changes and transitions. Through this model, adolescent girls can apply skills to assist them with moving forward with taking care of their mental health and learning the importance of setting goals. Goal setting is a powerful process for cementing alternative outcomes and inspiring adolescent girls to thrive during adolescence and develop positive self-esteem. The process of setting goals can assist adolescents with being intentional and recognizing their own abilities and competence in achieving the life that they believe they deserve.

Implications for Future Research

The expectations of this model is for adolescent participants to have the courage to be imperfect. One of the underlying goals of this model is for adolescent girls to have compassion
for themselves and foster their capacity to maintain healthy, meaningful relationships and to make choices that are in the interest of themselves and others through narrative therapy. Another underlying goal of this model is for the facilitator(s) to focus on encouraging participants to free themselves from disabling assumptions and attitudes so they can live full lives with richer descriptions.

Today, adolescent girls have more possibilities and choices to actualize their life visions. They can develop their talents, get an education, follow their hearts, set and attain goals, plan their futures, and much more. It should be made a priority for schools to focus on providing adolescents with skills and tools to deconstruct the sociocultural influences adolescent girls encounter in regards to self-image and self-esteem. Psycho-educational interventions in school could focus on presenting and reinforcing a critical stance toward female adolescent success and empowerment, in order to prevent—or at least reduce—high levels of internalization, low self-esteem, and social comparison. Future research should exam how teaching life skills early on in middle school impact adolescents self-confidence and their desire to be resilient in the face of challenges. By extending or adapting the model presented, it may be possible to provide a basis for theoretically informed educational programs that target promoting resilience in adolescent girls through the use of Adlerian and Narrative group therapy.

Through emphasizing growth and self-discovery and re-authoring of narratives, adolescent girls using this model will be able to see themselves as in control of their destiny. Finally, this model affords the opportunity for adolescent girls to distance themselves from impoverishing stories by giving new meaning to their past. Adlerian and Narrative Therapy are united by an emphasis on understanding human experience and a focus on the individual rather than their symptom or problem. This model aims to increase self-awareness and self-
understanding through the art of narrative and storytelling and through fostering a community feeling within a group dynamic.

**Overall Significance of the Study**

The central task or issue we are faced with is how to encourage teenagers to live together cooperatively, accepting each individual for who they are and not what we think they should be in order to make life a better experience. Social interest fosters positive thoughts and feelings that can transpire into actions aimed at self-development as well as cooperative and helpful movements directed towards connecting with others on an uplifting level. At its core, the concept of social interest encompasses a feeling of self-awareness and a development of strengths and resources through giving or contributing something to another. At the same time, the concept signifies acknowledgment and acceptance that all people are interconnected.

From a narrative therapy perspective, problems are perpetuated by the dominant discourse of society. Particular ideas, beliefs, and practices govern the survival of certain ideologies. For instance, act of men’s violence against women could only thrive in a patriarchal, male-dominated environment that justifies its excuse of violence. Skin bleaching can only survive in cultures that value lighter complexion of skin, where value is judged in terms of appearance which promotes self-scrutiny and individualism. Narrative therapy strives to deconstruct and break down the beliefs, ideas, and practices of the broader culture in which a person lives that are serving to assist the problem and the problem story (Morgan, 2000, p. 45). Using narrative therapy to empower young girls to be the architect of their life has the potential to transform lives, influence cultures, and provide openings to different stories in their lives.
Conclusion

Low self-esteem can be likened to neurotic symptoms; it is a clinical symptom. The deeper cause of low self-esteem is discouragement. The deeper root of the discouragement is the social stereotype demanding perfection. This group model aims to encourage adolescent girls to have the courage to be imperfect. Do away with the black and white thinking of positive vs. negative and encourage young girls to accept themselves as being good enough in a culture that won’t let them.

Adlerian Therapy is a growth model that focuses on teaching individuals better ways to meet the challenges of life tasks, providing direction, and offering encouragement to the discouraged. Narrative Therapy is also a growth model that empowers individuals to re-author stories that limit them from leading unfulfilled lives. By encouraging individuals to generate more adaptive narratives through acknowledging their strengths and resources they are able to creating unique outcomes that is more gratifying. The combination of these two approaches emphasizes a sense of meaning, personal growth and understanding the importance of resiliency and acknowledging personal strengths and gifts.

White and Epston (1990, p.12) asserted, “Changing the language of the self-narrative can change the meaning ascribed to one’s life, and changing one’s life story can open new possibilities for behavior and relationships with others. The construction of self is thus continuously open to re-authorship through relationships.” I urge mental health practitioners, families, and community service providers to join the race in encouraging our adolescent girls to grow, shine, be bright, like comets in the sky and break the pathological behaviors that does not serve their purpose.
References


Appendix A: Inspiring RINA

Resilience Improvement Nourishment Authenticity

Inspiring R.I.N.A. (Resilience. Improvement. Nourishment. Authenticity), a structured support group for girls from age 13-18 years, integrates Adlerian and Narrative theories in a specific format designed to promote Encouragement. This is a group that gives adolescent girls the opportunity to explore and learn more about themselves and their patterns of relating to others. Group members will have the opportunity to observe and discuss their own thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and reactions as they occur in a safe environment.

This group also provides students with the chance to voice their experiences, develop nurturing connection, and gain skills to pursue meaningful goals in education, careers, and relationships. This group is an ideal setting for young girls interested in improving relationships and addressing specific concerns, as well as for those seeking an opportunity for personal growth and development. This group is designed to provide members a safe space to learn more about themselves and their relationships, experiences, and struggles.
Group Model

Inspiring Rina

- Outline/Structure of Psychoeducational/Guidance Group
- Purpose: Self Discovery Group
- Closed Group -- Co-Facilitated by two females
- Gender of Members: Female
- Age Range: 13-15 or 16-18 years
- Location: Community Clinics
- Length: 8 week curriculum; 8 units

Goals

- Strengthen Self Esteem and Self Perception by finding your voice, strengths, and gifts
- Promote awareness through Adler’s tasks of life (Work, Love, Community, Self, and Spirituality)
- Promote resiliency

Session Topics

1. Self Esteem
2. Connecting with others
3. Identifying individuality of self and peers
4. Finding your strengths and gifts
5. Creating a positive self-image
6. Support and Inspiration
7. Body, Mind, and Spirit
8. Planning for the future

General Session Procedures

Ice Breaker

- Team building exercise

Activity

- Session topic
- Incorporation of Adler’s Life tasks

Discussion

- Reflect on activity

Ending Circle
• Group members will form a circle around a group member and each member will tell the member in the center of the circle one positive compliment. When compliments are received say “thank you” or “I affirm”

Session 1: Self Esteem

• Goals
  o Introduction/Get to know each other
  o What is a psychoeducational group
  o Establish group rules and purpose
  o Brainstorming session on self-esteem and individual differences that focus on what makes people unique
• Icebreaker
• Group Rules
• Activity & Discussion
  o Define Self Esteem
  o Sources of Self Esteem
  o Self Esteem as it applies to you
• Ending Circle

Session 2: Connecting with Others

• Goals
  o Review last session’s topic
  o Review rules of confidentiality
  o Begin discussion on Communication and Relationships - Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
• Icebreaker
• Activity & Discussion
  o The media, society, relationships & support system
  o Discussion and activities aimed at building positive relationships with self and others and improving communication skills
  o Dating and sexuality
• Ending Ritual

Session 3: Exploring Individuality of Self and Peers

• Goals
  o Review last session’s topic
  o Building a positive sense of self, learning to value everyone as a unique person and the importance of respecting everyone’s individuality/differences
  o Discussion on Social Interest
• Icebreaker
• Activity & Discussion
  o Leaders and Role Models
Session 4: Finding your strengths and gifts

- Goals
  - Review last session’s topic
  - Identify personal strengths and assets
  - Discussion on peer pressure and how to handle it
- Icebreaker
- Activity & Discussion
  - What makes me feel good about myself?
  - Sense of belonging - Identifying attitudes and beliefs
  - My story - Understanding that change is a part of growth
- Ending Circle

Session 5: Creating a Positive Self Image

- Goals
  - Review last session’s topic
  - Identify female role models and heroes in your community, culture, society
  - Discussion on Values and Identity
- Icebreaker
- Activity & Discussion
  - Instilling Optimism; Highlighting the positive in your life vs. living by the negative
  - Power of Perspective
  - Gifts
- Ending Circle

Session 6: Support and Inspiration

- Goals
  - Review last session’s topic
  - Building support system
  - Discussion on change and acceptance
- Icebreaker
- Activity & Discussion
  - Narrative Writing exercise
  - Getting your needs met
  - Activity on building resiliency
- Ending Circle

Session 7: Body, Mind, & Spirit

- Goals
Review last session’s topic
- Emotional/Physical Wellness
- Discussion on Spirituality
- Victor Frankl
- Icebreaker
- Activity & Discussion
  - What does Spirituality mean to you?
  - How does your spirituality affect your self-esteem/physical/emotional wellness?
  - How does it fit into your life’s purpose?
- Ending Circle

Session 8: Planning Your Future
- Goals
  - Party! Pizza, Snacks, etc…
  - A celebration of group members’ hard work!
  - Closing thoughts and reflections on group
- Icebreaker
- Activity & Discussion
  - Positive aspects of group and things that were difficult (not bad)
  - A letter to myself: group members will write a letter to themselves about what they learned from group, about themselves and others and how this group impacted them as young women
  - Work through plan of forward progress
- Ending Circle