

Healthy Transitions Curriculum:

Wellness Curricula for Youth Exiting Foster Care

Dustianne North, M.S.W., Ph.D.

Jerry Sherk, M.A.



Acknowledgements

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**MAY ALL OUR HARD WORK SUPPORT
FOSTER CARE YOUTH TO MAKE
HEALTHY TRANSITIONS!**



Learning Objectives

Participants in this webinar will:

- Understand the importance of mental health, self-care, and wellness for transitioning foster care youth, and the corresponding need to support these critical life skills
- Become familiar with the Healthy Transitions curricula
- Consider ways in which the curricula may be effectively utilized
- Learn about the positive and challenging experiences that pilot programs encountered during program implementation
- Hear about some resources and supports that may be available to providers interested in utilizing materials

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Agenda

- I. Overview and purpose of curriculum
- II. Designing a basic and supplemental course
- III. Peer-to-peer group development
- IV. Coordinator Toolkit
- V. Guest presenter: Reports From the Field (Woodland Community College)
- VI. Q & A

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"Healthy Transitions"... An Overview

- Aims to support successful transitions in youth exiting foster care
- Addresses all aspects of health and wellness
- Offers training and peer support
- Wellness as a key set of life skills
- Not treatment but can identify needs and refer
- Youth-driven, interactive format



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A Few Words of Welcome

Colleen Ammerman
Program Director
Foundation for California Community Colleges

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Components of Curriculum

- 12-hour Basic Curriculum
- 9-hour Supplemental Curriculum
- Peer-to-Peer Support Group Manual
- Student Resource Guide
- Coordinator Toolkit



All materials can be found, free of charge, here:

<http://www.foundationccc.org/WhatWeDo/HealthyTransitions/tabid/944/Default.aspx>



How to Use Trainer Guide and Related Materials

- Who should facilitate this course?
- The trainer guide
- How materials are packaged
- External materials



Main External Sources

- Transitions: Student Reality Check by Dr. Stanley Kutcher
- Kidshealth.org and Teenhealth.org
- Recipes for Life Cookbook by California Youth Connection
- Mentalhealthfirstaid.org
- Toxic Relationships Handouts form HRM Video



Designing Your Course

- Selecting Components and Sequencing
- Selecting Instructors
- Standard vs. Customized Curriculum
- Group Composition
- Student Design and Facilitation



Understanding the Standard Curriculum: Centralizing Frameworks

- **Tree that is Me** (Basic)

“**The Tree that is Me**” uses a tree as metaphor for each individual's personal health and growth. Participants will begin working with this concept by using a drawing of a tree to track their support system, their strengths and accomplishments, their strategies to balance and cope with their lives, and the contributions they can make to the world. Students are encouraged to continue filling in their tree throughout the course, and several activities relate directly back to this centralizing theme.



I did it!

Support

Strength

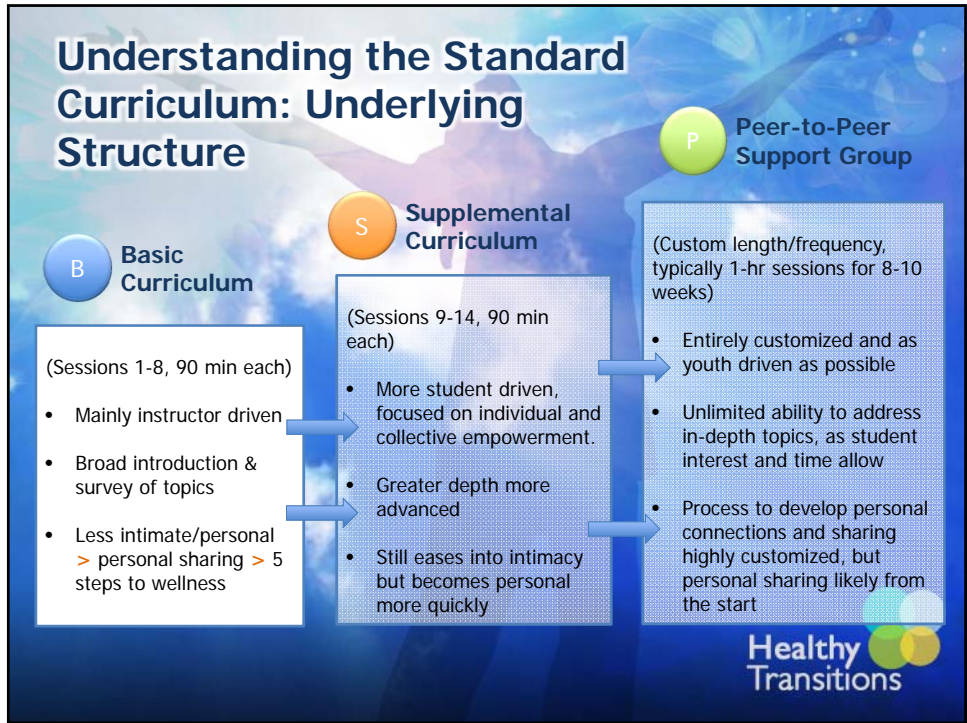
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Understanding the Standard Curriculum: Centralizing Frameworks

- **The Hero's Journey** (Supplemental)

This part of the coursework is built upon the concept of “**The Hero's Journey**” (© 2010 Jerry Sherk, M.A.). It begins by pointing out to students that we are all the heroes of our own stories. Beyond that, those who have experienced maltreatment in foster care should be considered heroes; this theme is revisited throughout the course. “The Hero's Journey” focuses on the guideposts along the path that will help these youth to become more whole while also finding ways of caring for others. Furthermore, the “CHAMP” goal setting model (© 2012 Jerry Sherk, M.A.), which is based on “The Hero's Journey,” will help students to look at and plan the next steps of their own life journeys.

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Standard Curriculum: How Class Sessions Are Designed

- **Paired sessions = 90 minutes**
- **Key Concepts presented and reinforced (slides, student glossary)**
- **Take it Home activities**
- **Student Resource Guide/ Transitions Booklet**
- **Types of activities provided:**
 - icebreakers and interactive exercises
 - activities involving art and creativity in self-exploration
 - physical activities for fun and fitness
 - yoga, meditation, and other relaxation/stress management tools
 - "standard exercises"
 - instructions for creating your own "jigsaw puzzle" activities
 - self-assessment tools and games
 - role-playing and scenario-based activities
 - "jeopardy"-style games
 - Optional: outside speakers

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Facilitation Tips and Strategies

Creating a Safe Space

- Initiating safe space
- Dealing with deep personal issues
- Facilitators' self-disclosure
- Pay attention to the climate of the group



Facilitating Creative Activities

- Emphasizing process over product
- Talking about the artwork
- Helping others support creativity
- The importance of cleaning up

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Encouraging Peer-to-peer Support and a Student-Driven Course*

- Involve students in the design of the course
- Consider training some students to help facilitate
- Think about ways for very interested youth to deepen their knowledge
- Ask students to offer advice to each other before you offer it yourself
- Canvass students several times throughout the course to see if their needs are being met

*especially in supplemental and peer-to-peer components

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Basic Curriculum, Sessions 1-8

This component provides an engaging and interactive introductory survey of an array of wellness, self-care, and mental health topics. It can be delivered in 8 sessions that are 90 minutes each, 4 sessions that are 3 hours each, or as a weekend retreat.



The Basic Curriculum

SESSIONS 1 & 2: Daily Wellness

SESSIONS 3 & 4: Taking Care and Keeping Your Balance

SESSIONS 5 & 6: Healthy Mind, Healthy Heart

SESSIONS 7 & 8: Putting it all Together- Empowering Ourselves and Each Other



The Supplemental Curriculum

These sessions will introduce the supplemental course, allow students to set goals for furthering their journey toward wellness, and revisit themes related to daily wellness and self-care.



The Supplemental Curriculum

Sessions 9 & 10: Daily Wellness and Self-Care

Sessions 11 & 12: Stress and Trauma, Coping and Recovery

Sessions 13 & 14: Empowering Ourselves and the Foster Care Community



Customizing the Curriculum

- Basic and Supplemental curricula can be mixed and matched!
- Peer-to-Peer Support Group Manual
- *Mental Health and High School Curriculum*
- *Transitions* booklet
- related materials from teenmentalhealth.org "online classroom"
- the Coordinator Toolkit
- the Student Resource Guide

Also recommended:

Mind Over Mood, by Dennis Greenberger, Ph.D. and
Christine A. Padesky PhD

Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook, by
Martha Davis, Elizabeth Robbins Eshelman, Matthew
McKay



Peer-to-Peer Group Development



Dustianne North Ph.D.

Jerry Sherk, M.A.



Today We Will Cover

- Overview & Benefits of Peer-to-Peer Groups
- Pre-Made Materials Available
- Peer Group Design Options
- Strategies for Running Groups
- Icebreakers and Exercises
- Group Projects



Benefits of a Peer-to-Peer Group

- Builds on Basic & Supplemental Curriculum
- Youth Work with Peers in Safe & Intimate Setting
- Students Share Their Hopes and Fears
- Support Each Other/Empowerment
- Build Permanent Connections
- Fun Learning Environment



Peer-to-Peer Manual

Six Parts

- I: Selecting a Peer-to-Peer Model
- II: Tips for Running Peer-to-Peer Groups
- III: Icebreakers
- IV: Exercises
- V: Standard Exercises
- VI: Group Projects



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Two Main Categories of Peer Groups On a Continuum

SHARING



CURRICULUM

- **A Sharing Group Builds Intimacy**
 - Intimacy Allows Individuals to Express Themselves
 - Handling Emotions Can Be a Challenge
- **A Curriculum Group Provides Structure & Learning**
 - But Less Time for Sharing
 - Not Easy Coming Up w/ Curriculum Each Meeting
- **Combination Group May be Good Middle Ground**

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Suggestions for Frequency of Meetings

- Best if a Sharing Group Meets 2 to 4 times a Month In Order to Build Up and Maintain Trust
- Curriculum Groups with Less Sharing Should Meet at Least 1X Per Month
- If Sharing or Curriculum Group Takes on a Group Project, it's Best to Meet Frequently—Assess Time Needed to Complete



Developing a Sharing Group

- Facilitator Needs Comfort with Process
- Involves a “Check-in” with Each Student
- Check-in Format Can Be “Good News/Bad News”
- For Extended Sharing, 6 to 8 Maximum Students
- Draw on Peers for Solutions (Not Facilitator)
- Sharing Topics Can Drive Curriculum or Group Project
- Emphasize Consistency of Attendance
- Have a Plan for the Sharing of Deep Personal Issues



Developing a Curriculum-Based Group

- Canvass Students' Wants and Needs
- Use Peer-to-Peer Manual Icebreakers & Exercises
- Basic and Supplemental Curriculum and Other Recommended Materials
- You Can Ask Students to Develop Curriculum & to Facilitate Exercises
- Recruit Guest Speakers
- Books and Search Engines for Exercises, Projects



Session Design Matrix

Activity	Estimated Time
Icebreaker	5
Small Group Sharing	15
Educational Curriculum	25
Closure & Next Steps	5
Total	50



Icebreakers and Exercises

- **Icebreakers (AKA “Warmers”)**
 - Samples in Peer-to-Peer Manual
 - Use “Get-to-Know You” Icebreakers in a New Group
- **Exercises**
 - Found in Peer-to-Peer Manual & Basic & Supplemental Curriculum
 - Peer-to-Peer Manual Setup:
 - Name of Exercise, Estimated Time, Materials Needed, Instructions, Debrief Instructions

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“Standard” Exercises

A Standard Exercise Can be Used More Than Once and it Can Be a Thread That Weaves Your Group Process Together

- Good News/Bad News
- Jigsaw Puzzle
- One Big Thing
- Head, Heart and Feet



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Group Projects

- Info on Group Projects in Peer-to-Peer Manual
- Ask for Input on Students' Preferences Ahead of 1st Group
- Plan Meeting Frequency Based on Group Project
- How Many Meetings to Complete a Group Project? (10?)
- Group Project Ideas
 - Training Practitioners to Work with Current or Former Foster Youth
 - Mental Health First Aid Training
 - Create Blog on Former Foster Youth Mental Health Experiences
 - Photo Voice or Digital Story Telling



Coordinator Toolkit

Part I: Additional Curricula and Classroom Materials

- A: Comprehensive Curricula on health related topics
- B: Other Health and Mental Health-Related Resources and Materials
- C: Self-advocacy materials

Part II: Working Effectively with Youth Facing Mental Health Challenges

- A: Best Practices Resources and links
- B: Dealing with Difficult Issues with Youth: Effective communication and Intervention
- C: Respecting Culture: Foster Care Youth
- D. Trauma and Recovery
- E. Grief and Loss

Part III: Concepts and Tips for Operating as Part of a Quality Continuum of Care

- A: Cal-MHSA
- B: Building a Quality Referral Network and making excellent referrals
- C: Going further: developing and sustaining high-function service partnerships

Part IV: Additional Resources

- A: Ca dept of education- Foster Youth resource listings
- B: Selected listings from Kidsdata.org



Resources and Assistance

Should you decide to implement any parts of the *Healthy Transitions* Curriculum, help is available!

- Foundation for California Community Colleges
- Contract with Developers
- Other Technical Assistance



Meet Our Guest Presenter

Cherie Schroeder
Foster Care Program Director
Woodland Community College



Panel Questions

1. Which curriculum components have you implemented (basic curriculum, supplemental, peer-to-peer)?
2. How have you recruited youth to participate in a curriculum addressing these very personal set of topics, and what has worked in terms of retaining youth in the course?
3. What do you like most about the curriculum?
4. How have you customized and utilized the materials? In what format did you deliver them (weekly sessions, weekend retreats, etc.)?
5. What is your least favorite thing about the curriculum, and how might other programs consider addressing those challenges?



Q & A

What additional questions do you have, about any or all of the 5 curricula components?





**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME
AND ATTENTION!**

Good luck...
We know you'll have great success!!!

