

Unit 1, Session 7**Surviving Tough Times**

Rationale:	Identifying sources of support and handling conflict peacefully are elements of a positive identity and assets in participants' development. Participants who develop these assets are more likely to engage in positive, constructive behaviors and avoid negative, destructive behaviors.
Target Audience	Out-of-school participants who have completed at least secondary education
Facilitator Expertise	Construction Industry Class leaders and local counterparts who have been trained in how to use and adapt the Life Skills and Leadership Manual.
Time	120 minutes
Pre-requisites	Unit 1, Session 6
Version	Nov – 2014

Facilitator preparation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare flip charts • Bring a copy of the handout “List of Values” from Session 4 to use as a reference in the Information section, Step 3, discussion. • Bring the personal posters from the Assessment section of Session 2: My Life as Art • Bring Flip chart 2: Ways to Reduce Stress generated by participants in Session 6
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Materials:

Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper • Pens or pencils • Markers or crayons • Personal posters from Unit 1, Session 2 (Part 1): My Life as Art
Prepared flip charts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flip chart 1: Self-Care • Flip chart 2: Seeking Support • Flip chart 3: Positive Activities

Handouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handout 1: I'm a Survivor
Trainer materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainer Material 1: The Life of Nelson Mandela • Trainer Material 2: List of Values (from Session 4)

Learning Objective(s):

<p>1. After examining the life of Nelson Mandela and conducting peer interviews, participants will identify at least one lesson learned from difficulties they have encountered and identify at least two positive peers or adults with whom to talk when they have problems.</p>
<p>2. After reviewing their personal posters, participants will identify the components of their vision for a healthy, thriving lifestyle and at least two strategies they need to implement in order to achieve it.</p>

Instructional Sequence

Motivation (20 minutes)

Materials: Markers or crayons
Flip chart 2: Reducing Stress (from Session 6)

Reducing Stress

Participants review ideas about things they do to calm down and reduce stress in order to get through difficult situations.

Remind participants of the assignment from the previous session in which they agreed to try a new stress reducing technique.

Show Flip chart 2: Reducing Stress from Session 6 and say:

“Last time we talked about how stress from our pet peeves can build up like trash inside our ‘house.’

We identified ways to reduce stress and each of you agreed to try a new stress reducing strategy. I'd like to give you an opportunity to talk about the stress reducing method you tried and to talk about how well it worked.”

Note: If you have some participants who were not at Session 6, invite them to ask questions they have about any of the stress reduction techniques. Encourage participants who were present for Session 6 to give answers to the newcomers before you provide additional information. This gives everyone a chance to review as necessary and show what they have learned.

Give everyone a marker or crayon.

Say:

“I’d like to get a sense of how many different stress reducing methods were used. Please come to this flip chart and put an ‘X’ next to all the stress reducing methods you have used since our last meeting. You may see your name next to a method. It’s OK if you weren’t able to use that technique, but there were probably others that you did use. (If you weren’t here last time, there still may be stress reducing methods you have used that you can mark.)”

Provide participants with a few moments to put marks on the flip chart. They do not need to take turns, as three or four people will probably be able to make their marks at the same time. After everyone has had a chance to mark the flip chart, ask the group to help you identify the three most frequently used stress reduction methods. Then lead a discussion using the following questions:

- **Are there any surprises concerning which stress reducing techniques were used most?**
- **Why do you think the most frequently used techniques are so popular?**
- **How difficult was it to use – or remember to use – the stress management strategies?**
- **What might help you to use the strategies more often?**
- **What new strategies have you thought of since we made the list at our last meeting?**
- **What is a strategy that you would still like to try?**
- **What advice would you give to someone using these stress reducing methods?**

Summary

Summarize by saying:

“Each of us has strategies for managing stress and resources for getting through tough times. In this session, we will explore more ways of coping with problems.”

Information (30 minutes)

Materials:

Trainer Material 1: The Life of Nelson Mandela

Trainer Material 2: List of Values (from Session 4)

Staying Strong During Tough Times

Participants discuss an example in which someone turned a life of adversity and hardship into one of hope and opportunity.

Explain that not only are we troubled by daily pet peeves, we also have to contend with our past.

Say:

“So far, we have been talking mostly about the pet peeves and daily troubles that make us feel stressed. But there are also tough times and severe difficulties we have to deal with that are beyond our control. The loss of a loved one, being abused, physical illness or injury, or being displaced or homeless are just a few things that might make someone feel angry, depressed, or even to wonder whether life is worth living.

“Everyone faces tough times, but we also develop strategies that help us feel hopeful. We are able to bounce back from hard times and start over if we need to. I’d like to share the story of someone who faced an especially difficult time yet actually changed a painful past into a hopeful future.”

- Read “The Life of Nelson Mandela” (Trainer Resource 1) aloud to the group, then discuss some of the following questions with participants:
- **What did you find most interesting or inspiring about Mandela’s life story?**
- **What events of his past do you think would have been most painful for him?**

- **What emotions do you think he felt during these times?**
- **If you were in Mandela’s situation, which stress management methods would you find most helpful?**
- **How were his needs met – or not met – while he was in prison?**
- **Think of the personal values we learned about in Session 4, “Choosing Positive Values.”**
- **What would you guess are some of Nelson Mandela’s values? (Possible responses: patience, forgiveness, freedom, equality, justice, humor, democracy, integrity, courage, faith.)**
- **How might his beliefs have given him strength in times of trouble?**
- **How would you describe the “house” Mandela has built for himself? (Possible responses: He has positive values; He has good communication skills; He can see others’ perspectives; He is forgiving.)**

Summary

Summarize by saying:

“Nelson Mandela is an extraordinary person. There are not many other people who have lived through so much and still remained hopeful and productive. He has been able to thrive in spite of the many difficult trials he has lived through. If you think about it, he was able to turn some of the most difficult situations of his past into something positive. For example, if he had not spent so much time in prison and kept such a strong attitude of forgiveness, he might not have been elected president. His life provides inspiration for everyone who struggles through tough times because he has built such a strong ‘house’ for himself.”

Practice (30 minutes)**Materials:**

Handout 1: I'm a Survivor

“Being a Survivor”

Participants turn negative life experiences into opportunities for learning and growth.

Say:

“We can learn a lot from the troubling times that Nelson Mandela experienced. Each of you also has had your troubling times—hopefully not as severe as Mandela’s. Undoubtedly, there are lessons we could all learn from your experiences of surviving difficulties. I’d like to know what you’ve learned about being a survivor. I don’t want you to share anything specific about what happened to you, but I do want to know how you helped yourself stay strong.

Take a moment and think about a difficult situation that you lived through.

Note: It’s very important to emphasize that the purpose of sharing troubling times is to learn from them and gain new strategies to use in the future. Help participants keep their troubling times private. You are not trying to solve past problems or lead a group therapy session!

Give participants a few moments to think in silence.

Then distribute Handout 1: I'm a Survivor and give them a few minutes to fill in as much of it as they can. (It’s alright if not everyone is able to complete all blank spaces on the handout.)

Ask participants to choose someone they know well and share the parts of their handout that they feel comfortable talking about.

After about 10 minutes, lead a discussion using the following questions:

- **Who helped you or inspired you during your time of difficulty?**
- **What might you try differently in a similar situation in the future?**
- **What advice would you give to someone else going through tough times?**

- **Who are the people (peers or adults) you can go to for help when you have problems or are experiencing tough times?**

Note: Answers to the four questions in Step 3 serve as an assessment of Learning Objective 1

Summary

Summarize by saying:

“We cannot change our past to eliminate the bad experiences. However, often there is a way to transform the troubling times into a new opportunity. If we can learn from those tough situations, we will find we have gained valuable new skills and abilities that help us in our future. Learning from difficulties is one way to keep a light of hope burning in our ‘house.’”

Application (30 minutes)

Materials:

- Personal posters from Session 2: My Life as Art
- Blank flip chart paper
- Small pieces of paper, tape, tacks, or pins
- Flip chart 1: Self-Care
- Flip chart 2: Seeking Support
- Flip chart 3: Positive Activities
- Markers or crayons, colored pencils, paint, and other art supplies, as available

Gallery Walk

Participants add to the list of strategies they are using to reduce stress, stay strong during tough times, and achieve a positive lifestyle

Display all the personal posters from the Assessment section of Session 2: My Life as Art in the learning space. Invite participants to study the posters.

Say:

“We have referred many times to these posters about your future that you have created. Today I’d like you to look them in a slightly different way. We’ve talked about the needs we all have and that when those needs are met, we are happier, healthier, and able to survive. Please walk around silently studying the posters and try to identify pictures, words, and symbols that are examples of, or represent, a positive, thriving lifestyle.

Look for examples where someone feels good about him or herself, has positive values, and manages emotions well. Examples could be spending time with family, having good communication, using time well, or making decisions.”

Give participants about five minutes to view the posters. Gather people together to share what they have observed. Write each idea or observation about healthy lifestyles on a small piece of paper. (Try to identify enough ideas to equal the number of participants. Be prepared to add a few of your own ideas if necessary.) When all ideas have been exhausted, distribute the small papers to participants as evenly as possibly.

Say:

“I’ve given each of you at least one paper with an idea for how to develop a healthy lifestyle. They represent ways to build a strong ‘house’ for yourself. I also have three flip charts labeled ‘Taking Care of Yourself,’ ‘Getting the Support You Need,’ and ‘Positive Activities.’ When I give the signal, I want everyone to come forward and tape (or pin) their paper(s) to the flip chart that is the best heading for it. That way we’ll end up with all the ideas sorted into these three categories.”

When all the small papers have been attached to the big sheets, ask participants to stand back and review the three flip chart pages. Ask whether participants generally agree that the slips are on the correct flip chart. If there are disagreements, ask them to share their views. Shift some of the small papers to other flip chart pages, or add duplicates, until everyone is satisfied with how the ideas have been categorized.

Conclude the activity by inviting participants to add any ideas for living a more positive lifestyle to their personal posters.

Say:

“All these strategies you have identified are really wonderful. Take a few moments and add as many of them to your own posters as will be helpful to you.”

Note: Step 4 of the activity “Gallery Walk” serves as an assessment of Learning Objective 2.

Summary

Summarize by saying:

“You can see that most of the strategies for building a strong ‘house’ and thriving (growing and developing well) as we work to fulfill our dreams fit into the three broad categories of caring for ourselves, getting the support we need from others, and participating in healthy activities.”

Assessment (10 minutes)

Materials:

- Paper and pens or pencils

The assessment for this session has been integrated throughout the session and is noted within:
Learning Objective 1: Identify at least one lesson learned from difficulties they have encountered and identify at least two positive peers or adults with whom to talk when they have problems.

Assessed in Practice, “Being a Survivor” Step 3, discussion questions.

Learning Objective 2: Identify the components of their vision for a healthy, thriving lifestyle and at least two strategies they need to implement in order to achieve it.

Assessed in Application, “Gallery Walk” Step 4, adding details to Personal Posters.

Complete Failure

Participants review material from Unit One

Remind participants of what they have learned so far in the Life Skills and Leadership training.

Say:

“So far we’ve had seven classes and you’ve learned a lot.

We’ve talked about building a strong, stable ‘house’ for your future self.

We’ve had lessons about personal strengths and assets, the stages of adolescence, building up our confidence by making self-affirmations, the importance of strong, positive personal values, and the factors that influence our values.

We've also learned about emotions and personal needs, how to manage stress, and today, the importance of turning times of trouble into opportunities to learn and grow."

Distribute paper and pens or pencils.

Say:

"I would like you to think about all the things you have learned and write down three things you could do to make sure that all these classes have been a waste of time. That's an unusual request, but I think you can do it! In other words, what could you do to make sure that what you have learned will NOT have a positive influence on your future? For example, you could take your personal poster home and hide it under your bed so you never see it again."

Note: Make sure participants know what is being requested. You may need to exaggerate the point.

Some participants may question your instructions but insist that you are serious. After a few minutes to allow for writing,

Say

"Of course, I don't really want your time to have been a waste, so now I would like you to turn each of your ideas for failure into a strategy for success. For example, if you are going to hide your personal poster under your bed, turn that idea around. To make a successful statement, you can promise to take you poster home and hang it above your bed, where you can review, think about, and be inspired by that vision of your future each night before you fall asleep."

Have participants rewrite their statements to become success strategies. Be prepared to assist individuals in turning their failures around, if necessary. Ask class leaders to share examples of their success statements.

Summary

Conclude by saying:

"Sometimes it's easier to find the flaws and weaknesses in our 'house.' When we do, it becomes a simple matter of changing our focus to keep things in good repair."

“Remember, you’ve learned many ways of staying strong. You have learned about your own assets and that you can keep using the assets you have while exploring ways to develop assets you don’t have.

“You have learned about the stages of adolescence. This was a way to help you understand, to make sense of, the physical, mental, emotional, and social changes you have experienced and are experiencing. It also helps you get ready for changes yet to come as you grow into adulthood.

“You learned how to build your confidence by making positive personal statements. You also identified your own personal values and were able to see how being clear about your values can help guide the way you live.

“You also learned about mental models, or the patterns of thinking that we all have which influence how we understand and respond to the world around us.

“And most recently, we’ve been learning about stress, emotions, and how to learn from past experiences, rather than becoming depressed or disappointed because things aren’t going the way we would like at the moment.

“In the future, we will build upon all these things you have learned to become more effective in our communication and our personal relationships. I hope you will come to our next session!”

Note: The activity “Complete Failure” serves as an assessment of Unit One.

References:

Selected Bibliography of Books by Nelson Mandela: Mandela, Nelson. Nelson Mandela Speaks: Forging a Democratic, Nonracial South Africa. New York: Pathfinder, 1993.

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