

# **Group Proposal**

**Stress management group  
for Single Parents**

# Group Proposal

## I. Introduction

With reference to Population Census in 2001, there were 58 460 single parents in Hong Kong, increased by 23 922 or at an average annual growth rate of 5.4% over the past decade. Over the past 10 years, number of single mothers grew dramatically by nearly one fold, from 23 059 to 45 072. The demands and needs on welfare and support service are increasing. In the geographical characteristics, there were 808 single parents living in Tai Po, which is 6.0% over Hong Kong, it ranked top five in Hong Kong. And the percentage single parent living with their children aged under 18 in Tai Po was high, too. There was 4% over Hong Kong, ranked top 6 in Hong Kong. According to the needs among single parent, the group about stress management with cognitive thinking, simple stress coping skill and mutual support network will be held. Through the group, members are expected to learn how to reduce the stressors come from their daily life and enhance their quality of life.

**Name of Group:** 減壓創新生

## II. Rationale

### 1. Definition of Stress

Stress can be identified in three major ways of definition. (Ivanceich and Matteson, 1980). They are stimulus definition which seen stress as an external force acting on a person. It is believed that the environmental stressors provoked stress to individuals; response definition which emphasized stress that took place in the physical function, thoughts, feeling and actions of individual facing stress situation; and stimulus-response definition which focused on the relationship between individual and environment.

In this group, the stimulus-response definition will be chosen to look into the stress of single mothers. The function of stimulus-response definition is the interaction of the subjectively defined demands of a situation and the capacity of an individual or group to respond to these demands. It means that we will experience negative consequences associated with stress when we makes a judgment that our coping resources were unable to deal with the internal and environment demands. It can be applied to the case of single mother. The

environment has changed when the family became single parent family such as: finance, living condition, roles and responsibilities of being parents would be affected. These environmental stressors (economic, parenting and social discrimination) may adversely influence the single mothers' psychological, emotional and social aspects. If they are unable to deal with these stressor strategies appropriately, they will become stressful, tense, or even depressed.

## 2. Stress on difficulties faced by them after being a single mother

### A. Financial issue

Yawkey and Cornelius (1990) mentioned that the single mothers faced the drastic change of the families, they need to face the limitation of financial resources. As mentioned by the Hong Kong Family Welfare Society (1991), the employment problem is one of the difficulties among the single parents. And it has strong relationship with another stressor, financial difficulty, especially for the single mothers. Since the single mothers had worked as full-time or part-time housewife before and they usually have got few or even no working experience before, moreover, they may be not well-educated at their childhood or teenage period. (Yawkey and Cornelius, 1990) It is difficult for them to find a job, especially Hong Kong becomes a knowledgeable city which requires well-educated and well-trained worker. Therefore, it is harsh for them to earn a stable income to give the living to herself and her children. In addition, financial difficulty led to the living problem for the single parents because of the high rent of living place in Hong Kong. The above are stressors for the single parents.

### B. Family-related issue

Single parents not only need to face the financial difficulty, but also need to manage the housework and take care of the children in the family. They have to redefine the household responsibilities and carry out tasks normally performed by the absent spouse (cited from Yawkey and Cornelius, 1990). Most frequently, the parent-child relationship become worse since the single parents are too busy to earn living, manage housework and take care of the children. Citing from Yawkey and Cornelius (1990) stated that the multiples roles of the single parent may result in parental isolation, lowered self-esteem, and minimal personal satisfaction. It is due to the multiple roles that the single parents need to participate in the comforting parent but also authoritative parent, and they need

to help the cognitive and social development of the children, and take care of their daily needs. It is another stressor suffered by single parent.

### C. Emotional and interpersonal problem

According to Yawkey and Cornelius (1990), single parents always have emotional problems after divorce, separation or loss of loved one. Most likely, they may have low self esteem, depression, confusion over role changes, feelings of anger, hopelessness and less behavior control. There are stages and period of time to pass through the single parenthood. Moreover, for single mother, their psychological support may be less since the low social status with disconnection with old friend or relatives. It may due to the others'(relative, neighborhood, public) negative perception on single parent, and discriminated against the single parent, especially single mother. That leads the single mothers anxious when facing and contacting others. And they also have self perception that they have lower social status and avoid contacting with others or telling others that they are single parents. In addition, lack of time and money is another factor and stress that leads the parents cannot participate in the social gathering with others in the community. Yawkey and Cornelius (1990) stated that it was essential for the single parents to have interpersonal resources, emotional support as well as the social network. And the social network should include both informal (relatives and friends) and formal (professional intervention) network that can provide mutual support and emotional support and advice to the single parents.

### 3. Quality of life

Quality of life refers to the needs (both objective and subjective) of the service user and as a guiding principle for service design, and it is a set of measurements. It emphasizes on person-centered and individualization that focus on personal goals or dreams, and life experience. (Schalock, 1997) There are eight dimensions for exemplary objective quality of life indicators suggested by Schalock (1997): 1, Emotional well being (Safety, spirituality, happiness, freedom from stress, self-concept & contentment), 2, Interpersonal relations (Intimacy, affection, family, interactions, friendship & supports), 3, Material well- being (Ownership, financial, security, food, employment, possessions, social economic status, shelter), 4, Personal development (Education, skills, fulfillment, personal competence), 5, Physical well-being (Health, nutrition, mobility, health care,

leisure & activities of daily living), 6, Self-determination (Autonomy, choices, decisions, personal control, self-direction & personal goals/values), 7, Social inclusion (Acceptance, status, supports, work environment) and 8, Rights (Privacy, accessibility, ownership). Furthermore, Ihinger-Tallman (1995) mentioned that there are variables important to establish quality of life and well-being in single parent families. It focused on the 4 time sequences by the single parent families to finally move to a single parent with quality of life and hold family well-being. They are marital status (married/unmarried), transition events (Separation, divorce, widowhood, premarital birth and adoption), single parent status, and finally, relinquishing of single parent status. (Remarriage, loss of child or foster care). And it shows the importance to obtain different resources and support (economic, self-physical/emotional, motivation) and to achieve the quality of life with both for family and for themselves (adjustment and own satisfaction on personal growth).

As mentioned above, quality of life is essential for single parent to find their way out, enhancing their own development but also the whole family well-being. In this group, the focus on the individual life cycle than the family life cycle will be taught to maintain a better quality of life.

### **III. Intervention Strategy:**

#### **1. Use of Cognitive Therapy**

According to Corey (2005), Aaron Beck's cognitive therapy is an insight therapy that emphasizes recognizing and changing negative thoughts and maladaptive beliefs. It believed that people learn irrational belief from significant others during childhood, and create irrational dogmas and superstition by themselves. There are two approaches in cognitive therapy: Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) of Albert Ellis and Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) of Aaron Beck. RET is an approach that focuses on altering client's patterns of irrational thinking to reduce maladaptive emotions and behavior. The A-B-C theory of personality will be used in letting the single parent to understand the intervening in the belief system can determine how we can feel and act. CBT is a therapy that believed in the interactive relationship among cognitive, behavioral and emotional factors. Through the cognitive restructuring, an improvement in mood and behavior can be made accordingly.

According to Wong (2004), there are several common irrational beliefs held by the single parents. First, they thought that people must discriminate them as a

single parent family. They care about how people perceived them and try to cover that they was single parent families. Secondly, they always think that there must be limitation and problem in a single parent family. They think the family was worse than other families with a couple. These are the polarized thinking that they categorize experiences in all-or-nothing terms. Third, most of them think they were so poor that could not reserve a well-structured family for the children and made the children face hardship. They always felt guilty with the role of single parents. This is the personalization that relates all external events to themselves and being self-blamed. Forth, they believe that they were person with failure since they lost confident in building relationship with others after the failure in marriage, and they tend to isolate themselves with others. This is the overgeneralization that they hold the extreme beliefs on the basis of one incident and apply them inappropriately. (Corey, 2005) Therefore, single parents have such irrational beliefs that producing stress to their live.

CBT is adopted to enable the single parents to have better quality of life by reducing their irrational or negative belief.

## **2. Group Goal**

To enhance the quality of life of the single parents.

## **3. Objectives**

1. To identify members' sources of stress
2. To instruct members to reduce their stress by positive cognitive thinking.
3. To develop a support network among the single parents.

## **4. Group Nature**

Educational group (supportive service)

## **5. Membership**

Target: Single mothers with children aged 12 or below

Size: 10

## **6. Structure of Meeting**

Duration: 5 sessions

Frequency: once a week

Date: 12/07/2005-09/08/2005 (every Tuesday)

Time: 10:00AM-11:45AM (1 hour 45 mins / session)

## 7. Place of meeting

## 8. Program Plan

Session	Date	Topic	Program Content
1	12/07/ 2005 (TUE)	我想 認識你	<p><b><u>Objectives:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To enhance members understanding towards the group</li> <li>2. To explore the interests and expectation of members.</li> <li>3. To share the stress members encountered and how they cope with it.</li> <li>4. To set contract with the member.</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Contents:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Welcoming and Ice breaking game</li> <li>2. Contracting</li> <li>3. Expectation shared</li> <li>4. Pre-test</li> <li>5. Game (What is Stress?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Physiological change when facing stress.</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Sharing on the stress encountered in daily live.</li> <li>7. Identifying their present ways of stress coping</li> <li>8. Relaxation exercise (breathing with music)</li> <li>9. Homework assignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Record their emotion and behavioral change when facing stress/event in coming week/ an experience in past.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
2	19/07/ 2005 (TUE)	壓力 鐵三角	<p><b><u>Objectives:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To identify members' negative emotion when facing stress.</li> <li>2. To understand the relationship between emotion, behavior and cognition.</li> <li>3. To identify members' strength to cope with</li> </ol>

			<p>stress.</p> <p><b><u>Contents:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Warm up game</li> <li>2. review of the session 1</li> <li>3. Sharing on homework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify the emotion and behavior when they facing stress.</li> <li>- Sharing the emotion change when facing stress, other members using emotional cards to share what will their emotion change when facing each member's event/ stress. Sharing the difference of emotional change.</li> <li>- Introduction of the relationship between emotion, behavior and cognition.</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Relaxation exercise (breathing with music)</li> <li>5. Write down the strength members had to cope with their stress. + write down encouraging words to others</li> <li>6. Homework assignment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ABC recording in coming week</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
3	26/07/ 2005 (TUE)	面對壓力, 我有計!	<p><b><u>Objectives:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To introduce how cognition affects the way we feel and behave</li> <li>2. To teach the difference between irrational and rational thinking.</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Contents:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Warm up game</li> <li>2. review of the session 2</li> <li>3. Sharing of homework on ABC theory. Introduction and application of A-B-C theory</li> <li>4. Introduction:What is Irrational VS rational belief?</li> <li>5. Relaxation exercise (breathing with music) + write down encouraging words to others</li> </ol>



			<p>6. Homework assignment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ABC recording in coming week</li> <li>- Belief comes to their mind when facing the stress</li> </ul>
4	02/08/ 2005 (TUE)	魔鬼走開! 天使降臨	<p><b><u>Objectives:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To identify the irrational belief members encountered.</li> <li>2. To find out ways or coping methods to counteract the irrational belief.</li> <li>3. To bring out the importance of positive cognitive thinking when facing stress.</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Contents:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Warm up game</li> <li>2. review of session 3</li> <li>3. Sharing about the common irrational thinking in facing their stressful events</li> <li>4. Exercise: understand what their irrational belief is (one to two cognitive distortions)</li> <li>5. 4-steps-method for changing the irrational belief to positive belief and practice together with their daily life examples.</li> <li>6. Relaxation exercise (muscular) + write down encourage words to others</li> <li>7. Homework assignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- write down some positive statement for yourself</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
5	09/08/ 2005 (TUE)	壓力 BYE BYE!	<p><b><u>Objectives:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To have revision on what have learnt from the group</li> <li>2. To give feedback and share the feeling towards group</li> <li>3. To stress on the importance of mutual help when facing stress.</li> <li>4. To evaluate the group</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Contents:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Warm up game: Massage each others and</li> </ol>

			sharing 2. Report of the homework 3. Review of the group 4. Prize-giving 5. Post-test: Evaluation form 6. Relaxation Exercise (Breathing and muscular) 7. Wishing tree and supportive cards
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## 9. Recruitment method

It will be held in late June to July, and the deadline of recruitment will be on 8<sup>th</sup> July, 2005.

- Open recruitment: poster posted in Center (18/6/2005-08/07/2005)
- Recruitment from other groups in center (18/6/2005-08/07/2005)
- Recruitment from workers' case referral (20/6/2005-08/07/2005)
- Recruitment through roll calling the list of single parents sent by Social Security Field Unit (27/06/2005-08/07/2005)
- Intake by phone for the member enrolled (04/07/2005-08/07/2005)
- Intake interview in office will be arranged if needed (04/07/2005-08/07/2005)

## 10. Manpower and Materials

Manpower: 1 worker, 1 helper, 2 volunteers for babysitting service

Materials: Labels, stationeries, cards, CD, handouts, homework, Evaluation form

## 11. Budget

Income		Expense	
Items	Qty	Items	Qty
Subsidy from centre	\$200	Materials for groups	\$100
		Cards	\$2@X10= \$20
		Presents	\$5@X10= \$50
		Drinks	\$3@X10= \$30
Sub-total:	\$200	Sub-total:	\$200

#### **IV. Evaluation format**

##### 1. Pre-test and Post-test

For an objective evaluation of the group, pre-test and post-test questionnaires will be done in first session and the last session respectively. Members' source of stress and stress level will be assessed to reflect members' changes after participating the group.

##### 2. Subjective feedback from members

Members' verbal feedback on the group's contents, format and design, performance of worker and achievement of the objectives will be collected in the last session.

##### 3. SWD User Satisfaction Form

User Satisfaction Form will be distributed to all participants at the end of the program. The form focuses on evaluating the learning from the program and their satisfaction on the services provided.

## V. Reference

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