

START NOW

COMMUNITY EDITION Workbook

Unit 3 My Relationships: Building Positive Relationships



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My Relationships: Building Positive Relationships

Session 19 Beginning Positive Relationships



Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 18



ABC In-Session Practice Exercise

Sometimes, people think the word “relationships” just refers to our romantic or sexual partners.

The truth is we all have many types of “relationships” in our lives. Some of them we want and choose to have, and others we wish we didn’t have. These can include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ❖ Friends | ❖ Neighbors |
| ❖ Parents | ❖ Other helping professionals, like teachers, social workers, doctors, case managers |
| ❖ Sons & daughters | ❖ Romantic or sexual partners |
| ❖ An “ex” who is the parent of your child/children | ❖ Other people in the community like cashiers, maintenance workers, etc. |
| ❖ Other family members | ❖ _____ |
| ❖ Peers or roommates | |
| ❖ Co-workers or employers | |
| ❖ _____ | |

Group Discussion:

What are some reasons why it’s helpful to build positive relationships?

2 Different Types of Relationships:

Open & Balanced Relationships vs. Getting Over on People



Open & Balanced Relationships



Getting Over on People

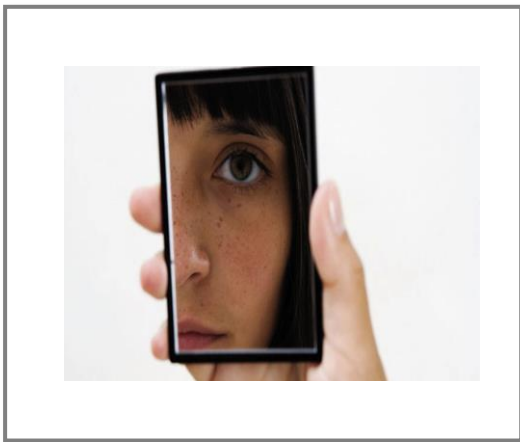
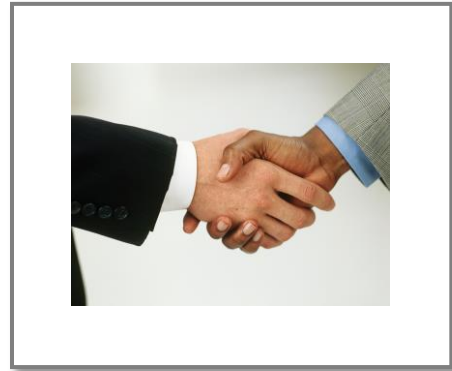
Both people feel good about the relationship	One person feels good at the other's expense
Interested in the other person for who he or she is	Interested in what can be gotten from the other person
Keeping it real	Putting up a front or an image
Trusting	Suspicious and fearful
Power is shared	Trying to be the one in power
Respect for each other	Trying to get respect through power

Some people have learned “getting over on people” as a way to survive. It’s possible to let go of this way of relating to others if you choose to, by practicing START NOW skills.

START NOW Skills can be used to build Positive Relationships:

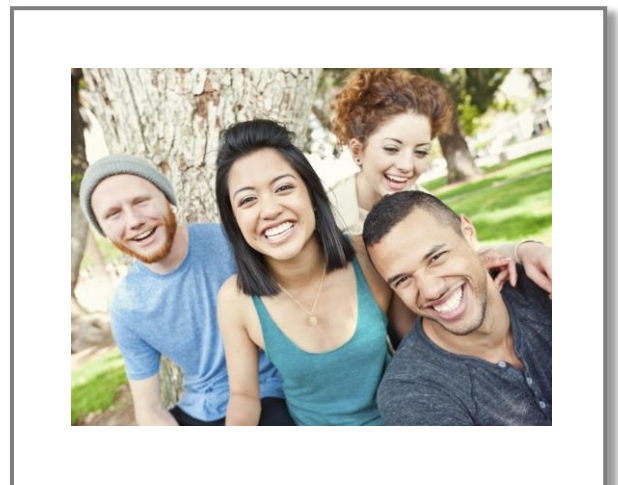
► An Open & Balanced Attitude

An open & balanced attitude helps convey respect for the other person's view.



► Accepting Myself

The more that you accept yourself, the more likely you are to accept others.



► Developing My Values

If you start to identify values like “family,” “friends,” or “kindness,” you may find that building positive relationships is even more important to you.



► Coping with Loss

When you know that you can deal with loss, you're more likely to take the risk of connecting with people.

Building Positive Relationships: Starting with the Basics

Names

- Learn the names of people you see regularly.
- Use memory cues to remember the names (your group leader will suggest some).
- Greet people by their names. Say their names at times when speaking to them.
- Address them as they introduce themselves. If they say “Mr. Jones,” you say that too (not “Robert”).



Friendly Manner

- Show a friendly manner in your nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication includes the expression on your face and your body posture. You show a friendly manner when you:
 - Smile
 - Have a relaxed posture
 - Make some eye contact, but don't stare the other person down
 - Use polite phrases, like “Please,” “Thank you,” “Take care,” etc.

Kind Communication

- Ask about things that are important to the other person. Here are some examples-
 - *“Mom, last time I talked to you, you said you were having trouble with your diabetes. How’s that been lately?”*
 - *“You applied for that job. Did you hear anything yet?”*
 - *“How’s your day going?”*



- Notice & state positive things about other people, like-
 - Thank them when they help you.
 - Congratulate them when they accomplish something (like getting a job, or making a good play in sports).

Take the First Step

- Consider taking the first step to improve your relationships. Sometimes each person waits for the other to move first. Each of you may be frustrated. Here are some ways to take the first step:
 - Call, or send a letter or card
 - Start a positive conversation with someone
 - Join a positive organization



Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise

My Relationships: Building Positive Relationships

Session 20 Active Listening



Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 19



Focusing In-Session Practice Exercise

Active Listening is a set of skills people use to improve communication. It lets other people feel heard.



Group Discussion: In what ways do you think being an active listener can help build positive relationships?



Sometimes when we're talking with someone, we don't listen very much. We're busy planning what we're going to say. When that happens, we talk **at** the other person, not **with** them.



Why do you think we do this?

Instead, we can use **Active Listening** skills.

Facts about Active Listening

- People enjoy talking to people who are good listeners. Active listening skills can help you be a good communicator.
- Active listening can be learned. It improves with practice.
- People everywhere benefit from learning and practicing active listening skills.



Active Listening

- **Focus:** Use focusing to really tune into what the other person is saying. If you find that you have drifted off, focus again on the other person's words. Being sober allows you to listen actively. If you start to plan what you're going to say next, stop, and re-focus on the other person's words.
- **Show "Active Listening" Body Language:**
 - Look at the person who is talking.
 - Nod your head at times. It lets the other person know you're listening, and encourages them to say more.



- **Listen without Interrupting:** Let the other person finish before you say something. We all sometimes interrupt by accident. If you do, just say something like, "Sorry. Go ahead."
- **Follow up with Open-Ended Questions:** Open-ended questions invite the person to tell you more. Closed-ended questions can be answered with one-word answers, like "yes", "no", a number, etc.

Closed Ended Questions	Open-Ended Questions
<i>How many kids do you have?</i>	<i>How are your kids doing?</i>
<i>Did you go to work today?</i>	<i>How was work today?</i>
<i>When do you come back to group?</i>	<i>What has your group experience been like?</i>

Active Listening, continued

Reflect: Tell the other person what you heard them say. Say it in your own words. Here's an example-

Family member on the phone: *"I'm so stressed out. I got so many bills. I can't take it."*

Active listener: *"It's been really hard for you. Money's tight."*



Reflecting gets easier with practice: Most people find it to be a challenge at first. When you are learning to reflect what someone has said, it might be helpful to start with one of the following phrases:

- *"So you're telling me that . . ."*
- *"You're saying . . ."*
- *"What I'm hearing you say is . . ."*



Group Practice

Here's a chance to practice reflecting what the other person says.



Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise

My Relationships: Building Positive Relationships

Session 21 Assertive Communication



Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 20



ABC In-Session Practice Exercise

Positive communication takes 2 people- a skillful speaker AND a skillful listener.

Last time we looked at the listening side of communication. Today we turn to the speaker.

Assertiveness is a way of speaking. When you are assertive, you are clear and direct in what you say. You get your point across. It's a set of skills that can be learned.

You can begin to understand more about assertiveness by looking at what it is NOT.

Imagine this example.

First, let's imagine that Lee calls Lucy using an **aggressive** communication style. Here's the background:

Lee's 10-year old son, Alex, lives with Lee's sister, Lucy. Lee hasn't seen Alex in months. Lucy offers to bring Alex for a visit. For many weeks she's been saying that she's going to bring Alex. So far, though, the visit hasn't happened. Each time, Lucy tells Lee why the visit couldn't happen. First her car broke. Then she had to work. Next Alex had a baseball game. Then she had to go to a baby shower. Lee is getting really sick of this. He misses Alex. He feels like Lucy is making a fool of him. He decides to call Lucy to try to set things straight.



Here's how the call sounds:



Lucy, I'm sick of this BS. Don't play me for a fool. You're selfish. Don't waste my time telling me you're gonna bring Alex here. It's always what Lucy wants. Never mind anyone else. I don't need this crap! (Slams down the phone).

Group Discussion

1. How do you think this conversation would affect Lucy?
2. How do you think this conversation would affect Lee?
3. What else did you notice about that way of communicating?

Aggressive Communication:

- Tends to be demanding & pushy.
- Often includes a loud voice, name-calling, bullying, or threats.
- Is sometimes a habit a person has learned.
- The speaker puts what they want over what the listener wants.
- The listener often ends up with a negative feeling toward the aggressive speaker. Below are some possible results.
 - They end up arguing.
 - The listener gives in but starts to dislike the speaker.
 - The listener stops calling or spending time with the aggressive speaker.
 - The speaker ends up feeling worse after the conversation, sometimes angrier and sometimes sad for having "lost it".
- Sometimes aggressive communication leads to the speaker getting short-term results, but damaging the relationship in the long run.

Now let's imagine that Lee calls Lucy using a **passive** communication style.



Oh, now it's a birthday party this weekend. And next weekend you're gonna bring Alex if you don't have company? Ok. You gotta do what you gotta do. I wish I could see Alex. I bet he looks taller now. I probably won't even recognize him. Alright, I'll let you go now.

Group Discussion

1. How do you think this conversation would affect Lucy?
2. How do you think this conversation would affect Lee?
3. What else did you notice about that way of communicating?

Passive Communication:

- Tends to be wishy-washy; doesn't get to the point.
- Is sometimes a habit a person has learned.
- The speaker doesn't really say what he wants.
- The speaker puts what the listener wants over what he wants.
- The passive speaker often ends up holding onto negative feelings about a situation. Below are some possible results.
 - The problem doesn't get worked out
 - The speaker gets a negative crabby attitude, especially toward the other person involved.

Finally, let's imagine that Lee calls Lucy using an **assertive** communication style.



Lucy, I know you're really busy. And thanks for all the nice things you do for Alex. You keep telling me that the next weekend you're gonna bring him. Then it doesn't happen. That's real hard on me. I really want to see him. I still hope you can bring him soon. Please don't say you two are coming unless it looks a lot more like it's really gonna happen. If you don't think you can bring him, tell me. I'll see if someone else can. Lucy, what do you think about what I'm saying?

Group Discussion-

1. How do you think this conversation would affect Lucy?
2. How do you think this conversation would affect Lee?
3. What else did you notice about that way of communicating?

Assertive Communication:

- It's speaking directly and clearly. You say what you mean, and you mean what you say.
- You request what you want the other person to do. You don't act like you can make them do it.
- You get your point across calmly without hammering it.
- Assertive communication increases your chances of getting results **and** keeping a positive relationship. However, it does not guarantee you'll get those.

Tips for Assertive Communication

- ✓ Use a Calm Voice. Speak using a calm tone. Keep your voice at a medium volume (not overly loud or soft).
- ✓ Keep a Relaxed Posture.
 - Arms are relaxed, not pointing or crossed.
 - Make eye contact, but don't stare the person down.
 - Facial expression is friendly and confident.
- ✓ Reflect Understanding and Show Respect. Reflect your understanding of the other person's view. Aim for an open and balanced attitude. Show respect for their position.

How did Lee do this in his assertive communication?
- ✓ State your View using "I Statements". State your own view including how the current situation affects you. Use "I statements": sentences that start with the word "I".

How did Lee do this?
- ✓ State your Request Clearly and Simply. Politely tell the person what you are asking them to do. Use "I" statements, like "I would appreciate it if you would . . .".

How did Lee do this?
- ✓ Suggest Solutions or Compromises. Consider suggesting a possible solution or compromise.
- ✓ Invite the Other Person to Respond. Ask for the other person's reaction to what you've said. Say something like, "How does that sound to you?", or "What do you think?" Listen actively. Reflect what they say.
- ✓ Be Patient. Remind yourself to be patient. The other person may need to think about your request for a while. They may not ever agree. Give yourself credit for asking.
- ✓ Practice assertive communication. You will get better at it with practice.



Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise

My Relationships: Building Positive Relationships

Session 22 Responding to Feedback



Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 21



Focusing In-Session Practice Exercise

Julio and Luis are both in training for a job as a cook. Each day they both hear a lot of feedback from people.



Who gives Julio and Luis feedback?

- The head cook
- Other cooks and assistants
- Servers
- The people who eat the food
- The manager

What are Julio and Luis getting feedback about?

- How the food tastes
- How fast they work
- How the food looks
- How they deal with people
- How much they know about food preparation
- How they prepare and cook the food

● Julio listens when people tell him both good things and bad things about his cooking. He doesn't get his back up. He asks them to tell him more. He tries to use their suggestions to improve his skill as a cook. Julio is "open to feedback".

● When Luis gets feedback, he nods or grunts. He doesn't appear to listen. He seems to get a bad attitude when people make suggestions about his cooking. Even when they say something good, he acts like he hardly hears their compliments. Luis is "closed to feedback".

Who do you think will turn out to be a better cook? Why?

Responding to Positive Feedback

How we respond to feedback affects our success in life.

Examples of positive feedback:

- Someone tells you that you did a good job
- Someone tells you they like how you act or look
- Someone congratulates you on meeting a goal

Some people are comfortable getting positive feedback. Others find it difficult. This is especially the case if someone is not used to getting positive feedback.



Group Discussion

In what way do you think being able to accept positive feedback may be helpful?

Tips for responding to positive feedback:

- **Simply say “thank you” or “Thanks.”**
- **Just notice any feelings that result** from receiving the positive feedback. If it’s good, like feeling happy, allow yourself to enjoy that. If it’s not good, like feeling nervous, just notice that reaction. You may even have mixed feelings when getting positive feedback. If so, just notice that- don’t try to change it.
- **Avoid explaining away the positive feedback, or making it smaller.** Sometimes people feel like saying things like, “Oh, it was just good luck”, or “No, my drawings are no good.” When you hear yourself say things like that, you reduce your self-acceptance. It also can hurt the feelings of the one who offered the positive feedback.
- **Avoid bragging.** Sometimes people respond to positive feedback by talking at length about how great they are. They may end up irritating others.

About Negative Feedback

How we respond to feedback affects our success in life.

Examples of negative feedback:

- Someone tells you they think you should have done something differently
- Someone tells you they don't like the way you act or how you look



Negative Feedback can be Constructive or Destructive

When deciding how to respond to negative feedback, first decide whether it's constructive or destructive.

Constructive = useful, helpful. When you construct something, like a house, you build it.

- What is constructive feedback and how do I know when I am receiving constructive feedback?
 - Constructive feedback can help build a stronger, more effective person.
 - It's constructive feedback when it's about something you can change, if you want to do so.
 - It's constructive feedback when it's about something you did, or how you behave.

Destructive = harmful, unhelpful. When you destroy something, like a building, you tear it down.

- What is destructive feedback and how do I know when I am receiving destructive feedback?
 - Destructive feedback can be hurtful.
 - It's destructive feedback when it's about you, not your behavior.
 - Name-calling is destructive feedback
 - It's destructive feedback when it's about something you can't change, even if you wanted to.

Responding to Constructive Negative Feedback:



- **Remind yourself to have an open and balanced attitude**, rather than getting defensive or getting your back up. Take a deep breath. Consider that many people feel on guard or nervous when someone starts to give them negative feedback.
- **Use active listening** to understand the feedback. Remember to:
 - **Focus** on what they're saying.
 - **Show non-verbal listening behaviors**, like relaxed posture, eye contact and friendly facial expression.
 - **Listen without interrupting.**
 - **Reflect** what you hear them say.
Example: *"You're saying that I don't clean up after myself."*
or
"I'm hearing you say you think I'm late a lot."
 - **Ask open-ended questions.**
Example: *"How has my being late affected you?"*
or
"What would you like me to do instead?"
- **Find something in the feedback to agree with.** Reflect that part of the person's feedback to them. Tell them the truth you see in it.
Example: *"You say I never shut up. I **do** talk more than some people do."*
- **Offer a possible solution.** If there is a solution that is ok with you, and that would address the other person's concern, suggest it.
Example: *"I'll try to clean up my stuff but may forget. Would you work with me if that happens?"*

Responding to Destructive Negative Feedback:

- **Try to ignore it.** Try not to let it get to you. Focus on other things and activities, rather than the destructive comment.
- **Reduce the amount of time you spend** talking with the person who has given you destructive feedback, if possible.
- **Use assertive communication to ask the person to stop** saying that, especially if it's repeated.

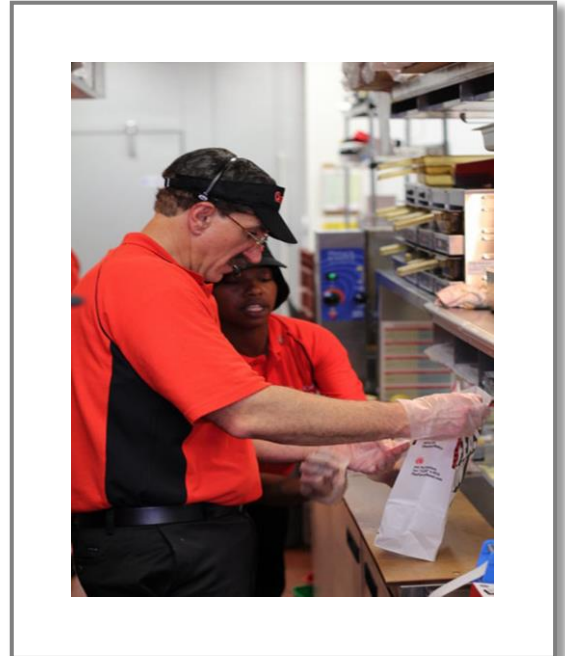
Example:

*"I can hear you calling me an idiot.
Drop it."*

or

"Mom, it hurts me when you say I'm never gonna change. I know you've been through a lot between Dad and me. I'm working on myself. I wish you'd sometimes say something good about me."

- **Avoid responding with an attack.** Doing so often creates more problems for you.
- **If you think it may be verbal abuse, talk to a helping professional** about other options.



Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise

My Relationships: Building Positive Relationships

Session 23 Increasing My Support System



Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 22



ABC In-Session Practice Exercise



Group Discussion

Why do we need support?

Types of Support

❖ Practical Support-

Someone helps you get things done.

Examples:

- Helping you build or make something
- Giving you a ride somewhere
- Helping you fill out an application

❖ Emotional Support-

Someone helps you cope with difficult emotions.

Examples:

- Listening to you talk when you're upset
- Sending you a kind note or card
- Comforting you, like by getting you a cup of coffee or by saying some caring words
- Turning to someone with expertise

❖ Information Support-

Someone gives you helpful information or facts.

Examples:

- Telling you where jobs are available
- Teaching you about a new legal policy
- Telling you about the latest news

❖ Social Support-

Someone gives you time and friendship.

Examples:

- Doing positive and fun things together
- Sending letters
- Talking about interesting topics together
- Attending a social support group



Group Brainstorming Exercise:
How Can People Increase their Support Systems?



In your current environment?

In the future?

Skills for Seeking Support

- Join positive organizations.
 - Find out what kinds of groups are available. Join one. Attend more than one meeting. You can't tell if you'll like it until you really give it a try. Find a friend who will go with you.



- Use assertive communication to ask for support.
 - Be specific about what type of support you are asking for.
 - Ask someone who is in a position to provide the support you are requesting.



- Give support to others.
 - Many people find that helping others helps themselves. Why do you think this happens?
 - Consider ways you may have helped others in the past.
 - Find out about opportunities for volunteer work.

In-Group Exercise

My Support System



Current:

Supportive Relationships I Have Now	Supportive Relationships I Want to Build
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Future

(the lists below can include some of the same people or groups as above):

Supportive Relationships I Have Now	Supportive Relationships I Want to Build
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise

My Relationships: Building Positive Relationships

Session 24

Recognizing & Avoiding Negative Relationships



Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 23



Focusing In-Session Practice Exercise

There are many ways to build positive relationships. We have looked at communication skills that help you do so.

Other skills help you avoid negative or harmful relationships. Negative relationships bring you down or hurt you.



Group Discussion

Have you seen negative relationships harm people? If so, how? This may include something that you've gone through. Also, it could be what you've seen happen in someone else's life.

Recognizing Negative Relationships

Avoiding negative relationships starts with being able to identify them.

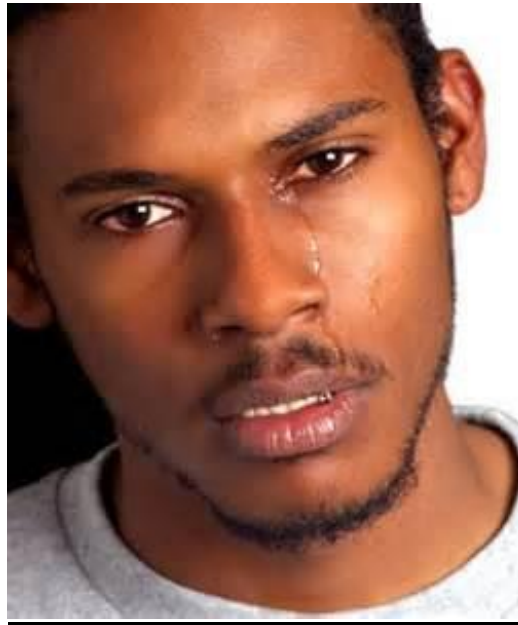
Signs of Negative Relationships

Here are signs or clues that can help you recognize a negative relationship.

- **Brings you down.** When you spend time with that person, it brings you down in some way:
 - **Negative Feeling-** You have a negative feeling after spending time with that person. The negative feeling can be from the other person doing things to you like hitting, lying, insulting, cheating, offering or encouraging drug or alcohol use, or mocking. You often end up feeling upset, ashamed, and hurt after spending time with this person.
 - **Negative Actions-** You do negative behaviors around this person. You may do things that are against your values. These actions may cause you negative consequences. When with this person, you may be more likely to break the law, abuse drugs and alcohol, do risky sex, or engage in other self-destructive actions.
- **Unequal treatment.** In positive relationships, there is a give and take. Both people benefit. In many negative relationships, one person does the giving while the other does the taking.



- **Ups & Downs.** Many negative, abusive relationships have a pattern of ups & downs. First things are fine. Then some type of hurtful action occurs. For example, the person loses their temper and threatens or hurts you. Next, the person doing the hurtful action begs for forgiveness. The relationship appears fine again. Then the cycle repeats.



- **Intensity.** Healthy relationships grow over time. A relationship that starts off as very intense may be a clue to an unhealthy relationship. For example, the person may tell you that no one else understands them as you do. This is a difficult clue, because an intense relationship can be exciting. You can be tempted to ignore risky signs.
- **Jealousy and Control.** The person may tell you what to wear, who to spend time with, or what to do.

What other early signs of negative relationships have you noticed?



Avoiding Negative Relationships

Once you have recognized that a relationship may be negative, here are some skills you can use to stay clear:

► **Tell Someone.** Talk to someone who has been a support to you. Tell them what you see in the early relationship that concerns you.

► **Keep busy with positive people and activities.** Do things you enjoy. Spend time with people who lift you up rather than bring you down.

► **Be honest with yourself about the problems you see with this relationship.** You may enjoy the exciting part of the negative relationship. You may feel like brushing off the risky side of the relationship. Be real with yourself.



► **Try to look ahead to the problems this relationship may cause.** Here are some examples:

Ed begins hanging out with a guy named Joe. He starts to notice that Joe is a fast-talker who seems like he's always got some kind of scam going. Ed starts to realize that if he keeps hanging out with Joe, he's going to get into trouble. Ed looks ahead. He pictures getting involved in trouble with Joe. Then he sees himself ending up in trouble. He decides to stop hanging out with Joe.

Alfredo starts getting letters from his ex-girlfriend Monique. Monique hopes he's moving back to her town later this year. She writes about the good times they'll have together when he gets there. Alfredo reminds himself that when they were together, there were more problems than good times. He remembers the times the police were called because of their fighting. Plus, he heard Monique is still getting high, and he's been in recovery for 10 months. He gets honest with himself. He tells himself that if he got back together with Monique, he'd likely get in trouble pretty quickly.

► **Figure out if there is a specific type (or types) of negative relationship you tend to get involved in.** Then make a plan to watch out for that pattern, and avoid it. Here are some examples of negative relationship types:

- People you used to get high with, when you're trying to stay clean / sober.
- People who are involved in other criminal activities.
- Romantic/sex partners who tend to be involved in a lot of chaos & fighting.
- People who abuse you physically, verbally and/or sexually.
- People who are really needy and dependent.
- People who tend to lie and take advantage of others.



Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise

My Relationships: Building Positive Relationships

Session 25 Setting Boundaries



Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 24



ABC In-Session Practice Exercise

START NOW Session 10 focused on identifying your personal boundaries. Here are some points to remember from that session.

Personal Boundaries = a person's comfort zone



It also means how you expect people to treat you, your property, and your time. It goes along with how you expect yourself to treat other people, and their property and time.

- People have a right to decide their own boundaries.
- Personal boundaries help you connect with people, not just with keep them away.
- Having & setting boundaries, and respecting other peoples' boundaries, can feel strange & good at the same time.

First, you decide your personal boundaries, based on your own values and beliefs. Then you can learn to set boundaries with the people around you.

Today the focus is on how you **communicate your boundaries** to others.

Examples of Boundary Setting



Here's a situation where you may need to set a boundary:

Another group member has lost his phone. He asks you to call someone for him. You don't want to make the call.

Some people find a situation like that difficult. What may be difficult about it?

Setting this boundary may be worth it, even though it's hard to do. Why?

Here's another example:

You have been in recovery from alcohol use for six months. You will be celebrating Thanksgiving and you realize that having others around you drinking alcohol is a major trigger for relapse.

What may be difficult about this situation?

Setting this boundary may be worth it, even though it's hard to do. Why?

Skills for Setting Boundaries

► **First, be clear about personal boundaries.**

Know your own limits. Tell yourself it's ok to draw a line you won't cross. Show the respect for other people's boundaries that you would like shown to you.

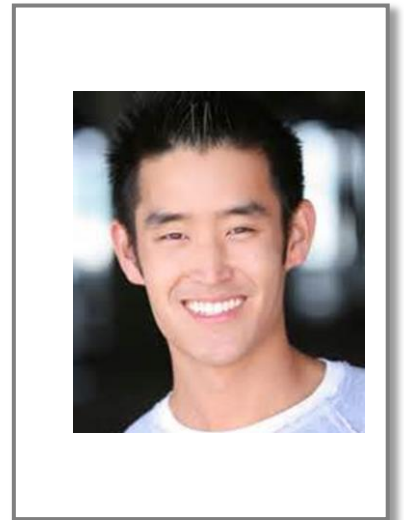
► **When you mean “no”, say “no”.** Say “no” in a calm, respectful tone.

► **If you're someone that has a hard time setting limits, start setting limits about easy things.** A lot of people who do it this way end up finding out that it's not as hard as they thought. They work up to setting boundaries about more difficult issues.

► **Think about whether the request is aggressive and respond according to that.** Sometimes the other person is making a request because they simply want something, like your time or belongings. Other times the person is asking for something because they want to control you. They may want power over you. People who do this often have a reputation as bullies. People who make simple requests generally act friendly and kind. How you respond depends on whether you think the request is aggressive or not.

► **If the request appears to be aggressive, keep your response brief.** A simple “no” will do. If you get rattled, try not to show it. Move onto doing something else. If the problem occurs many times, ask a helping person if there are other options you can pursue to protect yourself from bullying.

► **If the request appears to be a simple request without aggression, you may want to combine saying “no” with a statement of understanding.** For example you might say, *“Man, I've been there before, not having money. I worked real hard for what I have. Sorry, but I'm not gonna give it away.”*



Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise

My Relationships: Building Positive Relationships

Session 26 Coping with Rejection



Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 25



Focusing In-Session Practice Exercise

Everyone has to deal with rejection sometime.

Here are some ways rejection happens-

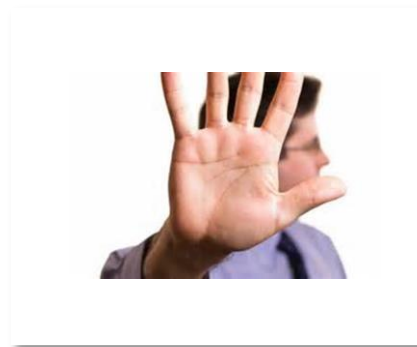
- Someone breaks up with you.
- You get turned down when you apply for a job.
- Everyone but you seems to be in a relationship.
- Others appear to be moving ahead when you are not. For example, they might be getting new jobs, or graduating from a program.
- Someone you care about doesn't visit, call, or write.
- Others are having a good time together and you feel left out.



People often feel lonely and frustrated when these experiences happen. People may feel all the more alone because they don't talk about what happened. Why do you think many people don't talk about these experiences?

Yet, people of all ages, in many different life situations, feel rejected sometimes. Today's topic is how to cope with rejection.

Coping with Rejection through Thoughts & Imagery



- **Replace Negative Self-Talk with Positive Self-Talk.** Sometimes when faced with rejection, you might say things to yourself that make you feel worse. If you notice yourself doing that, stop, and say something kinder to yourself. Here are some examples of that.

Negative Self-Talk	Positive Self-Talk
<i>"No one likes me."</i>	<i>"Some people do like me- _____. It's just hard to feel outside of the group right now."</i>
<i>"Everyone's looking at me like I'm a loser."</i>	<i>"They're probably not focused on me. They're probably worried about themselves."</i>

- **Use Focusing to Simply Notice the Upset Feeling.** This feeling, like other negative feelings, will pass.
- **Use Coping with Grief and Loss Skills.** Review these skills from Unit 2 of START NOW. Often when you experience rejection, it helps to deal with related feelings of loss.
- **Reduce Resentment by Replacing Hot Thoughts with Cool Thoughts.** Sometimes when faced with rejection, you might also say things to yourself that get you pumped up with anger and resentment. This can increase your risk of doing something that creates more trouble for you. Consider replacing hot thoughts with cool thoughts. Here are some examples of that.

Hot Thoughts	Cool Thoughts
<i>"Those jerks have something against me. That's why they didn't pick me."</i>	<i>"Maybe someone else had a better application. I'll keep trying, and I'll get a good job too."</i>
<i>"They're kicking me when I'm down. I'll let them know they can't get away with that."</i>	<i>"They've got their own lives, too. Maybe they're busy. I've got other people who care."</i>

- **Use Imagery to Picture Future Success.** When you feel badly about rejection, picture yourself experiencing future success. Here are some examples:
 - When someone breaks up with you, see yourself in a great relationship in the future.
 - When you're turned down for an application, see yourself continuing to apply until you get a positive result.
 - When you feel outside of the "in crowd," picture yourself making some new friends you enjoy.

Coping with Rejection through Actions

- **Do Something Enjoyable.** When going through rejection, it helps to be kind to yourself. Do something you like. Spend time with positive people. Find a drug-free enjoyable activity.
- **Consider using Assertive Communication.** Here are some examples of how assertive communication might be helpful.
 - If you feel like your family doesn't care about you, tell them you miss them and ask them to reach out to you.
 - When going through a break-up, use assertive communication to ask people for support.
 - When turned down on an application, use assertiveness to ask about ways to increase your future success.
- **Look for new supports.** You may find yourself mostly focusing on the person/people you feel rejected by. Push yourself to turn your attention toward others. Use the skills found in "Increasing My Support System".
- **Avoid Impulsive Angry Actions.** You may feel angry about the rejection you experienced. You may be at risk acting impulsively. Doing so may harm you and your relationships. How?

- If you find yourself feeling stuck in your angry feelings, try the “Coping with Anger” skills from Unit 2 of START NOW.
- If you decide to express your frustration, remember to use positive communication skills rather than going off on people.



Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise