

Second Edition
2014

Give us a break!

www.giveusabreak.org.uk

A programme for
young people who
have experienced
loss or change

My sister
is ill

My parents
have split up

My mum
died of cancer

My friend
moved away.
I miss him

My mum and
dad can't look
after me

NHS
Lanarkshire

**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.**
CANCER SUPPORT

SOUTH
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Education Resources

The logo for 'Give us a break!' features the text in a bold, yellow, rounded font with a blue outline. It is centered within a white circle that is surrounded by several overlapping, colorful rings in shades of red, pink, green, and orange, some with patterns like dots or stripes. The background of the top half of the page is a gradient of light blue to a darker blue.

**Give us
a break!**

Psychological Service's Audit and Evaluation of *Give us a break!*

South Lanarkshire Council Psychological Service is committed to evaluating the impact of the *Give us a break!* programme. We are dedicated to ensuring that the *Give us a break!* programme is the best it can be, and we welcome feedback and comments on any aspect of the programme. It is also crucial for our funders to receive feedback on the impact of *Give us a break!* and to ensure that any necessary changes to the programme are identified.

We may contact you in the future about your experience of running a *Give us a break!* group and to audit the implementation of the *Give us a break!* programme. You may be asked about the number of groups you have run, how many children have attended, and the loss/change each child has experienced (with specific reference to changes that have occurred through cancer).

We would be grateful for any help you can give us to evaluate *Give us a break!*

*Elizabeth N King and the
Give us a break! team*

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Give us a break!

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A note about photocopying.

Lesson plans and Resource sheets may be freely copied as required for use in groups.

Leaflets, parents/carers booklets and evaluation forms may also be photocopied or alternatively may be ordered from the Psychological Service when registering your group, using the order form supplied.

All the above documents can be downloaded from the Give us a break! website www.giveusabreak.org.uk

Photocopy in colour if at all possible. For 50 or more copies please contact printing@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

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Setting up, running and evaluating the programme

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The logo for 'Give us a break!' features the text in a bold, yellow, rounded font with a blue outline. It is set against a white circular background that is partially obscured by several overlapping, colorful circles in shades of pink, red, green, and orange, some with patterns like polka dots or stripes.

**Give us
a break!**

Foreword

It is an undoubted privilege to provide this foreword to our second edition of the *Give us a break!* programme, which has been updated following the need for a reprint. The *Give us a break!* team continue to take into account existing and emerging research and best practice in supporting children and young people affected by bereavement and loss, and this second edition is informed both by this research and by feedback from facilitators, young people and families.

The solution focused theoretical underpinning of the programme remains and children and young people continue to have opportunities in the *Give us a break!* programme to explore and expand on their strengths and learn about effective strategies to help them cope with current and future adverse life events.

We continue to be greatly encouraged by the strength of the positive feedback from children and young people who have experienced the *Give us a break!* programme. It is to those wonderful, courageous children and young people with whom we have had the privilege to work, that we are dedicating this second edition.

Elizabeth N. King

Elizabeth N King

Principal Educational Psychologist
South Lanarkshire Council Psychological Service

If you need this information in another language or format,
please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.

Phone: 0303 123 1015

Email: equalities@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk

www.giveusabreak.org.uk





Give us a break!

Introduction

About *Give us a break!*

In today's society more and more young people are experiencing upheaval and change in their lives. Events like divorce, separation, loss of a loved one or other major trauma can be deeply distressing. These events often also bring associated changes in other areas of life, such as a change of home, school or living arrangements. For some children and young people these changes can be difficult. They often feel overwhelmed, confused or unable to cope and their mental health can suffer.

Give us a break! is an 8-week programme, developed jointly by South Lanarkshire Council Psychological Service and NHS Lanarkshire, for young people aged 10-14 who are coping with negative change in their lives, including family break-up and bereavement. This programme acknowledges that loss and grief are a normal part of life and are experienced uniquely by each individual.

Using a solution focused approach, the programme aims to give young people a chance to make sense of their experiences in a supportive environment with others who have gone through similar changes. Young people are encouraged to recognise and celebrate their own strengths and to look to the future in a positive way. If appropriate they can also set themselves achievable goals and monitor their own progress.

Solution focused approach

Solution focused therapy, sometimes known as Brief Therapy, became popular through the work of Steve De Shazer. He saw clients as resourceful and competent and worked with them to find solutions. De Shazer developed a model of therapy which created plans with clear steps for the therapist and client to follow.

Rather than focusing on the details of the problem, clients in solution focused therapy are encouraged to identify times when the problem does not bother them so much or does not occur at all. They are encouraged to picture life without the problem and are given tasks designed to help them take small steps towards this preferred future.

While it originated in a counselling/therapeutic setting, the solution focused approach is very adaptable to other situations. It has been successfully used in schools, business and health settings and has been shown to be effective in group work, addressing a wide range of issues.

Further information about solution focused working with groups is contained in the *Give us a break!* training course. The group provides opportunities to acquire knowledge, skills and confidence in using the approach in the context of this programme.



Give us a break!

The programme

The *Give us a break!* programme consists of 8 sessions lasting approximately 1 hour. It is designed primarily to be used in schools, therefore each session should be able to fit into the structure of the school day in a secondary school. If used weekly as recommended the programme should fit easily into one school term.

Give us a break! can also be used in health or community settings, where there may be a little more flexibility regarding the length of each session. It is recommended that for most groups the sessions should last at **least** 50 minutes and maximum 1hr 30 minutes.

Throughout the 8-week programme young people will be encouraged to:

- Get to know one another, identifying their own and each other's strengths (week 1).
- Understand the changes in their life and how they feel about them (week 2).
- Accept their feelings and share them with others (week 3).
- Look to the future in a positive way (week 4).
- Recognise what they are already doing to help themselves move forward, set achievable goals and monitor their progress (week 5, 6, and 7).
- 'Take a Break' to celebrate their strengths, successes and achievements (week 8).

Though the programme is structured, it is not rigid. Provided the focus of each week is aimed for, there is scope for flexible use of the weekly content to achieve this. In recognition of this, a follow-up meeting is recommended. See notes for week 8 for further details.

As the group sessions come to an end, members are encouraged to continue to use the skills they have learnt throughout the programme to work independently to achieve their personal goals. Therefore the end of the 8 week programme marks the beginning of each group member's individual efforts.

Materials

The *Give us a break!* pack contains:

- This folder, containing notes, lesson plans and other resources as detailed in the Contents.
- A pack of 'Strength Cards for Kids'.*
- Poster.
- Registration, order form and other publicity materials.
- Evaluation forms.

* *Strength Cards from St Luke's Innovative Resources*
(c) *Innovative Resources* & *John Veeken 2003*

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Give us a break!

Facilitator training

There is a comprehensive training course which complements the *Give us a break!* pack. It is important that this facilitator training course is undertaken by anyone who intends to offer the programme. Information about training can be obtained from the development team (contact details are at the back of this pack and are also available on the website www.giveusabreak.org.uk).

Criteria for inclusion in a group

- The programme is intended for children and young people who have experienced any kind of major negative change in their lives, such as bereavement and/or family break up, and who have shown signs of difficulty in managing the emotional consequences. These signs may be educational, emotional or behavioural and may be occurring at home or in school, or both. (Please see further discussion on identifying prospective group members on page 8)
- Children should have had an adequate, natural grieving time to process the events that have happened in their life. Children should be ready and willing to engage in group work of this kind.
- The target age group is 10-14 years. In practice this means that in primary schools a group of P6/7 pupils or in secondary a group of S1/2 pupils could be considered. Parental agreement to participate in the group should be sought when the child is under 12 years old.
- As a result of the wide range of activities available within the programme it would be possible to include children or young people slightly younger or slightly older than the recommended age group.
- It is not recommended that the full age range of 10-14 be included in the same group because of the great differences in maturity levels found within this age range. However, if necessary, it may be possible to include a wider age group particularly if siblings are involved. In this case special care should be taken over the choice of activities, language used etc. so that all group members feel included.
- It is recommended that a group should consist of between 3 and 6 members, plus 2 trained facilitators. Less than 3 is not workable as a 'group', while more than 6 makes it difficult for the facilitators to give the level of individual attention required.

Referral for a group

- Depending on the setting, children and young people can be referred by school staff, health or other professionals or by parents or carers. They can also self-refer through key professionals they are working with or via the *Give us a break!* website.
- Young people who are being considered for inclusion in a group should be given the information leaflet, and the opportunity should be given to discuss it with their parent or carer as well as an adult in school.
- The young person then decides whether to take part.
- If a child or young person is already accessing mental health services, inclusion in a *Give us a break!* group may not be appropriate and this should be discussed with the relevant health professional working with him or her.
- It is important that facilitators consider the age, gender and social mix of any group and use their discretion with regard to this.
- More information from young people can be found on our website at www.giveusabreak.org.uk.

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Give us a break!

Who organises the groups?

Professionals from many different disciplines such as education, health or social work who have experience of working with children and young people will have the skills to be effective facilitators of the programme. Those with experience of solution focused working and/or bereavement counselling would be in a particularly strong position to lead a group. However, the training course provides the necessary support and guidance.

It is recommended that there should be 2 trained facilitators who run the group together. If the group takes place in school, or is associated with a particular school, one of these should ideally be a member of school staff. In addition, a senior member of staff should be nominated to be the school link person (unless the school facilitator is in a senior position). It is particularly important that a senior staff member has responsibility for *Give us a break!* if neither facilitator is a member of the school staff.

When a group is run in a non-school setting, e.g. health or social work, facilitators must have a management link person who can offer supervision/consultation regarding the needs of any child. Whatever the setting, management links must be established before the group starts.

Child Protection – facilitators will be bound by their own organisation’s guidelines on child protection. This is an important safeguard and therefore it is not appropriate for anyone or any organisation not bound by child protection guidelines to be involved in running the groups.

Should any issues or concerns arise before, during or after a group these must be dealt with in accordance with the guidelines provided by your employer or supervisory organisation. Ensure that you and anyone else working with you are fully aware of and are able to follow these procedures if necessary.

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Give us a break!

Role of the facilitator

There should be 2 trained facilitators for each group. This allows for more effective planning and evaluation, and also means that should there be any young person in need of individual support or attention during the course of a session there will be someone available to continue the session with the others.

The facilitators have several key roles:

- Explaining the programme to relevant and interested parties, including young people.
- Assessing the appropriateness of the programme for any individual (see page 5 under 'Criteria for inclusion' section).
- Setting up and running the programme, including making any associated 'housekeeping' arrangements.
- Registering the group through the *Give us a break!* website.
- Liaising with parents/carers, and with management link person.
- Accessing consultative support from the programme development team.
- Being an active listener and communicator to maintain a solution focused approach in the delivery of the programme.

While all the above are important the last point is crucial to the success of any group and is considered in more detail in the *Give us a break!* training course.



Give us a break!

Setting up, running and evaluating the programme

Preparation: identifying prospective group members

(See also 'Criteria for inclusion in a group' section)

It is important to realise that not all young people who have experienced loss in their lives will require the support of a group like *Give us a break!* Research suggests that only about 7% of children and young people will not experience bereavement or other loss while at school. Of the many who do, a considerable number will have strong family, community and personal resources giving them the resilience they need to cope with such setbacks.

Children and young people may be considered for inclusion in a group if they have experienced significant loss in their lives and if they are showing signs of difficulty in relation to this. Such signs may include acting out behaviour, emotional or social withdrawal and/or deterioration in school work. Sometimes in school the behaviour is obvious but staff are unaware of the underlying cause. Also, some young people may give no indication in school but may be having difficulty coping at home. For these reasons we recommend that schools inform all parents/carers and young people within the target year group(s) about the *Give us a break!* group being planned (see Appendix 2 and other publicity materials included in the pack). In this way families and young people themselves will have the opportunity to decide whether referral, including self-referral, is appropriate.

You may then of course have more applicants than the group can accommodate and will need to make some hard decisions. However, you will at least have some idea of the demand and can use this knowledge for the planning of future groups.

While we do not offer a recommendation as to the length of time elapsed between the occurrence of the loss experience and inclusion in a *Give us a break!* group, it is best offered some time later, perhaps within a few months. Some young people can benefit even after the passage of years since their bereavement or other loss. Often, sensitive and sympathetic discussion with a young person will clarify whether *Give us a break!* is appropriate for him or her at this time.

There are some children, sadly, whose young lives are constantly in a state of upheaval and change. Many of these are often looked after away from home by their local authorities either intermittently or for extended periods. We have found that it is possible to successfully include these children and young people in mixed groups as a powerful way of 'normalising' their experiences and accessing the support of their peers.

Once children or young people have been identified as possible members, whether by parents/carers, professionals or by self-referral, the facilitators should discuss participation in the group with each of them individually, explaining the purpose and answering any queries. They should provide those interested with one of the leaflets about the programme and encourage them to discuss it with a responsible adult at home.



Give us a break!

Ultimately the young person him or herself will make the decision whether to accept the offer of a place. We would suggest that potential group members are encouraged to see this acceptance as a commitment to the full 8-week programme. We also strongly advise against adding newcomers to an established group once the group has started as this can upset the balance of the emerging group identity.

For the programme, facilitators will need:

- Access to a reasonably quiet room with comfortable seating, tables/desks for drawing etc. and if possible some free space for activities, including space for group members to lie comfortably on the floor for relaxation sessions.
- A variety of music, especially music for relaxation. ‘Energising’ music would also be useful, as would music to accompany individual work if the group works better this way. Young people may be invited to bring in their own favourite music for certain activities.
- A CD player.
- Loose leaf binders/folders (one for each participant).
- Flip chart, pens, post-it notes.
- Paper punch for inserting notes, art work etc into folders.
- Simple art materials: paper, pens, pencils, glue sticks.
- Gym mats for relaxation sessions. If this is not possible, group members could perhaps bring their own mat or towel.
- We recommend that facilitators use a separate facilitator’s folder. In this way the original pack can be left untouched for future use. The folder could contain copies of session plans with comments, copies of evaluation forms and record pages for each group member (see next page).

Please refer to the facilitator process flow chart, which details everything you need to do from initial facilitator training to becoming a fully qualified facilitator.

Give us a break!

Facilitator Process Flowchart

Step 1

- Are you operating within clear child protection guidelines?
- Do you have agreement/support from your Head Teacher or Line Manager to commit to organising, planning and running an 8-week programme?
- If the answer to the above 2 questions is **yes**, then ...
- Attend Initial Facilitator Training event and receive your Certificate of Completion of Initial Facilitator Training.
- Contact www.giveusabreak.org.uk to obtain your facilitator login for access to resources available on the website.

Step 2

- Assess the appropriateness of the nominations and identify 3-6 prospective group members.
- Identify a suitable location and a co-facilitator to run the group with you.
- If you are not able to identify the above, please contact the *Give us a break!* team who will be able to advise on access to locality groups or check out our website for more information on these developments (www.giveusabreak.org.uk).

Step 3

- Liaise with key parents/carers around the child to explore what the on-going concerns are and complete the pre-interviews with pupils, parents/carers and teaching staff.
- Once identified, complete the Group Registration Form and either post it to Psychological Service, Hamilton Office, or register your group at www.giveusabreak.org.uk (NB facilitator login required for this).

Step 4

- You are now ready to run your 8-week *Give us a break!* group.
- Remember time to plan and de-brief with your co-facilitator.

Step 5

- After the group has finished, facilitators should carry out an evaluation of the programme.
- Conduct post-group pupil interviews about 4 weeks after the group finishes.
- Liaise with parents/carers and teaching staff to complete post-group interviews.

Step 6

- Arrange at least one follow-up meeting 4-8 weeks after the group has finished to see and hear how the group are progressing.
- Attend a *Give us a break!* Support and Development Session to let the team hear about your experience(s) of running a group and during this session you will receive a certificate to verify that you have fully completed the facilitator training.

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Give us a break!

Individual record pages

We suggest that facilitators keep in their folder a running record page (or pages) for each group member. Their purpose is as an 'aide memoir' in order to help you as facilitators be as effective as possible in using the solution focused approach.

The pages should be used for noting the following about each participant:

- Strengths: both those you have noticed and those they have self-reported, including evidence whenever possible.
- A short description of the 'problem' as described by the young person, i.e. the difficulties or circumstances which brought them to the group. In this section please be sure to only note what the individual has shared, and to use their own language and descriptions as far as possible.
- Any exceptions to the pattern of the problem, or times when the problem seems less noticeable. Again these observations can be reported by the young person him/herself or noticed by you or others.
- The young person's vision of the future (see week 4), using rich or 'thick' descriptions, i.e. including as much detail as possible.
- Any goals identified and positive steps taken (see weeks 5,6,7).

The notes will, of course, be added to each week according to the particular focus of the session. However, it is important to note strengths at any time, and it is one of the main tasks of facilitators to actively look out for strengths in each of the participants throughout the programme.

In the interests of the openness, integrity, trust and confidentiality which is the basis of the *Give us a break!* programme, the following is very important:

- Group members should be informed of the existence of these notes, and should be allowed to see their own pages on request.
- At the end of the group the records should either be destroyed or given to the young person to keep.
- Notes should never be shared with anyone outside the group, for example teachers or parents/carers, without the express permission of the child or young person.

Please note however, that the above must be compatible with your organisation's guidelines on child protection, which must take priority (see comments on child protection).

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Give us a break!

Self-Evaluation

South Lanarkshire Council Psychological Service highlights self-evaluation as a critical element of the *Give us a break!* programme. Evaluation ensures that programme delivery remains at a high standard, and that *Give us a break!* continues to be an effective intervention for children and young people who have experienced loss/change. Evaluation is also beneficial to you as a practitioner, as it allows you to review any feedback from your groups and subsequently make any changes necessary to the delivery of the programme.

In the Evaluation Forms section of this pack, there are examples of interview forms you can use to evaluate your *Give us a break!* group (copies are also available from the *Give us a break!* website using your facilitator login). These can help you assess the views of pupils, parents/carers and teachers both before and after the group intervention. Below is a description of each of the forms:

- **Pupil Interviews:**

Pre group

- Section 1 is highly recommended as a useful tool to get to know each child who will be participating in your *Give us a break!* group. This form can be used before the group starts, and has been developed to be used in an interview style with the child.
- Section 2 asks the child specific questions regarding the loss they have experienced and what they hope to gain from participating in the *Give us a break!* group.

Post group

- Section 1 can be used to assess whether or not the child enjoyed attending the *Give us a break!* group. It will enable you to gain feedback on the activities the children did or did not like and the reasons why. This will help you when planning future *Give us a break!* groups.
- Section 2 is identical to the pre group, Section 2 interview. The forms can be used together to assess how the child is coping with the loss/change they experienced prior to the group, compared to after they have participated in the *Give us a break!* group. (NB, these forms are only useful if they are compared with each other).

- **Parent/carer Interviews:**

Pre and post group interviews assess the views of parents/carers about how their child is coping with the loss/change they have experienced before and after the group, respectively.

- **Teacher Interviews:**

Pre and post group interviews assess the views of the teacher about how the child is functioning at school before and after the group, respectively.

You may choose to use your own evaluation method, but feedback from experienced facilitators suggests that completing a pre group interview with each pupil can help with building relationships, particularly if you do not already work in a professional capacity with the child. Completing the post group questionnaire can help to ensure that any outstanding issues are dealt with and to identify whether the child would benefit from further support.



Give us a break!

Running the programme

For each week there are several suggested activities, often on two or more related themes. These can be used flexibly according to the needs of any particular group. There is no need to use all the available material. Core tasks for each week are highlighted in **bold type** on the weekly lesson plans. The important thing is to be aware of the specific aims of each session and to remain solution focused, choosing activities and topics which in your judgement will best further these aims with your particular group. Some tasks may be used as “take home” activities if wished. These are generally indicated on the lesson plans.

Relaxation training in *Give us a break!*

Relaxation training is an important part of the *Give us a break!* programme. Two main types of relaxation techniques are introduced: muscle relaxation and visualisation. Muscle relaxation is introduced in the early weeks to help the group get a feel for what it means to relax completely. Visualisation is offered in the form of a ‘secret room’ or ‘safe place’ as a powerful tool to relieve stress, and also is used in a special way for the ‘ideal tomorrow’ activity in week 4/5, one of the central elements of the programme and one of the more difficult tasks. A group which has experienced relaxation before they encounter this will be better equipped to benefit from it. Therefore some time, however brief, should be set aside each week for the relaxation element of the programme. This can sometimes be difficult for young people but it is important to the success of the programme and therefore worth preparing and doing well.

Further guidance and suggestions on how to use the relaxation exercises and other activities can be found in the programme notes which accompany each week’s lesson plan.

Planning and review

Following each session the facilitators should get together to review the session, adding any comments for their own information in the right hand column of the lesson plan, and to make plans for the next session.

Referral for further support

If it is felt that a young person’s difficulties are such that they would benefit from further support, this should be discussed firstly with the nominated school link person and the parent or carer.

Referral can then be made for further support, if agreed, through the normal school channels.

Please note the comments about Child Protection.



**Give us
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Liaison with parents/carers

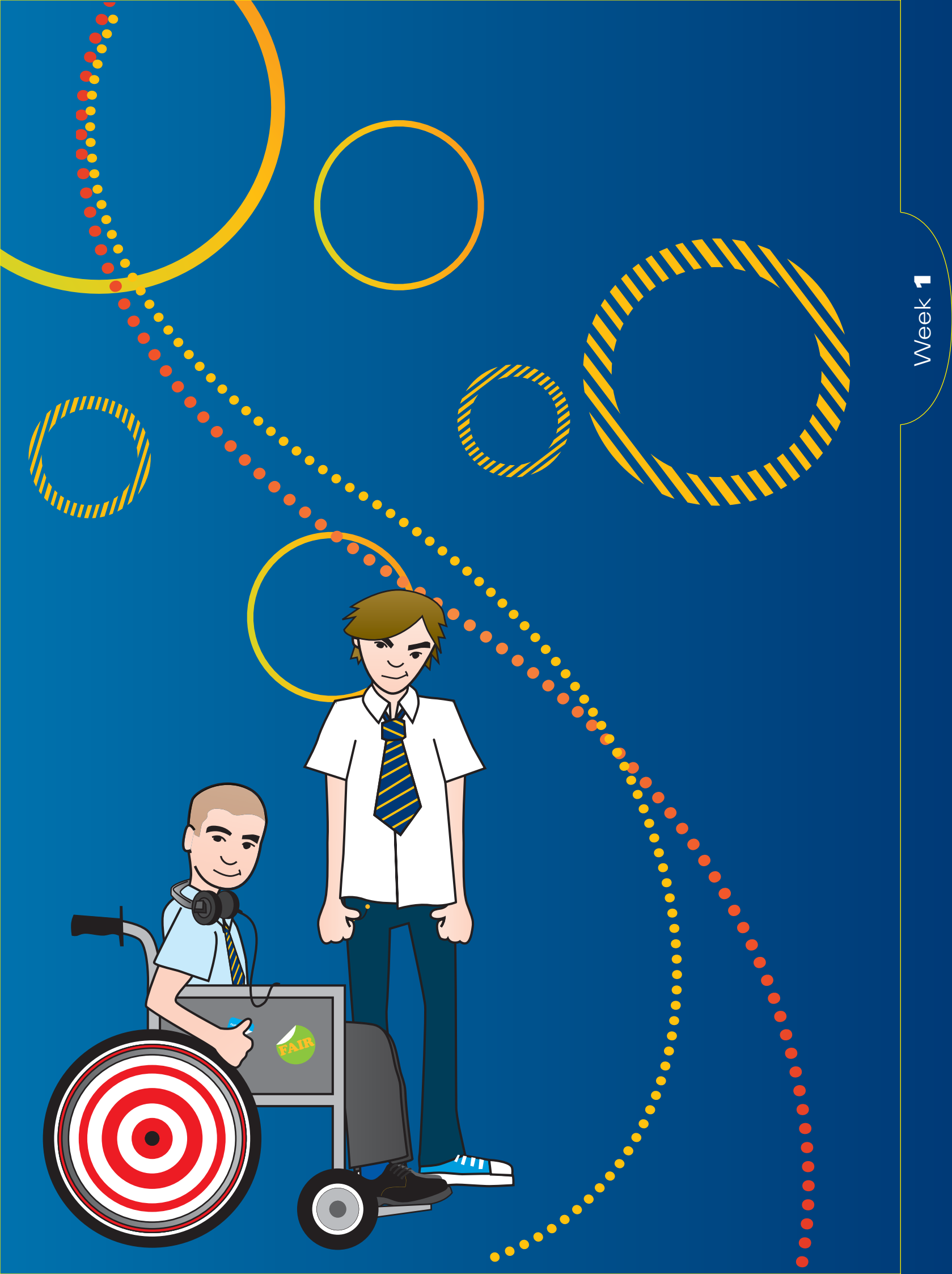
Facilitators should contact the parent/carer of prospective group members before the group begins. This can be by telephone or in person via a home visit, depending on the circumstances and time available. The pre-group questionnaire should be introduced and completed at this point with support from the facilitator if necessary.

The purpose of this initial contact is to give basic information about the group and to enlist their support. The main task is to ensure parents/carers are informed of the purpose of the group and given at least an idea of how they can help their child to benefit from it.

Included in the pack is a booklet for parents/carers which can be used in different ways. It can simply be given directly to parents/carers as a booklet at this stage, or may be used as a basis for a seminar or group session for parents/carers if wished. Further ideas on working with parents/carers, and tips on how to use the booklet are given in Appendix 2.

Parents/carers should be contacted again at the end of the programme and the post-group questionnaire completed. At this time the facilitator can offer feedback about the group, focusing on the young person's attendance and participation. In offering this feedback, please remember to respect the confidentiality of the group and the individual child. It may be helpful for the young person to be present and to express their own views about the group.

Parents/carers can help by showing an interest in the programme, asking about it and helping at home with any tasks set. However, they should be asked to respect the confidentiality of the group. It should be explained that sometimes young people will want to talk and at other times may say very little. Parents/carers should be reassured about this and asked not to press too hard if their son/daughter does not feel like talking.





Give us a break!

Week one: Getting to know you

Notes

Due to the need to deal with organisational issues, give explanations, decide on rules etc, this first session could potentially be quite long. If you wish you could either make this an extended session or divide it into two: the first consisting of introductions, explanations and rules, while the second could begin with the strength cards activity and finish with relaxation. If you do this it is best to try and run the two sessions fairly close together, perhaps on consecutive days or within the same week, to maintain continuity.

Getting to know you (Resource sheet 2)

Eight Resource sheets (2a-h) are provided for this introduction activity for variety. These can also be printed from the website with your facilitator login details. Only one sheet is required for each group member. You may wish to shorten this activity or omit it if time is limited, although even when young people know each other well they usually still enjoy carrying it out. If you do omit it, have a simple activity where each member introduces and gives some information about themselves, e.g. 'something you might not know about me is...' Don't forget to introduce yourselves to the young people, and take part yourselves in any activity! The term 'group facilitator' is probably better than 'facilitator' when explaining your role to children and young people.

Explanations

Group members will need to know when and where the group will take place, the arrangements for getting out of class if relevant and any other 'housekeeping' matters. They will of course know a little about the programme already, but a reminder should be given at this stage of the main points:

This is an 8-week programme, called 'Give us a break!' Its aims are:

- To give them a safe space (a 'break') to think about some difficult things that may have happened in their lives, e.g. someone close has died, parents/carers separated etc.
- To give them a chance to get support from each other and be with others who have had similar experiences.
- To give them the opportunity (i.e. a 'break', meaning a chance or an opening) to look positively to the future.
- To support them, if they are ready, in making positive choices for change. If by the end of the programme they have begun to change something in their life for the better, no matter how small (even if it is only a change in attitude), it will have been successful.



Give us a break!

Rules

If you wish you can provide the group with a set of rules already made up and allow them to discuss these. Generally, though, it is best if the group comes up with the rules themselves and everyone agrees. Remember you are a member of the group and are allowed to suggest rules too! Rules should be based on mutual respect and should always be expressed in a positive way, e.g. 'Listen respectfully when someone is talking' rather than 'Don't interrupt when someone is talking.' When they are agreed, the rules can be displayed in the room during each session, or if this is not possible they can be copied for everyone to keep in their folders/loose leaf binders. Refer to them if a gentle reminder is required during the programme. If rules require to be amended or added at a later stage this should be discussed and agreed with the group.

Remember to include, with sensitivity, the Child Protection requirement, emphasising that this is to ensure everyone is safe. Explain that you must tell someone if you think they or any other young person is or could be in danger. Reassure the group that if you do need to pass on any information you will only do so after discussing it privately with the group member concerned. This need not become a big issue (and should not be included in the 'rules') but it is important that everyone is aware of it.

Record keeping

Introduce the individual folders with the front page inserted (Resource sheet 1). Any papers from the introductory activity can be inserted straight away. (If a paper punch is available group members can do this easily for themselves.) The group can carefully write their names and the start date on the front page. They can decorate this page in their own preferred style either now or whenever there is any free time during the group.

It is important to set a tone of respect from the outset both for their own and for each other's folders, recognising that these may at some point contain deeply personal material. Explain that you will be keeping the folders safely locked away for them between sessions.

Tell the group about the facilitator's folder, and in particular about the individual pages. Reassure them regarding the confidentiality of the information held. (See Introduction section of this pack for an explanation of how to use these pages.)



Give us a break!

Strengths

The key aim for week one is that group members **recognise strengths in themselves and others**. This is really the heart of the first session so make sure you have enough time to explore it. Throughout this session (and indeed all sessions) you need to be looking out for evidence of strengths to discuss (and to note in each child's record page). Sometimes you can elicit a general strength from something specific, for example:

Pupil: 'I'm good at football.'

You: 'How did you get so good?'

Pupil: 'I practice every day.'

You: 'A lot of practice? So you are able to stick at something in order to improve?'

If there is time group members could make a note in their own folders/loose leaf binders of the strengths they have identified. Indeed you may prefer to use this as an activity instead of the 'make your own strength card' activity if time is short.

Make your own strength card (Resource sheet 3)

The idea in this activity is for the pupils to draw themselves demonstrating an existing strength, rather than one they would like to have. They may want to focus on one of the strengths identified in the previous activity. Depending on the group they may need some discussion about what it is that they do which shows they have this quality. They should be able to give evidence of any strength they identify. They will also need to think of a caption for their card, and some may need help with this. If this is the case try to give assistance as unobtrusively as possible, remembering that this is not the time to be working on their writing/spelling! Some older pupils may prefer to write a short descriptive paragraph rather than draw. This is ok too.

If time is short the activity may be used as a take home task, after some discussion along the lines above. Indeed this may be a good way to get parents/carers involved. If you decide to do this, as indeed with any home activities set throughout the course of the programme, do take it as seriously as any other activity. Remember to ask about it at the start of the next session and ensure that the results are placed in the individual's programme folder.

Bring a photo next week

This can be a very helpful, and powerful, way to introduce discussion of the circumstances which brought each member to the group, so do all you can to encourage the group to bring in a photo of a time in the past that they would like to remember and to tell the group about next week. If a young person says he or she does not have a photo tell them that another meaningful or special object will do, for example a card, toy or other small keepsake.



Give us a break!

Relaxation (Resource sheet 4)

There are several relaxation activities in this programme. This first exercise provides a gentle introduction by focusing on breathing. Although it is relatively short, it is worth putting in the effort to make this session a success as it will set the tone for the future.

As an introduction you could explain to the group that once they are able to relax unselfconsciously it makes it easier for them to do some of the visualisation exercises they will meet later in the programme. It is also a very useful skill to have in general, and can help you to feel more calm, confident and in control. However, it is not particularly easy for many people and requires a bit of practice before the benefits are felt.

Relaxation can be difficult for some children and we have found it works best, particularly with younger children, if they are able to completely relax by lying down. This also means they are less likely to be distracted by watching each other! If possible, provide mats and plenty of floor space so they don't touch each other. Switch off or dim any ceiling lights as they can be dazzling if you are looking up at them. We have found that most young people like some gentle music to relax to, but be aware that some prefer silence. You can suggest that they may like to close their eyes, or focus on some part of the ceiling or the room (not on another person!).

As you talk them through the activity, keep your own voice steady, calm, quiet and unhurried. Let them know that if they lose concentration at any time, it's ok – they can just lie calmly and tune in again whenever they are ready. If anyone says they can't do it, ask them just to lie quietly while the others are practising and they can join in at any time if they feel able.

Make sure there is enough time at the end for everyone to gradually become more alert and ready to end the session and return to class.

Week one: Lesson plan

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet other group members and find out what participating in the group is likely to involve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils will gain an awareness of what the group aims are. • Pupils will be able to name the other group members and give some interesting pieces of information about them. • Pupils will be able to identify the rules of the group and the reasons behind them. • Pupils will have the ability to describe what a strength is and be able to list different strengths which people may possess. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitators introduce themselves and give a little explanation of what the group is going to be about. • Pupils introduce themselves. • Pupils participate in an ice-breaker/getting to know you activity. • Facilitators facilitate a discussion amongst pupils regarding the rules of the group. • Group facilitator facilitates discussion on strengths: what are they, who has them, how do you get them etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource sheets 2a-2h • Pens, pencils. • Flipchart. • Pens. 	



Week one: Lesson plan (continued)

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils will be able to recognise their own strengths. (Core skill) • Pupils will be able to identify strengths in others and accept the strengths others see in them. (Core skill) • Pupils will be able to participate in simple relaxation techniques. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils choose the three strength cards which best describes them and discuss their choice with the rest of the group. • Pupils choose the one strength card most relevant for them and design a new strength card with this motto and a picture depicting them demonstrating this strength. Strength card is kept in pupil's individual folder. <i>(may be used as take home project if wished)</i> • Compliments session – all pupils have to compliment one other in the group about something they have noticed during the session. • For next week: Ask group to bring in a photograph of when they were younger which they will be asked to show everyone and explain why they chose it. • Finishing off activity – simple relaxation activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength Cards. • Paper, pencils, rubbers, felt pens. • Individual folders. • Resource sheet 3: Make your own strength card. • Resource sheet 4: Breathing exercise. • Relaxing music. • CD player. 	







Give us a break!

Week two: Personal experiences and feelings (1)

Notes

Key activities this week are **sharing stories** and **recognising similar experiences of others**.

Rules

Before starting this week's session, set up the flipchart paper with the rules made in week one, and/or give out sheets with the rules to be kept in individual folders. It may help the group to feel safe and settled if you can quickly recap on the rules, and check that they are still relevant or need to be amended in some way.

Strengths

It may be helpful to remind pupils that they identified strengths in themselves last week. By recapping names and strengths, ask the group to identify who the particular strengths belong to. This will assist the group to remember each others names, and consolidate the group's acknowledgement of their identified strengths.

As an alternative, if last week's strength card activity was to be done at home, these could be looked at, discussed and placed in individual folders.

Although the topic of 'strengths' will not formally appear again until the end of the programme, throughout this session, and every session, continue to look for evidence of strengths and make a note of these in your record page for that child. Also look out for, and make a note of, things that the pupil is already doing towards an improvement in their situation. You can then feed back these observations to the pupils at the 'Encouragement' time at the end of each session.

Photo or Meaningful Object

If any pupil did not bring a photo or object, ask them to think of a happy time when they wished they could have taken a photo. Ask them to describe who was there, where it was, what kind of day it was, how they were feeling at the time etc.

It may be that this activity leads on naturally to discussion of the particular experiences of loss which brought each person to the group. If so, it would be best to leave out the Life Journey activity so as not to interrupt the flow.



Give us a break!

Good listening (Resource sheet 5)

You may find from your experience of carrying out the above activity that the young people are having trouble listening respectfully to each other.

For some young people truly listening to someone else's story is very difficult. This is particularly so for those who have experienced loss and trauma in their own lives. The pain they feel can be so overwhelming that they can be quite self-focused, making it hard for them to 'decentre' in order to pay good attention to what others are saying. Throughout the group it is crucially important that the young people feel heard and supported, not only by the parents/carers but also by their peers.

Fortunately, listening is a skill which can be learnt, so if you feel that the group needs it, use the 'good listening' activity (Resource sheets 5, 5a) at this point, before introducing the central theme of 'Sharing our stories'. Don't worry if by doing this you need to rearrange activities over the next week or so. It will be worth the time and effort spent on it now.

One advantage of doing this activity is that it creates a reference point for the group which you can use as a reminder of how to listen well at other times throughout the group.

Sharing our stories

This is the central theme of today's session. Encourage good listening and respect for each other throughout this activity. A good way to introduce the topic of loss and negative change is to demonstrate a life journey on the flip chart:

Life Journey

Mark 'Birth' at the beginning, and 'Today' at the end, connected by a line (possibly a road, railtrack or river etc). Along this line place a mark for sad/happy events, or anything important that has made a difference in that life. Demonstrate with events from your own life (made up if wished) including important milestones and both happy and sad events. Each pupil should then be issued with Resource sheet 6, pencils/pens to make their own Life Journey time line. They may wish to match up their photo or memento with a particular point on their line. If you prefer, you can give pupils a blank A3 sheet for this activity.

Life Journey is a very useful activity which can help pupils focus on the significant events in their lives, and is a good preparation for the sharing which follows. However, depending on the size of your group, there may not be time for pupils to complete this, and if so it will be sufficient if you can demonstrate the time line. On the other hand if you feel that the group needs more time to prepare for sharing, it would be perfectly acceptable to extend the time spent on the Life Journey, and perhaps even put off sharing altogether until next week.



Give us a break!

When you feel the group is ready, explain that they are going to share their personal experiences of loss, bereavement etc. emphasising that pupils can share as much or as little as they wish. You can begin by giving your own account of a personal experience of loss or change that is appropriate to be heard and understood by the group. Thereafter each pupil has the opportunity to volunteer their story. They may wish to use their Life Journey sheet to help, even if it is not yet completed. It is most important during this activity that the children experience being actively listened to, so responses that validate any feelings being expressed by the child would be helpful. It is best if the group don't interrupt by asking questions, unless it is to clarify understanding of what the pupil has said. The group may need guidance to remember that the child is in control of what they wish to divulge.

Feelings Word search (Resource sheet 7)

If time allows, this activity assists in validating some of the feelings that may have been experienced by the young people in response to the adverse events in their lives. It also helps by providing them with language to describe feelings which they perhaps have not articulated before. This could be a good take home project if time is short.

Encouragement Session

An opportunity to thank one another for participating in this week's session, and to give the group feedback about strengths that you and they have identified this week. Encourage the group to continue to notice strengths in themselves and others from the group that they may have contact with over the coming week.

Finishing off activity

If sharing has taken place it is essential to plan time for an ending activity to allow group members to 'switch off' from the intensity of the earlier work. There are two options here. You can use either or both. The Balloon Juggle activity (Resource sheet 8) introduces a bit of fun and is helpful in lifting the mood at the end of this session. However, depending on the 'temperature' of the group, it would be just as appropriate for you to use a relaxation session such as the breathing exercise (Resource sheet 4) from week 1 or Progressive Muscle Relaxation from week 3 (Resource sheet 9).

Week 2: Personal experiences and feelings (1)

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage pupils to discuss their experiences and validate their feelings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils will be able to identify their own and others strengths. Pupils will be able to describe a time in their life when they were happy. Pupils will be able to listen actively and with respect. <p>Sharing our stories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils will be able to identify important events in their own Life Journey. (Core skill) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator recaps names and strengths identified last week and pupils have to try to identify who it is. <p style="text-align: center;">Or</p> <p>Discuss take home project if appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator asks each member of the group to show their photo and describe why they chose it, what it reminds them of, who's in it, how did they feel when it was taken etc. Good listening activity (use if necessary). Facilitator introduces idea of a Life Journey and demonstrates using flipchart and events from their own life. Pupils can then try creating their own Life Journey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photos, mementoes brought by group members (including facilitators). Resource sheet 5a, 5b. Flipchart and pens Resource sheet 6, pens, pencils, felt tips for each group member. 	



Week 2: Personal experiences and feelings (1) continued



Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils will be able to share their experiences with others. (core skill) • Pupils will recognise that other group members have had similar experiences and feelings as themselves, and that these feelings are completely normal. (core skill) • Pupils will be able to co-operate on an active task. • Pupils will extend their experience of relaxation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator explains they are going to share their personal experiences of loss, bereavement etc. emphasising that pupils can share as much or as little as they want to. If they do not feel able to discuss it now, they can pass. Facilitator begins the discussion by sharing a personal narrative of their own. During the activity the Facilitator notes down strengths and resilience about group members. Pupils constantly reassured that any feelings they are describing are ok. • Pupils complete a feelings word search. <i>(may be used as take home project)</i> • Finishing off activity: Balloon Juggle. <p style="text-align: center;">And/Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxation: see notes for this week. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource sheet 7. • Pencils, felt tip pens. • Individual folders. • Balloons. • Resource sheet 8. • Stomach, relaxation breathing exercise (Resource sheet 4). • Progressive muscle relaxation (Resource sheet 9). 	





Give us a break!

Week three: Personal experiences and feelings (2)

Notes

This week's key activities are **discussion of feelings** and **progressive muscle relaxation**.

Recap on wordsearch activity

If necessary this can be completed by the group members as they arrive, although hopefully it will have been done by most at home. A brief discussion of the words found, and their meanings, takes place and the sheets are then put in the individual folders.

An alternative activity might be to complete the Life Journey sheets if not finished at the previous session. These should also be placed in the folders where they can be referred to for the 'Sharing our stories' activity if this is being done later.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) (Resource sheet 9)

This could be moved to the end of this week's session if preferred, especially if some members have still to share their experiences. It can take a full 10-15 minutes. If there is to be no further sharing of stories this week, relaxation can now take place.

Resource sheet 9 gives the script for this exercise. The aim is to allow the participants to experience the contrast between tension and relaxation. Ensure there is sufficient time at the end for each individual to relax on their own, and then for the group to gradually become aware of their surroundings and come back to the present.

Once they have experienced what 'relaxation' feels like the group will be better able to practise it by themselves at home. Encourage them to try some relaxation in between group sessions. They can use either the breathing or muscle relaxing exercise, whichever they find works best for them.

Note: if you used this exercise successfully last week and would like to try something else you could substitute Mental Relaxation (Resource sheet 17) if you wish. However, it is absolutely fine to use PMR again.

Links to music to accompany this exercise can be found on our website www.giveusabreak.org.uk.



Give us a break!

Sharing our stories (continued from week 2)

If necessary, continue with this activity from last week. Some who may not have opted to share last week may now be willing to do so. However, this must be their own choice. If a young person does not want to share, firstly acknowledge this, and say it is ok to share as much or as little as they wish. Say you will chat with them privately before the next session. During this chat:

- Validate their choice not to share.
- Discuss with them their feelings about it.
- Check in a sensitive way whether the young person still wants to be part of the group – he or she may still be benefitting from it, even though they do not want to share at this time.

Discussion of feelings/feelings word wall

Introduce this topic with reference to the various stories the group members have shared, and the strong feelings that can be associated with these life events. They need to understand that people can experience a wide range of feelings and that all of these feelings are ok. There are no ‘wrong’ feelings, and all should be validated. For example, some young people may be confused because at times they feel happy, even after the death of a loved one, and may feel as if they have somehow betrayed the person who has died.

Word Wall

Have a large sheet of paper ready, e.g a flip chart or wall poster. Depending on your artistic skills you can, if you wish, draw a ‘wall’ of bricks. Everyone contributes to covering the wall with feelings words. Give examples by sharing some of your own feelings, and/or providing a start by saying something like: “Some people have felt ...” You can either write the words, graffiti-like, directly on the ‘wall’ or write them on post-its and stick these to the wall. The resource materials in the pack provide a wide range of vocabulary (look at the Bingo cards on Resource sheets 12a-d). Encourage the group to talk about their own actual feelings, either now or in the past. Try to help them use a range of vocabulary. It is important to include some **positive** words, so if these do not emerge naturally then suggest a few.

During the week, write up all the words on to a sheet for each group member to keep as a word bank in their folder. Add another list of more words if you wish, especially if all the words chosen by the children express negative feelings.



Give us a break!

Further activities

Several activities are suggested for this week. They need not all be used, and you should choose those most appropriate for your group, bearing in mind the main focus of this week is to explore, acknowledge and validate the many different feelings young people may experience, as well as enriching their emotional vocabulary.

Feelings poem (Resource sheet 10) and 'My life before and after...' (Resource sheets 11a and b):

Choose one of these activities rather than trying to do both. Either would be a good way to round off the discussion and will also provide a record of the activity in each member's individual folder. Some discussion of these activities will be required. For the poem, group members should be encouraged to choose a feeling or emotion that is significant for them, rather than having one arbitrarily assigned to them by the facilitator. Try to include some time at the end of this activity for the group to share what they have done if they wish, or perhaps provide a display area where their work can be seen.

Using the poetry activity:

1. 'Acrostic' poem: the chosen word is written down the left hand side of the page and each letter starts a line of the poem. It is not necessary for the lines to rhyme, but they should relate in some way to the theme and to the personal experiences of the writer.

For example:

*Sometimes I am lonely
And look on others playing carefree in the park
Desolate, I turn away.*

Here is another version of an acrostic poem:

*I sit **H**ere alone,
My thoughts **U**ncertain, my feelings bruised.
People **R**eject me because of what happened,
But I know that **T**ime can heal.*

Note: Children often use the word 'sad' as a substitute for more specific, and therefore more powerful, adjectives. The act of creating a poem such as those above encourages them to explore the strong feelings which can lie unspoken beneath a conventional choice of words.



Give us a break!

2. 'List' poem: the poem starts with the line as described on the Resource sheet, then each subsequent line provides an example or illustration (in words, of course!) of the chosen feeling. There can be as many or as few lines as you wish, though encourage participants to think of at least three or four.

For example:

I feel scared...
I feel scared when I am alone.
I feel scared in the dark.
I feel scared when I think of the past.
I feel scared – sometimes.

This type of poem tends to be a little easier for younger children than the acrostic poem.

Of course, poems can use more positive feelings too, and children can write as many as they like! If they are confident, a good take home activity could be to write a poem **on a positive theme** using either the acrostic or the list format.

Using 'My life before and after...'

This drawing activity may be suitable for younger children, or if you are less confident yourself in using poetry as a medium. However, although simpler than poetry, be aware that this is another exercise which can arouse strong emotions. Ensure that group members are given space and support to deal with these. Calming music played in the background may help.

Feelings Bingo/Charades (Resource sheets 12a-d and 13a-h)

Children usually enjoy these activities, especially the Bingo feelings game. They may be used if time allows, but are not essential. It would be possible to use one of these instead of, or before, the 'word wall' activity for children whose vocabulary is particularly restricted as they offer the opportunity to encounter and discuss many new words.

Finally

Try to include a brief 'encouragement' session at the end, and continue to note strengths on your record pages. This need not be a long activity. Strength cards may be used or not, as you wish. As the young people become better known to you and each other, many positive qualities will come to light which can be acknowledged and recorded.

Week 3: Personal experiences and feelings (2)

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To extend pupils' experience and skills in relaxation techniques. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils will be able to identify new words learnt from their wordsearch activity. Pupils will be able to use the progressive muscle relaxation technique to help them relax. (core skill) Sharing our stories (contd): Pupils will be able to recognise that other members of the group have had similar experiences and feelings, and that these feelings are completely normal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils discuss wordsearch activity and place sheets in their folders. Relaxation exercise. If all group members did not get a chance to tell their story last week recap last week's session and remind pupils that they can disclose as much or as little of their experience as they wish. Other group facilitator to start the discussion by sharing an experience of loss. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take home activity: wordsearch sheets. Resource sheet 9. Complete Life Journey Resource sheets. 	



Week 3: Personal experiences and feelings (2) continued

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
<p>To develop pupils' emotional literacy so they have a greater awareness of, and ability to express, their feelings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils will be able to express the way they are feeling using appropriate vocabulary. (core skill) • Pupils will be able to express their emotions relating to their loss through poetry. • Pupils will be able to come to terms with the fact they have suffered a loss of some kind and things have changed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are asked to write up on the word wall words which express feelings they have experienced to build up a word bank. They write directly on the 'wall' or use post-its. Facilitators offer other words they feel may be missing. Facilitator types up word bank and gives group members a copy the following week. • Pupils choose a feeling word relevant to them and create an acrostic poem or a list poem. Pupils are given the opportunity to share their poem with the group or display it on the wall. Poem is then put in their individual folders. <i>(may be used as take home activity)</i> • Pupils draw a picture of how their life looked before the loss and how it looks after the loss. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-it notes (if using). • Flipchart or wall chart to form Word Wall. • Resource sheet 10. • Paper, pencils, felt pens, crayons. • Individual folders. • Resource sheets 11a,b. • Paper, pencils, felt pens, crayons. 	



Week 3: Personal experiences and feelings (2) continued

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils will be able to appropriately use a richer vocabulary of 'feeling' words.• Pupils will be reminded of their own and others' strengths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils participate in feelings game. For example, Feelings Bingo/ Feelings Charades.• Compliments session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resource sheets 12a-12d and 13a-13h. Charades/Bingo cards and Bingo Boards.• Strength cards, if wished.	







Give us a break!

Week four: Change and looking to the future

Notes

The key activities for this week are **My ideal tomorrow** and the preparatory activity **Things we can/cannot change**. These ideas are at the heart of the programme and will probably take some time, particularly the 'ideal tomorrow' visualisation activity. However, as they are so central to the programme it is worth spending time on them, even if other things need to be left out. If you feel that work from previous weeks is unfinished it may be best to complete it this week, and perhaps only use the preparatory activity 'Things we can/cannot change' and the relaxation session. You can then focus on the 'ideal tomorrow' visualisation the following week.

Recap

It may be helpful to begin with a group discussion to focus on this week's work. The discussion could recap on strengths that are known to exist among participants in the group. Following this, ask the group to remember some of the different feelings relating to their loss that they identified last week. Give out the word bank and allow any additions. If you have added any yourself be prepared to explain any words pupils may not be familiar with.

It would be helpful to introduce here the concept that feelings can change in relation to a loss which cannot change. Not only can people experience many different emotions at a time of change, but feelings can and do change over time.

Things we can/cannot change (Resource sheet 14a-d)

This activity reinforces the above concept. It needs to be prepared in advance by copying and cutting up Resource sheets 14c and 14d into individual pictures and placing them in an envelope for each person. After discussion they can place the pictures on the relevant sheet (14a or 14b) and stick down.

Hint: it is helpful, and saves time, if any sheets to be placed in the individual folders are pre-punched before the session starts. If not possible, just leave a punch where anyone can use it. With 'Things we can/cannot change', as with some other activities, it is best if the sheets are punched so that they can be seen at the same time when placed in the folder, i.e. a right-hand and left-hand page.

The discussion which follows this activity, and the flipchart list, could be left until next week if necessary in order to leave enough time for the 'ideal tomorrow' activity.



Give us a break!

Ideal Tomorrow (Resource sheet 15)

This activity is a key element of the whole programme. It consists of two parts: visualising a hopeful future and sharing that vision with the group.

When introducing the concept of an ideal tomorrow without the problem, it has to be clear to pupils that the future they describe must relate to their present circumstances i.e. living in the same house, with the same people, at the same school etc. This activity does not allow for a fantasy future. This is why the activity is called 'my ideal tomorrow' (rather than ideal future) – to help focus the mind on the immediate future. Ask young people to visualise how things will be when the group ends, looking into a TV screen and seeing themselves at the end of the group. You may wish to refer back to the previous activity regarding things we can/cannot change.

A calm, relaxed and focused atmosphere is required for this activity to be successful. You may find it helpful to use some of the relaxation techniques from previous weeks in preparation for the visualisation exercise which follows. (If you do, leave out the suggested relaxation activity at the end of this session.)

Get pupils to lie on the floor as for previous relaxation sessions, and when they are relaxed ask them to imagine they are looking into the immediate future and seeing themselves happy one day. As suggested above, children can have difficulty visualising a realistic picture of themselves far in the future and if asked to do this they are likely to resort to fantasising about being a millionaire, famous footballer, pop star etc. So stick to the immediate future, as the purpose is to help the pupils experience in their minds how things in their present situation could be better, and to use this experience to develop a goal which is clear and attainable.



Give us a break!

My ideal tomorrow

As with all the relaxation exercises, try to create a calm, unhurried and serene atmosphere. Use a low, clear, relaxed voice. Remind anyone having difficulty with the task that it's ok to just lie quietly and join in when they feel able. Describe the scene using the following script:

“Let's imagine we have reached the last session of *Give us a break!* and that you've been practising using your strengths and skills, like relaxation (etc) in ways that have worked really well for you. The result is that you're really happy about how your life is going now. Your life is going in much better ways – ways that you notice and all the people who are important to you also notice.

Imagine a video of how your life will look at that time – let's see how an ideal day will look – starting from getting up out of bed in the morning.

- What will the video be saying/showing as your day goes on. What will **you** be doing? What will **you** be seeing?
- What will **you** be noticing that tells you **you** are much happier with how your life is going at that point? At breakfast time? And going through your day from there? At school?
- What will your family and friends be noticing then?
- If your ideal day is on a school day, what will your close friend(s) notice that's different from how things have been in the past? What will **you** be noticing?
- If your ideal day is a weekend day, what will your family and friend(s) notice that's different from how things have been in the past? What will **you** be noticing? What will relatives (aunts/uncles/cousins) be noticing then? And what else? And what else?.....”

You can lead the young people through their ideal tomorrow, focusing on what they will be doing and how they will be feeling. Help the young people to develop a rich and detailed picture in their minds of the ideal tomorrow by offering prompts, such as “What is the first sign that things have changed? What else? How are you feeling? Who notices? How can they tell? What are they doing/saying? How will they describe the difference? Who else notices? What tells them their ideal tomorrow has happened?” Go through the day like this, focusing on the young person's feelings and interactions with others more than on actual events, although of course these are necessary to set the scene, etc.

Language: use 'immediate' language as in the example above, i.e. present or future tense wherever possible rather than 'would', 'might', etc. If someone says, 'I'll be happy', find out **how they 'do' happy**. If they say something won't be happening then – find out what will be happening instead, in videotalk terms.

Use Resource sheet 15 immediately after visualisation to allow everyone to record their vision – allow either or both drawing/writing. Follow up with sharing. This means each young person will have a note of the most important/striking features of their 'ideal tomorrow' when it is their turn to share.



Give us a break!

It may be that during the sharing a young person will say their 'ideal tomorrow' is that everything goes back to how it was before, e.g. a person who has died is alive again. If this is the case, you could gently say something like: "I know you're aware that can't happen, so maybe you can imagine yourself feeling the way you did then and doing some of the things you did that made you happy at that time?" Take some time to help them see how this might work in their specific situation. You want the group members to feel at the end of this activity that the future is hopeful and that they themselves have the power to make changes, even though these ideas may not be explicitly stated at this point.

It is a good idea to make notes for the children's individual record pages if everyone is happy for you to do so. This will be helpful as a reminder for the following sessions.

Noticing task (Resource sheet 16)

The main benefit of this activity is to begin to plant the seed of the idea that things are already moving in the direction of the preferred future, and to sharpen the group's awareness of any signs that this is happening. When setting goals (weeks 5 and 6) it will usually be easier to continue with something which has already started to happen. It is therefore rather different from previous 'take home' tasks in that it is an integral part of the group rather than an extra activity.

Only use the noticing task this week when you have completed the visualisation and sharing. Otherwise another take home activity, perhaps from previous weeks, could be used.

Encouragement session

As in previous weeks, group members give positive feedback about each other's strengths, particularly in relation to their participation in today's session, and to any positive developments noted. Strength cards may be used if wished.

Week 4: Change and looking to the future

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make pupils aware that change occurs in everyone's life. Some of these changes we can't control but there are others we can. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils will be able to identify and express their feelings and emotions more clearly using the appropriate vocabulary. Pupils will be able to give examples of some events/things which they can/cannot change. (core skill) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefly recap last week's session by asking pupils to remember some of the feelings they had after their loss. Pupils are then given the typed up "feelings" wordbank from week 3 and asked to highlight all the feelings they have experienced during and since their personal experience. Remind the group that all feelings are acceptable. Pupils place sheets in their folders. And/or Discuss poetry take home activity if given. Facilitator introduces this week's topic by looking at how our feelings may have changed since the loss. Discussion of things you can and cannot change, using the Resource sheets as a prompt. Pupils complete their sheets and place them in their folders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wordbank of feelings vocabulary. Highlighter pens/coloured pencils/crayons. Flipchart, pens, glue sticks. Individual folders. Resource sheets 14a-d. 	



Week 4: Change and looking to the future continued

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils will be able to name different activities which may help to change the way they are feeling. • Pupils will be able to describe in detail what their ideal tomorrow will look like. (core skill) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss things we can change/do to make ourselves feel better, eg. Listen to music, meet friends, go to cinema etc. A list is created on flipchart, typed up and given to pupils to put in their folders the following week. • Ideal tomorrow: Pupils asked to imagine they could look into a TV screen and see their ideal (yet realistic) future. (Please refer to notes for this week) • Pupils are asked to draw their ideal tomorrow and write a short description to go along with it. • Discussion and sharing then takes place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flipchart, pens. • Resource sheet 15. • Pens, pencils, felt tips. 	



Week 4: Change and looking to the future continued

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils will be able to identify small changes that have occurred since their loss, including times when they don't feel as upset/sad. Pupils will be able to identify strengths in other members of the group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator asks group members what has already happened that tells you things are changing? (i.e. moving closer to your Ideal tomorrow.) Facilitator highlights the fact that the feelings of some group members may have started to change since the loss, e.g. they don't always feel so sad. Facilitator gives the group a homework task of noticing the times when things are a little better, e.g. they feel happier or they don't think about the loss. Resource sheet 16 is given out and discussed. <i>(take home activity)</i> Encouragement session. Finishing off activity: relaxation exercise. If you used the 'ideal tomorrow' task which involves visualisation (itself a form of relaxation) you may wish to omit this activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource sheet 16. Resource sheet 17. 	







Give us a break!

Week five: Goal setting (1)

Notes

Key activities for this week (and next week) are **scaling** and **goal setting**. If the scaling exercise seems difficult for your group at this time, don't worry. Introduce it and give it a try so they become familiar with the concept but then let them move onto the more concrete goals ladder and goal setting. There will be the opportunity to revisit scaling next week.

Recap

If the activity 'identifying things that help us feel better' was done last week, a brief recap is all that is needed. Otherwise use this as your introductory activity.

Noticing task (Resource sheet 16)

As you discuss this take home activity with the group, try to help them see that, because nothing stays the same, in their lives there will be some signs of change, even if very small at present, that show they are already beginning to move towards the ideal tomorrow which they identified last week. Discuss the 'ideal tomorrow' visualisation - use your individual notes pages if necessary - to try and create a positive and hopeful atmosphere. This is a good preparatory activity for the scaling exercise which follows.

Scaling exercise (Resource sheet 23)

This can be a very powerful exercise, bridging the gap that exists between the young person's present reality and the preferred future which they have identified. It opens up possibilities and signals to the young person that things not only can change, but are already changing. At the same time it reinforces the message of empowerment conveyed by the emphasis on personal strengths throughout the programme.

When presented with the scale very few see themselves at zero - most will say they are at 2 or 3, or perhaps higher. You therefore have the opportunity to ask what is happening to keep them at this point (and not at a lower point on the scale). In your questioning try to help the individual focus on what he or she is doing to contribute to this success, rather than on external factors over which they have no control. If necessary remind them of the 'things we can/cannot change' exercise from previous weeks.

For each individual, focus on what needs to happen to move up one point on the scale - don't be tempted at this stage to take it further. Some may not be ready to think about moving forward just yet. In this case reinforce how well they are doing to have reached this point and ask them to continue over the coming week to look out for signs that tell them they are moving forward - in other words give a 'noticing' task.

Further help in using solution focused 'scaling' questioning is provided in the facilitators' training course.



Give us a break!

Goals ladder and goal setting (Resource sheet 18a, 18b)

There have been several activities throughout the programme which can help pupils deal with this exercise successfully. They can be reminded of these: recognition of their strengths; noticing what is already happening; recognition of things they can do that make them feel better. The questioning used in the scaling activity also helps in preparing the group for this exercise.

There are 2 possible ways to complete the goals ladder:

1. Simply start at the bottom and ask the pupils to write their first goal at No.1, moving up a number as each goal is achieved.
2. The ladder can be linked with the scaling exercise. For example, if they have identified that they are at 3 on the scale, their goal would be written on step 4 of the ladder. When this goal is achieved the next step would be on step 5 and so on.

The second method allows the pupils, if they wish, to write on the previous steps the key strengths which have helped them to reach their current point on the scale (step 3 in the example).

There is no need to complete every step on the ladder – ten is an arbitrary number after all – but help them to see each step as progress towards their vision. For this week they need only identify one goal, e.g. the first step.

When choosing a goal for this week, encourage the group to keep it realistic. This can be done by making the success criteria ('how will you know...?') clear, concrete and observable by themselves or others.

The take home activity for this week is the task they have set themselves in this exercise. Pupils can take home their 'goal setting' sheet with their chosen target written in – ask them to be sure to bring it back next week – or they can leave it with you for safekeeping.

The Secret Room (Resource sheet 19)

If pupils have experienced previous relaxation exercises they should have little difficulty with this. Many find this the most effective method of relaxation. It can be very helpful in combating stress, either used simply as a means of 'getting away from it all' or to provide a safe place where one can retreat in the mind to work through problems.

Week 5: Goal setting (1)

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage pupils to set goals which are achievable so they can experience success and change in moving forward. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils will be able to identify things they can do to help change the way they feel. Pupils will be able to identify the times when they feel most upset and recognise that they can do more of the things that make them feel happy. Pupils will be able to identify where they are on the scale just now and give reasons for why they are there. (core skill) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap last week's session by asking the pupils what kinds of things they can do to help change how they are feeling and what they had decided their ideal tomorrow would look like. Facilitator gives out list of suggestions from previous week for pupils to keep in their individual folders. Discuss noticing task set last week. Facilitator asks questions relating to when they feel less sad: how long does this last for? what are you doing at this time? Try to encourage pupils to see that by doing more of the things that make them feel good and less of the things that make them feel bad, they can begin to change. Group facilitator asks each person in the group scaling questions. For example, "On a scale of 0-10 with 0 being the worst that things have been in your life and 10 representing your ideal tomorrow, where are you today? So what is it you're doing that means you're at 3 ...and not at 2? So if you're on 3 what do you think you will be doing differently when you reach 4? What can you do to help move up to 4?" Group facilitators should try to encourage other group members to remind pupils of their strengths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource sheet 23. 	



Week 5: Goal setting (1) continued

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils will be able to identify a goal which will help them move towards the next point on the scale. (core skill) Pupils will be able to use visualisation to relax and/or to help them cope better with stress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils are asked to complete a 'goals ladder' They can either start at the bottom and write their first goal at No.1, or the ladder can be linked with the scaling exercise (see notes pages). Pupils keep their 'goals ladder' in their individual folders. If any pupils are hesitant or resistant to setting goals, they could be given a noticing task for the following week. <i>(take home activity)</i> Encouragement session as before if wished. Finishing off activity: relaxation 'The Secret Room'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource sheets 18a, 18b. Individual folders. CD player. Relaxing music. Resource sheet 19. 	







**Give us
a break!**

Week six: Goal setting (2)

Notes

Key tasks for this week are essentially the same as last week: **scaling** and **goal setting**.

Recap

Let each group member tell how they got on with the task they had set for themselves. Goal setting sheets can be placed in their folders.

Scaling and goal setting

Review scaling and goals from week 5. New goal setting sheets may be required for this week, or goals can be continued on the original sheet. This week should see a slight shift in focus from the individual to the group. In other words the group can be seen as a source of help and encouragement to each member as he or she works on their targets. Ask the individual if he or she would like help from the others to choose a goal for this week. You can also ask the group to remind him or her of any particular strengths they have noticed that will help the pupil to reach that goal.

Once again the take home activity will be the goal set for this week.

Helium stick (Resource sheet 20)

An activity which encourages working together to solve a problem. Try not to intervene too soon with your own suggestions, but encourage discussion among the group. However, it can be a frustrating activity so ensure that you don't leave them for too long! This is not a 'trick question' and there is no clever answer. It may help, though, to reduce the numbers working on it and see whether a solution can be found in this way.

Encouragement session

This activity is particularly relevant as the programme draws towards a close. If you have not used it regularly during other weeks try to include a short session this week.

Relaxation

You can use any of the previous relaxation sessions this week, according to the group's preference.

Week 6: Goal setting (2)

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to encourage pupils to see they can change how they are feeling by making changes in their life through the setting of achievable goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils will be able to identify any progress they have made towards achieving their goals and the reasons for this change. (core skill) Pupils will be able to identify their position on the scale and justify why this is the same/different to previously. They will also be able to identify new targets or the next steps towards change for themselves. (core skill) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap on last week's session looking at where pupils were on the scale of 0-10. Group discussion on how well they did with the goals they had set themselves last week. Pupils may want to look back at their 'ideal tomorrow' before they do the scaling question again. Repeat the scaling questions exercise and try to encourage the pupils to identify a new goal/task which will help them move towards the next rung of their ladder. If pupils were not successful in reaching the goal set the previous week, encourage them to think of a different task which may help them work towards the next rung of the ladder. Or if they are not ready to set a new goal/task they can be given a noticing task. Pupils can use worksheets to write down a list of possible solutions if that helps. Pupils write down their next goal on their 'goals ladder'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Last week's Goal Setting sheets. Resource sheet 23. Resource sheets 18a, 18b. 	



Week 6: Goal setting (2) continued

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils will experience cooperation and problem solving as a group. • Pupils will experience the satisfaction of completing any unfinished work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helium Stick: all stand in two lines facing each other and try together to place the stick on the ground. Easy? Wait and see! • If time permits, let everyone finish off any worksheets or activities still outstanding in their folders. <li style="text-align: center;">Or • Use a group game you may have previously left out, e.g. Feelings Bingo. • Encouragement session. • Finishing off activity: relaxation 'The secret room' or relaxation activity of choice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource sheet 20. • Thin stick about 1.5-2 metres long. • CD player. • Relaxing music. • Resource sheet 18 or as desired. 	







Give us a break!

Week seven: Looking back: how far have we come?

Notes

The main focus of this week is **recognition of the progress** each group member has made since the start of the programme and acknowledgement of the strengths each of them possesses and has developed over the group.

There should be a feeling of bringing things to a satisfactory close, so a recap on goals – setting new ones if appropriate – is followed by each member sorting out and completing work in their folder.

Everyone should be encouraged to see the forthcoming end of the group as the beginning of the next step: using the skills they have learned to continue to make progress independently towards their goals. If they wish, they can start a new section in their folders ready to take away with them to be used to record their continuing progress after the group ends.

Praise and encouragement

For this activity the facilitator's folder can be used quite openly, almost ceremoniously, if you wish. There is something very powerful about the written word, and all the positive things noted take on a special significance simply because they have been recorded.

Make sure all understand that this is not a contest. Everyone has come to the group with a different set of circumstances, strengths, needs and difficulties or problems. Everyone has tried their best in the context of their unique situation and deserves respect, understanding and positive regard.

Ensure all remarks are based on evidence. Children and young people are quick to recognise and reject flattery or insincerity. Very often low self esteem causes them to reject even sincere praise. This is why it is very important to provide specific examples of when they showed particular strengths. Doing so makes these strengths much more likely to be accepted and internalised.

Strength Cards and What I've achieved (Resource sheet 21)

Move on straight away to the Strength Card activity – this should follow on easily – then after discussion let everyone complete Resource sheet 21 for their folders: 'What I've Achieved'. In particular, young people may require support to complete the second part of the sheet ('What I did that I didn't think I could do').



Give us a break!

Plans for next week

Allow the group as far as possible to decide what to do. You may need to impose certain restrictions (or they may be imposed on you!) such as time or place. Try to find out beforehand what is likely to be allowed and what budget (if any) will be available. If you are planning a trip remember that parental permission will be needed.

Trust Game (Resource sheet 22)

A very good way to round off this session. Although it involves everyone in an active way, it should be a calming, reassuring experience as it allows the caring and trust which has hopefully been built up among the members of the group to be felt by all.

Some gentle, calming music may be helpful for this activity.

Please be aware that if you have a young person/persons with physical disabilities in your group this activity may need to be adapted or may not be appropriate.

Week 7: Looking back: How far have we come?

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help pupils identify the progress and changes they have made since joining the group in week 1. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils will be able to accurately articulate how well they achieved their goals. Pupils will be able to identify appropriate new goals for themselves. Pupils experience the satisfaction of seeing all their work neatly arranged in their folders. Pupils will be able to identify the progress they and others have made since starting the group. (core skill) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap on last week's session and discussion of how well pupils got on with their goals. Group facilitator asks the scaling question again and pupils set new goals which are recorded on their 'goals ladder'. Pupils are encouraged to continue working towards their goals independently after the programme ends. Give pupils the opportunity to finish off any worksheets not completed. All sheets are now placed in individual folders, and folders are completed and tidied. Group facilitator starts the discussion about where each pupil was at the beginning of the programme, what progress they have made and where they are now. Group leader to offer praise for each pupil's effort and encouragement to maintain their progress. Pupils should be encouraged to congratulate each other for the progress they have made. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goal setting sheets. Resource sheet 23. Goals Ladder. Individual folders. Leader's folder. 	



Week 7: Looking back: How far have we come? continued

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils will be able to identify their strengths including new strengths developed in the group. (core skill) • Pupils will be able to offer their views and opinions of what they would like to do next week on 'Take a Break' day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As in week 1, strength cards are displayed and young people are invited to choose those appropriate to them. This time pupils can take as many cards as they feel is appropriate. If someone else has a strength card they want they can write down its motto. Facilitator facilitates a group discussion on how pupils' strengths have changed/increased. Pupils to record their achievements on a worksheet. • Pupils discuss what they would like to do as a celebration on 'Take a Break' Day. Allow all group members an opportunity to voice their opinions and group vote to decide the winner. • Finishing off activity: Trust Game. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength Cards. • Resource sheet 21. • Flipchart, pens. • Resource sheet 22. 	







Give us a break!

Week eight: 'Take a Break' Day: Celebrating our success!

Notes

As the name suggests, this is a day for **relaxation** and **celebration**. The phrase 'Take a Break' however also clearly implies that further work is to follow. In keeping with the overall future orientation of the *Give us a break!* programme there is the expectation that when the group is completed, group members will continue to work independently towards their goals, using the skills they have acquired.

Having completed their work last week and reviewed their progress, today is for rest, refreshment and relaxation in order to re-energise for the future.

Award ceremony

Have certificates ready for each group member with their names. Further copies are available on the *Give us a break!* website or from the Psychological Service.

A nice idea is to also prepare a 'compliments' card for each member, again with their names on (include one for the facilitators too if you like). The cards are passed round and group members write a positive comment on each. They do not, of course, get their own card to write on! Cards are then distributed so everyone finishes with a card from the group.

Evaluation

For this, use the programme evaluation sheets at the back of this pack. Further copies can be obtained by using your login details to access the evaluation sheets from the *Give us a break!* website. Please contact www.giveusabreak.org.uk to obtain your unique login details.

(Note: If you are having a trip out for your celebration you may prefer to complete the above activities in week 7.)

Celebration

Relax! Enjoy! You've earned it!

Follow up

Remember to hold the **individual interviews** some time during next week using the post group pupil interview questionnaire (found at the back of the pack or on the *Give us a break!* website). This is essentially the same form as you used prior to the group so you will be able to see whether the young people report any differences in their answers. Once again it's best to use the form as a prompt for the interview: you note down their answers rather than ask the young person to write. In this way they are free to say whatever they wish without worrying about having to express themselves in writing. Of course if in addition to the interview they would like to write something about their experience of the group this is to be welcomed. You can refer to your record page notes at this meeting if you wish, and allow the young person to decide what should be done with them (see notes on individual record pages).

Send out post group questionnaires to parents/carers and teachers.



Give us a break!

Follow up meeting

At least one **follow up meeting** should be arranged to see how everyone has been getting on, ideally held within 4-8 weeks of the end of the group. It can be very short and informal, or can be longer, perhaps including some activities from the programme. In any case, once you have committed to a follow up meeting do take the commitment seriously as young people can be very disappointed by a cancellation.

The main aims of the meeting are:

- To support and encourage the group members in their individual efforts.
- To remind them of the strengths they possess and the skills they have learnt.
- To share successes and facilitate peer support.
- To help iron out any difficulties.

If you have gathered positive feedback from parents/carers and/or teachers (perhaps via the post-group evaluation forms) you could pass this on to the young people.

At this meeting you may also wish to give group members information about further help and support which they can access if needed. You will find some suggestions in Appendix 4, or you may be aware of local provision. Ensure that they at least know how to contact you if they need to, or if this is not possible who to go to in school for help.

and finally...

We would like to say 'congratulations' on successfully facilitating 'Give us a break!' All the hard work, enthusiasm and effort that you have put into the training, preparation and delivery of the programme will make a difference to the young people you have assisted over the past few weeks. The work that each and every young person has participated in will go forward with them into their future, where this learning experience will continue to sustain them.

Well done, you made that happen.

Week 8: 'Take a break' day: Celebrating our success!

Aims	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Resources	Your own notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To celebrate the success of the group and the progress made by all its members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils will have a relaxing, sociable and enjoyable end of group celebration! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils awarded certificates for participation in and completion of the group. Dependent on what the pupils voted on in week 7. Facilitators ensure all pupils are given the chance to say what they would like to do for a celebration. If pupils vote for a trip out to the cinema, bowling etc., parental permission will need to be sought. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificate of participation for each pupil. (see front of pack) Food including crisps, juice, sweets, etc. or healthy alternatives. CD player and CDs. Games. 	

