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## **Study Skills, Organizational Skills, Self-Awareness and Understanding Self Skills: A Development of Skills Curriculum for Middle School Students**

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# Study Skills, Organizational Skills, Self-Awareness and Understanding Self Skills: A Development of Skills Curriculum for Middle School Students.

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## Purpose

The skills curriculum: *Study Skills, Organizational Skills, Self-Awareness and Understanding Self Skills: A Development of Skills Curriculum for Middle School Students* was created for the guidance staff at Twin Oaks Middle School. Each lesson is designed around an issue or topic that has been identified as a common subject matter during scheduled group sessions during this age of adolescence. The purpose of the skills curriculum allows for the guidance staff to have an additional resource to pull material from regarding specific subject matters.

Specifically, each lesson is based upon research and literature that supports the introduction, education, and implementation of the outlined lessons and developed psychoeducational material. Each lesson is designed to educate the students and incorporate group work, including completion of the psychoeducational material within a given 20 minute period of time.

## Literature Review

- The transition to middle school is a large and difficult transition. This transition includes changes in expectations of rules, homework, study habits and organization (Boller, 2008).
- Adolescents are not only dealing with pubertal changes during this developmental period, but also are learning about themselves, including an increase and intensity of moods (Nicholes, Mahaded, Bryant, & Botvin, 2008).
- The entrance into adolescence may bring intensity in moods such as anger, depression and concerns regarding self-esteem (Nicholes, Mahaded, Bryant, & Botvin, 2008).
- Organizational challenges are major obstacles for a many students. Students with both learning and behavior problems often struggle with organizational skills (Minskoff & Allsopp, 2003). A student's struggles with organization can result in low grades and academic failure (Anderson et al. 2008).
- Time management is also important to the success of a middle school student. As adolescents transition into middle school, a student's use of time management is imperative to their academic success. Specifically, time management plays a significant role into the outcome of a student's grades (Liu, Rijmen, MacCann & Roberts, 2009).
- Learning and implementing study skills is an important contribution to academic success (Meneghetti, De Beni, & Cornoldi, 2007).

- The transition to middle school is commonly reported as a period of extreme stress for young adolescents and is associated with anxiety symptoms (Grills-Tauechel & Norton & Ollendick, 2010).
- Middle school students face with a large amount of stress each day and the quantity of stress is often times underestimated by adults. Examples of stressors are performance, relationship, family and school pressure (Blodgett-Salafia & Lemer, 2011).
- Depression is a significant problem and concern for middle school students. Adolescents with or at risk for depression, if untreated, are more likely to experience negative outcomes such as lowered self-esteem, social withdrawal, risk of other psychiatric disorders, and poor school performance (Ruffolo & Fischer, 2009).

## Methodology

An extensive systematic review of literature was completed to analyze different skills curriculum and evidence based strategies used for skill building groups, focusing on the stage of adolescence. Textbooks, hard-copy journals, previously developed skills workbooks and multiple electronic databases were utilized. The process was completed by implementing literature to develop a 12 chapter research based skills curriculum. The research was put into practice through developing age appropriate psychoeducational materials to include in the skills group facilitation.

Skills Curriculum Lesson 1: ADHD

### MY SCHOOL BEHAVIOR CONTRACT

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 WEEK: \_\_\_\_\_  
 School Behavior Contract Shared With: \_\_\_\_\_

GOALS FOR THIS WEEK IN FOLLOWING AREAS:

AREA:	GOAL:	EARNED PRIVILEGES:	CONSEQUENCE:
Classroom Behaviors:			
School Social Interactions:			
Homework effort and completion:			

For each category, what went well this week?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Any change in goals, privileges, and consequences for next week?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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Skills Curriculum Lesson 4: Depression

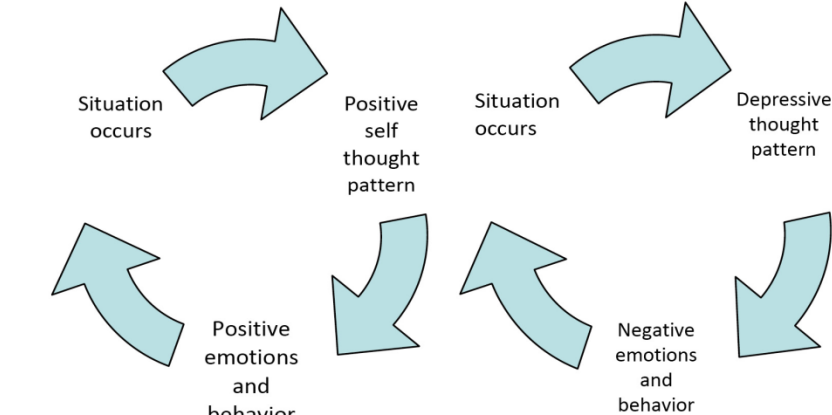
### POSITIVE SELF THOUGHTS WORKSHEET

We all have different Depression Symptoms, below are some examples.

Trouble sleeping	withdrawal from friends	skipping school or classes
Achy body parts	withdrawal from family	easily angered
Trouble focusing	constant fear of something	abuse of alcohol/drugs
Self disappointment	negative self thoughts	increased desire to be alone

Are you able to identify yours? If so, write them down.  
 \_\_\_\_\_

When we are having depressive symptoms, it is easy to think negatively. When we think negatively, this affects our emotions and behaviors. See Below:



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## Areas of Need Identified

- Skills for Managing ADHD in School
- Skills for Helping Anxiety in School
- Stress Management Skills
- Skills for Managing Depression in School
- Developing Study Skills
- Building Organizational Skills
- Learning Skills for Successful Time Management
- Learning Skills for Taking Notes and Creating a Study Guide
- Skills for Managing Anger in School
- Building Self Esteem Skills
- Skills for Living a Healthy Lifestyle
- Skills to Help Improve Family Communication

## Implications for Practice

- The role of the school social worker is to provide a link among school, home and community, and provide services to students including casework, group work, and classroom presentations and providing crisis intervention (Minnesota School Social Workers Association, 2012).
- A large role of a school social worker is to coordinate delivery of education and mental health services (MSSA, 2012).
- The school social worker helps remove barriers to academic success by patterning with administration, guidance staff, teachers, and serving students and families (MSSA, 2012).
- The role of schools professionals involves working to remove barriers and provide the students with organizational skills, study skills, and other skills necessary to assist students for being academically successful (House & Hayes, 2002). Through psychoeducational lessons and groups, students can learn proficiencies, and skills to apply to homework and studying as well as become educated and gain knowledge of skills that can be applied to emotions and behaviors that may be impacting their school functioning.

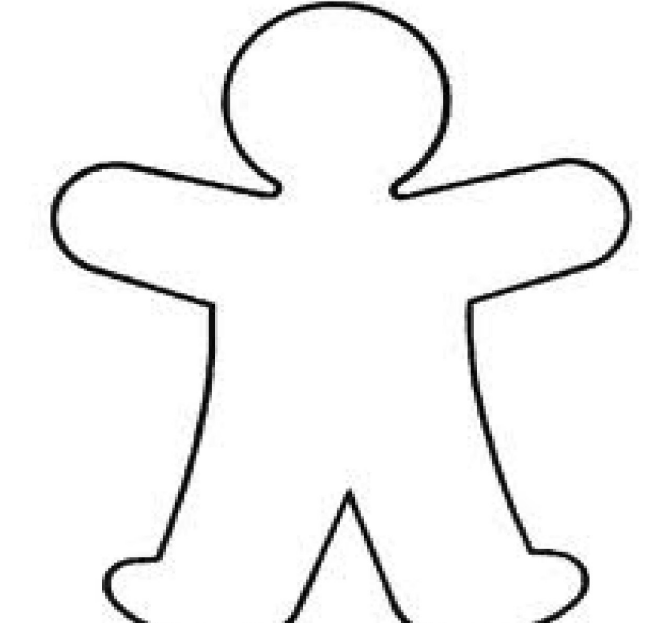
Skills Curriculum Lesson 9: Anger

### PHYSICAL RESPONSE TO ANGER

Sometimes our emotions such as anger affect us physically. Some examples of how anger affects us physically are:

- Crying
- Face turns red
- Stomach aches
- Breathing rate increases
- Feet your heart racing

In the outline below, identify how your emotions and anger affect you physically.



What are positive and helpful ways to calm down when you feel these reactions?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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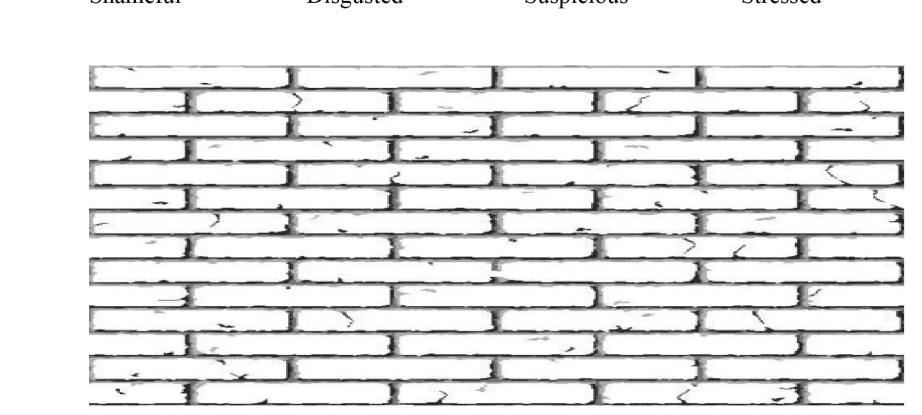
Skills Curriculum Lesson 9: Anger

### USING ANGER AS A WALL!

Sometimes anger is used to show our emotions and feelings. When we do this, we are using anger as a wall to hide what we are really feeling.

Below is a list of emotions. Circle any that may be difficult for you to show. Add your emotions and feelings to your own personal wall.

Sad	Fearful	Hopeful	Guilt
Frustrated	Embarrassed	Ashamed	Overwhelmed
Lonely	Judged	Anxious	Confused
Happy	Surprised	Frightened	Depressed
Shameful	Disgusted	Suspicious	Stressed



Please share an example of when you used anger as a wall instead of talking about your actual feelings.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Going forward, what are some ways to identify your feelings and emotions and not use anger as a wall?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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## Recommendations for Implementation

- For nearly half of the adolescents who do seek help and receive mental health services, the public school system is their only resource. Interventions and preventative services i.e. early school based mental health interventions can be instrumental to adolescents and can reduce the levels of unmet mental health needs (Amaral, Geierstanger, Soleimanpour & Brindis, 2011).
- Research suggests that students who utilize school-based mental health services have been characterized as adolescents who have more frequent experiences of depression, anxiety, possible suicidal ideation and poorer academic outcomes (Amaral, Geierstanger, Soleimanpour & Brindis, 2011).
- Issues addressed by this curriculum, and concerns recommended to focus on during the outlined short term skills group cannot take place of treatment of a diagnosed condition, or be viewed as a therapy intervention. If symptoms of a diagnosable condition that are noted through out the skills curriculum are being presented, students should be evaluated by a trained medical or mental health professional who can make a diagnosis and recommend treatment if necessary. While this particular skills curriculum addresses skills to manage anxiety, stress, depression, ADHD, and self-esteem it should be noted that more intensive interventions may be needed for some students.

## References

References are available from the author upon request.