

Anger/Stress: The H.E.L.P. Toolbox

(Healthy Emotions, Loving Parents)

In 1994, the Young/Single Parent Support Network identified the need to address the issues of anger and stress and how they affected the lives of young/single parent families. The development of an anger management program was incorporated into the workplan of the Health Canada CAPC (PACE, Santé Canada) project, Brighter Futures for Children of Young Single Parents, and an 8 week program was developed and piloted in 1995.

After two years of piloting the new program, an update was initiated. The program needed to incorporate more time for participants to practice new skills being learned, and include sessions related to coping and self-esteem. Lengthy waiting lists confirmed the popularity of the program. Program participants recommended unanimously that the program be longer than 8 weeks.

Funds were applied for and received from Health Canada's Population Health Fund for this initiative. The Young/Single Parent Support Network and its Brighter Futures project established an Intersectoral Advisory Committee with representatives from Health, Education and Social Services to oversee the professional development of the program. This committee was unique as it brought together representatives from a variety of local agencies to work together and finalize the manual and workbook. These agencies included the Ottawa-Carleton Health Department, community health centre representatives, Rideau High School, Algonquin College, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Probation Services, the Children's Aid Society and several others. Two participants of the Brighter Futures project were key members of the committee.

The **Anger/Stress H.E.L.P. Toolbox** program provides participants with some of the tools and skills for coping with everyday stresses. It is carefully designed to build awareness and to reinforce positive attitudes and behaviors in key areas:

- Anger
- Self-Confidence
- Coping
- Parenting
- Stress

The program is organized into a series of five modules (one for each area), with each module consisting of four 2 hour sessions. Participants are able to choose which of the modules they want to complete. As each module is only 4 weeks long, the waiting list for new participants should not exceed 3 weeks. The emphasis of the **Anger/Stress H.E.L.P. Toolbox** is on education and prevention.

The program is designed to be led by an experienced facilitator – ideally someone who has had formal training in facilitating groups. However, the kit also contains useful

information for the less-experienced facilitator who is prepared to take on the challenge by “learning on the job”.

The **Anger/Stress H.E.L.P. Toolbox** program was originally developed for young single parents but can be adapted to suit the needs of a variety of groups. It can be offered in various settings, from the more traditional classroom to a living room setting in a drop-in centre or group home. Little special equipment is required. *The Facilitator's Planning Guide* at the beginning of each session provides a list of any equipment and supplies that will be needed.

The manual consists of three segments:

- *The Introduction*, which includes an overview of the program and of basic facilitation skills;
- *The Facilitator's Guide*, which includes a list of necessary materials for each session, as well as tips and red flags for managing difficult situations; and,
- *The Participant's Workbook* which allows group members to have a record of their work for each module. This section is easy to photocopy.

The manual is available at a cost of \$100.00 (plus \$5.00 for shipping and handling).

As part of the introduction to the manual, a one day facilitator training workshop has been developed and was piloted in June 1998 at two Eastern Zone CAPC sites for front line staff and community partners. *Brighter Futures* hopes to offer future training workshops to interested sites. A French version of the program has also been produced.

For more information on **Anger/Stress: The H.E.L.P. Toolbox**, please contact:

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