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**Goals**

* + To increase understanding among mothers who are sex workers of the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional developmental milestones of children
  + To strengthen parenting skills to nurture and support childhood development within the context of maternal sex work
  + To increase mothers who are sex workers’ ability to prevent, recognize, and mitigate common maternal and child health risks
  + To increase sex workers’ sense of empowerment and confidence in their ability to be good mothers, supporting them to thrive both as mothers and sex workers

**Learning Objectives**

*By the end of this session group members will be able to:*

* Describe traits that make a good mother and identify which of these qualities they possess
* List and explain the human and children’s rights in the South African Constitution
* Identify specific challenges mothers who are sex workers face
* Identify solutions to overcoming some of the challenges mothers who are sex workers face

**Session Preview**

* Introduce group members to each other and the Mothers of the Future social support group
* Help group members describe traits of a good mother and identify these traits within themselves
* Introduce the concept of human and children’s rights in the South African Constitution
* Assist group members in exploring and sharing challenges sex workers face as good mothers
* Help group members think of ways to overcome these challenges mothers who are sex workers face
* Help group members build self-esteem through sharing and receiving compliments about their parenting abilities

**Materials Needed**

* Flip chart paper
* Marker for facilitator
* 1 marker for each group member
* Tape
* Flip Charts:
  + Flip Chart 1 - Children’s Rights

**Preparation Needed**

* Arrange chairs in a circle
* Write out the following materials before the session begins:
  + Flip Chart 1 - Children’s Rights

**Possible Facilitators**

* Peer educators

**Instructional Time**

120 minutes (2 hours)

**Activity Minutes Needed**

1. Introduction…………………………………………………………………….25 minutes
2. Traits of a Good Mother………………....…..…………………………………30 minutes
3. Children’s Rights……………………………………………….………....……20 minutes
4. Challenges of a Good Mother..…………..……………………………………..25 minutes
5. Solutions and Closing…….……………………………………………...…......20 minutes

**Activity A**

Introduction

**Preparing for the Activity**

**Purpose**

To welcome group members to the group, set ground rules, and get to know one another.

**Materials**

* Flip chart paper
* Marker for facilitator
* Tape

**Time**

20 minutes

**Procedure--------------------------------------------------------**

* After all the group members are in the room, start to sing a song. Have everyone stand up and sing/dance with you. Do not let this go on for more than **3 minutes.** Then, welcome the mothers to the group by saying:

Welcome to our first group meeting of Mothers of the Future! We are very excited you are here. This social support group is meant to be a safe space for mothers who are sex workers to talk about how we can be the best parents we can be. We will be able to discuss what being a mother who is a sex worker is like and how we can support our children to be healthy and happy and to become healthy and happy adults.

Parenting a child is one of the most difficult things we can do, but it is also one of the most rewarding. Although being a mother can be hard at times, it is important to remember that we will make mistakes. Everyone does. We want to learn from these mistakes and continue improving as mothers. I hope we will all share our experiences as mothers and sex workers with the class as much as we feel comfortable. We will be discussing the time span from pregnancy until a child is 5 years old. A lot of the skills and knowledge we will learn together will continue to be important throughout our children’s lives. If we are all honest with ourselves and each other, we can add to the things we already know about raising happy and healthy children.

We will meet as a group for the next 9 weeks and each group meeting will last two hours. Since we are all parents, we understand that we are all very busy! However, I hope you will try your hardest to make it to our group so we can all work towards becoming even better mothers.

Does anyone have any questions about our Mothers of the Future group?

* Answer any questions the group may have.

Let’s start by getting to know each other a little more. Can we each say our name, the gender of our children, and our children’s age? I can start. *[Facilitator says their name, the gender of their children, and their children’s age].*

* Go around the circle and ask each group member to introduce themselves. After they have all finished, say:

Great! Thank you all for sharing. Before we go any further, let’s make some ground rules. What rules do you think we should have for the group to make sure this is a safe space where we can all grow as mothers and sex workers? We will follow these rules every time we meet.

* Allow group members to suggest ground rules and write these on the flip chart paper. Do not let this go on for more than **5 minutes.** If someone suggests an inappropriate ground rule, ask the rest of the group how they feel about that rule. Let the group talk about the rule until they can all agree on the rule.
* Answers **could** include:
  + Only one person talks at a time
  + Everyone should be involved
  + No sleeping
  + You can disagree with one another, but you must be respectful
  + Do not judge others
  + Turn off cell phones
  + Arrive on time

I would also like to add “stick to each activity’s time limit” as a ground rule if the group agrees. We have a lot to cover as a group, so we must be careful of time. If it ever seems like I am trying to move on to the next activity, it’s not because I don’t want to hear what you have to say, I just want to make sure we have time to talk about everything. We know everyone is busy and wants to leave on time! If you have something important to say and we don’t have time, please tell me after class and we’ll fit it into next week or discuss it between the two of us.

These ground rules look great. Can we all agree to follow these ground rules?

* Wait for group to say yes or no. If someone says no, ask them why and try to fix the problem. Then tape the group rules to the wall.

If you think of any other rules that should be added later, just let the group know.

Now let’s play a game to find out more about each other. I’m going to call out something about people in the group, like “I’m a sex worker”. If what I said is true for you, please stand up. Since we are all sex workers, we would all stand up. After we all look around, everyone will sit back down and I will say something else. Does anyone have any questions about the game?

* Answer any questions the group may have.

Let’s get started with our game! Remember, stand up if what I say is true for you.

* The facilitator should also play this game with the group members. The first question is to see if everyone understands the game. Everyone should be standing up because everyone in the group is a sex worker. After a few seconds, ask everyone to sit back down, then read the next statement. Remind group members to only stand up if what you read is true for them.

Let’s get started with our game! Remember, stand up if what I say is true for you.

1. I am a sex worker.
2. I like being a sex worker most of the time.
3. I’m from Cape Town.
4. I sometimes wish I had help raising my children.
5. I am in a relationship or married.
6. I sometimes make mistakes as a mother.
7. All of my children currently live with me.
8. I have been a sex worker for longer than a year.
9. I have been a sex worker for longer than ten years.
10. I sometimes think being a mother is hard and stressful.
11. I want to have more children one day.
12. I am a good mother.

Thank you for all sharing more about your lives and feelings. It is important to remember that even though we are all sex workers, we have very different lives and different ways of raising our children. There is no such thing as a perfect parent. We all have different strengths and weakness as mothers, and can learn a lot from each other.

**Activity B**

Traits of a Good Mother

**Preparing for the Activity**

**Purpose**

To talk about what being a good mother means and list strengths of mothers in the group.

**Materials**

* 3 pieces of flip chart paper
* 1 marker for each group member
* Tape

**Time**

30 minutes

**Procedure--------------------------------------------------------**

* Start the activity by saying:

As we just learned, we all have very different backgrounds. However, we are here today because we are all mothers. Each one of us has strengths as a mother. As a group, we want to build on our strengths so we can become the best mothers we can be.

Before we can start growing as parents, we have to first think about what it means to be a “good mother”. Let’s break into three groups so we can talk about what being a good mother means.

* Help the group members break into three groups. Provide each team with a piece of flip chart paper and each group member with a marker.

Let’s start talking about what a good mother does that makes her a good mother. Is she always home with her kids, or is she out working to earn money? Does she breastfeed or bottle feed her baby? Is she free spirted or does she have a lot of rules? Think of what a good mother acts like and how she raises her children.

It may help you to think about someone that you think is a good mother. This can be your own mother, sister, friend, aunt, or yourself! Talk about what makes them a good mother with your group.

As a group, use the piece of paper to draw and/or write what you think makes a good mother, good. Each group will present their poster of a good mother to everyone else, so draw or write whatever you want.

Does anyone have any questions about our activity?

* Answer any questions the group may have.

Let me know if you have any questions. You have 10 minutes to draw and/or write what a good mother means to you.

* Let the groups start talking and working. Move between each group to make sure they understand the activity and help them think deeper about the question. After **9 minutes**, or sooner if the groups seem to be done, tell the groups they have 1 minute left to finish up their poster. After the last minute has passed, say:

These posters all look great! Who would like to talk about their poster first?

* Select a group to present their poster first. Then say:

Thanks for volunteering. Can you please tell us about your poster and describe what it means to be a good mother?

* Let each group present their posters for no longer than **3 minutes**. After each group has presented, ask them to hang up their posters.

Thanks for talking about what it means to be a good mother. All of us in this room have some, if not all, of these strengthens. Would anyone like to share an example of something that makes them a good mother?

* Allow one group member at a time to share an example of what makes them a good mother. Provide feedback and highlight any good parenting skills they mention. Relate their examples to things that are written or drawn on the posters. Do not let this go on for more than **10 minutes**.

It sounds like we have a lot of really great parenting strengthens in our group. As mothers, it is our responsibility to care for and nurture our children. With all of our life experience, we can learn from and help each other to become even better mothers than we already are.

**Activity C**

Children’s Rights

**Preparing for the Activity**

**Purpose**

To talk about children’s rights and list children’s rights written in the South African Constitution.

**Materials**

* Flip Chart 1 - Children’s Rights

**Time**

25 minutes

**Procedure--------------------------------------------------------**

* Start by saying:

In order to grow as mothers, it is also important to understand our legal role as parents. All humans, including mothers, children, and sex workers, have certain rights under the South African Constitution. The things which you should have simply because you are human are called human rights.

Can anyone list some of our human rights? In other words, what rights do all people, including sex workers, deserve?

* Let group members list human rights for no more than **5 minutes.**
* Answers **could** include:
  + Equality
  + Human Dignity
  + Freedom and security of the person
  + Right to privacy
  + Freedom of expression
  + Freedom of association
  + Freedom of movement and residence
  + Freedom of trade, occupation, and profession
  + Labor relations
  + Environment
  + Right to housing
  + Right to healthcare, food, water, and social security
  + Right to education
  + Access to information
  + Just administrative action

Children also have all of these human rights. In South Africa, a child is anyone who is under the age of 18. Because they are children, they still need their parents, families, or the government to care for and protect them. To make sure this happens, children also have a few rights just for children that are written in the South African Constitution. Let’s talk about some of the children’s rights.

* Hang up Flip Chart 1: Children’s Rights. Point to this as you explain the following part:

Every child has the right to the things listed on this page. Let’s talk about each of these rights and what they mean.

1. First is the right to a name and a nationality. This means that when a child is born they should be given a name and become a citizen of a country, like South Africa.
2. Every child also has the right to some form of care. Can some explain what it means to care for a child?

* Let **1 group member** explain what it means to care for a child. Then say:

Caring for a child means you look after and provide for the needs of that child. Under the Constitution, a child’s parents or family must take care of that child. In cases where no one in the family is able or wants to care for the child, the child will be taken away from the family and placed under someone else’s care. This is called foster care or adoption. We will talk about this in a few weeks.

1. All children have the right to enough healthy food. They also should have a place to live, basic health care services, and social services.
2. Children have the right to be protected from neglect, abuse, and disrespect. Can someone explain what it means to abuse a child?

* Let **1** group member explain what it means to abuse a child. Then say:

Abusing a child means to treat them with cruelty or violence. Abuse can mean hurting a child’s body *on purpose*. For example, if you hit, kick, slap, shake, burn, choke, or hurt a child in any other way on purpose, this is abuse. Abuse can also mean hurting a child’s feelings. Emotional abuse includes yelling, screaming, name-calling, shaming, or telling a child they are “bad, no good, worthless, or a mistake”. Abuse can also be a sexual act between an adult and a child. This means having sex with a child, making a child watch you have sex, forcing a child to be a sex worker, or any other kind of sexual act between an adult and a child. All South African children have the right to be protected from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. They also have the right to not be neglected. Neglecting a child means to not take care of it. Neglect includes not giving a child food, water, clothes, a place to live, or health care. Lastly, a child has the right to be protected from disrespect. Disrespect is like emotional abuse. It means to insult a child or treat them very rudely.

I realize abuse, neglect, and disrespect can be confusing. A lot of parents in South Africa are very strict and may punish their children by hitting, slapping, or hurting them in some other way. However we don’t have to hurt our children to teach them. Just like adults, children have the right to not be hurt. In a few weeks we will learn ways to teach or discipline our children without hurting them or violating their rights.

Does anyone have any questions about what we have talked about so far?

* Answer any questions the group may have, then continue by saying:

1. Our next children’s right deals with working. Children cannot be made to perform work if they are too young to work. Any child under the age of 15 is not legally allowed to work in South Africa. Children cannot be made to do work that could harm the child. This means children cannot do work that could hurt their education, health, or development. Can anyone give examples of work that could potentially harm a child?

* Let group members talk about this for no longer than **2 minutes**.
* Answers **could** include:
  + Agriculture/farms
  + Domestic work
  + Food service
  + Street vending
  + Begging

Although it is a child’s right to not work, we know that sometimes children need to work to help their family survive in South Africa. Even if we need our children to work and help earn money, we should try to protect their rights as much as possible. We should make sure our children stay in school and are not hurt in their job. If our children do have to work, does anyone have any ideas on how we can keep them safe and in school?

* + Let group members share ideas for no more than **3 minutes**. Also ask the group about why it is important for children to stay in school.
  + Answers **could** include:
    - Children could go to work before or after school, or on the weekends.
    - Children should have a job that doesn’t hurt or scare them.
    - Children should be old enough to work, like 14 or 15 at least.

We may not be able to protect all of our children’s rights at the moment, but now that we know what they are we can work towards making sure our children are safe, healthy, and well cared for. As mothers, it is also our job to always do what is best for our child. To make sure we are like the good mothers we drew on our posters, we should continue to work towards making sure all of our children’s rights are being met.

Does anyone have any questions about human or children’s rights?

* + Answer any questions the group may have.

***Flip Chart 1 - Children’s Rights------------------------------***

*[Instructions: Write this on a flip chart before the session begins.]*

**Children’s Rights**

*Every child has the right to:*

* *A name and citizenship*
* *Some form of care*
* *Enough healthy food, a place to live, health care services, and social services*
* *Be protected from abuse, neglect, and disrespect*
* *Not to work if the child is under 15 years old or if that work would hurt the child*

Challenges of a Good Mother

**Activity D**

**Preparing for the Activity**

**Purpose**

To list challenges sex workers face as good mothers.

**Materials**

* “Good Mother Posters” made in the last activity
* 1 marker for each group member

**Time**

25 minutes

**Procedure--------------------------------------------------------**

* Move onto the next activity by saying:

Besides all being mothers, another thing that brings us together is being sex workers.As we learned, being a sex worker does not mean we can’t be good mothers. We all love our children very much and work hard to support them.

However, some of us may have experienced stigma and discrimination because we are mothers who are sex workers. This can be painful, but we must not let other people’s judgments affect how we live our lives. We all know that we’re able to raise children, just like any other parent. We too have human rights and deserve respect as mothers and sex workers.

Just like any working professional, trying to manage a job and raise children can be hard. However, as sex workers we do face certain challenges that other mothers might not. This does not make us any less capable of being good mothers, it just means that we need to develop ways to get around these challenges. We can talk about and work together to overcome some of the biggest challenges we face as mothers who are sex workers.

Would anyone feel comfortable sharing a challenge they face as a mother who is a sex worker?

* Let **1 group member** talk about a challenge they face as a sex worker who is a mother. If more women want to share challenges, remind them we’re about to talk about more challenges in our small groups.

Thank you for sharing. That does sound hard and was a good example. Now let’s start to think of other challenges mothers who are sex workers face.

First, let’s get back into the groups we were in earlier. Can everyone please go sit by the good mother poster you helped make?

* Help group members get into their groups.

Let’s look back at the posters we made of what good mothers look like. As a group, please talk about and circle what things good mothers do that might be more difficult for a sex worker. What is hard about being a mother who is a sex worker?

* Try to use something on one of the group’s poster as an example. If you can’t find a good example, explain the activity by saying this: For example, pretend a group wrote good mothers sing their child to sleep every night. However, after talking about it, the group decided that it is difficult for sex workers to sing their child to sleep every night because sex workers are normally working at night. The group would then circle “sing their child to sleep every night” on their poster. This does not mean that a sex worker wouldn’t want to sing their child to sleep – it just means that it might be difficult for a sex worker to sing their child to sleep because they are working.

If your group thinks of other challenges that mothers who are sex workers face that aren’t on your good mothers poster, feel free to write or draw these on the bottom or sides of your poster. It might be helpful to look at the list of Children’s Rights we just discussed and think about any challenges mothers who are sex workers might have in making sure their children have these rights. For example, is it harder for mothers who are sex workers to get their children basic health care because of stigma? If a group thought this was a challenge mothers who are sex workers face, they would write or draw it at the bottom of their sheet.

Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

* Answer any questions the group may have.

Let me know if you have any questions. You have 10 minutes to circle, write, and/or draw what is hard about being a mother who is a sex worker. Afterwards, we’ll talk what challenges we face as mothers who are sex workers and start to think about solutions.

* Let the groups start talking/working. Move between each group to make sure they understand the activity and help them think deeper about the question. After **9 minutes**, or sooner if the groups seem to be done, remind the groups they have **1 minute** left to finish up their poster. After the last minute has passed, say:

Thank you all for your thoughts, I heard some really good discussions about challenges mothers who are sex workers face. Who would like to present their group’s work first?

* Select a group to present their poster first. Then say:

Thanks for volunteering. Can you please tell us what your group decided is hard about being a mother that is also a sex workers?

* Give each group **3 minutes** to present their poster. Ask them to explain why the challenges they choose are hard specifically for sex workers and not just mothers in general. After the three teams have presented, summarize the activity by saying:

Thanks for sharing your thoughts about the challenges mothers who are sex workers face. Being a sex worker doesn’t make us any less of a mother. It just means we need to be aware of *if* and *how* being a sex worker affects our role as mothers. If we know what the challenges we face are, we can think of ways to overcome them. We have to think about parenting in a sex worker’s world.

**Preparing for the Activity**

**Purpose**

To identify solutions to some of the challenges mothers who are sex workers face and wrap-up the meeting.

**Materials**

* “Good Mother Posters” made in the last activity

**Time**

20 minutes

**Activity E**

Solutions and Closing

**Procedure--------------------------------------------------------**

* Introduce the activity by saying:

Each time we meet, we will talk about a parenting topic from the viewpoint of a sex worker. We will leave the posters we created up to remind us of our strengths and challenges as mothers who are sex worker. Over the next 8 weeks, we will think of ways to overcome the challenges we just talked about. However, many of us have been mothers for a long time and probably already have solutions to some of these problems.

Before we wrap-up, let’s start sharing some of these solutions. I want you to think back to all the challenges we listed that mothers who are sex workers face. Which of these challenges do you have solutions or answers to? For example, can anyone think of a good way to deal with *[insert a challenge one of the groups listed].*

* Let the group members share solutions they have to some of the challenges they listed on their posters. Keep asking for solutions to the challenges they listed and write these down as they are said. Do not let group members talk for more than **10 minutes**.

Great. It seems like people already have a lot of great tips on how to be a mother who is a sex worker. I look forward to hearing all of your solutions to overcoming challenges mothers who are sex workers face at all of our future meetings!.

Before we end our meeting today, let’s do one last quick activity. Everyone turn to the person next to you and say something you learned about them that makes them a good mother. This can be something they said, an idea they shared with the group, or just something you noticed that you thought was great.

* Let the pairs talk between themselves for **5 minutes**. Make sure each person gets to tell their partner something that makes them a good mother and hear what their partner has to say about them.

Thanks for sharing today! I hope you all realize how many strengths you already have as mothers and how we can all continue to become even better mothers and sex workers together.

We are now coming to the end of our meeting. Today we learned about human and children’s rights, what we think makes a good mother, and challenges and solutions to being a good mother who is a sex worker. We will continue to talk about these topics over the next 8 weeks and learn more even more solutions to any problems mothers who are sex workers face along the way.

Thank you all for coming today! Remember, our next meeting is on *[date]* at *[time]*. We’ll be talking about planning to become pregnant and safe sex. It’s going to be an interesting and informative session, so I hope to see you all again on *[date]* at *[time]*!

**Appendix 1 - Resources---------------------------------------**

1. Manock, S.-L. and K. Manock, *Know Your Rights: A Simplified Guide to Sex Work and Your Rights*, ed. J. Williams and P. Sykes. 2012: Women's Legal Centre.

2. Women's Legal Centre. *Women's Legal Centre*. 2013. Available from: <http://www.wlce.co.za/>.

3. International HIV/AIDS Alliance, *Tools Together Now!* 2006. 251.

4. Constitutional Court of South Africa. *Children's Rights*. Available from: <http://www.constitutionalcourt.org.za/text/rights/know/children.html>.