

Discussion Guide for Adolescence Role Play Exercises

Directions: A group role play will be conducted as described by the trainer. Read the case study assigned to your group. Select a group member who will participate in the role play. As a group, discuss the questions below in order to assist your group member in the role play.

- 1) Assess your "youth's" development in the following areas:
 - * Level of cognitive development - abstract or hypothetical thought
 - * Level of perspective taking ability/insight
 - * Ability to enter into meaningful interpersonal relationships
 - * Self-esteem, self-confidence
 - * Level of moral development - conventional, preconventional
 - * Emotional maturity, impulse control, frustration tolerance

- 2) Assess how your "character" would respond to the following questions. Prepare your "character" for the role play in which your character will be one of seven youth who have been brought to the Receiving Center for assessment after having been arrested the night before. All seven of you were in the same car. The Youth Leader will be discussing the following issues with you in the group meeting.
 - * Why did you get arrested? Why do you think you were brought to the Receiving Home? What did you do wrong?
 - * What do you think it will take to get you out of the Receiving Home?
 - * Talk a little bit about your family. What's your Mom like? Your Dad?
 - * Who are your friends and what are they like? What do you like about them?
 - * Describe yourself. What kind of person are you?

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- * You are 16. You'll soon be on your own. What do you see for your future?

Case Study #1: Francie

Francie is 16. She lives with her mother and two younger sisters in a poorly maintained home in a low-income neighborhood. She was arrested with a group of other kids at midnight in a van driving 80 MPH on the freeway. All had been drinking, and several marijuana joints were found in the van. Francie had been truant from home for several weeks, and her mother had no idea where Francie was. Francie had been previously designated a "child in need of supervision" by the court in response to chronic truancy, and was placed in the temporary custody of the children's service agency. Francie was taken to the Receiving Home after her arrest.

History

Francie has lived with her mother on and off since birth. She never knew her father. Her father and mother were never married. Her mother has lived on public assistance since Francie's birth. Her sisters are age 12 and 10. All three girls have different fathers, and Francie's mother has never had a stable marital relationship. Francie's mother has lived with several different men since Francie's birth, and has been occasionally battered by them. She has also been arrested for prostitution. Francie has been cared for on and off by neighbors, relatives, and licensed foster homes. Her early years were characterized by profound neglect, disorganization, physical deprivation. There was suspicion that her mother's current boyfriend sexually fondled her when she was 10, but there was never any proof and the mother broke up with the boyfriend. Her mother abandoned the children and moved the California with a man she met in a bar when Francie was 5, and returned when she was 6. Francie has been chronically school truant.

Characteristics

Francie feels totally victimized by life's events. She sees herself having no control over her world or people in it. She has no understanding of how her behavior has any affect on other people, or on what happens to her. When bad things happen, it's the other person's fault. She is baffled when people try to assign blame to her. She also sees the actions of other people as arbitrary. She has no awareness of rules or structure to the world.

She is very impulsive. She has no frustration tolerance, no ability to delay gratification. She takes what she wants, fights when she's mad, runs away when she's afraid, has a tantrum when she's cornered. She is easily frustrated by small stresses.

She is totally egocentric. There is only one perspective from which to assess any event: her own simplistic view. If things go her way, she feels good. If things don't go her way, she gets mad. The sum total of life revolves around how she feels, what she wants, her concerns and needs.

Francie displays a kind of "bottomless pit" dependency. She attempts to use all relationships for gratification of her immediate needs. She is transparently insincere, and makes clumsy, insincere efforts to flatter or please other people in order to get what she wants. She doesn't get emotionally involved with people beyond trying to meet her needs.

Her relationships with people are limited and very shallow, and without continuity. Her "best friend" could be someone she met 3 day (or 3 hours) earlier. As long as people are nice to her, they are "friends." If they withhold what she wants, they are "mean." It is entirely possible for Francie to like you one minute and hate you 30 seconds later, depending on whether you've been "nice" or "mean" to her. If you're "mean" enough she'll abandon you . . . until you're nice to her again. She has no ability to take other people's perspectives; she has no idea that other people have feelings, much less understanding what those feelings are. Therefore, she interprets other people's behavior in a very concrete and egocentric fashion.

Because she has no understanding of rules or the feelings of others, she doesn't understand what other people expect of her unless it is spelled out in crystal clear, concrete, behavioral terms. "Please be considerate" is meaningless to her. "Pick up your clothes and put them in the basket" can be understood.

She has no ability to think about or plan for the future. Her life exists in the present moment, and is dominated by getting her own immediate needs met. She feels other people should take care of her. In spite of feeling a victim, she has grandiose ideas about how wonderful things will be when she's 18 and "on her own." She has no conception of how this will happen, however.

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Case Study #2: Lee

Lee is 16. He was arrested with a group of other kids at midnight, driving 80 MPH on the freeway. All had been drinking, and several marijuana joints were found in the van. Lee had been truant from home on and off for several weeks; his mother didn't know where he was, but thought he had perhaps gone to visit a 20-year old "friend," a man Lee had met a few weeks earlier in the next town. She was worried about Lee's whereabouts and called the police, who notified the children's service agency. Lee was designated a "child in need of supervision." After the arrest, he was taken to the Receiving Home.

History

Lee was the 4th of 6 children, born and raised on a farm. A seventh child was stillborn. His family included three brother, two sisters, a grandmother, an elderly aunt, and a cousin who came to visit and never left. His father was 50 when he was born, his mother 22. His family had enough money to get by, but they rarely had extra. Lee's father was alcoholic and most nights would drink himself into a stupor. Occasionally he would be verbally abusive, but there is no evidence of physical abuse. Two years ago Lee's father died of alcohol-related illness. Lee's mother couldn't manage the farm and moved with Lee and two younger siblings into the city. She survives on ADC.

Characteristics

Lee is a quiet, generally cooperative youth. He is easy to get along with, almost to the point of over compliance and passivity. He readily agrees with others and conforms quickly to their demands, particularly when he views them to be in power. He typically overestimates other people's power and sees himself as having almost none. He has very poor self-esteem and feels entirely inadequate in comparison to people around him. To adults, he appears helpless and in need of protection.

He is dependent on others to meet his needs. He craves social approval and acceptance. He yields quickly to peer group pressure when the peers, and to adult authority when he's with adults. He will comply with whomever is in control at the moment in order to be accepted and viewed in a positive light.

His thinking ability is very concrete, and he views the world in simplistic, concrete terms. He has limited perspective-taking ability. He knows that people are different, but he evaluates them based upon observable behaviors, and he has no insight into other people's feelings. His mother is "nice, she cooks good meals." His father "was a drunk and worked a farm." He is "friendly, not so good in school." He knows his mother gets mad when he runs away from home, but he really likes to be with Tom, his 20-year old friend. Tom is "cool - he has his own car and rents a neat apartment."

He knows right from wrong; he knows it's wrong to skip school, and it's good to go to church and sit quietly. He shouldn't fail in school, and he should get a good job when he grows up. It's wrong to hurt other people. It's important to be nice. He doesn't like "being in trouble" at all.

He understands his own feelings in concrete terms. He knows he gets mad, sometimes he's happy, sometimes he's sad. He doesn't think it bothers anyone when he gets mad. He is impulsive. He knows he shouldn't run away, and he should be in school. He should get better grades. But none of this changes his behavior. He was in the van with the other kids because "it seemed like it would be fun and all the others were going."

He is viewed by peers as a "tag along" and is often used by peers. He will do whatever he's told, because he craves social acceptance. He is only marginally accepted, however, and at times is scapegoated.

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Case Study #3: J.J.

JJ is 16. He lives with his 80-year old grandmother. He was arrested with several other kids at midnight in a van driving 80 MPH on the freeway. All had been drinking, and several marijuana joints were found in the car. JJ claims he knew the other kids only vaguely from school, and was just "hitching a ride" to go meet some of his buddies. JJ has been chronically truant from school, and has been gone from his grandmother's house for several weeks. He claims he's been living with two of his buddies, also members of his "gang." The gang is not a street gang, but a group of teens from the housing project where JJ lives. They are always together. JJ was previously designated a "child in need of supervision" by the Court after his grandmother filed charges because she could no longer control him. He was placed under protective supervision by the children's service agency. The police brought him to the Receiving Home after his arrest.

History

JJ was taken from his mother and placed in foster care when he was 3 because of fairly serious abuse. He was placed in his grandmother's home from foster care when he was 4½, and he has been there since. His grandmother is now 80. She was 64 when he was placed with her. She has had diabetes and heart trouble since she was 60. While JJ got basically good care, his grandmother spent most of her time meeting her own needs. Her other daughter, JJ's aunt, lived with her mother on and off for many years, moving home any time she was out of work or had no boyfriend to support her. She and JJ were "best pals" when she was in the home, but JJ never saw her when she moved out. She was apparently seductive, and there was some suspicion that JJ was sexually fondled by his aunt between the ages of 7 and 11. He joined the gang when he was 12, and has "hung out" with them ever since.

Characteristics

JJ doesn't like adults. He doesn't trust them and does everything he can to avoid them. He says they've "never helped me none." His buddies do. He spends most of his time with members of the gang. He dresses in the gang "uniform," blue jeans, jean jacket, black t-shirt, and motorcycle boots. None of them owns, or rides, a motorcycle, but they all aspire to becoming riders. The gang does most things together. Their hair is all cut in a similar, and unusual, style. JJ says he feels totally safe with them . . . nothing can hurt them when they're together.

JJ sees himself to be "in control." He won't talk about things that are emotionally charged. He doesn't recognize other people's feelings, and he denies that he has any. He claims that people who let their problems get to them are sissies. His gang is tough. When asked what they talk about in the gang, he says, "Not much. Just stuff." He describes the various gang members in concrete terms; Freddy is "smart, he calls the shots"; Tony is "quiet" and Ray is "Funny . . . the guy knows great jokes." He also sees the members as more alike than different; "we all hate school. We'd rather be out doing things than at home. We do drugs, but not so it hurts

anything."

Despite his demeanor of "tough," JJ is very uncomfortable when he is not with his gang. He doesn't understand how to get along in the larger world. The rules in his gang are clear cut and unambiguous. The rules of the larger world don't make much sense to him. His simplistic formulas to manage situations typically create conflict for him outside the group, and he is continually getting into trouble.

The group has strict codes of loyalty and morality. Members don't turn on one another, and they treat each other in very clearly delineated ways. This does not, however, translate to the larger world. JJ doesn't feel he owes anybody anything, outside his group. They do for Him . . . he does for them.

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Case Study #4: Terry

Terry is 16. He lives in a tenement with his stepfather and a mentally retarded uncle. He was arrested with a group of other teens at midnight in a van driving 80 MPH on the freeway. All had been drinking, and several marijuana joints were found in the van. Terry had been in the custody of the Court for breaking into a neighbor's garage when he was 14, and he had been designated a "child in need of supervision" rather than a delinquent because of his young age and the fact that it was a first offense. Terry had been truant from home for several weeks. His stepfather didn't know where he was. Terry attends school sporadically. His step-father works a job that often requires that he travel out of town. When he is gone, Terry does what he pleases. Terry was taken to the Receiving Home after his arrest.

History

Terry's mother was married twice. Her first husband was Terry's biological father. His stepfather and his mother were married when Terry was six, about a year after the divorce. Terry had been close to his father. After the divorce, his father remarried and left the state. At the time of the divorce, he promised that Terry could visit him any time he wanted. However, he has not communicated with Terry since. Terry's mother left his step-father many times during their marriage to live with other men, always returning when things didn't work out. She finally died of a drug overdose when he was 12. His mother's younger brother, a moderately mentally retarded man of 35, has always lived with the family.

Terry was a difficult child who wanted to have his own way. He and his step-father have been in constant conflict since his mother's death. Terry thinks his step-father is a "wimp" who lets people take advantage of him.

Characteristics

Terry likes himself. He sees himself as unique. He thinks that life is a game, and he feels great when he can beat it. Nobody in his family ever figured out how to "make it." He thinks he has, and claims it isn't hard. "Most people are pretty stupid," he says. "You can get what you want, if you're good enough." He sets up power struggles with adults and authority, and loves it when he wins. He says it gives him a real rush. He's in charge.

He was in the car with the other kids because "I figured since they had the joints, they could probably get some coke. I was about ready to score, too, when that damned police car pulled us over. We wouldn't have gotten caught if I'd been driving."

Terry is a manipulator. He approaches life by trying to figure out the rules of the game and then manipulates better than others. He figures you have to, or else others will "use you and take advantage of you. You have to be better than them." He's an expert at conning and conforming.

He can be charming and cooperative, or can work a formula to get around you, depending on which strategy will best get him what he wants. He makes a good first impression, but people are quickly alienated when they realize his superficiality and lack of sincerity.

Despite his ability to manipulate, he has a very circumscribed understanding of other people. Terry probably had the basic cognitive capabilities for insightful social interaction. However, his environment has so reinforced his perception of the other people as self-serving and manipulative that, although he has developed considerable skill in negotiating in such an environment, he no longer has the capability or insight to recognize unselfish or cooperative motivation in others. He doesn't consider other people's feelings. He denies having any himself.

When a strategy doesn't work, and he can't con or conform someone, he figures he didn't do something right, and works harder to figure out what he should have done differently. He doesn't understand that "conning" and "conforming" are inappropriate and unproductive ways of relating to people. He has no close friends. He says he doesn't need them; he's perfectly capable of taking care of himself. He "doesn't have to depend on nobody!"

He claims he doesn't miss his mother. He says he was probably upset when she died, but got over it quickly. He doesn't remember much about his real Dad. He doesn't think he was sad for long after his Dad left. He doesn't remember, but "I was a pretty tough little kid. It probably didn't bother me." He creates an image of invulnerability and indifference.

He doesn't think being arrested was any big deal. He claims, "I'll be out of here soon, no big deal." He thinks it was pure bad luck they were arrested. He doesn't see himself as having any problems."

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Case Study #5: Leslie

Leslie is 16. She lives with her mother, her two younger brothers, and her mother's new husband, Jerry. Leslie was arrested with a group of other teens at midnight driving in a van at 80 MPH on the freeway. All had been drinking, and several marijuana joints were found in the van. Leslie has been chronically truant from home for the past four months and has failed to attend school. Her mother had no idea where she was, and had called police to report her missing. She was designated a "child in need of supervision" and brought to the Receiving Home after her arrest.

History

Leslie's early years were relatively uneventful. She was an average student and showed no serious problems. Her parents both worked blue collar jobs and made a good living. The children were well cared for. When Leslie was 14, her father developed a heart condition and died 6 months later. Leslie's mother had held the family together with help from Leslie's grandmother, who came and stayed with them during the rough time. About a year later, Leslie's mother met Jerry. They were married six months later, and Jerry moved in with the family.

Leslie liked Jerry at first, but after a few months, she began telling her friends that he was "weird" and "he won't leave me alone." Leslie confided in her best friend's mother that Jerry "felt me up," "pinched my butt," and "came into my room at night and put his hands all over me." Leslie asked her friend's mother if she could come stay with them. The friend's mother called Leslie's mother, who ordered Leslie home, became very angry with the friend's mother, and forbade Leslie from seeing her girlfriend again. Her mother threatened to file charges against Leslie for lying and grounded her for a month. Shortly after, Leslie's truant behavior began.

Characteristics

Leslie definitely feels that what Jerry was doing to her was wrong. She says he is her mother's husband, and he shouldn't be messing with other women, especially his own daughter, even though she is only a stepdaughter. She had told him she didn't like it and wanted him to stop, and was mad because he just laughed at her. She said she felt as if "what I felt and wanted didn't matter to him at all! He's a selfish jerk. I really like - liked - my Mom. But I think she's flipped. I can't imagine what she sees in him. Something must have happened to her when my Dad died."

In the past several months, Leslie's school work has deteriorated. She has become chronically truant. She has stopped seeing her old friends; they think she's changed. She's been hanging out with a group of kids from another school and has been living with the emancipated 18-year old sister of one of her new friends in a one-bedroom apartment

above a store. Leslie has been sleeping on the floor. She says she tried drugs, but quit because "I just didn't like them. They scare me." She does drink. She thinks that drinking too much is wrong, but all the other kids were doing it, and it kind of felt good. When she's drunk she doesn't have to think about home. She doesn't like "being in trouble," and is upset that she was arrested. "I wish things were different," she says. She's afraid of embarrassing her mother, although she's not sure that she wants to ever see her mother again. She's afraid she'd "yell at her and then she'd never forgive me."

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Case Study #6: Kathy

Kathy is 16. She was arrested with a group of other kids at midnight in a van driving 80 MPH on the freeway. All the kids had been drinking, and several marijuana joints were found in the van. Kathy insisted she didn't know there were drugs in the van. She had been standing on the corner with some kids from school when "this kid came by in a car and asked if we wanted to go for a ride." Kathy said she hesitated, but went along because she didn't want her friends to think she was weird. She was brought to the Receiving Home after her arrest for an assessment of her situation.

History

Kathy lives with her parents and three younger siblings, two brothers and a sister. Her father is a minister, her mother a homemaker who is active in the church as a minister's wife. Kathy's father was an only child. He went to a seminary after having been befriended by a minister who worked at a youth club where Kathy's father went after school. Kathy's father became fast friends with this man, and was eventually convinced to follow in his footsteps and pursue a career in the church.

Kathy's mother is a quiet, unassuming woman. She has devoted her life to serving others. She spends several evenings a week with church related activities. Kathy's father cares for the children these evenings, unless he too has church related obligations. Kathy then has the responsibility of caring for the other children.

When Kathy was 12, her father began finding excuses to come into the bathroom when she was bathing, and he would remain in the bathroom and watch her out of the corner of his eye. Kathy would ask him to leave, but he repeatedly told her there was nothing wrong with his being there; after all, he was her father, and he'd seen her naked all her life. About six months later he began going into her bedroom at night. He began by fondling her, moved to finger penetration, and finally began intercourse when Kathy was 14. Her father told her that God thought the human body was beautiful, and that the relationship between parents and children was the most sacred of all human relationships. However, he said, that other people who weren't as close to God wouldn't understand, and if she ever said anything to anyone about their "special relationship," he would be banned from the church, and they would lose their home and the family would break apart.

Kathy didn't disclose the abuse until she was arrested, at which time the social worker who did the intake interview at the Receiving Home asked her about her family. Kathy began to cry immediately and told the Child Welfare Professional how ashamed she was. Despite what her father had told her, she knew that what they had been doing was wrong. She had seen a TV program on incest, and realized what was happening. She had wanted to tell her mother, but her mother had also watched the TV program and blamed the child, indicating that the child was "a bad girl - she must have asked for trouble." Kathy knew

her mother would think her bad and blame her, and she was ashamed that maybe her mother was right. After all, she didn't fight her father. She said she was really afraid her father really would lose his job if she told anyone. She was sure nobody would forgive her, now that she really has told. She guessed it didn't matter because nobody would ever want to date her now anyway.

Kathy appeared to be anxious and very depressed. She claimed not to be a chronic user of drugs or alcohol. She said she did go out a lot with her friends to get away from her father. It made her Dad very angry, but she couldn't help it. She became "upset" when she stayed at home . . . her stomach ached, she had headaches, and sometimes she threw up. She felt better if she was out of the house "where there is some fresh air."

She told the Child Welfare Professional she wished things could be different. She despaired that this was possible. A check of police records showed that Kathy had been arrested twice previously with groups of teens who were out late drinking, but charges were never filed against her. Teachers reported occasional angry outbursts at school between Kathy and other students, with Kathy apparently starting arguments over minor issues. Her teachers liked her but felt her to be withdrawn and pensive. A school counselor said Kathy would "wander in" to chat frequently, but seemed reluctant to talk about her private life. Kathy also seemed to work hard to prove she was a good student, apologizing profusely when she didn't do well on school tests.

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Case Study #7: Pat

Pat is 16. He was arrested with a group of other teens at midnight driving his van at 80 MPH on the freeway. All the kids in the van had been drinking, and several marijuana joints were found in the car. Pat said he had been "cruising" when he spotted some kids he knew from his school smoking pot on a street corner and picked them up, hoping to get a joint. They picked up a couple other kids outside the liquor store. Pat had been chronically truant from home for about a year. He had been expelled from school for throwing a text book at a teacher who "embarrassed me in class." He had been repeatedly suspended from school for swearing and for disruptive behavior. He was failing all his subjects, despite above average intelligence. He had been designated a "child in need of supervision" a year earlier and was brought to the Receiving Home after his arrest.

History

Pat was the youngest of three children. He was raised in a working class family in an ethnic neighborhood of the city. His father was a rigid, authoritarian man who spent most of his waking hours working. His mother was a quiet, passive woman who spent her life trying to raise her two sons and a daughter and keep a home for her husband. She had few interests outside her home and family. Pat's older brother Ray was the favored child; Pat's father identified with Ray and felt Ray was special.

When Pat was 10, his older brother Ray, then 16, began to tease him about being "little, skinny and ugly," routinely took his belongings, and constantly belittled him. When Pat got angry, Ray would hit him. Between the ages of 10 and 14, Pat was teased, traumatized, and rather regularly beaten up by his brother. His brother threatened him with serious bodily harm if he ever told anyone. Finally, when he was 14 (and physically as large as his brother) Pat tried to tell his mother about Ray's beatings. She cried for a day and then told his father. Pat's father hit his wife, bit Pat in the face, and then told Pat if he ever lied like that again, he would "beat him so he'd know what beating was really like." Three months later, Pat left home and has not returned.

He has been living with anyone who will provide him shelter. He regularly does drugs. Shortly after he left home, he confided in his sister. He told her he knew he had caused trouble for her and his Mom, and he felt really bad about that. He said he knew he had put his Mom in the middle by telling her, and should have just handled it with Ray. He asked his sister to tell his Mom that he really loved her. He said he couldn't go home because "the old man" would never believe him because he thought Ray walked on water. Ray had a "good job," and made "good money," which made him perfect in his Dad's eyes. Pat said that his Dad should only know that his "golden boy" was pushing drugs for a living. Pat also told his sister that his father had often told him that he would "never amount to a hill of beans" because he was more interested in art and music than business.

When approached now to discuss his past, Pat refuses to talk about it. He becomes very agitated and minimizes the importance of his earlier experiences. He claims it's useless to talk about it, it won't do any good. There's no point in dredging up the past. "It's over, behind me, finished. The bastard will never lay a hand on me again. I was too young to know the difference when it happened, but if he ever comes near me again, I'll kill him." Pat keeps his distance from people. He is emotionally insulated, he has no close friends. His relationships are superficial. His approach to other people is confrontive and belligerent.

His tendency to test adults by being obnoxious and antagonistic creates problems with his teachers and with other adults. He challenges everything they say and appears to be ready for a fight. He expects that others will "try to pull a power play" on him, and he has to "protect myself." He claims he "feels fine, better than I have in my life. I'm a free man." However, on other days, he'll occasionally say, "I wish things were different. I don't want to end up a junkie they have to sweep off the streets."