

Building Friendships: Avoid Discounting

OBJECTIVES:

1. Explore the relationship between stress and discounting.
2. Understand what discounting is and how it relates to stress in relationships.
3. Plan action steps to change discounting of self and others.

ITEMS NEEDED FOR THIS EDUCATIONAL SESSION:

- Handout materials for participant workbooks
- Scrapbooking materials
- Pencils and pens
- Flipchart and markers

HANDOUTS:

1. *Lavonda's Bad Day*
2. *Action Plan—Positive Strokes*
3. *Action Plan—Discounting*
4. *Take Home Message for This Session*



GETTING STARTED

Review Homework Assignment (If the **Positive Strokes** lesson was the previous lesson, please review homework assignment as part of the icebreaker.)

Today we are going to focus on an important topic that we all deal with: stress. Stress seems to be a problem for everyone. It is a part of being human. We cannot completely get rid of stress, but there are ways to manage stress so that it doesn't hurt ourselves or those we love. The first step in managing stress is to learn more about how you feel stress in your body.

ACTIVITY: Reactions to Stress and Defining Stress

Draw a picture of yourself under stress. How does stress feel and look for you? Don't worry about your drawing ability but feel free to express yourself using the markers.

(Recommended that the facilitators also draw a picture of themselves under stress to show that stress is a universal experience.)

Next, draw a picture of the person who most helps you with caring for your baby when he or she is under stress. This could be your partner or the baby's other parent or a close relative. (Facilitator does the same.)

Now let's look at our drawings.

1. How well does your personal picture match the picture of the person who helps you care for your baby? What are the differences?
2. What do you think stress is? What came to mind when I first said this word?
3. Can you tell from the pictures what is causing you stress?

4. What do you feel? What happens to you when you feel stress?
5. What do you see yourself doing? What do you do that is positive? What do you do that might be harmful to yourself or other people?
6. When do you notice your stress? Later or early when stress arises?
7. What happens when your partner or other close person is under stress? How do you react?

Let's put these drawings in the workbook we are putting together for this program. We will refer back to this drawing later as we think about ways to manage stress.

ACTIVITY: Discounting

In our last session, we talked about the importance of positive strokes and how the number of positive strokes needs to far outweigh the negative ones. Today we are going to talk about another communication habit that can damage our relationships. Unfortunately, many of us say or do things that decrease our own or another person's self-esteem when we are stressed out.

The opposite of giving positive strokes is called "discounting." (Write this term on the flipchart). Look at the picture you drew of yourself under stress. Consider that your reactions to stress may be due in part to how you think about your situation and what other people say to you. For example, you might be a very warm and happy person most times. However, when you are having problems at work, you may find yourself treating other people differently. You may lose patience more easily and say things you do not mean and not even be aware of it.

The term “discount” means to think or speak of as small or unimportant. It is also called belittling, minimizing, and talking down to oneself or another person. Some people use the term “diss”—a slang term that is short for disrespect.

Let’s start with an example of how discounting works with oneself. [The facilitators role play the following:]

- One facilitator compliments the other facilitator, “You look so nice in those clothes.”
- The other facilitator turns the compliment into a negative. She or he might respond by looking embarrassed, shaking their head, looking down or disagreeing with the compliment. “This old thing. It’s about ready for the rag bag.”

Ask participants to reflect on these questions and write the group’s ideas on the flipchart:

1. What were some of the ways that the person in the role-play discounted the positive stroke that he or she was given?
2. What kind of body language was used in the role-play to show discounting?
3. What are some of the ways you discount positive strokes given to you?
4. What are some positive ways that you might respond to a stroke?
5. How can you prevent yourself from discounting positive strokes?

ACTIVITY: Lavonda’s Bad Day

Read the case study with the group. Form the participants into groups of two to four people. Have the groups discuss the questions at the end of the case study. Use the ideas and suggestions generated above to guide the discussion.

Let’s apply what we’ve learned about positive strokes, stress, and discounting to Lavonda. Have you ever had the kind of day that Lavonda is having? Lavonda’s story shows that there are some things we can do to prevent stress. However, there are some stressors that are beyond our control. In these cases, it is important for us to learn healthy strategies to manage our stress and to calm ourselves down.

1. What are the stressors Lavonda is experiencing? Circle all the ones you find.
2. Put an “X” next to the ones over which Lavonda has some control. What might Lavonda have done differently to avoid these stressors?
3. Put a “+” next to those stressors over which Lavonda has very little control. Why do you think Lavonda has very little control over these stressors? What positive strokes can she give herself about these things she cannot control?
4. What other positive strokes can Lavonda give herself to help her through this difficult day and to reduce her stress? Be as specific as possible.
5. What are examples of “discounting” that she might do? What might happen to Lavonda’s stress levels if she starts discounting herself? How can she turn these into positives?

ACTIVITY:
**Scrapbooking Page on
Commitment to Avoid Discounting**

Have participants complete a scrapbook page for the Memory Book that depicts their commitment to increasing positive strokes and decreasing discounting with themselves and others.

ACTIVITY:
**Action Plans for Positive Strokes and
Avoiding Discounting**

Over the next week, try to practice giving more positive strokes to yourself and others. Also, try to accept positive strokes when they are given to you. Using the handouts **Action Plan—Positive Strokes**, and **Action Plan—Discounting** develop a plan for yourself this week about how to increase the strokes you give to yourself and others and to stop discounting. See how your stress levels change as you practice positive strokes and stop discounting.

HOMEWORK:

Have participants take a minute to complete the **Take-Home Message** for their magnet. The action step should focus on the action plans they developed on positive strokes and discounting.

CLOSING:

Today we learned that discounting causes stress, and decreases our self-esteem and confidence levels. As a result, we may find it more difficult with stressful situations. If we are not careful, discounting practices can become a source of stress in relationships.



Lavonda's Bad Day

Lavonda has had quite a day so far and it is just after lunch. First of all, she overslept and was late to her job as a nurse's aide at the long-term care facility across town. Her 4-year old didn't want to get dressed and eat her toast. At least her two-month old was easy to get ready. Lavonda then missed the bus that she takes to get her children to her mom's house, and then to work.

When Lavonda finally arrived to work, her supervisor was waiting to talk with her about being late to work again. Lavonda explained what happened leaving out the part about oversleeping. Her supervisor gave her a verbal warning that she'll need to write her up and put something in her file next time she is late. If it continues, she may even lose her job. Lavonda is really ticked at her boss and wishes she would cut her some slack.

While working, Lavonda's brother calls her on her cell phone and asks her for money. He's behind on his child support and hasn't worked for a long time. Lavonda really doesn't have the money to spare but wants to help out. She wishes he'd get life together and is not sure what to do.

Right after lunch, her mom calls and tells her the baby is crying and has a high fever. Lavonda is afraid to ask her supervisor to leave but doesn't feel like she has a choice. Lavonda now has a headache (she often suffers from migraines) and doesn't know how to handle all the things that day has brought so far. Who knows what else will go wrong?

Lavonda's Bad Day

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4. What other positive strokes can Lavonda give herself to help her through this difficult day and to reduce her stress? Be as specific as possible.

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5. What are examples of "discounting" that she did? How can she turn these into positives?

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Strokes

Action Plan—Positive Strokes

I will practice GIVING positive strokes to:

Who?

How or what will you do?

When?

Who?

How or what will you do?

When?

I will practice GETTING positive strokes from:

Who?

How or what will you do?

When?

Who? MYSELF

How or what will you do?

When? EVERYDAY

Strokes

Action Plan—Discounting

I currently use discounting in the following ways:

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I will not use discounting when:

- Someone gives me a compliment.
- Someone says I did a good job.
- I know I did something positive.
- I look and feel good.
- Other:
- Other:

I will practice positive self-talk:

- I will say good things to myself (either aloud or in my head) everyday.
- I will concentrate on doing the right thing for my baby and me.
- I will forgive myself when I make mistakes.
- Other:
- Other:

Take Home Message for This Session

Directions: Think of one step you will take before the next session and write it down in the space provided. In addition, write down the time, date, and location of the next session.

**“Do a little more
each day than you think
you possibly can”**

—Lowell Thomas—

My Action Steps:

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The Next Session:

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DATE

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TIME

.....
LOCATION

