

**An Identity-Conscious Group Counseling Program for Upper Elementary Students
Navigating Parental Incarceration**

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H340: The Process of Counseling – Advanced Skills & Techniques

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Abstract

This paper presents an identity-conscious group counseling program designed for fourth and fifth grade students who have a parent who is currently or previously incarcerated. Grounded in literature on parental incarceration, stigma, and school connectedness, this program addresses the emotional, relational, and identity-related challenges experienced by this population.

The six-session group intervention focuses on reducing isolation, increasing emotional awareness and expression, and supporting the development of coping strategies and peer connection. Through a structured yet flexible group format, students are provided with a safe space to explore their experiences, build relationships with peers, and strengthen their sense of belonging within the school environment.

The program is guided by a logic model and includes clearly defined short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. Evaluation methods incorporate both qualitative and quantitative measures, including student self-report surveys, counselor observations, and teacher feedback. This paper highlights the importance of school-based, identity-conscious group interventions in supporting students impacted by parental incarceration.

Introduction

Parental incarceration is a significant yet often invisible experience for many children in school settings. Students with incarcerated parents frequently navigate complex emotional, social, and identity-related challenges, including stigma, family disruption, and a diminished sense of belonging. Despite the prevalence of this experience, it is often misunderstood or unaddressed within schools, leaving students without adequate support to process their experiences.

For upper elementary students, these challenges can be particularly impactful. As students begin to develop a stronger sense of identity and place greater importance on peer relationships, experiences of stigma and difference may become more pronounced. Students may feel pressure to conceal aspects of their family life, leading to isolation, internalized shame, or difficulty forming connections with peers and adults.

This paper presents an identity-conscious group counseling program designed to support fourth and fifth grade students who have experienced parental incarceration. The program is grounded in a strengths-based and relational framework, recognizing both the challenges students face and the resilience they bring. By providing a structured group space for emotional processing, peer connection, and skill-building, this intervention aims to reduce isolation, challenge stigma, and promote a stronger sense of belonging within the school environment.

The following sections draw on relevant literature to establish the need for this work, outline the design and implementation of the group counseling program, and present a comprehensive evaluation plan to assess student growth and program effectiveness.

Literature Review

Why This Population Warrants Attention

Children with incarcerated parents represent a significant and often overlooked population within school settings. In the United States, millions of children have experienced parental incarceration, with disproportionate impacts on racially and economically marginalized communities (Murphey & Cooper, 2015; Shaver et al., 2024). Despite its prevalence, this experience often remains invisible in schools, where students' needs may be misunderstood or unaddressed.

Parental incarceration is increasingly recognized not only as an adverse childhood experience, but as a complex and multidimensional factor that shapes children's emotional,

social, and academic development. Research suggests that the effects of parental incarceration are not isolated events, but rather part of broader systems of inequality that influence children's access to resources, stability, and support (Thorne et al., 2023; Turney, 2014). As a result, understanding this population requires attention to both individual outcomes and the larger structural contexts in which these experiences occur.

Research consistently demonstrates that children with incarcerated parents experience overlapping emotional, academic, and relational challenges. These students are at increased risk for anxiety, depressive symptoms, and difficulties with emotional regulation, all of which can influence their ability to engage in school and form relationships with peers (Davis & Shlafer, 2017; Heard-Garris et al., 2018). At the same time, parental incarceration has been linked to decreased academic engagement, increased disciplinary actions, and lower overall school performance (Shlafer et al., 2017; Shaver et al., 2024). These patterns are particularly concerning given the role of school as a central context for both learning and social development.

These challenges are further compounded by disruptions in family systems. Children may experience separation from a caregiver, changes in living arrangements, and reduced parental involvement in their education (Haskins & Jacobsen, 2017; Thorne et al., 2023). These disruptions can create instability that affects both emotional well-being and daily functioning in school environments.

Taken together, these findings suggest that children with incarcerated parents experience layered and compounding challenges that extend beyond individual emotional responses. The interaction between mental health risks, academic disruption, and changes in family systems creates a context in which students may struggle to access both internal and external supports. Without targeted intervention, these challenges can reinforce patterns of disconnection,

disengagement, and vulnerability within school settings. This highlights the importance of school-based interventions that are both preventative and responsive to students' lived experiences.

In addition to understanding the impact of parental incarceration, it is equally important to consider how targeted interventions can mitigate these risks. Research has increasingly emphasized the role of school-based supports in addressing the emotional and behavioral needs of children impacted by parental incarceration. Interventions that focus on emotional regulation, coping strategies, and relational support have been shown to improve mental health outcomes and reduce behavioral challenges for this population (Merhi et al., 2024). These findings highlight the importance of not only identifying risk but also implementing structured supports that can promote resilience and positive development within school settings.

Parental Incarceration as an Identity-Conscious Issue

In addition to its impact on emotional and academic outcomes, parental incarceration must be understood as an identity-conscious issue that shapes how children see themselves and how they are perceived by others. The stigma associated with incarceration often extends beyond the individual to their family members, resulting in what has been described as “courtesy stigma” or a “spoiled identity” (Goffman, 1963; Luther, 2016). As a result, children may internalize negative societal perceptions and feel pressure to conceal aspects of their family experience.

Research suggests that children with incarcerated parents frequently engage in identity management strategies, such as hiding their family circumstances or distancing themselves from their parent, to avoid judgment or social exclusion (Luther, 2016; Turney, 2014). While these strategies may serve as protective in certain contexts, they can also contribute to feelings of isolation, shame, and disconnection. Over time, this can negatively impact students' self-concept, sense of belonging, and willingness to seek support within school environments.

In school settings, this identity management can have significant implications for students' engagement and sense of safety. When students perceive that their experiences are not understood or accepted, they may withdraw from participation, limit interactions with peers, or avoid seeking support from adults. This dynamic reinforces the importance of creating counseling spaces where students feel both seen and validated, and where identity-conscious issues such as stigma and concealment can be explored openly and safely.

Importantly, parental incarceration does not occur in isolation but is deeply connected to broader systems of inequality. Incarceration disproportionately impacts racially and economically marginalized communities, meaning that many children experience this identity at the intersection of multiple forms of marginalization (Thorne et al., 2023). These intersecting identities can intensify experiences of stigma and exclusion, particularly within school systems that may not fully recognize or respond to these complexities.

Across the literature, stigma, concealment, and identity negotiation emerge as central experiences shaping how students navigate both their sense of self and their relationships within school contexts. Understanding parental incarceration as an identity-conscious issue highlights the importance of interventions that do not simply address behavior or emotion, but that also create space for identity exploration, validation, and belonging.

The Impact of Group Counseling

Given the emotional, relational, and identity-related challenges associated with parental incarceration, group counseling offers a particularly effective and developmentally appropriate intervention. Group counseling provides a structured space in which students can process their experiences, build coping skills, and develop meaningful connections with peers who share similar lived experiences.

Beyond general school-based supports, research specifically supports the use of structured group interventions for students impacted by parental incarceration. For example, Gerlach (n.d.) presents a six-session group counseling intervention for students with incarcerated parents, providing a structured model that supports the use of small group counseling in school settings. Although this intervention is not presented as an evidence-based model, it offers a structured and developmentally appropriate framework that supports the feasibility and relevance of group counseling for this population. These findings further support the use of small group counseling as a targeted intervention that addresses both the emotional and relational needs of this population.

One of the most significant benefits of group counseling for this population is its ability to reduce isolation. Many children with incarcerated parents experience their situation as something that must be hidden, leading to feelings of being alone or different from their peers. Group counseling creates opportunities for shared understanding and normalization, allowing students to recognize that they are not alone in their experiences. This sense of connection is a critical component of emotional healing and resilience.

In addition to promoting connection, group counseling provides a structured environment for processing shared experiences in ways that individual counseling may not fully replicate. For children with incarcerated parents, the opportunity to engage with peers who have similar lived experiences can reduce feelings of “otherness” and support identity normalization. Research suggests that group-based interventions can enhance emotional expression, increase perceived social support, and improve coping outcomes for youth experiencing adversity (Shaver et al., 2024; Shlafer et al., 2017).

Research on school connectedness further reinforces the importance of relational interventions. School connectedness has been identified as a protective factor for youth with incarcerated parents, with higher levels of connection associated with improved academic outcomes and reduced behavioral challenges (Shaver et al., 2024; Shlafer et al., 2017). Group counseling directly supports this protective factor by fostering peer relationships and creating a space for students to feel seen and supported within their school community. These findings align with broader research on resilience, which suggests that while children with incarcerated parents face significant risk, protective factors such as supportive relationships, emotional skill development, and access to interventions can meaningfully improve outcomes (Johnson & Arditto, 2023). School-based group counseling interventions are uniquely positioned to target these protective factors by simultaneously addressing emotional regulation, peer connection, and identity development.

In addition to fostering connection, group counseling supports the development of key social-emotional skills, including emotional expression, communication, and perspective-taking. These skills are particularly important for students navigating complex family experiences, as they may not have consistent opportunities to process their emotions in other settings. Group settings also allow for intentional exploration of identity-conscious issues, including stigma, secrecy, and self-perception, helping students to challenge internalized beliefs and develop a more empowered understanding of themselves.

While research specifically focused on group counseling for children of incarcerated parents is still emerging, existing literature on school connectedness and relational interventions strongly supports the use of group-based approaches for this population. These findings support the need for structured, school-based interventions that target both emotional regulation and

relational connection, positioning group counseling as an appropriate and evidence-informed modality.

Additionally, research emphasizes that interventions for this population should be both trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate, recognizing the complex and often hidden nature of students' experiences. School counselors play a critical role in implementing these interventions, as they are uniquely positioned to provide accessible, consistent, and relationship-based support within the school environment (Warren et al., 2019). This further reinforces the importance of structured group counseling programs that are intentionally designed to meet the needs of students impacted by parental incarceration.

Conclusion

Children with incarcerated parents represent a vulnerable and often overlooked population within school settings. The literature demonstrates that parental incarceration is associated with significant emotional, academic, and identity-related challenges, while also highlighting the importance of protective factors such as connection and belonging. At the same time, stigma and concealment play a central role in shaping how students navigate their experiences within school environments.

Group counseling offers a meaningful and effective intervention that addresses both the emotional and identity-conscious needs of this population. By fostering connection, reducing isolation, and creating space for identity exploration, group counseling can support students in developing resilience, self-awareness, and a stronger sense of belonging within their school communities. This literature provides a strong foundation for the development of targeted, identity-conscious group counseling interventions designed to support students impacted by parental incarceration.

Group Counseling Program Overview

Given the emotional, relational, and identity-related challenges outlined in the literature, this group counseling program is designed to provide targeted, identity-conscious support for fourth and fifth grade students navigating the experience of having a parent who is currently or previously incarcerated. Research highlights that students impacted by parental incarceration often experience stigma, isolation, emotional distress, and disruptions in family systems, all of which can influence their ability to engage in school and develop a sense of belonging.

Within school environments, these experiences are often unspoken or misunderstood. Students may feel pressure to hide aspects of their family life, leading to internalized shame, withdrawal, or difficulty forming connections with peers and adults. This group is intentionally designed to disrupt that isolation by creating a space where students feel seen, understood, and supported.

This program is grounded in an identity-conscious and strengths-based framework. Rather than viewing students through a deficit lens, the group recognizes the resilience, insight, and adaptability students already bring. The group aims to support both emotional processing and connection, helping students build skills while also validating their lived experiences.

Target Population and Context

This group is designed for fourth and fifth grade students at Florida Ruffin Ridley School (FRR), a K–8 public school in Brookline, Massachusetts. Upper elementary students are at a developmental stage where identity formation, peer relationships, and social awareness become increasingly important. At this age, students are more aware of differences between themselves and others, which can heighten feelings of self-consciousness, belonging, and social comparison.

The target population includes students who have at least one parent who is currently or previously incarcerated. These students may be navigating complex emotional experiences

related to separation, stigma, and family instability. In a school setting, these experiences may present as anxiety, emotional dysregulation, difficulty concentrating, withdrawal from peers, or challenges forming and maintaining relationships.

FRR serves a diverse student population across racial, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Because incarceration disproportionately impacts marginalized communities, this group also recognizes the ways in which race, socioeconomic status, and family structure intersect with students' experiences. The group is designed to be responsive to these intersecting identities and to create a space where students' experiences are validated rather than minimized or overlooked.

Identity-Conscious Issue of Focus

The identity-conscious focus of this group centers on parental incarceration as a stigmatized and often invisible identity. Students may actively conceal this aspect of their lives due to fear of judgment, misunderstanding, or social exclusion. Over time, this can contribute to feelings of shame, self-monitoring, and disconnection from others.

This group recognizes that these experiences are not simply individual but are shaped by broader societal stigma and systemic inequities. Students impacted by parental incarceration often navigate multiple intersecting identities, and these intersections can influence how they are perceived and supported within school settings.

The group creates space for students to explore these experiences in a way that feels safe and developmentally appropriate. Through guided discussion, reflection, and peer interaction, students are supported in challenging internalized stigma, building self-awareness, and developing a more empowered sense of identity. The goal is not to force disclosure, but to create conditions where students feel safe enough to share when they choose.

Type of Group

This will be a closed, identity-conscious counseling group designed as a Tier 2 intervention within a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework. The group is intended for students who share a common experience and demonstrate identified emotional or social needs that are not fully addressed through universal supports.

As a closed group, membership will remain consistent across all six sessions. This consistency is critical in building trust, fostering group cohesion, and creating a sense of safety. The group integrates relational, reflective, and skill-building components, ensuring that students are not only learning strategies, but also engaging in meaningful connection and emotional processing.

Group Structure and Logistics

The group will consist of 5–7 students in fourth and fifth grade and will meet for six weekly sessions lasting approximately 40 minutes each. Sessions will take place during a designated resource or advisory period to minimize disruption to academic instruction while maintaining consistency.

The physical environment of the group is intentionally structured to support connection and safety. Students will be seated in a circle, without desks or barriers, to encourage openness and engagement. Materials such as journals, emotion charts, and simple grounding tools may be used to support participation in a developmentally appropriate way.

Each session will follow a predictable structure, including:

- a brief check-in
- an introduction to the session theme
- an interactive activity or discussion
- reflection or sharing
- a closing or grounding activity

This consistency helps students feel secure while also allowing space for flexibility if meaningful conversations emerge.

Attendance is expected across all six sessions, as each session builds upon the previous one. Journal prompts are intentionally sequenced to align with the progression of the group, supporting increasing depth of reflection over time. While students may choose to withdraw at any time, participation for the full duration of the group is strongly encouraged to support both individual growth and group cohesion.

Recruitment and Screening Procedures

Students will be identified through a combination of needs assessments, teacher referrals, and counselor observations. Needs assessments completed by caregivers, teachers, and students will help identify emotional and social needs, including those related to family experiences, peer relationships, and emotional regulation.

Teachers and school staff will be invited to refer students who may benefit from additional support, particularly those who demonstrate signs of withdrawal, difficulty with peer connection, or emotional dysregulation. School counselors may also identify students through ongoing interactions and observations within the school setting.

To promote awareness of the group, developmentally appropriate flyers will be shared with students and introduced through brief classroom visits. Caregiver-facing brochures will provide clear information about the purpose, structure, and goals of the group. These materials are designed to be accessible, supportive, and non-stigmatizing.

Following initial identification, students will participate in brief pre-group screening interviews. These conversations are used to assess students' readiness for group participation, their comfort level in a small group setting, and the alignment between their needs and the focus

of the group. Screening also ensures that students who require more intensive or individualized support are appropriately referred to other services.

This process helps ensure that the group remains cohesive, supportive, and responsive to the needs of all participants.

This program intentionally integrates emotional processing, identity exploration, and relational connection, ensuring that students are supported not only in developing skills but also in making meaning of their experiences within a safe and validating environment.

Transition to Next Section

The following section outlines the purpose and goals of the group counseling program, including the specific emotional, relational, and identity-related areas targeted throughout the six-session intervention.

Purpose and Goals of the Group Counseling Program

Umbrella Purpose of the Group

The overarching purpose of this group counseling program is to support fourth and fifth grade students who have a parent who is currently or previously incarcerated by providing a safe, identity-conscious, and developmentally appropriate space for emotional processing, peer connection, and skill-building. The group is designed for students whose experiences may be hidden, stigmatized, or misunderstood within the school setting, and who may benefit from a small group space where they can feel less alone.

This group addresses both the emotional and relational impact of parental incarceration. On an individual level, the group supports students in building emotional awareness, expressing feelings, developing coping strategies, and reducing internalized shame or stigma. On a social level, the group aims to create a supportive peer community where students can connect with

others who may share similar experiences, practice communication skills, and strengthen their sense of belonging within school.

The purpose of this group is not to “fix” students or define them by their family circumstances. Rather, it is to honor the complexity of their lived experiences while helping them build resilience, confidence, and connection. The group recognizes that students’ emotional responses are shaped not only by personal experience, but also by broader stigma and systemic inequities surrounding incarceration. For this reason, the group is both supportive and intervention-focused, offering students a structured space to process, learn, connect, and grow.

Intrapersonal Goals

Intrapersonally, the group seeks to support each student’s ability to understand and manage their own emotional experiences. Students impacted by parental incarceration may experience sadness, worry, confusion, anger, embarrassment, or shame, and these emotions may be difficult to name or express. Through group activities, discussion, reflection, and coping skill practice, students will strengthen their emotional vocabulary and begin to recognize patterns in their feelings and responses.

The group also aims to reduce internalized stigma. Students may worry about how others would view them or their family if they knew about their parent’s incarceration. By exploring themes of identity, family experience, and self-worth in a safe setting, students will be supported in separating their own identity from the stigma attached to incarceration. The group will help students build a more compassionate and empowered understanding of themselves.

Additionally, students will develop a coping “toolbox” that they can use both inside and outside of the group. These coping strategies may include grounding techniques, identifying trusted adults, using self-talk, journaling, and recognizing when they need support. The goal is

for students to leave the group with concrete, age-appropriate strategies that help them manage stress, regulate emotions, and feel more capable when difficult feelings arise.

Interpersonal and School-Based Goals

Interpersonally, the group seeks to reduce isolation by helping students recognize that they are not alone in their experiences. A key purpose of group counseling is to create opportunities for shared understanding, mutual support, and peer connection. For students whose family experiences may feel private or different from their peers, the group can provide a rare space where they feel seen and understood.

The group also supports students in practicing relational skills, including listening, sharing, empathy, respectful communication, and help-seeking. These skills are important within the group itself, but they also support students' broader engagement in the school community. As students become more comfortable expressing feelings and connecting with others, they may also become more confident seeking support from trusted adults and participating in peer relationships.

Within the school context, the group aims to strengthen students' sense of belonging. Because school connectedness can serve as a protective factor for students impacted by parental incarceration, this group intentionally focuses on helping students feel supported within the school environment. The group is designed to create a bridge between students' private experiences and their school-based support system, so that they do not have to carry difficult emotions alone.

Measurable Sub-Goals

The following measurable sub-goals will guide the implementation and evaluation of the group:

- 1. Students will increase emotional awareness and expression.**

By the end of the six sessions, at least 75–80% of students will show growth in their

ability to name and express feelings, as measured by pre- and post-group student surveys, exit slips, journal reflections, and counselor observation checklists.

2. Students will reduce feelings of isolation related to parental incarceration.

By the end of the group, at least 70–80% of students will report feeling less alone in their experiences, as measured by pre- and post-group Likert-scale items related to belonging, connection, and feeling understood.

3. Students will develop and identify coping strategies.

By the final session, at least 75% of students will be able to identify at least two coping strategies they can use when feeling stressed, upset, or overwhelmed. This will be measured through student surveys, session reflections, and counselor observations.

4. Students will increase peer connection and comfort participating in a group setting.

Across the six sessions, students will demonstrate increased engagement with peers through discussion, listening, sharing, and supportive responses. This will be measured through counselor observation checklists, weekly exit slips, and teacher feedback when appropriate.

5. Students will strengthen their sense of belonging within the school community.

By the end of the group and in follow-up check-ins, students will demonstrate growth in their sense of being supported at school. This will be measured through student self-report, teacher feedback, counselor observations, and brief follow-up reflections.

6. Students will increase help-seeking and self-advocacy behaviors.

Students will be encouraged to identify trusted adults and practice asking for support. Progress will be measured through student reflections, counselor observations, and teacher feedback related to students' willingness to seek help when needed.

Connection to the Six-Session Structure

These goals are intentionally embedded across the six-session progression of the group. The first session focuses on safety, trust, and group norms. The second session builds emotional awareness and language. The third session supports identity exploration and self-understanding. The fourth session addresses stigma, assumptions, and what students may feel pressured to hide. The fifth session focuses on coping strategies and support systems. The final session supports reflection, closure, and consolidation of student growth.

Together, these goals ensure that the group is not simply a space for discussion, but a structured intervention designed to support emotional growth, identity development, coping, peer connection, and school belonging.

Program Development and Evaluation

The development of this group counseling program is grounded in both the literature on parental incarceration and research supporting group counseling as an effective modality for reducing isolation, promoting emotional expression, and increasing school connectedness among youth experiencing adversity. Research suggests that structured group counseling interventions can reduce feelings of isolation, increase emotional expression, and improve peer connection among youth experiencing adversity, particularly when implemented in school settings (Gerlach, n.d.; Lemberger-Truelove et al., 2024). This program is designed as a structured, six-session, identity-conscious intervention that integrates emotional processing, peer connection, and skill-building in a developmentally appropriate way.

The design of the group reflects established stages of group development, including initial engagement, exploration, working, and termination. Early sessions prioritize building psychological safety, establishing group norms, and fostering trust among members. As the group progresses, students engage in deeper emotional exploration, identity reflection, and

shared discussion of experiences related to family, stigma, and belonging. Later sessions emphasize skill application, including coping strategies, help-seeking behaviors, and relational engagement, followed by structured reflection and closure. Teacher and caregiver feedback will be collected pre- and post-group to assess observable changes across settings (see Appendix L and Appendix M).

The counselor will complete a structured observation checklist during each session to monitor student participation, emotional expression, and engagement (see Appendix K).

The program is intentionally designed to move beyond surface-level discussion and toward meaningful emotional and relational growth. Each session builds on the previous one, allowing students to gradually increase comfort, participation, and depth of reflection over time.

Logic Model Framework

This program is guided by a logic model that outlines the relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. This logic model reflects a research-informed approach to intervention design, ensuring that each component of the program is intentionally aligned with evidence-based practices in school counseling and social-emotional learning.

Inputs include the school counselor, structured session curriculum, recruitment and screening procedures, developmentally appropriate materials (e.g., journals, emotion charts), and evaluation tools. Activities consist of six structured group sessions incorporating discussion, experiential activities, reflection, and skill-building practices. Outputs include consistent participation of 5–7 students, attendance across all six sessions, and active engagement in group discussions and activities. Outcomes reflect measurable changes in emotional awareness, coping skills, peer connection, and sense of belonging, as outlined below.

SMART Outcomes and Measurement

The outcomes of this program are designed to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound. Outcomes are organized into short-term, intermediate, and long-term categories to reflect the progression of student growth and the goals of the intervention. This tiered structure reflects research indicating that social-emotional growth occurs progressively, beginning with awareness, followed by skill development and application, and ultimately resulting in sustained behavioral and relational change.

Short-Term Outcomes (Weeks 1–6)

In the short term, students will demonstrate increased emotional awareness, improved ability to identify and express feelings, and increased comfort participating in a group setting.

Measurement Tools and Indicators

Student Self-Report (Pre/Post Surveys):

Students will complete a Likert-scale survey before and after the group assessing emotional awareness and comfort with expression. Example items include:

- “I can name how I am feeling”
- “I feel comfortable sharing my feelings with others”
- “I understand my feelings better than before”

Growth will be indicated by increased agreement across items.

Counselor Observation Checklist:

- willingness to participate
- use of emotional language
- engagement in group discussion
- comfort with sharing

Qualitative Reflections:

Students will complete brief exit slips or journal prompts (e.g., “One feeling I noticed this week...”), providing insight into emotional growth.

Intermediate Outcomes (Skill Application & School Functioning)

Intermediate outcomes focus on the application of skills and increased connection within the school environment. Students will demonstrate increased use of coping strategies, improved emotional regulation, and greater comfort interacting with peers.

Measurement Tools and Indicators

Student Post-Group Survey:

- “I use strategies to help myself when I feel upset”
- “I feel more comfortable talking to other students”
- “I know what to do when I feel overwhelmed”

Teacher Feedback Forms:

- emotional regulation in the classroom
- peer interaction
- participation and engagement

Counselor Observations:

- independent use of coping strategies
- references to group skills
- changes in peer interaction

Long-Term Outcomes (Sustained Growth & Belonging)

Long-term outcomes focus on sustained emotional and relational growth, including continued use of coping strategies, increased emotional expression, and an improved sense of belonging within the school community.

Measurement Tools and Indicators

Follow-Up Teacher Feedback (4–6 weeks post-group):

- sustained emotional regulation
- peer relationships
- classroom engagement

Student Check-Ins / Reflection:

- continued use of coping strategies
- comfort expressing emotions
- sense of belonging in school

Counselor Follow-Up Observations:

- help-seeking behavior
- ongoing engagement
- transfer of skills beyond group

These long-term outcomes are particularly important for students impacted by parental incarceration, as sustained access to coping strategies and supportive relationships has been identified as a key protective factor in promoting resilience (Johnson & Arditti, 2023).

Evaluation Methods

To comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of the program, both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected from multiple sources. This multi-method approach to evaluation aligns with best practices in school counseling research, which emphasize the importance of using both quantitative and qualitative data to capture student growth across emotional, behavioral, and relational domains.

Student Measures

Students will complete pre- and post-group Likert-scale surveys assessing emotional awareness, coping skills, and sense of connection. These surveys provide measurable indicators of growth. Students will also complete reflective prompts and journaling activities, offering insight into their lived experiences and emotional development.

Teacher Measures

Teachers will complete pre- and post-group feedback forms assessing observable changes in emotional regulation, peer interaction, and classroom engagement. Teacher input provides an external and ecologically valid perspective on how group learning transfers into the classroom environment.

Counselor Observations

The group facilitator will use structured observation checklists during each session to document student participation, emotional expression, engagement, and use of coping strategies. (see Appendix K). These observations allow for ongoing assessment of both individual progress and group dynamics.

Additional School-Based Indicators

When appropriate, school-based data such as attendance, behavioral referrals, and time spent out of class may be reviewed to identify broader patterns of change in student functioning and engagement.

Data Integration and Interpretation

Using multiple methods of evaluation ensures a comprehensive understanding of student growth. Quantitative data provides measurable evidence of change across key domains, while qualitative data captures students' experiences, reflections, and meaning making.

Together, these data sources allow for a more nuanced evaluation of the program's effectiveness and support ongoing reflection and refinement of the intervention to better meet the needs of students.

Session Outlines

This paper concludes with detailed session outlines for each of the six group counseling meetings included in this program. While the sessions are structured, they are designed to be flexible so facilitators can adapt them to the needs and dynamics of their specific group. Each session follows a consistent format to promote predictability and emotional safety: (1) Check-in/Warm-up, (2) Activity Introduction or Mini-Lesson, (3) Experiential Activity, (4) Processing and Discussion, and (5) Wrap-up and Closing.

Each session is intentionally sequenced to support students' emotional awareness, expression, and skill development over time. Session One focuses on establishing group norms, building safety, and introducing the purpose of the group. Session Two introduces emotional awareness and helps students begin identifying and naming their feelings. Session Three builds on this by exploring internal versus external emotional experiences, allowing students to reflect on what they may choose to share versus keep private. Session Four focuses on the development and application of coping strategies, supporting students in managing difficult emotions. Session Five emphasizes strengths, self-concept, and the application of learned skills in real-life contexts. Finally, Session Six provides space for reflection, closure, and consolidation of learning, allowing students to recognize their growth and identify strategies they will carry forward.

Group Session Plans

Session 1: Establishing Safety, Building Connection, and Introducing the Group

Target Population and Issue Addressed

This group is designed for fourth and fifth grade students who have a parent who is currently or previously incarcerated. Students may be navigating complex emotions related to their family experiences, including confusion, sadness, embarrassment, or worry. Because these experiences are often private or stigmatized, students may also have trouble expressing themselves or connecting with peers.

This session introduces the group as a supportive and identity-conscious space while prioritizing safety, choice, and connection.

Session Goals

Students will:

- Begin to feel safe and comfortable in the group environment
- Develop initial connections with peers
- Understand the purpose and structure of the group
- Contribute to shared group agreements
- Engage in low-risk self-expression

Rationale

This session represents the forming stage of group development. At this stage, students are often cautious and unsure of what to expect, especially in a group centered around potentially sensitive experiences. Because of this, the session is intentionally structured to reduce pressure and provide multiple entry points for participation.

Early activities focus on identity and connection rather than personal disclosure. This allows students to engage in the group without feeling exposed, while still beginning to build relationships with peers. Establishing safety and shared expectations in this session supports deeper engagement in later sessions.

Materials

- Chairs arranged in a circle
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- Blank paper or notecards
- Journals (if used throughout the group)

Session Structure

Prior to the start of the group, students will complete a brief pre-group survey to assess emotional awareness, coping skills, and sense of connection (see Appendix I). Teacher and caregiver input may also be collected to provide baseline data.

Welcome and Group Framing (5 minutes)

The facilitator welcomes students and introduces the group as a space for connection, support, and learning. The purpose of the group is explained in simple and developmentally appropriate language.

Students are informed that:

- they can choose what they share
- there is no pressure to speak right away
- the group will follow a similar structure each week

This helps create predictability and reduces uncertainty.

Connection Activity: “Parts of Me” (10–12 minutes)

Each student is given a piece of paper and asked to create a simple representation of different parts of who they are. Students may divide the page into sections or use a format of their choice. Some examples include drawing squares, or a flower and writing inside the petals.

They are prompted to include 3–5 “parts” of themselves to show us a little bit about who they are. This may include:

- roles (e.g., sibling, friend, student)
- interests (e.g., sports, art, music)
- strengths (e.g., helpful, funny, kind)
- personality traits

Students are given a few minutes to draw or write their responses. The facilitator may provide examples to support understanding but avoids directing content too specifically.

After completing their paper, students are invited to share one or two parts with the group. Sharing is optional, and students may pass.

The facilitator supports connection by briefly noticing similarities across responses when appropriate.

Group Agreements (10–12 minutes)

The facilitator introduces the idea that the group will work best when everyone helps create a safe and respectful environment.

Students are asked to respond to prompts such as:

- What helps people feel safe in a group?
- What makes it easier to share?
- How should the group respond when someone shares something important?

Student responses are recorded on chart paper and organized into a set of group agreements.

The facilitator ensures that key elements are included, such as:

- Listening without interrupting
- Respect and kindness
- Keeping what is shared private
- Allowing others to pass

Students are asked to agree to these expectations, reinforcing shared responsibility. A great way is to have students sign the chart paper at the end of the activity.

Reflection Activity: Hopes for the Group (5–7 minutes)

Each student is given a notecard or paper and asked to reflect on one of the following:

- Something they hope this group can help them with
- Something they want to feel more of (e.g., calm, understood, less alone)

Students may write or draw their response.

They are then given the option to share their response with the group or keep it private.

The facilitator collects informal insight into student needs through this activity.

Processing and Discussion (10 minutes)

The facilitator leads a structured discussion to help students reflect on their experience of the group.

Questions may include:

- what it was like to participate in today's group
- what students noticed about others
- what helped them feel comfortable
- what might make it hard to share in a group

Students are also invited to reflect on connection by considering whether they noticed anything they had in common with others.

To deepen reflection, students are asked to rate their comfort level in the group on a scale from 0 to 10. They are then invited to consider what might help increase that comfort in future sessions.

The facilitator listens for themes and reinforces shared experiences when appropriate.

Closing (5 minutes)

Students are invited to share one word that describes how they are feeling at the end of the session. Participation is optional.

Students will complete a brief journal reflection using the prompt corresponding to the session focus (see Appendix N). This week, students will respond to the prompt:

“One word to describe how I feel about this group is...”

The facilitator acknowledges the effort it takes to try something new and reinforces that comfort and trust will continue to build over time.

A brief preview of the next session is provided, explaining that the group will begin focusing on understanding feelings and learning ways to handle them.

The session may end with a short grounding moment, such as taking a deep breath together.

Session 2: Understanding Feelings and Beginning Coping Skills

Target Population and Issue Addressed

Students in this group may have trouble identifying, expressing, or managing emotions, particularly when those emotions feel overwhelming, confusing, or difficult to communicate. This session focuses on building emotional awareness and introducing the idea that there are ways to respond to feelings in supportive and manageable ways.

Session Goals

Students will:

- Increase awareness of their emotions
- Practice identifying and naming feelings
- Reflect on how they typically respond to emotions
- Begin identifying helpful and unhelpful coping strategies
- Learn and practice one coping strategy

Rationale

This session builds on the sense of safety and connection established in Session 1 and represents an early step into the working phase of the group. As students begin to feel more comfortable, they are better able to engage in reflection and skill-building.

Developing emotional awareness is a foundational component of self-regulation. Students must first be able to recognize and name their feelings before they can respond to them effectively. Research in social-emotional learning highlights emotional awareness as a key skill that supports both emotional regulation and interpersonal functioning. For students navigating complex or stigmatized experiences, feelings may be particularly difficult to identify or express, making structured opportunities for exploration especially important.

This session introduces emotional awareness in a developmentally appropriate and non-threatening way while beginning to connect feelings to actions and coping.

Materials

- Chairs arranged in a circle
- Feelings chart or emotion visuals
- Blank paper or structured worksheet
- Markers or crayons
- Journals (if used throughout the group)

Session Structure

Check-In (5–7 minutes)

The session begins with a structured emotional check-in.

Each student is invited to share one word that describes how they are feeling that day. The facilitator may display a feelings chart to support students who may have difficulty identifying emotions.

Students are given the option to:

- share a single word
- briefly expand on their feeling
- or pass

The facilitator listens for patterns across responses and may briefly reflect shared themes to normalize the range of emotions present in the group.

Mini-Lesson: Understanding Feelings (5–7 minutes)

The facilitator begins by introducing a range of common feelings using a feelings chart or visual.

Students are guided to identify and discuss several emotions, such as:

- happy
- sad
- angry
- worried
- frustrated

The facilitator briefly explores:

- what each feeling might look like
- how it might feel in the body
- situations where someone might feel that way

After reviewing feelings, the facilitator introduces the idea of coping strategies.

Students are guided to think about:

- what people can do when they feel different emotions
- how some strategies help feelings feel more manageable

The facilitator may provide a few concrete examples to support understanding, such as:

- taking a break when feeling overwhelmed
- talking to someone when feeling sad

- using breathing strategies when feeling anxious

Students are encouraged to share ideas, while the facilitator records a few examples to reference during the activity.

“When I Feel...” Reflection (12–15 minutes)

Each student is given a piece of paper or worksheet divided into three sections.

Students are guided to complete the following prompts:

- **When I feel** _____
- **I usually** _____
- **Something that helps (or could help) is** _____

The facilitator explains each section clearly:

- the first identifies the emotion
- the second identifies the student’s typical response
- the third introduces coping or support

Students may:

- write responses
- draw representations
- or combine both

The facilitator circulates throughout the activity to:

- support students who are unsure how to begin
- provide examples if needed
- help students connect feelings to behaviors
- ensure students remain engaged

Students are encouraged to complete at least one full example. If time allows, they may complete additional examples.

After completing the activity, students are invited to share one example with the group. Sharing is optional, and students may choose which part they feel comfortable sharing.

Processing and Discussion (10–12 minutes)

Students will complete a brief journal reflection using the prompt corresponding to the session focus (see Appendix N). This week, students will respond to the prompt:

“One feeling I noticed today was...”

The facilitator leads a structured discussion to help students reflect on their responses and deepen understanding.

Questions focus on:

- what it was like to think about their feelings
- whether it was easy or difficult to name emotions
- how they typically respond when feelings feel strong
- whether those responses feel helpful or unhelpful

Students are also encouraged to reflect on group connection by considering whether they noticed similarities between their responses and those of others.

To introduce a deeper level of reflection, students are invited to consider whether there are times when they choose not to show their feelings and explore possible reasons, such as wanting to avoid attention or protect themselves.

The facilitator listens for themes and reinforces shared experiences to normalize students' responses and strengthen group cohesion.

Coping Skill Introduction and Practice (5–7 minutes)

The facilitator transitions to coping by explaining that while people may already have ways of responding to feelings, they can also learn new strategies that may be helpful in certain situations.

A simple coping strategy, called “box breathing” is introduced. It is a simple counting strategy to follow.

Students are guided through a brief practice while using their finger to draw a box in the air:

- breathing in slowly for 4
- holding for 4
- breathing out slowly for 4
- pausing for 4

The facilitator models pacing and encourages students to follow along.

Students are invited to notice:

- how their body feels during the exercise
- whether anything changes after the exercise

The strategy is framed as one option that may be helpful, reinforcing those different strategies work for different people.

Reflection on Coping (3–5 minutes)

Students are invited to briefly reflect on the coping strategy.

They may consider:

- what they noticed during the activity
- a time they might use this strategy

Students may share responses or keep them private.

This reinforces the connection between emotional awareness and action.

Closing (5 minutes)

Students are invited to share:

- one thing they learned
- or one strategy they might try during the week

Participation remains optional.

The facilitator acknowledges students' effort and reinforces that learning to understand and manage feelings takes time and practice.

A brief preview of the next session is provided, explaining that students will begin exploring how people show or hide their feelings and why.

The session may end with a short grounding moment, such as a collective deep breath.

Session 3: Exploring Feelings, We Show and Feelings We Keep Inside

Target Population and Issue Addressed

Students may experience a range of emotions related to their lives and may not always feel comfortable expressing those emotions openly. At times, students may hide or protect certain feelings due to embarrassment, fear of judgment, or uncertainty about how others will respond.

This session focuses on helping students explore the difference between feelings they show outwardly and feelings they keep inside, while normalizing these experiences and supporting connection within the group.

Session Goals

Students will:

- Deepen awareness of their emotions and how they express them
- Explore the difference between internal and external emotional expression
- Reflect on reasons why people may hide or protect certain feelings
- Recognize that others may have similar experiences
- Practice expressing emotions in safe and flexible ways

Rationale

This session builds on the emotional awareness and coping foundation introduced in Session 2 and represents a transition further into the working phase of the group. As students become more comfortable, they are better able to engage in deeper reflection and begin exploring more complex emotional experiences.

Research suggests that students impacted by parental incarceration may experience stigma and may choose to conceal aspects of their emotions or experiences. Providing structured opportunities to explore both expressed and unexpressed feelings helps normalize these experiences and reduce isolation. This session supports students in recognizing that emotions can be complex and that they have control over how and when they express them.

Materials

- Chairs arranged in a circle
- Blank paper
- Markers or crayons
- Journals (if used throughout the group)

Session Structure

Check-In (5–7 minutes)

Students begin with a brief emotional check-in.

Each student is invited to share one word that describes how they are feeling that day. Students may choose to expand briefly or pass.

The facilitator listens for patterns across responses and may briefly reflect general themes to normalize the range of emotions present in the group.

Mini-Lesson: Feelings We Show and Feelings We Keep Inside (7–8 minutes)

The facilitator introduces the idea that people often experience more than one feeling at a time and that not all feelings are shown outwardly.

Students are guided to consider:

- how people sometimes show one feeling on the outside while feeling something different on the inside
- how experiences in life or at home can sometimes make it harder to share certain feelings

The facilitator may provide simple, relatable examples, such as:

- appearing calm while feeling nervous
- acting happy while feeling worried

Students are invited to share examples or ideas if they feel comfortable. This helps build understanding and prepares students for the activity.

Main Activity: “Inside–Outside Feelings” (15 minutes)

Each student is given a piece of paper and asked to divide it into two sections:

- **Outside (What others see)**
- **Inside (What I might feel but not always show)**

The facilitator clearly explains the task and may model a simple example.

Students are guided to:

- identify at least one feeling they might show outwardly
- identify a different feeling they may keep inside

Students may represent their responses by:

- drawing

- writing
- or combining both

Students are reminded that:

- they are in control of what they choose to include
- they do not need to share anything that feels too personal

During the activity, the facilitator circulates to:

- support students who are unsure how to begin
- prompt reflection if needed
- help students understand the difference between inside and outside feelings
- ensure students remain engaged

After completing the activity, students are invited to share one part of their work if they feel comfortable. Sharing remains optional.

Students will complete a brief journal reflection using the prompt corresponding to the session focus (see Appendix N). This week, students will respond to the prompt: “Something I wish people understood about me is...”

Processing and Discussion (10–12 minutes)

The facilitator leads a structured discussion to help students reflect on the activity and connect with others.

Questions focus on:

- what it was like to think about inside versus outside feelings
- whether one side was easier or harder to identify
- reasons why people might keep certain feelings inside
- when it might feel safe to share feelings

Students are also encouraged to reflect on connection by considering:

- whether they heard something they related to
- whether they noticed similarities between their experiences and others

The facilitator highlights shared themes and normalizes the idea that many people have feelings they do not always express.

Connection to Expression and Coping (5–7 minutes)

The facilitator connects the activity to coping and emotional expression.

Students are guided to consider:

- safe ways to express feelings (talking, drawing, writing, taking space)
- trusted people they might go to when they want to share

The facilitator reinforces that:

- expressing feelings can look different for everyone
- choosing when and how to share is a skill

This builds on coping strategies introduced in Session 2 and expands students' understanding of emotional expression.

Closing (5 minutes)

Students are invited to share one word, feeling, or takeaway from the session. Participation is optional.

The facilitator acknowledges that thinking about feelings in this way can be challenging and reinforces that students are building important skills.

A brief preview of Session 4 is provided, explaining that the group will begin focusing on ways to handle strong emotions and use coping strategies in different situations.

The session may end with a short grounding moment, such as a collective deep breath.

Session 4: Building and Using Coping Strategies for Big Feelings

Target Population and Issue Addressed

Students may experience strong or overwhelming emotions and may not always have consistent or effective ways to cope with them. This session focuses on helping students expand their coping strategies and feel more confident using them in real-life situations.

Session Goals

Students will:

- Build on their understanding of emotions and how they respond to them
- Identify coping strategies they already use
- Learn additional coping strategies for managing strong emotions
- Practice applying coping strategies to real-life situations
- Increase awareness of when and how to seek support

Rationale

This session builds on the emotional awareness and expression work from Sessions 2 and 3 and represents a deeper stage of skill-building within the group process. As students become more comfortable, they are better able to reflect on their own behaviors and consider new ways of responding to emotions.

Research supports the use of explicit coping skill instruction in group counseling to increase emotional regulation and a sense of control. For students navigating complex or stressful life experiences, having access to a range of coping strategies can serve as a protective factor. This session emphasizes that coping is flexible and that students can choose strategies that work best for them in different situations.

Materials

- Chairs arranged in a circle
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- Blank paper
- Journals (if used throughout the group)

Session Structure

Check-In (5–7 minutes)

Students begin with a brief emotional check-in.

Each student is invited to share one word that describes how they are feeling that day. Students may expand or pass.

The facilitator may also invite students to reflect briefly on whether they have noticed or used any coping strategies since the previous session.

Mini-Lesson: What Is Coping? (7–8 minutes)

The facilitator introduces the concept of coping strategies and shows the visual coping strategies poster (see Appendix P).

Students are guided to think about:

- what people do when they have strong feelings
- how some strategies help feelings become more manageable
- how some strategies might feel helpful in the moment but do not always solve the problem

The facilitator introduces the idea that:

- there are different types of coping strategies
- different strategies work in different situations
- coping is something that can be learned and practiced

Examples are provided to support understanding, such as:

- talking to someone
- taking a break
- using breathing strategies
- engaging in a calming activity

Students are invited to share examples of what helps them.

Main Activity: Creating a “Coping Toolbox” (15 minutes)

Each student is given a piece of paper and asked to create a “coping toolbox.” (see Appendix Q)

Students may:

- draw a toolbox and fill it with strategies
- list or write strategies in any format

The facilitator guides students to include:

- strategies they already use
- new strategies they might want to try

Students are encouraged to think about:

- what helps when they feel angry
- what helps when they feel sad or worried
- what helps when feelings feel overwhelming

The facilitator circulates throughout the activity to:

- support students who need help generating ideas
- provide additional examples when needed
- help students connect specific strategies to specific feelings

Students are encouraged to complete multiple strategies to build a range of options.

After completing the activity, students are invited to share one or two strategies with the group. Sharing is optional.

Students will complete a brief journal reflection using the prompt corresponding to the session focus (see Appendix N). This week, students will respond to the prompt: “One way I can take care of myself when I feel upset is...”

Processing and Discussion (10–12 minutes)

The facilitator leads a discussion to help students reflect on their coping strategies.

Questions focus on:

- which strategies feel most helpful
- whether different strategies work for different feelings
- challenges that might make it difficult to use coping strategies in the moment

Students are also encouraged to reflect on connection by considering:

- whether they heard a strategy from someone else that they might want to try

The facilitator reinforces that:

- coping looks different for everyone
- trying new strategies can take practice
- it is okay if something does not work right away

Students may also be invited to consider how their experiences or situations in their lives might affect how they respond to feelings, while maintaining choice in what they share.

Application Activity: Using Coping in Real-Life Situations (5–7 minutes)

Students are invited to apply their coping strategies to real-life scenarios.

The facilitator may present simple examples, such as:

- feeling frustrated at school
- feeling worried about something at home
- feeling upset with a friend

Students are asked to:

- identify a feeling
- choose a coping strategy from their toolbox

Students may respond verbally or reflect quietly.

This activity helps students connect coping strategies to real-world use.

Connection to Support (3–5 minutes)

The facilitator introduces the idea that coping can also include reaching out for support.

Students are guided to think about:

- trusted adults at school or home
- people they feel comfortable talking to

The facilitator reinforces that:

- coping does not have to be done alone
- asking for help is a strong and important skill

Closing (5 minutes)

Students are invited to share one coping strategy they want to try or remember. Participation is optional.

The facilitator acknowledges students' effort and reinforces that learning to cope is a process that takes time and practice.

A brief preview of Session 5 is provided, explaining that the group will focus on recognizing strengths and how to use these skills in their lives.

The session may end with a short grounding moment, such as a collective deep breath.

Session 5: Recognizing Strengths and Applying Skills to Real Life

Target Population and Issue Addressed

Students may have developed new awareness of their emotions and coping strategies but may not always recognize their own strengths or feel confident using those skills in real-life situations. This session focuses on helping students identify their strengths, reflect on their growth, and apply what they have learned in meaningful ways.

Session Goals

Students will:

- Reflect on personal strengths and growth
- Recognize progress they have made in the group
- Strengthen connection and support within the group
- Practice applying coping strategies to real-life situations
- Increase confidence in their ability to handle challenges

Rationale

This session builds on the emotional awareness, expression, and coping skills developed in previous sessions and represents a transition toward closure. At this stage, it is important to help students recognize their growth and begin to internalize the skills they have learned.

Research supports the use of strengths-based approaches in group counseling, particularly for students experiencing adversity. Highlighting strengths helps counter deficit-based thinking and promotes resilience and self-efficacy. This session also reinforces peer connection, allowing students to feel seen and supported by others who may share similar experiences.

Materials

- Chairs arranged in a circle
- Blank paper or structured worksheet
- Markers or crayons
- Notecards
- Journals (if used throughout the group)

Session Structure

Check-In (5–7 minutes)

Students begin with a brief emotional check-in.

Each student is invited to share one word that describes how they are feeling that day. Students may expand or pass.

The facilitator may also invite students to briefly reflect on whether they have used any coping strategies or noticed any changes in how they handle feelings since earlier sessions.

Mini-Lesson: What Are Strengths? (5–7 minutes)

The facilitator introduces the idea that strengths are not just talents, but also include:

- ways people handle challenges
- personal qualities (e.g., kind, brave, patient)
- skills they have developed

Students are guided to consider that:

- everyone has strengths
- strengths can grow over time
- strengths can help people get through difficult situations

Examples are provided to support understanding.

Students are invited to share ideas about what strengths might look like.

Main Activity: “My Strengths and Growth” (12–15 minutes)

Each student is given a worksheet (see Appendix V) and asked to reflect on their strengths and growth.

Students are guided to include:

- something they are proud of
- something they have learned in the group
- a strength they have shown
- something they have gotten better at

Students may:

- draw
- write
- or combine both

The facilitator circulates throughout the activity to:

- support students who have difficulty identifying strengths
- provide examples if needed

- help students connect their strengths to real experiences

Students are shown the character strengths poster (see Appendix S) to assist in identifying strengths.

Students are encouraged to complete multiple examples if time allows.

After completing the activity, students are invited to share one strength or area of growth with the group. Sharing is optional.

Peer Strengths Connection Activity (8–10 minutes)

Students are paired with one partner. The facilitator may assign pairs to ensure balance and comfort.

Each student takes turns sharing with their partner:

- one strength they see in their partner
- or something they noticed or appreciated about how their partner participated in the group

Before beginning, the facilitator briefly reviews expectations for sharing, emphasizing that comments should be:

- kind
- specific
- respectful

The facilitator may provide simple sentence starters to support students, such as:

- “One thing I noticed about you is...”
- “I think one of your strengths is...”

Students are given a few minutes to share with their partner, with time for both students to speak.

After partner sharing, the facilitator invites (but does not require) students to share something they said or heard with the larger group.

Students will complete a brief journal reflection using the prompt corresponding to the session focus (see Appendix N). This week, students will respond to the prompt: “One thing that makes me strong is...”

Processing and Discussion (10 minutes)

The facilitator leads a discussion to help students reflect on their growth and the group experience.

Questions focus on:

- what students have learned about themselves
- what they feel proud of
- what has been helpful about the group

Students are also encouraged to reflect on connection by considering:

- what they have learned from others in the group

The facilitator reinforces themes of growth, effort, and resilience.

Students may also be invited to consider how their strengths help them handle challenges in their lives, while maintaining choice in what they share.

Application Activity: Using Skills in Real-Life Scenarios (7–10 minutes)

The facilitator introduces the idea that the skills and strengths students have been building can be used in many different situations.

Students are then presented with one or two simple, developmentally appropriate scenarios, such as:

- feeling left out at school
- feeling frustrated with a friend
- feeling worried about something happening at home

The facilitator reads each scenario aloud and ensures students understand the situation.

Students are then paired with a partner and asked to discuss:

- what the person in the scenario might be feeling
- what coping strategy they could use
- what strength might help them handle the situation

The facilitator may provide sentence starters or guiding prompts if needed.

After partner discussion, the facilitator brings the group back together and invites pairs to share one idea they discussed. Sharing is optional, and multiple responses are encouraged to highlight that there can be different helpful approaches.

The facilitator reinforces connections between:

- feelings
- coping strategies
- personal strengths

This activity helps students practice applying what they have learned in a concrete and supportive way, while reducing pressure to share personal experiences.

Closing (5 minutes)

Students are invited to share one strength they want to remember or one strategy they want to continue using. Participation is optional.

The facilitator acknowledges students' effort and growth and reinforces that they have developed important skills they can continue to use.

A brief preview of Session 6 is provided, explaining that the final session will focus on reflecting on the group experience and preparing for the group ending.

The session may end with a short grounding moment, such as a collective deep breath.

Session 6: Reflection, Closure, and Moving Forward

Target Population and Issue Addressed

As the group comes to an end, students may experience a range of emotions, including pride, connection, sadness, or uncertainty. This session focuses on helping students reflect on their experiences, recognize their growth, and leave the group with a sense of confidence and support.

Session Goals

Students will:

- Reflect on their experiences and growth throughout the group
- Recognize strengths and skills they have developed
- Identify coping strategies they can continue to use
- Create a meaningful reminder of what they have learned
- Experience a sense of closure in a supportive and positive way

Rationale

This session represents the closing stage of the group process. Endings are an important part of group counseling and should be intentional and supportive. Students benefit from opportunities to reflect on their growth, process the ending of the group, and identify ways to carry their learning forward.

Research supports the use of structured closure activities to help students consolidate learning and create meaning from their experiences. For students who may have experienced transitions or disruptions in relationships, it is especially important to frame the ending as a continuation of growth rather than a loss.

Materials

- Chairs arranged in a circle
- Beads in different colors (each color representing a meaning)
- String or elastic for bracelets
- Small bowls or containers for beads
- Paper or visual guide showing what each bead represents
- Journals (if used throughout the group)

Session Structure

Check-In (5–7 minutes)

Students begin with a brief check-in.

Each student is invited to share one word that describes how they are feeling about today or about the group ending. Students may expand or pass.

The facilitator acknowledges that this is the final session and normalizes that people may feel different things about the group ending.

Reflection: Looking Back on the Group (10–12 minutes)

Students are invited to reflect on their experience in the group.

They may think about:

- something they learned
- something they are proud of
- something that helped them
- a moment they remember

Students may share verbally, write, or reflect quietly.

The facilitator highlights themes of growth, effort, and connection, helping students recognize how they have changed over time.

Mini-Lesson: Carrying What We've Learned Forward (5 minutes)

The facilitator introduces the idea that even though the group is ending, the skills and strengths students have developed will continue.

Students are reminded that:

- they have learned ways to understand their feelings
- they have practiced coping strategies
- they have identified strengths and support systems

The focus is on continuation rather than loss.

Students will complete a brief journal reflection using the prompt corresponding to the session focus (see Appendix N). This week, students will respond to the prompt: "Something I learned about myself in this group is..."

Planning and creating a "Reminder Bracelet" (20 minutes)

The facilitator introduces the bracelet activity as a way for students to create a personal and meaningful reminder of what they want to carry with them from the group.

Students are first given a visual chart (see Appendix T) that shows what each bead color represents. These may include:

- a feeling they want to understand or remember
- a coping strategy
- a personal strength
- a reminder to ask for help
- something that helps them feel calm

Before receiving materials, students are asked to plan their bracelet.

Each student is given a piece of paper (see Appendix U) and invited to:

- draw their bracelet design
- choose which bead colors they want to include
- think about what each bead will represent

The facilitator encourages students to think intentionally about their choices by connecting them to:

- what they learned in the group
- what they want to remember
- what might help them in the future

After planning, students receive materials and begin creating their bracelets.

During this time, the facilitator circulates to:

- support students in connecting their bead choices to meaning
- help students who need assistance generating ideas
- reinforce connections to coping strategies, strengths, and emotional awareness

Students may adjust their designs as needed.

After completing their bracelets, students are invited to share the meaning behind one or more beads if they feel comfortable. Sharing is optional.

Processing and Discussion (5–7 minutes)

The facilitator invites students to reflect on the activity.

Students may share:

- what their bracelet represents
- why they chose certain beads
- what they want to remember moving forward

The facilitator reinforces connections between:

- feelings
- coping strategies
- strengths
- support systems

This helps solidify learning and meaning.

Closing and Goodbye (5–7 minutes)

The group ends with a structured and supportive closing.

Students are invited to share one of the following:

- something they are taking with them
- something they appreciated about the group
- a final thought or feeling

Participation remains optional.

The facilitator acknowledges each student's effort, growth, and participation, and reinforces that they can continue using their skills and reaching out for support.

Students are reminded of trusted adults and supports available to them.

The session may end with a consistent closing routine, such as a collective deep breath, to create a calm and meaningful ending.

Completion of Group

Following the completion of the group, students will complete a post-group survey to assess changes in emotional awareness, coping skills, and sense of connection (see Appendix I).

Teacher and caregiver feedback may also be collected to evaluate changes in behavior and engagement.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Guardian Needs Assessment

Florida Ruffin Ridley School

Brookline, MA

Date: 2/22/2026

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As part of our ongoing efforts to support the emotional well-being of students at Florida Ruffin Ridley School, the counseling team is considering offering small support groups for fourth and fifth grade students. These groups would provide space for students to process emotions, build coping strategies, and feel more connected at school.

To help us understand which areas of support may be most meaningful for your child, please review the topics below and check any that you feel might be helpful at this time.

- Navigating family separation or change
- My child may be impacted by a family member being away
- My child may be impacted by a family member being away due to incarceration
- My child struggles with feeling different or misunderstood
- My child may benefit from a small support group with peers
- My child has difficulty expressing feelings
- My child experiences stress, worry, or big emotions
- My child would benefit from support building coping skills
- Other: _____

Child's Name: _____ Grade: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Completing this form does not guarantee placement in a group. Responses will be used to guide the development of counseling groups and determine which areas of support may be most helpful for students. If a group is offered and your child is identified as a potential participant, you will be contacted with additional details and consent materials.

If you have questions, please feel free to reach out.

Warmly,
School Counseling Team

Appendix B: Teacher Needs Assessment

Florida Ruffin Ridley School

Brookline, MA

Date: 2/22/2026

Dear Teacher,

The counseling team is gathering input from classroom teachers to help inform the focus of upcoming small counseling groups for fourth and fifth grade students. These groups aim to support students' emotional well-being, peer connection, and ability to manage challenging experiences.

Please review the topics below and check any areas you believe may be beneficial for this student.

- Student appears impacted by family separation, absence, or change
- Student may be impacted by family circumstances related to incarceration
- Student struggles with feeling different or disconnected from peers
- Student appears anxious, withdrawn, or emotionally overwhelmed
- Difficulty with emotional regulation
- Difficulty expressing feelings or asking for help
- Challenges with peer relationships or belonging
- Adjustment to changes at home or school
- Other: _____

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

Teacher Signature: _____ Date: _____

This information will be used to guide the development and focus of counseling groups. Participation in a group is not guaranteed and will be determined through additional screening and family consent.

Thank you for your partnership in supporting students.

Warmly,
School Counseling Team

Appendix C: Student Needs Assessment

Florida Ruffin Ridley School

Brookline, MA

Date: 2/22/2026

Dear Student,

We want to learn more about what kinds of support might help students feel better at school. Please check any boxes that feel true for you.

- I feel worried or stressed sometimes
- Big feelings can feel hard for me to handle
- I want help talking about my feelings
- I want to feel like I belong or fit in
- I feel different from other students sometimes
- Someone important in my life is not at home and that feels hard
- I want support from other students who understand me
- Changes at home or school can feel hard
- Other: _____

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

Thank you for sharing. This helps us think about how to support students better at school.

Warmly,
School Counseling Team

Comments

Appendix D: Parent/Guardian Group Counseling Consent Form

Florida Ruffin Ridley School
Brookline, MA

Date: 05/03/2026

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child _____ has been invited to participate in a small counseling group at Florida Ruffin Ridley School. This group is designed to support students who may be navigating family circumstances such as having a parent who is currently or previously incarcerated.

This will be a closed group of 5–7 fourth and fifth grade students. The group will meet once per week for six weeks during a designated resource or advisory period in a private counseling space within the school.

The purpose of this group is to provide a safe and supportive space for students to build emotional awareness, develop coping strategies, and feel less alone in their experiences. Students will have opportunities to express feelings, connect with peers, and learn skills to manage stress and challenging emotions in a developmentally appropriate way.

Participation in this group is voluntary, and students may choose how much they wish to share during each session. While students may withdraw at any time, consistent participation is strongly encouraged to support both individual growth and group cohesion.

Confidentiality is an important part of group counseling. Students will be encouraged to respect each other's privacy and not share personal information outside of the group. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a group setting. Additionally, confidentiality will be broken if there are concerns related to student safety, including risk of harm to self or others, or if required by law. In such cases, appropriate school personnel and caregivers will be notified.

Your permission is requested for your child to participate in this group. Please sign and return the section below if you consent to your child's participation. If you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please feel free to reach out.

Sincerely,
School Counseling Team
Florida Ruffin Ridley School

I, _____ (parent/guardian name), give permission for my child
_____ (student name) to participate in the small counseling
group.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E: Teacher Group Counseling Consent Form

Florida Ruffin Ridley School
Brookline, MA

Date: 05/03/2026

I understand that _____ (student name) will be participating in a small counseling group designed to support students navigating complex family experiences, including having a parent who is currently or previously incarcerated.

The group will meet once per week for six weeks during a designated resource or advisory period. I understand that the purpose of the group is to support students' emotional well-being, peer connection, and coping skills.

I acknowledge that the student may miss a small portion of instructional time and will support their participation in this intervention.

Teacher Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Student Counseling Consent Form

Florida Ruffin Ridley School
Brookline, MA

Date: 05/03/2026

My name is _____

I am being invited to join a small group at school. In this group, students will talk about feelings, learn ways to handle big emotions, and build connections with others.

Some students in the group may have important people in their lives who are not at home. We can talk about these experiences if we want to, but we do not have to share anything we are not comfortable sharing.

The group will meet once a week for six weeks. I will try my best to come to each meeting.

I understand that:

- I can choose how much I want to share
- It is okay to pass if I am not ready to talk
- I should respect others by keeping what they share private

I also understand that if someone is not safe, the counselor may need to tell other adults to help keep people safe.

If I have questions or feel uncomfortable, I can talk to my counselor.

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G: Recruitment Materials Brochure and Flyer

A SUPPORT GROUP FOR STUDENTS AT FRR

ARE YOU GOING THROUGH SOMETHING AT HOME THAT FEELS HARD TO TALK ABOUT?

DO YOU EVER FEEL DIFFERENT FROM OTHER STUDENTS OR WISH YOU HAD MORE SUPPORT?

THE COUNSELING DEPARTMENT IS OFFERING A SIX-WEEK SMALL GROUP FOR 4TH AND 5TH GRADE STUDENTS. THIS GROUP IS DESIGNED TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WHO MAY BE GOING THROUGH CHANGES AT HOME OR NAVIGATING CHALLENGING EXPERIENCES. T



- BUILD A SAFE SPACE FOR SHARING AND CONNECTION
- HELP STUDENTS UNDERSTAND AND EXPRESS THEIR FEELINGS
- LEARN COPING STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING STRESS AND BIG EMOTIONS
- REDUCE FEELINGS OF ISOLATION AND BUILD PEER SUPPORT
 - STRENGTHEN SENSE OF BELONGING AT SCHOOL

WEDNESDAY DURING RESOURCE/ADVISORY PERIOD

TALK TO YOUR TEACHER/SCHOOL COUNSELOR OR INDICATE INTEREST ON THE ATTACHED FORM

Who We Are

This small counseling group is designed for 4th and 5th grade students at Florida Ruffin Ridley School who may be navigating challenging experiences at home or in their lives. Students will have the opportunity to build connections, develop coping strategies, and feel more supported within the school community.

Approach

This group is grounded in an identity-conscious approach, recognizing that students' experiences are shaped by family, culture, and broader social factors. We aim to support students in ways that are validating, inclusive, and responsive to their lived experiences.




Participation is based on student need and readiness for a small group setting. Students are identified through teacher referrals, needs assessments, and counselor observations.

What will students gain?



Increased comfort in expressing emotions



Tools to manage stress and big feelings



A stronger sense of connection with peers



A space to feel understood and supported



Group Activities
 Guided discussions
 Reflection activities
 Coping strategy practice
 Group connection exercises



Group Details

- Grade levels: 4th–5th grade
- Group size: 5–7 students
- Duration: 6 weekly sessions
 - Time: During school (resource/advisory period)
- Location: School counseling space

Purpose of the Group

Process emotions

Build Coping Skills

Connect with peers

Strengthen sense of belonging

Together, we can create a space where students feel seen, supported, and not alone.

Why This Group Matters

Students' experiences outside of school can deeply impact how they feel, learn, and connect with others.

Providing a space for students to process these experiences helps them feel less alone, more supported, and more confident navigating school and relationships.

Supporting students through life's challenges with care and connection

A Support Group for Students

123--456-7890

wmnaggar@gse.harvard.edu

Florida Ruffin Ridley

JOIN US

In Creating a Better Future!

Contact Information

School Counseling Team
Florida Ruffin Ridley School
For questions or more information, please contact:

Winnie Naggar
School Counseling Intern
Harvard Graduate School of Education



Appendix H: Screening Plan & Grid

After students are identified through needs assessments, teacher referrals, and counselor observations, brief individual pre-group screening interviews will be conducted to assess each student's fit for the group. This identity-conscious counseling group is designed specifically for fourth and fifth grade students at Florida Ruffin Ridley School who have a parent who is currently or previously incarcerated. These screening interviews will take place during nonacademic support times such as advisory or resource periods and will last approximately 10–15 minutes.

During the screening process, students will be introduced to the purpose of the group in a developmentally appropriate and supportive way. The group will focus on helping students process emotions related to their family experiences, reduce feelings of isolation or stigma, and build coping strategies and peer connection. Expectations around participation, confidentiality, and group norms will also be clearly explained so that students feel prepared and safe entering the group space.

The screening interview serves two primary purposes. First, it ensures that the student's experiences and needs align with the group's identity-conscious focus on parental incarceration, stigma, belonging, and emotional support. Second, it allows the counselor to assess each student's readiness to participate in a small group setting, including their ability to engage with peers, reflect on their experiences, and follow group expectations. Students whose needs fall outside the scope of the group, such as those experiencing acute emotional crisis or requiring more intensive individual support, will be referred to appropriate alternative services. This process is designed to promote safety, cohesion, and meaningful participation for all group members.

Screening Criteria

Group Goals	Selection & Deselection Criteria Based on Group Goals	Questions to Ask During Screening Interview	How Well Does the Member Fit in This Group?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Process emotions related to having a parent who is currently or previously incarcerated 2. Reduce feelings of isolation, stigma, and feeling different from other students. 3. Build emotional awareness and ability to express feelings safely 4. Develop coping strategies for managing stress and difficult emotions 5. Increase sense of belonging and connection to peers 	<p>How well do the student's needs fit with group goals?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What made you interested in being part of this group? 2. Sometimes this group is for students who have a parent who is away or not at home. Does that feel like something that connects to you? (<i>keep this gentle/age-appropriate</i>) 3. When things feel hard at school or at home, what kinds of feelings come up for you? 4. What would you hope could feel different for you after being in this group? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the student express emotional needs related to having a parent who is currently or previously incarcerated? 2. Does the student identify feelings such as isolation, stigma, sadness, or confusion connected to their family experience? 3. Does the student express a desire to feel more understood, supported, or connected to others?

	<p>Can the student's needs be supported in this group?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When things feel hard at school or at home, what kinds of feelings come up for you? 2. Do you feel like you have people you can talk to about what's going on in your life? 3. Do you think it would help to be in a group with other students who might have similar experiences? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are the student's needs related to emotional experiences connected to parental incarceration? 2. Would the student benefit from a group focused on reducing isolation, stigma, and building connection? 3. Are the student's needs appropriate for a small group setting rather than requiring intensive individual support? 4. Does the student demonstrate some ability to reflect on their feelings or experiences?
	<p>Specific selection and deselection criteria related to this group</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does this group connect to something in your life or family that you might want support with? 2. Do you ever feel different, misunderstood, or like you can't share certain things 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the student have a parent who is currently or previously incarcerated? 2. Is the student aware of this experience at a developmentally appropriate level? 3. Is the student experiencing

		<p>about your life at school?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Are there times when it feels hard to talk about what's going on? 4. Do you feel like talking with other students who may have similar experiences could be helpful? 	<p>emotional or social challenges related to this experience (e.g., isolation, stigma, difficulty with belonging)?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Is the student NOT currently in acute crisis or requiring intensive individual support? (If yes, student is referred to individual or external supports rather than included in the group.)
	<p>Group Readiness and Participation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you ever been part of a small group like this before? What was that like for you? 2. What are you usually like in group settings? 3. How comfortable are you sharing thoughts or feelings in front of other students? 4. What strengths do you think you could bring to a 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the student willing to participate in a small group setting? 2. Is the student able to listen to peers and follow group expectations? 3. Does the student demonstrate appropriate behavior for a group environment? 4. Is the student open to receiving

		group like this?	support from others?
	Willingness to Agree to Ground Rules and Procedures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you willing to attend the group each week for six sessions during the scheduled group time? 2. Are you willing to respect others' privacy and keep what is shared in the group confidential? 3. Are you willing to listen to others and allow others to support you as well? 4. Are you willing to engage with the group even if it uncomfortable at first? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the student willing to attend all 6 group sessions? 2. Is the student willing to respect confidentiality and group norms? 3. Is the student willing to try coping strategies and participate in activities? 4. Is the student willing to engage, even if sharing feels challenging at first?

Appendix I: Student Feelings & Support Survey (Pre/Post)

Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Not Sure | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

Directions: Circle the number that best shows how you feel.

Emotional Awareness

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I can tell what I am feeling | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I can name my feelings (like angry, sad, worried, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I feel comfortable talking about my feeling | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Belonging & Connection

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. I feel like I belong at school | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I feel understood by other students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I feel like I am not alone in my experiences (<i>reverse scored</i>) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Coping Skills

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| • I know ways to calm myself down when I feel upset | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • I can use strategies when I feel stressed or overwhelmed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • I know at least two things I can do to help myself feel better | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Identity & Safety

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. I feel okay being myself at school | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I feel safe sharing about my life if I choose to | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I worry about what others think about my family (<i>reverse scored</i>) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix J: Weekly Exit Slip

Today I felt:

One thing I learned about myself today was:

One thing I want to remember:

Circle one:

I felt comfortable sharing today...



(Optional) Something I want help with:

Appendix K: Counselor Observation Checklist**Rate each area per session:**

Low / Moderate / High

- Participation in discussion

Low

Moderate

High

- Ability to identify emotions

Low

Moderate

High

- Engagement with peers

Low

Moderate

High

- Use of coping strategies

Low

Moderate

High

- Comfort in group setting

Low

Moderate

High

- Willingness to share

Low

Moderate

High

- Demonstrates confidence

Low

Moderate

High

Notes:

--

Appendix L: Teacher Feedback Form**Rate 1–5 (1 = Not at all, 5 = Consistently)**

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Student participates in class | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Student interacts positively with peers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Student manages emotions appropriately | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Student seeks help when needed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Student demonstrates confidence | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Open-ended:

Have you noticed any changes in this student?

In what areas has the student improved (if any)?

Appendix M: Caregiver Check-In

Rate 1–5 (1 = Not at all, 5 = A lot)

- My child talks about their feelings more 1 2 3 4 5
- My child uses coping strategies at home 1 2 3 4 5
- My child seems more confident 1 2 3 4 5
- My child shares more about their day 1 2 3 4 5

Optional comment:

Name: _____

Appendix N: Session-Aligned Journal Prompts

Directions: Each week, you will respond to **one prompt** that matches what we worked on in group.

1. One word to describe how I feel about this group is...

2. One feeling I noticed today was...

3. Something I wish people understood about me is...

4. One way I can take care of myself when I feel upset is...

5. One thing that makes me strong is...

6. Something I learned about myself in this group is...

How do you feel today?



calm



angry



sleepy



sad



happy



worried



shy



tired



shocked



proud



hurt



afraid

Appendix O: Feelings Check in *Adapted from Canva "Feelings Check-In" template.*

CALMING STRATEGIES

When I feel upset, I can choose to..

 <p>take deep breaths</p>	 <p>read a book</p>	 <p>listen to music</p>
 <p>get a drink</p>	 <p>count to 10</p>	 <p>take a walk</p>
 <p>rest on a pillow</p>	 <p>think happy thoughts</p>	 <p>hug a stuffed animal</p>

Appendix P: Calming Strategies Poster *Adapted from Canva “Calming Strategies Poster”*

template.



Appendix Q: Toolbox Worksheet Adapted from Canva “My Toolbox Cut & Paste Worksheet”

template.

Name/Class: _____ Date: _____

GROUP COUNSELING WHEN I FEEL

Write and draw how you feel today in this journal.

When I feel:

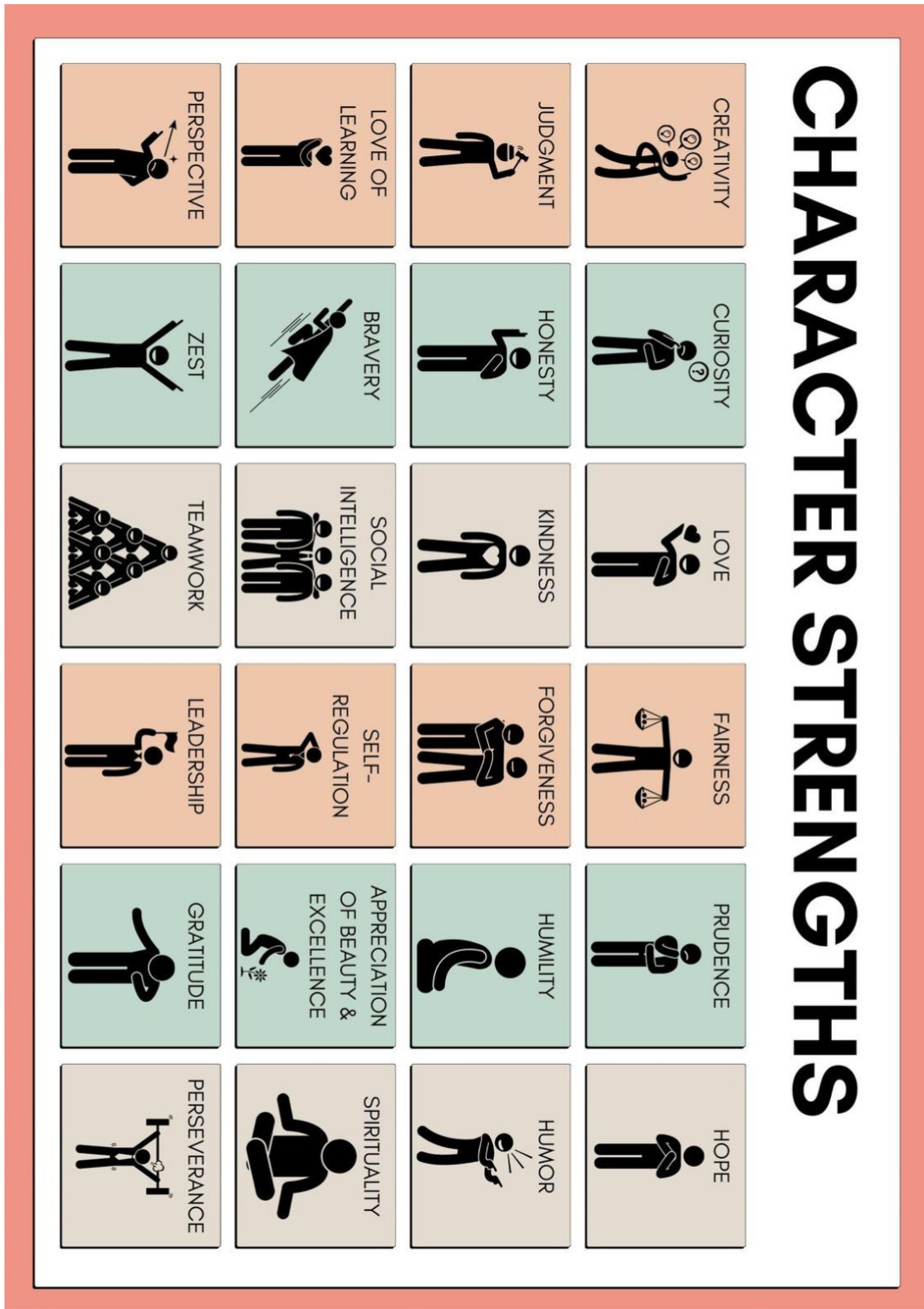


Draw you using a coping strategy:

I usually _____

Something that helps (or could help is...)

Appendix R: When I Feel... Worksheet Adapted from Canva “World Mental Health Day My Feelings Journal Drawing and Writing Worksheet in Blue Pink Simple Style” template.



Appendix S: Character Strengths Poster Adapted from Canva “Character Strengths Pictorial Poster” template.

REFLECTION BRACELETS

Our bracelets show what we want to bring with us from group. Choose bead colors that coorespond with how you grew!

 I CAN CALM MY BODY WHEN I FEEL UPSET.   

 I CAN NAME AND UNDERSTAND MY FEELINGS.   

 I AM GROWING AND LEARNING NEW THINGS ABOUT MYSELF.   

 IT'S OKAY TO HAVE BIG FEELINGS.   

 I CAN ASK FOR HELP WHEN I NEED IT.   

 I HAVE PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT ME."   

Appendix T: Bead Color Poster *Adapted from Canva “Monster Theme Brag Bracelet*

Document in Pastel Cartoon Style” Template

Plan which beads you want to use for your bracelet by coloring in each circle with the beads you chose.



Appendix U: Bracelet Planning Worksheet

Name _____


Date _____



My STRENGTHS



Draw or write in each of the boxes below

something I am proud of	something I have learned recently
 <p>I AM STRONG</p>	
a strength I have shown	something I have gotten better at