



Week Four Theme: **BUILDING & DEEPENING TRUST**

In this midpoint session, a physical trust-building activity combines with a reflective and writing exercise to deepen the understanding and trust between mothers and daughters.

ACTIVITY

- Trust Exercise with Discussion, Writing and Pair Share: *Letter to Teen Self* (by Mothers); *Letter to Younger Girl Self* (Daughters)

MATERIALS

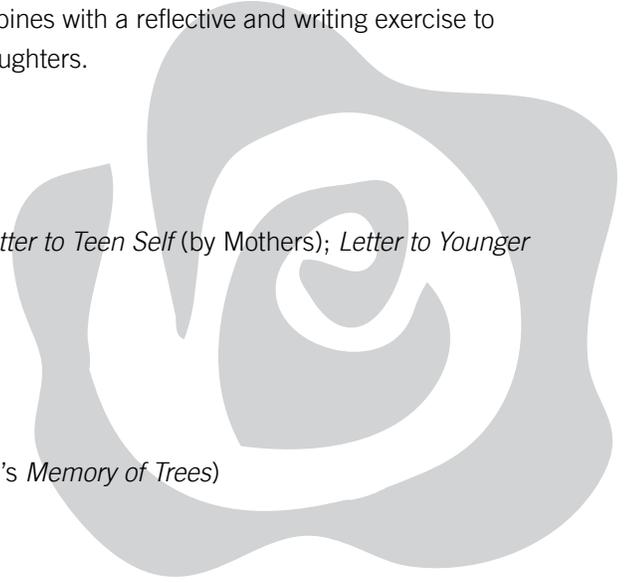
- Blank paper and pens for each participant
- Soft music for guided visualization (Recommended: Enya's *Memory of Trees*)
- Flip chart and markers

PURPOSE

- To identify the most important elements of trust in mother/daughter relationships
- To develop awareness and compassion for past childhood and adolescent experiences
- To promote expression of genuine wisdom, guidance, and encouragement
- To promote mother-daughter understanding and trust building

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Read and familiarize yourself with the Trust Exercise instructions. It may be helpful to arrange a practice session first with peers or co-workers so that you are comfortable with providing the instructions to the group. Safety is paramount in this activity.





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OPENING RITUAL

Choose a reading from the Resources section of this guide. Select a group member (mother or daughter) to read the quote or reading to mark the beginning of your circle.



THEME INTRODUCTION

Introduce the theme of the week, “Building & Deepening Trust.”



CHECK-IN

Go around the circle and have each girl and mother “check in” as to what is going on in her life.



ACTIVITY 1

Trust Exercise – We’ve Got Your Back!

In this activity, groups of two to four pairs of mothers and daughters will form a circle and one by one experience being supported by the group as they lean to the back, front, or sides.

- 1 Divide the participants into groups of six to eight people including two to four pairs of mothers and daughters. Assign a facilitator to join each group and to reinforce the safety of the participants.
- 2 Have each group form a circle. Distribute larger and smaller sized people evenly around the circle.
- 3 Explain to the group that each participant will have the opportunity to practice “trusting the group” by standing in the center of the circle with all other members facing her, then will close her eyes and lean back, front, or side to side and allow the group to fully support her and “pass her around” the circle. Tell the group that you will demonstrate the activity by being the first one in the middle and modeling the activity with them.
- 4 Establish the ground rules as follows:
 - Everyone in the group needs to brace themselves properly to act as spotters for the person in the center.
 - Each participant will have a verbal command that lets others know when they are ready.
 - Staying focused on the activity is vital to trust and success.

HOW THE TRUST EXERCISE WORKS:

(Read all the instructions below very carefully before starting the activity.)

1 Roles:

One person is the person that is leaning. Everyone else is a spotter. Spotters support the person in the middle as they lean. There are verbal commands for each of these roles.



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- 2 Each facilitator should stay with each group to assure that everyone follows instructions correctly and safety is in place.
- 3 Now, explain to the group how the verbal commands will go:
 - When the leaning person is ready to lean, she will call out... "READY?"
 - When the spotters are ready to support her, they call out... "READY!"
 - Leaning person then calls out before she leans....."LEANING!"
 - Spotters call out (before she leans)....."LEAN ON!"
- 4 Begin with the facilitator as the person in the middle who will lean. Stand with feet close together, fold arms across chest, and close eyes. Wait for group to position themselves to support the facilitator.
- 5 Have all group members stand shoulder-to-shoulder with arms outstretched toward facilitator in the middle. Their elbows should be locked, hands ready and able to reach the facilitator, and their feet should be set so that one foot is in front of the other with knees slightly bent to provide good support.
- 6 Facilitator calls out....."READY?" and follows verbal command instructions. Once the leaning begins, the center person can take time to experience the support, usually about one-two minutes each.
- 7 After the facilitator demonstration, invite a volunteer to become the person in the middle and follow the directions. As the activity begins, the spotters should stand nearly touching the person with their hands, allowing the leaning person to experience a very gentle trust experience. Once the trust experience becomes more familiar, the spotters can move VERY slightly back to allow for a slightly increased trust activity.
- 8 If there is a reluctant person, invite her to try the activity with her eyes open first, or ask her what would make it safer for her. Always respect people's reluctance but try to encourage them to take a small step that they are willing to try.
- 9 Continue the activity until each person in the group has had the opportunity to be the person in the middle.



SHARING OF ACTIVITY

Gather the whole group together once again. Tell the group that you would like to hear back from them about the trust exercise and to discuss together their ideas about the necessary elements of a trusted community and trust in the mother-daughter relationship.

You can ask:

- How was that?
- How did you feel when you leaned on the group?



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- On a scale of 1- 10 with 10 being highest, what was your level of trust?
- What helped you feel more secure?
- What didn't help?
- How was it to be one of the spotters?
- What did you need to do so that the leaning person would be safe?
- How did your group communicate with one another?
- What was harder: leaning on your group or spotting someone?
- What differences were there, if any, between mothers and daughters in their willingness to lean on others? If there was a difference, why do you think so?

Further discuss:

- What was the main point of this trust activity?
- How was the activity similar to everyday experiences for women and girls?
- How might this activity relate to the mother-daughter relationship?
- What happened here that relates to your specific mother-daughter relationship?
- Based on your experiences today, what are the most important elements of a trusting relationship? (For example: clear communication, doing what you say you'll do, listening, stating what you need, allowing others to support your goals, etc.)
- How can trust be strengthened or re-built in a relationship?

*Adapted from James Neill's "Willow in the Wind" activity,
<http://wilderdom.com/games/descriptions/WillowInTheWind.html>*



ACTIVITY 2(a)

Letter to Teen Self (MOTHERS) & Letter to Younger Girl Self (DAUGHTERS)

Have pencils/pens and paper available for this activity.

Split up the mothers into one group and the daughters into another group with a facilitator assigned to each group utilizing the following instructions:

MOTHER GROUP – Letter to Teen Self

- 1 Tell the moms that you are going to lead them through a **guided visualization** where they will think back to the time when they were a teen. Say:
 - Now, we are going to lead you through a **guided visualization** where you think back to the time when you were a teen. This is an exercise that invites some memories of adolescence.
 - We all have varied experiences with that time in our lives. For some there are many good recollections, while for others, this was a very difficult time. It may not be easy to look back.



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- Some of us may be survivors ourselves. Please take care of yourselves today and during this exercise. Go at your own pace. Let us all be sensitive to one another and create safety for each other as we do not know what others have been through.
 - In this spirit of respect and support, I now invite you to participate in the exercise.
- 2 Ask the following questions in a calm, slow, methodical way, **pausing after each question** to allow some time for visualization. Say:
- *Sitting in your chair, I would like you to relax, take a deep breath and close your eyes if you are comfortable*
 - *Think back when you were about 15-16 years old.*
 - *What did you look like? What clothes did you wear?*
 - *What were your favorite songs or groups? Who were your friends?*
 - *What was it like for you at that time in your life?*
 - *What did you do for fun?*
 - *What type of trouble did you get into at that time?*
 - *What was your family life like?*
 - *What type of teenager were you - rebellious, quiet, a loner, part of a clique?*
 - *How did you feel about becoming a young woman?*
 - *What was challenging for you as a teenager?*
 - *Who was a significant influence in your life at that time?*
 - *Was there an adult you could talk to and confide in?*
- 3 I would like to slowly bring you back to the room and to open your eyes when you are ready. *Pause.*
- *Now, keeping in this quiet, introspective place, and again being mindful and sensitive to others experiences, please get out a piece of paper; and I would like to invite you to write a letter to your teenage self. Tell her anything that you would want her to know now. This can include anything such as guidance, wisdom, encouragement, anything you would like to say to her now as an adult. Take about five minutes.*



SHARING OF ACTIVITY

(Mothers Group):

- 1 After the mothers have completed their letters, say:
- *We all had very different experiences as teenagers. Take a look at your own letter and identify two or three things that you would feel comfortable sharing with others in the group. It may be reading the whole letter or maybe sharing what that activity was like for you. Take about five minutes in your group to share these things with each other now. (Allow about five minutes.)*



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- *What do you think was the point of this exercise?*
 - *Do you think our own life experiences, as teenagers, impacts how we mother our own daughters today?*
- 2 Next, ask the mothers to look over their letters and to select any lines or sentences they would feel comfortable sharing with and reading to their own daughters. Say:
- *In a moment, we'll join back together and each of you will get together with your daughters. At that point, you'll have a chance to share with her something from your letter. Please look over your letter and see if there is a sentence or more that you want to read to her. Maybe it can apply to her as well as to your teen self.*



ACTIVITY 2(b)

DAUGHTERS – Letter to Younger Girl Self

- 1 Tell the girls that you are going to lead them through a **guided visualization** where they will think back to the time when they were a younger girl, before they knew they were growing up (i.e. age 9 or 10, or whatever is true for them). Say:
- Now, we are going to lead you through a **guided visualization** where you think back to the time when you were a younger girl who had not yet started growing up into an adolescent. This is an exercise that invites some memories of your girlhood.
 - We all have had different experiences with our childhood. For some there were many good memories and a joyful time, while for others, this was not so good. Sometimes girls have survived being hurt by others.
 - This is a safe time here, and let's invite a spirit of safety. We can show each other respect and be caring toward all girls here as we go back in our minds a few years.
- 2 Ask the following questions in a calm, slow, methodical way, **pausing after each question** to allow some time for visualization. Say:
- Sitting in your chair, let's take a good, deep, slow breath through our noses, fill up our bellies as if we have a balloon inside that is getting full, and exhale very slowly through our mouths like we are blowing through a straw.
 - You can close your eyes if you want, or focus on a spot where it is comfortable
 - Think back when you were about 9 or 10 years old. (Or, suggest "a few years ago.") I will ask you some questions and you can think quietly to yourself about your responses:
 - *What did you look like? What clothes did you wear? How did you wear your hair?*



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- *What were your interests and favorite things to do? Who were your friends?*
- *How did you play?*
- *What was your life like as a younger girl?*
- *What type of mischief did you get into at that time?*
- *What was your family life like?*
- *What type of younger girl were you – quiet, friendly, lonely, noisy, full of imagination, sad, mad, a leader?*
- *What was hard for you as a young girl?*
- *Who did you look up to as a girl?*
- *Who did you go to for comfort or reassurance?*
- *How was your relationship with your mother during those years?*

- 3 Now, I would like to slowly bring you back to the room, and ask you to notice your body again and yourself as you are now, at your current age, and open your eyes when you are ready. *Pause.*
- Now, keeping in this quiet, reflective place and being mindful and sensitive to others experiences, please get out a piece of paper and I invite you to write a letter to your younger girl self. Tell her anything that you would want her to know now. This can include anything such as guidance, advice, wisdom, encouragement, and thinking about the kind of teen that your younger self will grow to become, anything you would like to say to her now as an older girl. Take about five minutes.



SHARING OF ACTIVITY

(Daughters Group):

After the daughters have completed their letters, say:

- We all had very different experiences as girls. Take a look at your own letter and choose two or three things that you would feel comfortable sharing with others in our group. You can read the whole letter or maybe share what that activity was like for you, remembering your self as a younger girl. Let's take about five minutes in the group now to share these things with each other. (Allow about five minutes for this sharing.)
- What do you think was the point of this exercise?
- Do you think your experiences as younger girls affects how you feel as teenagers today?
- How has your relationship with your mother changed since you were younger?



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ACTIVITY 3

Mother-Daughter Talk Time

- 1 Bring the two groups back together in the main area. Tell them:
 - We've been in separate groups, remembering when we were younger and what our experiences were like at that particular time. The letters of wisdom and encouragement you wrote to your younger self express some important understandings you have since developed. Now you will have a chance to speak closely with your own mother or daughter here, exchanging some of these words of wisdom.
- 2 Have each mother-daughter pair find a place in the room and invite them to exchange portions of their "letters to self." They will also be practicing their **reflective listening** skills, and mothers will practice using **affirmations**.

Say:

- As a pair, find a place in the room where you have some privacy, and sit facing one another, so that your knees are close together.
- Daughters, please prepare to read to your mothers any portion of the letter you wrote to your younger girl self.
- Mothers, please use your best reflective listening skills. When your daughter shares what she has written, please listen, and then tell your daughter what you heard her express. For example:
"You want your younger self to know that _____, is that what you meant?"
- Daughters, go ahead and read to your mothers now.
- Mothers, go ahead and use your reflective listening skills.
- Mothers, now, state an affirmation to your daughter. Remember, an affirmation is telling your daughter something specific you see she is doing well, for example:
"I see you doing _____ more often lately; that means a lot to me."
- Mothers, now read to your daughter the selection you've chosen from your own Letter to Your Teen Self. You may also share any word of wisdom to her.
- When you have each spoken, please thank each other for this talk, and return all together to the large group.



SHARING OF ACTIVITY

Bring the participants back to the circle, asking mother-daughter pairs to sit together. Say:

- What was that like?
- How did it feel to exchange writings?



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- How was it to express those words to your daughters?
- Daughters, how was it to hear encouraging words?
- As women and young women, what is the value of giving and receiving these kinds of messages?
- Can these messages strengthen trust in your relationship? If so, how?
- As a mother-daughter pair, please talk privately together now and decide what is the *one thing that you BOTH want to do this coming week* as result of the messages you exchanged earlier to each other? (Allow a minute or two for this discussion.)
- Daughters, please walk up to the Flip Chart and write down the one thing BOTH you and your mother want to do this week, related to the messages you shared together.

Invite the group as a whole to walk up to the Flip Chart and simply read the different Mother-Daughter statements.



CLOSING RITUAL

(Same as Week One)

- 1 Place the **“Connection Cards”** on a center table or center area in the group for all to see.
- 2 Place a decorative bowl or basket in the center of the table.
- 3 Invite group members to view the cards and think about a quality, action, or characteristic they want to offer in their Mother/Daughter relationship this coming week.
- 4 One by one, invite each person to choose the card which expresses that quality, to state it aloud to the group, saying,
*“I intend to offer (or show) _____ with my _____
(mother/daughter) this week.”*
- 5 Then, she places the card in the basket.
- 6 “Pass the Pulse of Intention” around the circle.

Thank the group members for their participation in the circle and tell them you are looking forward to seeing them next week!