



Helping At-Risk Students, Second Edition: A Group Counseling Approach for Grades 6-9

By Jill Waterman PhD, Elizabeth Walker PhD

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Engaging, activity based, and effective, this widely used group counseling curriculum (the SPARK program) is designed for flexible implementation in school or clinical settings. The program helps youth build skills for school success and social-emotional growth while exploring such crucial topics as personal goals, ethnic identity and prejudice, peer pressure, violence prevention, and family relationships. Featured are 36 reproducible handouts and forms—plus Spanish-language versions of the 32 handouts—in a large-size format with lay-flat binding for ease of use.

New to This Edition

- *Revised and expanded to incorporate new findings and field-tested strategies.
- *New module on male–female relationships.
- *New sessions on emotion regulation, communication, and relational aggression.
- *Strategies for whole-class implementation have been added.
- *Nearly half of the 68 reproducibles are new or revised.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This creative, activity-based psychoeducational curriculum addresses diverse needs of the most vulnerable sixth- to ninth-grade students. The second edition adds an excellent section on male-female relationships, as well as cutting-edge material on emotion regulation, anger management, gossip and bullying, and effective communication. The manual and reproducibles are remarkably user friendly for participants and facilitators alike. Adolescents will be immediately engaged by the relevant, realistic examples."--Louise Silvern, PhD, Department of Psychology, University of Colorado at Boulder

"Helping At-Risk Students provides effective and practical techniques for addressing the complex developmental and mental health challenges of youth in a group context. I have used this flexible and comprehensive curriculum with great success. Covering everything from the referral and recruitment of group members to the exploration of group dynamics and process issues, this book has become an essential part of my arsenal of therapeutic resources. I highly recommend it to school counselors, community mental health providers, and other professionals working to address the mental health needs of youth."--Erika Van Buren, PhD, Director of Organizational Development, District of Columbia Department of Mental Health, Washington, DC

"Providing powerful tools for helping at-risk youth, this innovative approach can be utilized in a range of educational and mental health settings. The program includes pragmatic, skill-based interventions that address the feelings and stressors that many at-risk youth experience in their daily lives. It can be used in its entirety or individual modules can be implemented flexibly to address specific issues. The second edition enhances the effectiveness of some of the original modules and adds important new content areas related to interpersonal and intrapersonal development."--Jeffrey Jacobs, PhD, Director of Psychological Services, University Elementary School, University of California, Los Angeles

"Waterman and Walker have developed a counseling curriculum that is flexible, engaging, empirically validated, and, most important, effective. I would recommend this book to school psychologists, counselors, and others charged with improving the lives of at-risk children and adolescents."--Dennis Dierck, EdS, school psychologist, Garden Grove (California) Unified School District

"Each of the eight modules has a clear and logical order designed to sequence and scaffold student understanding. It spans a semester of school. SPARK has been implemented in schools over approximately nine years in various iterations and with various foci and the second edition is a result of reflection on implementation. It provides tools and techniques for practitioners working with youth at risk for academic, behavioral, and emotional difficulties. It incorporates very good teaching and learning strategies with an in-depth understanding of the requirements of young people 'at risk.'"
(*Journal of Educational Administration and History* 2009-01-11)

"I implemented the majority of the activities in the Trust-Building, Anger Management, and Peer Pressure modules with an actual group. There are quite a few games in each module, which are directly related to the objective and engaged the participants. I believe that the students learned a good deal from these lessons. The

handouts were very descriptive and helpful. Pretty much any written material you would ever need for this group was in the appendix. I really appreciated that the statements for the facilitator were printed in bold; when running a group, it is essential to be able to glance at the page, read your statement, and then look up to listen to the responses. Another great feature of this book is that all of the copy materials and games are also available in Spanish. The Ethnic Identity module would be great for whole-classroom implementation, and the Bullying section would be great for peer mediators....The book is worth it for the excellent activities, games, facilitator scripts, and curriculum it includes. It is especially helpful if you are working with youth who are already in trouble (i.e., federal setting III, IV, or V). This would be a great book to add to your middle school social work library."

(*School Social Work Journal* 2009-01-11)

"A helpful and excellent guide that focuses on eight important topics for working with adolescents through the SPARK curriculum....The activities chosen for the sessions typically are engaging ones that will hold the interest of challenging teenagers. Many of the activities are based on therapeutic techniques proven effective through research, such as deep breathing, guided imagery, and relaxation techniques....Easy to read and understand and is a valuable resource when counseling adolescents. The format lends itself to implementing psychoeducational counseling sessions and can be used by seasoned or beginning practitioners. Group counseling that builds positive coping skills is needed in our schools and this project and book are to be commended as assets to school psychology."

(*NASP Communiqué* 2009-01-11)

About the Author

Jill Waterman, PhD, is Adjunct Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles, and coordinator of the UCLA Psychology Clinic, the training clinic for UCLA's top-ranked PhD program in clinical psychology. Her research and publications focus on various aspects of child trauma and on developing and evaluating interventions aimed at helping our most vulnerable children. Dr. Waterman is also a practicing psychotherapist in the Los Angeles area.

Elizabeth Walker, PhD, received her doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 2000. As a graduate student, she spent several years working with inner-city students in the Los Angeles area, and she currently works with economically disadvantaged, ethnically diverse high school students in Denver. Additionally, she is especially interested in integrating religion and spirituality into the therapeutic process.

Users Review

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Kelly Watson:

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Randall Hernandez:

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Lillie Corley:

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