



Kids Like Me!

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***See Preface Page 5 for an explanation of the Alternate Session Plans**

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***See Preface Page 5 for an explanation of the Alternate Session Plans**

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Introduction to Kids Like Me!

Welcome!

I am so happy to welcome you to **Kids Like Me!**, the newest resource from Confident Kids. In many ways, this project takes Confident Kids full circle, in that we started with groups for children of alcoholics/addicts in 1987! It has always been my desire to return to this population of children with a resource that could make a difference in their lives. That's why I am SO happy to introduce **Kids Like Me!** to you today.

As always, if you have any questions about anything in this manual – or any of our other programs – please feel free to contact us in the Confident Kids office. We will be most happy to answer your questions and assist you in any part of your ministry to hurting kids!

Linda K. Sibley

History

In 1999 we were asked to help a newly formed Christian Recovery ministry in Russia to develop an alcohol, tobacco and other drugs prevention program for the Moscow school system (check out our web site for more information about this exciting project: www.confidentkids.com). When we accepted that invitation, we had little idea as how to proceed. But God had a plan! Shortly after returning to the states, we came into contact with several prevention experts in the San Jose, CA area who were **also Christians AND had done prevention training in Russia a number of years earlier!** Consequently, they already had a heart for Russia and were immediately eager to help with the project. We became a team in early 2000 and have been working on the development of this extensive curriculum ever since.

Our main goal as we developed the project was to incorporate the latest research in the field of prevention and working with children of alcoholics/addicts (COA/A's) – including brain chemistry, fetal alcohol syndrome and learning differences – to produce a state-of-the-art curriculum unlike any currently in existence. (See Appendix D for a summary of the research that guided our work, and how it is incorporated it into the curriculum.)

It did not take long before ALL of us realized the tremendous potential for using this material here at home, as well as in Russia. Our dream has always been to see this wonderful material used both in community-based secular programs and church-based Christian ministries. Under the careful direction of Confident Kids, **Kids Like Me!** became the first Christian curriculum to come from this material.

The Writing Team

Since the **Kids Like Me!** program is an adaptation of the Russian prevention curriculum, all of our writing team members have had a significant part in developing the materials in this manual. Let me introduce you to them:

Linda Sibley: Team Leader & Primary Editor

Linda is the author and founder of Confident Kids, an organization which has been enabling churches and other Christian ministries to provide support groups to high stress children and their parents since 1990. She and her husband, David, travel extensively to train church leaders how to begin and run Confident Kids support groups.

David L. Sibley

David is the Executive Director of Family Resources International, the parent organization of Confident Kids and our newly formed Prevention Partnership International. Dave brings his experience in sales and marketing gained from thirteen years with the Coca-Cola Company and Vice-president of Southern California Safe Company. He is also a co-trainer with Linda in their seminars and training events in the US and Russia.

Rosemary Tisch: Prevention and Research Specialist

Rosemary's expertise provided the foundation of our curriculum development. Her past experiences include the founding of Kids Are Special and Family Education Foundation, which focused on the prevention of substance abuse in high-risk populations. She was also the chair of the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Clinic Development Committee and the Co-Chair of the Santa Clara County Community Learning Assessment Task Force. She has provided training in Russia, Ukraine and Mexico as well as in the United States.

Rosemary is also a recovering alcoholic with twenty years sobriety. Her knowledge of children of alcoholics is enriched by her own experience of raising two daughters.

Julie Scales

Julie was the Executive Director of Legacy Foundation located in San Mateo County, CA, a non-profit organization focusing on changing the perception and approach to chemical dependency in the community. Concurrently, she was the Director of The Children's Place Program, the oldest alcohol/drug prevention education program in the country for children ages 5-13 years. Julie has over twenty years of experience working as a prevention specialist in the field of child abuse and addiction. She is a former program director and trainer for The Child Advocacy Council and The Kids are Special program and has conducted prevention and education training seminars extensively throughout Northern California and in Moscow, Russia.

Betsy Rockett

Betsy is an addiction specialist with advanced training in alcohol and drug studies. She previously was on the board of Legacy Foundation and was coordinator of the Family Program of Sequoia Center at El Camino Hospital, an alcohol and drug treatment program.

Betsy is also a recovering alcoholic, a mother of four and grandmother of eight.

Why Work With COAs (Children of Alcoholics/Addicts)?

Alcoholism and drug addiction is taking a toll on the American family. As a result, 8.3 million children in the United States, approximately 11 percent, live with at least one parent who is in need of treatment for alcohol- or drug-dependency. One in four children under the age of 18 is living in a home where alcoholism or alcohol abuse is a fact of daily life. Countless others are exposed to illegal drug use in their families.

The toll addiction takes on these children can be substantial. Children of addiction (or COAs) are at significantly greater risk for:

- mental illness or emotional problems, such as depression or anxiety;
- physical health problems; and
- learning problems, including difficulty with cognitive and verbal skills, conceptual reasoning and abstract thinking.

In addition, children whose parents abuse alcohol or drugs are almost three times more likely to be verbally, physically or sexually abused; and four times more likely than other children to be neglected. Strong scientific evidence also suggests that addiction tends to run in families. Children of alcoholics are four times more likely than non-COAs to develop alcoholism or other drug problems.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. You Can Help: A Guide for Caring Adults Working with Young People Experiencing Addiction in the Family (PHD878, (SMA) 01-3544) Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved October 03, 2002 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.samhsa.gov/centers/csat/content/intermediaries/>

Program Overview

Kids Like Me! is a **Life Skills Educational Support Group Program**. As such, it is made up of two components:

1. **Life Skills Education.** Research has clearly shown that life skills education is the most effective means of preventing alcohol and drug use in children and teens. Therefore, the curriculum focuses on teaching COA/A's a comprehensive set of life skills, including an understanding of addiction and how it affects them and their whole family.

2. A Support Group. The life skills curriculum is presented in a support group setting, which provides COAs (children of addiction) a safe place to share their life experiences and discover they are not alone.

The curriculum is comprised of 13 sessions (a full quarter) with **three fully detailed age-graded lesson plans** for each session – one for Early Childhood (ages 4-6 years), Elementary (ages 7-9 years), and Preteens (ages 10-12 years).

Purpose:

The purpose of **Kids Like Me!** is to give children the support, life skills education, and spiritual foundation they need to live healthy, addiction free lives.

Goals:

Through participation in a **Kids Like Me!** group children will:

1. Have a safe place to talk about their life experiences.
2. Realize they are not alone as they share with other children and program facilitators.
3. Learn about the disease of chemical dependency and how it affects themselves and their whole family.
4. Be equipped with healthy living skills to break the cycle of addiction and co-dependency.
5. Discover how prayer, scripture, and a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ are foundational to living a healthy life.

Session Topics:

Early Childhood:

- Session 1: I Can Be Healthy.
- Session 2: I Can Be Careful What I Say & How I Listen.
- Session 3: I Have Many Feelings.
- Session 4: All My Feelings Are Okay.
- Session 5: Sometimes I Get Mad!
- Session 6: Families Are Special.
- Session 7: Families Have Problems.
- Session 8: I Can Get Help & Stay Safe.
- Session 9: I Can Solve My Problems.
- Session 10: My Body is Special.
- Session 11: Friends Are Special.
- Session 12: Celebrating Me!
- Session 13: End of Unit Celebration.

Elementary and Preteen:

- Session 1: Introduction to living a healthy life.
- Session 2: Communication Skills.

Session 3: Feelings
 Session 4: Feelings Defenses
 Session 5: Anger Management
 Session 6: Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Facts & Information
 *Session 6 (Alternate Lesson): What's A Family?
 Session 7: Chemical Dependency is a Disease
 *Session 7 (Alternate Lesson): All Families Have Problems
 Session 8: Chemical Dependency Affects the Whole Family
 *Session 8 (Alternate Lesson): Getting Help; Staying Safe
 Session 9: Choices/Goal Setting
 Session 10: Boundaries
 Session 11: Friendships
 Session 12: Uniqueness
 Session 13: Celebration!

For a complete list of Session Key Concepts and Objectives, see Appendix B.

ALTERNATE SESSIONS:** The three core sessions – 6,7,8 – are completely about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and the disease of chemical dependency. ***Since not all children attending Recovery Ministry groups are from homes where addiction is the primary issue, these sessions have been added. KLM administrators can choose which session plans are most appropriate for the children attending their groups.

Scriptural Foundations

At the heart of the **Kids Like Me!** program is it's power source, the scriptural foundations. Our desire is to help all children attending the groups find God as a personal friend and source of strength in the midst of their life experiences. Each session includes a carefully selected Bible verse, Bible Story (Early Childhood only), and a small group prayer time to communicate four Scriptural truths. We believe these truths to be foundational not only to COAs, but to all high stress children:

1. **God is a loving caregiver who is always present and gives us support in difficult times.** *Joshua 1:9, Romans 8:38-39, I Peter 5:7*
2. **Jesus knows what it means to suffer and be hurt and therefore can help us when we experience suffering and hurt.** *Hebrews 2:18, and the Easter events (which help kids connect with Jesus' suffering and difficult choices).*
3. **When we pray honestly about what we are feeling, God helps us find comfort and peace.** *Philippians 4:6-7*
4. **God intends a hopeful, purposeful future for us, no matter how painful the present may seem.** *Jeremiah 29:11*

About Our Logo

Our logo consists of two parts:

- 1. The name: Kids Like Me!** was chosen to communicate to children of alcoholics/addicts that they are not alone in their situation. Because of the secrecy surrounding addiction issues in families, COA/A's often feel alone and isolated. Consequently, they do not receive the support and information they need to help them deal with the disease of chemical dependency.. Children's healing often begins with the simple knowledge that there are thousands of other "kids like me!"
- 2. The World:** The problem of addiction is an international one. Throughout the world, kids are in need of help to overcome the effects of living in homes affected by alcohol and drug addictions. If we are to break the cycles of addiction in our world, we must begin with educating and supporting the children!

Using the curriculum

Group Format: Open Versus Closed Groups

One of the biggest differences between the Confident Kids program and **Kids Like Me!** is the issue of closed versus open groups. The difference is:

Closed Groups:

Closed groups are those in which families register their children into the group for a specified period of time and make a commitment to attend consistently. No new children are added after the first or second week of the current session.

Advantages: In closed groups, each session builds on the material presented in the session before, making it possible to present the material in a comprehensive way. Since no new children are added to the group, the trust level deepens over the course of the unit. Also, since children are registered into the program, the number of children in the groups at any one time is easily controlled, assuring that the facilitator:child ratio is strictly maintained. (In Confident Kids groups, this ratio is 1:4.)

Disadvantages: The main disadvantage is that families must wait to join a group until a new unit begins, which may take up to several months. This is difficult when a family wanting to join the group is facing a crisis and they are very much in need of the support *now*. It is also difficult for Recovery Ministries, in which parents may bring children at any time.

Open Groups:

Open groups are those in which children may come at any time, with no need to register in advance.

Advantages. The support group is immediately available to children, and the family does not have to make a commitment for an extended period of time. In open groups, the curriculum topic changes each week so even those who come sporadically are able to benefit from the session.

Disadvantages. It is more difficult to build trust in a group when children are not committed for a specified time. Each time a new child enters the group the trust level changes. It is also hard to maintain the proper facilitator:child ratio when it is not known how many children will show up each week.

The **Kids Like Me!** program was written in an open group format. This makes it more responsive to the needs of recovery ministries that want to provide a children's program every week for whoever may show up that night. However, it would certainly be an effective closed group, too. The question of whether to offer the program as an open or closed group is left to the discretion of the program administrators running each program.

Time Frame: Ninety minutes or Two hours?

The recommended time frame for **Kids Like Me!** is ninety minutes. However, since many adult recovery groups run for two hours, the material was written to be easily expanded to fit this time period. Notice that on the outline of each meeting there is a suggested time range for each section. Use the first time if you are conducting a ninety minute session, and the second if you are conducting a two hour session.

Meeting Components

Each meeting in the **Kids Like Me!** program is structured in exactly the same way. This is important because COA/A's need to know what to expect each week in order to build trust. It is highly recommended that the following format be followed exactly as follows:

Early Childhood:

Welcome! (25 – 30 Minutes)

Activity Centers of your choice. The first few moments the children are in the room are crucial to establishing the climate for the rest of the group experience. If the first few moments are chaos, it will be almost impossible to regain children's attention and trust. During the Welcome time, children are provided with a variety of structured activity centers, and allowed to roam between them. Leaders supervise these centers, playing with the kids to provide a safe environment and build relationships. Examples of centers: puzzles, blocks, home living, art supplies, Play Doh, simple crafts, story books.

Session Theme Activity. One center each week sets the stage for the session theme. The directions for this center are included in the session plan.

Circle Time (10 – 15 Minutes)

Gathering & Quiet Time. During this time, the transition from the open activities to the more structured group time takes place. Mark this space clearly so children know exactly where they should be. You can set up chairs in a circle for them to sit on or have them sit on carpet squares on the floor. You can also mark the circle by putting masking tape on the floor. Be sure children understand that they are to go directly to the designated area – this is not play time!

To insure a smooth transition, use a **signal** to let children know it is time to **move** to the area of the room designated for circle time. This signal can be singing or playing a simple song, clicking the lights

several times or ringing a chime. Once children are seated, a Quiet Time exercise is used to help children settle down and focus.

What Are We Doing Today? Knowing what's coming next is an important part of feeling secure in group, for all ages. For young children, who have trouble sequencing events (first this happens, then this happens, etc.) reviewing the session agenda each week is especially important. A Velcro Board (see Materials and Supplies for information on making the board) is used to provide a visual reminder for children of what is coming next. Session Component Strips (provided in the curriculum) are placed on the board at the beginning of each session. As each part of the meeting is completed, a volunteer removes the strip from the board. In this way, children always know what they will be doing next, helping them feel secure.

Group Rules. Without rules, the atmosphere of safety essential to the group process cannot be maintained. For rules to be effective, they must be clearly explained, posted in the room and reviewed each week. For young children, the rules are kept simple and posted on the Velcro Board (Group Rules strips are provided in the curriculum).

Enforcing Rules with Young Children. It is the job of the program leaders to enforce the group rules. We strongly recommend group leaders use positive reinforcement (rewarding appropriate behavior with affirmations and/or stickers) and redirection (removing a distracting item from a child or a child from a distracting situation) to help children learn appropriate behavior. In cases where more may be needed, a time out can be given. Remember to place the child where he/she can still see the group (never sit children in corners) and invite them back in to the circle within a few minutes.

Review. Since young children will not remember what they did in group from week to week, the review is essential to help them reconnect to the group experience. The review for young children consists of simple restatements of the main concept from the previous week, including having children repeat any slogans, verses or motions learned. Remember, children learn through repetition!

Acts of Kindness. Asset Development research tells us that sensitivity to others and reaching out to them in kind ways is an important part of living a healthy life. That is why doing Acts of Kindness is an on-going assignment for all ages in *Kids Like Me!*. Young children, too, can reach out to others in kind ways. Children report every week and keep track of their Acts of Kindness on a continuously growing train that wraps around the room. This list becomes a visual reminder of what they are accomplishing by doing even small kindnesses.

It is also important for program leaders to look for and recognize Acts of Kindness that take place in group each week. This is another way to affirm children and reinforce the skill of being kind to others. Affirm

different children each week, hopefully affirming all children throughout the program. A side effect that is likely to develop: children begin reporting the kindnesses they notice during group, too!

Introduction to Session Theme. The introduction presents the main concept of the session. The session plan uses a puppet (named Scruffy but you can name your puppet anything you like) to help with this presentation, as young children are more apt to express their thoughts and feelings to a puppet than to a real person. The same puppet is used every week so that in the children's minds, the character becomes part of the group.

There are several ways for the puppet to "talk" to the children. One is for the puppeteer to use their natural voice to have the puppet speak directly to them. The children will be so focused on the puppet they will not care that it is speaking in the puppeteer's voice. Another simple way to use the puppet is to tell the children that the puppet is shy and it will only whisper to you. The puppeteer then manipulates the puppet by having it whisper in his/her ear and telling the children what it is said. This is the method used in the session plans, but the choice is individual.

Activity Time (10 – 15 Minutes)

The activities provided at this time are directly related to what the children have just heard in the introduction. Activities include such things as activity sheets, role plays, stories or games that reinforce the main concept of the session.

Intermission (15 – 20 Minutes)

Bathroom. Young children will need a bathroom break at this point in the session. Have them line up at the door and walk quietly through the halls, so they do not disturb the other groups. Remember to have them wash their hands before returning.

<p>NOTE: Don't expect them to know how to line up and walk quietly in the first session! This is a skill you will need to teach them throughout the program.</p>

Snack. A simple, healthy snack is served. As children return from the bathroom, have them sit at the tables. Invite volunteers to distribute napkins and the snack, once children are seated quietly (this may also take some time for children to learn). Children stay seated until all have finished and volunteers have passed the waste basket for all to dispose of their trash.

Active Games/Songs. At this time in the session, children need to expend some energy. This can be as simple as going outside (if it is still light) to take a walk, play follow the leader or play on the playground, if you have one. Or, indoors you may play a favorite game such as Simon Says, Duck Duck Goose or Follow the Leader.

Children also love to sing active songs with motions. Many books and CD's are available with ideas of both inside and outside games and songs appropriate for this age level.

Small Group Bible Time (10 – 15 Minutes)

Sharing Activity. The activities used during this time give children more opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings with the group leader. It is recommended these groups are no larger than four children to provide an intimate setting for this to happen.

Bible Verse. Each session has one truth from God's Word that relates to the session theme. Each of these verses is carefully selected to help even young children discover God's continuous love and care for them, lead them in to a personal relationship with God through Jesus, and guide them to draw on God's power in their daily lives.

Bible Story. As with the weekly verse, a simple Bible story is chosen to further reinforce the spiritual truth being presented. It is recommended that each site invest in Bible Story Coloring Books to give children not only a coloring sheet during the story time, but a reminder of the truth from God's Word to take home.

Prayer Time. Prayer is a vital part of the **Kids Like Me!** program for all ages. It is during this time that many kids share their most personal concerns. It is also the time when facilitators can offer encouragement to children who are disappointed that God has not answered their prayer for help in the past. Facilitators can optimize this time by using a prayer journal or some other means to keep a record of kids' requests and God's answers. There are also a variety of suggestions for drawing children into the prayer time written into the session plans.

Closing Circle (5 Minutes)

Review Bible Verse. As with the older age groups in *Kids Like Me!*, each Early Childhood session closes with a ritualistic closing. The ritual closing contributes to a feeling of safety and builds a sense of belonging to the group.

GOD MADE ME SPECIAL Affirmation. The ritual ends with the children yelling out an Affirmation with motions (described in the curriculum).

Wrap-Up (15 – 20 Minutes)

Quiet Games & Activities. If your children's group ends before the adult groups, you will need to provide some structured activities to keep children occupied until parent's arrive. These activities need to be QUIET activities; do NOT just let children free to amuse themselves. Children need to leave KLM feeling calm – not chaotic. Provide activities such as reading story books, short videos, coloring pages.

Elementary & Preteen:

Welcome! (25 – 35 min.)

Gathering Activity. The Gathering Activity is usually a game or a craft designed to involve the kids as soon as they arrive, and begin the meeting in a positive and fun way. Facilitators should be available to greet the kids warmly and immediately direct them to this activity.

Group Rules. In dealing with children who are not used to living with clear messages about appropriate behavior, it is important to establish what is expected of them in **Kids Like Me!** almost immediately. This is done through the use of group rules. It is most effective to involve the children in establishing these rules. A complete list of rules and how to present them to the kids is included in each session plan.

Warm-up. The Warm-up is usually a game or other activity that is directly related to the session theme. It is meant to give the kids a fun experience to prepare them for the session's teaching time. Also, **if you are running a ninety minute session**, this activity can be left out.

Lessons for Living (25 – 35 min.)

Teaching Content. The teaching begins with a short review of the previous session's content. Please keep in mind that if you are running an open group, you are likely to have new children each week. Be sure to address them during this time in a way that makes them feel part of the group. For instance, you might tell them that the review is especially for them, and then have the rest of the group share with the new kids what they learned the week before. Following the review, the main theme of the session is presented during a short teaching time.

Reinforcement Activities. Incorporated into the teaching time are learning activities that further teach the session theme. **Kids Like Me!** is an interactive curriculum with lots of discovery learning and role play activities.

Family Groups (25 – 35 min.)

Perhaps the most important part of the meeting is the Family Group time. During this time, the larger group is divided into groups of four or five children with a Family Group Leader. Try to **have the same children with the same leader each week** to facilitate building trust.

Personal Application & Sharing. The activities used during this time are specifically designed to have the kids make personal application of the session theme. It is done in a small group so kids will have more opportunity to talk and feel safer to share their personal experiences.

Bible Verse. Each session has one truth from God's Word that relates to the session theme. Each of these verses is carefully selected to help

kids discover God's continuous love and care for them, lead them in to a personal relationship with God through Jesus, and guide them to draw on God's power in their daily lives.

Prayer groups. Prayer is a vital part of the **Kids Like Me!** program. During this time many kids share their most personal concerns. It is also the time when facilitators can offer encouragement to children who are disappointed that God has not answered their prayer for help in the past; i.e., "I prayed and prayed my dad would quite drinking, and he didn't, so what's the point?" Facilitators can optimize this time by using a prayer journal or some other means to keep a record of kids' requests and God's answers. There are also a variety of suggestions for drawing children into the prayer time written into the session plans.

Wrap Up (15 min.)

Connecting with Others. The Connecting With Others activity was added in response to the research (Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets and Resiliency Studies) indicating that reaching out to others is an important part of equipping children to live a healthy life. However, reaching out to others is not something children are automatically inclined to do. To guide them in this direction, children are asked to do one kind thing for someone else each week. This is to be done without accepting anything in return, but offered as a gift to the one they are helping. In the group, children report what they did each week which is added to a continuously growing list. As the list grows, children can see visually how their small acts of kindness add up, and discover that they can make a difference in their families and communities!

NOTE: *To further reinforce this concept, be sure leaders point out acts of kindness they see being performed by children during group sessions and add those to the list!*

Connecting with God. This is a brief review of the session's Bible verse and spiritual concept.

Closing. Each session is closed in the same way. In the elementary groups, the children yell out an affirmation together, while the preteen groups recite the Serenity Prayer. This method of closing brings a sense of ritual to the group, which is important to creating a sense of belonging.

Supplies and Materials

Each session plan contains a list of materials needed for that session. This is only a listing of the materials unique to that session, such as activity sheets, posters, craft materials, etc. In addition, **each room should be stocked with the following items:**

Basic Supplies:

- CD's of quiet music to play as children arrive (helps set a calm atmosphere for the group)
- A chalk or dry erase board or a flip chart
- Pencils, fine tip markers and broad tip markers
- Scissors and staplers
- Glue or Glue sticks
- Masking and scotch tape
- An assortment of construction paper and poster board
- Miscellaneous craft supplies, such as glitter, stickers, scraps of fabric and yarn, cotton balls, chenille wires
- A basket of soft toys (to keep hands busy during discussion and to use as "talking objects")

Optional Supplies:

- Snacks (can be especially important for younger children in a two hour session)
- Music tapes and/or instruments to add a music time to the sessions
- A costume/props box for role plays and skits
- Game supplies (balls, balloons, finger darts, etc.)
- Extended time activities: coloring sheets, puzzles, theme related books, children's videos
- A variety of craft and games resource books to supplement the curriculum, as needed
- How Are You Feeling?* Feelings Faces Posters, magnets, stickers and other items from Creative Therapy Associates, Inc. Check out available items at www.confidentkids.com and order from the Confident Kids office.
- A *Surprise Box* with stickers or other small items children might enjoy. Children choose an item as they leave.

Early Childhood – Additional Supplies:

In addition to the above lists, the Early Childhood groups will need the following:

The Velcro Board is used every week to hold the Session Agenda and Group Rules strips (see Session 1). It can also be used to create story boards and a other visuals. Glue Velcro to a sturdy background such as Foam Core. Cover the board with strips or dots of Velcro placed about 3 inches apart. Children's Picture Books that correlate with the curriculum; see suggested book list below.

Puppets: A main puppet for use each week, plus a variety of small hand puppets for use in role plays. (Puppets can be purchased or made from paper lunch bags, socks or wooden spoons.)

Preschool Picture Books that are theme related. Young children love story books. It is easy to find titles that support most of the themes of the curriculum. Check out libraries, bookstores and Amazon.com to find titles

OPTIONAL: Provide an individual plastic tote for each child, containing a pair of scissors, box of crayons, their name tag and any other supplies they will need on a week-to-week basis. Totes can be purchased from 99¢ Stores or office supply stores generally run great specials on basic back to school supplies in the fall. You can also Velcro their name tags on the outside of the box so children can find their boxes easily.

Using the Session Summaries for Parents

It is important that parents be kept informed of what their children are learning in the group each week. Therefore, a *Session Summary* page is included with each session plan. These pages are to be copied and sent home with the children or handed to the parents as they arrive to them pick up.

Note that each *Session Summary* includes a To-Do-At-Home Activity which reinforces the session theme. It is recommended that the leaders do this activity during the week, too, and then talk with the kids about it at the beginning of the next session. In many cases, it can also be used in the session as a supplemental activity.

Tips for Working With Children's Support Groups

Years of experience have taught us pitfalls to avoid in running children's support groups. You can learn from our mistakes by carefully observing the following guidelines.

General:

- 1. Maintain a small facilitator:child ratio.** The Family Group time is the most important part of the meeting. For children to feel safe and share freely, it is vital that these groups be no more than 4-5 children! This can be difficult in an open group format, but the more you are able to hold to this standard, the more successful your group will be – trust us on this one!
- 2. Enforce the Group Rules – consistently!** New facilitators who are eager to work with high stress, hurting kids are often reticent to deal with their behavior. Since high stress kids often act out their feelings in disruptive ways, especially in settings where they have not yet learned to trust, all facilitators must work together to see that the group rules are enforced. If this does not happen, the kids will never let down their defenses and trust the group experience. Trust us on this one, too!
- 3. Be careful of transition points.** The most dangerous time for losing control of the group is during the transitions, such as from one activity to another and from the large group to Family Groups and back again. Be sure to plan carefully for these times. Also, be sure leaders are set up and ready to go BEFORE the children arrive. By being well prepared and working together as a team, the meetings can flow smoothly from one activity to another.
- 4. Work on Team Building with the program staff.** We have learned from sites all over the country that the overall success of the program is in direct relationship to the way the staff has bonded as a team. Team building is facilitated by holding regular training meetings which include a time for personal sharing and prayer as well as planning for the program. It is also important for team building to debrief as soon as possible after each session. This can be a short meeting, but should happen on a regular basis (see Training section for more information). Finally, be sure to hold a quarterly team party to simply relax and have fun together!

Early Childhood Groups (4-6 years):

Young children, who are at a much different developmental level than elementary age kids, function in and respond to the support group experience very differently. Here are some tips to help you plan working with them:

1. **Young children hurt deeply but have few developmental skills to deal with emotional pain.** A young child cannot reason: “I feel guilty and abandoned because my parents are getting a divorce. I need to grieve this great loss in my life.” Rather, she is confused by the intense pain and responds by acting out. Since she cannot verbalize what is really going on, adults may miss the connection between a child’s feelings and her behavior. You need to understand this connection and help them deal with their emotional pain by naming their feelings, releasing them through play and story activities, and by teaching them to ask for help when they need it.
2. **Young children may need to bring transitional objects to group.** Because they hurt deeply and have few skills to deal with the pain, transitional objects (a favorite toy, stuffed animal or blanket) may be necessary to feel safe and adjust to the group. Whereas bringing toys to group is not generally encouraged, some may need to do so.
3. **Young children express themselves through play and pretending.** Because of their limited verbal skills, they are helped more through play centers, puppet role plays and art activities than through dialogue and discussion. The most strategic time you have with may be when using puppets or in a play center.
4. **Young children are concrete thinkers and have difficulty with abstract concepts.** Feelings, chemical dependency and evaluating results of choices are abstract concepts. Don’t expect children to understand everything.
5. **Young children cannot think in terms of cause-and-effect relationships and complex processes.** This means they may have trouble understanding the relationships between feelings and the events that caused them and will not be able to think in terms of “layered” feelings. For example, “Are you really feeling hurt or are you feeling angry?” would be a confusing question. They will also have trouble “building” content from one week to another. For example, “Last week we learned about feelings defenses – what defense would you use in this situation?” would be beyond their reasoning abilities. Therefore, keep the content simple, clear and deal with only one idea at a time. Less is more with this age group!
6. **Young children have trouble participating in group discussion.** To help, go around a circle and ask each child a question. Be prepared to help them respond by suggesting possible answers. Also, have them interact with a puppet! They will say more to a puppet than they ever will to a real person.
7. **Young children can remember and respond to only one direction at a time.** Make your directions clear and simple. Stay focused on one task at a time. For example, don’t tell preschoolers to finish their coloring sheets, clean up, get their snack, and sit on the story rug – and expect them to get it all accomplished!
8. **Young children think mostly in the present.** Although they may remember events that happened in the past, they cannot make a correlation between

past events and what is happening now. The weekly review can help them stay connected to the group as a whole – but don't expect them to apply the concepts learned last week with those learned this week!

Elementary Groups (7-9 years):

Here are a few characteristics of the age group that can help you in your planning:

- 1. They value belonging to the group.** By Kindergarten, kids are growing in their ability to relate to one another in a social setting. By third grade, the need to be accepted by the group is well established. Having a best friend is important in these years, and peer pressure to conform to the group is already important.
- 2. They express their thoughts and feelings in short sentences and in response to direct questions.** Kids in your group will have the ability to talk about their life circumstances, but don't expect them to ramble on and on about what is happening in their lives! Rather, listen for bits and pieces of their stories, especially when answering direct questions. You'll also learn a lot when asking for prayer requests.
- 3. They like to wiggle, act silly, and express themselves physically in play.** Expect lots of physical activity from the kids. Boys, especially, will want to wrestle and hit each other, and the girls may fight over who gets to sit next to you! Be careful that this behavior does not get out of control and keep you from accomplishing the group goals. (See *Minimizing Discipline Problems*, below, for more on this subject.)
- 4. They are increasingly aware of, and distracted by, the opposite sex.** K's and first graders can participate in co-ed small groups without many problems. From second grade on, however, co-ed small groups will greatly decrease the kids' ability to focus on the subject at hand. When possible, have same sex Family Groups.
- 5. They still idealize their parents.** Kids at this age deeply want a relationship with their parents, no matter how their parents treat them. They cannot yet separate the parents' behavior from the childhood image of "my dad (mom) is the best dad in the whole world!" When this discrepancy surfaces, help the child focus on his/her feelings and do not attack the parent! Example: "It really hurts when Dads break their promises, doesn't it? I can understand why you feel so sad."
- 6. They learn and absorb a great deal, but offer little feedback.** New facilitators may fear they are not "getting through," or making a difference. Never forget that any positive feedback you are fortunate enough to receive is only the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. You will never know (except maybe in heaven), the true extent to which you are influencing the kids' lives.

Preteen Groups (10-12 years):

Preteens are at a much different developmental level than younger elementary kids, and therefore respond to the support group experience quite differently. Here are a few key points to help you plan for your Preteen group:

- 1. They are developing skills of abstract and cause-and-effect thinking.**
Dealing with the more abstract concepts of feelings, boundaries, grief, and understanding their role in the family are well within the range of preteens' emerging thinking capabilities. This means program leaders will be able to have more process-oriented, focused, and deeper discussions with them. Sometimes, leaders may choose to set aside other activities to let the kids continue their processing/sharing.
- 2. They are letting go of “magical thinking.”** About the age of 10 years, kids begin to see a wider world perspective than the restrictiveness of their own home environment. Until this time, their home and parents — regardless of how good or bad things actually are — are magically interpreted by the child to be the “best in the world.” But now, they begin to see that there are other families and other parents who are different; maybe even better; than their own. If there are problems in the family, this can be a particularly agonizing time for kids as they let go of their idealized view of the parent and begin to see what is real. You will see kids in your group struggling with these issues; be patient if they bounce back and forth between realism and magical thinking!
- 3. They are entering puberty.** Be prepared for the accompanying effects of emotional upheaval; “love/hate” attraction to, but awkwardness around, the opposite sex; and lots of complaints about things being “baby-ish.” Although the curriculum does not directly address the issues connected to puberty, you are likely to get into discussions in your Family Groups about the many changes that are taking place, especially in the 6th graders.
- 4. They LOVE competition!** Kids at this age LOVE to compete. But competition can be motivating OR destructive to the participants, depending on how it is handled. Here are a few points to consider:
 - Play down the competition by not making a big deal over who wins and who loses. Simply move on to the next activity.
 - Be sure everyone wins sometimes.
 - If you want to use prizes, be sure they are small and that all receive prizes at one time or another.
 - If you find some of your kids cannot handle the competition, do not use it!
- 5. They HATE worksheets!** You will find the reproducible materials for the preteens to be materials such as props, game materials and visuals which the kids will enjoy. Since we encourage you to adapt the curriculum to suit your needs, be sure that any teaching materials you choose to add are appropriate to this age group.

- 6. They have defense mechanisms that are deeply internalized and mostly subconscious.** By this age, the behaviors kids have developed to defend themselves from emotional pain will be a significant part of the way they relate to the world at large. In addition, many of them will enter your groups feeling “too cool” to open up about the painful points of their lives. You may have to work hard to establish trust with your kids, waiting patiently for them to feel safe enough to lower their defenses with you. Once they do, however, you will be rewarded with the opportunity for extended conversations on healthy ways to deal with the emotional stress points in their lives.

Minimizing Discipline Problems

Because the children coming to your groups will be high stress children with lots of active defense mechanisms operating, maintaining discipline may be one of your biggest challenges. These suggestions will help significantly:

- 1. Clearly state and consistently enforce rules.** This is the number one rule for maintaining order in the room and creating trust. ALL the facilitators in the room must work together to consistently remind the kids of the rules and enforce them. The kids must know that the adults in the room are in control of the meeting. If you give control to the kids they will not respond to anything you say or try to do. Guaranteed!
- 2. Plan how you will use your physical space.** Many behavior issues are connected to the space they are in. Before you begin your first session:
 - *Limit the size of your area.* Too much space invites kids to run races rather than pay attention to you.
 - *Remove, or mark as “off limits” items that distract.* This includes stacks of extra chairs, boxes of toys, pianos, etc.
 - *Use something physical to define boundaries.* This is especially helpful for the younger children. For instance, masking tape on the floor or an area rug can define where the kids are to sit for large group times; a table or ring of chairs sets the area for Family Groups.
- 3. For the younger children, use activity sheets during Family Group discussions to keep them focused.** Young elementary children are not yet ready to sit in a circle and listen to one another share. Having something in front of them to work on will help them focus on the activity and lessen the temptation to look around the room or poke a neighbor.
- 4. Recruit high schoolers, especially boys, to help in your room.** The presence of teens in the group has many advantages, but in terms of behavior issues, teens are invaluable. They can play games with the kids, wrestle with the boys at appropriate times, keep the physical energy focused, and help the kids settle down when it's time to listen.
- 5. Balance active and quiet activities according to the needs of your group.** For instance, if the kids are getting out of control because the opening

activities are too active, change them to table activities! Or, if younger kids get wiggly after sitting for 25 minutes in Family Groups, use a few stretching exercises or a game of Simon Says as a re-gathering activity. In other words, learn to pay attention to the physical needs of your kids and do what works!

Getting Started

Initial Questions

The first step in setting up a **Kids Like Me!** program is to answer the following questions:

Target Audience?

Who do you want to reach with your program? Are you targeting:

- COAs only?
- Children of the parents in your recovery ministry, no matter what their recovery issues might be?
- High stress families in general?
- Children in your church only? Children in the community only? Both?
- Families who have attended Confident Kids groups in the past?

Your answer to this question will affect how you organize, publicize, staff, and train leaders for your program.

Closed or Open Group?

If you have not already done so, read the information about this issue in the section “Using the Curriculum” (above). This issue is a vital one to discuss before you begin your program. Here again, your answer will affect how you organize, publicize, staff, and train leaders for your program.

Chain of Command?

If a problem arises in your group, who is responsible to solve it? Who else needs to be informed? Working with this population of children/families may raise problems that need to be dealt with, such as reporting abusive behavior. In that eventuality, all program staff need to know what procedures they are to follow to handle it appropriately. Don't wait until something happens to deal with this issue! Clarify the chain of command that is required by your church before you begin a **Kids Like Me!** program.

A recommended chain of command is as follows:

Program facilitators report to the

Kids Like Me! Administrator, who reports to the

Church Pastoral Staff Member over the **KLM** program (i.e., a Recovery Pastor, Church Counselor, Children's Pastor), who reports to the

Senior Pastor/Church Board

Be sure your church's chain of command is in writing and clearly communicate it to all program staff. The important issue is that all **Kids Like Me!** leaders have a clear procedure for handling sensitive problems that may arise.

Leadership Recruitment and Training

Perhaps the most difficult part of any on-going children's program is finding and maintaining qualified leadership. Many churches are concerned that beginning a support group for children will be a drain on their already over-tapped leadership pool. However, experience has taught us that a support group program for children often attracts new leaders. Follow these guidelines as you recruit:

Leadership Characteristics and Commitments:

Successful **Kids Like Me!** leaders exhibit the following characteristics:

- A deep love for children.
- A high degree of responsibility and dependability.
- A special concern for hurting children.
- Although not required, leaders who have personally experienced living in a family with an alcoholic or addicted parent, or other painful childhood issues, tend to have a level of understanding and sensitivity that is helpful in the **Kids Like Me!** program.
- Although not required, some past experience in working with children in group or class settings is also helpful.

In addition, successful leaders must be committed to the following three principles:

- **Consistency of Physical and Emotional Presence.** Leaders must be totally committed to being there each week, both physically and emotionally. This is crucial when working with children who have been hurt by trusted adults in their lives.
- **Being nonjudgmental.** Leaders must realize that children may reveal family secrets or behave in ways that go against their own personal value system. Although leaders do not have to condone these issues, they must realize that unconditional love and acceptance is important to the healing process.
- **Respecting confidentiality.** **Kids Like Me!** leaders must realize they will be called upon to use wisdom and discretion as children reveal details of their lives. In most cases, they must be able to keep what children say in the group setting confidential, with a few notable exceptions. See *Handling Sensitive Issues* (below) for more information on this vital subject.

The Leadership Team:

The Program Administrator. This person is the overseer of the entire program. Ideally, this is a paid staff member or someone with easy access to the administrative resources of the organization (i.e., office equipment, publicity vehicles, scheduling and room allocations, knowledge of potential volunteers, etc.). The responsibilities of the Program Administrator include:

- Coordinating with the supervising Pastoral Staff Member and other Recovery Ministry Leaders to set the time and place for the meetings.
- Recruiting, training and caring for the program facilitators.
- Publicity.
- Maintaining records.
- Securing all needed supplies.
- Evaluation and follow-up.

Program Facilitators. The facilitators work directly with the children. One facilitator for every four to five children is needed. Following the **Kids Like Me!** curriculum, these facilitators conduct the meetings each week.

Training:

Stage One: Orientation. The first step in the training process is a “no-obligation” orientation. This gives both the potential leaders and the program administrator a chance to explore whether or not this ministry will be a good match for both. This meeting generally is conducted as follows:

- **Get acquainted.** Participants share their backgrounds and why they are interested in the **Kids Like Me!** program.
- **Overview of Kids Like Me!** Includes program goals, qualifications of leaders, and a look at the curriculum and meeting format.
- **Details of the Facilitator Commitment.** Expectations and the importance of follow through once a commitment is made are discussed.
- **Distribute Facilitator Applications.** Appendix C contains a sample application. For legal reasons, it is important to have an application on file for every facilitator. Participants can fill them out at home and return them before the next training, should they decide to continue.

Stage Two: Basic Training. Once the applications have been reviewed and the team chosen, the basic training can begin. **Kids Like Me!** facilitators are trained in the following areas:

- **Children of Addictions Issues.** Characteristics of COAs, Family Roles, and other related issues are discussed (see Appendix E) .
- **Small group facilitation.** Skills are taught in listening and responding, keeping the group on track, recognizing behaviors that indicate a need for

professional help, and your church or organization's policy for handling sensitive issues.

- **Classroom management.** This includes how to maintain discipline and control, provide smooth transitions between program segments, and the importance of well prepared session plans.
- **Team building.** Facilitators work together to plan sessions, discipline consistently, solve problems, and pray. Having some of your meetings over dinner can also help build the team.

Stage Three: On-the-Job Training. Training does not stop once the Basic Training is completed. Additional training experiences are needed as follows:

- **De-briefing Sessions.** Debrief each of the sessions as soon as possible. We recommend a short meeting for this purpose after each session. If this is too late in the evening, gather half an hour before each session begins. If that is not possible either, schedule a debriefing meeting at a convenient time at least every two weeks. Use this time to share what has been happening in the groups, celebrate successes, solve problems, plan for future meetings, and pray.
- **Enrichment Sessions.** Approximately once each quarter, hold a special training session to focus on an issue of concern. This could be a further discussion of discipline methods, additional information on one of the life skills contained in the curriculum (i.e., an in-depth look at anger management), or a special speaker to address an issue of concern (i.e., a local educator to talk about Learning Disabilities, an addiction specialist to discuss methodology for working with children of addiction, or a representative from Children's Services to discuss signs of and proper reporting procedures of abuse).
- **Team Building Events.** Plan times just to relax and have fun together! Quarterly pot luck dinners or game nights will do a lot to increase the bonding of your team. And remember, the more bonded your team is, the more successful your **Kids Like Me!** program will be – guaranteed.

Handling Sensitive Issues

Confidentiality

Written Policy. Most of the time, sharing in **Kids Like Me!** groups is straightforward and predictable. However, from time to time children or parents may reveal matters of a sensitive nature. Decisions about how these matters will be handled must be made before you begin the program so you will be prepared, should a problem arise in your program. Many churches now have church-wide written policies for procedure in handling sensitive issues. If your church does NOT have written policies regarding reporting abuse, chain of command, etc., encourage the church leadership to do so before beginning a **Kids Like Me!** program.

Confidentiality Agreement with the Kids. Confidentiality is one of the most important rules on the group rules list. Facilitators explain it to the children by saying that **Kids Like Me!** is meant to be a safe place where they can talk about whatever they want to talk about. But, in order to feel safe everyone needs to know that what they say in group will stay in group. Facilitators further explain this to mean that when they leave the group, they may not tell anyone else about personal, private things another child has shared. They can, however, talk about whatever else they want. The kids will also be told that the confidentiality agreement extends to the facilitators. The facilitators will not tell anyone what the kids share with them without their permission, and *this includes their parents*. We cannot be helpful to the kids if they fear we will turn around and talk to their parents about everything they say in the group.

Children's Understanding of Confidentiality. The distinction between what is okay to talk about outside the group and what is to be kept confidential is very blurred at the elementary age level. Be prepared for children to tell their parents that they were told they could not tell Mom or Dad anything that happened in the group. If you receive phone calls from parents about this issue, explain the importance of confidentiality to the group process, and then add the information in the following paragraph.

Confidentiality Agreement with the Parents. Explain to parents that although we respect and hold to the confidentiality agreement with the kids, program administrators will always find a way to get information that is of concern to them. This is usually not difficult to do. Most often when we ask the kids if we can talk to their parents about a particular issue, they are very happy to have us do so; some are even relieved. Even when they do not give us permission, we can usually find a way to get information to parents without violating confidentiality; such as making observations about their behavior. Parents can be assured that it is not our intent to hide things from them; but to make it as easy as possible for their kids to receive help.

Exceptions to Confidentiality. There are two exceptions to confidentiality:

- **Reports of abusive behaviors.** Any reports of abusive behavior against the kids will – by law in most states – be reported to authorities.
- **Confidentiality among **Kids Like Me!** program leaders.** If we are to give the families the best possible experience, facilitators must be free to share information about what happens in the groups each week. They can then be given guidance as to the best way to deal with the issues their group members raised. This sharing also allows the Program Administrator to note any information that seems out of the ordinary and needs follow-up.

Referrals

When families have problems that go beyond the scope of the support group program, they will need to be referred to other sources for help. If your church does not have an approved list of counselors and/or agencies, build one of your own. Include resources such as the following on your list:

- **Counselors and counseling agencies** that include one or more counselors who specialize in working with child and/or family therapy; AND include a sliding scale fee structure.
- **Lawyers and legal aid services** to assist parents with legal issues.
- **Community resources** for specialized issues such as chemical dependency treatment, ADD diagnosis and treatment, shelters for women and children, etc.
- **Local meetings of AA, Al-Anon, and other 12 step groups.**
- **Other helping professionals** in your community.

Reporting Abuse

In most states, church workers are required by law to report statements of abuse, or suspected abuse. Be sure the entire program staff knows in advance signs of abuse and the proper procedures for making reports. You may consider inviting a social worker or representative from Child Protective Services to train your staff in this area.

Preventing Legal Problems

It is not likely that your church will encounter any legal difficulties from your **Kids Like Me!** program. However, you can safeguard against this possibility by giving attention to the following three issues:

- **Have parents sign a release form.** The purpose of this form is to make it clear to parents that they are attending a support group – not a therapy group. Most courts will recognize that support groups are peer led groups, and do not fall into the same legal liabilities as professionally led therapy groups. A sample parent release form is included in Appendix C.
- **Know when and how to report abusive behaviors.** Never act alone in reporting abuse. This decision should be made in consultation with the child's facilitator, the **Kids Like Me!** Program Administrator, and any other pastors/counselors acting as supervisors to your program. The main point to emphasize here is the need for all leaders to know the proper procedure to follow in your church or organization *before the issue actually comes up*. Don't wait until you are in a crisis situation to stipulate this procedure!
- **Screen your **Kids Like Me!** facilitators carefully.** This is an important responsibility of the Program Administrator. The screening process begins with carefully reviewing the applications filled out by potential facilitators (see Appendix C).

