

**Girl Power: A Girls Empowerment and Social-Emotional Skills Program at the Boys and
Girls Club**

Chandler T. Kelly

Department of Occupational Therapy

Indiana University Indianapolis

Author Note

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Correspondence concerning this report should be addressed to Chandler Kelly, Indiana University Department of Occupational Therapy, 1050 Wishard Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46022.

Email: ctkelly@iu.edu

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Abstract

Due to the circumstances of the home environment or living conditions, many of the students attending the Boys and Girls Club have experienced trauma and thus have high adverse childhood experience (ACE) scores. According to research, emotional regulation and coping skills can contribute to minimizing racial trauma and preventing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Additionally, the program director of the Boys and Girls Club identified that many of the members have difficulty with emotional regulation, coping skills, and self-esteem. The purpose of this capstone project was to address and meet these needs by developing and implementing a girls empowerment, social-emotional skills program. Intervention activities focused on emotional regulation, coping skills, interoception, and self-esteem. The girls demonstrated satisfaction with their participation in the program by stating that they enjoyed the activities, reporting something they learned, and recommending the program to other girls. A digital and physical program handbook was created to improve sustainability and increase likelihood of continuation of program implementation after the conclusion of the capstone.

Keywords: emotional regulation, empowerment, self-esteem, coping skills, boys and girls club, trauma, adverse childhood experience

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Introduction

Trauma and adversity play a major role in the development of healthy emotional regulation. Enduring stressful life events or traumatic experiences during childhood and adolescent years impacts not only the development of minoritized children, but also their behavioral health and overall well-being (Njoroge, 2021). Research shows that in comparison to white peers, it is far more prevalent for African American children and adolescents to be exposed to traumatic experiences (Saleem, 2020). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) as “traumatic events that occur between the ages of 0-17 years”, or aspects of the environment that threaten a child’s safety, stability, and bonding (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2023). According to research, children facing inequities relating to the social and economic environments in which they live, are at an increased risk of experiencing ACEs compared to others (CDC, 2023). ACEs and racial stress and trauma (RST) are of high prevalence among Black populations and increased exposure to ACEs results in greater susceptibility to higher emotion dysregulation (Cole, 2024).

Racial trauma is not something that can be prevented; however, it can be minimized by taking steps towards learning how to cope with it (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2024). Learning strategies for empowerment, taking charge of emotions, and social support are all methods to help one learn how to cope with racial trauma (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2024). The purpose of this doctoral capstone project was to create a safe space that empowered the girls to be confident, recognize their value, and help them develop social and emotional skills needed to improve their occupational performance and engagement. The project was designed to address social-emotional skills by focusing on interoception, emotional regulation, coping skills,

and confidence. Furthermore, the capstone student aimed to facilitate sustainability of implementation by providing resources for the Boys and Girls Club staff and identifying limitations to continued implementation.

Needs Assessment

The capstone student expressed interest in completing the capstone project with the Sankofa Program at the Boys and Girls Club after learning about the opportunity from Dr. Wasmuth when she came to present the opportunity to the class. After expressing interest and discussing it with capstone coordinator, Dr. Annie DeRolf, the capstone site was finalized. Upon solidifying the doctoral capstone site with Dr. Wasmuth, working with the Sankofa Program, the capstone student developed questions for the needs assessment interview based on the community profile and literature search. The interview questions, found in Appendix A, were formulated to get a better understanding of the culture and structure of the Boys and Girls Club, as well as insight on what the Boys and Girls Club program director believes the students could benefit from. Additionally, the capstone student developed a set of questions, also found in Appendix A, to interview with both the director and program manager of the Sankofa program as well. These questions were developed to gain an understanding of the goals of the Sankofa program, potential areas of improvement for Sankofa, and obtain opinions on what the girls in the program could benefit from. Upon completion of all three interviews, there were some common themes that arose regarding areas that the girls could use some improvement. These themes included: self/emotion regulation, coping skills, and self-esteem/confidence. From these interviews, the capstone student determined that the desired state of the site is for the girls attending the Boys and Girls Club to demonstrate improvements in the areas of confidence, self-

esteem, emotional regulation, and coping skills. It was determined that the capstone student's sole focus of the capstone experience would be the development of a life skills program, with the goal of providing the site with resources, strategies, and activities that can be implemented to help the students achieve improved confidence, self-esteem, emotional regulation skills, and coping skills. The capstone student also met with the unit director of the Boys and Girls Club to gain some insight on current programming at the club, specifically things that make programs run smoothly and things that make programming a challenge. From this, the capstone student learned that the two key factors that play a major role in programming include building a relationship with the girls and consistency. The unit director expressed how it is imperative that these things are incorporated when developing a program for the Boys and Girls Club, as the lack of rapport and consistency is detrimental to successful implementation of a program.

Site Profile

The Boys and Girls Club is an organization that aims to “provide a safe, educational, and positive atmosphere where they can prosper and reach their full potential” (Boys & Girls Club of Indianapolis, 2022) by providing after school care for elementary and middle school aged students. They value being youth centered, ethical, accountable, and united. The Boys and Girls Club operates in a family-oriented atmosphere that is based around showing love and showing the students that someone cares about them, and the staff are adamant about building relationships and connecting with the students. The students participate in various programs to promote character and leadership development, education and career development, health and lifestyles, the arts, sports, fitness and recreation, and outreach.

The population of students at the Boys and Girls Club is elementary and middle school aged students, predominately minorities, coming from families of low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Many of these girls have experienced complex trauma, including racial trauma, and it has impacted the way they interact with their peers and their environment, as well as the way they view themselves. Many of the girls who participated in the program were experiencing a lack of confidence, self-esteem, and self-regulation skills which was evident in their decreased emotional regulation and coping skills. The capstone student targeted this population of students when developing and implementing the program, specifically the 5–10-year-old age range. The purpose of this capstone project was to create a space that empowered the girls to be confident and recognize their value and helped them develop social and emotional skills needed to improve their occupational performance and engagement.

Literature Review

Racial Trauma in Adolescents

Racial stress and trauma (RST) largely impacts childhood development. Saleem, et. al.'s article, *Racial Trauma Developmental Considerations*, examines ways in which RST is affecting children and adolescents in different developmental contexts and how communities and family contexts that the children are in, impact how they are able to cope with the trauma. The authors argue that more attention needs to be brought to the RST that youth experience and they emphasize the benefits that addressing RST can have on individuals' health, communities, and the health and well-being of greater society (Saleem, et. al, 2020). However, regarding treatment of RST, they question strategies to approach the treatment and conceptualization of symptomatology of different racial ethnic groups. Occupational therapy (OT) can play an important role in addressing RST in numerous ways. OTs can use a trauma informed care (TIC) approach, which can be applied to any racial ethnic group, to address the various things that children experience during different developmental periods as a result of RST including poor

behavior, decreased self-image, problems in school that are often misinterpreted as ADHD, stress and coping, social withdrawal, mental health, etc.

One of the specific ways RST affects the development of children and adolescents is in the area of mental health. More specifically, evidence shows that the risk of depressive symptoms in African, Latino/a, Asian, and Native American (ALANA) youth follows the development of RST (Woody, et.al, 2022). In Woody et. al.'s article, *Racial Stress and Trauma and the Development of Adolescent Depression*, the authors argue that there is a link between depression, RST, and racism. Their research demonstrates that mediating the link between RST and depression is possibly the vigilance for racism-related threats in ALANA youth, which is a predisposition to depression. The perpetual state of vigilance along with continuously attending and responding to threat cues, interferes with other cognitive and attentional demands that are necessary to engage in meaningful activities and participate in daily life. This argument speaks to the larger issue that the heightened vigilance that these youth are experiencing as a result of RST is taxing across multiple domains of adaptive functioning including physical, behavioral, and cognitive-affective, ultimately resulting in things such as decreased performance in school, difficulties sleeping, chronic stress, and social withdrawal (Woody, et.al, 2022).

Interventions

Racism-related stressors are likely the cause of the disproportionate rates of trauma and the associated outcomes observed in African Americans (Metzger, et. al, 2021). Traumatic stress is nearly universal with high-risk, low-income populations; therefore, a very popular best practice when working with traumatized children in this population is utilizing trauma informed approaches. When children are continuously exposed to trauma, it can lead to traumatic stress reactions that can include “intrusive thoughts, irritability, arousal, anxiety, fear, difficulty

concentrating, dysregulation, aggression against self and others, dissociative symptoms, somatization, and character issues” (Fette, 2019). Trauma-informed care consists of six core principles including: safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support and mutual self-help; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice, and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues (SAMHSA, 2014). Using interventions built on the foundation of these six core principles helps practitioners be able to identify triggers in order to assist children in feeling safe and coping effectively (Fette, 2019).

Another evidenced based practice for treating this population is a sensory-based approach. A sensory based approach “aims to assist persons in more effectively regulating their emotional and physiological arousal” (McGreevy, 2020). Survival responses from the brain and the nervous system are often elicited as a result of the overwhelming nature of trauma and triggering events or sensations can lead to a reoccurrence of the physiological and emotional responses that were experienced during the initial traumatizing event (McGreevy, 2020). Therefore, the overwhelming physiological arousal caused by traumatizing events or triggers can be addressed using a sensory based approach to help with self-regulation. A few ways occupational therapy can play a role in emotion regulation includes teaching emotional regulation skills, providing sensory strategies, and modifying routines, environments, and tasks.

Effects of Trauma on the Nervous System (Dysregulation)

Not only does RST impact the mental and behavioral development and health of the youth, but it also affects their physical health. Roach, et. al, in their article, *The Association Between Race-related Stress and Trauma and Emotion Dysregulation in Youth of Color*, performed a systematic review in which they examined the relationship between emotion dysregulation and RST. In doing this, they found that higher levels of emotion dysregulation are

associated with greater RST, which is then associated with an increase of negative outcomes of health and wellbeing (Roach, et.al, 2023). Emotional dysregulation “refers to the processes by which individuals modulate which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express them to achieve their goals” (Roach et. al, 2023). It is possible that the emotional distress caused as a result of the unpredictable and unchangeable identity characteristic of RST, can interfere with one’s adaptive regulation strategies; ultimately, due to the emotional dysregulation, one will either fail to utilize appropriate emotional regulation strategies for the context of the situation or they may fail to participate in emotional regulation at all (Roach, et. al, 2023).

RST can lead to emotional dysregulation, but it can also cause dysregulation in the body as well. Dysregulation is often caused by a disruption in the nervous system. In McGreevy and Boland’s article about sensory-based interventions with trauma survivors, they discuss how the nervous system elicits fight/flight or freeze survival responses in response to the overwhelming nature of trauma, which ultimately interferes with physiological functioning as well as the ability to self-regulate (McGreevy, 2020). When a person is unable to regulate these experiences in their body, they will continue to reoccur and present themselves in the body as somatic sensations (McGreevy, 2020).

Emotion Regulation in OT

Occupational therapy (OT) takes a holistic approach in addressing any barriers that interfere with a person engaging or participating in activities that they want and/or need to do. These barriers can range anywhere from physical and cognitive impairments to mental health and emotional dysregulation. Occupational therapists have the expertise in the area of addressing both emotional dysregulation and the dysregulation that is felt in the body. An evidence-based

approach found to be beneficial in addressing dysregulation, specifically as a result of trauma, are sensory-based interventions. In McGreevy and Boland's article, they completed a review in which they analyzed and summarized the evidence for using sensory-based interventions in the treatment of trauma survivors, both adults and adolescent. Throughout this article, we learn the importance of sensory based interventions in the field of OT, but also more specifically with the population of trauma survivors and how participation and engagement in occupations is largely affected by interventions that support regulation and address the body on a sensory level (McGreevy, 2020).

Guiding Model/Theory

The occupational therapy model used to guide the development and implementation of this program was the Model of Occupational Empowerment. The Model of Occupational Empowerment was developed to fulfill the need of a theoretical model that guides occupation-based practice in alienated and marginalized populations in community settings (Fisher, G.S. and Hotchkiss, A., 2008). This model addresses the idea that "disempowering environments can lead to occupational deprivation, which then reinforces learned helplessness." (Fisher, G.S. and Hotchkiss, A., 2008). Researchers describe disempowering environments as unfavorable circumstances and problems such as poverty, substance abuse, physical abuse, violence, limited social support, etc. (Cho, 2008). Due to the negative environments and external circumstances, individuals are then limited in their ability to access, engage in, and enjoy meaningful experiences, also known as occupational deprivation. When occupational deprivation persists, it has the potential to lead to unhealthy occupational identity and limitations in their ability to function and have autonomy over their lives (Cho, 2008). The Model of Occupational Empowerment addresses the three key areas of environment, occupation, and empowerment to

promote healthy behaviors and improved self-efficacy with the ultimate goal of facilitating positive occupational engagement (Cho, 2008).

Within the targeted population of this capstone project, many of the girls come from disempowering environments that impact their identity and perception of their level of competence and interferes with their ability to access and participate in activities that are meaningful to them. Additionally, it often results in participation in unhealthy and sometimes unsafe behaviors. Learning skills of how to regulate themselves and cope with challenging circumstances and empowering the girls to be confident in themselves and their capabilities, resulted in improved self-efficacy, healthier behaviors, and promote positive occupational participation and performance.

Project Plan and Process

Upon completion of the needs assessment and literature review, the capstone student developed some goals to guide the implementation of the capstone project. The goals were created with the purpose of closing the gap in the literature and meeting the needs that were identified during the needs assessment and initial site interviews. The goals are as follows:

Goal 1: Student will create and implement an occupation-based life skills program focusing on interoception, coping skills, self-regulation, and self-esteem to promote identity development and occupational engagement.

Objective 1: Student will utilize information learned about participants during the Sankofa program to develop an occupation-based life skills group that incorporates participant interests and client-centered activities.

Objective 2: Student will utilize the National Youth Outcomes Initiative (NYOI) and Child Occupational Self-Assessment (COSA) as an outcome measurement.

Goal 2: Student will facilitate sustainability of implementation of life skills program by Boys and Girls Clubs staff and/or volunteers.

Objective 1: Student will develop physical and digital handbooks to utilize for implementation of occupation-based life skills program, as well as education resources.

Objective 2: Student will educate Boys and Girls Club staff on effective implementation of occupation-based life skills program.

Goal 3: Student will develop and provide education resources to Boys and Girls Club staff on trauma informed care and adverse childhood experiences.

Objective 1: Student will create evidence-based informational resources addressing trauma informed care and adverse childhood experience for use by Boys and Girls Club staff.

Objective 2: Student will educate Boys and Girls Club staff on the impact of trauma on development, specifically in African American girls.

Prior to the initiation of project implementation, the capstone student outlined a project timeline in order to achieve the goals listed above. The project timeline can be found in Table 1.

Table 1.

Phase	Tasks
Phase 1: Weeks 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with faculty advisor to discuss/review capstone plan • Boys and Girls Club orientation • Develop initial program protocol • Identify assessment tools and outcome measures
Phase 2: Weeks 3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build rapport with participants and BGC • Update literature review and needs assessment • Finalize initial program protocol

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of participants
Phase 3: Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize participants • Pre-assessments (COSA & NYOI) • Creation of program materials • Development of program handbook
Phase 4: Weeks 6-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize program handbook • Program implementation
Phase 5: 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-assessments (COSA & NYOI)
Phase 6: 13-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize paper • Finalize resources for BGC

Project Implementation

The purpose of this program was to create a safe space to empower girls to be confident and develop healthy social-emotional skills. The girls participated in various activities that addressed topics including interoception, confidence and self-esteem, emotional regulation, and coping skills. The program was conducted in a total of six sessions over the course of weeks 6-11. It was split into six different modules, with the first session being an introduction session and the final session being a reflection and wrap-up session. Before beginning implementation of the program, the capstone student spent two weeks developing the initial program protocol, two weeks building rapport and developing relationships with the girls, and another two weeks completing pre-assessments. The initial development of the program protocol was created with one or two interventions outlined for each session. Due to the time constraints, this was adjusted to focusing on one intervention per session. Each session consisted of check ins at the beginning of each session to acknowledge how the girls were feeling, a fun icebreaker question, a mini discussion to introduce the session topic, an intervention activity or game, and a discussion to close the session. Table 2 provides an outline of the sessions and interventions for the program.

Table 2

Program Outline

	Topic	Interventions
Module 1	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ice breakers • Team building • Topic/program introduction
Module 2	Interoception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body Maps • Body awareness mindfulness video
Module 3	Emotional Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIY stress balls
Module 4	Coping Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy & unhealthy coping skills
Module 5	Confidence/Self-Esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirmations collage • Negative vs. Positive Self Talk
Module 6	Wrap Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection discussions • Pizza party

Recruitment and Participants

To begin the process of recruitment, the capstone student first received approval from the university's institutional review board. Following this, the recruitment process began once the capstone student arrived on site and began working with the program director of the club. Recruitment was conducted by participation of the capstone student in regular programming, building relationships with the girls, and collaborating with the program director to identify girls who would benefit from participation in the program. There was a total of 10 girls recruited to take part in the program, ranging from ages 5-10 years old.

Structure

This program took place at the Boys and Girls Club. Four of the six sessions took place in the fitness room, while two of the sessions took place in the art room due to the type of activity of the session. Each session occurred for approximately 60 minutes; however, some sessions were cut short due to another weekly program that takes place in the fitness room that occurred

on the same day. The number of participants for each session ranged from six to eight girls. This varied due to inconsistencies in club attendance as well as parents arriving early to pick girls up.

Project Evaluation

Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data to determine the benefit of this program. Quantitative data was collected using the National Youth Outcomes Initiative (NYOI) and a modified version of the Child Occupational Self-Assessment (COSA). The capstone student gathered qualitative data from conversations with the program director regarding feedback on program implementation, as well as exit interviews with the participants to determine implementation outcomes. There was not enough data to do statistical tests to determine program effectiveness, so the capstone student examined average pre and post test scores to describe trends and generate ideas for future study.

Data Collection

Data was collected using a modified version of the COSA and the NYOI survey which were both administered during week 5 of the capstone experience and then again during week 12. The NYOI survey was used to assess the social and emotional health of the participants. This was administered as a pre and post assessment tool to measure any notable changes in the social and emotional health of the participants following participation in the program. The COSA was utilized to identify the girls' perception of performance and importance in different occupational performance tasks relating to home, school, and the community. This was also administered as a pre and post assessment tool to determine if the tools and skills learned during the program would improve the girls perceived competence in their occupational participation. Additionally,

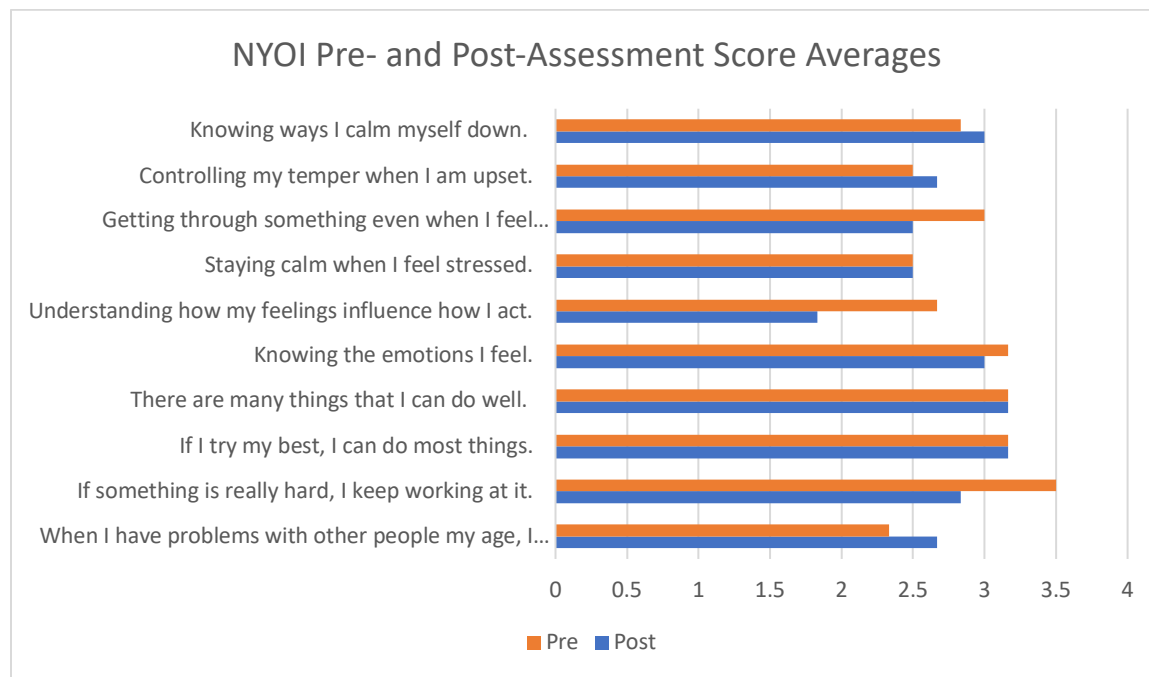
data was collected through observation of the girls, exit interviews with the girls, and discussions with the program director to determine overall success of the program.

Project Results

NYOI Findings

The administration age for the NYOI begins at second grade. There were three girls who were below the administration age for the NYOI, eliminating them from data collection for this assessment. Additionally, there was one dropout prior to post-assessment administration and that participant's pre-assessment data was not included. In total, six girls completed the pre- and post-assessment NYOI surveys. When comparing the data from the NYOI pre and post surveys, the results were fairly inconsistent, as shown in Table 4. There were a few items that showed no variability from pre-assessment administration to post-assessment administration, there were a few items with lower post-assessment averages compared to averages from pre-assessment administration, and there were some items that saw an increase in average scores on the post-assessment survey.

A variable that potentially affected the results was lack of understanding and comprehension. When asked if she understood how the questions related to the program, one of the girls stated, "Kind of, not really." Many of the girls likely answered the questions based on how they felt in the moment instead of answering based on what they learned in the program because they were unable to correlate the two. However, two of the questions that produced an increase in average scores were, "Knowing ways I can calm myself down," and "Controlling my temper when I am upset." This indicates that the girls were able to learn new emotional regulation and coping skills from their participation program.

Table 4.*NYOI Pre- and Post-Assessment NYOI Score Averages***COSA Findings**

When analyzing the results of the COSA, the capstone student averaged the results of seven items that addressed occupational performance tasks most closely related to the areas of focus for the program. The girls scored each of the seven items based on their perceived level of performance and importance for each task. From pre to post administration there was an increase in average performance scores for majority of the questions. The average scores for the question “Make my body do what I want it to do,” decreased for both performance and importance. However, there was a slight decrease in average scores for, “Make others understand my ideas,” but only in the area of performance. The results of the averages from both the pre and post assessments are found in Table 5 and Table 6, including the survey statements, scoring criteria, and average scores.

Table 5.*Scoring Criteria*

1: I have a big problem doing this	2. I have a little problem doing this	3. I do this ok	4. I am really good at this
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Performance Scoring Averages for COSA Pre and Post Assessment

Question	Pre-Score Average	Post-Score Average
Keep my mind on what I am doing	2.1	2.7
Think of ways to do things when I have a problem	2.4	2.6
Ask my teacher questions when I need to	2.6	2.9
Make others understand my ideas	2.3	2
Keep working on something even when it gets hard	2.4	3
Calm myself down when I am upset	2.1	2.3
Make my body do what I want it to do	2.7	2.1

Table 6.*Scoring Criteria*

1: Not really important to me	2. Important to me	3. Really important to me	4. Most important of all to me
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Importance Scoring Averages for COSA Pre and Post Assessment

Question	Pre-Score Average	Post-Score Average
Keep my mind on what I am doing	2.4	3.3
Think of ways to do things when I have a problem	3	3.4
Ask my teacher questions when I need to	2.6	2.7
Make others understand my ideas	2.4	2.9
Keep working on something even when it gets hard	2.9	3.1
Calm myself down when I am upset	2.7	3.4
Make my body do what I want it to do	2.9	2.6

Exit Interview Results

The girls completed exit interviews individually with the capstone student and as a group discussion during the final session. Results from the exit interviews, which are detailed in Appendix B, suggest that the program was helpful. Overall, based on the girls' responses during the interviews, the girls all reported that they had fun and enjoyed the activities during the program, every girl learned something from the program, and they all acknowledged the benefit of the program for themselves and for other girls. Each girl who participated in the program stated that she would recommend the program to other girls which indicates their satisfaction with the program.

Project Discussion

The purpose of this project was to empower young African American girls to be confident in themselves and their abilities and develop healthy social and emotional skills to help them show up as their best self. The capstone student achieved this by developing and executing a girls empowerment and social-emotional skills program called Girl Power. The program consisted of activities to address interoception, emotion regulation, coping skills, and confidence. Some of the activities included a body map coloring activity, DIY stress balls, a healthy versus unhealthy coping skills game, and affirmation collages. The goals of this project were to create and implement a life skills program, facilitate sustainability of the program, and provide educational resources to the staff. Based on the implementation outcomes and feedback from the program director, all of the goals were achieved. Overall, this program positively impacted the girls who participated in increasing self-esteem, improving accountability, and fostering new relationships.

Limitations

Despite the overall success of the program, there were a few barriers that impacted program implementation. One of the biggest barriers was the inconsistency in attendance at the Boys and Girls Club, which affected participation in the program. The average attendance for each session was seven out of 10 girls, and four out of 10 girls missed half the sessions. With the program consisting of a total of six sessions, missing even one session majorly affected the participant's outcomes from the program. Another barrier was location of the session. Majority of the sessions took place in the fitness room; however, the fitness room was also utilized for another reoccurring program on the same day as Girl Power. Occasionally, sessions had to end

early so the other program could use the room and Girl Power sessions got slightly cut short interfering with the ability to get through the entire session.

Another limitation to program implementation was age. The ages of the girls in the program ranged from five years old to 10 years old. Due to the girls being of various ages, they were often in different locations at the start time of the program. The amount of time it took to gather all the girls and get them to the room to begin the program minimized the amount of time left for programming.

Impact

Based on the capstone student's observations during her time at the Boys and Girls Club and feedback from the program director of the club, this program had a positive impact on the girls who participated by increasing self-esteem, improving accountability, and fostering new relationships. The small group size allowed for the girls to better get to know their peers on a personal level and provided the opportunity for them to build relationships with one another. Additionally, creating the space with girls of varying ages presented the opportunity for the girls to foster relationships with different people who they otherwise likely would not have. Also, the consistency of the program and of the capstone student's presence at the Boys and Girls Club helped build strong rapport between the capstone student and the girls, which strengthened over the course of the 14-week experience.

The program director mentioned that as a result of the capstone student working with the girls, it gave them the courage to be able to be confident and stand up for themselves.

Additionally, the capstone student and the program director recognized a decrease in behaviors from the girls who were participating in the program as well as more accountability being taken in that the girls were doing better at owning up and taking accountability for their actions.

Sustainability Plan

When developing this program, the goal was to create a program that would be sustainable and have a high likelihood of continuing to be implemented at the Boys and Girls Club, even after the capstone student is no longer there. To promote and encourage sustainability, the capstone student developed a digital and physical program handbook to leave with the Boys and Girls Club. The handbook consisted of a detailed outline of each of session with a description of the materials needed, activity instructions, and discussion questions. It also included a resource on trauma informed care and adverse childhood experiences. The handbook contained links and access to the worksheets needed for the different sessions. The physical copy was printed off and put into a binder that will remain at the club and the digital copy will be a pdf that is sent to the program director. During the final week of the capstone experience, the capstone student presented the program handbooks to the Boys and Girls Club program director and talked through some tips for implementation. When asked if this is a program that has potential to be continued, the program director stated that “I think it could definitely be continued if there is a staff who is committed and willing to put in the effort in implementing it.”

Conclusion

This 14-week capstone experience provided the Boys and Girls Club with a girls empowerment, social-emotional skills program to provide skills to girls experiencing a lack of confidence, low self-esteem, and a lack of self-regulation and healthy coping skills. The overall goal of this capstone project was to create and implement a program that incorporates activities and strategies to help the girls develop these skills that are necessary in helping them appropriately engage in social participation and improve their occupational participation and performance. Following the program, the girls who participated in the program experienced

increased self-esteem, accountability, and improvements with social participation with the development of new relationships. The program also helped improved the participant's perception of performance and importance in various occupational tasks. Based on the handbook created by the capstone student, the program is able to continue to be implemented.

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Appendix A

Needs Assessment Interview – Boys and Girls Club

1. What improvements would you like to see in the girls?
2. What programming do you feel like the girls need that you don't already have?
3. What are the goals of the Boys and Girls Club for the members who attend? – things you want them to get out of boys and girls club
4. What is the culture of this Boys and Girls Club site?
5. Staff and programming?
6. Do you currently address the mental health of the members attending the Boys and Girls club? If so, how?
7. What is the relationship between the Boys and Girls club and staff and the families of the members?
8. What is the relationship between the Boys and Girls club and staff and the students that attend?

Needs Assessment Interview – Sankofa Program

1. What was the inspiration behind starting the Sankofa program?
2. How did you end up partnering with the Boys and Girls Club to put this on? Or how did you decide on boys and girls club?
3. What are your goals of the Sankofa program? What do you want the girls to get out of the program?
4. What do you think could make Sankofa even better?
5. What do you think is something the girls who participate in Sankofa could benefit from?
6. What do you think I (OT) could bring to Sankofa to help support the program?

Appendix B

Post Program Exit Interview

1. Overall, what did you like about participating in Girl Power?
 - Learning new things
 - Fun
 - A lot of activities
 - Puts me in a good mood
 - Spending time with Ms. Chandler
 - Playing games
 - Answering the questions
2. What was your favorite activity?
 - Body map – liked drawing emotions

- Unhealthy & healthy coping skills game
 - I love my neighbor
 - Affirmation collage
 - DIY stress balls
 - 2 truths and a lie
3. What is something you learned from participating in the program?
- “Calming myself-down with starfish breathing.”
 - “Stick up for yourself.”
 - “If someone is bothering you get an adult.”
 - “Try your best.”
 - “Don’t listen to people who make fun of your skin color.”
 - “Don’t take emotions out on other people.”
 - “To be a lady and listen when others are speaking.”
 - “How to make a stress ball that calms you down.”
 - “It’s important to talk about how you’re feeling.”
 - “Don’t judge a book by its cover.”
4. Would you recommend the program to other girls?
- “Yes, to help them understand their emotions.”
 - “Yes, it was fun and a lot of stuff to do. Other people can learn to be kind.”
 - “Yes, so they can learn to be a lady.”
 - “Yes, so it can help with their problems.”

Appendix C

Girl Power Program Handbook



17

Materials

- 10 water bottles with 1 cup of flour (pre make before session; mind Box bottles are easiest)
- Ribbons
- Markers
- Emotion wheel worksheet

Notes for Facilitator

- Write the plan for the day's session on the board or large sticky note!
- Provide recognition for girls throughout the session!
- Provide opportunity for the girls to make choices throughout the session.
- Reflection: Multiple questions are listed. Depending on time at the end of the session you can either choose one question and have a few people answer OR choose multiple questions and have one person answer each one.

1. Warm Welcome

- Introduce and greet girls as they enter. Give each girl an emotion wheel and all the flour.
- One word check to see how they are feeling today (circle on the wheel).
- One word check to see how they are feeling today (circle on the wheel).
- One word check to see how they are feeling today (circle on the wheel).
- One word check to see how they are feeling today (circle on the wheel).

2. Community Builder

- Discussion Questions: What are emotions?
- Come together in a group to discuss how they feel and what emotions activities.

Group Goals

- By the end of this session, girls should be able to:
 - Identify different emotions and explain a situation when they might feel each emotion.
 - Identify one emotion they like during their day.
 - Identify one word to describe an emotion that can be used to help regulate.
 - Express self-regulation tool.

3. Activities

Activity 1: Emotion Wheel (15 mins.)

- Print out emotion wheel worksheets for each participant.
- Separate full group into multiple groups of 4-6 girls, depending on the size of the full group.
- Place markers in the center of the table of each small group.
- Introduction:
 - For each emotion on the emotion wheel, girls will draw a face or picture of the emotion or a memory of when they experienced the emotion.

Activity 2: POP Storm Ball (30 mins.)

- Place one balloon in each girl (allow them to choose the color of their balloon).
- Each girl will get a water bottle that contains 1 cup of flour.
- Introduction:
 - Introduce girls to blow a little bit of air in the balloon (about the size of a tennis ball).
 - Introduce girls to put the opening of the balloon around the neck of the water bottle (instructor to provide assistance as needed).
 - Introduce girls to pop the balloon over the bottle from the bottle to the balloon.
 - Introduce girls to release the balloon from the bottle and observe the small amount of air out of the balloon (do this slowly so the flour stays in the balloon).
 - Be a star in the balloon.

4. Reflection

- Discussion Questions:
 - How did you feel getting from that emotion wheel and all the flour?
 - What was your favorite emotion of the wheel?
 - What was your favorite memory of when you made the wheel?
 - What is something you learned from today's activities?

5. Closing & Clean Up

- Thank girls for participation in today's session.
- Girls to share and help put the wheel back in their bag.
- Girls to share and help put the wheel back in their bag.
- Girls to share and help put the wheel back in their bag.

Reference for Activity

Emotion Wheel Worksheet: <https://www.therapistdiva.com/emotion-wheel-worksheets/>

POP Storm Ball Worksheet: <https://www.therapistdiva.com/pop-storm-ball-worksheets/>

18

18

Materials

- Lists of fight, flight, freeze warnings
- Fight, flight, freeze labels
- Tape
- Cards with healthy & unhealthy coping strategies

Notes for Facilitator

- Write the plan for the day's session on the board or large sticky note!
- Provide recognition for girls throughout the session!
- Provide opportunity for the girls to make choices throughout the session.
- Reflection: Multiple questions are listed. Depending on time at the end of the session you can either choose one question and have a few people answer OR choose multiple questions and have one person answer each one.

1. Warm Welcome

- Introduce and greet girls as they enter. Give each girl a list of fight, flight, freeze warnings.
- One word check to see how they are feeling today (circle on the wheel).
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- One word check to see how they are feeling today (circle on the wheel).

2. Community Builder

- Discussion Questions: What are emotions?
- Come together in a group to discuss how they feel and what emotions activities.

Group Goals

- By the end of this session, girls should be able to:
 - Identify different emotions and explain a situation when they might feel each emotion.
 - Identify one emotion they like during their day.
 - Identify one word to describe an emotion that can be used to help regulate.
 - Express self-regulation tool.

3. Activities

Activity 1: Fight, Flight, Freeze Activity (30 mins.)

- Introduce and explain the terms: Fight, Flight, and Freeze.
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- Introduce and explain the terms: Fight, Flight, and Freeze.

Activity 2: Fight, Flight, Freeze Cards (30 mins.)

- On each side of the board, introduce and give a piece of tape on the board to create a column for each side: healthy coping skills and unhealthy coping skills.
- When the instructor says "go", one person from each team will randomly choose a card off their team's side and go back to the board under the category they think it belongs under (healthy or unhealthy coping skills).
- They will work together (depending on what team we are in) back to their group and the next person will go.
- Each team will get 5 minutes, one participant at a time, until all cards are on the board.
- The goal is to see which team can finish the fastest and get the most recognition.

19

19

Materials

- Construction Paper
- Affirmation Stickers
- Markers
- Tape & Glue
- Papers with positive & negative self-talk phrases

Notes for Facilitator

- Write the plan for the day's session on the board or large sticky note!
- Provide recognition for girls throughout the session!
- Provide opportunity for the girls to make choices throughout the session.
- Reflection: Multiple questions are listed. Depending on time at the end of the session you can either choose one question and have a few people answer OR choose multiple questions and have one person answer each one.

4. Reflection

- Discussion Questions:
 - How did you feel getting from that emotion wheel and all the flour?
 - What was your favorite emotion of the wheel?
 - What was your favorite memory of when you made the wheel?
 - What is something you learned from today's activities?

5. Closing & Clean Up

- Thank girls for participation in today's session.
- Girls to share and help put the wheel back in their bag.
- Girls to share and help put the wheel back in their bag.
- Girls to share and help put the wheel back in their bag.

2. Warm Welcome

- Introduce and greet girls as they enter. Give each girl a list of fight, flight, freeze warnings.
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3. Community Builder

- Discussion Questions: What are emotions?
- Come together in a group to discuss how they feel and what emotions activities.

Group Goals

- By the end of this session, girls should be able to:
 - Identify different emotions and explain a situation when they might feel each emotion.
 - Identify one emotion they like during their day.
 - Identify one word to describe an emotion that can be used to help regulate.
 - Express self-regulation tool.

20

20

Materials

- Coloring pages
- Crayons or markers
- Gifts bags
- Pizza
- Pizzas, cups, napkins

Notes for Facilitator

- Congratulate the girls on completion of the program!
- Have fun and enjoy the last session with the girls!

3. Activities

Activity 1: Positive vs. Negative Self-Talk, Scavenger Hunt Matching Cards (15 mins.)

- A facilitator reads the activity (you can set up these with multiple pieces of paper and place them in the middle of the room).
- Separate full group into multiple groups of 4-6 participants, depending on the size of the full group.
- Each participant receives a piece of construction paper (allow them to choose their own color).
- Place markers in the center of the table of each small group (markers, crayons, markers).
- Introduction:
 - Each participant will receive a self-regulation tool of affirmation.
 - Encourage girls that there is no correct or wrong way to complete the activity.
 - They can be self-regulation tools, when needed, etc.
 - The goal is to give girls to do positive self-affirmations that mean something to them, so they can read it every day and fill their mind up with positive affirmations.

Activity 2: Affirmation Cards (20 mins.)

- Each participant will receive a self-regulation tool of affirmation.
- Encourage girls that there is no correct or wrong way to complete the activity.
- They can be self-regulation tools, when needed, etc.
- The goal is to give girls to do positive self-affirmations that mean something to them, so they can read it every day and fill their mind up with positive affirmations.

4. Reflection

- Discussion Questions:
 - How did you feel getting from that emotion wheel and all the flour?
 - What was your favorite emotion of the wheel?
 - What was your favorite memory of when you made the wheel?
 - What is something you learned from today's activities?

5. Closing & Clean Up

- Thank girls for participation in today's session.
- Girls to share and help put the wheel back in their bag.
- Girls to share and help put the wheel back in their bag.
- Girls to share and help put the wheel back in their bag.

Reference for Activity

Self-Talk Worksheet: <https://www.therapistdiva.com/self-talk-worksheets/>

21

21

Materials

- Coloring pages
- Crayons or markers
- Gifts bags
- Pizza
- Pizzas, cups, napkins

Notes for Facilitator

- Congratulate the girls on completion of the program!
- Have fun and enjoy the last session with the girls!

3. Activities

Activity 1: Positive vs. Negative Self-Talk, Scavenger Hunt Matching Cards (15 mins.)

- A facilitator reads the activity (you can set up these with multiple pieces of paper and place them in the middle of the room).
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- The goal is to give girls to do positive self-affirmations that mean something to them, so they can read it every day and fill their mind up with positive affirmations.

4. Reflection

- Discussion Questions:
 - How did you feel getting from that emotion wheel and all the flour?
 - What was your favorite emotion of the wheel?
 - What was your favorite memory of when you made the wheel?
 - What is something you learned from today's activities?

5. Closing & Clean Up

- Thank girls for participation in today's session.
- Girls to share and help put the wheel back in their bag.
- Girls to share and help put the wheel back in their bag.
- Girls to share and help put the wheel back in their bag.

Reference for Activity

Self-Talk Worksheet: <https://www.therapistdiva.com/self-talk-worksheets/>

22

07

1. Warm Welcome

- Welcome and greet girls as they come in. Give hugs and ask how their day was!
- One-word check-in of how they are feeling today (either as they enter the room or go around the room once everyone is seated)
- Question of the Day: How do you feel about today being the last day of the program?

2. Community Builder

Pizza party to celebrate the completion of the program!

Group Goals

By the end of this session, girls should be able to:

- Identify something they learned over the course of the last 6 weeks.
- Share a favorite memory of the program.

3. Activities

Activity 1: Pizza Party & Group Reflection/Discussion

- We will celebrate the completion of the program with a pizza party. While everyone enjoys their pizza we will reflect and discuss their experience in the program with the following questions:
 - What was your favorite activity and why?
 - What is something you learned in this program?
 - What does it mean to have girl power/be empowered?
 - How will the things you learned in this program be helpful to you outside of this program?

Activity 2: Coloring & Goody Bags

- Each girl will choose a coloring sheet and we will spend the remainder of the session coloring.
- In the last few minutes of the session, instructor will pass out a goody bag to each girl as a token of appreciation for participating in the program.

07

4. Reflection

- Discussion Questions:
 - Did you enjoy the program?
 - Would you recommend the program to other girls?

5. Closing & Clean Up

- Thank girls for participation in the program.
- Ask girls to clean up and help put the room back in order.
- Ask girls one-word check-out as we dismiss from the group.

33 34 35