

Hidden Helpers

# FACILITATORS GUIDE

— POWERED BY —



WOUNDED WARRIOR  
PROJECT

PSYCH/ARMOR®



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## WHO ARE HIDDEN HELPERS? ●●●●●

Hidden Helpers are military and veteran caregiving youth. Specifically, they are children and young adults who are impacted by the care needs of a wounded, ill, or injured active-duty service member or veteran. Approximately 2.3 million children under the age of 18 live with a veteran who is disabled, and are often tasked with additional responsibilities in their military caregiving home lives. Many Hidden Helpers rise to the challenge of helping out more often at home, however, this does not go without consequence. Research has found that in order to combat the negative outcomes associated with growing up in a military caregiving home, children need more support to navigate their experiences as Hidden Helpers. This facilitator guide aims to be an additional resource for Hidden Helpers by focusing on Hidden Helper peer connection and support.

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# SESSION PREPARATION



The purpose of this guide is to facilitate an open conversation with Hidden Helpers keeping in mind the goals of 1) helping participants to build connections within their Hidden Helpers community and 2) empowering participants to successfully interact with non-caregiving youth.

This guide is broken into 4 separate sections. Although it is recommended to move through the guide in order, each section can be used independently based on the needs of the group. Breaks can be taken throughout the sections as needed. There is also a natural break between each section. See the notes below in each section on how activities can be broken up into two weeks for each section depending on the structure of your group and the time you have.

Now, in preparation for your session, please watch PsychArmor's *15 Things Military and Veterans' Kids Want You to Know* video. This will help provide context on the military child population.

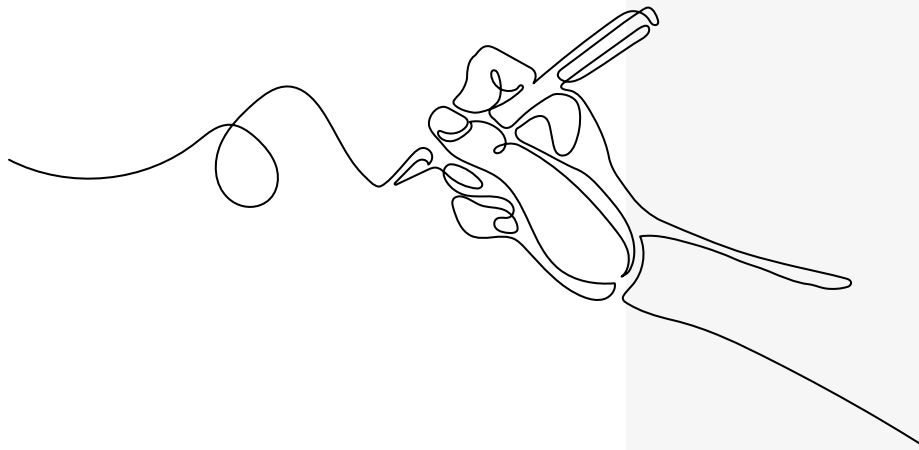
Next, review the sections that will be utilized for your session, in order to anticipate the appropriate materials and resources that will be needed during the group session.

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## FACILITATING: SKILLS, TIPS AND TRICKS



- Invite all participants to share
- Make sure that all have the opportunity to speak
- Be aware of children who might dominate the conversation (avoid going around in a circle in a particular order as this can force participants to speak before they are ready to share)
- Invite shy/quiet participants to share if comfortable, use a tangible “turn-taking” object (i.e., talking stick, ball)
- Be open to potential awkward moments. No one is perfect and this time is simply to provide a space for group
- Be open to self-analysis and scanning what may activate you



## FOR THE PARENTS



(Please share this page and the following page with parents of the children in the group)

Thank you for allowing your child to participate in this group! We hope you also find value in participating in this process.

The purpose of this group is to develop a sense of belonging and support among the youth of military service members and Veterans who have become injured or ill due to military service. While it may be unconventional to label these children as “Hidden Helpers,” we also know that kids sometimes help within the home. We have interchangeably used the labels of ‘military kids in a caregiving home’ and ‘Hidden Helper’ in order to specify the group we are talking about. We intend for the activities and accompanying journal to help your child further develop their ability to advocate for their needs and create connections with others.

During this process, your child may come home and ask questions about the service member’s/Veteran’s injury or illness that may not have been talked about previously. This process is meant to encourage open communication about feelings related to that experience, and it is our hope that parents/caregivers will be supportive of this outside of the group, too. Of course, this looks different for each family, so please connect with the group facilitator to work through any specific questions or concerns you may have about this program.

Depending on how the facilitator has chosen to implement this initiative, there may be slight variations in the exact themes covered, but this entire process could cover:

- “Who We Are” - This section is intended to help the kids recognize and share the similarities and differences in how they see themselves.
- “Our Unique Families” - This section explores the strengths and areas for growth in the unique military and Veteran families within which hidden helpers are embedded.
- “We Serve Too” - This section discusses what service and purpose are, as it relates to the way in which hidden helpers also serve when their parent(s)/caregiver(s) serve in the military and subsequently become ill or injured.
- “Building Resilience” - This section focuses on strengthening the child’s sense of resilience and confidence.

An easy way to successfully support your child as they participate in this process is to continue the dialogue in the home setting, as appropriate for your family. This will look different for each family. We encourage you to reach out to the facilitator if you would like specific examples or information on how to handle these types of discussions outside of the group setting.



# SECTION 1:

## WHO ARE YOU?



**The following activities in this section can be split into two weeks.  
Ex. Activity 1 in the first week, Activity 2 in the second week.**

Theme: Getting to Know Each Other & Self-Identification

### Summary

- The theme for this section is self-identification. Hidden helpers employ many different identities. This session is intended to help participants recognize and share the similarities and differences in how they see themselves. In doing so, the aim of this session is to lay a foundation for participants to see their connection to one another, emphasizing that they are not alone.

### Session Format (Time Estimate: 1 Hour, 15 Minutes)

- Welcome & Check-in
- Activity
- Activity
- Discussions (Optional)
- Wrap-up

### Session Goals

- Introduce participants to one another
- Connect how participants share hidden helper identity
- Start to build relationship-connecting skills

# CHECK IN



## Icebreaker

- Purpose: Start by building an inclusive space. Have music playing if it feels appropriate. Use this time to have the group settle into their positions and fill out their name tags. When it's time to start talking, use this first session to role model an individual check-in that covers your name, one word for how you're currently feeling, and one hope you have for that session. Explain that this 'one word' can be an emotion, a bodily feeling, or just a general sense of how you're starting this group. The facilitator could also consider swapping out the 'one word' and/or the 'one hope for the session' with something else like using a feelings wheel, body scan, or rating your energy from 1 to 10. Be sure to explain to the participants that this check-in will be at the beginning and end of each session that you all have together.



# GROUND RULES EXERCISE



- Group “Ground Rules” Pre-Exercise
- Note: the Established Ground Rules should be visible at all times, during every session (suggestion: writing rules on a white board).
- Purpose: This first activity for the group is to set norms, accepted behaviors and boundaries for the rest of the session. Guidelines can be written or verbalized, and should be posted in an area where all participants can see the ground rules at all times. Invite participants to add more if appropriate.
- Examples:
  - Agreeing on who can speak and when (a talking stick or physical cue can be helpful for younger audiences)
  - Discussing how personal contact between group members should be saved for when the group has been completed (i.e., use of phones, social media, etc. between group members during this process should not happen [if they aren’t already connected via these systems])
  - Establishing topics that may be off-bounds
  - Sharing how to express hurt feelings within the group and creating a code/symbol that participants can use to show when this process needs to be used (ex: the group decides to use a nonverbal thumbs down when they don’t feel up to answering a question or participating in a specific activity)
  - Accepting that all feelings are ok
  - Agreeing that what’s shared within the session stays in the session can help make bonds that allow children to feel more comfortable and safe for sharing and discussion. This is meant to foster a sense of community.

# ICEBREAKER



- The title of this overall initiative was made up by adults outside of this group. For the first activity, have the kids brainstorm a new group, or ‘club’, name so they have the chance to buy-in to participating in this group. Feel free to start the brainstorm and if the kids can’t agree then take a pause to move on to something else temporarily. Be sure to settle on a name by the time the first session is over!
- Examples for additional icebreakers after this group naming exercise:
  - Toss & Chat (see Appendix A)
  - Name Game (see Appendix A)

## ACTIVITY 1: IDENTITY SHIELDS



- Overview: “Identity Shields” The purpose of this activity is for participants to identify their identities or how they see themselves, and to connect these with one another. Invite participants to answer the questions “who are you?” and “who are we?”
- Instructions: Participants’ identities may include, but are not limited to, gender, age, race/ethnicity, etc. Along with how they identify, participants may also share roles they hold at school, home, or in their community. Examples of a role could be: student, sibling, friend, military kid, helper, etc.
  - Provide a sheet of paper and drawing materials so that the kids can create their own ‘shields’ that have their own identity labels on them. After participants have completed the individual creation of their shields, create an inclusive space for the kids to share with the whole group.
- Suggested materials:
  - Paper, pencils, markers, crayons, scissors to cut out their shield
  - The accompanying journal also has space for this activity!
  - For group sharing: Post-its on charts; markers for facilitator to write out on a board or large paper
  - You can use a timer or hourglass to keep time on this activity

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## DISCUSSION:



Facilitator's Note: Please give parents notice prior to this session that these questions may come their way outside of this session.

Prompts:

- Who would like to tell us in a few sentences about what they created?
- Which one of these identities/roles does everyone here have in common?
  - When being a child of a service member who is ill/injured is brought up, consider the following questions to encourage the kids to talk about what knowledge they do have about their parents/caregivers - but be sure not to pressure them into disclosing anything they aren't comfortably/openly sharing:
    - How did you know your loved one was injured?
    - How was it explained to you, or was it not?
    - Are there questions you might have for your loved one/other parent about this situation that would make it easier to understand and participate at home as a helper?
- How does knowing you all have these similar backgrounds make you feel?
- Of these, which impacts your life everyday? How so?



## ACTIVITY 2: ADVANTAGES & CHALLENGES



- Overview: The purpose of this activity is for participants to identify the challenges and advantages of being a military kid in a caregiving home.
- Instructions: Invite participants to write and then drop paper into one of two jars labeled “Advantages” and “Challenges”
- Suggested materials:
  - 2 jars, writing utensils, paper
  - The accompanying journal also has space for this activity!
  - You can use a timer or hourglass to keep time on this activity

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## DISCUSSION:



Prompts:

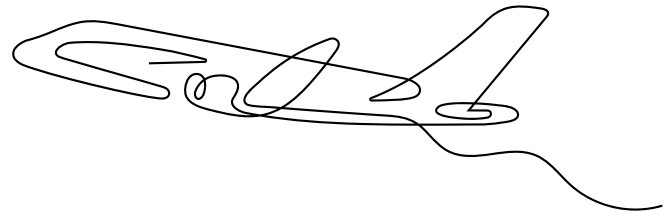
- As a kid in a caregiving home, what are the unique challenges/advantages that you face?
- After hearing the challenges/advantages from everyone, what themes/topics did you hear coming up the most?
- Why do you think these were the most common?
- What are ways we can best overcome the challenges?
- What are ways for us to strengthen the advantages?



## DISCUSSION OPTION 1



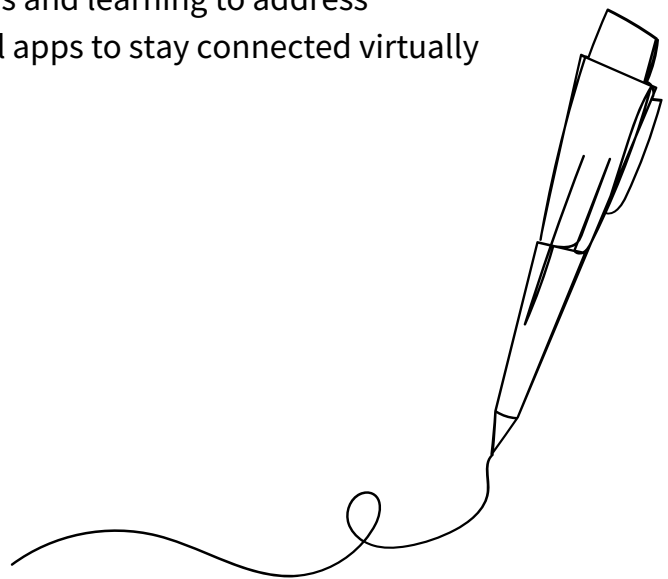
- Overview: The purpose of this discussion is to begin learning and strengthening relationship-building and connection skills. Assess whether this activity is appropriate for this group.
- Ask: Imagine that you were going to go on a trip around the world and you get to choose one person and one item to bring along. What and who would you choose and why?
- Facilitator Note: This would be a great space to use the accompanying journal! If appropriate for the group, the kids can use the journal to write down their thoughts before sharing aloud. Go around the circle and have members of the group share their answers. Notice what common “whys” the participants share and discuss what they are.



## DISCUSSION OPTION 2



- Overview: The purpose of this discussion is to begin learning and strengthening relationship-building and connection skills. Assess whether this activity is appropriate for this group.
- Ask: Think about your closest friend or ally. Share what makes this person special. How did you start talking and getting to know this person? What are your favorite things about them? In what ways, do you like to spend time together? What makes them a good friend? What makes it challenging to maintain a relationship with them? What are ways we can stay connected with friends even if they are far away physically?
- Facilitator Note: Normalize that staying connected can be challenging, and also reinforce the positive skill of learning how to stay connected (learning about other places, being able to use this skill throughout life). This would be a great space to use the accompanying journal! If appropriate for the group, the kids can use the journal to write down their thoughts before sharing aloud (if you think it's best to share these answers aloud).
- Activity option: Making postcards and learning to address envelopes; Brainstorming digital apps to stay connected virtually





## WRAP UP



- Instructions: As the session begins to close, ask participants “As we wrap up, what are some ideas that you learned or appreciated from our time together? What are some ideas that you would share with a friend?” Touch on recurring or important themes from today’s session. Reinforce the strength to be open to sharing about themselves and listening to others. Follow through on having the check-out process that mirrors the check-in process from the beginning of the session.
  - Encourage participants to stay (as time permits) if additional support is needed. Offer open-ended support for getting further help or resources. Thank participants for their time and participation
- End session

### Facilitator Reflection & Feedback

Please provide your reflection of the session below. Include feedback that may be helpful for future facilitators.

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## SECTION 2:

### OUR UNIQUE FAMILIES



**The following activities in this section can be split into two weeks.  
Ex. Activity 1 in the third week, Activity 2 in the fourth week.**

Theme: Strengths & Growths

#### Summary

- The theme for this section is strengths and areas for growth within the context of the unique military and Veteran families that hidden helpers are part of. Each family has unique traditions, norms, and experiences. This session is intended to highlight both the areas of strength and potential for growth to help participants gain confidence in their family system. In doing so, the aim of this session is to lay a foundation for participants to reflect on their family's military service and to gain coping skills for potentially tough feelings.

#### Session Format (Time Estimate: 45 Minutes)

- Check-in
- Activity
- Activity
- Wrap-up

#### Session Goals

- Introduce participants to one another
- Share the unique strengths and growth opportunities for military and Veteran families
- Brainstorm and practice coping techniques for overcoming challenging feelings

## CHECK IN



- Start building an inclusive space. Have music playing if it feels appropriate. Use this time to have the group settle into their positions, fill out their name tags, and conduct the check-in process as described in the first section.
- Group “Ground Rules” Pre-Exercise
  - Purpose: This first activity for the group is to set norms, accepted behaviors and boundaries for the rest of the session. Guidelines can be written or verbalized, and should be posted in an area where all participants can see the ground rules at all times. Invite participants to add more if appropriate.
  - Examples:
    - Agreeing on who can speak and when (a talking stick or physical cue can be helpful for younger audiences)
    - Discussing how personal contact between group members should be saved for when the group has been completed (i.e., use of phones, social media, etc. between group members during this process should not happen [if they aren’t already connected via these systems])
    - Establishing topics that may be off-bounds
    - Sharing how to express hurt feelings within the group and creating a code/symbol that participants can use to show when this process needs to be used (ex: the group decides to use a nonverbal thumbs down when they don’t feel up to answering a question or participating in a specific activity)
    - Accepting that all feelings are ok
    - Agreeing that what’s shared within the session stays in the session can help make bonds that allow children to feel more comfortable and safe for sharing and discussion. This is meant to foster a sense of community.

# ICEBREAKER



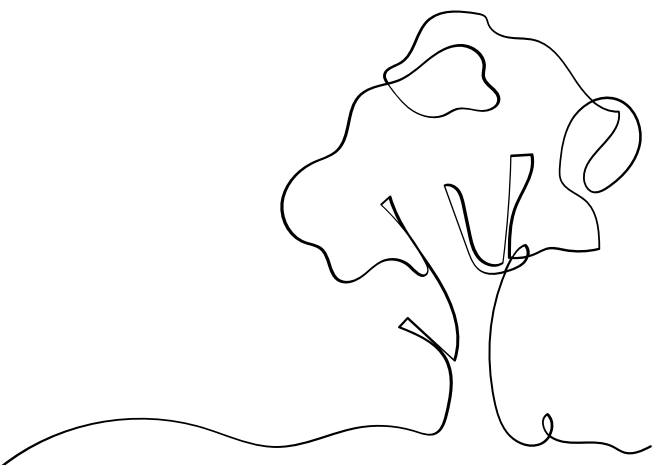
## Icebreaker

- Purpose: Relationships and teamwork can help make bonds that allow children to feel more comfortable and safe for sharing and discussion. This is meant to foster a sense of community.
- Examples:
  - Toss & Chat (see Appendix A)
  - Name Game (see Appendix A)

## ACTIVITY 1: FAMILY TREE



- Overview: The purpose of this activity is for participants to identify and share their family and community. This activity is meant to strengthen the participants' feelings of association with their family/community systems.
- Instructions: Invite participants to draw out their “family tree”
- Facilitator Note: Participants may have unique family structures that may include non-biological individuals. Encourage participants to include everyone who they consider to be in their familial system.
- Suggested materials:
  - Writing utensils and paper
  - The accompanying journal also has space for this activity!
  - Use a timer or hourglass to keep time on this activity



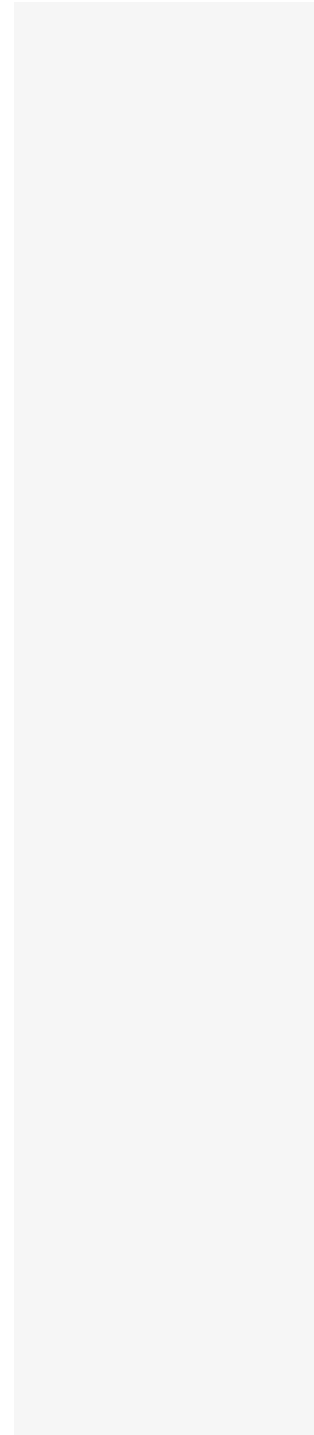
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## DISCUSSION:



Prompts:

- Pick a community/family member you are close with. What do you love most about them? What makes them unique?
- As we think about what makes this person unique, how does being a military family that serves the community/nation make military and Veteran families unique? What are the best things about being part of this special community?



## ACTIVITY 2: THE IMPACT OF SERVICE



- Overview: The purpose of this activity is to help participants process potentially tough feelings from the previous activity related to the impact of their family's military service. As part of the process, this activity is aimed to equip participants with coping skills that can be drawn upon after the session.
- Instructions: Invite participants to create a visual (drawing, word bubbles, abstract) about what it means to be a military family member. Encourage participants to share challenges that they face and highlight similarities within the group as a means of connection. Discuss and practice coping skills that could help participants during a challenging moment.
  - The accompanying journal also has space for this activity!
  - You can use a timer or hourglass to keep time on this activity

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## DISCUSSION:



### Prompts:

- What does it mean to be a military family member?
- What can be difficult about being a military family?
- What impact did your family's military service have on the family?
  - Potential topics that may come up:
    - On family: Resilience, flexibility, strengthened bonds, disrupted routine, high levels of stress, hospital or care visits, parent-child relationship can suffer, stigma
    - Overall: Transitions, medical discharge, changing schools, making new friends, exploring new places, trying new foods
- What are coping skills?
- What are some examples of coping skills?
- When would a person need to draw on these skills?
  - Age appropriate coping skills could include: breathing techniques, talking to a friend, taking a bath, listening to music, journaling, 54321 grounding
    - 54321 Grounding explained: this is used to calm down during a high-stress/panic event. You'll go through each step, taking slow controlled breaths as you list off 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell & 1 thing you can taste.





## WRAP UP



Instructions: As the session begins to close, ask participants “As we wrap up, what are some ideas that you learned or appreciated from our time together? What are some ideas that you would share with a friend?” Touch on recurring or important themes from today’s session. Reinforce the strength to be open to sharing about themselves and listening to others. Follow through on having the check-out process that mirrors the check-in process from the beginning of the session.

- Encourage participants to stay (as time permits) if additional support is needed. Offer open-ended support for getting further help or resources. Thank participants for their time and participation
- End session

### Facilitator Reflection & Feedback

- Please provide your reflection of the session below. Include feedback that may be helpful for future facilitators.

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## SECTION 3:

### WE SERVE TOO



**The following activities in this section can be split into two weeks.  
Ex. Activities 1 & 2 in week six, Activity 3 in week seven.**

Theme: Service & Purpose

#### Summary

- The theme for this section is service and purpose as it relates to the way in which hidden helpers also serve. Service can come with the responsibility of advocacy (called “Speak Up Skills” here), so this session is intended to help participants build self-advocacy skills. In becoming an advocate for themselves and others, hidden helpers have the building blocks to become peer leaders in their communities. The aim of this session is to discuss and strengthen these skills, in order to help them more effectively communicate with their peers and adults.

#### Session Format (Time Estimate: 1 Hour, 15 Minutes)

- Check-in
- Activity
- Activity
- Activity
- Wrap-up

#### Session Goals

- Identify the concept of service and explain what it looks like in their lives
- Brainstorm additional ways to serve others after the session
- Identify the concept of Speak Up Skills (i.e., self-advocacy) and explain how it can be applied in their own lives
- Identify the concept of peer leadership and discuss how participants can embrace this role in their own lives

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## CHECK IN



- Start by building an inclusive space. Have music playing if it feels appropriate. Use this time to have the group settle into their positions, fill out their name tags, and conduct the check-in process as described in the first section.
- Group “Ground Rules” Pre-Exercise
  - Purpose: This first activity for the group is to set norms, accepted behaviors and boundaries for the rest of the session. Guidelines can be written or verbalized, and should be posted in an area where all participants can see the ground rules at all times. Invite participants to add more if appropriate.
  - Examples:
    - Agreeing on who can speak and when (a talking stick or physical cue can be helpful for younger audiences)
    - Discussing how personal contact between group members should be saved for when the group has been completed (i.e., use of phones, social media, etc. between group members during this process should not happen [if they aren’t already connected via these systems])
    - Establishing topics that may be off-bounds
    - Sharing how to express hurt feelings within the group and creating a code/symbol that participants can use to show when this process needs to be used (ex: the group decides to use a nonverbal thumbs down when they don’t feel up to answering a question or participating in a specific activity)
    - Accepting that all feelings are ok
    - Agreeing that what’s shared within the session stays in the session can help make bonds that allow children to feel more comfortable and safe for sharing and discussion. This is meant to foster a sense of community.

# ICEBREAKER



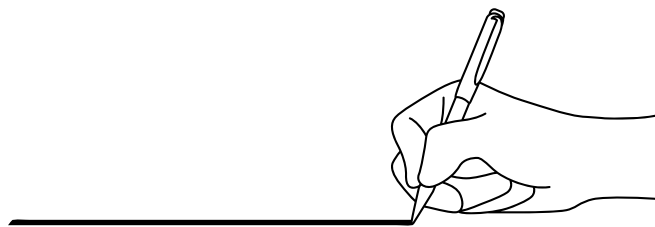
## Icebreaker

- Purpose: Relationships and teamwork can help make bonds that allow children to feel more comfortable and safe for sharing and discussion. This is meant to foster a sense of community.
- Examples:
  - Toss & Chat (see Appendix A)
  - Name Game (see Appendix A)

## ACTIVITY 1: WHAT IS SERVICE?



- Overview: The purpose of this activity is for participants to identify what service is, and how they employ service in their lives. In addition, participants will be encouraged to brainstorm additional ways to serve others after the session.
- Instructions: Facilitator demonstrates an act of service. As the group brainstorms ways in which to plan an act of service, allow participants to design or give one another awards for their service.
- Suggested materials:
  - Arts and crafts, creative writing utensils, paper
  - The accompanying journal also has space for this activity!
  - You can use a timer or hourglass to keep time on this activity



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## DISCUSSION:



Facilitator's note: consider superlatives for acts of service within the group (ex: give a small reward at the end of the entire program for the kid who consistently demonstrates unprompted acts of service like helping tidy up the space or distributing materials)

Prompts:

- What can service outside of the military look like?
- In what ways have you demonstrated service in your household, community, at school, with friends?
- What can be challenging about service?
- What have you learned from your experiences serving others?
- What are ways for us to do an act of service for others that we aren't already doing?



## ACTIVITY 2: SPEAK UP SKILLS



- Overview: The purpose of this activity is for participants to identify what Speak Up Skills are, and how this concept can be applied in their own lives.
- Instructions: Watch YouTube video demonstrating Speak Up Skills <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJL3TLxXa9o>
  - The accompanying journal also has space for this activity!
  - You can use a timer or hourglass to keep time on this activity

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## DISCUSSION:



### Prompts:

- What do you think of when you hear about Speak Up Skills?
- When thinking about the challenges/advantages of being a kid in a caregiving home, have you ever tried to explain to others outside of your community about challenges or needs you may have?
- What can be challenging about saying/voicing your own challenges and needs?
- If a friend needs help speaking up about something they need, what would you say or how would you help them?
- How would it look different if they needed to talk to another person their age vs. an adult?
- After learning about Speak Up Skills and in thinking about your own experience, what ways have you used these skills or seen someone else use these skills in the past?
- Brainstorm tools to engage in Speak Up Skills with peers and adults. How do these look the same and/or different?





## ACTIVITY 3: PEER LEADERS



- Overview: Peer leaders are young people who make a commitment to promoting healthy behavior in their communities, particularly among other young people. Peer leadership believes the ability of young people to influence one another in positive ways. The purpose of this activity is to introduce and strengthen the concept of peer leadership and how participants can embrace this role in their own lives.
- Instructions: Organize and explain either of 2 games (see Appendix A).
  - Option 1: Leader of the blindfold
  - Option 2: Direct the “egg”
    - The accompanying journal also has space for notes on this activity!
    - You can use a timer or hourglass to keep time on this activity

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## DISCUSSION:



Facilitator Note: For this age group, leadership may be applied in the classroom, with peers, encouraging others, modeling positive, pro-social and empowering behaviors including Speak Up Skills and helping others who have a clear need.

We are NOT suggesting the kids learn to anticipate the needs of others, which is more adult-like and can reinforce parentification or hyper-vigilance in a household with unknown or complex diagnoses to navigate.

Prompts:

- What support would I need to make this happen?
  - Facilitator's Note: 'This' meaning age-appropriate leadership skills mentioned just above
- What are qualities of someone who leads?
- Based on these descriptions, do you see yourself as someone who has led, is leading, or would like to lead in the future?
- What are some ways you would be able to help others in need?
- How can we combine the ideas around service and Speak Up Skills into leadership skills you can use with others outside of this group?



## WRAP UP



Instructions: As the session begins to close, ask participants “As we wrap up, what are some ideas that you learned or appreciated from our time together? What are some ideas that you would share with a friend?” Touch on recurring or important themes from today’s session. Reinforce the strength to be open to sharing about themselves and listening to others. Follow through on having the check-out process that mirrors the check-in process from the beginning of the session.

- Encourage participants to stay (as time permits) if additional support is needed.
- Offer open-ended support for getting further help or resources.
- Thank participants for their time and participation
- End session

### Facilitator Reflection & Feedback

Please provide your reflection of the session below. Include feedback that may be helpful for future facilitators.

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## SECTION 4:

### BUILDING RESILIENCE



**The following activities in this section can be split into two weeks.  
Ex. Activity 1 in week eight, Activity 2 in week nine.**

Theme: Grit & Self-Worth

#### Summary

- The theme for this section is grit and self-worth, which will focus on strengthening the participants' sense of resilience and confidence. Building resilience is a learned skill from caregivers, including young helpers such as the kids in a military/Veteran caregiving home. By the end of this session, participants should have a proud sense of how much they've overcome, as well as coping strategies for when they come across challenges.

#### Session Format (Time Estimate: 1 Hour)

1. Check-in
2. Activity
3. Activity
4. Wrap-up

#### Session Goals

- Identify the concept of resilience and discuss how it has shown up in their lives
- Allow participants to reflect on all they've learned throughout the sessions

## CHECK IN



- Start by building an inclusive space. Have music playing if it feels appropriate. Use this time to have the group settle into their positions, fill out their name tags, and conduct the check-in process as described in the first section.
- Group “Ground Rules” Pre-Exercise
  - Purpose: This first activity for the group is to set norms, accepted behaviors and boundaries for the rest of the session. Guidelines can be written or verbalized, and should be posted in an area where all participants can see the ground rules at all times. Invite participants to add more if appropriate.
  - Examples:
    - Agreeing on who can speak and when (a talking stick or physical cue can be helpful for younger audiences)
    - Discussing how personal contact between group members should be saved for when the group has been completed (i.e., use of phones, social media, etc. between group members during this process should not happen [if they aren’t already connected via these systems])
    - Establishing topics that may be off-bounds
    - Sharing how to express hurt feelings within the group and creating a code/symbol that participants can use to show when this process needs to be used (ex: the group decides to use a nonverbal thumbs down when they don’t feel up to answering a question or participating in a specific activity)
    - Accepting that all feelings are ok
    - Agreeing that what’s shared within the session stays in the session can help make bonds that allow children to feel more comfortable and safe for sharing and discussion. This is meant to foster a sense of community.

# ICEBREAKER



## Icebreaker

- Purpose: Relationships and teamwork can help make bonds that allow children to feel more comfortable and safe for sharing and discussion. This is meant to foster a sense of community.
- Examples:
  - Toss & Chat (see Appendix A)
  - Name Game (see Appendix A)

## ACTIVITY 1: RESILIENCE



- Overview: The purpose of this activity is to clearly identify and explain the concept of resilience, and how it applies to them.
- Instructions: Watch YouTube video about the Hugging Tree [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCZY\\_TlwhDU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCZY_TlwhDU)
  - The accompanying journal also has space for this activity!
  - You can use a timer or hourglass to keep time on this activity

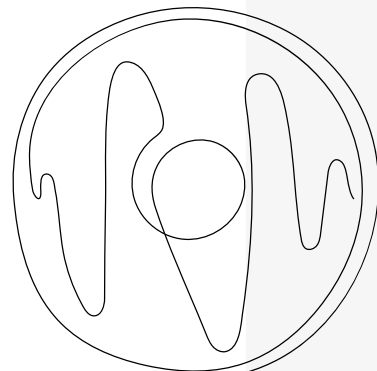
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## DISCUSSION:



Prompts:

- Who has heard of the idea of resilience?
- How did the hugging tree show resilience?
- Similar to the giving tree, how have you shown resilience in your life?
- What unique ways have you had to be resilient as a kid in a caregiving home?
- What kinds of events/challenges have you overcome? (i.e., deployments, moving, complicated feelings, sometimes I don't like to talk about it, I wish others would understand, etc.)





## ACTIVITY 2: REFLECTION



- Overview: The purpose of this activity is to allow participants to reflect on all they've learned throughout the session(s). These reflections could be on their identities as military children in caregiving homes, their unique families, their own service, and resilience.
- Instructions: Set up music to prepare an environment for participants to begin a quiet, self-reflection time using the discussion prompts below as examples. It is encouraged to play music related to strength and resilience (see Appendix B for suggestions). Encourage participants to write down and take with them a list of self-care tools.
- Suggested materials:
  - Writing utensils, index cards or similar
  - The accompanying journal also has space for this activity!
  - You can use a timer or hourglass to keep time on this activity

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## DISCUSSION:



### Prompts:

- In thinking about those times we've had to overcome difficult times, what helped you to endure those challenges?
- What healthy activities helped to bring relief when faced with uncertainty?
- What are ways we can take care of ourselves when situations become too overwhelming?
- Brainstorm self-care tools for participants to take away from session (i.e., drawing/coloring, listening to music, talking with a friend, taking a bath, asking for help)



## WRAP UP



Instructions: As the session begins to close, ask participants “As we wrap up, what are some ideas that you learned or appreciated from our time together? What are some ideas that you would share with a friend?” Touch on recurring or important themes from today’s session. Reinforce the strength to be open to sharing about themselves and listening to others. Follow through on having the check-out process that mirrors the check-in process from the beginning of the session.

- Encourage participants to stay (as time permits) if additional support is needed.
- Offer open-ended support for getting further help or resources.
- Thank participants for their time and participation
- End session

### Facilitator Reflection & Feedback

Please provide your reflection of the session below. Include feedback that may be helpful for future facilitators.

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# APPENDIX A

## GAMES/ACTIVITIES



### 1) Toss and Chat Game

What You Will Need: An inflated beach ball and a permanent marker

Set-Up: Write silly random topics on each colored portion of the beach ball, for example:

- Have you ever waved at someone thinking you know them, only to realize they are the wrong person? How did that go?
- If animals could talk, which would be the most sarcastic?
- Do you eat or drink soup?
- What is an embarrassing song that you secretly enjoy?
- What is your favorite animal and why?

How to Play: Have the group stand in a circle and begin by tossing the ball to each other. Whoever catches the ball must answer the question that their right index finger ends up touching. Continue until everyone has had a chance.

### 2) Name game Intros

What You Will Need: Any ball, ideally a beach ball

Set-Up: Have the group stand in a circle facing the center. Then, go around the circle and have each person say their first name.

How to Play: When someone throws it in the group, they only have 2 seconds to say someone else's name and throw the ball to them. If they can't remember anyone's name in 2 seconds, the ball becomes deactivated, and they are "out." Have participants who forget names step to form an outside circle. As the inner circle gets smaller, the group will continue tossing the beach ball until they know everyone's name in the group. You can offer a prize for the last ones standing who learned their peers' names.

# APPENDIX A

## GAMES/ACTIVITIES



### 3) Leader of the Blindfolded

Round your kids up into a group and then choose one of them to step aside. Whoever is remaining has to be blindfolded. It is then up to the person who is removed from the group to guide the group of blindfolded kids across the room with clear and easy to understand commands. Time the process to see how long it takes, and encourage other kids to get involved and be the leader. You can create friendly competition by giving a prize to whoever gets their group across the quickest. Make sure everyone gets a turn at being a leader and experiment with different environments. This is a fantastic confidence builder for the leader as well as an awesome trust exercise.

### 4) Direct the Egg

Split your group of kids into two and give each side an egg. The aim of the game is to get them to ferry the egg across the room in the most interesting and creative way possible. Of course one technique could just simply be to pick up the egg and walk over to the other side of the designated area. But that's not the type of activity that you should be encouraging. Allow the kids to appoint their own leader in this task and give them an appropriate amount of agency. Don't restrict them from doing anything in particular unless of course it is a threat to health and safety. Analyze the ways in which they choose to move this egg across the room. How many people do they get involved? Are they making sure everybody is included and feels useful? As you can see, a wealth of leadership skills can be cultivated and blossom from this task.

## APPENDIX B

### BACKGROUND MUSIC PLAYLIST



1. "Give it your best" by Indra Rios-Moore
2. "Hope" by Arlo Parks
3. "Keep on Keepin On" by Daphne Willis
4. "Possibilities" by Darius Rucker
5. "Resilient" by Katy Perry
6. "Something Beautiful" by Tori Kelly
7. "Stand" by Rascal Flatts
8. "Trying My Best" by Anson Seabra

## APPENDIX C

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



#### About PsychArmor

- PsychArmor is a leading national nonprofit and preferred training provider which specializes in military cultural awareness and competency. We power learning journeys, from continuing education to customized trainings, through a rich learning ecosystem – including online courses, curricula, podcasts, webinars, live speaking engagements, social media and so much more. Our goal is human connection. We believe education and training equates to transformation. This transformation starts with humility, runs on awareness and results in genuine connection. Powered by PsychArmor, learners and organizations can collectively create impact and change that benefits outcomes for military, Veterans and their families.

#### About WWP

- Our partner, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP), is committed to serving the post-9/11 generation and all future generations of injured service members, ensuring they get the care, attention, and support they deserve. Wounded Warrior Project also serves the family members and caregivers who are an integral part of the warrior's recovery and transition back into civilian life.

# APPENDIX C

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



### Common Military Jargon and Terms

- **Active Duty:** Active duty is full-time duty in the active military service of the United States. This includes members of the Reserve Components serving on active duty or full-time training duty, but does not include full-time National Guard duty.
- **CO (Commanding officer):** The officer in charge of a military unit, such as captain for a company (Army) and squadron commander for a squadron of aircraft (Air Force).
- **CONUS:** Continental United States
- **Duty Station:** Location that a service member is temporarily or permanently conducting work
- **National Guard:** The National Guard of the United States is a reserve military force composed of National Guard military members or units of each state and the territories of Guam and the Virgin Islands plus the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia (54 organizations) under federally recognized active or inactive Armed Force service for the United States.
- **NCO (Noncommissioned officer):** A military officer who has not received a commission, such as sergeant (Army) and warrant officer (Navy).
- **OCNUS:** Outside of Continental United States
- **PCS (Permanent Change of Station):** A Permanent Change of Station is the official relocation of an active duty military service member, including Family, to a different duty location.
- **PTSD:** Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- **TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury):** A disruption in the normal function of the brain that can be caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or penetrating head injury.
- **TRICARE:** Military health care program. TRICARE provides health benefits to service members, retirees and their families.



## APPENDIX C

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



#### More Resources

- Military Child Education Coalition <https://www.militarychild.org>
- Hidden Helpers  
<https://hiddenheroes.org/resources/hiddenhelpers/>
- Elizabeth Dole Foundation  
<https://www.elizabethdolefoundation.org/>
- Sesame Street for Military families  
<https://sesamestreetformilitaryfamilies.org/>
- Sesame Street in Communities  
<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/>
- Camp Corral <https://www.campcorral.org/>
- Wounded Warrior Project  
<https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/>
- Cohen Veterans Network  
<https://www.cohenveteransnetwork.org/militarykids/>