



What is a Nurture Group?

Nurture Groups were developed as a part of the Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) model. Nurture groups are a way to practice and build attachment skills in a playful and safe environment. Researcher Jude Cassidy (2001) has identified four skills that are developed in a secure attachment that are needed for close relationships of any kind: Seeking Care, Giving Care, Negotiation, and an Autonomous Self. In Nurture Groups, children learn they have a voice and how to use their voice to negotiate their needs. They provide opportunities to give and receive nurturing care

without feeling embarrassed or alone in expressing their needs. Nurture Groups provide language and “Life Value Terms” to use in future interactions of discipline to engage muscle memory of what they practiced. They are also fun and playful, which speeds up learning and building neural connections!

The rules for Nurture Groups are borrowed from the Theraplay® intervention and are as follows:

1. “Stick together – idea is that group members stay together physically (i.e. staying in the group, going where the group goes, participating in the activities our group is participating in) and psychologically (i.e. paying attention, raising your hand, being respectful, developing meaningful relationships with each other)
2. No hurts – physical or emotional, with actions or words; “inside” hurts can be physical like headaches or stomachaches, or emotional hurts like sad or angry feelings; “outside” hurts can be scratches, bruises, or other marks
3. Have fun – When group members stick together and don’t hurt each other, the group will be enjoyable for everyone.” *(from Play With Them: Theraplay® Groups in the Classroom : A Technique for Professionals Who Work With Children, Rubin & Tregay, 1989)*

Other important parts about Nurture Groups are that group members can “pass” on participation as long as they do so with respect. If you notice hesitation or non-verbal “no” being expressed, help the child to learn to say “no thank you” to build trust in you as the caregiver and to practice negotiation their needs. Modeling participation as parents help keep them involved.

Nurture Groups are for families, schools, camps, or any group that wants to learn to heal attachment wounds and build connection!

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Nurture Group Fishing for Feelings Lesson:

Introduction:

Learning how to express what emotions we are experiencing is key to managing them. The technique “Name it to Tame It” by Dr. Dan Siegel uses emotional vocabulary to help children (and adults) to ease the uncomfortable feeling they are experiencing simply by labeling it. In addition to the relief in the moment, learning words for emotions strengthens the ability to move through difficulty in the future. Learning this skill in Nurture Group helps the family to build emotional vocabulary to help in taming future emotions, while having fun together!

Supplies:

1. Printed emotion fish
2. Some kind of fishing pole (see suggestions below)
3. Gummy worms

Instructions for Fish:

Cut out the fish and staple an X with two staples on the head. Use a magnet fishing pole game like this one below from Melissa and Doug or attach a magnet to a stick. You could even use a stick with tape or one of those sticky hands kids seem to get at birthday parties. 😊



Nurture group outline:

Follow this outline to lead a nurture group by getting the family together in a comfortable spot. You can even include pets if they are willing! Allow to fidget toys to help with focus and be mindful of how much your child can tolerate to make this fun. Everyone participates, including the parents, in sharing and receiving. Allow for the ability to respectfully “pass” on something to build the ability to negotiate their needs with respect.

1. Review the family rules or TBRI® nurture group rules of “Stick together, no hurts, and have fun.” See the Nurture Group document for explanation.

2. Check in question: Silly or fun question to open with play. Sometimes it helps to have a talking stick or object to hold to designate the speaker. One example is, "If someone was trying to fish for you, what kind of bait would they use to catch you for sure?" Ex. Snickers bars or cheese curds (just us Wisconsin girls maybe? 😊)
3. Time for nurture: Do something together that builds connection such as a line of back massages, using Band-aids to care for scrapes or emotional pains, or passing a compliment. Allow the children to respectfully pass if they would like and do not force it. One idea for this topic would be to pass on a "fish lips kiss" on the cheek or hand to each other. You know the one where you suck your cheeks in and make tiny lips like a fish? Have one person give the kiss and one receive it and take turns until everyone has had a chance to do both. Allow for someone to make a compromise of blowing a fish kiss or passing. Have fun with it!
4. Time for learning: Play the fishing game together by taking turns fishing for an emotion. Place all the fish down on the floor face down. Option one for basic learning would be to fish for the emotion and share what it feels like in the body to experience it. For example, anger can feel like tight jaw and red face. You can also have each person act out the emotion and have the other family members guess what one it is. Another option for families that have had a base for emotional vocabulary, would be to catch the fish and use it for conversation about how to express the emotion in a "good" way and "bad" way. Each family member can fish for an emotion and discuss how to express it in healthy ways. For extra muscle memory, act it out with puppets or role play!
5. Time for feeding: This time in nurture group is to allow for repairing those wounds in early childhood with neglect and to allow for the attachment to heal by learning to accept care. Everyone takes turns feeding one another, including the parents. One idea for this topic is to use gummy worms and poke them with a toothpick to make a fishing pole and take turns feeding and being fed until everyone has had a chance to do both.
6. Close: Choose a way to close the group that you will use every time. Family prayer, group handshakes, group hugs, or high-fives can work well.