<u>PRP</u> (12 lessons)

Lesson #1: Link Between Thoughts and Feelings

The first half of PRP Lesson 1 is devoted to introducing the students to the program, establishing rapport, and building group cohesion. The cognitive component of this lesson is based on the ABC model (Ellis,1962). Automatic thoughts are introduced as "conversations inside our heads", or "self talk", and students are encouraged to describe recent activating events, or adversities, and to recall what they "said to themselves". The final section of Lesson 1 focuses on the link between thoughts and feelings; the B-C of the ABC model. Students, with the aid of 3-frame cartoons, generate the automatic thoughts that make sense of specific emotional consequences, given the adversity.

Lesson #2: Thinking Styles

The focus of this lesson is on explanatory style, particularly the stable-unstable dimension. Optimism and pessimism, referred to as "thinking styles" in PRP, are presented to the students through a series of skits that they act out as a group. The students practice identifying permanent (stable) thoughts in similar skits. Activities in the lesson require the students to generate alternatives to the initial, explanatory style-driven thoughts of the actors. For homework, students use their knowledge of explanatory style to generate alternative explanations for events in their own lives.

Lesson #3: Challenging Beliefs: Alternatives and Evidence

After Lessons 1 and 2 the students are able to identify their pessimistic automatic thoughts and have come to understand that we often uncritically accept these thoughts as accurate. They have also practiced generating more optimistic alternatives. In PRP Lesson 3, the students consolidate the skill of generating alternatives and learn how to evaluate the accuracy of these beliefs and their initial, automatic thoughts. The group leader reads a story to the students which presents the process of generating alternatives and evaluating evidence as analogous to the work of a detective. The story is about two fictional characters, Sherlock Holmes and Merlock Worms. Merlock Worms is a bad detective because he only comes up with one suspect (i.e., endorses his initial automatic thoughts and fails to generate alternatives) and overlooks evidence which is vital to the case (i.e., fails to evaluate the thought). Sherlock, however, is a good detective because he draws up a list of suspects (generates candidate beliefs) and looks for clues to narrow down the list (evaluates evidence). The skill of evaluating evidence is practiced in the "File Game" activity. The students receive a confidential portfolio about a fictitious child, which contains letters, report cards, diary entries, and awards, etc. The child's automatic thoughts are presented to the students, and their task is to use the information in the portfolio to evaluate the accuracy of the thoughts.

Lesson #4: Evaluating Thoughts and Putting It In Perspective

PRP Lessons 2 and 3 have targeted causal attributions; beliefs about past events. The focus shifts in Lesson 4 to thoughts about the future in the wake of a negative activating event. The skills of generating alternatives and evaluating evidence are applied to catastrophizing. The notion of catastrophizing is conveyed to the students with the classic story of Chicken Little and the acorn. Chicken Little is compared with Merlock Worms; both believed the first thought that popped into their heads without generating alternatives and looking for clues. The students differentiate the "worst case", "best case", and "most likely" scenarios for consequences of the adversity (i.e., generating alternatives). The students have now learned three essential cognitive skills: generating alternatives, producing counter-evidence, and putting it in perspective. They have learned to apply these skills as they reflect on difficult situations they encounter. The final

cognitive skill, "Real-time Resilience: The Hot Seat", teaches students to use the skills in real time.

Lesson #5: Review of Lessons 1-4

PRP Lesson 5 is devoted to reviewing the cognitive skills developed in Lessons 1 through 4 and applying these skills to inaccurate beliefs about the causes of adversities and catastrophic thoughts about the future.

Lesson #6: Assertiveness and Negotiation

Lesson 6 of PRP is the first in the interpersonal problem-solving module. This module aims to apply the basic cognitive skills learned in the first half of the program to the interpersonal domain, highlighting interaction style, social skills, and social problem-solving. Skits are used to illustrate the three interaction styles; aggression, passivity, and assertiveness. Students discuss the consequences of each type of behavior as well as beliefs that promote or inhibit it. The students spend most of the lesson practicing assertiveness and role-playing the use of negotiation skills when assertiveness fails to bring about the desired goal.

Lesson #7: Coping Strategies

Lesson 7 teaches the students more behaviorally oriented techniques to help them cope with difficult emotions or stressful situations, like when their parents are arguing. The group leader covers a variety of skills and strategies, including controlled breathing and muscle relaxation and guides them through practicing each. In addition, the group leader helps the students formulate a positive visual image (e.g., their next birthday party), which they can call to mind when they begin to feel angry or anxious. Students are also encouraged to seek support from others, including family members and friends.

Lesson #8: Graded Task and Social Skills Training

The first half of this lesson is devoted to procrastination. Many cases of procrastination are a consequence of all-or-none-thinking. The perfectionistic child who believes "My social studies paper has to be an A+" will tend to build the task of writing the paper into a seemingly insurmountable problem. The behavioral consequence of such thoughts is avoidance, or procrastination. This component of PRP aims to apply the cognitive skills learned in the first 4 weeks of the program to negative thoughts about projects and chores. In addition, students learn a strategy for overcoming procrastination by breaking large projects into smaller, more manageable steps.

Lesson #9: Decision Making and Review of Lessons 6-8

The first part of Lesson 9 reviews the skills covered in Lessons 6 through 8 through a discussion of hypothetical dilemmas and ways to handle these scenarios. Students also practice relaxation techniques and assertiveness strategies. Indecisiveness is common for children who are experiencing symptoms of depression. Many of the same thoughts that lead to procrastination can make decision making difficult for children and adolescents at-risk for depression. In Lesson 9 the group leader leads them through the use of a four-cell technique for decision-making, in which they generate the pros and cons for different actions. In the final section of the lesson, this technique is applied to examples from the students' lives.

Lesson #10: Social Problem-solving

Many children, especially children at risk for depression and conduct disorder, selectively attend to hostile cues and attribute the ambiguous behavior of others to hostile intent (Dodge, 1986; Dodge & Frame, 1982). Lesson 10 combats this tendency by teaching a 5-step approach to problem-solving. First, students are taught to stop and think about problems before reacting impulsively. In this step, students learn to gather evidence for and against their initial beliefs, to

consider alternative interpretations, and to perspective-take. Second, students are encouraged to determine what their goal is in the situation. Third, students learn to generate a variety of possible solutions. Fourth, students use the decision-making techniques from Lesson 9 to choose a course of action and enact it. Finally, students learn to evaluate the outcome and to try again if they haven't reached their goal, The final portion of this lesson is spent practicing their social problem-solving skills with several scenarios offered by the group leader.

Lessons #11 and #12
The skills of social problem-solving are consolidated in PRP Lesson 11, which provides a forum for the students to apply the five-step technique to difficult interpersonal situations in their own lives. The final lesson of PRP, Lesson 12, is a review of the entire program and a party for the students. The importance of attending the booster sessions is discussed.

University Of Pennsylvania. (2007). *Positive psychology center*. Retrieved October 10, 2010, from http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/prplessons.pdf