

WHEN YOU'RE IN NEED OF A FRIEND: SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES

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This lesson focuses on the concept of support, by helping participants unpack and discuss the challenges and opportunities of leveraging support for securing basic physical and socioemotional needs. This lesson prioritizes self-compassion as a means to help participants understand that they deserve and are benefitted by having a solid support system.

KEYWORDS

Community
Health/Sexual
Health
Mental Health
Relationships
Social Supports
Stress Management

THEME

Society & Culture

FORMAT

Interactive
Discussion

TIME

125 minutes





PREPARATION

The facilitator(s) should use this section to prepare for the lesson.

PREPARATION

WHY THIS LESSON IS IMPORTANT FOR BLACK MEN

The ability to engage with community and social supports is an important protective factor for Black gay and bisexual men. Research has demonstrated that Black gay and bisexual men who have a strong sense of community and are able to utilize social supports are less likely to be adversely impacted by HIV (Reed & Miller, 2016). Accordingly, helping these men to feel comfortable engaging such resources is an effort toward increasing their protection against HIV and other STIs.

GOAL

Participants will increase their capacity to identify and secure resources and other assets available to them in their communities.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Identify three sources of support currently present in their lives.
- Identify three untapped sources of social support currently present in their community.
- Create one strategy for overcoming barriers to accessing community support.

TIME

STEPS 1–6	Introductions and Opening Activity	30 min.
STEPS 7–10	The Trap of Resilience	20 min.
STEPS 11–14	Identifying and Accessing External Assets	40 min.
STEPS 15–17	Identifying and Accessing Personal Assets	25 min.
STEPS 18–20	Closing Activity	10 min.

REQUIRED BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE FOR EDUCATORS

This lesson is intended to be able to be led by any individual with at least a high school education.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

This lesson can accommodate groups of any size. Make small group number adjustments as needed (from 3–4 to two) for groups smaller than five persons.

KEY TERMS

Assets: Highly valuable people, places or things that are available to an individual for bettering one’s life.

Resilience: The process of adapting well when experiencing adversity; also known as the ability to “bounce back” after a rough situation.

FACILITATION PREP

The facilitator(s) should complete the following tasks before the lesson starts:

- ❑ Prior to the beginning of the session, take two different colors of construction paper, and cut them into hand-sized smaller sheets, to be used for the Trap of Resilience Activity. When distributing them, be sure that each participant gets one sheet of each color. Designate in advance which color will symbolize “True”, and which will symbolize “False”.
- ❑ Prepare a list of local social service resources that may be available to participants in the areas of jobs, education, housing, food access, health care, etc. Have it available to distribute at the end of the session.
- ❑ Adhere the group norms sheet to a wall in a prominent and easy-to-see location.

MATERIALS

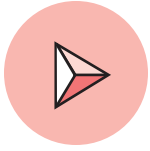
The facilitator(s) should have the following materials for the lesson:

- ❑ Writing utensils (*one for each participant*)
- ❑ Blank paper (*three sheets for each participant*)
- ❑ Markers (*at least two different colors*)
- ❑ Construction paper (*at least two different colors*)
- ❑ Flip chart paper

HANDOUTS

Each participant should be provided with the following printed materials:

- ❑ H1, “Assets Profile—Leo”
- ❑ H2, “Types of Social Support”
- ❑ H3, “Skills Assessment”
- ❑ End-of-Session Evaluation



PROCEDURE

The facilitator(s) should follow the steps in this section to facilitate the session, and use the margin for notes and prompts.



Introductions and Opening Activity

STEP 1

Welcome participants to your session and conduct brief introductions with the group as needed. Review all established group agreements and reaffirm consent from the group. If group agreements have not been completed, please create them at this time (*use the Community Agreements lesson, if necessary*).

STEP 2

Explain to the group that the purpose of the session is to discuss the concept of assets. Invite participants to explain what they believe to be an accurate definition of the term, then share the definition as listed in the Key Terms section of the lesson.

STEP 3



Instruct participants to get into small groups of 3–4, and then distribute a copy of **Handout H1, “Assets Profile—Leo”** to each participant (*if you are low on copies, you can give one copy to each group instead, and instruct participants to share*). Instruct participants to review the handout, and to point out aspects of the story that they believe represent assets in the main character’s life.

STEP 4

After five minutes has passed, post three sheets of flip chart paper, and then reconvene the larger group. Invite participants to share the assets that were identified in each group; write each response on the first flip chart sheet.

STEP 5

Once all responses have been shared, instruct the group to help organize the larger list into smaller category types on the second sheet of flip chart paper. Work with the group to choose whatever names they believe best describe each category (e.g., emotional supports, personal characteristics, social services, etc.).

STEP 6

Once each of the smaller lists have been created, proceed through the following Discussion Questions:

1. “What do you notice when looking at these lists? Are there any that appear to be longer or shorter than others? If so, why do you think that is?”
2. “Sometimes it might be easier to point out social services as an asset before we look at other types. What might be some other non-tangible types of supports that haven’t been mentioned?” *(If they have not been mentioned, **encourage** participants to consider more of the following: emotional support from friends and family, someone willing to provide mentorship, someone willing to provide a helping hand when money gets tight, someone to tell them they’re attractive. **Specify** or **remind** participants that “assets” can be a broad term.)*
3. “Are there any assets on the list that can take a minute to recognize? What do you think may take a person time to identify those?”
4. “What kinds of assets would you say Black gay men should have available to them?”
5. “What barriers might get in the way of Black gay men knowing what assets they have, or which ones are available to them?” *(As participants answer this question, **write** responses onto a third sheet of flip chart paper. **Encourage** participants to offer as many responses as they think are relevant.)*



The Trap of Resilience

STEP 7

If the term has been mentioned, take a different colored marker and circle the word “Resilience”. Invite participants to explain what comes to mind when they hear that word. *(If no one has mentioned the word prior to this point, add it to the first list of assets created, and circle it.)* If no one can define it, offer the definition noted in the Key Terms section of the lesson. Explain to participants that it is important to mention resilience, because sometimes people may forget that they have it; however, also explain to participants that resilience can be a barrier to accessing assets if it is overused.

STEP 8

Distribute two sheets of construction paper (two different colors) to each participant. **Explain** that you will now read from a list of statements made about resilience, and that each participant will need to guess whether they believe the statement is Myth or Fact. For each true statement, **instruct** participants to raise the sheet that corresponds to the color previously selected to designate “True”, and the alternate colored sheet for “False” (*See Facilitation Prep.*)

STEP 9

Read each statement aloud from [Facilitator Resource A, “Resilience: True or False?”](#). **Pause** between each statement to allow time for participants to establish whether they believe the statement is true or false. **Reveal** the correct answer to each statement after participants have had the chance to deliberate over it, approximately 30 seconds–1 minute per statement. **Do not reveal** that all the statements are true unless it appears that the entire group is aware of this fact. If the group becomes aware that all the statements are true, confirm their discovery, and then continue reading the remaining statements out loud.

STEP 10

Once all statements have been deliberated and discussed, **proceed** through the following Discussion Questions:

1. “What was it like doing that activity? Any initial thoughts or reactions?”
2. “Were there any statements from the list that surprised you, or made you uncomfortable?”
3. “Which of the statements, if any, can be hardest to practice or remember as a Black gay man?”
4. “What is one message that can be taken away from this activity overall to help us better understand resilience in our daily lives?” (*If it is not mentioned, **reiterate** the last two statements from Facilitator Resource A, highlighting that resilience does not and should not stop a person from accessing other support systems, including friends, family, and other social/therapeutic services.*)



Identifying and Accessing External Assets

STEP 11



Explain to participants that they will now begin thinking about the particular assets in their own lives. **Distribute** copies of **Handout H2, “Types of Social Support,”** along with two sheets of paper and a writing utensil.

STEP 12

Ask for volunteers to read through each line of the handout or **read** it to the group out loud. **Ask** participants if they have any questions about the terms on the Handout, and then **instruct** them to identify sources of support from each category that either does or could exist in their own lives (**Encourage** participants to work silently, and to try to identify at least one source for each category.)

STEP 13

After 10–12 minutes, **reconvene** the larger group, and **invite** any volunteers to share what they wrote. Once all volunteers have shared, **proceed** through the following Discussion Questions:

1. “How did it feel to do this activity? On a scale of 1, meaning “Very Difficult”, to 5, meaning “Very Easy”, how challenging was it?”
2. “Are there people or other supports on your lists that you have found to be easier to ask for support from? If so, what would you say makes them easier to approach?”
3. “Are there any people or other supports on your list that aren’t as easy to ask for assistance? If so, what would you say makes them more difficult to ask?” *(If it is not mentioned, encourage participants to consider how aspects of both personality and society, including personal pride, social stigma, and discrimination, can serve as challenges in accessing supports.)*
4. “What, in your opinion, might be some ways to minimize the challenges of seeking out support from others?”

STEP 14

Thank participants for sharing their thoughts about assets and supports in one’s personal life. **Explain** to the group that it may be easier to access some supports versus others, and that is okay. **Encourage** participants to think about how they can maintain a balance in the supports they draw on, so that they be fairly and

reasonably supported, without becoming a drain on anyone else. **Encourage** participants to, on their own time, return to Handout H2 to think of ways they may also be able to provide one or two types of supports to others.



Identifying and Accessing Personal Assets

STEP 15

Explain to participants that while the purpose of the session is to explore resources and assets that exist outside of us, there is still significance in highlighting and validating internal assets as well. **Explain** to participants that they will now spend some time taking inventory of one's own personal assets, to see how they can also be leveraged as part of their own support system.

STEP 16



Distribute a copy of **Handout H3, "Skills Assessment"** to each participant, and **read** the directions listed out loud to the group. **Ask** participants if they have any questions about the handout, then **give** them 5–7 minutes to complete it.

STEP 17

After 5–7 minutes has elapsed, **invite** 2–3 volunteers to share what they wrote, and then **proceed** through the following Discussion Questions:

1. "How was it doing this activity?"
2. "There are many times when we underestimate the assets that exist inside of ourselves. Were there any self-discoveries from this activity that surprised you?"
3. "Which skill on your sheet would you say is your strongest skill? What's one way, do you think, you could leverage that skill to better an area of your life?" *(If participants appear challenged in answering this question, **invite** participants to help each other think about and answer the question. Answers could run the gamut, but **include** accomplishments like securing a new job or career advancement, accessing social services, accomplishing educational goals, etc.)*
4. "Did you note anything on your sheet as a skill that needs improvement? Which asset could you draw on from your Social Support list that could help you in improving it, and how might you going about accessing it?"



Closing Activity

STEP 18

Close the session by validating for participants that even after doing these activities, it can still sometimes be difficult to find adequate support and resources. Distribute the list of local resources created prior to the session (see *Facilitation Prep*), and read it aloud for the group. Encourage participants to advocate for themselves and be patient as they pursue the resources noted, as they can be in high demand, in some cases.

STEP 19

Distribute a copy of the End-of-Session Evaluation to each participant. Allow participants 5–7 minutes to complete the evaluation, and collect them as they are completed. After five minutes, invite any participants who have not completed the evaluation to do so after the next activity.

STEP 20

Ask participants if they have any remaining questions, comments, or concerns. If you are able, answer the questions. After all responses have been shared, thank participants for their time, and adjourn the group.



FACILITATOR RESOURCE A

RESILIENCE: TRUE OR FALSE?

Directions: See **STEP 9**.

1. If people weren't born with resilience, they can grow it. TRUE

Truth: Resilience is not a trait. Resilience involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed by everyone. Being resilient involves tapping into your resources, such as personal strengths and the support of family and friends.

2. Resilient people feel stress and negative emotions like everyone else. TRUE

Truth: Resilient people experience just as much stress and negative emotion as anyone else. The difference is that individuals who have well-developed resilience skills are able to see opportunities for growth and development in most experiences, even if it is just a lesson born from a bad experience.

3. Learning from struggle is more important than struggle itself. TRUE

Truth: People can experience positive changes in their lives after struggling with bad experiences. Many people think it is the suffering that makes people stronger, but it is more likely the ways we learn to navigate the struggle. Therefore, it is the opportunity to learn rather than the bad experience itself which makes us stronger.

4. Going to therapy can be a form of resilience. TRUE

Truth: Therapy can be a useful tool for any of us. It is an opportunity to think through some of our challenges and receive support from someone trained in helping.

5. Resilient people are resourceful enough to rely on others when they need them. TRUE

Truth: Resilient people are resourceful. Resilient people have strong social networks, close connections to family and friends, are able to self-disclose about their troubles to people close to them, and ask for help when they need it. Resilient people recognize that their social supports are their most important resources.



HANDOUT

ASSET PROFILE—LEO

Leo is a 24-year-old Black gay man living in the big city. He is the middle child of three; his older brother is 26, married, and lives as a youth minister in the suburbs, while his youngest sister, who is 16, is in high school and living at home with Leo's parents. Leo's relationship with his family is not strained; however, he does not spend much time with them because, as he says it, "We're really more like a family of individuals, and they don't really get me." That said, he still calls his mother once a week, and texts her just as often.

Leo earns money as an HIV tester for the local health department, though his passion is writing about comic books, which he does as a side gig for a popular online forum. He is newly diagnosed with HIV and has known his status for the past five months. He got it after having unprotected sex with his ex-boyfriend, who he later found out was cheating. Since then, Leo has decided not to date, and spends most of his time either at work or on the internet. Outside of his HIV diagnosis, Leo has no other major health issues, and makes sure to take his ART (Antiretroviral therapy) regularly.

Leo lives in a three-bedroom apartment with two roommates, also black gay men in their 20's. Both roommates are aware of Leo's health status and have been very supportive in helping Leo work through his feelings about being diagnosed. One of his roommates (who is also positive) recently introduced Leo to meditation; after a little hesitation, he started to enjoy the practice, and now does it and yoga on a weekly basis. Outside of his roommates and his ex-boyfriend, no one else knows Leo's status, and he's not sure if or how he should tell others. This last fact is why he hasn't yet signed up for the HIV+ support group he usually refers his clients to.



HANDOUT

TYPES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

TYPE	DEFINITION & EXAMPLES
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	<p>Expression of empathy, love, trust, and caring.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Close friends and family members providing hope and a listening ear.</p>
INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT	<p>Tangible aid and/or service.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> A partner deciding to work from home two days per week to care for the children while the other attends doctors' appointments.</p>
INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT	<p>Advice, suggestions, and information.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i> (1) A doctor provides sound recommendations for HIV treatment and health maintenance; (2) A community health resource center provides counselors and other trained staff who work exclusively with LGBTQ people.</p>
APPRAISAL SUPPORT	<p>Information that is useful for self-evaluation.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Reading a pamphlet that includes an assessment quiz to determine the type of career someone may want to pursue in the future.</p>



HANDOUT

HANDOUT

SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Directions:

Rate each common job skill based on how confident you feel exhibiting it.

	Strong skill	Medium skill	Skill that needs improvement	Does not apply to my job search
Attention to Detail				
Being Self-Motivated				
Cleanliness				
Communication				
Cooking				
Creativity				
Customer Service				
Driving				
Following Directions				
Graphic Design				
Handling Money				
Leading Groups/Projects				
Learning Quickly				
Microsoft Office				
Organization				
Punctuality				
Teamwork				
Time Management				
Typing Speed				
Working with Children				
Working with Older Adults				
Working with Teens				
Writing				
Other:				