

Caregiver Letter of Praise & Support

Therapeutic Reparation for Youth with Problematic Sexual Behaviors Part 4 of 6

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All children seek verbal or non-verbal feedback from the adults in their life to understand what has happened to them. A caregiver can provide encouragement, hope and a vision of a positive future for a youth who has been sexually harmful with others. I believe that putting these thoughts in writing makes it more sincere to the child or teen with PSB (Problematic Sexual Behavior) and enables the youth the opportunity to re-read the information whenever needed.

The caregiver Letter of Praise and Support is generally provided to the youth who is responsible for the problematic sexual behavior about halfway through treatment in order to assist the youth with taking accountability. In some cases, this letter can also be combined with the Accountability Family Session, see part 3. It is recommended that this letter be worked on and reviewed in at least one individual session with the caregiver(s) before giving it to the youth. It maybe shared with the youth in session and reactions can be processed or in higher functioning families, it can be shared with the youth privately. This type of letter is a part of the curriculum in multi-family groups following the CBT-PSB group model from Oklahoma University. If the youth as taken accountability, the youth may also share a letter or talk to their caregivers about their point of view and feelings of guilt and/or shame. Hopefully, all parties can find some healing after they all acknowledge the harm, without minimizing or justifying the behavior, and then also make statements of hope for the future.

The handout on page two of the article can be copied and given to the caregiver in order to help them organize their thoughts and provide examples of positive messages.

Additional resources and articles that are intended to accompany this article available on www.sheryloverby.com

- Part 1 Understanding Reparation
- Part 2 Helping Youth take Accountability
- Part 3 Accountability Family Session
- Part 5 Apology Letters
- Part 6 The Reparation Project

Caregiver Letter of Praise & Support

Here are some ideas about what to include in a letter to your child:

- A. **Praise** your child for the changes they have made with concrete examples about things you have noticed. Such as:
 - a. Attending therapy
 - b. Admitting to the problem
 - c. Accepting their consequences
 - d. Doing better at school or completing chores
 - e. Putting forth effort, reading this letter for example

- B. You **believe** your child has made a mistake with their sexual behavior and you **believe** they are able to fix their mistake or learn from their mistake. See handout of “What Caregivers Can Say” on www.sheryloverby.com if you are stuck.

- C. You will **encourage** and **support** your child with physical and emotional needs. Please give one or two concrete examples of how you will be supportive. Perhaps:
 - a. Attend family sessions and pay for the appropriate treatment without complaining
 - b. Have empathy for them, try to understand their thoughts and feelings, even if they haven’t completed treatment yet or you don’t “get it”.
 - c. Show respect by listening to them, or leaving them alone, etc. etc.
 - d. Change things in the home environment to encourage sexual respect and reduce access to pornography.

- D. You will **guide** your child to make good choices and do well in the future, such as:
 - a. Helping your child to work out more issues in therapy
 - b. Your commitment to treatment or whatever else is needed in the future
 - c. Maintain the safety plan or supervision so they will have an opportunity to succeed, even though they may not like it
 - d. Provide more opportunities to do well in school or extra curricular activities
 - e. Maintain hope for positive outcomes in the future because they “have so much potential”

- E. **Model taking responsibility** if you have made a mistake or have a regret for your own behavior. Make sure you do not burden your child with your own problems or minimize their accountability for their unhealthy behavior. Show them that there is hope of being a better person in the future. Possible examples are:
 - a. Under-reacting after disclosure of the problematic behavior such as not providing supervision or getting treatment right away
 - b. Not providing appropriate sex education when it was needed in the past
 - c. Over reacting when the abuse was disclosed and saying hurtful things or physically punishing your child
 - d. Making things worse by catastrophizing these events or predicting failure
 - e. Anything that has made this process, including court or treatment, longer or more complicated.