



Family Pathway Workbook



Introduction

We are pleased that you have entrusted us with your child's care and we very much look forward to working with your child and you. Open Sky Wilderness Therapy ("Open Sky") bases its therapy on a family systems approach, which means that we believe that your child's growth is dependent in part on your family's ability to grow and change. In that spirit, we present you with the attached workbook which is filled with assignments for parents/guardians. We believe that working through these assignments will not only help you and your family, but will model for your child your willingness to participate in the growth process. It is striking how much more effort students put into the program when they sense their parents working along with them. Moreover, research has found that adolescents' ability to make changes in wilderness treatment and maintain those changes after treatment is dependent in part upon the extent to which their families were involved in the family treatment process.

This Family Pathway workbook is designed to help you keep track of the assignments you will be asked to complete as part of the Open Sky family curriculum. The Family Pathway is broken up into weekly assignments and has a number of components: family therapy, letter writing, therapy assignments, journaling assignments, and wellness practices. This workbook consists of core assignments that all families complete, but your Open Sky therapist may assign your family specific assignments based on your needs. Each parent/guardian will work on his/her own Family Pathway workbook – one parent can't do it for everyone.

Logistics

Prior to your first call with your Open Sky therapist, please complete the Week 1 Family Pathway assignments, and then email or fax that weekly assignments page to your Open Sky therapist so that you can both have access to this information during the call. In the column on the right of the Family Pathway are the assignments and on the left is a column for you to give an update with regard to the assignment – "completed," "still working on," etc. Make sure prior to each weekly call with your Open Sky therapist to fax or email your weekly assignments page for that week.

Computer Instructions

Before you begin working in the Family Pathway please set up a folder on your computer called **Open Sky Family Pathway**. Save the attached Family Pathway assignments for each week in this folder. Clearly label each week's document: eg., Open Sky Week 1, Open Sky Week 2. Remember to save the email attachment in the folder your computer before working on it so that you don't run the risk of losing your work!

Questions

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the Family Pathway workbook, please ask your Open Sky therapist.



Week 1 Family Pathway

To complete and email to your Open Sky therapist prior to week 1 phone call.

Name:

Child's Name:

√	Assignment	Update
	<p>Family Therapy. Make an appointment with a family therapist (if you haven't already). Set up a weekly schedule for meeting with him/her.</p>	
	<p>Release Forms. If you haven't done this already, sign and fax Open Sky Consent for Release of Information forms to (970) 381-9494.</p>	
	<p>Letter Writing. Write a letter to your child. Review Open Sky Letter Writing Guidelines in the Initial Parent Information.</p>	
	<p>Impact Letter. Write the first draft of your Impact Letter and send by fax or email to your Open Sky therapist. (see Impact Letter Guidelines in this packet for details).</p>	
	<p>Journaling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a list of stressors that you have in your life right now. Then create a list of signs that you are experiencing stress. Break down this list into the following categories: body, mind, heart, soul. • Strengths list. What do you recognize as strengths about yourself? Write down at least five. 	
	<p>Wellness Plan. Do at least two wellness activities listed on the Wellness Activities list.</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p>	



Week 2 Family Pathway

To complete and email to Open Sky therapist prior to week 2 phone call.

Name:

Child's Name:

√	Assignment	Update
	Family Therapy. Attend family therapy with your home therapist.	
	Letter Writing. Write a letter to your child.	
	<p>"I Feel" Statements.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Before the weekly phone call with your Open Sky therapist, review the I Feel Statements guidelines sheet in this packet. Have an "I feel" statement prepared to review on the phone call. 2. During the phone call: review and prepare for writing an "I feel" letter to your child. 3. After the phone call, write a letter to your child with at least two "I feel" statements: one "I feel" about something you would like your child to work on, one about something you admire about your child. 	
	<p>Journaling.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe a typical weekday and weekend-day. What do you notice about the way you spend your time? What would you like to do more of? What would you like to stay the same? What would you like to change? 2. Who are you talking to about your child being at Open Sky? How do you describe it? What is this like for you? 	
	<p>Personal Wellness Plan. Do at least two wellness activities listed on the Wellness Activities list.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 	
	Individual Assignments from your Open Sky Therapist.	



Week 3 Family Pathway

To complete and email to Open Sky therapist prior to week 3 phone call.

Name:

Child's Name:

√	Assignment	Update
	Family Therapy. Attend family therapy with your home therapist.	
	Letter Writing. Write a letter to your child.	
	Journaling. 1. Write about your experience growing up. What were your parents like? How did your family communicate? What were some of your family's strengths and weaknesses? What are ways that your parenting style has been similar or different from your parents'? What were your teenage years like?	
	Personal Wellness Plan. Do at least two wellness activities listed on the Wellness Activities list. 1. _____ 2. _____	
	Individual Assignments from your Open Sky Therapist.	



Week 4 Family Pathway

To complete and email to Open Sky therapist prior to week 4 phone call.

Name:

Child's Name:

√	Assignment	Update
	Family Therapy. Attend family therapy with your home therapist.	
	Letter Writing. Write a letter to your child.	
	Journaling. 1. Write about your current support system. What are your relationships like with family members? Friends? Who do you turn to when you need support? What are ways you could develop your support network?	
	Personal Wellness Plan. Do at least two wellness activities listed on the Wellness Activities list. 1. _____ 2. _____	
	Aftercare Planning. Develop a plan for continuing to support your child in his/her growth. Think about your child's needs at this time in terms of guidance and safety. Keep in mind child's peer environment and willingness to accept direction. Discuss this plan with your child's Open Sky therapist and, if you have one, your educational consultant.	
	Individual Assignments from your Open Sky therapist.	



Week 5 Family Pathway

To complete and email to Open Sky therapist prior to week 5 phone call.

Name:

Child's Name:

√	Assignment	Update
	Family Therapy. Attend family therapy with your home therapist.	
	Letter Writing. Write a letter to your child.	
	Journaling. 1. Write about challenges your family has experienced. Identify the ways you coped with these challenges. Notice patterns. What do you see as your strengths? What patterns would you like to change?	
	Personal Wellness Plan. Do at least two wellness activities listed on the Wellness Activities list. 1. _____ 2. _____	
	Individual Assignments from your Open Sky therapist.	



Week 6 Family Pathway

To complete and email to Open Sky therapist prior to week 6 phone call.

Name:

Child's Name:

√	Assignment	Update
	Family Therapy. Attend family therapy with your home therapist.	
	Letter Writing. Write a letter to your child.	
	Journaling. 1. Write a letter to a friend as if it is three years from now. Describe in present tense what life is like: your relationships with family members, work, how you are taking care of yourself, your support network, your struggles, your accomplishments.	
	Personal Wellness Plan. Do at least two wellness activities listed on the Wellness Activities list. 1. _____ 2. _____	
	Individual Assignments from your Open Sky therapist.	



Week 7 Family Pathway

To complete and email to Open Sky therapist prior to week 7 phone call.

Name:

Child's Name:

√	Assignment	Update
	Family Therapy. Attend family therapy with your home therapist.	
	Letter Writing. Write a letter to your child.	
	Journaling. Write about your hopes and dreams for your child. How have these changed over time? What worries do you have about some of these coming true?	
	Personal Wellness Plan. Do at least two wellness activities listed on the Wellness Activities list. 1. _____ 2. _____	
	Individual Assignments from your Open Sky therapist.	



Week 8 Family Pathway

To complete and email to Open Sky therapist prior to week 8 phone call.

Name:

Child's Name:

√	Assignment	Update
	Family Therapy. Attend family therapy with your home therapist.	
	Letter Writing. Write a letter to your child.	
	Journaling. Write about what will be rewarding and challenging the road ahead with your child. What issues remain and concern you? What growth are you excited or hopeful about? What personal goals do you have for yourself in terms of your relationship with your child? What growth have you made while your child has been at Open Sky?	
	Personal Wellness Plan. Do at least two wellness activities listed on the Wellness Activities list. 1. _____ 2. _____	
	Individual Assignments from your Open Sky therapist.	



Wellness Activities List

This is a partial list of activities – feel free to create or use your own wellness activities! Try to use at least one activity from each category each week; we have found that putting energy into all four dimensions – body, mind, heart and soul – contributes to optimal health, working synergistically to promote wellness.

Body

Exercise in a gym for at least 30 minutes
Walk with friends or pets
Avoid sugar, caffeine and alcohol for at least two days
Jog for at least 20 minutes
Stretch for at least 15 minutes
Cook a meal made up of organic or locally-produced foods
Do Yoga, Aikido, Tai Chi or other activities

Mind

Write in a journal for at least 10 minutes
Read a book you've been wanting to read for a long time
Go to the library or the internet and research something you want to know about
Turn off the television and talk with friends or family

Heart

Share your feelings with someone you love
Keep a feelings journal and record your feelings in it at least 3 times a day
Attend a support group meeting in your area (Al-Anon, Nar-Anon, other family support groups)
Do an activity which brings you joy, such as attending a concert, painting a painting, playing a musical instrument, etc.

Soul

Write down your dreams
Meditate, or learn to meditate
Pray
Read a religious or spiritual text
Explore a wilderness area near you
Spend at least 60 minutes completely alone



Impact Letter Guidelines (for Week 1 Assignments)

What is an impact letter?

The impact letter is the letter in which you describe the reasons why you believe it is important for your child to be at Open Sky. Impact letters are meant to help students gain perspective on his/her life and he/she has impacted others. Receiving impact letter(s) is pivotal event in a student's growth process at Open Sky.

How are impact letters read?

Your child will read his/her impact letter for the first time in a group session with peers and treatment staff. This group session tends to be very powerful for the student, but also for the peers and treatment staff. Hearing the letters gives more background to peers and staff about what was going on before Open Sky, thus giving the group rich information for working with the student.

Who writes an impact letter?

We ask that each parent involved in the program, including step-parents and involved partners, write an impact letter. Each person writes a separate letter so as to address the issues from his/her own perspective. We encourage impact letters from siblings if appropriate. Please have them follow the same guidelines and send the letters to your Open Sky therapist for review.

Timetable for preparing impact letters

It is important for students to receive their impact letter about two weeks into their stay. Thus, it is extremely important for you to send a complete the assignment as soon as possible, balancing the work on it with rest and self care. **Please send your first completed draft to your Open Sky therapist *no later than a week after the student's enrollment at Open Sky.*** Your child's Open Sky therapist will review your letter, give you feedback, and ask you to complete a final draft incorporating feedback and suggestions. Note: Please send the additional two letters a week to your child *while* you are working on your impact letter.

How to write an impact letter

1. Describe why you believe it was necessary for your child to come to Open Sky and how the issues/incidents impacted you (1.5-2 pages total)

Describe your perspective on why your child is at Open Sky

- Describe specific incidents and behaviors that were of concern to you.
- Use vignettes and examples to illustrate the incidents/behaviors/issues.
- The more specifics you include the more powerful the letter will be. Use quotes, write out specific things he/she said, did, etc.

Describe how these incidents/behaviors impacted you on an emotional level

- Speak to feelings you experienced related to the events you describe. (Your child likely knows what the issues are that brought him/her here but probably does not realize how you were impacted personally).
- Use "feelings statements" such as, "When you did this...I felt ..." "When you said...it affected me this way..."

- Refer to the *Emotion Resource Guide* and the write-up on “I feel” statements in the Family Pathway for guidance.

Include validating statements

- Include statements that show you understand that your child was struggling.
- Examples: “I felt worried to see you in so much pain,” or, “The time after mom and I divorced must have been such a confusing and difficult time for you.”

2. Your regrets and commitments (about 2 paragraphs total)

Incidents/behaviors that you regret (1 paragraph)

- Acknowledge mistakes that you made in the past. Be specific.
- You may use this as a time to apologize.

Changes you are committed to (1 paragraph)

- Tell your child you are working on while he/she is at Open Sky.
- Examples: Family Pathway assignments, attending family therapy, practicing communication skills, and doing wellness activities.

3. Positives and hopes (about 3 paragraphs total)

Strengths/positives you see in your child (2 paragraphs)

- Describe the positive qualities and strengths you see in the student. What is he/she good at? What do you admire/respect about him/her?
- Give specific examples. Rather than simply stating, “You are so thoughtful and caring with you little sister,” describe a memory that stands out for you when he/she displayed this behavior.
- This is a powerful and essential part of the letter. Hearing that family members see the good along with the bad is essential for rebuilding the relationship.

Times you felt close to your child (1 paragraph)

- Speak to a time or times you felt close and connected with the student, even if it was many years ago, and how it impacted you to have that closeness with the student.

Hopes for your child(a few sentences)

- Briefly describe your hopes for the student’s life and growth at Open Sky and beyond

“Do’s and Don’ts”

Don’t:

- Moralize, preach or lecture
- Use derogatory words or name calling
- Shame or blame
- Psychoanalyze or offer theories of why your child does what he/she does

Do:

- Be honest, direct, and tactful
- Be genuine and sincere
- Be descriptive yet succinct
- Speak from your heart. Let your child see your humanity.

Self care

- People commonly describe this process as everything from painful to cathartic.
- You may want to “free write” your first draft to get things “out.” After this it is important to shift the writing into the parameters described above; venting in its uncensored form is best left in your own journal.
- Being detailed can be uncomfortable and painful; however, it is a crucial part of the healing process for both you and your child to revisit the specifics before moving on to a healthier future.

- Experiencing resistance to revisiting difficult memories is completely normal. Hang in there!
- Make sure you are taking breaks for “wellness activities.” You will write a better letter if you are rested and taking care of yourself.

Formatting

- Save the impact letter as a word document
- Title the document as the student first name & last initial/impact letter/family member. For example: “JohnT.ImpactLetter.Mom”
- 12-font Times New Roman or 11-font Arial
- 1.5 line spacing
- Include page numbers
- 3-5 pages total
- Make sure to sign it at the end (e.g., “Love, Dad”)

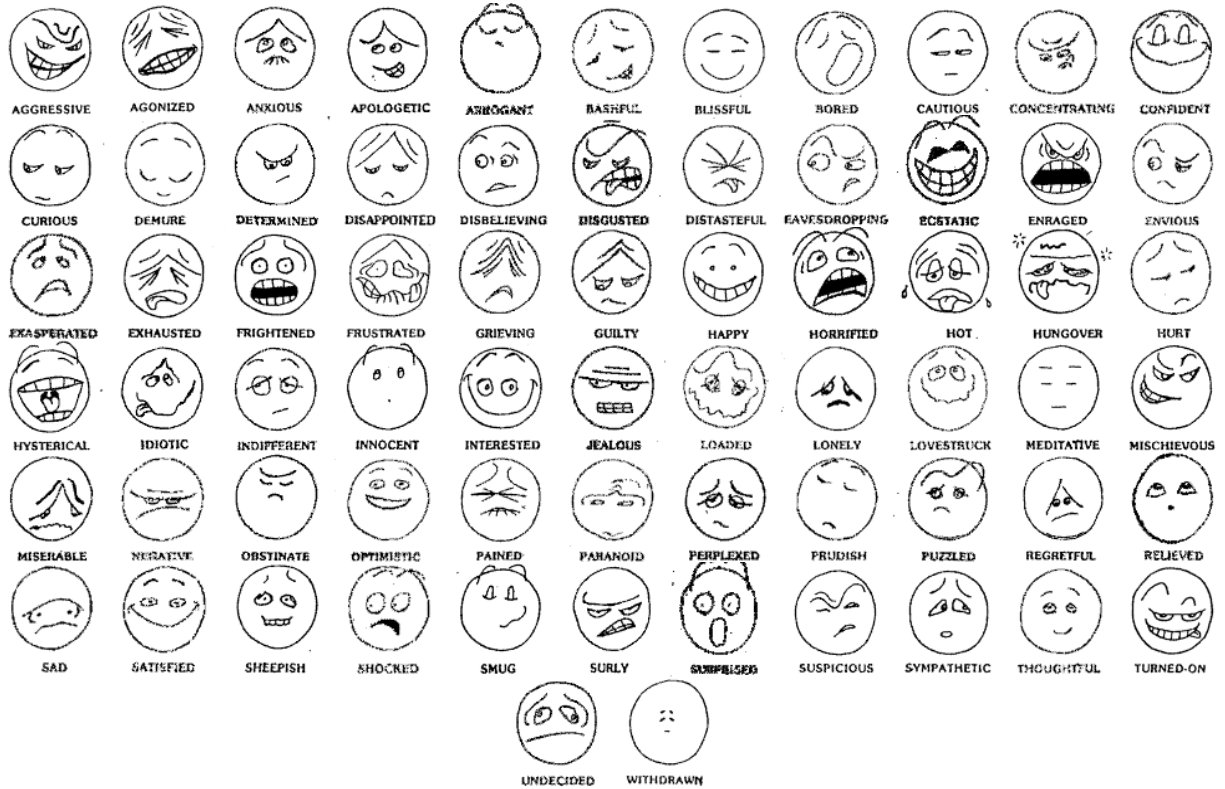
Emailing

- Do not send impact letters to student mail. Email the impact letter to the attention of your Open Sky therapist.

Thanks for your efforts on this!

Emotion Resource Guide

In case you're feeling stumped about what feeling you might be experiencing, here are some possibilities!





"I Feel" Statements

"I feel" statements are a foundation of communication skills at Open Sky. We value "I feels" highly because they support assertive communication about difficult issues. At Open Sky, your child is learning "I feels" and is being asked to practice them on a daily basis with his/her team. At this point in the process, we want you to practice "I feels" through letter writing with your child.

Here is the format for an "I feel" statement:

The Speaker:

I feel _____ **when** _____.
(use feeling words only, such as hurt, sad, scared, guilty, confused) (an event – what did you see or hear)

I imagine I feel this way because _____ **In the future** _____
(Your belief about the event – what do you imagine was going on with the other person that would explain what happened or is happening) (A request for what you would like to see).

The Listener reflects:

So you feel _____ **when** _____.
You imagine you feel this way because _____ **In the future, you'd like** _____.

The Listener adds: **Did I get that right? Did I miss anything? Is there more?**

Examples of "I feel" statements you might say to your child:

- I feel worried when you don't come home on time for curfew. I imagine I feel this way because we had an agreement about curfew and I don't know where you are. In the future, I need you to be on time or call me to let me know if you are safe.
- I feel appreciative when you come home on time for curfew. I imagine I feel this way because it feels respectful of the family rules and expectations. In the future, I hope that you continue to follow through with your commitments to the family.

General Guidelines for Effective "I feel" Statements:

- Keep "I feels" concise and stick to one subject at a time – if they are too long they become impossible to reflect.
- Refrain from justifying or explaining.
- Remember that "I feels" are not meant to solve a given situation but rather to provide a forum for expressing feelings.
- Practice, practice, practice...with family members, friends, your Open Sky or home therapist, or in journal writing.



Validation

What is validation?

- Validation communicates to another person that his or her responses (feelings, thoughts, actions) make sense to you – that you can understand that they feel the way they do
- Validation is acknowledgement
- Validation communicates acceptance of the person
- Example: “I can see that you are really upset right now.”

Why should I validate?

- It shows that you are listening
- It shows that you understand
- It communicates understanding in a non-judgmental way
- It supports the relationship
- It can decrease the intensity of conflicts

What should I validate?

- Yourself, others, relationships
- Validate the need that is driving the given behavior. For example...

Remember:

- Validating is not necessarily agreeing
- Validating does not mean that you necessarily like what the other person is doing, saying or feeling

How can I validate?

- 1) Actively listen and pay attention to the person.
 - a) Make eye contact
 - b) Nod your head when they are talking
 - c) Be aware of yourself and your body language
- 2) State his or her feelings descriptively without passing judgment
 - a) “It looks like you are upset”
 - b) “You have a sad look on your face”
- 3) Respond in a way that takes the person (or yourself) seriously
 - a) If the person wants to be alone for awhile, say OK and let them calm down before approaching again (though make sure the issue is revisited)
 - b) If the person is crying, give them a tissue
- 4) Show tolerance. See that the person’s (or your own) behavior, emotion, or action makes sense given his/her (or your own) life circumstances and history, even if you don’t approve of the behavior, emotion, or action itself.
- 5) Be mindful of yourself, the other person, and the relationship.
- 6) Use reflective listening. Show empathy. Summarize what you see going on for them.



Validation Practice Exercise

Chose a situation in which normally you would be reactive or struggle to accept someone else's point of view (or your own). Instead, interrupt your habitual response and practice validating.

Practice in at least 3 situations:

- 1) With person at work or in a social setting. (For example, "I can imagine that it must have been upsetting that I was late for your presentation. I had told you specifically that I would be there.")
- 2) With family member. (For example, "It sounds like you are feeling really homesick and that it is difficult to settle in to being at Open Sky. It must be really hard.")
- 3) With yourself. (For example, "Think of how exhausting these past months have been for me. No wonder it has been so difficult to find the strength and energy to write this impact letter.")

Review the guidelines written on the following page and practice.

After you practice, reflect on the experience in a journal writing activity. For each situation, answer these questions:

Who did you validate?

What was the situation?

What did you say or do to validate?

What did you notice about the other person's (or your own) response?

What feelings came up for you during the process?

Would you say or do anything differently next time? If so, what?