

SESSION 5 COURSE NOTES BUILDING OUR VILLAGE – CREATING PROTECTIVE NORMS & REDUCING RISKS TO CHILDREN & TEENS

Hi there,

Welcome to your easy-to-follow notes for Session 5. These are your friendly companion for today, whether you read them before we gather, keep them nearby during the session, or look back afterwards. They're written in a simple, conversational way, just like we're chatting together.

Over the past sessions we have built skills to see clearly, step up safely, respond with heart, and stay steady under pressure. Today we bring it all together by looking at the environments we create — at home, at work, and in our communities. Small, consistent norms can become powerful safety nets that protect children and reduce risks for teens.

In South Africa we have a deep cultural understanding that it takes a village to raise a child. This is the spirit of ubuntu, we are because we are together. When families, workplaces and communities create consistent protective norms, children and teens have stronger safety nets. These norms reduce isolation, model healthy relationships, and lower the risks that can lead to teen pregnancy or increased child vulnerability.

Protective norms are not about perfection. They are about small, repeatable practices that say: “You matter. We are here. We look out for one another.”

By the end of this session you will be able to:

- Describe at least three protective family or workplace norms.
- Link those norms to reduced teen pregnancy risk and child vulnerability.
- Create one personal or team commitment that strengthens safety nets.

These outcomes turn everything we've learned into real, everyday action you can start this week.

BEFORE WE BEGIN – A QUICK PRIVATE REFLECTION (5 QUESTIONS)

Take two minutes now to answer these in your head or on a scrap of paper. There are no right or wrong answers; this is simply to help you see where your thinking is at and get the most from our time together.

1. What small, everyday practices in your family, workplace or community already help children and young people feel safe and supported?
2. How might consistent adult-child connection time (even short daily check-ins) reduce risks for teens?
3. Can you think of one way your workplace or team could quietly support parents and caregivers without stigma?
4. What is one small commitment you could realistically make this week that would strengthen safety for children or young people around you?
5. Right now, how confident do you feel that together we can build stronger protective nets for children and teens in our communities? (Rate yourself 1–5, where 1 is “not confident at all” and 5 is “very confident”.)

Hold onto your thoughts. By the end of this session you'll have a clear, personal commitment and a deeper understanding of how small norms create big protection.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN OUR SESSION TOGETHER

We keep everything interactive, emotionally safe, and hopeful. Participation is completely voluntary, you can observe or step out at any time. We focus on building forward with hope and collective strength. We do not shame current norms, we explore what we can strengthen together. Keep the tone warm, respectful and empowering.

Here's how the session flows:

- We open with a short, powerful 5-minute introduction video that tells a hopeful South African story of a workplace and community that strengthened their protective norms and saw real differences for the children and young people in their care.
- A brief pair reflection on what stood out.
- Clear input on protective family, community and workplace norms, with real South African examples and the link to reducing risks for children and teens.
- One hopeful story from a manufacturing plant in KwaZulu-Natal that shows how two small norms made a visible difference.
- Small-group brainstorm of protective norms already present or possible in your context.
- Individual time to write one specific, small commitment you will take away and start this week.
- Pair share of your commitment (only what you feel comfortable sharing).
- A structured group debrief where we celebrate the commitments.
- Three quick verbal questions to lock in the learning.
- A warm close and transition into the overall workshop closing and integration.

Everything is designed to feel hopeful, practical and collective.

THE HEART OF SESSION 5: PROTECTIVE NORMS – THE VILLAGE THAT RAISES AND PROTECTS OUR CHILDREN

Protective norms are the everyday practices that say to children and teens: “You are seen. You are supported. You matter.” When we strengthen them together, we reduce vulnerability and give young people stronger foundations.

Protective family and community norms

- Consistent adult-child connection time (even short daily check-ins or shared meals).
- Clear, warm boundaries combined with emotional availability.
- Open communication where children and teens know they can talk without fear of harsh judgment.
- Strong adult support networks so no caregiver carries everything alone.

- Collective responsibility; neighbours, colleagues and extended family quietly looking out for one another's children.

Protective workplace norms

- Support for parents and caregivers without stigma (flexible check-ins, understanding of family responsibilities).
- Team practices that reduce isolation (simple daily or weekly check-ins: "How are we holding up?").
- Modelling respectful relationships and zero tolerance for bullying or controlling behaviour.
- Safe channels to raise concerns without fear of retaliation.

These norms do not require big programmes or extra budgets. They are small, repeatable choices that build safety nets over time.

A HOPEFUL SOUTH AFRICAN STORY

Let me share a story from a manufacturing plant in KwaZulu-Natal. The shift supervisors noticed that many team members were arriving exhausted and short-tempered because of pressures at home. Children were sometimes left with tired or stressed caregivers, and a few young people in the community were getting into risky situations.

Instead of blaming families, the supervisors started two small norms. First, they began every shift with a two-minute team check-in: "How is everyone holding up today?" Second, they created a simple, confidential way for parents to request a short family-related conversation with a supervisor without it affecting their standing.

Over six months, team members reported feeling less alone. Several parents said they now had the courage to talk earlier when things were getting difficult at home. One young worker later shared that knowing the adults around him cared enough to check in helped him make better choices. The children in those families had more stable, supported caregivers because the workplace had quietly strengthened its protective norms.

Notice what they did not do. They did not create complicated programmes. They strengthened simple, repeatable practices that said: "We are in this together." That is how villages and workplaces protect children and teens.

TRANSITION INTO ACTIVITY

Today we will not only talk about protective norms, we will each create one realistic commitment that strengthens safety nets in our own families, teams or communities.

YOUR BRAINSTORM & PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

First, in small groups of four or five, you'll take six minutes to brainstorm: What protective norms already exist in your workplace, family or community that you could strengthen? What small new norm could you help introduce? Think about what is realistic in your context.

Then, on your own, you'll take five minutes to write one specific, small commitment you will take away from today. It could be something you will do at home, at work, or in your community. Make it something you can actually start this week.

After writing, you'll turn to one person next to you and share your commitment (only what you feel comfortable sharing). Give each other one encouraging word.

Participation is voluntary. If you prefer to think quietly or observe, that is perfectly fine.

STRUCTURED DEBRIEF & KEY TAKEAWAY

We'll come back together and hear from a few people about the commitments they are taking away (only what you feel comfortable sharing).

We'll reflect on what protective norm stood out as most powerful for reducing risks to children and teens, and how strengthening these norms at work or at home helps create safer futures for young people.

The key takeaway we'll emphasise together is this:

Protective norms are the everyday practices that say to children and teens: "You are seen. You are supported. You matter." When we strengthen them together, we reduce vulnerability and give young people stronger foundations. When many of us make small commitments, we become the village that protects our children. This is ubuntu in action.

AFTER SESSION 5 – WHAT YOU TAKE WITH YOU

You now have a clear picture of how protective norms built through small, consistent choices, create the village that raises and protects our children and teens. You have also made a personal commitment that turns today's learning into real action.

You have walked a powerful journey today, from seeing clearly, to stepping up safely, responding with heart, standing strong together, and now building our village. Every step you take protects South Africa's children and strengthens our families and workplaces.

Remember: Your Certificate of Attendance and the full resource pack (with more examples, your action-plan template and all national support numbers) will be emailed to you after the workshop. Everything is created professionally and sent directly to the email address you provided. No printing is required from you.

Let's move into our closing integration, where we will reflect on the whole day, complete the final survey, and celebrate what we have built together.

10 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SESSION 5

1. **My workplace or family isn't ready for big changes - how can small norms still make a difference?** Small norms are powerful precisely because they don't require big announcements or everyone's agreement at once. One team check-in, one consistent daily connection with a child, or one confidential way to ask for support can quietly shift the atmosphere. Over time these small choices add up and often inspire others.
2. **How do protective norms actually help reduce teen pregnancy risk and child vulnerability?** Protective norms reduce isolation, model healthy relationships, and give young people safe adults to talk to. When teens feel seen, supported and able to communicate without harsh judgment,

they are more likely to make safer choices and seek help early. Consistent adult presence and strong support networks are known protective factors.

3. **What if I make a commitment but then life gets in the way and I can't keep it?** That's completely human. Choose something small and realistic from the start, something you can actually start this week. If it slips, you can gently restart or adjust it. The power is in the intention and the consistent attempt, not in perfection.
4. **Can I strengthen protective norms even if I'm not a manager or parent?** Yes. Every person in a workplace or community can contribute. You can start a simple team check-in, offer quiet support to a colleague who is a parent, model respectful relationships, or simply notice and encourage positive norms that already exist. Collective responsibility belongs to everyone.
5. **What's the difference between a protective norm and just "being nice"?** Being nice is individual and can be inconsistent. A protective norm is a repeated, shared practice that becomes part of the culture, something people can rely on. For example, a regular team check-in or a consistent daily connection time with children creates safety nets that last beyond any one person's mood or energy on a given day.
6. **How do workplace norms affect children at home?** When workplaces support parents without stigma and reduce isolation through simple check-ins, employees feel less alone and more able to manage pressures. This reduces stress spillover into the home, increases emotional availability for children, and models healthy ways of handling difficulty. Children benefit from calmer, more supported caregivers.
7. **What if my commitment feels too small to matter?** Small is exactly right. Protective norms are built one small, consistent choice at a time. A two-minute team check-in or a five-minute daily connection with a child can change the atmosphere over weeks and months. Big protection often grows from humble, repeatable actions.
8. **Can these norms work across different cultures and languages in South Africa?** Yes. The examples we use are drawn from real South African workplaces and communities. You can adapt the language and style to fit your context — whether that's Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans, English or any other. The heart is the same: consistent connection, open communication, mutual support and collective care for children.
9. **How does this session connect to the earlier sessions on the 5 D's, Listen & Believe and resilience tools?** Everything works together. You use the 5 Ds to step up safely when you notice something. You use Listen & Believe when someone discloses. You use centring and reframing to stay steady. And you use protective norms to create environments where fewer crises happen in the first place. Together they form a complete circle of protection.
10. **What happens after today - how do I keep these commitments alive?** You don't have to do it alone. Share your commitment with one trusted person who can gently encourage you. Revisit it in a week or two and celebrate what worked. Many people find that once they start one small norm, it becomes easier to add or strengthen another. You are now part of a growing community of Upstanders building safer families, workplaces and communities across South Africa.

Thank you for the care, thoughtfulness and courage you brought to this entire day. You have walked a powerful journey from seeing clearly, to stepping up safely, responding with heart, standing strong together, and now building our village. Every commitment you make and every norm you strengthen helps protect South Africa's children and gives young people stronger foundations.

You are now part of the village.