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## LEADER'S GUIDE:

**A Second Chance** by Sandra Evans  
I'm learning how to handle my children  
without getting high.

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**DISCUSSION FOCUS:**  
Nurturing your children.

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**ACTIVITY GOAL:**  
Participants will understand how to communicate love and care to  
their children.

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### STORY SUMMARY

*Sandra was neglected and abused as a child and used drugs to handle her painful experiences. When she became a mother, she turned to meth whenever she became overwhelmed by caring for her children, until your youngest child was born positive tox. Sandra's husband Francisco stayed home with their children while Sandra went to drug treatment with their newborn.*

*In treatment, Sandra learned to connect with her children through eating together, activities, praise, saying "I love you," consistent discipline, hugs and holding. Her relationships with her husband and her children improved.*

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### GROUP INTRODUCTION: 10 minutes

Today we're going to talk about nurturing our children. Many parents are determined not to raise their children as they were raised, but are not sure how to help their children feel loved and cared for. Simple things like holding infants during feedings, hugging and soothing your children by holding them, following a daily schedule, eating together, planning family activities, praising good behavior, and being consistent with discipline can help you and your children feel close and safe.

- How do you feel about this topic?
- Do you have experiences related to this topic that you'd like to share before we get started?

## READ AND DISCUSS STORY: 15 + 30 minutes

Read the story out loud as a group. Help participants recognize the writer's emotions and coping mechanisms and their own. Go back over important moments in the story and ask the participants about how they've handled similar experiences:

| STORY MOMENT   | DISCUSSION QUESTION   |
|--|---|
| In treatment, Sandra learns about children's needs.  | What have you been surprised to learn about children since becoming a parent?                         |
| Sandra finds that keeping her children on a schedule is a form of nurturing.                               | How do you communicate to your children that they can count on you to take care of their daily needs? |
| Sandra spends more time holding and hugging her children and giving them attention and praise.             | What little things help you and your children feel good about being together?                         |
| Parenting classes and one-on-one support help Sandra feel confident after she returns home from treatment. | How does your confidence in yourself as a parent affect how you treat your children?                  |
| Sandra's social worker gives her ongoing support.  | Who in your life could or does support you in being a positive parent?                                |

## JOURNAL TIME: 15-30 minutes

By writing in their journals, participants can more deeply reflect on their own experiences. Hand out the "Journal Reflections" worksheet and give participants time to write. They can share their responses with the group or in pairs, or after the workshop with a peer, family member, therapist or other important person in their lives.

NAME:

DATE:

**JOURNAL REFLECTIONS: A Second Chance** by Sandra Evans

It can be difficult to feel close and connected to your children when you're busy and tired, yet pushing your children away can also make their behavior worse, as they whine, act demanding, or misbehave to get your attention. Sandra learned to use firm discipline but also to hold, praise and spend time having fun with her children.

Take some time to reflect on your strengths as a parent and new ways that you could nurture your children.

1. What are some activities that you enjoy doing with your children?

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2. What are some times each day when your children can count on having your attention?

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3. What are some ways that you soothe your children when they are upset?

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OVER 

4. How do you show your children that you're proud of their behavior?

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### **ACTION STEPS**

Sandra finds that her children do well when they follow a predictable schedule each day, including meals and activities together. Write down 2-3 ways that you could give your children both more structure and more nurturing.

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

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### **A SUPPORTIVE CONNECTION**

I plan to get support and encouragement by talking about my reflections and action steps with:

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