

# IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- People Bingo
- Some of Both
- Make Them Work for You
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will recognize that each individual has personal strengths.

Students will identify their individual strengths and weaknesses.

Students will identify ways in which they can use their weaknesses to their advantage.

### Materials Needed

- Two copies of the “Bingo” activity sheet for each student (Parts I and II)

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**Starter (3 minutes)**

Ask for a volunteer to play a quick game of catch. Tell the volunteer that they may use only one hand to catch. Gently toss a balled-up piece of paper to the student. Then, ask them the following questions:

- Which hand did you use to catch the paper?
- Why did you use this hand rather than the other one? (If the student replies that they are right- or left-handed, ask what this means.)
- If one of your hands is dominant, or stronger, does this mean that your other hand is useless or worthless? Why or why not?

Remind students that everyone has strengths. Point out that everyone also has some weaknesses; however, just like the less dominant hand, weaknesses do not need to be obstacles. Tell students that they will identify their individual strengths and will explore the relationship between strengths and weaknesses.

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**Part I People Bingo (15 minutes)**

Purpose: Students recognize their individual strengths by playing a game involving group interaction.

**1. Students listen to the game's directions.**

Distribute copies of the "Bingo" activity sheet, and allow time for students to review it. Then, give the following directions:

- Move around the room and ask each of your classmates to sign their name in a square that describes one of their strengths. For example, if a square reads "knows how to swim," find a classmate who knows how to swim and ask them to sign that square.
- Your goal is to get bingo. That means that you must fill five squares in a row with names. Completed rows may read across, down, or diagonally.
- A person's name cannot be in any winning row more than once.
- When you have filled a row with signatures, call out, "Bingo!"
- If you sign your name to something, you may be asked to prove it.
- You have five minutes to play.

**2. Students play the game.**

Tell students to begin, allowing them to move freely around the room. After five minutes, quickly poll the class to see how many students are just one square away from bingo. Decide whether to allow an additional minute or two before ending the game.

### 3. Students discuss the activity.

Ask students if they found it difficult to get signatures for the various squares. As volunteers respond, encourage them to support their responses with details and examples. Allow students to challenge one another. For example, if a student has signed their name to the square that reads “speaks more than one language,” the student may be asked to say a few words in another tongue. This often allows students a chance to show off their strengths, and further encourages the class to build trust and a positive rapport.

Summarize the discussion by observing that the activity sheet has 24 different squares on it, each listing a different skill or strength. Point out that everyone has strengths, which is why each student was able to sign their name to at least one square.

In the event a student claims that they felt unable to sign any square on the sheet, remind the class that it’s impossible to measure all of the skills and strengths that people have—the sheet listed only 24, which is a small number. If pressed, tell the student that they kept the commitment to be in class today, and that keeping commitments is a very valuable strength.

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## Part II Some of Both (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students will identify their individual strengths and weaknesses.

### 1. Students identify their personal strengths.

Distribute new copies of the “Bingo” activity sheet. Ask students to reread each square and to consider whether it lists one of their strengths or traits. If so, have them write their name in the square. If not, ask them to put an X across the square.

Point out that students have begun to identify personal strengths. Allow time for students to add additional squares across the bottom of the chart, indicating other strengths or skills they have.

### 2. Students identify their personal weaknesses.

Explain that even the most talented, respected people have weaknesses or areas in which they don’t excel. Share a weakness of your own with the class; perhaps you are not a great speller, you can’t carry a tune, or you have trouble memorizing things. Write your example on the board.

Invite volunteers to provide examples of their personal weaknesses. Write their responses on the board. If students have difficulty offering examples, refer them to the boxes they left blank on the second “Bingo” activity sheet. The list of weaknesses needs to include only a few examples.

Tell students to use the backs of their activity sheets to list some of their weaknesses.

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### Part III Make Them Work for You (5 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify ways to use weaknesses to their advantage.

#### 1. Students explore how to turn weaknesses into strengths.

Refer to the list on the board, and challenge students to convert these weaknesses into strengths. Model the thinking process for them by addressing your own example first. For example, you might say, "I'm a poor speller, so I have to proofread carefully. But when I proofread, I usually catch other mistakes, too. This makes my writing stronger than it might be if I were a good speller."

Ensure that students understand the technique of changing one's attitudes in order to convert a weakness into a strength. Explain that this technique will be useful throughout their lives. Provide examples of situations in which converting a weakness into a strength is especially useful (e.g., when being teased, during an interview).

#### 2. Students continue brainstorming in small groups.

Encourage students to brainstorm ways that one of the weaknesses listed on the board can be restated as a strength. If students cannot reasonably convert a weakness, focus the discussion on identifying ways to overcome it.

When the brainstorming session is complete, divide the class into groups of four or five. Explain that within each group, students should brainstorm ways to convert the weaknesses each student has listed on the back of their activity sheet. Remind students that if they cannot find ways to convert a weakness into a strength, they should brainstorm ways to overcome it.

Suggest that each group appoint a volunteer to take notes on the strategies created to address their individual weaknesses.

#### 3. Students share their strategies.

Invite a volunteer from each group to share some strategies that the group developed. Be sure to affirm students' efforts and to encourage supporting ideas from other students.

Conclude the discussion by pointing out that knowing what you're not good at is actually a real strength. Successful people focus on doing what they do best, and make sure to work with others who are strong in the areas in which they are weak. That way, everyone is doing what they do best.

Give examples of this strategy, such as the following:

- Actors often work with business advisors who are paid to manage their finances efficiently.
- Athletes work with coaches who are talented at strategizing.
- Doctors specialize in a particular area and work with other specialists to treat patients most effectively.

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### Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students if this process was easy or difficult. Ask them to name a few of their classmates' strengths. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Everyone has strengths. It's important to identify your own strengths so that you can focus on using them.
- Everyone also has weaknesses. It's important to identify your weaknesses so you can create strategies for overcoming them or using them to your advantage.
- Successful, respected people can always identify both their strengths and their weaknesses. It's what enables them to focus on doing what they do best, and to work with others who have strengths in areas in which they are weak.

### Student Assessment

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1. Why is it important to be aware of your own strengths?
2. List three of your personal strengths (or three things that you are good at).
3. What are some ways you can turn a weakness into a strength?

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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**Quote:** “Once we know our weaknesses they cease to do us any harm.” —Georg C. Lichtenberg

**Activity:** Have students rewrite this piece of wisdom in their own words, as if passing it on to a friend or classmate.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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**Activity:** Have volunteers who excel at jumping rope prepare and “perform” the poem “Jumping Double Dutch” (activity sheet #3) for the class. Help students use their bingo cards to divide the class into other groups of experts. Have each group write and perform a poem, chant, or cheer to celebrate their area of expertise.

### Writing in Your Journal

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**Activity:** Have students write a one-minute sales pitch or want ad (100 words or less) describing their skills, interests, and experiences. Remind students to use lively, positive language. Have students share their first drafts with a partner for feedback before presenting their pitches/ads to the class.

### Using Technology

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**Activity:** Have students create business cards on a computer, choosing a logo and slogan that characterize their strengths. (Specify in advance if it’s okay for them to include phone numbers/emails.) Have students share their work in small groups, explaining their choices of words and designs.

## Homework

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**Activity:** Have students interview an adult they admire about something they considers a weakness, and how they have compensated for it or used it as an advantage. Have students summarize their findings in a paragraph. Have the class discuss what they've learned. Create a chart of strategies for compensating for weaknesses.

## Additional Resources

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**Activity:** Have students read *Freak the Mighty*, by Rodman Philbrick, or watch the movie based on the novel (*The Mighty*). Discuss the relationship between the main characters—oversized, learning disabled Max and physically disabled, genius Kevin. Have students list the strengths of each young man, and describe how they helped each other compensate for their respective weaknesses.

# JUMPING DOUBLE DUTCH

BY LINDAMICHELEBARON

*We can double dutch turn,  
turning jumps into dance.  
Our steps are serious.  
We don't make them up by chance.*

*Some think jumping is a game.  
Jumping rope is more than that.  
Watch us tumble fast and agile,  
jumping sidewalk acrobats.*

*We can double dutch dance.  
We can double dutch sing.  
We can double dutch do about anything.*

*Double ten, twenty, thirty...  
keeping count to the beat.  
If you want to see us miss, if I were you,  
I'd take a seat.*

From *The Sun Is On* by Lindamichellebaron. Reprinted with permission of the author.



# BINGO

Is good at math	Always works hard	Likes to join in activities	Can organize anything	Can write computer code
Speaks more than one language	Tells great stories and jokes	Is a good speller	Plays a team sport	Likes to read
Knows how to swim	Can play a musical instrument		Has a good memory	Is good at building or making things
Likes to make charts and graphs	Likes to figure out how things work	Likes to write	Likes to be in plays	Likes to help others
Is a good cook	Keeps a personal diary or journal	Likes to design posters and murals	Is a good artist	Is a great dancer

# WHAT IS OVERCOMING OBSTACLES?

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- Identifying Obstacles
- A Day in a Life
- A Day in My Life
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will identify the specific skills they will learn and practice through the Overcoming Obstacles course.

Students will recognize how they will apply these skills to their everyday lives.

### Materials Needed

- One copy of the “Table of Contents” activity sheet for each student (Parts I–III)
- One copy of the “A Day in a Life” activity sheet for each student (Parts II and III)
- Slips of paper with job titles students might hold in the future (Part III)
- A hat (Part III)

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**Starter (3 minutes)**

Invite students to make a list of activities they enjoy doing that require practice to do well (e.g., playing a sport or musical instrument, ballet, tap dancing). Read the following scenario out loud:

At band practice, your teacher only talks about the song you're learning, but does so without explaining what he is doing. You're expected to learn by listening and watching. You never play an instrument until the day of the first concert.

Ask students to comment on the effectiveness of this method of learning. Ask students how well they think they'd do when asked to perform without practicing first. (Students might respond: although you might learn some fundamentals, you can't learn just by watching; you need to practice to improve your technique; you need to know where your skills are weak so you know what to work on.)

Point out that for many of the most important skills we need in life, we don't always get sufficient practice before we're expected to demonstrate them. Often, they are skills we learn by watching others, which students have determined is not the best way to learn. Invite the class to suggest what some of these life skills might be. If students are unsure, explain that this lesson will help them identify these skills and how they apply to students' lives now and in the future.

Explain to students that the Overcoming Obstacles course will give them an opportunity to learn and to practice skills they need to succeed in school, at home, in their communities, and on the job.

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**Part I Identifying Obstacles (10 minutes)**

Purpose: Students analyze the program title "Overcoming Obstacles" by identifying common obstacles in daily life.

**1. Students define "obstacle" and explore options for dealing with obstacles.**

Write "obstacle" on the board. Ask students to define the word. Relate the word to concrete experiences. Ask students to visualize a time when they were driving, hiking, or riding a bike and came upon something that was an obstacle to continuing on their way. Ask, "What did you do about the obstacle?" Invite students to share their experiences and solutions, such as moving the object, going around it, or finding an alternative route to reach their destination.

Explain to students that while they are likely to encounter such physical obstacles, they are just as likely to experience many "life obstacles," some of which can be very damaging. Brainstorm with students examples of these life obstacles, such as emotional roadblocks that they encounter in their relationships with friends and family members. For example, have students identify an obstacle that may occur between friends that must be overcome for the friendship to continue. Write their responses on the board.

## **2. Students review the table of contents for the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum and define “life skills.”**

Distribute copies of the “Table of Contents” activity sheet to students and have them review it (or have them access the activity sheet through their electronic devices). Explain to students that the table of contents lists skills that they will be developing and practicing in this class. Encourage students to comment on what is covered in the curriculum and why these topics are called life skills. Have students define the phrase “life skills.”

## **3. Students anticipate the benefits of the Overcoming Obstacles course.**

Ask students to consider why this course is called Overcoming Obstacles. Refer students to the list of obstacles they’ve identified on the board. Invite volunteers to suggest ways that the particular skills they’ll be learning can help them find ways around life’s obstacles, just as they’d find a way around a fallen tree or a concrete barrier in their path.

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## **Part II A Day in a Life (20 minutes)**

Purpose: Students explore the relevance of the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum by analyzing the activities and life skills that are part of a fictional student’s day.

### **1. Students review a fictional student’s day.**

Have students work in pairs. Either give each student a copy of the “A Day in a Life” activity sheet or share electronically. Review the sheet with students to be sure they understand that it is the schedule for a fictional student, Camilla Juarez. Tell students that they will also need the “Table of Contents” activity sheet.

Explain that most of our daily activities are a series of actions and decisions. Waking up in the morning, for example, requires deciding what hour to get up in order to get to school or a job on time and remembering to set the alarm the night before.

### **2. Students analyze which life skills are used by a fictional character.**

Ask students to analyze Camilla’s day. Next to each activity, they should list skills from the “Table of Contents” activity sheet that are relevant to that activity. If students are unsure about the specific content of some lessons, have them make their best guess. Suggest that they focus on the skills that may result in more positive outcomes for Camilla.

Ask students to share the specific skills they listed for each of Camilla’s activities. Encourage discussion about the kinds of obstacles Camilla is facing on this particular day. Have them predict how practicing the skills that Overcoming Obstacles offers could help Camilla overcome her challenges and obstacles.

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**Part III A Day in My Life (20 minutes)**

Purpose: Students explore the relevance of the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum by analyzing how the skills it offers are useful in their own lives.

**1. Students recognize how the life skills they will learn through Overcoming Obstacles apply to their daily activities.**

Have students repeat the previous activity, this time working alone and substituting activities in their own lives for Camilla's. Have students list on a sheet of paper 10 activities in their daily schedule. They may include some of the same activities from the "A Day in a Life" activity sheet but should also include at least two specific issues that they are dealing with at this time (e.g., getting a better grade on the next math test).

Ask students to jot down notes for each activity identifying the skills from the "Table of Contents" activity sheet that they would use to successfully complete it. Have them comment on how applying the skills they will develop through the Overcoming Obstacles course will help them to become more successful.

Invite students to share examples of ways in which the skills they will learn through Overcoming Obstacles apply to their own lives. Suggest that students save their notes and responses to this activity. As they progress through the curriculum, they can return to their notes from this discussion to check how their mastery of the life skills they are learning is deepening.

**2. Students identify skills that will prepare them for potential obstacles that may arise on the job.**

Give the class one minute to arrange themselves into small groups of three to five students. Place the slips of paper with the job titles in a hat. Pass the hat around and have each student draw one slip.

Have students work in their groups to identify the jobs they have drawn, name obstacles they might face in those jobs, and identify life skills they will develop in this class that could help them overcome those obstacles. Encourage students to help each other identify obstacles and relevant life skills.

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## Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to name some of the skills they will learn in this course. Elicit from students the following key points that were taught in this lesson:

- The Overcoming Obstacles course is about the life skills that are relevant to success at home, at school, with peers, and on the job.
- The Overcoming Obstacles course allows students to learn and practice these skills, helping them to overcome obstacles in their daily lives.
- The Overcoming Obstacles curriculum is relevant to students' lives now and in the future as adults.

## Student Assessment

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1. Describe an obstacle you have faced in your life. What skills helped you overcome this obstacle?
2. What skills would you most like to learn in this course?

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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**Quote:** “Practice makes perfect.” —Pablo Casals, world-famous cellist who practiced six hours a day

**Activity:** Have students write about why they think Casals practiced every day. As a class, discuss why it is important for students to practice the life skills they will learn through the Overcoming Obstacles course.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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**Activity:** Ask students to make a pie chart that shows how they allot their time in a typical day. Have students identify the relevant skills they use during each activity represented on the chart.

### Writing in Your Journal

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**Activity:** Introduce students to the idea of a journal (if needed). Discuss the importance of writing down thoughts and feelings. Ask students to begin a journal with the following question: “What does Overcoming Obstacles mean to you?” Have students discuss what they have written with a partner.

### Using Technology

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**Activity:** Ask students to research a profession of their choice on the internet. Ask them to identify the relevant life skills needed for that job. Have students write the skills on an index card and share their work with the class.

### Homework

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**Activity:** Ask students to interview adults about their jobs. Students should find out which life skills the adults use on the job, how they learned these skills, and why these skills are important. Have students compare the responses they receive with the “Table of Contents” activity sheet.

## Additional Resources

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**Activity:** Have students read sections of *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank or *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou. Have students identify the obstacles the people in these books faced and how they overcame those obstacles.



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# A DAY IN A LIFE

Camilla Juarez is a high school senior. The following are the activities she has planned for today.

Where	Time	Activity	Related Overcoming Obstacles Lessons
Home	6:15 AM	1. Wake up.	
	6:25 AM	2. Take a shower and get dressed.	
	6:45 AM	3. Eat breakfast.	
	6:55 AM	4. Get books and papers together for school.	
	7:00 AM	5. Leave for school.	
	7:00 PM	6. Complete homework.	
	8:00 PM	7. Decide how to spend or save my paycheck.	
	8:30 PM	8. Try to find a different job.	
School	7:45 AM	1. Meet with Mr. Jones to ask if I can retake the test.	
	9:00 AM	2. Take notes in history class.	
	11:30 AM	3. Talk to Jack at lunch about the argument we had yesterday.	
	1:00 PM	4. Complete science project with my group.	
Work	2:45 PM	1. Catch a bus to work.	
	3:00 PM	2. Check supplies inventory before my shift starts.	
	5:30 PM	3. Speak to my boss about the raise that was promised.	

# SETTING EXPECTATIONS

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- What You Put In Is What You Get Out
- Building Cooperation
- Overcoming Obstacles Bill of Rights
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will recognize that their active participation is critical to their getting the most from the Overcoming Obstacles course.

Students will identify the challenges and benefits of working with other students in a group.

Students will recognize the need to cooperate with and respect other class members as they master life skills together.

Students will identify a set of rights that promote cooperation and respect in the Overcoming Obstacles classroom.

### Materials Needed

- 15 sheets of newspaper for each group (Part II)
- About three feet of masking tape for each group (Part II)
- Chart paper and a marker (Part III)

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**Starter (2 minutes)**

Ask students if they have ever seen a preview for a movie that seemed interesting. Ask whether they went to see the movie when it opened. If so, find out if the movie was better than they thought it would be. Was it worse? Did it meet their expectations?

Tell students that this lesson is about setting expectations and that they will discuss as a class what to expect from the lessons, from the teacher, and from one another.

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**Part I What You Put In Is What You Get Out (10 minutes)**

Purpose: Students identify what they expect from the Overcoming Obstacles course and why their active participation is required to meet those expectations.

**1. Students identify their expectations for this class.**

Remind students that the previous lesson provided an overview of what they'll be learning in the Overcoming Obstacles course. Ask students to write down their expectations. Offer examples such as the following:

- I'll learn to make better decisions.
- I'll learn how to use my time more efficiently.

**2. Students discuss how they will acquire life skills.**

Remind students of the discussion in the previous lesson about the best way to learn a song for a concert. Ask students to recall their conclusions about the best way to develop new skills. (Students should mention that it's best to learn by doing and practicing.)

Ask students to review their expectations and to consider how well they'll meet those expectations if they don't practice the skills. Ask students how well they will succeed if they only sit in their seats and listen to you talk and watch others develop these life skills. Encourage discussion.

Conclude by emphasizing that Overcoming Obstacles is a course about life. Explain that you will help every student relate the skills and activities to their own life, but it's ultimately up to each student to practice the skills in order to master them.

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**Part II Building Cooperation (20 minutes)**

Purpose: Students demonstrate the benefits of group work and the importance of cooperation to group success.

### **1. Students identify the importance of learning how to work with others.**

Ask, “Why is it important for you to be able to work as part of a group?” Point out to students that as young people now and later as adults, they will often be required to work in groups or teams. Explain to students that group activities will be a frequently occurring format in the Overcoming Obstacles course and that the course will teach them skills that will enable them to function well as part of a team. Tell students that you expect them to work cooperatively.

### **2. Students participate in a cooperative group activity.**

Divide the class into groups of four or five students. Have students arrange their desks to create an open work space for each group. Distribute 15 sheets of newspaper and three feet of masking tape to each group.

Give the groups the following directions:

- Please don't start until I tell you to do so.
- Using only the materials I gave out, you will have 10 minutes to build the highest freestanding tower you can.
- The tower cannot be taped to the desks or to the floor. It must stand on its own.

Answer any questions students may have, then instruct them to begin. Circulate through the room, observing group interactions and noting conversations and comments. Watch for evidence of both cooperation and dissension.

### **3. Students reflect on the experience.**

When 10 minutes have passed, check students' results and involve all groups in a discussion of the experience. Ask the groups to describe how they built their tower and why they think they were or weren't successful. Share your observations and encourage students to elaborate on what took place. Ask for examples of how all team members contributed. Allow students to discuss, in respectful terms, any tensions that developed.

Give each group two to three minutes to summarize what they learned from the experience. Offer questions such as the following for guidance:

- What is easy about working with others?
- What is difficult?
- Why is cooperation necessary?
- What will your group do differently the next time you work together?

Ask the groups to share their summaries. Have them describe what it is like to work as a team and how to improve cooperation in the future. Write their responses on the board.

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**Part III Overcoming Obstacles Bill of Rights (20 minutes)**

Purpose: Students work together to establish guidelines and expectations for the class.

**1. Students recall their expectations for the class.**

Point out that so far, students have stated their expectations for the course, and you have stated your expectation of how students will work together cooperatively in groups. Explain that students also have a right to expect certain treatment and behavior from fellow students in this class.

**2. Students discuss the purpose of rules.**

Ask students to name some school rules and to suggest reasons why these rules are in place. Affirm that rules are designed not just to stop negative behavior, but to protect the rights of those who behave appropriately.

**3. Students create a classroom bill of rights.**

Have students identify the document that guarantees individual rights in the United States. (Students should mention the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the Constitution.)

Have students read the Bill of Rights (available at [www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript](http://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript)). Have students review the document and describe its characteristics. Write student responses on the board. Guide students to focus on the document's language, format, and structure, as well as its content. (Students might respond: the date and place are written at the top of the document, the first sentence tells why Americans need the document, the language is formal.)

Divide students into pairs. Have them create a bill of rights for this class that's patterned after this important document. Remind them that their bill of rights should protect the right of every class member to be treated with respect, to voice different opinions, to expect confidentiality when sharing personal experiences, and to be considered a valued member of the group. Guide them in coming to an agreement on 10 basic rights. Write them on chart paper.

When the list is complete, have students come forward to sign the document. Post the bill of rights on a bulletin board for the duration of the course. Remind students that this document will be referred to frequently in this class. It provides a statement of mutual understandings about respectful behavior that will be expected from all members of the class.

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**Conclusion (3 minutes)**

Ask students to explain the relationship between participating in class and learning. Elicit from students the following key points that were taught in this lesson:



- Each student is responsible for giving the most to and getting the most from the content taught in this course.
- Students will work together in groups in this course, so they must know how to cooperate with others.
- The bill of rights will remind students of how they expect to be treated and how others expect to be treated by them.

## Student Assessment

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1. List three advantages and three disadvantages of working with others in a group.
2. List five examples of times when people must work together in a group or as a team.
3. What skills are necessary for people to work well together?

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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**Quote:** “History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heartbreaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats.” —B. C. Forbes

**Activity:** Ask students to choose and research a person who has overcome obstacles. Have students write at least three paragraphs on the obstacles the person overcame and prepare a two-minute presentation.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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**Activity:** Have students create the following lists:

1. List your expectations for school.
2. List your responsibilities.
3. List experiences you would like to have (e.g., skydiving).
4. List the skills you hope to learn.
5. List what you hope to learn about yourself and others.

Ask students to share one item from each list.

### Writing in Your Journal

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**Activity:** Ask students to write a letter to themselves. Have them include their expectations for school, events or experiences they are looking forward to, special memories, and first impressions of the year. Discuss writing letters to yourself as a technique for staying focused on your dreams and keeping yourself “in check.”

## Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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**Activity:** Divide students into small groups. Have each group perform two role plays, one showing a classroom that does not follow the bill of rights the class made and another showing a class that does. Discuss the importance of following the classroom bill of rights.

## Homework

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**Activity:** Have students keep a list of the obstacles and challenges they face over the next three days. At the end of the three days, have them note next to each obstacle which skills from the “Table of Contents” activity sheet can help them overcome that obstacle. Have volunteers share the skills they most look forward to learning through this course.

## Additional Resources

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**Activity:** Have students review *The Secret of Success Is Not a Secret: Stories of Famous People Who Persevered* by Darcy Andries or *Top Performance: How to Develop Excellence in Yourself and Others* by Zig Ziglar. Ask students to choose and discuss five key ideas from one of the books.

# COMMUNICATING CONSTRUCTIVELY

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- Easy Talk, Tough Talk
- I-Messages
- Controlled Debate
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will explore what makes some conversations easy and others difficult.

Students will develop techniques to communicate their feelings and encourage open dialogue in difficult situations.

Students will practice communicating in a constructive manner, even when they disagree.

### Materials Needed

- One copy of the “I-Messages” activity sheet and one copy of the “Vocabulary of Feelings” activity sheet for each student (Part II)
- One copy of the “Topics for a Controlled Debate” activity sheet (Part III)
- Activity rules written on the board, a transparency, or a piece of poster paper (Part III)

**Starter (3 minutes)**

Write the following list where everyone can see: talking on the telephone, joking with friends, conversing with an adult, quarreling with a sibling, asking to borrow money, discussing a homework assignment. Ask students what all of these conversations have in common. (All require verbal communication.)

On a scale of one to five, with five being extremely important and one being not important at all, ask students to rank the importance of verbal communication in their daily lives. (Most students will rank communication high.)

Ask for a show of hands to check the students' rankings from one to five. Write their rankings where everyone can see.

Explain that verbal communication is very important. Ask whether students believe that some types of verbal communication are more difficult than others. Explain that this lesson will help them make difficult conversations easier and more effective.

**Part I Easy Talk, Tough Talk (10 minutes)**

Purpose: Students explore what makes some conversations easy while others are more difficult.

**1. Students classify conversations as easy, average, or difficult.**

Instruct students to take out a piece of paper and fold it into three columns. Have them title the left column "Easy," the middle column "Average," and the right column "Difficult."

Explain that this activity will have them classify different conversations according to their difficulty. Ask them to list, for example, a conversation with a close friend about what to wear to a party (easy), a telephone conversation to schedule a dentist appointment (average), and a request to a boss for a raise (difficult).

Divide the class into pairs. Tell students that they have three minutes to list as many examples of verbal communication in each column as they can think of. Tell them that their goal is to have at least three examples in each column. If needed, prompt students by asking questions such as the following:

- Think about conversations you have had with your parents. Are some more comfortable than others?
- How would you rank conversations with members of the opposite sex?
- Where would you rank confrontations with peers?
- How do you feel about conversations with teachers?

While students are writing, draw the three columns in a place where everyone can see.

When the three minutes are up, ask volunteers to fill in the columns on the board. Discuss which conversations are easy, which are average, and which are difficult.

## **2. Students analyze what makes some conversations easy and others difficult.**

Ask students to form groups of four to five. Have each group select a note taker/reporter. Tell the groups that their task is to determine what makes certain conversations easy and others difficult. Allow about three minutes for the discussion.

## **3. Students recognize that difficult conversations often involve strong emotions.**

Call on each group to share its analysis with the rest of the class. Write important points where everyone can see. Reinforce observations that difficult conversations often involve conflict. They may arouse emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, insecurity, and hurt feelings, while easy conversations tend to evoke more positive emotions. There may also be some risk in a difficult conversation, like the possibility of rejection.

Explain that an awareness of each party's emotions can help make a difficult conversation easier.

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## **Part II I-Messages (10 minutes)**

Purpose: Students use an activity sheet to develop techniques to communicate their feelings and encourage open dialogue in difficult situations.

### **1. Students learn the purpose of an I-Message.**

Say, "An I-Message is a technique you can use to express yourself when you are upset or angry that will lead to open discussion and will not escalate conflict. When you use an I-Message, people are more willing to listen to you and respond to your requests without becoming defensive. I-Messages encourage discussion and help reduce friction."

Explain how an I-Message works:

- Tell students that an I-Message begins with a statement of feelings (e.g., "I feel afraid, tense, worried...").
- It is followed by a statement of what the problem is (e.g., "...when you don't take out the garbage, when you are late picking me up, when you skip class...").
- An I-Message ends with your reasons for feeling the way you do. It tells how the observed behavior affects you, and it avoids using the word "you."

Provide students with a sample I-Message. Say, “I feel tense when you ditch English class because I can’t ignore your absences, and attending English class is a requirement for graduation.”

## 2. Students create their own I-Messages.

Distribute the “I-Messages” activity sheet and the “Vocabulary of Feelings” activity sheet to students.

Tell students that they are going to write their own I-Messages. Explain the proper format for filling out the “I-Messages” activity sheet:

- Line 1: By beginning with “I feel...” students explain their feelings and do not accuse the other person. Though students may feel mad or angry, they should not use “mad,” “angry,” or other aggressive or accusatory words on this line because such words do not encourage dialogue. Students should use the “Vocabulary of Feelings” activity sheet to find words other than “mad” or “angry” to describe how they feel. Remind them to avoid using the word “you.”
- Line 2: This line should be a description of what the other person does that upsets the student. It should describe the other person’s specific action, but not label or accuse the person. For example, students should write “when you don’t return my things” (describes the action). Students should not write “when you are inconsiderate” (broadly labels the person). Lead students to the understanding that when a person acts in a way that seems inconsiderate, it is the specific behavior that is causing the negative feeling; that person is not always inconsiderate.
- Line 3: This line should explain in detail why the student is feeling how they are feeling. For example, a student might write “because they are important to me.” This line explains the importance of the action or behavior to the other person.

Instruct students to fill out the remaining I-Messages on their activity sheets.

## 3. Students discuss their I-Messages.

When students have completed the activity sheet, ask them to share their I-Messages with the class.

Discuss the value of I-Messages by asking the following questions:

- Why are I-Messages a valuable tool for communication?
- When could you use an I-Message?

Remind students that when their sentences begin with “I,” they are not accusing the other person, and the other person will not become defensive. I-Messages allow students to express how they feel, encourage open discussion, and can help resolve a conflict quickly and easily.

You may wish to tell students that using I-Messages is an important skill that requires practice. It takes a while to get used to wording feelings this way. It is important to understand the technique and practice using it. Over time, using I-Messages will become natural.

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**Part III Controlled Debate (25 minutes)**

Purpose: Students participate in a controlled debate to practice communicating in a constructive manner, even when they disagree.

**1. Students prepare the classroom for the activity.**

Have students arrange all of the classroom chairs in two rows that face each other. Students will be moving back and forth between the rows, so make sure that there are no obstacles to block them.

**2. Students choose the topic for the controlled debate.**

The debate topic can be an issue discussed in class, or you can choose another topic of interest to students. Consider presenting students with a choice from among four controversial topics that are relevant to their lives, using the “Topics for a Controlled Debate” activity sheet.

Write each topic as a statement where everyone can see. To the right of the statements, create two columns labeled “Agree” and “Disagree.” Write the number of students who agree and disagree with each statement. The best topic for the debate is the topic that has the most even split between those who agree and those who disagree.

**3. Students prepare for the debate.**

Have all students who agree with the statement sit in one row of chairs and all students who disagree sit in the other row.

Refer students to the rules of the debate that you have previously written:

- Only one person may speak at a time.
- Speakers from the two sides will alternate.
- To make a point, raise your hand.
- Do not raise your hand until the person who is speaking is finished.
- If someone on the opposing team makes a point you agree with, get out of your seat and move to the other row. This does not mean that you have changed your mind about the debate topic; it means that you agree with that one point.
- Move back to your original side when someone on your team makes a point with which you agree.

**4. Students engage in the controlled debate.**

Begin the debate by flipping a coin to determine which team begins. Remind students to use the techniques of effective verbal communication (including active listening) that they have learned.

Explain that the debate will last 10 minutes.



The following are some suggestions for facilitating this activity:

- It is important that you act only as a referee and avoid offering your opinion.
- If students stray from the topic, help them bring the discussion back to the debate.
- Enforce the rules, allowing only one student to talk at a time, calling only on students who wait until others finish talking before raising their hands, and encouraging students to change sides when strong points are made by the opposing team.
- Remind students that agreeing with a specific point (and therefore changing sides) does not mean that the student has completely changed their mind on the topic. It signifies that they are able to see the merit of a point made by the opposing side.
- Ensure that students remain respectful of each other's opinions.

Keep the class apprised of the time remaining in the debate.

### 5. Students discuss the debate experience.

When 10 minutes have passed, have students remain in the rows and ask them the following questions:

- How was this debate different from disagreements you have in everyday life?
- What was difficult about this activity?
- How did you feel when you wanted to say something but couldn't? How about when you wanted to raise your hand, but someone else was speaking?
- Did you resist switching sides? Why? Did you have all of the information on this topic before the debate? Have any of the points you heard caused you to take a closer look at the issue? Which points did you find most effective?
- How well did you and others use techniques for good listening and good communication?
- What can you apply to "real life" from this debate?

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### Conclusion (3 minutes)

Have students discuss recent situations that could have been improved through the use of I-Messages. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Effective communication is important in people's lives.
- An awareness of both parties' emotions in a conversation can help make communication more effective.
- An I-Message is a technique that helps people to communicate when they are upset or angry, without escalating conflict.

## Student Assessment

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1. Why are some conversations more difficult than others?
2. Write three angry or accusatory statements, and then rewrite them as I-Messages.
3. List three reasons why I-Messages are often a more effective communication tool than angry or accusatory statements.

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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**Quote:** “Speech is power...to persuade, to convert, to compel.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Activity:** Have the class give examples of how speech might empower people in everyday situations.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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**Activity:** Provide students with texts of historical speeches. Have small groups of students analyze the speakers’ styles and messages. Possible subjects for analysis: historic events leading up to the speech, the audience, possible controversy, desired outcome, and notes on the historical accuracy of the text. Have groups share their analyses. Discuss the role that effective, careful communication played in the speeches.

### Writing in Your Journal

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**Activity:** Have students write about a disagreement they’ve had. Have them write a paragraph that explains the situation and an I-Message that might have helped them get their point across. Have students share their I-Messages (with identifying details omitted) in small groups, suggesting changes as needed.

### Using Technology

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**Activity:** Have students observe one segment of a television show (commercial to commercial) that includes a disagreement between characters. Have students write a summary of the scene and rewrite the dialogue using I-Messages. If desired, have students role-play their scenes for the class.

## Homework

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**Activity:** Have students read “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros (from *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*). The 11-year-old narrator of this short story is embarrassed by her teacher in front of the class. Have students write a paragraph about how the narrator might have maintained her dignity, and strategies for using I-Messages with authority figures. Discuss students’ work as a class.

## Additional Resources

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**Activity:** Have students read *Mad: How to Deal with Your Anger and Get Respect* by James J. Crist, PhD. As a class, discuss how anger can get in the way of constructive communication. Have students brainstorm ways to control their anger. Reiterate that I-Messages allow people to effectively share their anger without escalating conflict.

# I-MESSAGES

I-Messages are a great way to explain yourself when you are upset. When you use I-Messages, people are more willing to listen to you and respond to your requests without becoming defensive. I-Messages encourage open discussion and can help resolve a conflict quickly and easily.

## EXAMPLE

One of your friends often borrows things from you and doesn't return them.

I feel upset  
 when you don't return my things  
 because they are important to me.

Fill in the blanks for the following I-Messages:

1. Your closest friend is telling others about your personal life.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
 when you \_\_\_\_\_  
 because \_\_\_\_\_

2. You haven't been called on all week, even though you've raised your hand.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
 when you \_\_\_\_\_  
 because \_\_\_\_\_

3. Someone in your family keeps forgetting to give you messages.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
 when you \_\_\_\_\_  
 because \_\_\_\_\_

# VOCABULARY OF FEELINGS

## A

Afraid  
Aggressive  
Annoyed  
Anxious  
Apathetic  
Apologetic  
Apprehensive  
Ashamed  
Audacious

## B

Bashful  
Bold  
Bored  
Brave

## C

Calm  
Cautious  
Cheerful  
Comfortable  
Competent  
Confident  
Confused  
Curious  
Cynical

## D

Decisive  
Depressed  
Determined  
Disappointed  
Disapproving  
Disgusted  
Distressed

## E

Ebullient  
Ecstatic  
Embarrassed  
Energetic  
Enraged  
Enthusiastic  
Envious  
Excited  
Exhausted

## F

Friendly  
Frightened  
Frustrated

## G

Grateful  
Greedy  
Guilty

## H

Happy  
Helpless  
Hopeful  
Horrorified

## I

Impatient  
Incompetent  
Indecisive  
Indifferent  
Innocent  
Insecure  
Inspired  
Insulted  
Intimidated  
Irritated

## J

Jealous  
Joyous

## L

Lazy  
Listless  
Lonely

## M

Marvelous  
Mischievous  
Miserable  
Morose

## N

Negative  
Nervous

## O

Oblivious  
Optimistic  
Overwhelmed

## P

Paranoid  
Peaceful  
Perplexed  
Petrified  
Proud  
Puzzled

## R

Reckless  
Regretful  
Relaxed  
Restless

## S

Sad  
Satisfied  
Secure  
Serene  
Shocked  
Shy  
Silly  
Skeptical  
Sleepy  
Sluggish  
Smart  
Stimulated  
Stupefied  
Subdued  
Sullen  
Surprised  
Suspicious  
Sympathetic

## T

Tense  
Tentative  
Timid  
Tranquil  
Trusting

## U

Uncomfortable  
Undecided

## W

Wary  
Whimsical  
Worried

## Z

Zealous

# TOPICS FOR A CONTROLLED DEBATE

- Students who get in trouble with the law should be expelled.
- Healthy people should become organ donors.
- People should be banned from talking on their cell phones in public places.
- Animals should live in their natural habitats, not in zoos or circuses.
- Boys and girls should be allowed to try out for and play on any high school sports team they want, including basketball and football.
- Squirt guns, laser pointers, and other toys that look like guns should be banned from schools.
- Policies banning homework should be established in school districts.
- All schools should require uniforms.
- All students should be required to learn a foreign language.
- Athletes should be required to graduate from college before playing professional sports.
- Schools and libraries should block certain websites on computers used by high school students.
- Student government should have the power to change school policy.

# ESTABLISHING WHAT'S IMPORTANT

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- The Top 10
- Hmm, Let Me Think about That
- "To Thine Own Self Be True"
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will examine and determine their personal values.

Students will make decisions based on their values.

Students will practice resisting pressure to make decisions that are not in line with their personal values.

### Materials Needed

- One copy of the "Top 10" activity sheet for each student (Part I)



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**Starter (3 minutes)**

Ask students to identify who George Lucas is. (He is the writer and director who created Star Wars, Indiana Jones, and the sequels to those movies. He is also the founder of Industrial Light & Magic, a computer technology company that creates special effects for movies.)

Tell students that Lucas was quoted as saying, "I used to think there was nothing more important in the world than making movies, but there is...raising children is more important."

From his blockbuster films, we know that George Lucas is an accomplished filmmaker who has invested a great deal of effort in his career. However, it is reported that he also made a decision to take a 16-year break to raise his children as a single father. Point out that this decision would indicate that George Lucas values his family. Explain to students that although most people cannot afford to leave their jobs in order to raise their children as George Lucas did, everyone makes choices about their lifestyle, their values, and the priorities in their lives. This is how we establish what is most important to us.

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**Part I The Top 10 (20 minutes)**

Purpose: Students examine and determine their personal values.

**1. Students identify the people, places, and things that are important to them.**

Distribute a copy of the "Top 10" activity sheet to each student. Explain that these top 10 lists are meant to help them discover who and what is important to them. Direct students to think about what they really feel before they start writing. Tell students to list their top 10 choices for each category.

Allow students 10 minutes to complete the activity sheet.

**2. Students examine their choices and draw conclusions about their personal values.**

When students have completed the activity sheet, ask the following questions:

- Look at your top 10 list of people. Are they mostly friends or family? Are they people that you've known for a long time? Are they people you know well or admire from a distance? What qualities of character, if any, do these people share?
- Look at your top 10 list of things you like to do. Are they things you do with others or alone? Do you mostly use your body, your mind, or both to do them? Can you do them near your home, or must you travel? Do they cost a lot of money, or are they free?
- Look at your top 10 list of places. Are they near or far? Do you like to go there alone or with other people? Are they all real, or are some imaginary? Do they cost a lot of money, or are they free?
- Look at your top 10 list of things you'd like to own. What did you write down? How do these things reflect your values? If, for example, your list is filled with clothes, does this mean that you value looking good?
- Look at your top 10 list of rules to live by. What qualities of character do these rules reflect (e.g., honesty, loyalty, perseverance)?

Guide students to conclude that the people, places, and things that are important to us and the rules we live by reflect who we are and what we value. We all have things that we value, and those values affect every choice we make.

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## Part II Hmm, Let Me Think about That (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students make decisions based on their values.

### 1. Students prepare for the activity.

Explain that you will be presenting students with a series of choices. Students will make a choice and either stand up or remain seated, depending on where you point. Demonstrate how this will work by saying: "For example, I will ask if you would rather have X (point up, meaning stand up) or Y (point down, meaning remain seated)."

### 2. Students make some choices.

Ask a series of questions like the following, beginning with simple choices and moving to more difficult ones:

- Would you rather dress up or dress down?
- Would you rather be onstage or in the audience?
- Would you rather be an athlete or an artist?
- Would you rather have dinner at home with your family or go to a fast-food restaurant with friends?
- Would you rather take a long walk by yourself or be with friends?
- Would you rather be healthy but poor or sick but very rich?

### 3. Students reflect on the choices they made.

Ask students if they thought the choices became more difficult toward the end. Encourage them to explain why and tell how they finally made a decision. Explain that the decisions and choices we make are influenced by what is important to us, or what we value. Point out that everyone made different choices and that there are as many different sets of values as there are people.

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## Part III "To Thine Own Self Be True" (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students practice resisting pressure to make decisions that are not compatible with their personal values.

### 1. Students perform role plays.

Share the following quote from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "To thine own self be true." Discuss the meaning of this quote. Explain that once we know what's important to us, we must live by those values, even in the face of pressure.

Divide the class into three groups. Have each group brainstorm one of the following scenarios and act it out for the class:

- You're at a party with a popular crowd, and someone you like and want to impress is encouraging you to do drugs. What do you do?
- Someone you like has the answers to your midterm exam and is passing them around. You've been worried about passing this course—it's a tough one. There's little chance of getting caught because almost everyone who's been approached has taken the answers, so they're not likely to snitch. What do you do?
- You notice that your friends like to taunt the less-popular students at school. They want you to join in, and they tease you when you don't. What do you do?

Discuss the difficulty of maintaining your values in the face of pressure to change them. Remind students that self-respect, as well as the respect of others, is strongly tied to our values. Ask students if they think that self-respect is more important than having the respect of others. Point out that self-respect is defined by a person's own value system, while the respect of others is defined by their value systems. Since another person's value system may be different from their own, remind students again of the quote, "To thine own self be true."

## 2. Students apply what they have learned.

Have students write a paragraph describing a time when their values conflicted with the values of someone close to them. Ask volunteers to read their paragraphs out loud. Have the rest of the class suggest resolutions to the conflicts.

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## Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to name the one thing that is of paramount importance to them. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- The things you value influence everything you do.
- Decide what things you value and make choices based on them.
- Stay true to your beliefs in your actions. Make decisions that are aligned with the rules that you live by.

## Student Assessment

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1. List three values that are important to you. Explain how these values influence your actions.
2. Explain what is meant by the saying "To thine own self be true."
3. On whose values is self-respect based? What about the respect of others?

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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**Quote:** "Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value." —Albert Einstein

**Activity:** Ask, "If you were to live by your values, do you think you would be vulnerable to pressure from peers? Why? Why not?" Brainstorm with students ways to stick to their own values.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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**Activity:** Ask students to stand in the middle of the room. Label the corners of the room "strongly agree," "somewhat agree," "strongly disagree," and "somewhat disagree." Ask students questions related to values. Tell students to go to the corner that represents how they feel. Have students explain why they feel the way they do.

### Writing in Your Journal

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**Activity:** Have students write about a person who they think has values similar to their own and why they think this is the case. Discuss with students how values are formed and how values might change.

### Using Technology

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**Activity:** Watch a high school-themed movie as a class. Talk with students about the values (or lack thereof) that are represented in the film. Ask, "Are these values realistic? Do you agree with or accept the values portrayed?"

### Homework

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**Activity:** Ask students to create a "Me Bag." Students should decorate a bag or box and fill it with items that represent them and their values. Have students describe the contents of their "Me Bag."

## Additional Resources

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**Activity:** Choose a short story that emphasizes values and share it with the class. Have students choose and share their favorite quote from the story.

# TOP 10

The top 10 people in my life:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

The top 10 things I like to do:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

The top 10 places I like to go:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

# TOP 10

(CONTINUED)

The top 10 things I'd like to own:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

The top 10 rules I live by:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

The top 10 dreams I have for the future:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.



# IDENTIFYING GOALS

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- Why Goals?
- Can I Do It?
- Stepping-Stone Goals
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will recognize the importance of having goals.

Students will recognize that there are realistic and unrealistic goals.

Students will identify goals as short term, medium range, and long term.

### Materials Needed

- A physical or online dictionary (Part I)
- One copy of the “My Goals” activity sheet for each student (Part I)
- One copy of the “On Your Way” activity sheet for each student (Part III)

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**Starter (3 minutes)**

Divide the class into four groups. Tell students that each group will make a certain noise. The members of the first group will rub their hands together. People in the second group will snap their fingers continuously. Students in the third group will hit their thighs with their hands. Members of the fourth group will stomp their feet. On the count of three, have students begin making the noises until you say stop.

After about 30 seconds, stop the game and ask what the purpose of that exercise was. Ask, “Did we accomplish anything during this activity? Did we have a goal?”

Students should respond negatively to these questions. Point out that they made an effort but didn’t accomplish anything. Explain to students that having a goal can help ensure that they accomplish what is important to them.

Tell students that in the next few lessons, they will be discussing goals and the ways in which goals can help them succeed in life.

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**Part I Why Goals? (15 minutes)**

Purpose: Students identify the importance of having goals.

**1. Students define “goal.”**

Ask students to suggest meanings for the word “goal.” Have a volunteer look up “goal” in the dictionary and read the definition to the class. Have the volunteer write the definition on the board. Have students offer their own definitions and elicit from them that a goal is something a person wants to accomplish.

**2. Students identify the purpose and importance of goals.**

Tell students that they are now going to repeat the activity in the starter, but this time with the goal of making the sound of a rainstorm. Remind each group of its assigned sound. Tell students that you will point to one group at a time. When you point to a group, that group is to begin making its noise and continue until you point to the next group. Explain that when you point to a group, students should join that group in making their sound. Tell students that when you point to their group a second time, they should return to making their original sound.

Point to each group in succession, so that the noise builds and sounds like a rainstorm. Then reverse the order, so it sounds as if the rain is slowing down.

Ask students what they accomplished this time. Lead students to recognize that having a goal helped them focus and make sense out of some seemingly disconnected activities. Explain to students that having goals for what they want to accomplish in life can help them stay on track and make sense of the many activities they undertake.

### **3. Students identify their own goals.**

Distribute the “My Goals” activity sheet to students. Ask students to brainstorm their goals on the activity sheet. Remind students that a goal is something a person wants to accomplish. Use prompts to stimulate students’ thinking.

### **4. Students share their goals.**

Ask every student to share at least one of their goals. Write the goals on the board.

Tell students that goals are indispensable for their success in life. Goals are a guide and a target to work toward. Goals help people to do their best and accomplish what they want.

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## **Part II Can I Do It? (10 minutes)**

Purpose: Students recognize that there are realistic and unrealistic goals.

### **1. Students recognize realistic and unrealistic goals.**

Tell students that it is important for their goals to be realistic. Explain to students that if a goal is not realistic, they could become discouraged, but that if it is too easy, they could become bored. Lead students to recognize that a goal should be both achievable and challenging.

### **2. Students classify their personal goals as realistic or unrealistic.**

Suggest goals such as the following to students, and ask them to categorize the goals as realistic or unrealistic:

- A 14-year-old girl, interested in science, sets a goal to become a veterinarian.
- A high school senior who hasn’t worked or saved any money wants to travel to Europe during the summer after graduating from high school.
- The school principal wants all graduating seniors to go to college.

Ask students why they classified the goals as they did. Direct students to the recognition that the time frame attached to a goal is important. Tell students that each of their long-term goals should always specify a time frame in which the goal will be achieved.

Have students share their personal goals and classify them as realistic or unrealistic. They should also ensure that their goals are achievable and challenging. Remind students to think carefully about the time frames they establish.

### Part III Stepping-Stone Goals (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify goals as short term, medium range, and long term.

#### 1. Students recognize that long-term goals can be broken down into short-term and medium-range goals.

On the board, write the following: “Eat a good meal. Concentrate on math homework. Pass tests. Graduate. Study for math tests. Pass classes.” Explain to students that the goal here is to graduate from high school. Challenge students to order the events so that this goal can be achieved. Ask students to suggest an order.

Summarize the process:

- You had to eat a good meal in order to concentrate on your homework and study for your tests effectively. These are examples of short-term goals.
- By studying effectively, you were able to pass your tests and therefore pass your classes. These are examples of medium-range goals.
- Achieving those short-term goals and medium-range goals allowed you to graduate. That is a long-term goal.

#### 2. Students examine stepping-stone goals.

Tell students that the things you have to do now or soon in order to accomplish your goals are stepping-stone goals.

Explain stepping-stone goals as the following:

- **Short-term goals** are objectives that you want to achieve in a short time frame—an hour from now, today, or as far as a month away. Short-term goals can also be things you have to do along the way to reach your medium-range or long-term goals.
- **Medium-range goals** are objectives that you want to achieve that will take more time, between a month or so and a year. Medium-range goals can be achieved on the way to reaching long-term goals.
- **Long-term goals** are objectives that you want to achieve in the future, whether you hope to accomplish them a few years from now or when you are much older.

Explain to students that stepping-stone goals help us to achieve realistic goals in realistic periods of time.

### 3. Students set stepping-stone goals for themselves.

Distribute the “On Your Way” activity sheet. Tell students to choose one of the long-term goals that they identified on the “My Goals” activity sheet and write it in the top box on the “On Your Way” activity sheet.

Allow students to choose a realistic goal for themselves. Circulate the room and ensure that students have chosen appropriate long-term goals. Say to students, “Backtrack, and decide what goal you need to accomplish just before you achieve your long-term goal. Put that in the second box from the top. Continue backtracking until you identify all of the short-term goals necessary to reach the long-term goal.”

Have students complete the activity sheet. Work with students to fill in the entire staircase so that it begins with a simple, easily attainable task.

### 4. Students add deadlines to their action plan.

Point out to students that what they have developed is only the start of an action plan. Most complete action plans include some kind of time line. Tell students that they are now going to revisit their stepping-stone goals and set deadlines. Remind students to be realistic and to work backward, using their time frames for their long-term goals.

Have students add deadlines to their stepping-stone goals. Then, review with students the following steps of an action plan:

- Determine your long-term goal.
- Establish stepping-stone goals (which include short-term and medium-range goals).
- Set deadlines for completing each goal.
- Complete each step on time.
- Continue until you attain your goal.

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### Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to define short-term goals, medium-range goals, and long-term goals. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Set positive and realistic goals.
- Realistic goals are ones that you can achieve. They should not be too easy or too hard.
- Stepping-stone goals help you to achieve long-term goals.

### Student Assessment

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1. Why is it important to set goals?
2. Explain the difference between a realistic and an unrealistic goal.
3. List a long-term goal different from the one you chose in class.
4. List four short-term and four medium-range goals that you need to achieve in order to meet your long-term goal.

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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**Quote:** “The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.” –Lao Tzu

**Activity:** Explain that Thomas Edison worked on 3,000 different theories before finally inventing an efficient light bulb. Have students consider the role that failure plays in accomplishing goals. Discuss how failure can lead to discovery.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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**Activity:** Show students that making daily lists can help to remind them of tasks that they have to do that day. Have students make and keep daily lists. Have them demonstrate how they keep and use these lists. Be sure to explain that a system that works for one student may not work for another.

### Writing in Your Journal

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**Activity:** Have students write letters to themselves about where they want to be five years from now and what they would like to be doing then. Tell them to put their letters somewhere safe and to open them in five years. Have students write down their goals and their plans to reach them. Discuss students' plans as a class.

### Using Technology

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**Activity:** Have students use the internet to research how politicians reach decisions in government. Have students brainstorm the goals political figures must first identify before making such decisions.

### Homework

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**Activity:** Have students make a list of 10 things they like to do. Explain that accomplishing goals sometimes requires doing things we don't enjoy. Discuss how connecting our goals to things we enjoy doing can make accomplishing them easier.

## Additional Resources

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**Activity:** Have students read excerpts from *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller. Remind students that Helen Keller, having never heard how people speak, wrote this book by dictation. Have students discuss what they think of the book's language. Ask students if they find her message inspirational.



# MY GOALS

Career?

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Education?

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Leisure Time?

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Family?

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Home?

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Possessions?

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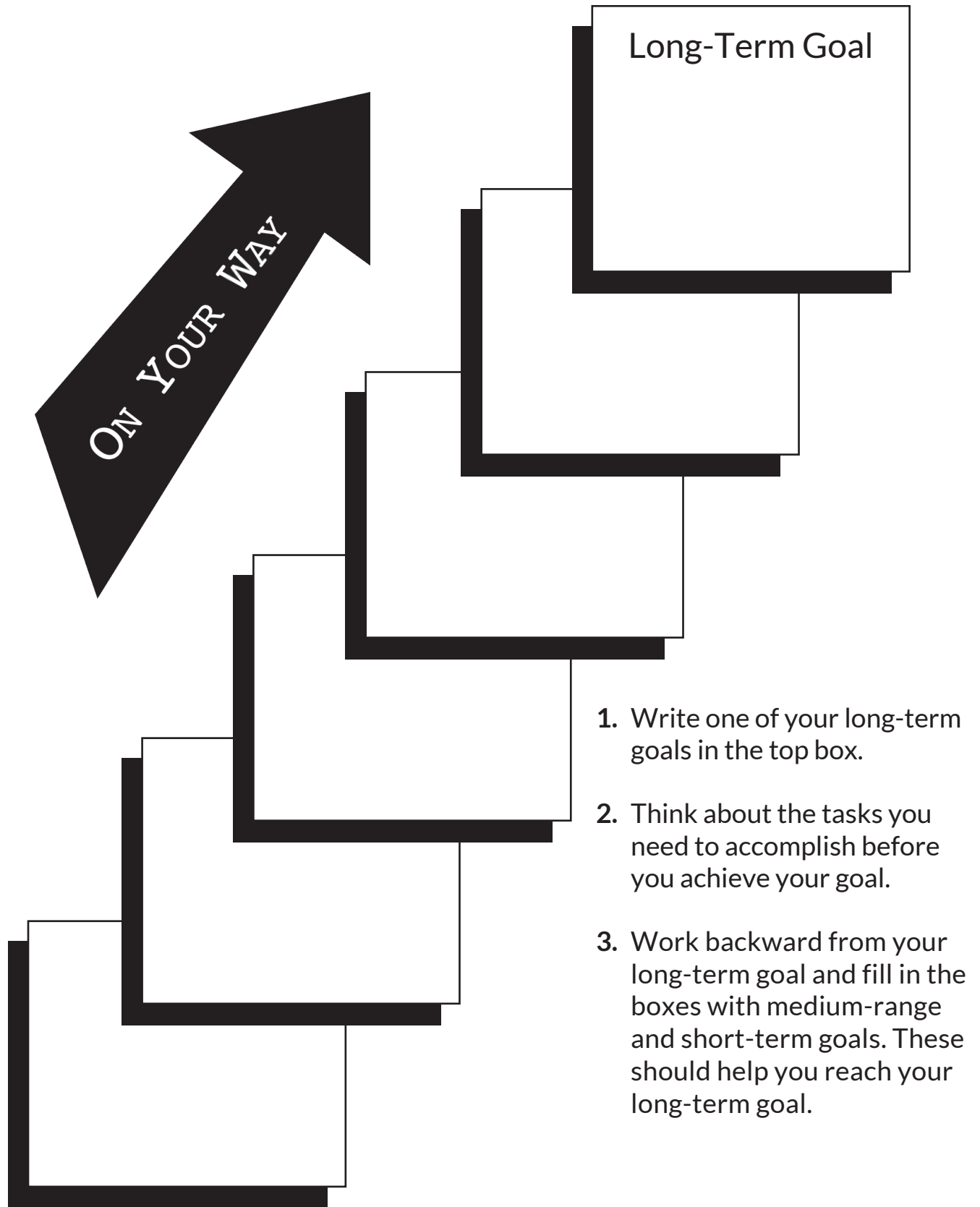
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# COMMUNICATING CONSTRUCTIVELY

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- Easy Talk, Tough Talk
- I-Messages
- Controlled Debate
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will explore what makes some conversations easy and others difficult.

Students will develop techniques to communicate their feelings and encourage open dialogue in difficult situations.

Students will practice communicating in a constructive manner, even when they disagree.

### Materials Needed

- One copy of the “I-Messages” activity sheet and one copy of the “Vocabulary of Feelings” activity sheet for each student (Part II)
- One copy of the “Topics for a Controlled Debate” activity sheet (Part III)
- Activity rules written on the board, a transparency, or a piece of poster paper (Part III)

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**Starter (3 minutes)**

Write the following list where everyone can see: talking on the telephone, joking with friends, conversing with an adult, quarreling with a sibling, asking to borrow money, discussing a homework assignment. Ask students what all of these conversations have in common. (All require verbal communication.)

On a scale of one to five, with five being extremely important and one being not important at all, ask students to rank the importance of verbal communication in their daily lives. (Most students will rank communication high.)

Ask for a show of hands to check the students' rankings from one to five. Write their rankings where everyone can see.

Explain that verbal communication is very important. Ask whether students believe that some types of verbal communication are more difficult than others. Explain that this lesson will help them make difficult conversations easier and more effective.

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**Part I Easy Talk, Tough Talk (10 minutes)**

Purpose: Students explore what makes some conversations easy while others are more difficult.

**1. Students classify conversations as easy, average, or difficult.**

Instruct students to take out a piece of paper and fold it into three columns. Have them title the left column "Easy," the middle column "Average," and the right column "Difficult."

Explain that this activity will have them classify different conversations according to their difficulty. Ask them to list, for example, a conversation with a close friend about what to wear to a party (easy), a telephone conversation to schedule a dentist appointment (average), and a request to a boss for a raise (difficult).

Divide the class into pairs. Tell students that they have three minutes to list as many examples of verbal communication in each column as they can think of. Tell them that their goal is to have at least three examples in each column. If needed, prompt students by asking questions such as the following:

- Think about conversations you have had with your parents. Are some more comfortable than others?
- How would you rank conversations with members of the opposite sex?
- Where would you rank confrontations with peers?
- How do you feel about conversations with teachers?

While students are writing, draw the three columns in a place where everyone can see.

When the three minutes are up, ask volunteers to fill in the columns on the board. Discuss which conversations are easy, which are average, and which are difficult.

## **2. Students analyze what makes some conversations easy and others difficult.**

Ask students to form groups of four to five. Have each group select a note taker/reporter. Tell the groups that their task is to determine what makes certain conversations easy and others difficult. Allow about three minutes for the discussion.

## **3. Students recognize that difficult conversations often involve strong emotions.**

Call on each group to share its analysis with the rest of the class. Write important points where everyone can see. Reinforce observations that difficult conversations often involve conflict. They may arouse emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, insecurity, and hurt feelings, while easy conversations tend to evoke more positive emotions. There may also be some risk in a difficult conversation, like the possibility of rejection.

Explain that an awareness of each party's emotions can help make a difficult conversation easier.

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## **Part II I-Messages (10 minutes)**

Purpose: Students use an activity sheet to develop techniques to communicate their feelings and encourage open dialogue in difficult situations.

### **1. Students learn the purpose of an I-Message.**

Say, "An I-Message is a technique you can use to express yourself when you are upset or angry that will lead to open discussion and will not escalate conflict. When you use an I-Message, people are more willing to listen to you and respond to your requests without becoming defensive. I-Messages encourage discussion and help reduce friction."

Explain how an I-Message works:

- Tell students that an I-Message begins with a statement of feelings (e.g., "I feel afraid, tense, worried...").
- It is followed by a statement of what the problem is (e.g., "...when you don't take out the garbage, when you are late picking me up, when you skip class...").
- An I-Message ends with your reasons for feeling the way you do. It tells how the observed behavior affects you, and it avoids using the word "you."

Provide students with a sample I-Message. Say, “I feel tense when you ditch English class because I can’t ignore your absences, and attending English class is a requirement for graduation.”

## 2. Students create their own I-Messages.

Distribute the “I-Messages” activity sheet and the “Vocabulary of Feelings” activity sheet to students.

Tell students that they are going to write their own I-Messages. Explain the proper format for filling out the “I-Messages” activity sheet:

- Line 1: By beginning with “I feel...” students explain their feelings and do not accuse the other person. Though students may feel mad or angry, they should not use “mad,” “angry,” or other aggressive or accusatory words on this line because such words do not encourage dialogue. Students should use the “Vocabulary of Feelings” activity sheet to find words other than “mad” or “angry” to describe how they feel. Remind them to avoid using the word “you.”
- Line 2: This line should be a description of what the other person does that upsets the student. It should describe the other person’s specific action, but not label or accuse the person. For example, students should write “when you don’t return my things” (describes the action). Students should not write “when you are inconsiderate” (broadly labels the person). Lead students to the understanding that when a person acts in a way that seems inconsiderate, it is the specific behavior that is causing the negative feeling; that person is not always inconsiderate.
- Line 3: This line should explain in detail why the student is feeling how they are feeling. For example, a student might write “because they are important to me.” This line explains the importance of the action or behavior to the other person.

Instruct students to fill out the remaining I-Messages on their activity sheets.

## 3. Students discuss their I-Messages.

When students have completed the activity sheet, ask them to share their I-Messages with the class.

Discuss the value of I-Messages by asking the following questions:

- Why are I-Messages a valuable tool for communication?
- When could you use an I-Message?

Remind students that when their sentences begin with “I,” they are not accusing the other person, and the other person will not become defensive. I-Messages allow students to express how they feel, encourage open discussion, and can help resolve a conflict quickly and easily.

You may wish to tell students that using I-Messages is an important skill that requires practice. It takes a while to get used to wording feelings this way. It is important to understand the technique and practice using it. Over time, using I-Messages will become natural.

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**Part III Controlled Debate (25 minutes)**

Purpose: Students participate in a controlled debate to practice communicating in a constructive manner, even when they disagree.

**1. Students prepare the classroom for the activity.**

Have students arrange all of the classroom chairs in two rows that face each other. Students will be moving back and forth between the rows, so make sure that there are no obstacles to block them.

**2. Students choose the topic for the controlled debate.**

The debate topic can be an issue discussed in class, or you can choose another topic of interest to students. Consider presenting students with a choice from among four controversial topics that are relevant to their lives, using the “Topics for a Controlled Debate” activity sheet.

Write each topic as a statement where everyone can see. To the right of the statements, create two columns labeled “Agree” and “Disagree.” Write the number of students who agree and disagree with each statement. The best topic for the debate is the topic that has the most even split between those who agree and those who disagree.

**3. Students prepare for the debate.**

Have all students who agree with the statement sit in one row of chairs and all students who disagree sit in the other row.

Refer students to the rules of the debate that you have previously written:

- Only one person may speak at a time.
- Speakers from the two sides will alternate.
- To make a point, raise your hand.
- Do not raise your hand until the person who is speaking is finished.
- If someone on the opposing team makes a point you agree with, get out of your seat and move to the other row. This does not mean that you have changed your mind about the debate topic; it means that you agree with that one point.
- Move back to your original side when someone on your team makes a point with which you agree.

**4. Students engage in the controlled debate.**

Begin the debate by flipping a coin to determine which team begins. Remind students to use the techniques of effective verbal communication (including active listening) that they have learned.

Explain that the debate will last 10 minutes.

The following are some suggestions for facilitating this activity:

- It is important that you act only as a referee and avoid offering your opinion.
- If students stray from the topic, help them bring the discussion back to the debate.
- Enforce the rules, allowing only one student to talk at a time, calling only on students who wait until others finish talking before raising their hands, and encouraging students to change sides when strong points are made by the opposing team.
- Remind students that agreeing with a specific point (and therefore changing sides) does not mean that the student has completely changed their mind on the topic. It signifies that they are able to see the merit of a point made by the opposing side.
- Ensure that students remain respectful of each other's opinions.

Keep the class apprised of the time remaining in the debate.

### 5. Students discuss the debate experience.

When 10 minutes have passed, have students remain in the rows and ask them the following questions:

- How was this debate different from disagreements you have in everyday life?
- What was difficult about this activity?
- How did you feel when you wanted to say something but couldn't? How about when you wanted to raise your hand, but someone else was speaking?
- Did you resist switching sides? Why? Did you have all of the information on this topic before the debate? Have any of the points you heard caused you to take a closer look at the issue? Which points did you find most effective?
- How well did you and others use techniques for good listening and good communication?
- What can you apply to "real life" from this debate?

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### Conclusion (3 minutes)

Have students discuss recent situations that could have been improved through the use of I-Messages. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:



- Effective communication is important in people's lives.
- An awareness of both parties' emotions in a conversation can help make communication more effective.
- An I-Message is a technique that helps people to communicate when they are upset or angry, without escalating conflict.

## Student Assessment

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1. Why are some conversations more difficult than others?
2. Write three angry or accusatory statements, and then rewrite them as I-Messages.
3. List three reasons why I-Messages are often a more effective communication tool than angry or accusatory statements.

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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**Quote:** “Speech is power...to persuade, to convert, to compel.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Activity:** Have the class give examples of how speech might empower people in everyday situations.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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**Activity:** Provide students with texts of historical speeches. Have small groups of students analyze the speakers’ styles and messages. Possible subjects for analysis: historic events leading up to the speech, the audience, possible controversy, desired outcome, and notes on the historical accuracy of the text. Have groups share their analyses. Discuss the role that effective, careful communication played in the speeches.

### Writing in Your Journal

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**Activity:** Have students write about a disagreement they’ve had. Have them write a paragraph that explains the situation and an I-Message that might have helped them get their point across. Have students share their I-Messages (with identifying details omitted) in small groups, suggesting changes as needed.

### Using Technology

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**Activity:** Have students observe one segment of a television show (commercial to commercial) that includes a disagreement between characters. Have students write a summary of the scene and rewrite the dialogue using I-Messages. If desired, have students role-play their scenes for the class.

## Homework

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**Activity:** Have students read “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros (from *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*). The 11-year-old narrator of this short story is embarrassed by her teacher in front of the class. Have students write a paragraph about how the narrator might have maintained her dignity, and strategies for using I-Messages with authority figures. Discuss students’ work as a class.

## Additional Resources

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**Activity:** Have students read *Mad: How to Deal with Your Anger and Get Respect* by James J. Crist, PhD. As a class, discuss how anger can get in the way of constructive communication. Have students brainstorm ways to control their anger. Reiterate that I-Messages allow people to effectively share their anger without escalating conflict.

# I-MESSAGES

I-Messages are a great way to explain yourself when you are upset. When you use I-Messages, people are more willing to listen to you and respond to your requests without becoming defensive. I-Messages encourage open discussion and can help resolve a conflict quickly and easily.

## EXAMPLE

One of your friends often borrows things from you and doesn't return them.

I feel upset  
 when you don't return my things  
 because they are important to me.

Fill in the blanks for the following I-Messages:

1. Your closest friend is telling others about your personal life.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
 when you \_\_\_\_\_  
 because \_\_\_\_\_

2. You haven't been called on all week, even though you've raised your hand.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
 when you \_\_\_\_\_  
 because \_\_\_\_\_

3. Someone in your family keeps forgetting to give you messages.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
 when you \_\_\_\_\_  
 because \_\_\_\_\_

# VOCABULARY OF FEELINGS

## A

Afraid  
Aggressive  
Annoyed  
Anxious  
Apathetic  
Apologetic  
Apprehensive  
Ashamed  
Audacious

## B

Bashful  
Bold  
Bored  
Brave

## C

Calm  
Cautious  
Cheerful  
Comfortable  
Competent  
Confident  
Confused  
Curious  
Cynical

## D

Decisive  
Depressed  
Determined  
Disappointed  
Disapproving  
Disgusted  
Distressed

## E

Ebullient  
Ecstatic  
Embarrassed  
Energetic  
Enraged  
Enthusiastic  
Envious  
Excited  
Exhausted

## F

Friendly  
Frightened  
Frustrated

## G

Grateful  
Greedy  
Guilty

## H

Happy  
Helpless  
Hopeful  
Horrified

## I

Impatient  
Incompetent  
Indecisive  
Indifferent  
Innocent  
Insecure  
Inspired  
Insulted  
Intimidated  
Irritated

## J

Jealous  
Joyous

## L

Lazy  
Listless  
Lonely

## M

Marvelous  
Mischievous  
Miserable  
Morose

## N

Negative  
Nervous

## O

Oblivious  
Optimistic  
Overwhelmed

## P

Paranoid  
Peaceful  
Perplexed  
Petrified  
Proud  
Puzzled

## R

Reckless  
Regretful  
Relaxed  
Restless

## S

Sad  
Satisfied  
Secure  
Serene  
Shocked  
Shy  
Silly  
Skeptical  
Sleepy  
Sluggish  
Smart  
Stimulated  
Stupefied  
Subdued  
Sullen  
Surprised  
Suspicious  
Sympathetic

## T

Tense  
Tentative  
Timid  
Tranquil  
Trusting

## U

Uncomfortable  
Undecided

## W

Wary  
Whimsical  
Worried

## Z

Zealous

# TOPICS FOR A CONTROLLED DEBATE

- Students who get in trouble with the law should be expelled.
- Healthy people should become organ donors.
- People should be banned from talking on their cell phones in public places.
- Animals should live in their natural habitats, not in zoos or circuses.
- Boys and girls should be allowed to try out for and play on any high school sports team they want, including basketball and football.
- Squirt guns, laser pointers, and other toys that look like guns should be banned from schools.
- Policies banning homework should be established in school districts.
- All schools should require uniforms.
- All students should be required to learn a foreign language.
- Athletes should be required to graduate from college before playing professional sports.
- Schools and libraries should block certain websites on computers used by high school students.
- Student government should have the power to change school policy.

# DEVELOPING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- Positive's a Plus!
- Let's Be Positive
- See It, Think It
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will define "positive attitude."

Students will identify principles of positive thinking and behavior.

Students will practice developing a positive attitude.

### Materials Needed

- Art materials for each group of four students, including poster paper, old newspapers, old magazines, markers, crayons, scissors, and glue (Part I)
- One copy of the "Visualization Techniques" activity sheet for each student (Part II)
- One copy of the "Affirmation Statement Techniques" activity sheet for each student (Part II)

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**Starter (3 minutes)**

Tell the class to imagine two runners, both of equal ability. As they get ready to begin a race, one is thinking, “I’ll never win. I feel so sluggish. I can’t believe I’m even in this race. This girl next to me looks so much faster; I bet she’s going to run right past me.” The other runner is thinking, “I feel great—light and fast! This is going to be the best race I’ve ever run. I’m strong, and I’ve been practicing for weeks. I can’t wait to get started.”

Ask students which runner will perform better. Have them defend their answers. Elicit from students other examples of how attitude can affect performance. Lead students to see the connection between attitude and performance.

Tell students that today they are going to learn about the power of positive thinking and how having a positive attitude can help them achieve their goals.

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**Part I Positive’s a Plus! (20 minutes)**

Purpose: Students define “positive attitude.”

**1. Students define “attitude.”**

Ask students to suggest definitions for the word “attitude.”

Lead students to understand that “attitude” refers to their outlook on life—a way of thinking about themselves, others, and the world.

**2. Students discuss positive attitude.**

Divide students into groups of four. Instruct the groups to answer the following questions:

- Describe a positive attitude.
- How do you create a positive attitude?
- How does it feel to have a positive attitude?

Allow the groups about five minutes to discuss their responses.

**3. Students create visual representations of positive attitude.**

After five minutes have passed, have groups use the art materials to create visual representations of positive attitude. Encourage students to try to represent their answers to the above questions.

Allow students about 10 minutes to create their posters.



#### 4. Students learn how a positive attitude can help them achieve their goals.

Have groups share their posters. After the discussion is completed, elicit from students these points to add to the class definition of “positive attitude”:

- Having a positive attitude means being strong and motivated.
- It means focusing on strengths and confidently moving forward.

Refer to the starter and ask students to suggest reasons why having a positive attitude might lead to goal achievement. Write student responses on the board. Direct students to understand that thinking positively affects our behavior—when we have a positive attitude, we act in a way that reflects that attitude. Lead students to recognize that people who have a positive attitude “bounce back” more quickly from setbacks.

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### Part II Let’s Be Positive (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students learn principles of positive thinking and behavior.

#### 1. Students recognize how positive behavior can benefit them.

Explain to students that when people behave positively, their brains create chemicals called endorphins, which enhance performance. Endorphins can increase physical energy, increase mental alertness, reduce anxiety, and improve problem solving skills.

#### 2. Students learn how to develop positive behavior.

Ask students to predict how they might develop positive behavior. Write responses on the board.

Offer these steps:

- Positive behavior can be developed by forming positive habits.
- Think of yourself as successful and have positive expectations for everything you do.
- Remind yourself of your past successes.
- Never dwell on past failures, but learn from and avoid repeating them.
- Surround yourself with positive people and ideas.
- Keep trying until you achieve the results you want. You only fail when you quit trying.

Ask students to share examples of experiences in which having a positive expectation produced positive results. Then, ask them to share times when they experienced negative results because of negative expectations.

Students may want to discuss times when they had negative expectations (such as a time when they thought they would do poorly on a test) and were pleasantly surprised. Suggest to students that they should consider how well they might have done if they had a positive attitude.

### **3. Students understand the technique of visualization.**

Explain to students that there are many techniques that promote a positive attitude. One of these techniques is called visualization.

Ask students if they know what visualization is. Ask them to suggest meanings of the word “visualization” based on their knowledge of the root word and the suffixes.

After students have offered definitions, explain that visualization is the technique of purposefully creating a mental picture of a successful performance. Visualization improves performance because the positive picture stimulates the brain to trigger corresponding positive responses that support the mental image.

Continue by explaining that this is the technique used by many athletes to enhance their abilities on the field or court, by entertainers to ensure their best performances, and by successful professionals to achieve their goals.

Distribute the “Visualization Techniques” activity sheet to each student and discuss each step.

Tell students that they will have an opportunity to practice visualizing after they learn another technique.

### **4. Students understand the technique of affirmation.**

Ask students if they have ever heard of the technique of affirmation, which is another way of creating a positive attitude. Ask students to suggest meanings of the word “affirmation” based on their knowledge of the root word and the suffix.

Point out to students that visualization is creating a “mental movie” in which they are the stars. Affirmations are like mental commercials that encourage them to buy into positive images of themselves. Affirmative statements are positive self-reminders that help us strengthen our efforts and achieve our goals.

Distribute the “Affirmation Statement Techniques” activity sheet to each student and discuss each step.

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## **Part III See It, Think It (10 minutes)**

Purpose: Students practice developing a positive attitude.

### **1. Students brainstorm areas of their lives in which having a positive attitude could help them.**

Tell students that they are now going to consider the areas of their lives in which having a positive attitude might help them. Have students brainstorm situations or activities that might benefit from their having a more positive attitude or using the techniques discussed. Write student responses on the board.

## 2. Students consider situations in their own lives in which attitude plays a role.

Have students think of a current, specific situation in their own lives in which they might have a negative attitude. If students cannot think of anything current, have them consider something that might happen in the future, such as a major test, presentation, or job interview.

Tell students to write about the situation at the top of a piece of paper. Allow them about two minutes to describe their current attitude toward the situation. Then, have students describe the positive attitude they would like to have. Give students about eight minutes to answer the following questions:

- How could visualization help you? Describe a visualization that might be useful.
- What affirmations might be useful?
- How might your behavior change as a result of changing your attitude?

Tell students to keep what they wrote so they can reflect on it when their attitude might be keeping them from their goals.

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## Conclusion (2 minutes)

Close this session by asking students to define “visualization” and “affirmation.” Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- A positive attitude can lead to positive behavior.
- Positive expectations, behaviors, and habits bring positive results.
- Visualization and affirmation are techniques that you can use to promote a positive attitude and help you achieve your goals.

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## Student Assessment

1. Describe someone with a negative attitude and someone with a positive attitude (no names are necessary). Which one do you think will be more successful in life? Why?
2. List three benefits of demonstrating a positive attitude.
3. List three things someone can do to work toward having a positive attitude.

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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**Quote:** “The greater part of our happiness or misery depends on our disposition and not on our circumstances.” –Martha Washington

**Activity:** Discuss this quote with students. Have students reflect on a recent experience in which thinking about the meaning of this quote would have helped them. Have students discuss how this quote may be helpful to them in the future.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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**Activity:** Have each student write their name on a sheet of paper. Instruct students to exchange papers. Ask them to write one positive comment about the student listed on each paper they receive. Continue this process until each student has commented on every other student’s paper. Once students have finished, collect and edit the lists. Then, give them back to their owners. Have students write about their reactions to their lists.

### Writing in Your Journal

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**Activity:** Have students revisit the list they wrote during Lesson 2’s journal-writing extension. Ask, “Were you able to accomplish everything on your list? How do you feel about it?” Have them make another list for tomorrow.

### Using Technology

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**Activity:** Have students share their feelings about friends who consistently post negative status messages on social networking sites. Explain that negative attitudes can be infectious. Have students search the internet for different ways to develop a positive attitude. Have them share their findings with the rest of the class.

## Homework

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**Activity:** Have students interview a business owner about their business, how they got into it, what it takes to run this kind of business, and what they like about it. They should also ask how having a positive attitude helps the owner with their business's challenges. Have students present their findings to the class.

## Additional Resources

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**Activity:** Have students read the positive affirmations at [www.happierhuman.com/positive-affirmations-teens/](http://www.happierhuman.com/positive-affirmations-teens/). Ask them to choose an affirmation from the list and use it every day for one week. At the end of the week, discuss with your students how using positive affirmations made them feel.

# VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES

1. Relax. Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and clear your mind.
2. Mentally paint a picture or make a video in your mind that shows you succeeding at a goal. For example, if your goal is to give a great speech in front of a large audience, see yourself doing just that—poised, speaking clearly, and impressing the audience.
3. Make your mental image detailed and visualize success. Do not allow negative visions such as fear, failure, or nervousness to enter the picture. See yourself as already successfully achieving your goal.
4. Add specific words, actions, and your senses to your visualization. Practice what you want to do or say in your visualization. Mentally rehearsing strengthens your real performance.
5. Keep your visualization in your mind. Be ready to recall it whenever you choose. Repeat your visualization as often as you can before the actual event.

# AFFIRMATION STATEMENT TECHNIQUES

1. Make the statements personal. Use your name, “I,” or “you.”
2. Keep the statements short. You want to remember them. Long statements are harder to remember.
3. Use positive language. If you want to control your nervousness, say, “I am calm and confident. I am well prepared for this test.” Don’t say, “I will not be nervous about my math test.”
4. State your affirmations as facts, as if they are happening, even if you have not achieved them yet. For example, say, “I will graduate from high school with a 3.2 GPA.”
5. Repeat your affirmations at least once a day. Repetition stimulates your brain to help you reach your goals.
6. In your mind, say your affirmations often. Also, write down your affirmations and place them where you can see them often. Just like advertisements on television or the internet, the more you see or hear an affirmation, the more you believe it.

Here are some examples of affirmations:

- I have the talent to be cast as the lead in the play.
- I will be offered this job because I am prepared for the interview.
- My brother and I will get along well for the rest of the summer.

# CLARIFYING VALUES

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- This or That
- Valuable Squares
- Being True to Yourself
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will analyze how their values influence the decisions they make.

Students will identify the people, possessions, activities, and future plans they value.

Students will demonstrate how their values influence their decision making.

### Materials Needed

- One sheet of paper for each student (Part II)
- One copy of the “Mission to Mars” activity sheet (Part II)
- One role-play scenario card for each group of three to four students (Part III)



**Starter (3 minutes)**

With a sense of urgency, tell students that they have 30 seconds to choose one person and one possession they would take with them to a deserted island. They can assume that their basic needs, such as food, water, and shelter, will be met.

When 30 seconds have elapsed, ask volunteers which person and possession they chose. Encourage students to explain why they made their particular choices.

After volunteers have responded, explain that different individuals value different things. Tell students that knowing what they value will help them make decisions and plans that they are comfortable with.

Tell students that today they're going to spend some time identifying what they value.

**Part I This or That (5 minutes)**

Purpose: Students analyze how their values influence the decisions they make.

**1. Students listen to instructions.**

Explain to students that they will be presented with a series of choices. Depending on what they choose and where you point, they should either stand up or remain seated.

Demonstrate how this will work by saying, "For example, I will ask if you would rather have X (point up, meaning stand up) or Y (point down, meaning remain seated)."

**2. Students play a game involving choices.**

Beginning with simple choices and moving to more difficult ones, ask students a series of questions such as the following:

- Would you rather wear clothes with patterns or without patterns?
- Would you rather be on stage or in the audience?
- Would you rather be an athlete or an artist?
- Would you rather spend time with your family or with your friends?
- Would you rather do something with others or work on something alone?
- Would you rather be healthy but poor, or terminally ill but very rich?

**3. Students reflect on their choices.**

Ask students if they thought the choices became more difficult toward the end. Invite volunteers to give examples of choices that they found difficult to make. Encourage them to explain why these choices were difficult, and to describe how they finally made a decision.

Point out that people make decisions every day. Many decisions are easy to make and seem unimportant. But sometimes the decisions are more difficult, and they require more thought. Explain that what is important to us, or what we value, influences the decisions and choices we make.

Tell students that for this reason, it's necessary for each person to know what they consider to be important. Knowing what we value allows us to make decisions and choices with which we are most comfortable.

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## Part II Valuable Squares (30 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify people, possessions, activities, and future plans they value.

### 1. Students identify people and things that are important to them.

Give each student a sheet of paper. Demonstrate how to fold, crease, and cut the paper to make 16 squares. First, fold the paper in half from top to bottom, and crease it. Now, fold and crease it from side to side. Then, fold and crease it again from top to bottom, and finally again from side to side. Unfold the paper, and use a ruler or the side of your desk to tear along the crease lines.

Using the 16 squares, students should write a word or two to identify the following:

- Three favorite activities
- Five important people in their lives
- Three goals they have for the future
- Three favorite possessions
- Two things they would like to own someday

Each person, thing, activity, or goal should be written on a separate square.

Tell students to keep the squares in separate stacks on their desks, but to combine the possessions into one stack. In other words, they should have four stacks: activities, people, goals, and possessions.

### 2. Students listen to an imaginary story and identify whom and what they value most.

Explain to students that you are going to read a story. After you read each part of the story, they will be asked to make a decision. They will have 10 to 15 seconds to make the decision. All decisions are final. Discarded squares must be crumpled or torn up.

Read the “Mission to Mars” activity sheet aloud to students. After each part, pause for 10 or 15 seconds before announcing that time is up.

Then, continue to read the story.

### 3. Students reflect on their decisions.

Prompt students to think about and evaluate the decisions they made by asking:

- How did you feel about the decisions you made? Why?
- Which were the hardest ones for you to make?
- Would it have been easier if someone else had made the decisions for you? Why or why not?
- Was anyone surprised by the squares they had left at the end? Do these squares reflect what’s really important to you?
- If you were to play this game again, would you choose to have different squares at the end? Raise your hand if you would.
- If you were to play this game again, would you change some of the things you wrote on your squares? Raise your hand if you would.

End this activity by explaining that we all value different people and things for different reasons; each person lives by different personal rules. Tell students that while it’s important to respect the values and rules of others, it’s difficult to be the person you want to be and to respect yourself unless you live according to your own values and rules.

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## Part III Being True to Yourself (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students demonstrate how their values influence their decision making.

### 1. Students role-play situations in small groups.

Divide the class into groups of three or four. Explain that each group will role-play a situation involving peer pressure. Tell students that each group must select one person to play the main character. The rest of the group will then try to convince the main character to do something that they don’t want to do.

Give each group a notecard with one of the following scenarios:

- Amy loves playing basketball. Two days before a big game, her friends try to convince her to skip practice, and go instead to see a popular new movie.
- Darien made plans to hang out with his best friend. Darien's other friends want him to ditch his best friend and hang out with them.
- Serena's favorite possession is a tablet that her older brother gave to her. It's engraved with the words "Best sister ever!" Her friends want her to trade in the tablet to get the latest model.
- Alan has a dream of making the honor roll. His friends try to convince him that studying is not important.

Tell students that they have five minutes to work. Circulate among the groups, listening and observing as students role-play their scenarios.

## **2. Students reflect on their experiences.**

Ask those students who played a main character if it was hard not to be swayed by their classmates. As students respond, ask them if they would rather have been on the other side of the role play. Invite other students to describe how it felt to try to convince the main characters to do something they didn't want to do.

Acknowledge that being true to yourself is not always easy to do. Explain that when you have a clear understanding of what you value, it becomes easier to be true to yourself. Tell students that this program will help them learn more about their values and their goals, and give them practice in being true to themselves.

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### Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to define “values.” Have them describe how their values affect the way they choose to live their lives. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- The things you value influence everything you do.
- Decide on what you value, and make choices and decisions based on that.
- Be respectful of what others value, but always make your own choices.
- Your decisions may be tough, but if you stay true to yourself and what you value, you’ll feel good about whatever you decide.

### Student Assessment

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1. Define “personal values.”
2. Why would someone make a decision that goes against what they value? What problems could this cause?
3. Describe a decision you have made in your life, and explain how this decision relates to your personal values.

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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**Quote:** “The best things in life aren’t things.” –Art Buchwald

**Activity:** Ask students if they agree or disagree with this quote. As a class, discuss how valuing only material goods leads to an unhappy life.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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**Activity:** Have students bring in an object that’s important to them. Encourage them to think about objects that reveal something about themselves. Have students explain the importance of their objects in small groups. As a whole class, categorize the objects that students value (e.g., possessions, family relationships).

### Writing in Your Journal

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**Activity:** Have students write a letter to someone they value (e.g., a friend, a family member, a public figure), telling this person what they mean to them. Have students discuss why these people are important to them.

### Using Technology

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**Activity:** Have students use the internet to locate the mission statements of several corporations and organizations. You may want to assign a few familiar ones (e.g., Girl Scouts, McDonald’s, the NBA). Have students analyze the different mission statements and generate a list of company values. What similarities are found? Do all companies stay true to their mission statements?

## Homework

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**Activity:** Distribute the “Mission to Mars” activity sheet and have students play the game again, once with a partner and once with someone not in the class. Have students share their observations with the class. Did the results change the second time around? How did their friends’ and family members’ answers compare with their own? Were they surprised by anything they observed?

## Additional Resources

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**Activity:** Have students read “Raymond’s Run,” a short story by Toni Cade Bambara printed in *America Street: A Multicultural Anthology of Stories*. Have students discuss Hazel’s values. How do her values compare with their own?

# MISSION TO MARS

- 1.** You have volunteered to undergo training to journey into space and take part in an effort to make Mars habitable. You will need to dramatically change your daily routine to begin training for the mission. You have to give up one of your favorite activities to prepare.
- 2.** Because of the mission, you will be away from your normal life for some time. You must lose one of your goals.
- 3.** There is a limited amount of room on the spacecraft that will take you to Mars. You must give up one of your possessions.
- 4.** The engineers have redesigned the spacecraft in order to make it safer, but there is less extra space now. You have to give up another possession.
- 5.** You are given news that in order to make the most out of the mission, you will be on Mars longer and must undergo even more training for the mission. You lose one of your goals and must give up an activity. And because of how busy you are now, two important people disappear from your life since you are no longer able to maintain relationships as easily.
- 6.** As stress mounts for the impending mission, you find it even harder to make time for the people you care about. Discard two squares containing important people.
- 7.** As you prepare to embark, it becomes more and more clear that the mission will take up decades of your life. You must discard three of your remaining squares. Which will they be?
- 8.** You have returned from the mission and will live out the rest of your life with only this person, possession, goal, or activity.