

**BEST OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME CONFERENCE**

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**Workshop:**  
***Activities to Engage Youth In and Out of School***

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## ACTIVITIES TO ENGAGE YOUTH IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL

### ANGER MANAGEMENT

- **Cooling Off-** Provide students with a mix and match handout of various cooling off techniques. After students are done completing the handout, review and provide the correct answers. Discuss each technique and have students provide examples of how they use or can use the technique described.
- **“I” Statement Skits-** Introduce “I” statements and the role they can play in communication. Partner up each student and ask her to pick a real life scenario where they can practice using “I” statements.
- **Thermometer Reading-** Place different temperature thermometers on opposite sides of the room (30 degrees being “cold” / 70 degrees being “comfortable” / 120 degrees being “very hot”). Provide various scenarios and ask each student to choose a temperature depending on their feeling(s) toward the statement. For example, if the scenario is “*you’re late to class for the third time in a row and the teacher makes a rude comment when you walk in,*” how upset would you be? Take a stand according to the thermometer readings. The goal is to have students learn that people respond differently to different things (we all have different triggers).

### BODY IMAGE

- **Evolution-** Show the Dove’s “Campaign for Real Beauty” video *Evolution* (can be viewed on Youtube). Discuss the impact of edited photos in magazines, videos, etc. Show examples of airbrushed/edited photos and discuss its impact on girls’ body image.
- **Getting Healthy, Staying Healthy-** Create a game such as Jeopardy that includes questions related to health (i.e. how many minutes of physical activity should teens get daily? / how many ounces of water should you drink every day? / what are the categories in the food pyramid?). Students can work in teams to come up with the correct answers. Each question can be followed by a brief discussion. Encourage students to focus on one item they want to change, such as drinking more water or cutting back on candy. The group can take things even further by charting their progress.
- **Healthy vs. Hype-** Each student takes a picture of her/himself (or someone else) and an item typically advertised in magazines (i.e. shampoo, running shoes, music, books, food, etc.). Students must then create an ad to promote that item in a healthy and positive way. All ads are compiled to create a unique magazine that can be placed in office or library.
- **Mirror Image-** Provide youth with a template of a hand mirror (ask students to cut their own). Each student should write five to eight positive words about themselves

to remind them how special they are. Encourage students to place mirror templates in a location they see everyday (mirror, bathroom, door).

- **MissRepresentation-** Show clips from the documentary *MissRepresentation* (or view the trailer if you do not have access to the DVD). Guide students in discussion about the main points presented. *What can we do promote a healthy body image for ourselves and others? Why is there such a strong focus on what girls look like? Do boys feel this same pressure?*
- **The Mask You Live In-** Show clips from the documentary *The Mask You Live In* and guide students through a variety of discussions and/or group activities. Group discussions can focus on how media shapes our perception of masculinity. Discussion prompts can include: *What does it mean to be a man? What does society tell you about being a man? How have these messages impacted you? Consider showing images of G.I. Joe throughout the years- how has the image changed?*
- **What's Right With My Body?-** Have students make a list of everything their body does for them (they can be specific and mention their legs, arms, heart, skin, etc.). The goal is to have students focus on what their bodies *are* rather than what they are not. Consider following up with a lesson on how to take care of your body via nutrition or exercise.

## CAREER EXPLORATION

- **Career Bingo-** Like the game *Bingo*, print a couple of sheets with pictures of careers. Print a deck of cards with the same images (you will call out each career in your deck of cards). Once a student yells “bingo,” discuss the qualifications, education, or experience of each career that was mentioned. Make sure to ask students if they would be interested in the career being discussed.
- **What's Your Interest?-** Provide each student with a career interest survey (you can search online for career assessments for teens). Once students complete the assessment, discuss the main categories of jobs that they identified. Highlight the level of education and/or training needed for the specific careers that the students identified.

## EDUCATION

- **Where Am I?-** Students often take for granted that they are on the right path to meet their educational or career goals. Providing students with an overview and assessment of credits, graduation requirements, etc. is a great way for youth to examine where they actually stand. Review each student's credit/class history and have them align with their identified goals. *Are they are on the right track? Do they need to focus on certain classes? What can they do to stay on the right track?*

- **Education Pays-** Using newspapers or an Internet search, students will do research about the cost of living in their city. Provide each student with a list of basic household/life expenses (make sure to include car expenses such as gas and insurance or bus pass costs). Students can work in pairs or in groups to complete the handout. Provide each group with an Education Pays Chart (can be found through Google search). Discuss the connection between education and earnings. As a group list on the board the monthly expenses. Add the expenses and ask the girls to identify the education bracket they should be in to live comfortably. Now, ask them to adjust their expenses to the salary of a high school drop out. Proceed with discussion.
- **Life After High School-** Discuss plans/options for life after high school. Ask students what their plan is. *What plan do they want/need to put in motion? Who can support them in this?* For students who need direction consider asking them, *“what do you see yourself doing? What do you want your life to be like after high school? What would you like to do if there were no obstacles?”*
- **Guest Speaker Panel-** Invite a few community members to be part of an interactive panel with your students. Panel members can share what education, career, or business path they took and lessons learned along the way. Consider having a diverse panel so that various careers are represented.

## EMPOWERMENT

- **Influential Men/Women-** Download the Influential Men/Women pictures from SDCOE’s website (<http://bit.ly/GenderServices>) and provide each student with one. Have each student read the biography of their assigned “influential man or woman.” Then have students share with the rest of the group why that person is important (they only need to share a few things about the person they read about). Discuss each woman briefly as a large group. Highlight the resiliency factors in each man and woman’s story. Provide each student with a blank paper and have her write her own biography. *In the next five or ten years, what would they have accomplished?*
- **I Am Poem-** Provide students with an “I Am Poem” template (various available online). The poems are used to help girls describe themselves, past experiences, hopes, fears, etc. Encourage students to take a risk and share their poem with the group. For an additional activity have the students type their poems and create an artistic background using scrapbooking paper, wrapping paper or even magazines. Once done, the poems can be framed.
- **I Will Survive-** Provide students with the lyrics to Gloria Gaynor’s “I Will Survive.” Lead group discussion or allow time for journaling with the following prompts: *What is a part of your life that you would like to say good-bye to? In what way are you a survivor?* Activity: Play the song while participants stand in a circle. Sing the song

aloud together, adding gestures and movements to send those negative aspects of your life "out the door!"

- **Resilience-** Start by showing the group a picture of a plant or flower that survives in a harsh environment (i.e. a flower growing through a crack in a sidewalk). Provide the definition of resilience. Ask students to journal ways that they have been or are resilient. *What have they overcome? What have they learned about themselves when faced with a difficult situation?* Encourage students to share responses with group.

## GOAL SETTING

- **Goals In My Grasp-** Students trace their hand on blank paper. Students write their names in the middle of the handprint along with one goal on each finger. *Thumb: Short-term goal, Index: Long-term goal, Middle: Educational goal, Ring: Supportive Adult, Pinky: Dream Job.* Discuss basic steps needed to complete short-term and long-term goals.
- **S.M.A.R.T. Goals-** Provide an overview (and handout if possible) on S.M.A.R.T. goals. Have students identify a goal they want to accomplish in the next six months. Have them apply the S.M.A.R.T. goals strategy to identify steps needed to accomplish goal. Discuss how this model can help us realize our goals compared to not using any model or structure.
- **Vision Boards-** Students use magazines and other printouts to create a visual representation of what they want for their future. Encourage students to think about everything they might want (i.e. happiness, college degree, good health, no stress, family, support, home, etc.). Send an email to friends to receive magazine donations. Extended version of activity: Girls present their vision board to the group and receive constructive feedback on their presentation. Once vision boards are completed, students can focus on goal setting to make their vision a reality.

## GRATITUDE

- **Appreciation Coupons-** Have students identify people that make a difference in their life for which they are grateful. Students then create their own version of an "appreciation coupon" to give to at least one person. Ideas for coupons include: help with laundry, organize the classroom, give you a hug, draw a picture, etc.). Source: Generation Respect Lessons by Beverly Gonzalez.
- **Attitude of Gratitude-** Have students create a list of things and people in their school and personal life for which they are grateful. At the bottom of the paper students should list the names of two people (two from school and two from personal) and one reason they appreciate them. Discuss why it's important to think of those who we are grateful for. How do we express our gratitude?

- **More Than Thanks-** Provide students with an overview of the benefits of practicing gratitude daily. Have them create a list of the things they are grateful for. Ask students to select three items from their list that they wish to express gratitude for. Example: if student selects, “I’m grateful for a healthy body” then ask them to come up with one way they can show gratitude to their body. This can include getting enough sleep, eating healthy, or exercising. If a student selects “I’m grateful for my parents,” ask them how they can express their gratitude.
- **Gratitude Journal-** Provide a journal or composition notebook for each student. Ask them to write three things they are grateful for either at the start of the day or before they go to bed.

## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

- **Power & Control Wheel w/ Scenarios-** Provide each student with a copy of the Power and Control Wheel. Develop scenarios that match each segment of the wheel and have girls identify which category the scenarios correspond to. Discuss after each scenario is identified.
- **Recipe for Healthy Relationships-** Have a group discussion about the necessary ingredients for a healthy relationship. *What types of things would you need in your relationship to be happy? What things are important for you to have in relationships (with significant other, family, friends)?* Once an extensive list is compiled, have students make a note of the items that pertain to a current relationship. If time allows, review items that would make a “relationship recipe” go wrong (these are the warning signs of unhealthy relationships).
- **Relationships 101-** Provide students with a quiz on healthy relationships. Discuss each question/answer when students complete the quiz.

## PERSONAL GROWTH

- **Handprint of Influence-** Have students trace their hand on a blank paper. Have students write the name of a person and/or experience that has shaped their life (either in a positive or negative way) on each finger. Encourage students to share their responses with the group. Emphasize how others can shape our lives just as much as we can shape others.
- **Inside / Outside Bags/Boxes-** Give each student a paper lunch bag or small box. Ask them to decorate the outside of the bag with words or images that represent the qualities they show to the world. They can use magazines for images or create their own. Then have them decorate the inside of the bag or box with images and words that represent the inner qualities that are typically hidden from people. Source: Brock University, [https://brocku.ca/webfm\\_send/6381](https://brocku.ca/webfm_send/6381). Invite students to share about their bags/boxes.

- **Letter to Self I-** Have students write a letter to a younger version of themselves. Have students consider what advice they wish someone had given them. Let students share their letters with the group if they are willing to take the risk. Debrief lessons learned.
- **Letter to Self II-** Creating a relaxing environment, give students time to write a letter to themselves that includes advice and encouragement that will help them achieve their goals. Envelope, seal, and return to the student at the end of the group's completion.
- **My Whole-Self Activity Sheet-** Have students make a circle on blank paper and divide into a pie of eight. At the top of the paper have students write, "As a girl/boy..." Then in the pie they must complete each section: "I am" / "I hope" / "I believe" / "I wish" / "I fear" / "I give" / "I need" / "I want." Discuss as a group.
- **Self-Care Plan-** Discuss the importance of self-care. Provide each student with a Self-Care Plan template (you can find plenty via a Google search). Have students share the specific activities they will put into practice to take better care of themselves.
- **Stars in the Night-** Discuss quote by Stephenie Meyer, "Without the dark, we'd never see the stars." What are some of the gifts of the dark times in your life? Paint, color, or draw a night scene with brilliant stars and use words and images in the picture to represent what gifts you have found in the darkness.
- **What I Know to Be True-** Have students create a list of 10 items that they know to be true. Encourage group sharing and debrief.
- **What I Should Know By Now-** Have students write a list of 10 things they should have learned by now. Encourage risk taking by having students share with the group.

## RELATIONAL AGGRESSION

- **All About Friends-** Lead a group with the following questions (you can put questions on index cards and have students draw in order to start the discussion). Always give students the option to answer for themselves or pose the question to the group. 1) *What qualities do you look for in a friend?* 2) *Are friends more important to you now than they were in elementary school? Why?* 3) *There's an old saying that goes "in order to have good friends you have to be a good friend." What does that mean? Do you think it's true?* 4) *What's the difference between a friend and an acquaintance?* 5) *Some say that a true friend is somebody who knows everything about you and still likes you. What do you think that means?* 6) *How do you tell the difference between true friends and false friends?* 7) *What is a "best friend?" Is it possible to have more than one "best friend" at the same time?* 8) *In what ways does friendship change as you get older?*

- **What Would You Do?**- Read different scenarios related to relational aggression and have youth discuss how they would handle the situation.
- **Friendship Stems**- Each student is given three strips of blank paper to complete the sentence, “a true friend is someone who...”. Once finished, the facilitator reads each statement while asking for specific examples. If a statement reads “a true friend is someone who always supports you,” the facilitator would ask someone to elaborate more. *Why is this important to some of you? Is there someone in particular you were thinking of with this statement? Would your friends say this about you?*

## TEAMBUILDING

- **Back In The Day**- Have students introduce themselves and share one thing they enjoyed doing back in the day. For example, “my name is Jessica and back in the day I used to play with Nintendo.”
- **Birthright**- Divide people into four groups: youngest, middle, oldest, and only children. After they have gathered, have each group write down the pros and cons of their particular birth order. One of the youngest children might say, “I always got stuck with hand-me-down clothes, but I was allowed to get away with more.” This offers people a chance to connect quickly over shared experiences.
- **Extreme Rock, Paper, Scissors**- You play this energizer in the normal “rock, paper, scissors” fashion with a fun twist. Have the group pair off. Once the winner and loser are established, the loser must follow the winner around for the rest of the activity chanting the winner’s name. This continues until you are left with two people fighting with a large crowd of supporters watching.
- **Finish the Sentence**- Pose or write the start of a question on the board (i.e. My Favorite job was ..., My Hobby is...) and go around the room with each person finishing the sentence. When the group is finished, post another question and start again.
- **Human Knot**- This is a human puzzle in which a group of people in a circle hold hands with two different people who are not next to them, and the goal is to disentangle the limbs to get the group into a circle, without letting go of grasped hands. Instead, group members should step over or under arms to try to untangle the knot. An easy way to ensure that the game will end up with a single circle with no nodes is to start from a circle of people holding each other hand, looking all towards the center of the circle, and ask some of them to cross his/her arms and swap his left hand with his right hand grasping again the same neighbors. When the game is successfully completed a certain number of people will look outside of the circle. This number equals the number of people having crossed arms. The challenge is to solve the game

several times starting each time with an increasing number of crossed people. The game is recommended for children from 12 years and up. Not all human knots are solvable and can remain knots or may end up as two or more circles

- **People Search-** Create a bingo-style handout with various boxes of statements such as “likes scary movies,” “is afraid of spiders,” “does not use Instagram,” etc. Students must try to collect one signature per box. The first person to win is the winner. Debrief with students when time is up to stress commonalities in the group.
- **Two Truths and a Lie-** Have students say three things about themselves. Two should be true and one should be a lie. Have participants guess which response was a lie and give their reasoning.

## TIME MANAGEMENT

- **My Daily Schedule-** Have students make a schedule of their daily routine. Have them add into their schedule one activity to improve each of the following: mental health, emotional health, physical health, and spiritual health. For example, "On my way to school, I will think positive about my day." "I will do some yoga while I watch TV at night." If time allows, have students decorate their schedules with markers and designs, so it looks attractive to them. Encourage students to post their schedule where they can see every day.
- **On Time Fixes-** Have students explore what contributes to being on time or being late. Identify factors associated to being late (i.e. stress, throws your day off, consequences at school, etc.). Create a list of possible “fixes” to common problems. For example, *set your watch five minutes fast so you are never late, organize your clothes/school lunch the night before, avoid procrastination, leave your backpack in the same place so you know where to find it, etc.* Once students have a list of multiple strategies, have them identify one or two they are willing to try for at least two weeks.