

Courage

Bravery, boldness, daring, confidence, resolve

“You can’t be brave if you’ve only had wonderful things happen to you.”

Mary Tyler Moore

When our daughter Annie was ten years old, she was bucked from a horse. She suffered a few bruises, but the worst bruise was to her courage. She cried and said that she never wanted to ride a horse again. This might have been okay, except that Annie had lived and breathed horses since she was old enough to pronounce the word. It had been her dream and her goal to ride in competition. Obviously, that couldn’t happen if she remained afraid to get on a horse again.



My husband Larry encouraged her and told her how important it was to face those fears that defeat you and prevent you from becoming what you want to be. “Otherwise,” he explained, “you’re like a butterfly who’s afraid to leave its cocoon.”

Annie brushed away her tears, squared her tiny shoulders, and climbed back onto that spirited horse. She didn’t know what would happen next, but she was willing to do it anyway. Although years later she’d win enough ribbons to wallpaper her room, she never demonstrated more courage—even in difficult competitions—than she did on that day when she was just ten.

The Meaning of Courage

Some people confuse courage with foolhardiness. They assume that if you’re brave, you’ll try anything. But reckless behavior and courage aren’t the same.

Courage means doing the right thing, even when it’s scary or difficult. It means that you try your best to succeed, even when success isn’t guaranteed. In fact, the greatest courage often follows failure. You pick yourself up and get back on the horse.

Courage means facing the monsters in your closet and under your bed—things you’re afraid of, whether real or imagined.

"You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face."

Eleanor Roosevelt

There are many different kinds of courage. You'd need **physical courage** if your boat capsized and you had to swim to shore. But it might also take **mental courage** to swim one more mile when you were nearing exhaustion.

Moral courage is what enables you to stand up to your friends and say "No, I won't show you the answers to the test. That would be cheating." This is the kind of courage that helps you stay true to your beliefs and make good choices, even when your friends tease you or snub you. It gives you the strength to admit "I was wrong" or "I made a mistake" and to say "I'm sorry." It gives you the power to influence others when they're facing difficult decisions.

"One man with courage makes a majority."

Andrew Jackson

It takes courage to stand up to censure and tyranny and speak out against injustice. It takes courage to embark on a new experience or adventure—to start a new school, to make a new friend. It takes courage to break a bad habit or make a difference in the world. You need courage to solve problems, and courage to stand the pain of losing a friend or loved one.

Courage does *not* mean that you ski down the steepest slope without having the skill, dive off the highest rocks into a shallow lake, or drive your car too fast. Putting yourself in danger isn't brave, it's stupid. Although growing up involves taking some risks, those risks should be reasonable.¹

Different people have different ways of being courageous. For example, you might be someone who can stand up in front of your history class and speak for ten minutes without notes. But for someone who's shy or lacks confidence, raising a hand and answering a question might require an extraordinary amount of courage.

Finally, you'll need courage to fulfill your dreams. You'll need courage to learn from others and from your own mistakes, to get up after you fall, to come back from a failure, to work hard when you're too tired, to keep going when you're alone. It takes courage to learn and grow, to let life be your teacher.

"Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage."

Anais Nin

Profiles in Courage

- ✧ Sir Isaac Newton did poorly in school. He was only allowed to stay in school because he was a failure at running the family farm. He grew up to become one of the most famous philosophers and mathematicians of all time.
- ✧ Admiral Richard E. Byrd was retired by the Navy as being "unfit for service." He became a legendary explorer who flew over the North Pole in 1926 and the South Pole in 1929.
- ✧ Thomas Edison was told by his teachers that he was too stupid to learn anything. He read all the books in his local library on his own and became the greatest inventor of all time, with more than 1,000 patents issued in his name.
- ✧ Rosa Parks, who was black, was ordered to give up her seat on the bus to a white man. She refused, forcing the police to remove, arrest, and imprison her—and sparking the Montgomery bus boycott. She became known as the mother of the American civil rights movement.
- ✧ Andrei Sakharov was a high-ranking Soviet physicist when he began opposing nuclear weapons tests and supporting human rights. He was exiled for many years as a result of his beliefs. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975.
- ✧ Aung San Suu Kyi has spent her life working for democracy and human rights in her country of Myanmar (formerly Burma). From 1989–1995, she was under house arrest. She won the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 1990 and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

¹ For more about risk taking, see "Imagination," pages 126–134.

CHECK IT OUT

Since 1901, the Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to people of great courage. You'll probably recognize many of their names: Yitzhak Rabin, Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, the 14th Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, Lech Walesa, Mother Teresa, Anwar el-Sadat, Rigoberta Menchu, Henry Kissinger, Elie Wiesel, Martin Luther King Jr. Find out more about these courageous men and women by reading about their lives. Look for biographies and articles at your school or community library, search encyclopedias, or explore the resources of the Internet.

The Nobel Prize

www.nobelprize.org

The Nobel Prize Internet Archive

www.almaz.com

Character Dilemmas

For journaling or writing essays, discussion, debate, role-playing, reflection

Suppose that ...

1 Every afternoon when you walk home from school, a bully pushes you around, knocks your books to the ground, or calls you names. What might you do to stop the abuse and, at the same time, help the bully to change his behavior? What kind of courage would this take?

2 A woman wants to run for election to the school board. She understands the problems facing the board and is very well qualified, but she doesn't have the money she needs for campaign expenses. A group of parents offers to pay for her advertising costs, but if she's elected, she must agree to vote the way they want her to vote on issues facing the board. What might the woman do? What type of courage will she need to do the right thing?

3 You're at the mall with two friends who dare each other and you to shoplift. What might you do to keep your friendships and also stay out of trouble? What kind of courage will this take?

4 You've signed up for summer camp with a friend, and you plan to room together. At the last minute, your friend changes her mind and decides to bunk with someone else. Will you still go to camp? What kind of courage will you need?

5 You love to swim, and you're on the swim team, but your coach has just told you that you'll never be a good swimmer. What might you do about this? What type of courage will you need?

6 Your twin brother needs a bone marrow transplant, and your marrow is a perfect match for his. You've been asked to be a donor, but you're afraid. Meanwhile, your volleyball team is heading for the league championships, and you're the star player. If you agree to be a donor, you won't be able to play in the championships. How might you gain the courage to make the right decision?

7 Your school is having a talent contest. You have a special talent for writing poetry, and you read very well. There's just one problem. The thought of reading in front of a crowd makes your knees do a drum roll. What might you do to overcome your fear?

Activities

EXPLORE WHAT COURAGE MEANS TO YOU. Consider several of the following situations (or come up with your own). Then talk about or write about actions or decisions that demonstrate courage or the lack of courage. *Example:* Following your parents' rules might mean that you refuse to watch a movie with your friends that your parents wouldn't want you to watch.

- ◆ following your parents' rules
- ◆ following school rules
- ◆ following community rules or laws
- ◆ applying for a job
- ◆ asking someone for a date
- ◆ learning to play a musical instrument
- ◆ sharing your talents
- ◆ admitting mistakes
- ◆ meeting new people

- ◆ being different (different abilities, background, race, etc.)
- ◆ being friends with someone that few people like
- ◆ standing up to peer pressure
- ◆ telling the truth
- ◆ trying to learn something new that you've always wanted to do
- ◆ wearing or not wearing certain clothes
- ◆ correcting a teacher, parent, or friend
- ◆ sticking up for someone else
- ◆ sticking up for your beliefs or convictions
- ◆ facing the unknown

ROLE-PLAY SITUATIONS that require courage. Choose a few of the situations described above to role-play with a friend or a small group. For each, demonstrate three possible approaches: 1) no courage, 2) lukewarm courage, and 3) courage. *Example:* A person who wants to ask someone for a date might show *no courage* by simply not asking, *lukewarm courage* by calling the person on the phone but not asking, or *courage* by asking. The person might also show courage by asking someone else if the first person says no.

WRITE IN YOUR JOURNAL² about the things you fear the most. How can you face your fears? How can you lessen your fears? Or write about something you know you should do but might be afraid to do. Then decide what you *will* do.

LEARN ABOUT A COURAGEOUS SCIENTIST. *Examples:*

- 💡 What kind of courage has Stephen Hawking demonstrated in his life? What has he learned about black holes? What has he contributed to our knowledge of the universe and its origins? Write an essay to share what you learn.
- 💡 How did Marie Curie show courage in her life and career? Find out about her life and struggles. Discover the connection between her work and her death from leukemia. Write a brief biography of this Nobel Prize winner.
- 💡 What happened when Vesto Melvin Slipher challenged Jacobus Kapteyn's theory of the

universe? Were his ideas accepted or not? What kind of courage did it take to convince the scientific world that he was right? Compose a possible debate between Slipher and Kapteyn.

HAVE THE COURAGE TO BE HEALTHY.³ Make a list of things you can do to achieve (or maintain) a healthy body, mind, and spirit. How might each of these require courage? *Example:* You decide to stop eating certain kinds of foods for health reasons. Your family doesn't want to change its eating habits. What might you do?

BE AN ENTREPRENEUR. It takes courage to start your own business. Here's how to begin:

1. Decide what you might want to do. Then try to find out if this is something that's needed in your neighborhood or community. *Examples:* cleaning, snow removal, baby-sitting, gardening, landscaping, dog walking, window washing, party organizing.
2. Estimate the costs of starting your business. How much money will you need to spend on materials? Advertising? A place to keep your equipment? Travel? What else?
3. Decide how much you'll charge for your services. **TIP:** Find out the "going rate." What do other people charge? What are people willing to pay?
4. Estimate how long it will take to recover your start-up costs and begin earning (and saving) money.

CHECK IT OUT



Growing Money: A Complete Investing Guide for Kids by Gail Karlitz and Debbie Honig (New York: Price Stern Sloan, 2010). A beginner's investment guide that covers savings accounts, stocks, bonds, and mutual funds. Ages 9–12.

The New Totally Awesome Business Book for Kids by Arthur Bochner, Rose Bochner, and Adriane G. Berg (New York: William Morrow, 2007). A savvy brother-and-sister team suggest 20 super businesses for kids ages 10–17, with special attention to jobs that help the environment.

² See "Endurance," pages 88, 89, and 92, for journaling resources. If you took the Fears Inventory on page 8, you might want to look back at it now. If you haven't yet taken the Fears Inventory, you might want to take it and write about it in your journal.

³ See "Health," pages 103–114.

The U.S. Small Business Administration

409 Third Street, SW
 Washington, DC 20416
 1-800-827-5722
 www.sba.gov

Created by Congress in 1953 to help America's entrepreneurs, the SBA is a wealth of information and advice. Call the national hotline to listen to recorded information on topics related to starting and running a business, or contact your local SBA office to request your own Small Business Starter Kit.

LEARN ABOUT A HERO OR HEROINE in history. Research a man or woman who fought tyranny, stood up for human rights, invented something important, was a leader, etc. Dress up like the person and tell his or her story to your class, club, or family.

LEARN ABOUT A HERO OR HEROINE of today. Choose someone you admire, then find out as much as you can about him or her. This might be someone famous or someone who has been an important role model in your own life—a grandparent or parent, teacher, friend, or neighbor. Find out about times when the person has acted courageously. If you choose someone famous, read a biography of the person or write to him or her.⁴ If you choose someone you know personally, interview him or her. Afterward, think about what you have learned. How might this affect the decisions you make in your own life?

CHECK IT OUT



American Heroes: Their Lives, Their Values, Their Beliefs by Robert Pamplin (New York: Master Media, 1996). Outstanding men and women of the 20th century including Billy Graham, Colin Powell, Elie Wiesel, Oprah Winfrey, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Bill Cosby, and others share their stories of courage, integrity, and compassion. Ages 12 & up.

The Giraffe Heroes Project

PO Box 759
 Langley, WA 98260
 (360) 221-7989
 www.giraffe.org

The Giraffe Project finds, commends, and publicizes people who “stick their necks out” for the common good. Write, call, or search their Web site for stories about real-life heroes of today.

My Hero

1278 Gleneyre #286
 Laguna Beach, CA 92651
 (949) 376-5964
 www.myhero.com

Check the Web site to read inspiring true stories about all kinds of heroes—teachers, artists, businesspeople, poets, explorers, athletes, freedom fighters, scientists, even pets. Submit your own story about someone you know who has shown courage, generosity, kindness, or ability. The stories are being developed into a TV series about role models for young people.

GIVE AWARDS FOR COURAGE. Place a “Courage Box” in your school, home, place of worship, or club. Put a stack of paper and a marker beside the box. Above the box, include a sheet of simple instructions. They might say “Write about an anonymous act of courage you’ve done or seen someone do.” Design an award to be given each week to someone who has demonstrated courage.



⁴ See “Choice,” page 32, for information about *The Kid’s Address Book*.

GO UNDERGROUND. Research the Underground Railroad, which helped slaves to escape from the United States South and reach freedom in the North and Canada before the Civil War. You might want to focus on the contributions of Harriet Tubman and Levi Coffin. Write a play about what you learn and perform it for an audience.

CREATE A DIORAMA depicting your favorite hero, heroine, or a moment in history when someone you admire acted with courage. Include a brief description. Place your diorama in your school library or clubhouse, or donate it to a local library. (This activity is more impressive if you do it as a group and create several dioramas.)


Variation: Write a song describing your favorite hero, heroine, or a moment in history when someone you admire acted with courage. Perform it for an audience.

LEARN A NEW SPORT OR ATHLETIC SKILL. Choose one you feel uncertain about—maybe even one you fear. Practice it until you conquer your fear and feel comfortable and confident.


PLAY A BALL-TOSS GAME ABOUT COURAGE. You'll need a Nerf ball or other soft ball and a stopwatch. Divide into two teams. The leader or teacher starts the game by tossing the ball to a member of either team. That person has five seconds to think of an example of courage. If the person can think of one, he or she tells it to the group and earns a point for that team. If the person can't think of one, he or she tosses the ball back to the leader, who then tosses it to the


other team. Keep alternating between teams. The first team to earn 5 points wins that round.


READ STORIES ABOUT COURAGE. Look for these books:

 *Cracker Jackson* by Betsy Cromer Byars (New York: Viking, 1986). Jackson discovers that his former baby-sitter has been beaten by her husband. With the help of his friend Goat, Jackson attempts to drive her to a shelter for battered women. Ages 10–14.

 *Journey to Jo'Burg: A South African Story* by Beverley Naidoo (New York: HarperCollins, 1986). Naledi and her brother Tino travel to Johannesburg to find their mother. While there, they witness firsthand the struggle for freedom in South Africa. Ages 10–13.

 *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo (New York: Fawcett, 1987). The classic story of the lives of several down-on-their-luck Parisians during the early 1800s. Ages 13 & up.

 *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry (New York: Dell, 1994). In Denmark during World War II, Annemarie and her family hide her best friend Ellen, who is Jewish, while Nazis track down Jewish families. Ages 10–13.

 *So Far From the Bamboo Grove* by Yoko Kawashima Watkins (NY: Puffin, 1987). Eight-year-old Yoko escapes from Korea to Japan with her family at the end of World War II. Ages 10–14.

Character in *ACTION*

Merrick Johnston: The Courage to Follow a Dream

Merrick Johnston sat at the feet of Vernon Tejas, a mountaineer and guide, listening to his stories of slippery slopes, of wind pelting snow in your face, of the tremendous rush when you reach the top of a mountain. She was nine years old, and right then she knew that she'd have to climb Mount McKinley someday.

Located in Alaska, Mt. McKinley is the tallest mountain in North America, 20,320 feet high at its peak. Much of it is covered by permanent snowfields and glaciers. The average temperature for June is 10–15 degrees, but the winds can blow up to 100 mph, and the wind chill can drop the temperature to 50–80 degrees below zero. During the 1995 climbing season, only 43 percent of the people who tried to climb it made it to the top. Six climbers died, and 22 needed to be rescued.

"At first, my mom didn't take me seriously—not until I was eleven," Merrick says. "I trained by doing gymnastics sixteen hours a week, snowboarding six hours a week, and hiking four hours a week in the mountains nearby."

Merrick needed a lot of courage to keep up her heavy schedule of physical activity. But she knew that if she wasn't physically strong, she would be a danger to the others on the climb.

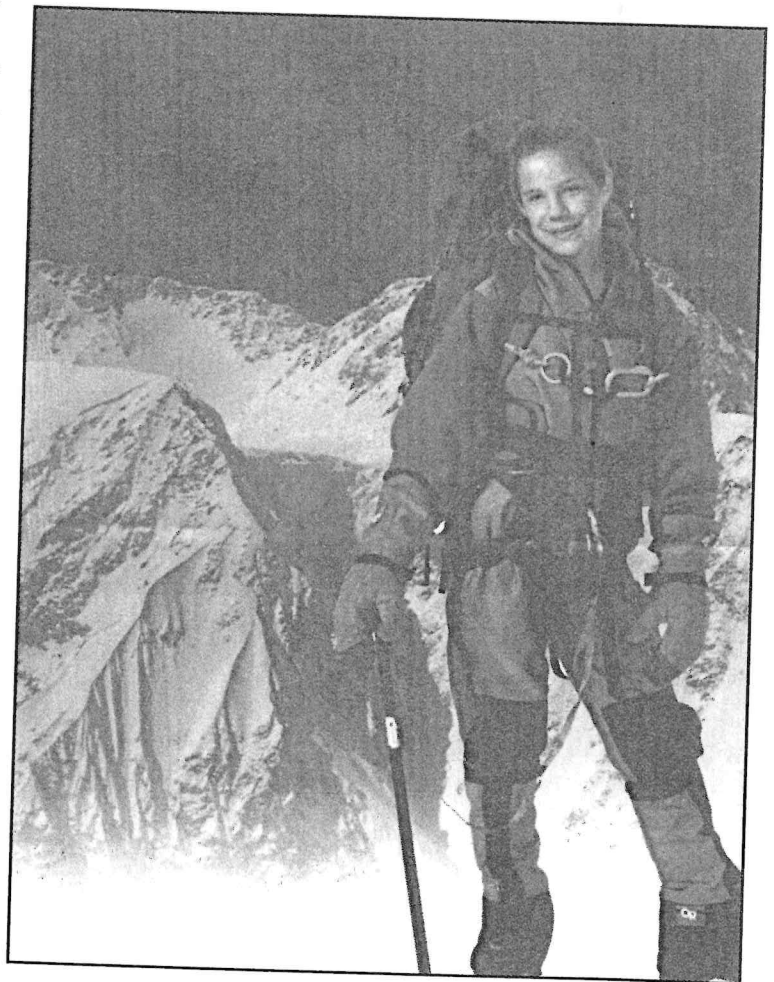
"My mom and I hiked out back, and we gradually increased the loads in our packs and sleds. We climbed Mt. Goode, about 11,000 feet, using ropes, snowshoes, and crampons—boots with spikes," Merrick explains. She weighed just 90 pounds in a wet snowsuit, but she climbed with a 55–65 pound load. Although Merrick's favorite pastime is talking, she learned to entertain herself with her thoughts, and often when she was so exhausted she could hardly move, those thoughts were "I can do it. I can do it. I'm going to do it."

Merrick decided that when she climbed Mt. McKinley, she would also do something to help other children who weren't as fortunate

as she was. She collected pledges from neighbors and other people in her community. The higher she climbed, the more money she would raise. The money would be donated to the Anchorage Center for Families, a family wellness center and child-abuse prevention agency.

On June 1, 1995, a beautiful, sunny day, Merrick began to fulfill her dream to climb Mt. McKinley. "My goal wasn't to reach the top. It was to *try* to reach the top." She paused at the base camp to build snowmen to mark the beginning of her journey.

"The worst part of the lower glacier was traveling in the heat and wearing a layer of clothes so we didn't sunburn," Merrick remembers. "We had two teams of four people. We had to load up sleds attached to



Merrick Johnston

our packs with all of our extra gear, food, and fuel, tow them ahead to our next camp, bury everything, and return to our other camp below and spend the night. The next day, if the weather was okay, we'd pack up our camp and set up our next camp where we had cached our supplies the day before. So we were really climbing the mountain twice. But it's safer that way, because if the weather gets bad you can stop and wait it out.

"We did that routine over and over until reaching our last camp at 17,000 feet. We planned to go from there to the top in one day, but we got snowed in for a week. Every night, we'd all go into one big tent and sing and giggle together. That's what kept me going."

Merrick needed a big dose of courage to pull her through the challenge of the climb. While climbing up to make camp at 11,000 feet, she fought strong gusts of wind and snow. The storm made it hard to see her own boots, and the load she carried felt like a ton of bricks on her back. She was the last person on a four-person rope team with her mother, another climber, and a guide in the lead.

Merrick had sunscreen for her lips and face tied onto a string around her neck. As she struggled forward, the string became twisted and caught up in the team's rope, tightening around her neck and choking her. Merrick panicked and started hyperventilating. The howling storm drowned out her pleas for help. Her mother, realizing there was a problem, yanked and shouted until she finally got the attention of the man ahead of her. But they couldn't make the guide aware of what was happening. He just thought that everyone was straining because of the steep slope and heavy loads. Merrick hung on like a pit bull for what seemed like hours. Finally, the guide stopped and Merrick was able to untangle herself.

On June 23, the climbers formed a single rope team for the final ascent to the summit. Merrick was second in line. She concentrated on each step, knowing that the summit ridge had a 7,000-foot drop off the right side. She thought again of the abused and disadvantaged kids back in the shelter. As she inched her way along a 100-foot ledge that was half the width of

her foot, she felt grateful for her many hours of gymnastics practice.

At 1:35 P.M., Merrick heard the lead guy whoop. "We were on top of the clouds," she says. "I was the first one to touch the summit, and I saw a picture I'll never forget. The sun was setting, making the clouds look like pink cotton candy. I could see the blue shadow of the summit against the clouds. We were all struck dumb." She snuggled next to her mom, drank in the view, and felt a great rush of accomplishment.

Merrick Johnston was 12 years, 5 months, and 5 days old when she stood at the top of Mt. McKinley—the youngest person ever. Now she has her heart set on Mt. Vinson in Antarctica. And she has other goals as well. "I want to have the power to help people when I grow up," she says. "I want to be on top of things. I want to have an important job, like a heart surgeon. And I want to be a white-water rafting guide so I can play a lot, too."



Merrick in Alaska

Empathy

Understanding, compassion, charity, sensitivity, concern

"You can't understand another person until you walk a few miles in their moccasins."

Native American proverb

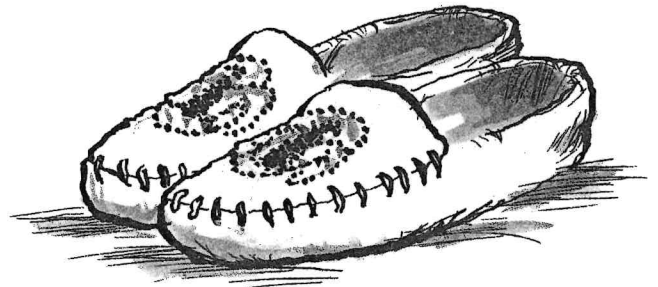
Have you ever visited the Hoh rainforest in the Pacific Northwest? If you travel there, you'll discover the beautiful Sitka spruce, which grows abundantly in the shade of the forest's green canopy. There's something especially interesting about this tree. The young Sitka spruce seedlings have a hard time getting started alone in the dirt. There's too much competition from dense moss and other aggressive plants that spread a carpet along the forest floor. A seed must land on a fallen Sitka log in order to germinate, then live off the nourishment from the decaying trunk. The dying tree becomes a "nurse log" to new seedlings. The seedlings send roots into and around the log. Eventually the old log disappears, and all that remains are the new Sitkas standing in a colonnade on stilt-like roots.

If you have empathy, you can compare yourself to that nurse log. There's a deep connection between the decaying tree and the new seedlings that grow from it. Empathy is one step beyond service. You can care for people and serve them without knowing much about their thoughts and feelings.¹ For example, you might have a friend who reads to an elderly woman every week. That's a great service. But your friend might not know that the woman is weeping inwardly for a lost child, or that she's afraid of dying.

Empathy means that you can *sense, identify with, and understand* what another person is feeling. You can almost get inside the person's head and heart. You have a shared communion with him or her. You can connect and relate to what the person needs. For example, if your friend who reads to the elderly woman has empathy for the woman, your friend probably won't choose to read *The Giving Tree*. Shel Silverstein's story about a tree that sacrifices its life for a man might be too painful for the woman to bear, and your friend will realize this without being told.

When you shout from a hilltop, sometimes your words come back to you in an echo. You hear the same words you shouted, but they're not as loud. Empathy is like an echo. You don't add to what someone feels. You don't change the feelings. You accept and share them, but in a softer way, because it's almost impossible to feel with the same intensity of the other person's firsthand experience.

If you have empathy, you have *compassion* for others. In response, you might show them *charity*—kindness, benevolence, and goodwill. The



¹ See "Caring," pages 21–27.

word “charity” comes from the Latin for “Christian love,” which is one way to understand it; if you’re not a Christian, you might interpret it as “Mohammed-like love,” “Buddha-like love,” or whatever best describes your personal faith. Mother Teresa has often been cited as an example of charity because she not only served people in great need, she also lived with them. She “walked in their moccasins.”

Empathizing with someone is *not* the same as pitying or feeling sorry for him or her. This is an important distinction. When you pity another person, you look down on him or her. You think “How awful” or “What a terrible situation that person is in” or even “Thank goodness I’m not in that situation.” Pity sets you apart; empathy brings you together.

“With compassion, we see benevolently our own human condition and the condition of our fellow beings. We drop prejudice. We withhold judgment.”

Christina Baldwin

Character Dilemmas

For journaling or writing essays, discussion, debate, role-playing, reflection

Suppose that . . .

- 1 There’s a new student at your school who wears clothes that are different from what everyone else wears. How might you feel if you were 1) the new student, 2) a popular student, 3) an unpopular student, 4) a teacher, 5) the parent of the new student?
- 2 Your state legislature has just passed a law requiring all public buildings—including schools, businesses, and houses of worship—to build wheelchair ramps within one year. How might you react if you were 1) a school administrator, 2) a person in a wheelchair, 3) a business owner, 4) a city planner, 5) a church administrator?
- 3 Your city demolishes an entire block of low-income housing because it’s in bad repair. How might you feel if you were 1) a person with a low income, 2) a developer who builds new houses, 3) someone who lives across the street from the newly razed block?

4 Two girls have been best friends for years. One girl starts dating the other girl’s boyfriend. How might you feel if you were 1) the girl who lost her boyfriend, 2) the girl who started dating her best friend’s boyfriend, 3) the boyfriend?

5 Your government has just announced major cuts in medical insurance for the elderly. How might you feel if you were 1) a government official, 2) a senior citizen, 3) a middle-aged person, 4) a child?

6 A teenager signs an organ donor card. In the event of his death, his organs will go to other people who need them. How might you feel if you were 1) the person signing the donor card, 2) his parent, 3) a person awaiting an organ transplant, 4) a physician?

Activities

LEARN TO EMPATHIZE WITH ELDERLY PEOPLE. Read stories, read books, or watch videos about elderly people. Then interview elderly people in your family, neighborhood, or senior citizens’ centers in your community. Try to imagine what it might be like to be one of them. (Someday you will be!) Ask them how they feel about health care, food and housing, social security, family relationships, health and sickness, the future, and anything else you’d like to know about. Write about what you learn and share your findings with your family, class, or community.

CHECK IT OUT*



Driving Miss Daisy (1989; PG). Jessica Tandy won an Oscar for her portrayal of an elderly Southern woman who can no longer drive. When her son hires a black man (Morgan Freeman) as her chauffeur, the two become faithful companions.

Harold and Maude (1971; PG). Bud Cort and Ruth Gordon star in this black comedy (and cult classic) about a friendship between Harold, a depressed 20-year-old, and Maude, a 79-year-old with a zest for life.

On Golden Pond (1981; PG). Henry Fonda and Katharine Hepburn won Academy Awards for their poignant portrayals of an 80-year-old man and his devoted wife spending a summer in Maine.

* You must get permission from your parents to watch these movies. Better yet, watch them *with* your parents.

LEARN ABOUT THE NEEDS OF VARIOUS GROUPS in your community including 1) elderly people, 2) families, 3) children, 4) parents, 5) single parents, 6) people with disabilities, 7) people who are ill, 8) minorities, 9) immigrants, 10) homeless people, 11) women, and 12) men. Contact your city council or mayor's office for information; read your local newspaper; ask people who work or volunteer for service and charitable organizations. Compile your findings on a chart showing the differences and similarities among people's needs.

WRITE IN YOUR JOURNAL² about how it might feel to have LD (a learning difference or disability). If you have LD, write about how it might feel to have another kind of difference or disability.

CHECK IT OUT



Keeping a Head in School: A Student's Book About Learning Abilities and Learning Disorders (Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service, 1991). Stay on top of homework with this handy book. Ages 9–12.

LDOnline

www.ldonline.org

An interactive site where parents, teachers, and kids can learn about LD. Includes information about LD and ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), artwork and writing by young people with LD, recommended resources, and more. Be sure to visit the section for kids: www.ldonline.org/kids

Yahoo's Disabilities Links

www.yahoo.com

Type a specific disability into the Search box for a list of links to sites with information.

TAKE FIELD TRIPS to increase your understanding of people whose lives and needs are different from yours. You might visit a children's hospital, juvenile detention home, halfway house for recovering alcoholics, home for unwed mothers, senior citizens' center or rest home, women's shelter, homeless shelter, food pantry, and any other place you're interested in. Each time you return from a field trip, write a story or a poem about your experience. **IMPORTANT:** Be sure to get permission from your parents,

your school, and the place or agency you want to visit. Go with a chaperon.

VOLUNTEER AT ONE OF THE PLACES you visit. Follow these steps:³

1. Decide where you'd like to go and what you'd like to do.⁴ Consider these questions:

- ? What might benefit the most people?
- ? What might make the biggest difference?
- ? What can I afford (in terms of time, effort, etc.)?
- ? What's really possible for me to do?

2. Talk to the administrator or volunteer coordinator. Many organizations couldn't exist without strong support from volunteers, so they already have a system in place for accepting and training them. Ask what they need volunteers to do. This might be different from what you originally thought, and it might be different from what you'd like to do, so be prepared to be flexible—or to decide that you'd rather volunteer elsewhere. *Example:* If you want to be a volunteer at a children's hospital, you may have to be 16 to qualify.

3. Once you find a good match, get any permissions you need to proceed. Depending on where you want to volunteer, you may need permission from your parent(s), teacher(s), principal, youth leader, etc. You may need an adult chaperon.

4. Decide how long you'll stay involved and what you want to achieve. Set a schedule for yourself. When will you start? How much time will you spend volunteering each week or month?

5. If you don't want to go it alone, invite others to join you. Choose people who share your interest and can make a commitment.

6. Firm up the details. Will you need transportation back and forth? Any special materials, equipment, supplies, clothing, or skills? Are there any limitations or restrictions on what you can do or when and where you can do it?

³ Adapted from *The Kid's Guide to Service Projects* by Barbara A. Lewis (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1995), pages 8–11. Used with permission of the publisher.

⁴ See "Caring," page 24, for information about national programs that promote youth service.

² See "Endurance," pages 88, 89, and 92, for journaling resources.

7. *When your term as a volunteer comes to an end, evaluate the experience.* Discuss it with your team members, family, teachers, and friends. Talk it over with the people you served. Consider these questions:

- ? What did I learn?
- ? What did I accomplish?
- ? What were my feelings, fears, joys?
- ? Would I do it again?
- ? How could I improve on the experience?
- ? Will I repeat the experience? When? How soon?

PRACTICE SEEING BOTH SIDES of an environmental issue. Choose an issue that's currently being debated in your community. *Examples:* the use of a stream bed; air quality; dumping; the development of an area (for high-income housing, low-income housing, retail, industry, park, etc.). Invite speakers from both sides to address your class, school, or club and express their views on the issue. Afterward, ask your classmates and friends to vote on which person seemed most persuasive. Did you have an opinion or point of view before you heard the speakers, and did anything they said change your mind? Did you empathize more with one speaker than the other?

FIND OUT THE AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME of a family in your town, city, or state. Then find out the average annual incomes of families in several countries around the world, including third world countries. (You might gather this information from almanacs, encyclopedias, or the Internet.) Calculate the differences and make a chart illustrating them. Could your family live on the amount of money earned by a family in Afghanistan? In Bangladesh? In Cuba? In India? In Zaire? How do you think families in these countries pay for food, clothing, housing, utilities (heat, light, water, telephone), medical expenses, transportation, education, and recreation? You might extend your research to include average life expectancy, infant mortality rates, and other topics. Afterward, think about how this information has affected your feelings about different peoples around the world. Can you begin to empathize with the struggles of families in poor nations?

PRACTICE EMPATHIZING WITH YOUR PARENTS. Each day, ask them how they feel about a different issue. *Examples:* family rules, money, working, the easiest/best part about raising children, the hardest/worst part about raising children, current events, their hopes/dreams for your future, etc. Do this for five days. Just listen to what they say—without arguing. Afterward, think about what you learned. Do you know your parents any better now? Can you see their point of view on certain issues? Can you understand where they're coming from and why? Tell them how you feel and practice having a discussion.

Variation: Practice empathizing with your siblings. Ask your older or younger brother(s) or sister(s) what frustrates them the most, what makes them happiest, etc. Ask if they have any advice for you.

WALK IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES. Literally! Exchange shoes with a sibling, parent, classmate, teacher, or friend for an hour or a day. Talk about what you learned from the experience.

Variation: Imagine what it would be like to walk in the cold with *no* shoes. Or be courageous and do it. Ask your parents for permission first. Afterward, collect good used shoes (and money for new shoes) from your school or club and make a donation to a homeless shelter, second-hand store, or kids' shelter.

LEARN ABOUT IMMIGRATION in your town, city, or state. Check with organizations that sponsor immigrants to find out where people are coming from. If possible, arrange to meet with and interview recent immigrants. (You might need translators to accompany you.) Ask about the beliefs and customs they have brought with them to their new home. Try to empathize with their feelings and needs. Afterward, present your findings to your class or school. You might want to create a choral reading using different "voices" to tell about the immigrant experience and the beliefs and customs of the people.

START AN INTERNATIONAL CLUB at your school.⁵ Post flyers announcing the club. Your goal should be to attract as many people as possible, preferably from a wide variety of ethnic groups and backgrounds. Talk about common concerns and problems, special needs, and times when you need support and

⁵ See "Leadership," pages 160–161, for tips and a resource on how to start a club.

understanding. Get to know each other. Really listen to each other. Empathize. Decide on common goals and ways to achieve them.

Variations: Hold an International Fair with exhibits and presentations. Or have an International Talent Show, Music Show, Fashion Show, Food Festival, or Arts & Crafts Show. Invite students (and parents) to participate, perform, and share information about their lives and cultures.

CHECK IT OUT



Skipping Stones Magazine

PO Box 3939

Eugene, OR 97403

(541) 342-4956

www.skippingstones.org

This international multicultural children's magazine encourages an understanding of different cultures and languages. Ages 8–18.

Perhaps . . . Kids Meeting Kids Can Make a Difference

380 Riverside Drive, Box 8H

New York, NY 10025

www.kidsmeetingkids.org

This international organization promotes multicultural understanding, peace, fairness, and children's rights. Programs include pen-pal and peace exchanges, workshops, and a newsletter.

CREATE A POSTER COLLAGE showing different types of ethnic clothing. If you can't find pictures in magazines, visit your library and look for books on costumes and fashions. Then draw pictures based on what you find. If you hold an International Fashion Show, take photographs of the show and use them to make your collage. Imagine how people's lives might be affected by the types of clothing they wear.

MAKE A JIGSAW PUZZLE (with cardboard or wood backing) showing different people. You might show men, women, and children; people from different ethnic or racial groups; people of different ages; people working at different types of jobs, or engaged in various kinds of recreational activities; etc. Donate your puzzle to a class of younger kids.




LEARN EMPATHY THROUGH MUSIC. Play different types of ethnic music over your school PA system each morning for 5–10 minutes to increase understanding and appreciation of various cultures. Ask


students to bring in examples of music to play, and/or gather examples from your school or local library.


PRACTICE EMPATHY IN SPORTS. When someone on your team makes a mistake, pat him or her on the back or offer encouragement. When you compete with another team, try to imagine how they feel if they win or lose. Shake hands at the end no matter who wins. Help a teammate or competitor who falls. Develop concern for your teammates and competitors. Keep track of how this changes your attitude toward and feelings about sports. How does it affect your performance?

PLAY A "GUESS WHAT I'M FEELING" GAME. Divide into pairs. Face each other. Player A tells about an experience he or she had. Player B watches for facial expressions and concentrates on listening and understanding. Then Player A says "Guess what I'm feeling." Player B tries to identify the emotion the first player felt during the experience just described—happiness, sadness, anger, joy, fear, hurt, relief, frustration, etc. Then Player B tries to repeat what Player A said about the experience—as closely as possible, and empathizing with Player A's feeling. Afterward, the players switch roles and Player B tells about an experience.

READ STORIES ABOUT EMPATHY. Look for these books:

-  *Belle Prater's Boy* by Ruth White (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc., 1996). Woodrow moves in with his grandparents after his mother mysteriously disappears. There he befriends his cousin, and together they learn to face the losses in their lives. Ages 12 & up.
-  *Blubber* by Judy Blume (New York: Simon & Schuster Children's Books, 1982). Jill doesn't worry much about the grief that she and her classmates cause a fellow student—until Jill becomes a target herself. Ages 9–12.
-  *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco (New York: The Putnam Publishing Group, 1994). Say Curtis describes his meeting with Pinkus Aylee, a black soldier, during the Civil War, and their capture by Confederate troops. Ages 9–13.

 *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles (New York: Bantam Books, 1994). Set at an elite boarding school for boys during the early years of World War II, this beloved classic (a best-seller for over 30 years) is a starkly moving parable of friendship, treachery, and tragedy. Ages 13 & up.

 *Visiting Miss Pierce* by Pat Derby (New York: Sunburst Books, 1989). In talking with an elderly woman about her past, Barry begins to examine his own situation as an adopted child. Ages 11–14.

Character in ACTION

Mia Mejorado: Compassionate Service

Mia Mejorado was 12 years old when she first started volunteering as a junior counselor at Delhaven Community Center a block from her home. The center ran a summer camp and was also the site of an after-school program in a low-income neighborhood, where Mia had grown used to hearing gunshots puncture the silence. Once she had to help rush the kids into an enclosed building because there was gunfire right next door.

"I was in charge of helping the kids play games, do artwork, or other activities," Mia remembers. "Every day, we took care of between 50 and 100 kids."

Mia had attended Delhaven Community Center as a child until she was too old at the end of sixth grade. Then she volunteered as a junior counselor. She was so responsible and mature that she was made a senior counselor during her first summer camp between seventh and eighth grades, more than a year earlier than anyone else.

During the seven years she volunteered at Delhaven, Mia helped many children. Once a tiny, sparrow-like girl attended a summer camp where Mia volunteered 24 hours a day, with only a few days off for breaks. "I felt so sorry for this little soft, delicate girl," Mia says. "All of the other girls in my group were happy to be away from home. But this one cried. So I kept her under my wing like a baby bird all day. I gave her piggyback rides and wiped her tears."

Mia pushed damp curls off the girl's forehead at night as she tucked her in. Then she remained beside the girl until she smiled and slept. Meanwhile, Mia remembered many dark nights she had spent alone while her parents worked. "I often longed for morning so I wouldn't feel the

dead calm of the night or fear the noises or the sound of gunshots."

Mia also took care of mentally disabled adults who came from group and private homes on Saturdays for recreation activities. She spoon-fed them and wiped spaghetti sauce from their chins with gentle hands. She even changed their diapers. Sometimes she lost her own appetite, but she swallowed hard and carried on, sensing the adults' frustration and loneliness.

When Mia was 15, her best friend, who also worked at Delhaven, was killed in a car crash. The center started a scholarship fund in his memory. Mia walked about silently, fighting a sinking feeling in her chest. She moved robot-like among the children. But she understood their pain even better than before. Now she knew death.

Not long afterward, she was leading a group of mentally disabled adults at an amusement park. Several members of the group decided to go on the gondola ride. Mia watched, helpless and horrified, as one of the women fell 30 feet from the gondola to the concrete below. Mia rode in the ambulance with the woman to the hospital and waited there until 11:00 P.M., when she was taken back to the camp. She couldn't sleep, so she went to the shower area, sat on the tile floor, and cried through the night.

Although Mia had been a good student before the woman's accident, she grew uninterested in school. When she learned that the woman had been injured so severely that she would never walk or talk again, Mia's grades fell further to a rock-bottom low.

Her Delhaven supervisor, Tim Seal, understood Mia's problem and appreciated the thousands of

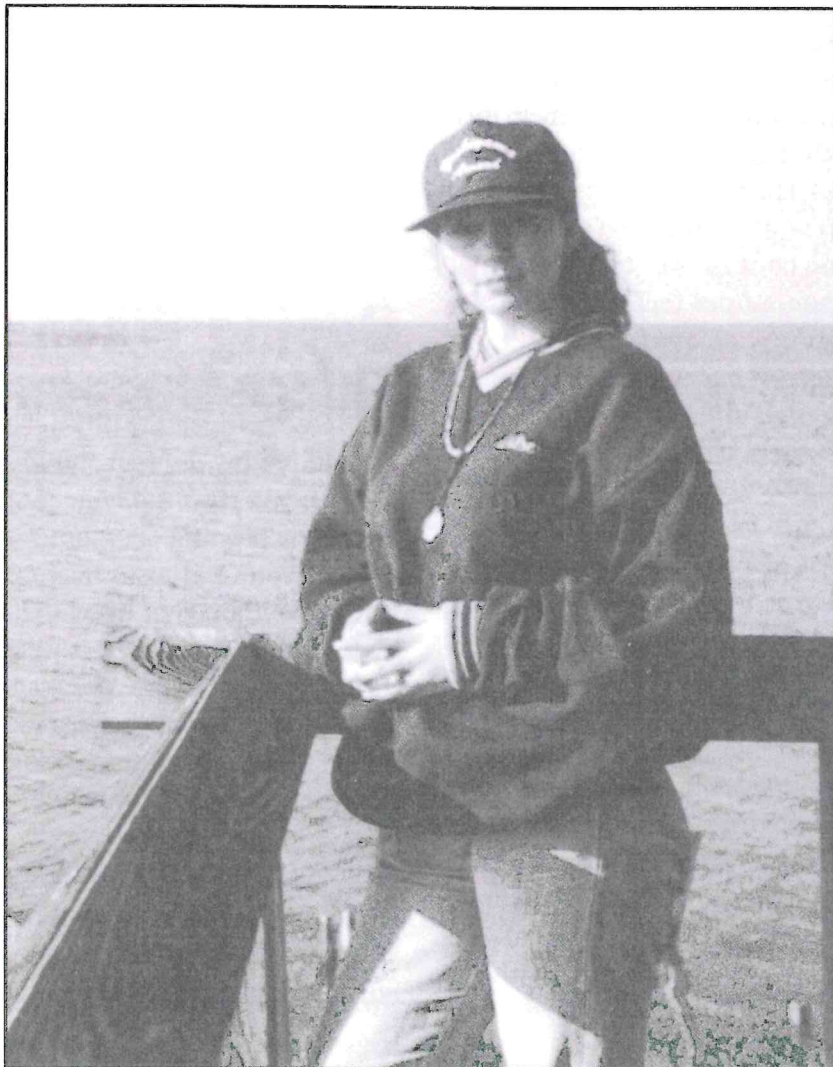
hours she had volunteered for the center. He arranged for her to attend a new private school, Bishop Amat Memorial High School. Delhaven sponsored her with a scholarship.

In the warmth of her new school, Mia revived. She regained her enthusiasm for learning and continued to volunteer at Delhaven. Her grades soared to A's and B's. When she was 16, she was hired as the youngest person on the staff of Delhaven. They paid her a stipend of \$75.00 a month, and she used some of the money for her school uniforms and books. She continued to donate countless hours in volunteer service.

Her life wasn't easy, however. Once she saw a man commit suicide, shooting himself in the mouth in the center's parking lot. She went back into the building, sat down in the corner of the bathroom, and cried.

Despite everything she's seen and experienced, Mia is generally cheerful, and she loves people. Sponsored by Delhaven, she's now attending Mount San Antonio College, where she plans to study education, recreation, law enforcement, or social work. When she turned 18, she was made the youngest member of Delhaven's Board of Directors. Her compassion and kindness have cushioned the hardships of many kids and adults.

"It's like a positive addiction," Mia explains. "Those little kids need someone to talk to. They need me. Even if I'm low, when I go there, they run up and hug me. They give me pictures they've drawn and pull on my hands. They need someone who'll always be there—someone they can depend on. I want to get married and have a family someday, but even if I do, I still want to adopt some kids."



Mia Mejorado

Endurance

Patience, stamina, strength in adversity and suffering

"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome."

Anne Bradstreet

In a test to check the effects of depression and stress, two groups of mice were given a series of electric shocks. One group was allowed to learn a way to turn off the shocks; the other group wasn't allowed any control over the shocks. The result of the test was that the second group was less able to fight off cancer cells.

When you have no control over the things that happen to you, you sometimes feel helpless, frustrated, depressed, guilty, or anxious. And your body doesn't like it. You often catch a cold because your immune system gets tired, overworked, and goes on vacation, leaving you with a headache and a box of tissues.

Bad things happen to good people. In fact, *bad things just happen.* Sometimes you have problems you cause to happen because of poor choices, such as not getting enough sleep or exercise, getting chilled, and not eating right. Then you really can't blame your immune system. But some things happen that you can't seem to control.

Endurance is *the ability to withstand hardship or adversity.* To endure means *to undergo hardship without giving in; to remain firm under suffering or misfortune without yielding.* When you have endurance, you stand strong, holding your balance physically, emotionally, and spiritually, without

buckling under, losing hope, or surrendering. You're patient, holding your own and waiting until the turmoil subsides. You know and accept that bad things happen, and you don't blame anyone. Instead of thinking "My mom's in the hospital and it's the doctor's fault," you think "Okay, my mom's in the hospital. Now what do I need to do?"

"The thought that we are enduring the unendurable is one of the things that keep us going."

Molly Haskell

Coping When Bad Things Happen

A zit blossoms on your forehead just before a first date. Or you miss the tying foul shot in the regional basketball playoffs. Or your friend spreads lies about you. Or your dad loses his job. Or you break a leg, catch pneumonia, or develop a serious illness. What do you do? If you have endurance, you cope in healthy, positive ways. You realize that making good choices can help you to avoid much suffering, but you also understand that doing things right doesn't always prevent misfortune from knocking at your door.

Not-So-Cool Ways to Cope

Escape or avoid your problems. You crumple up your failed biology test and toss it in the trash. Or you vegetate in front of the TV, sleep more than you

need to (although sometimes sleeping helps), eat constantly, or do something self-destructive (drive too fast, use alcohol or drugs, or take other unhealthy risks). Sometimes, when things get *really* bad, some people think that suicide is the answer. It isn't. Suicide is the final copout. You can't ever change your mind or come back from it.

"Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem."

Phil Donahue

CHECK IT OUT



Straight Talk About Anxiety and Depression by Michael Maloney and Rachel Kranz (New York: Dell, 1993). Case studies, self-corrective behavior, suggestions for coping, and how to get help. Ages 11–18.

The Power to Prevent Suicide: A Guide for Teens Helping Teens (Updated Edition) by Richard E. Nelson, Ph.D., and Judith C. Galas (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2006). Understanding the causes of suicide, recognizing the signs, and reaching out to save a life. Ages 11 & up.

Boys Town

1-800-448-3000

www.boystown.org

Immediate crisis intervention, support, and referrals for runaways and abandoned youth, and those who are suicidal or in crisis. Help is available for children, teens (male and female), and adults.

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education

www.save.org

An extensive collection of links and articles about depression and suicide.

Blame yourself. This is *not* the same as accepting responsibility for your actions and choices. In fact, blaming yourself is a way of *avoiding* responsibility. If you tell yourself, "I failed my biology test because I'm too stupid to learn that stuff," you've just given yourself an excuse for not studying anymore. And you can forget about doing better on future biology tests.

Blame other people. "I failed my biology test because Sarah made me go to a concert with her." You can probably see the false reasoning in this argument. Unless Sarah tied you up and dragged you to the concert, you *chose* to go with her.

Blame chance. "I failed my biology test because the bus came too early, and I missed it. I got to school ten minutes late and had to rush through the test." Chance happenings are totally out of our control, right? Yes . . . but what we do in response is up to us.

Blame other things, forces, or powers. "I failed my biology test because I had to go to work and didn't have time to study." That's not a good reason. That's poor planning. "I failed the test because God is punishing me." It may help to talk to a religious leader if you feel this way.

Cool Ways to Cope

Face and accept what happens in your life. If you stop trying to escape and avoid disagreeable or painful events, if you stop looking for someone or something to blame, you can gather your strength and move forward. It's normal to feel depressed and discouraged at times. But if you're always angry, hurt, sad, or frightened, you get stuck and immobilized. And you may develop unpleasant side effects—headaches, back pain, overwhelming tiredness or lethargy. Even when what happens to you isn't your fault at all—if, for example, you contract a serious disease—you can't waste your energies wondering "Why me?" That won't make you better. It might even make you worse. Don't spin your wheels searching for fairness, because *sometimes life isn't fair*.

"I accept the universe!"

Margaret Fuller

Express your feelings. If someone hurts you, talk to him or her. If you're angry, that's okay. Express your feelings in a way that doesn't blame or hurt you or the other person. Focus on the behavior, not the person.¹ *Example:* "It really makes me mad when I hear that lies are being told about me." Talk about your feelings with someone you trust—a true friend who will listen and understand. Sing, dance, laugh, or cry. Crying can help you release your frustration.

Write about your feelings. Dr. James Pennebaker and Sandra Beall once did an experiment with 46 college students to find out how important it was to

¹ For more on this topic, see "Respect," pages 217–218.

express feelings related to problems. They divided the students into groups and asked them to write about their suffering. One group was told to stick to the facts; another group was told to also write about their feelings, frustrations, anger, and so on. The students who wrote about their feelings had higher blood pressure and heart rates after writing than the first group. Six months later, however, they had fewer illnesses, less tension, more peace of mind and insight, and were able to face painful things more easily. So get a journal to write in and let your feelings out. Learn from them; let sadness and suffering be your teachers.

CHECK IT OUT



Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank (New York: Bantam Books, 1993). The diary Anne Frank kept during the two years she and her family hid from the Nazis in an Amsterdam attic is an eloquent testament to the human spirit. Ages 12 & up.

Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect annefrank.com

View a photo essay about Anne Frank's life, read excerpts from her diary, and learn about the Anne Frank Center USA.

The Diary of Latoya Hunter: My First Year in Junior High by Latoya Hunter (New York: Vintage Books, 1993). A young girl writes about the challenges of youth and the way it's shaped by the inner city. Ages 10–14.

Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo by Zlata Filipovic (New York: Viking Press, 1994). Shortly before war broke out in Sarajevo, 11-year-old Zlata Filipovic began to keep a diary. Moving and inspiring, it puts a human face on an inhuman tragedy. Ages 11 & up.

Get help if you need it. Sometimes it's not enough to write in a journal or talk to a friend. You might need to talk with an adult—a teacher, counselor, parent, religious leader, or someone else you trust. If people belittle or discount your feelings, you might end up feeling ashamed or worse. So find someone who will take you seriously and understand your fear and pain. If your body got sick, you'd go to a doctor. If your mind and soul are suffering, seek out a counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist.



"I'm feeling burned out. Are you in?"

CHECK IT OUT



Kids Help Phone

1-800-668-6868

www.kidshelpphone.ca

Canada's only toll-free national telephone counseling service for children and youth ages 5–20.

Try to make it better. Take positive action. If you fail a test, study harder next time. If you tell a lie, admit it. If you break a window, repair it. If you have an illness, follow your doctor's advice. When you redirect your energy from suffering to making things better, you stop being a victim.

"Although the world is full of suffering,
it is full also of the overcoming of it."

Helen Keller

Take good care of yourself. Eat well. Get enough sleep. Leave time in your life for daydreaming, meditation, relaxation, recreation, and goofing off. Reward yourself for taking care of yourself.²

² See "Health," pages 103–114.

Let go. Have you ever seen a rotten tree branch wedged in a gutter? Before long, all kinds of junk are snagged by the branch. By itself, the tree branch isn't harmful, but the debris it collects can cause the gutter to clog and overflow. If you cling to your difficulties, you might obstruct your own progress. Try to let go of your problems and move on. Know what you can control and what you can't control, what you can change and what you're powerless to change. You'll be healthier, happier, and more successful in everything you do.

Learn and grow from your experiences, including the ones that hurt. You'll develop wonderful character traits as a result. You might become more patient, tolerant, understanding, and helpful. You might learn how to take better care of your body so you're healthier for the rest of your life. You might become more assertive and confident, and develop leadership skills. Your friends might respect you more for setting a good example. You might even become a hero! Best of all, you'll probably develop more empathy, understanding, and compassion for others.

Character Dilemmas

For journaling or writing essays, discussion, debate, role-playing, reflection

Suppose that . . .

- ① Your best friend decides that she doesn't want to be friends with you anymore. How might you turn your suffering into a positive experience so you aren't hurt so badly? How might you stick up for yourself and, at the same time, treat your former friend kindly?
- ② You have a friend whose parents are getting divorced. Your friend is devastated. He starts missing school, and his grades begin to fall. He keeps to himself and ignores you and his other friends. How might you help your friend to cope? What could you say without being preachy?
- ③ Lately your older sister has been crying a lot. You know that something has happened to hurt her. But every time you try to talk with her, she slams the door in your face. How might you help her, even if she won't tell you what's happened? Or should you just ignore her?

④ Your father loses his job, and your family moves to another state. Once there, your mother starts working, too, and you end up taking on more of the housework. Your grades start to slip and your social life is nonexistent. What might you do to help your family and yourself endure these difficult changes and times?

⑤ You feel like a loser, hate the way you look, and are convinced that you have no talents or abilities at all. You're sure that good things only happen to other people, never to you. What might you do to change your suffering into something positive? How might you change the way you feel about yourself? Be realistic.

⑥ There's a young child in your family or neighborhood who has stopped speaking and hides from people. What might you do to help?

Activities

WRITE IN YOUR JOURNAL about things that have hurt you physically or emotionally. Write about what you've done to feel better—or what you might do if you're still suffering. Then follow through.³

CHECK IT OUT



A Book of Your Own: Keeping a Diary or Journal by Carla Stevens (New York: Clarion Books, 1993). Practical suggestions plus excerpts from diaries past and present. Ages 9–13.

All About Me: A Keepsake Journal for Kids by Linda Kranz (Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Publishing, 1996). A place to record problems, reflect on your life, and preserve memories of your best or hardest times. Ages 9–12.

WRITE A POEM that begins "I hurt most when. . ." Or write a poem about suffering, what you can learn from it, how to face it, how not to hurt others—or anything else you want to write about.⁴

³ See page 92 for a list of fiction books written in journal style.

⁴ See "Communication," page 57, for a list of resources for young writers.

COLLECT STORIES, POEMS, DIARIES, or quotations by writers who have written about pain and suffering. *Examples:* William Shakespeare, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Edgar Allan Poe, William Wordsworth, Norman Vincent Peale. (You might also look through the Bible, the Koran, the Talmud, or other religious or reflective works.) What can you learn from them about endurance, patience, and strength? What are their attitudes toward adversity? Here are three quotations to get you started:

♥ "A Wounded deer—leaps highest." *Emily Dickinson*

♥ "Those who aim at great deeds must also suffer greatly." *Marcus Licinius Crassus*

♥ "I do not believe that sheer suffering teaches. If suffering alone taught, all the world would be wise, since everyone suffers. To suffering must be added mourning, understanding, patience, love, openness and the willingness to remain vulnerable." *Anne Morrow Lindbergh*

BRAINSTORM "CURES" FOR THE BLUES. Make a list of things you might do to help yourself feel better the next time you're down or depressed. (Be sure that your list includes "Talk to someone I trust" and "Get help if I need it.")

RESEARCH THE RELATIONSHIP between health and emotions.⁵ Find out how eating and exercise can affect the way you feel. Invite a nutritionist to your class or club to give a presentation and answer questions.

Variation: Interview a doctor or psychiatrist about depression and disease. Ask questions like:

- Does depression weaken the body's ability to fight off disease?
- Do some diseases cause people to feel depressed?
- What kinds of help are available for people who are depressed?

LEARN WHAT GALILEO ENDURED. Research this famous astronomer (or another scientist you choose) to find out what kinds of opposition he faced during his lifetime and how he endured. Write a story or skit about his life.

CALCULATE HOW MUCH IT COSTS to get help. Suppose that you need counseling to help you endure a prob-

lem in your life. Find out how much money it would cost for six months of counseling by a 1) school psychologist, 2) social worker, 3) psychologist, 4) psychotherapist, and 5) psychiatrist. You'll need to find out how much per hour each type of counselor gets paid. Will you meet with your counselor once a month? Once a week? Twice a week? Figure the costs, then compare them on a graph or chart.

FIND OUT WHO NEEDS HELP ENDURING. Check your neighborhood or community. Visit a hospital, children's hospital, senior citizens' center, nursing home or rest home, juvenile detention center, or homeless shelter. (Be sure to get permission, and go with a chaperon.) Ask what you can do to help. TIP: Don't forget your own family.

MAKE ACTIVITY KITS FOR CHILDREN at a hospital or homeless shelter. Include pencils, crayons, markers, paper, coloring books, clay, glue, glitter, colored paper, pictures from magazines, yarn, safety scissors, etc. TIP: Be sure to contact the hospital or shelter first to find out what they want or need.

CREATE A SKIT that shows what to do when disaster strikes. Depending on where you live, choose one or more of the following topics: a tornado or hurricane, earthquake, fire, mudslide, drought, flood. Perform your skit for other students, younger children, your club or youth group, your community group, and anyone else who's interested.

LOCATE WORKS OF ART that depict suffering. Look through art books in your school or local library, or visit an art museum. You might start your search by looking for paintings by Cimabue, Donatello, Fra Angelico, Daumier, Picasso, Goya, Munch, Titian, Van der Weyden, Grunewald, and Dali. For each painting you find, decide what it means to you. What do you think the artist's attitude was toward suffering?

EXPLORE THE HEALING POWERS OF MUSIC. Many people around the world believe that music has special healing powers. What do you think? Form your own opinion by listening to many different types of music. You might want to start with music categorized as "relaxation," "healing," or "New Age." Ask at your local library or music store, or find a local radio station that plays relaxing music.

⁵ See "Health," pages 103-114.

Variations: Create your own music when you're feeling down. Play a musical instrument or sing. How does this make you feel? Better? Worse? No different? You might try writing a song or a tune. Do you agree or disagree with William Congreve's famous quotation, "Music has charms to soothe a savage breast/To soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak"?

EXPLORE THE HEALING POWERS OF EXERCISE. When you're feeling blue or have a problem, try jogging, going for a brisk walk, taking a bike ride, playing racquetball—anything that raises your heart rate and makes you sweat. When you exercise, your brain releases endorphins into your bloodstream. Endorphins are chemicals that give you a natural "high." When you're through exercising, see how you feel.

EXPLORE THE HEALING POWERS OF PETS. Researchers have found that pets and companion animals improve our everyday health and well-being. Medical studies suggest that blood pressure is lowered and hospital stays are shortened when patients have access to pets. The next time you've got the blues, spend time with your pet (or a friend's pet). See how you feel during and afterward.


PLAY A "HANG IN THERE" GAME. Divide into teams, brainstorm some problems that cause sadness or suffering, then try to come up with as many ideas as you can for coping with those feelings. Think of 1) things you might do to lessen or eliminate the problem, 2) things you might do to make yourself laugh, 3) things you might do to help yourself endure the problem, and 4) things you might do to reward yourself. Award 1 point per idea. The team with the most points (or the most creative ideas) wins. *Example:* Someone steals \$25 that you needed for a new pair of \$50 running shoes. Ideas:

1. Report the theft to someone who might help you; find a way to earn \$25.
2. Make a "Most Wanted" poster showing a \$20 bill and a \$5 bill; offer candy kisses for information leading to the recovery of your money; make a list of embarrassing or funny things a thief might accidentally steal and get caught with.
3. See if you can borrow \$25 from a friend, parent, or sibling; see if you can borrow a pair of running shoes; try to find running shoes on sale for \$25 instead of \$50.


4. Do something you enjoy. Climb rocks, take a bike ride, draw, paint, listen to music, or treat yourself to an ice-cream sundae.


PLAY A "PASS THE CANE" GAME. Canes are supports you can lean on when you need help walking. Friends are supports you can lean on when you need help enduring. Sit in a circle (around a campfire, if possible) and pass a cane. The person with the cane shares a story about a time when he or she was hurt or suffering. If you don't feel like talking when the cane reaches you, simply hand it to the next person. If you do feel like talking, hold the cane while you talk.

READ STORIES ABOUT ENDURANCE. Look for these books:

-  *After the Dancing Days* by Margaret I. Rostkowski (New York: Harper & Row, 1986). Just after World War I, 13-year-old Annie is forbidden to maintain her friendship with a badly disfigured soldier. The experience changes her views on heroism and patriotism. Ages 12–14.
-  *The Brave* by Robert Lipsyte (New York: HarperCollins, 1991). Seventeen-year-old Sonny, a boxer, has left the Indian reservation for the streets of New York. He tries to harness his emotions by training with Alfred Brooks, who left the sport to become a police officer. Ages 13–17.
-  *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). Brian is still dealing with his parents' divorce when he chooses to visit his father on the oil fields of Canada. His trip takes a life-threatening turn when the small plane he's flying in crashes, stranding him in the Canadian wilderness. Ages 11–14.
-  *Julie of the Wolves* by Jean Craighead George (New York: Harper & Row, 1972). While running away from her family and an unwanted marriage, a 13-year-old Eskimo girl becomes lost on the North Slope of Alaska, where she's befriended by a wolf pack. Ages 11–14.
-  *Weasel* by Cynthia C. DeFelice (New York: Macmillan, 1990). Nathan is alone in the frontier of 1839 as his father recovers from an injury. During that time, he meets the renegade killer Weasel and makes a surprising discovery about revenge. Ages 9–12.


Books written in journal or diary style:


 *Amelia Writes Again!* by Marissa Moss (Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press, 1996). A 10-year-old writes about her life—and her struggles with friendship, privacy, and loyalty—in the journal she receives for her birthday. Ages 8–12.

 *Catherine, Called Birdy* by Karen Cushman (NY: Clarion Books, 1994). A 13-year-old daughter of an English country knight keeps a journal in which she records the events of her life, including her longing for adventures beyond the usual role of women and her efforts to avoid being married off. A Newbery Honor Book and ALA Notable Children's Book. Ages 11–14.

 *Don't You Dare Read This, Mrs. Dunphrey* by Margaret Peterson Haddix (New York: Simon &

Schuster, 1996). Sixteen-year-old Tish Bonner first resents having to keep a journal for English class, then finds solace in writing about problems she can't discuss—such as being abandoned by her mother. Ages 12–16.

 *Ellen Anders On Her Own* by Karen Hirsch (New York: Macmillan, 1994). Eleven-year-old Ellen gains insight into her changing friendships after reading her deceased mother's girlhood diary. Ages 9–12.

 *Heads or Tails: Stories from the Sixth Grade* by Jack Gantos (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994). Jack's diary helps him to deal with problems including dog-eating alligators, a terror for an older sister, and next-door neighbors who are really weird. Ages 9–12.

Character in *ACTION*

Ryan Schroer: Carrying the Torch

Ryan Schroer was 16 years old when he was asked to carry the Olympic Torch across town in Columbus, Indiana. "That is, my wheelchair and I carried the torch," Ryan chuckles.

Ryan was born with cerebral palsy, a condition that severely impairs muscle control. But he didn't let that stop him. At three years old, he taught himself to read by pulling out the Yellow Pages of the phone book and learning letters and words. His parents realized that he was very bright and needed to be in a regular school, where he's stayed all the way through high school. With the help of an aide, and a computer for writing assignments and tests, he's able to function very well. Although he's been identified as moderately mentally handicapped because of poor eyesight and lack of motor skills, he's an honor roll student.

"I'm lucky," Ryan insists. "I don't have a terminal disease. I try not to look at myself as disabled, because if I do I might want to take the easy way out."

When he was nine years old, he took his first step with the help of leg splints and a walker. When he was 15, he was trudging down his street, listening to the radio attached to his walker, when he felt pain in

his left hip. It had slipped out of its socket and required surgery. After six weeks of lying in bed and still keeping up on his school work, Ryan developed kidney stones. Just as he started getting stronger, he felt pain in his back and learned that he had two cracked vertebrae.

"At that point, I was ready to die," Ryan explains. "I asked God to take me if He wanted me. But then I told myself 'You know, you shouldn't listen to that negative side of your mind.' So I didn't give up." He struggled through painful physical therapy and returned to school.

He became a reporter for the school newspaper, *The Triangle*, using a tape recorder and his computer to do interviews and articles. Then one day Ryan heard an announcement over the school PA system. The basketball team needed managers. "Something popped into my head and told me that I'd be perfect for that job. Something else in my head said 'No, you have too many limitations.' But I've learned not to listen to that negative voice. So I wheeled into Coach Preda's office and told him there were some things I couldn't do, but ask me to fold a towel, and hey! I can do that! A couple of weeks later, Coach Preda came up to me in the gym

and told me that I could keep the statistics for all the home games.”

One of his teachers designed a system of circles and boxes so Ryan could track the statistics for each game with two colored pencils. “When Coach Preda uses my charts in the locker room at halftime, it gives me a good feeling because I know I’m making a contribution to the team. I’ve always wanted to be part of a team.”

Then Ryan received a surprise: the United Way nominated him as one of the people who would carry the Olympic Torch through Columbus before the Atlanta games. “I didn’t want to do it at first, because I thought they had selected me because I’m disabled. I wanted to give the honor to my English teacher and good friend, Rick Weinheimer. He taught me to respect myself, and I thought he deserved it more than me. But then he got nominated, too. So I wanted to carry it with him.

“The torch was placed in a holder in my wheelchair, and I carried it from Northside Middle School to North High School. Then I handed it off to Mr. Weinheimer. It was the most poignant moment of my life. I felt a sense of history, joy, sadness—like I wanted to bust out crying. I heard music in my head. The whole town turned out and my whole school.

“I want to go on making a contribution to life. I’m going to college and maybe study communication. I hope I can continue to influence people. I like to be noticed for *who* I am, not *what* I am. But I don’t wish I was able-bodied anymore. I used to. I can experience some regular things, but then I can do things other people can’t.” Ryan smiles. “I can speed down the school hallway really fast. Being this way gives me a unique view of the world.”



Ryan Schroer (center) passing the Olympic Torch to his teacher, Rick Weinheimer

Forgiveness

Pardon, absolution, leniency, mercy, grace

“And throughout all eternity
I forgive you, you forgive me.”

William Blake

There’s an old Zen story that tells of two monks who were walking along the banks of an overflowing river. They saw a young woman who was afraid to cross. Although the monks had taken vows never to touch a woman, the older monk picked her up and carried her to the other side of the river. The younger monk seethed in anger all day. The two didn’t speak until sunset, when they were allowed to break their vow of silence. Then the younger monk, enraged, accused the older monk of defiling himself and the whole order. The older monk simply answered “I put the woman down on the other side of the river early this morning. It is only you who have been carting her around throughout the day.”

You’re not going to get through life without people stepping on your toes and sometimes even stealing your shoes. You’ve probably already experienced people lying about you, cheating you, betraying you, taking your friends, homework, or possessions, telling you you’re stupid, and worse. You may have suffered physical pain, injury, or abuse from people you love. These things should never happen . . . but they happen.

What should you do? What’s best for you. Drop your anger and desire for revenge like a hot potato, because if you don’t, the person who wronged you will hurt you twice. *Example:* Your brother takes your bike without asking, ruins the gear shifter, then dumps the evidence in the trash behind a store.

Okay, he’s hurt you once. If you seethe in anger like the younger monk, you’ll put a stop to your own personal growth and probably hurt your health, too. Wham! Your brother has hurt you twice—and you still don’t have your bike.

“Hate is like acid. It can damage the vessel
in which it is stored as well as destroy the
object on which it is poured.”

Ann Landers

Here’s the secret of forgiveness: When you forgive others or yourself, *you stop being a victim*. You stop suffering. You can turn your pain into strength. You can improve your health, your sense of peace, and your happiness.

“Great,” you might say, “but forgiveness is easier said than done.” And you’d be right. Developing positive character traits isn’t for wimps, and forgiveness is one of the hardest of all traits to form. You can do it, though. Here’s how.

How to Forgive Others

1. Acknowledge and accept what was done to you. Don’t ignore it or bury it. Buried things rot. Life isn’t fair, bad things happen to good people, and wrongdoers aren’t always punished. This doesn’t mean you should give up or give in.

2. Report the offense. If the other person broke the law, report him or her to the police. If the person

broke a school rule, report it to your teacher or principal. If the person broke a family rule, tell your parents. You're not being a tattletale. Offenders should be held accountable for what they do.

3. Let your feelings out. Go ahead; get mad. Yell and cry if you want to. Let your anger out in a non-violent way. Anger held inside can make you sick. Jog, run, throw a football, pound the floor, pound your pillow, or wad up your dirty socks and throw them at the wall.

4. Talk with a caring, understanding adult or friend. Explain what happened and how you feel. Get professional help if you need it.¹

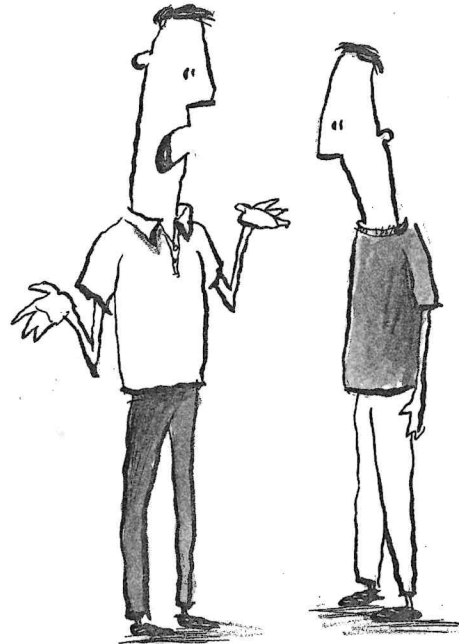
5. Write about your feelings in your journal.² Let them out. Or pound out your feelings on a piano or other musical instrument. Or draw your feelings. Do whatever works for you.

6. Tell the offender how you feel. Sometimes other people aren't aware that they've hurt you. Focus on the problem, not the person. Explain, don't blame. *Example:* You might say "I needed that bike to get to my job. Now I either have to walk or lose my job. This is a real hardship for me, and I don't know what to do." Don't say "You idiot! You stole my bike and ruined it. You're a thief and a liar. I hate you!" The first approach might turn your brother into an ally—someone who sympathizes with your problem. The second approach will put him on the defensive.

7. Ask the offender to make things right. Ask the person to return what was taken or fix what was broken. *Example:* "Will you help me repair my bike? Will you help me pay for the parts I need?" Sometimes this is possible, sometimes it isn't.

8. If this is appropriate for you, talk with God or another Higher Being/Higher Power you have faith in. Ask to be relieved of your anger and desire for revenge. Ask to be healed of your hurt. Ask for the ability to understand what's happened and put it behind you. Ask for the strength to forgive.

9. Forgive the offender. Take charge of your own attitudes, reactions, and feelings. Anger is a choice, revenge is a choice, hatred is a choice—



"I really NEED a bike. What am I going to do?"

and forgiveness is a choice.³ When you're ready, say "I forgive you." If you're sincere, you should feel a sense of calm and relief. Your body and spirit will be healthier. Don't worry about justice; leave that to the law, to the offender's own conscience, or to a Higher Power.

"It is by forgiving that one is forgiven."
Mother Teresa

10. Find a way to serve the offender. "WHAT?" you might ask. Yes, you read it right! This step is not for the faint of heart. Only the truly courageous can take it. But this is where you grow the most and gain the most—and that's why it's worth a try.

For this step, focus on the *person*, not the problem. See the human being complete with faults, weaknesses, worries, doubts, deficiencies, and insecurities. Then ask yourself "How can I serve this person? How can I help him or her? What can I do to make his or her life better—without expecting anything in return?" An answer will come to you. You might even do a "secret service" or a random act of kindness.⁴

¹ See "Endurance," pages 87 and 88, for crisis hotlines.

² See "Endurance," pages 88, 89, and 92, for journaling resources.

³ See "Choice and Accountability," pages 28–34.

⁴ See "Caring," page 24.

Serving someone who hurt you can be very healing. When you do this, you defeat the wrong that was done to you. You're free. You win!

11. Repeat any of these steps as often as you need to until they stick. Be patient with yourself. Forgiveness takes time.

How to Forgive Yourself

"If you haven't forgiven yourself something, how can you forgive others?"

Dolores Huerta

What if you're the person who committed the offense? Who hurt someone else? Who behaved badly? You can hope that the other person will forgive you, but that's not something you can control. What you *can* control is how you treat yourself.

You can't change the past. You can't go back in time and undo the wrong you did. But you can do good in the present. And you can start by forgiving yourself. Here's how.

1. Admit what you did. Take responsibility for your actions. You can't forgive yourself until you acknowledge that you did something wrong. Maybe you made a mistake; everybody does from time to time. Or maybe you deliberately hurt someone. Either way, *you* did it, and *you* need to admit it.

Think of your wrong or mistake as the first link in a chain that imprisons you. Each time you lie

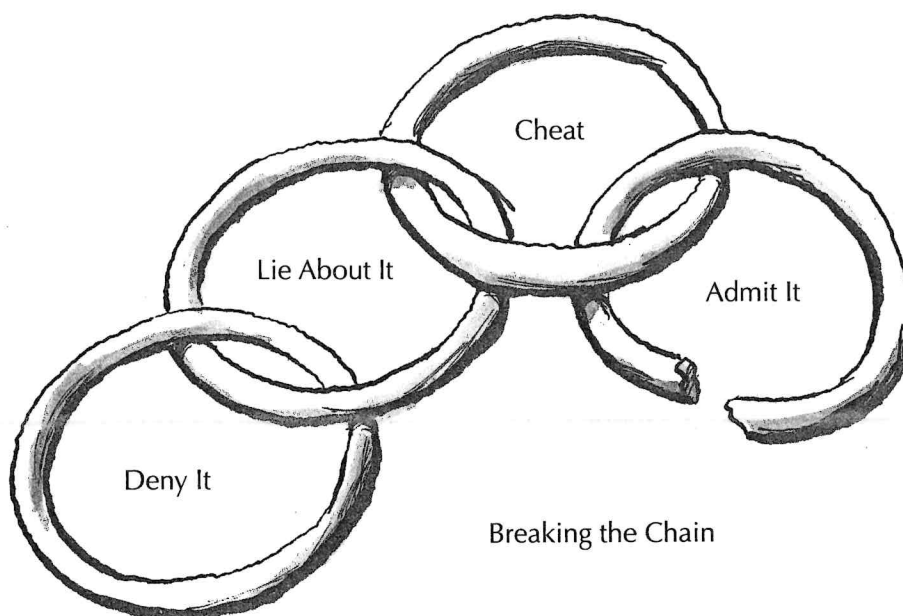
about or deny what you did, you're adding another link. Admitting it breaks the chain.

2. Let yourself feel guilty. But be aware of what kind of guilt you feel. If your guilt leads you to look in the mirror, admit what you did, and feel sorry for it, you'll grow from your experience. If your guilt makes you turn away from the mirror in shame and self-loathing, get help.

3. Talk with a caring, understanding adult or friend. Explain what happened and how you feel. Get professional help if you need it. Talking about wrongs and mistakes can be healing. You might ask for advice, if that seems appropriate. Then do what you think is best.

4. Say you're sorry and ask the person you wronged to forgive you. Be sincere. And be prepared; the person might throw a tomato in your face. It's not your problem if the person doesn't accept your apology. You can't control what he or she says, does, or feels. You can only control what *you* say, do, or feel. Try not to get angry if the person doesn't immediately respond the way you'd like. Forgiveness takes time. However, most people will soften if you ask for forgiveness and really mean it.

5. Accept the consequences of what you did—unless they seem unjust. Then you have the right to be assertive and work for a better solution. *Example:* You steal \$10 from the cash register in the school cafeteria. Someone sees you and reports you to the



principal, who calls you into his office and confronts you. You say “What I did was wrong. I’m really sorry, and I’ll pay it back. Please forgive me. I won’t ever do it again.” The principal gives you a date by which he expects you to pay back the money. He also gives you a month’s worth of detentions. And you know that you’ve lost his trust and respect and will have to earn them back—if you can. Those consequences are fair.

But what if the principal makes you pay the money back *and* expels you from school for the rest of the year? Those consequences aren’t fair. Ask a parent, teacher, or counselor for help. If you’re convicted of breaking the law, get a lawyer. If you can’t afford to pay for a lawyer, ask the court to appoint one for you. You have the right to expect fair and just consequences for what you did.

6. Do what you can to make things right. Give back the money. Paint over the graffiti. Tell the truth about a friend. Admit that you cheated, then take the test over—or accept a failing grade.

7. Try to find a way to serve the person you hurt. If this isn’t possible, do kindnesses for other people.

8. If you have a faith tradition that encourages you to look to a higher power, ask that higher power for forgiveness. Ask for the strength not to repeat the wrong or mistake. Ask for patience if the person you hurt hasn’t forgiven you.

9. Forgive yourself. Don’t bad-mouth yourself or carry around a load of guilt. This can make you sick in your mind and your body. Sometimes it’s easier to forgive others than it is to forgive yourself. When you forgive yourself, you can learn from your actions and mistakes. You’re free to use your energy to keep growing and becoming the kind of person you want to be.

Character Dilemmas

For journaling or writing essays, discussion, debate, role-playing, reflection

Suppose that . . .

1 Your sister steals money from your room. You go through all the steps of forgiving others, but she won’t cooperate. She just keeps stealing from your room. What might you do?

2 You’re jealous of a big guy on the football team, and you want to replace him on first string. So you lie and tell the coach and everyone else that he’s muscular because he uses steroids. He gets dropped from the team, and you feel terrible about it. You finally go to him, tell him what you did, and ask his forgiveness. He punches your lights out. What might you do? Fight back? Tell the coach? Let it go? Try to make things right? Predict and evaluate the results of each action.

3 A man is mistakenly identified as a murderer and sent to prison for life. He knows he’s innocent, and the real killer is still on the loose. What might the man do with his life? Is it possible for him to get justice? How can he free himself from his own anger and the injustice committed against him?

4 Your best friend is driving home from school one day when she’s broadsided by a drunk driver. As a result of the accident, she loses the use of her legs and must spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair. What are some specific things you might do to help your friend overcome the anger and hatred she feels for the drunk driver?

5 You’re taking a math test when you happen to gaze to your right. You’re lost in thought, and you’re not even aware that your head is turning; in fact, you don’t even see anything. But your teacher notices, walks over to your desk, looks at your paper, looks at the paper of the person sitting on your right, and accuses you of cheating because your answers happen to match. You tell the truth—you weren’t cheating—but she doesn’t believe you. She tears up your paper in front of the class and announces that you’ll be getting an F. What might you do to release yourself from the anger you feel toward your teacher?

6 An elderly widow in your neighborhood has just lost her home. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has taken it because, they claim, her husband didn’t pay income taxes for 20 years. How might she handle her anger toward the IRS—and her dead husband? What might she do? In your opinion, were the IRS’s actions fair and just?

7 One of your friends is shot in the arm by a gang member for warning the police about a gang fight. The police can’t prove that the gang member

did the shooting, and after a few months in the detention home, he walks free. Now he's threatening to kill your friend. What might your friend do? Consider the possible consequences of each course of action your friend might take.

Activities

BRAINSTORM WAYS TO "LET OFF STEAM" when you're angry. Make a list. Keep your focus on positive, helpful things rather than negative, harmful, or vengeful things.

CHECK IT OUT



Don't Rant and Rave on Wednesdays! The Children's Anger-Control Book by Adolph Moser, Ed.D. (Kansas City, MO: Landmark Editions, 1994). Like *Don't Pop Your Cork on Mondays!* (see page 4), this book is written for younger kids ages 6–9, but the information it contains makes it worth reading at any age.

Everything You Need to Know About Anger by Renora Licata (NY: Rosen Publishing Group, 1994). Discusses the causes of anger, how it affects people, and ways to control it. Ages 12–18.

WRITE IN YOUR JOURNAL⁵ about someone you're angry with. Write about how you feel; write about what you'd like to do. Or write about an experience someone else has had.

COLLECT NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE STORIES about crimes, wrongdoings, and mistakes. Bring them to your class or club and rewrite them so they have positive endings. Imagine how each victim might overcome his or her anger and desire for revenge and arrive at positive new solutions.

CHECK IT OUT



True Stories About Forgiveness

www.greensboro.com

On Easter Sunday, 1996 (April 7), the *Greensboro News & Record* published a series of stories on the subject of forgiveness. Reporter Lex Alexander interviewed five people including a man who was wrongly convicted and imprisoned for rape, a woman who put her mother in a psychiatric hospital, and a man whose sons were murdered. The series also includes

an article on how various religions—Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism—view forgiveness. If you can't access the Web site's News Archives and you'd like to read the stories, see if your local library subscribes to the *News & Record* and has back issues on file or on microfiche. Or contact:

The Greensboro News & Record

200 E. Market St.
Greensboro, NC 27401
1-800-553-6880

WRITE A MYTH about how forgiveness came into the world. You might want to start by reading myths or folktales from various cultures to get a feel for how they're written. (Your local library will have many books about myths for you to explore.) Afterward, consider presenting your myth as a play, reading it aloud to your classmates and younger students, illustrating it, or sharing it in other ways.

INVITE A PSYCHOLOGIST OR PSYCHIATRIST to your class to discuss the harmful effects of holding on to guilt, harboring grudges, wanting revenge, etc. Ask the expert's advice on ways to handle anger, being a victim, and so on.

WRITE A REPORT ABOUT MENTAL or physical illnesses that result from harboring anger, guilt, grudges, and other responses to being wronged. You might interview your school counselor or psychologist, if one is available.

RESEARCH THE LIVES of one or more famous people who have overcome hatred, injustice, guilt, or being victimized and have made a significant contribution to the world. Make a chart showing 1) their names, 2) the injustices they suffered or obstacles they faced, 3) how they responded to and/or triumphed over the injustices or obstacles. *Example:* 1) Anne Frank 2) lost her home, her family, and ultimately her life to the Holocaust. 3) During the time she spent in hiding, she kept a diary that has inspired millions of people.⁶

ESTIMATE WHAT IT COSTS YOUR COMMUNITY to counsel people who have been victimized by crime, abuse, or other wrongs done to them. Contact victims' rights organizations, battered women's shelters,

⁵ See "Endurance," pages 88, 89, and 92, for journaling resources.

⁶ See "Endurance," page 88, for information on Anne Frank's diary and a related Web site.

Child Protective Services (the government agency responsible for investigating reports of child abuse, neglect, and abandonment), and other organizations and agencies that work with victims. See if you can find out approximate hourly counseling fees, numbers of counselors, and average caseloads. Using those figures, try to come up with an estimate.

SURVEY YOUR SCHOOL, NEIGHBORHOOD, or community to determine how many people are holding grudges—against individuals, groups, agencies, organizations, etc. Come up with three or more questions to ask each person you survey. *Examples:*

- ? Is there anyone you're angry with right now?
- ? How long have you been angry? An hour? A few days? A month? Longer?
- ? What are you doing about your anger?

Organize your survey results on a chart or graph.

CREATE A BOOK OR BOOKLET about forgiveness. You might want to write a story and illustrate it, create a comic book, or write a how-to book explaining how to forgive. Bind your finished work and donate it to your school library. If it's a picture book, share it with younger children.


CREATE A SERIES OF SYMBOLS illustrating different feelings and emotions related to forgiveness. *Examples:* hurt, anger, frustration, sadness, acceptance, guilt, being apologetic, forgiveness.⁷


VOLUNTEER AT A HOSPITAL, home, or treatment center for children with behavioral disorders. Ask for training to help those who have pent-up anger, aggression, or hostilities.


FOLLOW THE STEPS on pages 94–96 or 96–97 if there's someone you need to forgive (someone else or yourself). Keep a diary of what you experience, how you feel, and what happens as a result of your efforts. If you think you need professional help to resolve some of the issues you're facing, get a referral from your school psychologist, community counseling center, youth leader, or religious leader.


PLAY A YARN GAME. Sit in a circle with a ball of yarn. One person starts the game by holding the yarn ball and telling about a time when he or she forgave someone else. Then the first person hangs on to the loose end of the yarn and tosses the ball to another person, who relates a personal experience about forgiveness. That person then loops the yarn around his or her finger and tosses it to a third person, and so on. At the end of the game, you'll have a network of crossed yarn strings that might resemble a spider's web. Talk about how your common experiences connect you, as the yarn connects you. **TIP:** If someone doesn't want to tell a personal story, he or she can tell a story that happened to someone else (without naming names).


READ STORIES ABOUT FORGIVENESS. Look for these books:

 *The Fear Place* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor (New York: Atheneum, 1994). When 12-year-old Doug and his older brother Gordon are left camping alone in the Rocky Mountains, Doug faces his fear of heights and his feelings about his brother. Ages 9–12.

 *Glennis, Before and After* by Patricia Calvert (New York: Atheneum, 1996). When her father is sent to jail for a white-collar crime and her mother is hospitalized with a breakdown, 12-year-old Glennis goes to live with her aunt and learns that not all prisons are made of stone. Ages 12 & up.

 *Honor Bright* by Randall Beth Platt (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1997). While visiting her grandmother during the summer of 1944, a 14-year-old girl helps to heal the wounds that have been inflicted upon three generations of women. Ages 14 & up.

 *Nick* by Alma Yates (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Co., 1995). Aaron Solinski's summer job in northern Utah leads to more than he expected, including meeting his old friend's kid sister Nadine (Nick) and running into his estranged father. Ages 12 & up.

 *Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech (New York: HarperCollins, 1994). As Sal and her grandparents follow the route her mother took when she suddenly left home, Sal tells about her friend Phoebe, whose mother also left. Ages 11–14.

⁷ See "Positive Attitudes," page 18, for a resource about symbols.

Character in ***ACTION***

Andrew Papachristos: Forgiving Others

Andrew Papachristos grew up in the Rogers Park neighborhood on Chicago's North Side. He remembers the way it used to be. "It was ethnically diverse," he explains, "with practically every religion, ethnic group, and race within one mile. We were black, white, Hispanic, Russian, Italian, Greek, everything. My parents were part owners of Kamar's Restaurant and had been for many years. We served free dinners on Thanksgiving and Christmas, and a lot of the neighborhood ate there every day. I worked there. It was a place for people to come and hang out."

By the time Andy became a teenager, things were changing. "Our strong neighborhood started to deteriorate. People joined gangs and began running

drugs. There was violence, theft, and beatings. People became afraid. So the community got together and started a Crimestoppers Group for parents. My parents worked with the community, and I joined the Guardian Angels. Rather than watch my neighborhood be taken over by crime, I decided to do something about it."

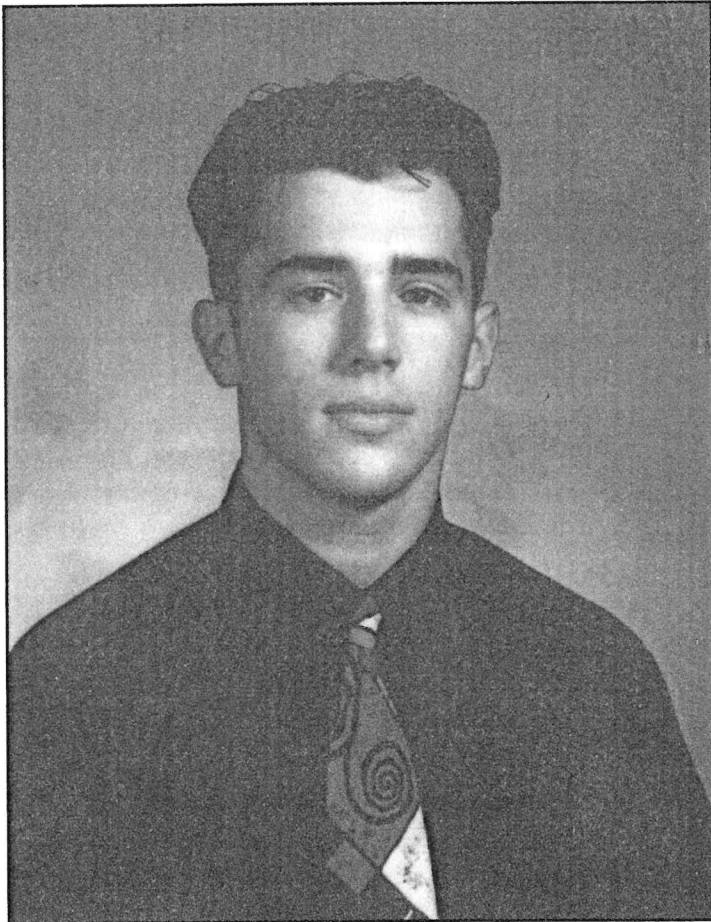
Andy was 16 when he joined the Guardian Angels, an organization of trained volunteers who patrol neighborhoods, make citizens' arrests, and offer protection to anyone in need. "I became a patrol leader," Andy explains. "So I got really involved. The gang members—many were my old friends—didn't like that."

Andy's parents scrimped, saved, and sent him to Loyola Academy, a private Catholic high school. "I'm really grateful for that," he says, "because Loyola gave me a different way of being accepted. It gave me a choice."

As Andy walked home from the train after school each day, he'd usually find at least two gang members waiting for him. Dressed in baggy pants, baseball caps cocked to one side, gold chains swinging from their necks, they'd stop him at street corners and taunt him. "Hey, Charlie's Angel! What you trying to do, bro? We're going to get you. You can't stop us." Then they'd block his path, push him, and insult him and his family.

Andy tried to talk with them, then ignored them, and sometimes shoved back and ran. Having been trained by the Guardian Angels to defend himself, he learned to block the gang members' punches and blows. Sometimes he had to fight back to get past them.

The gang members didn't like Guardian Angels patrolling the streets and protecting the store owners because it interfered with their extortion business. Gang members collected "protection" money from store owners. If the owners refused to give it to them, the gang members would break the store windows, steal, and set businesses on fire.



Andrew Papachristos

Soon Andy's family started receiving threats. Gang members followed his sister home from work during the summer, shouting trashy names at her. They wrote letters to his parents threatening to burn down their restaurant and harassed them on the phone. They tromped into the restaurant during business hours and shouted "You can't stop us. We're going to get you." They broke windows in the restaurant, and each time the alarm went off, Andy's family would get a call from the police. Andy and his dad would drag themselves out of bed at 3:00 A.M. and go to the restaurant to shut off the alarm. Then they'd reset the alarm so the gang members couldn't get inside and loot the restaurant. They'd have the windows repaired and start over.

Gang members hit their family car. They broke the windows and covered it with graffiti three times. They stole a car belonging to one of Andy's aunts and burned down another aunt's garage. After each incident, they bragged about it on the street or left threatening notes so Andy and his family would know who had attacked them.

Despite the torment, Andy stayed with the Guardian Angels. He became a youth counselor and tried to help other kids choose alternatives to gangs, drugs, and violence. He and his family were role models in their neighborhood.

Then one night the telephone rang. It was a neighbor. "You'd better get down here. They set the restaurant on fire!" Andy, his parents, and his sister tore out of their apartment and raced to the restaurant.

"I sat there under the tracks where the elevated train goes over, just watching the blaze," Andy remembers. "They had poured gasoline down the ventilation shaft in the ceiling, then thrown a Molotov cocktail down it. The explosion set the ceiling on fire. I saw the roof collapse." The blaze shot 20 feet into the air. There was nothing anyone could do.

"I can't describe how I felt," Andy says. "They had gotten us where it hurt. The restaurant was all we had. We had no house, no fancy car. We were just



Andy (left) with another Guardian Angel

a regular family trying to make a difference. Now everything we had was gone.

"At first, I wanted revenge. I was steaming mad. But my family and I talked about it, and I cooled down. Then I was just happy that no one was hurt. The blaze was so big that it also destroyed the three businesses around our restaurant: a shoemakers' shop, a tavern, and a convenience market.

"There was no proof, so the gang members got off free. The insurance company went bankrupt, and we got nothing. My parents didn't blame me or themselves. I went to work at a grocery store, my father got a job as a draftsman, and my sister worked at the university. My mom got jobs at retail stores."

When Andy saw the gang members on the street, bragging to let him know who had done this to his family, Andy curled his fists into balls but controlled his anger. "Either you hold a grudge forever, or you say 'That's over with. Now what are you going to do?' If you hold a grudge, you're driven by rage and revenge. You end up hurting other people and yourself. You have to let it go."

Not long after the fire, Andy's parents brought in three foster children, kids involved in gangs and

drugs. Then his family helped to start Communities Dare to Care, a one-of-a-kind organization that works directly with youth at risk. Andy counseled the kids, showing them another way. "There's a saying that goes something like this: 'If you ever get a chance to get out of your situation, you've got to reach down and bring someone else up with you.' Other organizations like to work with kids who offer more hope for change. We work with the throwaways, the dropouts, the kids who live on the streets or in gang houses."

Andy still sees the gang members who burned down his family's restaurant. "They're on the street all the time. One of them is in jail for something else . . . It's hard to forgive," he admits. "But if I had sought revenge, I would have become what I hate the most. I would have been stuck there. Instead, I wanted to do something with my life. So I'm going to college to study criminal justice. I'm now the director of Communities Dare to Care, and we're incorporated. I'm writing grants for funding."

He pauses, thinking back on the events of the past few years. "It's funny," he says, "but if you give something good back to the community, it's easier to forgive."

Health

Being physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy

"We are indeed much more than what we eat, but what we eat can nevertheless help us to be much more than what we are."

Adelle Davis

Imagine that someone gives you a fancy new car. As you read your owner's manual, you discover that it likes to guzzle high-octane, expensive supreme gas. You decide that your car should have less expensive tastes, so you feed it regular gas. After a year or so, the engine coughs, sputters, and dies. Because a new engine costs thousands of dollars, you decide to get a different car instead.

Your body is like a fancy car. It requires high-quality fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins to keep its engine running—but if something goes wrong with your body, you can't replace it.

"Wait!" you might say. "My Great Aunt Harriet is 105 years old, and she chain-smokes cigars and eats french fries every day." Maybe so, but what does that have to do with you? It's true that some people have heredity on their side. No matter how they abuse their bodies, they seem to be okay. Most people aren't like that, however. And you can't be sure which side of the family your genes come from. Maybe your Great Uncle Harry died at age 30.

You are what you eat, and you'll definitely be healthier if you give your mind and body the fuel they need.

You may have heard about the Four Basic Food Groups: 1) meat, fish, poultry, and eggs, 2) dairy products, 3) vegetables and fruits, and 4) grains. Maybe you've defined some Food Groups of your own: burgers, shakes, sugar, caffeine, and chips. You

probably already know that most fast foods aren't good for you. But how do you know which foods *are* good for you? It's not always easy to tell, and the facts about food seem to change every day.

It used to be that everyone thought the Four Basic Food Groups were the way to go. Then, in 1992, the U.S. Department of Agriculture came out with a chart called the Food Guide Pyramid. The Pyramid identified five major food groups: 1) the bread, cereal, rice, and pasta group; 2) the vegetable group; 3) the fruit group; 4) the milk, yogurt, and cheese group; and 5) the meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts group. The USDA even recommended how many servings per day you should eat from each group.

Sounds simple, right? Not so fast. Researchers have learned a lot about food since 1992. For example, while the Pyramid says to use fats sparingly, it turns out that some fats are an important part of a healthful diet. While the Pyramid pushes carbohydrates, suggesting 6–11 servings per day of bread, cereal, rice, and pasta, not all carbohydrates are good for you. Some—like white bread and white rice—are digested very quickly, causing blood sugar to rise. This can lead to weight gain, diabetes, and heart disease, to name just a few potential problems.

Plus the Pyramid isn't clear about what *kinds* of foods to eat from each food group. When it recommends 2–3 servings per day from the meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts group, does that mean it's okay to eat 2–3 servings of red meat? What about 2–3 servings of bacon? What about bacon wrapped around a big, juicy burger with a piece of fried chicken on the side?

Some people feel that the USDA is influenced by the food industry, including meat, egg, milk, and sugar producers. For example, the Pyramid suggests 2–3 servings per day from the milk, yogurt, and cheese group. True, these foods are sources of calcium, needed for strong bones—but so are green, leafy vegetables. And veggies aren't full of saturated fats, the kind that aren't healthful.

Did you know that obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death in America? (The leading cause is a little more obvious: smoking.) Each year, 300,000 Americans die from health problems related to being overweight. There are many things that could lead to weight management problems: genetics, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, poor eating habits, and lack of exercise to name a few. And low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety are also problems that may come up as a result of being overweight. Between 16 and 33 percent of kids and teens in the United States are obese. Being overweight puts kids at risk of health problems later in life, and obese teens are at risk of growing up to be obese adults. The good news is, your body will never be more resilient than it is right now. Changing your eating and exercise habits today will keep you fit and healthy into the future.

So how is a teen supposed to eat right and be fit? What if you have special nutritional needs, like an allergy to milk or nuts? What if you don't eat certain foods because of your personal or religious beliefs? Every *body* is different. Pay attention to yours. Use common sense. Read up on nutrition. Talk to your doctor or a nutritionist if you have questions.

CHECK IT OUT



Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy: The Harvard Medical School Guide to Healthy Eating by Walter C. Willett, M.D. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001). This book describes an alternative to the USDA's Food Guide Pyramid. Created by experts at the Harvard School of Public Health, it's called the Healthy Eating Pyramid.

Harvard School of Public Health

www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-eating-plate

This Web page describes the Healthy Eating Plate and the Healthy Eating Pyramid.

Nutrition.gov

www.nutrition.gov

Information about food and nutrition from the U.S. government. Browse the site for information on eating nutritiously and making healthy choices.

Oldways: The Food Issues Think Tank

www.oldwayspt.org

The Oldways Preservation and Exchange Trust is a nonprofit organization that translates the complex details of nutrition science into everyday language and good advice. Visit their site to download free copies of four "healthy eating pyramids" based on Asian, Latin American, Mediterranean, African, and vegetarian diets. Versions are available for adults and children.

How to Be Physically Healthy

"When it comes to your health,
I recommend frequent doses of that rare
commodity among Americans—
common sense."

Vincent Askey

Listen to your body. Do you get lightheaded if you go more than four hours without eating? Maybe you need to eat more often and increase the amount of protein you consume. Or maybe it's a sign that you're eating too much sugar. Change your eating habits and see what happens.

Eat a variety of wholesome, healthful foods. You might use the Harvard Medical School's Healthy Eating Pyramid as a guide. (Although this pyramid suggests "alcohol in moderation," this means adults, not kids or teens. But you knew that!) What if you don't eat meat? Many people are vegetarians who get their protein from other sources; evidence shows that this, too, is a healthful way to live. Some vegetarians are vegans ("vee-guns") who don't consume any dairy products, either, meaning no milk, eggs, or cheese. This diet can also be healthful as long as it includes plenty of beans and legumes.

CHECK IT OUT



The excellent, friendly *Smart Girl's Guide to Going Vegetarian* by Rachel Meltzer Warren, M.S., R.D.N. (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2014) is aimed at both teenage boys and girls, helping them choose the degree of vegetarianism they want to adhere to and then get the nutrition they need.

Vegetables Rock! A Complete Guide for Teenage Vegetarians by Stephanie Pierson (New York: Bantam, 1999). Basic nutrition information, a helpful Q&A, the lowdown on foods containing hidden animal products, tips for braving the perils of cafeteria dining, what to say to meat eaters who give you a hard time, and recipes made with ingredients from your local supermarket.

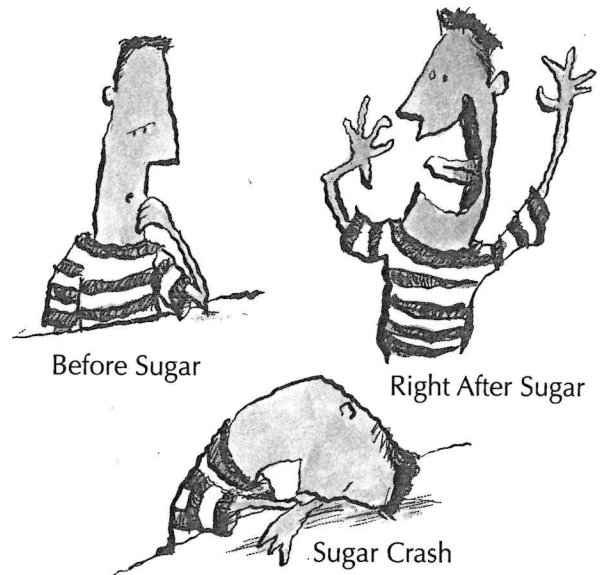
Know that all fats are not the same. You can't avoid eating fats, and you shouldn't try. Fats are a major source of energy. They help your body absorb vitamins. They make food taste better and you feel full. But while some fats are healthful, others are not. What you want to eat are unsaturated fats—those found in plant oils (olive, canola, soy, corn, sunflower, peanut) and fatty fish (like salmon). What you want to limit are saturated fats and *trans* fats.

"Limit" doesn't mean "totally avoid for the rest of your life." An occasional splurge won't hurt you. Just don't make fried foods the focus of every meal.

Saturated fats are found in foods from animals (beef, lamb, pork, lard, butter, cream, cheeses) and some plants (coconut oil, palm oil). They are usually solid or almost solid at room temperature. *Trans* fats are found in vegetable shortenings, some margarines, crackers, cookies, snack foods, and other foods made with or fried in partially hydrogenated oils.

How can you tell if a food contains saturated fats or *trans* fats? Check the Nutrition Facts Panel (NFP) on the product label. When comparing foods, choose those with lower amounts of saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol.

Go easy on the sugar. A single bottle of soda contains anywhere from 30–50 grams of sugar—about 7–9 teaspoons. (Think about eating 9 teaspoons of sugar. Doesn't that make you sick?) Sugar by any other name—glucose, sucrose, fructose, corn syrup—is still sugar, as are the so-called natural sugars.



Sugar sends you on a rollercoaster ride. You rise and then you drop. You drink a soda or eat a candy bar, and you experience a buzz and burst of energy. Then your pancreas starts secreting insulin, which carries the sugar to your liver. Then your liver kicks into overdrive to get rid of the extra blood sugar. Before you know it, you're crashing, cranky, and looking for another sugar fix.

Avoid caffeine. If you drink four cans of soda or four cups of coffee a day, you're probably hooked on caffeine—unless you're a decaf drinker. How can you tell if you're a caffeine fiend? Try going without it for a day or two. If you get a headache that goes away when you drink caffeine, that's a sure sign.

Caffeine can make your heart race, keep you awake at night, give you stomachaches and scary dreams, and make you so jittery that you start drumming your fingers on your desk (and driving everyone around you crazy). And it's not only in soda and coffee. Caffeine is also found in chocolate, cold capsules, cough syrups, and headache medication. When in doubt, read the product label.

Limit your salt and sodium intake. Too much salt can raise your blood pressure. A little goes a long way, and you can train your tongue to like less. TIP: Try some fresh-ground black pepper or an herbal flavoring instead.

Exercise regularly. When you exercise, you strengthen your cardiopulmonary system, stimulate your vital organs, and keep your body flexible. You get in shape and manage your weight.

Many fitness experts recommend that teens do some kind of physical activity every day. The USDA's *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005* recommend at least 60 minutes of physical activity for kids and teens on most and preferably all days of the week. Plus you should do at least 20 minutes of vigorous exercise (the heart-pumping, hard-breathing, sweaty kind) at least three days a week. Most teens don't need to work out every day.

While regular exercise is good, compulsive exercise is not. Some teens put workouts ahead of everything else in life—friends, homework, responsibilities, and fun. If that sounds like you (or someone you know), talk to an adult you trust.

If you need advice on what to do and how often to do it, ask your gym teacher or a coach at your school or community center. If you've been a couch potato until now, talk with your doctor before starting an exercise program.

CHECK IT OUT

Be Fit, Be Strong, Be You by Rebecca Kajander, C.P.N.P., M.P.H., and Timothy Culbert, M.D. (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2010). Specific tips on eating, exercise, and self-esteem help you learn how your body, mind, and spirit are connected and work together to make a whole, healthy self. Ages 8–13.

Teenage Fitness: Get Fit, Look Good, and Feel Great! by Kathy Kaehler with Connie Church (New York: Cliff Street/Harper Collins, 2001). As a teen, Kathy Kaehler had eating problems and a poor body image. Now she's the *Today* show fitness expert and one of Hollywood's most sought-after fitness trainers. Ages 12 & up.

Get enough sleep. Most people need to sleep an average of eight hours a night. Some need less sleep; others need more. Too much sleep can be an escape—a way to avoid problems or responsibilities. If you find yourself sleeping 10–12 hours every night and taking naps during the day, ask yourself what's happening in your life. Is there something you need to face, fix, decide, or do?

Stay away from alcohol, drugs, and smoking.

According to the National Safety Council, more than 4 million American teenagers have serious problems with alcohol. Most teens don't use drugs, but millions do. The American Cancer Society estimates that cigarette smoking causes 87 percent of all deaths from lung cancer; more than 3,000 teenagers start smoking each day. Alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes combined are the main cause of early and preventable illness, disease, disability, and death in the United States today.

Be smart and don't start. If you've already started, quit. Help is available from many sources, including toll-free information and counseling hotlines.¹

CHECK IT OUT



Wise Highs: How to Thrill, Chill, & Get Away from It All Without Alcohol or Other Drugs by Alex J. Packer, Ph.D. (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2006). Read this book and you won't need artificial highs. You won't want them. You won't have time for them. You'll know so many ways to get high *naturally* that you'll never be able to try them all. Ages 13 & up.

Above the Influence

www.abovetheinfluence.com

This teen-friendly site is filled with reliable facts about drugs. You'll find message boards, quizzes, free stuff, and opportunities to share your stories and ideas.

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) for Teens

teens.drugabuse.gov
Part of the National Institutes of Health, NIDA offers a comprehensive website of news and materials about substance abuse, the science behind it, and prevention. The visual, interactive site is tailored for middle and high school students, offering a helpline, blog, videos, and the National Drug IQ Challenge.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

1-877-SAMHSA-7
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857
www.samhsa.gov

Part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA is the world's largest resource for current information and materials about substance abuse prevention. Ask about free fact sheets, brochures, pamphlets, posters, and videos.

¹ See also "Cleanliness," page 49, for how to contact SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions).

Don't obsess about your weight. Instead, find your *et point*—your own healthy weight. You'll feel better, look better, and stay healthier if you find the weight your body wants to be. Don't worry if your set point isn't the same as your friends'; your bodies are different. When you're eating sensibly, aren't always hungry, have plenty of energy, and generally feel "balanced" and comfortable, you're there. Avoid excesses (eating too much or too little), which can lead to eating disorders.

There are three types of eating disorders, and they affect *both* females and males, although more girls than boys tend to have problems with them.

- *Bulimia* is eating too much (binge eating) and then throwing up on purpose (purging).
- *Anorexia* is self-imposed starvation.
- *Compulsive eating* is bingeing without purging, which leads to obesity and constant dieting.

All three types can become so serious that they require treatment. In some cases, eating disorders lead to death. As in this true story. . .

Claire² was a popular 14-year-old at her junior high school. She was a hard worker and a cheerleader with high grades. But she was afraid of getting "fat," so she began secretly purging after she ate. Soon she discovered that if she put a small amount of baking soda in water and drank it, the mixture would taste so disgusting that she automatically threw up.

One morning, Claire's mother heard her scream from the upstairs bathroom. She rushed upstairs to find Claire doubled over in pain, and as Claire choked out what was wrong, her mother learned that Claire had dumped *several teaspoons* of baking soda into a glass of water and swallowed it down.

You might remember from science experiments what happens when you mix baking soda with vinegar. The "volcano" erupts, or the cork shoots sky-high off the top of the soda bottle. That's what happened to Claire. The baking soda mixed with the acid in her stomach, producing large amounts of carbon dioxide. The pain grew excruciating as Claire's abdomen swelled like a basketball.

Although Claire's mother rushed her to the hospital, it was already too late. The swelling had cut off the blood supply to Claire's organs. During the night,

this bright young woman with everything to live for died of organ failure.

CHECK IT OUT



Food Fight: A Guide to Eating Disorders for Pre-Teens and Their Parents by Janet Bode (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997). This comprehensive guide to eating disorders discusses their causes, symptoms, and solutions. Ages 11 & up.

National Eating Disorders Association

1500 Broadway, Suite 1101
New York, NY 10036
1-800-931-2237

www.nationaleatingdisorders.org
Information and referrals to clinics, counselors, and support groups in your area.

Something Fishy

www.something-fishy.org

Lots of information about eating disorders and related issues, personal stories from girls and women, chats, links to other sites, and more, all presented in a friendly, caring style with fun graphics.

Protect yourself against contagious diseases. Make sure that your immunizations are up-to-date. (Public health clinics often give them free of charge.) Even if you had all of your shots when you were younger, pay a visit to your doctor and ask if you're due for any new immunizations or boosters.

CHECK IT OUT



CDC Vaccines & Immunizations

1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

www.cdc.gov/vaccines
Hotline: 1-800-232-4636

Information about vaccine-preventable diseases, the benefits of immunization, the risks of immunization vs. the risk of disease, immunization schedules, quizzes, travelers' health information, and more from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Protect yourself against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unwanted pregnancies. The best way to protect yourself is by abstaining from sexual activity until you're married. Get the facts about STDs (including HIV/AIDS) and pregnancy. If someone is

² Not her real name.

pressuring you to be sexually active, talk to an adult you trust. Ask for help and support in saying no.

CHECK IT OUT



CDC HIV/AIDS Prevention

www.cdc.gov/hiv

CDC STD Prevention

www.cdc.gov/std/default.htm

Up-to-date information online. Free written materials available.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

www.plannedparenthood.org

Information about pregnancy, STDs, and sexual health. To reach the Planned Parenthood office nearest you, call 1-800-230-7526.

Protect yourself against the sun. Wear sunblock or sunscreen whenever you plan to spend time in the sun, especially between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., when the ultraviolet (UV) rays are strongest. UVA rays can contribute to aging, wrinkling, and skin cancer; UVB rays can cause sunburn, skin cancer, and cataracts. UVC rays—the strongest ones—are normally filtered out by the ozone (except where there are holes).

Protect yourself against accidents and injuries. See “Safety,” pages 234–244.

CHECK IT OUT



Kidzworld Health

www.kidzworld.com/me/health

A lively site with information on grooming, health, and hygiene along with advice on related issues.

Teenage Health Care: The First Comprehensive Family Guide for the Preteen to Young Adult Years by Martha M. Jablow and Gail B. Slap, M.D. (New York: Pocket Books, 1994). Dr. Gail Slap, a “Dr. Spock for teenagers,” teams up with Martha Jablow to present a complete guide to teenage health, covering the confusing changes that take place during puberty, common medical conditions during adolescence, risky behaviors, and more. Ages 11–18.

How to Be Mentally and Emotionally Healthy

“The brain is a world consisting of a number of unexplored continents and great stretches of unknown territory.”

Santiago Ramón y Cajal

Follow these simple tips for maintaining good mental and emotional health:

Run it out.

Talk it out.

Wash it out.

Then move on!

Give your brain a break. Like your body, your brain needs regular rest and relaxation. When you sleep and dream, your brain produces chemicals and proteins to replace those you used while you were awake.

Exercise your brain. Like your body, your brain thrives on regular exercise. It stays flexible and gets stronger. So keep your brain active! Read, think, ask questions, solve problems, learn and try new things. (Homework is good brain exercise.) TIP: Staying *physically* active is one of the best things you can do for your brain. Studies have shown that aerobic exercise improves memory, thinking, and mental response time.

“No brain is stronger than its weakest think.”

Thomas L. Masson

Eat well and healthfully. Like your body, your brain needs nourishment. Although researchers can’t agree on any specific foods that improve brain functioning, they do agree that a varied, balanced diet is what your brain needs most.

CHECK IT OUT



The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Understanding the Brain by Arthur Bard, M.D., and Mitchell Bard, Ph.D. (Indianapolis, IN: Alpha Books, 2002). Food for thought and lots of facts about what’s going on in your head.

Neuroscience for Kids

faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html
Experiments, activities, brain games, facts about the brain and nervous system, resources, links, and much more, all for elementary and secondary students and their teachers. This fun and fascinating site is maintained by Eric H. Chudler, Ph.D., a Research Associate Professor at the University of Washington in Seattle. Sign up to receive the free e-newsletter.

Feel your feelings. Don't worry about "feeling bad" from time to time. It's okay to sometimes feel sad, frustrated, angry, worried, guilty, and/or afraid. Be brave and face your emotions. Peek inside yourself and try to figure out why you're feeling a certain way. Recognizing, acknowledging, and experiencing your feelings is good for you. It's only when you try to shove painful or uncomfortable feelings out of sight that they grow into monsters. So give yourself permission to cry, to go outside and throw rocks at the dirt or into a lake, to scream or stomp your feet. Release your "bad" feelings in ways that don't hurt you (or anyone else). If you have feelings you just can't handle—if you're overwhelmed or knocked flat by powerful emotions—find an adult you trust and can talk to.³

Avoid escape routes. It's tempting to want to dodge painful or uncomfortable feelings. It's easy to sleep too much, watch too much TV, put things off until tomorrow, skip school, ignore homework, evade responsibilities, retreat into a shell, or numb yourself with alcohol, drugs, or food. You can't run away from your emotions. Wherever you go, they go, too.

Accept the sad or bad things that happen in your life. This doesn't mean that you throw your hands in the air and just give up. Instead, it means that you take sad or bad things in stride.⁴ Why kick yourself over and over again for missing the final free throw in the last game of the season? Why beat yourself up for losing a friend? Don't waste your energies on things you can't change. Learn from these experiences and move on.

Help yourself to feel better. You can do it. Here's how:

1. Focus on things you *can* change. Brainstorm things you *can* do that won't hurt you or others.
2. Write down your feelings in your journal.⁵ Write about what happened and how you feel. This can release some of your tension, sadness, and anger.
3. Draw your feelings. Don't worry about what your drawing looks like. Don't worry about making mistakes. Just draw.
4. Listen to soothing music.
5. Do something you enjoy. Read a book, ride your bike, take a walk, watch a video or DVD, pet your cat, spend time with a friend.
6. Meditate or pray.
7. Practice relaxing. Stretch out spread-eagle style, or sit in a comfortable chair. Relax every muscle as you breathe in and out. Think or say to yourself: "I can face this. I can fix this. I can do this."⁶
8. Do a service for someone. You'll be amazed at how good it feels to focus on helping someone else. This won't make your problems go away, but it will increase your ability to handle them. Try it and see.
9. Set a time limit on your sad feelings. Decide that you *will* feel better in an hour, a day, or a week.
10. If steps 1–9 don't work, get a second opinion. Talk with someone you trust who cares about you. Brainstorm solutions together. Or seek professional help. Ask your parent, school counselor, youth group leader, or religious leader to recommend someone you can call. If you had a toothache, you'd go to the dentist. Don't let your emotions fester.

CHECK IT OUT



When Nothing Matters Anymore: A Survival Guide for Depressed Teens by Bev Cobain, R.N., C. (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2007). When feelings of sadness, hopelessness, helplessness, and loneliness are deep and don't go away, you may have depression. This book offers solid information and straight talk you need to help yourself or get help. Ages 13 & up.

³ If there's no adult available, see "Endurance," pages 87 and 88, for crisis hotlines.

⁴ See "Endurance," pages 86–93, and "Forgiveness," pages 94–102.

⁵ See "Endurance," pages 88, 89, and 92, for journaling resources.

⁶ See "Peacefulness," pages 175–176, for a relaxation exercise.

Facts for Families Guide

www.aacap.org

An award-winning series of fact sheets on problems and issues that affect children and teens, developed by the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP). Available in English and Spanish.

Mental Help Net

www.mentalhelp.net

Tons of information about mental health, wellness, and family and relationship issues and concerns. This award-winning site is maintained by clinical psychologists. Click on "Disorders & Issues" to start exploring.

Character Dilemmas

For journaling or writing essays, discussion, debate, role-playing, reflection

Suppose that . . .

- 1 Someone you know is infected with a highly contagious disease. How might you help the person and still protect yourself?
- 2 Over 12 percent of the children in the United States don't have health insurance.⁷ Should the U.S. be responsible for ensuring that *all* citizens have access to health care? Or only *some* citizens? (Which ones?) What about illegal aliens? Who should fund the health care system?
- 3 Only 75 percent of all two-year-olds in the United States have been immunized against preventable diseases.⁸ Some parents object to immunization for religious or personal reasons; others just don't get around to having their children immunized. Do parents have the right to keep their children from being immunized? Why or why not? Which is most important—the parents' freedoms of belief and expression, or the children's health?
- 4 Almost 17 percent of all children in the United States are living in poverty.⁹ Who should feed the thousands of kids who go to bed hungry each night? Are the parents responsible? The government?

⁷ This is true, by the way. *Source:* U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2002 Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

⁸ This is also true. *Source:* The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *MMWR Weekly Report*, 1995 statistics.

⁹ True again. *Source:* U.S. Census Bureau, *Poverty in the United States: 2002*. Current Population Reports: Consumer Income. Issued September 2003.

The schools? State health agencies? How do you think this problem should be addressed?

5 Some obese people have sued fast-food restaurants, claiming that the food made them overweight. It's true that fast food is often high in calories, fats, and cholesterol. And those tempting "super-sized" portions often contain a whole day's worth of calories. But who's to blame if someone eats fast food and becomes overweight? Is it the restaurant's responsibility to serve healthful, nutritious food? Or is it the individual's responsibility to make better choices about what he or she eats?

Activities

BRAINSTORM THE EFFECTS of poor health and nutrition on people in the U.S. or other countries. Think of as many ways as you can in which people's lives are affected.

BRAINSTORM THE VARIOUS "ESCAPE ROUTES" people take to avoid facing their feelings. *Examples:* sleeping too much, eating too much, watching too much TV, spending too much time at the computer. Combine your list with other people's lists. How many different "escape routes" can you come up with?

WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR of your local newspaper, a newsletter, or school newspaper. Express how you feel about hunger, malnutrition, health care, being an organ donor, or any other health-related issue you feel strongly about.

FAST FOR A DAY. Try going without food for one day to see how it feels to be hungry. Then write in your journal about the experience. **IMPORTANT:** Get your parents' permission first. Make sure you're in good health. Don't take part in any strenuous physical activity while you're fasting.

RESEARCH AND REPORT ON SOMEONE who has made important contributions to health and medicine. *Examples:* Albert Schweitzer, Jonas Salk, Florence Nightingale, Pearl Kendrick, Alexander Fleming, May Chinn, Sigmund Freud, C. Everett Koop, Gertrude Elion.

RESEARCH AND REPORT ON A HEALTH CARE topic or issue. *Examples:* nutrition, food preparation, smoking,

exercise, teen pregnancy, heart disease, stress management, allergies, asthma, environmental health, HIV/AIDS, etc. Come up with a creative or unusual way to present what you've learned. *Examples:* Create a board game; write and illustrate a comic book; make a slide show or video; design a Web page; start a blog. You might want to research both conventional and alternative approaches to your topic or issue.

CHECK IT OUT

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health

www.nccih.nih.gov

Sound advice on alternative health options from the National Institutes of Health.

Healthfinder

www.healthfinder.gov

Hundreds of health-related sites pre-screened for accuracy.

CALCULATE YOUR TARGET HEART RATE (THR). Here's the formula:

$$\frac{(220 - \text{your age}) \times 70\%}{6} = \text{Your THR}$$

Your THR is the specific heart rate that offers you the most benefits during periods of physical activity. It's the rate your heart should be at (or near) after you spend 20–30 minutes walking, biking, swimming, running, playing tennis, or whatever activity you choose. Check your pulse rate at your wrist or at the carotid artery alongside your Adam's apple while you're still active. (After 10 seconds of rest, a healthy heart is already starting to return to its normal rate.) If your pulse is above your THR, you're working too hard. If it's below your THR, you need to work a little harder.

Variation: Check your pulse after you've been sitting or resting. Check it after 20–30 minutes of activity. Compare your resting rate with your active rate.

CALCULATE THE COST OF HEALTH CARE in the United States. In 1999, the U.S. spent over 13 percent of its GDP (Gross Domestic Product, the value of all goods and services produced in a nation in a given year) on health care. The total GDP was \$9,268 billion (\$9.3

trillion). Check your calculations against the answer printed upside down at the bottom of the page.

Variations: Find out how health insurance costs have increased over the past 10 years. Plot your findings on a line graph. Call or visit a local hospital to ask how much it costs, on average, for 1) outpatient treatment, 2) an overnight stay, 3) a visit to the emergency room, 4) a week-long stay. How much does insurance cover, on average?

RESEARCH WORLD HUNGER AND DISEASE. In which countries is hunger most common? Most severe? Where are the world's "hot spots" for disease? Make a map showing the results of your research. Include facts, figures, names of diseases, and other information you find. TIP: Contact the American Red Cross or CARE USA to request information.

CHECK IT OUT

The Penguin State of the World Atlas, current edition (New York: Penguin USA). In full-color maps, and graphics, this acclaimed atlas gives you a global overview of population growth, global warming, human rights, children's rights, health and disease, and more.

American Red Cross

National Headquarters
431 18th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006
1-800-733-2767
www.redcross.org

CARE USA

PO Box 7039
Merrifield, VA 22116
1-800-521-CARE (1-800-521-2273)
www.care.org

ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO BECOME ORGAN DONORS. Unless you're opposed to organ donation for religious or personal reasons, contact your local hospital to see how you can help encourage people to become organ donors. You might make cards to hand out that include a phone number to call. Or you might distribute flyers or brochures that the hospital has available.

ROLE-PLAY WITH YOUR FRIENDS, class, youth group, or club various ways young people can say no to sexual pressure and avoid STDs or unwanted pregnancy.

FACTS: Over 1,100 babies are born to teenage mothers every day in the U.S. More than one-third of all teenage pregnancies in the U.S. end in abortion.

VOLUNTEER AT A FOOD BANK, soup kitchen, or other place where meals are served to homeless and hungry people.¹⁰

TAKE NEEDY CHILDREN ON A PICNIC. Contact a shelter or other service organization. Prepare sack lunches for children there and take them on a picnic. Be sure to check the food handling license requirements for your area, get proper permissions, and go with a chaperon.

REACH OUT TO A FRIEND. Do you know someone who's abusing alcohol or other harmful drugs? Try talking frankly with him or her. See if your friend will agree to get help. You might suggest that he or she talk to a parent, teacher, school counselor, school social worker, youth leader, or clergy member, or call a hotline. Look in your local business telephone directory under "Drugs" and "Alcohol" for local hotlines.

Variation: Start a substance-abuse awareness and prevention campaign in your school, club, or community. You can obtain many of the materials you might need from the resources listed on page 106.

CHECK IT OUT



Type "A Guide for Teens: Does your friend have an alcohol or other drug problem?" into Google. This brochure can help you be a good friend. Read it and print it out for free.

START AN EXERCISE CLUB WITH YOUR FRIENDS.¹¹ Decide on a time and place to meet, and get an adult sponsor if you want to make your club official. Choose a variety of activities to do together (aerobics, running, jogging, biking, hiking, swimming, etc.). You might designate an "activity of the week" or just get together and burn off calories dancing to music.




MAKE A MURAL, BULLETIN BOARD, OR POSTER illustrating a healthy eating pyramid (see pages 103–104) for your classroom or school.

LEARN ABOUT THE NUTRITIONAL VALUE of fast foods. Which is better for you, a McDonald's hamburger or a Subway sandwich? A Taco Bell bean burrito or a Pizza Hut pizza? Many fast-food chains now have nutrition information available to hand out in their restaurants or read on their Web sites. Do some research and report on your findings.

DESIGN AND CREATE BUTTONS to make people more aware of hunger, malnutrition, the need to have children immunized, and other health issues in your community. Hand them out at a school assembly, a local mall (get permission first), a community council meeting, or to anyone who might be interested or concerned.

RESEARCH SONGS FROM THE GREAT DEPRESSION. Visit your city or county library to find old records, tapes, or sheet music from songs popular during the Great Depression, which began in 1929 and lasted through most of the 1930s. **TIPS:** Look for recordings by Woody Guthrie and those on the Folkways or Rounder records; check Library of Congress and Smithsonian recordings; research old blues recordings. What impact do you think this music might have had on the mental health of people living during the Depression era?

READ STORIES ABOUT HEALTH. Look for these books:

-  *Amazing Gracie* by A.E. Cannon (New York: Delacorte, 1991). Gracie has a lot to deal with during her sophomore year when her mother, a victim of depression, remarries, a new brother moves in, and the family moves to Salt Lake City. Ages 13–16.
-  *Blubber* by Judy Blume (New York: Simon & Schuster Children's Books, 1982). Jill doesn't worry much about the grief that she and her classmates cause a fellow student—until Jill becomes a target herself. Ages 9–12.
-  *The Hunger Scream* by Ivy Ruckman (New York: Walker, 1983). Lily, a Colorado high school senior, progressively withdraws from her family and friends as she loses weight in an effort to protect her independence. Ages 12 & up.

¹⁰ See "Empathy," pages 81–82, for tips on volunteering.

¹¹ See "Leadership," pages 160–161, for tips on how to start a club.

Character in *ACTION*

Ashley Johnson: Kids' Café

Ten-year-old Ashley Johnson pulled the giant plastic trash bag over her head and popped her head and arms through the holes. She had stapled labels from junk foods on the bag: cookies, bubble-gum, greasy chips, and other fattening stuff. The skit she was about to perform (and had helped to write) would teach other kids about the importance of eating healthful foods. Ashley and friends from her fifth-grade class were taking a bite out of poor nutrition by being part of Kids' Café, a nationwide program that provides meals, activities, and friendship to children at risk of hunger.

It all started when Ashley and her classmates at Dilworth School met with their teacher, Gloria Jones, to brainstorm about the problems in the world. They

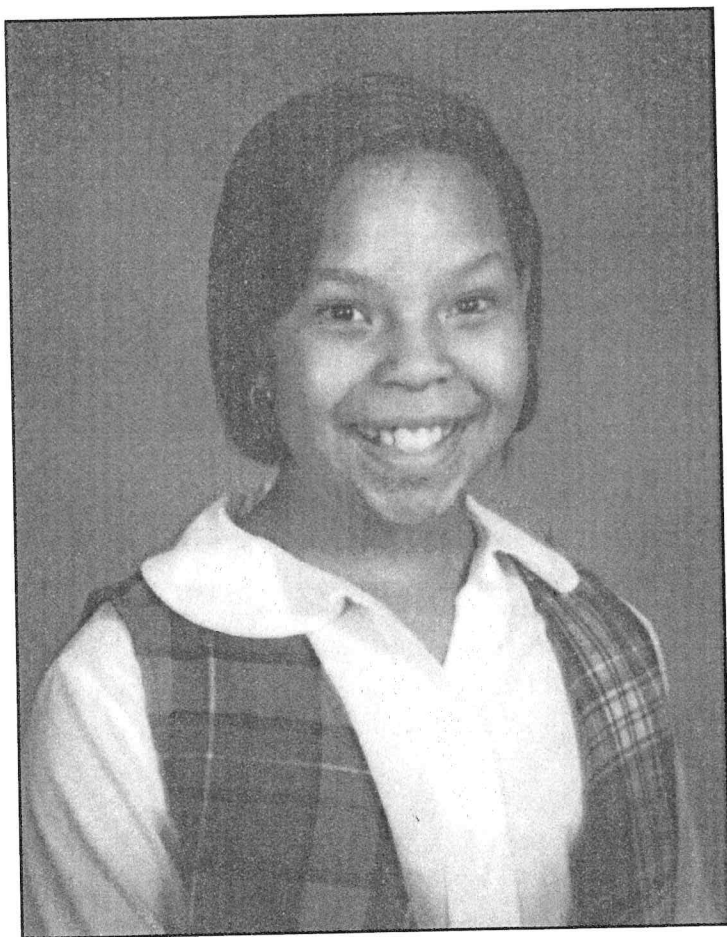
got excited about the idea of reducing hunger among kids, and they decided to begin in their own community of Charlotte, North Carolina. Usually Kids' Cafés are run by adult volunteers. This one would be the first in the nation that allowed kids to help kids.

Ashley and her friends spent months planning and finding partners. They got help from Second Harvest, the national network of all food banks in the United States. They partnered with North Carolina Harvest, which recovers restaurant surplus food, and the Metroline Food Bank. The American Culinary Federation of Chefs offered to do the food preparation. Tonight's program was called "Blast Off to Good Nutrition," and Ashley had helped to decide what would be on the menu. The hungry kids would enjoy such creative dishes as "Meteor-Shower Rice," "Big Dipper Juice," and "Alien Green Beans."

"We did it all after school," Ashley explains. "First we had disadvantaged kids come in from the projects. They were different ages—first to sixth grade—and we talked to them and got to know them. We asked them what they wanted us to do. They asked for a puppet show and skits. So we made up a paper-plate puppet show and wrote four skits."

In the skits, Ashley played the role of a character she invented, Chef-Boy-R-U-Junky, wearing her decorated trash bags. She'd say lines like "I've improved my diet this week. I had sugar-sweetened cereal, chocolate milk, and orange pop for breakfast." Then another Dilworth student, Jonathan Kite, playing the part of Astronaut Food Dude, would enter in a football helmet and baseball pants to help the kids in the audience analyze Chef-Boy-R-U-Junky's breakfast. The kids from the project learned that if they ate that way, they wouldn't get the nutrition they needed.

Ashley says "One little boy came up to me and said 'Is that *really* what you ate for breakfast? That's really bad!' Another boy promised to eat more vegetables."



Ashley Johnson

The Dilworth students were part of Kids' Café from February until May, 1996. Twice a week, they ate dinner with kids from the project at a local YWCA. They also planned art activities, wrote and taught nutrition lessons, and mapped out the meals. Each time the two groups met at Kids' Café, they hugged each other. In between times, they wrote love letters and thank-you notes.

"The children my students served weren't the only ones who benefited," Mrs. Jones remembers. "My students would come in before school and stay after school to work on Kids' Café. They were constantly planning. Parents told me how much this

carried over into their homes. My students changed their own eating habits, and so did some of their family members. Parents said this was the most exciting curriculum they had ever seen—and the most meaningful."

Ashley agrees. "Kids' Café helped me to understand some of the problems in the world, and the different ways we can help. It meant a lot to me to see the children's faces when we worked with them each week. They were happy. Plus it was a good leadership experience. I had never worked on a project where the adults stepped aside and let the kids do the work."



Ashley (left) wearing her Chef Boy-R-U-Junky costume