

Choice and Accountability

**Making decisions, accepting consequences,
being responsible for your choices**

“We are free up to the point of choice,
then the choice controls the chooser.”

Mary Crowley

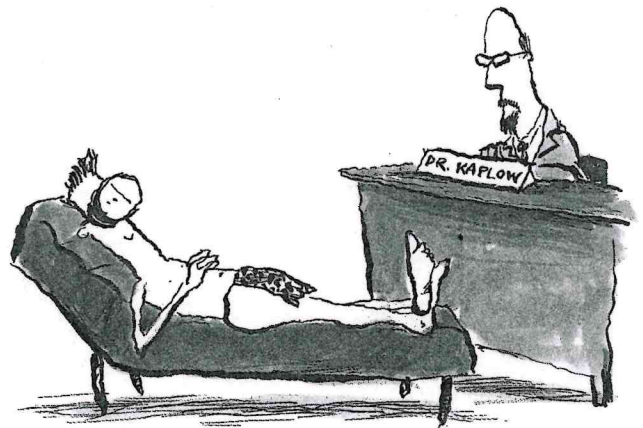
Choice

A 22-year-old man lit a firecracker in a fireworks store in Scotttown, Ohio, that killed several people, including two children. His friends dared him to do it. He took the dare, and it was meant to be a joke. The joke ran amok as rockets whizzed and firecrackers exploded in a violent chain reaction. The man was charged with involuntary manslaughter, and he learned the hard way that you'd better think about consequences before making a choice.

You may think you have the right to choose many things: what you wear to school, what you eat, who your friends are. You can choose between right and wrong, to do your homework or not, to tell the truth or lie. But you can't control the consequences of your choices, and sometimes those consequences can limit you. *Examples:*

3 You can choose what you want to eat. But what if your parents don't agree with you that potato chips and onion rings belong to the vegetable food group? Unless you buy your own food, your choices are limited. And even if you do buy your own food, you can't control the consequences of eating only junk food—the harm it eventually does to your body and your health.

- 3 You can choose your friends. But what if the ones you choose don't choose you? Or what if the ones you choose are kids who get into trouble all the time? Are you willing to go along with them and suffer the consequences?
- 3 You can choose to wear a loincloth and scuba mask to school, but you might not be allowed to stay there. In fact, you'll probably be invited to spend a session with the school psychologist.



- 3 You can choose between right and wrong. But what if you don't know the difference? What if the adults in your life have never taught you? Or what if their definitions of right and wrong

conflict with what most people in your society or culture believe? Or what if you know that it's wrong to steal, but your family is starving and if you don't steal food, they might die? (You're right; this can get very complicated and confusing.)

2. You can choose not to do your homework. But you can't control whether and for how long your parents will ground you when you bring home a bad report card.
3. You can choose to tell a lie. But the consequences of your lie—losing your parents' trust, losing a friend, ruining your reputation—are out of your control.

Ideally, any choice you make should be both *conscious* and *informed*.

- A *conscious* choice is one you're aware of. You think it through ahead of time. You're mindful and alert when you make your decision. You realize that it might have both positive and negative consequences.
- An *informed* choice is based on information and facts you've gathered in advance. You find out as much about your choice as you can. You look at it from all sides. You try to predict the consequences.

Example: Your teacher has just assigned you a paper due tomorrow. The problem is, today is your grandmother's birthday, and your whole family is taking her out to dinner tonight. You have to choose between writing your paper or celebrating your grandmother's birthday. The choice is up to you. What will you do?

1. **Think it through.** If you choose to stay home and write your paper, your paper will get done but your grandmother will be disappointed. If you choose to go out to dinner, your grandmother will be happy but you'll get a zero grade on your paper. Neither choice is perfect.

2. **Gather information.** Before you leave school, talk to your teacher about your dilemma. Can you turn in your paper a day late? If not, how much will one zero hurt your final grade? Talk to your parents about your dilemma. Ask what they think you should do. Can you call your grandmother

and explain the problem? Can you arrange to see her later in the week and celebrate her birthday at that time?

3. **Weigh your choices and the possible consequences, then make your decision.** It might not be perfect, but it will be the best it can be under the circumstances. It will be conscious and informed.

Sometimes we make choices that aren't really choices at all. They're habits. *Example:* You walk to school the same way every day. This may be the fastest and most efficient route, but it's not a conscious choice. What if you decided to walk another way instead? Maybe you wouldn't have to cross so many busy streets, or maybe you'd pass a friend's house on the way and could walk with him or her.

The worst choices are the ones you make by default. Instead of making a conscious, informed choice, you simply allow something to happen. *Example:* You want school lunches to be better. On the day your school votes for a new menu, you forget to vote. So do a lot of other students, so the vote doesn't pass and school lunches stay the same. By not choosing, you have made a choice, and the results weren't what you wanted.

"Use wisely your power of choice."

By Mandino

Accountability

When you're accountable, you take responsibility for the choices you make. Maybe they weren't the best choices; maybe you made mistakes. Perhaps you didn't find out as much about your choices ahead of time as you could have, or perhaps there were too many factors you couldn't control. Still, they were *your* choices.

Have you ever heard someone say "You made me do that" or "It's your fault that I didn't finish"? When you're accountable, you don't blame other people for your actions. You know that you can't control what others say and do—only what *you* say and do. You don't lie or make excuses for your behavior ("I'm sorry I was late. My brother kept me up last night and I overslept." "I didn't do my homework

because I had to wash the dishes"). Instead, you make conscious and informed choices. *Examples:*

- ▲ "If I stay up late and watch another video, I'll oversleep tomorrow. Then I'll be late to school and I'll probably get a detention. Plus I'll be tired all day. It's not worth it. I'll watch the video on Friday night instead."
- ▲ "Since it's my turn to wash the dishes, I'm not going to have enough time to talk to my friends on the phone and do my homework besides. If I talk on the phone, I won't get my homework done. I guess I'll have to sacrifice some of my phone time tonight."

Besides choosing and being accountable for your actions, you also choose and are accountable for your *thoughts, feelings, reactions, and attitudes*.¹ For example, you can choose to think that one race of people is superior to another—and you might choose to feel superior to other people as a result. But what if you're asked to be accountable for these choices? Are they informed choices? Are they based on facts? Or have you simply accepted something you've heard or read? If you choose to believe everything you hear and read, you might make a poor choice that leads to other poor choices in the future.

Or let's say that the school bully dumps his lunch tray in your lap. You might choose to punch him in the stomach and get into a fight. You might choose to do nothing and hold a grudge. Or you might choose to walk away, report him to a teacher, and let the teacher do something about it. You can't control what the bully does, but you can control how you react. Your reaction is a choice.

How Can You Make Better Choices?

Your life is and will be full of choices and decisions. What can you do to make sure that your choices are the best they can be?

- ✧ Be conscious and informed whenever you make a choice.
- ✧ Try to determine if your choice is more likely to help someone or hurt someone. Try to make choices that help other people, yourself, or the world.

- ✧ Talk over your choice with people you trust—people who care about you and want what's best for you. Make sure to talk to at least one adult.
- ✧ After making a choice, review what you did and what happened as a result. Did it help someone? Did it make something better? Would you make a different choice next time?
- ✧ Learn from your choice. Remember what you did and what the consequences were. Use this knowledge to keep making good choices in the future.

What If You Make a Poor Choice?

- ◆ Admit it. Be honest and accountable. ("I stole a CD from the music store.")
- ◆ Accept the consequences. ("I have a court hearing now and must do 15 hours of community service. Plus I have a police record.")
- ◆ Do what you can to make up for your poor choice and turn it into something positive. ("I'll pay the store for the CD. I'll teach and warn other kids not to steal. I won't steal anymore or get into worse trouble so my criminal record can be erased when I'm 19.")
- ◆ Learn from your choice. ("I'll be more careful with my money. I'll be patient and wait until I earn enough money to get the things I want—or I'll do without them.")
- ◆ Ask someone you trust to monitor your progress and give you support and encouragement. ("I'll talk to my parents about what happened and what I've decided to do about it. I'll ask for their help and advice.")
- ◆ Make a personal commitment to make better choices in the future.

"Your life is the sum result of all the choices you make, both consciously and unconsciously. If you can control the process of choosing, you can take control of all aspects of your life. You can find the freedom that comes from being in charge of yourself."

Robert A. Bennett

¹ See "Positive Attitudes," pages 14–20.

Character Dilemmas

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

Suppose that . . .

1 Your wealthy aunt offers to pay for a year's worth of any kind of lessons you want to take. Money is no object. How will you decide what lessons to take—or whether to take any lessons at all? How will you make the best possible choice?

2 You're planning your course schedule for the upcoming school year. There are two courses you really want and need to take. Unfortunately, they're both being taught during third hour. How will you choose which course to take?

3 You've been saving your money for a new mountain bike. You know exactly what kind you want and how much it costs. For the past year, you've done extra chores, baby-sat, brown-bagged your school lunch, rented videos instead of going to movies, and saved more than half of your weekly allowance. You're almost ready to buy your bike when something terrible happens: A fire destroys the home of one of your classmates, and the family loses everything. The student council announces a donation drive to help the family get back on their feet. How will you choose what to do?

4 You learn that a piece of land next to your school is up for grabs. The city hasn't decided what to do with it. Some people want to use it for a park. Others want to build stores and businesses there. Still others think it's the perfect site for a new housing development. A committee has been formed to consider the various issues involved and make recommendations, and you've been chosen to represent the students in your school. How will you choose what to recommend? Can you predict the consequences of your choice?

5 Two weeks ago, a friend of yours ran away from home. Yesterday, you saw him at the mall. He told you that he was living with someone he met at the bus station. Then he explained why he ran away from home: his parents were abusive, and he wasn't

going to take it anymore. He swore you to secrecy. How will you choose what to do next?

6 There's a student at your school who's always being bullied and teased. One day, you overhear a group of popular kids planning a mean practical joke to play on him. You're friends with one of the popular kids, and you'd really like to be part of that group. What are your choices? What will you do?

Activities

MAKE A LIST of the most important choices you need to make today, this week, this year. Think about how you can make the best choices. Jot down some possible consequences. Try to do this daily or weekly. In a month, review your list and notes. Has this made a positive difference in your life? Has it helped you to make better choices?

MAKE A TIMELINE of the most important choices you'll face during your lifetime. Show the ages at which you think you'll be making those choices. What can you do to plan ahead? If you want, you can illustrate your timeline.

WRITE IN YOUR JOURNAL² about a time when you made a poor choice. Describe the consequences of your choice. What have you learned as a result of your choice and the consequences? Write about a time when you made a good choice.

ROLE-PLAY with a friend how you might talk to another friend who's considering joining a gang. Or how you might role play talking with someone who's using drugs or alcohol, or who's planning to run away from home.

LEARN ABOUT POOR CHOICES in the history of science. *Example:* Around 150 A.D., Ptolemy theorized that the earth was the center of the universe. He chose to keep believing this in spite of other theories and evidence. Other scientists chose to believe Ptolemy's theory, too, and this halted the advance of knowledge in this area for many years. Try to find more examples of times when people have made poor choices and stuck with them in spite of evidence to

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

the contrary. *Example:* Sigmund Freud searched for a substance that would enhance the workings of the brain. He found and used cocaine and called it a “magical drug.” His enthusiasm for cocaine led to widespread use before its harmful side effects were discovered. Find out more about the consequences of this choice—for Freud personally and for others.

FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS to people who choose not to pay their income taxes. If your state has an income tax, contact your state tax commission. Try to find answers to these questions: Approximately how many people who live in your state don't pay their income taxes? About how much money does your state spend each year trying to recover lost revenues? What happens to nonpayers who get caught? If your state doesn't have an income tax, contact the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and ask about federal taxes.

INTERVIEW THE OWNER of a successful small business in your town or city. Ask questions like:

- ? “What kinds of choices have you faced over the years?”
- ? “What's the best choice you've ever made? The poorest choice?”
- ? “Were you able to predict the consequences of your choices? Were there any big surprises?”
- ? “If you could go back in time and change just one of your choices, which one would it be? How would your choice be different? How would the consequences be different?”

WRITE TO 10 FAMOUS PEOPLE and ask this question: “What's the hardest choice you've ever had to make?” If you do this as a class, compile the responses you receive into a book. Donate it to your school library.

CHECK IT OUT



The Kid's Address Book: Over 3,000 Addresses of Celebrities, Athletes, Entertainers, and More . . . Just for Kids! by Michael Levine (New York: Perigree Books, 1997; updated often). Over 2,800 addresses (and many email addresses) for famous people. Also by Michael Levine: *The Address Book: Direct Access to Over 4,000 Celebrities, Corporate Execs, and Other VIPs* (New York: Perigree Books, 1997; updated often).

START A “CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES” discussion group. Talk about the following choices. Try to come up with at least three possible consequences for each choice. Or, if you prefer, consider real choices you're facing at this time in your life.

- ▲ going to college vs. not going to college
- ▲ eating healthful food vs. eating a regular diet of junk food
- ▲ getting regular exercise vs. being a couch potato
- ▲ joining an after-school club vs. hanging out with friends
- ▲ doing a random act of kindness vs. not making the effort
- ▲ coming home before curfew vs. staying out past curfew
- ▲ doing your homework vs. not doing your homework
- ▲ standing up for a friend who's being bullied vs. ignoring the situation
- ▲ doing your chores vs. not doing your chores
- ▲ making friends with someone who's not very popular vs. not making friends with the person.

WRITE A SERIES OF 5-MINUTE SKITS about choices, consequences, and being accountable. Present your skits to younger kids at your school. Depending on how well they're received, you might perform them for children in a hospital or shelter.

CREATE A COMIC BOOK about choices, consequences, and being accountable. You might invent a character and show scenes from his or her life. Or you might use examples from your own life or the life of someone you know. Follow the look and style of one of your favorite comic books.

CHECK IT OUT




Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art by Scott McCloud (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994). Explores the history and symbolism of comics, the energy of line and color, and the hidden worlds of comics storytelling. Ages 13 & up.

RESEARCH THE LIFE OF A FAMOUS COMPOSER, past or present. What kinds of major choices did he or she have to make? How did these choices affect the composer's life and work? What can you learn from his or her example?


READ THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN ATHLETE in the news. Or learn about the athlete's life by reading articles in magazines, in newspapers, or online, or by watching televised interviews. What kinds of choices has the athlete made during his or her life and career? From what you can tell, is the athlete accountable for his or her choices, or does he or she blame other people, events, and circumstances for the hard times and problems in his or her life?


PLAY A "STICK TO THE TRUTH" GAME. Sit in a circle. Pass a stick around. The person who holds the stick shares a story about a time when he or she made a good or poor choice, and what the consequences were. People who don't have anything to share can pass the stick to the next person. TIP: Go around the circle at least twice. People who "pass" the first time might have something to say the second time.


READ STORIES ABOUT CHOICE and accountability. Look for these books:


 *Choosing Sides* by Ilene Cooper (New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1990). Jonathan doesn't want to be called a quitter, but his coach is

turning middle school basketball into a forgettable experience. Ages 10–13.

 *Here at the Scenic-Vu Motel* by Thelma Hatch Wyss (New York: HarperCollins Childrens Books, 1989). Seven teens board at the Scenic-Vu Motel because they live too far from Pineville to make the commute to the high school every day. High school senior Jake finds himself responsible for the group. Ages 13 & up.

 *Shiloh* by Phyllis Naylor (New York: Atheneum, 1991). Young Marty discovers a puppy near the Shiloh schoolhouse and soon learns that the dog's owner mistreats him and his other animals. As the dog does not belong to him, Marty struggles to decide what he should do. Ages 10–13.

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

 *Trouble's Child* by Mildred Pitts Walter (New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1985). Martha dreams of leaving her island home off the Louisiana coast. She longs to attend high school to learn more than the ways of her grandmother and perhaps broaden the lives of the superstitious villagers. Ages 12 & up.

Character in *ACTION*

Jed Michael: Living With Your Choices

Jed's science teacher looked at him sternly and asked, "Did you tie Mandy's hair in knots?" Jed hung his head and said, "Yep." He grinned fiendishly.

"Jed, is that you talking in the back of the room?" his math teacher asked. Although several other students were also talking, Jed pulled his long, corn-colored hair over his face and answered, "Uh-huh."

"Which of you students threw food in the cafeteria today?" the principal wanted to know. Jed rolled his eyes, raised his hand, and said, "I did." No one else said a word. For telling the truth, Jed was

only allowed to eat a sliced carrot and one slice of yellow American cheese on bread, with milk, for the rest of the school year. "I don't think I deserved the punishment, but it worked," Jed admits. "I stopped throwing food!"

Telling the truth doesn't always get you out of trouble, especially if you're guilty. Jed didn't always make the best choices, but he always accepted the consequences for what he did.

Many of his choices were good. For example, he spoke out at public meetings to keep out radioactive dumping near his house in Cincinnatus, New York.

But school was a different matter. "I was a pain in the neck, for sure," Jed confesses.

When you're a pain in the neck, sometimes you get blamed for things you didn't do. "I got blamed for vandalizing a mural in the hallway," Jed remembers. "I was standing outside the classroom as a punishment for speaking out of turn, and I deserved that. But I *didn't* vandalize the mural. I also got accused of stealing a carton of orange juice from the breakfast program—something else I didn't do."

Although Jed was able to prove that the hand smears on the mural were larger than his, and that the orange juice was part of his school breakfast, the school authorities expelled him anyway. For a while, Jed had a tutor for a couple of hours each day. Then



Jed Michael

his parents were able to arrange for him to attend an alternative high school.

"It's a great school," he explains. "Everyone respects people for who they are instead of what they do." At his new school, Jed chose to help other people instead of getting into trouble. He started earning a good reputation, and many people sought him out.

"There was a guy who was pumped up on drugs and having problems. He wanted to kill himself. I pointed out to him that suicide wouldn't leave him with any choices at all. It wouldn't accomplish anything. After we talked, the guy went back to his parents' house, and then he went into rehab. He's doing okay now."

A girl Jed knew came to him with boyfriend problems. There were two guys who liked her, and they were fighting over her. "I told her to get them both together and talk it out. I was a mediator. Now all three of them are friends."

Then there was a kid nobody liked. "He had a grating personality. Kids were making fun of him and accusing him of being gay. I told him to tell the truth and people would respect him more."

Not every story Jed tells has a happy ending. "A close friend of mine fell into a wrong crowd and started dealing drugs. He's in prison now. He's smart enough to realize that dealing drugs is a dumb thing to do, but he made the wrong choice and now he's paying for it."

Jed knows firsthand the difference between good choices and poor choices. "If I do something wrong, I accept the consequences. That's just the way I am. But now I have the chance to graduate a year early, because I've worked hard at this school and made the right choices.

"Honesty works. It could be its own system of government, if everyone followed it. You can settle almost any dispute with honesty. You can get ahead by being honest. And you don't have to worry about getting caught if you tell the truth."

Cleanliness

**Clean body, mind, and habits;
personal hygiene, neatness**

“What America needs is dirtier fingernails
and cleaner minds.”

Will Rogers

Once I had a student with a smile that could melt an iceberg and big brown eyes that made you want to hug him. The problem was, you could smell him before you could see him. One day I took him aside and talked with him very candidly. I learned that he didn't have soap in his house or a washing machine. It was a great lesson for both of us. Somehow he found a way to get clean, while I saw a new side of tolerance.

Keeping Your Body Neat and Clean

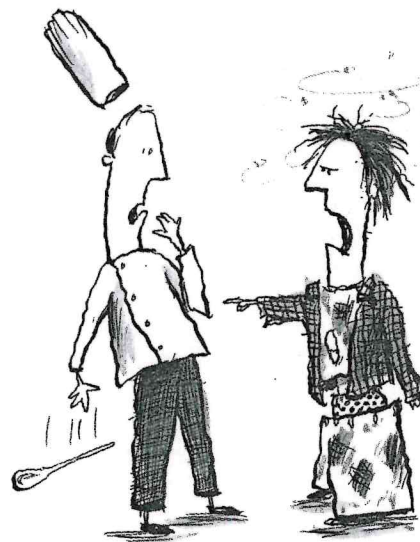
In some cultures, body odor is okay, but in Western cultures, it isn't. If you don't have washing facilities or adequate clothing, you should ask your teacher, your religious leader, or another trusted adult what to do. You'll probably find someone who can help you.

Try not to form opinions about people's character based on the way they look or smell, how long (or short) their hair is, or what they wear. As the old saying goes, “Don't judge a book by its cover.” Whether you like it or not, however, other people might judge *your* character by your cleanliness and neatness, and often those people are adults.

If you dress sloppily, have uncombed hair that looks like a wildlife refuge, don't brush your teeth, or

wear pants that are so full of holes they look as if you use them for target practice, your teacher might misjudge you and might even give you a lower grade. You might not get chosen for special activities and privileges. Your parents might try to restrict your freedom. If you're applying for a job, forget that. It's not fair, but it's a fact of life.

“But wait!” you might say. “I'm just expressing my individuality!” And you might be right. But remember that most people you meet won't be able to see into your heart. They're not perfect, either. So find a way to express your individuality that doesn't jeopardize your reputation, grades, opportunities, parents' respect, and job prospects. Your life will be a lot easier.



“I'd like to apply for a job.”

“Have you ever taken something out of the clothes hamper because it had become, relatively, the cleanest thing?”

Katharine Whitehorn

Clean Environment, Clean Mind

Keeping your body tidy isn't all there is to cleanliness. This trait can also include vacuuming up the dust bunnies under your bed, recycling the stack of newspapers in your garage, cleaning up the broken glass and discarded aluminum cans along your street, or washing the pesticides off your apple before you eat it. Cleanliness can include avoiding cigarettes for the sake of your breath and your health.¹

What about the words that come out of your mouth and the thoughts that crowd your head? If you stuff your body with garbage and gutter water, you won't last long. Don't stuff your mind with trash, either. You might have a friend who watches X-rated videos. If that's all he watches, he'll gradually become desensitized to the things he's hearing and seeing. He might even start to think that some of them are okay.

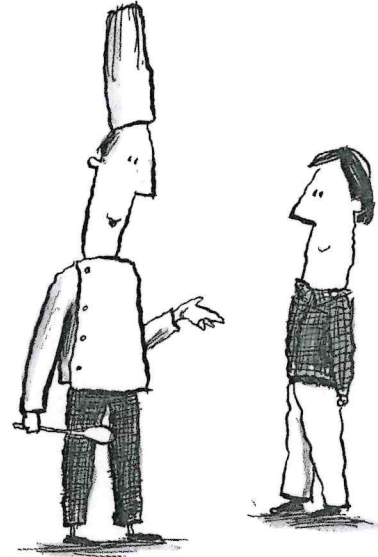
Before you drive too far into the muck (where you might get stuck), stop and ask yourself:

- ? “Would I want my little sister or brother to do this?”
- ? “If I were a parent, would I want my children to do this?”
- ? “Would I want my parents and teachers to know that I do this?”

If you can't answer yes, throw your gears into reverse and back out fast.

Bad influences can lead to questionable behaviors that become bad habits, and habits are hard to break. So choose your movies, videos, and TV programs carefully. Listen to uplifting music. Read thought-provoking, inspiring books. Hang out with people who enjoy safe, wholesome activities.

“But wait!” you might say. “I'll miss all the fun!” It's true: Things that aren't good for you can taste good, feel good, and be exciting. (Who would want to do them if they were nasty, painful, and boring?) It



“I'd love to hire you. Can you start tomorrow?”

takes courage to make positive choices. But whenever you make one, you weaken your bad habits and strengthen your good habits. Healthy habits can keep you from making poor choices. Just as what you eat shows up on your body, what you take into your mind shows up on your face. Most people don't like to be around mean-looking, violent, crude people.

Your family and friends will like you better if you keep your mind and body clean. You'll attract people with similar attitudes and goals. You'll be more successful because your positive thoughts will attract positive people and experiences.² Remember that garbage attracts flies and flowers attract butterflies.

Character Dilemmas

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

Suppose that . . .

- 1** You know someone who has body odor or uses bad language. Is it your responsibility to talk to him or her? Why or why not? Is it anyone's responsibility? Whose? Would it make any difference to you if you knew about the person's living conditions? If you decided to speak up about this sensitive issue, what would you say to the person?

¹ See “Health,” pages 103–114.

² See “Positive Attitudes,” pages 14–20.

2 You have to choose between being clean or being thoughtful and kind. Which would you rather be and why? Which is more important in developing friendships?

3 You have a friend who often watches X-rated shows on cable TV. Do you think there's a relationship between what a person sees and hears and what a person says and does? Explain your thoughts.

4 Your community has scheduled an open hearing about a rock band scheduled to appear at a local club. The band is known for songs that promote violence and drug use. Should you attend the hearing? Should the band be allowed to perform? The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees the right to free speech. Do you think that performers are protected by this amendment? Explain your answer.

5 You often imagine yourself doing things you know you shouldn't do. For some reason, scary ideas just keep popping into your head. What can you do about this? Why should you do something about this? Or do you think it's no big deal and you shouldn't do anything? Explain your answer.

Activities

WRITE A SONG OR JINGLE about cleanliness. Balance humor with helpful suggestions. Perform your song or jingle for younger students at your school or community center. For inspiration, visit the children's music section at your local library and listen to songs by Raffi, especially "Brush Your Teeth" from *Singable Songs for the Very Young*.

READ AND DISCUSS THIS VERSE from Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*. You might want to start by "translating" it, since Pope wrote during the 18th century and his use of language is different from ours today:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

RESEARCH THE HISTORY OF CLEANLINESS. Which ancient civilizations had running water? What did

people in the past use for soap? How often did they change their clothing? Was personal hygiene as important to them as it is to us today? What did they use to cover up or mask unpleasant odors? Report on your findings.

Variation: Learn about inventors who have created cleaning products and devices. *Examples:* The drive-through car wash; the Jacuzzi; liquid dishwashing soap; the vacuum cleaner. Make a timeline of inventions.

CHECK IT OUT



Panati's Extraordinary Origins by Charles Panati (New York: HarperCollins, 1989). The fascinating origins of hundreds of things we take for granted, including antiperspirants, the carpet sweeper, the clothes washer and dryer, shampoo, S.O.S. pads, the vacuum cleaner, and *much* more. Ages 12 & up.

The American Cleaning Institute

www.cleaninginstitute.org

Explore this site to learn about the history, chemistry, human safety, environmental safety, and effective use of personal cleaning products, laundry products, dishwashing products, and household cleaning products.

RESEARCH DISEASES AND EPIDEMICS that were related to poor sanitary conditions. *Example:* Bubonic plague was spread by the bites of fleas from infected rats. If you're online, search the Internet for information on diseases and epidemics. (Some words to search for: epidemics, pestilence, infestations, plagues, Black Death, cholera.) Prepare a brief report on your findings to present to your class.

LEARN ABOUT THE COSTS of cleanliness. Interview 1) men, 2) women, and 3) teenagers or children. Ask how much money they spend on cleaning products during a typical month. *Examples:* toothpaste, soap, shampoo, detergent, dish soap, house/room cleaning supplies, car cleaning supplies, etc. If the people you interview can't come up with exact amounts, estimates are okay. (Parents will probably pay for most of their kids' cleaning supplies.) Make charts or graphs showing how much each group spends per month and which products they use most.

Variation: Calculate how much money an average family of four might spend on cleaning products during a typical month.

FIND WAYS TO SAVE MONEY on cleaning products. Is there a less expensive brand of dishwashing soap than the one your family normally uses? Can you use a less expensive soap (without fragrances, deodorants, and fancy packaging)? Can you buy cleaning products in bulk at a local warehouse store?

Variation: Research environmentally friendly cleaning products. Look for stores that recycle containers. See if your family will commit to making a switch to environmentally friendly products. Are these products more or less expensive than regular commercial products? Is the actual dollar cost the only consideration? *Example:* Maybe an environmentally friendly laundry detergent costs more per ounce than a popular national brand, but it takes less to do a load of laundry.

INVENT A CLEANING PRODUCT from simple products or recycled objects. *Examples:* Combine vinegar, water, and a little dish soap to make a window cleaner. Or design a toothbrush that brushes and sprays your teeth.

KEEP TRACK of your personal cleaning habits. Write on a calendar how often you brush your teeth, wash your hair, shower or bathe, change your socks, clean your room, change your bedsheets, clean your locker or desk, etc. (Add your own ideas.) Which things do you do most often? Least often? Where do you need improvement? Is there anything you do *too* often?

CHECK IT OUT



Colgate Kids

www.colgate.com/en-us/products/kids

Visit Dr. Rabbit's No Cavities Clubhouse, play "Tell the Tooth," get a message from the Tooth Fairy, and more while learning how to take care of your teeth.

TeensHealth

teenshealth.org

This site is full of information on hygiene, weight, fitness, diseases and conditions, and other health-related topics.

COLLECT CLEANING PRODUCTS to donate to a traveler's aid organization, homeless shelter, or "free store" in

your town or city. When you travel, gather hotel shampoo and soaps. Ask manufacturers and local retailers to donate products and samples.

BE A CLEANUP HELPER. Find people in your neighborhood or community who are ill or disabled. Offer to sweep, dust, or clean house for them. Make this a club or classroom project.

Variation: Get more involved in cleanup around your own home. Are you doing your share of the family chores? What else could you do to make your home cleaner and more pleasant for everyone?

HAVE A CLEANUP CONTEST in your community or school. Make "Great Balls of Foil" (an idea from the Reynolds Metals company) by collecting all the discarded foil you can find and creating a ball. Give prizes for the biggest and heaviest balls, then recycle them.

Variations: Pick up litter, pop bottles, cans, etc. to recycle. Donate any money you earn from recycling to a charitable organization.

FIND OUT WHAT YOUR SCHOOL IS DOING to promote personal hygiene and clean minds. For centuries, many schools had this saying by the Roman poet Juvenal as their educational goal: *Mens sana in corpora sano*—"A sound mind in a sound body." How is your school building "sound minds"?

ANALYZE ADVERTISEMENTS. Videotape ads for cleaning products you see on TV; clip ads from magazines and newspapers. Which ones seem most interesting? Most truthful? Which ones seem to exaggerate?

Variations: Videotape a day's worth of a single TV channel. Fast-forward to the commercials. Keep track of how many commercials you see for cleaning products. Or make a poster montage of ads for cleaning products cut from magazines. As you watch commercials and gather advertisements, you'll probably notice that a lot of companies have Web sites. Visit them to see what they have to say about their products. You'll also find some interesting facts and helpful cleaning tips.

INTERVIEW ELDERS in your family or community (your grandparents, neighbors, etc.) to find out how cleaning products and practices have changed over the years. Ask if they ever used homemade cleaning products and, if so, what they were.

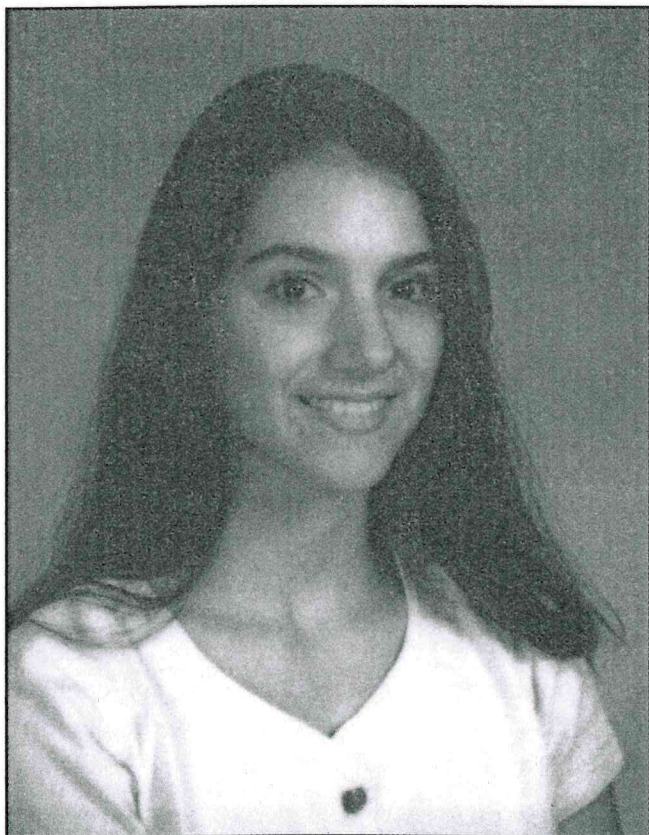
Character in *ACTION*

Sarah Shirkey: Staying Clean

Seventeen-year-old Sarah Shirkey stepped out of the shower and dressed quickly. This was an exciting morning and she didn't want to be late.

Starting today, Sarah would spend a week at Michigan Tech University. Sarah had been selected to take part in a special program called "Minorities in Engineering." She would meet other students from as far away as Belgium, and she would be able to speak Spanish with some of them. She would also get to have hands-on experiences in chemistry, metallurgy—even visit a classroom in a mine.

She ran a brush through her wash-and-wear, shoulder-length brown hair, leaving it still damp, and tied her shoes. "I've always liked to be clean and organized," Sarah explains, "but I don't fuss over my hair or try to impress people. Being clean is the most important."



Sarah Shirkey

As Sarah headed for the back door, she paused to rewrite her mother's grocery list so it was neat. This was kind of a joke between them. Her mom had told Sarah that when she was a little girl and they went to the grocery store, Sarah would rearrange the cans and boxes on the shelves.

Sarah isn't perfect, however. Her mom reports that she doesn't do much housework, and Sarah confesses that, although her room is clean, it's sometimes cluttered.

Sarah's friends at Addison High School think highly of her. She's a varsity cheerleader and class secretary, and she's been a homecoming princess and prom queen. Because she's a good student, she's made the honor roll for each report card period and is a member of the National Honor Society.

Sarah feels that it's just as important to keep her body clean on the inside as on the outside. "I don't do drugs, drink alcohol, or smoke anything. I never have. I try to live a clean life. I joined SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) to try to make an impression on people before it's too late.

"Breath that smells like cigarette smoke is a big turnoff. I won't let anyone smoke in my car, and I keep my ashtray full of papers or candy so no one can use it. I'm not rude about it. I have friends who smoke. But if I'm in a smoky room, I'll get up and leave." She laughs. "One of my friend's parents used to smoke. My friend put on a painter's mask and wore it around her house until her parents got the idea and finally quite smoking.

"I remember one day when a couple of my friends asked me to walk with them down the dirt road past my house. They stopped under a big maple tree and pulled out a joint. I knew they were potheads, but they were still my friends. They knew I had never tried drugs before and didn't want to. One of them said 'Here, try this. It'll make you feel good.' I refused. They kept pressuring me and actually tried to push it into my mouth. I just turned and said 'I'm sorry. I don't want to join in your fun. I'll see you later.' And then I walked back home."

Moral cleanliness is also important to Sarah. She doesn't use profanity or make crude remarks. And she's decided to wait until marriage to have sex. "I signed a pledge called 'True Love Waits.' Thousands of kids all over the country have signed these pledges."

Plus Sarah is committed to keeping the environment clean. Her science class conducted a watershed project to test the waters in their area. "I tested the water quality in a nearby creek ten times in just nine weeks and presented my results to six schools and also in the community."

"I think the next generation is going to have so much to worry about that they shouldn't have to worry about the environment, too. We should try to

take good care of it so they can focus on their future and not our past.

"Our bodies are gifts, and our environment is a priceless heirloom. Those are two things I would definitely avoid trashing."

CHECK IT OUT



SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions)

SADD National

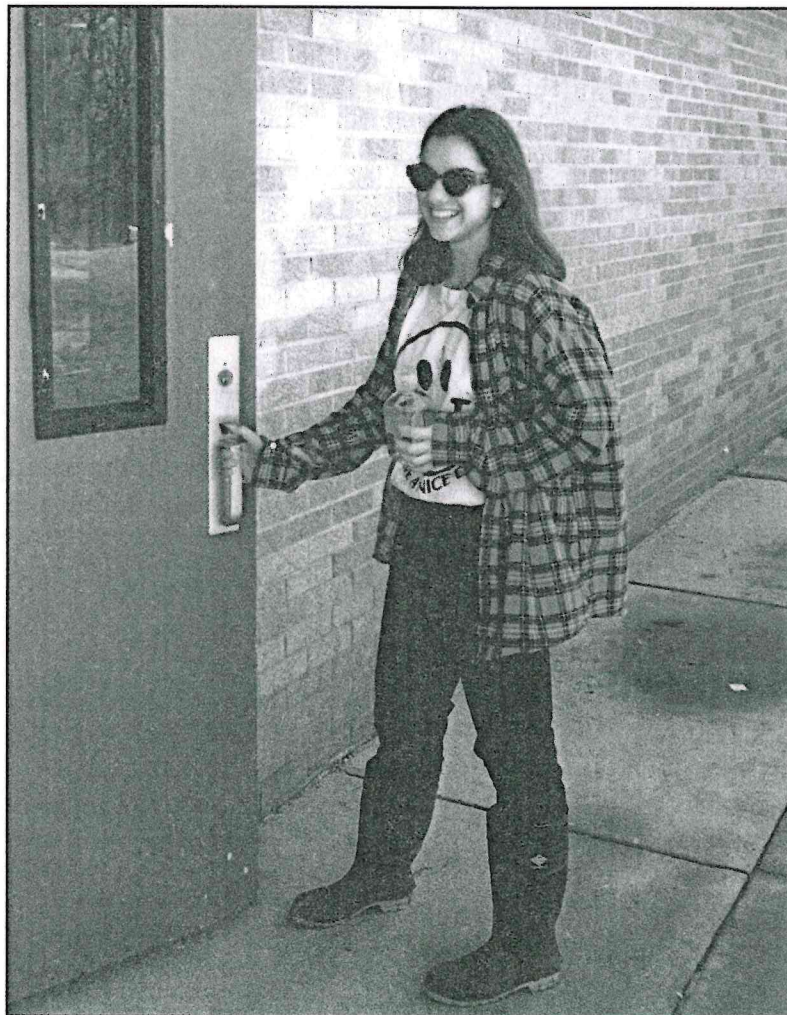
1440 G Street NW

Washington, DC 20005

1-877-723-3462

www.sadd.org

Consider signing the SADD "Contract for Life" with your parents. To request a copy, contact SADD.



Sarah at school

Communication

Effective speaking and listening, public speaking

“We have to face the fact that either all of us are going to die together or we are going to learn to live together, and if we are to live together, we have to talk.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

“**S**ticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Do you believe that old saying? Probably not, because you know that words can sometimes hurt more than a broken arm. The words we speak show how we feel about each other, and unkind words hurt both the person who hears them *and* the person who says them.

On the other hand, kind words encourage others *and* build up the people who say them. If you become a good communicator, you’ll win more friends. You’ll impress your teachers and parents, and you’ll even have a better chance of getting a job in an interview. It makes sense to learn to communicate clearly and effectively.

If you throw a stick into the ocean, the stick comes back to you. If you toss a boomerang into the air, the boomerang comes back to you. Words are like that. What you throw out eventually comes back to you. It’s true that sometimes people won’t answer your kind words with kindness. But over the long run, if you communicate kindness, you’ll attract kind words in return.

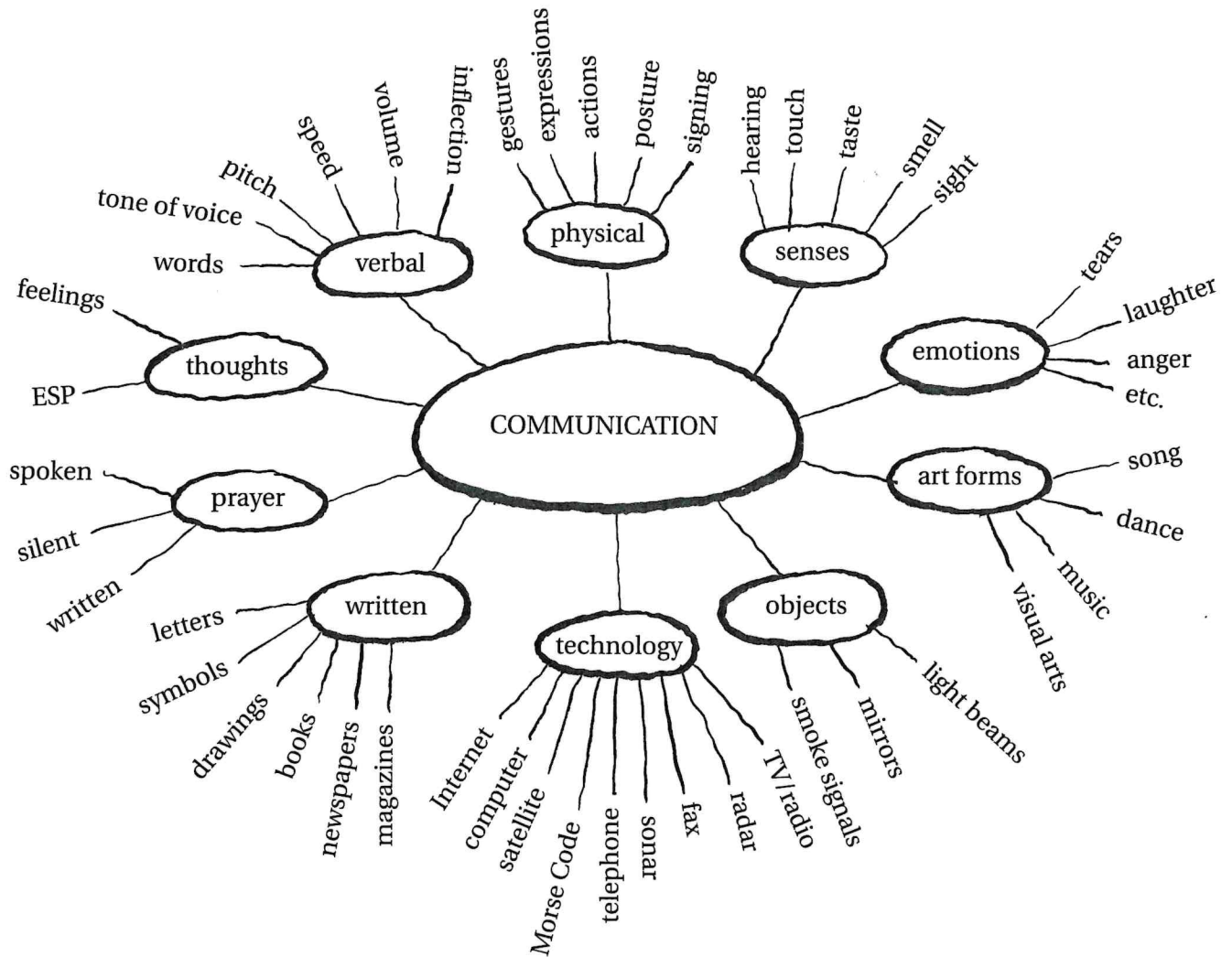
We communicate in many ways. The illustration on the next page shows some. Can you name others?

In general, any movements you make with your body, any sounds that come out of your mouth, the

expression you wear, and sometimes the things you think or feel, can send a message to someone.

12 Ways to Be a Good Communicator

1. Speak clearly. Look at the person you’re speaking to.
2. Really *listen* to what the other person says, and respond accordingly. Look at the person when he or she is speaking.
3. Maintain eye contact at a mutually comfortable level—somewhere between staring and avoiding each other’s eyes. Try to pick up on cues that tell you what’s comfortable for the other person.
4. Do your best to understand what the other person is saying. If there’s something you don’t understand, ask about it.
5. Be alert to body language and verbal cues—yours and the other person’s. Look alert and interested. Watch for signs that the other person is losing interest, wants to change the subject, or needs to end the conversation.
6. Give feedback when it’s asked for. Ask for feedback, too.
7. Give examples to support what you’re saying.
8. Give your opinion if it’s asked for.



9. Take turns speaking.

10. Match the level and language of the person you're speaking to. For example, you'll speak differently to young child than to an adult. (Use simpler words and sentences, not baby talk.)

11. Listen for requests. (These won't always come in the form of questions or direct statements.)

12. Use your intuition. Sometimes words aren't necessary and you can communicate with feelings, expressions, and gestures.

And here are a few don'ts to keep in mind: Don't be nosy. Don't gossip or pry. Don't interrupt. Don't change the subject. Don't contradict or correct what the other person is saying. Don't brag. Don't fall asleep!

12 Ways to Break Through a Communications Roadblock

1. Express anger, disappointment, or frustration in "I-messages" ("I don't like it when someone lies about me"), not "you-messages" ("You've been lying about me").
2. Focus on the *problem* ("I don't like it when my locker is messed up"), not the *person* ("I knew it wouldn't work to share a locker with you").
3. Remember that a cornered animal will bite and scratch. Always give the other person a way out ("I'm sure you didn't mean to hurt my feelings"). Don't

back him or her into a corner (“I know you did that on purpose!”).

4. Listen without being defensive. Everyone makes mistakes—even you.
5. Don't allow yourself to be a victim. Don't take the blame for something you didn't do. Stick up for yourself without attacking the other person.
6. Say you're sorry if you need to.
7. Look for the good in the other person, even when this is hard to do. Make it clear that you care about him or her. (“You're my friend, and I really want to help.”)
8. Look for common ground—something you can agree on.
9. Try to stay calm no matter what.
10. Brainstorm solutions together. Try to reach an agreement on what's best to do. Carry out your agreement.
11. If your best efforts don't succeed, get a third party involved. Find a peer mediator or an adult to help you talk through your problem.
12. If spoken communication isn't going anywhere, try writing a letter. But wait at least a day before mailing it. You might change your mind about what you want to say.

Public Speaking

Does the mere thought of giving a speech make you break out in hives? Or are you someone who loves to grab the microphone? Even if you hate public speaking, it's hard to avoid it. (You might not have to address the whole school at an assembly, but you'll probably have to give an oral report in class.) Here are some hints to help you give great speeches.

Plan it out and write it down.

- ☞: Open with a snappy beginning to grab your audience's attention. (“Selena helped to put a robber behind bars. And she's just 10 years old.”)
- ☞: Develop the body of your speech with facts. (“During the past year alone, more than 40

crimes have been stopped or solved with help from kids.”)

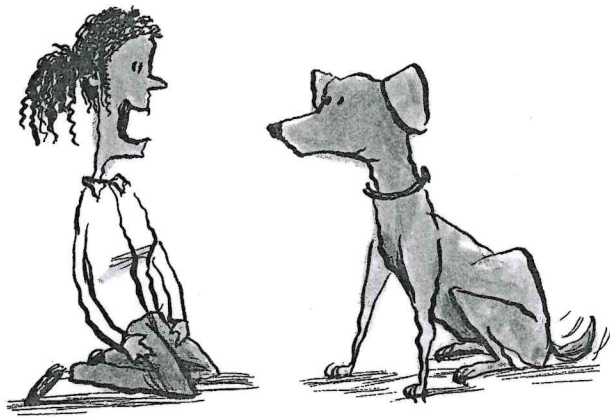
- ☞: Include quotes and statistics. (“In the words of police chief Bob Darien, ‘Kids are making a difference in our community.’”)
- ☞: Include anecdotes and examples. (“When Jason saw a stranger trying to open his neighbor's window, he called 911 right away.”)
- ☞: Summarize your main idea(s). (“You don't have to be a grown-up to fight crime. All you have to be is alert and willing to speak out and get involved.”)
- ☞: Give your opinion, if it's appropriate. (“I'm glad our community has so many young crimefighters. I know I feel safer!”)
- ☞: Close with a snappy ending. (“If we all work together—adults and kids—we can cut down on crime in our community.”)

Memorize ideas, not whole sentences. This will help your speech to sound more natural and less canned. You'll also save yourself a brain cramp from trying to remember the exact words you want to say.

If your written speech says this:	Jot down and remember this:
“Sanitation was a big problem for the ancient Romans. Although they didn't know about bacteria yet, experience had taught them that poor disposal of human wastes led to disease.”	Romans: sanitation Bacteria Human wastes/disease

Practice giving your speech. Practice by yourself at first. Give your speech to the wall; give it to your dog. (Neither will criticize you.) When you feel more secure, practice with a family member or friend.

Don't worry about “wixing your mords.” Just smile and repeat yourself. Even the best speakers sometimes twist their words around.



"If you vote for me, I promise to work for better school lunches."

Look at your audience when you speak. Keep your chin up. Look confident and relaxed. Smile. Then any mistakes you make won't matter.

Know how to handle interruptions. If you're distracted by noise, or by people coming into or leaving the room, stop speaking. Wait until it gets quiet again before you continue.

Speak LSC (Loudly, Slowly, Clearly). Use your playground voice. The larger the room, the longer it takes for sound to travel from your mouth to your audience's ears. If you have a microphone, speak right into it.

Leave time for questions and answers. This is especially important if you're speaking to a group such as the PTA or community council.

Add interest wherever you can. Tell a story, a joke, a surprising (or shocking) statistic. Use charts, graphs, slides, overheads, and/or a video. (Make sure that any visuals are large enough for your whole audience to see.)

Prepare a one-page flyer about your speech. List the major points of your speech and, if you want, include a phone number where you can be reached for more details. Hand it out before or after you give your speech.

CHECK IT OUT



What! I Have to Give a Speech? by Thomas J. Murphy and Kenneth Snyder (Bloomington, IN: Grayson Bernard Publishing, 1995). How to organize a speech, use humor, control nerves, and gain confidence and professionalism. Ages 12–14.

Great Speeches of the 20th Century. History comes to life in original recordings of famous speeches by presidents, civil rights leaders, astronauts, and more. Available on CD or cassette. Check BarnesandNoble.com, your library or record store, or contact:

Rhino Records
1-800-432-0020

Toastmasters International

9127 South Jamaica Street, Suite 400
Englewood, CO 80112
(720) 439-5050

www.toastmasters.org

Founded in 1924, dedicated to helping people speak more effectively, this international organization has more than 8,000 clubs around the world. Contact your local Toastmasters club to see if it's willing to conduct a Youth Leadership program for you and your friends. The program lasts for eight sessions, and you'll need at least ten participants ages 13–16. Regular Toastmasters clubs are open to people ages 18 & up.

Character Dilemmas

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

Suppose that . . .

① You're trying to communicate with a teacher about a problem, but he cuts you off and won't listen. What might you do to improve communication with him?

② Your parents ground you for a whole week for something you did. You think the punishment is unfair, but they won't listen to your explanation. What might you do?

③ You overhear your parents arguing. Should you get involved and try to help them communicate better, or should you stay out of it? What if you overhear your siblings arguing? Your friends? Strangers?

4 You're the mayor of your city, and newspaper reporters keep misquoting you. People are starting to think you're dishonest. How could you approach the reporters about the problem and improve your relationship with them? In what ways can a public official best communicate with the people he or she serves?

5 You're a parent whose daughter won't listen to you. Whenever you try to talk with her or correct her behavior, she stomps off to her room and slams the door. What might you do to improve communication with your daughter? How can you discipline her *and* keep the lines of communication open? Does it matter what age she is? What if she's a preschooler? A fourth grader? A high school student?

6 You're on a peacekeeping committee for the United Nations. Two third-world countries are constantly fighting. One country has recently started building nuclear weapons. How might you bring about peaceful negotiations between the two warring nations?

Activities

WRITE AND RECORD a jingle, rap, or public service announcement (PSA) about something you care about and want to communicate to others. Do it just for fun, or play it over your school intercom. Some radio stations will play PSAs free of charge.

WRITE IN YOUR JOURNAL¹ about a time when poor communication hurt your feelings (or someone else's). Jot down ideas for a solution. Then ask the person to sit down and talk with you. Practice the skills described in this chapter.

WRITE AN ARTICLE for your school newspaper.

Variation: If your school doesn't have a newspaper, see if you can start one to improve communication at your school. You'll need a teacher to serve as your sponsor and advisor, a place to work and store supplies, money to fund the newspaper, and reporters to write for it.

SEND A FAX to someone you know. If you don't know how to use a fax machine, ask for help. Your school, library, post office, or local copy center will probably

have a fax machine you can use. You might be charged a fee.

LEARN ANOTHER ALPHABET. You might choose Morse Code (combinations of short and long signals transmitted by electricity or light), Braille (a system of raised dots used by people who are blind or visually impaired), or the Manual Alphabet (hand motions used by people who are deaf or hearing impaired). If you and a friend learn it together, you can practice sending messages to each other. You'll find all three alphabets on pages 55–56.

Variation: If you learn Braille or the Manual Alphabet, find a school or class for children in your community who are blind or deaf and donate your time as a tutor or helper. Get permission and support from your parents, and ask the school's or teacher's permission.

RESEARCH ANIMAL AND PLANT COMMUNICATION. What have experts learned about how animals communicate? Do they use sounds? Movements? Do plants communicate? Can we communicate with them? Write a report on a topic that interests you.

Variations: Try to communicate with a pet. Using repetition and rewards, train your dog to fetch, your cat to sit in your lap, etc. Or try communicating with a plant. Talk to it, play music for it, etc., and see what happens.

RESEARCH SPACE COMMUNICATION. Have any messages been received from outer space? Have they been interpreted? Write a report about your findings. You might start by finding out about the SETI Institute. (SETI stands for Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence.)

CHECK IT OUT



SETI Institute

189 Bernardo Avenue, Suite 200
Mountain View, CA 94043
(650) 961-6633
www.seti.org

































The SETI Institute is a nonprofit research organization with more than two dozen projects funded by government agencies, private foundations, and individual donors. Write, call, or visit the Web site to learn about ongoing projects, education programs, and related science and education sites.

¹ See "Endurance," pages 88, 89, and 92, for journaling resources.

The MORSE CODE Alphabet

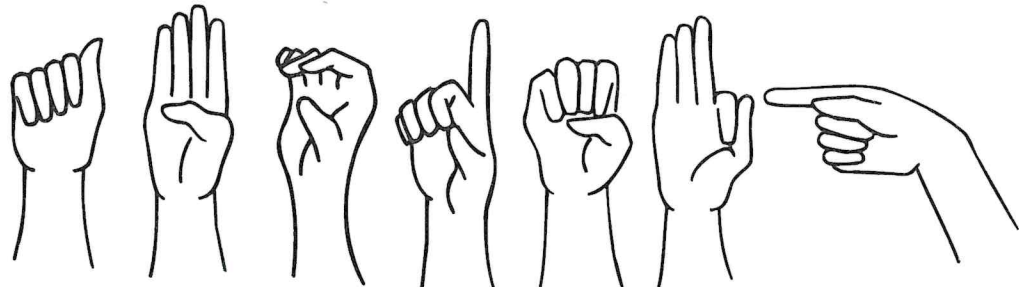
A: •—	J: •— — —	S: •••
B: —•••	K: —•—	T: —
C: —•—•	L: •—••	U: ••—
D: —••	M: — —	V: •••—
E: •	N: —•	W: •— —
F: ••—•	O: — — —	X: —••—
G: — — •	P: •— — •	Y: —• — —
H: ••••	Q: — — • —	Z: — — ••
I: ••	R: •—•	

The BRAILLE Alphabet

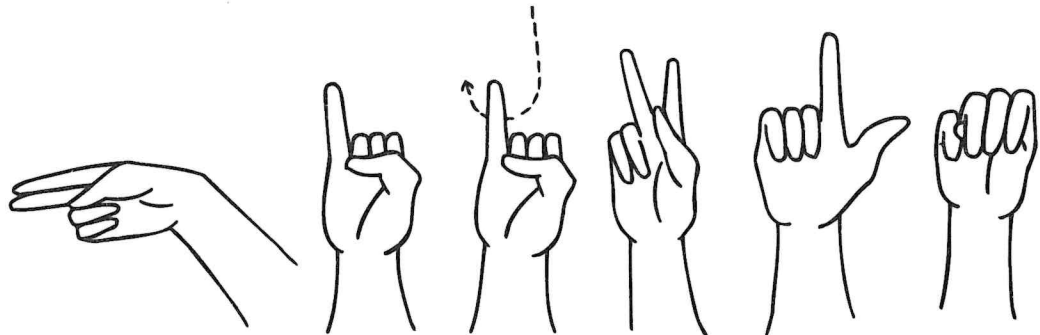
							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
							
I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
							
Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
							
Y	Z						

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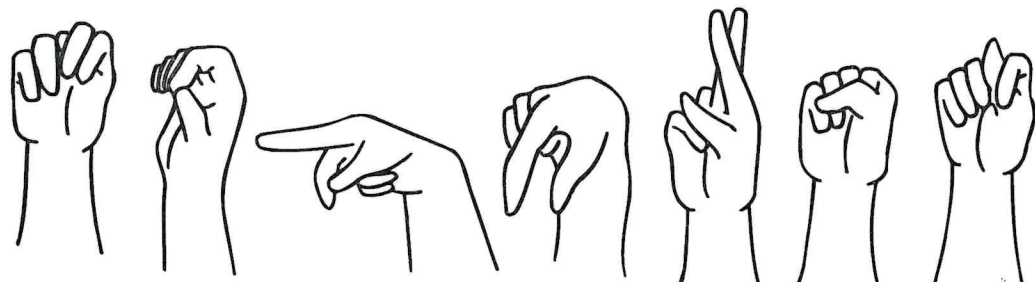
The MANUAL Alphabet



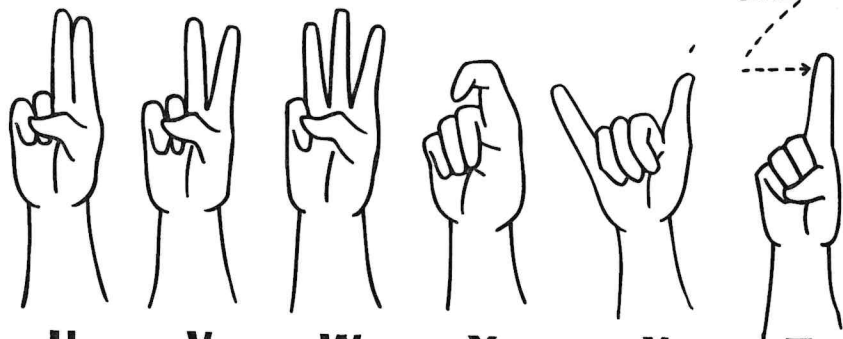
A B C D E F G



H I J K L M



N O P Q R S T



U V W X Y Z

LEARN HOW THE PARTS OF YOUR BODY communicate. How does your brain send signals to your arms and legs? How does your body's defense system warn you of danger? How does one cell communicate with another—and what does it “say”? Draw a chart to illustrate your findings.

JOIN AN INTERNET DISCUSSION GROUP on a topic that interests you, then communicate with people across the country and around the world. If you're not yet hooked up at home or at school, start a campaign to make it happen.

CHECK IT OUT



Learn about discussion groups, search for online communities, forums, and more at:

Google Groups

www.groups.google.com

Yahoo! Groups

groups.yahoo.com/neo

“A world community can exist only with world communication, which means something more than extensive shortwave facilities scattered about the globe. It means common understanding, a common tradition, common ideas, and common ideals.”

Robert M. Hutchins

CALCULATE HOW LONG it might take to communicate with someone 1) in the same town or city, 2) in another state, 3) in another country, 4) on another planet in the solar system, 5) in another galaxy. Decide what method of communication you'd use (letter, phone, cell phone, fax, email, Web page, satellite, light beam, etc.).

GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT CELL PHONES. Call local companies that sell connections and phones. Try to determine what percentage of the population in your city has cell phones. Find out what age group(s) use cell phones the most. Are most users male or female? At what time(s) of the day are most calls made?

Variation: Gather information about pagers.

FIND OUT HOW MANY MAJOR LANGUAGES are spoken in the world today. Make a pie chart showing the percentages of the world's population that speak each language.

LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE. Pick one that interests you and start to learn common phrases. Check your library for books and audiocassettes.

Variation: There may be someone in your class or school who can help you learn the language. If so, find out if there's something you can teach him or her. Swap lessons.

INVENT A NEW LANGUAGE. You might try designing symbols for ideas (such as ancient pictographs) or different symbols for letters. Share your new language with your club, family, or class.

Variation: Learn about Esperanto, a language invented by Dr. Ludwig L. Zamenhof in the late 1800s.

BECOME A PUBLISHED WRITER. Do you write stories, articles, essays, poems, plays, or . . .? Have you always wanted to publish your writing? What are you waiting for? Find out what to do, then follow through. Get help and support from peers and adults. Enter contests, submit your work to publishers—and don't forget that the Internet offers many publishing opportunities.

CHECK IT OUT



Market Guide for Young Writers by Kathy Henderson (Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books, updated often). Over 140 market and contest listings especially for young writers, plus profiles of successful young writers, answers to questions young writers ask most, and more. Ages 8–18.

To Be a Writer: A Guide for Young People Who Want to Write and Publish by Barbara Seuling (New York: Twenty-First Century Books, 1997). Read up on honing your writing skills and learn how to have work published. Ages 8–13.

Merlyn's Pen

www.merlynspen.org

Advice, articles, interviews, and links.

BE A PEER MEDIATOR. Help others improve their communication skills by resolving conflicts peacefully. Here are the basic rules of peer mediation:²

1. Everyone has an equal chance to express his or her point of view.
2. No interrupting.
3. No bad language.
4. No physical fighting.
5. At the end of the session, everyone signs an agreement stating their conclusions and compromises.

Variation: If your school doesn't have a peer mediation program in place, write a proposal to your principal to start one.

DESIGN A PLAN to help the nations of the world learn to communicate and understand each other better. You might research NATO, the United Nations, and other international organizations to learn what has already been done.






TRY TO COMMUNICATE without using words. Sit across from a friend. Relax and close your eyes. Concentrate on each other. Each of you should think of *one* thing—a hobby, interest, family member, food you like or dislike, etc. Try to guess what each other is thinking. See how accurate you can be.

INTERPRET ART. Find a book of famous paintings. Pick two or three you like. Try to determine what the artists were trying to communicate through their paintings. Then read about the artists and the paintings to see if you were right.

CHOREOGRAPH A DANCE that communicates anger, joy, fear, surprise, wonder, or any emotion(s) you choose. Perform it for your club, class, or school.

PLAY CHARADES. Act out song titles, words, movie titles, books, names, etc. *Example:* You might act out "Silent Night" by first putting a finger to your lips (the "shhhh!" sign) and then placing your hands on either side of your head, tilting your head, and shutting your eyes.

READ STORIES ABOUT COMMUNICATION. Look for these books:

-  *Operation Siberian Crane* by Judi Friedman (New York: Dillon Press, 1992). Describes the efforts of Soviet and American scientists to save the Siberian Crane. Ages 11 & up.
-  *Racing the Sun* by Paul Pitts (New York: Avon Books, 1988). Twelve-year-old Brandon has lived in the suburbs all his life. When his grandfather comes to live with the family, Brandon discovers the importance and difficulty of staying true to his Navajo heritage. Ages 11–13.
-  *A Solitary Blue* by Cynthia Voigt (New York: Scholastic, 1993). Jeff is raised by his father after his mother deserts the family. When his mother returns, Jeff must deal with the conflict between his parents. Ages 11–14.
-  *The Twelfth of June* by Marilyn Gould (Newport Beach, CA: Allied Crafts Press, 1994). Thirteen-year-old Janis wonders how her cerebral palsy will affect her future and her relationship with her friend Barney. Ages 10–14.
-  *Wild Magic* by Tamora Pierce (Thorndike, ME: Thorndike Press, 1993). Thirteen-year-old Daine is enlisted to help battle the fierce immortals threatening the kingdom of Tortall. Ages 10–14.

² See "Peacefulness," pages 178 and 180, for more about being a mediator.

Character in *ACTION*

Jackson Elementary: Getting the Message Out

Jogette rushed her words and spoke in a breathless voice: "And I was just out on my front lawn eating a Popsicle when this big old car drove by and began shooting. I hit the dirt. Those guys shot fifteen shots over my head, and then I crawled into the house to warn my mom."

Richard chimed in: "And someone broke into my house and stole my Nintendo and all my games. And then they stole our car."

"And my mom was shot at when she was shopping at the 7-Eleven," Moleni added.

Precious pulled her dark hair into a ponytail and said: "Well, someone broke into my house and pulled a gun on my dad. I ran out the back door and went to my neighbor's house and called the police."

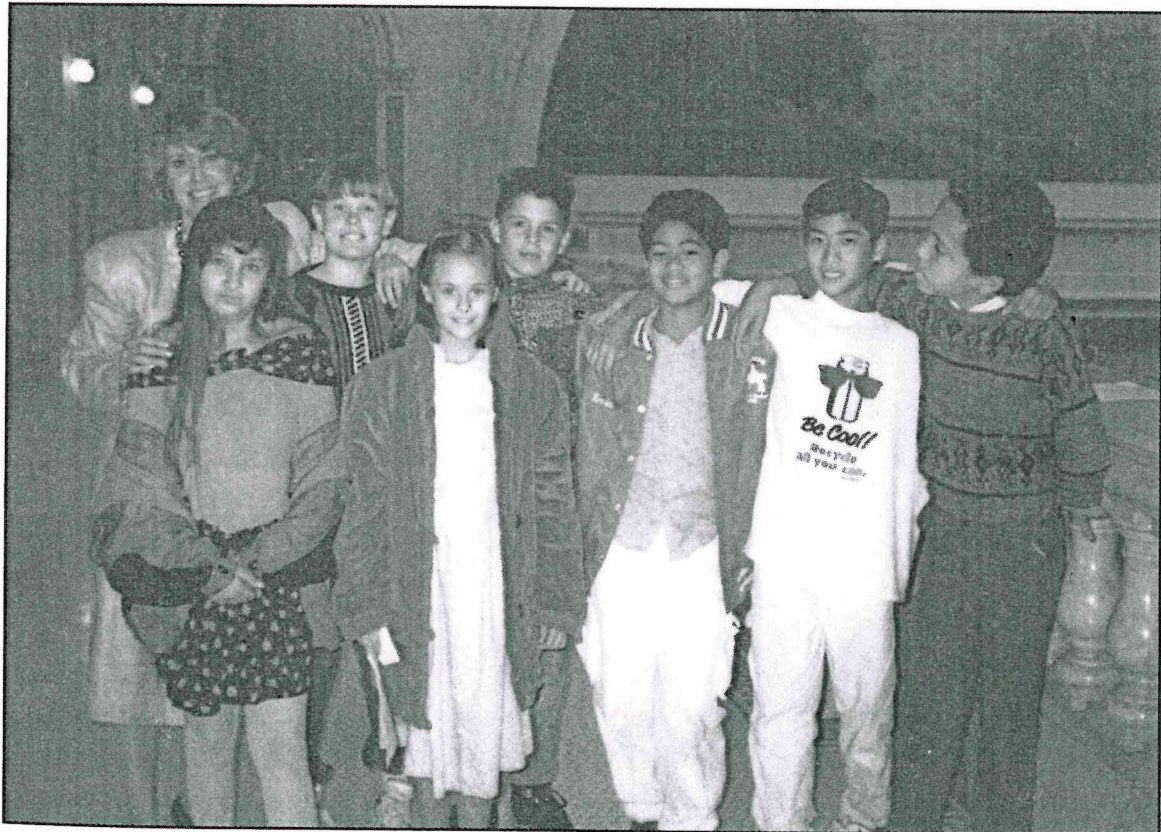
"You're like a hero or something," Moleni grinned.

Another child told the group that he had been abused by a family member.

All told, 18 children shared their stories with each other. Then they surveyed the school and found out that approximately one-sixth of the students or their family members had been shot at, and almost one-fourth of the kids had been chased or threatened with knives or other weapons.

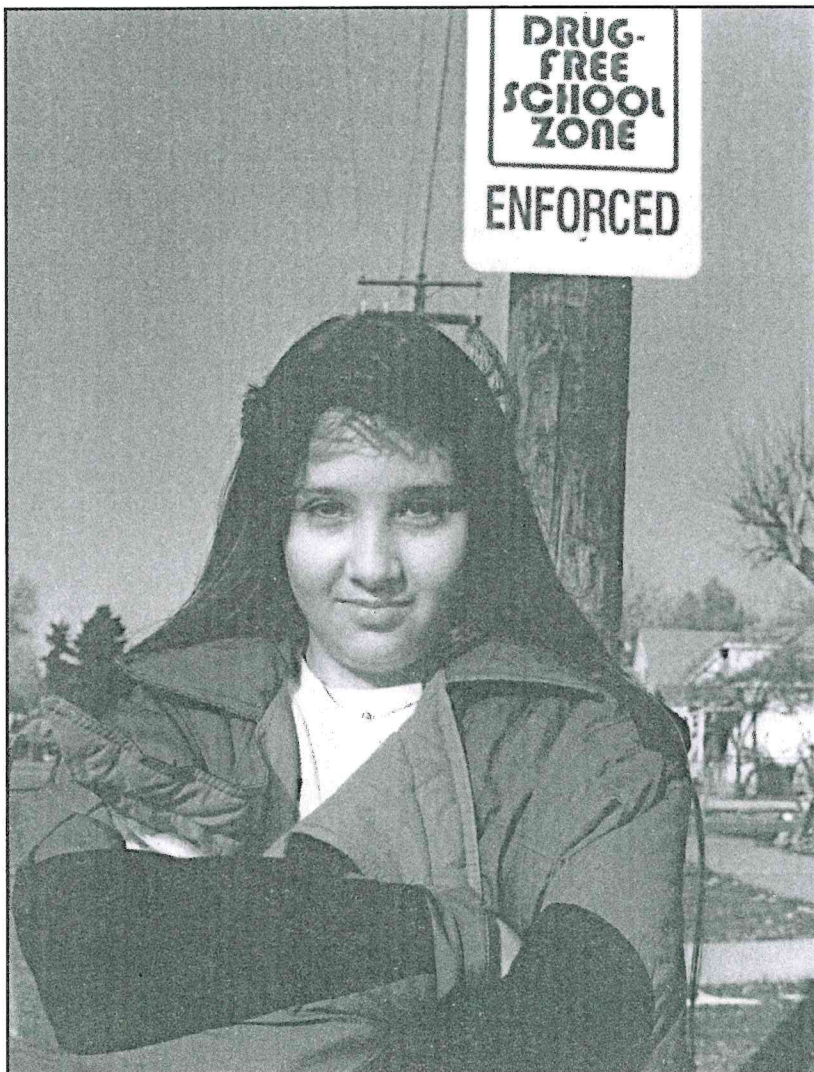
Although most of Salt Lake City is tame, the area around Jackson Elementary School was troubled. Railroad tracks, a homeless shelter, a liquor store, and many abandoned buildings and houses attracted transients who brought crimes with them. Gang membership had also increased.

The students brainstormed and decided that they needed a massive communications campaign to try to reduce crime in the area. Here's how they got their message across:



The Jackson Elementary kids and their teacher, Barbara Lewis (far left)

- 👂: They talked with their parents and sponsored an anti-crime night with the community, working with the McGruff House program to get Safe Houses in their neighborhoods. Parents were asked to take charge of a Neighborhood Watch program.
- 👂: They gave speeches at assemblies, in schools, at the Utah State Education Association, and nationally at a Youth Crime Watch convention.
- 👂: They measured off a drug-free zone 1,000 feet around their school, then worked with the Utah Council for the Prevention of Crime to install warning signs aimed at drug dealers and users.
- 👂: They spoke with the mayor and wrote a proclamation for an anti-crime month.
- 👂: They put a Crime Clue Box in the school, where kids and parents could drop anonymous tips on crimes. The tips led to identifying a person who had written graffiti on the school, foiling an attempted kidnapping, and stopping a gang fight.
- 👂: They spoke to legislators, testifying and lobbying for stiffer penalties for 1) drive-by shootings, 2) possession of weapons near schools, and 3) graffiti. They testified and lobbied for an anti-child-abuse law. All four bills sailed through and became laws.
- 👂: They wrote public service announcements (PSAs) about child abuse. One of them—"You always lose if you choose to abuse," featuring one of the students and Utah's Attorney General—was seen on TV.



Joette Garcia

- 👂: They wrote a small city grant and worked with a billboard company to put an anti-child-abuse PSA on a billboard.
- 👂: They decided that kids needed to have a special child-abuse hotline—an easy-to-remember number they could call for help or just to talk about an abuse problem. After three years of trying, they got their hotline.
- 👂: They wrote letters and spoke to housing authorities, reporting a drug house across the street from the school. About a year later, the house was torn down, and the kids were able to help build a new house in the area.

This is how Joette sums up the experience: "I used to be shy, but because I had to communicate with so many people about fighting and dealing with crime, it opened me up. I've become more confident. It's important for everyone to speak what's on their minds. To risk nothing is to have nothing, do nothing, be nothing. Speaking out is taking that risk. If you don't do that, nothing will get done."

Conservation

Preservation, thriftiness, moderation

"The earth we abuse and the living things we kill will, in the end, take their revenge; for in exploiting their presence we are diminishing our future."

Marya Mannes

A couple of years ago, I visited a hazardous waste facility just to see what it looked like. That's a place where dangerous chemicals, infectious waste (like hospital needles, things contaminated with blood), mine tailings, and other toxic materials are stored. The waste products were buried in mounds that looked like a cross between an Egyptian pyramid and a burial mound. Usually, pyramids and burial mounds are filled with treasures—the most valued possessions of the people who built them. I couldn't help but wonder "How might future civilizations judge us, when they dig up the pyramids from our time and find that they're filled with toxic garbage?"

You can learn a lot about people by looking at the things they throw away. Right now, that includes everything from disposable diapers to disposable dishes. You might ask yourself "What do I really need to throw away?"

Conservation

Conservation means deliberately preserving or saving things. Often it refers to saving the environment—our water, land, plants, animals, and air—but you can conserve (or waste) many different things. *Examples:*

- ◆ material things including clothes, buildings, houses, and furniture
- ◆ food
- ◆ money
- ◆ friendships
- ◆ energy
- ◆ peace
- ◆ your own talents, physical health, and mental health
- ◆ time.

Can you think of other items or ideas you might add to this list?

"Dost thou love Life? Then do not squander Time; for that's the Stuff Life is made of."

Benjamin Franklin

Since conservation can involve everything in your life, you should decide what things are most important to you and work to preserve them or use them wisely.

Thriftiness

Would you like to get rich? Here's how: *Spend less than you earn.* Do you think that someone who earns \$500,000 a year is rich? Not necessarily, because he or she might be paying for an expensive home, a vacation cottage, five cars, designer clothes, and a yacht. In fact, this seemingly wealthy person might be close to bankruptcy.



When you're *thrifty*, you make your money go a long way. You plan ahead for your needs and budget your money carefully. If you simply can't live without designer clothes, you wait until they go on sale. You clip coupons, look for bargains, and shop at thrift stores, secondhand stores, garage sales, and tag sales.

Even small expenditures can add up quickly, and before you know it, your money is gone. Keep track of your spending habits. Make a plan to save part of your allowance or job earnings each week. Soon you'll be on your way to being rich!

Moderation

"Moderation in all things."

Terence (Publius Terentius Afer, c. 190–159 B.C.)

Moderation means avoiding extremes, setting limits, and exercising restraint. When you use moderation, your life is in balance. You exercise . . . but you don't overexercise. You sleep . . . but not 12 hours a day. You eat . . . but you don't stuff yourself. You pursue your interests . . . but you don't get obsessed with them. You develop your talents . . . but you leave room for other things and people. You do your best . . . but you're not a perfectionist.

Consider something as basic as water. You can't drink too much, right? Wrong. Some people drink an excessive amount of water every day in an effort to lose weight. This drains nutrients from their body and can eventually damage their health. On

the other hand, if you don't drink enough water, your body gets dehydrated. You feel dizzy and weak and can even pass out. So use moderation. Drink five to six glasses of water each day. And if you want to lose weight, try a combination of sensible eating and regular physical activity.

When you feel that your life is out of balance, stop, look, and listen. What is your body telling you? Do you have headaches, sore muscles, black shadows under your eyes? What is your mind telling you? Are you frantic, anxious, stressed out, bored? What are your friends and family telling you? Are they worried about you and advising you to slow down, take it easy, and make more time for them? What are your teachers telling you? If something seems out of whack, take a deep breath, plant both feet on the ground, and make a commitment to moderation.

On the other hand, maybe moderation isn't for you. Some great contributions—to the arts, sciences, medicine, politics, philosophy, religion, and other areas of human life and culture—have been made by people who went overboard with a talent, ability, interest, or passion. You'll need to decide for yourself when to step back and when to leap forward.

Character Dilemmas

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

Suppose that . . .

① A developer wants to build new homes on the wetlands at the edge of your town. The wetlands would be lost, but your town would gain much-needed property tax revenues. Should people be allowed to build homes in wetlands and other undeveloped areas? Or should that land be preserved? Is a compromise possible? How could you determine how much land should be developed and how much should be saved?

② People in a South American country are buying up huge chunks of the rainforest, chopping down trees, and planting cash crops on the land. Sales of the crops are bringing in money the people need to raise their standard of living. Does your country have the right to insist that the South American people

preserve the rainforest? Why or why not? Be sure to consider as many sides of this issue as possible.

3 You live in a city where unemployment is high. A big company has just announced plans to build a factory downtown. The factory will provide hundreds of new jobs, but it might also pollute the air and contaminate the soil and water. What should your city do? What can you do?

4 An old historical building in your city has been vacant for many years. The City Council has just announced plans to tear it down and build a parking ramp. What, if anything, should you do about this? What can you do?

5 You have a friend who saves every penny she earns. She never has money for movies or snacks, and when she goes out with you and your friends, someone else always ends up paying her way. Can thriftiness ever be carried to an extreme? If so, how?

6 In science class, you learn about a new lightbulb that uses less energy and lasts much longer than regular lightbulbs. The only problem is, they cost twice as much as regular lightbulbs, and your family is on a limited budget. Should you try to convince your parents to make the switch? What else can you suggest that would lower your family's monthly electric bill?

7 Your brother has a special talent for music. Should he develop that talent exclusively? Should he spend hours every day studying and practicing? Should your parents make sure that he has the best teachers and opportunities available? What would that mean to you and your family? What kind of life might your brother have? On the other hand, what might happen if he decides not to develop his talent?

Activities

MAKE A VIDEO of people at your school (students, teachers, staff) to show at a school assembly. Start by choosing a theme—conservation, thriftiness, or moderation. Come up with questions to ask the people you tape. *Examples:*

? What is our school doing to conserve energy? What should our school be doing? What ideas do you have?

? What is our school doing to be thrifty? What ideas do you have to help our school be more thrifty? Are you a thrifty person? How?

? Do you think that our school values moderation? Explain your answer.

LEARN ABOUT THE NATURAL RESOURCES of different countries around the world. You might consider the United States, a European country, an Asian country, an African country, and one or two other places (a polar region, a Caribbean island, New Zealand). What are each country's most important natural resources? What does each country do with its resources—conserve them, use them wisely, or waste them? Make and illustrate a chart showing your findings.

LEARN ABOUT ENDANGERED SPECIES around the world. Choose one to research in depth, then present your findings artistically. You might write a melody, song, or poem; produce a play or skit; choreograph a dance; prepare an art exhibit; make a quilt; make a diorama; create a slide show; or whatever else you'd like to do.

CHECK IT OUT



The Atlas of Endangered Animals by Stephen Thomas Pollock (New York: Facts On File, 1993). Maps, pictures, symbols, and words focus on areas of the world in which human activity is threatening to destroy various animal species. Ages 12 & up.

Endangered Species Program U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

www.fws.gov/endangered

Tons of information about U.S. animals and plants, including lists and counts by state, plus a foreign species index. You can also download a copy of the Endangered Species Act.

World Wildlife Fund

www.worldwildlife.org

Find lots of interactive maps of some of the Earth's richest, rarest, and most endangered areas. Also includes an extensive glossary and links to other organizations concerned about the environment.

INTERVIEW AN ENVIRONMENTAL/CONSERVATION expert in person or over the telephone. Write up your interview and submit it to your school newspaper. During the interview, ask questions like these:

- ? What's the most pressing environmental/conservation issue we're facing today in our country? Our world?
- ? What kinds of projects are you working on now? What are your plans for the future?
- ? What can other people do to help with your project?

PLAN AND CARRY OUT an environmental/conservation project to benefit your school, neighborhood, or community. Invite a speaker to your class or club from a neighborhood beautification community, environmental group, or community council. Pick the speaker's brain to find out what projects are needed in your area. Then choose one to do and make a step-by-step plan for getting it done.¹

Variation: Find your own project by walking around your school or neighborhood or reading the local newspaper for ideas. To start you thinking, here's a list of 10 project ideas:

1. Adopt a zoo animal and fund-raise for a habitat.
2. Adopt a pothole in the street near your school and repair it.
3. Plant trees near your school or in a park.
4. Find homes for abandoned pets. Work with your local Humane Society or animal shelter.
5. Clean up litter.
6. Conduct an energy audit of your school.
7. Recycle used school paper.
8. Ask your school to purchase recycled paper.
9. Dispose of chemicals (from your school chemistry lab, cleaning service, etc.) safely.
10. Teach other kids about conservation.

MAKE DECORATIONS from recycled materials. *Examples:* Styrofoam, plastic rings from pop-can holders, lids, cans, paper, newspaper, magazines, paper or plastic grocery bags, old jewelry, old clothes, dishes, paper towel tubes, egg cartons, etc. (including whatever you find under your bed). Decorate your classroom or your room at home.

FIND OUT ABOUT HISTORIC BUILDINGS and sites in your community. Is there anything listed on the National Register of Historic Places? Are there any National Trust for Historic Preservation sites? If not, do you know of any buildings or sites you feel should be identified for preservation? Are any currently scheduled for demolition? Contact your local Historical Society or History Center for information and advice. Ask how you can help.

CHECK IT OUT



National Register of Historic Places

National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
(7228)
Washington, DC 20240
(202) 354-2211
www.nps.gov/nr

National Trust for Historic Preservation

2600 Virginia Avenue, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20037
1-800-944-6847
savingplaces.org

LEARN HOW ATHLETES conserve energy during competitions. You might interview members of your school football, basketball, gymnastics, or cross country teams. If your town or city has semiprofessional or professional sports teams, you might try to interview some of the players. Ask questions like:

- ? Do you eat any special "energy foods" before competing?
- ? How do you keep from burning out before a competition is over?
- ? Are there any mental exercises you do that help you to conserve energy during competitions?
- ? What's your attitude during competitions?

PLAN YOUR LIFE down to the minute. Someone who lives for 75 years lives for more than 39 million minutes. Figure out how many minutes remain between now and your 75th birthday. Make a pie chart showing how you plan to spend this time. How many

¹ See "Be an activist" in "Citizenship," page 39, and "Plan and do a service project" in "Caring," pages 23-24.

minutes will you spend sleeping? Eating? Taking care of your body (bathing, washing, etc.)? Going to school? Studying and doing homework? Doing chores? Working? Playing, pursuing hobbies, vacationing? Praying, thinking, meditating? Volunteering? Goofing off? What else? For each segment of your pie chart, show the approximate number of minutes. Then analyze your chart. Is your life plan balanced?

LEARN TO BUDGET YOUR TIME. Make a list of all the activities you do during a typical day. (You can use the chart on page 66 or design your own chart.) For the next week, record how much time you actually spend on each activity. Next, on a clean copy of the chart, indicate how much time you'd *like* to spend on each activity. Try to follow this plan for at least a week. Afterward, review it and make any needed changes.

LEARN TO BUDGET YOUR MONEY. For the next month, keep track of your income (allowance, gifts, wages, payments for services, etc.) and expenditures (clothes, recreation, school lunch, gas, etc.) Record *everything* you earn and spend—to the penny, if possible. (You can use the chart on page 67 or design your own chart. If you need help designing a chart, ask your parents or teacher.) Then analyze your spending and saving habits. Are you spending too much? Could you be saving more? If you have money left over, add it to your savings account (or open a savings account). **TIP:** If you're spending too much, try this strategy: Whenever you see something you want, wait at least 24 hours before actually buying it. Better yet, wait a week. You may find that you no longer want it . . . and the money can go into your savings account.

Variation: Carry a small pocket notebook everywhere you go. Use this to record your expenditures. Transfer this information to your chart.

CHECK IT OUT



The Kids' Guide to Money: Earning It, Saving It, Spending It, Growing It, Sharing It by Steve Otfinoski (New York: Scholastic, 1996). How to earn money, save for a big purchase, understand the stock market, choose a worthy cause for charity, avoid getting ripped off, and more.

GO SHOPPING. Compare food prices, clothing prices, etc. Which products are most economical? Where

are the best places to shop? Share what you learn with your family and friends.

ENJOY FREE FUN AND GAMES. Having a great time doesn't have to cost money. Share some no-pay play with your friends, club, and family. *Examples:*

- Ask a grandparent or elderly neighbor to tell you about the "good old days."
- Build sand castles or snow castles.
- Chase butterflies.
- Climb trees.
- Decorate each other's lockers.
- Feed squirrels.
- Go on a scavenger hunt.
- Go swimming.
- Have a laughing contest.
- Have a squirt-gun fight.
- Have a tickling contest.
- Have a tug-of-war.
- Have an arm-wrestling contest.
- Make "rock buddies" (decorate rocks with paint, stick-on eyes, paper feet).
- Make a fort from snow, blankets, etc.
- Make and fly paper airplanes.
- Make paper chains and hang them.
- Make paper boats and sail them.
- Make snow angels and snow sculptures.
- Make your own kite and fly it.
- Play hide-and-seek.
- Play tag.
- Rake leaves into a pile. Jump in.
- Read aloud to little kids.
- Roll down hills.
- Save seeds from fruits and vegetables. Plant them.
- Skip stones on a creek or river.
- Swing in the park.
- Take a hike.
- Walk in the rain.
- Watch birds.
- Watch for shooting stars.

Time Chart

For the week of _____, _____, _____ through _____, _____, _____.
 month date year month date year

ACTIVITY	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Sleeping							
Eating							
Chores							
Homework							
Recreation							
Entertainment							
Practicing talents							
Exercise							
Personal hygiene							
Prayer, thought, meditation							
Service/ volunteering							
Other:							
Other:							
Other:							
Other:							

Income and Expenditures Chart

DATE	MONEY EARNED (from where?)	MONEY SPENT (on what?)	BALANCE

See "Learn to budget your money" on page 65.

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EXPLORE EXTREMES. Make a poster showing how good things can become problems if taken to extremes (overuse/overdoing and underuse/underdoing). For example, you might put a drawing or photograph of exercise equipment in the center of your poster. To one side, show a kid watching TV, eating chips, drinking soda, and looking out of shape (underuse). To the other side, show a kid with hugely exaggerated muscles (overuse). You might title your poster "Too Little or Too Much: Either Can Be a Crutch." Here's a list of other things you might want to illustrate—or come up with your own list:

- ▲ communication
- ▲ computers
- ▲ conservation
- ▲ entertainment
- ▲ friends
- ▲ hobbies
- ▲ homework
- ▲ recreation
- ▲ sleep

- ▲ talents
- ▲ thriftiness
- ▲ volunteering/service
- ▲ work

READ STORIES ABOUT CONSERVATION. Look for these books:

- 📖 *The Ancient One* by T.A. Barron (New York: Tor Books, 1994). While helping her Great Aunt Melanie try to protect an Oregon redwood forest, 13-year-old Kate goes back five centuries through a time tunnel and faces an evil creature intent on destroying the same forest. Ages 12 & up.
- 📖 *Canyon Winter* by Walt Morey (New York: Puffin Books, 1994). Stranded for six months in the Rocky Mountains after a plane crash, a 15-year-old boy is taken in by an old hermit who teaches him the ways of the wilderness. Ages 11 & up.
- 📖 *The Weirdo* by Theodore Taylor (New York: Avon, 1993). Seventeen-year-old Chip Clewt fights to save the black bears in the Powhatten National Wildlife Refuge. Ages 13 & up.

Character in ***ACTION***

Nick Pollack: Being Thrifty

When Nick Pollack needed a bike in fifth grade, he rummaged through the family "parts stockpile" out behind the old barn in LeSueur, Minnesota. He salvaged wheels from one old bike, chains from another, and brake equipment from a third. Then he created a new bike for himself while at the same time recycling a bunch of old parts.

Nick has learned to be thrifty and to save money, too. This was necessary because his parents lost their family farm when he was five years old. "I have to save for stuff I need," Nick explains. "If I don't, I don't get it. I've saved money for shoes, ink pens, pencils, a calculator, clothes, and that kind of stuff. I have my own bank account. If you don't learn to save now, you won't know how to save in the future."

Nick is large for his age, and farmers around his home hire him to unload beans out of granaries, unload hay when they're baling, and do yard work

and other farmhand work. He's dependable and willing to do anything.

Nick's conservation efforts branched out into the environment when he was in seventh grade at the Minnesota New Country School, a year-round school. During the summer of 1995, teacher Cindy Reinitz led her students on a nature hike through Ney Woods, part of a Wildlife Game Refuge near Henderson, Minnesota. The day was so hot that Nick felt like a melting ice-cream cone. As he passed under some huge oaks and maples, he noticed frogs near the trees. Nick dove to the ground on his belly and grabbed one. But it was weird. Nick's frog had very thin, paralyzed legs. It was almost as if there were no muscles in them. Another girl found a frog that was missing its hind legs. The frogs were easy to catch because so many of them were deformed.

The class scrapped their nature hike and headed for the pond in Ney Woods. They visited the pond many times over the next few months. "I found at least 100 deformed frogs myself," Nick remembers. The big question was: What was causing the deformities? To find out, the students needed equipment for testing the soil, the water, and the creatures in the pond.

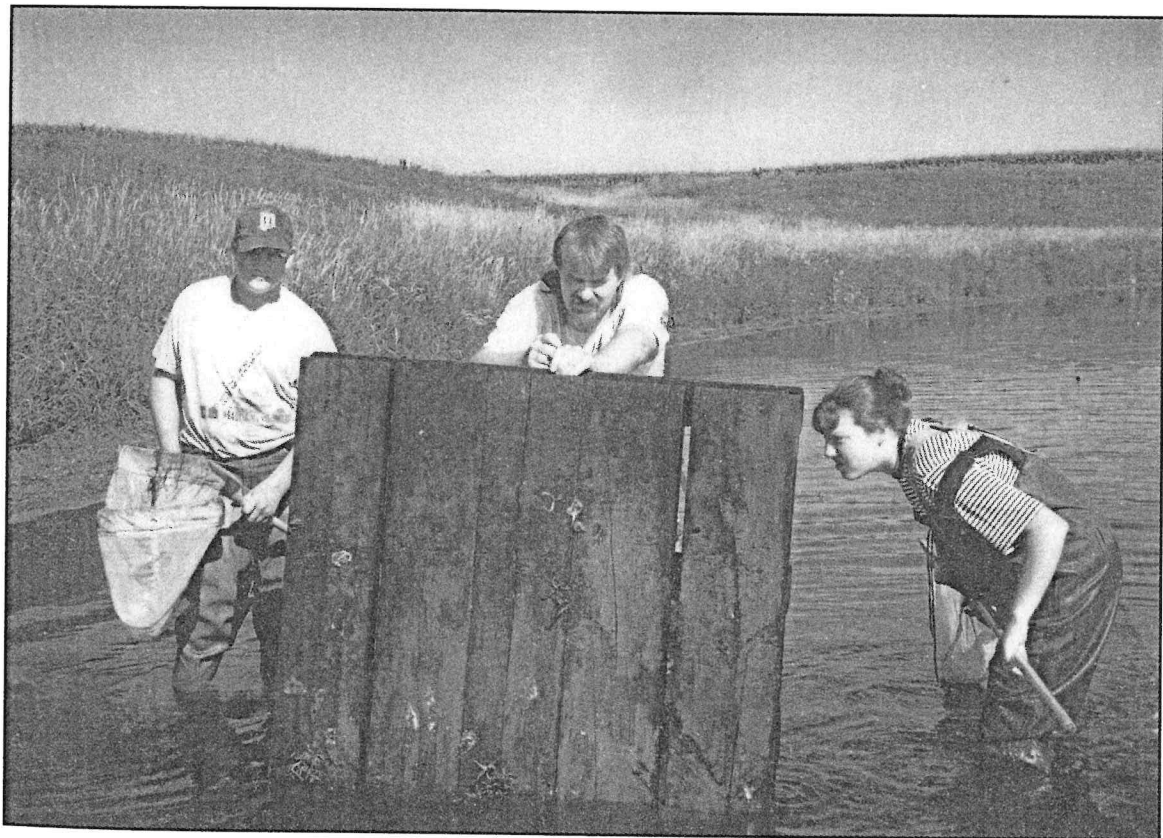
Once again, Nick hit the family "parts stockpile" and found some discarded C-clamps, glass jars, and a wooden pole. He used them to make a soil collector. "I attached the glass jar to the long pole so it was L-shaped. Then you could scoop out dirt from the bottom of the pond. But I sterilized the collectors first and then sealed them up. Then I made an invertebrate collector from two-liter pop jugs and dowel rods." According to Nick, you can tell a lot about a pond's water quality by finding out what invertebrates live there. If there aren't very many, the water probably isn't very good.

Ms. Reinitz's class sought the help of scientists to test their samples. They went to their state legis-

lature and lobbied for funding. Nick testified before the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources. "We feel sort of attached to these frogs," Nick told the lawmakers. "We want to find out how to stop these deformities."

He and his classmates gave speeches at several hearings. As a result, the lawmakers allocated \$123,000 for research on the frog problem alone. Then they set aside \$28,500 to develop programs to involve students across the whole state. The Ney Learning Center received a \$100,000 grant to build a classroom at the pond site. And the kids have a proposal out for nearly half a million dollars for education and further research.

In the spring of 1996, when the snow melted and the students returned to the pond, they discovered deformed toads, deformed turtles, and albino (colorless) birds. The problem seemed to be spreading. Then they had a breakthrough. Nick and his friends tested the pond water after a big rainstorm and found that it was very high in nitrates. Could nitrates from fertilizer runoff be causing the deformities?



Left to right: Nick Pollack, Minnesota New Country School teacher Tom Fish, and Kim Steiner checking the Ney Pond

"We don't know yet, because you have to take a whole lot of tests and put them together before you can guess," Nick says.

It might not even be the water. The frogs migrate up to a mile over the ground and could contact pollution along the way. So the problem isn't solved yet, and it may take years to correct. But Nick suspects that humans are the cause.

Today Nick is a confirmed conservationist. "Trees make money for you," he points out. "The food you eat comes from an animal that sacrificed its life for you. Don't waste paper or food. You can pick up trash and be resourceful instead of wasting things and buying stuff new.

"If we don't start saving now," he warns, "there won't be anything left for kids in the future."

CHECK IT OUT



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

www.pca.state.mn.us/living-green/deformed-frogs/minnesota

This site offers information about deformed frogs. It provides background information, frequently asked questions, publications you can download, research news, and links to other frog-related sites.
