

Problem Solving

Resourcefulness, ingenuity

“Problem solving means weeding out all the things that don’t work until you find something that does. Mistakes need not be failures. They can be steps toward finding solutions.”

Barbara A. Lewis

When my fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students at Jackson Elementary in Salt Lake City discovered a hazardous waste site three blocks from their school, they flew into action, like an army of termites trying to eat the Sears Tower. It was a huge problem. Some 50 thousand barrels had been stockpiled over 40 years. Most of the things the kids tried in the beginning didn’t work. For example, they conducted a survey of the neighborhood looking for ground wells so they could ask health officials to take water samples to test for toxic chemicals—but all the wells had been cemented over. They called the health department—and health officials told them there was nothing the kids could do. They passed a petition around the neighborhood asking for the removal of the barrels—and the petition was threatened with a lawsuit three times.

Was my students’ project doomed to failure? No! Along the way, they learned many things that didn’t work, and some that did. Through a process of problem solving, they eventually got all the barrels removed, and the site was cleaned up. It took 10 years, a lot of mistakes, some failures, and hard work, but they succeeded.

My students were in good company. People who make great contributions or discoveries always have problems to solve along the way.

Alexander Fleming took advantage of an apparent failure in an experiment, and by shrewd observation discovered penicillin. Here are more success stories that started out as failures:

- 💡 Beethoven’s music teacher once proclaimed “As a composer, he is hopeless.”
- 💡 Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper editor because he had “no good ideas.”
- 💡 The legendary tenor Enrico Caruso once had a music teacher who told him “You can’t sing. You have no voice at all.”
- 💡 Madame Schumann-Heink, who later became a famous opera star, was told by the director of the Imperial Opera in Vienna that she would never be a singer and should buy a sewing machine.
- 💡 Leo Tolstoy flunked college.
- 💡 Werner von Braun failed ninth-grade algebra.
- 💡 Louis Pasteur was rated as “mediocre” in chemistry when he was at college.
- 💡 Dr. Seuss’s first book, *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, was rejected by 23 publishers.
- 💡 Abraham Lincoln began the Black Hawk War with a captain’s rank and came out as a lowly private.
- 💡 Louisa May Alcott was told by an editor that she wouldn’t ever be able to write something that would have popular appeal.

💡 During World War II, a scientist named James Wright kept trying to invent artificial rubber, but all he got was a lump of flexible, bouncy stuff. He thought he had failed completely. In fact, he had invented Silly Putty.

💡 At the first TV station that hired her, Oprah Winfrey tried to be a reporter—and failed. But she couldn't be fired because of the terms of her contract, so her producers assigned her to a local morning talk show. That was the beginning of Oprah's incredibly successful career.

"Go ahead and make mistakes. Make all you can. Because remember, that's where you'll find success."

Thomas J. Watson

Successful problem solving requires several good character traits. If you glance at the list of character traits in the Contents, you'll see that any number of these are needed to solve problems. You have to *know yourself* and your own capabilities. It helps to be *optimistic* and have *hope* in your efforts. You need to *care* enough to try your best. Problem solving means making *choices*—and accepting the consequences when your choices don't turn out the way you want them to. And so on down the list. You might even think of problem solving as a "chemical reaction" that combines your best character traits to create a new "solution."

CHECK IT OUT

Mistakes That Worked by Charlotte Foltz Jones (New York: Doubleday, 1991). Explores many inventions—Coca-Cola, Post-it Notes, Frisbees, cheese, chocolate chip cookies, aspirin, and more—that all happened by accident. Ages 9–13.

10 Ways to Fail at Problem Solving

Do you want to know how *not* to solve problems? Here are ten strategies that are almost guaranteed to lead to failure.

1. Fight against the problem. Many people think they can solve a problem by swimming upstream against it. That works for salmon, but not for problem solving. Instead, study the problem and try to understand it. Learn about it. Examine it from as many angles as you can. Then you'll know how to approach it.

2. Deny or ignore the problem. Do you remember the fable about the ant and the grasshopper? The ant worked hard to prepare for winter, but the grasshopper played. When winter came, the ant was ready, but the grasshopper was cold and hungry. If you deny or ignore a problem, it won't go away. It will just be harder to solve when you're finally forced to face it.

3. Have a bad attitude about the problem and your own ability to solve it. Shouting "Having a curfew STINKS!" won't win any points with your parents. Thinking "I can't talk to them, so why bother?" won't help, either.

4. Don't finish what you start. Some people are afraid to carry out their solutions for fear that other people will criticize them. Or they procrastinate and don't get around to finishing. Either way, the problem isn't solved.

5. Be afraid of making mistakes. Problem solving can be scary. What if you do something wrong? Make a mistake? Goof up? (In fact, doing nothing is usually a *bigger* mistake.)

6. Give up. Stop before you reach a solution. Stop before you start working toward a solution.

7. Be afraid of the competition. Some people don't solve problems for fear that others might do it better.

8. Get a false or inaccurate picture of the problem. If you think it's smaller or less serious than it is, you won't devote enough time and effort to solving it, and you're likely to fail. If you think it's bigger or more serious than it is, you'll devote too much time and effort to solving it—which could cause even more problems.

9. Rely on luck to solve the problem or make it go away. What some people call "luck" is really the result of thought, energy, commitment, and the willingness to take advantage of good opportunities.

"I find that the harder I work, the more
luck I seem to have."

Thomas Jefferson

10. *Rely on other people to solve problems for you.*

If you depend on others to solve problems and make decisions for you, this prevents you from learning and growing. Plus you have to be satisfied with what they come up with, even if it's not what you want.

10 Steps to Successful Problem Solving

As you read through these steps, you might notice some similarities to the scientific method—a procedure scientists have used for centuries to solve problems.

1. See if there's a problem to solve. You can't solve it if you can't see it. Identify it. Describe it. *Example:* "Uh-oh, I'm failing algebra."

2. Research your problem. Find out the history of your problem. What's involved? Who's involved? What's the extent of your problem? Ask questions about it. Talk to experts about it. *Example:* Your test and quiz grades have been slipping for the past few months. You've neglected to turn in several homework assignments, which also affects your grade. You go to your algebra teacher and say "Uh-oh, I'm failing algebra."

3. Get help. See if there's anyone who can work with you to solve your problem. *Example:* Your teacher tells you there's an after-school tutoring club for people who need help with algebra.

4. Make a hypothesis or guess about what you think might solve your problem. *Example:* "Maybe if I start going to the tutoring club, I can bring up my grade and pass the class."

5. Experiment and observe. Try your solution and watch what happens. *Example:* You start attending the tutoring club. You observe yourself to see if your grades improve.

6. Form a theory based on your observations. Think about what you've learned so far. Is it enough

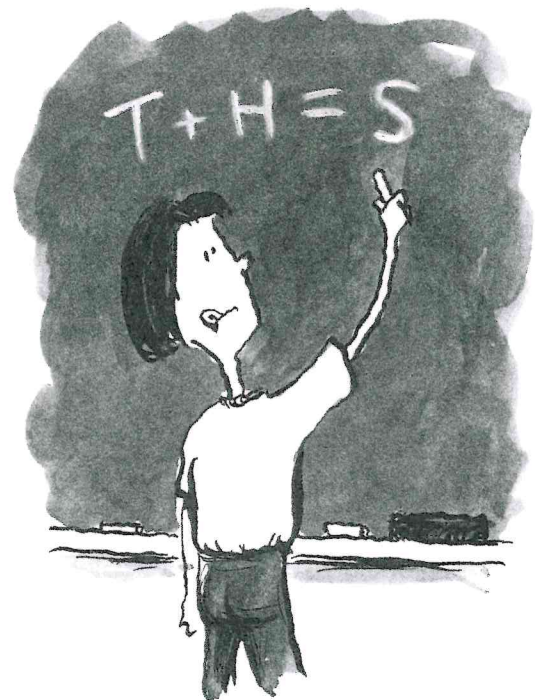
to solve your problem? If not, think *beyond* what you've learned. *Example:* "Attending the tutoring club might not be enough. Maybe I need to start doing my homework."

7. Make a decision based on your theory. *Example:* "I should spend more time studying and complete all of my homework assignments."

8. Make a plan based on your decision. *Example:* "I'll pay more attention in class, write down the homework assignments, go to the tutoring club three times a week, and do my homework every night." Follow your plan.

9. Learn from your mistakes. Mistakes can be good teachers. *Example:* "Now I know that I can't bluff my way through algebra."

10. Revise your theory. *Example:* "Tutoring plus homework equals success in algebra."



BONUS: Successful problem solving can help you to *prevent* future problems. *Example:* "I guess I should start working harder in chemistry *before* that becomes a problem, too."

"Each problem that I solved became
a rule which served afterwards to
solve other problems."

René Descartes

Character Dilemmas

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

Suppose that . . .

- 1 You want to go to the algebra tutoring club, but you can't stay after school. Both of your parents work outside the home, and you have to take care of your little sister. What might you do to solve your problem?
- 2 Your parents are divorced. You live with your mother, but you want to live with your father. What might you do?
- 3 You're the mayor of a town in which two different groups are competing for the same budget money. One group wants a hospital expansion with better facilities for people who are mentally disabled. The other group wants a hospital expansion for children with birth defects. Both groups have urgent needs that can't wait for future funds. If you half-fund both groups, neither will be able to reach its goal. How might you decide which project should have priority? Or is there another way to approach this problem?
- 4 You're a teacher with 39 students in his class, and because of budget cuts you don't have enough desks and books to go around. Ten of your students have serious behavior problems, and you believe that they would learn better in another school that specializes in teaching kids with behavior problems. But that school is overcrowded, too. You have several problems. What are they? What might you do about each one? Where will you start?
- 5 You overhear two gang members talking about plans to graffiti the school and neighborhood. You think they know that you overheard them, but you can't be sure. If you tell on them, they might retaliate. If you don't tell, your school and the neighborhood will be defaced. What will you do?
- 6 You live in a small town that doesn't have a public library. You work to build a team of people to work on this project, and the town donates a build-

ing and books. Just as you're about to begin renovations, you learn that the building is going to be demolished for a new sports park. Your group has no money to buy another building. How might you solve this problem?

Activities

CONNECT WITH STUDENTS FROM OTHER SCHOOLS around your state, country, or world to find out how they solve problems. You might do this over the Internet or join a pen-pal organization.¹ Ask them how they deal with issues like these (or think of your own ideas):

- 3 communicating with parents
- 3 doing homework
- 3 having a job and going to school at the same time
- 3 curfew
- 3 getting along with peers
- 3 handling peer pressure
- 3 reducing crime
- 3 getting school supplies
- 3 getting medical care.

START A PROBLEM-SOLVING NOTEBOOK or journal.² Write about the problems you face in your daily life and how you solve them. Write about what works and what doesn't work.

LEARN ABOUT THE ORIGINS of famous discoveries, inventions, and talents. Each one started out as a problem to be solved. You might want to start by asking yourself something you've always wanted to know. *Examples:* How do they get the lead into a pencil? How did they discover the age of the earth? How do they get music onto a CD? Then visit the library or log on to the Internet and look it up! See if you can figure out the problem-solving steps each discovery required.

¹ See "Peacefulness," page 179, for a list of pen-pal organizations.

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

CHECK IT OUT

How Do They Do That? Wonders of the Modern World Explained by Caroline Sutton (New York: Quill Books, 1982). Answers questions including: How do they create spectacular fireworks? How do they splice genes? How do they dig tunnels underwater? Ages 13 & up.

Tricks of the Trade for Kids, edited by Jerry Dunn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994). Learn how to draw cartoons from a Disney animator, how to build mighty biceps from Arnold Schwarzenegger, how to start a successful business from Mrs. Fields of cookie fame, and more. Ages 9–14.

WRITE A NEW ENDING TO A STORY, POEM, OR play that ends in a sad or disappointing way. You might have to work backward in the text to discover where the problem started, then rewrite that part, too.

HOLD A SPEECH CONTEST in which the contestants describe problems and propose solutions.³ You might have a theme for the contest, such as a particular school or community problem (tolerance, theft, gangs, drugs and alcohol, sports ethics, etc.). Or you might broaden your theme to include city, state, or national issues (health care, child care, urban development, foreign relations, etc.). Give prizes for Best Speech and Best Solution.

HAVE A CLASS, CLUB, SCHOOL, OR FAMILY debate on this topic: "Be it resolved that from this time forward, all children in our town (city) under 16 years old will be in their homes by 9:00 P.M." Divide into two teams: *affirmative* (in favor of the statement) and *negative* (against the statement). TIP: Remember that when you debate a topic, you don't necessarily agree with the side you present. After the debate, switch sides so everyone has the chance to debate both the pros and cons of the topic.

BRAINSTORM A LIST OF SOLUTIONS for these problems (or other problems you'd rather brainstorm about):

- low self-esteem
- acne
- losing your homework

- a sibling who teases you
- making new friends
- finding a boyfriend or girlfriend.

RESEARCH SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS caused by natural disasters. What might people do to reduce the impact of tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, fires, and other events? Report your findings to your class or club. *Examples:*

1. Research the Mt. St. Helens volcanic eruption on May 18, 1980. What happened when the volcano erupted? What have people learned from this disaster? Make a chart or poster illustrating what you learn.
2. Research the impact of forest fires. What happens to the local populations of animals, plants, and trees? What happens to the people who live nearby? How do firefighters problem solve during a forest fire? What are the positive aspects of a forest fire? What happens to the forest as it recovers from a fire? Present your findings in an oral report.
3. Investigate earthquake detection. How do scientists know when an earthquake is going to happen? How accurate are their predictions? What kinds of instruments do they use to problem solve? Write a report on your findings.

CHECK IT OUT**Cascades Volcano Observatory**

1300 SE Cardinal Court
Building 10, Suite 100
Vancouver, WA 98683
(360) 993-8900

volcanoes.usgs.gov/observatories/cvo
Part of the U.S. Geological Survey, the Cascades Volcano Observatory keeps a close watch on Mt. St. Helens.

Forest Service

U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250
1-800-832-1355
www.fs.fed.us

Contact the Forest Service or visit the Web site to learn about fire management and current or recent fires.

³ See "Communication," pages 52–53, for tips on public speaking.

U.S. Geological Survey

12201 Sunrise Valley Drive

Reston, VA 20192

1-888-275-8747

www.usgs.gov

Contact the USGS or visit the Web site for information on California quakes, hazards and preparedness, studying earthquakes, and more.

INVITE A FINANCIAL PLANNING EXPERT to speak to your class, school, or club. Learn about ways to solve the problem of making your money grow—now and in the future. How and where should you invest your money? How can you make sure to have enough money to meet your needs?⁴

PREPARE A COLLEGE EDUCATION BUDGET. Many students (and their families) are facing the problem of how to finance their college education. It's never too soon to start thinking about this, since college can be *very* expensive. Imagine that you'll be going to college at some point in the future—seven years from now? four years from now? next year? Choose a college or university you think you'd like to attend. Find out the current costs for tuition and room and board. (Ask your guidance counselor or librarian how to do this, or search the Internet.) Try to estimate costs for books and supplies, transportation, recreation, clothing, and medical expenses. You might want to start by researching current expenses. Then try to predict what expenses might be when you actually start college. What might you start doing *now* (individually and with your family) so you'll be ready when the time comes?

CHECK IT OUT

College Financial Aid Made Easy by Patrick L. Bellantoni (Atlanta, GA: Tara Publishing, updated often). Describes in depth the variety of financial resources available to college undergraduates, including application information and financial planning suggestions. Written in a clear, easy-to-use style appropriate for high school students, parents and guardians, and school counselors. Ages 15 & up.

⁴ See "Conservation," pages 61–70, for a discussion of thriftiness, an activity on budgeting your money, and a reproducible "Income and Expenditures" chart.

FinAid: The SmartStudent Guide to Financial Aid

www.finaid.org

A free, comprehensive, independent, objective guide to student financial aid, maintained by the author of *The Prentice Hall Guide to Scholarships and Fellowships for Math and Science Students*, sponsored by the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA).

FIND OUT WHAT SUPPLIES your school needs. Books? Lab equipment? Computers? Sports equipment? Musical instruments? Interview teachers and your principal to learn about the most urgent needs. Then work with your class, school, or club to plan and carry out a fund-raising effort. **TIPS:** You might 1) sell services (car washes, talent shows, tours, etc.), 2) ask for donations, 3) sell goods (cookies, buttons, books, candy, yo-yos), or 4) apply for grants.

LEARN HOW PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS have been treated historically. How have people who are disabled, mentally incapacitated, or terminally ill been treated in the United States? What problem-solving techniques have been used to help them? How have people with special needs been treated in other countries and cultures? Show your findings on a histogram. (A histogram is a bar graph with the bars touching each other, leaving no gaps.)

Variation: Use your problem-solving skills to decide what people might do today to improve the acceptance and care of people with special needs.

CHECK IT OUT**disABILITY Information and Resources**

www.makoa.org

A gateway site to vast amounts of information about people with disabilities, laws, products, services, and more.

VISIT A HOLOCAUST MUSEUM or war memorial. You might do this as a field trip with your class or school. Afterward, write a letter to the editor of your school or town newspaper describing what you saw and experienced. Can you think of other ways to solve disagreements besides killing people and fighting wars? You might end your letter with a suggestion or two. **TIP:** If there are no museums or memorials

within visiting distance, search the Web for sites you can visit online. *Example:* The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. has a Web site at: www.ushmm.org

LOBBY YOUR LEGISLATURE. Sharpen your problem-solving skills by supporting a bill (potential law). Follow these steps:

1. Call a legislator who represents your home or school district. (To learn the names of legislators in your area and the districts they represent, call your state house and ask, or check at your library.) Ask your legislator's intern to send you a list of bills currently under consideration in an area that interests or concerns you. (*Examples:* bills dealing with aging, poverty, hunger, substance abuse, homelessness, kids, disease, teen pregnancy, graffiti, possession of weapons, nutrition, or crime.) Ask the intern to include the bill numbers, descriptions of each bill, and the names and telephone numbers of their sponsors.
2. Choose one bill you'd like to support.
3. Research both sides of the issue.
4. Contact the bill's sponsor(s) and ask what you can do to help support the bill. You might offer to write letters, lobby in person, pass out flyers, testify before legislative committees, build local support, or advertise the bill.

Variation: Lobby on a local level. Contact your city or town offices and find out how you can support an ordinance.

IDENTIFY AND SOLVE A SCHOOL PROBLEM. Look around your school for things that need fixing, improving, or changing. Survey students, teachers, and administrators to get their input and perspective. Then follow the 10 steps on page 39. (You might need to adapt them to fit your project.) Afterward, reward yourself and your team for all the hard work you've done. Have a party!

PAINT THE TOWN. Contact the human services department in your town or city and get the name of a family or senior whose house needs painting. Use your problem-solving skills to find an adult sponsor, get the permissions you need, gather a team of

workers (friends, family members, classmates, kids in your club or faith community), and get the job done.

LEARN HOW EDITORIAL CARTOONS and comics have portrayed real-life problems. Editorial cartoons in particular focus on current events and news (elections, social problems, scandals, etc.); some comic strips have editorial content (for example, *Doonesbury*). You might choose a particular period from history (the Great Depression, the Vietnam War, the most recent national election), then visit your library and look at cartoons and comics from newspapers published during that time. Think about these questions as you're doing your research:

- ? How do cartoonists treat problems? Mostly seriously, or mostly as jokes?
- ? Do cartoonists have the power to influence public opinion?
- ? Do cartoonists ever suggest solutions to problems? Are they realistic or exaggerated?

Share what you've learned with your class, club, or family. You might want to create a comic book or a series of cartoons to present your findings.⁵

LEARN HOW MUSIC AND ART can help people cope with problems, such as physical and mental illnesses or accidents. Interview a psychologist.

Variations: Are there places in your community where people are lonely? *Examples:* a senior citizens' home, children's shelter, homeless shelter. Cheer them up with a musical talent show. Get your whole class or club involved. Find people who sing and play musical instruments. Prepare a program and present it. Invite the people you're performing for to sing along with you. TIP: Choose songs that are easy to learn and sing (such as rounds), or popular songs that many people are likely to know. Or plan a summer music program for latchkey kids. Use your problem-solving skills to get the permissions, adult sponsors, and equipment you need.

FIND OUT ABOUT THE SPORTS PROGRAMS available to children and teens in your community. Are there enough programs, locations, and choices (softball, soccer,

⁵ See "Choice and Accountability," page 32, and "Imagination," page 131, for resources related to comics.



tennis, volleyball, swimming, etc.) that anyone who wants to participate has the opportunity? Are they adequately funded? Are they affordable? Do the teams have the supplies and equipment they need? Survey local schools, neighborhood groups, park employees, etc. Maybe you won't find a problem. But if you do, brainstorm solutions and, if you can, carry them out.

PLAY A "CHOOSE A SHOE" GAME. Have everyone in your class or club take off one shoe. Put all of the shoes in a pile in the middle of the room. Blindfold each player in turn and ask him or her to find a shoe that fits (other than his or her own shoe). Keep playing until everyone has a shoe. Then talk about what happened. Discuss questions like these:

- ? Was it hard to find a shoe that fit?
- ? Did being blindfolded make it even harder?
- ? Do you need to see the whole problem to find a solution that "fits"?
- ? Is it easier to find a "fit" when you have a number of choices available to you? (In other words, does it help to have many possible solutions to choose from?)

Variation: Have other players give the blindfolded players verbal instructions to direct them toward specific shoes ("go right," "go left," "reach down"). Then talk about how it helps to have knowledgeable people in the team who can "see" all of the available solutions.

READ STORIES ABOUT PROBLEM SOLVING, resourcefulness, and ingenuity. Look for these books:

-  *The Book of Changes* by Tim Wynne-Jones (New York: Orchard, 1995). Six witty short stories full of magic, real-life ghosts, and unlikely heroes. Meet Clarke, who doesn't have the nerve to peddle *TV Guides* door-to-door; Tobias, who once again has left his long-term school project for the last minute; and Dwight, who uses his Donald Duck impersonation—and some timely advice from the school nerd—to thwart the neighborhood bully. Ages 8–13.
-  *The Car* by Gary Paulsen (San Diego, CA: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young

Readers, 1995). A teenager left on his own travels west in a kit car he built himself. Along the way, he meets two Vietnam veterans who take him on an eye-opening journey. Ages 12 & up.

-  *The Happiest Ending* by Yoshiko Uchida (New York: Atheneum, 1985). When 12-year-old Rinko learns that a neighbor's daughter is coming from Japan to marry a stranger twice her age, she sets out to change the arrangement and gains new insight into love and adult problems. Ages 8–13.
-  *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, 1997). Records the courage and self-reliance of a Native American girl who lived alone for 18 years on an isolated island off the coast of California. Originally published in 1960. Ages 10 & up.
-  *The Tar Pit* by Tor Seidler (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1991). Trying once again to skip math class, Edward Small wanders to an old tar pit and discovers a dinosaur jawbone, but no one will believe him. After a terrible nightmare in which his dinosaur destroys everything in sight, Edward realizes he's his own worst enemy and decides to change his attitude toward school and the people around him. Ages 10–14.

CHECK IT OUT

If you'd like to find a book that might help you deal with a specific problem or challenge you're facing in your life, visit your local public library and ask the reference librarian for *Bookfinder* or *The Best of Bookfinder*. Published by American Guidance Service, this valuable resource groups and describes books by topic. (Sample topics include peer pressure, communication with parents, jealousy, resourcefulness, decision-making, loneliness, depression, and talents.) Your library might even have *The Bookfinder* on CD-ROM.

Character in *ACTION*

Christine Sargent: Solving Problems

“You have to be aware of your surroundings, watch, and keep one hand free, like when you’re coming out of a grocery store,” 15-year-old Christine Sargent explains. She’s addressing a group of women in the self-defense class she teaches with her friend, Rita Trujillo. “Self-defense means that you’re in control of your body and aware of your surroundings.”

Christine and Rita grew interested in self-defense for women when they learned that girls as young as eight months and women as old as 80 years had been raped or physically abused in Taos, New Mexico. Together they founded the Taos Women’s Self-Defense Project. They were the youngest of the first 12 people to be trained as instructors; the other women involved were all between 30 and 60 years old. Christine’s mother, a psychotherapist, spearheaded the project.

First, Christine and Rita had to raise the money to fly trainers to Taos from the Los Angeles Commission on Assault Against Women. The trainers spent four hours with the Taos group, then left them with books and videos to study. Christine and Rita devoted two nights a week for a year to their training.

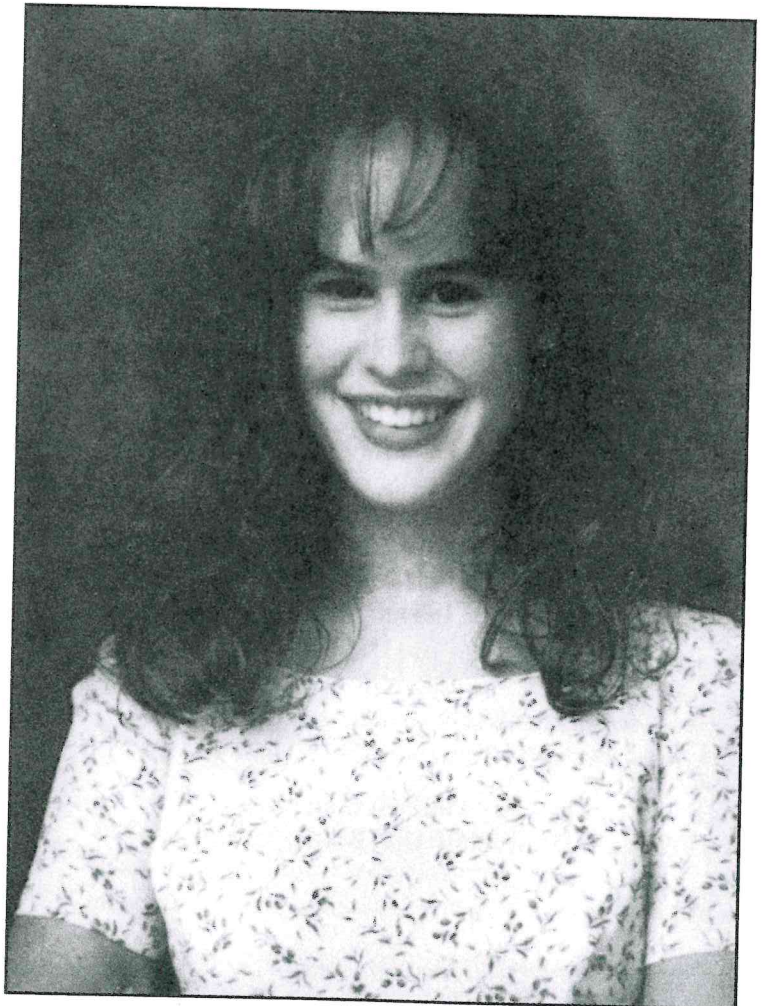
“Each of us would learn a skill and then teach the others,” Christine says. “After being certified as instructors, we taught many classes for teens and women of all ages. We taught them *awareness* techniques, like watching your space and paying attention to how close you are to other people, and *assertiveness* skills so they could stand up for themselves. We also taught them *physical* techniques, like kicking, punching, and how to identify targets.

“We worked with seventh, eighth, and ninth grade P.E. classes. We warned them that when you’re at a party, you have to be aware and assertive if someone hits on you. You have to use your voice effectively, make eye contact, and pay attention to your body language. Stand firm and don’t slouch. Look strong and

sound like you mean what you say. You need to be respectful in the way you speak to other people, but you should always be alert to what’s going on. You have the right to protect yourself.”

“Often, women don’t know how to assert themselves,” Rita adds. “In our society, girls are trained to be polite, nice, and submissive. We have to learn how to be strong individuals and follow our instincts.”

Christine has used her problem-solving skills in her private life, too. For a while, she devoted so much time to the defense project that she had to figure out how to weave in her other activities. She



Christine Sargent

practiced the piano every night after school, and as soon as she got her driver's license at age 15, she drove an hour and a half to her piano lessons. She maintained an A average at Taos Junior High, participated in the science fair, and tutored kids at an elementary school.

She even helped a shy first grader who had a problem asserting himself with other kids. While

tutoring him, Christine taught him how to play games such as "Duck, Duck, Goose" so he'd feel more confident about joining groups. She also participated in the student senate, was a member of the honor society, and got involved in other activities as well. But she kept her weekends for fun—something she still tries hard to do. As Christine says, "You can be a problem solver without being boring."



Rita Trujillo (left) and Christine Sargent

Purpose

Direction, goals, focus, vision

"We must overcome the notion that we must be regular . . . it robs you of the chance to be extraordinary and leads you to the mediocre."

Wta Hagen

Suppose you have a friend who lives in the Springhill Housing Development somewhere in your city, and one day you tell him that you'd like to visit him. You know that you've seen a sign for the development in the eastern part of your city, so you set off in that direction. Without any specific instructions, you search for two days along main roads until finally you find a sign for the Springhill Housing Development.

You drive into the development and discover that it contains over 600 homes. After another two days of knocking on doors, you finally get lucky and locate someone who knows your friend. Of course, by then your friend has grown weary of waiting for you.

You probably would never do anything like this. It doesn't make good use of your time, and it doesn't win any points with your friend. Instead, you'd ask him for directions before you left home. Your friend would describe signposts to watch for along the way. You'd know to take I-15 to the Valley Hill Shopping Center exit, go left four blocks, turn right at Lexington (the corner with the Mom & Pop Gas Station), travel through two stoplights, and so on until you reached his home.

Although the idea of setting out on a journey with no directions seems hard to believe (and silly

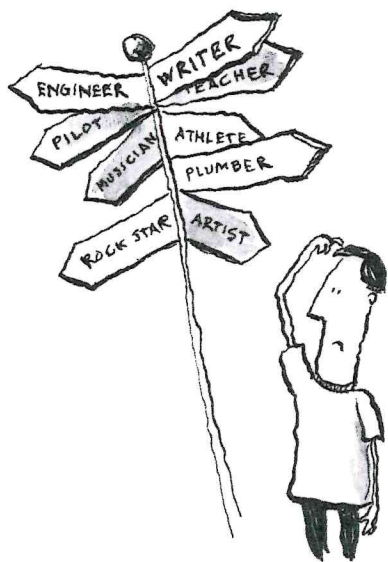
besides), some people live their lives this way. For example, suppose that you want to be a chemical engineer someday. You have a vague idea that being a chemical engineer is somewhere out there in your future. You might know the general direction to go in, but if you don't know any of the signposts along the way, you might wander indefinitely and never achieve your goal.

What are some of the signposts on the way to becoming a chemical engineer? First, you'll want to know what kinds of classes to take in school. If you don't take some chemistry and math, you'll have a longer and harder road to travel. You should probably do your best to earn good grades, since that will help you get into college. To finance your college education, you may need to work summer jobs, save money, and apply for scholarships. You'll need to do some research to discover the best colleges and universities to apply to and what kinds of scholarships might be available to you.

Thinking about and planning your future will help bring your dreams into focus. When you concentrate on something important to you, it usually becomes clearer and stronger in your mind. When you ignore something, it often becomes weaker and more indistinct.

What if you don't know what you want to be? That's okay. You can still find general signposts to help you go in positive directions. You can still do all kinds of wonderful things in your lifetime. It's also okay to change your mind and your direction as you journey through life. But you can achieve things

faster and easier if you plan far ahead, and some things take a long time to reach—and require many signposts and steps along the way.



Finding a Purpose

“We are told that talent creates its own opportunities. But it sometimes seems that intense desire creates not only its own opportunities, but its own talents.”

Eric Hoffer

You might think of “what you want to be” (or “who you want to be”) as your *purpose*. Purpose is very personal. It’s that special something inside of you that you want to develop and pursue. Purpose gives your life meaning and enables you to make a contribution in your own unique way.

How can you find your purpose? You might start by asking yourself “What do I like to do most?” You have special talents that make you what you are. You can do things that nobody else can do, or do them in ways that nobody else can duplicate. When you match your talents with a need, you can find a purpose. Here are more questions to ask yourself as you think about your purpose and what it might be:¹

¹ If you completed the Self-Portrait on pages 12–13, you might want to look back at it now. Some of your responses contain clues to your purpose.

- ? What are my talents?
- ? What’s easy for me to do?
- ? What’s hard for me to do?
- ? What are my interests?
- ? What do I do in my spare time?
- ? Who needs me or my skills?
- ? What do I dream about?
- ? Who are my heroes?
- ? What kinds of people do I like to be around?
- ? Do I like to be around people?
- ? Do I like to be around animals?
- ? Would I rather be outdoors or indoors?
- ? What things do I *dislike* doing?
- ? What things worry me?
- ? What things would I like to see improved?
- ? How would I design the ideal future for my town, city, country, or world?

You might want to jot down some responses to these questions in a notebook or journal.² Look back at your responses from time to time. Are there more questions you might ask yourself? Can you develop your responses further and go into more detail? If you’re *purposeful* about your purpose, you should find it becoming more clear as the months and years go by.

Setting Goals

“Goals determine what you’re going to be.”

Julius Erving

The signposts and steps you follow on the way to your purpose are your *goals*. Setting goals is a skill you can learn. Here’s how to do it:

1. **Get ready to do some serious goal-setting.** Here are four things you’ll need:

- some uninterrupted quiet time
- someplace where you can think and work comfortably
- something to write with
- something to write in or on.

² See “Empathy,” pages 88, 89, and 92, for journaling resources.

Take a walk, find a quiet corner at the library or your school media center, or go to your room and hang a “Do Not Disturb” sign on your door.

2. Set your long-range goals for the next 10 years. Write down all of the things you’d like to accomplish during this time. Keep your purpose in mind. Your long-range goals should support your purpose.

Example: You like being around animals. One of your long-range goals might be to work as a veterinarian. So you write down “To work as a veterinarian,” “To have my own veterinary practice,” “To find cures for diseases that affect animals,” and “To attend a college or university that has a program in veterinary medicine.”

3. Prioritize your long-range goals. Number them in order of their importance to you. Then look at numbers 1, 2, and 3. These are your Top Three long-range goals. Congratulations!

Example: Your Number 1 long-range goal might be “To have my own veterinary practice.”

4. Set your medium-range goals for the next 3–5 years. Write down all of the things you’d like to accomplish during this time. Include details. Keep your purpose AND your long-range goals in mind. Your medium-range goals should help you achieve your long-range goals. They’re related!

Example: You write down “To find out which colleges and universities offer the best veterinary medicine programs,” “To get a part-time job working for a veterinarian,” “To read as many books as I can about being a veterinarian,” and “To learn more about running a business.”

5. Prioritize your medium-range goals. Number them in order of their importance to you. Now you have a Top 3 list of medium-range goals. You’re making real progress!

Example: Your Number 1 medium-range goal might be “To find out which colleges and universities offer the best veterinary medicine programs.”

6. Set your short-range goals for the next year or two. Write down all of the things you’d like to accomplish during this time. Keep your purpose AND your medium-range goals in mind. Your short-range goals should help you achieve your medium-range goals.

Examples: You write down “To ask my guidance counselor about veterinary schools,” “To interview veterinarians about their education and what their work is like,” “To search the Internet for veterinary schools and ask for copies of their catalogs,” and “To check out a book from the library about being a veterinarian.”

7. Prioritize your short-range goals. Number them in order of their importance to you. Now you have a Top 3 list of short-range goals. Good work!

Example: Your Number 1 short-range goal might be “To check out a book from the library about being a veterinarian.” (Guess what: This is something you could do today. *Taking action on your goals is what makes them happen.*)

8. Record all of your Top 3 goals in a notebook or journal and date them. Check your lists often to remind yourself of your goals—once a day or once a week. Whenever you reach one of your goals, check it off and write down that date in your notebook.

9. Revise your lists as you reach your goals. Whenever you reach one of your top goals, choose another one to replace it.

10. Revise your goals as needed. Things change. People change. You’re changing right now. Don’t be afraid to look back at your goals and start over if you need to. What’s important is to *always have goals.*

You might be thinking that goal-setting seems too hard or complicated. Remember that it’s a skill, and learning any new skill takes practice. If you want to play the piano, you have to practice. If you want to make the swimming team, that takes practice, too. Improving your score on your favorite video game is something that comes after hours of practice. Isn’t it worth it to practice a skill that can shape your whole life? One that you’ll use again and again throughout your life? After all, you’ll always have things you want to achieve and accomplish.

Here are just a few of the good things that come from being a goal-setter:

- ✦ You feel more independent. You’re not waiting for someone else to decide your life for you. You’re doing it yourself.
- ✦ You feel more capable. You’re not waiting and hoping for things to happen. You’re *making* them happen.

- ✦ You feel more in control of your time. You can look back at each week and know that you've accomplished something. This frees you to have more fun!
- ✦ You feel more confident that you'll eventually fulfill your purpose. Remember, goals are the steps that get you there.

You might be thinking that goal-setting seems too simple or easy. How can making lists have such a powerful effect on your life? After all, you're just writing down a bunch of words! But before you decide that goal-setting isn't for you . . . *try it*. Look around for other goal-setters and talk with them. (TIP: Successful people and high achievers are usually goal-setters.) Then promise yourself to follow this process for at least three weeks. By then, you'll have a good idea of whether it works for you. If you don't like this process after three weeks, you might try it again, and then again, because it can help you to focus your energy in finding and fulfilling your purpose.

Many young people (and adults, too) have a general idea of where they might like to be in 5, 10, or 20 years from now. But they don't have the discipline to do the *daily planning* that enables them to accomplish the "little things" on the way to achieving their long-range goals. If you can train yourself to do this—and you must *do it for yourself*—then you'll be on your way to fulfilling your purpose.

You create your own future in your mind. Vision comes before doing. Goal-setting helps to make your vision come true.

"The victory of success is half won when one gains the habit of setting goals and achieving them. Even the most tedious chore will become endurable as you parade through each day convinced that every task, no matter how menial or boring, brings you closer to fulfilling your dreams."

Op. Mandino

Character Dilemmas

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

Suppose that . . .

- 1 You're a talented musician, a top scorer on the soccer field, plus you're very interested in medicine. How might you decide which is the best career or direction for you to choose? Give reasons.
- 2 One of your friends is suddenly given the opportunity to attend a day-long leadership workshop out of state. Unfortunately, she already has a music recital scheduled for the same day, and she sent out invitations several weeks ago. So she (reluctantly) decides to skip the leadership workshop. Do you think she might ever have another opportunity like that, or does "opportunity knock" only once? Do you think your friend made the right decision? Why or why not?
- 3 The mayor of a city has made a plan for the city's future direction. Her plan includes developing a large park as a business area, which would lead to economic growth the city needs. When the mayor's plan is made public, many people protest. They think that the park should be left alone. Should the mayor follow her plan for the city, or should she listen to the people? Explain your answer.
- 4 You go to a sleepover at a girlfriend's house, expecting that it will be an all-girls party. When you arrive, you discover that your friend has invited boys to spend the night, too. You don't want to be a party-pooper, but you're not comfortable with boys sleeping over. Should you ask your friend to tell the boys to leave? Should you stay at the party and keep quiet? Should you go home? What might you do in the future to avoid similar problems and misunderstandings?
- 5 You're confused about your future, and you have no particular vision of what you want to be someday. Is that okay? Should you do something to plan your future? Or should you just let it take care of itself?

Activities

INTERVIEW PEOPLE WHO DO interesting things. You might do this on the telephone, by letter, or by email.³ Broaden your own interests by interviewing people who do things you don't know anything about. Write up your interviews in a notebook and share it with your class.

KEEP A SCRAPBOOK of newspaper articles about people who do unusual or interesting things. You might look for articles about people with unique jobs, unconventional hobbies, or anything else that catches your eye.

SEARCH THE INTERNET to learn more about your interests and hobbies. Use a search engine like Yahoo, Hotbot, Excite, or Altavista. (If you don't know how to use a particular search engine, read the tips or Help section.) Bookmark any sites you find that you want to visit again in the future.

EXPAND YOUR INTERESTS BY VOLUNTEERING.⁴ This is a great way to learn new things, meet new people, and serve others. Check with your school, community center, place of worship, local United Way office, etc. to find out what opportunities are available to you.

GO MUSEUM HOPPING. Visit museums around your city. Look for different things you might be interested in. Do any of them relate to your purpose? Do any of them inspire you to do some goal-setting?

Variation: Visit museums on the Internet. Many have their own Web sites with virtual exhibits. You might start by going to www.yahoo.com and doing a search for "museums."

TRY TO FIND AT LEAST THREE good reasons for studying math in school. Why learn math if you're interested in things that don't have anything to do with math? Does math do anything special for your mind? How might it help you to focus on problems and find solutions? Set goals? Find a purpose? Write your reasons and thoughts in your journal.⁵

Variation: Try to find at least three good reasons for *everything* you're studying in school. Why learn about history? Science? Literature? Health? Geography? What else?

PLAN GOALS FOR THE FUTURE of your country. Suppose you're a member of the President's cabinet and you're able to plan goals for the future of the United States. Write at least five goals you think the U.S. should head towards in the future. Justify your goals. (If you live in a different country, plan goals for your own country.)

CHECK IT OUT



The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500
www.whitehouse.gov

When you finish writing your goals, consider sending them to the President. You can do this by mail, or through the White House Web site (if your Web browser supports forms).

GO ON A SCAVENGER HUNT around your neighborhood or community. Look for interesting things around you. Does anything you see give you an idea of a direction you'd like to follow?

HAVE A CULTURAL EXPERIENCE. Encourage your family to accompany you to a symphony, ballet, opera or musical, or art exhibit to broaden your vision of things you might be interested in. Afterward, discuss your experience—and plan the next one. You might want to consider getting a family membership to an art museum, science museum, or children's museum in your area.

Go "MENTOR SHOPPING." If you have a strong interest in something, seek out a professor, a teacher, or community member who is involved with your interest.

³ Get in touch with famous people with help from *The Kid's Address Book*. See "Choice and Accountability," page 32.

⁴ See "Empathy," pages 81–82, for guidelines on how to volunteer.

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

Contact the person and ask if it might be possible to spend time together so you can learn from him or her.⁶ **IMPORTANT:** Be sure to get permission from your parents or guardians. Ask them (or another responsible adult) to chaperon you when you meet with your mentor.

START A CLUB FOR PEOPLE who share your interest(s).⁷ *Examples:* Computers Club, Dog Lovers Club, Dancers Club, Singers Club, Young Astronauts Club, Gardeners Club, Volleyball Club. Meet once a week or once a month.

FIND A CLASS OR CAMP that allows you to explore one of your interests. *Examples:* basketball camp, swimming class, water polo class, crafts class, science camp, etc. Develop a talent you've always wanted to develop. **TIP:** Ask about free classes at your community center.

USE DAILY AFFIRMATIONS to help you find your purpose and reach your goals. An affirmation is a simple statement you tell yourself often throughout the day. It might be about something you want to accomplish, feel, become, or be. When actor Jim Carrey was still a struggling comedian, he used to tell himself "I will earn ten million dollars a year by 1995!" You can use affirmations to form good habits ("Today I'll take a 20-minute walk"), strengthen a talent ("Today I'll really concentrate when I practice the piano"), explore a new interest or hobby ("Today I'll learn more about cars"), or develop a positive character trait ("Today I'll tell the truth"). You might want to start each day by reading or writing an affirmation.

CHECK IT OUT

Making the Most of Today: Daily Readings for Young People on Self-Awareness, Creativity, and Self-Esteem by Pamela Espeland and Rosemary Wallner (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1998). A year's worth of quotations, readings, and affirmations to help all kids know themselves better, be more creative, and feel better about themselves.

⁶ For a related activity, see "Establish a mentor file" on pages 131–132.



⁷ See "Start a new club" on pages 160–161 for how-to tips and a resource.


CREATE A BOARD GAME in which players try to reach a goal. You might model your game after Monopoly, Life, Candyland, Chutes and Ladders, or any other game you enjoy playing (or used to enjoy playing when you were younger). Use these steps as guidelines:


1. Decide on a goal. This can be anything you choose—finishing high school or college; becoming a dancer, artist, computer programmer, chef, or forest ranger; learning to be a good speaker; developing friendships; getting married; raising children; etc.
2. Place "signposts" along the way from Start to Finish that relate to reaching the goal. *Examples:* "You get an A in math. Go forward two spaces." "You win first prize in an art contest. Go forward three spaces." "You get invited to a slumber party. Take an extra turn."
3. Place "traps" along the way that slow players' progress toward the goal. *Examples:* "You skip third period math class. Go back two spaces." "You miss the deadline for entering the art contest. Lose a turn." "You ignore someone who greets you in the cafeteria. Draw a penalty card."

Work with your class, club, or family to design and create a game board, playing pieces, bonus and penalty cards, etc. Decide on the rules. Then play your game and refine it if necessary. You might want to share your game with younger kids in your school.

READ STORIES ABOUT PURPOSE, direction, goals, focus, and vision. Look for these books:

-  *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George (New York: Puffin Books, 1991). A young boy builds a treehouse in the Catskill Mountains and lives alone for a year, struggling to survive and ultimately realizing that he needs human companionship. Ages 11–14.
-  *Water Sky* by Jean Craighead George (New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1987). While living in Barrow, Alaska, with friends of his father, a boy learns the importance of whaling to the native Eskimo culture. Ages 11–14.

 *Wise Child* by Monica Furlong (New York: Random House, 1989). Abandoned by both of her parents, nine-year-old Wise Child goes to live with the witch woman Juniper, who begins to teach her the ways of herbs and magic. Ages 9–12.

 *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* by Sook Nyul Choi (New York: Dell, 1993). A young Korean girl survives the oppressive Japanese and Russian occupation of North Korea during the 1940s to later escape to freedom in South Korea. Ages 10–13.

Character in *ACTION*

Billy Green: A Sense of Purpose

Thirteen-year-old Billy Green hunkered over the computer at the National Science Teachers' Association (NSTA) Conference in St. Louis. He spoke to the 120 people who had sandwiched themselves into the meeting room—some at tables, some standing, some squatting on the floor. Another 100 had been turned away at the door. Billy and his younger brother, Kirk, were helping their dad, Tom Green, present a very popular session called "Using the Internet to Enhance Science Education." Before the conference, Billy had prepared a slide show demonstrating how to find resources on the Net.

As his audience watched, Billy demonstrated a search technique. "I'll use the Excite search engine to find out how dinosaurs became extinct," he explained. Billy brushed long strands of hair from his eyes and clicked on one icon after another. "It says here that once people thought dinosaurs died out because the mammals ate their food." A few teachers chuckled. "And here it says that one of the first theories was that dinosaurs died out because of the sniffles." Some teachers laughed out loud. "Here's a more recent theory," he said, scanning the computer screen. "It says that an asteroid threw up a cloud of dust, which blocked out the earth's rays and lowered the temperature. It was too cold for the dinosaurs, and that's why they died out."

Billy looked out at his audience. "It's fun to find all kinds of stuff on the Internet," he said. "But mostly I like using it to find answers to puzzles and games." He grinned, and the laughter grew even louder. Billy told the teachers how he had reached a dead end in the popular CD-ROM game *Myst*. He couldn't get the right combination to a safe he needed to continue

with the adventure. "So I went on the Net and found the solution." The teachers applauded.

This wasn't the first time Billy had helped science teachers. He had presented at an earlier NSTA conference and also at the Michigan Environmental Teachers' Conference. "I want to be a computer programmer when I'm older," Billy says. He knows it won't happen in one giant step, so he's doing it in small bits and bytes.

Billy sets goals for himself, and he has advice to offer others: "If someone skips school and gets bad grades, they have nothing. They can't get good jobs or anything else they want. When this happens, they don't like their lives. So it's important to work hard in school."

Billy first became interested in computers by way of Nintendo. That led him to real computers, computer games, searching the Internet, and programming. He spent two weeks at the University of Michigan learning "C," a computer language. This happened because he was selected as a high achiever by the Midwest Talent Search. His California Achievement Test (CAT) scores were above the 97th percentile in math and the 95th percentile in English. Billy had to write and rewrite an essay to convince the judges to choose him for the University of Michigan program. Writing isn't easy for him.

He wants to go to Michigan State University because his dad went there. Since a college education is expensive, he's already planning to work during the summers and save the money he earns. His mom, dad, and grandfather have agreed to help him, too. He'd like to win a scholarship but knows he can't count on that, so he's earning good grades now, taking special classes, and spending time on

the Internet. On some days, his parents forbid him from going on the Net because he spends hours mucking around and surfing, monopolizing the family phone line.

"Billy likes to concentrate on one thing—like the Internet—to the exclusion of everything else," his father, Tom, explains. "He gets so intense. When he's trying to solve a problem on a computer game or the Net, he stops eating, ignores everyone, gets grouchy, and becomes so competitive that he's not always fun to play with. He's getting better now because he has a goal and he's determined to reach it."

"I want to make my own home page next," Billy says. "I think I'll have categories—movies, games, MUDs and MUSHes. MUDs and MUSHes are games you play on the Internet with other people. You can walk around virtual worlds, chat with other characters, explore dangerous areas with monsters, and solve puzzles.

"I'll practice what I learned at the University of Michigan this year, and next year I'll go back to learn graphics. Then I'll put it all together. You have to work to get your goals accomplished—work and go to special classes. You can't learn everything you need to know in school. But most of all, you have to practice."

CHECK IT OUT



Midwest Academic Talent Search

Northwestern University Center for Talent Development

Northwestern University

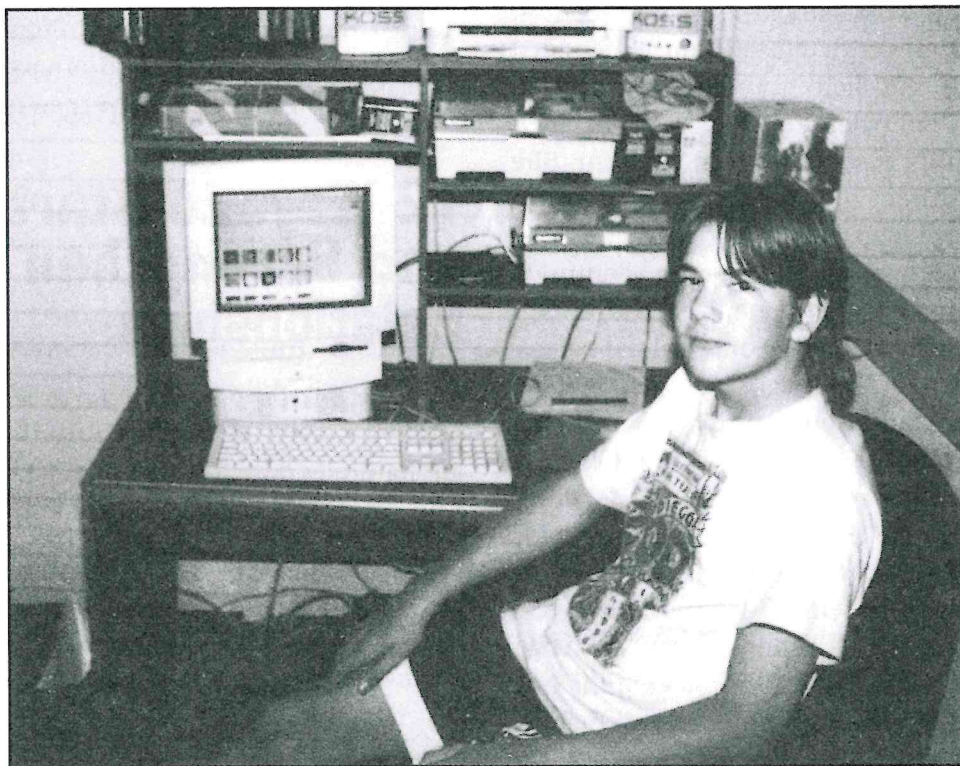
617 Dartmouth Place

Evanston, IL 60208

(847) 491-3782

www.ctd.northwestern.edu

Information about special programs, resources, and enrichment opportunities for all grades; information about other regional talent searches.



Billy Green at his computer

Relationships

With family, friends, self, and others

"Personal relations are the important thing forever and ever."

E. M. Forster

You may have heard or read about the three-year-old boy who fell into a gorilla exhibit at the Brookfield Zoo in Illinois in 1996. Binti Jua, an eight-year-old female gorilla who was carrying her own baby, Koola, on her back, hurried over to the unconscious boy, who had climbed a railing and fallen 18 feet. Binti gently picked him up, cradled him in her arms, and held him. Then she carried him over to the door where zookeepers could reach him, and carefully placed him on the floor. She continued to protect him from the advances of other gorillas until help came.

Onlookers were astounded at the seemingly understanding and sensitive behavior of the mother gorilla toward the human boy. Some animal behavior experts think that Binti might have acted differently if the boy had been running around in a threatening way, because gorillas, while not normally aggressive, will act to defend their territory and their babies. Nevertheless, Binti's behavior sparked a lot of discussion across the country.

It's difficult to know why Binti behaved the way she did, because she can't tell anyone how she felt at the time. Is it possible that Binti protected the boy because she had her own baby and had experienced the mothering instinct? What do you think?

You first learned about loving and caring in your relationship with your parents and family. When you are loved and nurtured, you can love and nurture in

return. Babies who aren't loved and nurtured don't grow as well, and sometimes they die. If they live to be adults, they often have a difficult time developing relationships with other people.

You probably received tender loving care from your parents, and you're all set. But what if you think you didn't? What if your relationships with family members weren't as nurturing as you might have hoped or wanted them to be? Here's good news: You can *learn* to develop good relationships with your family, friends, yourself, and others. Following are some tips and suggestions you can try.¹

12 Ways to Start and Strengthen Relationships

1. **Be a person of good character.** When you're positive, honest, loyal, and respectful, other people are naturally drawn to you. They recognize you as someone who's worth getting to know.
2. **Be kind and caring.**² Notice and reach out to other people, especially when they're hurting. *Example:* Your friend is caught cheating on a test, and he's embarrassed and ashamed. You might write

¹ Sometimes people who haven't been loved and cared for need professional help learning how to love and care for others. If you think you might need professional help, talk to an adult you trust—a teacher, school counselor, religious leader, family member, or friend.

² See "Caring," pages 21–27.

a note telling him something you admire about him. By doing this, you're not condoning the cheating. Instead, you're letting him know that you still see his good qualities.

"The greatest healing therapy is
friendship and love."
Hubert Humphrey

3. Be loving and supportive. When you care for other people, you enjoy watching them succeed. You wish for good things to happen to them, and you support them when they're in need. *Example:* If you have a friend who's in trouble, try talking with her privately. Tell her how much you care about her and how worried you are that she might get hurt. This is the best way for you to influence your friend to think about her actions and make better choices.

True love is unconditional. You love your friend even when she makes poor choices. You love your little brother in spite of the fact that he constantly raids your hidden cache of candy. **IMPORTANT:** Unconditional love doesn't mean that you sacrifice your beliefs or values for another person. You can stay true to yourself *and* be a true friend.

"If we would build on a sure foundation in
friendship, we must love our friends for
their sake rather than for our own."
Charlotte Brontë

4. Be a good listener. Show that you're interested in other people and their lives. Ask questions about their talents, passions, plans, goals, hopes, dreams, fears, and anxieties; find out what makes them happy or sad. *Example:* If your sister suddenly starts spending a lot of time alone in her room, try to find out why. She might not be willing to tell you when you first approach her. But if you're patient, persistent, and kind, you'll eventually gain her confidence and she may tell you what's bothering her.

"You can make more friends in two
months by becoming interested in other
people than you can in two years by trying
to get other people interested in you."
Dale Carnegie

5. Spend time together and share experiences. As much as you might like and appreciate another

person—a parent, sibling, close friend, or acquaintance—your relationship won't grow if you don't do things together and connect in other ways. You might plan special activities to share—or you might spend quiet time together reading, doing homework, studying, or watching the clouds go by.

6. Recognize when you have problems with others. The first step in healing a wound is acknowledging that one exists. But don't just scratch it or put a Band-aid on it and hope it will go away. Try to find the cause of the wound. Was it something you said or did? How can you make up for it? Was it something another person said or did? How can you find out what's bothering him or her, and what, if anything, can you do to make things better? What might you do to improve the relationship?³

7. Be willing to compromise. When you compromise with another person, you *both* get something you want. You might not get *everything* you want, but you reach an agreement that seems fair to everyone involved. *Example:* You're 15, and your dad still wants you to be home each night by 8:30 P.M. You'd like to be able to stay out later. You and your dad sit down together to talk about your curfew. You each express your point of view, and you listen carefully to each other. You agree to a compromise: 8:30 P.M. on school nights (unless there's a school activity), later on Fridays and Saturdays. Neither you nor your dad gets *everything* you want, but you both get *something* you want.

8. Talk about your feelings, especially when problems arise. Be assertive.⁴ Address the problem without blaming the person. *Example:* A friend borrows \$10 from you and doesn't pay it back. You might say "I'm wondering how soon you'll be able to pay back the \$10 I loaned to you. I have to buy some books tomorrow and I really need the cash. Could you have the money for me by tomorrow morning?" Or you might say "You're such a loser! You never pay me what you owe me. Don't ever ask me for a loan again!" Which approach is most likely to get your \$10 back?

³ See "Communication," pages 51–52.

⁴ See "Respect," pages 217–218.

9. Don't play the blame game. If you think your parents, siblings, friends, and others have wronged you in any way, try to forgive them.⁵ Let it go.

There's a story about an old man who gathered kindling for a living and sold it to others. He was an angry guy who held many grudges. Whenever someone did something mean to him, he wrote the person's name on a stick and put the stick in a sack on his back so he wouldn't forget the offense and could eventually get even. At night, he'd pull out all the sticks and plan strategies for revenge. Often just thinking about what he might do to get back at someone made him feel better. One day, as he was climbing a hill to collect dead branches from a tree, he lost his balance from the burden of sticks on his back and fell backwards to the bottom of the hill.

Holding grudges can weigh you down. When you let things go, you're free to move on and improve your relationships.

10. Try not to judge others. Not even when you're absolutely, positively sure that you're right and they're wrong. Nobody's perfect all of the time—even you. It's your job to improve *yourself*, not everyone else you know.

“Every man should have a fair sized
cemetery in which to bury the
faults of his friends.”
Henry Brooks Adams

11. Expand your circle of friends to include people who are different from you. Sometimes these friendships can bring the most rewards. You'll learn to see things from a new perspective. You'll become more tolerant and accepting.⁶ Your world will grow in many positive ways.

12. Be friendly. You might say “But I'm too shy!” Or “Being friendly is too risky. I don't want to get hurt.” Many people are shy or go through periods in their lives when they're shy. Being shy is okay. And most people are afraid of getting hurt—so you're not alone. But if you want to be friendlier, here are some tips you can try:

Friendliness starts with a simple “hello.” Say “hello” (or “hi” or “how's it going?” or whatever feels comfortable to you) to people you see often, even if you don't know them well. Practice by standing in front of the mirror and watching yourself. Practice on your family. Tell your mom or brother that this is your goal. Try doing it once a day, then three times, and so on. The more you do it, the easier it gets, like learning to ride a bike.

Reach out to others. Join groups, organizations, and clubs. Sit with someone you usually don't sit with at lunch. Get a pen pal.⁷ Call someone on the phone.

Include others. Look for people who are left out of activities and groups and invite them to join you. The more people you're nice to, the more friends you'll have. I know a young man who once ran for president of his high school. He didn't hang out with the popular group, but he always talked to everyone and looked for people who were alone so he could include them. Some students laughed when he ran for school president, but they didn't laugh when he won.

Eye contact. If you look at people when you say “hi” or talk with them, they'll pay more attention to you. Practice on your family. Practice in the mirror. Try making eye contact with teachers, then with friends, and so on.

Names. Learn and remember them. To most people, the most beautiful sound in the world is the sound of their own name. When you first meet someone new, repeat his or her name. To help you remember it in the future, make up a mnemonic or “hook.” *Example:* You've just met someone named Justin Harmon. You might think “*Justin is just* and he *harmonizes* well.” It's corny, but it works.

Don't focus only on yourself. Think of the person you're with. If you hang a picture of yourself in your window, you can't see through it to the world (and the people) on the other side. Ask questions and listen to the answers.

Smile. Your smile might warm up a person who doesn't know you exist. If you combine your smile with eye contact, you might start a fire of friendship. If you're not used to smiling very much, you may need practice!

⁵ See “Forgiveness,” pages 94–102.

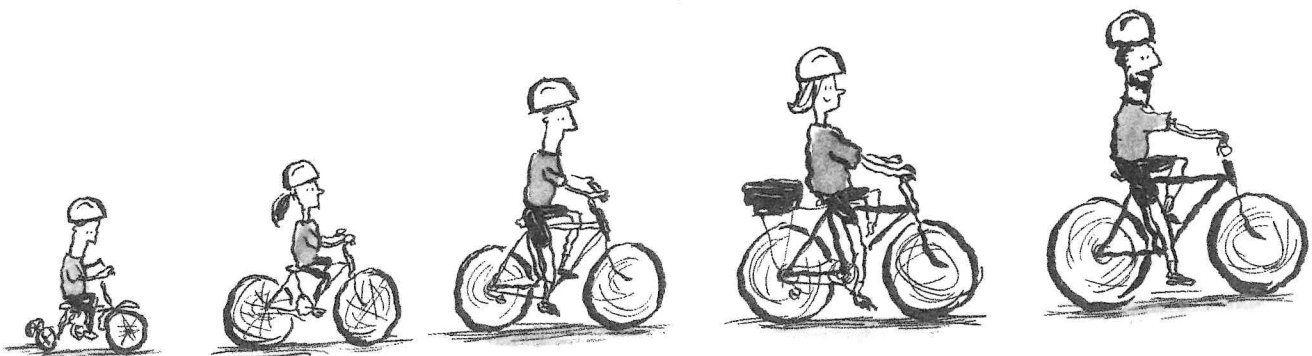
⁶ See “Justice,” pages 144–145.

⁷ See page 179 for pen-pal resources.

Fun Ways to Strengthen Family Relationships

Does your family spend time together doing things everyone enjoys? If so, be thankful—and be willing to participate. If not, do something about it. Organize activities. Contribute ideas and suggestions. Let your parents and siblings know that you love them and want to be with them. Especially if your family hasn't formed the togetherness habit, you may need to be extra patient. Don't expect instant results, and don't assume that everyone will always want to go along with your plans. Even if your family activity turns into just you and your mom, or you and your big brother, or you and your grandpa, it still counts. Once other family members see how much fun you're having, they may decide to join in.

- ♥️ Plan a once-a-week family activity for an evening when most family members are at home. *Examples:* Watch a video together. Take a walk. Have a picnic on the porch.
- ♥️ Make cookies or other treats together, then divide them—half for your family to enjoy, and half to deliver to a neighbor.
- ♥️ Play some of the old games stored in your basement or attic. Pull out Twister, Dominoes, Monopoly, or anything else that looks interesting. You might even play hide-and-seek or tag. The older you are, the sillier and more fun this can be.
- ♥️ Have a pillow fight or a water fight (whatever your family and neighbors will tolerate).
- ♥️ Take a hike, ride bikes, swim, play street hockey with brooms, or play family volleyball or tag football.
- ♥️ Sing or perform together. Learn songs your parents used to sing. Play your violin, flute, drums (make your own), play rhythm sticks, or whatever you like to do.
- ♥️ Teach each other dances. Show your parents the latest steps and moves; have them show you how to do the dances they enjoyed when they were younger (or the dances they like doing today).
- ♥️ Tell stories. Ask your parents about the “good old days” (or the “bad old days”). Share your favorite story or experience. Or make a “chain story” together. The first person writes a sentence on a piece of paper, folds the paper over to hide the sentence, then passes it to the next person, who does the same . . . and so on. Read the story aloud after everyone has contributed.
- ♥️ Make family rules. Decide together on your family “do’s” and “don’ts.” Agree on rewards for following the rules and consequences for breaking them. Write the rules on a chart and hang it in your home.
- ♥️ Read together. Read books of quotations, favorite stories, magazines, and newspapers. You might even read scriptures, like the Bible or Koran, a prayer book, or another book important to your faith.



CHECK IT OUT

Closing the Gap: A Strategy for Bringing Parents and Teens Together by Jay McGraw (New York: Fireside, 2001). Growing up can mean growing apart from your parents, and this can put a strain on your relationship. Learn how to bridge the gap and remain connected with your parents. Ages 12 & up.

Dr. Ruth Talks About Grandparents: Advice for Kids on Making the Most of a Special Relationship by Ruth K. Westheimer (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997). Dr. Ruth lost both her parents and her grandparents when she was just 10 years old. She has spent most of her life forging solid relationships and teaching others to do the same. In this warm, forthright book, she discusses the many ways in which grandparents can enrich children's lives and suggests how kids can help out in return and show appreciation. Ages 9–12.

Fun Ways to Strengthen Friendships

"Friendship is the hardest thing in the world to explain. It's not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything."

Muhammad Ali

- 3 Make popcorn balls (or other treats) and bring them to someone new in your school.
- 3 Read a play together. Assign different parts to different friends (or ask which parts they'd like to read).



- 3 Have a water balloon toss (outside in the playground, please).
- 3 Bring old baby pictures to class and share them.
- 3 Take off your shoes and walk in the mud, go wading, or go puddle stomping.
- 3 Cut each other's hair (but first ask parents if it's okay).
- 3 Paint scenes on your windows with washable, removable paints (again, ask parents first).
- 3 Fly kites.
- 3 Learn to juggle, balance something on your nose, or share a magic trick.
- 3 Have a "read-a-thon" or "music-a-thon." Share your favorite books or music.
- 3 Volunteer together. Find out about opportunities available in your neighborhood or community, then choose one to try.⁸ Or plan and do a service project together.⁹
- 3 Start a club.¹⁰
- 3 Choose any activity from this book and do it together. Help each other to develop positive character traits. Support each other's efforts to become strong, principled people.

CHECK IT OUT

Trust & Betrayal: Real Life Stories of Friends and Enemies by Janet Bode (New York: Laureleaf, 1997). Teens talk about their best friends, worst enemies, and the importance of being accepted by their peers. Real-life stories help young adults learn to deal with the ups and downs of fitting in, getting out, and making the right choices about friendship. Ages 12 & up.

⁸ See "Empathy," pages 81–82, for tips on how to volunteer.

⁹ See "Caring," pages 23–24, for service project tips and resources.

¹⁰ See "Start a new club" on pages 160–161 for how-to tips and a resource.

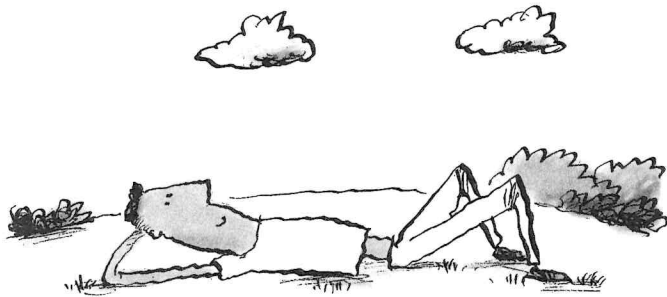
Fun Things to Do When You're Alone

"Friendship with oneself is all-important, because without it one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world."

Eleanor Roosevelt

To *have* a good friend, you must *be* a good friend. And that means with yourself as well as others. Here are some ways to strengthen your relationship with Y-O-U:

- ✦ Find a quiet, private place where you can hang out with yourself and just think—an attic, basement, tree, under the porch, under your bed, or in your closet.



- ✦ Write in your journal about how you feel about things that happen to you each day or each week.¹¹ Or write poems, stories, or letters to yourself.
- ✦ Dress up in a friend's or parent's clothes, or go to a department store or sports shop and try on clothes you don't normally wear.
- ✦ Do something physical. Jog, practice throwing, shoot baskets, kick balls, skate, walk, lift weights, swim, dance, or whatever gets your heart beating and your blood circulating.
- ✦ Draw or paint. Copy characters from comic books or the comics section in your local newspaper. Check out books on drawing from your library and practice. Instead of *writing* in your journal, try *drawing* in your journal.
- ✦ Surprise your parents and wash the dishes, clean out a closet, or bake a treat.

¹¹ See "Endurance," pages 88, 89, and 92, for journaling resources.

- ✦ Practice a skill you'd like to learn, such as singing, dancing, playing a musical instrument, doing card tricks, or blowing bubbles.¹²
- ✦ Make something, such as jewelry, wood carvings, model cars or airplanes, or clothes.
- ✦ Read something. Read anything that interests you—books, comic books, encyclopedias, cookbooks, newspapers, magazines.
- ✦ Make a time capsule. Bury it in your backyard or hide it on a closet shelf. Plan to dig it up or take it out in five or ten years.
- ✦ If you haven't yet completed the inventories on pages 7–11, do them now (or plan to do them soon).
- ✦ Lie in your bed, under the covers, or somewhere you're comfortable and just dream. Listen to soft, soothing music and let your mind wander.

Character Dilemmas

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

Suppose that . . .

- 1 You want to improve your relationship with your parents. Is it more important to be loving or obedient? Give examples to support your answer.
- 2 A politician wants to get reelected. Is it more important for her to be truthful to her constituents or to establish warm relationships with them? Why?
- 3 You can choose to have just one close friend or many friends who aren't as close. Which will you choose and why?
- 4 Two of your friends recently stopped being friends. What do you think causes most friendships to break up?
- 5 A married couple you know is getting divorced. Almost half of all American marriages today end in divorce. Why do you think the divorce rate is so high? How do you think divorce affects children?

¹² See "Problem Solving," page 188, for information about *Tricks of the Trade for Kids*.

What might kids do to help themselves during a divorce? What could couples do to make marriages more successful or divorces more peaceful?

6 A small country and a large, powerful country have an ongoing relationship. For many years, the large country has given the small country millions of dollars in aid including food, technology, and medical supplies. Now the leaders of the small country are asking the large country for help in stopping a revolution within its borders. The leaders want the large country to give them sophisticated weapons to use against the revolutionaries. What do you think the large country should do? Give reasons for your answer.

Activities

WRITE A SURPRISE LETTER to your mother or father, guardian, brother, sister, grandparent, or another relative. In your letter, tell the person how much he or she means to you.

Variation: Write Chain-of-Praise letters in your family, class, or club. You'll need one sheet of paper per person. Write the person's name at the top. Then pass each letter around, inviting everyone to write something they like or appreciate about the person. When you're through, everyone will have a letter of praise and support written by everyone else.

EXPLORE THE INTERNET WITH YOUR FAMILY. If you have Internet access from a home computer, arrange a time to sit down together and visit family-friendly sites. If you don't have access to the Internet at home, visit your local library and ask about free community Internet access.

CHECK IT OUT



Here are two family-friendly sites kids and parents can visit together:

American Museum of Natural History
www.amnh.org/explore/ology

Bill Nye the Science Guy
billnye.com

HAVE A FAMILY DISCUSSION about the "ideal family." Discuss each of the following questions. You might want to set some ground rules first, such as 1) Everyone answers as honestly as they can, and 2) Everyone listens respectfully to each other's answers without interrupting or criticizing. You might want to ask someone to volunteer as secretary/recorder to write down people's answers. Afterward, work together to create a chart or collage showing your family's view of the "ideal family."

- ? In the "ideal family," who's the breadwinner? The father, mother, both parents, or others?
- ? How many children does the "ideal family" have? How many boys? How many girls? Are children near the same age or farther apart?
- ? Where does the "ideal family" live? On a farm? In the city? On the moon? In a house? On a boat? On a mountaintop? In a small town? In an apartment building? In a cabin in the woods?
- ? Where do grandparents in the "ideal family" live? With their children and grandchildren? With other people? On their own?
- ? In the "ideal family," who's in charge of disciplining the children? The father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, or someone else?
- ? In the "ideal family," what is the role of each family member? Think about the father, mother, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.
- ? Is it possible for someone who never marries to have an "ideal family"? Why or why not? Can a person create an "ideal family" from friends and other relatives?
- ? Is divorce a solution to some marriage problems? Why or why not? If it is, when?

PLAN A DANCE OR OTHER SOCIAL EVENT for grandparents and grandkids at your school, club, or faith community. If you don't have a grandparent to bring along, invite another senior citizen you know and trust.

WORK TOGETHER AS A FAMILY to research your roots and create a family tree. Interview living relatives. Look through family records and family Bibles (if available) for information. Use the Internet to find long-lost family members. Make copies of your family tree to share with other relatives.

CHECK IT OUT
**Ancestors Videos**

Produced for public television, this series of ten 30-minute programs goes on location to visit with family historians of various social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. It explains how to search for your family's roots and describes many resources available to genealogists. Check to see if your school or library has a copy. To order, call 1-800-828-4727.

Ancestors: A Beginner's Guide to Family History and Genealogy by Jim Willard, Terry Willard, and Jane Wilson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997). The companion book to the television series provides additional information about family history research not included in the series and an extensive resource directory. Ages 13 & up.

Ancestors

byutv.org

The Web site for the series includes tips and tricks, a Teacher's Guide, and the Ancestors Resource Guide, a state-by-state listing of genealogical resources.

FamilySearch

The Genealogical Society of Utah
familysearch.org

The Mormon Church owns the largest collection of genealogical records in the world. You don't need to be a Mormon or have a Mormon in your family to use it. Contact the Genealogical Society to find out the location of the branch genealogical library nearest you.

READ ABOUT FAMOUS PEOPLE OF THE PAST to learn what kinds of relationships they developed with others. Did they marry, have close friends, have a family, or live alone? Did their relationships affect how successful they were? Why or why not? Was one particular person especially important in their lives?

Variation: Write to famous people of the present and ask which of their relationships has been most important to them and why.¹³

RESEARCH AN EXAMPLE of communal living. Throughout history, many people have chosen to live in groups and share their possessions, property, and responsibilities. Choose one type of communal group and learn as much as you can about it. *Examples:*

- monastic communities (monks or nuns, such as the Benedictines, Franciscans, Carthusians, or Dominicans)
- Puritans
- the United Order
- Amish
- Shakers
- New Harmony
- Brook Farm
- Oneida Community
- Amana Society
- Twin Oaks
- kibbutzim
- the "hippie" communes of the 1960s

As you do your research, try to find answers to these questions:

1. Why did the people choose to live as they did?
2. What were the advantages of the communal relationship? The disadvantages?
3. If the commune is no longer in existence, what brought about its end?
4. How did people in the surrounding communities relate to those who lived in the commune?

VISIT A LOCAL STORE THAT SELLS greeting cards. Make a list of the different types of cards you see that are intended to strengthen relationships. *Examples:* birthday, anniversary, get well, congratulations, bon voyage (for people about to leave on a journey or vacation), Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, sympathy, thank you, graduation, wedding, new baby, friendship, etc. Try to figure an average price for each type of card. Now imagine someone with a large family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, siblings, cousins, etc.) and many friends who always sends cards on special occasions and often sends them "just because." Calculate how much money that person might spend on cards during a typical year. **TIP:** Don't forget to include the price of postage!

¹³ See "Choice and Accountability," page 32, for information about *The Kid's Address Book*.

Variation: If possible, find out who buys cards most often: men or women, younger or older. Show your results on a chart.

DECIDE WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU in a friend. Copy and complete the questionnaire on page 211. Afterward, consider these questions:

- ? Did any of your rankings surprise you?
- ? What do your rankings tell you about your friends? (Do your friends match your rankings? If not, why not?)
- ? What do your rankings tell you about *yourself*?
- ? Do you think that your rankings might change as you grow older? If so, which ones seem most likely to change? Why?

Variation: Have everyone in your class or club complete the questionnaire. Afterward, discuss one or more of the questions listed above, or other questions your group wants to explore. Create a bar graph showing the results of the questionnaire labeled with percentages. *Example:* "55% of the group ranked 'fun' #1."

WITH YOUR CLASS OR CLUB, DEBATE the most important character trait for a friend to have. Give examples of why you think the trait you name is most important. After the debate, vote on which trait is the most important and who was the most persuasive debater.

SURVEY YOUR CLASS OR SCHOOL to find out how long friendships last when friends are the *same* gender, when friends are the *opposite* genders, when friends are the *same* age, and when friends are *different* ages. You can copy and use the survey on page 212 or write your own questions. Distribute the surveys and set up a collection box where people can return their completed surveys anonymously. Afterward, show the results of your survey on a bar graph and see if you can arrive at any conclusions. You might want to compare males to females and/or different age groups or grades. For question #6—"What do you think is the *most* important quality for a friend to have?"—you might want to make a poster listing the qualities and ranking them according to how often they were named on the surveys.

ROLE-PLAY THINGS YOU CAN DO in a new school to develop friendships. Role-play things other people can do to make a new person feel welcome.

SWITCH SEATS IN YOUR CLASSROOM once a week for 10 minutes so everyone can get better acquainted with each other.

ARRANGE A PANEL DISCUSSION with students from another school. Talk about ways to build or improve relationships between your schools. This might be a "rival" school or just another school in your community or city. You might also talk about ways to improve student-student and student-teacher relationships within your own school.

CREATE A PHOTOGRAPHY BULLETIN BOARD about friendship. Find people in your school or community from a wide variety of cultures. Ask each person "How can people from different cultures form good relationships?" Write down the response. With the person's permission, take his or her photograph. Display the pictures and responses on the bulletin board.

LEARN ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS among animals. *Example:* Did you know that blue whales will stay around an injured whale? Even when this puts them in danger of being wounded or caught? How can you explain this?

Variation: Learn about relationships among people and animals.

CHECK IT OUT

The Dog Who Rescues Cats: The True Story of Ginny by Philip Gonzales and Leonore Fleischer (New York: HarperPerennial, 1996). The heartwarming story of an adopted mixed-breed dog whose remarkable sixth sense leads her to rescue and nurture handicapped stray cats. If you enjoy this book, you might also want to read the sequel: *The Blessing of the Animals: True Stories of Ginny, the Dog Who Rescues Cats*. Ages 13 & up.

Koko's Kitten by Francine Patterson (New York: Scholastic, 1995). The true story of Koko, a famous sign-language-speaking gorilla, and her friendship with a kitten. For younger kids ages 6–9, but fun to read.

Real Animal Heroes: True Stories of Courage, Devotion, and Sacrifice, edited by Paul Drew Stevens (New York: Signet, 1997). These 53 true stories of life-saving animal bravery are examples of courage, commitment, and love. Ages 13 & up.

What's Most Important in a Friend?

*Read the following list of qualities you might look for in a friend.
Rank them in order from 1 (most important to you) to 15 (least important to you).*

- ___ Family income level
- ___ High moral values/standards
- ___ Honesty
- ___ Intelligence/education
- ___ Interests/hobbies
- ___ Kindness toward others
- ___ Knows how to have fun/likes to have fun
- ___ Is law-abiding
- ___ Looks/personal appearance/clothes
- ___ Loyalty
- ___ Physical fitness/good health
- ___ Political beliefs
- ___ Popularity/social status
- ___ Race/ethnicity/cultural background
- ___ Religion/religious beliefs

See "Decide what's most important to you" on page 210.

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Friendship Survey

This is an anonymous survey. Don't write your name anywhere on it! Please drop your completed survey in the collection box in _____ location.

1. Think of the *close* friendships you have with people of the *same* gender as you. (If you're a girl, think of your female friends. If you're a boy, think of your male friends.) How many of these friendships have lasted for:
less than a year _____? 1-2 years _____? more than 2 years _____?
2. Think of the *close* friendships you have with people of the *opposite* gender. (If you're a girl, think of your male friends. If you're a boy, think of your female friends.) How many of these friendships have lasted for:
less than a year _____? 1-2 years _____? more than 2 years _____?
3. Think of the *close* friendships you have with people the *same* age as you. (This includes both female and male friends.) How many of these friendships have lasted for:
less than a year _____? 1-2 years _____? more than 2 years _____?
4. Think of the *close* friendships you have with people who are at least 3 years *older* than you. (This includes both female and male friends.) How many of these friendships have lasted for:
less than a year _____? 1-2 years _____? more than 2 years _____?
5. Think of the *close* friendships you have with people who are at least 3 years *younger* than you. (This includes both female and male friends.) How many of these friendships have lasted for:
less than a year _____? 1-2 years _____? more than 2 years _____?
6. What do you think is the *most* important quality for a friend to have?

Please be sure to complete this information:

You are a male female

What grade are you in? _____

How old are you? _____

THANK YOU for taking this survey!

IMAGINE THAT ALIENS HAVE LANDED on Earth and you've been chosen to represent all of humanity in a first encounter with them. What will you say? What will you do? How will you act? How will you try to establish a peaceful and friendly relationship with them?¹⁴

Variation: Research how aliens are usually depicted in science fiction books and movies. Are they friendly? Hostile? Appealing? Horrifying? Helpful? Threatening? Give examples. You might want to make a poster or comic book illustrating what you learn from your research.

ANALYZE U.S. FOREIGN RELATIONS with Japan, Great Britain, Germany, Russia, Canada, Mexico, or any other nation of your choosing. TIPS: Read newspapers and news magazines, search the Internet, or interview a Congressional representative or senator. Find out how the relationship between your country and the other country has changed over the past 5 or 10 years. What do you think would help to strengthen and maintain good relations with that country?

CHECK IT OUT



To learn more about relations between the U.S. and other countries, contact:

Committee on Foreign Relations
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6225
(202) 224-4651

www.foreign.senate.gov

Learn which Republican and Democratic senators are currently serving on this senate standing committee. Contact one or more by mail, phone, or directly through the Web site.

Foreign Affairs

www.foreignaffairs.org

Published since 1922 by the nonprofit, nonpartisan Council on Foreign Relations, *Foreign Affairs* is the most widely read magazine on international affairs and U.S. foreign policy. Check your library for current and back issues; visit the Web site for current and past articles, a large archives, and extensive links to related sites.

U.S. Department of State

www.state.gov

Visit the State Department's Web site for information about foreign affairs.

MAKE A TIMELINE showing how the relations between the U.S. and Russia have changed over the past 100 years. Keep in mind that for many years people used the name "Russia" to refer to the entire U.S.S.R. The Soviet Union was formed in 1917 and ceased to exist in 1991; today Russia is an independent republic and is officially called the Russian Federation.

RESEARCH THE RELATIONSHIPS among North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries over the past 50 years. TIPS: Read newspapers and news magazines, search the Internet, or interview a Congressional representative or senator. Which countries have been dominant? How have the dominant countries influenced the other countries in keeping, restoring, or encouraging peaceful relationships? Report your findings verbally or in writing to your class, club, community group, or family.

CHECK IT OUT



To learn more about the relations between NATO countries, visit:

NATO

www.nato.int

PLAY A "GETTING-TO-KNOW-YOU" GAME. Try this at the start of a school year or anytime you want to learn more about your classmates or friends. Start by randomly pairing off. The pairs have five minutes to discover three things they have in common that they *didn't* know about each other before now. *Examples:* Both wear the same size shoes; both get up early on Saturday mornings to watch the same cartoon show; both have the same birthday month; both like old Beatles records; both like pizza with anchovies.

¹⁴ See "Communication," page 54, to learn how to contact the SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) Institute.

READ STORIES ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS. Look for these books:

- 📖 *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maude Montgomery (New York: Penguin, 1997). This is the classic story of Anne, an orphan, who is taken in by a middle-aged brother and sister. Anne's personality and mischief-making lighten their lives. Ages 11–14.
- 📖 *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.
- 📖 *The Blue Heron* by Avi (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992). While spending the month of August on the Massachusetts shore with her father, stepmother, and their new baby, almost 13-year-old Maggie finds beauty in and draws strength from a great blue heron, even as the family around her unravels. Ages 11 & up.
- 📖 *Homecoming* by Cynthia Voigt (New York: Fawcett Book Co., 1987). Abandoned in a parking lot, Dicey, along with her little sister and two younger brothers, tries to find her aunt Cilla. After they walk the length of the Connecticut coastline, Cilla takes them in, but she considers it a duty, not a pleasure, and Dicey realizes that they can't stay there long. Ages 10–14.
- 📖 *Molly by Any Other Name* by Jean Davies Okimoto (New York: Scholastic Inc., 1993). A teenage Asian girl adopted by non-Asian parents decides to find out who her biological parents are. Ages 13–16.

Character in *ACTION*

Josh Lewis: Helping Friends in Need

Naturally friendly and confident, 17-year-old Josh Lewis always tried to be there when his friends needed him. He'd speak and joke with everyone and treated them all about the same. Friends constantly bummed rides off of him, and sometimes he piled eight people into his '88 Ford Thunderbird just because he didn't like to turn anyone down. He was a friend to anyone.

Josh was a big kid, standing 6'1" tall and weighing 225 pounds. On the football field, he was a friend to the younger guys when the older jocks gave them a hard time. Sensing hurt feelings, Josh would say "Cut it out. It isn't fun anymore." He also offered the freshman players advice, telling them who to block or what pass route to run when they were confused.

Once at a party a big kid began pushing around Josh's best friend, Patrick Avard. The guy was twice Patrick's size and about 50 pounds heavier than Josh. Josh jumped in and protected his friend. "If you've got a problem with Patrick," he warned, "you've got a problem with me, because he's my friend." And he took a few punches for Patrick.

Josh met his good friend Lesley Eddings when the two of them were in seventh grade. Josh had just moved into his grandparents' house. "Lesley was my first girlfriend," Josh remembers. "She was always a cheerleader, and I always played football. In high school I got her together with my friend, Ben. We all hung out together. We rented movies and swam together in Patrick's pool. Wherever the guys went, we dragged Lesley along."

On one fall evening, Josh's friendship for Lesley was tested to the fullest. Josh had picked up Lesley in his Thunderbird, and they were headed for Ben's house when the back right tire either blew out or came off. The car fishtailed, hit an embankment, flipped upside down, and slid backwards into a utility pole. The fuel tank ruptured, and within moments the car burst into flames.

Josh had blacked out when the car first flipped, and he became conscious just as he felt himself crawling out a side window. He searched frantically for Lesley, but she wasn't anywhere on the ground, so he knew she must still be inside the car. When he went to look, the car was filled with

smoke and he could hardly see anything. Then he noticed her legs—not moving—and knew she must be unconscious. Josh tried to pull his friend through the window, but she was wearing her seat belt. He reached through the smoke and found it, pulling hard and panicking when it didn't release. He gritted his teeth and yanked with bull strength. The belt ripped loose and Josh dragged Lesley through the window.

Friends who were driving behind them called 911 and rushed them both to the hospital. Josh escaped with a cut to his head, and Leslie suffered burns on her upper right arm that required skin grafts. Josh remembers standing there at the accident, feeling numb as a zombie, watching his car burning in a big bonfire . . . but it was okay. His friend was safe.

Two months later, Josh was challenged again, and this time he became a friend to a stranger. He and Patrick had returned to Josh's house after a late-night movie, and it was raining hard. Since Josh's high-school football team had just won the state championship, he was tired. Patrick had driven and had come inside to call his folks when the two boys heard a loud *thud* outside the house. Josh thought the wind had blown a tree branch down onto Patrick's car, so he went out to investigate. He saw a light through the rain. A car had hit a ditch, gone airborne up a pine tree, and slid down the trunk into bushes.

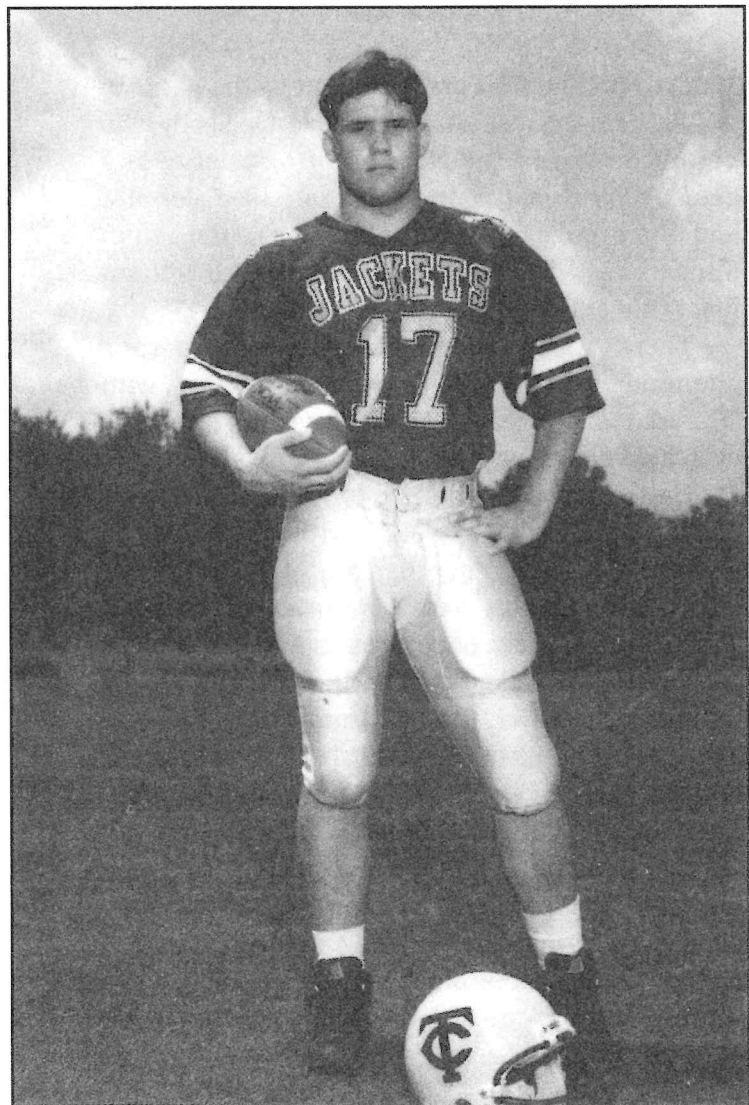
Josh raced into the house shouting for his grandfather, who was the volunteer fire chief. "I've never run faster than that," Josh remembers. "Not even on the football field. I couldn't have taken more than fifteen seconds, but when I got back out, the car was in flames."

Without pausing to consider the danger, Josh jumped into the bushes and found the car door. There was a woman in the driver's seat, sitting in shock. Josh grabbed her and pulled her from the car to safety. She spoke incoherently, shouting that her children were inside the car. Josh charged back into the blazing car in a frenzied search for her kids. There were no kids in sight. Emerging from her

shock, the woman remembered that her children had not been with her after all.

Josh received a lot of attention after that, for saving both his friend Lesley and the stranger. He was awarded the U.S. Department of Justice's Young American Medal for Bravery and the Carnegie Medal, among others. But Josh insists that "it was no big deal." He was just doing what he'd do for any friend. The usual stuff—like sharing with them, sticking up for them, protecting them, and risking his life for them.

"Honestly and truly," Josh says, summing up his feelings about friendship, "if you have a handful of good friends you know you can trust and will always be there, you've been very well blessed."



Josh Lewis

Responsibility

**Dependability, reliability, perseverance, being organized,
being punctual, honoring commitments, planning**

"You can't escape the responsibility
of tomorrow by evading it today."

Abraham Lincoln

When you're crouched at home plate with the bat cocked over your shoulder and the ball is whirling toward you, you can't suddenly step aside and ask someone else to hit it for you. It's too late, and if you refuse to swing at the ball, you'll be out and your team will suffer the loss. It's okay if you swing and miss the ball, because doing your best doesn't guarantee success. Making mistakes is an important part of learning and growing.

When you joined the baseball team, you accepted the **responsibility** of being a team member. You agreed to wear the uniform, go to practices, listen to your coaches, be on time for games, be a good sport, and do what you can to help your team win. Depending on your role on the team, you might have other responsibilities as well. If you're the captain, for example, you're not only responsible for your own behavior but also for the behavior and performance of the team as a whole.

Responsibility implies **dependability** and **reliability**. Your coaches and team members know they can count on you.¹ You might have bad days, you might make mistakes, but you won't purposefully or carelessly let the others down. You'll show up for practices even when you don't feel like it, or when you'd rather be doing something else. If you strike

out or foul, you won't blame the pitcher, your bat, your coaches, other players, or bad luck. You'll resolve to do better next time, and meanwhile you'll practice to improve your skills. You'll have the **perseverance** to swing at the ball 10 times or 100 times or 1,000—whatever it takes to improve your chances of getting base hits or even home runs. (There's an old saying about perseverance that you might already know: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.")

As a human being, you have many types of responsibilities. They include:

- ✧ **Moral responsibility** to other people, animals, and the earth. This means caring, defending, helping, building, protecting, preserving, and sustaining. You're accountable for treating other people justly and fairly, for honoring other living things, and for being environmentally aware.
- ✧ **Legal responsibility** to the laws and ordinances of your community, state, and country. If there's a law you believe is outdated, unjust, discriminatory, or unfair, you can work to change, improve, or eliminate it. You can't simply decide to disobey it.²
- ✧ **Family responsibility**. This means treating your parents, siblings, and other relatives with love and respect, following your parents' rules, and doing chores and duties at home.

¹ See also "Honesty," pages 115–125; "Integrity," pages 135–141; and "Loyalty," pages 164–171, for related character traits.

² See "Loyalty," pages 164–171, for more about obedience.

- ✦ **Community responsibility.** Unless you're a hermit who lives in a cave, you're part of a community. As such, you're responsible for treating others as you want to be treated, for participating in community activities and decisions, and for being an active, contributing citizen.³ If your neighborhood park is full of trash, don't wait for someone else to pick it up. You can read local and community newspapers to stay informed. When you're old enough, vote in elections. If you're feeling *really* responsible, you might even decide to run for office.
- ✦ **Responsibility to customs, traditions, beliefs, and rules.** These might come from your family, your community, your heritage, or your faith. Learn what they are and do your best to respect and follow them.
- ✦ **Personal responsibility.** It's up to you to become a person of good character. Your parents, teachers, religious leaders, scout leaders, and other caring adults will guide you, but only you can determine the kind of person you are and ultimately become.

"Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands."

Anne Frank

"But wait!" you might say. "This is a free country! Nobody can force me to accept all those responsibilities." In fact, freedom is meaningless without responsibility—and vice versa. Life is a balance between the two. Freedom without responsibility means that everyone does what they want, when they want, with no regard for anyone or anything but themselves. Responsibility without freedom means that everyone is forced to do the same things with no regard for individual wants and needs. You might think of freedom and responsibility as a matched pair of shoes. If you try to hop only on freedom's shoe, you'll be reckless and out of control. If you try to hop only on responsibility's shoe, you'll feel like a drone. You

need both shoes to move through life with confidence, grace, and strength.

How can you become more responsible? You can start by **getting organized**. Buy or make a daily planner and learn to use it.⁴ There are many student planners available, and they often come with instructions. Once you form the habit of using a daily planner effectively—jotting down important notes, marking due dates, keeping to-do lists, writing down goals⁵—you'll find that you no longer "forget" about upcoming tests or long-term assignments. When you note important appointments in your planner, you're less likely to miss them (or to show up late). Other people will appreciate you for **being punctual** and **honoring your commitments**. They will respect you more and your self-esteem will grow. It's a win-win situation all around.



And speaking of commitments: You can make a *personal commitment* to start being more responsible *today*. Tell yourself that this is the kind of person you want to be. Then be it.

"The ultimate responsibility always lies within you, and opportunities are the ones you create."

Melissa Poe

³ See "Citizenship," pages 35–43.

⁴ See page 231 for a related activity.

⁵ See "Purpose," pages 195–197, for goal-setting steps.

CHECK IT OUT

Visit your local office supplies store to find a daily planner. Or order a special student planner from:

Day-Timer

1-800-457-5702

www.daytimer.com

The Day-Timer student planners are binders with multiple features including monthly calendars, class schedule sheets, monthly planning sheets, project planning forms, inspiring monthly success messages, grade tracking sheets, and study tips.

Franklin Covey

1-888-868-1776

www.franklincovey.com

Franklin Covey offers all types of planners, calendars, and bags to help students organize, prioritize, keep track of assignments and goals, and take responsibility for their classwork and schedules.

How to Plan

Whether you use a daily planner or not, you need to know *how to plan*. Planning is different from problem solving,⁶ although you might use problem solving if you encounter obstacles while trying to make and carry out a plan. You can use planning in every area of your life, from deciding what to eat for breakfast to arranging a party for your friends, from tackling a chore around the house to approaching a science project. Simply put, planning means figuring out ahead of time how to do something so you can proceed efficiently. Planning is purposeful and deliberate.

Sometimes planning can be done in your head. ("Will I wear the blue sweater tomorrow or the red sweater? The blue one has spaghetti on it, so I'll wear the red one.") Sometimes you need to think through a plan and all of the steps involved. You might even want to write them down. The more detailed your plan is, the more likely it is to succeed.

Here's how to go about making a plan:

1. Write a list of all the things you need to do this week. Then prioritize your list. Put a "1" by the most

important task or job, a "2" by the next important one, and so on down your list.

2. Write down when each task or job needs to be done. These "deadlines" might be imposed by other people (your mom wants you to clean your room by Sunday), or they might be self-imposed (you want to clean your room by Friday so you won't have to do it on the weekend).

3. Write down what you'll need to accomplish each task or job. Any special materials, equipment, or resources? Tools? Books? Other people to help you? This way, you won't start something (like a homework assignment) and suddenly discover that you're missing an essential component (like your book, which you left at school).

4. Always have a backup plan—a "plan B." Try to predict any problems that might arise and prevent you from carrying out your plan. Ask yourself some "What if. . .?" questions: "What if it rains on the day I want to mow the lawn?" "What if I don't have time to finish a homework assignment on the night before it's due?" Then come up with answers.

You might want to write your plan on a chart. Then you can see at a glance how the parts fit together and whether there are any problems or conflicts. You can also use your chart to make notes and changes as the week progresses. You'll find an example of a planning chart at the top of page 228.

The more carefully you plan, the more organized you are. The more organized you are, the more responsible you become. The more responsible you become, the more your parents (and other people) trust you. Planning definitely has its rewards.

⁶ See "Problem Solving," pages 184–193.

JOB OR TASK (list, then prioritize)	WHAT I NEED TO DO IT	DONE BY WHEN?	BACKUP PLAN
4. Mow lawn	Gas (ask Dad to buy some), trash bags	Saturday noon	If it rains on Saturday, do Sunday afternoon
2. Read story for English class	English book (bring home Tuesday)	Wednesday morning by 10:30 class	Read in study hall before class on Wednesday
1. Buy school supplies	Ask Mom to drive me to the store. Buy 1) notebook 2) paper 3) pencils	Monday night	Ask Dad or Megan to drive me, or walk there on my way home from school
3. Clean my room	Pick up clothes, wash clothes, vacuum, dust, change sheets	Thursday night	If someone else is using the washing machine, wash clothes on Friday night

Character Dilemmas

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

Suppose that . . .

- 1 You're a recent immigrant to the United States (or the country you now live in). Are you responsible for obeying the laws if you don't know what they are? If you unknowingly break a law, should you be held accountable?
- 2 You have a real talent for gymnastics, but your parents can't afford to pay for lessons. Are they responsible for finding ways to support and encourage your talent? If they aren't responsible, who is?
- 3 You're a parent whose child was caught painting graffiti on a school building. Are you responsible for the damage your child has done? If not, why not?
- 4 Someone who lives in your neighborhood accidentally broke a water pipe while planting a tree on the boulevard. The boulevard is public property. Who should pay for repairing the damage? The person who broke the pipe? The city? The neighborhood organization? Would it make a difference if you knew that the person was a single parent with several children and a very limited income?

- 5 Your school has a "closed campus" rule, meaning that students aren't allowed to leave the school grounds during school hours. A group of your friends regularly eats lunch at a nearby fast-food restaurant. Do you have any responsibility in this situation? If so, what is it? If not, why not?
- 6 You read in the newspaper that many preschoolers in your town haven't been immunized against childhood diseases. Their families don't believe in immunizing children. Should the children be immunized anyway? If so, who's responsible for seeing that it's done? Your town, state, or federal government? The police? Health officials? School officials? Other parents? You? No one? Would it make a difference if you knew that the families were objecting to the immunizations for religious reasons?
- 7 You overhear your aunt and uncle telling your parents that they have no savings. They assume that after they retire, they'll be able to live on their Social Security. Meanwhile, they're spending the money they earn on travel, fancy cars, and other luxuries. You've been hearing on the news that the Social Security reserves might not be sufficient when "baby boomers" like your aunt and uncle reach retirement

age. Who should be responsible for taking care of seniors who don't have enough money to live on? The government? The children of the "baby boomers"? All of society? Religious organizations? No one?

Activities

TELL ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU unknowingly broke a rule in your classroom or family, or a law in your community, and got caught. What happened to you? How did you feel?

Variation: Write in your journal⁷ about a time when you knowingly broke a rule and didn't get caught. What, if anything, happened? How did you feel? Would you do it again? Why or why not?

THINK OF A NEW TALENT OR SKILL you'd like to develop. Then:

1. Brainstorm all of the things you could do to develop that talent. *Examples:* Take classes at school or a community center; read books; watch videos.
2. Make a list of all the people you might ask for help. Write down their names and telephone numbers. Go down your list and contact people until you find someone who's willing to help you and has the time. (Check with your parents or guardians before contacting other adults.)
3. Create a schedule outlining the things you'll learn and do. Give yourself a deadline for each one.
4. Practice at least one-half hour each day, or an hour or two several times each week.
5. Perform your talent or share it with your family, class, or club.

WRITE A POEM, JINGLE, PARAGRAPH, or saying about responsibility. If you do this as a class (or even as a school), you might start each day by reading one over the PA system. Or create a Responsibility Bulletin Board to display students' thoughts and writings about responsibility.

RESEARCH DISCOVERIES AND INVENTIONS that have had both positive and negative consequences. *Examples:* In 1884, an anesthetic was developed that included cocaine as one of its ingredients. Cocaine has since

been found to be highly addictive. In 1939, the pesticide DDT was developed to control insects that spread malaria. For years, it was used widely on farms and in homes; later it was discovered to be very harmful to the environment. If you make a discovery or create an invention, do you have a responsibility to share it with the world? Afterward, are you responsible for how your discovery or invention is used? Debate these questions with your friends, class, family, or club.

CONSIDER WHETHER MATH makes you more responsible. Does studying math have any effect on your organization or perseverance? Can the benefits of learning logic skills and analytical thinking spill over into other areas of your life? Draw a chart, graph, or mind map showing all of the connections you can think of between math and. . . ?

RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITY IN ADVERTISING. Suppose that an advertiser of a popular breakfast cereal claims that "Crunchie Critters" gives you more pep and energy than other breakfast foods. What if it isn't true? Are advertisers responsible for telling the truth? Watch a week's worth of television commercials and keep a record of any that seem to be exaggerations, unproved claims, or outright lies. Keep track of the TV stations that air the commercials. Afterward, write to your local stations and complain about any commercials that appear to be irresponsible.⁸

Variations: Listen to radio commercials or clip advertisements out of magazines or newspapers. Or study advertisements you see on the World Wide Web.

RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITY toward indigenous peoples. Choose a country that was taken from an indigenous population by invaders, settlers, or foreign governments. *Examples:* Australia (its indigenous people are the Aborigines); the United States (the Native Americans); various countries in Africa. Did the "outsiders" behave responsibly or irresponsibly toward the indigenous peoples? Give examples to support your answer. Do you think that when one nation conquers another (as in a war), the conquering nation has a responsibility to treat the conquered peoples justly and fairly? Or is this a matter of "might makes right"? Give reasons

⁷ See "Endurance," pages 88, 89, and 92, for journaling resources.

⁸ See "Honesty," page 120, for resources on advertising.

for your answer. TIPS: If you decide to study the Native Americans, find out about the following:

- ◆ the false stereotypes of Native Americans that were spread by European settlers
- ◆ the Treaty of Greenville
- ◆ the Dawes Act (or General Allotment Act) of 1887
- ◆ the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (and the forced marches that resulted from it)
- ◆ the concepts of “reservations” and “assimilation”
- ◆ Wounded Knee
- ◆ the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934
- ◆ the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act of 1971

ORGANIZE A GRAFFITI REMOVAL PROGRAM. Look around your neighborhood for graffiti. If you find some, contact your local police or city officials and ask whether there are any graffiti removal programs in place. If there aren't, start one. Ask for donations of paint and brushes, and invite the police to chaperon. Organize your friends, classmates, and families to wipe out graffiti.

SURVEY YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD and find out if there are any seniors who need help with such things as repairing fences, shopping for groceries, painting, doing minor repairs, lawn care, pet care, etc. Take responsibility and either do it yourself or get others to help you. Be sure to take an adult chaperon along (a parent or guardian) both when you survey your neighborhood and when you do your good deeds.

WRITE A SKIT THAT DEMONSTRATES your school's rules. Present it to the first all-school assembly in the fall. Don't forget to include humor in your skit; people remember things better when they can laugh. But don't make your skit *too* funny or people might miss the message.

FIND A JOB OR START YOUR OWN BUSINESS.⁹ *Example:* Are you good at doing yard work? Collect names of neighborhood kids who do yard work. Make a one-page flyer describing the kinds of work you and the

other kids can do. Decide how much you'll charge to do certain kinds of jobs, and include that information on your flyer. Distribute copies of your flyer around the neighborhood.

CHECK IT OUT

Better than a Lemonade Stand: Small Business Ideas for Kids by Daryl Bernstein (Hillsboro, OR: Beyond Words Publishing, 2012). Describes dozens of money-making ventures including curb address painter, birthday party planner, dog walker, house checker, newsletter publisher, photographer, and sign maker. Daryl was 15 years old when he wrote and published this book. Ages 8–15.

Kid Cash: Creative Money-Making Ideas by Joe Lamancusa (New York: Tab Books, 1993). Dozens of concrete, creative suggestions for earning money, samples of advertising flyers, and tips on what to charge for your services, how to keep records, and how to handle your profits. Written by a 14-year-old with firsthand experience running his own business. Ages 9–13.

MAKE A FAMILY JOBS CHART. Your chart should have two columns: “Things to Do” and “Things Done.” With your family, brainstorm a list of jobs that need to be done around the home every day or every week. Decide who's responsible for each job. Write each job on a strip of construction paper (you might choose a different color for each family member). Use removable tape to attach each job strip to the “Things to Do” column. Each person is responsible for moving his or her own job strips from the “Things to Do” column into the “Things Done” column. Try this chart for a week or two, then have a family meeting to discuss it. Does it seem to be working? Is everyone being responsible? Dependable? Reliable? Persevering? Organized? Make any necessary changes to the chart so it works well for everyone.

CREATE A RESPONSIBILITY TREE. Draw a large tree on poster paper. Find or make symbols that represent your responsibilities and hang them on your tree. *Examples:* a doll's shirt = taking care of your clothing; a small book = learning; a stop sign = obeying laws; a school house = taking care of your brother after school. If you have a small potted tree, you might hang your symbols from it like ornaments.

⁹ See “Courage,” pages 74–75, for information and resources on being an entrepreneur and starting your own business.

Variation: If everyone in your class makes Responsibility Trees, you can put them together in a Responsibility Forest.

MAKE YOUR OWN DAILY PLANNER. Buy a small binder and plenty of paper, or create your own binder using stiff cardboard, a hole punch, and yarn. Include:

- ✓ an identification page with your name and phone number
- ✓ 12 calendar pages, each one showing a full month (you might decorate each calendar page with symbols representing the month)
- ✓ a page for each day of the current month (so you can write down notes, ideas, assignment, appointments, etc.)
- ✓ a list of your classes, room numbers, class times, and teachers' names
- ✓ pages for friends' addresses and phone numbers
- ✓ pages describing upcoming projects or things you want to think about and plan
- ✓ a budget page (list things you want to save money for and how you plan to earn the money)
- ✓ a pocket (fold a piece of card stock or stiff paper and tape the sides) to hold notes, a pencil, and important reminders.

FIND EXAMPLES OF POPULAR MUSIC that promote responsibility, dependability, and perseverance. Bring them to school and share them with your class. (Clear them with your teacher first.) Do you think that music has the power to inspire people to be more responsible? Less responsible? Explain your answer.


EXAMINE THE ROLE OF RESPONSIBILITY in sports. Compare team sports to individual sports. Which sports seem to demand the most responsibility from the players? Which seem to promote responsibility? Which, if any, seem to promote irresponsible behavior?


Variations: Interview coaches and athletes in your school and community. Ask them to tell you their ideas about responsibility in sports. Or write to famous athletes.¹⁰

PLAY A "WHAT'S THEIR RESPONSIBILITY?" GAME. Make a list of roles or careers in society. You can use the example below, add to it, or write your own list. Divide into two or more teams. Give each team the list of roles or careers. The object of the game is to list four different or unusual responsibilities for each role or career. Give a prize for 1) the most answers and 2) the most unusual answers.

artist	mother
bank teller	musician
business executive	news reporter
cafeteria worker	nurse
child	nutritionist
city planner	pilot
club member	plumber
coach	police officer
computer programmer	principal
court justice	psychologist
directory assistance	recreation/resort manager
telephone operator	religious leader
doctor	sales person
electrician	scientist
engineer	student
father	teacher
friend	trash collector
governor	veterinarian
grandparent	weather forecaster
guardian	writer
landscape architect	youth group member
legislator	zoo owner
letter carrier	
mayor	

READ STORIES ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY, dependability, reliability, perseverance, being organized, being punctual, and honoring commitments. Look for these books:

 *Dacey's Song* by Cynthia Voigt (New York: Atheneum, 1982). Dacey struggles with school, a job, and responsibility for her brothers and sisters as she adjusts to living with her grandmother. Ages 11–12.

 *Little House in the Big Woods* by Laura Ingalls Wilder (New York: HarperCollins, 1990). Young Laura Ingalls describes a year in the life of her pioneer family in the Midwest. Ages 8–12.

¹⁰ Get in touch with famous athletes with help from *The Kid's Address Book*. See "Choice and Accountability," page 32.

📖 *Malu's Wolf* by Ruth Craig (New York: Orchard Books, 1995). After Malu is permitted to raise a wolf pup, significant changes happen in the lives and traditions of the young girl's Stone Age clan. Ages 9–13.

📖 *Summer of the Swans* by Betsy Byars (New York: Puffin Books, 1981). A teenage girl gains new insight into herself and her family when

her mentally retarded brother gets lost. Ages 10–14.

📖 *When the Road Ends* by Jean Thesman (New York: Avon Books, 1993). Sent to spend the summer in the country, three foster children and an older woman recovering from a serious accident are abandoned by a slovenly caretaker and must try to survive on their own. Ages 10–14.

Character in *ACTION*

Ellen Bigger: Taking Responsibility

When Ellen Bigger was in the fifth grade, her former Brownie leader was murdered by her husband, who was on drugs at the time. Ellen had spent many days at her leader's house and was a friend of her daughter. When she heard the news, she was deeply shocked. For a long time, she cried often and had trouble sleeping at night.

In sixth grade, Ellen heard a speech that changed the direction of her life. At the commissioning of the Coast Guard Cutter *Key Largo*, the speaker told the audience of the Coast Guard's efforts to keep drugs from coming into the United States. But the *real* challenge, the speaker emphasized, was for people *at home* to make the effort.

Ellen felt as if a fire had been lit under her. She felt responsible for helping to spread the anti-drugs message and was determined to find a way to do it. Her mom had just bought a computer, so Ellen planted herself in front of the screen that very weekend and designed a brochure. "Drugs can kill and destroy your life, tear apart your family, and break your heart," she wrote. "No matter what age you are, you can help fight the drug problem by pledging a drug-free life." She put a pledge form on the back and promised to send a decal if all the members of a family would take the pledge for a Drug-Free Home.

Ellen had \$500 in savings that she had earned, and she spent all of it on the first printing of her brochure and postage to mail it out. Her family helped her to fold the brochures. The Girl Scout Council in Miami and the United Way printed additional copies and the

decal. Ellen handed out brochures at shopping malls, festivals, churches, schools, and grocery stores. She received many responses in the mail from all over the country. Over the next few years, she would distribute more than 50,000 copies of



Ellen Bigger (left) working with kids

her brochure, finally hearing from places as far away as Brazil and Egypt.

One boy in a detention home wrote her a letter and asked her how he could get off drugs. Ellen worried and stewed over what to say. She finally wrote a message advising him to trust himself and pledge to stay off drugs one day at a time. She watched the mail, but he didn't write back.

She designed a T-shirt and buttons that said "I live in a Drug-Free Home, and I'm proud of it," decorated with a picture of a house tied with a red ribbon. When she was interviewed on television, her program spread across the U.S. She was invited to speak at conferences and workshops in Texas, Ohio, and Georgia.

Meanwhile, her parents still expected her to fulfill her family responsibilities. Ellen did chores, cooked some of the meals, and took care of the family dogs. She also volunteered at the local Red Cross, planted trees, and got involved in other volunteer projects with the Scouts. Her bedroom was a disaster area, piled high with papers, brochures, socks, and T-shirts tossed in corners and under her bed. (Nobody's perfect.)

During the summer after eighth grade, when Ellen was fourteen, she decided to organize another program. She had received many letters from kids who didn't know how to start their own projects. Ellen called her program "Youthwish." Through Youthwish, Ellen encouraged kids to volunteer, gave instructions for how to set up a volunteer fair, and explained how kids could share ideas for networking

with adults. She began a biweekly newsletter and asked a teacher to be her sponsor. The teacher helped Ellen to make Youthwish a nonprofit corporation so it wouldn't be taxed. Shortly after, Ellen won the Noxzema Extraordinary Teen Award for volunteering. She received \$5,000 for her favorite charity. With that money, she set up \$500 grants through Youthwish for kids who wanted to start their own programs.

The real prize came later, though. One day, Ellen was speaking and volunteering at a public event. A young man walked up to her and introduced himself. It was the boy who had written to her long ago from the detention home. He told Ellen that although he'd written to many people when he was imprisoned and alone, asking for help, she was the only one who had responded with a personal letter of encouragement. It had meant a lot to him. He was no longer using drugs, and he thanked her.



Ellen (center) and her friend Naomi delivering emergency supplies to Hurricane Andrew victims