



Practical Life Skills:

A workshop for care
leavers and those who
have recently left care
aged 10 to 13 years

**PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK
COMPANION**

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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The resources consulted include:

- Original iteration: Care Leaver Personal Development, Career Employability, and Learning Skills Manual, Kenya Society of Care Leavers (KESCA) with Sandra Githaiga
- United States Peace Corps. (2001). Life Skills and Leadership Manual. Accessed at: <https://files.peacecorps.gov/library/M0098.pdf>
- Brakarsh, J. (2017). Singing to the Lions: A facilitator's guide to overcoming fear and violence in our lives. Accessed at: <https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/singing-lions>
- REPSSI. (2017). The Journey of Life Trainer's Manual Global Edition: Facilitator's Guide. Accessed at: https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/jol_global-main_cig_web_0.pdf

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INTRODUCTION

Young people who grow up in care¹ face challenges that are frequently different from those faced by other young people. They often leave care without any definite or tangible support from the government, little to no guidance from the child care institution (CCI) they are leaving, and sometimes limited connections to family or community. Additionally, young people who have spent time in institutional care can have social and behavioral challenges.²

A 2011 Kenyan study of 122 care leavers found that the majority were “stuck in transition,”³ feeling excluded from society, and poorly equipped for life outside of care. Many had limited coping strategies and lacked the safety nets or supportive community networks that young people have growing up in families. They described experiencing stigma and discrimination. Global research describes risks to care leavers including early marriage, lower educational attainment levels, lower levels of educational attainment, unemployment, mental health problems, drug use and abuse, and conflict with the law.⁴

This participants handbook has come into being by care leavers for care leavers. It has been developed based on the myriad of challenges shared and experienced by care leavers, hoping with the hope that it will support others leaving care. This handbook contains materials you can use during and after following the training sessions. It contains:

- The main learning points of each session
- Activities to do during or after the session
- Extra reading material by module
- Additional blank pages for note-taking

Who are the workshops for?

Activities and materials are targeted to young people between **10 to 13 years of age who are in the process of transitioning out of care and those who have already left care.**

Who is the participant handbook designed to be used by?

- All participants and care leavers attending the life skills sessions.

Your facilitator will help you understand each session, review content from the previous session, and look over your homework. The assignments are designed to help you start practicing the skills gained during the sessions. Please carry this participant handbook every time you attend a life skills session. Your facilitator will help you check your take home assignment during each session. The assignments are designed to help you start practicing the skills that you are learning during the sessions. Please carry this participant handbook every time you attend a life skills session.

Why run workshops with young people?

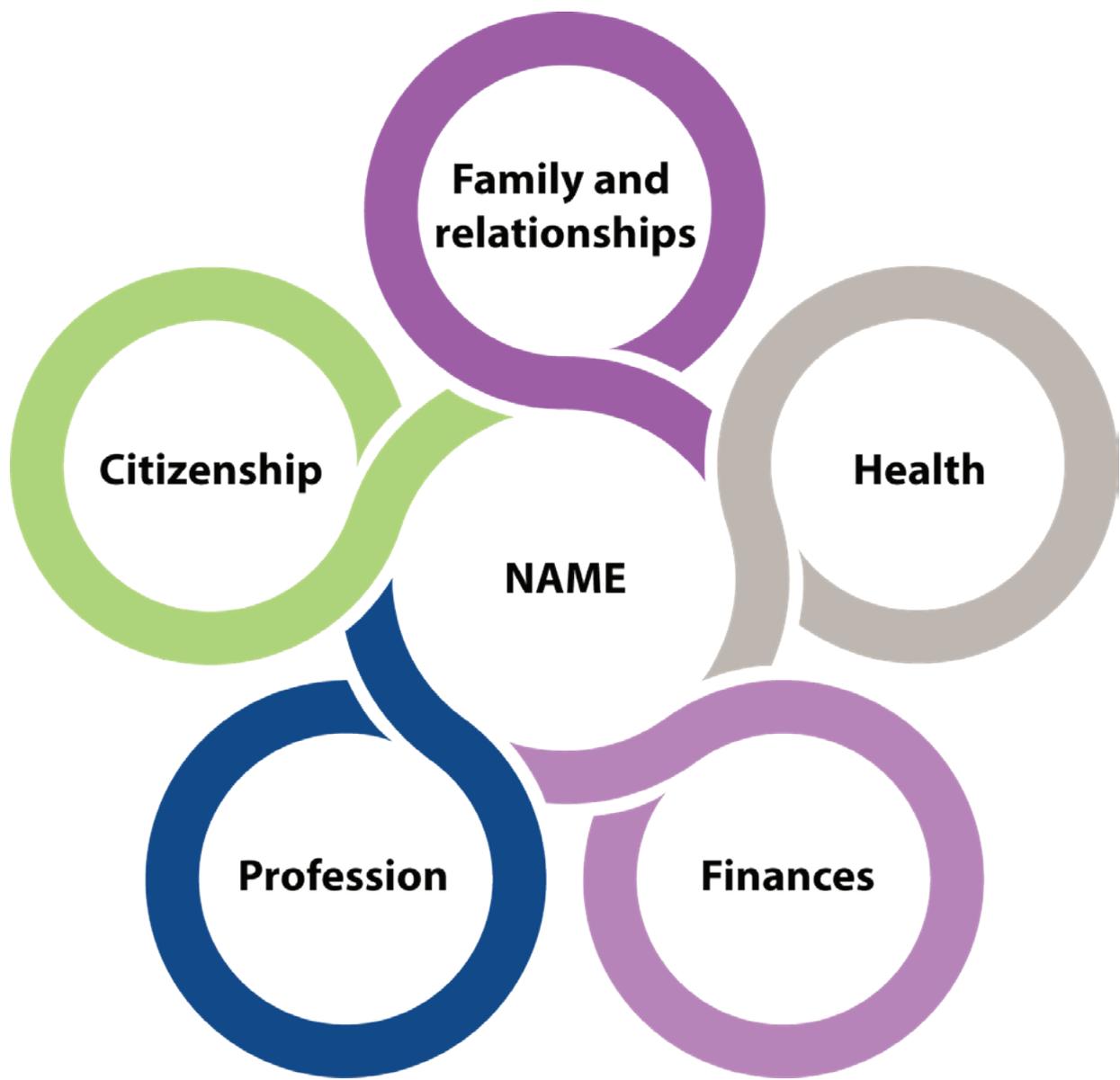
A behavior change approach is at the core of these life skills sessions with young people, aiming to help young people to develop lifelong reasoning, thinking, analyzing, personal care, and interpersonal skills. This includes self-awareness, problem-solving, learning to negotiate, decision-making, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, conflict resolution, empathy, coping with emotions, stress management, money management, raising a family, and running a home. The approach aims to empower and guide care leavers to be competent and confident. The methodologies are interactive, innovative, and fun. Case studies, stories, group discussions, role-plays, and games are all used and can be adapted for each circumstance.

1 The term “care” as used here refers to alternative care of all types as described in the glossary located in Annex 1.

2 Browne, K. (2009). *The risk of harm to young children in institutional care*. London: Save the Children.

3 KESCA, Koinoinia (2011). Kenya Careleavers Conference Report “How I left care”

4 Ibid.

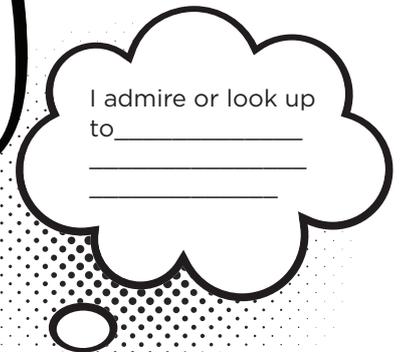
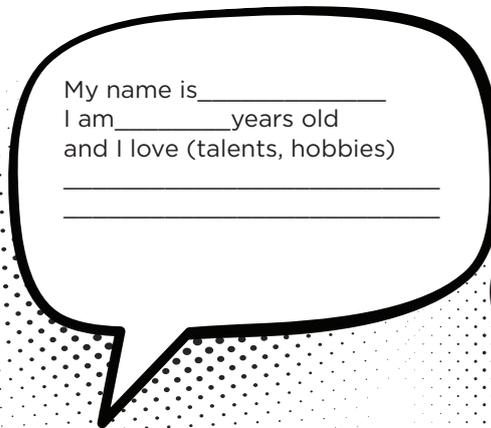
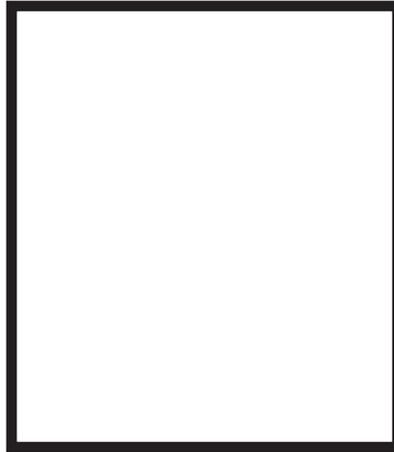


MY PLANS AND GOALS

LEAVING CARE

Leaving care can be exciting or even scary. Leaving behind your friends creates excitement for new beginnings and can also bring in feelings of sadness and fear of the unknown. This life skill session journey will hopefully make this transition easier.

Photo or drawing
that describes me



TOPIC 1: BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

TOPIC 2: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Communication is the act of passing information from one person to another through mutually understood signs and includes a sender, message, and receiver.
- To be an effective communicator, the message must be complete, clear, concise, and accurate. The communicator must be courteous, use the right channels, and provide feedback.
- Be cautious of cultural barriers or a different interpretation of some nonverbal cues. For example, in some cultures, eye contact is important, while in others, it is considered rude to maintain eye contact.
- Other barriers are technological barriers and physical barriers, e.g., deafness, jargon, or perception/attitude barriers.
- Listen attentively, keep it short, ask questions, notice body language, and summarize.
- Stand up for your own or other people's rights in a calm, honest, and positive way without being aggressive or passive. Be assertive.
- Conflict is a normal part of friendship. The idea is not to avoid conflict but to learn how to resolve it healthily. When conflict is mismanaged, it can cause significant harm to a relationship. However, when handled in a respectful, positive way, conflict provides an opportunity to strengthen the bond between two people.
- Trust, teamwork, communication, and effective listening are great tools for effective teamwork.
- Being part of a team offers an opportunity to exchange ideas and develop creative ways of handling an issue. Team members can take advantage of each other's strengths to achieve something. Learn to be a team player.
- Solid communication can help us be more explicit in what we need, want, and do not want. It can help us have stronger friendships, be clearer with family, teachers, mentors, and community leaders, and set a good example of clear communication to others. Good communication takes practice.



BRAIN BOOSTER: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

You identified three people to join you during a youth camp. Whom did you choose and why?

TOPIC 3: KEEPING MYSELF SAFE

SESSION 1: KEEPING MYSELF SAFE AND WHAT TO DO WHEN I FEEL UNSAFE

- Adults and other young people can harm young people like us. Harm can look like many things; bullying, hitting, physically hurting, shouting, saying hurtful things, touching inappropriately, withholding food and water even though family members have it, making us work in unsafe places/jobs, cutting our genitals, or making us get married before we are adults.
- People can also harm us online, including people who pretend to be our friends to collect photos and videos or meet us in person. Also, our friends and others can bully us online.
- When online, be kind and respect others. Think before you post.
- In some instances, people who inflict harm are the people closest to you (perpetrators). They can be family members, tutors, etc.
- Report any behavior that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe. For example, if someone is overly attentive, gives you money or gifts, threatens you, or touches you inappropriately.
- Report any form of abuse immediately. In case of abuse, preserve any form of abuse (texts, clothing, etc.).
- Do not meet strangers. If you must meet a stranger, do so with a friend and in a public place, and let a trusted adult or friend know that you are meeting them.
- Do not divulge personal information such as phone number, place of residence, school, or work details, etc.
- Do not believe everything you read on the internet; not everything on there is truthful or reliable.
- Do not accept gifts if they make you feel uncomfortable. The reason it does not feel right is because it may be in exchange for something you are not comfortable with doing.
- Avoid websites you are not sure about, particularly adult-only and websites promoting anorexia, self-harm, etc.).
- Do not chat with people you do not know online; if you do, do not share any personal information and do not meet them offline. Cover your webcam if you have one, unless you are chatting with someone you know and trust.
- Change your passwords regularly and do not write them down.
- Limit the time you spend on social media. Excess amount of time spent on social media has been linked to causing obesity, social isolation, sleep deprivation, emotional health problems like depression, etc.
- Violence and abuse is never acceptable, whoever the perpetrator may be, even if it is a family member, and for whatever reason they offer. You deserve to feel valued, respected, and safe. Speak up and report any form of abuse.

INTERNET SAFETY

The Internet is a huge source of information and means of communication. However, not all of the information or people online are trustworthy.

Safe

S

Ensure personal information and passwords are kept private.

Do not put any of your contact details online and always check your privacy settings on social networking websites.

Never use your real name for your username, and ensure passwords are difficult to guess.



Meet

M

Never meet with an online friend in person, even if you think you know that person well.

Meeting someone from a chat room or social networking website could be dangerous. Online friends are still strangers and may not be who they say they are.



Accept

A

Do not accept emails, instant messages and friend requests from people you do not know.

Messages may contain viruses or unpleasant information and images. Also, remember that 'friends' on social and gaming networks can see and share what you post. Do you want strangers to see everything that you post?



Reliable

R

Not all of the information or people online are reliable. There is a lot of false information.

Always check that the information is correct and use reputable sources. Also, some people post false information or use false identities online to cause harm and trick people.

Try to limit your friends to 'real' friends.



Tell

T

Tell a trusted adult if anything online makes you feel uncomfortable.

Many chat rooms and social networking websites have support email addresses or alert buttons that enable users to report inappropriate behaviour, including bullying.

You can log off if you are uncomfortable or suspicious of anything.

REPORT ABUSE



Be careful what you share online!

Anything you post online or send in an email, such as a photo or message, can be copied or shared by anyone who can see it.



SOURCE: Daydreameducation.co.uk

BRAIN BOOSTER: KEEPING MYSELF SAFE AND WHAT TO DO WHEN I FEEL UNSAFE

Read the directions for each section and then write your answers:

1. Three top tips for staying safe online:

2. Three top tips for staying safe in the real world:

TOPIC 3: KEEPING MYSELF SAFE

SESSION 2: HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

- Our relationships with our friends and families are essential because they can affect our physical and mental health, help us work through problems, and feel better about ourselves and our decisions.⁵
- However, not all relationships are healthy. Sometimes we spend time with people who may not want what is best for us. It is vital that we learn to recognize a healthy relationship from a harmful one.
- Healthy Relationships are where both people are listened to, able to be themselves, valued for who they are, and not judged.
- Peer pressure is the attitude that we must mirror other people of our age and social group to be liked or respected. Peers are people in our age group.
- Often, peers influence the way you act or think because you spend significant time with them.
- Learn how to deal with peer pressure; be confident and communicate your viewpoint boldly. Avoid hostile friends and choose a friend you share values with and who you can be accountable to and have each other's back. Avoid situations or places that put negative pressure on you. Use clear, confident communication and share your viewpoint boldly. When necessary, say no like you mean it.
- Do not change yourself to be more liked or popular. Do not do things to please your friends to fit in. True friends respect your choices. Know your values and worth and stick to them.



⁵ Adapted from: <https://schools.au.reachout.com/articles/relationships>

TOPIC 4: MY HEALTH

SESSION 1: MY BODY

- Everyone goes through puberty—it is a normal part of life. For some, puberty may begin early (age eight) or later (age 16). Being understanding and supportive of each other is important.
- If you or someone else is being bullied by, or feels unable to participate in things due to puberty, speak to an adult you trust for advice and guidance. Be wary of researching your questions on the internet and only access information from reliable sources.
- During puberty, your body will grow faster than at any other time in your life. Each person is a little different, so everyone starts and goes through puberty on their own schedule.
- Teenage brains change rapidly during puberty. The part of the brain developing during this time is called the prefrontal cortex which helps with decision-making and reasoning. During adolescence, you are still using the amygdala to make many decisions—which controls emotions, impulses, aggression, and instinctive behavior. This makes dealing with our feelings and emotions challenging.
- Sometimes feelings can feel strong. Learning to accept our feelings and sitting with them until they pass can make it less overwhelming. You can manage feelings by writing them down, drawing, physical activity, crying, or talking to someone, etc.
- While our bodies and brains start preparing for adulthood, physical and emotional changes during puberty can be tough.
- Remember you are not alone; develop your knowledge about the changes your body and brain are going through, develop positive coping tactics when your feelings are overwhelming, talk to friends, and find adults you trust to confide in. They will support you.
- Be aware of the information and support you can access on the internet—it is not always reliable or trustworthy. Avoid websites that promote negative coping mechanisms such as self-harm, anorexia, and bulimia.

BRAIN BOOSTER: MY HEALTH—MY BODY

Your friend of the opposite sex is going through puberty.

What advice and support could you give them ?

TOPIC 4: MY HEALTH

SESSION 2: HIV

- HIV is a virus spread through certain body fluids that attacks the body's immune system, specifically the CD4 cells, often called T cells. Over time, HIV can destroy many of these cells making the body unable to fight off infections and disease. These special cells help the immune system fight off infections. Untreated, HIV reduces the number of CD4 cells (T cells) in the body. This damage to the immune system makes it harder for the body to fight off infections and other diseases. Opportunistic infections or cancers take advantage of a fragile immune system and lead to AIDS.
- Knowing our HIV status helps us to:
 - *Be less worried if we are HIV negative.*
 - *Learn how we can reduce the risks of contracting HIV if we are negative.*
- Have timely linkage to life-saving treatment and support if we are HIV positive.
- Be able to look after our health and get information and counseling about how to live well with the virus.
- It is important to take an HIV test if you have possibly been at risk of contracting HIV and to repeat the test three months later. There is a window of time after HIV transmission before the body develops antibodies. It is not mandatory to be tested for HIV.
- A pregnant woman living with HIV can pass the virus to her baby during pregnancy, child-birth, and through breastfeeding. All pregnant women with HIV are placed on HIV treatment as soon as possible.
- The virus hides itself in blood, vaginal fluids (the moistness in your vagina), semen, and breast milk.
- Health care providers usually diagnose HIV through blood tests. Someone who has HIV is said to be HIV positive. Tests also are available without a prescription at the drugstore. With your parents or guardian's permission you can do the test at home.
- By taking medicines and receiving regular medical care, HIV positive people can live long and healthy lives. A medicine called antiretroviral therapy (ART) helps them live long lives.
- We cannot see HIV and we cannot see who has HIV. Preventing HIV transmission is just as important for people already living with HIV, to protect other people and to protect themselves. For more advice or support on both preventing and living with HIV, it is important to go to someone who can give you accurate information and support.



BRAIN BOOSTER: MY HEALTH—HIV

Interview three friends about their views on HIV.

Think about why they might have those views?

What is one thing you can tell them that might increase their knowledge about HIV?

TOPIC 4: MY HEALTH

SESSION 3: MENTAL HEALTH

- Approximately one person in three has a mental health issue at some point in their lives. There are many mental health issues; the more common are depression, anxiety, and trauma.
- When we feel down or depressed, we may not be able to attend to our own needs and responsibilities. If we break an arm, we get help, and it is vital to do the same if we feel mentally unwell.
- While focusing on our strengths and skills does not prevent mental health issues, it can help us find tools that support us to start addressing mental health issues and keeping ourselves mentally as healthy as possible.
- Anyone with persistent mental health issues or suicidal ideations must seek help as soon as possible. This help can come from mental health workers, a doctor, or counselor.
- We all have helpful and unhelpful ways of coping with negative feelings, even if we are not aware of them. For example, listening to our favorite music if we are feeling down is a helpful coping mechanism. Unhelpful coping methods can be addictive both physically and emotionally; it can be challenging to replace them with helpful ones.
- With time, helpful coping mechanisms can also be addictive (in a good way!). Most people use unhelpful coping methods at times, even if we know they are not good for us. Do not criticize yourself and try to use helpful coping methods next time. Remember—speak to someone if you need some support.
- Letting go of stresses and worries can often help us see them as less important and gain new perspectives. Often, talking to someone we trust about what is worrying us, or writing it down (and keeping it somewhere safe), can be an important first step.
- Just like keeping physically well, staying as mentally fit as possible takes effort. Eating healthily, getting enough sleep, doing regular exercise, allowing for relaxation and fun, understanding and managing our stress, speaking to friends we trust, and getting help when we need it are all essential.
- Sometimes we do not feel or are not able to take positive steps to improve our mental wellbeing. If you feel overwhelmed or unable to cope, it is important to speak to someone you trust or a mental health professional and get the support you need.



BRAIN BOOSTER: MENTAL HEALTH

Sometimes we can get stuck in a negative circle of thoughts and actions.

Addressing them can help us cope better with the present and look forward to the future

Negative thought:	Where did my thoughts come from?	How it makes me feel and by which percentage:	An alternative positive thought:	How much I believe my new thought:	How my new thought makes me feel and how much:
Example: I am a failure	My friend told me So	Sad Angry	I have not attended school consistently due to lack of fees	60%	Hopeful 40%

TOPIC 4: MY HEALTH

SESSION 4: RESILIENCE

- Resilience is the ability to bounce back from something difficult or challenging in our lives. It is the ability to handle a stressful moment and recover from it. However, resilience does not come without challenges. Resilience is learning to deal with those moments by keeping a healthy mind.
- Resilient young people keep an open mind and think in ways that make them feel as though they are in control when stormy situations in life hit. Sometimes a problem can become smaller and more manageable depending on how we view it. It can be seen as something unmanageable, or something we can cope with and work through.
- Seeing your strengths is an important part of building a toolbox to help them be more resilient.
- Resilience means being flexible, pliable like a rubber band when we face challenges and difficulties in life.
- We talk to ourselves to help figure things out. For example, when we are working through a challenge. We call this 'self-talk' or 'helper words and phrases.' You can learn positive ways to think and act by learning helper words. Helper words remind you of things you can do when you are confused or upset. Use them to remember that you oversee your feelings and behavior.
- When dark storms arrive, do not panic. You have handled these feelings before and this time you are older and more experienced. Be proud of yourself when you use your helper words and phrases and remember everything takes practice. How do you build your resilience?
 - Talking to my friends and another adult whom I trust.
 - Writing or drawing how I feel.
 - Having fun—playing sports, listening to music, spending some time being quiet, etc.
 - Achieving small things and praising myself for those achievements.
 - Not getting upset or angry at myself if I do not do something the way I think I should.
 - Taking action to address problems and difficulties.
 - Experiencing difficulties often teaches us important things such as relationship skills, increased self-esteem, and gratitude for daily blessings.
 - Knowing I can solve problems because I have done it before. I might just need some support, guidance, and a bit more time.



BRAIN BOOSTER: RESILIENCE

Practice three resilience-building skills you learned in this session.

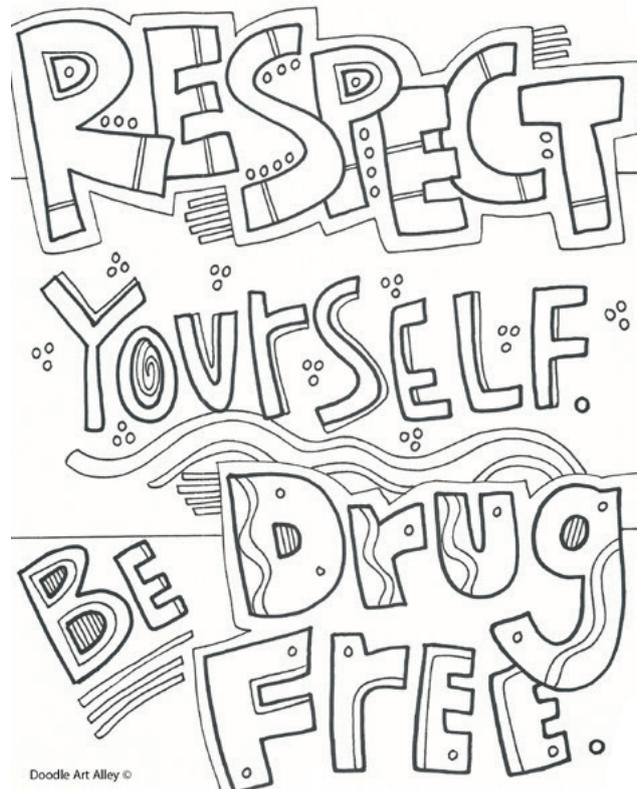
BUILDING RESILIENCE



TOPIC 5: MAKING SAFER AND HEALTHIER CHOICES

- Unsafe and unhealthy choices can put us at risk. For example, poor health, injury, or death.⁶ Children and young people tend to engage in risky behavior because the rational part of the brain is not fully developed, they may not think of long-term consequences, and may believe 'it cannot happen to me'. Examples of unhealthy choices are smoking, doing drugs, gambling, being in a gang, sharing personal information (including online) with someone you do not know, etc.
- Gambling can appear fun, but it can quickly become addictive, escalate, and lead people to bet what they do not own. The 'buzz' of endorphins we get when we win makes it more addictive because we develop a craving for that feeling. Even if it is just for fun, it is financially and mentally healthier to stay away from betting.
- Substance abuse is the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol, and illicit drugs including a strong desire to take the drug, difficulties in controlling its use, persisting in its use despite harmful consequences.
- Alcohol and drug abuse leads to many bad consequences, key amongst them, poor judgement, strained relationships, risky sexual behavior, poor school or work performance, increased risk of developing health problems like liver problems, cancer, etc.
- You can combat peer pressure by:
 - Staying away from places and people where drugs or alcohol are used.
 - Keeping busy with activities like running, bike riding, and dancing. It is possible to give a natural 'high' from endorphins that make our bodies and brains feel good.
 - Talking to a mentor or guardian if we are under pressure from friends to do things we know are not wise to engage in.
 - Reaching out for help if we have trouble with smoking, alcohol, or drugs, and encouraging our friends to do the same.

We all have a responsibility to understand and assess the risks related to the choices we make. We have the option to make safer and healthier choices, such as exercising, hanging out with friends who do not pressure us to do things, and building our confidence in saying 'no.'



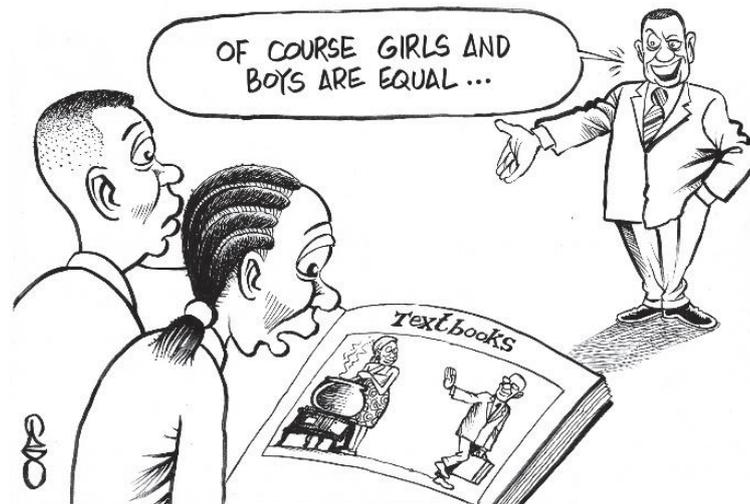
6 <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-youth-at-risk-behavior-2610455>

BRAIN BOOSTER: MAKING SAFER AND HEALTHIER CHOICES

You have been invited by the chief in your area to speak to the local under 15s football team for five minutes on the importance of making safer and healthier choices. What will you say?

TOPIC 6: GENDER ROLES

- Every society has expectations for how boys and girls should behave, communicate, act, and the roles and responsibilities they must adopt based on gender norms..
- Gender equality helps prevent violence against women and girls, boys and men, and makes our communities safer and healthier. Gender equality is a human right.
- Gender:⁷ What a society or culture expects from you based on gender (roles, behaviors, etc.). Gender is how society wants you to behave, think, or act because you are either a boy or girl.
- Gender Role: Expectations for the way men and women should act and their roles are in society.
- Gender Stereotype: An oversimplified or biased description of the abilities of men and women.
- When society tells a young man to “act like a man,” it usually means avoiding emotion, appearing strong, and being a successful provider. When society tells a young girl to “act like a woman,” it usually implies being submissive, not complaining, and acting sexy but never too smart. Gender stereotypes can negatively impact our lives and communities.
- Whether we are male or female should not stop us from being who we want to be and doing what we want to do (unless it harms ourselves or others). It is important to understand how our perspectives of gender shape what we think we and others can and should do in society.
- As we become more aware of how gender stereotypes negatively impact our lives and communities, think constructively about challenging them and promoting more positive gender roles and relations in our lives and communities. We are then free to imagine our ideas about gender and how to live our lives. Our culture and socialization influence our gender; this can be challenged and changed.
- Recognizing gender stereotypes is a key first step in identifying how they impact our thinking and actions and challenging those unhelpful stereotypes.



⁷ Life Skills and Health Curriculum for the Adolescent Girls Empowerment Program (AGEP) 2013. Population Council

BRAIN BOOSTER: GENDER ROLES

Identify successful male and female figures in your community who have challenged gender roles. What did they do?

What challenges did they face? What was the end result?

TOPIC 7: STARTING TO THINK ABOUT MY CAREER PATH

- Even though finishing school and beginning work may seem a long way off, thinking about your career now is important because it can influence what you choose to study.
- Staying and progressing in school can help young people achieve their life goals.
- School teaches us many core skills, including specific academic subjects. However, some skills we need to continue building outside of school, such as listening, good communication, building relationships, etc.
- Sometimes education can be important in helping us achieve our chosen careers. However, you can often take alternative paths to achieve your career of choice. For example, work experience, apprenticeships, and volunteering can further develop your skills and experience.
- Some people do not discover the career they aspire to until much later in life, so if you are not sure just yet, that is fine.
- Both having and not having a preferred career can feel like immense pressure. It is important to recognize this truth and try to take the pressure off of yourself while enabling your ideas and choices to shape your decisions, such as what additional subjects to study, skills you wish to learn, and experiences you want to have.
- Identifying your interests and strengths will help you narrow your career path selection criteria and education pathways.
- It might seem early to start thinking about your career, but planning can help us choose a pathway that supports our career, such as what subjects we choose to study, and which volunteering and work experiences we opt to partake. We can also change our minds, especially if we think the career we thought we desired is not as motivating as we imagined after researching or working in that area for a few years.
- Talking through career options with a mentor, teacher, or friend can be useful.



BRAIN BOOSTER: STARTING TO THINK ABOUT MY CAREER PATH

Write about why you have chosen your specific career and what you hope to achieve.

If you do not know yet, write about something you might be interested in doing for your career.

TOPIC 8: MONEYMATTERS

- It is important to build our understanding of the cost of items to begin learning how much money is necessary and how to budget.
- Learn how you can save money by purchasing discounted items. However, it is not always more beneficial to buy the cheapest option; sometimes, it is better to get a higher quality product that lasts longer.
- Understand which items are essential and which items are simply nice to own. If something requires saving, create a plan to save that money.
- Keep a record of the money you have and the money you have spent.
- Regularly check that you are not spending more money than you have.
- Track your spending daily to give you an idea of how much you spend monthly.
- Select your priorities. A necessity is something you require to survive—for example, food, shelter, clothing, etc. A desire is something lovely but is not essential to your survival—for example, a new phone, clothing for a specific occasion, etc.
- Money is essential—it enables us to pay for life needs, such as food, shelter, electricity, and clothing. It also enables us to pay for things we want in life, such as new clothing and a beach trip.
- Nevertheless, money cannot buy everything—it cannot buy healthy friendships, kindness, integrity, thoughtfulness, etc.
- Keep money in perspective and handle money by understanding what you have and how you spend it. Start budgeting and saving now, and it will become another great skill.



BRAIN BOOSTER: MONEY MATTERS

Your friend tells you they want to spend the money that is reserved for school books on a mobile phone.

What do you say to your friend and why?

TOPIC 9: CITIZENSHIP

- Values define us and those values determine our behaviors. Having a national ID/passport is important, but our values are more important.
- The six pillars of character are: being trustworthy, respecting others, taking responsibility for self and the environment, acting in fairness, and being a kind and compassionate citizen.
- Values can be difficult to uphold sometimes. The people we admire are often those who uphold their values at all times, including during challenging situations. When we uphold our values, we are also a shining example to others.
- Sometimes standing for these values may make you unpopular with your friends, but it is important to have values and stand by them. It is also acceptable that others may have different values to ours, as long as those values are not harmful to themselves or others.
- Kenya's Bill of Rights outlines that everyone's rights should be upheld and outlines the state's responsibilities to uphold them. The Bill of Rights demonstrates Kenya's commitment to upholding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Regarding young people, the bill states that young people must have access to relevant education and training; opportunities to associate; be represented; and participate in political, social, economic, and other spheres of life; have access to employment; and are protected from harmful cultural practices and exploitation.
- People with disabilities have the right to be treated with dignity, respect, a right to education, and a right to reasonable access to all places, etc.
- Identity is different for everyone. We all have similarities and differences that make us unique. As Kenyans we say, "I am—Kikuyu, Luo, Maasai, Kalenjin, Mijikenda, Kisii, Luhya, Sabaot, etc.," meaning I share a certain history with all who call themselves Kikuyu, Sabaot, Mmeru etc., I am also Kenyan, meaning I share a geographic and historical space with all other Kenyans. I am African. I am black. I am a citizen of the world.



BRAIN BOOSTER: CITIZENSHIP

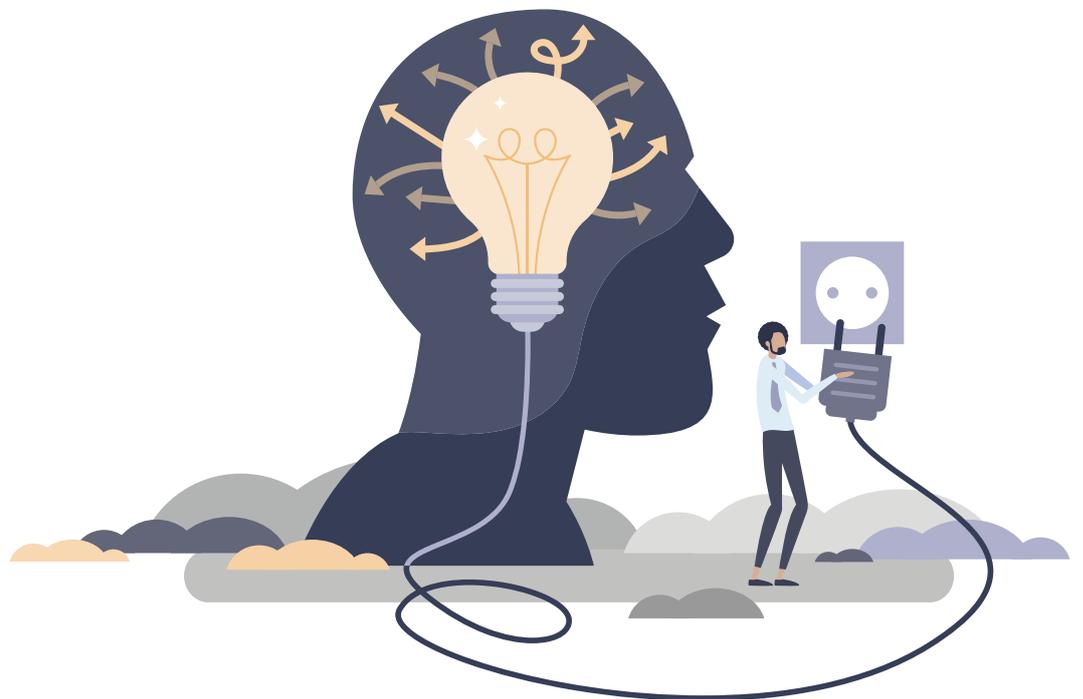
What does being Kenyan mean to you and why?

TOPIC 10: MANAGING CHANGES IN OUR LIVES

- Changes in our lives can be big or small; moving from our CCI to another place of care or returning home to be with our family is a huge change.
- Leaving care is an individual occurrence, and no two people have the same experience. There may be many changes, such as changing schools, finding new friends, and reuniting with old friends and family.
- Emotionally these changes can impact us—they can bring additional stress, anxiety, excitement, frustration, or happiness. Being aware of these possible emotions offers us an opportune time to use some of our skills, such as self-care, resilience, and our knowledge about how to access the support we need. All of these tools help make changes easier to navigate the transition and even enjoy it.
- You may also choose to access counseling to support you with the process, as may other family members. If at any point you feel unsafe, trust your instinct and get advice and support before taking further steps in the reintegration process.
- Some families may choose not to rebuild a relationship with the young person who left the family home. This can be painful. However, with the support from friends, mentors, and counseling, you can manage this transition and emerge stronger.
- During the transition from care, let the planners know if you are interested in meeting family/kin. They will then be able to draft a plan for how you will be involved in the process. If you have already left care, speak to your contact person at the CCI.
- Find people that enjoy doing what you enjoy doing—whether that is reading, playing a sport, singing, or cooking. Volunteering is a good way to meet people and develop experience at the same time. We also live in a time when no one is far away, thanks to technology. You can easily call a friend or video chat a family member.
- Mentors are trusted adults in the community who commit to supporting someone. They may be professionals in a field of work you're interested in getting into, have particular life skills you want to develop, or have life coaching experience.
- Check the qualities of the person(s) you may select to be your mentor. Are they patient? Would they share in your dreams? Are they easily accessible? Are they honest with their feedback?
- Once you find a mentor, establish an active role. Plan the meetings and prepare topics you wish to talk with them about.
- Always act with integrity in the mentoring relationship: it is a professional relationship with clear boundaries. Never ask for or take money, accept items, or engage in socializing, including drinking alcohol or doing drugs with a mentor. Report any behaviors that you do not feel comfortable with to a trusted adult.
- Managing change is a crucial skill to learn—it means using many of the tools we have learned in this program, including resilience, mental wellbeing, and clear communication about what we want and need. Leaving care is a big step. However, so is coming into care, going to secondary school, and taking exams.
- Changes are a part of life, and they help us grow. Keep using your tools and get advice and support when you are unsure how to manage a situation, feel overwhelmed, or get a bit stuck. Change can provide incredible learning experiences and can even be fun and exciting.

BRAIN BOOSTER: LEAVING CARE TRANSITION

Think about whom you might want as a mentor. Please make a list of their relevant skills and experiences. How might you approach them? If they say no, who else might you approach?



Our goals, dreams, and aspirations help us aim for things we never thought possible. They keep us accountable, give us ambition, and the drive to achieve what is important in life. Dream big, set goals, and act!

BACKGROUND READING FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Types of communication

- Verbal communication: is sharing information using speech. It can either be written or spoken. Verbal communication depends on the speaker's tone, clarity of speech, volume, speed, body language, and the quality of words used in the conversation. Verbal communication success depends not only on an individual's ability to speak but also on their listening skills.
- Non-verbal communication: is the process of sending and receiving messages without using spoken word. Examples include gestures, facial expressions, shaking hands, body language, eye contact, hugging, etc. Non-verbal communication is useful to reinforce what was said by adding facial expressions and eye contact.
- Intrapersonal communication: is a communicator's internal use of language or thought. It involves thinking, analyzing, interpreting, assessing, contemplating, feeling, etc. It is an action in your mind; wherein a person has a conversation with themselves, commonly known as 'self-talk' or 'inner speech.'
- Interpersonal communication: communication between two or more people verbally or non-verbally. This calls for an individual also to have skills like persuasion, negotiation, listening, assertiveness, etc.

Improve your Communication skills:⁸

Make eye contact. Establish eye contact with the person with whom you are speaking. Looking directly at the other person during the conversation shows interest and gives respect. Looking away is a sign of disinterest and is not proper.

Speak clearly and correctly. Use proper pronunciation, without rushing, and use correct grammar. Take turns speaking and do not interrupt.

Pay attention and respond appropriately. Give undivided attention to the people with whom you are communicating. Do not engage in distracting behavior such as chewing gum, playing with your pen, texting, etc.

Enter conversations politely. There is a correct way to join a conversation that uses proper manners. Learn how to approach a person or group respectfully, smile at those in conversation, listen to what people are saying, and wait until there is a pause before speaking. If joining an active conversation, smile and nod to recognize the person joining. When the speaker is finished, the group can greet the newcomer and make introductions.

End conversations pleasantly. Walking away from a conversation with decent manners is a crucial skill to possess. Leave a conversation saying some pleasantries such as, "I promised to be home in an hour so I need to go now, but it was really nice talking to you."

Learn how to control your volume and keep private matters private. Resist asking personal questions to people you are meeting for the first time.

Understand nonverbal communication and cues. Rude facial expressions such as eye-rolling, grimaces, yawning at a speaker, hair twisting, turning one's back to the speaker, fingernail picking, and checking one's watch are all bad manners. Nonverbal actions and behaviors can make people feel dejected. Learning to read other people's nonverbal cues is an important lesson too.

Learn how to provide appropriate and timely feedback. Remember communication is a two-way street.

Jot notes from important discussions and use them as references or reminders of action points.

As much as possible, try to remember to address people by their names. Calling someone by their preferred name shows that you value the relationship. When you make an effort to remember someone's name, they are more likely to engage in the conversation. A great way to remember a person's name is to repeat it aloud after they have stated it.

Beware of barriers that may hinder proper communication, e.g., loud noise, age perceptions, complex language, etc.

8 <https://whatsfordinner.net/articles/article-Six-Communication-Skills-Every-Child-Should-Know.html>

Key components of good communication

- Completeness of the Message Communication must be clear both verbally and in the message to guarantee understanding comes clearly.
- Clarity The message to be conveyed or sent must have clarity and integrity for better understanding. Clarity of thoughts and ideas enhances the meaning of the message.
- Conciseness Message A short and intelligible message sent to the receiver is preferred. It saves time and cost, as it is understood in the first instance.
- Considering the physical setting and the recipient to make communication more effective. The overall physical setting, i.e., the form of communication and the work environment, must be considered. The content of the message must recognize the attitude, knowledge, and position of the recipient.
- Courtesy The sender's message should be polite, reflective, and enthusiastic. It must show the sender's respect for the receiver and be positive and focused. Give positive nonverbal cues like nodding and eye contact.
- Correct messaging A draft of a message should be written so that the final message does not contain any grammatical errors nor repetitive sentences. The message should be exact, accurate, and well-timed.
- Appropriate for the audience, for example, if you communicate with younger children or someone with limited knowledge of the utilized language, you may use more straightforward language.
- Listening technique Ensure that you listen well, actively, and respectfully while paying attention to your body language and speaker.
- Feedback is a crucial part of communication and is required by all concerned in a communication process. It marks the end of communication.

Please note cultural barriers or different interpretation of some nonverbal cues. For example, in some cultures, eye contact is important, while in others it is considered rude to maintain eye contact.

Barriers to Effective Communication:

Barriers are things that can stall or distort communication. When communicating, it is important to pay attention to barriers in order to overcome them. The main barriers include:

- Judgmental attitudes are seen when someone exhibits excessive analysis, making value-based comments, name-calling, being bossy, ridiculing, making judgments, or ignoring.
- Physical barriers. For example, noise, a physical disability (deaf/blind), time, distance, climate, technical problems, etc.
- The use of jargon, complicated words, unfamiliar words, or technical phrases.
- Cultural barriers; issues around gestures or personal space vary from community to community, e.g., in some communities, young people or women are prohibited from speaking to men.
- Perception barriers—various people perceive issues differently. Messages must be simple and straightforward. There should not be any room for diversified interpretation.
- Technological barrier; technological advancement may be a barrier to communication. For example, how many people can participate in a Skype call in your village?

Listen attentively, keep it short, ask questions, notice body language, and summarize.

Assertiveness

Assertive: Being able to stand up for your own or other people's rights in a calm, honest and positive way, without being either aggressive, or passively accepting 'wrong' but in an appropriate way. It is often seen as the balance between aggressive and passive behaviour

Passive: Compliance with the wishes of others and can undermine individual rights and self-confidence. Many people adopt a passive response because they have a strong need to be liked by others.

Aggressive: Behaviour that fails to consider the views or feelings of other individuals. Those behaving aggressively will rarely show praise or appreciation of others and an aggressive response tends to put others down. Aggressive responses encourage the other person to respond in a non-assertive way, either aggressively or passively.

You may find that you respond differently – whether passively, assertively or aggressively – when you are communicating in different situations.

To be assertive you must:

- Know what you want.
- Be sure it is fair and factual.
- Ask for it clearly and use “I” statements. Say, “I would like to attend evening classes,” instead of, “You are always giving me work in the evenings.”
- Stay calm.
- Accept praise and criticism.

Being assertive in communication⁹

- Face the other person, keep your shoulders back and chin up, and make eye contact. Have a serious facial expression, but do not frown or appear hostile.
- Do not fidget.
- Try to avoid using filler words such as, “Um,” “You know,” “Uh,” and “like,” when speaking.
- Keep your voice calm and soft. You do not need to be loud, but you do need to make yourself heard. If the person you are talking to does not appear to be listening, try a firm “excuse me” to get their attention.
- Speak slowly. Rushing when you talk is an admission that you do not expect people to take the time to listen.
- Be clear and specific in your explanations and direct in your requests. Your statements should be short and to the point. They should provide facts and specifics rather than vague hints. For example, directly saying, “Will you please ...?” is much more effective than “Maybe you could...”
- Disagree respectfully. For example, if you do not agree with what is being said, you can say “But may I say this?”
- Learn to say no when necessary. Know your limits.
- Tips
- State the problem, “Teacher, you have given two different instructions.”
- Make a request, “Can you allow me to finish one assignment before starting the other?”
- Getting clarification, “Can you explain what you want completed again?” and “ If I heard you correctly...”

How to manage conflict

- Learn how to manage strong emotions like yelling, getting frustrated, or temptations to hit or throw items. Do not name-call. Yelling makes situations worse.
- Talk and listen actively. Give everyone a fair chance to express their opinions calmly and respectfully. Pay attention to your nonverbal communication and that of the other person.
- Know when to walk away. Walking away is not a sign of weakness. If all else fails, walk away from the situation and revisit the issue later when you have cooled down.
- Focus on the present issues and avoid raising issues from the past because it impairs the ability to resolve the issue at hand and only ends up assigning blame.
- Negotiate and allow time for mediation.
- In all situations have a win-win attitude that allows negotiation and strengthens the relationship. Stay motivated until the conflict is resolved

⁹ <https://middleearthnj.wordpress.com/2014/04/14/5-ways-parents-can-teach-assertiveness-to-teens/>

- Be willing to forgive and let go of something; resolution is about the ability to forgive or let go of issues.

Teamwork

- What is teamwork?

Teamwork is the combined effort of a team to achieve a goal, objective, or task. This is accomplished when individuals use their skills to achieve a common goal. For example, when you form groups to work on a school assignment together.

- Why is teamwork important?

Teams can brainstorm and achieve solutions to difficult problems . It offers an opportunity to exchange ideas and imagine creative ways of handling an issue. Members can take advantage of each other's strengths to achieve something together.

Qualities of a good team player

What are the qualities of a good team leader? Allow the group to brainstorm and write down their answers:

- Reliable: They are dependable and available when needed. They follow through on tasks and keep to deadlines.
- Effective communication: good team players communicate effectively, timely, and with respect.
- They listen actively and voice their concerns genuinely and respectfully.
- Committed: team players display passion and commitment for their teams and other tasks.
- Flexible: teamwork means the adaptability to changing situations. They actively seek out and involve others in decision making, knowing that diversity of opinions leads to the optimal solution.

BACKGROUND READING FOR TOPIC THREE: KEEPING MYSELF SAFE

SESSION 1—KEEPING MYSELF SAFE AND WHAT TO DO WHEN I FEEL UNSAFE

Abuse:

Young people who live in care may be more susceptible to abuse due to a lack of consistent caregiving parents, or caregivers who can protect them from harm.

A. Physical abuse involves any action that brings physical pain or discomfort to a child, including slapping, pinching, punching, pushing, burning, or throwing objects to hurt or punish the child. There are often external injuries (wounds or bruises), but the abuse may not always be detectable. Physical abuse is almost always accompanied by emotional abuse.

B. Emotional abuse wounds a child or young person's emotions and spirit, leaving psychological marks that can last a lifetime. Children or young people who experience emotional abuse are "hit" every day with words that demean, shame, threaten, blame, or intimidate them. Emotional abuse destroys a child or young person's self-confidence and self-esteem. It results in the sense of worthlessness and inadequacy, especially when expressions of love, support, and reassurance are withheld.

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C. Sexual abuse can entail genital or oral stimulation and fondling, sexual intercourse or indecent exposure. It may also be violent, as in rape.

D. Neglect results in young people who lack shelter, food, health, etc., and as a result exposes them to the abuses mentioned above.

E. Additional forms of abuse: Child marriage, Corporal punishment, Child labor, Bullying/Teasing, Stigma and discrimination, and Human trafficking.

How can I keep myself safe?¹⁰

Body parts are private. Private parts are called private because their private parts are not for everyone to see. people outside of the home should only see them with their clothes on.

Body boundaries. no one should touch their private parts and no one should ask them to touch somebody else's private parts. Sexual abuse often begins with the perpetrator asking the child to touch them or someone else.

1. Secrets about our bodies are not ideal. Most perpetrators will tell a child to keep the abuse a secret. This can be completed in a friendly way, such as, "I love playing with you, but if you tell anyone else that we played, they will not let me come over again." Perpetrators can also be threatening: "This is our secret. If you tell anyone, I will tell them it was your idea, and you will get in big trouble!" Tell your parents/guardian if someone is forcing you to keep a body secret.
2. No one should take pictures of your private parts. People who abuse children love to take and trade pictures of naked children online. This puts you at risk.
3. Learn how to get out of scary or uncomfortable situations. Learn how to say no to older peers and adults.
4. The body boundaries rules still apply, even if you know someone or that person is a child. Teachers, uncles, aunts, coaches, etc., should never see you naked, ask for your naked photo, or touch you in any way that makes you feel uncomfortable.
5. People closest to children are often the perpetrators, including family members. People can groom families, sometimes for years, in order to abuse children. This preparation makes it harder for children to speak out as they think, often correctly, they will not be believed and gives perpetrators easier access to children because parents trust them.

When to report abuse

- Children report abuse as soon as it has happened, or they may wait several weeks, months, or years. Some children are abused once and some are subject to repeated abuse.

¹⁰ <https://www.heysigmund.com/are-you-teaching-your-toddler-skills-to-prevent-sexual-abuse/>

- Children should be encouraged to report abuse as soon as possible, or as soon as they feel able. If they are worried and are at risk of abuse, it is important they report before they are
- Where possible, reporting a case of sexual violence to the police and or hospital as soon as it happens is essential in enabling the collection of evidence for treatment and legal purposes.¹¹ Most abuses are criminal acts and punishable by law.
- Encourage children and adults not to be embarrassed or intimidated, and report any form of abuse **IMMEDIATELY**.
- Understand that some people may not want to report abuse or may have been abused for several years before they report. Do not criticize their decision not to report sooner. Instead, support and encourage them to report the incident now.

How to report abuse

- Report any form of abuse immediately to the designated safeguarding lead.
- Children and young people should be made aware of how they can report abuse and to whom. If the child is not affiliated with an organization, they can talk to a trusted adult, the gender desks available at police stations, etc.
- If sexual abuse has taken place and the child or young person may be in a situation where they do not have a support person or designated lead, such as after reintegration, they should be informed about the importance of preserving evidence, e.g., keeping clothing clothes, underwear, body fluid, etc. and not to shower until the police have taken evidence.
- Sometimes, people feel embarrassed to report abuse. In such instances, use anonymous hotlines that are available to you.

Call Child help line 116, a 24-hour, toll-free phone service that links young people in need of care and protection to essential services and resources.

Top tips for staying safe both online and offline

- Do not meet with strangers. If you must meet a stranger, do so with a friend in a public place, and let a trusted adult or friend know that you are meeting those people.
- Do not divulge personal information, such as your phone number, place of residence, school, or work details, etc.
- Do not accept gifts if they make you feel uncomfortable. If the reason does not feel right, or the gift appears to be in exchange for something you are not ok with, rejecting it is fine
- Set boundaries. For example, do not kiss, hug, or allow friends into your bedroom
- Take responsibility and speak up when you see or suspect that something is not right
- Notify the authorities (guardian, parent, chief, teachers, etc.) if you feel vulnerable or suspect perpetrator behavior. Speak up!
- Be proactive: keep yourself safe online and be responsible. Report concerns as soon as you have them. You are not alone and there are people around to support you.
- Think before you post: do not share when you are feeling emotional—anything you put into cyberspace stays there, even if you delete it.
- Cover your webcam when you are not using it.
- Avoid websites you are not sure about, particularly adult-only and websites promoting anorexia, self-harm, etc.
- Do not chat online with people you do not know. If you do, do not share any personal information.
- Change your passwords regularly and do not write them down.
- Be aware when online gaming. It is easier to feel safe sharing things with avatars, but it poses the same risks.
- Avoid sharing 'live' updates such as sharing your current location on social media.

¹¹ Sexual violence. A guide to management of the chain of evidence by service providers, LVCT

- Do not give in to peer pressure, blackmail, or other threats. Instead, report such abuse.
- Seek advice from ChildLine, a teacher, or a parent, and report inappropriate and illegal web content.
- Support your friends to also stay safe online.

How can I have a more positive time online?¹²

1. Clean your feed

It is not always easy to tell why you are feeling down when you are online. Take some time to go through your social media feed to work out what makes you feel good and what does not. Use the following tips to help you keep your experience online more pleasant:

- Try unfollowing or muting accounts that annoy you, upset you, or take up too much of your time.
- Remember, you do not have to be on every social media channel. Try deleting one app from your phone for a week and see if that improves your mood.
- Try limiting your time on social media before you go to sleep and when you first wake up.
- Before you post or comment ask yourself: am I doing something positive for myself and the people who will see this?

2. Find your crowd

Whatever your passions are in life, you are not alone. There are accounts out there that will interest and excite you, and help you explore your passions.

Being part of a positive online community can sometimes give you a boost to your mental health. Here are some tips to help you find your communities:

- See which accounts the people you enjoy following are following and explore the hashtags they use to discover similar content.
- Follow accounts that make you feel good, keep you interested, and share positive content.
- Build your positive personal following, as well as following confident people. Did you know that you can select who follows you and what they can see?
- You are not alone. Whatever your passion is, there will be other people online who share it. Find like-minded online communities and use social media to fuel your passions.
- It is important to remember that while many online mental health communities are positive spaces, some can be negative for you and your recovery. Avoid any spaces that encourage you to do things which are harmful for your physical or mental health. If you are struggling with things you are experiencing online, talk to someone you trust.

3. Say hey

You never know what someone else is going through and, whether you realize it or not, your support could make all the difference.

Social media is a great place to let your friends know you have not forgotten them, that you care about them, and that they matter. Getting involved in making the online world a more positive place to be could give you a boost too. Here are some tips to get you started:

What change would you like to see in the world? Use your feed to support the causes you care about and help make them happen.

Check your mood before using social media, and think about what you are going to do before logging in. Ask yourself if social media is going to make you feel better or worse?

Remember: not all the advice you receive online is from experts, even if it comes from people who know what you are going through. Positive communities will never advise you to do anything harmful or make you feel more inadequate.

4. Do not compare yourself to celebrities that you find online.

Unfollow such individuals and then address the issue causing that insecurity. Remind yourself that what you see online is only a portion of another person's life and not their entire truth. Your favorite influencer will have things that they are insecure about. Often people do not post

¹² <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/social-media-and-mental-health/>

about their insecurities because they do not wish to be vulnerable. Remember that you are doing fantastic and are at a stage in life where you are supposed to be—it is not a competition between you and your followers.

How can I deal with online bullying?

Bullying is never acceptable, whether it is at school, at home, or on the internet. If you are being harassed or upset in any way online, reach out for help from someone you trust.

- You can block and report the people involved, or, if you feel unable to block someone, try muting them. They will not know you have muted them and you will not have to see their posts or messages.
- You can also use the privacy settings on your social networks to limit what they can see on your profile. See below for tips on how to block, report, or mute people on social media.

How can I look after my privacy?

Here is some advice to help you decide what to share, how to avoid oversharing, and how to look after your privacy.

- What you put online stays online—even things you delete can be saved or screenshotted, including Snapchat snaps meant for just one friend.
- Online strangers are still strangers—forums and group chats can be a great way to connect over topics you may not discuss face to face, but do not feel pressured to share more than makes you feel comfortable.
- It is easy to over-share on social media sites, especially if you forget who can see your profile. You can use social media channel settings to create lists so only people you trust can see your updates. For example, Instagram allows you to make your account private, or you can use the Close Friends tool to share your stories with a group of people you have selected.
- Privacy is possible—make sure you use social media site settings to protect your information. Do not hesitate to block anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable.

Social media on well being

Social isolation: Despite the significant number of likes and followers, internet use decreases the time for face to face interaction, thus reducing the benefits of things like touch, hugs, etc. Many children and young people reported that they felt lonely despite having hundreds of friends on social media platforms.

Sleep deprivation: Some studies have shown that compulsive use of social media led to a lack of sleep because most people spent 'sleep hours' on social media. Since excessive use of screen time eventually interferes with the ability to fall asleep.

Obesity: This is due to the lack of physical activity and poor dietary habits associated with such a sedentary lifestyle.

Psychological Problems: Social media use is linked to cognitive impairment, with symptoms of distraction, procrastination, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and inhibits independent thinking in some adolescents.

Behavioral problems: Social media use is linked to behavioral addictions, such as gambling, anorexia, etc., which are related to peer pressure from the internet. For example, some young people report that they developed obsessive/addictive monitoring behaviors, engaged with extreme diets or exercises, and experienced heightened levels of body dissatisfaction because of accessing material from social media and healthy lifestyle technologies.

Emotional health: Social media use is linked to emotional states like depression, anxiety due to friends liking or not liking posts, feeling a need to belong, peer pressure, cyberbullying, etc.

Privacy violations: Social media exposes one to a global world that may lack restrictions, e.g., unsolicited adverts, receiving unwelcome content, inclusion in unsolicited groups or pages, having content shared without approval, etc.

How to avoid cyberbullying

1. Limit time on social media.
2. In case of bullying, do not retaliate; instead, save the evidence.
3. Block and report the bullies using the reporting feature available.

4. Do not share any content that you would not appreciate getting leaked. Remember, the internet never forgets.
5. Do not share too much information, e.g., a profile photo of you in a school uniform of a particular school, a photo of a relative without their consent, etc.
6. Conduct yourself with dignity and respect.
7. Protect your account; use passwords and do not share your passwords with others.
8. Report any incidents of cyberbullying to the authorities.

Report

Report to the police, caregiver, or a trusted adult if someone you only know from the internet asks for your photos, videos, personal information, or requests to meet with you.

BACKGROUND READING FOR KEEPING MYSELF SAFE

SESSION TWO—HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Unhealthy relationships

An unhealthy relationship can take on different forms. In general, it is where one person does not feel comfortable in a relationship. Being uncomfortable in a relationship may be due to equal power. This can look like one person feeling undervalued. There can also be too much arguing, a lack of respect, a little trust, a lack of integrity, or someone is prevented from being who they are or want to be. We will go through some different forms of unhealthy relationships through this session. It is important to remember that an unhealthy relationship can also be a relationship that does not feel right.

In the previous session, we talked about abuse; abusive behaviors can occur in unhealthy relationships. In this session, we look at a wide range of relationships: family, friends, and intimate partners. All of the following apply to all these types of relationships.

Controlling relationships

A controlling relationship is where one person tries to control the other. It can include becoming jealous, angry, threatening to harm themselves or the other person, telling someone what to wear or say. For example, there may be 'rules' they must live by not to anger the other person.¹³

Being controlled by someone can make you feel cautious, desperate, hopeless, and fearful. Abusive behavior in a controlling relationship can be physical (for example, hitting someone to make them do as they are told). Abusive behavior can also be emotional (name-calling or making them feel fearful or guilty), sexual (controlling or forcing sexual behaviors) and or neglectful (depriving the other person if they do not behave in the way the other person desires, such as not giving them affection or denying access to money or a phone).

Violent relationships

There are high levels of violence in relationships between parents, their children, or partner violence. No form of violence is acceptable. A violent relationship may only have rare physical violence incidents, but the fear of violence makes people afraid in the relationship. All forms of violence are abusive.

Belittling relationships

In belittling relationships, an individual is not respected for who they are and may feel afraid to say or act in specific ways. This can include experiencing humiliation and criticism; ignoring or putting someone down; mocking someone's family; challenging friends; or criticizing their job. Some behaviours are 'excused' because of gender; a woman's place is in the home; women are the property of men; but none of these are valid or true and none are unacceptable.

Listening to your inner voice

Often, we may not know exactly what is wrong with a relationship, but it just does not feel right. If our inner thoughts and feelings tell us we are not safe or comfortable in a relationship, it is important to listen to that voice and act on it. A first step may be to speak to someone you trust.

Peer pressure¹⁴

Feeling pressured to take drugs? Here are ways to deal with that:

1. Remember that you are not alone. It is easy to think you are the only one who has not tried drugs, but most young people do not do drugs.
2. Figure out where you stand on issues like sex, drugs, and alcohol. Knowing your stance makes it easier to stay true to yourself.
3. Prepare yourself. Think about how you would like to respond when someone offers you drugs, so you know what to say.
4. Try to understand who is offering you the drugs and why. Friends should understand if you say no, people you do not know you very well may expect something in return.

¹³ <https://1q7dqy2unor827bjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Controlling-Behaviour-in-Relationships-talking-to-young-people-about-healthy-relationships.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.talktofrank.com/get-help/dealing-with-peer-pressure>

5. Say no firmly but clearly and without making a big deal about it. If they try to persuade you, do not feel like you have to change your mind.
6. Remember that, although they may not show it, your mates will respect you more if you are assertive and clear about what you do and do not want to do.
7. Look around. You will soon see that you are not the only one worrying about what other people think of you. Try to focus on your own opinion of yourself—in the end, that is all that matters.
8. Are you worried about your mates being pressured, too? Please do not keep it to yourself; talk to them or someone you trust.
9. If you find it hard to be yourself within your group, take a step back, and think about whether it is time to find a new crowd.

Self-esteem¹⁵

Self-esteem is how we see and feel about ourselves. Many people will have low self-esteem at some point in their life. It can be caused by several things; comparing yourself to your friends, problems with family, school, or your health. Sometimes the feeling passes naturally, but occasionally it is necessary to help yourself feel better by seeking council.

If you tackle low self-esteem early, it can help prevent depression or anxiety from developing. You can start to build your self-esteem today with these seven steps:

Step 1: Understand why you focus on negative things.

- What negative thoughts do you have about yourself?
- When did you start having these thoughts?
- What happened to make you think this way?

Step 2: Challenge the negative feelings

Ask yourself if there is another way of looking at things? What advice would you give to a friend who was having similar negative feelings? Remind yourself about things that have happened which prove these negative thoughts are not valid. Include things that have happened that prove they are not true. Maybe the thing that caused those feelings has stopped.

Try writing down a list of these things to keep and bring out next time you feel low.

Step 3: Focus on the positive

Write down your best features, the last time you received a compliment, a time you did something for someone that made you feel good. These might seem like small things, but it is vital to recognize all the good things about you and the reasons why people appreciate you for being who you are.

Talking to your 'inner child' can help you recognize the good things about yourself. For example, you can say, "I am good at football," "I draw well," and "I love my strong legs," etc.

Step 4: Find the right people

How do the people around you make you feel?

Spend more time with those who make you feel good and less with those who do not make you feel confident about yourself or spend a lot of time criticizing others.

Step 5: Get Active

Think about doing something you enjoy—or trying something new. If you already have a hobby, do it more often. But remember, you do not have to keep plugging away at a hobby you do not enjoy just because you think you have to.

Step 6: Set yourself some goals

Choose something you know you can already do and challenge yourself—but keep your goals realistic. Achievements can give you a positive feeling and remind you just how much you are capable of doing.

¹⁵ <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/believe-in-yourself/>

Step 7: Tell someone

If you are really struggling with negative feelings about yourself, talk to someone you trust, such as a family member, teacher, or a school nurse.

You can also talk to your teacher, religious leader, or a parent who will be able to tell you what sort of support might be available to you in your area.

If you are finding it hard to talk to someone you know, or talking face-to-face, then look for online counseling services.

BACKGROUND READING ON MY HEALTH

SESSION 1—MY BODY

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PUBERTY

More Than a Funny Word

OK, so it is a funny word...but what is puberty? Puberty is the name for when your body begins to develop and change.

During puberty, your body will grow faster than at any other time in your life, except for when you were an infant. Back then, your body was growing rapidly, and you were learning new things — you will be learning new things during puberty, too. Except for this time, you will not have diapers or a rattle, and you will have to dress yourself!

It is wise to know about the changes puberty causes before they happen. It is important to remember that everybody goes through puberty; it means we are developing into adults. No matter where you live, gender, or dislike or like hip-hop or country music, you will experience puberty. No two people are exactly alike. However, one thing all adults have in common is they made it through puberty.

Time to Change

When your body reaches a certain age, your brain releases a special hormone that ignites puberty changes. It is called gonadotropin—a releasing hormone, or GnRH for short. When GnRH reaches the pituitary gland (a pea-shaped gland that sits just under the brain), it releases into the bloodstream two more puberty hormones: luteinizing hormone (LH for short) and follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH for short). Boys and girls have both of these hormones in their bodies. Depending on whether you are a guy or girl, these hormones act on different body parts.

For guys, these hormones travel through the blood and give the testes the signal to begin producing testosterone and sperm. Testosterone is the hormone that causes most of the changes in a guy's body during puberty. Sperm cells must be produced for men to reproduce.

In girls, FSH and LH target the ovaries, containing eggs that have been there since birth. The hormones stimulate the ovaries to begin producing another hormone called estrogen. Estrogen, FSH, and LH cause a girl's body to mature and prepare her for pregnancy.

So that is what happens during puberty — it is all these new chemicals moving around inside your body, turning you from a teen into an adult with new levels of hormones

Puberty usually starts sometime between age 7 and 13 for girls and 9 and 15 for boys. Some people start puberty a bit earlier or later. Each person is different, so everyone starts and goes through puberty on their own schedule. Puberty explains why some of your friends might still look like kids, whereas others look more like adults.

It Does Not Hurt...It is Just a Growth Spurt

“Spurt” is the word used to describe a short burst of activity, something that happens in a hurry. Furthermore, a growth spurt is just that: Your body growing fast! When you enter puberty, it might seem like your sleeves are always getting shorter, and your pants look too long — it is because you are experiencing a significant growth spurt. It lasts for about 2 to 3 years. When that growth spurt is at its peak, some people grow four or more inches in a year.

This growth during puberty will be the last time your body grows in height. After that, you will be at your adult height. Nevertheless, your height is not the only thing that will be changing.

Taking Shape

As your body grows in height, it will change in other ways, too. You may gain weight, and it is possible to start seeing changes in your body's overall shape. Guys' shoulders will become wider, their bodies may become more muscular, and their voices will drop an octave and become deeper. For some guys, breasts may grow a bit, but this growth goes away by the end of puberty for most of them.

Guys will notice other changes, too, such as the lengthening and widening of the penis and the enlargement of the testicles. All of these changes mean that their bodies are developing as expected.

Girls' bodies usually become curvier, and they gain weight on their hips. Their breasts develop, starting with just a little swelling under the nipple. Sometimes, one breast might develop more quickly than the other, but this evens out over time. With all this growing and developing, girls will notice an increase in body fat and occasional soreness under the nipples as the breasts start to enlarge, which is normal.

Gaining some weight is part of developing into a woman, and it is unhealthy for girls to go on a diet to try to stop this normal weight gain. If you ever have questions or concerns about your weight, talk about it with your doctor.

Usually, about 2 to 2½ years after girls' breasts start to develop, they get their first menstrual period. Menstruating is another indicator that lets a girl know puberty is progressing, and the puberty hormones are working. Girls have two ovaries, and each ovary holds thousands of eggs. During the menstrual cycle, one of the eggs drops from the ovary and begins a trip through the fallopian tube, ending up in the uterus (the uterus is also called the womb).

Before the egg drops from the ovary, the uterus has built its lining with extra blood and tissue. If the egg is fertilized by a sperm cell, it stays in the uterus and grows into a baby, using that extra blood and tissue to keep it healthy and protected while developing.

Most of the time, though, the egg is only passing by. When the egg does not get fertilized, the uterus no longer needs the extra blood and tissue, leaving the body through the vagina as a menstrual period. A period (when blood flows) usually lasts between three to seven days, and about two weeks after the start of the period, a new egg is released, which is called ovulation. Ovulation means your matured egg gets released from one of your ovaries and into the associated fallopian tube, where it hangs out for 24 hours, waiting to be inseminated. If no sperm are present, your egg will disintegrate in one day.

Hair, Hair, Everywhere

Well, maybe not everywhere. But one of the first signs of puberty is hair growing where it did not grow before. Guys and girls both begin to grow hair in their armpits and in their pubic areas (on and around the genitals). It begins by looking light and sparse. Then as you go through puberty, it becomes longer, thicker, heavier, and darker. Eventually, guys also start to grow hair on their faces.

About the Face

Another thing that comes with puberty is acne and pimples. Puberty hormones trigger acne. Pimples usually start during puberty and can stick around through adolescence and into the teen years. You may notice pimples on your face, upper back, or on your chest. To combat acne, it helps to keep your skin clean. Your doctor will be able to offer some suggestions for clearing acne. The good news is that acne usually gets better or disappears by the end of adolescence.

Putting the P.U. in Puberty

A lot of teens notice that they have a new smell under their arms and elsewhere on their bodies when they enter puberty, and it is not a pleasant one. That smell is body odor, and everyone gets it. As you enter puberty, the hormones affect glands in your skin, and the glands make chemicals that smell bad. These chemicals put the scent in adolescence!

So what can you do to feel less stinky? Keeping clean is a good way to lessen the smell. You might want to take a shower every day, either in the morning before school, or in the evening. Using deodorant every day can help keep body odor in check, too.

There's More?

Guys and girls will also notice other body changes as they enter puberty. These are all normal changes. Girls might see and feel a white, mucus-like discharge from their vagina. This does not mean anything is wrong — it is just another sign that your body is changing.

Guys will start to get erections (when the penis fills with blood and becomes hard). Erections happen when guys fantasize and think about sexual things, or sometimes they occur for no reason at all. They may experience nocturnal emissions (or wet dreams) when the penis becomes erect while a guy is sleeping and ejaculates. When a guy ejaculates, semen discharges from the penis. Semen is a fluid containing sperm. That is why they are called wet dreams — they happen when you are sleeping, and your underwear or the bed might be a little wet when you wake up. Wet dreams become less frequent as guys progress through puberty, and they eventually stop. Guys will also notice that their voices may “crack” and eventually get deeper.

Change Can Feel Kind of Strange

Just as those hormones create changes in the way your body looks on the outside, they also create changes internally, too. While your body is adjusting to all of the new hormones, so is your mind. During puberty, you might feel confused or have strong emotions that you have never experienced before. You may feel anxious about how your changing body looks.

You might feel overly sensitive or become easily upset. Some teens lose their tempers more than usual and get angry at their friends or families.

Sometimes it can be challenging to deal with all of these new emotions. Usually, people are not trying to hurt your feelings or upset you intentionally. It might not be your family or friends making you angry — it might be your new “puberty brain” trying to adjust. While the adjustment can feel difficult in the beginning, it will gradually become more comfortable. It can help talk to someone and share the burden of how you feel — a friend or, even better, a parent, older sibling, or adult who has gone through it all before.

You might have new and confusing feelings about sex as well as lots of questions. The adult hormones estrogen and testosterone are signals that your body is giving you new responsibilities, like the ability to create a child. That is why it is important to get all your questions answered.

It is easy to feel embarrassed or anxious when talking about sex, but you need to be sure you have all the right information. It is better to be momentarily uncomfortable than to walk into a situation uneducated. Some teens can talk to their parents about sex and get all their questions answered. But if you feel funny talking to your parents about sex, there are many other people to talk to, like your doctor, a school nurse, a teacher, a school counselor, or another adult you can talk to comfortably.

Developing Differently

People are all a little different from one another, so it makes sense that they do not all develop at the same pace. No two people are at the same stage in puberty, and everyone changes at their own pace. Some of your friends may be getting curves, whereas you do not have any yet. Maybe your best friend’s voice has changed, and you think you still sound like a kid with a high, squeaky voice. Or maybe you are sick of being the tallest girl in your class or the only boy who has to shave.

Eventually, everyone catches up, and the differences between you and your friends even out. It is also good to keep in mind that there is no right or wrong way to look. That is what makes us human — we all have qualities that make us unique, on the inside and the outside.

Inside the teenage brain¹⁶

Adolescence is a time of significant growth and development inside the teenage brain.

The main change is that new connections in the thinking and processing part of your child’s brain (called the grey matter) are pruned. At the same time, other connections strengthen. This is the brain’s way of becoming more efficient, based on the ‘use it or lose it’ principle.

This pruning process begins in the back of the brain. The front part of the brain, the prefrontal cortex, is remodeled last. The prefrontal cortex is the brain’s decision-making part, responsible for your child’s ability to plan and think about the consequences of actions, solve problems, and control impulses. Changes in this part continue into early adulthood.

Because the prefrontal cortex is still developing, teenagers might rely on the brain called the amygdala to make decisions and solve problems more than adults do. The amygdala is associated with emotions, impulses, aggression, and instinctive behavior.

Have you noticed that sometimes your child’s thinking and behavior seems quite mature? However, at other times your child seems to behave or think in illogical, impulsive, or emotional ways? The back-to-front development of the brain explains these shifts and changes—teenagers are working with brains that are still under construction.

Building a healthy teenage brain

The combination of your child’s unique brain and environment influences how they act, think, and feel. For example, your child’s preferred activities and skills might become ‘hard-wired’ in the brain.

¹⁶ Raising Children—the Australian Parenting website, <https://raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/development/understanding-your-pre-teen/brain-development-teens>

How teenagers spend their time is crucial to brain development. It is worth thinking about the range of activities you expose your child to, be it music lessons, sports, language learning, travel, or video games. How are these experiences shaping the brain your child carries into adulthood?

You are an essential part of your child's environment. You mean a lot to your child. How you guide and influence your child will be crucial in helping your child build a healthy brain too.

You can do this by following these steps:

- encourage positive behavior
- promote good thinking skills
- help your child get lots of sleep

Behavior strategies for teenage brain development

While your child's brain is developing, your child might:

- take more risks or choose high-risk activities
- express intense and more diversified emotions
- make impulsive decisions

Here are some tips to encourage healthy behavior and to strengthen positive brain connections:

Let your child take some reasonable risks. New and different experiences help your child develop an independent identity, explore grown-up behavior, and move towards independence.

Help your child find new creative and expressive outlets for feelings. Your child might be expressing and trying to control new emotions. Many teenagers find that doing or watching sport or music, writing and other art forms are great outlets.

Talk through decisions step by step with your child. Ask about possible courses of action they might choose and talk through potential consequences. Encourage your child to weigh positive consequences or rewards against negative ones. Use family routines to give your child's life structure. These might be scheduled around school and family timetables.

Provide opportunities for negotiating those boundaries. Young people need guidance and limit-setting from their parents and other adults.

Offer frequent praise and positive rewards for desired behavior; this reinforces pathways in your child's brain. Be a positive role model. Your behavior will show your child the behavior you expect. Stay connected with your child. You will probably want to keep an eye on your child's activities and friends. Being open and approachable can help you with this.

Talk with your child about their developing brain. Understanding this important period of growth might help your child process their feelings. It might also make taking care of the brain more interesting for your child.

Teenagers are often passionate about their interests, especially ones that give them opportunities to socialize. You can help your child develop skills and confidence by supporting your child's interests, activities, and hobbies.

Thinking strategies for teenage brain development

Brain growth and development during these years mean that your child will start to:

- think more logically
- think about things more abstractly and understand that issues are not always simple
- pick up more on other people's emotional cues
- logically solve complex problems, and see problems from different perspectives
- get a better perspective on the future

You can support the development of your child's thinking with the following strategies:

Encourage empathy. Talk about feelings—yours, your child's, and other people's. Highlight the fact that other people have different perspectives and circumstances. Reinforce that many people can be affected by an action.

Emphasize the immediate and long-term consequences of actions. The part of the brain respon-

sible for future thinking (the prefrontal cortex) is still developing. Talk about how your child's actions influence both present and future circumstances. You can contribute to the healthy development of your child's prefrontal cortex.

Try to match your language to the level of your child's understanding. For important information, you can check that your child has understood by asking your child to tell you in their own words what they have just heard.

Help your child develop decision-making and problem-solving skills. You and your child can work through a process that involves defining problems, listing tactics, and considering outcomes that makes everyone happy. Role-modeling these skills are essential too.

Sleep and teenage brain development

During the teenage years, your child's sleep patterns will change. This is because the brain produces melatonin at different times of the day. This makes your child feel tired and ready for bed later in the evening. It can keep your child from sleeping and make it difficult for them to wake the next morning.

Sleep is essential to healthy brain development. Try the following tips:

- Ensure your child has a comfortable, quiet sleep environment.
- Encourage 'winding down' before bed. This may include reading a book, listening to music, stretching, taking a shower, and spending at least an hour away from screens before sleeping.
- Reinforce a regular sleeping routine. Your child should aim to go to bed and wake up at regular time each day.
- Encourage your child to get enough sleep each night. On average, teenagers need 8-10 hours each night.

Risk-taking behavior and the teenage brain

The teenage brain is built to seek new experiences, risks, and sensations—it is all part of refining those brain connections. Also, teenagers do not always have enough self-control or sound judgment and are more prone to risk-taking behavior. This happens because the self-monitoring, problem-solving, and decision-making part of the brain—the prefrontal cortex—develops last. Hormones also contribute to impulsive and risky behavior in teenagers. Teenagers, however, do need to take risks to grow and develop.

You can support your child in choosing healthy risks—like sports and travel—instead of negative ones like smoking and stealing. All risk-taking involves the possibility of failure. Your child will need your support to get over any setbacks.

Stress and the teenage brain

With so many changes happening to your child's brain, your child must be protected and nurtured.

The percentage of poor mental health increases during the teenage years; this could be related to the fact that the developing brain is more vulnerable to stress factors than the adult brain.

Teenage stressors can include experiences such as starting a new school and peer pressure, significant life events like moving to a new house, alcohol and other drugs, or the death of a loved one.

Nevertheless, too much protection and attention might not be adequate for your relationship, either.

Instead, staying connected and involved in your child's life can help you learn more about how they are coping with stress. It can also help you keep an open relationship with your child and ensure that they see you as someone they can talk to—even about embarrassing or uncomfortable topics.

It is thought that children are more likely to be open to parental guidance and monitoring during their teenage years if they have grown up in a supportive and nurturing home environment.

Every teenage child is unique, and teenagers respond to stress in different and unique ways. You know your child best, so it is smart to trust your instincts. It is smart to ask for help from friends, family members, or professionals like your general practitioner through this stressful time.

Getting help

Every child experiences changes at a different rate.

If you are concerned about your child's development rate, be it behavior or another concern, you can talk to a school counselor or your GP. If you are anxious, you can seek a personal counselor or psychologist. You do not need a referral, but you might prefer to have your GP recommend someone.

Menstrual hygiene

1. Menstruation is a normal and healthy process that affects all women. Menstruation means you begin bleeding through the vagina each month for 3-6 days every cycle. Cycles do not visit the same time every month—especially at first.
2. Menstruation is one of the signs of puberty in the female body. Alongside visible signs such as the growth of breasts, hair under the arms and between the legs (pubic hair), and body size and shape changes.
3. Menstrual bleeding over 3-6 days is sometimes called a 'period.' Periods start when girls are between 10 and 16 years old. It is common for periods to start at differing ages.
4. Periods start when the brain sends chemical messengers called 'hormones' to parts of the body that create babies.
5. A period happens when the female eggs have not 'met' a male sperm during sex. It is like a nest inside the womb, and when this is not needed, it comes out as blood.
6. Periods stop when pregnancy begins. It is one of the first signs that an egg has been fertilized by a sperm inside the womb.
7. Bleeding is heavier at the start of a period, and some people feel pain in their stomach, have headaches, and feel sad and angry.
8. Pads made of cloth or toilet paper, sanitary towels, tampons, and menstrual cups are all used to catch the blood.
9. No-one should be shy to buy or ask about pads or sanitary options at schools, shops, or clinics. Bleedings happen to all women, and it is normal.
10. It is important to wash and keep your body clean and fresh and change the pads or tampons or empty the cup at least twice a day, or more at the start of the period.
11. For some, period pain is unbearable. Friends and family can help and encourage girls when they miss school or other activities and make sure they drink enough fluids and eat a balanced diet.

BACKGROUND READING ON MY HEALTH

SESSION 2—HIV

Children nine to 12 years old think a lot about their bodies. Many of them are entering or going through puberty. Children also feel a lot of peer pressure and have an influence from other children their age to try new (and possibly dangerous) things. It is the time to tell them how HIV can spread. Since HIV commonly spreads through sexual contact, now is the time to give your children accurate information about sex. Tell them about the importance of sexual health and safer sex (encourage the use of condoms). Inform them that sharing needles for any reason is dangerous. Whether it be for drug use, steroid injection, informal tattooing, or body piercing—it can put them at risk of HIV.

Teach preteens that they have choices in life and that the decisions they make today could affect them for the rest of their lives. Let them know that it is okay for them to talk to an adult they trust (parent, teacher, older relative) if they feel unhappy, pressured, or bullied.—from The Well Project¹⁷

HIV is a virus spread through certain body fluids that attack the body's immune system, specifically the CD4 cells, often called T cells. Over time, HIV can destroy many of these cells, to the point where the body cannot fight off infections and disease. These special cells help the immune system fight off infections. Untreated, HIV reduces the number of CD4 cells (T cells) in the body. This damage to the immune system makes it harder for the body to fight off infections and other diseases. Opportunistic infections or cancers take advantage of a fragile immune system and signal that the person has AIDS.¹⁸ According to UNAIDS (2018), about 1.7 million people were living with HIV in Kenya. Kenya's HIV transmission occurs by sexual transmission. More than half (51%) of all new HIV infections in Kenya in 2015 transpired among adolescents and young people (aged 15-24 years), a rapid rise from 29% in 2013.

Information about HIV

The HIV Virus is very weak. It can only live where it is quite warm inside the fluids in the human body. It must pass from one human to another without being exposed to the air so that it can stay warm.

The virus hides only in blood, vaginal fluids (the moistness in your vagina), semen, and breast milk. There must be enough fluid with a virus in it to make transmission possible. **Transmission only happens through:**

- Sex, when either vaginal fluid (female) or semen (male) passes very closely into the other body (any sex).
- Blood transfusion, a medical procedure during which blood passes from one person to another.
- From a woman to the baby through pregnancy, during birth, or in breast milk, the baby has sores in the mouth or the stomach. A baby is unlikely to get sores if the baby only has breast milk, with no other foods, for up to six months.

The following do not cause HIV:

- Any contact between a person with HIV and anyone else if no vaginal fluid, semen, or blood directly enters the other person's body.
- Kissing. There is no HIV in the mouth, and saliva can also kill the virus.
- Insects or other animals — HIV only lives in humans.

If a person with HIV is taking HIV treatment, the virus's risk of passing to someone else is much lower. The HIV drugs lower the amount of virus in the person's body fluids, making it harder for each virus to duplicate (make more copies of itself).

What Causes HIV and AIDS:¹⁹

Our body is amazing—it has a particular way of protecting us, called the immune system. When something new comes into our body, like a germ or a virus, our body quickly gets to work to

17 <https://www.thewellproject.org/hiv-information/talking-your-children-about-hiv-hiv-awareness-children#Talking%20to%20Children%20of%20Different%20Ages>

18 <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/whatisshiv.html>

19 <https://www.childrenforhealth.org/the-collection/hiv-aids/>; <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/hiv.html>

protect us and makes the invading germ or virus leave our body. This is how the immune system stops germs and viruses from making us ill.

HIV is a germ called a virus. It is a dangerous virus that stops our body from protecting itself from other germs. When a virus attacks us, it tricks our body into doing what the virus wants to do. HIV is dangerous because it stops our immune system from working correctly, so it cannot protect us from other germs and viruses. By stopping our immune system from working properly, HIV can weaken our bodies and eventually develop AIDS. HIV destroys CD4 cells (also called T cells). CD4 cells are part of the immune system.

HIV can pass from mothers to babies. When mothers take Antiretrovirals (ART), it helps prevent babies from getting HIV before they are born. Mothers using ART can also prevent babies from getting HIV from their breast milk. Babies use their mothers' blood to help them grow inside the womb, and when they are born, they can come into contact with their mother's blood. When a mother takes ART, she can reduce the chance that her baby will get HIV. ART medicine reduces the amount of HIV in the body. Mothers who are breastfeeding their babies and taking ART are less likely to pass HIV to their babies.

After time and without medicine, people with HIV develop AIDS. AIDS is a group of severe illnesses, and these make the body weaker and weaker. When HIV gets into our bodies, it stops our immune system from working. After a person has had HIV for a long time, and if they do not have medicine, their immune system becomes very tired and stops defending against germs. When this happens, people with HIV grow weak and can develop many illnesses. This is AIDS.

HIV is invisible and lives in blood and other liquids in the body (typically present during sex). HIV can pass during sex, from infected mothers to babies, or in blood. We can pass HIV from person to person when we come into contact with their body's fluids during sex or with their blood. Mothers can pass HIV to their babies before they are born because their blood helps the baby grow. After a baby is born, HIV can also pass from a mother to the baby when she breastfeeds her baby.

How Is HIV Diagnosed:

Health care providers usually diagnose HIV through blood tests. Those who have had HIV are considered HIV positive. Tests are also available without a prescription at the drugstore. With your parent/guardian's permission, you can complete the test at home.

- HIV is diagnosed as AIDS when someone has fewer than 200 CD4 cells or develops an AIDS-defining condition.

How Are HIV and AIDS Treated:

Medicine (antiretroviral/ARVs) can help people with HIV stay healthy. They also prevent HIV from advancing to AIDS. Healthcare providers prescribe a combination of different medicines for people with HIV and AIDS. The medicine must be taken precisely as prescribed, or it will not work. These medicines help keep the number of CD4 cells high and reduce the viral load of HIV (how much HIV is in the body). Regular blood tests will check the number of CD4 cells in the body (called the CD4 cell count) and the viral load. If an HIV-positive person's CD4 count becomes low, doctors prescribe daily antibiotics. This prevents pneumocystis pneumonia, which happens in people with weakened immune systems.

Can HIV Be Prevented?

We cannot see HIV, and we cannot see who has the virus. To reduce the risk of getting HIV, people should:

- Be faithful to one sexual partner
- Abstain from sex
- Get tested and treated for STDs (sexually transmitted diseases); having an STD increases the risk of HIV infection
- Consider taking a medicine every day (called PrEP or pre-exposure prophylaxis) if they are at very high risk of getting infected (e.g., in a rape incident)
- Do not inject drugs or share any kind needles.
- Do not share razors or other personal objects that may touch blood.
- Do not touch anyone else's blood from a cut or sore.

- Informal tattooing or body piercing can put you at risk for getting HIV.
- If you are a mother, getting support from a health care provider to ensure that your unborn child is HIV free

HIV Treatment

The treatment has significantly improved for people with HIV. By taking medicine and getting regular medical care, HIV-positive people can live long and healthy lives. A medicine called antiretroviral therapy (ART) helps them live long lives. ART are medicines that work together to stop HIV from being active in the bloodstream of someone with HIV. It makes the virus slow down and reduces the amount of HIV in the body. When someone knows they have HIV, they can take ART before they become ill with AIDS. Beginning ART sooner rather than later can help stop HIV from spreading from person to person. It is important to find out if you have HIV to take ART before you get ill with AIDS

If you have HIV, make sure that you:

- go to all doctor visits
- take all medicines exactly as directed
- go for all follow-up blood tests
- understand what HIV/AIDS is and how it spreads
- stay physically active, get enough sleep, and eat well

Remember

1. You can play, share food, drink, hold hands, and hug people with HIV and AIDS. It is safe, and you will not catch the virus this way. People with HIV and AIDS need care and kindness. We can show we care by playing, holding hands, hugging, and doing all the things we usually do with friends with people who have HIV. We can learn why we cannot catch HIV from everyday activities. We can learn how HIV is passed from person to person, so we know that it is safe to play with HIV or AIDS.

2. People with HIV and AIDS sometimes feel afraid and sad. Like us, they need love and support, and so do their families. They need to talk about their worries. Many families care for someone with HIV and AIDS, and many young people have HIV and AIDS. We can learn more about HIV and AIDS to understand how people with this disease might feel. We can learn to listen when someone with HIV or AIDS wants to talk about their feelings. We can help our school and our community become more supportive places for people with HIV and AIDS.

3. People who think they may have HIV or AIDS must go to a clinic or hospital for testing and counseling to help themselves and others. It is important to get tested for HIV if someone thinks they may have the virus or AIDS. Getting tested allows people with HIV to get the medicines they need. Taking antiretroviral therapy medicines can help people with HIV reduce their chance of passing it on to someone else. The hospital or clinic will give the person counseling on HIV and the test, what it means, and what will happen next if they have HIV.

BACKGROUND READING ON MY HEALTH

SESSION 3—MENTAL HEALTH

What is mental health?

According to WHO, mental health is a state of well-being. Every individual realizes his or her potential, can cope with the everyday stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and contribute to her or his community.

Children can struggle with a range of issues as they grow up.²⁰ Some of the common mental health-related issues they experience include: relationship problems (for example, family, peers, etc.)

- eating or body-image issues
- bullying (including cyberbullying)
- abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual)
- feeling sad or depressed
- worry or anxiety
- self-harm or suicide

Mental Health Red Flags:²¹

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/teen/Pages/Mental-Health-and-Teens-Watch-for-Danger-Signs.aspx>

- Excessive sleeping, beyond usual teenage fatigue, could indicate depression or substance abuse. Other signs could be difficulty sleeping, insomnia, and other sleep disorders.
- Loss of self-esteem.
- Abandonment or loss of interest in favorite pastimes is an indication of mental health issues.
- An unexpected and dramatic decline in academic performance.
- Weight loss and loss of appetite, which could indicate an eating disorder.
- Personality shifts and changes, such as aggressiveness and excess anger that are sharply out of character, could indicate psychological, drug, or sexual problems.
- Self-mutilation, or mention of hurting themselves.
- Obsessive body-image concerns.
- Excessive isolation.
- Abandonment of friends and social groups.

How to improve mental health

Build Trust: A child's relationship with a parent plays a large role in their mental health. Fostering a feeling of safety and security starts with building trust between a child and a parent or guardian.

Foster healthy relationships with others: The relationship a child has with her parents is vital, but it is not the only relationship that matters. A mentally healthy child will have a number of relationships with other family members, such as grandparents, cousins, as well as friends and neighbors.⁴ Have play dates with other kids in your neighborhood.

Learn healthy ways to manage stress. While it is important to protect yourself from traumatic events, you cannot prevent yourself from experiencing stress, e.g., having exams, disagreements with friends or parents, etc. Learn skills to deal with those circumstances, e.g., writing in a journal, talking with a friend, playing with friends, taking a walk, etc.

Establish healthy habits. Having a healthy diet, a good night's sleep, and plenty of exercise are beneficial to your mental and physical health. **Mindfulness and gratitude** can also have a

²⁰<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/kids-mental-health>

²¹ <https://www.verywellfamily.com/improve-childrens-mental-health-4154379>

big impact on mental health. Practice gratitude by saying thank you, naming your blessings, giving back to society, etc.

Develop self-esteem. developing self-esteem can give a significant boost to your mental health and life.

Develop new skills. Explore talents and interests. Get involved in activities and work hard to get better.

Take time out. No matter how busy you are, it is important to take a break to recharge. Step back and do something that you enjoy, such as a hobby or rest.

Be on the lookout for red flags and seek professional help. If you notice signs that you feel sad or overly anxious about normal situations, there might be a problem.⁸ A change in mood or behavior that lasts more than two weeks could be a sign of a problem.

Ways to relax

1. Switch off the screens—turn off your phone, tablet, and computer and go and do something that does not involve tech gadgets.
2. Get a hobby—a hobby away from school or work can help you switch your brain off from school and work stress. A great hobby may be a dance class, woodworking, or braiding hair for your friends.
3. Exercise—increases your heart rate and releases endorphins that make you feel good. Going for a run, cycling, swimming, or team sports such as football or netball are all great exercise. Choose one you love and build your exercise routine around that.
4. Walking—as moderate exercise, walking releases “feel good” endorphins. It can also help you to switch off. You have time to take in your surroundings and walk in a steady rhythm. Walking can be a less stressful way to travel than being stuck in slow moving traffic. Fresh air helps you relax and sleep better.
5. Spend time in the natural world—an old Zen proverb says: “You should sit in nature for 20 minutes a day. Unless you’re busy, then you should sit for an hour.” Start gardening or tending to your plants or flowers as a way to relax.
6. Take a long warm bath.
7. Watch a TV show or read a book—escapism is a great way to switch off from reality and help your mind relax.
8. Meet a friend—leave a stressful situation and spend some time with a friend. Talking things over, having some laughs, and hearing a different perspective can take your mind off of things and help you calm down.

Emotional wellbeing

We can learn to manage stress and feel better and more balanced by making changes in:

- The way we behave
- The support we receive from other people
- The way we think about and understand the stressors

Our thoughts, activities, and mood are interrelated, which means that:

- How we feel affects the way we think and what we do.
- The way we think and what we do also affects how we feel
- Changing what we do also affects how we think and feel.

When we feel down or depressed, we are not able to be the best students/children/employees that we can be and may not attend well to our needs and responsibilities.

Anger is a natural, though sometimes unwanted or irrational emotion, that everybody experiences from time to time. While it is normal to feel angry when you have been wronged, anger becomes a problem when you express it in a way that harms yourself or others. Chronic anger that gets out of control can have serious consequences for your relationships, health, and state of mind. Anger is a normal, healthy emotion; however, there is a difference between angry feelings and aggressive behavior. Kids can learn to label their feelings to verbalize emotions of

anger, frustration, and disappointment. Try saying, “It is okay to feel angry, but it is not okay to hit.” You can manage anger by taking time away from people, walking away to clear your head, and doing calming activities like coloring, drawing, etc.²²

How do you manage your stress or anger?²³

You can manage your stress or anger by doing what you enjoy doing, increasing your positive interactions, and encouraging healthy thoughts.

a) What do you enjoy doing?

Knowing what you like to do can help generate ideas to improve your mood when you are feeling down. For example, playing football, knitting, reading a book, watching a movie, etc.

b) Increase positive interaction with others

Our relationships with other people affect our mood. When people are feeling down, they often:

- Have less contact and avoid others
- Have lower tolerance, feel more irritable
- Feel more uncomfortable around people
- Act quieter and less talkative
- Are more sensitive to being ignored, criticized, or rejected
- Some people tend to become hyperactive

c) Thoughts

Thoughts are similar to self-talk. It is like having a conversation with ourselves. Thoughts can help or harm our moods and feelings. When we feel stressed or overwhelmed, harmful thoughts can make us feel worse. Learning to be aware of your thoughts in stressful situations and how you talk to yourself at such times can help you protect your mood and feelings. The best way to stop negative thoughts is through thought interruptions, a coping mechanism that tells your mind to stop thinking about something demeaning. Also, time projection is helpful when we get sad or depressed; it helps us imagine ourselves moving forward in time to a point when things will be better.

²² <https://www.verywellfamily.com/ways-to-teach-your-child-anger-management-skills-1095010>

²³ Le, H. N. (2017). *The Mothers and Babies Course: Integrated Version. Facilitator's Manual*. George Washington University

BACKGROUND READING ON MY HEALTH

SESSION 4—RESILIENCE

Can we learn to become more resilient?

You can learn individual attitudes, skills, and behaviors that will boost your resilience. Being resilient does not mean that you will not experience pain and emotional distress in a difficult or traumatic situation. However, it does mean that you can regain your balance and strength, and perhaps even be stronger before. It involves learning certain behaviors, thoughts, and actions, which anyone can do, e.g., courageous, assertive, decisive, and informed.

What are the building blocks of resilience?

- A combination of factors promotes resilience. Research indicates that primary among these are caring and supportive relationships. Such relationships are characterized by love, trust, encouragement, security, and offer role models.
- Other important factors include coping skills, such as the process of making and executing realistic plans to manage demands that you are facing; realistic self-appraisal and healthy self-esteem; communication and problem-solving skills; and being able to regulate strong emotions and impulses.
- Develop a belief in yourself, others, the world around you, and your ability to cope. In psychology, this is referred to as a sense of self-efficacy.

Develop the ability to make sense of hardship on an emotional-spiritual level—to find some meaning. When bad things happen, the common question is, “Why me?” Spirituality can help one put one’s trust in a higher power, find some purpose, and come to terms more easily with what had happened.

BACKGROUND READING ON MAKING SAFER AND HEALTHIER CHOICES

Facts about alcohol

- Alcoholism is an illness; it can be very addictive.
- Alcohol can cause anxiety, depression, other mental health and physical health issues.
- One of the leading causes of road accidents.
- It can seriously damage the liver and destroy brain cells.
- It affects judgment and makes you more likely to take risks, putting you at risk of harm.
- Excessive alcohol can cause death.

Facts about smoking

- It increases your likelihood of getting certain types of cancer and heart disease.
- Smoking can also put others at risk because they breathe in the smoke, too.
- Smoke remains on your clothing and in your house—this is dangerous, especially to babies, children, and pets.
- Everyone you use reduces your lifespan by 11 minutes
- It contains nicotine, which is very addictive
- Can cause death

Facts about drugs

- There are lots of different types, and many also have names used specifically on the street.
- It can lead to a change in perceptions, senses, risk assessment, and risk-taking, putting you more at risk of harm.
- Can cause anxiety, depression, other mental health issues, and physical health issues.
- It can be incredibly addictive.
- It can be mixed with other substances that are also dangerous—dealers do this because they make more money this way.
- It can cause death.

Video games and online communication:²⁴

A video game is interactive digital entertainment that you play through a computer, tablet, or phone.

A good game will be the right one for your age. Games receive ratings, similar to movies, and your guardian can help discern which ones you should play. If you can choose one that gets you up and moving, that is preferable.

Some studies have shown that certain video games can improve hand-eye coordination, problem-solving skills, and the mind's ability to process information. Nevertheless, too much video game time may cause problems.

- It is hard to get enough active play and exercise if you are always inside playing video games. Without enough exercise, kids can become overweight.
- Overdoing video games can also affect other important stuff, such as friendships and how well a kid performs in school. Kids who play violent video games might act more aggressively.

How to develop healthy video gaming habits:²⁵

- Only play games appropriate to your age.
- Make sure there is an adult around to help you understand a game or solve problems.
- Play only at certain times of day, such as after schoolwork, before dinner, or on the weekends.

²⁴ <https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/video-gaming.html>

²⁵ <https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/play-learning/screen-time-healthy-screen-use/healthy-gaming-children-teens>

- Have fixed gaming periods planned in advance with your caregiver.
- Avoid games that involve playing with others, especially strangers.
- Compete respectfully.
- Identify games that encourage you to move, improve your literacy, etc.

Substance abuse: According to WHO, substance abuse is the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. These drugs create a strong desire to ingest the drug and lead to difficulties in controlling its use, continuing use despite harmful consequences, a higher priority given to drug use than other activities and obligations, increased tolerance, and sometimes a physical withdrawal state.

Some drugs are more addictive than others, and some people are more likely to become addicted than others. Some prescription medicines can be abused by users, e.g., codeine and codeine-based cough syrups such as benylin, pethidine, morphine, betapyn, and syndol cozepam, ketamine etc. In 2016, 1338 drug-related deaths were reported, mostly from an opioid overdose. There were 49 drug-related deaths per million people in Kenya in 2016.²⁶

Drug and alcohol abuse leads to addiction. The user needs the alcohol or drug to feel normal, and failure to get high triggers withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, anxiety, etc.

For various reasons—adverse childhood experiences, a high incidence of psychological and behavioral problems, and feelings of loss and fragmentation following time in care—young care leavers are considered particularly vulnerable to having or developing drug problems.

²⁶ <https://www.nation.co.ke/newsplex/opioids/2718262-4700848-tm1dq/index.html>

BACKGROUND READING ON GENDER ROLES

What should I know about gender?²⁷

- Gender equality means that the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female.
- Child marriage threatens the wellbeing of girls and the society as whole. It denies girls access to education and other basic human rights.
- Female genital mutilation (FGM) is an extreme form of violence against women and girls. Do not support FGM.
- Do not support bullying or teasing, especially on the basis of gender. Do not tease your friends by saying things like: “Don’t be a sissy.”
- Explore different activities that interest you even if those activities are deemed by society as appropriate for the opposite sex. For example, a girl who has an interest in football or a boy who wishes to learn how to sew.
- Boys and girls should feel free to explore their emotions.
- Attribute compliments to achievements and abilities rather than appearance.
- Read books that show girls and boys taking on differing roles at home, in the workplace, and within their childhood.
- Identify role models that defied gender stereotypes and aim to learn from them, e.g., Wangari Maathai.
- Aim for inclusive play and interaction at school or in your community.

²⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/gender-equality>; <https://novakdjokovicfoundation.org/how-to-send-positive-gender-messages-to-children/>

BACKGROUND READING ON THE BEGINNING OF MY CAREER PATH

Career planning²⁸

Talk to your school counselor or teacher regarding how they help kids plan for their future careers.

Discuss careers with your caregiver to help you identify the types of things you enjoy doing. Look for career opportunities in your area or community that allow kids to learn about careers. This can help eliminate or spur an interest in different fields.

Remember that it is okay to change. Change brings about learning and no one has to stay in the same career forever. However, anything worth doing takes commitment. Commit to a decision long enough to give it a chance to pay off.

Prioritize. There are various factors involved in choosing a career: time, money, opportunities, vacation days, and location. Determine what is most important to you as this is essential in deciding the type of career in which you will flourish. Some jobs pay very well but offer limited time off.

Reflect on which type of career would suit you?²⁹

The first step towards finding a fulfilling career is thinking about the type of life you want. It is also important to consider what you think a good career means to you. For some people, a fulfilling career might mean one that pays well, whereas others might see a promising career as one that allows you to manage your workload or be an independent business owner.

Values

To help you determine what a fulfilling career looks like to you, try arranging the following statements in order of how important they are to you:

- A job with a high paying salary is important to me.
- I value having the freedom to work using my initiative.
- I enjoy being part of a team and working with other people towards a common goal.
- I take direction well, and I prefer to follow instructions from others.
- I want to be my own boss.

Consider the order in which you have placed these statements. The ones that you have placed at the top of your list are most likely the ones that you value the most when thinking about careers. Try to consider your values when conducting your research as this can impact what type of career you might want to pursue.

Interests

How do you spend your time after school and on the weekend? Do you have a particular hobby that you enjoy? Do you play any sports? Do you spend most of your time with friends in your own company?

Your personal interests can be a good starting point for reflecting on possible career options. If you are able to find a career working in an industry that you have a genuine passion for, then you will get more job satisfaction and will generally be happier with your career choices.

Skills

What are you good at? Do you have a talent for writing? Are you good with numbers? Maybe you can play a guitar? Whereas every skill can be developed, most of us have one or two that just seem to come naturally to us. When it comes to reflecting on your career options, it can help to think about what skills you already have. If you're a people person and are good at talking people round then perhaps a career in sales or PR would be good for you? Or if you work well with numbers, then perhaps you should look at a career in finance or management.

²⁸ <https://www.brighthubeducation.com/parenting-teens/128736-planning-a-career-for-life-for-teens/>
²⁹ <https://successatschool.org/blog/515/Careers-Advice-for-Teenagers>

Qualities

Are you a naturally outgoing person, or are you more reserved? Do you prefer to think things through logically or trust your instincts? Taking the time to think about your personal qualities can help ensure that you choose a suitable career in line with your personality.. For example, some careers are known for being high-pressured and busy, whereas others are known for being more creative, requiring you to think on your feet.

BACKGROUND READING ON MONEY MATTERS

All about money³⁰

- People earn money through working; by providing goods or services. Money comes from working hard and receiving a remuneration for a service or a good.
- Learn the difference between a want and a need; emotional purchases, a desire (want), necessary ones, or something for survival (need). Work within your budget. Learn how to prepare budgets by starting off with one for your school shopping.
- Start saving early. Save your pocket money for something you will need in the future. You can put your savings in an old tin or, if able, open a bank account where your money will be safe and can earn an interest (when money grows in value over time). Please note that even debt and loans earn an interest over time.
- Prepare a wish list of the things you may wish to obtain. Sit down with your caregiver/guardian/teacher and prioritize which items are important to have and set a goal and timeline for when you will purchase them.
- If you cannot afford to pay for it now, then understand that you cannot afford it. Beware of credit and taking loans to meet your budget. Be cautious of money lending apps. Loans earn huge interest and thus are expensive to repay.
- You will be required to pay taxes to the government from your employer or business. Taxes are money that the government collects from its citizens in order to provide services like roads, health care, etc.
- Learn to share—donate money to charity or support a worthy cause in your community. Keep in mind that giving affects the people receiving as well as positively impacting the giver, too.
- Learn how to be content—do not yearn for things simply because you have seen a friend with that specific item. It is normal, however, to have those feelings.
- Learn to share. Donate money to charity and support a worthy cause in your community

³⁰<https://www.parents.com/kids/responsibility/money-management/lessons-teach-kids-about-money/>; <https://www.thesimpledollar.com/financial-wellness/how-to-teach-kids-about-money-from-toddlers-to-teens/>; <https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/how-to-teach-kids-about-money>

BACKGROUND READING ON CITIZENSHIP

Pillars of character³¹

- **Trustworthiness:** Be honest and do not deceive, cheat, or steal. Be reliable and keep promises. Have the courage to do the right thing even when difficult. Be loyal — stand by your family, friends, and country.
- **Respect:** Treat others with respect; do not insult or call other people names. Be considerate of the feelings of others. Do not threaten, hit, or hurt anyone. Deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements.
- **Responsibility:** Do what you are supposed to do. Keep on trying, and always do your best. Use self-control. Be self-disciplined. Think before you act — consider the consequences. Be accountable for your choices. Take care of your environment.
- **Fairness:** Share and do not show favoritism. Play by the rules and lose honorably. Be open-minded and listen to others. Do not take advantage of others. Pursue equity.
- **Caring:** Be kind and compassionate and show you care. Find a way to express gratitude every day. Forgive others. Help people in need. Treat people with kindness or generosity. Protect and care for the environment.
- **Citizenship:** Cooperate with others. Make your school, community, or country better. Get involved in community affairs, stay informed, and most importantly, vote! Be a good neighbor and obey laws and rules. Respect authority.

KENYAN BILL OF RIGHTS

As a Kenyan citizen, you are entitled to many rights as outlined in Chapter 4 of Kenya's constitution.

Every child has the right--

(a) To a name and nationality from birth; The Constitution of Kenya 37

(b) To free and compulsory primary education;

(c) To essential nutrition, shelter, and health care;

(d) To be protected from abuse, neglect, harmful cultural practices, all forms of violence, inhuman treatment and punishment, and hazardous or exploitative labor;

(e) To parental care and protection, which includes equal responsibility of the mother and father to provide for the child, whether they are married to each other or not; and

(f) Not to be detained, except as a measure of last resort, and when detained, to be held--

(a) For the shortest appropriate period; and

(ii) Separate from adults and conditions that take account of the child's sex and age.

A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.

(1) A person with any disability is entitled--

(a) To be treated with dignity and respect and to be referred to in a manner that is not demeaning;

(b) To access educational institutions and facilities for persons with disabilities that are integrated into society to the extent compatible with the interests of the person;

(c) To reasonable access to all places, public transport, and information;

(d) To use sign language, Braille, or other appropriate means of communication; and

(e) To access materials and devices to overcome constraints arising from the person's disability.

The State shall ensure the progressive implementation of the principle that at least five percent of the public members in elective and appointive bodies are persons with disabilities.

³¹ <https://charactercounts.org/program-overview/six-pillars/>

The State shall take measures, including affirmative action programs, to ensure that the young people—

(a) Access relevant education and training;

(b) Have opportunities to associate, be represented, and participate in political, social, economic, and other spheres of life;

(c) Access employment; and

(d) Are protected from harmful cultural practices and exploitation.

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