



ECOMAP TOOLKIT

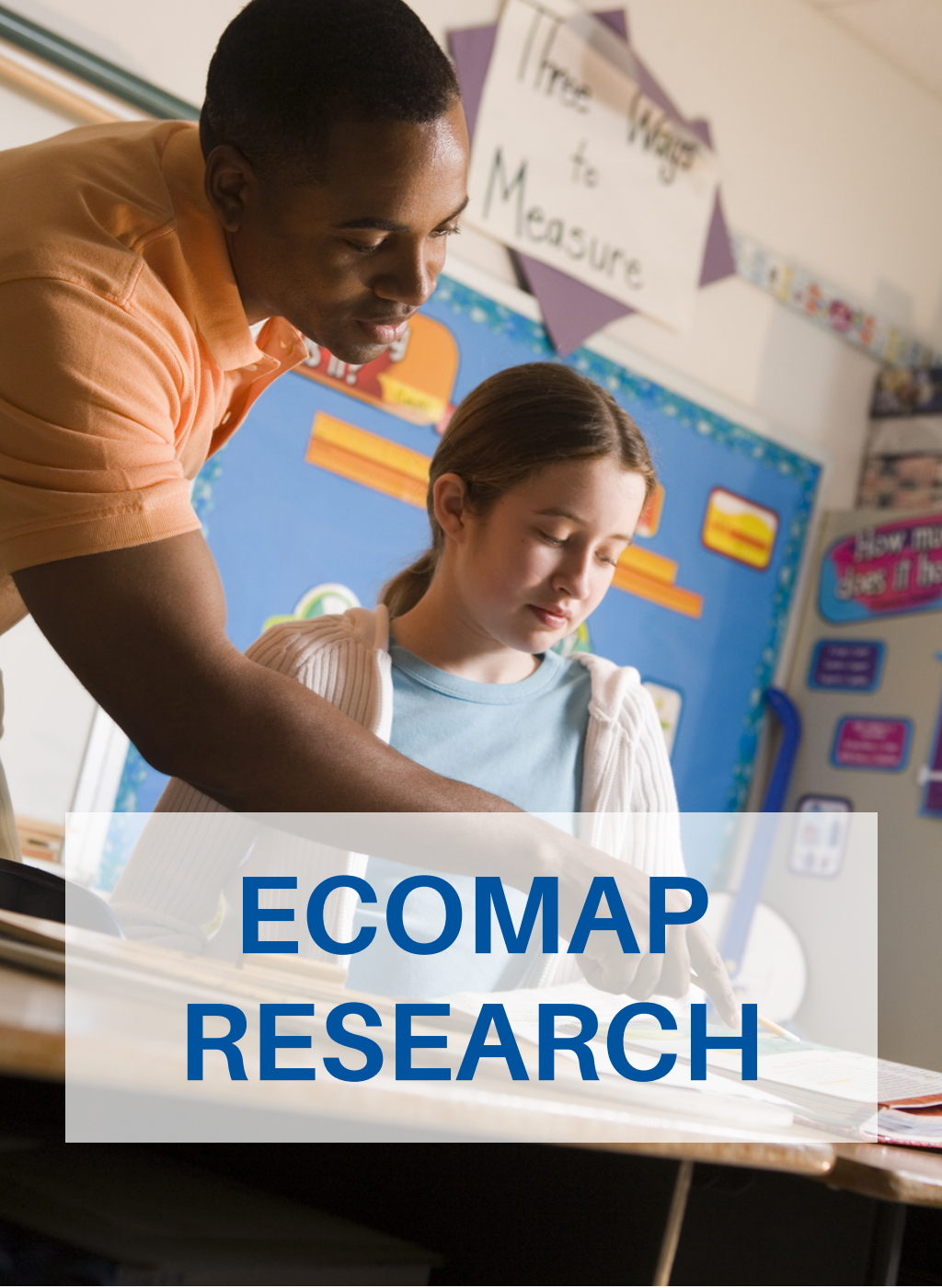
25
Celebrating 25 Years



Communities
In Schools®
Mid-America

Table of Contents

Research	3
Ecomap Directions.....	6
How to Complete Ecomaps.....	7
Talk With Your Students	7
Matrix.....	9
Blank Ecomap.....	10
Individual Ecomap.....	11
Family Support Questionnaire.....	13
Community Ecomap.....	16
Ecomap Evaluation	18
Five Relationships.....	21
Strong Relationships.....	22
Ecomap Activities	23
Healthy Relationships.....	25
New Relationships	52
Improving Relationships	59
References	109
Additional Resources	110



ECOMAP RESEARCH



Communities
In Schools®
Mid-America

Research

What is An Ecomap?

An Ecomap is an important diagram that maps family and community systems' process over time. They represent a type of research that uses an "Approach in which participants gather data in their own setting, give voice to participants who are some-times overlooked, and allows a practitioner's knowledge to benefit a study" (Bennet and Grant, 2016).

Ecomaps were created in the 1970s by a social worker named Dr. Ann Hartman. Her goal was to capture and organize the complexity of the ecological system of an individual that includes the family and the total environment. This diagram would essentially represent a social "solar system" in which a "Family genogram is placed in the position of the sun, at the center, and other important people and institutions in their life space are depicted with circles around the center, like planets around the sun" (Michigan State University, n.d.).

Essentially, Ecomaps were intended to be a tool for creating a 'snapshot' picture of individuals in a support network and the types of relationships those individuals had. This visual tool is used by many social workers with families and individuals as a participatory way to involve clients in describing and organizing the various elements impacting their lives. Some question this method of research because of its

meticulousness, but others are strong proponents because it allows for collaboration. "Ecomaps...provide a way to visualize the quality of those connections either as positive and nurturing or negative wrought with conflict and stress. Connections can also be considered strong or weak" (ECOMAP, n.d.).

An Ecomap can be a powerful tool for discovering possible sources of depression and anxiety as well as uncovering hidden support systems in friends, neighbors, clubs, professional agencies, charities, and social or religious organizations.

-(Making Access Happne, 2016)

Research

Why Are They Important?

An Ecomap can be used to gain a greater understanding of the client and the relationships that influence them. It is a good way to start a discussion and ask the right questions in counseling. Robin McWilliam, Ph.D., began using Ecomaps as a component of his Routines Based Intervention approach. In his article "Understanding the Family Ecology" (2001), Dr. McWilliam calls the Ecomap the "most important activity of the intake visit." It provides the team with the family's "perceived informal, formal and immediate supports" (Making Access Happen, 2016).

Additionally, Ecomaps are useful because they "assist clients in describing, organizing, and understanding the ways in which the client relates to and with each of the systems in their lives. Ecomaps reveal not only the relationships themselves, but the quality of those relationships in the ways that the client chooses to classify them" (The Ecomap - A Social Work Assessment Tool, n.d.).

Ecomaps give workers a comprehensive picture of many things, to include: family dynamics, connections to their social systems and the community, the family unit's level of connection to the external world, areas of deprivation where resources may be needed or strengthened, and areas of service duplication.

-Brandi Brown and Wendy, Alabama's Early Intervention System

They can also assist in providing the interviewer with family information. It is critical to understand the people with whom families are connected—so as to utilize their existing supports without inventing new ones. Understanding the social supports of families is positively linked with achievement of early intervention outcomes.



ECOMAP DIRECTIONS



Communities
In Schools®
Mid-America

How to Complete Ecomaps

Every Site Coordinator is tasked with completing an Ecomap for each of their caseload students. These documents are completed at the beginning and at the end of the year.

3 Steps to fill out Ecomaps

1. Talk With Your Student
2. Utilize the Ecomap Matrix
3. Fill Out the Blank Ecomap

Talk With Your Student

Explain what an Ecomap is. Remind your student that they do not have to share anything that they are not comfortable with.



Utilizing the Ecomap Matrix

Filling out a student's Ecomap can be tricky as there can be inconsistencies in how students classify "Strong," "Stressed," and "Broken" relationships. For example, one student can state he has a "Broken" relationship with his mother because she would not let him have a cookie for breakfast while another student might classify her relationship with her mother as "Broken" because she hasn't spoken to her mother in three years.

These inconsistencies led to the creation of a document designed to assist in determining relationship scores for your student's Ecomaps. This document is called the Ecomap Matrix. Site Coordinators can use this document when filling out Individual Ecomaps with their students.

Individual Ecomaps Give Workers a Comprehensive Picture of:

- Your student's immediate relationships
 - Family, friends, neighbors, teachers, etc.
- The quality of those relationships, as classified by the client
- The individual's ecology and his/her/their environment
 - An assessment of his/her/their ecology

The domain questions in the Ecomap Matrix have been created based on the five elements the Search Institute has identified that make relationships powerful in young people's lives. Young people are more likely to grow up successfully when they experience developmental relationships with important people in their lives. Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them.

Utilizing the Ecomap Matrix

Ecomap Matrix

Domain	1 (Broken)	2 (Broken/Stressed)	3 (Stressed)	4 (Stressed/Strong)	5 (Strong)	Score
Do they push you to get better?	No, they don't care how I do.	Sometimes, but I don't think they care how I do.	They push me sometimes, and they want me to be better.	They usually push me to be better.	Yes, they want me to be my best.	
Do they help you complete tasks and achieve goals?	No, they don't care how I do.	They only help me if they have to.	They help sometimes.	They want to help, but they don't always have time.	Yes, they always help me when I need it.	
Do they treat you with respect and give you a say?	No, they don't care about my opinion.	They've asked for my opinion before, but not very often.	They don't usually ask for my opinion, but they listen to my ideas.	They usually ask me what I think and listen to what I say.	Yes, they want to hear what I think and care what I say.	
Do they pay attention when you're together?	They never pay attention to me.	They usually ignore me.	They'll pay attention if I ask for it.	They try and pay attention, but don't always succeed.	They always pay attention to me when we're together.	
Do they expose you to new ideas, experiences, and places?	No, they don't introduce me to anything new.	They have once or twice.	They introduce me to new things sometimes.	They try but don't always have time.	Yes, they want me to learn new things to expand my possibilities for my future.	

Total Score:

How to Determine Your Student's Relationship Score:

To determine the score of your student's relationship for their Ecomap, go through each domain question and assign it a number in the score column. Once you have completed all the questions, add up the total score and put that number in the blank space next to "Total Score." This is the number you will use.

- Total scores that fall in the range 5-11: **Broken Relationship**
- Total scores that fall in the range 12-18: **Stressed Relationship**
- Total scores that fall in the range 19-25: **Strong Relationship**

Utilizing the Ecomap Matrix

Example 1

Domain	1 (Broken)	2 (Broken/Stressed)	3 (Stressed)	4 (Stressed/Strong)	5 (Strong)	Score
Do they push you to get better?	No, they don't care how I do.	Sometimes, but I don't think they care how I do.	They push me sometimes, and they want me to be better.	They usually push me to be better.	Yes, they want me to be my best.	4
Do they help you complete tasks and achieve goals?	No, they don't care how I do.	They only help me if they have to.	They help sometimes.	They want to help, but they don't always have time.	Yes, they always help me when I need it.	2
Do they treat you with respect and give you a say?	No, they don't care about my opinion.	They've asked for my opinion before, but not very often.	They don't usually ask for my opinion, but they listen to my ideas.	They usually ask me what I think and listen to what I say.	Yes, they want to hear what I think and care what I say.	4
Do they pay attention when you're together?	They never pay attention to me.	They usually ignore me.	They'll pay attention if I ask for it.	They try and pay attention, but don't always succeed.	They always pay attention to me when we're together.	3
Do they expose you to new ideas, experiences, and places?	No, they don't introduce me to anything new.	They have once or twice.	They introduce me to new things sometimes.	They try but don't always have time.	Yes, they want me to learn new things to expand my possibilities for my future.	3

Total Score: 16

- Total scores that fall in the range 5-11: **Broken Relationship**
- Total scores that fall in the range 12-18: **Stressed Relationship**
- Total scores that fall in the range 19-25: **Strong Relationship**

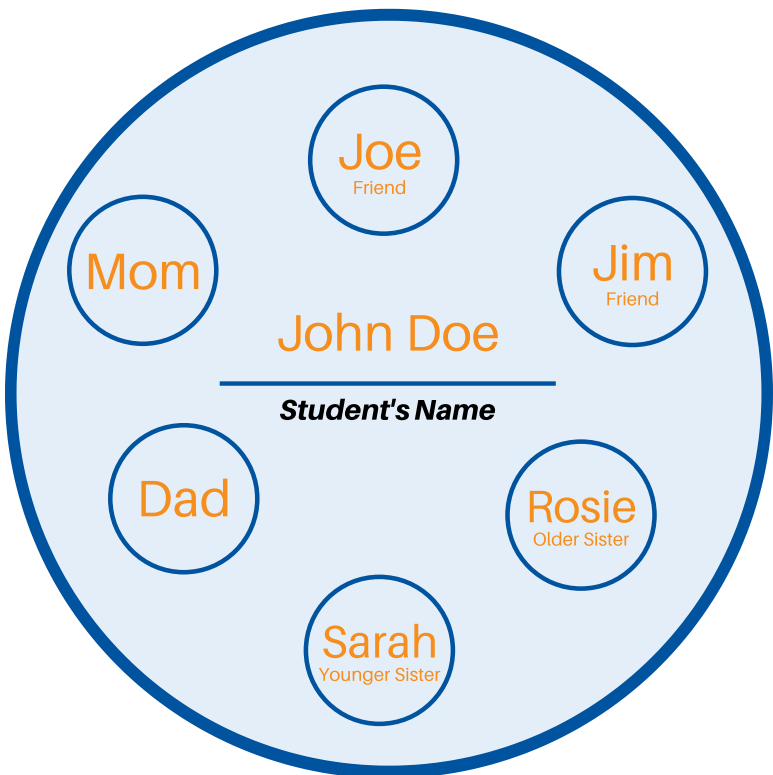
Example 1: In this example, the Site Coordinator has gone through the Ecomap Matrix with his/her/their student. The Site Coordinator has circled the score that best reflected the answer that the student gave to the domain questions. After going through each question, the Site Coordinator has tallied up the scores for a total score of 16. Using the key, the Site Coordinator now knows that he/she/they can classify this relationship as "Stressed" on the Ecomap. The Site Coordinator will repeat this process for each student relationship listed on his/her/their Ecomap. This document can be found on the X Drive here: [X:\Field Operations\Eco Mapping\Research](#)

Fill Out the Blank Individual Ecomap

Now that you have completed the Ecomap Matrix, you are ready to fill out your student's Individual Ecomap.

To Fill in The Individual Ecomap:

- Write the student's name on the line and the names of those with whom your student has a relationship in the circles.

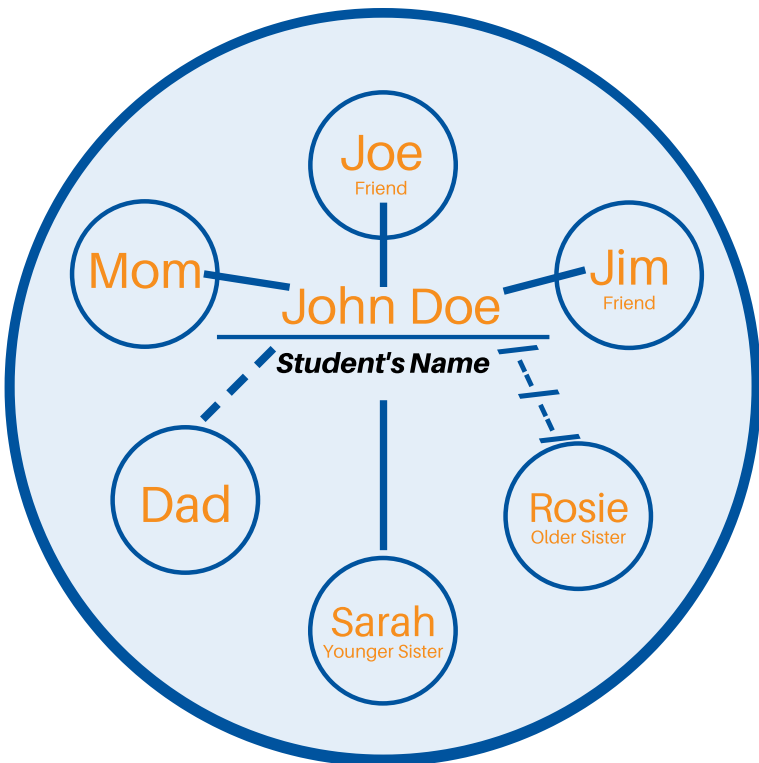


Fill Out the Blank Individual Ecomap

Using the information you gathered from Step 2, "Utilizing the Ecomap Matrix," assign each of the relationships their correct relationship score. Represent this with the correct line.

To Fill in The Individual Ecomap

- Connect the circles to the student's name with the correct line.
 - Strong Relationship: _____
 - Stressed Relationship: - - -
 - Broken Relationship: /- - /- - /



Expanding Upon Your Student's Ecomap

Community Ecomap

After completing the required Individual Ecomap for their students, some Site Coordinators might want to expand upon the activity. In this case, the Site Coordinator would complete the Community Ecomap for his/her/their Student.

Community Ecomaps Give Workers a Comprehensive Picture of:

- Family members connections to social support systems
 - Housing/income support, counseling, justice programs, etc.
- Family members connections to their community
 - Family friends, neighbors, sports clubs, spiritual influences, etc.
- The whole family unit's level of connectedness to the external world
- Areas of deprivation where sources may need to be mobilized
- Areas of service duplication

To complete a Community Ecomap, the Site Coordinator will need to utilize the Family Supports Questionnaire during one of the monthly check-ins with their student's legal guardians.

Utilizing the Family Supports Questionnaire

Family Supports Questionnaire:

Domain	No	Yes		
	n/a	0 (Broken)	.5 (Stressed)	1 (Strong)
Does your family partake in early intervention or other educational or therapy services?		We use these services but don't think they help or are useful.	We use these services and think they help sometimes.	We enjoy attending these services and think they are beneficial.
Does your family partake in any medical services?		We use these services but don't think they help or are useful.	We use these services and think they help sometimes.	We use these services and think they are extremely beneficial.
Does your family partake in any financial assistance programs?		We use these services but don't think they help or are useful.	We use these services and think they help sometimes.	We use these services and think they are extremely beneficial.
Does your family partake in any recreational activities?		We participate in recreational activities, but we don't enjoy them.	We participate in recreational activities, but we don't always enjoy them.	We love participating in our recreational activities!
Does your family have any religious affiliations?		We participate in religious activities, but we don't enjoy them.	We participate in religious activities, but we don't always enjoy them.	We love participating in our religious activities!
Does your family partake in any additional programs or services?		We participate in additional activities, but we don't enjoy them.	We participate in additional activities, but we don't always enjoy them.	We love participating in our additional activities!

How to Determine the Relationship Score:

Go through each domain question with your family. If they answer "No," move onto the next question. If they answer "Yes," determine whether it is a "Broken," "Stressed," or "Strong" relationship.

- If the relationship is **"Broken,"** it will be represented by a **/-/-/-/** line on the Ecomap
- If the relationship is **"Stressed,"** it will be represented by a **- - -** line on the Ecomap
- If the relationship is **"Strong,"** it will be represented by a **—** line on the Ecomap

Utilizing the Family Supports Questionnaire

Example 2

Domain	No	Yes		
	n/a	0 (Broken)	.5 (Stressed)	1 (Strong)
Does your family partake in early intervention or other educational or therapy services?	✓	We use these services but don't think they help or are useful.	We use these services and think they help sometimes.	We enjoy attending these services and think they are beneficial.
Does your family partake in any medical services?		We use these services but don't think they help or are useful.	We use these services and think they help sometimes.	We use these services and think they are extremely beneficial.
Does your family partake in any financial assistance programs?		We use these services but don't think they help or are useful.	We use these services and think they help sometimes.	We use these services and think they are extremely beneficial.
Does your family partake in any recreational activities?		We participate in recreational activities, but we don't enjoy them.	We participate in recreational activities, but we don't always enjoy them.	We love participating in our recreational activities!
Does your family have any religious affiliations?		We participate in religious activities, but we don't enjoy them.	We participate in religious activities, but we don't always enjoy them.	We love participating in our religious activities!
Does your family partake in any additional programs or services?	✓	We participate in additional activities, but we don't enjoy them.	We participate in additional activities, but we don't always enjoy them.	We love participating in our additional activities!

If the relationship is **"Broken,"** it will be represented by a /-/-/-/ line on the Ecomap
 If the relationship is **"Stressed,"** it will be represented by a - - - line on the Ecomap
 If the relationship is **"Strong,"** it will be represented by a — line on the Ecomap

Example 2: In this example, the Site Coordinator has gone through the Family Supports Questionnaire with the parents or legal guardians of the caseload student. This is done during one of the monthly check-ins with the caseload student's parents or legal guardians. The Site Coordinator has circled the score that best reflected the answer that the parents or legal guardians gave to the domain questions. After going through each question, the Site Coordinator now knows how to classify each activity or service on the Ecomap. This document can be found on the X Drive here: [X:\Field Operations\Eco Mapping\Research](#)

Fill Out the Blank Community Ecomap

To Fill in The Community Ecomap:

- Write the student's name in the center box. Fill the boxes at the top with the student's family and friends. Boxes on the side will be filled with places of support. Boxes on the bottom will be filled with community resources the family utilizes.

Fill the top with names of friends, family, and neighbors. People you see most.

Jim-Friend	Dad	Sarah-Lil Sis
Joe-Friend	Mom	Rosie-Older Sis
School	Name: John Doe	
Baptist Church		
CIS	Food Stamps	Mrs. Smith - Social Worker

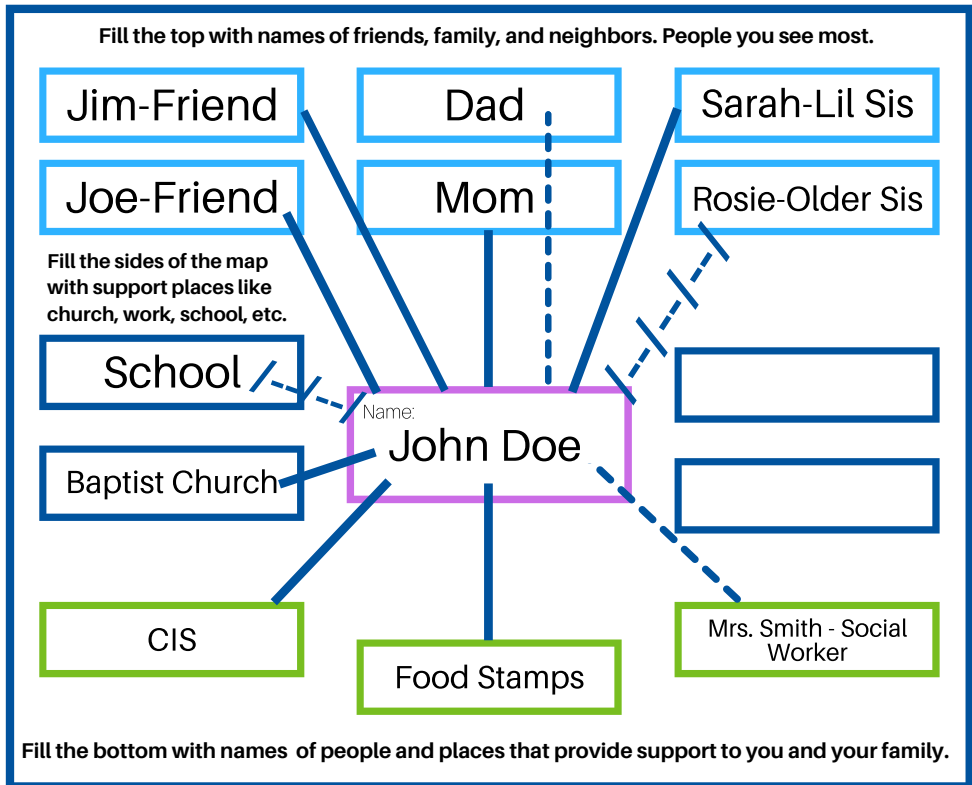
Fill the sides of the map with support places like church, work, school, etc.

Fill the bottom with names of people and places that provide support to you and your family.

Fill Out the Blank Community Ecomap

To Fill in The Community Ecomap:

- Connect the outside boxes to the box in the center with the correct relationship line.
 - Strong Relationship: ———
 - Stressed Relationship: - - -
 - Broken Relationship: /-/-/






ECOMAP EVALUATION

How to Evaluate Ecomaps

How Do Ecomaps Relate to Communities In Schools of Mid-America?

As a Site Coordinator, you are probably thinking, "I've finished my Ecomaps, and now what? How can I use this information I have learned from these documents?" Don't worry! We've got your back.

Young people are more likely to grow up successfully when they experience developmental relationships with important people in their lives. Founder of CIS, Bill Milliken said,

 **It is relationships, not programs, that change children...’ We now know that relationships have a lot to do with brain development..the ‘relationship gap’ is having serious impacts on how young people learn - or rather, don't” (Erquiaga, 2018).**

This relationship gap is more pronounced and concerning for young people from marginalized communities. By addressing this gap, CIS can help its students address the inequities they experience in many facets of their lives, including education. If a student is in adverse circumstances at home, the adults in his or her life may not be able to provide all five elements that encompass a developmental relationship. Non-existent relationships or relationships with missing elements leave a gap in our lives (Erquiaga, 2018).

Since Ecomaps demonstrate the relationships in student's lives and the strength of those relationships, Site Coordinators can use these documents to determine relationships that may need improving and if students are lacking healthy relationships.

How to Evaluate Ecomaps

What is a Healthy Relationship Goal?

So, how many developmental relationships should a person have? Is there a limit to the number of close connections a person can have? According to evolutionary psychologist from Oxford University, Dr. Robin Dunbar, the size of the average person's neocortex, the part of our brain responsible for sensory perception as well processing language and emotion, and concluded that our minds can deal with roughly 150 close connections. Within this number, one can break the connections down into categories according to intimacy. We tend to have a cluster of 10 close connections who round out our most important support network (Leaver, 2020).

After that, we have around 35 individuals that we would refer to as "friends" if we ran into them at the store, but they are not people we would talk to every day. Then, we have 100 people that we would consider our acquaintances (Leaver, 2020).

Typically, we have a **core group of five very close friends** — something Robin refers to as our 'support clique.' They're our real, ride-or-die, deep, meaningful connections (Leaver, 2020).

This core group of five people are the individuals that are essential to a person's happiness, self-esteem, and wellbeing. "Research by an academic called Susan Degges-White found that people with three to five close friends report the highest levels of life satisfaction" (Leaver, 2020).

Since research demonstrates that five close relationships promote the highest levels of satisfaction, the goal for our caseload students is to have five strong relationships. This can be completed by introducing new relationships or improving existing relationships.

How to Evaluate Ecomaps

YOUR STUDENT SHOULD HAVE 5 RELATIONSHIPS

CHECK THE NUMBER OF RELATIONSHIPS YOUR STUDENT HAS

This number can be found on their Ecomap. The goal is for your student to have at least 5 relationships.



HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH YOUR STUDENT

If your student doesn't have at least 5 relationships, talk to them about the people in their life. Go through the activities to help introduce new relationships to your student.

DOES YOUR STUDENT LIST YOU ON THEIR ECOMAP?

As your student's Site Coordinator, you should be listed as a relationship on your student's Ecomap. If you're not, figure out what you can do to strengthen that relationship!



CHECK IN WITH YOUR STUDENTS!

Make sure you continuously check in on your students and make sure that they have 5 relationships. If something changes, start the process over!

How to Evaluate Ecomaps

TURN YOUR STUDENT'S STRESSED OR BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS INTO STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

CHECK YOUR STUDENT'S ECOMAP

Look at your student's ecomap and find the relationships that are listed as either stressed or broken.



CREATE GOALS TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS

Figure out ways your student can improve these relationships. Work through the Ecomap activities with them or help mediate a conversation between the student and individual.

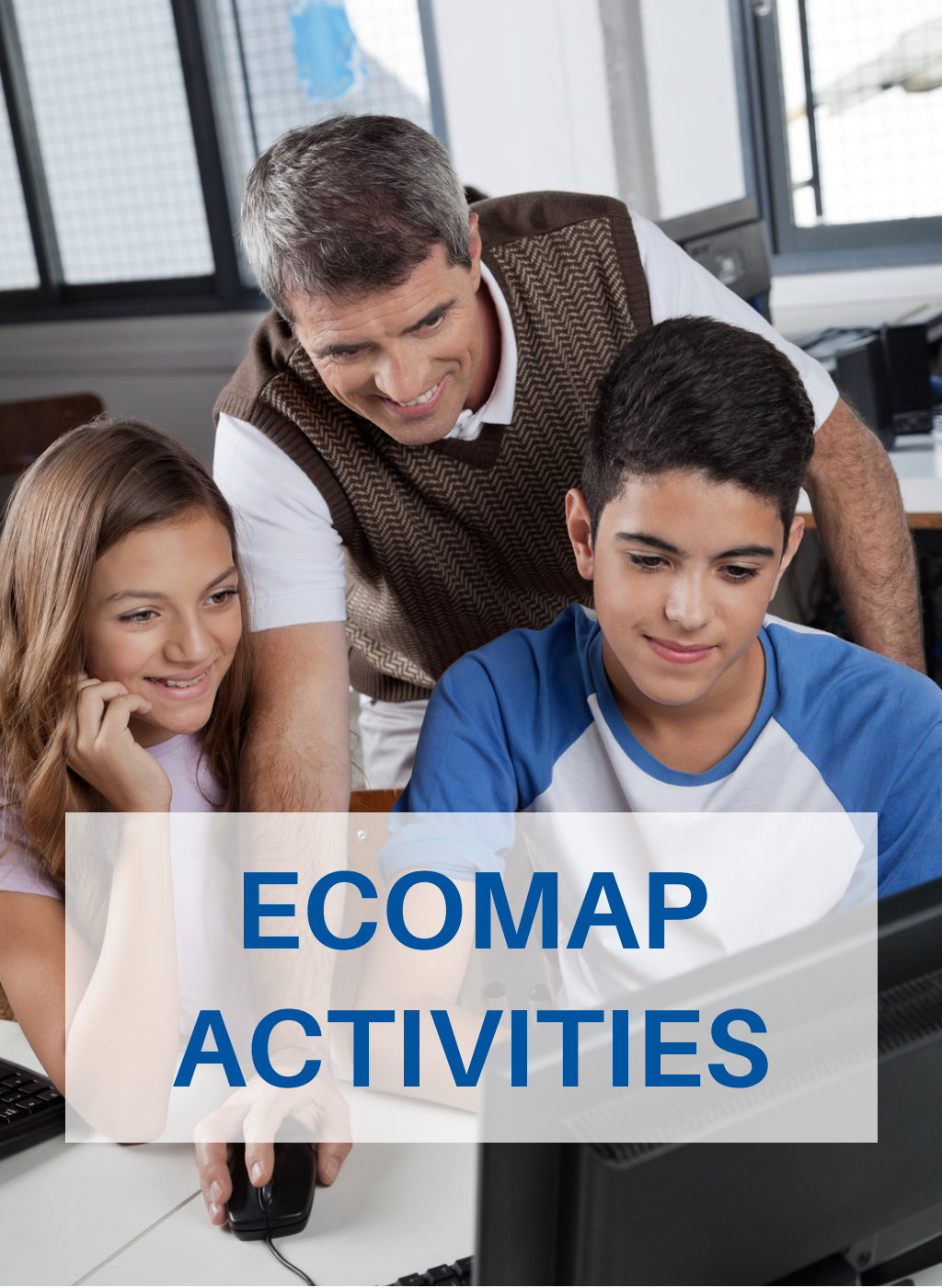
HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH YOUR STUDENT

Talk to your student about these relationships. Ask them what is making them stressed or broken. Ask what needs to happen to turn these relationships into strong ones.



CHECK IN WITH YOUR STUDENTS!

Make sure you continuously check in with your students about the progress they are making in these relationships. Readdress the goals you created with them and try new activities if necessary.



ECOMAP ACTIVITIES



Communities
In Schools®
Mid-America

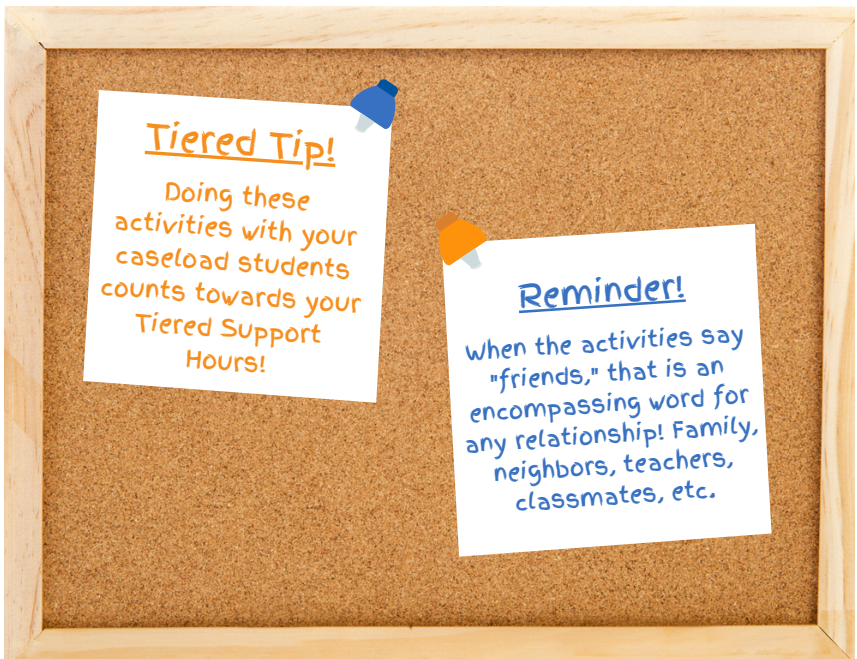
Activities

Ecomap Activities:

Overview:

In the next few sections, you will find different activities designed to work with your students in **three** different areas:

1. Recognizing and Participating in Healthy Relationships
2. Forming New Relationships and Friendships
3. Improving Stressed and Broken Relationships



Activities for Healthy Relationships

Overview:

The first step we all should take in forming a new relationship is recognizing what makes a relationship healthy or not. At Communities In Schools of Mid-America, we want our students to feel supported, respected, and cared for. For us, it is important to teach our students what makes a good relationship.

These activities are designed to help our students recognize what a good friend is so that they know what to look for while forming new relationships. In addition, we want them to have the ability to recognize an unhealthy relationship when they encounter it. We also want them, themselves, to embody healthy relationship characteristics.

Reminder, the word "Friends" in these activity sheets is an encompassing term that means friends, neighbors, teachers, classmates, family, etc.



Activities for Healthy Relationships

BE a GOOD Friend Activity

Objective:

The "BE a GOOD Friend" activity is designed to help students recognize what qualities make any kind of relationship healthy.

Materials/Preparations

Copy of "BE a GOOD Friend" Worksheet

Toys

Duration: 30 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

1. To make this activity more interactive, do it with a group of kids!
2. Have your students go through the worksheet individually.
3. Bring the group back together and have the students act out the different scenarios.
 - a. For example, have a student pretend to be sitting alone at lunch and instruct the other kids to approach that student.
 - b. Use toys as an alternative option! Have your students act out the different scenarios with the toys.
4. Have a discussion after each scenario about the actions your students took.



BE a GOOD Friend

Three ways I could be a better friend:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Three ways I could be kinder:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What would you do

1. If you saw someone without a lunch?
2. If you saw someone playing by themselves at recess?
3. If someone from your class was being picked on?

Activities for Healthy Relationships

What Kind of Friend...? Activity

Objective:

The "What Kind of Friend" activity is designed to help students recognize what qualities make any kind of relationship healthy.

Materials/Preparations

Copy of "What Kind of Friend..?" Worksheet

Markers

White board/poster board/blank paper

Tape

Duration: 15 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

1. On the whiteboard/poster board/blank paper, draw a line and write "Bad Friend" and "Good Friend" on either side of the line.
2. Have your students take turns and write the sentences from the activity worksheet in the correct column.
3. After they have gone through each sentence, have a discussion with your students about why they placed it in the "Bad Friend/Good Friend" column.

Alternative Activity Steps:

1. Place a line of tape on the floor in your room. Label one side "Good Friend," and the other "Bad Friend"
2. Read through the scenarios, and have your students move to the correct side of the tape.
3. Have a discussion after each scenario.

Activities for Healthy Relationships

What Kind of Friend...? Page 1

Name _____

Date _____

What Kind of Friend...?

What does a good friend do? What does a bad friend do? Read the sentences below and write them in the correct chart.

... talks behind your back

... tries to understand your problems

... cares about you and your problems

... doesn't help when you need it

... helps you when you are in need

... treats you in a nice and kind way

... tells your secrets to other people

... doesn't listen to your problems

... is always with you in bad times

... makes fun of you

... shouts at you when you make a mistake

... keeps your secrets

... shares everything with you

... only cares about himself/herself/themselves

Activities for Healthy Relationships

What Kind of Friend...? Page 2

A GOOD FRIEND...

1.	_____

2.	_____

3.	_____

4.	_____

5.	_____

6.	_____

7.	_____

A BAD FRIEND...

1.	_____

2.	_____

3.	_____

4.	_____

5.	_____

6.	_____

7.	_____

Activities for Healthy Relationships

What Kind of Friend...? Answer Key

A Good Friend

1. Cares about you and your problems
2. Helps you when you are in need
3. Is always with you in bad times
4. Shares everything with you
5. Tries to understand your problems
6. Treats you in a nice and kind way
7. Keeps secrets

A Bad Friend

1. Talks behind your back
2. Tells your secrets to other people
3. Shouts at you when you make a mistake
4. Only cares about himself/herself/themselves
5. Doesn't listen to your problems
6. Makes fun of you
7. Doesn't help when you need it

Activities for Healthy Relationships

What is a Friend? Activity

Objective:

The "What is a Friend" activity is designed to help students recognize what qualities make any kind of relationship healthy.

Materials/Preparations

Copy of "What is a Friend?" Worksheet

Markers

Poster board/blank paper

Other craft materials

Duration: 30 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

1. Have a conversation with your student(s) about what qualities make a great friend.
2. After your students come up with three to five qualities, have them draw those qualities on their paper/poster.
3. Have them share their pictures when they are done!

Activities for Healthy Relationships

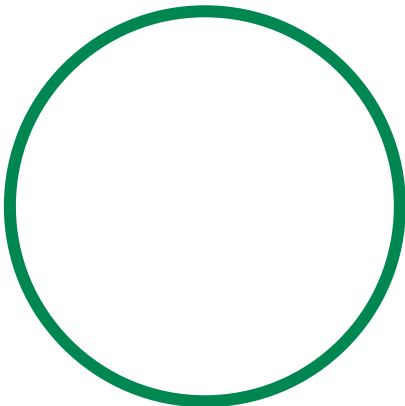
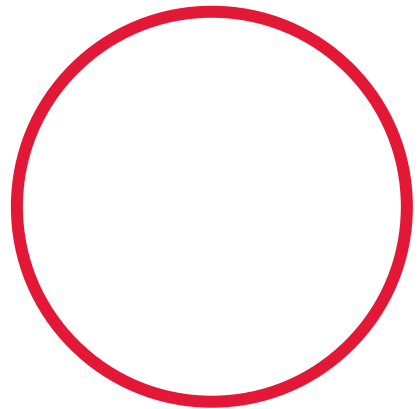
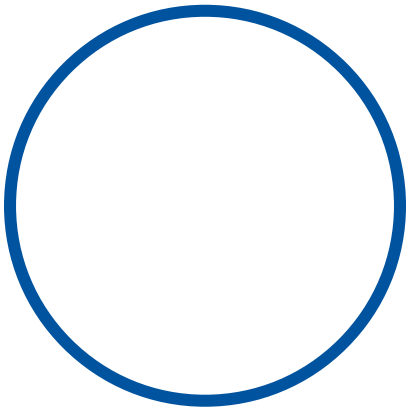
Name: _____

Date: _____

WHAT IS A FRIEND?

To have a friend, you first must be a friend.

Draw 3 ways you can be a good friend:



Activities for Healthy Relationships

Relationship Skills Activity

Objective:

The "Relationship Skills" activity is designed to help students recognize the qualities they possess that make relationships healthy.

Materials/Preparations	
Copy of "Relationship Skills" Worksheet	
Markers	
Popsicle Sticks	
Duration: 15 mins	Activity Type: Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Group <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Steps:

1. Have your students pick out three popsicle sticks. Have them write an "S," "A," and "N" on their sticks with their markers.
2. Go through each relationship skill and have your students hold up the popsicle stick for their answer.
3. Talk to them about each skill and why it is a positive or negative skill to have.

Activities for Healthy Relationships

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS



Under each column of the positives and negatives of friendship skills, identify yourself with a: **S** for sometimes, an **A** for always and an **N** for never.



- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take Turns | <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in conversations | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggression (hit others...) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Start Conversations | <input type="checkbox"/> Being bossy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Value opinions | <input type="checkbox"/> Arguing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Share | <input type="checkbox"/> Interrupt others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apologize appropriately | <input type="checkbox"/> Name calling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperate | <input type="checkbox"/> Whine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help others | <input type="checkbox"/> Complain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Showing off |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remain positive | <input type="checkbox"/> Dominating conversations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't join in unacceptable behaviors | <input type="checkbox"/> Breaking rules |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Follow the rules | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignore others opinions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Show genuine concern | <input type="checkbox"/> Being a poor sport |

Activities for Healthy Relationships

Relationship Building Activity

Objective:

The "Relationship Building" activity is designed to help students recognize what qualities they possess that make relationships healthy.

Materials/Preparations	
Copy of "Relationship Skills" Worksheet Zoom/Google Classroom/Skype	
Duration: 20 mins	Activity Type: Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Group <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Steps:

1. Have your students go through the worksheet individually.
2. Once everyone is finished, break your students up into groups and place them in breakout rooms.
3. In the breakout rooms, instruct your students to have a discussion about the worksheet.
4. After 5-10 minutes, bring the group back together and discuss as a bigger group.

Activities for Healthy Relationships

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING RATE YOURSELF

Need to work on it.....OK.....Average.....Good.....Excellent

1

2

3

4

5

What is your score for building and keeping relationships with friends, family, and important people in your life? _____

Provide an example of a time where your listening skills were key to support a good relationship: _____

Why are good communication skills important in good relationships?

Why is it important to have strong, healthy relationships?

Activities for Healthy Relationships

Relationships: Take Charge Activity

Objective:

The "Relationships: Take Charge" activity is designed to help students recognize what qualities make any kind of relationship healthy.

Materials/Preparations	
Copy of "Relationships: Take Charge" Worksheet Journal	
Duration: 25 mins	Activity Type: Individual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Group <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Steps:

1. Divide your students into three groups.
2. Assign each group either Cooperation, Communication, or Conflict Resolution.
3. Tell the groups that they have 10 minutes to come up with a skit to perform in front of everyone that demonstrates their word.
4. Have the groups take turns performing their skits and have a discussion after each one about their words.

Alternative Activity Steps:

1. For older students, go through the worksheet and discuss what Cooperation, Communication, and Conflict Resolution mean.
2. Have your students journal over the next few weeks and discuss situations where they utilize these three strategies.
3. Come back together after three weeks and discuss what they have journaled.

Activities for Healthy Relationships

RELATIONSHIPS: TAKE CHARGE



You are in charge of giving great advice to others on the following key relationship skills for when you are working in small groups or playing games together:

Cooperation:

Explain what it means to cooperate. List three rules that group members/friends need to follow:

Communication:

Explain what effective communication looks and sounds like among friends and classmates:

Conflict Resolution:

Explain what effective conflict resolution looks and sounds like among friends and classmates:

Activities for Healthy Relationships

How to Make and Keep Friends Activity

Objective:

The "How to Make and Keep Friends" activity is designed to help students recognize what qualities make any kind of relationship healthy.

Materials/Preparations

Copy of "How to Make and Keep Friends" Worksheet

Prepare definitions for each word beforehand

Duration: 25 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

1. Divide your students into groups.
2. Assign each group one of the words from the worksheet.
3. Tell the groups that they have 10 minutes to come up with a skit to perform in front of everyone that demonstrates their word.
4. Have the groups take turns performing their skits and have a discussion after each one about their words.

Activities for Healthy Relationships



NAME:

DATE:

How to Make and Keep Friends

List the character traits (trustworthy, honest, good listener, cooperative, and compassionate) required to make friends. Beside each trait, explain what it looks like and why it's important.

Example: Inclusiveness - We include everyone when we play, work, or when we're on teams. We value the opinions and contributions of others because we do not want to hurt the feelings of others. We want to treat others the way we would like to be treated.

Trustworthy

Honest

Good Listener

Cooperative

Compassionate

Activities for Healthy Relationships

The Spotlight Game Activity

Objective:

The "Spotlight Game" activity is designed to help students recognize what qualities make any kind of relationship healthy.

Materials/Preparations

Copy of "Spotlight Game" Worksheet

Red, Yellow, and Green item (Markers, toys, socks, stuffed animals, etc.)

Zoom or other online video service

Duration: 20 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

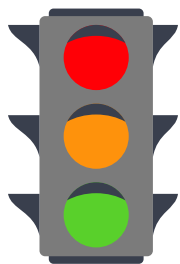
Steps:

1. Read through each scenario from the worksheet.
2. Instruct your students to hold up a red item for bad signs, a yellow item for warning signs, and a green item for good signs in a relationship.
3. After they have gone through each sentence, have a discussion with your students about why they picked bad, warning, or good.

*This activity can be done virtually through Zoom!

Activities for Healthy Relationships

The Spotlight Game Page 1



THE FRIENDSHIP SPOTLIGHT GAME

Instructions: The object of this game is to decide which scenarios are most compatible with each of the following three statements: "These are **bad** signs in a friendship", "These are **warning** signs in a friendship", and "These are **good** signs in a friendship".

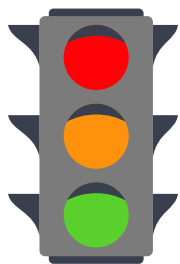
Read through each scenario and write them in the correct stoplight.

- Red for "These are bad signs in a friendship"
- Yellow for "These are warning signs in a friendship"
- Green for "These are good signs in a friendship"

Activity Tip: To make this more interactive, read the scenarios out loud for your students and have them hold up the colored spotlight they think the scenario fits best.

Activities for Healthy Relationships

The Spotlight Game Page 2



THE FRIENDSHIP SPOTLIGHT GAME

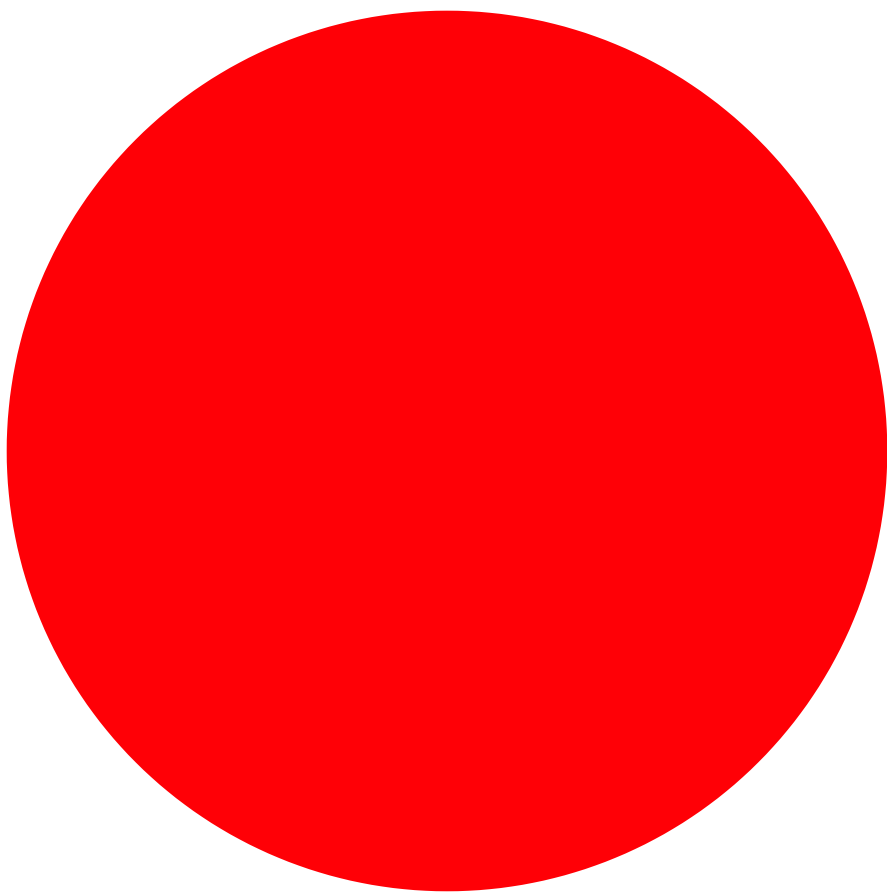
Scenarios

- You are afraid of your friend's temper
- You are nervous that if you tell your friend something personal, she/he/they will tell other people at school
- Your friend criticizes you or people you care about
- You usually feel happy when you are with this person
- Your friend respects your feelings and your opinions
- Your friend sometimes makes fun of you
- Your friend talks to you about his/her/their feelings
- Your friend threatens to hurt you
- Your friend bullies and makes fun of you or other kids at school
- You enjoy being with this person, but you also enjoy spending time with other friends
- Your friend tells you not to hang out with certain people
- Your friend pressures you to do things you do not want to do
- You say that you agree with your friend, even when you really don't. You are afraid they won't be your friend anymore if you disagree
- Your friend is happy when good things happen to you
- You rarely get to plan what the two of you will do together

Activities for Healthy Relationships

The Spotlight Game Page 3

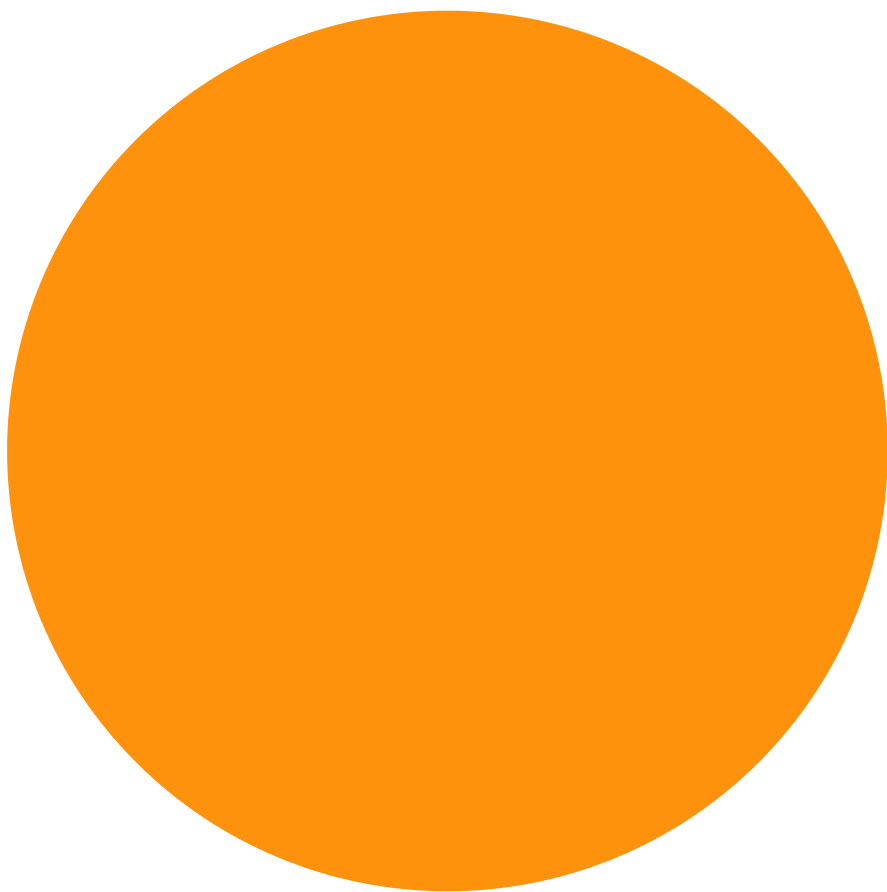
These are bad signs in a friendship:



Activities for Healthy Relationships

The Spotlight Game Page 4

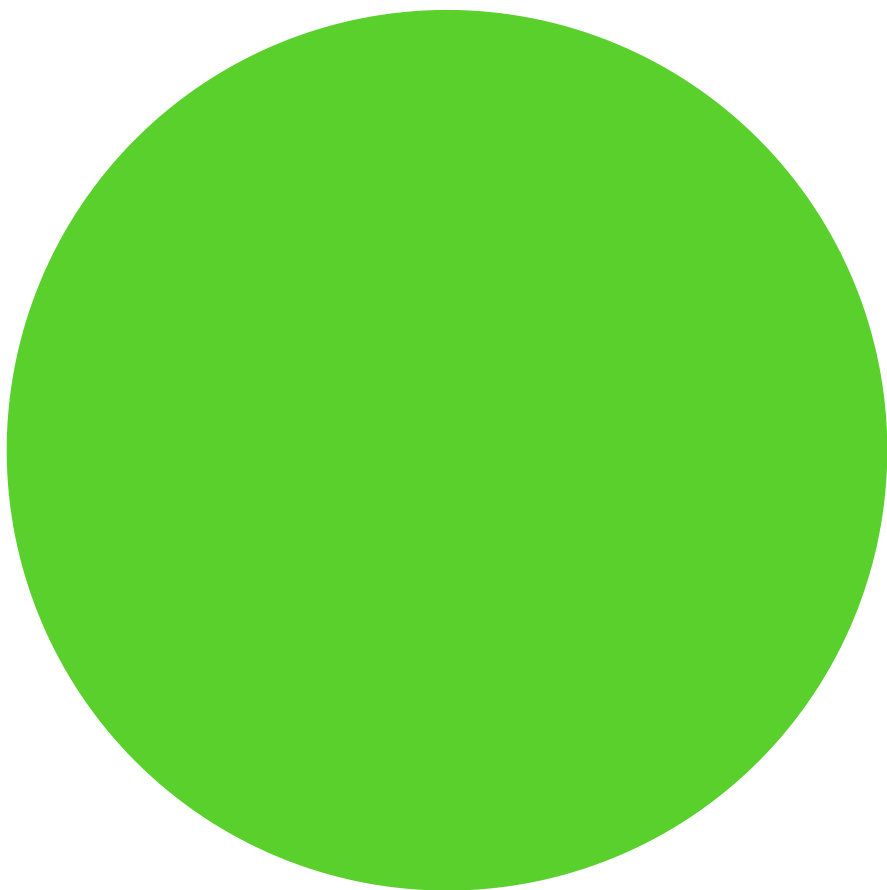
These are warning signs in a friendship:



Activities for Healthy Relationships

The Spotlight Game Page 5

These are good signs in a friendship:



Activities for Healthy Relationships

The Spotlight Game Answer Key

RED LIGHT: These are unhealthy/bad signs in a friendship

1. You are afraid of your friend's temper
2. Your friend criticizes you or people you care about
3. Your friend threatens to hurt you
4. Your friend bullies and makes fun of you or other kids at school
5. Your friend pressures you to do things you do not want to do

YELLOW LIGHT: These are warning signs in a friendship

1. You are nervous that if you tell your friend something personal, she/he/they will tell other people at school
2. Your friend sometimes makes fun of you
3. You rarely get to plan what the two of you will do together
4. Your friend tells you not to hang out with certain people
5. You say that you agree with your friend, even when you really don't. You are afraid they won't be your friend anymore if you disagree

GREEN LIGHT: These are healthy/good signs in a friendship

1. You usually feel happy when you are with this person
2. Your friend respects your feelings and your opinions
3. Your friend talks to you about his/her/their feelings
4. Your friend is happy when good things happen to you
5. You enjoy being with this person, but you also enjoy spending time with other friends

Activities for Healthy Relationships

The Self Advocacy Activity

Objective:

The "Self Advocacy" activity is designed to support students with developing communication for building relationships and new networks of support as they prepare for post-secondary life. Students will consider key questions concerning who they are, what they want, and ways they can express their needs and goals, enhancing their ability to identify and access resources and opportunities, as well as leverage their unique strengths, gifts, and interests.

Materials/Preparations

Copy of "Self Advocacy" Worksheet
Chart Paper
Pen/Markers

Duration: 60 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

1. Put the terms 'Self-awareness', 'Self-determination', and 'Self-advocacy' with definitions on the chart paper around the room. Cover the definitions to start. To gauge student(s) understanding of the terms, have them come up with a definition (in their own words), a symbol, or an example of what they think the terms mean to them.
 - a. Self-awareness: is having a clear perception of your identity, including strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, values, beliefs, motivation, and emotions
 - b. Self-determination: is each person's ability to make choices and manage their own life
 - c. Self-advocacy: is the ability to speak up for what you need, knowing your rights and responsibilities, and when to ask for support
2. Discuss with students the importance of progression and significance of each in the context of their transition into greater independence and potential. Explain the concept of an "elevator speech" and why it's important.
3. Pass out the worksheet. Have each student read it and complete it independently, taking notes and asking questions if they need to.
4. After the student(s) have finished the worksheet, they will share it with the facilitator or small group.

Activities for Healthy Relationships

High School Students

Self-Advocacy WORKSHEET

Directions:

As a young adult preparing for life after high school, it will be important for you to be able to communicate who you are and what you want for your future. This worksheet will be a simple reference you can use to build new relationships as you plan for your future and align the right people with the goals you've set for yourself. Fill in the blanks for the "elevator speech" and answer at least 4 questions under each of the sections.

My Elevator Speech

Hi, my name is _____ and I'm a Senior at _____ (School).

I am considering _____ as a possible career path.

This school year my goals are _____ (Attendance Goal).
_____ (Academic/College Career Goal). & _____ (Personal/Wellness Goal).

I'm interested in _____ & _____.

This year I would like help with _____.

Self-Awareness: Who I am

- I'm at my best when...
- I have dreams to...
- I learn best when...
- What motivates me most is...
- I stay grounded when I'm overwhelmed by...
- I value...
- I can express myself through...
- I communicate best when...
- I define success by...
- What brings me joy is...
- I'm naturally gifted at...
- I have to work hard at...
- I have my best ideas when...

Activities for Building New Relationships

High School Students



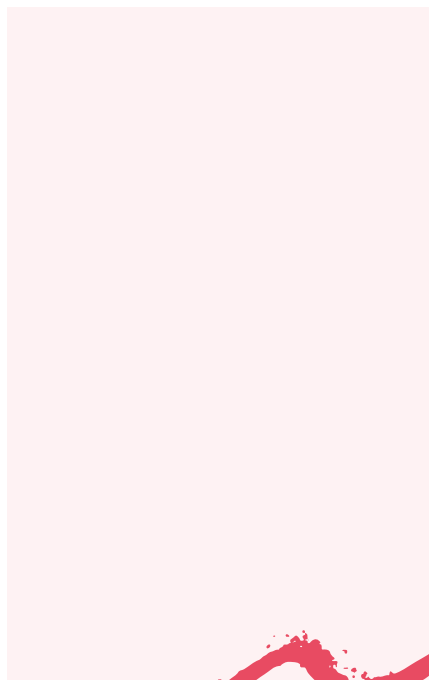
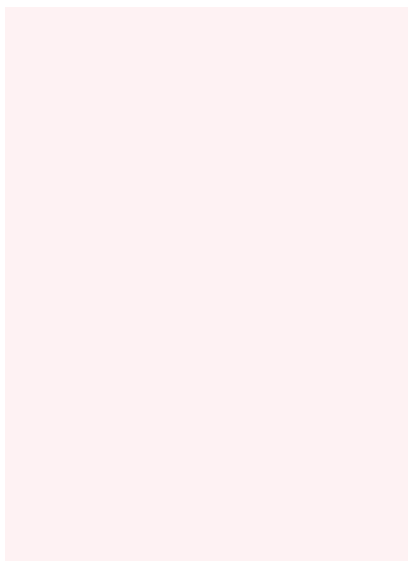
Self-Determination: What I Want

- Important choices I will make this year are....
- I plan to respond to challenges by...
- I need to find solutions to...
- I will define success by....
- This year I will practice leadership in...
- The following people are my thought partners and support system...



Self-Advocacy: How to Speak to My Needs

- I need to speak up for myself when...
- To accomplish my goals I need...
- Positive habits I can develop to improve my self confidence are...
- I can practice assertive (honest and respectful) communication with...
- Activities I can participate in to get my needs met are...
- If I have questions, need guidance, counseling, or advice at school I can talk to...
- I'm worth enough to persist in doing what is best for me, even when it seems impossible because...



Activities for Building New Relationships

Overview:

Since the goal of Communities In Schools of Mid-America is for all our students to have meaningful relationships in their lives, it is important to introduce new relationships when necessary. Forming new relationships can be a difficult task for some people. Many individuals might not know where to start.

These activities are designed to help students form new relationships. They will help our caseload students increase their number of relationships to five.

Reminder, the word "Friends" in these activity sheets is an encompassing term that means friends, neighbors, teachers, classmates, family, etc.



Activities for Building New Relationships

Name _____

Date _____

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

When you completed your Ecomap, you listed out your current relationships and the strength of those relationships. For this worksheet, you will be brainstorming new relationships and ways you can form those relationships.

List out some people who you want to have a relationship with. For example, a teacher, coach, or friend that you want to get to know better.

What is a good way to start a relationship with someone new?

List one thing you will do to begin your new relationship.

Activities for Healthy Relationships

Wanted: A True Friend Activity

Objective:

The "Wanted: A True Friend" activity is designed to help students recognize what qualities make any kind of relationship healthy.

Materials/Preparations

Copy of "Wanted: A True Friend" worksheet

Markers/glue/glitter/other craft materials

Poster board

Duration: 30 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

1. Have your student go through the worksheet.
2. Instruct your student to use the qualities they outlined in the worksheet to design their newspaper ad.
3. Utilizing the poster board and craft materials, have your student design their advertisement for a true friend.
4. **Reminder: a true friend can mean a positive relationship with family, neighbors, teachers, classmates, etc.**

Activities for Healthy Relationships

Building Friendships: Inviting Others to Play Activity

Objective:

The "Building Friendships: Inviting Other to Play" activity is designed to help students recognize good ways to make friends.

Materials/Preparations	
Copy of "Building Friendships: Inviting Others to Play" worksheet	
Duration: 30 mins	Activity Type: Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Group <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Steps:

1. Have your student go through the worksheet.
2. Have them act out each scenario
3. After each, ask your students if it was a good way or bad way to ask someone to play.
4. Talk to them about why it was a good/bad way.

Activities for Building New Relationships



Building Friendships Inviting Others to play

Circle each good way to ask or invite someone to play.

Discuss with a partner why the ones you did not circle are NOT good ways to ask or invite someone to play.

Would you like to play basketball at recess?	I guess I have to play with you.	My teacher said I have to be nice to you, so let's play.
Hey, who wants to play baseball?	We are going to the pool - want to come?	We should all play this game together.
I want to go to your house because you have better games.	I love that game! Could I play with you next time?	Hey kid, play ball with me now!

Activities for Building New Relationships

Building Friends Answer Key

Good ways to ask someone to play circled:

Would you like to play basketball at recess?	I guess I have to play with you.	My teacher said I have to be nice to you, so let's play.
Hey, who wants to play baseball?	We are going to the pool - want to come?	We should all play this game together
I want to go to your house because you have better games.	I love that game! Could I play with you next time?	Hey kid, play ball with me now!

Activities for Improving Relationships

Overview:

Healthy relationships are instrumental to our student's success. When our students are experiencing stressful relationships, they are unable to focus fully on their school work.

These activities are designed to help students improve their stressed or broken relationships. These activities also help students articulate what these individuals would need to do in order to improve that relationship.

Reminder, the word "Friends" in these activity sheets is an encompassing term that means friends, neighbors, teachers, classmates, family, etc.



Activities for Improving Relationships

NAME:

DATE:

Work to Improve Relationships

List out the people you have stressed or broken relationships with.
Then, write out one way you can make the relationship positive.

Activities for Improving Relationships

My Feelings, My Needs Activity

Objective:

The "My Feelings, My Needs" activity is designed to help students brainstorm ways to resolve their stressed or broken relationships.

Materials/Preparations

Copy of "My Feelings, My Needs" worksheet

Print out emoji faces that represent mad, sad, and scared

Markers/pens/colored pencils/etc.

Duration: 30 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

1. Pass out copies of the emoji faces to each student.
2. Have each student fill out the angry emoji face with what they feel when they are mad.
3. Repeat for sadness and scared.

Activities for Improving Relationships

NAME:


DATE:

My Feelings, My Needs

What do you need others to **say** or **do** when you feel mad, sad, and scared?

When I feel **MAD**, I need you to

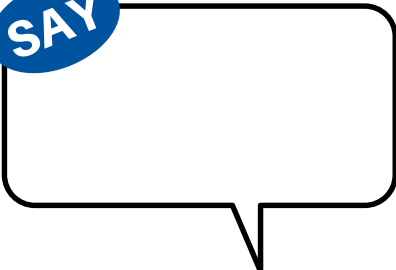
SAY



DO

When I feel **SAD**, I need you to

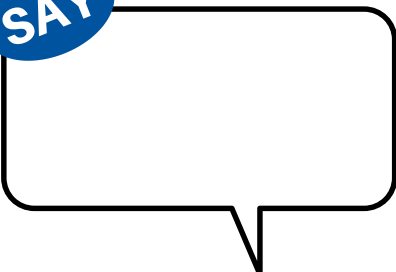
SAY



DO

When I feel **SCARED**, I need you to

SAY



DO

Activities for Improving Relationships

DR Checklist Activity

Objective:

A tool that provides a young person with the opportunity to tell an adult which actions in the Developmental Relationships Framework he or she would like to experience more often, less often, or at about the same frequency in their relationship.

Materials/Preparations

Copy of "DR Checklist" worksheet

Duration: 30 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

1. Explain that the DR Checklist is a simple worksheet that lists twenty actions that studies have shown it is good for young people to experience in their relationships with adults.
2. Tell your student that nobody else is going to see their copy of the Checklist except you and stress that the Checklist is not going to be used to evaluate them in any way.
3. Give them the checklist.
4. Tell them that to write the name of a person they have a stressed or broken relationship with at the top of the checklist.
5. Have them go through the list.
6. Have a discussion once they have completed it.

Activities for Improving Relationships

Name of Adult: _____ Would you like the adult whose name you wrote above to do the things listed below more often, less often, or with about the same frequency as they do now?	Do it more often	Do it less often	Do it about the same as now
1. Show me that I can trust you			
2. Really pay attention when we are together			
3. Make me feel like you really know me and value me			
4. Show me that you enjoy being with me			
5. Praise me for my efforts and achievements			
6. Show me that you expect me to be my best			
7. Push me to try harder			
8. Tell me that I need to take responsibility for my actions			
9. Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks			
10. Guide me through hard situations			
11. Build my confidence to take charge of my life			
12. Stand up for me when I need it			
13. Put limits in place to keep me on track			
14. Treat me fairly			
15. Include me in decisions that affect me			
16. Work with me to solve problems and reach goals			
17. Let me lead the way sometimes			
18. Inspire me to see possibilities for my future			
19. Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places			
20. Introduce me to people who can help me learn and grow			

Activities for Improving Relationships

Barriers to Resolving Conflict Activity

Objective:

The "Barriers to Resolving Conflict" activity is designed to help students brainstorm ways to resolve their stressed or broken relationships.

Materials/Preparations	
Copy of "Barriers to Resolving Conflict" worksheet	
Duration: 30 mins	Activity Type: Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Group <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Steps:

1. Ask your students to fill out the worksheet individually.
2. After, have the students describe their previous conflicts to the group.
3. Role-play and act out the conflicts.
4. Discuss amongst the group ways in which the conflict could have been resolved differently.

Barriers to Resolving Conflict

Even when our anger is in check and we listen appropriately, sometimes, barriers are still encountered. Some of those barriers include:

1. Judging instead of sticking to the facts.
2. Making a decision too quickly.
3. Not taking ownership or responsibility for the problem.

Describe previous conflicts you have encountered where these barriers got in the way of resolving the conflict and discuss possible solutions to these barriers:

Activities for Improving Relationships

Conflict Prevention and Intervention Activity

Objective:

The "Conflict Prevention and Intervention" activity is designed to help students work through their conflicts.

Materials/Preparations

Copy of "Conflict Prevention and Intervention" worksheet

Duration: 30 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

1. Place your students in groups of 2-3.
2. Have one of the students describe a conflict they have been involved in.
 - a. They do not need to use names and can be ambiguous when describing the situation.
3. As a group, have the students discuss the conflict and which strategies could have prevented the conflict.

CONFLICT PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Think about a conflict(s) you've been involved in. How could 4 or 5 of the strategies below help resolve this conflict? Explain your thinking.

- Ignore
- Share
- Redirect
- Make alternative suggestions
- Discourage behavior
- Suggest taking turns
- Suggest a different idea
- Reassure
- Track the taking of turns
- Establish expected behaviors and or rules
- Set expectations
- Be inclusive
- Model acceptable play and behavior
- Simply stop!
- Converse kindly, taking turns talking and listening
- Be accepting
- Provide opportunity for participation
- Focus on solutions
- Don't blame
- Apologize and forgive
- Be fair
- Use humor

Activities for Improving Relationships

Work it Out Activity

Objective:

The "Work it Out" activity is designed to help students work through their conflicts and arguments with the people they have relationships with.

Materials/Preparations

Copy of "Work it Out" worksheet

Duration: 30 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

1. Group your student together in pairs of two.
2. Have them each go through the "Work it Out" worksheet.
3. When they are finished, have them role-play the conflict.
4. Have them brainstorm possible solutions together.

Activities for Improving Relationships

WORK IT OUT

The Conflict:

Each person will give "facts only" about their point of view, avoiding any hurtful actions.

Point of View:

Point of View:

Looking at each point of view, re-state the conflict/problem: _____

Each side provides 3 solution suggestions:

Solution Suggestions:

Solution Suggestions:

Determine the best solution: _____

What will you do if the solution doesn't work? _____

Activities for Improving Relationships

Brown Bags Activity

Objective:

This activity helps to create a supportive and affirming climate for youth in order to help them trust and “bond” with one another in group settings. This activity works well as an icebreaker where it is important for youth to be positive and affirming throughout the remainder of the year.

*supply drop-off

Materials/Preparations

Small brown paper lunch bags
Masking tape
Colored marking pens
An ample supply of notepaper
Stickers (optional)
Copies of the personal profile sheet (attached)

Duration: 20 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

- Distribute a copy of the attached profile sheet to each participant. Allow 10 minutes for youth to answer the questions. When they've finished, tell them to put the page away somewhere because they won't need it again until it's time to go home.
- Distribute brown bags and markers. Tell youth to print their names vertically down the outside of the bag. Each letter can then be used to spell out something unique or descriptive about who they are. Allow five to 10 minutes (depending on group needs) to complete this part of the activity.

Activities for Improving Relationships

Brown Bags Activity

Steps Continued:

- Point out that while many people don't know each other very well right now, during the time they're together they'll be getting much better acquainted. The things we say and do reveal things about the kind of people we are. For example:
 - At first, most of us reveal things we'd like others to know about us. These things usually have to do with our "outer" selves and are similar to the kinds of things we've written on the outside of the brown bags. Usually, they have to do with the way we look and act our special talents and abilities, the kinds of things we enjoy doing, etc.
 - As we begin to trust others, we start feeling more comfortable revealing other things about ourselves. These things are more like the things on the personal profile sheet—our attitudes, beliefs, fears, hopes, feelings, and secret concerns. Sometimes we deliberately hold back this information because we're afraid of what others may think of us. It can be scary to share these kinds of things unless we feel we'll be accepted.
- From now on it will be up to this group to create a trusting and supportive environment so people can get to know one another from both the inside as well as the outside.
- Explain how important it is to let others know we appreciate and value them. Unfortunately, in our culture, it's more common to dwell on things we don't like about people instead of focusing on positive traits and characteristics.
- Since we all need to feel valued and accepted, the purpose of this activity is to make sure that happens. Explain the following procedure for using the brown bags:
 - Everyone will take a turn to introduce themselves by explaining what they've put on the outside of the bag. Afterward, all the bags will be taped to a wall.

Activities for Improving Relationships

Brown Bags Activity

Steps Continued:

- The bags will stay taped to the wall so that people can use them to leave personal notes for one another in order to comment on positive traits, behaviors, and characteristics. Encourage youth to write at least one note for each participant. When it's time to leave, everyone can take down their bag and read the messages when they get home.
- At the conclusion of the event, before youth depart for home, allow some time for them to finish any notes they had intended to write.
- Before taking down the bags, remind youth of the personal profile sheets they filled out when they arrived. Ask youth to think about whether or not they were able to share this part of themselves with any of their new friends.

Personal Profile Questions:

1. Something I like about myself:
2. Something I would like to change about myself:
3. Something I'm proud of having done or accomplished recently:
4. Something I would like to do over:
5. Something I am hoping for:
6. Something I am dreading:
7. Something that made me very happy:
8. Something that happened once that made me very sad:
9. A private goal I've set for myself:
10. Someone who means a lot to me and one thing I love about him or her:

Activities for Improving Relationships

Classified Ads Activity

Objective:

Intended to encourage discussion about what it takes to be a good friend, this activity takes a slightly different approach to the topic. It can be an effective way to supplement other activities that focus on peer support or cross-age mentoring. Age, 10 and older.

Materials/Preparations

Duplicate the attached Classified Ad Worksheet.

If desired, locate a few appropriate "personal" newspaper ads placed by individuals seeking companions and friendship

Duration: 20 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

- Introduce the activity with a reference to the personal ads that some people place in newspapers in order to meet other people. (Consider reading a few examples that you've found previously.)
- Be sure youth understand the following:
 - The purpose of this activity isn't to place a real classified ad.
 - The best way to find new friends is to meet people and get acquainted with them face to face.
 - Classified ads illustrate what people think is important about friendship and relationships.
 - Writing your own imaginary classified ad will give you a chance to take a closer look at what it means to be a friend.
- Ask for a few examples of what it takes to be a good friend (kindness, trust, etc.). Then get a couple of other examples of things good friends do not do to one another (lie, talk behind their backs, etc.).

Activities for Improving Relationships

Classified Ads Activity

Steps Continued:

- Distribute the worksheets and allow five to 10 minutes for youth to make up their own ads. 5. Collect all the ads and select a few to read to the entire group. (Be sure not to reveal the identities of those whose ads you read.)

Follow-up Discussion:

- Ask youth for examples of how to meet people and form friendships instead of placing ads in newspapers.

Activities for Improving Relationships

Classified Ads Activity Sheet

Wanted:

- Describe the kind of person you would like your friend to be:
 - Someone who is _____ , _____ , and _____ to be my friend
- List other qualities that describe the kind of friend you want and describe the way you would like to be treated by your friend:
 - Must have _____ and be the kind of person who will _____
- List hobbies and other interests you would like in a friend:
 - Prefer someone who is interested in _____
- Describe the kinds of behaviors and actions you don't want in a friend:
 - Persons who _____ need not apply.
- Describe something important about yourself:
 - If you're someone who's looking for a _____ person to be friends with, I'm that person!

Examples:

Wanted: Someone who is happy, cheerful and good natured to be my friend. Must have a kind heart and be the kind of person who will be nice to me, talk to me, keep secrets and listen when I have something to say. Prefer someone who is interested in dogs, collecting stickers, and playing soccer. Persons who are mean, tell lies, and act stuck up need not apply. If you're someone who's looking for a fun-loving and honest person to be friends with, I'm that person!

Wanted: Someone who is carefree, energetic and full of fun to be my friend. Must have a great sense of humor and be the kind of person who will never let me down. Prefer someone who is interested in roller blading, eating pizza, and going to the mall. Persons who smoke, whine a lot, and make fun of other people need not apply. If you're someone who's looking for a totally awesome person to be friends with, I'm that person!

Activities for Improving Relationships

Drawing With X's and O's Activity

Objective:

This activity is about two-way communication. It illustrates the importance of speaking clearly and concisely and helps people understand the value of being able to ask for feedback and clarification when confused. This activity works well with any program or training session where communication skills are being taught. Age, elementary age, and older, including adults.

Materials/Preparations

Be sure to have a sufficient supply of paper and pencils available.

Read over the directions carefully so you can explain how to do the activity and be prepared to lead the follow-up discussion

Use a large sheet of paper to prepare a few illustrations of the kinds of drawings that can be done with X's and O's (see example).

Duration: 40 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

- Explain that this activity is a fun way to learn why talking and listening both take concentration. Tell everyone they'll need a partner so they can take turns giving each other directions for how to make drawings using only X's and O's. Use the examples you've prepared in advance to illustrate the kinds of drawings partners will be making.
- Go over the following instructions:
 - Partners will sit back to back and there is to be no peeking at one another's drawings.
 - The talking partner is to describe what he/she is drawing so the listening partner can try to copy it—without seeing it or asking any questions. This means the talker must give very specific directions while working on the drawing.

Activities for Improving Relationships

Drawing With X's and O's Activity

Steps Continued:

- Pairs will have two minutes to make their drawings without any peeking. Then they can turn around to see if their drawings match.
- They'll get another chance to try it again but first, they'll have to switch roles: the person who was listening gets to be the one that gives directions about what to draw. This time both partners will have an extra minute to work on their drawings and they may talk to each other and ask questions while they're working.
- Once everyone understands how to do the activity, distribute the paper and pencils. Break into pairs and have the shorter partner be the "talker" for the first round of the activity.
- Make sure partners are sitting back to back so they can't peek at each other's drawings. Then proceed with the activity as previously described.
- After going through the activity twice to give partners a chance to switch roles, have everyone return to the large group.

Follow-up Discussion:

- Ask for volunteers to hold up their drawings. Find out which way was easiest—the first time or the second time. Ask:
 - How did it feel to try following directions when you couldn't ask questions about them?
 - How did it feel to give directions to people and not know whether they were understood?
 - What difference did it make to be able to talk to each other while the drawings were being made?
 - What difference did it make to have a little more time to work on the drawings?
 - What are some examples from real life of why it's impossible to communicate if one person is doing all the talking and the other person can't say anything?

Activities for Improving Relationships

How Did it Feel? Activity

Objective:

This activity provides an opportunity for people to experience what it feels like to share their feelings with someone who listens. Age, older youth and adults

Materials/Preparations

Copy the following statements onto a piece of flip chart paper. (You may prefer typing the statements onto a single sheet of paper that can be duplicated and distributed to each person.)

- Describe something especially enjoyable that happened recently and how you felt about the experience.
- Tell about the loss of someone or something that meant a lot to you and describe what it felt like to go through the experience.
- Share something embarrassing or frustrating that happened to you and how you felt about it at the time.
- Tell about an adult who was very special to you when you were a child and describe how you felt about that person.
- Share something you feel especially good about having accomplished and why you feel that way.
- Describe a time you were treated unfairly or a situation where you were misunderstood and what it felt like to be treated that way.
- Share something that is causing you a fair amount of stress these days and describe your reactions to it.

Duration: 30 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

- Point out that relating to other people on a one-to-one basis means sharing thoughts and feelings. But that's not always easy to do. It's even more difficult when it seems the other person isn't really interested in listening to what we have to say.
- Explain that this activity is intended to give people a chance to practice sharing what's on their minds as well as listening to another person do the same thing.

Activities for Improving Relationships

How Did it Feel? Activity

Steps Continued:

- Have people find a partner. Then put up the flip chart paper or distribute individual copies to each pair. Explain that everyone will have a chance to choose one of the statements to talk about with his or her partner for five minutes.
- Emphasize how important it is to be the listener. Explain that when it's your turn to listen, your job will be to encourage the other person to keep talking. It will mean really paying attention to what's being said rather than jumping in to mention something you'd like to point out.
- Before beginning, allow a few moments for people to look over the list of statements so they can choose the one they want to talk about when it's their turn.
- Tell the couples to decide who is going to be the talker and the listener for the first round of discussion. Give the signal to start and after five minutes tell everyone to stop. Have the couples switch roles for the next five minutes.

Follow-up Discussion:

- Ask the group the following questions about their reaction to the exercise:
 - What did it feel like to be the one doing the talking?
 - What did it feel like to do the listening?
 - Which was easiest—talking or listening? Why?
 - How did it feel to know you could count on the other person to listen?
 - What difficulties did you have trying to describe your feelings and experiences?
 - What did your partner do to encourage you to keep talking?
- Ask the group to describe some things they learned from this exercise that will be important to keep in mind as they interact on a one-to-one basis with other people.

Activities for Improving Relationships

Secrets Activity

Objective:

This exercise provides a structured environment in which youth can experience and express empathy. Intended for small groups of no more than 20 in settings intended to build trust and promote understanding. Time needed will depend on the number of youth in the group and how well they know each other. Age: Middle school aged youth and older.

Materials/Preparations

Read through the activity carefully in order to be able to facilitate it without needing to rely on notes. Be prepared to contribute a secret of your own and participate in the activity with the other group members.

Write the following on a chalkboard or piece of flip chart paper: "If I were this person I would feel"

Make sure the following materials will be available:

- Index cards
- Pens or pencils

Duration: 30 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

- Have everyone sit in a circle and ask them to define what "empathy" means. Point out that an empathetic person makes an effort to "walk in another person's shoes" by trying to:
 - Think and feel with another person
 - Look at things through the other's point of view
 - Relate to what the other person is experiencing without telling him or her what to do about it.
- Explain that this activity will give everyone a chance to experience empathy—from the perspective of receiving it as well as expressing it.
- Distribute index cards and pens. Tell youth to write a short secret about themselves that no one else in the group knows about. It can be something simple ("I had Cornflakes for breakfast") or something more

Activities for Improving Relationships

Secrets Activity

Steps Continued:

serious (“I don’t have a date for Homecoming). Youth should refrain from putting their names on the cards.

- When everyone is ready, have youth fold their cards and give them to you. Be sure to let them know that you are adding a secret of your own.
- Shuffle the cards and place them in the center of the circle. Explain that group members will be taking turns selecting a card to read aloud. (It’s okay if a person draws his or her own secret since no one is supposed to know who wrote it in the first place.)
- Remind everyone of the phrase you’ve copied on the flip chart paper. Stress that empathy involves identifying with the other person’s feelings rather than trying to tell him or her what to do about them. So after reading the card, youth are to describe how that person might be feeling about the secret, and then ask others in the group to add to the list. (For example, “If I were this person, I would feel...depressed about not being able to go to the dance and envious because my friends all have dates.”)
- Ask if anyone has any questions. Then demonstrate how to proceed by taking one of the secrets, reading it aloud and describing how you think that person would feel.
- Continue until everyone has chosen and responded to a secret. If necessary, remind people not to give advice, but only to describe how they think the person whose secret they’ve drawn might be feeling.

Follow-up Discussion:

- Once everyone has drawn and responded to a secret, ask the group members the following questions:
- What was it like hearing other people respond to your secret?
- What was it like trying to describe how other people might be feeling rather than giving them advice about what to do?
- Why do you think empathy is important?
- Point out that empathy and confidentiality go hand in hand. That’s why the things that have been shared during this exercise should not be talked about outside this room.

Activities for Improving Relationships

Test Your Communication I.Q. Activity

Objective:

This “quiz style” tool is intended to encourage people to examine some of the dynamics of interpersonal communication that are often overlooked. This discussion activity is an effective way to focus on the need for strengthening communication skills. Ages, older youth and adult.

Materials/Preparations

Duplicate sufficient copies of the following survey and answer sheet.

Be sure to read through the directions carefully so you’ll be ready to answer any questions.

Duration: 25 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Steps:

- Introduce the survey by pointing out that most of us take communication for granted. We’ve gotten so accustomed to doing it that we rarely pause to consider what we’re actually doing during the process—and why it can sometimes backfire.
- Distribute the survey. Instruct people to respond to the 10 true or false questions and then read over the following answer sheet.
- As soon as everyone has completed the questionnaires, use the follow-up discussion items below to emphasize major points.

Activities for Improving Relationships

Test Your Communication I.Q. Survey

Survey

Indicate whether you think the following statements are true (T) or false (F).	
1. _____	Communication can be intentional or unintentional.
2. _____	It's impossible not to communicate.
3. _____	Like any other process, communication is reversible.
4. _____	Meanings are in the words themselves.
5. _____	Physical surroundings have little impact on communication.
6. _____	More communication is better than no communication.
7. _____	Communication will not solve all problems.
8. _____	Communication is a natural skill.
9. _____	Personal communication is essential for our well-being.
10. _____	What happens during communication can be reconstructed.

Activities for Improving Relationships

Test Your Communication I.Q. Activity

Answer Sheet:

True 1. Communication can be intentional or unintentional. Ideally, we think about what we want to say— especially if we want to offer advice or provide constructive criticism. But sometimes we say things without thinking and often end up regretting it. The same is true of non-verbal communication. For example, a bored look on our face, or fidgeting and glancing at the clock on the wall lets the other person know we're anxious to be doing something else.

True 2. It is impossible not to communicate. Speaking or remaining silent, confronting or avoiding another person, smiling or showing no emotion at all—it all provides information about our thoughts and feelings. Whenever we're with another person, we are communicating one way or another. Sometimes our bodies—and the things we do to them—communicate even louder than words. Our clothes, jewelry, hairstyles and even the cologne or after-shave we've splashed onto ourselves send messages to other people. This explains why even the most bizarre of fashion trends becomes important to teenagers who want to express things about themselves that can't always be put into words.

False 3. Communication is final. Once something has been expressed it cannot be erased. Even though we may regret what has been said or done, we cannot go back and undo it. Of course we can always apologize and can even try to explain our way out of a misunderstanding. But no amount of explaining or apologizing can erase what was said or done in the first place.

False 4. Meanings are not in the words themselves. It's a mistake to assume the words we choose are conveying exactly what we're trying to say. That's because the same word can mean so many different things. Much depends on how the speaker uses the word— and the way it's interpreted by the person who hears it.

Activities for Improving Relationships

Test Your Communication I.Q. Activity

Answer Sheet Continued:

False 5. Physical surroundings have a big impact on communication. We talk and behave differently based on where we happen to be at the time. For example, we might not talk about things while standing in the checkout line of a grocery store that we talk about while in a church or synagogue. Other things about our surroundings influence the way we communicate. Cozy furniture and soft lighting might help us relax and feel comfortable talking to another person. On the other hand, a crowded auditorium full of the sounds and excitement of a sports event probably isn't the best place to be if you have something important to talk over with another person.

False 6. More communication is not always better. While it's important to keep the lines of communication open, too much talking can make a situation worse—especially if a person mistakes nagging for communication. Sometimes it's best not to say anything at all. For instance, when we are angry or hurt there's always a chance we'll say something we'll regret. It's better to take some time to cool off and wait until we've had a chance to think about the things we need to say and do, before trying to talk to the other person.

True 7. Communication won't solve all problems. Being careful and attentive about what you're saying is no guarantee that talking about a problem will automatically solve it—especially if it involves making difficult and emotional decisions. But talking can help identify feelings and concerns. Often the first step to solving these kinds of problems is recognizing how serious they are and knowing when it's time to ask for help dealing with them. It's also important to consider the consequences of being "brutally honest" about what you tell another person. Imagine that a friend asks for your honest opinion about a new haircut. You don't have to point out that it makes her ears stick out and her nose look bigger. Instead you can honestly tell her that you liked it better when it was longer

Activities for Improving Relationships

Test Your Communication I.Q. Activity

Answer Sheet Continued:

False 8. Communication is not a natural skill. Even though just about everyone is capable of communicating, that does not mean they are skilled at doing it. People often assume that “communication comes naturally” and so there’s no need to work at it. But like any other skill, communication can be strengthened through training and practice.

True 9. Personal communication is essential for our well being because we need to communicate with people in order to form friendships and get close to the people we care about. Without those kinds of relationships, our physical as well as our emotional health will suffer. Medical research reveals that the lack of close, personal relationships can actually result in a wide range of health problems including high blood pressure. Satisfying relationships are important aspects of a healthy lifestyle, and personal communication is what makes those kinds of relationships possible.

False 10. What happens during communication cannot be reconstructed. While it’s possible to remember some of what has been said, you can’t possibly remember everything. For example, how can you duplicate another person’s tone of voice or how nervous you might have felt while you were talking? Telling someone about a conversation you had earlier will not be the same as experiencing it firsthand.

Follow-up Discussion:

1. Communication can be intentional or unintentional.

- Recall a time you said something without thinking and ended up regretting it later. How did you feel and what effect did your words have on the other person? Did you ever find an opportunity to apologize? (Don’t ask people to share their answers unless they want to.)

Activities for Improving Relationships

Test Your Communication I.Q. Activity

Follow-up Discussion Continued:

- Ask for volunteers to demonstrate some common non-verbal messages. Have people guess what is being communicated.
2. It is impossible not to communicate.
 - What are some examples of how we communicate by remaining silent?
 - What is meant by the term “fashion statement”? What do clothes, hairstyles, etc. say about us?
 - What kinds of intentional and unintentional things do tattoos and body piercing communicate about a person?
 3. Communication is irreversible.
 - Recall a time you would have liked to have been able to take back something you said to another person. (There’s no need to share these examples with the group.)
 - Why is it difficult for some people to apologize for hurtful things they’ve said or done?
 - Why is it difficult for some people to be forgiving when someone else apologizes for what has been said or done?
 4. Meanings are not in the words themselves.
 - Ask for examples of words and phrases that mean different things to different people.
 - Why do words like “always” “never” and “every” often lead to misunderstandings and arguments?
 5. Physical surroundings have an important impact on communication.
 - Share examples of how we communicate differently based on our physical surroundings?
 - If you wanted to have a serious conversation with someone, what kinds of places would you go to feel the most relaxed and comfortable?
 6. More communication is not always better.
 - How can you tell when it would be better to keep your mouth shut for a while?

Activities for Improving Relationships

Test Your Communication I.Q. Activity

Follow-up Discussion Continued:

- What are some ways to respond to someone who is starting to say things he or she might later regret?
 - What can you do when a conversation is going nowhere or is about to lead to an argument?
7. Communication will not solve all problems.
- What kinds of problems can't be solved just by talking?
 - Are there times when you should tell another person something even though you know it will hurt him or her deeply? If so, how should you go about it?
8. Communication is not a natural skill.
- Give some examples of what it's like to talk with someone who has developed good communication skills versus someone who isn't good at communicating.
9. Personal communication is essential for our well-being.
- Take a moment to think of someone who makes your life more enjoyable and worthwhile. (Ask if anyone would be comfortable sharing an example.)
 - Why are good communication skills necessary for close personal relationships?
10. What happens during communication when it cannot be reconstructed.
- Recall a time you tried to describe a conversation you had with someone else. What kinds of things got left out as you tried to reconstruct the conversation?

Activities for Improving Relationships

Test Your Love Smarts Activity

Objective:

Students will be presented a series of slides containing common beliefs about relationships. Students will scale how accurate they think each statement is from 1 (false) to 10 (true). The instructor will then reveal the correct accuracy rating and provide a reasoning behind the rating. Some follow up questions specific to the statement may be asked.

- Can be done in person (PowerPoint and white boards/markers) or virtually (PowerPoint and online video platform poll/chat box).

Materials/Preparations

Create the slides/presentation

Duration: 30 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Questions:

- If a relationship or friendship is meant to be, it will just work out. Good relationships don't require much work.
 - Accuracy Rating: 1 (false)
 - You are merging your own life, needs, wants, desires, dreams, and hopes, all of which shift and change over time and in response to various circumstances, with those of another person whose separate needs, wants, desires, and dreams also shift and change. How else is such a complicated endeavor possibly supposed to succeed unless you both work at it? How much work it actually takes might ebb and flow, but expect to invest attention and work even in the best of times.
 - When are situations when this would be true? Not true?
- You should avoid voicing dissatisfactions with a friend or partner early on.
 - Accuracy Rating: 4 (This is usually incorrect but depends on one's communication skills.)

Activities for Improving Relationships

Test Your Love Smarts Activity

Questions Continued:

- The first stage of a relationship sets future expectations about the roles you each will play, your initiative levels, communication styles, and other relationship dynamics. If your partner is late to most dates, even by a little, and you say nothing, you message that you'll be OK with their lateness going forward. If you're not okay with lateness, you need to speak up, even on the second date, and even if by voicing just a mild and constructive comment.
- When would this be true? Not true?
- If you're truly happy with your partner, you shouldn't need to be close to anyone else.
 - Accuracy Rating: 4 (There is a minority of couples who are indeed happy this way, but for most of us it's totally false.)
 - This might be true if both of you are massively co-dependent but assuming you're not, one person asserting this to his or her partner is either an attempt to control that person or just sheer ignorance about our basic psychological need for friendship and community. Many people use romantic relationships as a primary source of support but have other sources of support as well.
 - When is this more true? Less true?
- People in good relationships don't argue with each other.
 - Accuracy Rating: 5 (Overtime and after years of problem-solving, couples in good relationships should argue less.)
 - One of the most consistent and established research findings in all of psychology is that what matters is not if couples argue but how they argue. Productive arguments are those that avoid escalation and result in resolutions and mutually agree to takeaways for dealing with similar situations more productively in the future. Most couples should learn how to argue productively and practice the relevant skills if they want to change how they deal with conflict.

Activities for Improving Relationships

Test Your Love Smarts Activity

Questions Continued:

- Caution To Teens: Your romantic relationships should be mostly fun. If there is more fighting, sadness and problems than fun, take it as a red flag that this relationship is not worth continuing.
- When is this more or less true?
- If you find "the one" best friend, boyfriend or girlfriend, then you will be happy.
 - Accuracy Rating: 1
 - "Although love can make you feel good, it should not be confused with happiness...If you care about your happiness, you should be realistic about the fact that love won't always make you happy. Happiness will, however, affect your success in love. Happier people are more likely to get married. And research shows that the bigger the happiness gap between spouses, the more likely it is that they will get divorced....Rather than focusing on love as a route to happiness, perhaps it's best to focus on being happy regardless of love, and then love and strong relationships will follow."
 - When is this more true? Less true?
- You should learn to love your partner's worst qualities.
 - Accuracy Rating: 4 (you can love some of their bad habits- but not all of them.)
 - "Some people have habits that are slightly disgusting and impossible to 'love.' Fortunately, loving your partner's poor qualities and habits is not necessary. Instead, simply accept them and learn how to shrug them off and minimize their importance."
 - When is this more true? Less true?
- Happy couples have fewer differences and argue less than unhappy couples.
 - Accuracy Rating: 4

Activities for Improving Relationships

Test Your Love Smarts Activity

Questions Continued:

- "Arguing is not only normal, but is also quite healthy for a marriage. Conflict is the primary vehicle for change. If we're unhappy with something our partner does or doesn't do, only by confronting them can we give ourselves a chance to make our needs understood...More important than how often couples argue is how they behave toward each other when they do. We should point out that arguing is only helpful if you and your partner are effective at it, and by that we mean the argument achieves the straightforward objectives of solving a problem and doing it efficiently..." Disagreeing and discussing problems should always be respectful.
- When is this more true? Less true?

Activities for Improving Relationships

The Balloon Game Activity

Objective:

This is an enjoyable, non-threatening way to engage another person in one-to-one dialogue. Ages elementary and older, including adults. This activity can be used as an icebreaker when presenting programs that deal with communication issues. It is especially effective when working with groups of adults and youth.

- This activity can be adapted virtually using breakout rooms in an online video platform and posting the question in the chatbox.

Materials/Preparations

Purchase an adequate supply of balloons in assorted colors.

Make copies of the questions on page 8. Cut them into strips to be folded and inserted into the balloons before they are inflated.

Use the following color code:

- Green balloons—questions for children and youth
- Blue balloons—questions for adults
- Assorted other colors—questions suitable for any age

Duration: 15 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Directions:

- Put all the balloons in a large box or on a table at the front of the room where they will be visible as people arrive.
- Point out the following:
 - Friendships happen when people have a chance to learn about one another.
 - It's fun to share experiences, ideas and values with other people.
 - Playing the balloon game will encourage everyone to get to know each other a little better.
 - Review the following procedure and ask for questions. Explain the color scheme (above) so that each partner can choose an appropriate balloon. Each partner will get three

Activities for Improving Relationships

The Balloon Game Activity

Directions Continued:

minutes to tell the other person about what's written on the slip of paper found inside the balloon.

- Have everyone find someone they don't already know real well to be their partner. (Or use whatever method you prefer to assign partners.) Once they've found a partner, people can choose their balloons.
- Before beginning the exercise remind everyone to use the following tips when they are doing the listening:
 - Pay attention instead of letting your mind wander.
 - Don't interrupt to start talking about yourself.
 - Encourage the other person to keep talking.
- Have the partners who will be talking first break their balloons and allow a few moments for them to retrieve their slips of paper. Then give the signal for the first round of talking/listening to begin. After three minutes, interrupt to repeat the process so the other partners can have a turn talking.
- Assemble the entire group and ask for examples of interesting things people learned about their partners.

Follow-up Discussion:

Ask people for reactions to the following questions:

- Was it easier to be the talker or the listener? Why?
- What were some things your partner did to let you know he or she was interested in what you were saying?

Questions for Adults (for the blue balloons)

- What is it like to be an adult and not have to do what you're told?
- What is something you really enjoy about being an adult?
- What is something you miss about being a child?
- Describe a time you got really angry at your parents when you were a child.

Activities for Improving Relationships

The Balloon Game Activity

Questions for Adults (for the blue balloons)

- What is something you did when you were a child that would make you furious at your own child for doing?
- What is something you have learned about life that you think everybody needs to know?
- What is one piece of advice you would like to give to kids?
- If you could go back and re-live one day from your own childhood, which day would you choose?
- If you could live your own teenage years over again, would you do anything differently?
- What is something you don't like about being an adult?

Children/Youth (for the green balloons)

- Why do you think some kids think it's okay to drink alcohol?
- If you are ever a parent, what kind of parent would you want to be?
- Describe the way the inside of your locker looks.
- Explain why or why not you would like to have a son or daughter exactly like you.
- What age would you like to be and why?
- What is something you would like to change about your school?
- If you could give adults serious advice about raising kids, what would you tell them?
- Why do you think some kids are so mean to other kids?
- What do you think it will be like when you are an adult?
- What is something you think adults need to keep in mind about what it's like to be your age?

Questions for Anybody (other colored balloons)

- What kinds of things do you worry about?
- Describe something helpful or kind you did for someone else this past week.

Activities for Improving Relationships

The Balloon Game Activity

Questions for Anybody (other colored balloons) Continued:

- Describe something other people do that upsets you or makes you angry.
- Who is someone you really admire and why?
- What is something you enjoy doing in your spare time?
- If you could take a trip anywhere in the world, where would you choose and why?
- If somebody gave you \$1,000 but told you to spend half of it on the other people in your family, what would you buy for them?
- If you could spend an afternoon with a famous person, who would you pick and why?
- If you had to move out of your house in a big hurry and could only take one grocery bag full of your things with you, what would you take along?
- Tell me about three things that make you feel thankful.
- Do you think it is ever okay to tell a lie? Explain why.
- If you could travel back in time to meet someone who lived in another century, who would you want to meet and why?
- If you could choose a different first name, what would it be and why?
- What is something you would really like to do before you are too old to do it?

Activities for Improving Relationships

The Building Block Activity

Objective:

This exercise requires that individuals work together in teams to build a Tinker Toy structure that will be “judged” according to criteria developed by members of the group. The purpose of the activity is to help people recognize that the sender and the receiver of a message are both equally responsible for the success of the communication process. This activity can be used at camp counselor training or other programs where youth are learning about teamwork and communication. Ages, 10 and older.

Materials/Preparations

Obtain the following materials:

- Two complete sets of Tinker Toys, Lego blocks, or similar construction toys
- Pencils, pens, and paper
- Stopwatch

Carefully review the directions for this activity in order to be thoroughly familiar with the process and prepared to teach it effectively. In particular, you will need to determine the following in advance:

- How to divide youth into small groups
- How to determine which groups will be the “builders” and which one group will be the “judges.”

Duration: 60 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Directions:

- Introduce the activity by explaining that everyone will be participating in a fun activity that illustrates important things that need to happen during the communication process.
- Divide into groups of four to six people. One group will be the “judges” and the other groups will be “builders.” (You may want to assign groups ahead of time, or have them draw slips of paper marked “builders” and “judges” from a hat.)
- Explain that the activity will take place in two parts. The following directions are for Part One:

Activities for Improving Relationships

The Building Block Activity

Directions:

- The builder groups will have five minutes to build a structure using the materials you've provided. They can build whatever they want; however, there can be no talking while they work.
- After five minutes, there is to be no further work on the structure. Groups will have three more minutes to select a spokesperson and help him/her prepare a short presentation for the judges. For example, the presentation may want to describe the structure, its uses, or special points of interest.
- While the "builders" are constructing their structures and preparing their presentations, the "judges" will use that time to quickly decide what to look for when it's time to judge the structures. They will need to create several categories in order to select winners in separate areas. For example, they may want to consider the structure's balance, height, use of color, originality, etc. They will need to write down what they'll be looking for under each category.
- After the groups have built their structures and planned their presentations, they will each have a chance to make a short presentation to the "judges." After all the presentations have been made, the judges will be given two minutes to arrive at their decision and announce the winners.
- Make sure the above instructions are clear before giving the signal for participants to begin Part One of the activity.
- At the completion of Part One, remind everyone that there's more to this activity. Tell everyone to stay in their original groups and instruct the builders to take their structures apart while listening carefully as you explain the following directions for Part Two:
 - The builders are to construct a new structure but this time they will be able to talk to each other while they're working. They will be given three extra minutes that can be used to make some plans and get organized. When the building time is up they'll be

Activities for Improving Relationships

The Building Block Activity

Directions:

- given the same amount of time as before to plan their presentations for the judges.
- Meanwhile, the “judges” can review their system for evaluating the structures. They may want to change their ideas about the winning categories or keep them the same. Once again, they will need to write down their ideas.
 - Make sure the above instructions are clear before proceeding with the activity.

Follow-up Discussion:

At the conclusion of Part Two of the activity, follow up with a short discussion about the following:

- What were the differences between Parts One and Two? Which was easier? Why?
- What difference did it make to be able to plan the structures ahead of time?
- What difference did it make to be able to talk?
- What was it like knowing the structures were being judged?
- • What was it like to be in charge of judging the structures?
- What did you learn about communication from doing this activity? Who is responsible for communicating successfully?
- How does this activity relate to other things that go on in your life — at home, at school, and other places?

Activities for Improving Relationships

Thinking about Friendship Activity

Objective:

These are some suggestions for using the attached handouts and materials to help youth explore what friendship means to them. Age, middle school, or older. Time needed varies because the activities can be worked into a variety of teaching formats.

Materials/Preparations

- Look over the following handouts (listed below) and determine which one works best with the material you'll be presenting.
 - Tips for Reflective Listeners
 - How do you rate as a listener?
 - What's a Friend For?
 - Stuff that Gets in the Way of Friendship
 - Old Year Resolutions
 - What to do if a Friends Needs Help
- Make sufficient copies of necessary materials.
- Draw a small smiley face in the center of a large sheet of flip chart paper. Draw a frowning face in the center of another sheet of flip chart paper. Tape both sheets to the wall.
- Be sure to have enough markers or crayons available.
- Be sure to allow sufficient time for youth to "process" or discuss what the worksheet is all about and how it relates to other activities and experiences you're providing.

Duration: 60 mins

Activity Type:

Individual

Group

Directions:

- Distribute a marker or crayon to each youth. Have youth use the smiley face sheet of paper to jot down words and phrases that describe qualities and behaviors associated with friendship. The other sheet of paper can be used to describe people who are not acting out of friendship. Allow five or six minutes for youth to finish.
- Distribute any worksheets or handouts you've chosen and allow sufficient time for youth to complete it.

Activities for Improving Relationships

Thinking about Friendship Activity

Follow-up Discussion:

When youth are finished with their worksheets, take a few minutes to discuss some of the following questions:

- Why is it sometimes hard to find a really good friend?
- Is there a difference between “being popular” and being a really good friend?
- Is it ever okay to lie to a friend? Explain your answer.
- Explain why it is or is not okay to repeat something a friend told you in confidence.
- What do you think is one of the most important things a friend can do for a friend?
- In your opinion, what is one of the nicest things a friend can do for his or her friend?
- How can you tell if a person is really your friend or not?
- Tell why you agree or disagree with this statement: “You can’t be a good friend unless you start out by liking yourself.”
- Can you be a friend to everyone? Explain.
- Should you be a friend to a person who doesn’t have all the “friendship qualities” you’d like him or her to have? Explain.

Activities for Improving Relationships

Thinking about Friendship Activity

What's a friend for?

We all need friends. The problem is, we don't always pay attention to what friendship really means. Sometimes we let people do or say hurtful things to us because we want that person to like us—even though he or she isn't really much of a friend to begin with. Other times we forget that having a good friend means being a good friend as well. Here's a way to take a closer look at friendship.

Things that matter in a good friend

Part A:

Look through Column A. Add other things you think should be on the list. Then use this scale to rate how important it is for your friends to have those qualities:

1 - Extremely important 2 - Important 3 - Not very important 4 - Totally unimportant

Column A	Column B
_____ fun to be with	_____ fun to be with
_____ common interests	_____ common interests
_____ generous	_____ generous
_____ unselfish	_____ unselfish
_____ adventuresome	_____ adventuresome
_____ trustworthy	_____ trustworthy
_____ a sense of humor	_____ a sense of humor
_____ loyal	_____ loyal
_____ appearance (looks cool)	_____ appearance (looks cool)
_____ honest	_____ honest
_____ a good listener	_____ a good listener
_____ has a positive attitude	_____ has a positive attitude

Activities for Improving Relationships

Thinking about Friendship Activity

_____ intelligent	_____ intelligent
_____ good personality	_____ good personality
_____ _____	_____ _____
_____ _____	_____ _____

Part B:

Look at the qualities listed under Column B. Add any others you think should be on the list. Then check off the qualities you yourself possess. Are they the same ones you rated highly in Column A?

Activities for Improving Relationships

Thinking about Friendship Activity

Stuff That Gets in the Way of Friendship

Part A:

Look through Column A. Add whatever else you think gets in the way of friendship. Then use this scale to rate how much of a problem those things can be.

1 - A big problem

3 - Not much of a problem

2 - Somewhat of a problem

4 - Doesn't matter that much

Column A	Column B
_____ is bossy	_____ bossy
_____ is selfish	_____ selfish
_____ has a bad temper	_____ bad temper
_____ is conceited	_____ conceited
_____ is self-centered	_____ self-centered
_____ is overly critical	_____ overly critical
_____ argues and fights	_____ argues and fights
_____ insist on having his/her own way	_____ insist on having your own way
_____ acts gross	_____ acts gross
_____ is moody	_____ moody
_____ complains a lot	_____ complains a lot
_____ insecure	_____ insecure
_____ depressed	_____ depressed
_____ talks all the time	_____ talks all the time
_____ tries to get the other person to do stuff they don't want to do	_____ try to get the other person to do stuff he/she doesn't want to do
_____ won't listen	_____ won't listen

Activities for Improving Relationships

Thinking about Friendship Activity

Stuff That Gets in the Way of Friendship

Part A:

Look through Column A. Add whatever else you think gets in the way of friendship. Then use this scale to rate how much of a problem those things can be.

1 - A big problem

3 - Not much of a problem

2 - Somewhat of a problem

4 - Doesn't matter that much

_____ can't be trusted	_____ can't be trusted
_____ acts mean	_____ mean
_____ is spoiled	_____ spoiled
_____ is sarcastic	_____ sarcastic
_____ tells lies	_____ lies
_____ _____	_____ _____

Activities for Improving Relationships

Thinking about Friendship Activity

What to Do If a Friend Needs your Help

Being a good friend means wanting good things to happen to the other person, and feeling bad when things go wrong. It's tough knowing someone you care about is having a rough time— especially if that person has been hurt by someone. It can be hard to know how to help when a friend has a problem or is in trouble. Here are some important things to keep in mind:

Listen to your friend.

It's important for people to talk about things that trouble them. Sharing feelings, reactions, and worries can be a tremendous relief. Often when people get things out in the open, they end up discovering they already know what needs to be done about them.

Resist the temptation to criticize or blame your friend for what he or she has done.

If your friend has a problem and is feeling bad about it, you aren't going to help by pointing out how stupid it was to make that kind of mistake. He or she needs to know you care and are concerned even though you don't like what you are hearing.

Keep in mind that it's not up to you to solve other people's problems.

One of the most important lessons to be learned in life is how to deal with our problems and how to support other people as they deal with theirs. Instead of telling your friend what he or she ought to do, it's better to listen carefully to his or her ideas for handling the situation. You can let your friend know what you think but avoid pushing your ideas on him or her.

Encourage your friend to get help if it's needed.

Knowing when to ask for help is a sign of strength not of weakness. Sometimes the most important thing you can do for a friend is to encourage him or her to get help. This is especially true if your friend is in serious trouble or in danger of being hurt emotionally or physically. Finding someone who will know what to do is a sign of maturity. Help your friend identify a trusted adult in your community to talk to. It could be a school guidance counselor or teacher, a minister or priest, or some other adult who has been trained to help people deal with whatever is troubling your friend. If he or she is reluctant about talking to that person, offer to go along to make it easier.

Understand when you need to reveal something that was said in confidence.

It's a tough spot to be in, but sometimes the best thing you can do for your friend breaks a promise you made about "not telling anyone." If he/she is suicidal or in danger of being physically assaulted, do not hesitate to reveal this information to an adult that you know you can trust.

References

- About Ecomaps. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://socialwork.msu.edu/sites/default/files/Koehler/docs/AboutEcomaps.pdf>
- Ecomap. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://cf.nearpod.com/neareducation/new/Webpage/365837812/iconoriginal.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAINYAGM2YWP2OWQBA&Expires=2147483647&Signature=fm11cs5NiF0PRmKJtuzHYnNfrxU%3D>
- ECOMAP. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://cf.nearpod.com/neareducation/new/Webpage/365837812/iconoriginal.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAINYAGM2YWP2OWQBA&Expires=2147483647&Signature=fm11cs5NiF0PRmKJtuzHYnNfrxU%3D>
- Erquiaga, D. (2018, July 20). In School and Out, Relationships Matter (Opinion). Retrieved from http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning_social_emotional/2018/07/in_school_and_out_relationships_matter.html
- Free worksheets and printables for the 1st grade to 10th grades. (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.worksheetplace.com/index.php?function=DisplayCategory>
- Friendship. (2016). Retrieved from <https://www.teacherplanet.com/content/friendship>
- Happen, M. (2020, September 11). Overview of the Ecomap. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/mah-authentic-assessment-support/ecomap-5abd1c278f1c>
- How to Make Friends at School Activities. (2020, August 12). Retrieved December 22, 2020, from <https://www.centervention.com/building-friendships-activity-how-to-make-friends-at-school/>
- Leaver, K. (2020, August 26). How many friends do we need to be happy? Retrieved from <https://www.abc.net.au/life/how-many-friends-do-we-need-to-be-happy/12589694>
- Region of Peel. (n.d.). There's Nothing Better than a Good Friend. Retrieved from <https://www.peelregion.ca/health/commhlth/bodyimg/changes-in-me/lessons/pdf/LessonSeven.pdf>
- Scarnato, J. (2018, May 11). The Ecomap – A Social Work Assessment Tool. Retrieved from <https://mswcareers.com/the-ecomap-a-social-work-assessment-tool/>
- Search Institute. (2018). The Developmental Relationships Framework. Retrieved from https://www.search-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Developmental-Relationships-Framework_English.pdf

Additional Resources

- <http://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/ecomap-activity/>
- <https://naturalenvironments.blogspot.com/search/label/ecomap>
- <http://www.ric.edu/sherlockcenter/ei/rbiecomap.pdf>
- <http://ucpalabama.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Ecomap-Presentation.pdf>
- <http://study.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/How%20to%20-%20Ecomaps.docx>
- https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4238&context=gradschool_theses
- <https://tnchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Genograms-and-Ecomaps.pdf>
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303505907_Using_an_Eco_map_as_a_Tool_for_Qualitative_Data_Collection_in_Organizations