

Our Future Generation

100+ Activities to Guide Adolescents
Towards Making the World a Better Place



By Judy Demers

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Introduction

Apathy toward education and discipline seems to have become common, and present-day classrooms include many unmotivated learners. No one group (parents, teachers, the school, or society in general) is to blame for this problem, but everyone must contribute to the solution. Pointing fingers or making excuses will not lead to a miraculous discovery.

We need to find ways to empower our young people to believe in themselves, realize they are important, and know they can make a positive difference in their own lives, as well as the lives of others. Our young people need to know that we are here for them. We should expect them to try their best without depending on shallow praise or constant rewards. We need to help them develop self-motivation and passion.

Our Future Generation: 100+ Activities to Guide Adolescents Towards Making the World a Better Place addresses both child and educator, each of whom has an important responsibility to make this world a better place. The book's problem-solving activities help students become empowered thinkers and doers and learn effective communication skills while sharing their stories.

Our Future Generation results from the belief that no one, young or old, should feel insignificant or powerless and that everyone should feel he/she has the right to be heard and represented.



How to Use This Book

Targeting students of middle school to high school age, *Our Future Generation* includes a variety of self-contained lessons that require minimal equipment and instructions and can be presented easily and effectively by counselors, teachers, youth leaders, and anyone else who works with young people. Activities include individual and small- and large-group formats to fit specific needs. Each lesson may be used as a stand-alone activity or sequenced within a theme identified by each chapter category. Lessons encourage self-reflection and group discussions.

Research Based Information

This book was inspired by nearly 30 years of observing the behavior of students and listening to their conversations while teaching at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. I wanted to find fun ways to help students build strong character and promote leadership skills for our future generation. The activities are research based, and my resources for background information came from clinicians, theorists, physicians, educators and other respected professionals in the fields of psychology and sociology.

Don't Judge Me By My Looks

Time Required:

30-45 minutes

Materials:

For the leader:

None

For each student:

- Paper
- Pencil

Preparation:

None required.

Purpose:

To help students become aware of how often we prejudice others

Procedure:

Read the following paragraphs aloud. Students' written answers to the questions will form the basis of a group discussion.

How many times have you misjudged others because of the way they look? Why do we do that? Is it because we need to label and control the unknown? It's much like children saying they don't like broccoli without trying it and, after tasting it, deciding they do.

A high school student once said, "I don't know how many times I was accused of being stuck-up because I was shy and didn't talk much. I once had an English teacher who said I was selfish because I kept my ideas to myself. I thought I was just listening and minding my own business."

An adult said of his high school days, "I was a competitive runner in my younger days. I remember my first big race; there were thousands of people in the stands. I was very nervous before the race. I must have looked petrified, because my competitors started to tell me how to run. I won the race. My competitors were very thoughtful when they told me what to do, but they didn't realize that looking nervous didn't mean I didn't know how to run."

The last story I would like to share is about a girl walking, behind her sister and her sister's boyfriend, along the beach toward the pier. The girl fell on the rocks

CHAPTER 3

Role Models

Positive or negative role models can have lasting influence on those who look up to them. Fame and fortune can attract followers, even if ethical behavior is lacking.

Positive role models need to take good care of themselves and show compassion and concern for those around them. They are kind, reliable, ethical, have positive attitudes, and model effective coping skills. Good role-models make this world a better place.

Writing in *Childhood Education*, Kristin Anderson and Donna Cavallaro state that development of an identity is one of the most important features of childhood and adolescence. Role models and heroes may shape children's behavior and values.

Lessons in this chapter help us identify characteristics of the good role models around us and reflect upon our own attributes.

ASCA Standards Addressed in Chapter 3

| |
|---|
| ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT |
| Standard A: Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span. |
| A:A3 Achieve School Success |
| A:A3.4 Demonstrate dependability, productivity and initiative |
| Standard B: Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide range of substantial post-secondary options, including college |
| A:B1 Improve Learning |
| A:B1.1 Demonstrate the motivation to achieve individual potential |
| PERSONAL/SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT |
| Standard A: Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others. |
| PS:A1 Acquire Self-knowledge |
| PS:A1.1 Develop positive attitudes toward self as a unique and worthy person |
| PS:A1.2 Identify values, attitudes and beliefs |
| PS:A1.6 Distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior |
| PS:A1.8 Understand the need for self-control and how to practice it |

Quiet Strengths

Time Required:

30-45 minutes

Materials:

For the leader:

None

For each student:

None

Preparation:

None required.

Purpose:

To show that actions are much more important than words

Procedure:

Begin by talking about how strength is often silent. Say:

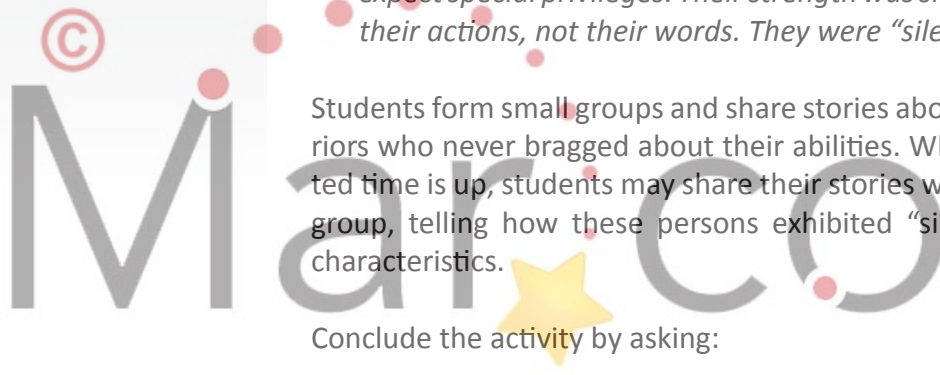
People don't need to tell you they are strong, smart, skillful, patient, determined, etc. Their actions will speak louder than their words.

A friend told me that two of the strongest people he knew were very unassuming. One was a middle-aged man in a wheelchair; the other was a 3-year-old girl with spina bi-fida. Both were highly motivated, inspirational, and very positive. They didn't complain, feel sorry for themselves, or expect special privileges. Their strength was shown through their actions, not their words. They were "silent warriors."

Students form small groups and share stories about silent warriors who never bragged about their abilities. When the allotted time is up, students may share their stories with the entire group, telling how these persons exhibited "silent warrior" characteristics.

Conclude the activity by asking:

1. *Did any of the stories have anything in common?*
2. *Does someone who is strong always look strong?*



Role Reversal Evaluation Sheet

Watch each scenario. Then answer the following questions by circling *Yes* or *No* or writing your answer. Cross out scenarios in which you were involved.

Scenario 1

| | | |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Was the scenario accurately portrayed? | YES | NO |
| Were the players believable? | YES | NO |
| What was the best part of the scenario? | _____ | |
| Would you have enacted the scenario differently? | YES | NO |
| What would you have done? | _____ | |

Scenario 2

| | | |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Was the scenario accurately portrayed? | YES | NO |
| Were the players believable? | YES | NO |
| What was the best part of the scenario? | _____ | |
| Would you have enacted the scenario differently? | YES | NO |
| What would you have done? | _____ | |

Scenario 3

| | | |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Was the scenario accurately portrayed? | YES | NO |
| Were the players believable? | YES | NO |
| What was the best part of the scenario? | _____ | |
| Would you have enacted the scenario differently? | YES | NO |
| What would you have done? | _____ | |

Scenario 4

| | | |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Was the scenario accurately portrayed? | YES | NO |
| Were the players believable? | YES | NO |
| What was the best part of the scenario? | _____ | |
| Would you have enacted the scenario differently? | YES | NO |
| What would you have done? | _____ | |

Scenario 5

| | | |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Was the scenario accurately portrayed? | YES | NO |
| Were the players believable? | YES | NO |
| What was the best part of the scenario? | _____ | |
| Would you have enacted the scenario differently? | YES | NO |
| What would you have done? | _____ | |

Inch By Inch

Time Required:

30-45 minutes

Materials:

For the leader:

- *Inch By Inch Game Diagram* (page 79 or CD)
- Hula hoops for each pair of students
- 2 blindfolds

For each student:

None

Preparation:

None required.

Purpose:

To let blindfolded participants experience restricted mobility and the need to rely on others for help and give sighted participants an opportunity to keep a blindfolded teammate safe while completing a task

Procedure:

(Note to leader: Do not require students to be blindfolded. Ask for volunteers who are comfortable with the idea.)

Two blindfolded volunteers will participate on separate teams. Divide the rest of the students into two groups. Each group represents a team, and each student finds a partner from his/her team. Partners sit facing each other, about the width of a hula hoop apart and about 2 feet from the next pair of partners, and hold their hula hoop about 12–18 inches off the ground.

The blindfolded players start at the same end of their lines. On “Go,” each one walks as quickly as possible over and between the hoops to the opposite end of his/her team’s line. Teammates may give verbal instructions on how to safely proceed. To prevent loss of balance, those holding a hoop should allow the hoop to fall to the ground if the blindfolded person bumps it.

The team of the first blindfolded person to reach the other end of the line wins that round. New volunteers replace blindfolded participants.

Conclude the activity by asking:

1. *How did you feel being blindfolded?*
2. *Did you feel safe?*
3. *Did you feel confidence in those who gave you instructions?*
4. *If you were the sighted participant, how did you feel about watching out for your blindfolded teammate?*
5. *What strategy did your team use?*

Time Required:

30-45 minutes

Materials:

For the leader:

- Index cards
- Pen

For each student:

None

Preparation:

On index cards, write one scenario for each group of students. Possible scenarios include:

1. Your former best friend is spreading rumors about you.
2. A friend told lies about you so he/she could go out with someone you wanted to date.
3. Your best friend, who is the captain, wouldn't pick you for the team.
4. Your best friend decided to eat lunch with the popular group instead of with you.

Revenge Is Not So Sweet!

Purpose:

To help students understand the causes and harmful potential of revenge and ways to break the revenge cycle and gain insight into constructive ways to deal with destructive thoughts and behaviors

Procedure:

Read the following background information:

Non-violent Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi said, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." We need to find acceptable ways to stand up for our rights while respecting the rights of others.

Violence is increasing among young people from all walks of life. The three main causes of contemporary youth violence have been identified as:

- *the environment in which the child grows up*
- *media violence encouraging youth to value revenge*
- *such alienating experiences as racism and social biases.*

We are most often hurt by the people closest to us. Seeking revenge makes someone pay for his or her injustice to you. It might be something minor that open communication could have prevented. It might be something serious that



Positive vs. Negative Feedback



1. Describe when someone praised you for something you felt didn't deserve praise. _____

How did you feel? _____

2. What do you do because of outside recognition? _____

3. What do you do purely for enjoyment? _____



4. List some things you are proud of but for which you do not expect to be recognized.

Correction

Time Required:

30-45 minutes

Materials:

For the leader:

- *Correction Chart*
(page 149 or CD)

For each student:

- *Correction Chart*
(page 149 or CD)
- Pencil

Preparation:

Make copies of *Correction Chart*.

Purpose:

To encourage students to think about the type of reinforcement that most helps them change their behavior

Procedure:

Students give examples of positive and negative reinforcement from parents, siblings, coaches, teachers, youth leaders, counselors, or other sources. Following each example, ask:

1. *How did you respond to the advice?*
2. *Did it change your behavior?*
3. *Did you feel differently about the person delivering the reinforcement?*

Continue the activity by saying:

Reinforcement can be constructive, non-productive, or destructive. You would probably be more likely to listen to someone you respect who addresses your behavior than if he or she attacked you as a person. Reinforcement from someone who puts you down as a person and tries to belittle you is not very beneficial.

Some people turn constructive and destructive criticism into something positive. Being told they are not capable of something they really want to accomplish does not deter them from their goals. In fact, it encourages them to prove others wrong.

Tell the students how much time they have to fill in the *Correction Chart*, using answers from real-life situations or hypothetical answers based on individual opinions.

Students share what they wrote. If time allows, have the students come up with other sources and statements.

Conclude by having students change negative reinforcement into positive statements.

Body Language

Time Required:

30-45 minutes

Materials:

For the leader:
None

For each student group:
■ 1 penny

Preparation:

None required.

Purpose:

To help students better understand non-verbal communication

Procedure:

Begin the activity by saying:

Your body language can scream without you saying a word. Think about the answers to these questions:

1. *Are you good at concealing your feelings?*
2. *Can others tell when you are not feeling well or are tired, happy, angry, or anxious?*

Suppose you came to class one day with a terrible headache. You were determined to get through the day without others knowing you weren't feeling well. Then someone asked, "Do you have a headache?" What an eye-opener! You thought nobody would notice.

It takes practice to hide your feelings. For example, you might be afraid but need to stand strong to refuse something harmful. If someone asks you to smoke, don't smile or look away. Don't fidget, rock back and forth, or appear weak. Stand firm, look the person in the eyes, and say, "No!"

Be aware of your body language when you experience various emotions. Observe your family and friends. What sort of body language do they show when they are happy, sad, depressed, angry, confident, afraid, or stressed?

Divide the participants into groups of five or six members who sit in small circles, facing inward.

If I Were Brave, I Would...

Ask your partner each question and record his/her answers on the activity sheet.

1. What fear do you wish you didn't have? _____

2. Why do you think you have this fear? _____

3. If you could do something you've never done, what would it be? _____
Why? _____

4. What has stopped you from doing this? _____

5. What might help you do this? _____



Give Yourself a Break!

Time Required:

30-45 minutes

Materials:

For the leader:

- *Handling Stress*
(page 256 or CD)

For each student:

- *Handling Stress*
(page 256 or CD)
- Pencil

Preparation:

Make copies of *Handling Stress*.

Purpose:

To address common fears and ways to deal with them

Procedure:

Begin the activity by saying:

Stress and frustration are normal parts of living. Good stress can motivate us to try our best. Bad stress can create debilitating anxiety. Different things cause stress and frustrate different people. What stresses one may motivate another. It is important to learn positive coping skills instead of masking the problem with drugs, alcohol, or other unhealthy methods.

Noticing when and why you become stressed will help you manage it. Keep a log of stressors, the intensity of the stress, and ways to relax.

Public speaking and test anxiety are common stressors.

It's been said that many people fear public speaking more than they fear death. If you're afraid to speak in public, visualize the people in the audience in their underwear. Tell yourself that everyone feels the way you do, that you are an expert on the subject, and that everyone is eager to learn from you.