

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
What's Included .....	4
Accompanying Group Documents .....	5
<b>Introductory Group Session</b> .....	7
<b>Chapter 1: Kindness</b> .....	8
<b>Chapter 2: Patience</b> .....	14
<b>Chapter 3: Respect</b> .....	21
<b>Chapter 4: Gratitude</b> .....	27
<b>Chapter 5: Responsibility</b> .....	33
<b>Chapter 6: Honesty</b> .....	40
<b>Chapter 7: Friendship</b> .....	47
<b>Chapter 8: Compassion</b> .....	53
<b>Chapter 9: Forgiveness</b> .....	59
<b>Chapter 10: Perseverance</b> .....	65
<b>Final Group Session</b> .....	72
<b>Downloadable Resources</b> .....	72
<b>Small Group Action Plan Guide</b> .....	73
<b>Life Skills Group Permission Form</b> .....	74
<b>Life Skills Group Expectations</b> .....	75
<b>Group Attendance Form</b> .....	76
<b>Group Attendance Form (Example)</b> .....	77
<b>Pre- and Post-Group Survey</b> .....	78
<b>Post-Group Survey Results</b> .....	79
<b>Post-Group Survey Results (Example)</b> .....	80
<b>Certificate of Completion</b> .....	81
<b>Life Skills Group Completion Letter</b> .....	82
<b>References</b> .....	83
<b>About the Author</b> .....	83
<b>About NCYI</b> .....	84

# Introduction

Good life skills give children the confidence to make healthy decisions and build strong relationships with peers and adults. This Life Skills curriculum consists of ten to twelve thirty-minute sessions to help students learn the skills necessary to make healthy decisions, build strong relationships, develop better problem-solving and communication skills, and manage their emotions in difficult situations. Our goal with this curriculum is to help children become more well-rounded individuals and handle life's challenges with resilience and determination.

This Life Skills curriculum is tailored for 2nd through 8th graders and covers essential topics such as kindness, patience, respect, gratitude, responsibility, honesty, friendship, compassion, forgiveness, and perseverance. While some of these topics may seem obvious, it's often the first time someone has explicitly taught the students you are working with this information. This curriculum recognizes the unique ways in which each student learns, emphasizing that there's no singular 'correct' way to embrace these ideas. Just as each lesson is individualized to cater to diverse learning styles, the curriculum remains flexible, ensuring that every child can engage, understand, and practice these essential life skills.

The strategic design allows students to empathize, connect with others, and translate their new knowledge into practice. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA)-aligned curriculum contains an introductory lesson, ten core Life Skills lessons, and a final closing lesson. Facilitators have the flexibility to include the initial and final lessons as part of the core sessions if they have extra time.

You'll find a range of essential resources in the book's concluding pages. These consist of permission and completion letters, attendance logs, a group expectation form, and a certificate of completion. You'll also find pre- and post-group surveys to measure the success of the programming and templates to share the results with interested parties. Moreover, this workbook provides a comprehensive small group action plan that will integrate effortlessly into your ASCA evaluation document and facilitate a seamless transition from planning to assessment.

Practical and applicable, the activities provided are suitable for small and large group instruction and require no additional materials. You do not need to bring supplies beyond pencils, markers or crayons, and scratch paper; you won't need to spend hours prepping materials before meeting with your students. Everything you need is included!

**See Page 72 for information on Downloadable Resources**

## What's Included:

**Life Skills:** Comprises ten lessons and all necessary documents to conduct a group. Following the overview of the lesson curriculum, you'll find supporting documentation to develop a small group within the school setting.

**Mind Map:** Provides an illustrated diagram of the life skill that can help students make connections between the life skill and other concepts. Students should begin each lesson by considering the meaning of the specific life skill. It is optional to write these, but visuals are helpful for many students. Some have found it helpful to draw the Mind Map on the board, or you can draw a tree with the life skill written on the trunk and the related words on the fruit on the tree.

**ASCA Standards:** Each lesson includes success criteria for the learning target.

**Lesson Introduction:** At the start of each lesson, we will introduce a concept and explain it to provide clarity for the upcoming story.

**Circle Time Questions:** This section has three optional questions for the facilitator to start the conversation. These questions allow students to deepen their understanding of the topic and build community by discussing and sharing their experiences.

**Story Time:** Provides stories related to the life skill that should be read aloud to help children understand the concept.

**Coloring Sheets:** Allow students to visualize the life skill. Students can color the sheet while the facilitator shares the initial story after the lesson is complete or take it home with them.

**Discussion Questions:** Students can discuss the questions posed to help them process their beliefs on the subject.

**Skill Practice/How Would You Practice \_\_\_\_ Skill If?:** Using the round-robin method, go around the table and ask students how they would practice that skill, giving them each a chance to answer one question.

**Additional Activities:** Provides activities to help students practice and apply the concept.

**Closing Considerations:** Is an opportunity to review the concept and ask students to reflect on their new experience with the material.

**Would You Rather? Game:** Provides an opportunity for students to consider what they would “rather” do related to the lesson’s topic. The facilitator can cut out the cards and let students discuss or read aloud while moving from one side of the room to the other to communicate their preferred answer.

## Accompanying Group Documents:

**Small Group Action Plan Guide:** Provides the necessary information required to complete the ASCA National Model’s Small Group Action Plan.

**Permission Form:** The permission form is used to gain the permission of the student’s caregivers for the child to attend the Life Skills group. Be sure to send this home about two weeks before the group starts.

**Group Expectations:** These provide basic expectations for the group process. The form has space for the facilitator and group to collaborate on adding additional expectations to fit their group.

**Group Attendance Form:** This is a blank form that allows the facilitator to track which students attended each session and what topics were discussed.

**Group Attendance Form (Example):** This form is an example of how to best utilize the group attendance form.

**Pre- and Post-Group Survey:** Provides an opportunity for students to share what they know of the concepts before and after they’ve completed the curriculum.

**Example: Group Attendance Form**

Group: 5th Grade Lunch Day/Time: Thursday @ 12:50

DATE	8:00	8:15	8:30	8:45	9:00	9:15	9:30	9:45	10:00	10:15	10:30	10:45	11:00	11:15	11:30	11:45	12:00
James M. Smith																	
George M. Smith																	
John M. Smith																	
Jane M. Smith																	
Mark M. Smith																	
Thomas M. Smith																	
Travis M. Smith																	
Victoria M. Smith																	
William M. Smith																	
Xavier M. Smith																	
Yara M. Smith																	
Zoe M. Smith																	

SESSION 1: Check in/Sign-in/Sign-out and Mark Absence expectations/Group goals

SESSION 2: Buddy

SESSION 3: Adapt

SESSION 4: Support/Target starting to get along

SESSION 5: Introduce/Play game

SESSION 6: Introduction to social skills

SESSION 7: Identify the group and their needs the group

SESSION 8: Presenting the role of a peer, introducing the topic format

SESSION 9: Communication/Conflict resolution/group review

SESSION 10: Presentations/Plan for final group

SESSION 11: Presentations/Plan for final group

SESSION 12: Check-in/Sign-out/Sign-in/Sign-out and Mark Absence expectations/Play Group Land

To measure the progress of students who participate, use the same assessment for both the pre-group and post-group survey. Administer the pre-group survey at the start of the instructional period, followed by instruction and practice opportunities for measured skills or knowledge.

At the end of the instructional period, administer the post-survey and compare the results of both surveys to identify areas of improvement and areas that need further instruction. Then calculate the average score of the pre-survey and post-survey and determine the percentage of improvement by subtracting the pre-survey average from the post-survey average and then dividing the result by the pre-survey average. Use this pre-survey average improvement to measure the students' progress effectively.

**Percentage of Improvement Formula:**

$$(\text{Post-Group Total} - \text{Pre-Group Total} / \text{Pre-Group Total}) \times 100 = \text{Percentage of Overall Improvement}$$

**Example:**

$$(44 \text{ Post-Group Total} - 31 \text{ Pre-Group Total} / 31) \times 100 = 41.94\% \text{ Overall Improvement}$$

Look at your data to determine who should attend your group. Review conduct referrals, attendance data, and achievement metrics and look for students with deficits. Consider also tracking students' academic achievements, absences, and discipline referrals. You can better see the impact of your small groups when strategically selecting students and closely monitoring their academic, attendance, and conduct metrics. Be sure to share the results of your intervention with your advisory council.

**Post-Group Survey Results:** The survey shows one way to share your data with your interested parties. Remember, we want to make sure that we use graphs and charts as they show our data, which is often more impactful than a paragraph of text. Use whatever platform you prefer to show your data but be sure to complete the data following the group and then share with your interested parties.

**Post-Group Survey Results (Example):** The survey shows what your data might resemble following the completion of the groups. You can use this form to share your data.



**Certificate of Completion:** Present students with a certificate to congratulate them on completing the curriculum.

**Life Skills Group Completion Letter:** Letter written to the caregivers/guardians of students following the completion of the group. Provide students with their certificate and their life skills group review letter during the last session.

**Additional Materials:** We promised to provide everything you need in this workbook, and we have. However, you will need to make copies of the pre- and post-group assessment surveys and print the coloring pages. You might also print and cut the “Would You Rather?” game or facilitate that activity verbally. We recommend having crayons or colored pencils readily available on the table for those who wish to complete the coloring sheet. It might also be helpful to have some fidgets accessible for your students during their group session.

**Good luck with your group! We hope you have a fantastic experience!**

# Introductory Group Session

## Directions & Overview

Conducting this introductory session is recommended but not required, as the content covered here can easily integrate into the first core Life Skills session, especially if there's additional time during your first meeting. You have the flexibility to initiate the group activities at your convenience once you've analyzed your data to identify appropriate participants and obtained their caregiver permission forms.

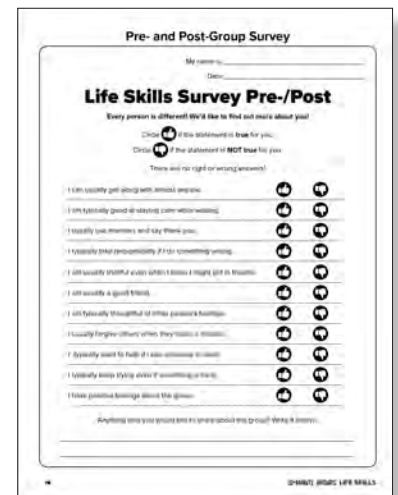
**Directions:** We recommend that you meet with the students to complete this introductory group session before conducting the first lesson. You will start by welcoming all of the students to the group. Then, explain the group's purpose and instill hope for gaining new knowledge and having fun together!

**Survey:** Before you progress further, read the instructions for the pre-group survey to the students. Discreetly review the forms as they are given to you to ensure that each question has been answered.

**Introductions:** Help your students get to know one another by asking them to share their names, something about themselves, and what they hope to learn from the group. Explain that during each session, they will be asked to share a highlight and lowlight for the week or check in using the weather to represent their emotions in a small group format. Offer to practice that check-in now.

**Explain the Group Format:** Explain where and how often you will meet. Share the list of topics. Explain that, in each meeting, you'll discuss one of the topics together, then read a story, and answer questions. Discuss the logistics of what they'll do while you are reading; they'll be eating (if it is a lunch group) or completing their coloring sheet. Explain that they'll have time to work in pairs for the Skill Practice portion and play a "Would You Rather?" game. Finally, explain that at the end of each session, they'll be asked to give a one-sentence overview of what they've learned and make a plan to practice that lesson topic throughout the week.

**Review Group Expectations:** Print a copy of the Group Expectations. Review the expectations together with the students and answer questions as they arise. Take time to collaborate with your group to determine whether you need to modify or add expectations.



The image shows a "Pre- and Post-Group Survey" form titled "Life Skills Survey Pre-/Post". It includes a header for "My name is:" and "Date:". Below the title, it says "Every person is different! We'd like to find out more about you!" and provides instructions: "Circle 1 if the statement is true for you" and "Circle 2 if the statement is NOT true for you". There are two columns of radio buttons labeled "1" and "2". The survey contains ten statements, each with a "1" and a "2" radio button. At the bottom, there is a section for "I have positive feelings about this group:" and a line for "Anything else you want me to know about this group? Write it here:". The footer reads "©2016 THE 30-MINUTE LIFE SKILLS".



The image shows a poster titled "LIFE SKILLS GROUP EXPECTATIONS". It has a header "CONFIDENTIALITY" and a paragraph: "In this group, we will keep what we hear about ourselves, Confidentiality means! Keeping something private and not telling anyone else about it. We know that names, things, and events, and not every one needs to know about them! However, because we are a group, we can't promise that everyone will keep your secrets. So please be careful of what you share with the group. If you have that question to that you can't ask someone else, or that someone might give, I will have to keep our confidentiality rule to keep you safe!". Below this are four sections: "EVERYONE GETS A TURN" (Everyone will have a chance to speak during discussions.), "LISTEN WITH RESPECT" (We will give our full attention to the person speaking without interrupting and listen. We will not talk about what we hear to anyone else.), "BE KIND" (Disagreements are allowed, but we won't yell or call names or throw objects. We will use calm and safe words, and tones.), and "CREATE YOUR OWN" with a blank line for writing. The footer reads "©2016 THE 30-MINUTE LIFE SKILLS".

**Group Conclusion:** Ask each student to summarize the information they learned from this session into one sentence. Students may share with their partners or the group.

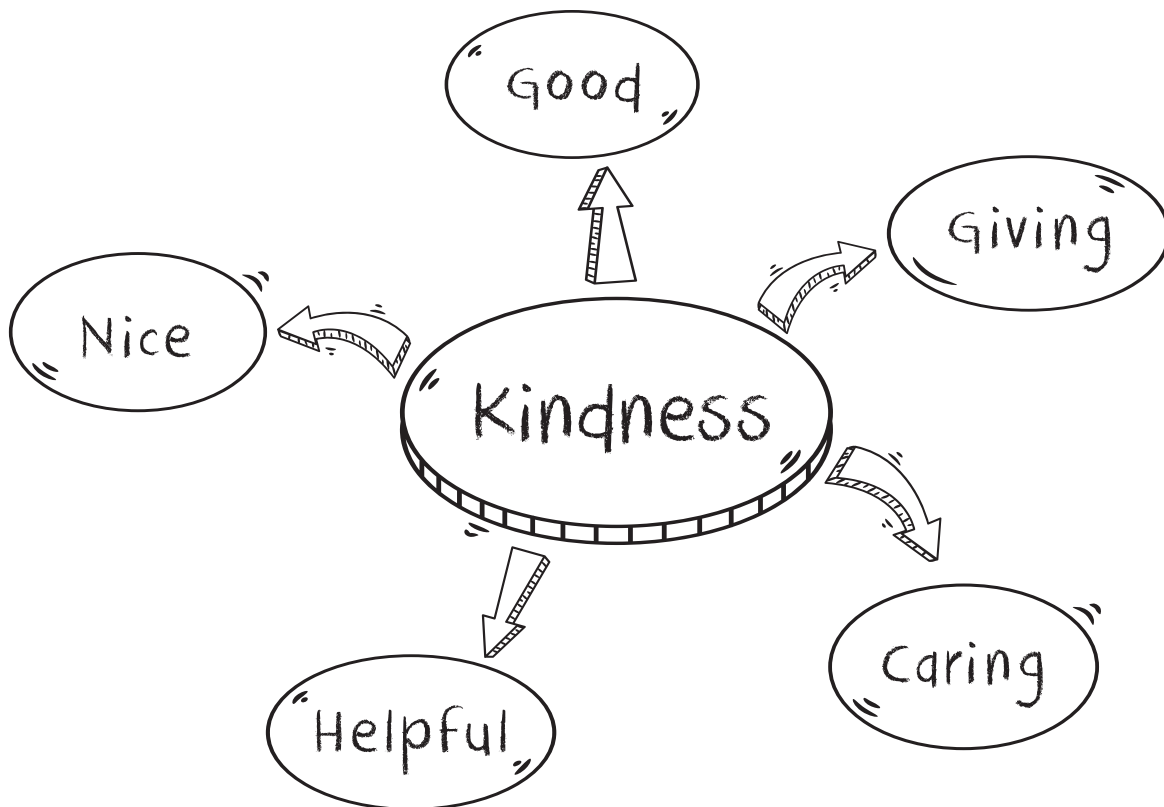
**Note to Facilitators:** You can customize the material to fit the needs of your group. If your students are not yet readers, you can read the "Would You Rather?" game questions aloud and request that students move to different sides of the room to show their answers. If you're working with shy students, they can write their responses to questions instead of sharing them aloud or break into smaller teams to discuss. Some facilitators may choose to incorporate traditional games into the lessons if they have longer session times. Remember, the workbook is just the framework, but you will bring it to life!

# Kindness

**KINDNESS:** a kind nature; being kind rather than doing harm; gentle; a kind act.

## MIND MAP

On the board, draw a mind map and ask students to consider the meaning of *kindness*.



## ASCA STANDARDS

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- **B-SS 2.** Positive, respectful, and supportive relationships with students who are similar to and different from them.
- **B-SS 4.** Empathy.
- **B-SS 10.** Cultural awareness, sensitivity, and responsiveness.

### DIRECTIONS

Prior to the first group, be sure your students have completed the Pre-/Post-Group Survey. In a small group format, complete a brief check-in with your students by asking them to share a highlight and lowlight for the week or by using the weather to represent their emotions. In a large group format, you might ask for a thumb up if they're feeling good, a thumb sideways in the middle if they're feeling okay, and a thumb down if they aren't doing well. Review the Group Expectations before reviewing the Mind Map. Then, read the Lesson Introduction and ask the Circle Time Questions before reading the Story and asking the Discussion Questions. Students can work in pairs to craft their responses or share with the whole group. Complete the Skill Practice, "Would You Rather?" game, and Additional Activities as time allows. Be sure to complete the Closing Considerations with each lesson.

### LESSON INTRODUCTION

Kindness is being thoughtful, friendly, or generous. We can show kindness by writing thank-you letters to show appreciation, helping around the house, giving compliments, or even smiling at our classmates. Kindness is treating others how you'd want to be treated. When we are kind, it can make others feel good, and they want to spread their kindness to other people.

### CIRCLE TIME QUESTIONS

Ask students to reflect and share their answers to the following questions with the group. Larger groups may need to be broken into smaller groups to give students ample time to share their answers and deepen the conversation.

- Can you think of a time in your life when someone was kind to you?
- What is your favorite way to show kindness to others?
- Can you think of a time when you wanted to be kind to someone but didn't follow through? Share how you felt about that experience.

## STORY TIME

Hand out coloring sheets and crayons or markers to students to work on while the facilitator reads the story, if desired.

### *Kindness Can Be Contagious*

Shana was Blue Bear Middle School's newest student. She'd been there a week and had made no friends. She was super friendly, played the drums, and was amazing at math and science, but most kids had barely looked at her since she'd arrived. Shana was diagnosed as a baby with a rare bone disease and could not use her legs, so she used a wheelchair to get around. Her classmates had never met anyone in a wheelchair and weren't sure what to say or how to act when she was around, so they kept their distance.

Sam, one of her classmates, noticed she hadn't made any friends yet. One night after school, Sam mentioned Shana to his dad and told him he was nervous about trying to make friends with her. Sam asked, "What if I say something stupid and hurt her feelings?" Sam's dad asked, "Can you remember what it felt like when we moved here, and you were the new kid?" Sam shuddered; he remembered he'd been so nervous that his palms were sweaty, and his stomach felt like it was doing flips. "Yeah," he replied, "I was doing breathing exercises for most of the first day just to stay calm enough to hear the teacher." His dad smiled, "And do you remember what else helped you feel calmer?" Sam's face broke into a big grin. "I do. The guys asked me to play soccer with them at recess." His dad gave him a knowing look, and Sam realized that even though he was nervous about making friends with Shana, she must be way more nervous than him.

The next day, Sam got up the courage to smile at Shana during breakfast and give her a little wave. It was a small gesture of kindness, but she smiled and waved back. Then at lunch, he invited Shana to have lunch with him and introduced her to his friends. Many of their classmates had been worried that they wouldn't have anything in common with Shana, so they'd avoided her, but when they saw Sam spending time with her, they realized that even though she got around differently, she was a kid just like them. It wasn't long before Shana had made many friends, and at the end of the year, Shana, Sam, and four of their classmates won the school's talent show due in no small part to Shana's excellent drumming skills.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was the first act of kindness Sam showed to Shana?
- Why was Sam nervous to make friends with Shana?
- What are a few acts of kindness that can brighten someone's day?
- How did Sam's example of kindness help his classmates become Shana's friends?
- If you were Sam, what might have held you back from trying to make friends with someone new?



## SKILL PRACTICE

Using the round-robin method, go around the table and ask students how they would practice each skill, giving everyone a chance to answer one question. Skill Practice can be adapted to allow students to answer in pairs or write their answers on scratch paper.

### How Would You Practice Kindness If:

- Your grownup is trying to fix dinner but is not feeling well?
- Your little brother is feeling sad because he received a low grade on his spelling test?
- A friend falls off her bike and skins her knee?
- You notice one of your classmates playing alone at recess?
- During a baseball game, your best friend strikes out?
- A new student comes into your class and doesn't know anyone?
- A classmate is being teased because of a birthmark on his face?
- It's your teacher's birthday?
- Your friend dropped their hoodie in the mud?
- Your baby sister is pulling the cat's tail?

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Divide the group into pairs. Ask each student to share a story with their partner about a time in their life when they practiced being kind. Then, ask each person to retell their partner's story.
- Ask students to write five different ways in which they will try to practice acts of kindness over the next several days. Then, in the next session, have them take out their paper and discuss their progress with the group.

## CLOSING CONSIDERATIONS

A kind person is thoughtful of others and themselves. Kindness is not something we have to do; being kind is a choice that is sometimes difficult to make, but often feels good. When we are kind to others, we treat them how we want to be treated.

Ask students to summarize the content of this session's lesson into a single sentence. Students will then consider how they will practice kindness throughout the next week. In pairs or groups of three, students may share their answers. If time allows, a few students may share with the whole group.

## “WOULD YOU RATHER?” GAME

Playing the “Would You Rather?” game is a fun and engaging activity for students to develop their critical thinking skills. Students will reflect on their experience, evaluate their options based on their preferences, and reflect on the opinions of others, providing a different perspective and strengthening their sense of connection to one another.

# Would You Rather?

Copy and cut out the questions for small groups to discuss, or have each person stand in the center of the room and move towards one side or the other to show their vote for either option as the facilitator reads the questions aloud.

**WOULD YOU RATHER BE GIVEN  
\$10 TO BUY YOUR GROWNUP  
A GIFT OR GIVEN \$10 FOR  
YOURSELF?**

**WOULD YOU RATHER HOLD  
THE DOOR OPEN FOR THE  
PERSON BEHIND YOU OR LET  
IT SLAM ON THEM?**

**WOULD YOU RATHER HELP  
A FRIEND WITH THEIR  
SCHOOLWORK OR PRETEND  
YOU DIDN'T HEAR THEM ASK  
FOR HELP?**

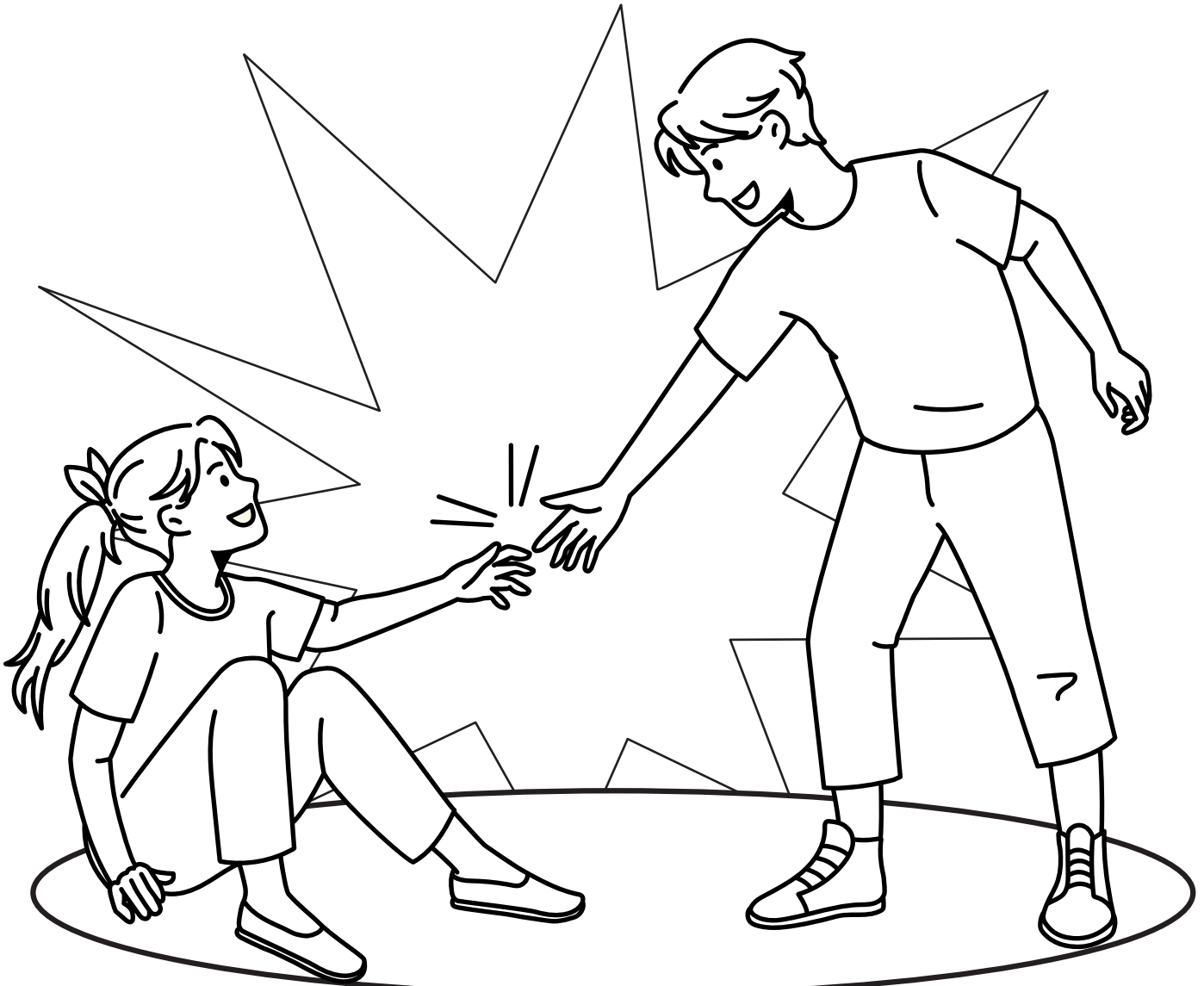
**WOULD YOU RATHER  
DONATE YOUR OLD CLOTHES  
TO CHARITY OR KEEP THEM FOR  
YOURSELF?**

**WOULD YOU RATHER SMILE  
AT A CLASSMATE WHO IS  
HAVING A BAD DAY OR NOT  
LOOK IN THEIR DIRECTION?**

**WOULD YOU RATHER PICK  
UP LITTER YOU SEE IN THE  
HALLWAY OR IGNORE IT  
AND KEEP WALKING?**

*"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."*

MAYA ANGELOU



# KINDNESS