

LIFE SKILLS

to

HELP TEENS

BALANCE

WAY

TOO

MUCH

Relevant
facilitator
reproducible
activities and
handouts

by Sandra K. Negley, MTRS, CTRS & Ester Leutenberg
Illustrations by Amy L. Brodsky, LISW-S

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Relevant facilitator reproducible activities and handouts

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LIFE SKILLS to Help Teens Balance WAY TOO MUCH!

This workbook is dedicated to ...

*each other and our deep and caring friendship
– a bond between two women that began in 1989
and over the years has grown with honor and admiration.*

*From Sandy to her Mother – Thank you for all of your gifts, especially strength.
From Ester to her Mother – Thank you for being a courageous woman and mother.*

Our gratitude to ...

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Notes to the Facilitator

Introduction

Teen life is filled with many opportunities, challenges, demands, desires, obligations and surprises. As teens' attempt to negotiate this array of responsibilities they also encounter profound physical, psychological and cultural changes. This multiple transitional period requires teens to face WAY TOO MUCH and they often find themselves totally overwhelmed. Some teens meet challenges head-on with innate resiliency, while others struggle to find meaning. Regardless of the teens' location along the spectrum, all teens will benefit from learning life skills. Acquiring insight, building and maintaining relationships, learning stress management skills, and strengthening self-reliance and wellness skills will support teens as they strive to become well-balanced individuals.

The ultimate goal of *Life Skills to Help Teens Balance WAY TOO MUCH!* is to provide the therapist, group facilitator or lay leader, resources that can be implemented in individual or group experiences. Multifaceted activity techniques teach teens the essential life skills necessary to balance the diversity of demands placed on them as well as the demands that they place on themselves.

Notes to the Facilitator - The Six Chapters

- 1) **Insight Skills** – Insight is the ability to understand oneself, others, and the surrounding events or situations, to intuitively sense what is occurring and to be able to reflect and discuss with deeper meaning. Developing skills that improve teens’ insight will assist teens in understanding themselves and their approach to life while acquiring the competence to make change when necessary.
- 2) **Relationship Skills** – Building and maintaining positive, healthy and nurturing relationships is a significant part of teen life. Relationships allow individuals to facilitate their own expressions, reflections and intimacy. Developing relationship skills will assist teens in building and maintaining their own healthy social network.
- 3) **Stress Management Skills** –The goal of balancing life demands is not to *eliminate* stress, but to learn how to *manage* the stress. Developing stress management skills will assist the teens in identifying their personal stressors, stress symptoms, and a variety of coping techniques. It is important that they are equipped with an array of stress management skills. Stress is a part of life and individuals experience and cope using their own preferred techniques.
- 4) **Self-Reliance Skills** – To be one’s own person and to function independently is the aspiration of most teens, but the demands during this transitional phase are confusing. Developing self-reliant skills will assist the teen in learning to be responsible and accountable, regulate emotions, and develop trust. These skills contribute to a strong personal sense of Self, which is established from feeling independent and self-reliant.
- 5) **Wellness Skills** – Healthy living and creating a sense of wellness is a lifelong endeavor. In order to feel good and live a long, healthy life, it is essential to engage in wellness behaviors. Developing wellness skills will assist the teens to establish good physical and mental health, and promote an active lifestyle now and throughout their life span.
- 6) **Reflecting on Skills that Create Balance** – This chapter is uniquely designed to enhance reflection and process the skills that are used throughout the workbook, and to evaluate the teen’s understanding of insight, relationship, stress management, self-reliance and wellness skills. Developing reflection and processing skills will assist the teen in continuous growth of the multitude of skills necessary TO BALANCE WAY TOO MUCH!

Chapter Introduction Page

Each chapter begins with a brief introduction, which introduces the basic concept of the skill and the learning outcomes for the chapter. The introduction page presents a quotation that emphasizes the philosophy of the skill. As the facilitator, you may find this strictly informational, or you may wish to use this information and the quotation as a way of introducing the teens to the topic.

Notes to the Facilitator – Activity Approaches

In the *Life Skills to Help Teens Balance WAY TOO MUCH!* workbook, a variety of activity approaches have been integrated to facilitate exploration of a multiplicity of concepts.

These techniques were carefully selected...

- To engage teens through a variety of learning styles - visual, verbal-linguistic and logical.
- To be implemented with an individual or in a group. Some people prefer a more solitary environment, but others prefer a group and more interactive environment.
- As a means to independent personal exploration.
- To develop a more global understanding of the topic and an opportunity to enhance teens' learning styles.

- 1) **Activity worksheets** use a combination of styles to engage the teens in the learning process. Some exercises will combine creative expression and journal writing, while others will have a more didactic approach. Many of the activity worksheets lend themselves to follow-up or homework assignments.
- 2) **Cards** are one of the most versatile approaches to group work. They also provide an innovative approach to one-on-one sessions. For frequent use, copy the handout onto cardstock, cut cards out, and if possible, laminate.

Suggested Card Activities:

- Place cards face-up on a flat surface. Ask each teen to select a card that most relates to a personal situation and to explain why each card was selected. If two people would like the same card, seat them together.
- Place cards face-down on a flat surface, or circulate the deck, asking teens to each select a card at random. Discuss with teens how the cards relate to them at this time or at a time in the past. If a person cannot think of any connection, you may want to allow that person to select another card.
- Use the cards in conjunction with journal exercises.

- 3) **Checklists** can create an awareness of current practices as well as stimulate new ideas similar to sentence starters. Some checklists can be converted into cards or used in conjunction with a creative expression exercise, activity worksheet or journal page.
- 4) **Creative expression** exercises will require additional supplies, and possibly some additional time outside a traditional 50 to 60 minute session, to complete some of these projects. The facilitator may choose from a variety of ways to accommodate the extended time such as lengthening the session, complete it during a second session, or assign some of the experiences as homework. A variety of facilitation techniques can enhance the session and assist those individuals who find it difficult to share thoughts and feelings in more conventional group approaches.
- 5) **Journaling** is a lifelong reflection and process technique. Some pages are designed for free-flow writing while others are more guided with specific questions and directed writing.

Suggested Journaling Activities:

- For pages with suggested words at the bottom, you may want to review all words to ensure that teens understand the meaning of each word. Support teens by asking questions prior to assigning writing.
- Encourage teens to add their own words on the blank lines.
- Encourage teens to not limit their writing to the space provided. Invite teens to use personal journals.

(Continued on the next page)

Notes to the Facilitator – Activity Approaches *(Continued)*

6) Meditations are introduced to engage the more auditory learners. They are also used to encourage the practice of taking time to slow down, focus, let go and be present in the moment. Meditations can be incredibly powerful but must be used with caution and practice. Keep in mind that for some people it is uncomfortable to close their eyes in a group. Always allow the option for individuals to participate with their eyes open and encourage them to participate at the level on which they are most comfortable. When facilitating a meditation, read the meditation numerous times beforehand so when you are implementing, you are confident and focused. This is critical for a successful meditation experience.

Deep rhythmic breathing requires practice. Before beginning a meditation experience, practice the breathing exercise so that all teens clearly understand and feel comfortable. The breathing part of the meditation is essential in gaining the full benefits from the experience by being able to meditate independently. Additional training in meditation and mindfulness is highly encouraged.

7) Quotations are provided on some pages and are used to motivate or validate teens' thoughts or actions. The quotations can be used as a part of the processing experience or as journal starters.

As a facilitator, you may wish to continue collecting quotes and add to those provided. Making a set of quotation cards is also a unique facilitation technique, one that interweaves techniques and multiple learning styles.

8) Sentence starters are excellent for breaking down topics, generating discussion, and initiating new ideas. Encourage teens to not limit their writing to the space provided but use a personal journal for more in-depth reflection. A more engaging method to open or close the session is to select one sentence starter and ask teens to write, or volunteers to discuss ideas the quotation evokes.

Group Facilitation

The facilitation of groups is a unique process that requires special consideration.

Size of group: The larger the group, the less personal the experience, which will often limit teens' self-disclosure. It is imperative to provide an atmosphere of emotional safety. When using experiential approaches in a group setting, limit the number of teens, if possible. The increased movement of teens and the use of supplies requires more room, and it can be difficult to monitor everyone's physical and/or emotional safety. It is always wise to have additional support staff present.

Teens: When facilitating a group or providing an individual counseling session, it is critical to be open to each teen, accepting and acknowledging where each one is at in this moment in time.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Will the teens be able to understand the concept of the exercise?
- Is there a better way to introduce the topic? Might there be individuals who have experienced a traumatic event for whom this exercise might trigger an unforeseen reaction?
- How will I introduce this exercise if there are individuals who are unable to read, write or speak English?
- What if members of the group are shy or uncomfortable answering questions? In what ways can I give them the option to pass or skip until they are ready to participate? In this situation, following up individually after the group session, reinforces that you care.
- Does this activity require the option of teens using name codes rather than others' actual names?

(Continued on the next page)

Notes to the Facilitator – Group Facilitation *(Continued)*

Length of session: Most sessions can be completed in the traditional 50 to 60 minute time period. However, if group time is shorter, introduce the concept in smaller segments, recognizing that some experiential exercises will require additional time.

Preparation:

- Plan ahead when using these exercises. Even seasoned therapists need time to prepare for sessions.
- It will be helpful to try the exercises before facilitating.
- Gather supplies needed. Have all of the supplies organized and ready in the room where the session is to be held.
- Count all supplies. How many pens, pencils, scissors, etc. are to be used? This assists in creating a safe environment for teens and facilitator.
- Arrange the group space. Each group can require an entirely different environment. If you desire chairs in a circle or need tables and chairs for a creative experience, have the area ready prior to group arrival.
- Read ahead for clarity and understanding. Be certain that you understand the directions and can facilitate the exercise smoothly and with ease.

Teens' follow-up and/or homework can reinforce the topic and increase behavior change. If you assign homework it is critical to follow-up on the assignment in a one-to-one session or at the next group meeting. Depending on the teens' sensitivity to the topic, encourage each teen to keep a personal journal. This can enhance the experience inside and outside of the session.

Sample Group Format:

- A. Group greeting (sets a safe and comfortable environment)
- B. Teens' introductions
- C. Ground rules (respect all comments, confidentiality within the group, etc.)
- D. Homework or follow-up review (if applicable)
- E. Introduction of topic
 - a. Discuss topic. You may use visual or auditory approaches for introduction and explanations, i.e., white board, flip chart, power point or participating initiatives.
 - b. Distribute supplies and/or handouts
- F. Facilitate group experience
- G. Process the experience (processing brings added meaning and closure to the group experience)
- H. Follow-up or homework

In Summary:

Remember, you are the facilitator and this is your session! It is through your practice the individuals gain knowledge and understanding of the subject and are allowed to reflect and process in order to bring meaning of that subject into their own personal lives. Herein lies an overwhelming responsibility. This workbook is a guide. Use the handouts in their entirety. Add, delete, adapt or allow them to spark your own new ideas. **Since the handouts in this workbook are reproducible, you can white-out words, insert your own that are pertinent to your teens and then use that paper as your master to photocopy.** In order for an individual or group session to be successful, it depends on the skills, abilities, preparation, and knowledge of the facilitator. For the session to be powerful, it requires the facilitator to be authentic, totally present and engaged when addressing the needs of the teens.

Refer teens who are experiencing difficult situations to a school counselor, mental health or medical professional. **If danger is imminent**, call 911 or the local emergency service number.

Life Skills to Help Teens Balance WAY TOO MUCH!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Insight Skills	11
Putting My Pieces Together	13
Putting My Pieces Together Facilitator's Guide	14
Gain Insight and Develop Awareness	15
Gain Insight and Develop Awareness Facilitator's Guide	16
It's Me!	17
It's Me! Facilitator's Guide	18
Poetic Thoughts and Feelings	19
Poetic Thoughts and Feelings Facilitator's Guide	20
Acting on My Attitude	21
Acting on My Attitude Facilitator's Guide	22
Keeping in S.T.E.P.	23
Keeping in S.T.E.P. Facilitator's Guide	24
Life is a Maze	25
Life is a Maze Facilitator's Guide	26
Finding My Life Purpose	27
Finding My Life Purpose Facilitator's Guide	28
Resiliency Workout Personal Workout Plan	29
Humor	30
Purpose	31
R-E-L-A-T-I-O-N-S-H-I-P-S	32
Creativity	33
Independence	34
Initiative	35
Resiliency Workout Facilitator's Guide	36
2. Relationship Skills	37
Relationship Self-Evaluation	39
Relationship Self-Evaluation Facilitator's Guide	40
A Journalist's Report on Teen Relationships	41
A Journalist's Report on Teen Relationships Facilitator's Guide	42
Dealing with Diversity	43
Dealing with Diversity Facilitator's Guide	44
Negotiate for a Win/Win	45
Negotiate for a Win/Win Facilitator's Guide	46
Energize or De-Energize My Time?	47
Energize or De-Energize My Time? Facilitator's Guide	48
My Heroes	49
My Heroes Facilitator's Guide	50
Who Can I Count On?	51
Who Can I Count On? Facilitator's Guide	52

How I Appreciate You!	53
How I Appreciate You! Facilitator’s Guide	54
Celebrating My Support System	55
Celebrating My Support System Facilitator’s Guide	56
3. Stress Management Skills	57
The Stress Process.	59
The Stress Process Facilitator’s Guide	60
S-T-R-E-S-S-I-N-G L-E-S-S Word Game	61
S-T-R-E-S-S-I-N-G L-E-S-S Word Game Facilitator’s Guide	62
Stress Symptoms	63
Stress Symptoms Facilitator’s Guide	64
Who Knows a Coping Technique? Survey	65
Who Knows a Coping Technique? Survey Facilitator’s Guide	66
Escape Zone	67
Escape Zone Facilitator’s Guide	68
Stress-Express	69
Stress-Express Facilitator’s Guide	70
Small Wonders	71
Small Wonders Facilitator’s Guide	72
Mini-Meditations	73
Mini-Meditations Facilitator’s Guide	74
“I Will Cope with Stress By ...” Action Plan	75
“I Will Cope with Stress By ...” Action Plan Facilitator’s Guide	76
4. Self-Reliance Skills	77
What it Means to be Responsible	79
What it Means to be Responsible Facilitator’s Guide	80
Organize by Making a List? Sounds SO Easy, but...	81
Organize by Making a List? Sounds SO Easy, but... Facilitator’s Guide	82
Prioritize – Now and Later.	83
Prioritize – Now and Later Facilitator’s Guide	84
Pro.cras.ti.na.tion	85
Pro.cras.ti.na.tion Facilitator’s Guide	86
What Do I Do with My Time?	87
What Do I Do with My Time? Facilitator’s Guide	88
Living on Your Own	89
Living on Your Own Facilitator’s Guide	90
Show Independence with Money Management Skills	91
Show Independence with Money Management Skills Facilitator’s Guide	92
The Skills for Finding and Keeping a Job	93
The Skills for Finding and Keeping a Job Facilitator’s Guide	94
How Important is Safety	95
How Important is Safety Facilitator’s Guide	96

Giving Back – I Can Do It!	97
Giving Back – My Research	98
Giving Back – Quotations	99
Giving Back – I Can Do It! Facilitator’s Guide	100

5. Wellness Skills	101
7 Ways to be a Health Groupie	103
7 Ways to be a Health Groupie Facilitator’s Guide	104
Make Your Own Vending Machine	105
Make Your Own Vending Machine Facilitator’s Guide	106
Mental Health Awareness	107
Mental Health Awareness Facilitator’s Guide	108
One Mile Marker at a Time	109
One Mile Marker at a Time Facilitator’s Guide	110
Health and Hygiene - Match Game	111
Health and Hygiene - Match Game Facilitator’s Guide	112
ABC’s of Healthy Activities	113
ABC’s of Healthy Activities Facilitator’s Guide	114
Fun Activities Word Search	115
Fun Activities Word Search Facilitator’s Guide	116
Small Steps Lead to Big “Feat”	117
Small Steps Lead to Big “Feat” Facilitator’s Guide	118
My Total Self	119
My Total Self Facilitator’s Guide	120

6. Reflecting on Skills that Create Balance	121
How Do You Create BALANCE in Your Life? Survey	123
How Do You Create BALANCE in Your Life? Survey Facilitator’s Guide	124
Choices: Stop – Think – Act	125
Choices: Stop – Think – Act Facilitator’s Guide	126
Putting My Skills Together	127
Putting My Skills Together Facilitator’s Guide	128
What Do I Do When There is Just Too Much To Do?	129
What Do I Do When There is Just Too Much To Do? Facilitator’s Guide	130
Serenity Prayer	131
Serenity Prayer Facilitator’s Guide	132
Reflecting on My Skills that Create Balance	133
Reflecting on My Insight Skills that Create Balance	134
Reflecting on My Relationship Skills that Create Balance	135
Reflecting on My Stress Management Skills that Create Balance	136
Reflecting on My Self-Reliance Skills that Create Balance	137
Reflecting on My Wellness Skills that Create Balance	138
Reflecting on ALL My Skills that Create Balance	139
Reflecting on Skills that Create Balance Facilitator’s Guide	140

Chapter I

Insight Skills

Insight is having the ability to understand oneself, others, and events or situations. It is to intuitively sense what is occurring and to be able to reflect and discuss with deeper meaning. Developing skills that improve teens' insight will assist them in understanding themselves and how they approach life. When striving to balance all of the opportunities, obligations, challenges and desires in their life, the place to begin is with the Self and to strive to understand the many aspects of both the internal and external influences and events.

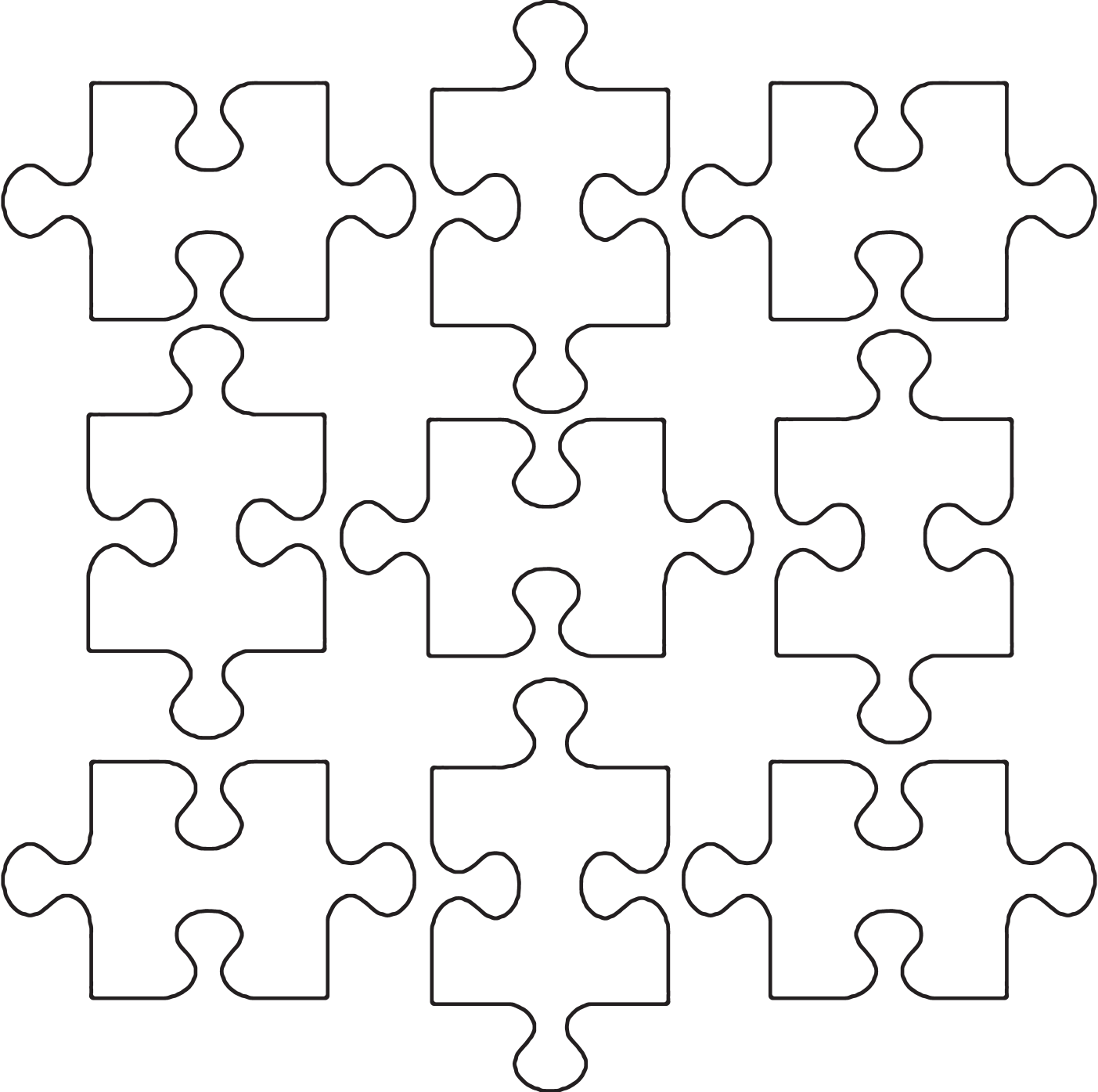
Objectives

- Explore and create an awareness of the total self.
- Develop an understanding of insight and insight skills.
- Observe the connection between attitude and actions.
- Create an understanding of the four dimensions of human experience.
- Understand the concept that actions create consequences.
- Begin to establish a life purpose.

The best vision is insight.

~ MALCOLM FORBES

Putting My Pieces Together



Putting My Pieces Together Facilitator's Guide

Purpose: Invite teens to explore their total Self by identifying their many pieces.

Introduction: Jigsaw puzzles are a unique experiential approach to teaching and exploring numerous life concepts. Below are ideas to facilitate a teen's awareness of Self. Understanding *who we are* is the first step in being able to create a balanced life.

Facilitator: When using puzzles one is stopped only by one's own creativity.

Material:

- Scissors
- Colored markers
- Writing utensils
- Stickers
- Other items to decorate pieces
- Glue
- Construction, poster or plain paper

Activity:

- A. Gather teens around a table. Ensure that each teen has adequate space to work.
- B. Distribute a *Putting My Pieces Together* handout to each teen.
- C. Ask teens to write one of the following aspects about themselves on each of the nine puzzle pieces:
 1. a quality you perceive as a positive quality
 2. a quality you perceive as a negative quality
 3. a new and different characteristic to explore and possibly adopt
 4. a positive emotional attribute
 5. a positive physical attribute
 6. a way you express independence and self-reliance
 7. a talent or skill you demonstrate at school
 8. something you would like to better understand about yourself
 9. something you would like to change about yourself
- D. Instruct teens to cut out the pieces of the puzzle.
- E. After teens have labeled each piece of the puzzle, invite them to be creative and decorate each of the pieces.
- F. When all of the pieces have been completed, direct teens to now put their puzzle pieces together to create a total Self picture.
- G. Ask teens to share their puzzle picture with the group. Encourage them to discuss each piece and what it represents. During group reflection you can discuss the following:
 - different characteristics that make-up a total person
 - how everyone has characteristics they like and dislike about themselves
 - the way pieces of the puzzle can change as their ideals change and as they grow as individuals.

Additional Ideas:

Teens can use puzzle pieces to explore their roles: brother, friend, daughter, student, team member, etc. The group can discuss how everyone has many roles in life and how all those roles contribute (a piece) in forming them as individuals (the puzzle as a whole). Roles change over time and each person's puzzle is constantly changing and evolving.

Gain Insight and Develop Awareness

Part of living a balanced life is gaining insight and developing awareness about your total Self.
These cards will help explore this process.



<p>I <i>risk</i> when</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>I show <i>courage</i> when</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>I am <i>passionate</i> about</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>My <i>dreams</i> are</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>My <i>path</i> will take me</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p><i>Reflection</i> allows me</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>My <i>expectations</i> are</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>I want to <i>change</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>I am at a <i>crossroads</i> about</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>I want to <i>forgive</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Seeing <i>possibilities</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>I <i>believe</i> I have <i>barriers</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><i>Choices</i> allow me</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Practicing <i>patience</i></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p><i>Gratitude</i> allows me</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p><i>Triggers</i> that affect me</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Gain Insight and Develop Awareness Facilitator's Guide

Purpose: To assist teens in the exploration of themselves, others, and situations which will promote greater awareness and deeper insight, and ultimately allow for stronger evaluation of life choices.

Introduction: Insight is the ability to understand oneself, others, or a situation in a very clear way, intuitively. Insight assists in learning cause and effect and allows the teen to evaluate choices through the development of stronger insight. Encouraging teens to listen to their internal conversations teaches them to understand themselves, others, and/or a situation from a deeper perspective. This process also assists the teen in evaluating the cause and effect of choices made by others or themselves which can lead to making more insightful, positive decisions and acquiring greater empathy for others.

Material:

One set of *Gain Insight and Develop Awareness* cards, cut prior to group.

Activity:

- A. Gather teens around a large table.
- B. Encourage group to discuss what it means to have *insight*. Use information from introduction to facilitate discussion.
- C. Place cards face down on table (flat surface) and ask each teen to select a card at random.
- D. Ask for a volunteer to begin by sharing his/her card. After each card has been shared by the participant who picked it, ask other members to share ideas about the card just read.
- E. Continue around the group until each member has had the opportunity to share their card.
- F. Facilitate discussion by asking these questions:
 - “What did you learn about your personal insight?”
 - “What did you learn when others shared their insights?”
 - “How can you gain greater empathy (putting yourself in someone else’s shoes) for others when you explore your own greater insights?”
 - “When you explore a situation with deeper insight, how does that assist you in making more competent choices?”
- G. Encourage teens to keep an insight journal until next group. Journal using the questions asked in the discussion or provide a *Gain Insight and Develop Awareness* handout to help them facilitate journal statements.

Additional Ideas:

1. Use the *Gain Insight and Develop Awareness* handout as is instead of making cards. Ask teens to respond to each card and then share insights with the group.
2. Provide pre-made cards and have teens make their own additional cards that facilitate personal insights.



It's ME!

My favorite
physical trait ...

I show kindness
by ...

I show my
emotions
by ...

A talent I have ...

A skill I can
teach others ...

I help the
community by ...

Something that
makes me laugh
is ...

An outdoor activity
I like to
participate in ...

The thing I like best
about me is ...

Something
I would like
to change ...

My friends tell me
I am good at ...

I show
frustration by ...

I show my
hurt feelings
by ...

My favorite
hobby is ...

Something
I highly value is ...