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LIFE SKILLS FOR HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING
Teaching What Really Matters

On my very first day of teaching a fight broke out. It was just before sixth period sophomore slow-track English. As I entered my room I found two boys tussling on the floor. "Listen, you retard!" yelled the kid on the bottom. "I didn't take your stuff!"

The fight was quickly broken up. After class I detained Joe, who had apparently started the fight. With a flat voice and dead eyes he said, "Teach, don't waste your time on us. We're the retards of the school."

That entire night I couldn't get Joe's face and comment out of my mind. I tossed and turned in bed wondering if I really wanted to be a teacher. Finally, I knew what to do.

The following day I stood at the front of my sixth period class and looked each student in the eye. I then turned and wrote DRAHCIR on the board. I said, "That's my first name. Can anyone please tell me what it is?"

They laughed and said I had a really weird name. I then turned and wrote RICHARD on the board. A couple of students blurted out my name and several gave me a funny look. They were suspicious and wondered if I was playing a joke on them.

I said, "Yes, Richard is my first name. I have a learning disability—something called dyslexia. In elementary school I had trouble writing my own name correctly. I couldn't spell and numbers get all jumbled up in my head. I was labeled retarded—RICKY RETARDED. I can clearly remember people calling me that and the way it made me feel."

"So how'd ya become a teacher?" asked a student in the front row.

I replied, "I hate negative labels. I love to learn and I'm not stupid. That's what my classes are all about, discovering just how smart you are and loving to learn. If you like the label 'retard,' you don't belong in here. Go see the guidance counselor and transfer out. But you have to know that I don't see any 'retards' in here. Now, this class isn't going to be a piece of cake. We're going to work hard, very hard. You're going to catch up and graduate and I'm sure some of you will go onto college. I'm not joking, and I'm not threatening you. I'm just making you a promise. I don't want to ever hear the word 'retard' again! Is that clear?"

No one transferred out and it wasn't long before the students began to believe more in themselves. As they came to expect more of themselves, they worked harder and harder, pushing themselves to catch up to their peers. We all learned a great deal about English literature that year, but so much more about life. While studying classics like The Grapes of Wrath and To Kill a Mockingbird, we discussed the need for taking responsibility for our actions, choices and consequences, and the need for setting life goals. We likened the characters’
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situations to similar problems they faced and practiced problem-solving methods, how to resolve conflicts, and other communication and relationship-building skills. We discussed various labels people carry, how those labels affect people’s behavior, and how negative labels can be overcome.

All of them did graduate and five of them, including Joe, earned scholarships to college. I’m now in my twenty-third year of teaching. I laugh whenever I think back on my first day in the classroom and how, for a night, I wondered if I really wanted to be a teacher. What could I possibly do that would be more rewarding than trying to make a difference in young people’s lives by teaching them the life skills that really matter?


Students in today’s world face many pressures, concerns, and problems. They need skills to successfully confront the life challenges of youth as well as those that appear later in adulthood. Life skills are abilities and behaviors that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. According to the World Health Organization, “life skills are a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner” (pg. 8).1 The World Health Organization further elaborates on the critical importance of life skills in the healthy development of young people, from their earliest years through childhood, adolescence, and into young adulthood:

These skills have an effect on the ability of young people to protect themselves from health threats, build competencies to adopt positive behaviours, and foster healthy relationships. Life skills have been tied to specific health choices, such as choosing not to use tobacco, eating a healthy diet, or making safer and informed choices about relationships. Different life skills are emphasized depending on the purpose and topic. For instance, critical thinking and decision-making skills are important for analyzing and resisting peer and media influences to use tobacco; interpersonal communication skills are needed to negotiate alternatives to risky sexual behaviour. (pg. 9)1

Life skills development can be taught in many curricular areas in schools. Health education, for instance, includes a broad range of content areas, such as emotional and mental health; healthy eating; physical activity; substance abuse prevention; injury prevention; reproductive and sexual health; and consumer health. Within these content areas, life skills such as decision making, communication, problem solving, and goal set-
Life skills are fundamental tools that teachers can use to help young people avoid health risk behaviors [see Box 2-1]. Specifically, life skills can help young people avoid the six categories of risk behaviors introduced in Chapter 1: dietary patterns that contribute to disease; insufficient physical activity; sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy, HIV, and other STDs; tobacco use; alcohol and other drug use; and unintentional and intentional injuries.

The focus of this chapter is on important life skills for health and emotional well-being. We want your students to acquire skills that help them feel comfortable with themselves, relate effectively with others, cope with disappointment and stressful situations, proficiently solve problems, celebrate life's successes, and make responsible and healthful decisions. We firmly assert that life skills development is a solid foundation for healthy development. Acquiring important life skills gives young people inner resources to withstand the pressures urging engagement in risky behavior.

This chapter is organized into the following life skill areas: self-esteem; emotional intelligence; being proactive; communication skills; relationship building; goal setting; and problem solving and decision making. To assist you in teaching these life skills to your students, we include numerous activities that you can use in your classroom. Upcoming chapters in this book present additional life skills and reinforce those introduced in this chapter. Chapter 3 focuses on media literacy skills. Chapter 4 provides information and resources for helping students develop stress management and coping skills. Chapter 5 addresses skills for healthy eating and physical activity. Refusal, decision making, and goal setting for countering sexual activity and substance use are highlighted in Chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 8 concentrates on important violence prevention skills such as anger management and conflict resolution skills. Chapters 9 and 10 teach skills for dealing with depression, suicide, loss, grief, and death.

**Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem is viewed by many mental health professionals as the foundation of positive emotional well-being. Most schools have made major efforts to improve the self-esteem of students in an attempt to avoid psychological difficulties such as anxiety and depression, underachievement, crimes of violence, and alcohol and drug abuse. Through these efforts, however, many misconceptions about self-esteem have arisen. One of the prominent myths concerning self-esteem is that it can be “injected” into students like a vaccination. Other self-esteem myths include the notions that self-esteem comes before accomplishment, that narcissism and self-centeredness are self-esteem, and that one should always feel good about oneself. These notions are responsible for what some have termed “The Self-Esteem Fraud.” Efforts to enhance self-esteem that incorporate these myths fail.
Before we can successfully nurture self-esteem in our classrooms, we must first have a clear understanding of what it is. **Self-esteem** is the evaluative component of self-image, or the positive or negative manner in which a person judges herself or himself. It is a product of what we perceive ourselves to be (self-image), how we want to be (ideal-self), and the expectations that we perceive others have for us (pygmalion-self). Our senses of competency, worthiness, and belonging are formed by the combination of these three “selves.” Figure 2-1 diagrams how all these factors combine to form self-esteem. Notice that the waves in the social mirror represent perceptions of reality. At times our perceptions are more distorted than at other times, such as on “blue days.” Consequently, our self-esteem, how we judge ourselves, is dynamic and ever-changing.

Negative self-perceptions can adversely affect a child’s performance in school. This fact has prompted some educators to try to “inject” self-esteem into students to raise scholastic performance. Injection efforts include generously praising students for any effort they make and having students chant self-affirming statements such as “I’m great!” This approach can produce students who feel good about mediocre performance but who do not experience a true lift in self-esteem. True self-esteem is experienced when we do our very best work—not from lowering the standards by which we judge ourselves.

Self-esteem is best nurtured by teachers when students are helped to achieve academic success and acquire emotional skills, and through estab-
Establishing an emotionally warm classroom where students feel capable, competent, and accepted. Throughout the rest of this chapter, we provide you with insight and strategies to help students gain true self-esteem—the type that will facilitate their successes in life.

We will now look at factors influencing the development of the ideal-self and pygmalion-self. We examine how ideal-self and pygmalion-self reflections affect self-evaluation and feelings of self-worth, and how to rise above negative self-image scripting.

**Ideal-Self**

*Ideal-self* is our perception of what we want to be. Ideal-self involves every aspect of our being, including physical characteristics, mental abilities, emotional and social skills, and moral standards. Ideal-self is based on the expectations that we have for ourselves. These expectations are shaped through relationships and interactions with family members, peers, and

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**Skill-Based Health Education**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), skill-based health education focuses on developing the knowledge, attitudes, values, and life skills that young people need to make and act on the most appropriate and positive health-related decisions. Individuals who possess these skills are likely to adopt and sustain a healthy lifestyle during their school years and throughout the rest of their lives. The WHO stresses that skill-based health education has been shown by research to achieve the following:

- Reduce the chances of young people engaging in delinquent behavior and interpersonal violence
- Delay the onset of using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- Prevent peer rejection and bullying
- Teach anger control
- Promote positive social adjustment and reduce emotional disorders
- Improve health-related behaviors and self-esteem
- Improve academic performance

others. The media also affect ideal-self through the messages and images to which we are exposed.

The aspect of ideal-self that we tend to focus on most is our physical characteristics. This is particularly true for teenagers. Our physical ideal is what we perceive as the perfect body—our image of what we believe is the perfect height, weight, body build, coloring, facial features, and so forth. This ideal is tremendously shaped by the numerous media images we see of beautiful people, airbrushed to perfection, on television, in movies, in magazines, and on billboards. If we do not look like these people, it is easy to form the impression that we are less than ideal. Yet, the truth is that very few are capable of living up to these ideals. Even models report that there are things they don’t like about their bodies. Therefore, the ideal that should be stressed is having a physically fit and healthy body. This is a healthy, achievable physical ideal.

While certain physical characteristics cannot be changed, moral characteristics can be attained. For example, everyone has the capacity to be honest, respectful, responsible, hard-working, and compassionate. These characteristics are not usually aspired to or sought after unless a person receives guidance and nurturing from adults. Too many youths idealize low moral characteristics (e.g., disrespect, disregard for the law, cruelty). In other words, the ideal-self of many young persons (what they aspire to be) includes low moral character. How can we help youth to want to incorporate moral characteristics into their ideal-self? The next sections on hero identification and character and values education address this question.

**Hero Identification**  Heroes are simply people that we admire. The people we choose to admire shape our perception of what we want to be (ideal-self). They provide a standard against which to measure ourselves. Thus, identifying one’s heroes gives great insight into one’s ideal-self. Think about who you truly admire. What is it that you admire about them? You will probably think of several heroes. Some may be people that you know personally. Others are people you know only from a distance or through the image portrayed through the media. Consider how your heroes affect your life. How much do you attempt to emulate the traits you find desirable?

How much do you think children and adolescents emulate the people they admire? If you ask children and adolescents who their heroes are, many will report celebrities—sports figures, actors, musicians, or other media stars. We tend to be a culture fixated on celebrity status. Unfortunately, these celebrity heroes often model egocentric, risky, irresponsible, and unhealthy behaviors.

Young people need to be exposed to heroes of high moral character in history, literature, and in our neighborhoods and communities. There are many heroes in our communities with whom our young people should become acquainted (e.g., people who give community service). Being exposed
to many different types of heroes helps youth form ideal-selves with high character qualities. It prompts young people to ask themselves if they have the various traits exemplified and inspires them to develop these traits.

Share your heroes with your students. Highlight the admired characteristics of the heroes you discuss with your students. Explain why the characteristics are important to you and how the hero may have developed these characteristics. Ask your students to interview adults, such as parents, relatives, neighbors, or others, about their heroes. Instruct your students to listen carefully and identify the admirable qualities these adults' heroes demonstrate. You can also have your students search local newspapers for articles that might identify some individuals who have acted in admirable ways and could be termed “heroes.” As you do these activities have the class make a large lettered list of admirable character traits. Display this list in a prominent location for several months. In class discussions continue to highlight admirable character traits you encounter in history, literature, and elsewhere as the semester proceeds. The more exposure students have to examples of high character, the more likely they are to make those characteristics part of their ideal.

Many students have media heroes who do not display high moral character. We should help students identify the good qualities of these heroes. This helps put the focus on the positive aspects of the hero. It is also appropriate to discuss how the media hero’s negative behavior can lead to problems for the hero himself or herself and for those who emulate this behavior.

Character Education  Character education is the deliberate effort to help people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values. Many schools include aspects of character education in their curricula in hopes of curtailing societal problems such as violence, vandalism, stealing, cheating, disrespect for authority and peers, sexual promiscuity, and abusive and self-destructive behaviors. People who display these problem behaviors do not exemplify good character and lack moral elements in their ideal-selves. For this reason, character education holds promise as a solution for these problems. Thomas Lickona explains that good character “consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good—habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action. All three are necessary for leading a moral life; all three make up moral maturity. When we think about the kind of character we want for our children, it's clear that we want them to be able to judge what is right, care deeply about what is right, and then do what they believe to be right—even in the face of pressure from without and temptation from within” [pg. 51].

Therefore, character education consists of teaching students “the good,” motivating them to desire “the good,” and inspiring actions of good character. Lickona labels these three components of character education as moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Effective character edu-
cation programs require intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approaches that promote core values in all aspects of school life. Schools that take a comprehensive approach to character education do the following:\(^3\)

- Publicly stand for core ethical values, including respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, diligence, self-control, caring, and courage
- Define these values in terms of observable behavior
- Model these values at every opportunity
- Celebrate their occurrence in and outside of school
- Study them and teach their application to everyday life, including all parts of the school environment (e.g., classrooms, corridors, cafeteria, playing field, school bus)
- Hold all school members, adults and students alike, accountable to standards of conduct consistent with the school’s professed core values

Schools with effective character education programs provide students with repeated opportunities for moral action geared to help them develop their intrinsic motivation. To be successful, character education must take place in a school environment that is caring and academically challenging and supportive of all students. Parents and community members must be recruited by the school and made full partners in the character-building effort.

**Values Education**

Values education is very similar to character education, and like character education, schools offer it as a solution to problem behaviors. The values education in today’s schools differs significantly from values clarification. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was considerable sentiment that schools should not teach values because of concern over which values would be taught. In an effort to avoid teaching specific values, schools taught “values clarification,” which focuses on having students identify and clarify their personal values. In values clarification, teachers were instructed to not influence students’ values by imposing their values. However, it became apparent that some students lacked moral values. Today we recognize that, even with vast diversities in our population, there are many values all of us share. Currently in values education, values are taught rather than “clarified.”

Which values do schools teach? Values education centers on the foundational moral values of respect and responsibility. All cultures and societies universally affirm these values in one way or another. Other values, such as honesty, fairness, tolerance, prudence, self-discipline, helpfulness, compassion, cooperation, courage, civic virtue, and citizenship, assist one in acting respectfully and responsibly. Effective values education inspires students to incorporate these values into their ideal-self.
Pygmalion-Self

You may be familiar with the Greek myth of Pygmalion, a sculptor who created an ivory statue of a beautiful young maiden. His creation was so realistic and beautiful that he fell in love with it. In recognition of Pygmalion’s strong affection for the ivory maiden, Aphrodite, the goddess of love, turned the statue into a live maiden. Using the theme from this myth, George Bernard Shaw wrote a play entitled *Pygmalion*, upon which the film *My Fair Lady* is based. The play and film portray the relationship between a young flower girl, Eliza Dolittle, and a professor. Professor Higgins’s determination and expectations transform Eliza from a flower girl into a lovely lady of high society. The powerful influence of expectations of others on behavior and self-esteem has been dubbed the *Pygmalion effect*. A common expression illustrating the power of the Pygmalion effect goes like this:

I am not what I think I am.
I am not what you think I am.
I am what I think you think I am.

*Pygmalion-self* is our perception of what we believe other people think of us. Thus, pygmalion-self is precisely what the expression above exclaims: “I am what I think you think I am.” Eliza Dolittle became the lady Professor Higgins thought she could be. Take a moment to consider your pygmalion-self. What perceptions do significant people in your life have of you? How are you affected and shaped by these perceptions? Pygmalion-self-perceptions can be negative, positive, or even neutral. Can you think of ways in which you have been negatively and positively affected by your pygmalion-self-perceptions?

Relationships and interactions from several individuals contribute to a young person’s sense of pygmalion-self, including family, teachers, peers, friends, coaches, and neighbors. However, pygmalion-self is also highly specific to each relationship and interaction. For example, it is common for a teenager to feel low regard from certain peers and yet feel high regard from other peers.

Pygmalion-self-perceptions are prone to inaccuracy. Consider the following case. Melissa wholly believes that one of her teachers thinks she is “dumb” and incorporates this perception into her pygmalion-self. In reality, the teacher considers Melissa as a slightly above-average student. Melissa’s perception affects her schoolwork and her relationship with the teacher. Misperceiving the perceptions of others is a common problem associated with pygmalion-self. For this reason, the next section of this chapter addresses how to help students accurately evaluate their pygmalion-self. Too often individuals accept certain labels as reality when in fact they are unfounded, an issue we address later in this chapter. While labels are usually difficult to overcome, it is possible to develop unconditional worth
Accurate Self-Evaluation

Forming an accurate sense of who we are is important to high self-esteem. Therefore, the manner in which we evaluate ourselves has a profound effect on self-esteem. Self-evaluation is helpful because it allows us to scrutinize the various aspects of our ideal-self and pygmalion-self. When our ideal-self or pygmalion-self is distorted, our self-esteem is affected (see Figure 2-1). The key to forming a “true picture” of who we are is the ability to take a nonemotive third-person view of ourselves. What we mean by this is seeing ourselves through the eyes of another person while maintaining a nonjudgmental state. This is a skill that can be learned. It takes time, patience, and effort to develop the skills necessary for accurate self-evaluation. Therefore, it is best to start training in childhood. The following examples illustrate the need for more accurate self-evaluation.

Marie works hard in school and recently earned a 94% on a test. Upon reviewing her corrected test she remarked, “I really messed up on the test!” Jennifer is a very attractive 14-year-old with what her friends consider an enviably slender figure. Jennifer feels that she is at least 15 pounds overweight and sometimes even refers to herself as “Thunder thighs,” the nickname given to her by her younger brother. This nickname is unwarranted because her thighs are rather slender. Michael is very agile and proficient in sports, the “athlete of the family.” He does moderately well in school but not as well as his older brother, the “brain of the family.” Therefore, he feels that he is dumb. These three young people have trouble evaluating themselves accurately. Being able to see oneself accurately is not an easy task, but it is an important component of emotional well-being.

Teachers can assist students in evaluating themselves more realistically by first helping them develop an awareness of their self-image, ideal-self, and pygmalion-self. A variety of activities can help students realize how they see themselves, including their physical and psychological traits, talents, shortcomings, roles, and labels. Other activities can help students answer the questions “How do I wish I were?” (ideal-self) and “How do others see me?” (pygmalion-self).

The second step to realistic self-evaluation is reviewing these three selves to see how they have been influenced over the years by the media, peers, parents, siblings, and teachers. Teachers can be especially effective in providing this kind of insight through lecture, discussion, and learning activities. Once students recognize all of these influences upon self-esteem, it is easier for them to evaluate the accuracy of their own self-
image. They can also determine whether their ideal-self is what they really want it to be, and if they care to accept the pygmalion-self imposed on them by others.

In the earlier example, Marie was able to accurately identify that she earned a high score on a test, but unrealistically evaluated her efforts as a failure because her ideal-self demanded perfection. Perfection is an unrealistic foundation for self-evaluation. One of the general characteristics of individuals with negative self-concepts is that they make unrealistically high demands of themselves. People with low self-esteem tend to judge themselves on the basis of unattainable goals of perfection. Even though Marie is a very competent student, her negative self-evaluations have undermined the positive self-esteem that her achievements should have helped to develop. If Marie could be helped to see how her ideal-self has demanded perfection, she might be able to make the conscious choice to change her ideal-self.

In the cases of Jennifer and Michael, both had accepted labels as part of their identity. Jennifer had generalized the label of “thunder thighs” to mean, in her self-image, that she was very overweight. Focusing on one part of her body blurred her view of the rest of her figure. Even though her friends had tried to help her see herself in a more realistic light, she held to the label and perception of being overweight. Focusing on one negative physical characteristic and allowing it to adversely affect self-esteem is common, especially during adolescence. Jennifer needs help to see how she has accepted the label of “thunder thighs,” generalized it, and incorporated it in her self-image. This insight might help her question the validity of the label and to listen to her friends’ positive feedback concerning her figure and weight.

Michael accurately assessed himself as talented in athletics but inaccurately believed he could not be both athletic and intellectual. Assigning labels and roles to relatives is common in families. Parents often place labels such as “the musician,” “the brain,” or “the athlete” on their children in an effort to reinforce talents they see in them. Unfortunately, parents don’t realize that placing the label on one child sometimes discourages siblings from developing potential in the same area. Another unfortunate consequence of labeling is that it makes the labeled person focus on the labeled trait to the exclusion of other talents or interests that he or she might have. By coming to realize how his family label has affected his self-image, Michael is not likely to suddenly perceive himself as being smart. However, he might wonder if he could be smarter than he had thought. He may challenge himself to see if he is capable of more than he had once believed.

Teachers are not in a position to counsel each student and individually review the student’s assessment of the three “selves” for accuracy. However, teachers can help students become more aware of their “selves” and realize the influences of media, parents, peers, siblings, and teachers on the
formation of self-image, ideal-self, and pygmalion-self (see Box 2-2). Then students can change inaccurate negative evaluations to positive ones, accept those things that they cannot change, and acknowledge their inadequacies as well as recognize their strengths. When students see their shortcomings in a balanced context with their strengths, they can then feel secure and competent enough to try to change.

Self-Worth

Feelings of self-worth come from both external and internal factors. Some external factors that contribute to self-worth are appearance, group approval, and social achievements. Thoughts such as “Buy some new clothes (or a sporty car) and you’ll feel like a million bucks” or “Make the team, get the lead in the school play, or get a high GPA and then you’ll be somebody” illustrate how appearance and personal achievements can affect feelings of self-worth. Another term for externally generated self-worth is conditional worth. Conditional worth is the concept that self-worth is conditional upon physical appearance, achievements, or competence. On the other hand, internally generated self-worth emanates from feelings that one is an important person regardless of performance or appearance, simply because one is a unique human being with infinite potential. Internal self-worth is also referred to as unconditional self-worth.

Most people see themselves and the world around them in external terms. If asked to play word association with names of individuals, people usually answer with external labels: cute, joker, sexy, athletic, skinny, fat, black, white, smart, old, rich, dentist, teacher, and so on. When we base our self-worth solely on external factors, life’s challenges can be intensely painful. Consider what happens to the beautiful when beauty fades, is blemished, or altered. Plastic surgery is currently used as a form of psychotherapy for individuals whose self-worth depends on their appearance. The suicides resulting from the stock market crash of 1929 attest to the loss of self-worth founded on the accumulation of wealth.

A common denominator among children and adolescents likely to attempt or commit suicide is a very low sense of self-worth. Young people basing their self-worth on conditional factors are vulnerable to feelings of worthlessness when there is failure or disappointment. Self-love and self-esteem for these individuals results from their performance or their capacity to feel worthy of it (conditional worth). They derive their esteem from conditions or situations. It is typical for many parents, teachers, and even society as a whole to espouse self-esteem in this manner. As a result of this tendency, we advocate that educational programs emphasize the unconditional worth of students and de-emphasize the conditional worth.

With unconditional self-worth there is diminished emphasis on the externally evident factors that we have discussed in this section (e.g.,
Teaching Activities for Self-Evaluation

The following teaching activities are for guiding students to more accurately evaluate themselves. Many of these activities help students identify positive character traits in others as well as in themselves. Each activity indicates its appropriate grade level.

- **P** = primary, K–3rd grade
- **I** = intermediate, 4th–6th grade
- **J** = junior high
- **H** = high school

In these and all other teaching activities, remember that you are dealing with sensitive personal issues. Never pry, force a student to divulge information, or put him or her on the spot.

**“This Is Me” Folder**

When students have completed the following activities, place the activities in personalized folders that the students can keep.  

**Picture How I Look**

Have students draw a self-portrait. Then have partners draw pictures of each other. Trace silhouettes of each student’s shadow to show how the students actually look. Discuss as a class the differences in these three portraits.  

**Describe How I Look**

In writing, have students (1) describe each of their physical features in detail, beginning at the head and progressing to the feet, and (2) evaluate how they feel about each feature. When steps 1 and 2 are completed, have students write a summary of how they see their body as a whole and how they feel about that self-image.  

**Positive Portraits**

Have each student draw a classmate’s name out of a hat. Have students draw a picture of that person, then under the picture write five positive characteristics they perceive that student possesses. Then have students share their pictures and the positive attributes they wrote.  

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**Partner’s Personality Recipe**

Assign each student a partner to get to know over the course of a few weeks. Have them then write a recipe for their partner’s personality (1 cup athletic, ½ cup generous, etc.). (I)

**Coat of Arms**

On drawing paper, ask students to draw a large shield and then design a personal coat of arms with symbols representing personal talents, traits, values, and aspirations. Give reassurance that this activity is not an evaluation of artistic ability, but is an exercise to build awareness and allow exploration of their self-image. (I, J, H)

**Getting to Know Me**

Have students write endings to complete statements like the following. Encourage depth and honesty by assuring them their answers are for their eyes only. (I, J, H)

1. I hate . . .
2. I wish . . .
3. I fear . . .
4. I love . . .
5. I hope . . .
6. I’m embarrassed when . . .
7. The thing that bothers me most is . . .
8. The thing I am most afraid of is . . .
9. I want most to be . . .
10. Regarding myself, I feel . . .
11. I am most cheerful when . . .
12. My greatest interest in life is . . .
13. The person who means the most to me is . . .
14. The person I would most like to be like is . . .
15. I have great respect for . . .
16. When bullied, I . . .
17. When I am the center of attention, I . . .
18. When I am late, I . . .
19. When I feel awkward, I . . .
20. When given responsibility, I . . .
21. When I am embarrassed, I . . .
22. When I want to show I like someone, I . . .
23. When I am angry, I . . .

*continued*
24. When others put me down, I . . .
25. Four of my greatest pressure points are . . .
26. When I am under a lot of stress, I . . .

What Article of Clothing Am I?
Ask each student to draw an article of clothing that symbolizes herself or himself. Students should think about the color, texture, style, and function of the clothing before deciding what article would best describe them. Partners could also draw how they see the other person. Discuss in small groups. (J, H)

Strengths and Weaknesses
Discuss the Wiseman’s Prayer:
“God grant me the strength to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”
Assign students to write a paper finishing the following sentences.
(I, J, H)
1. My most important strengths are . . . (Consider health, creativity, common sense, good habits, natural ability, integrity, skills, etc.)
2. My most serious handicaps are . . . (Consider bad habits, bad temper, moodiness, antisocial tendencies, poor ways of problem solving, etc.)
3. Things I can change for the better are . . .
4. Things I am going to have to accept are . . .

The Person I Admire Most
Have students write papers on whom they admire most in this world and why. (I, J, H)

If You Could Have Your Wish
Have students answer the following questions.
1. If you could have your wish for talent, what would it be?
2. If you could have your wish for a change in looks, what would you change?
3. If you could have your wish for money, how much would you want and for what?
4. If you could have your wish for a change in intelligence, what would you wish for and why?
5. If you had to rank your wishes, how would you do it? Does this help you see your ideal-self better? (I, J, H)

continued
beauty, wealth, intelligence). You may recall the experience of Jim Brady, who was shot during the attempted assassination of former President Reagan. His injuries left him partially paralyzed and slightly brain-damaged at the height of his career. The shooting altered his personal appearance and slightly diminished his intellect. Nevertheless, Jim Brady demonstrated incredible determination, courage, and unconditional self-worth in making a new life for himself. Unconditional self-worth served as an anchor, and he approached his challenges and new life with enthusiasm, humor, and positive self-esteem.

Another classic example demonstrating unconditional self-worth is Ann Jillian. Ann is a celebrated actress and singer who developed breast cancer. She was one of the first celebrities to publically discuss her battle with breast cancer and she did so in order to help others suffering from cancer or other life calamities. It took great courage to disclose the loss of her breasts from the cancer, especially when you consider that she works in an occupation where a woman's figure is often deemed as important as talent. This demonstrates a high degree of unconditional self-regard. Internal self-worth helps us meet life's challenges and gives us a firm foundation that allows us to work at achieving without fear of failure.

There are many ways that you can boost students' feelings of self-worth. Box 2-3 provides several suggestions that you can use in your teaching career. We also want to stress that although external self-worth is con-

**Pygmalion-Self**

Have students complete each of the following phrases with at least two answers, preferably in paragraph form. (I, J, H)

1. My closest friend truly thinks I am . . .
2. My classmates think I am . . .
3. My parents honestly think I am . . .
4. A stranger’s first impression of me might include . . .

**Roles I Play**

After discussing how differently different people can perceive one person, have students complete the following sentences. (I, J, H)

1. To me, I am . . .
2. To my family, I am . . .
3. To my peers, I am . . .
4. To a special friend, I am . . .
ditional, it is still integral to one's sense of worth. You can help your students develop this type of self-worth by helping them gain skills that improve scholastic performance and emotional well-being. You will find that self-esteem is enhanced when students increase skills in emotion identification and appropriate expression, goal setting, problem solving, media literacy, communication, and relationship development. These skills serve students by fostering a sense of competence and belonging as they find their own special place in the world.

The manner in which teachers and other adults interact with students is critical in forming unconditional self-worth. Positive interactions demonstrating that students are unique, lovable, and important regardless of appearance or performance nurture a strong sense of internal (unconditional) self-worth. Chapter 1 discussed this at length in the section entitled “Interacting with Students.”

### Self-Worth Activities

These activities are for building accurate self-images, enhancing positive self-worth, and identifying admirable character traits in self and others.

**I Am Unique**

Have students draw pictures or write words that show how they are unique as well as how they are similar to other members in the class. Discuss why people are different (e.g., family traditions, heredity, beliefs, environment, free choice). (P, I, J, H)

**Look at Me!**

Place on the floor a large sheet of paper that is folded so it is double thick. Instruct students to lie down on the paper and then have someone trace around them. Cut out the figure. Have students color their figures to show how they look, both front and back. Put the two pictures together and staple around the figure, leaving part of one leg open. Stuff newspaper into the “big picture” and staple the leg shut. The paper dolls will be complete. Dolls can be displayed and then taken home to share with parents. (P)
Fingerprints

Help each child make a set of fingerprints. Have them compare fingerprints with three other children. Point out the differences and discuss how each person is unique. (P, I)

For variation, have students draw eyes, ears, hair, and so forth on their fingerprints and then compare with classmates. Explain that even though two people may look alike (such as identical twins), their fingerprints are different. Have students frame their fingerprints and keep them on their desks as a reminder of their uniqueness. (P, I)

Classroom Stars

Make a bulletin board of dark blue paper with a yellow moon in one corner. Have each student make a star, sign it, and write a positive personal quality. You may have to help them identify these qualities. Display all of the students’ stars on the bulletin board. (P, I)

Sun Spots

Prepare or have students prepare one paper or cardboard sun (circle with perimeter lines for rays) for each student. Cut a hole in the center of each sun and have each student place one of their school pictures in their “frame.” Then you, the student, or classmates write special things about each individual on the sun’s rays. (P, I)

Show-and-Tell Hobbies

Schedule a day for students to share their hobbies with the class. Allow students the opportunity to teach their hobbies to interested classmates. (P, I)

King/Queen for a Day

On birthdays or some other day, honor each student by having him or her wear a crown and cape and sit in front of the class. Have the other students write and/or illustrate something nice about the honored student. Make these writings and drawings into a “book” and place each student’s book in the classroom library to be read by the class during free reading time. In time, have students take their books home. (P, I)

continued
I Am Good at . . .

Have each student draw a picture to complete this sentence, “I am good at . . .” Ask students to show and explain their drawings to the class. (P, I, J)

Self-Talk

Introduce the idea that our thoughts affect our emotions, including feelings of self-worth. Ask the class for self-put-downs and self-praise comments and list them on the board. Have students keep a journal of their negative and positive thoughts about themselves, such as “Are you ever going to learn?” “How stupid can you be?” “Hey, you did all right on that!” and “I’m proud of that.” Have them note the ratio of positive to negative thoughts and challenge them to a conscious effort to increase the positive. (J, H)

Eggs of Praise

At Easter time, give every student in the class a plastic egg with a message in it that recognizes talents, abilities, or positive behavior you have observed. (P, I)

Fortune Cookies

At Chinese New Year, give every student a fortune cookie that contains positive messages. (P, I)

Spotlighting

Place a baby picture of a student on a bulletin board with the caption, “Who is this important person?” Highlight information about this student—place of birth, hobbies, number of siblings, favorite foods, and so on. Make efforts to spotlight students who need recognition or spotlight each throughout the school year. (P, I, J)

Slide Show

Throughout the school year, take photographs of the students as they engage in various learning activities. Toward the end of the year, set aside time for students to view the slides, to give and receive comments (positive), and to recall shared experiences. (P, I)
Emotional Intelligence

Having and offering unconditional regard for every student is one of the most difficult, but most powerful, attributes a teacher can develop. It is a sad fact that among all the varieties of at-risk students (e.g., those with low educational aspirations, low self-esteem, low internal locus of control, negative attitudes toward school, history of academic failure, fractured family structure, and/or substance abuse problems), the most frequent consistent perception is that their teachers do not care about them.

Emotional Intelligence

In education classes you hear quite a bit about mental intelligence (IQ) and how it relates to success in academics and other aspects of life. Another type of intelligence that plays a prominent role in healthy development is emotional intelligence. Daniel Goleman explains in his widely sold book, Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ, how essential emotional intelligence is to success in life.\(^4\) He relates that success is difficult even for those who have high mental intelligence, if they lack emotional intelligence. On the other hand, those with modest mental intelligence but who have high emotional intelligence usually do quite well in schooling and career, social life, and family life. Goleman identifies the following as aspects of emotional intelligence:

1. *Knowing what you are currently feeling.* Developing this type of self-awareness takes time and practice and is crucial in making many of life’s choices, such as choosing a career or marriage partner.

2. *Recognizing emotions in others.* Empathy is the fundamental people skill. People who are empathetic are more tuned to the subtle social signals of others. They have, so to speak, a social antenna. Individuals who can “read” others are often identified as “star” employees by coworkers. They are able to work well with others, cooperatively solving problems and creating synergistic energy. Conversely, those who have a hard time tuning into others find establishing and maintaining relationships difficult. They can become loners or bullies.

3. *Impulse control and delayed gratification.* These two key elements of managing emotions are the foundation of every accomplishment, from staying on a diet to pursuing a medical degree. Conversely, those having problems with impulse control and delayed gratification are more likely to drop out of school, become pregnant as teenagers, abuse drugs, and end up in jail.

4. *Being able to calm oneself.* We all experience anger, frustration, insecurity and other negative emotions from time to time. Knowing how
to deal with these emotions and appropriately calm ourselves are critical aspects of emotional intelligence.

Take a moment and consider how each of the previously mentioned aspects of emotional intelligence might influence a young person’s behaviors regarding (1) risky choices that might lead to unintentional or intentional injuries, (2) poor dietary choices, (3) being sedentary and not getting enough physical activity, (4) risky sexual choices, and (5) using tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. This simple exercise makes it very clear why emotional intelligence can matter more than IQ for having a happy, successful life.

While mental intelligence is thought to be fixed, something we are born with, emotional intelligence can be developed. It can be nurtured and strengthened as children become experienced in various emotional situations. It is believed by Goleman that these learning experiences actually change the brain by creating new “circuitry” patterns that increase one’s emotional intelligence. Educators play an integral role in the development of emotional literacy among students.

Recognizing and Appropriately Expressing Your Emotions

You can facilitate the emotional intelligence of students by teaching them to identify their feelings and the feelings of those around them [see Box 2-4]. Young children especially find it difficult to articulate what they are feeling, other than to say they feel good or bad. Older students usually are not much more adept at identifying and articulating their emotions. Yet, once students are able to label an emotion, they can more easily verbalize their feelings and appropriately communicate their needs to others.

The ability to recognize and appropriately express emotions is especially important in adolescence. This is typically a very emotionally charged time of life, with many contributing factors, including hormones. Teenagers need to know that it is normal for them to experience wide mood swings, to learn not to take these mood swings too seriously, and to develop appropriate ways of sharing their feelings with others. Group discussions help adolescents come to see that they are not alone in their experiences. Chapter 4, “Dealing with Stress,” gives additional insights and activities for helping students identify and cope with their emotions.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand the feelings of others, to recognize emotions and have the sensitivity to understand how those emotions can make someone feel. Another person’s emotions are often displayed through body language, which serves as a means of communicating feelings. For example, in your mind you can probably picture the body language of someone who is sad or depressed. Other emotions invoke dis-
Teaching Activities for Emotions

The numbers in parentheses after the activity names can help you identify which activities build each of the following aspects of emotional intelligence.

1. Knowing what you are currently feeling.
2. Recognizing emotions in others and developing empathy. Additional activities on this are located in Box 2-6 (“Communication Activities”) and Box 2-7 (“Relationship-Building Activities”), later in this chapter.
3. Impulse control and delayed gratification.
4. Being able to calm oneself.

**Emotional Charades (1, 2)**

Have students act out different emotions, utilizing only nonverbal language. This activity can be used to help younger children identify and then label different emotions, demonstrate how emotions affect behavior, and demonstrate concepts in nonverbal communication. (P, I, J, H)

**Sentence Completion (1, 2)**

Have students complete sentences such as the following, to help them see that feelings are universal. (I, J, H)

- When nothing seems to go right, I feel . . .
- When someone laughs at me, I feel . . .
- When I do a good job on something, I feel . . .
- When I am afraid, I feel . . .

**Show-and-Tell Emotions (1, 2, 4)**

For show-and-tell, have everyone explore topics such as my most frightening experience, my most embarrassing experience, or what makes me really angry. Sharing can help them realize that others sometimes feel as they do and can help them cope. (P)

**Pictures (2)**

Have students cut out pictures of people showing various emotions. Make a bulletin board. Discuss possible reasons for the feelings that are expressed. Animal pictures may also be included. (P)
No Sound Track  (2)

Play an unfamiliar TV or DVD clip in class with the sound turned off. Ask the students to provide the dialogue of the situation they see on the screen based on how they read the actors’ faces and body language. Discuss the various emotions they saw the actors display. (P, l, J, H)

Faces of Emotions  (1)

Have students try to match these pictures with the following emotions.

- Anger
- Confusion
- Contentment
- Determination
- Distrust
- Embarrassment
- Excitement
- Fear
- Frustration
- Happiness
- Indifference
- Love
- Pride
- Sadness
- Satisfaction
- Worry
- Worry

A.  B.  C.  D.

E.  F.  G.  H.

I.  J.  K.  L.

M.  N.  O.  P.

continued
Drawing How I Feel  (1)
Ask students to draw a picture of how they feel right now. When the pictures are completed, discuss the following questions: What colors did you use and why? What is the size of the picture in relation to the paper? What were you thinking about as you were drawing? Have your feelings changed since completing the picture? If so, why?  (P, I, J)

Fear and Shadow Games  (1, 4)
Using ordinary objects, turn out the lights and use a spotlight to show the frightening shadows these objects can make. Involve students by asking them to suggest other objects that cast shadows. Discuss fear of the dark and how they have or might be able to overcome their fear.  (P)

continued

What Am I Feeling?  (1)
Break students into groups of three. Have them discuss for a few minutes how they remember feeling in the distant past (e.g., in kindergarten, two Christmases ago). Then ask them to discuss in their small groups how they felt on a particular day last week. Finally, ask them to discuss how they are feeling right now. Gently push them beyond one-word answers such as “bored” or “tired.” Tuning into present feelings is more difficult than identifying emotions felt in the past.  (J, H)

Emotional Crisis  (3, 4)
Ask each student to collect newspaper articles that describe how individuals have reacted to an emotional crisis. Discuss the emotional need the person may have been trying to satisfy. In what other ways might the emotional need have been met?  (I, J, H)

Letting off Steam  (4)
As a class, define what emotional “steam” is, discuss where it comes from, and the proper and improper times and means of “letting it off.” Have students make a simple poster illustrating both destructive and constructive methods of letting off steam. Discuss posters and any unaddressed methods. Display posters on the wall. Object lesson: Introduce the concept by demonstrating how real steam can be both harmful (burn) and beneficial (fuel a steam engine).  (P, I, J, H)

continued
cernible body responses. Teach your students to recognize these responses. Through the use of video clips and pictures, students can learn to interpret the facial expressions and body movements of characters. You can also teach these concepts by having students role-play different emotions. Or, have students play charades in which different emotions are acted out and the students guess the emotion that is displayed. You can also teach empathy by discussing what people might have felt in historical settings, fictional settings, or in real-life situations observed on the news or in daily interactions. Recognizing emotions and empathizing with others are skills some children learn quickly, whereas others need considerably more
help. Additional activities for learning to better read people and develop empathy can be found in Box 2-6 and 2-7, later in this chapter.

**Impulse Control and Delayed Gratification**

We live in a world saturated with advertisements whose messages tell us that we can have what we want now, that we deserve it, that we should have it. Educational efforts need to counterbalance these messages and pressures. Children can learn **impulse control** and **delayed gratification** through simple classroom structure. For example, these skills can be learned through very simple means, such as not getting a drink of water until a designated time, not speaking in class until called upon, and staying seated until the bell rings. Delayed gratification is learned when students achieve a reward that requires work and effort. Goal-setting activities [see Box 2-8, later in this chapter] help students learn the satisfaction of aiming for a goal, working to achieve the goal, and succeeding in reaching the goal. In the process, students learn delayed gratification.

**Calming Oneself**

Part of knowing how to deal with emotions and how to calm ourselves is understanding what contributes to the intensity of our negative feelings. Not getting enough sleep can magnify negative feelings, decrease coping skills, and create warped perceptions of reality. Children often stay up late watching TV and miss out on much-needed rest. Adolescents also lose sleep due to staying up late for such activities as watching TV, extracurricular activities, or studying. The need for sleep during adolescence is great because it is a time of rapid growth, but encouraging students to get more sleep can be difficult because a later bedtime is often thought to be a right of age. Class discussions on the emotional effects of sleep deprivation may persuade students to take a good look at their own sleep needs, especially if it is clear that healthy, mature people take responsibility for such needs.

Recognizing our negative thinking patterns can also be a powerful means of gaining control over our emotions and soothing ourselves. By changing our thinking patterns, we can change what we feel. Take the example of Ann, a very conscientious young driver who drives her parent’s new car to school. Ann is in the habit of swearing under her breath at inconsiderate drivers on the road. As a result, she often arrives at her destination exasperated, tense, and angry. In class she learns how negative thoughts can produce negative emotions and takes the challenge to think positively of those she perceives to have wronged her. On her way home, a car pulls out in front of her and she has to slam on the brakes in order to avoid a collision. Just as she is about to burst forth with colorful language, she remembers her resolve and, instead, says out loud, “I . . .
I . . . I . . . I bless you to get wherever you are going safely!” Immediately she starts laughing, feeling relaxed, calm, and even happy. Ann had been in the habit of thinking others were thoughtless, self-centered, reckless drivers out to put a ding in her parents’ new car and get her in trouble. In actuality, poor drivers like the one who pulled out in front of her might be confused, distracted, or ill. When Ann blessed the other driver she in effect blessed herself.

There are several techniques for gaining control over negative emotions and being able to soothe ourselves. The old advice of counting to 10 in a frustrating situation can be very helpful, especially if during that time we evaluate why we are frustrated, check any thinking patterns that add to our frustration, and determine if the situation is worth getting upset over. Is there anything we can do about it? Distracting ourselves can also help minimize negative emotions. Ann distracted herself when she took time to think of the blessing she gave to the other driver. We can distract ourselves by turning on a radio, reading something, engaging in a physical activity, or by looking for something humorous in the frustrating situation. One family has a rule that they can argue about anything, but when doing so they must lie down beside each other and sing their hostilities to one another. This family has discovered that arguments handled in this way soon turn into giggling sessions. Additional information on anger management can be found in Chapter 8.

**Being Proactive**

Taking responsibility for our life, for our actions and choices, is another key element of emotional well-being. Three prominent theories of determinism—genetic, psychic, and environmental—state that factors beyond our control are responsible for our behavior. Genetic determinism basically says that “It’s your grandpa’s fault”; it’s in your DNA, it’s in your nature. Psychic determinism says “It’s your parents’ fault”; it’s your upbringing, your childhood experiences, or emotional scripting that makes you who you are. Environmental determinism says “It’s your boss’s, spouse’s, or the economy’s fault.” In other words, someone or something in the environment is responsible for your situation.

We do not deny the influence that genetic, psychic, and environmental factors have on human behavior. However, we want to bring to your attention the concept of **proactivity**, which rejects the view that people and organizations are **controlled** by genetic, historical, or environmental forces. Covey explains: “As human beings, we are responsible for our own lives. Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions. We can subordinate feelings to values.” Highly proactive people “do not blame circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behavior. Their behavior
is a product of their own conscious choice, based on values, rather than a product of their conditions, based on feelings” [pg. 71]. The concept of being proactive emphasizes taking personal responsibility for behavior.

A classic example comes from the life of Victor Frankl, a Jewish psychologist incarcerated in Auschwitz during World War II. While standing naked, alone, and stripped of all his earthly possessions and family, Frankl envisioned that he had only one freedom left, the freedom to choose his responses. This realization led to the choice to forgive his captors. His forgiveness was not the result of benevolence; rather, he knew that holding on to hatred and resentment would destroy him. He continued to develop his freedom of response as the weeks and months dragged on. While digging ditches, marching, and enduring countless persecutions, he envisioned himself in the future, lecturing to university students on the lessons he learned in the concentration camp. In time, Frankl developed more freedom than his captors. Although they had more liberty, he had more freedom.

Another wonderful example of being proactive comes from the courageous life of Christopher Reeve. He was an acclaimed, tall, athletic actor who won stardom for his role as Superman. In 1995 he was fully paralyzed after a fluke fall during an equestrian competition. At age 52, in October of 2004, he died from a heart attack brought on by complications of his paralysis. During his years as a quadriplegic, Mr. Reeve displayed remarkable proactive behaviors. Rather than allow his situation to control him, he chose to take control over his life and to be happy. He reported that on most nights he would dream of walking, sailing, and playing with his children and then awake in the morning to the reality of his paralysis. He would fight the anguish and sense of loss by immediately trying to shake it off and focus on what he could do. What he did do is quite a legacy. He became the major force mobilizing scientists to find a way of reversing paralysis, something most had thought impossible until he began orchestrating the effort. You can read more about Christopher Reeve and learn why those who know his story view him as a real “Superman” by doing a Google search on his name.

In every circumstance in life we have the choice to be reactive or proactive. Reactive people are more or less controlled by circumstance or the environment. If they are treated well, they tend to feel and act “good.” If they are treated badly, they feel bad and are defensive. Reactive people build their emotional lives around the behavior of others, believing that love is a feeling, bestowed upon them like cupids’ arrows. On the other hand, proactive people, such as Victor Frankl and Christopher Reeve, “carry their own weather” with them. This means that they choose, to a large extent, how they are going to respond. They are value driven, having a carefully selected and internalized value code. Proactive people have the ability to subordinate an impulse to a value. This is the essence of proac-
activity—choosing how to act rather than being acted upon by circumstance, environment, or even impulse. Proactive people also think love is a verb, something they do rather than something that happens to them. To be proactive is to be empowered.

We urge you to emphasize this powerful principle as you teach students. Individuals do not happen to just “fall into” proactive thinking. It takes self-awareness, effort, and the building of character to achieve this way of thinking and living. You can help your students develop proactive living through modeling this behavior in your interactions with them. Insist that they take responsibility for their own actions, do not allow them to blame their behavior on someone else. Help your students develop a proactive thinking and speaking style (see Box 2-5.) If you want to gauge your proactive versus reactive thinking, observe patterns in what you say to others. Reactive language contains statements such as “There’s nothing I can do,” “She makes me so mad,” “That’s just the way I am,” “I have to do it,” “I can’t,” and “If only . . . ” Proactive thinking is identified with statements such as “I can . . . ,” “I control . . . ,” “I choose . . . ,” and “I will . . . .” You can help students substitute their “I can’ts” with “I will” and their “I have to’s” with “I choose to.”

Christopher Reeve was truly a “superman” for the way he chose to live his life after becoming a quadraplegic.
Proactive Teaching Activity

Have each student list their “I can’ts” on a sheet of paper. Give students time to think and write until they have filled their paper with comments such as “I can’t do long division,” “I can’t sit still very long,” “I can’t do a cartwheel,” “I can’t stand vegetables,” “I can’t stay up late.” Be sure and do this activity along with your students: “I can’t get the school to give me more funding,” “I can’t get Justin to complete his homework,” “I can’t get Jennifer’s mother to come in for a conference.”

After 10 or so minutes have the students put their pieces of paper into a shoe box that has been decorated to look like a coffin. Add your sheet of “I can’ts” to the box.

Lead your students out to the school yard and dig a grave for “I Can’t.” At the graveside read the eulogy provided below. If it is not possible to bury the box with your students present, modify this activity to meet your circumstances.

Eulogy

We have gathered here today to honor the memory of “I Can’t.” While he was with us on earth, he touched the lives of everyone, some more than others. His name, unfortunately, has been spoken in every public building—schools, city halls, state capitols and yes, even the White House. We have provided “I Can’t” with a final resting place and a headstone that includes his epitaph. He is survived by his brothers and sister, “I Can,” “I Will,” and “I’m Going to Right Away.” They are not as well known as their famous relative and are certainly not as strong and powerful yet. Perhaps some day, with your help, they will make an even bigger mark on the world. May “I Can’t” rest in peace and may everyone present pick up their lives and move forward in his absence. Amen.

After the funeral, cut out a large tombstone from butcher paper and write “I Can’t” at the top, put RIP in the middle, and write the date at the bottom. Display this tombstone all year as a reminder for when a student forgets and says “I can’t.” When this happens, simply point to the tombstone and have your student rephrase his or her statement. (P, I, J, H)


Communication Skills

Understanding the principles of effective communication is helpful in developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Communication
skills include understanding the dynamics of how messages are sent and received, listening skills, and communication styles (see Box 2-6).

**Sending and Interpreting Messages**

We communicate in many ways. The saying “Actions speak louder than words” refers to the importance of **body language** in communication. Actors understand the importance of body language in communicating emotion. When happiness, disappointment, disbelief, or other emotions are displayed on the screen, they are done so primarily through body language. Body language includes facial expressions; posture while standing, sitting, and walking; how close we are to others; and the amount and type of eye contact made.

The tone of voice used is also an important part of sending and interpreting messages. Take a simple statement such as “You are really good at math” and see how many messages you can express changing your voice and inflection. Can you express praise, ridicule, and scorn without changing the wording of the statement?
Communication Activities

Understanding with Feedback

Draw a geometric diagram on a three-by-five card. Give the card to one student and have him or her describe the diagram to the class without using hand gestures or allowing for clarifying questions. Have the class members try to draw what they think was described to them. Compare the students’ drawings with the original. Repeat the exercise with a different diagram and student describer. This time encourage students to ask clarifying questions. (I, J, H)

Gossip

Whisper a message into a student’s ear. Have that student repeat the message by whispering it in another student’s ear. Continue this process until the message has been passed through the class. Have the last student to hear the message repeat it out loud and check to see if it is the original message. (P, I)

Body Language

With the students, identify various types of nonverbal communication (e.g., arms crossed, sitting forward or lounging back, palms opened or clenched, direct or indirect eye contact, amount of space between participants, voice inflections). Discuss how mixed messages can be given when verbal and nonverbal language do not agree. (I, J, H)

Concentration

Have students mentally do a lengthy dictated arithmetic problem:

\[
(5 + 2, - 3, + 8, + 10, - 11, + 4, + 25, - 10, + 50 = ?)
\]

Make the point that listening in conversations takes concentration as well. Have students pair up, then have one person listen while the other discusses a topic such as “the happiest moment of my life” or “the most important person in the world.” Ask the listener to summarize what the speaker said. (I, J, H)

continued
When we send mixed messages others have trouble interpreting our message. **Mixed messages** are sent when spoken words and body language or tone of voice do not match. For instance, a little boy said to his teacher, “You don't like fourth-grade boys, do you?” His teacher responded, “I love fourth-grade boys.” The little guy then said, “I wish you would tell your face that.” When we receive a mixed message we tend to believe the non-verbal over the spoken message.

**“I” Messages**

Effective communication is enhanced when we take responsibility for our feelings. All too often we convey blame to others for our feelings (“You make me so mad!”). Instead, we should take responsibility for our emotions and convey them as such. For example, a student who is upset with his father for forgetting to come to his soccer game shouts out in frustration, “You’re so wrapped up in your work that you don’t care for anybody else in this family!” The father may resent such a strong statement and an argument may ensue. Instead, assume that this student takes responsibility for his feelings and says, “Dad, when you didn’t come to my game, I felt like you didn’t care about me.” This statement would encourage open communication because it describes true feelings and because the father is more likely to respond positively without becoming defensive. When we own our feelings and thoughts we use “**I**” messages and say, “This is how I feel,” “This is how I see it,” “This is what I think.”

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**Sociogram**

Have the class break into groups of five to eight persons. Have the groups discuss a question (e.g., Why are some people constantly putting down others? or What are some things that cause communication to fail?). As the group discusses the topic, a ball of string is passed from one speaker to the next, unraveling as it goes. Only the person holding the ball of string can speak. When another person wants to speak, the ball is passed and the string unravels more. After a few minutes, a sociogram will be revealed to the group. Group members can see who is dominating the conversation and they can include those who have not yet spoken. Repeat the exercise with another topic and challenge the students to do a better job of including everyone who wants to speak.  

(I, J, H)
Listening Skills

Listening is the most powerful communication skill that most of us don’t even consider. After all, we were blessed with two ears and only one mouth. Listening can be passive or active. In passive listening, an individual attentively listens without talking and without directing the speaker in any nonverbal way. Passive listening can be effective when you want the speakers to feel free to develop and express thoughts without concern for evaluation or intrusion from you as a listener.

Active listening requires a great deal more mental and physical effort and energy than passive listening. It involves giving complete attention to what an individual is communicating. Through active listening, a listener conveys understanding and caring to another person, using either verbal or nonverbal means. Active listening requires that you not think about the experiences and insights you want to add to a conversation, but instead “listen” with your eyes, ears, and heart. Verbal responses focus on what the other is saying and convey sympathy, respect, acceptance, and encouragement; for example: “I understand,” “What happened then?” “Is that right?” and “That’s wonderful!” You can also show you care and understand by using reflective listening. Reflective listening consists of paraphrasing (“Are you saying that . . . ?”), comparing (“Was it like . . . ?”), verbalizing unexpressed feelings (“Did it make you feel . . . ?”), and by seeking more information (“Tell me more about . . .”).

Communication Styles

People tend to express opinions and feelings in one of three communication styles: passive, aggressive, or assertive [see Figure 2-2]. We act according to each of these three styles on certain occasions, depending on our situations. However, if we generally respond in one of these styles then we can be classified as either passive, aggressive, or assertive. Those who are passive tend to hold back their true feelings and go along with the other person or persons. They are timid, reserved, and unable to assert their rights. Aggressive individuals take charge of almost all situations and express their opinions, beliefs, and values with little or no regard for others. Their messages may be threatening or disrespectful. Assertive persons carefully express their true feelings in ways that do not threaten or make others feel anxious. They speak their minds and invite others to do likewise. Assertive individuals are especially skilled at using “I” messages and reflective listening. They demonstrate greater emotional intelligence skills than assertive or passive individuals.

Relationship Building

Positive interpersonal relationships form the basis for many human needs. Relationships with significant others can alleviate loneliness, secure stim-
Young people often lack the skills to initiate and maintain satisfying relationships, resolve conflict, and deal with the deterioration or dissolution of relationships.

Intimate friendships do not develop immediately, but are built as they progress gradually through a series of stages. Understanding these stages and the skills necessary for their development and maintenance can help students build meaningful friendships. It can also help them strengthen family bonds.

In the first stage, initial contact is made and basic information is exchanged (“Hi, my name is Brittany”). Physical appearance often plays an important initial role. Other important factors are personal qualities such as friendliness, warmth, and openness. Classroom activities can help students develop and refine skills in initiating conversation and relationships. Students should learn about their tendencies to label and make premature judgments based on physical appearance. This knowledge will

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaking Behaviors</th>
<th>Assertive</th>
<th>Passive</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaks clearly and confidently with eye contact</td>
<td>Mumbles, nervous, avoids eye contact</td>
<td>Yells or refuses to speak; points finger, glares, uses physical force</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluations</th>
<th>Expresses appreciation and respect</th>
<th>Criticizes self and is always apologizing</th>
<th>Criticizes, never compliments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Uses “I” messages to communicate</th>
<th>Hopes the other person will guess his or her feelings</th>
<th>Uses “you” messages to blame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Solving</th>
<th>Seeks compromise</th>
<th>Gives in to others</th>
<th>Wants his or her own way</th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening Behaviors</th>
<th>Uses active listening skills</th>
<th>Silent, rarely speaks</th>
<th>Interrupts, is sarcastic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotions</th>
<th>Tries to understand other’s feelings</th>
<th>Denies own feelings and makes excuses</th>
<th>Makes fun of others, uses name-calling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**FIGURE 2-2 Communication styles**
help them to develop greater empathy and appreciation for their classmates and others. Learning about the processes of nonverbal communication helps students to analyze and interpret the messages they send and receive during the contact stage.

The **acquaintance stage** entails a commitment to get to know another person better and to become more open with this person. Feelings and emotions are shared, but only in a preliminary way. Relationships often abort during this stage when one person is unable to open up to the other, or opens up too much too soon. It is helpful for students to be aware of levels of communication. Communication ranges from a level of small talk (“That’s a great shirt you’re wearing”) to the sharing of ideas (“Why don’t we try doing it this way?”) to self-disclosure (“I’m having trouble getting along with my mom”).

The **intimacy stage** is characterized by a further commitment to another person. Becoming a best friend, boyfriend, or girlfriend are examples of this type of relationship. Intimacy is reserved for very few people at any one time. Children, for example, often have best friends to the exclusion of playing with others. Deep feelings and emotions are exchanged by intimates that are not shared with others outside this bond.

Having a best friend helps children learn intimacy skills. However, such strong bonding should not and does not mean excluding all others. Students can be taught how harmful cliques can be to the self-esteem of
others and to themselves. Charity can be fostered for all class members as they are encouraged to interact with each other.

The **deterioration stage** is experienced when individuals begin to feel that the relationship may not be as important as they once thought, or when the parties grow apart. Less time is spent together, awkward silences may occur, communication is not as open, and physical contact is not as frequent. Conflicts are more likely and reconciliation more difficult than earlier in the relationship. Conflicts often go unresolved because there is an inclination not to bother with reconciliation. When efforts are not taken to alter these events, deterioration can progress to dissolution of the relationship.

Deterioration is sometimes a natural, healthy way for individuals to grow apart. Children and adolescents need to learn how to gracefully stop being a best friend with someone or to “break up” with a girlfriend or boyfriend. Unfortunately, all too often youth become cruel in their efforts. Role-playing and effective communication skills (discussed later in this chapter) can help students learn to be kind in this stage.

Even though the deterioration stage is sometimes healthy, there are times when relationships crumble that could and should have been maintained. Family ties and relationships are especially vulnerable if left in the deterioration stage. Coming to understand mixed messages by appropriately using “I” messages, engaging in active listening, and being appropriately assertive can assist individuals in resolving conflicts. Students can be asked to take a good, long look at the health of some of their most important interpersonal relationships. They can ask themselves, “What needs to be improved? How can I make it better?” See Box 2-7 for more ideas on maintaining and rebuilding a relationship.

A relationship **dissolves** when bonds are severed that once united individuals. Sometimes roles are redefined, such as from boyfriend or girlfriend to “just friends.” At other times, so many negative emotions are present between individuals that they purposely avoid each another. Divorce is the outcome of a marriage that has reached this stage. Pain, bitterness, anger, rage, frustration, betrayal, and hurt are a few of the negative emotions that can result when a relationship dissolves. Many students have experienced some of these negative emotions due to dissolved relationships with peers or family members. Discussions of how to handle these negative emotions or avoid them in future experiences can be helpful.

Covey gives great insight into how we can develop and maintain strong relationships. He likens personal relationships to bank accounts. We have a different “bank account” with everyone we know, and we need to consciously make many deposits in accounts if we want them to remain “fiscally sound.” Whether our relationship with another is at the low- or high-quality end of the relationship continuum depends on the amount of deposits and withdrawals we have made in that account. High-quality relationships have accounts with abundant funds. When a person makes an
occasional withdrawal, such as being unsympathetic, not keeping a promise, 
or disciplining a child, the relationship survives fine because there were 
enough “funds” to cover the withdrawal. Relationships at the low-quality 
end of the relationship continuum have minimal funds or have been run 
into bankruptcy. Such relationships are full of conflict and animosity. The 
only way to correct such accounts is to minimize withdrawals and make 
steady generous deposits over time. Covey identifies six major types of 
deposits we can make: understanding the individual, small courtesies and 

**Relationship-Building Activities**

**Relationship Bank Accounts**

Make a relationship bank by wrapping a cereal box in paper and putting a slit in 
the top of the box. Place a picture of a person on the front of the bank to rep-
resent who the account is with. Use the items pictured below to help students 
identify and remember the various kinds of relationship deposits. Create a 
deposit slip for each type of relationship deposit and then make six copies of 
each type of slip. Divide the class into six groups. Give each group a set of deposit 
slips. Instruct the groups to write real-life examples on each of their slips. Have 
group representatives take turns sharing with the class what is written on 
their slips and placing their slips in the relationship bank. (P, I, J, H)

**Showing interest**

Small change—acts of kindness

**Good credit**—keeping commitments
Checking expectations

Pure gold—showing integrity

Cash—apologizing

A Pat on the Back

Have students pin a blank piece of paper on their backs. Every student is to write one positive thing about each classmate on his or her back. You should participate as well. When everyone has written on everyone else’s backs, have the students return to their seats, take the papers off their backs, and quietly read the comments. Discuss how it felt to have others write on their backs and how the comments make them feel. (Comments may be shallow and superficial, such as “nice shoes.”)

Ask the class to help you come up with a list of admirable characteristics (e.g., hardworking, honest, loyal). Make a permanent copy of this list and display it in the classroom. Tell the students that they will be repeating this activity in a couple of months. Challenge the students to look for these characteristics in one another and be ready to write even more meaningful comments on each others’ backs. Be sure to follow through and repeat the activity. (I, J, H)

Catch Somebody Doing Something Good

1. Have students draw and display posters showing good things they catch somebody doing.
2. Chart every time a student describes something nice he or she caught someone else doing, and encourage sharing such comments with the entire class. Or, place a large sheet of paper on or near the door for the students to record who they caught doing something nice and what the person was doing.
3. Post a tally sheet next to the door for marking down every time the students felt like tattling on others’ bad behavior but didn’t.
4. Evaluate class progress by keeping weekly records of the number of positive comments and negative tallies.

5. Include parents through letters, phone calls, or parent night. Encourage catching children doing good things at home. (P, I)

**Label Headbands**

Create a list of positive and negative character traits (e.g., beautiful, athletic, smart, creative, sensitive, ugly, stupid, smelly, rude). Place a headband labeled with one of the characteristics on each student, taking care that they don’t see what the labels say. Instruct students not to tell each other what their labels say. Give them a small group activity to complete with instructions to treat every person in the group according to his or her label. After the assigned activity, and before the students have removed the headbands, have them guess what their labels say. Discuss how they treated each other according to the labels and how it made them feel. (I, J, H)

**Secret Pals**

Have each student draw the name of a classmate for whom he or she is to do something special, for example, draw a picture, write a poem, give a special little treat. Make sure each child receives something from a secret pal, even if one has to be you. (P, I)

**I Do Care**

Have the students individually make a list of the most important people in their lives. Have them write down ways to show these people that they care about them (e.g., inquire about their activities, listen carefully, apologize when wrong, compromise, show appreciation, respect their ideas, show affection) and a list of things the students do that might make these people feel they do not care (don’t listen, talk only about self, interrupt, act uninterested, criticize, break promises, never show appreciation or affection). Have each student choose one person from the list and keep a log of his or her interactions with that individual for a week. Challenge students to make a conscious effort to increase the ways they show this individual that they care. (J, H)

**A “Fuzzy” Activity**

**Part One:** Read the short story “A Fuzzy Tale” on p. 00 and discuss these questions:

*continued*
Chapter 2 ■ Life Skills for Health and Emotional Well-Being

continued

1. What is a “warm fuzzy”?
2. Why don’t people give away more warm fuzzies?
3. Can someone really die from the lack of warm fuzzies?
4. What are “cold pricklies”?
5. What kind of potions and salves do people really buy?
6. Why do people spend so much money on these products?
7. How can people buy warm fuzzies?
8. What are plastic fuzzies?
9. How do you tell the difference between a warm fuzzy and a plastic fuzzy?

Part Two: Practice giving warm fuzzies (see other activities on giving compliments and communication skills). Have students make “live” (acrylic pom-poms) or paper warm fuzzies they can exchange with each other as they exchange emotional warm fuzzies.

Part Three: Have students draw a picture of their favorite warm, fuzzy experiences. (P, I, J, H; higher grades need modifications)

A Fuzzy Tale

Once upon a time, not far from here, lived a very happy couple called Tyler and Megan. They had two children named Michael and Emily. To realize how happy this family was, you have to understand how things were in their day. You see, at birth everyone was given a small, soft, fuzzy bag. Whenever a person reached into this bag he or she could pull out a warm fuzzy.

Warm fuzzies were in great demand because whenever you received one it made you feel warm and fuzzy all over. Getting enough warm fuzzies was never a problem. Whenever someone felt like it, he or she could walk up to you and say, “I’d like to have a warm fuzzy.” You would then reach into your bag, pull out a fuzzy the size of a newborn kitten, and place it on the person’s shoulder, head, or lap. The warm fuzzy would cuddle against the person’s skin and melt, spreading the warm feeling from head to toe. There were plenty of warm fuzzies to go around, and as a result, everyone felt warm and fuzzy most of the time.

One day a bad witch became angry because everyone was so happy and no one was buying her potions and salves. The wicked witch devised a fiendish and very clever plan. One beautiful spring morning she crept up to Tyler while Megan was playing with their daughter and whispered in his ear, “Look there, Tyler. See all the fuzzies Megan is giving to Emily? You know, don’t you, that if she keeps this up, she’s going to eventually run out and there won’t be any left for you!”

Tyler was shocked. He wheeled on the witch and said, “Do you mean to tell me that there won’t be a warm fuzzy in our bag every time we reach into it?”

continued
The witch slyly answered, "That's right! And once you run out, buster, that's it. You can't get any more." She then sped away on her broom, cackling hysterically.

Tyler took the witch's warning to heart and began to notice every time Megan gave a warm fuzzy to someone else. He eventually became very worried and upset because he adored Megan's warm fuzzies and didn't want to give them up. He certainly didn't think it was right for Megan to spend all her warm fuzzies on the children and on other people. He began to complain every time he saw Megan give a warm fuzzy to someone else. Because Megan didn't like to see Tyler upset, she stopped giving warm fuzzies to other people so often, and reserved them for him.

The children observed this and soon got the idea that it was wrong to give up warm fuzzies any time they were asked or felt like it. They too became very careful. They would watch their parents very closely, and object whenever they felt that one of their parents was giving too many fuzzies to others. They also began to worry whenever they themselves gave away too many warm fuzzies. Even though they found a warm fuzzy every time they reached into their bags, they reached in less and less often, and became more and more stingy.

People soon began to notice the lack of warm fuzzies, and they began to feel less warm and fuzzy. They began to shrivel up and, occasionally, people would die from the lack of warm fuzzies. More and more people went to the witch to buy her potions and salves even though they didn't seem to work. The wicked witch was delighted at her increased sales but was distressed by the deaths due to the lack of warm fuzzies, because dead people don't buy potions and salves. So, the witch came up with a new plan. She saw to it that everyone was given a bag that was very similar to a fuzzy bag, except this one was cold while the fuzzy bag was warm. Inside the new bag were cold pricklies. These cold pricklies did not make people feel warm and fuzzy, but cold and prickly instead. The cold pricklies, however, did prevent people from shriveling up and dying.

From then on, whenever someone said, "I want a warm fuzzy," people who were worried about depleting their supply would say, "I can't give you a warm fuzzy, but I can give you a cold prickly." Sometimes two people would walk up to each other, thinking they could get a warm fuzzy, but one or the other would change his or her mind, and they'd end up giving each other cold pricklies. The result was that while very few people were dying, a lot of people were feeling very cold, prickly, and unhappy.

The situation got very, very complicated. Since people were no longer freely exchanging warm fuzzies, there were fewer and fewer to go around.

Warm fuzzies, which used to be thought as plentiful as air, became very valuable. This caused people to do all sorts of things to obtain them. Before the witch appeared, people used to gather in groups of three, four, or five, never caring too much who was giving warm fuzzies to whom. After the coming of the witch, people began to pair off and reserve all their warm fuzzies...
fuzzies exclusively for each other. People who forgot themselves and gave a warm fuzzy to someone other than their partner would immediately feel guilty. People who could not find a generous partner had to buy their warm fuzzies. Some people somehow became “popular” and got a lot of warm fuzzies without having to return them. These people would then sell their warm fuzzies to people who were “unpopular.”

A further complication was that some people would take the easily available cold pricklies, coat them white and fluffy, and pass them off as warm fuzzies. These counterfeit warm fuzzies were really plastic fuzzies, and they caused additional difficulties. For instance, two people would freely exchange plastic fuzzies presuming the fuzzies would make them feel good, but they felt hollow and bad instead. Since they thought they had been exchanging warm fuzzies, people grew very confused about this, never realizing their cold prickly feelings were the result of having been given a lot of plastic fuzzies.

And so, you see, the situation was very, very dismal and it all started because of the witch who made people believe that some day, when least expected, they might reach into their warm fuzzy bag and find it empty.

room may be much different from that of her child’s. A newly wed woman’s perception of sharing the housecleaning chores may be different from her husband’s. A father picking up his daughter at the mall may expect her to be waiting somewhere different from where she is. A teacher’s perception of an A-quality report may be different from his students. Clearly communicating our expectations helps us strengthen our relationships.

**Showing personal integrity** means demonstrating character in all our actions and relationships. For instance, if a person speaks ill of someone not present, we may wonder what that person says about us behind our back. How we treat one person can affect our relationship with 30. A young man once said to his youth leader, “You know how you are always telling us you love us? I didn’t believe you until today.” The leader asked what had made the difference. The young man replied, “I’ve always tried to be real good around you. I figured if you knew the real me you wouldn’t love me. Today Johnny messed up real bad and you wouldn’t let the rest of us crawl all over him. You loved Johnny even when he didn’t deserve it. That’s when I knew you loved me.”

**Apologizing sincerely** when we have intentionally or unintentionally made a mistake is one of the surest and fastest ways of strengthening a relationship. Unfortunately, our pride often holds us back from saying, “I’m sorry . . .”. Our mistake turns into a relationship deficit when it could have easily become a relationship asset.

### Goal Setting

Setting and reaching goals are key skills needed for emotional well-being. Even very young children can be taught how to set and achieve realistic goals and thus realize the joy that comes from these experiences. Four-year-olds naturally set goals such as learning to tie their shoes and dressing themselves. As children grow and mature they need direction in the kinds of goals they should set and in how to reach long-term goals.

Students can learn to see their academic progress in terms of goal setting and achievement rather than reactions to assignments given by teachers. All too often students are not involved in the setting of their academic goals. Teachers, curriculum committees, and others set standards for students to achieve. If students do not feel ownership for these standards, they can easily rationalize their lack of accomplishment (e.g., “The teacher expected too much,” “The goal was set too high,” or “No one should be required to do so much”). When students are involved in the goal-setting process, however, using such defense mechanisms is more difficult and accomplishments are personally felt, generating new motivation and enthusiasm.

Students can benefit by learning different types of goals to set, how to set them, and the process of reaching them. A key to setting goals is to base them on past performance and to differentiate between long-term and short-
term goals. Individuals with negative self-concepts tend to set their goals either unrealistically low or unrealistically high. Either way, the results are perceived as failure. Children also tend to set unrealistically high goals; they don't feel comfortable with low goals. Teachers who have worked on goal-setting techniques have reported that children, when asked how many times they will try to respond correctly, usually set goals that are high in relation to past performance. The most reasonable type of goal setting is to make the goal slightly higher than previous performances. For many students, this may be at a level far below the long-term goal for which they and their teacher are aiming, but this shorter-term goal is attainable. Goals that are not attainable do not contribute to long-term commitment and performance. One way teachers can handle this tendency to set unrealistically high goals is by charting a child's goal as long-term with smaller, more easily achieved short-term goals identified as stepping-stones. As the child focuses on and obtains the first short-term goal, a sense of competency is felt along with motivation for taking the next step.

As students work toward goals they have set, they need to evaluate their progress and deal with any failures. Students can be helped to see failure to meet a goal as an opportunity to learn more about how to set goals. Students can ask and answer “Was the goal unrealistic?” and “Should the goal have been set lower, and if so, what are some shorter-term goals that would lead up to it?” with a teacher’s help. Students’ efforts toward obtaining goals should also be part of the evaluation process. See Box 2-8 for teaching activities related to goal setting.

The following six steps are involved in the goal-setting process:

1. Identify your goal in writing. If it is not written, it is just a wish.
2. Identify any short-range goals or steps necessary to achieve the major goal.
3. Identify all resources that can assist you in achieving the goal.
4. Identify alternative plans and solutions for any foreseeable conflicts.
5. Implement, and as you progress, continue to improve and refine your plan, reviewing steps 2 and 3. If you don't achieve success with the first plan, begin another.
6. Evaluate. What went well? What could you improve on when pursuing a similar goal in the future?

Problem Solving and Decision Making

Problem solving and decision making are very closely related. In essence, decision making is one of the steps in problem solving. We will first discuss problem solving as a whole and then take a closer look at decision making.
Activities for Goal Setting

**Thoughts on Goals**

Display the following thoughts on bulletin boards to stimulate class discussions. (J, H)

- The poor man is not he who is without a cent, but he who is without a dream.
- What will I wish a month, a year, or five years from now that I had done today?
- No man has become a failure without his own consent.
- No man has ever climbed the ladder of success with his hands in his pockets.
- There are two kinds of people that never amount to much. Those who can’t do what they are told, and those who can do nothing else.
- Too many people itch for what they want without scratching for it.
- You can eat an elephant if you just eat him one bite at a time.
- Life by the inch is a cinch, but life by the yard is hard.
- Success comes in cans, not in can’ts.
- Success consists of getting up just one more time than you fall.

**Wishes to Reality**

Have students write five things they wish to accomplish in the next three months. Ask them to choose one wish and work that wish through the first four of the six goal-setting steps contained in this chapter. When they are finished, have students break into small groups and review each other’s work for help in identifying aspects they may have overlooked. Challenge students to work on goals. Occasionally have the small groups review progress that individuals are making toward their goals. At the end of three months, have students turn in a paper regarding the project. (I, J, H)

**Class Goal**

As a class, set one or more class goals. These can be academic or behavioral. Help students write the goal, based on past performance, and have it be short-range. Work through the goal-setting steps with the students, being sure to evaluate and then follow up with additional goals. (I, J, H)

*continued*
Problem-solving skills are, unfortunately, seldom seen modeled by young people. On television they see complex problems easily resolved (often with violence) in a 30-minute to 2-hour program. Advertisements are everywhere, convincing them that life should be pain-free and enjoyed without any thought of the cost. Today few families eat dinner together more than one or two times per week. With so little family time, children are not in a position to observe their parents confront, handle, and overcome everyday problems. And sadly, in some homes, young people are told that they are the problem, not that they have a problem.

It is important for students to realize that life is filled with problems for people in all walks of life. Often youth feel they are the only ones with the burdens they carry. Simply discussing the universality of conflicts in people’s lives can help students feel less isolated and overwhelmed by their problems. Such discussions help put one’s own trials in proper perspective. Looking at other individuals’ lives and how they have overcome difficulties can help young people learn to solve problems and overcome obstacles.

Problem-solving steps are quite simple. The difficulty comes in focusing on the problem. Our impulse is to become sidetracked and waste a great deal of time and energy bemoaning the “realities” of a problem and blaming others for its existence. For instance, how often do we yell about “spilled milk”: The milk on the floor is a reality. How to clean it up is the problem—something that can be solved. Being a pregnant teenager is a reality. Securing the welfare of the mother and unborn child is a solvable

**Individual Academic Goal**

Have each student, in conference or in writing, set a goal relevant to the class subject material. Review the goals set to see that they are based on past performance and that they are short-range. If any goal does not meet these standards, help the student modify it. This is imperative if the student is to achieve the goal. (P, I, J, H)

**Teach Study Skills**

Sometimes the difference between the good student and the poor student isn’t the amount of time spent studying, but the amount of effective time spent. Take time in class to teach study skills such as skimming, scanning, using parts of the text, previewing reading material, outlining, notetaking, identifying key concepts, memorization techniques, and test taking. (P, I, J, H)
problem. Once we clearly see what the problem is, we must decide to do something about it. Successful problem solving is accomplished by following these steps:

1. Identify the problem. (Address the cause and how it can be avoided later.)
2. Identify possible resources and solutions.
3. Identify probable consequences for each possible solution.
4. Decide on one of the solutions.
5. Act on it—solve the problem according to this plan.
6. Evaluate the result of your actions.

Now we will take a closer look at decision making. It is a problem-solving step, and much more. We make decisions everyday without really considering them to be part of problem solving. What we eat, wear, say, and do are all examples. In effect these decisions create or avoid problems in our lives. Young people need help in recognizing how small and major decisions affect their lives.

There is also a moral aspect of decision making. Too often choices are made based on what feels good, what others will think of us, or on what everyone else appears to be doing. It is important to consider the moral right or wrong of a decision. Reviewing expectations set by parents, school, church, and community members can help children make morally correct decisions. Asking “What would happen if everyone in the world did this?” can also identify the moral implications of a decision.

It is helpful for students to see the thought processes that go into the countless decisions teachers make and the problems they solve each day in the classroom. Teachers can model problem-solving and decision-making skills by sharing with students some of the problems they face and the decisions they must make. Teachers can identify the steps they take in solving their problems and making their decisions. They can also ask their students to help them identify possible solutions and choices. Student involvement in this way helps them feel more responsible, capable, and part of the solution rather than the problem. Box 2-9 contains more suggestions for problem-solving and decision-making activities.

Additional Life Skills

So far in this chapter we have taken a close look at eight vital life skills. There are many additional life skills that help young people avoid risk behaviors and help them lead a happy and productive life. Other chapters in this text address media skills, stress management skills, skills for healthy eating and physical activity, refusal skills, conflict resolution and anger
management skills, skills for dealing with depression, suicide, and death, and many more. The more skills a young person has, the more resilient he or she will be. Many communities are organizing to help young people gain these important life skills and develop assets that will help them succeed in life. We will now take a closer look at resilience and asset development.

**Resilience**

Resilience can be defined as succeeding in spite of serious challenges and adverse circumstances (e.g., neglect; maltreatment; dysfunctional, alcoholic, or drug-dependent families; high levels of family conflict; poverty; physical disability; trauma). Although resilience means success in terms of

### Activities for Problem Solving and Decision Making

#### Apollo 13

Watch the movie *Apollo 13* and have students take note of the following:

1. The realities—things that have happened that cannot be changed
2. The problems
3. How people act/react to realities and problems
4. How problems are solved (I, J, H)

#### Kids’ Court

Have students brainstorm scenarios of problems that youth often face. From this list, select cases (scenarios) to try in kid’s court. Select students to play the roles of the accused, defendant, prosecutor, witnesses, jury, and judge. The teacher serves as moderator to assist students in their various roles. The jury decides the solution to the problem based on the evidence presented. (I, J, H)

#### What Would You Do?

Ask students to suggest common problems, such as one they might have at home or school with peers, brothers, or sisters. Assign students to role-play

*continued*
different problems without providing the solution. Discuss or have different students enact possible solutions. A variation of this activity is to collect newspaper articles about people who have made choices with negative effects (e.g., robberies, assaults, cheating, playing with guns). Discuss what early choices might have led to the major decision that resulted in tragedy. Discuss appropriate choices that could have prevented the negative outcome. (P, I, J, H)

**“Dear Abby”**

Have each student write a “Dear Abby” letter expressing a personal problem or one bothering a friend. As a class, discuss the problem, alternative solutions, and the advantages and disadvantages of each solution. Or, assign students to answer the letters in small groups. Later read and discuss the original letter and answers as a class. (I, J, H)

**Worry Solutions**

Have each student anonymously compile a list of things that worry him or her. Compile a master for the class indicating the most common worries. Propose solutions. (I, J, H)

**Cornflakes**

Prepare a place setting including a bowl, spoon, milk, sugar, and cold cereal. Review problem-solving steps as a demonstration. Which should go into the bowl first, the milk, cereal, or sugar? Why? What should go second, third? Why? In effect the class is identifying alternatives and possible results. Then take other common problems and work out solutions as a class, identifying the steps as you go. (I, J, H)

**Recall**

Have each student write down one decision he or she made during the past three months. Have them list the alternatives and identify the decision. Have them evaluate the decision and rethink whether it is the same decision they would make today. (J, H)

healthy human development and well-being, it does not mean that resilient youth remain unaffected, invulnerable, or unscathed.

We can learn a great deal from resilient children and youth. Studies have been conducted to discover how these children thrive in spite of difficult circumstances. Researchers have looked to find what resilient children
have in common. The characteristics they found have been called **protective factors**. Masten points out that results from longitudinal studies of resilient children and youth show that the most important of all protective factors is a strong relationship with a competent, caring, prosocial adult. She also lists the following as critical protective factors: normal cognitive development (e.g., average or better IQ scores, good attention skills, and “street smarts”), feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy, feelings of hope and meaningfulness of life, attractiveness to others (in personality or appearance), talents valued by self and others, and faith and religious affiliations. Hopefully you remember reading about many of these protective factors as part of the other skills discussed earlier in this chapter.

If a high-risk environment is the family itself (e.g., children are growing up in an alcoholic or drug-abusing family), studies suggest that children have a better chance of growing into healthy adulthood if they meet the following criteria. As you read these criteria, think about how you can help the high-risk students in your school develop these characteristics or abilities.

- Can learn to do one thing well that is valued by themselves, their friends, or their community
- Are required to be helpful as they grow up
- Are able to ask for help for themselves
- Are able to elicit positive responses from others in their environment
- Are able to distance themselves from their dysfunctional families so that the family is not their sole frame of reference
- Are able to bond with some socially valued, positive entity such as a school, community group, church, or another family
- Are able to interact with a caring adult who provides consistent caring responses

**Asset Development**

**Asset development** is a movement that focuses on combining life skills with family and community resources. It identifies by name and then tries to increase the positive building blocks in young people’s lives. The Search Institute is the major force behind the asset development movement. It has identified 40 different developmental assets that act as protective factors for youth. The Search Institute has divided these 40 assets into two different groups: 20 external assets and 20 internal assets. The external assets include actions that caring adults and communities can take to assist young people in the following areas: supporting and empowering
young people; setting boundaries and expectations; and fostering positive
and constructive use of young people’s time. The 20 internal assets con-
cern the positive internal growth and development of young people [life
skills], focusing on positive values and identities, social competencies, and
commitment to learning. A detailed listing and explanation of the 40
assets along with a teaching curriculum and strategies for them can be

Research has shown that the more assets youth have, the fewer the
risk patterns and the more positive behaviors youth experience. Asset-rich
young people are much less likely to abuse alcohol or to experience nega-
tive behaviors. Unfortunately, the average young person has less than one-
half of the 40 assets. Only 8% of youth are asset rich, that is, having 31 to
40 assets. One in five young people are asset poor, experiencing as few as 0
to 10 assets. Youth have fewer assets as they get older. The least common
assets experienced by youth (just 19% to 25%) are a caring school, being
treated as valuable resources, reading for pleasure, having their commu-
nity value youth, and spending time in creative activities.

Often we adults fail to do something about children’s problems because
we feel overwhelmed as we hear, see, and read about the extent of the prob-
lems facing young people today. Asset building says to everyone that we
have a role to play, that we can say hello to a teen-ager, ask youth to help
us help others, thank media when positive messages are broadcast about
youth, and just smile more at young people. School professionals can help
create a caring school climate, ensure there are plentiful after-school pro-
grams with lots of physical activity for all children, ensure that young peo-
ple develop good goal-setting and decision-making skills, and provide
opportunities for youth to contribute service and help others.

Key Terms

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<th>Term</th>
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<td>life skills</td>
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<td>Pygmalion effect</td>
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Review Questions

1. Identify and explain prominent self-esteem myths.
2. Define and differentiate the terms self-image, ideal-self, and pygmalion-self. Describe what your three “selves” look like. Discuss how the three “selves” are formed from one’s sense of competency, worthiness, and belonging.
3. Explain why physical traits tend to dominate one’s ideal-self and how teachers can help students develop fuller, healthier ideal-selves?
4. Describe effective character education programs. Explain how you can incorporate value/character education into your classrooms.
5. What is the Pygmalion effect? Give examples of positive and negative Pygmalion experiences you have witnessed in the classroom.
6. Explain how students can be helped to more accurately evaluate themselves.
7. Differentiate between external/internal and conditional/unconditional self-worth. Explain how students can be helped to focus on their unconditional self-worth while working toward developing conditional aspects of self-worth.
8. Identify the four major aspects of emotional intelligence and explain how they can be fostered within the classroom.
9. Explain the difference between reactive and proactive people. Give examples of each. Explain how teachers can help students become more proactive in the classroom.
10. Discuss the variables involved in sending and receiving messages such as body language, mixed messages, “I” and “you” messages, listening skills, and communication styles. Identify ways in which teachers can help students learn to better communicate.
11. Identify the various stages that relationships can go through. Explain the relationship bank account concept, including its various types of deposits.
12. Explain the benefits of students setting and reaching goals. List the keys for effectively helping students set and reach goals.
13. What steps are included in problem solving? Identify a problem you are currently facing and identify a possible solution using these steps. Identify tools students can use for making morally correct choices.
14. Explain the concepts of resilience and asset development. Describe how teachers can foster resilience and asset development.

References
