Why Try
Learning Activities Expansion Pack
(Sample)
The WhyTry Organization was founded by a group of individuals who all shared a common desire to give students hope and help them overcome their challenges in life. Much time and work has gone into the development of this program. It is the result of the collaborative efforts of several individuals who have graciously given of their time and talents. We would like to thank all who have contributed in this work including the many people who have helped run pilot groups and provided valuable feedback.

WhyTry Training Opportunities
If you are interested in further instruction in the WhyTry Program, we offer several options for training including seminars, workshops, and independent consulting services. If you have questions or feedback about our program, or about any of our products or services, please feel free to contact us. We look forward to hearing from you!

To order additional materials and program updates, please visit our website or contact us directly.

WhyTry LLC
P.O. Box 970907
Orem, UT 84097-0907
tel. 801-724-9879 (724-YTRY)
fax. 801-377-2011
www.whytry.org
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DISCLAIMER AND WARNING

The purpose of the WhyTry Program is to teach students ten visual analogies to help them deal with life’s daily pressures and challenges. Those teaching the WhyTry Program should have formal training in and a good understanding of human development and cognitive and behavioral interventions. Teachers should use discretion and apply the program only within the boundaries of their professional training and licensing and within the limits and rules of their practice setting. If issues arise outside of instructors’ professional training and licensing, teachers should refer clients to proper and qualified authorities and licensed mental health professionals. Such issues may include but are not limited to the following: clients with serious emotional or mental illness; clients dangerous to self or others; clients who have experienced abuse or neglect; and so forth. Since each instructor and client are different, we cannot guarantee the success of the teacher or the outcome of program participants.

The WhyTry Program also includes experiential activities. Improper use of the equipment and activities described herein may result in serious injury. Activities should therefore not be attempted without the supervision of trained and qualified leaders.

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**About the WhyTry Activity Expansion Pack:**
This book will give you an exclusive sneak peek into the future of the WhyTry Program. It includes over 100 learning activities – many of them brand new – for students of all ages and learning types.

The WhyTry learning activities are key in helping students from diverse backgrounds create unity in the classroom. The WhyTry Activity Expansion Pack will increase your ability to engage your youth in an experience that will meet their specific needs using their specific learning styles.

The activities in this packet are easy to read and understand, easy to implement, and easy to integrate into your flexible lesson plan. The activities begin by giving you at-a-glance parameters, such as grade level, time, group size, and spatial requirements. Each activity also provides a powerful tie-in to the visual analogy, better enabling you to effectively process the learning experience with your students. There are more diagrams, picture illustrations, and online resources to make it as simple as possible for you to implement the WhyTry learning activities with your youth.

**An overview of the WhyTry Program:**
The WhyTry Program consists of ten visual analogies that help students gain insight into how to deal with daily challenges. The goal of the WhyTry Program is to help students answer the question, “Why try in life?” when they are frustrated, confused, or angry with life’s pressures and challenges. The WhyTry Program teaches students that trying hard in life and putting effort into challenges at home, at school, and with peers is worth the effort.

The program, its visual analogies, and its questions stress to students that although making good decisions can be difficult, doing so results in more opportunity, freedom, and self-respect. Giving up and doing things that hurt ourselves and others, on the other hand, takes away opportunities, freedom, and self-respect.

**Learning Activities:**
Hands-on experiential learning, or active learning, is learning by doing or being actively involved in the learning process. “For most people academic learning is too abstract. They need to see, touch, and smell what they read and write about.” - John L. Goodland

In the WhyTry program, we want students to learn the WhyTry principles by seeing and hearing the WhyTry visual analogies. This is also done through the WhyTry music and positive lyrics, which help students become more familiar with the principles. Individuals will experience the life skills by doing the hands-on learning activities. Each activity relates to the ten WhyTry visual analogies and brings to life the principles being taught. Students will process the hands-on learning experience and make connections to their personal lives and learn to apply the concepts to everyday living.

Edgar Dale’s cone of learning 1 shows the effectiveness and retention of the different learning methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5%-15%</td>
<td>Verbal or Written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%-20%</td>
<td>Visual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%-50%</td>
<td>Visual and Verbal (Auditory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%-70%</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>Of what you experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr. Nancy Tabler’s study 2 shows the effectiveness of an interactive approach to learning vs. a non-interactive approach.
In the WhyTry program, we use as many multiple learning styles and intelligences as possible in teaching the WhyTry concepts. We take a comprehensive approach in delivering the program to the at-risk population. The more thoroughly an individual learns the WhyTry principles, the greater likelihood for insight and positive change.

**WhyTry Learning Flow Chart**
1. Visual (see all ten visual analogies)
2. Verbal (analogies taught verbally and with music)
3. Discussion
4. Experience (through hands-on experiential)
5. Teach and share with others
6. Application (practice in real life)
7. Internalize it (live the principles)

“Everything that happens to you is your teacher. The secret is to learn to sit at the feet of your own life and be taught by it.” -Polly B. Berends

Processing is part of the activity that helps students focus on learning from their experience participating in the activity. While processing a learning activity, students will do the following:

A. Evaluate
B. Analyze
C. Problem solve
D. Explain
E. Share feelings and insights
F. Plan (set goals)
G. Communicate
H. Increase self-awareness
I. Apply to real life
J. Focus on positive change

**Processing the Activities:**
In their book “Processing the Experience 3,” John L. Luckner and Reldan S. Nadler state and share the following steps to help students generalize and transfer to everyday life.

The more individuals digest, synthesize, and assimilate what’s happening to them, the more self-knowledge becomes available for learning and development. An increased understanding of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors provides people with a better chance of making changes in their lives, and will be better prepared for similar situations at work, school, and at home. The activities and events may be different, but the emotions, thoughts, and behavior patterns are not. Generalization and transfer can take place at the unconscious level. However, we can be more effective and increase the conscious aspects of the transfer of learning by considering several important factors:

Individuals must see the similarities between situations that happen during the experience and situations
that occurred in other aspects of life.

Individuals who see that new knowledge or behaviors bring about beneficial results are more likely to be motivated to use this new learning.

It is helpful if individuals can identify opportunities to use new knowledge.

Meaningful learning promotes better transfer than rote learning.

The more thoroughly something is learned, the more likely it is to be transferred to a new situation.

Numerous and varied examples and opportunities for practice increase the extent to which knowledge and skills may be applied in new situations.

The probability of transfer decreases as the time interval between the original task and the transfer task increases.

**Processing Rules and Suggestions:**
1. Always allow time for processing.
2. Create a safe, trusting, caring, and sharing processing environment.
3. Establish guidelines before you begin.
4. Surrender the one-up relationship. (see WhyTry manual.)
5. Members of the group should talk more than the facilitator.
6. Get everyone in the group involved in the processing.
7. Relate responses back to the Reality Ride and the other nine visuals.
9. Apply or help participants transfer learning to real-life situations.
10. Help students learn from their mistakes, failures, and the experience.
11. Encourage positive risk taking and overcoming fears.
12. Help students personalize the processing to their own lives.

**Safety Considerations:**
*Be aware of your group.*
Safety issues to look at may include size, weight, physical challenges, balance, emotional stability, strength, and fatigue. These factors need to be taken into consideration for each learning activity.

*Be aware of individuals.*
Be aware of any existing physical problems among those involved. Ask the group if there is anyone with an injury or physical problem (bad knees, back, sprains, other issues etc.). If so, have that person be a part of the group by spotting, supporting, and helping other group members. When it is their turn to go through the activity, have another person sub for them.

*Be a safeguard.*
As a person is doing an activity, spotting is the human safeguard provided by the other people in the group. Spotting protects a person from injury if they happen to fall. You, as the facilitator, are the key to effective spotting. Follow the movements of the participants to ensure their safety. Teach others to do the same. As the facilitator, you are the safety net. Do not do the activity for them. Be there as a backup to help if needed. The group members’ role is to help the person doing the event, spot, and be there to break a fall if one should occur.
Be confident and committed.
If you do not feel comfortable doing an activity, don’t do it.

It is important that you demonstrate confidence and commitment to the activity. If you are unsure of yourself as the director of the activity, then we suggest that you not do it. It may be helpful for you to do a practice run of the activity with a test group or with other instructors.
Introduction/Reality Ride

6. Learning Activity: Past to Present

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Group
Grades: 3-12
Group size: 2 or more
Time: 15 minutes

Introduction: To avoid repeating past mistakes, it is helpful to reflect on how your thoughts, feelings and actions have changed over time. When students realize that their goals, likes, and dislikes change as they grow older, they will give more thought and purpose to the choices they make today. This activity will help students think about ways they have changed already as well as areas where they still feel or act the same. This can be especially helpful in trying to show some past mistakes or challenges that they have overcome or are no longer doing.

Materials:
• 1 Past to Present worksheet for each student (These can be found at www.whytry.org/activities.)
• 1 pen or pencil for each student

Activity:
Print out enough copies of the “Past to Present” worksheet provided online, or make your own to better suit the needs of your class. Give each student a worksheet and pencil and allow time to fill it out. Then discuss in small groups or as a class some of the answers they listed.

Processing the Experience:
• What are some of the things that have changed since you were younger?
• What are some things that are the same?
• How do you feel now about some of the things you used to think or want or do?
• How does thinking about the changes in the way you think, feel, and/or act help you to avoid repeating past mistakes or bad behaviors?
• Do you think the things that are important to you will continue to change as you grow older? Why or why not?
• What have you learned from the past about yourself?
• What are some times in life when it might be helpful to think about the growth and changes you have made? How will this help you when making a choice?

Time: The learning activities range from 5 minutes to an hour, so be sure to factor the time into your lesson planning.

Some activities will refer you to the WhyTry website, where you can print off PDF copies of worksheets, object lessons, and other activity resources.

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Reality Ride:

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Reality Ride

1. Learning Activity: Take a Seat

**Spatial Requirements:** Gym/Outdoor space required  
**Activity Type:** Movement/group  
**Grades:** 3-12  
**Group Size:** 10 or more  
**Time:** 10 minutes

**Introduction:** On the Reality Ride, our choices often affect other people. This activity helps reinforce this important concept.

**Materials:** None

**Activity:** Ask the participants to form a circle, with their right sides facing the center so they are looking at the head of the person in front of them. Have them take enough steps toward the center so they are standing heel to toe.

Tell the group that on the count of three, they are to sit on the lap of the person behind them. Generally, it does not work on the first try.

Ask the group for suggestions on how to succeed in the next attempt. Continue this process until they can all sit on the lap of the person behind them. When they have succeeded, say, “On the count of three we will all stand up.”

**Note:** Avoid concrete or other hard surfaces while doing this activity.

**Processing the Experience:**

- If the group succeeded on the first attempt, ask what the keys were to being successful in such a challenging activity.
- If they did not succeed on the first attempt, ask, “What were the consequences when one person fell or slipped off the lap of the person behind him/her?”
- When this happened, how many people did it affect?
- By raise of hand, how many of you feel like your choices only affect you? Why?
- By raise of hand, how many of you feel like your choices affect you and others? Why?
- Who were the support systems in this activity?
- What support systems do we have in life that can help us during challenging times?
Reality Ride

2. Learning Activity: The Game of Life

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 3-12
Group size: 2 or more
Time: 30-45 minutes

Introduction: We get stuck in the loop when we avoid thinking about the consequences of our negative actions, and instead focus on the perceived benefits. This activity looks at the consequences and perceived benefits of real-life behaviors, encouraging students to think twice before making a decision.

Materials:
- Whiteboard
- Markers
- Eraser
- 6 poker chips of the same color
- 6 poker chips of different colors
- 1 container to hold chips
- Props, as listed see below

Activity:
Number the poker chips (front and back) from 1 to 6 for each color. Write the following on the board:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Benefits</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ask the students, “What things do we do that get us in trouble?” and let the students brainstorm. Following this discussion, have the group brainstorm some “Perceived Benefits” for using drugs and write these responses on the whiteboard. (You may use any of the other brainstormed ideas, but the sample props listed below may not apply.) The list may look something like this when you are finished:

Perceived Benefits
1 Buzz/High
2 Escape
3 Social/ fit in
4 Look older/status
5 Rebellion
6 Money

Now list six consequences associated with drug use. The props correlate with the following six categories, so try to tie in student responses to these:
1 School
2 Loss of job/no money
3 Health
4 Legal/jail
5 Family relationships
6 Death

Once the “Perceived Benefits” and “Consequences” columns are filled out, put the set of same-colored poker chips in the container. You are now ready to play the “Game of Life.”

Tell the students that they are going to draw poker chips from the container. Hold the container up high enough that students cannot see what they draw, then allow the students to take turns drawing a chip. Look at their number and make a statement about the perceived benefit that matches the one listed on the board. For example, if a student drew a “3,” you could say something like, “You are new in school and are using drugs to fit in and be part of the ‘cool crowd.’” Once a student has drawn and been given their “benefit,” they should return the chip to the container. You will then mix up the chips and go on to the next person. Allow everyone to take a turn and receive a “perceived benefit.”

Now add the colored chips to the mix. Say, “As time goes on, consequences start to come.” Go through the same process, allowing each student to draw from the container. When a “perceived benefit” chip is picked, follow the same procedure as the first round. If a colored chip is drawn, use the prop that correlates with the number, representing a consequence. For example, If a “1” chip is drawn, use one of the four props that goes with the “school” consequences. Continue this until everyone has had a turn.

Finally, remove the “benefit” chips from the container and leave the colored “consequence” chips. Say, “As the drug use increases or escalates, there are more consequences and fewer benefits.” Continue the game in the same manner until everyone has had a turn in Round 3.

Have the students look around at the consequences their classmates are suffering. Ask, “How many of you have school problems, job issues, health issues, legal issues, family issues, or died as a result of your drug use?”

Processing the Experience:
• Is this game true to life? Why or why not?
• Have any of the “Consequences” happened to you?
• Have any of the “Consequences” happened to people you know?
• What are some of the consequences that you would be willing to share?
• How do you break the cycle?

Props:
School
A sign with a student’s report card as follows: English: F, History: F, Math: F, Science: F, etc.
A letter informing a student that they need to attend truancy school
A suspension letter
An expulsion letter

Job
Three different signs with the following:
“Got fired from my job, will work for food”
“Got fired from my job, I came in late one too many times”
“Got fired from my job, stole from the till to pay off a drug fine I owe”

Health
A head brace for wrecking a car while driving under the influence
A straw for smoking-induced emphysema. Hold your nose and breathe through the straw for the rest of the activity.
A wheelchair: You had a boating accident because you were high on drugs. You are now paralyzed for life.

Jail / Law
A pair of handcuffs: You got caught shoplifting to pay for your drug habit.
An ankle bracelet and probation officer: You are in DT for “dealing.”
A sign that says, “Life in Prison without parole,” for being “under the influence” and committing a serious crime.

Family
A sign that reads, “Grounded for Life.” You stole the TV from your family and sold it for drug money.
A sign that says, “Lost Trust.” No more car, weekend with friends, phone or TV.
A sign that says, “9:00 pm curfew every night for a month.”
Reality Ride
3. Learning Activity: On the Brink

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 2-12
Group Size: 2 or more
Time: 10 minutes

Introduction: On the easy-fast track of the Reality Ride, what begins as simple fun can often lead to trouble. During this activity, kids will learn the importance of setting positive goals and thinking of the consequences before they cross the line from fun to trouble.

Materials:
• 1 penny per team
• 1 ruler per team
• 1 piece of paper per team
• 1 pencil or pen per team
• 1 desk or table space (at least 18 inches wide) per person

Activity:
Divide the group into teams of two and have the partners sit opposite each other at the desk or table. One partner uses his or her finger to flick the penny so it slides across the top of the table towards the opposite partner, who shoots the penny back or retrieves it if it goes over the edge. The object is to see how close the penny can come to the opposite edge without going off the table. Give the participants three minutes of practice, then allow them five turns each to get as close to the opposite edge of the table as possible. They will use their rulers to measure each try from the edge of the table to the closest edge of the penny, writing down each distance on the piece of paper. A penny off the edge is a 15-inch penalty. At the end of the five attempts, the total distance will be added up. The smallest total distance is the winner. Note that if a penny goes over the edge but doesn’t fall, it still counts as a penalty, since the point here is to not cross the line.

You can also use this activity when teaching about rules and laws in “Lifting the Weight.”

Processing the Experience:
• How difficult was it to not cross the line?
• Did it become easier to stay on the table after you practiced?
• What methods did you use to keep the penny on the table?
• What was frustrating about this activity?
• What did you enjoy about this activity?
• How does this activity apply to the Reality Ride?
• What happens when we cross the line from fun to trouble?
• How can the consequences of the penny flying off the table apply to the consequences of getting into trouble in life?
• What can you do to make sure fun doesn’t turn into trouble?
• How will setting positive goals help you avoid “crossing the line?”
Reality Ride

4. Learning Activity: Now or Later?

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Object lesson
Grades: 2-12
Group size: 1 or more
Time: 5-7 minutes, divided into two parts

Introduction: Is what you want now more important than what you want most? This activity helps students learn how to delay gratification, and teaches them that controlling impulses will lead to a bigger payoff in the future.

Materials:
- 1 writing utensil per person
- 2 pennies
- 2 nickels
- 2 dimes
- 2 quarters
- a 1-dollar bill concealed in a medium-sized box (wrapped like a gift, if you wish).

Activity:
This activity can be divided into two parts (optional). For Part 1, give the students three to five minutes to write down five goals they would like to accomplish in the next ten years. Then give them about two minutes to share their goals with a partner.

Ask everyone to write down one goal that, if accomplished, would bring them maximum joy. Explain that this goal will not be shared with anyone.

Once the students have their big goal written down, ask for a volunteer.

Hold your hands out to the student with a penny in one and a nickel in the other. Ask the student which coin they would rather have, the penny or the nickel. If they choose the penny, thank them and have them sit down. Start over with another student.

If they ask for the nickel, give it to them and bring out a dime. Repeat these steps - offering the dime, then the quarter. When you give them the coin of higher value, take back the less valuable one.

Once they have the quarter, congratulate them and have them return to their seat.

Ask for a new volunteer. Make the same offers to this student, starting with the penny and substituting the box for the more valuable coin. Ask if they want the coin now or the box later. Explain if they choose the box, they will have to wait until the end of class to see what is in the box and collect their reward.

If they choose any of the coins, thank them, give them their reward, and explain that you will reveal what is in the box at the end of class. If they choose the box, they return to their seat empty handed.

Now comes Part 2. If the student refused all offers to take the money and chose the box instead, then state something like, “Because of your decisions and your patience, you are now eligible for the box. Do you wish to accept what is in the box?” Then give them the box and have them open it.
Processing the Experience:

- Ask the recipient of the box, “Are you glad you waited? Why?” Be sure to identify the increased value.
- Pull up the Reality Ride visual analogy, and discuss which track we ride on when we delay gratification.
- Ask the students if they have any stories or examples of people who either acted on impulse or delayed gratification. What were the consequences?
- Ask the students to write down the following statement: “The chief cause of unhappiness and failure is sacrificing what is wanted most for what is wanted now.”

You might also ask:

- How can a goal help you delay gratification?
- What does the statement we wrote down mean to you?
- How does this activity relate to the phrase, “Harder but worth it?”
- How can the decisions you make today affect your future?
Reality Ride
5. Learning Activity: Count Your Fingers

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 1-12
Group size: 2 or more
Time: 5 minutes

Introduction: This activity will help students see the level of control they have over the choices they make, and the consequences that follow when they make certain choices.

Materials:
• None

Activity:
Ask the members of the group to pair off. Tell the group that they will put their hands behind their back and, on the count of three, show their fingers to their partner. Each partner in the group will hold up from 0 to 10 fingers. The first person that can count the total number of fingers on their partner’s hands and their own hands is the winner. Call up a partner to demonstrate, then begin. Tell the group that there will be three chances to determine the overall winner. Once everyone is ready, count to three and ask all partners to show their hands. Repeat this process two more times to determine the overall winners.

Processing the Experience:
• Tell the group, “A few of you counted your partner’s fingers and then counted your own.” Should you have known how many fingers you had behind your back?
• Who were the people that usually won the activity? (The ones that knew how many fingers they were going to show their partner)
• Why is it so important to make up your mind before you are faced with a choice that will get you into trouble?
• Listen to the following statement and explain what it means:
• “When you choose the beginning of the road you also choose your destination.” OR “You are free to choose, but you are not free to alter the consequence of your choice.”
Reality Ride
6. Learning Activity: Past to Present

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Group
Grades: 3-12
Group size: 2 or more
Time: 15 minutes

Introduction: To avoid repeating past mistakes, it is helpful to reflect on how your thoughts, feelings and actions have changed over time. When students realize that their goals, likes, and dislikes change as they grow older, they will give more thought and purpose to the choices they make today. This activity will help students think about ways they have changed already as well as areas were they still feel or act the same. This can be especially helpful in trying to show some past mistakes or challenges that they have overcome or are no longer doing.

Materials:
- 1 Past to Present worksheet for each student (These can be found at www.whytry.org/activities.)
- 1 pen or pencil for each student

Activity:
Print out enough copies of the “Past to Present” worksheet provided online, or make your own to better suit the needs of your class. Give each student a worksheet and pencil and allow time to fill it out. Then discuss in small groups or as a class some of the answers they listed.

Processing the Experience:
- What are some of the things that have changed since you were younger?
- What are some things that are the same?
- How do you feel now about some of the things you used to think or want or do?
- How does thinking about the changes in the way you think, feel, and/or act help you to avoid repeating past mistakes or bad behaviors?
- Do you think the things that are important to you will continue to change as you grow older? Why or why not?
- What have you learned from the past about yourself?
- What are some times in life when it might be helpful to think about the growth and changes you have made? How will this help you when making a choice?
Reality Ride
7. Learning Activity: Most Horrible, Most Excellent

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Group
Grades: 3-12
Group size: 2 or more
Time: 15 minutes

Introduction: When a good or bad event occurs in life, we need to step back and recognize the factors that led up to that event, either directly or indirectly. This self-evaluation helps us get out of the loop and stay on the right track. The following activity will give students an opportunity to reflect on ways they may have contributed to both the good things that happened to them as well as the bad. It will help them see the value in desisting negative behaviors and continuing positive ones.

Materials:
- 1 paper per student
- 1 pen or pencil per student

Activity:
Give each student a piece of paper. Have them fold the paper in half. Have them label one half of the paper “Most Horrible,” and the other half “Most Excellent.” Direct students to write on the “Most Horrible” side the three worst things that happened to them in the last week or month. Then have them write the three best things that happened to them on the “Most Excellent” side of the paper. Either in small groups or as an entire class, have students share some of the things they wrote under each heading. Explain to students that sometimes bad and good things happen that are completely out of our control, like another car running a red light and hitting your car. But often we do things directly or indirectly that can contribute to the events that happen to us. For example, staying up late to watch a movie on TV contributes to your bad score on a test the next day. As a class, go over some examples of good and bad things that happened and some possible behaviors that contributed to these events. Really try to get students to think of any possible behaviors that could have contributed in any way. Next, direct students to look again at the things they listed on their paper. Have them determine if there was any action on their part that may have directly or indirectly contributed to the event. Have them list anything they can come up with. If you have time, you may have some share what they listed.

You may also want to do this in conjunction with reading the story, Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst (WhyTry Elementary Book list and Why Try Elementary Journal, Literature Response Activity).

Processing the Experience:
- What are some of the “most horrible” things you listed?
- In what way did you directly contribute to that happening? Indirectly?
- Can you do anything to prevent this from happening again?
- How is this like getting out of the loop?
- What are some of the “most excellent” things you listed?
- In what way did you directly contribute to these events? Indirectly?
- What can you do to try to have this happen again?
- How is this like staying on the right track?
- What can you do when something bad happens that you cannot control?

*Note: Always be prepared to address the sensitive issues that may arise in an activity like this.
Reality Ride

8. Learning Activity: Lincoln’s Choice Challenge

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: K-12
Group size: 8 or more
Time: 20 minutes

Introduction: Staying on the right track involves taking control of our choices, ensuring that they are not left to chance or the influence of others. This activity illustrates the frustration that can often arise when we don’t take control of our own lives.

Materials:
- 1 penny per person
- 1 “Lincoln's Choice Challenge” maze (These can be found at www.whytry.org/activities.)
- A prize (optional)

Activity:
Give each student a “Lincoln’s Choice Challenge” maze. Tell students that to get through the maze, they must flip a coin that will determine their course. At each point in the maze where there is a choice to make, the students will flip the coin. If the coin reads “heads,” they will go right. If it reads “tails,” they will go left. If they reach a dead end, they can start over. If any student is lucky enough to finish the maze, you may award him/her a prize.

Processing the Experience:
- What was difficult about this race? What was easy?
- What would have made this race easier?
- If you could have, would you have chosen differently than the coin?
- How did you feel when the coin made a choice different from what you would have chosen?
- Is leaving choices up to chance a good idea? Why or why not?
- How does being in control of your choices lead to more opportunity, freedom and self-respect? How does it keep you on the right track? How does it help you reach your goals?
Reality Ride
9. Learning Activity: The Keys to Staying on Track

Spatial Requirements: Classroom with moderate space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 3-12
Group size: 10 or more
Time: 30 minutes

Introduction: Individuals involved in self-defeating behaviors do not understand the impact they have on themselves, their family, their co-workers, their school, and on society. Self-defeating behaviors are easy, but doors will open to the person who takes the harder but worth it track and strives to achieve ambitions, dreams, and goals. Opportunity, freedom, and self-respect will follow. This activity demonstrates that what is not always easy is worth it in the long run.

Materials:
- 30 3x5 cards with the same number on both sides (from 1 to 30)
- Masking tape
- Timer/stop watch
- Whiteboard and markers
- Permanent marker

Activity:
To prepare for this activity, set up a rectangular shape (12’ by 24’) on the floor with the masking tape. Place the numbered 3x5 cards on the floor in random order with the even numbers placed on one half of the rectangle, and the odd numbers placed on the other half (as shown in the chart on the following page). Set this up in an area where the group cannot see it until they start the activity. Make a start/finish line 20 feet away from the rectangle with masking tape. Explain the activity in another room by drawing the rectangle with a few numbers inside on the whiteboard as an example. Do not tell them that there are 30 numbers. Tell the following story to set the stage for the activity:

Your group has been selected to compete for a contract to build a railroad to connect the tip of South America to Alaska. The people awarding the contract have come up with an activity to test your ability to work under pressure, meet deadlines, work as a team, and solve problems. Each member of the group needs to touch the numbered cardstock (the cardstock represents railroad ties) in numerical order (1 through 30). One player runs in and touches the #1 and comes back out. The second player runs in and touches #2 and comes back out, etc. Each member of the group needs to touch at least one of the numbers. There can only be one group member inside the rectangle at a time. A 10-second penalty will be added for: a number touched out of order, two people in the rectangle at the same time, or a person in the group not touching a number. In order for the group to get the contract, they need to do the activity in less than one minute and 25 seconds. They have four attempts to get the contract. Give the group three to five minutes to plan the activity without you in the room. After the planning is over, bring the group to the starting line and ask if there are any final questions. Start the group and start the timer.

Notes to the facilitator:
As the group is going through the activity, keep track of penalties. Stop the timer when the last person in the group is over the starting/ending line. Give the group their time and penalties, and allow three to four minutes to process. Start the processing by asking the group what they learned and what they can do better. Continue for three more attempts. After the fourth attempt, or when they get under the 1:25, process the activity.
Processing the Experience:

- What were some of the challenges of the task?
- Did you make the same mistake more than once? What was it?
- What mistakes did you correct in the activity?
- What type of teamwork was displayed in the activity?
- By accomplishing your goal, what kind of opportunities were opened up for your group?
- What consequences came as a result of penalties?
- What would have happened if a member of the group said, “This is stupid and I am not going to do it?”
- What motivated you to stay with the activity and not quit or give up?
- How do our choices in life affect others?
- What challenges do you face in your life?
- What were some of the principles that helped you accomplish the task?
- How would these principles help you on the path to opportunity, freedom, and self-respect?
Reality Ride

10. Learning Activity: Flip the Coin

Spatial requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required  
Activity type: Movement/group  
Grades: 2-12  
Group size: 2 or more  
Time: 10 minutes  

Introduction: Often people think that what happens to them in life is the result of luck. Because of this, they don’t take responsibility for what happens to them. Rather than having goals, these individuals merely react to the events that happen each day and make decisions based on daily circumstances. When we take responsibility for our lives and make decisions based on our goals, we realize that luck doesn’t control our lives, we do. Once we realize this, we will quit waiting for good luck to strike and start making our own luck. The object of this activity is to help students realize that the way to succeed in life is by setting goals and then taking personal responsibility to reach your goals. This activity also ties in to “Lifting the Weight.”

Materials:  
- 1 piece of paper per student  
- 1 pen or pencil per student  
- 1 coin per student  

Activity:  
Give each student a coin, a paper, and a pencil. Have them number their paper 1 through 10. They will be flipping the coin ten times. Before each flip, they must guess whether the coin will land on heads or tails. Have them write down their guess before each flip, using “H” for heads and “T” for tails. After they flip the coin, they will write next to their guess whether or not they guessed correctly. After everyone has completed ten flips, have them report to the class how many times they guessed accurately.

Next, have students repeat this activity with a partner. This time, however, have them try to guess the results of two coins per flip. Have each team number their paper one through ten. Then have them draw two columns, one labeled “Me” and the other “Partner.” This time, to be right, they will have to correctly guess which way both coins will land. Once again, have each student record their guesses before the coins are flipped. Then have both partners flip their coins at the same time and record the results. Finally, after all pairs complete their ten coin flips, have each person report to the class how many times they guessed correctly.

Processing the Experience:  
- Was it easier to guess with one coin or with two?  
- What role did luck play in this activity?  
- Would you want to rely on a coin toss (luck) to make a really important decision in your life? Why or why not?  
- Can we depend on luck to help us succeed in reaching our goals?  
- How can we improve the odds of achieving our goals?  
- Is “luck” real?  
- Whose responsibility is it to make our own luck?  
- In reality, what is the best way to reach our goals?
**Reality Ride**

11. **Learning Activity: A $20 Decision**

**Spatial requirements:** Regular classroom setup: little or no space required  
**Activity type:** Object lesson  
**Grades:** 1-12  
**Group size:** 2 or more  
**Time:** 5-10 minutes

**Introduction:** This activity will help students understand that while we are free to choose, we do not always have the freedom to choose the consequences of our choices.

**Materials:**
- 1 tube of toothpaste
- 1 $20 bill
- 1 sheet of wax paper, construction paper, or cardstock
- Wet wipes or paper towels for cleanup
- 1 candy bar or treat
- 1 table or desk

**Activity:**
To set up for this activity, place the sheet of paper, tube of toothpaste, and $20 bill on the table or desk.

Tell the group that they have a chance to win $20. Show the materials on the table/desk and select a volunteer by asking, “By raise of hands, who would like to win $20?” When everyone raises their hands, ask, “How many of you brushed your teeth this morning?” This will eliminate a few group members. For those remaining, have them pick a number between 1 and the number of people remaining. Pick one of these numbers and write it on a piece of paper out of sight. The closest participant becomes your volunteer.

Tell the volunteer that in 30 seconds, he/she must squeeze as much toothpaste as possible out of the tube and onto the paper. When the time is up, tell the volunteer that you will give him/her $20 to get all of the toothpaste back inside the tube in two minutes. Before the volunteer begins, ask if they are sure they want to go through with the challenge. If yes, continue. If no, invite the person with the next closest number to participate.

Encourage the observers to cheer the volunteer on.

Even though your volunteer likely won’t win the $20, give him/her a candy bar for putting forth an effort.

**Processing the Experience:**
How successful were you at putting the toothpaste back into the tube? (Ask the volunteer.)  
Why did you volunteer for the activity? (Ask the volunteer and then the entire group.)  
When was the last time you got in trouble?  
If you knew the consequence, would you have still participated in the behavior? Why?  
Why do we make $20 decisions in life when we know the consequences will be negative?  
If you keep getting in trouble for the same thing over and over again, what is that telling you?  
When you hit the wall and “crash in life,” will the consequences of your choices give you lasting opportunity, freedom, and self-respect? Why?  
What will motivate you to get on another path?  
Who can help you?
# Reality Ride

## 12. Learning Activity: Birthday Cards

**Spatial Requirements:** Regular classroom setup: little or no space required  
**Activity Type:** Object lesson  
**Grades:** 4-12  
**Group size:** 5 or more  
**Time:** 5-10 minutes

**Introduction:** This activity will help youth recognize the difference between the easy-fast track and the harder but worth it track. They will see that the easy-fast track is only out to deceive them, while the harder track will lead to opportunities, freedom, and self-respect.

**Materials:**  
- 5 birthday cards (These can be found at www.whytry.org/activities.)

**Activity:**  
Print out the five birthday cards provided online with the following specific numbers in this sequential order:

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tell the group or class that you have a special gift or ability to predict birthdays. Randomly select someone to predict their birthday. You can do this by asking if anyone has a birthday in a given month. If more than one person has a birthday in that month, have them pick a number between 1 and 10. The student closest to the number is the winner and you will guess their birthday. Either turn your back to the group or step out of the room, then have that person tell their birthday or write it on the board. Now announce that you will come up with the actual birthday. Start by showing the numbers on card “A” and ask if their date is on that card. If it isn’t, go on to the next card. If it is, remember the number in the upper left hand corner of that card and go onto the next card. Every time they say their birthday is on the card shown, add the number in the upper left hand corner to all the other numbers in the same location on the cards they’ve said “yes” to. If they answer “no” to any card, you do nothing. For example, if the person’s birthday was November 19th, you would add 1 because 19 is on card A. 19 is also on card B, with two being the first number, so you would add 2 to 1 for a running total of 3 so far. 19 is not on card C or D, so you would add nothing and still have a total of three. Card E does have a 19 on it, so you would add the first number, which is 16, to 3. The students will be amazed with your special gift to predict birthdays. If you have time, you can predict one or two other birthdays.

**Processing the Experience:**  
- Ask the group or class, ‘Do you really think I have the ability to predict birthdays?’
• After their response, tell them that you really don’t have the power to predict birthdays; that you were in a sense trying to deceive or trick them into believing that you did.
• In what ways can we be deceived on the fast-easy track?
• What does life look like for a person that never makes it off the fast-easy track?
• Why is the other track called the “Harder But Worth It” track?
• Where does the “Harder But Worth It” track lead to?
Reality Ride

13. Learning Activity: Keep Your Eye on the Ball

**Spatial Requirements:** Classroom with moderate space required
**Activity Type:** Movement/group
**Grades:** 3-12
**Group size:** 6 or more
**Time:** 15-20 minutes

**Introduction:** This activity will help youth keep focused on their goals and dreams. It is harder but worth it to stay on track and work towards ambitions, dreams and goals. Doors will open and opportunities will be available to the person who stays on track.

**Materials:**
- 5 tennis balls, hacky sacks, or rubber balls
- 1 ball that is not the same as the 5 balls (different kind, color, or size)

**Activity:**
Have the group form a circle and space themselves so they can throw and catch a ball. The ball is to be passed in the same pattern and order every time, beginning with the designated starter. He or she will always throw the ball to the same person, who then will pass it to someone else in the circle. The pattern will be complete when everyone has caught and thrown the ball once. You also cannot pass the ball to the person right next to you on either side. You, the facilitator, start the group with one ball and have them learn and practice the pattern. Their goal is to not drop the ball as it goes through the sequence. Then introduce a second ball and start it about five seconds after the first ball has been passed. After they have completed two balls, give three more balls for a total of five balls. Start each ball about five seconds after the ball before it. Count how many times they drop the balls. Now introduce a brand new ball that is not the same kind, color, or size. Tell the group this is a very important ball and must not be dropped. Say, ‘Whatever you do, don’t drop this ball. Keep focused on this ball. Try not to drop the other balls, but it’s OK if you do.’ Have the special ball in the middle of the rotation, as either the third or fourth ball. Let the group know when that ball is starting by saying, ‘Here comes the special ball.’ The goal of the task is to focus on that ball and not drop it. This special ball represents their goals, dreams, opportunities, and the harder path that leads to the accomplishment zone.

**Processing the Experience:**
- What do the five balls represent in your life? (Priorities/How you spend your time)
- What does the special ball represent in your life? (The top priority)
- What was the key to not dropping the special ball?
- What is the key for getting on the harder but worth it track?
- How do priorities help us achieve our goals?
- How can focusing on our priorities help us remain on the harder but worth it track?
Reality Ride

14. Learning Activity: An Amazing Experience

Spatial Requirements: Gym/outdoor space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 2-12
Group size: 10-15 per maze
Time: 30-40 minutes

Introduction: As participants go through the maze, they will learn important concepts about choices and consequences. They will learn the importance of learning from their mistakes and the mistakes of others, and using positive support systems to help them through life’s experiences. This activity can also apply to “Climbing Out,” “Desire, Time, and Effort,” and “Plugging In.”

Materials:
• 1 roll of masking tape
• 1 grid map per team (These can be found at www.whytry.org/activities.)

Activity:
Make a 6 X 9 grid on the floor with the masking tape. A “maze master” stands at the head of each maze to monitor the movement of the team members on the maze. The maze master holds the grid map out of sight of the group. He/she also makes a “beep” sound when a mistake is made, and keeps track of all mistakes with a tally mark on the paper.

Have the team members line up in front of the maze. The team will see a grid of squares made of masking tape, and only the maze master will know which squares represent the path and which ones are impassable. (The impassable squares are those with an “X” over them on the map.)

The first person in line begins by stepping on any square of the maze. If they are lucky enough to step on the path, they may proceed to another square. They may move forward, backward, sideways, and diagonally, but can never skip or step over squares. As long as they stay on the path as shown on the grid map, nothing happens. But when they step off the invisible path and onto an invisible “X,” the maze master “beeps” and that person leaves the maze and proceeds carefully back through the maze, to the entry point, and on to the back of the line. (They must avoid “beeping squares” while they are retreating as well.) The next person in line then steps into the grid and also moves through it until they make a mistake and the maze master “beeps” at them. The other players must watch closely to learn the correct route and complete the object of the game, which is for everyone to finish the maze without stepping on an impassable, “beeping” square.

Time this event starting with the first person. Any time the maze master beeps, add one minute to the total time. This includes if a team member steps on an impassable square while retreating back to the starting point.

Allow each player to take a turn before allowing second turns. Do not allow props (like a pen and paper) or speaking.

Only one person may be on the maze at a time until a player has made it completely through the maze and the pattern is discovered. At this point, there may now be multiple players on the maze at one time. However, if any of those players make a mistake, all the players behind them must retreat back to the start. As before, each beep encountered while retreating adds a minute to the team’s total time.
Processing the Experience:
• What was difficult about this activity?
• What were your feelings as you went through this activity? What frustrated you? What motivated you?
• What tools helped you to be successful in the activity?
• What could the “Maze” represent in your life? (the path of life)
• What might the “beeps” represent? (the mistakes we make on the path of life)
• What “beeps” do you have in life?
• What support systems did you have in the activity?
• What support systems do you have in life?
• Do you use all of the support systems that are available to you? Why or why not? (This question also ties in to “Plugging In.”)
• Were you concerned about the success of the other players as they entered the maze? Why or why not?
• How concerned are you with the success of others in the maze of life?
• Do we ever allow friends to keep making the same mistakes over and over again? (This question also ties in to “Climbing Out.”)
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