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Teachers in Industry for Educational Support

Communicating With Teenagers

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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Curriculum Unit Overview – Narrative	3
Summary Chart	4
Section One Characteristics of Teenagers	5
Section Two Listening Skills	7
Section Three “I” Messages	9
Section Four Problem-Solving	12
Transfer Activity Robbery Report	18
Resources	21

Communicating with Teenagers Curriculum Unit Overview

Summary

This curriculum guide is designed to meet the needs of teens and those who communicate with them on a day-to-day basis. This program is divided into four competencies: characteristics of teenagers, listening skills, “I” messages, and problem solving. This unit could be adapted to other industry or occupational fields that include sensitivity training to enhance personal effectiveness.

Big Picture

This curriculum is valuable at home, school, and work to promote relationships with family, friends, and co-workers. It will help the class members who enter the work force by becoming aware of communication styles and effective communication techniques. These are important life skills that are crucial to being prepared for the real world as a productive adult. They are necessary components for teenagers to function as a successful team member.

Preparation for the Unit

The teacher will need to schedule a week of class time for implementing this unit. Materials need to be gathered. Handouts need to be photocopied, prompts need to be cut apart and placed into envelopes.

Overview

On the following page is a summary of the unit including brief summaries of each Authentic Learning Task (ALT). This table provides an overview of the tasks in the unit section and shows how the activities in the different teaching areas relate to each other.

Communicating with Teenagers Curriculum Unit Summary

Characteristics of Teenagers	Listening Skills	“I” Messages	Problem-Solving Skills
<p>ALT 1 – Uniqueness Class members will learn the characteristics of teenagers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group discussion. Brainstorming. 2. Name 6 important characteristics. Explain why these characteristics are important to you. 	<p>ALT 2 – Pay Attention Class members will learn effective nonverbal cues when listening.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group discussion. 2. Time to get to know your neighbor. 3. Class Activity – Introductions of each other. 	<p>ALT 3 – Responses Class members will learn how to use an “I” message statement in response to a prompt.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group discussion. Brainstorming. 2. Class Activity – Role Play using “I” Message prompts. 3. Tape recordings of role playing. 4. Group evaluation of role playing. 	<p>ALT 4 – Reasoning Class members will learn problem-solving strategies in response to a prompt.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group discussion. 2. Class Activity – Role Play using prompts. 3. Group evaluation of role playing.

Section One: Characteristics of Teenagers

ALT One: Uniqueness

Summary

During the adolescent years the largest influence can be their social environment. When they are 13 – 14, they tend to become excited easily and are more likely to explode than to succeed in controlling their emotions. Fifteen year olds try to cover up their feelings, making them moody and withdrawn. At the age of 16 – 17, they often experience anxiety brought on by new pressures, which may include driving, dating, and future career choices. Teens have to adjust to changes in people's expectations. This may cause insecurity and increased emotions. Knowing characteristics of teenagers is important for the communication process to be successful.

Competencies

1. Class members will be able to identify the characteristics of teenagers.

Time

15 - 30 minutes

Materials

1. Handout - Teen Characteristics
2. Chalkboard and chalk or chart paper and marker

Instructions

1. Distribute Teen Characteristics handout
2. Discuss characteristics of teenagers
3. Ask for feedback to put on chalkboard or chart paper

Evaluation Assessment

Ask the student the following questions for review:

1. Name six of the characteristics that you feel are the most important.
2. Explain why these characteristics are important.

Closure

It is important to be aware of characteristics of teenagers in order to understand their behaviors. Knowing these characteristics will aid in communicating effectively with them.

(Communicating with Teenagers) ALT One: Handout One
(Uniqueness)

1. Teens can be impulsive:
 - A. They may find it difficult to delay gratification.
 - B. Their immediate response to a situation may be verbally hostile or show physical anger.
2. Lack experience in relationships, use of alcohol, work, and life in general
3. Feel peer pressure to smoke, drink, have sex, hang with a certain group and dress a certain way
4. Teens have changing relationships:
 - A. They may be manipulative to get what they want.
 - B. Many lack communication skills to express ideas effectively and to resolve conflicts.
5. Hormones are constantly changing:
 - A. In many cases they are an emotionally, immature child in an adult body.
 - B. Adolescence is often a confusing and unstable time.
 - C. Hormones are responsible for affecting moods and general emotional responses.
6. They often lack knowledge and choices for the future.
7. Limited understanding of sexual roles and the socialization process:
 - A. Many use pregnancy as a way of finding love.
 - B. Confusing or mixed media messages regarding sexuality, relationships, and birth control creating a double standard
 - C. Frequently victims of sexual abuse within their relationships
 - D. Lack responsible sexual decision-making skills
8. Low respect for self and others:
 - A. Lack of hope and motivation for the future
 - B. Rebellion toward authority
9. Tendency to internalize problems and build negative thoughts and fear:
 - A. Feelings of isolation
 - B. Limited control of their lives
 - C. Reject domination as they seek independence
10. Avoidance and denial behaviors:
 - A. Do not identify self with problems
 - B. Deny they have a problem

Section Two: Listening Skills

ALT Two: Pay Attention

Summary

Listening demonstrates to other people that you care about them and what they have to say, which encourages healthy communication. The most common complaint that teenagers have is adults do not listen. Even teens who get along well with others wish that adults would listen more, talk with them more, be less critical and judgmental, and more willing to discuss the teen's point of view. Listening skills include body language and nonverbal cues.

Competencies

1. Class members will learn how to be a more attentive and sincere listener.
2. Class members will learn to use body language as a positive listening skill.

Time

15 - 30 minutes

Materials

1. Handout – Listening Skills
2. Chalkboard and chalk or chart paper and marker

Instructions

1. Distribute Listening Skills handout
2. Open discussion on effective listening skills
3. (Activity – Time to Get to Know Your Neighbor) allow five minutes for this activity
 - A. Have class member select someone in the class that they do not know.
 - B. Introduce your self to each other and learn something about them.
 - C. Each person will introduce their partner and tell three things about them.

Evaluation/Assessment of Student's Competency

1. Partners will evaluate each other's listening skills.
2. Each person will share with the class which listening skills their partner used effectively.

Closure

Effective listening skills communicate that the listener is honestly interested in the other person. They are intended to encourage the other person to open up and begin to verbalize his/her ideas or feelings freely. Listening behaviors have a powerful effect on people.

(Communicating with Teenagers) ALT Two: Handout Two
(Listening Skills)

Listening is a learned behavior that can be developed and improved upon.

1. Active Listening - More than half of all messages are conveyed nonverbally

- A. Make eye contact.
- B. Body should be relaxed with a forward tilt.
- C. Give an occasional head nod.
- D. Comfortable body distance from the other person.
- E. Convey a message of caring and concern.

2. Keys to Effective Listening:

- A. Listen for ideas and facts.
- B. Judge content, not delivery.
- C. Listen with interest.
- D. Don't jump to conclusions.
- E. Concentrate.
- F. Practice listening.
- G. Keep an open mind and hold your emotions in check.

3. Verbal Responses – Make it easy for the other person to talk.

- A. Do not argue, give advice, or ask judgmental questions.
- B. Use verbal cues such as “uhmm” and “I see”.
- C. Use open-ended questions. (Examples: “Tell me more.” or “How did that make you feel.”)
- D. Summarizing effectively checks your understanding of the person's feelings and situation.
- E. Be concerned with what the other person has to say, not your views and feelings. Bite your tongue!
- F. Keep questions simple.
- G. Ask relevant questions to clarify facts.

Section Three: “I” Messages

ALT Three: Responses

Summary

Good communication is a skill that takes practice, sensitivity, and thought. An “I” message is a statement that tells the listener what you see, think, feel, or want. It is an objective method that does not assign blame or put the listener down. When using “I” messages, you only need to say what you see or what you want.

Competencies

1. Class members will be able to identify and explain “I” messages.
2. Class members will practice using “I” messages as a response to a prompt.

Time

30 – 45 minutes

Materials

1. Handout – “I” Messages
2. List of “I” message prompts (cut, separate and place in Envelope #1)
3. Tape recorder

Instructions

1. Distribute “I” Messages handout
2. Group discussion
3. Give Examples
4. (*Activity*) Pair up. One person will randomly select an “I” Message prompt from Envelope #1 and read the prompt. Their partner will respond with an “I” message. Reverse roles. Select a new prompt. After practicing, each person will tape record An “I” message from a prompt.

Evaluation/Assessment of Class Member’s Competency

1. Each class member’s tape recording of the “I” message will be played.
2. The group will critique the tape recordings.

Closure

“I” messages open communication and build relationships. It allows communication without blaming or putting another person down. It is a way to express feelings and tell someone how their behavior affects you. It opens the door for problem solving.

(Communicating with Teenagers) ALT Three: Handout Three
(“I” Messages)

When communicating with teenagers use “I” messages.

An “I” message is a way of taking responsibility for your feelings, ideas, and opinions.

Examples of “I” messages are:

“I sense that you are lonely now.”

“I hear you saying that you miss your friend.”

“I felt disappointed when you did not want to spend the holidays with us.”

“I am disappointed when you do not do your homework.”

“I was worried when you did not call home and were going to stay out late.”

“I appreciate the time that you cut the grass without being asked.”

“I feel embarrassed when you yell at me in front of my friends.”

Examples of “I” messages to a prompt:

Prompt: “You just don’t understand.”

Response: “I sense you are feeling frustrated with me.”

Prompt: “You are such a slob.”

Response: “I can see that my habits are bothering you.”

Prompt: “Why can’t you be more responsible and let the dog out.”

Response: “It sounds like you are upset with me for not letting the dog out.”

Prompt: “Why don’t you love me any more?”

Response: I do love you; I just don’t like the way you were acting.”

Activity – Practice “I” Messages (See Envelope #1)

Directions:

1. Put the class members in groups of two.
2. Have one person from the group select a prompt from Envelope #1.
3. Role Play - One person will be the teen with a statement and the other person will respond with an “I” message.

(Communicating with Teenagers) ALT Three: Activity One
("I" Messages – Prompts)

Directions: Cut, separate and place into Envelope #1

"I hate you."

"I cannot play my trumpet very well."

"Why are you always telling me what to do?"

"She always does things better than I do."

"You act like you are crazy."

"Why don't you give me more attention?"

"You are stupid."

"Why aren't you more like your brother?"

"Can't you do anything right?"

“Why are you so irresponsible?”

“Don’t you ever shut up?”

“Why was I ever born?”

“Why can’t you get better grades like your sister did?”

“What did I do to get a rotten child like you?”

“I have told you six times to clean your room.”

“I miss him so much.”

“I don’t think anyone loves me.”

“It is your fault.”

“Don’t blame me for you problems.”

Section Four: Problem-Solving

ALT Four: Reasoning

Summary

Problem solving is a process in which a person follows a sequence of steps to select a solution from two or more possible choices. This process can be learned, applied, and evaluated. Individuals may face the same situation and select a different solution because of their values and goals.

Competencies

1. Class members will understand problem-solving strategies.
2. Class members will have the skills to make appropriate and realistic decisions.

Time

45 – 60 minutes

Materials

1. Handout – Problem-Solving
2. Problem-Solving prompts (cut, separate and place in Envelope #2)
3. Chalk board and chalk or chart paper and marker

Instructions

1. Distribute Problem-Solving handout.
2. Group discussion
3. (*Activity*) Pair up. One person will randomly select a prompt from Envelope #2
4. Act out prompt while other class member helps problem solve.
5. Group will discuss and evaluate role-playing.

Evaluation/Assessment of Class Member's Competency

1. Class members will demonstrate problem-solving effectiveness through role-playing.
2. Group will discuss and evaluate role-playing effectiveness.

Closure

Every person is unique. Each brings different ideas, values and goals to a problem. Everyone has a different way of problem-solving. Remember to be sincere and to be clear about the decision and the choices that are facing you. This curriculum is only one of many ways to problem solve.

(Communicating with Teenagers) ALT Four: Handout Four
(Problem-Solving)

When problem-solving, follow these steps:

1. Clarify the problem – You and the teen must have a clear understanding of the problem.
 - A. Rephrase what you think the teen is saying until both of you agree on the problem. (This would be a good place to use “I” messages).
 - B. If there is more than one problem, discuss which is most important to the teen. To focus on one problem, you may say, “When you wake up tomorrow, what one thing would you like to see different about your life?” Listen for the response.
2. Explore options to the problem – You may give suggestions and information, but do not give your opinion as to which option you prefer. Let the responsibility of the choice rest with the teen.
 - A. Explore the positive and negative consequences of each choice.
 - B. Draw upon the teens experience; is he/she able to take a similar experience and apply it to this one. What worked and what did not?
3. Have teen select an option.
 - A. Teen should have backup plans.
 - B. Teen needs to be flexible – there may be a slight change in their plan but not anything major.
4. Carry though with the decision.
5. Check the plan by evaluating it.
 - A. If the teen’s option is not working, go back to the beginning and start over.
 - B. Ask the teen if he/she would do it differently next time and how?
 - C. The teen should take responsibility for their decision.
 - D. Emphasize to the teen that the secret is to “never give up”.

Activity – Practice Problem-Solving (See Envelope #2)

Directions:

1. Put the class members in groups of two.
2. Have one person from the group select a prompt from the envelope.
3. Role Play. One person will be the teen with a given problem and the other person will help problem solve.

4. Evaluate by having the group give feedback on the response to the prompt.
 - A. How was the person effective in problem solving?
 - B. How did the person with the prompt feel?
 - * Did you feel you were helped with your problem?
 - * Did you feel responsible for the option chosen?
 - C. Were there any options not explored?
 - D. In this activity, were main points, feelings and ideas summarized?

(Communicating with Teenagers) ALT Four: Activity Two
(Problem Solving – Prompts)

Directions: Cut, separate, and place into Envelope #2.

Anger

You are a teenager and your newly ex-boyfriend is taking another girl to the prom. You had planned for over a year to be at the prom with him. You have your dress and shoes and now you will not be going. The prom is a week from now and this is all you can think about.

Sadness

Your best friend moved to another state, hundreds of miles away. The two of you did everything together. She/he was good in algebra and you were good in science. You did most of your homework together. Both of you were on the soccer team. You believe you do not have any other friends.

Jealousy

You run around with a group of friends. It seems like they get everything they want. You never do. Their parents have more money than yours. They are able to go on expensive vacations, buy great clothes, and do much more than you can. You do not think this is fair. You would really like to see one of their parents get a divorce. That way they do not have everything going for them.

Anger

You are sick and tired of your parents telling you what to do and when to do it. They try to act like they know everything. They make you so angry. The next time Mom/Dad tell you something, you are going to hit them. They had better watch out.

Love

My boyfriend and I have been going together for about a year. I know that he is going to break up with me if I do not have sex with him next weekend. I do not want to have sex, but I don't want to lose him either. I think he is the one that I want to marry after high school, so what harm can it do? If I get pregnant, I think that he would marry me.

Insecurity

I just want to have a baby to love me. I am only 15 years old, but I know I could take care of a baby. Then I would have someone to love only me. I do not have a boyfriend, but I will find one.

Embarrassment

My mother is always loud and obnoxious at our games. This is embarrassing me so much that I want to quit the team. Many of my friends are making comments about my rude mother. I love my mother but I don't know how to let her know how ashamed I am of her.

Depression

I can't take it any more. The students at school never stop picking on me. Students knock my books off my desk when the teacher isn't looking. They have even spit in my book bag. I feel so hopeless I don't know why I should go on living. I should just kill myself. No one can help me.

Low Self-Esteem

I weigh 95 pounds, but I am so fat. When I look in the mirror, I am disgusted with my body. After I lost 15 pounds, the boys thought I looked great. But since I have lost 10 more pounds, they don't call me anymore. I want to lose more; maybe they think I am too fat.

Transfer Activity

Competencies

1. Class members will use listening strategies learned in the curriculum (ALT 2 – Pay Attention and ALT 3 - “I” Message activity) to demonstrate an understanding of effective communication.
2. Class members will use problem-solving strategies (ALT 4) to identify similarities and differences portrayed in the Transfer Activity.
3. Class members will use effective communication skills to complete the Transfer Activity.

Time

30 – 45 minutes

Materials

1. Worksheet - Robbery Report (one for every class member)
2. Rubric (one for every class member)
3. Pen or Pencil (one for every class member)

Instructions

1. Ask for three volunteers from the class.
2. Send two volunteers out of class – out of listening range.
3. Distribute a worksheet and rubric to every class member.
4. Give directions to the class on how to fill out worksheet and rubric.
5. Teacher calls first volunteer back into the classroom.
6. Teacher reads message to the first volunteer.
7. Bring in second volunteer.
8. First volunteer relays message to second volunteer. Class then completes worksheet and rubric for the first volunteer.
9. Bring in third volunteer.
10. Second volunteer relays message to third volunteer. Class then completes worksheet and rubric for the second volunteer.
11. Third volunteer relays to class what they heard. Class then completes worksheet and rubric for the third volunteer.
12. Lead the participants in a discussion. Note the differences of the message between the three volunteers. Use this as a springboard into a discussion of effective listening techniques and effective communication.

Evaluation

Class members will complete a rubric.

Rubric for Robbery Report

	Volunteer 1	Volunteer 2	Volunteer 3
0 -5 Differences			
5 -10 Differences			
10 or more Differences			
0 -5 Similarities			
5 – 10 Similarities			
10 or more Similarities			

(Communicating with Teenagers) Transfer Activity
(Robbery Report Worksheet)

Message

Please listen carefully because I have to go to the hospital right away. I just called the police from the gas station on the corner. Wait here and report the robbery to them. I was walking into Johnson's Grocery Store, and this guy came running out and almost knocked me over. He was carrying a white bag, and it looked like he had a gun in his left hand. He was wearing a Levi jacket with the sleeves cut out and a green and plaid shirt and blue jeans with a hole in the right knee. He had skinny legs and a big stomach. He wore wire rim glasses and high topped Converse tennies. He was bald and had a brown mustache and was six and a half feet tall, probably in his mid thirties.

Directions

For each repetition of the report, note anything the person missed, added, or changed from the previous report.

First Volunteer:

Second Volunteer:

Third Volunteer:

Resources

Foster, Chad. (1999). Teenagers Preparing for the Real World. South-Western Educational Publishing: Cincinnati, Ohio.

Hendon, Sarah, and Dougherty, Barbara. (1994). Focus on Your Future: A Success Skills Planning Curriculum for Teens: Module II: Communicating Effectively. Center on Education and Work School of Education: University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Lindner, Frances. (1987). Career Survival Kit for Teen Education & Employment: Life Skills Workbook: A Guide to Personal Growth. Vocational Studies Center: University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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