

Independent Living Skills Module II

PROBLEM SOLVING

As you take on the responsibilities of adulthood, you will have to make some very important decisions which will affect your future. You will also need to find solutions for new and unfamiliar problems. Although decision-making and problem-solving is not always easy, practice can make it easier.



ACTIVITY

Find solutions/make decisions about the following problems.

(1) You live in your own apartment. You come home from a birthday party at 11:30 p.m. Standing outside your door, you realize that you have lost your house keys. What would you do?

Possible Solution:	
Pros:	Cons:
Decision:	
Evaluation:	

(2) Your supervisor tells you that you are laid off. You think you have done a good job and worked hard for him. You need the job to pay for your rent and food. Also, you believe that you deserve an explanation. What would you do?

Possible Solution:	
Pros:	Cons:
Decision:	
Evaluation:	

Independent Living Skills Module II

(3) You are enjoying living alone in your own apartment. Your rent, however, is \$400 a month, which takes up most of your income. One of the people you know from work has suggested that you move in with him/her to share expenses. This way, you would only have to pay \$250 in rent. However, you don't particularly like that person and you are not sure if you could get along with him or her in that kind of living situation.

Possible Solution:	
Pros:	Cons:
Decision:	
Evaluation:	

(4) You are thinking about buying a car. A friend of yours has a 10 year old pick-up, with 100,000 miles on it, which he would sell to you for \$1,000. The car is in good shape and you think it will last you for at least two years. However, you also went to a new car dealership and looked at new models. The salesman tried to convince you that you are able to afford a new car, paying \$1,000 down and \$250 a month for the next five years. You earn \$800 a month, pay \$300 in rent, and have a few other expenses. What would you do?

Possible Solution:	
Pros:	Cons:
Decision:	
Evaluation:	

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ACTIVITY

Can you think of two problems you might face while living independently? Describe them below, find a solution, and discuss the outcome with your foster parent, social worker, or staff.

Problem # 1:

Problem # 2:

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WHAT ARE MY PERSONAL GOALS?

We have talked a lot about personal values, decision making, and goals. Now it is time to practice making decisions about future goals. Let's look at several different areas. We will utilize the five steps.

① Education

① Ask.

What are two educational options I would consider once I finish high school or complete my GED?

Option A

Option B

② List. *What are ways of obtaining more information about each option?*

What are the entry requirements for each educational program? What are the possible career options and wages after I complete my education?

③ Think *(about the results)*.

What are some good and difficult aspects about each option?

A. Option A is good because _____

but it might be hard because _____

B. Option B is good because _____

but it might be hard because _____

④ Chose.

If you could choose only one, which option would you choose:

Option A

Option B

Why? _____

⑤ Evaluate.

Did this checklist help you make a decision about what educational option you want to pursue? In what ways?

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② Jobs.

① **Ask.**

What are two jobs you might like to have when you are 21 years old?

Job A

Job B

② **List.** *What are some ways you could get those jobs?*

What are the entry requirements for each job? How can you find out if there are a lot of openings in this type of job?

③ **Think** (*about the results*).

What are some good and difficult things about each job?

- A. Job A is good because _____
but it might be hard because _____
- B. Job B is good because _____
but it might be hard because _____

④ **Chose.**

If you could choose only one job, which one would it be?

Job A

Job B

Why? _____

⑤ **Evaluate.**

Did this checklist help you make a decision about what job you might want to obtain? In what ways?

Name one personal goal you have about work and jobs: _____

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③ Health.

① **Ask.**

How can I keep myself healthy?

② **List.**

What are some habits that will help me stay healthy?

Foods

Activities & Exercises

③ **Think** (*about the results*).

A. It's good to eat healthy food because _____

B. It's important to exercise because _____

C. One thing I like, that I might have to be careful about is _____

④ **Chose.**

In order to stay healthy, I will be sure to _____

and stay away from _____

⑤ **Evaluate.**

Did this checklist help you think about personal health goals?

Name one personal goal you have for your health _____

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④ Friends.

① Ask.

How will I make new friends as I become an adult?

② List.

Three places I might meet new friends/

A.

B.

C.

③ Think *(about the results)*.

A. One easy thing about making new friends here (A) is _____
_____ but one difficult thing is: _____

B. One easy thing about making new friends here (B) is _____
_____ but one difficult thing is: _____

C. One easy thing about making new friends here (C) is _____
_____ but one difficult thing is: _____

④ Choose.

One way I will try to find new friends is _____

⑤ Evaluate.

Did this checklist help you discover helpful ways to make new friends?

Name one personal goal you have for your future friendships _____

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Personal goals can change due to new information, different circumstances, and personal events. You can use the goal setting/decision making steps to set new goals or evaluate your present ones in all areas of life. Short term goals often help us get moving in the right direction, but they also help us establish and reach our long term goals. Let's evaluate and summarize your personal goals.

Short Term	Long Term
Education	
Employment	
Health	
Money Management	
Friends/Relationships	
Family	
Recreation	
Transportation	
Living Situation	

RELATIONSHIPS

Throughout our lives, we all depend on social interactions with others. During adolescence, friendships, dating, and relationships are an important part of life for most of you. Our experiences with friends and relationships can influence us greatly. Positive interactions with others help us feel good about ourselves, while bad experiences might have a negative impact on our sense of self worth. Interacting positively with others and building healthy relationships might not always be easy and both require many skills. In the following section we will build on the skills we have discussed in the previous exercises to work on the social skills necessary to develop positive friendships and relationships.



RELATIONSHIPS / PERSONAL SKILLS

In order for us to make good decisions, we have to know who we are. We have to know what is important to us and what is not. Our values often direct our relationships with others and our actions in general.

Nobody is born with a firm set of values. We all develop our values “along the way.” We learn to distinguish right from wrong, develop preferences and life philosophies. However, as we discussed previously, our values are not carved into stone. They can change due to our life experiences or new information. Different people have different values, each according to his/her own development, personalities, and cultural backgrounds.

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Positive values can help us to live our lives in a healthy way and guide us through difficult and confusing situations. Most of us establish values in many areas of life. It is particularly valuable to determine what is important to us in the areas of friendship and relationships.

Use the following exercise to explore some of your values. Circle your preference in each part.

I PREFER

To have a few good friends	-	Lots of acquaintances (not as good friends)
Good looks	-	A nice personality
To listen to the advice of others	-	To do things my own way
Have a good talk with someone	-	Go to the movies
Honesty	-	Excitement
Long lasting relationships	-	Short relationships
Hanging with the popular crowd	-	Having friends I can trust
To take the initiative in getting to know someone	-	To wait for others to approach me
To get to know someone before dating	-	To start dating right away
To only date people I like	-	To date anyone who asks me out
To rush into relationships	-	To take things slow
To be a part of defining expectations and limits in a friendship or relationship	-	To let others set limits and expectations
To communicate my thoughts and feelings	-	To hide my thoughts and feelings

In summary, describe what is important to you in a good friend.

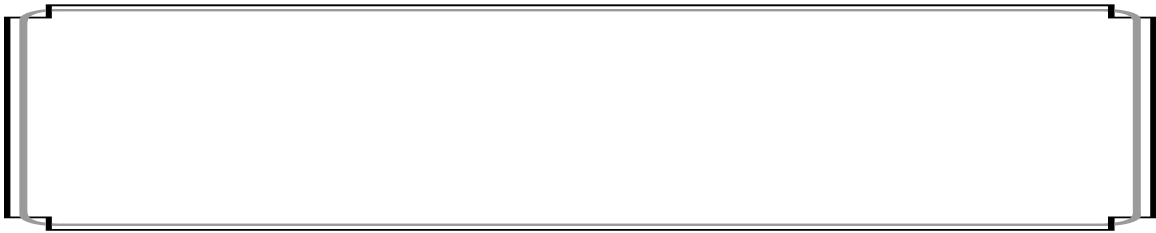
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What are some of the values our society and your cultural background have taught you?



Describe what is important to you in a dating relationship. Are the qualities you look for in a friend the same ones you value in a person you would date? Why or why not?



One way to shield ourselves against negative experiences is to live by our positive values and expectations.

Consider the following:

Kathy is a junior in high school. Tom, a senior and the captain of the football team, asks her out on a date. Kathy is not sure what to do. She knows that Tom is fooling around a lot and has heard him bragging to his friends about having had sex with many girls. Her best friend fell for him and has been hurting since Tom broke up with her after only four dates. On the other hand, Kathy thinks that Tom is very attractive and it would be pretty cool to be seen with such an older, popular guy. Kathy hopes that he really likes her and wonders if things might be different for her.

How would personal values help Kathy make a decision?

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Find two ends to Kathy's story using the two different set of values below.

Values I

- Enjoys hanging out with the popular crowd
- Starts dating right away
- Dates anyone who asks her
- Lets others set limits

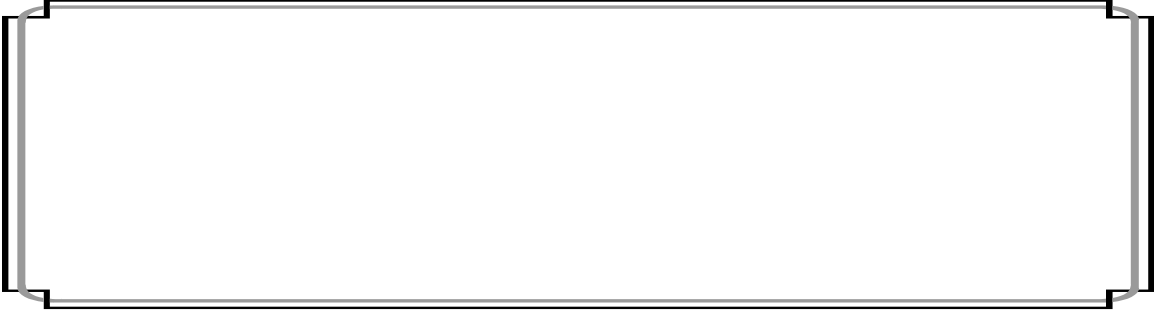
End Of The Story:



Values II

- Trust
- Getting to know someone before dating
- Long-lasting relationships
- Set limits and expectations

End Of The Story:



Which of your two endings do you think is best for Kathy and why?



How would you handle a situation like Kathy's?

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Values also help determine the quality of friendships and relationships.

Consider the following:

Chandra and Isaac have been dating for a while and getting along pretty well. Lately, however, Isaac has been having a difficult time. He has a lot of personal problems and is having trouble in school. He wants to talk to Chandra about it but she tells him that she doesn't want to deal with problems... She just wants to have fun times like they used to.

Do you think that Chandra and Isaac have different values? Describe.



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Let's look at the following chart to determine which values make relationships/friendships work. Choose the six values most important to you and describe why they are so.

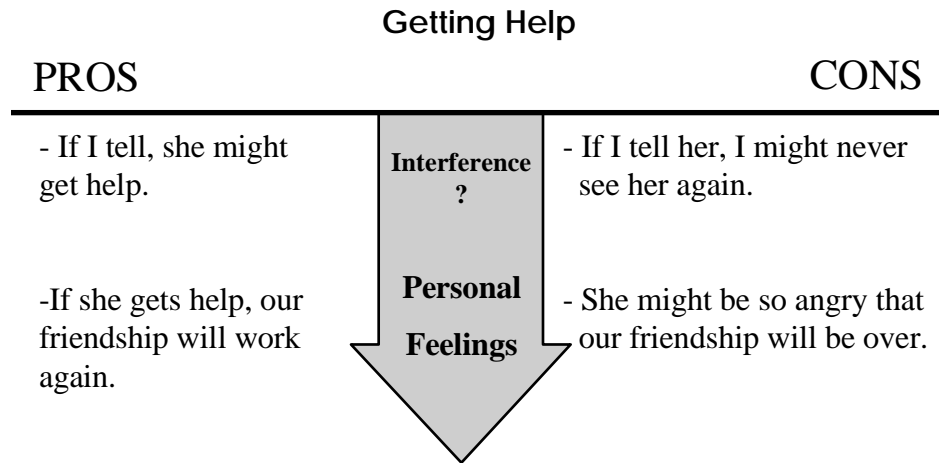
<p>Honesty</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Trust</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Commitment</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Reliability</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Acceptance of Boundaries</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Appreciation</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Respect</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Tolerance</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Communication</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Openness</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Sharing</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Consistency</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Dependability</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Sensitivity</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Thoughtfulness</p> <p>Why: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

DECISION MAKING IN RELATIONSHIPS

Once we have established what is important to us, we usually base our decision making on those values. We all are faced with many decisions every day, in all areas of life. Good decision-making is based on the concept that we have to evaluate pros and cons carefully in order to come up with the best possible solution. Good decision-making in friendships and relationships is difficult at times because our personal feelings might interfere with our ability to objectively weigh the pros and cons as we discussed in the previous Decision Making section.

Consider the following:

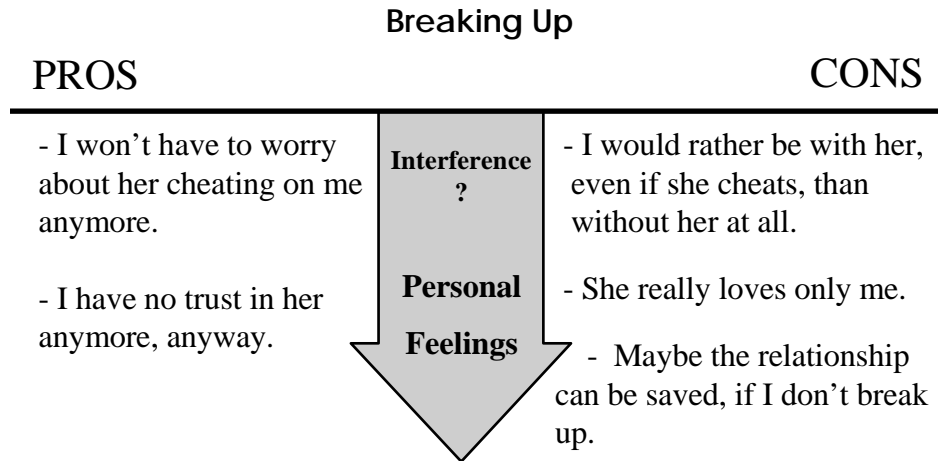
Maria and Sabrina have been friends since kindergarten. Recently, it has seemed to Maria that Sabrina has been behaving strangely. She is moody and hardly ever feels like doing anything with her. One day after school, Maria saw Sabrina hanging out with a bad crowd and doing drugs. Maria confronted her friend and suggested that she should get help. Sabrina told her that if she told anyone about her drug use, she could forget about ever seeing her again. Maria is not sure what to do. She knows that Sabrina needs help, but she doesn't want to lose her as a friend. She weighs the pros and cons.



What would you do in a situation like this? Why? Would your personal feelings interfere?

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Steven has been going out with Amber for five months. Recently, Amber has been spending almost no time with him, and Steven has heard from others that she has been cheating on him. When he confronted her, she admitted that she has been seeing his best friend. Amber said that she cared for Steven very much but could not promise that it wouldn't happen again. Steven debates whether or not to break up with her.



How would you decide? Why?

When we make decisions in regard to friends/relationships, we should always ask ourselves:

- What are the pros and cons?
- What are the alternatives/solutions?
- What short-term/long-term consequences will my decision have for me?
- What might possibly interfere with my making an objective decision?

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Did you ever have to make a difficult decision? Are you about to make a decision about a friend or relationship? If so, describe your problem and utilize the decision-making chart below to help you find a solution.

PROBLEM:

Possible Solution:

PROS

CONS



SOLUTION:

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COMMUNICATION

Our ability to interact with others greatly depends on our ability to communicate effectively. We need to be able to convey our thoughts and feelings to others as well as hear and understand the thoughts and feelings of others. There are two kinds of communication, verbal and nonverbal. It is important to remember that non-verbal communication is often just as important as what you say. Effective communication in our relationships with others should consist of:

- ⇒ Communicating thoughts and feelings clearly.
- ⇒ Listening carefully to others.
- ⇒ Body language which supports the spoken word.

Many of the misunderstandings, conflicts, and fights in people's relationships are the result of poor communication.

Consider the following:

Tina and Marc have been dating for six weeks. They enjoy each other's company and get along well. Tonight they had planned a night out at the movies. They were supposed to meet at the theatre at seven o'clock. Tina arrived twenty minutes late, and Marc is really aggravated.

MARC: What on earth is the matter with you?

TINA: Marc, I am. . .

MARC: Don't even try making up excuses. I have been waiting here twenty minutes!

TINA: Listen, please, I . . .

MARC: The movie's been on now for at least fifteen minutes. It's too late to go in now. You have ruined my evening!

TINA: Marc, let me explain. I was. . .

MARC: I hope you're happy. I really wanted to see that movie. I should have gone out with my friends!

TINA: Marc, I'm really getting angry. Why won't you let me explain?

MARC: You're getting angry? You don't have any right to be angry. You're the one who's late!

TINA: I don't have to stand here and listen to you yell at me. I'm going home. Don't ask me out again.

Tina turns around and leaves. Marc is puzzled. He does not understand why Tina went home and does not want to see him again. All he wanted to do was to get his point across. He really likes her and wondered what went wrong.

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What do you think went wrong?

What is the difference between assertive and aggressive communication?

Aggressive	Assertive

How could Marc have made his point in an assertive rather than an aggressive manner? Fill in Marc's parts as well as Tina's responses in the exercise below.

MARC:

TINA:

MARC:

TINA:

MARC:

TINA:

MARC:

TINA:

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Sometimes people have difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings, such as in the next example.

April and Laura have been friends since the second grade. They got into a big fight over a guy they both like, and in the two weeks since the fight, they have not spoken to each other. They both miss the other's company and would like to be friends again. One afternoon they meet on the subway.

APRIL: Hi.

LAURA: Hey.

APRIL: How's it going?

LAURA: All right, I guess.

APRIL: What's new?

LAURA: Nothing much. What have you been up to?

APRIL: Nothing really.

LAURA: Hmm.

APRIL: Yeah.

LAURA: So did you get the new Bon Jovi CD?

APRIL: Yes! Are those new jeans you're wearing?

LAURA: Yes. You like them?

APRIL: Sure.

LAURA: Did you hear that Reggi is going out with José?

APRIL: Yeah. That's no big surprise, is it?

LAURA: Yeah.

APRIL: Hmm.

LAURA: Well, this is my stop.

APRIL: Okay, see ya.

LAURA: See ya.

Were Laura and April able to tell each other that they want to be friends again? Did they talk about their fight? What do you think went wrong?



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How would you approach the conversation? Fill in the blanks in the exercise below so that April and Laura can be friends again.

APRIL:

LAURA:

APRIL:

LAURA:

APRIL:

LAURA:

APRIL:

LAURA:

APRIL:

LAURA:

APRIL:

LAURA:

APRIL:

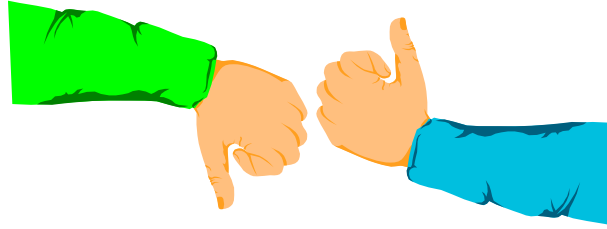
LAURA:

APRIL:

LAURA:

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As we stated in the beginning of this segment, communication can be divided into verbal and non-verbal expressions. So far, we have only focused on the verbal means of communicating with others. However, body language is important as well. Non-verbal communication can consist of gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, movements, posture, etc.



Our body language usually coincides with the words we speak. If it doesn't, we might be sending conflicting messages to others. Imagine, for example, your supervisor asking you to come to her office for an important talk. She explains that you have done a good job and offers you a promotion, but she has her head down and is slouched in her chair all the while. She does not even look at you. How would that make you feel? You would probably be uncomfortable and confused. Body language is an important facet of communicating.



ACTIVITY

Complete the following exercise by answering how you would best communicate (both verbally and non-verbally) in each situation.

Situation	Effective Communication
<p>You forgot that you were supposed to meet your friend yesterday to play basketball after school. During your lunch break today, your friend lets you know that he/she is kind of mad. You feel guilty and want to apologize. What would you say to your friend? How would you convey your feelings through your body language?</p>	<p>⇒</p> <p>⇒</p> <p><i>Body Language (non-verbal)</i></p>
<p>There is this boy/ girl in your class you talked to a few times. You really like him/her and would like to ask him/her out to the dance on Saturday. However you are somewhat nervous and fear that he/she might reject you. What would you say to him or her? What body language would you use?</p>	<p>⇒</p> <p>⇒</p> <p><i>Body Language (non-verbal)</i></p>

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Situation	Effective Communication
<p>You have been going out with someone for twelve months. Lately the relationship has not been working out. You have been fighting and spend less and less time together. You want to break up with him/her but don't want to hurt his/her feelings. You are somewhat sad but think that it is best to end it. What words and body language would you use?</p>	<p>⇒</p> <p>⇒</p>
	<p><i>Body Language (non-verbal)</i></p>
<p>You are angry at one of your friends for putting you down and making fun of you in front of a crowd. What would you say?</p>	<p>⇒</p> <p>⇒</p>
	<p><i>Body Language (non-verbal)</i></p>

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Good communication skills are necessary to resolve conflicts. All of you have probably been in situations where you did not agree with others. In those situations, it is important to negotiate and, at times, compromise.

Why do you think conflict resolution and negotiating is important in all relationships?



What skills/qualities do you think are important in resolving conflicts?



How do you usually deal with conflicts in a relationship?



How can good negotiation skills help you to be assertive and in control?



What could you do if anger interferes with your ability to solve a conflict?



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Create your own example (story) which reflects good conflict resolution and negotiation skills.

MY EXAMPLE:



IN SUMMARY:

Ask yourself these questions.

- Why are good relationships/friendships important to you?
- How would you describe good relationships and/or friendships
- What are some of the things you do not want in a relationship and/or friendship?
- What personal skills do you have to work on to improve your ability to form relationships with others?

Develop strategies with your foster parent, social worker, or staff for ways in which you can improve those personal skills.

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LOVE

Love seems to be the center of much of our society's attention. We hear love songs on the radio, watch movies about happy or unhappy love, and every so often we'll hear the people around us talking about being in love. Love seems to have great power and influence over us. Myths and stories about many different kinds of love go back thousands of years. But what, in actuality, is love?

What is your definition of love?

There are many different kinds of love - love of family, friends, a pet, as well as love of a potential partner. Can you think of other types of love?

What (if any) is the difference between friendship and love?



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What is the difference between dating and love?

How would you know if were in love?

Let's explore some of your values, experiences, and preferences by circling the phrases below which best describe your ideas about love of a potential partner:

Love at First Sight	-	Love develops slowly
Based on physical appearance	-	Based on personality
To fall in love often	-	To fall in love rarely
Love is a kind of game	-	Love is special
Love means commitment	-	Love means fun
Love is mysterious	-	Love is based on logical attraction
Love means work	-	Love just happens
Love means shared interests	-	Love means opposites attract
Intellect	-	Life philosophy
Love means sex	-	There are many ways to love someone without having sex
Attraction	-	Trusting, positive feeling
Love means taking care of someone	-	Love is confusing

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What is important to you in a loving relationship?



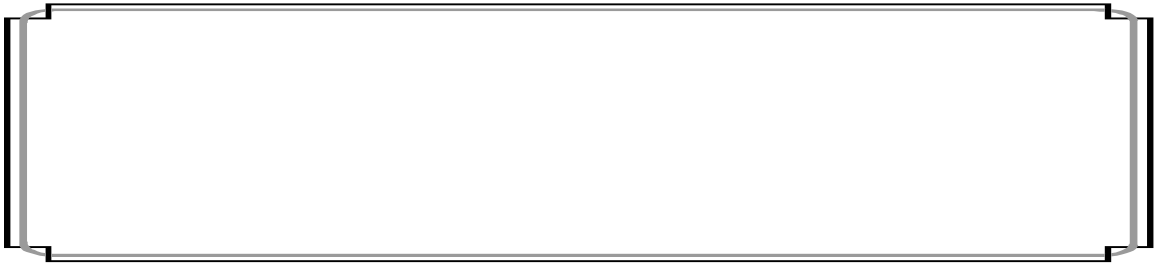
Just as in friendly relationships, your values in regard to love are important. All too often, we engage in relationships we expect to be loving ones but that turn out differently. Many of us probably dream about the perfect love and are convinced that, magically, the right person will come along and we'll live happily ever after.

The truth is that we are rarely able to live out a "fairy tale" love. A love relationship takes a lot of work and commitment by everyone involved. If we approach love with fantastic or unrealistic expectations, we're likely to be disappointed, less caring, and perhaps miss out on something special.

Consider the following:

Susi is having lunch with her friends at school. She points out a boy at another table, a boy Susi thinks is really cute. Although she has never spoken to him, she tells her girlfriends that she is "so much in love with him!"

Can Susi really be "in love" with him? Why or why not?



Although we might be attracted to someone as soon as we meet him/her, love develops over time. The term "falling in love" implies that we don't have any control over who we have loving feelings for. It's actually a misleading expression. Similar to our choices in friendships, we can control who we fall in love with and influence the quality of a relationship to a certain extent.

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Consider the following:

Maurice and Melanie have been going out for several months. Melanie never really thought about it before now but thinks that she might be in love with Maurice. Maurice believes that he loves Melanie and he hates the thought of her liking someone else. He is often jealous and always wants Melanie to tell him exactly where she is or what she is doing. For the past few weeks, Maurice has been asking her to call and get his permission before she goes anywhere. When Melanie tries to explain to him that he should trust her, he tells her that if she really loved him she would do as he says. Melanie does not like to be controlled and kept from her friends but is beginning to think that love means you have to give up everything for the other person.

What are Maurice and Melanie's values or concepts about love?

Do you agree with their values/concepts? Why or why not?

What do you think might happen in their relationship?