

**TRANSITIONAL
LIFE SKILLS
FOR TEENS**

**TEENS ~
SOCIAL SKILL
STRATEGIES ▶**

**Facilitator Reproducible
Activities for Groups
and Individuals**

**Ester R. A. Leutenberg
Carol Butler, MS Ed, RN, C**

Illustrated by
Amy L. Brodsky, LISW-S



Whole Person

101 West 2nd St., Suite 203
Duluth, MN 55802

800-247-6789

books@wholeperson.com
www.wholeperson.com

Teens – Social Skill Strategies

Facilitator Reproducible Activities for Groups and Individuals

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Purpose of the Book

Action and reflection promote learning.

In this workbook, *TEENS – Social Skill Strategies*, teens learn by doing, from each other, and through thought and feedback.

Real life comes to the classroom, group room or individual space as teens practice new skills or begin to change negative behaviors. Awareness of societal expectations, empathy, ethics and altruism are not taught but are lived, through simulated and actual situations.

Social skills constitute more than a time-honored list of modern manners; they are ways to thrive in today's world. Whether texting or talking, sitting at the table or involved in a crisis situation, operating with family or friends, in school or in love, communication, courtesy and compassion triumph.

Verbal and non-verbal communication, social graces, the desire to fit in, diversity, inclusion, finding and being a friend, family relationships, forgiveness, first love, breakups, humanitarianism and other topics are featured. Social issues, including abuse prevention and other topics are addressed.

Experiential education occurs as teens practice ways to achieve these goals.

- Become a leader
- Be a team player
- Portray and interpret body language
- Launch and join a conversation
- Use, not abuse, technological communication
- Elicit and express opinions
- Enact and analyze social behavior
- Read and write poetry, songs, lyrics, letters and riddles, expressing feelings related to relationships
- Develop passion for and ways to promote a social cause
- Start or participate in a service club

Active learning occurs as teens consider social life and social consciousness through interactive games, introspective drawing and writing, mock videos, role plays, panel discussions, press conferences, through drama, music, pantomimes and other activities.

Teens will practice ways to build people up and break down barriers.

Teens will internalize Maya Angelou's message:

*I've learned that people will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget how you made them feel.*

Format of the Book

An Introduction for Teen Participants motivates teens for the activities (Page vi).

A Cover Page for each chapter provides a quotation and description of the sessions. This page may be distributed as an introduction to a workshop or series of sessions.

Seven Chapters, four to ten sessions per chapter, (total of forty-seven) encompass the following:

1. Communication

Body language, personal space, behavioral cues, active listening, conversations, first impressions, communication starters and stoppers, assertiveness and negotiation skills.

2. Expectations

Technology, social networking, mealtime, introductions, first dates, events, travel, condolences, diplomacy, job interviews, work relationships and sportsmanship.

3. Fitting In

Parent/caregiver issues, excessive people pleasing, acceptance of self and others, respectful disagreement, shyness, positive personality traits, newcomers, diversity and multicultural contributions to society.

4. Friendship

Positive peer support, non-aggression, frenemies, influence of words and actions, friendship lyrics, envy and jealousy, and helping a person in crisis.

5. Family

Traditional and non-traditional family styles, changes at home, sibling rivalry, respect for authority without fear or rebellion, and forgiveness.

6. Teen Love

Healthy and unhealthy relationships, parent/caregiver concerns, first love, expression through art and poetry, dating dilemmas, breakups and power principles.

7. Caring

Empathy, social causes, creative fundraisers, ways to help at home, school, community, etc., advocacy in action, leadership as a passion to serve versus self-serving power.

Each chapter may function as a workshop. Provide one session per day or week.

Promote themes through posters and flyers. Emphasize the interactive and collaborative nature of the sessions.

Each of the forty-seven sessions may stand alone. Pick and choose per your population.

Most sessions are adaptable to interactive or individual activities. Most require at least fifty minutes and if necessary can be continued the next session or for homework.

In Each Session

Reproducible handout(s) for participants (games, charades, questions, etc.) Read before session, cut on the broken lines if directed, white out or add text specific to your teens if necessary, and photocopy.

A For the Facilitator page on the back of each teen handout provides the following:

- I. Purpose: Goals for teens.
- II. General Comments: Brief background information.
- III. Possible Activities: Ideas to introduce and present topics. Answer keys or responses to elicit.
- IV. Enrichment Activities: Additional learning opportunities. Ways to close session or follow up.

Sensitive subjects are addressed. Facilitator discretion is advised. Teens need to be reminded that the supreme social skill is to seek help for oneself or a peer in trouble. Facilitators need to refer teens in crisis for a psychiatric evaluation or to emergency services.

Suggestions for Facilitating

Capitalize on the likelihood that peers are of primary importance to teens. Consider the classroom, group room and/or individual space as a learning lab where teens experiment with behaviors.

Expect movement, discussion, laughter and learning from each other.

Teens – Social Skill Strategies sessions simulate life and provide practice for situations that may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable. Teens who are shy in real life may be reluctant to role play; teens who tend toward prejudice may question the value of diversity. The activities are arranged to motivate change.

As a facilitator, your skills will help teens gently move outside their comfort zones.

Emphasize that teens may volunteer to participate (or not).

Encourage teens to gradually test the waters.

(*Example: write, draw, share, be a team member and/or eventually become a leader.*)

Suggest that the higher the level of participation, the greater the benefits.

Promote the value of taking risks in session, risks that they wouldn't take in real life.

(*Example: Start or join an ongoing conversation during a role play.*)

Persuade teens to *Just do it* – but be mindful of your responsibility to others.

(*Example: let lyrics flow without worrying whether they're wonderful.*)

Location matters. Expect team members to sit together, arrange chairs in clusters as needed, for some activities a circle is a friendlier forum than rows; for mock videos or role plays, set up a stage area and audience seating.

For activities that involve social causes, fundraising, leadership, etc., try to promote actual charitable connections and actions; maybe teens can start a service club if feasible in your facility.

Decide the level of interaction or introspection your teens need and can handle; although most sessions promote peer contact, many activities can be done as individual worksheets.

Make the setting safe; ask teens to brainstorm their own ground rules.

Possibilities:

- Use name codes (example – for a friend who likes to boss, use LTB - Likes To Boss).
- Respect people who are reluctant to share.
- Keep private what people say in class or group. *"What's said in this room, stays in this room."*
- Game contestants may ask team members for help as needed.
- There are few right or wrong answers; on paper or in games, state what is true for you.
- Open your mind to consider other views, cultures, lifestyles, etc.
- No put-downs when ideas differ.
- No mocking if someone's behaviors seem awkward.
- Encourage peers to join in activities (as you will learn to include people in real life).
- Listen actively without interrupting the speaker.
- If you or a peer feel like harming self or others, tell a trusted adult.

Remind teens that the group is a segment of society – skills acquired here transfer to the outside.

Our gratitude to the following for their input ~

Annette Damien, MS, PPS and Hanna Lavoie, teenager

And to these professionals who make us look good!

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Editor and Lifelong Teacher – Eileen Regen

Editorial Director – Carlene Sippola

Illustrator – Amy L. Brodsky

Proofreader – Jay Leutenberg

Introduction for Teen Participants

Social networking, friends, family, dating and love – what could be more important?

How do you deal with your own and others' sensitive situations?

How do you handle your own and others' differences?

On a wider scale, what do you care about?

In **Teens – Social Skill Strategies** you and your peers are partners in learning.

You will expand your social comfort zone as you work on many skills:

- 1) Mix, mingle, observe and give feedback to each other.
- 2) Pick up on and portray body language cues.
- 3) Practice ways to make a good first impression.
- 4) Become a better conversationalist (on dates, with friends and your own family, with your friends' or a partner's family, new people, co-workers, teachers, etc.).
- 5) Assert your opinions and settle conflicts.
- 6) Figure out *fitting in* – without bending over backwards, with positive personality traits, overcoming shyness, and by welcoming new and different people and ideas.
- 7) Find friends not *frenemies*. Operate without envy and jealousy.
- 8) Manage family issues and handle authority figures people at home and elsewhere.
- 9) Forgive others and yourself, and learn to apologize.
- 10) Express feelings about romantic love; understand power in relationships and heal from breakups.
- 11) Develop leadership skills and possibly create a club or organization.

Social skill strategy activities are fun!

- Team Activities
- Charades and picture games
- Game shows
- Talk shows
- Tic-Tac-Toe
- Bingo
- Role plays
- Mock videos
- Pantomime and freeze frames
- Match games
- Panels and press conferences
- Poetry, songs and lyrics
- Riddles
- Art

Additionally, you will have other opportunities to think for yourself, share if you wish, and interact.

Major Social Skill

*I've learned that people will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget how you made them feel.*

– Maya Angelou

Teens – Social Skill Strategies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. COMMUNICATION	9
• Body Language “Says” It All.	11
• Congruent Conversation	13
• Space Invaders	15
• Communication Cues	17
• Conversations	19–22
• First Impressions	23
• Starters	25
• Stoppers	27
• Pushover to Assertor	29
• Negotiation Know-How	31
2. EXPECTATIONS	33
• Tic-Tac-Tech	35–38
• Munch Match	39
• Edit Your Intros	41
• Social Savant	43–46
• Consider Consideration	47
• Win at Work	49
• Sportsmanship Pyramid	51
3. FITTING IN	53
• Parent/Caregiver Puzzle	55
• Dr. Fell’s Press Conference	57
• New on the Block	59
• Personality by the Numbers	61–64
• End Exclusion and Embrace Inclusion Acrostic	65
• Pieces of Shy	67
• Corner Shyness	69
• The World’s Mosaic	71

4. FRIENDSHIP	73
• “I’ve Got Your Back” Charades	75
• A Frenemy	77–80
• Found Again	81
• Song Snippets	83
• Color Me Jealous ...or Not	85
• Lifesavers	87
5. FAMILY	89
• Fam-Mobile	91
• Sib-Rival Survival	93–96
• Power Figures	97
• Riddles	99–102
6. TEEN LOVE	103
• First Date	105
• Parent/Caregiver Concerns	107
• Love-U Bingo	109–112
• Pen Your Passion	113
• Dating Dilemmas	115–118
• Freeze	119
• From Ashes	121
7. CARING	123
• Diary of A Mensch	125
• Swappportunity	127
• Care Contract	129
• What’s My Cause?	131–134
• Leadership: Passion or Power?	135

COMMUNICATION 1

You never know when a moment and a few sincere words can have an impact on a life.

~ ZIG ZIGLAR

Body Language “Says” It All page 11 ►

Teens portray and decipher non-verbal messages in a charades-type game.

Teens enhance sensitivity to others’ emotions and learn to monitor the cues they convey.

Congruent Conversation page 13 ►

Teens learn to recognize incongruence between words and facial expression and/or body language. Teens practice substituting truthful but tactful messages.

SPACE INVADERS page 15 ►

Teens recognize and respect spatial distances for different relationships and occasions.

Teens learn to maintain their boundaries regarding intimate and personal space.

Communication Cues page 17 ►

Teens will develop observational and active listening skills.

Teens learn to ask about behavioral signals, feelings, ask for clarification and summarize.

Conversations pages 19–22 ►

Teens practice launching conversations with new people, friends and family and joining an ongoing conversation through role plays. Teens differentiate between questions that stimulate or stifle discussion and learn to refrain from rude interruptions.

First Impressions page 23 ►

Teens enact and observe specific behaviors that lead to favorable or unfavorable first impressions at a simulated party. Teens discuss the accuracy and duration of first impressions.

STARTERS page 25 ►

Teens compose and ask open-ended questions through a Starter-Go-Round game.

Teens differentiate between social and personal topics.

Stoppers page 27 ►

Teens portray annoying social behaviors to highlight what not to do through a role playing guessing game. Teens identify ways to reverse tendencies to monopolize, gossip, be a know-it-all, etc.

Pushover to Assertor page 29 ►

Teens differentiate among passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive and assertive responses through a game show format. Teens identify socially acceptable ways to meet personal and others’ needs and maintain individual rights.

Negotiation Know-How page 31 ►

Teens learn to bargain, compromise and collaborate with parents/caregivers, friends, dating partners and employers or supervisors at volunteer jobs. Teens consider ways to deal with confrontational or competitive types of people.

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Body Language "Says" It All

1. tight-lipped	2. pout with bottom lip out	3. bite lip	4. roll eyes	5. fake smile
6. hand over mouth	7. tilt head to the side	8. head down	9. chin up	10. cross arms in front of chest
11. raise eyebrows, tilt head	12. arms clasped behind head	13. thumbs down	14. hand on heart	15. shifty eyes
16. fingers up, hands facing outward	17. stand, legs a couple feet apart, hands on hips	18. index finger and thumb touch, other fingers up	19. thumbs up	20. pull on ear
21. shrug shoulders	22. hands over ears	23. tap foot	24. yawn	25. slumped over
26. look down	27. fidget with hair	28. glare with eyes	29. hands relaxed on the sides	30. body language doesn't match words

Body Language “Says” It All

FOR THE FACILITATOR

I. Purpose

To identify common non-verbal cues.

II. General Comments

Sensitivity to others’ facial expressions and body language enhances one’s ability to receive messages; awareness of non-verbal cues helps teens monitor impressions they convey.

III. Possible Activities

- a. Before session photocopy the *Body Language “Says” it All* handout and cut on the broken lines.
- b. Place the cutouts face down in a cup.
- c. Before session, coach a volunteer to enter the room and grip his/her own arms.
- d. Volunteer walks in with arms crossed, hands hugging upper arms.
- e. Ask teens to pretend the room temperature is 55 degrees Fahrenheit.
- f. Ask teens what is conveyed (person is cold).
- g. Ask what the body language suggests if the room is 75 degrees Fahrenheit (resistant).
- h. Explain the importance of context in deciphering body language, to look for clusters of behavior (more than one sign) and cultural factors. *Example:* someone who crosses their arms may be cold or they may be resistant, depending on the situation.
- i. Teens alternately go to the front of the room, pick a cutout and portray the action(s).
- j. Peers guess the messages conveyed and share times they experienced the feelings.
- k. Examples of common meanings (cutout numbers correspond to the numbers below):

1. secretive	2. annoyed	3. tense
4. exasperated	5. dislike	6. shock
7. interested	8. embarrassment	9. pride
10. resistant	11. questioning	12. confident
13. disapproval	14. attempt to show truthfulness	15. untrustworthy
16. a signal to stop	17. authoritative	18. <i>okay</i> (in some cultures it is a vulgar sign)
19. approval	20. unsure	21. does not care
22. doesn't want to hear what's being said	23. impatient	24. disinterest
25. defeated	26. lack of self-confidence	27. anxious
28. anger	29. open to talk	30. doesn't mean what person is saying

IV. Enrichment Activity

Encourage teens to share times theirs’ or others’ face and body language revealed true feelings.

Congruent Conversation

You can say one thing but show another with your facial expression and body language.

Example:

Your acquaintance asks you to help him move on Saturday.
You say *Yes* and roll your eyes.

In the situations below place an **S** if the words and actions send the **same** message and a **D** if **different**.

1. _____ Dating partner says *You're the only one I want* and then whistles at a passerby.
2. _____ Teen says *Yes, I'll clean the garage* and then slams down a backpack.
3. _____ Teen promises *won't text and drive* and then puts cell phone in trunk.
4. _____ Friend says *Tell me all about it* and then reads a text message.
5. _____ Teen says *Let me help you* and then carries a person's package.

When you are genuine, your actions won't give you away and will be congruent with your words. Below are examples of ways to diplomatically speak the truth that correspond to the *different* messages above:

1. Dating partner says *I'd like us to date other people.*
2. Teen says *I'd rather clean the garage on the week-end when I'm not tired from school.*
4. Friend says *I'd like to hear about it in fifteen minutes after I've checked my messages.*

By drawing pictures, cartoons, caricatures, or using symbols, speech balloons or thought bubbles, depict and/or describe a situation where your mouth said one thing and your body revealed another.

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Substitute truthful but tactful words for the above mixed message:

Congruent Conversation

FOR THE FACILITATOR

I. Purpose

To recognize incongruence between words and facial expression and/or body language.
To substitute truth and tact for mixed messages.

II. General Comments

People may *tell all* with eye rolls, fixed gazes on cell phone screens, yawns, foot taps, etc.

III. Possible Activities

- a. Before session coach two volunteers to perform the following role play:
 - One asks *This week-end will you help me baby-sit my two-year-old triplet nephews?*
 - The other looks down and shakes head no then looks up and says *“Oh, sure.”*
- b. When session starts, volunteers perform the skit.
- c. Ask the audience peers if the person really wanted to help babysit (no).
- d. Ask how teens knew the person didn’t want to help (shook head *no*).
- e. Write *Congruent* and *Incongruent* on the board; ask their definitions (similar, different).
- f. Explain that words and actions can be congruent or incongruent.
- g. Distribute the *Congruent Conversation* handout; teens read the information aloud.
- h. Direct teens to complete their drawings and/or descriptions of incongruent conversations.
- i. Reinforce that artistic talent is not required and teens need not edit for grammar or spelling.
- j. Encourage teens to share their pictures and/or descriptions. Remind them to use name codes.
- k. Encourage teens to share their truthful but tactful word substitutions.
- l. Ask teens to team up in pairs or trios and role play situations they have witnessed or experienced where words and actions did *not* match.
- m. After each role play, actors and audience identify truthful but tactful responses that would have prevented the incongruent scenarios.

IV. Enrichment Activities

- a. Ask teens to brainstorm times they might need to do something they dislike and monitor their actions instead of changing their words (for social grace or kindness).

Possibilities

- You’re introduced to a person whose hand you don’t want to shake, but the person extends his/her right hand; you shake the person’s hand firmly.
- A lonely neighbor starts a conversation when you’d rather talk on your cell phone; you ignore the phone and focus on the neighbor for a few minutes.
- As you’re told *Stick to the speed limit*, you want to grab the car keys and run; you listen patiently to the advice.
- An elderly relative tells you a story you have heard three times and you want to roll your eyes; you make eye contact and listen.
- A caregiver asks you to get some groceries but you’d rather watch music videos; you smile and say *Okay*.