

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

TRAIN-THE-TRAINER GUIDE

THREE-HOUR HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL WORKSHOP

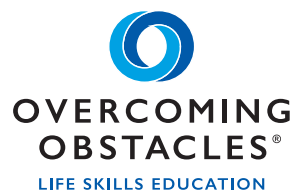


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INTRODUCTION

Community for Education Foundation (CEF) was founded in 1992 to ensure that all young people learn the communication, decision making, and goal setting skills they need to be successful in life. To achieve its mission, CEF developed Overcoming Obstacles which has helped over 230,000 educators from around the world and in all 50 states positively impact the lives of more than 55 million students.

The Train-the-Trainer Guide is designed to help you facilitate an Overcoming Obstacles teacher-training workshop and includes a workshop outline, step-by-step instructions, and activity sheets. Through a teacher-training workshop, educators will gain hands-on experience with the curriculum while learning about its methodology, content, and activity-based lesson format. This comprehensive guide will help you plan and execute an engaging, informative, and objective-based workshop that will equip educators with the training they need to effectively teach the Overcoming Obstacles life skills curriculum.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Min.	Activity	Description	Curriculum Page Numbers	Materials Needed
5	Welcome: What Is Overcoming Obstacles?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants are given the history and an overview of CEF. The purpose and goals of the workshop and a brief synopsis of the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum are presented. Educators discuss how the program can be used to meet the needs of their school and students. 	<i>Program Overview</i> , pages i—v	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copies of the Workshop Questionnaire Sign-in sheet
20	“Building Cooperation”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants compete in teams to build a paper tower and then discuss how they used skills such as communication, decision making, and goal setting to complete the activity. This activity demonstrates the benefits of group work and the importance of cooperation to group success, while allowing participants to use problem solving skills to complete a task. 	<i>Getting Started</i> , pages 11—12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 sheets of newspaper per group 3 feet of masking tape per group Chart paper Markers
20	“A Day in a Life”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants explore the relevance of the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum by analyzing the activities and identifying the life skills that are part of a fictional student’s day. This activity helps participants predict how practicing the life skills in the curriculum will enable students to overcome daily challenges inside and outside the classroom. 	<i>Getting Started</i> , pages 5—6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copies of the “A Day in a Life” activity sheet Copies of the high school Table of Contents
10	“Easy Talk, Tough Talk”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants explore what makes some conversations easy and some more difficult. This activity helps participants realize how difficult conversations often involve strong emotions and learn techniques to handle them more effectively. 	<i>Module One: Communication Skills</i> , pages 106—107	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing paper Pens
5	BREAK			

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Min.	Activity	Description	Curriculum Page Numbers	Materials Needed
5	“Hmm, Let Me Think about That”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants make decisions based on values in order to learn how the choices they make are influenced by what is important to them. • This activity helps participants understand the connections between the decisions they make and their values, and allows them to develop the confidence to share their values with those who might have a different point of view. 	<i>Confidence Building</i> , pages 47—48	
20	“Stepping-Stone Goals”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants identify goals as short-term, medium-range, and long-term, which will help them learn how to set realistic goals and how to use an action plan. • This activity demonstrates to participants the benefits of realizing their goals and shows them that they can achieve their goals by breaking them into smaller goals. 	<i>Module Three: Setting and Achieving Goals</i> , pages 197—199	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of the “On Your Way” activity sheet • Pens
20	“Controlled Debate”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants take part in a controlled debate to practice communicating in a constructive manner even when they disagree. • This activity helps participants realize how effective communication is important in people’s lives. 	<i>Module One: Communication Skills</i> , pages 109—110	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of the “Topics for a Controlled Debate” activity sheet • Activity rules displayed where all participants can see
5	BREAK			
30	“Pass It On”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants take part in a race to pass a penny from one end of a line to the other to learn the importance of using teamwork skills. • This activity will help participants learn the importance of patience and cooperation to teamwork. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 pennies • Supplemental activity from the Activity Sheets section

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Min.	Activity	Description	Curriculum Page Numbers	Materials Needed
20	“Starter/ Positive’s a Plus!”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants define a positive attitude and learn how having one can help them achieve their goals. • This activity helps participants understand how their attitudes can affect their choices as they try to reach a goal. 	<i>Module Three: Setting and Achieving Goals,</i> pages 208—209	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poster paper/ newspaper, old magazines, markers, crayons, scissors, and glue for each group of four participants
10	Q & A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants are invited to ask questions they may have about the workshop or the curriculum. • Participants are reminded that the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum team is available via phone and email to answer questions and assist with implementation planning. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of the Ongoing Support Contact Sheet • Copies of the Frequently Asked Questions

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS

Preparations

1. Allocate time minutes prior to the start of the training to prepare the space that will accommodate the expected number of attendees. This may involve rearranging the space to make it more suitable for team activities.
2. Prepare all of the materials, supplies, handouts, and equipment necessary for the training. Set the materials and handouts in a place where you can easily access them during the training. (To save time during the workshop, you may want to assemble all of the handouts into packets and distribute them to educators as they enter the room, or leave a packet on every seat.)
3. Please note that the full lesson from the curriculum relating to the activities is included in this guide. We encourage you to make copies of the lesson for each participant.
4. Write the bold-faced figures from the “Fast Facts” section of the following page where workshop participants will be able to see them.
5. You might set the tone by preparing a selection of appropriate music to play while educators enter the room and/or during hands-on group activities.
6. Greet workshop participants as they enter and thank them for attending. If you are not working with familiar colleagues, be sure to introduce yourself. The use of name tags is encouraged.

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

Welcome

1. Distribute copies of the Workshop Questionnaire, and pass around the sign-in sheet.
2. Welcome participants to the workshop. Ask participants to decipher the meaning of the numbers on the board. Comment that the numbers have no relevance yet but will give an overview of Overcoming Obstacles and today's workshop.
3. Begin the training by reading the "Fast Facts" below.
 - **3** hours is the length of this workshop, so let's get started! Over the past
 - **26** years, Overcoming Obstacles has helped over 230,000 educators teach more than
 - **55** million students the communication, decision making, and goal setting skills they need to be successful in life. The Overcoming Obstacles life skills curriculum has
 - **500** activities that engage students and teach over
 - **20** important life skills.
 - **[How often Overcoming Obstacles will be taught]**, educators at your school will have
 - **[period length]** to build relationships with over
 - **[number of students in your school being taught Overcoming Obstacles]** students.
 - **212, 406, 7488** are the numbers you need to call the curriculum team you can trust to provide guidance and ongoing support.
4. After you finish your introduction, tell the participants that you will organize them into groups for a teamwork activity. Explain that a large part of the workshop will involve their participation in the same activities they will facilitate. This allows them to become familiar with the lesson materials, and provides them with a model for teaching the curriculum.
5. Before having participants join their teams, share with them how you plan to organize the groups (e.g., by assigning each participant a number according to their seating arrangements). Then, begin facilitating the "Building Cooperation" activity.

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

Activity #1: “Building Cooperation”

1. Distribute the newspapers, masking tape, chart paper, and markers to each group.
2. Refer to pages 11-12 of the *Getting Started* module for instructions on facilitating this activity.
3. Debrief the activity:
 - Ask for volunteers to recall the three skills mentioned in the Overcoming Obstacles mission statement. If participants do not recall it, please state it again: to ensure that all young people learn the communication, decision making, and goal setting skills they need to be successful in life.
 - Now, ask the participants to share examples of how they or their teammates used the skills of communication, decision making, and goal setting during the “Building Cooperation” activity.
 - After you have called on several participants, explain that communication, decision making, and goal setting are the core skills of the Overcoming Obstacles program. The modules pertaining to these skills appear early in the curriculum so that students have a strong foundation for further life skills development.
4. Inform participants that in the next activity they will learn about the other skills taught in the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum. Then, begin facilitating the “A Day in a Life” activity.

Activity #2: “A Day in a Life”

1. Distribute copies of the “A Day in a Life” activity sheet and the high school curriculum’s table of contents.
2. Refer to pages 5-6 of the *Getting Started* module for instructions on facilitating this activity.
3. Debrief the activity:
 - Explain that when students learn more about themselves and how to plan their futures, they will take a more active role in their education. Engaging students in activities that link their work in school to the world outside of the classroom helps

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

students see that education is relevant to their lives. “A Day in a Life” illustrates the life skills that students use every day inside and outside of school.

- Ask participants if they have any questions about the curriculum after reviewing the table of contents.
4. Tell participants that in the next activity they will explore what makes some conversations easy and some more difficult. Then, begin facilitating the “Easy Talk, Tough Talk” activity.

Activity #3: “Easy Talk, Tough Talk”

1. Distribute paper and pens to participants.
2. Refer to pages 106-107 of *Module One: Communication Skills* for instructions on facilitating this activity.
3. Debrief the activity:
 - Explain that an awareness of both parties’ emotions in a conversation can help make communication easier and more effective.
 - Ask participants to share how their classroom environments will benefit from more effective communication between students.
4. Thank the educators for the work they have completed so far, and then dismiss them for a five-minute break.

Break

1. Collect the sign-in sheet.
2. Welcome the participants back to the workshop, and allow them a few moments to settle in. Then, begin facilitating the “Hmm, Let Me Think about That” activity.

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

Activity #4: “Hmm, Let Me Think about That”

1. Refer to pages 47-48 of the *Confidence Building* module for instructions on facilitating this activity.
2. Debrief the activity:
 - Explain that values are a huge influence on every individual’s decision making and goal setting, and that students become more engaged when they connect what they learn in school to their own lives.
 - Emphasize that recognizing what matters most to a person demonstrates that you have respect for him/her, and the better an educator knows his/her students—their values, dislikes, learning styles, and what makes them unique—the stronger the students’ learning experiences will be.
3. Tell the participants that the next activity will help them understand each of their students’ goals and how their personalities and values influence the decisions they make when pursuing a goal. Then, begin facilitating the “Stepping-Stone Goals” activity.

Activity #5: “Stepping-Stone Goals”

1. Distribute copies of the “On Your Way” activity sheet.
2. Refer to pages 197-199 of *Module Three: Setting and Achieving Goals* for instructions on facilitating this activity.
3. Debrief the activity:
 - Call on several participants to share their goals and the steps they identified for achieving them.
 - Ask participants to discuss the importance of stepping-stone goals for their students. Also, encourage them to discuss what some of their students’ long-term goals might be.
 - Explain that this activity not only helps students create a plan for accomplishing their goals but also helps teachers identify ways they can be most supportive to their students’ aspirations.

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

4. Tell the participants that the next activity will help them teach their students how to express and listen to opinions in a constructive manner, even if they disagree, by engaging them in a controlled debate. Then, begin facilitating the “Controlled Debate” activity.

Activity #6: “Controlled Debate”

1. Distribute copies of the “Topics for a Controlled Debate” activity sheet and write the activity rules in the front of the workshop space.
2. Refer to pages 109-110 of *Module One: Communication Skills* for instructions on facilitating this activity.
3. Debrief the activity:
 - Call on volunteers to identify some techniques of effective verbal communication.
 - Ask participants to describe how their students will benefit from communicating in a constructive manner during disagreements.
 - Remind the educators that, as with other Overcoming Obstacles activities, the lesson can be modified to meet the needs of their students. Ask for several volunteers to share their thoughts on how they would do this.
4. Thank the educators again for the work they have completed so far, and then dismiss them for a five-minute break.

Break

1. Welcome the participants back to the workshop, and allow them a few moments to settle in.
2. Tell the participants that you will now facilitate a team activity that is available as an additional resource to the curriculum. The purpose of the activity is to help students understand the importance of patience and communication when working as part of a team. Organize participants into two groups. Then, begin facilitating the “Pass It On” activity.

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

Activity #7: “Pass It On”

1. Refer to the “Pass It On” sheet located in your *Train-the-Trainer Guide* for instructions on facilitating this activity. Demonstrate the penny-passing technique before beginning the race to make sure that the process is clear.
2. Debrief the activity:
 - Ask both groups to identify what factors helped them perform the task and what factors made the task difficult.
 - Call on several volunteers to share how this activity will help their students develop stronger teamwork skills.
 - Ask the participants to identify how they would use this activity with their students and if there are any modifications they might make. Call on several volunteers to share their responses.
3. Tell participants that the next activity will help students express themselves as individuals. Then, begin facilitating the “Starter/Positive’s a Plus” activity.

Activity #8: “Starter/Positive’s a Plus”

1. Distribute all of the necessary materials to each group.
2. Refer to pages 208-209 of *Module Three: Setting and Achieving Goals* for instructions on facilitating this activity.
3. Debrief the activity:
 - Discuss the power of positive thinking.
 - Ask participants to share how having a positive attitude can help them achieve their goals. How can they help their students understand that thinking positively affects one’s behavior?
4. Tell participants that the workshop is almost finished. Thank them for their time and let them know that they will now be able to ask questions regarding the workshop and/or curriculum.

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

Q & A

1. Distribute copies of the “Frequently Asked Questions” sheet.
2. When facilitating the Q & A session, keep these considerations in mind:
 - Address all of the participants’ questions and comments, and provide them with the most informed responses possible.
 - Do not be afraid to allow participants an opportunity to express concerns in a constructive way.
 - If a participant asks a question you cannot answer, be straightforward and let him or her know that you will provide the correct answer as soon as possible.
 - If appropriate, provide participants with your contact information so that you may support them throughout their implementation of the Overcoming Obstacles program.
3. Explain that, in addition to the materials in the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum, more resources are available by visiting www.overcomingobstacles.org.

LESSON SAMPLES

LESSON

2

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

A G E N D A

- Starter
- What You Put In Is What You Get Out
- Building Cooperation
- Overcoming Obstacles Bill of Rights
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

Objectives

Students will recognize that their active participation is critical to their getting the most from the Overcoming Obstacles course.

Students will identify the challenges and benefits of working with other students in a group.

Students will recognize the need to cooperate with and respect other class members as they master life skills together.

Students will identify a set of rights that promote cooperation and respect in the Overcoming Obstacles classroom.

Materials Needed

- 15 sheets of newspaper for each group (Part II)
- About three feet of masking tape for each group (Part II)
- One copy of the “Bill of Rights” activity sheet (#3) for each student (Part III)
- Chart paper and a marker (Part III)

Starter (2 minutes)

Ask students if they have ever seen a preview for a movie that seemed interesting. Ask whether they went to see the movie when it opened. If so, find out if the movie was better than they thought it would be. Was it worse? Did it meet their expectations?

Tell students that this lesson is about setting expectations, and that they will discuss as a class what to expect from the lessons, from the teacher, and from one another.

Part I What You Put In Is What You Get Out (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify what they expect from the Overcoming Obstacles course and why their active participation is required to meet those expectations.

1. STUDENTS IDENTIFY THEIR EXPECTATIONS FOR THIS CLASS.

Remind students that the previous lesson provided an overview of what they'll be learning in the Overcoming Obstacles course. Ask students to write down their expectations. Offer examples such as the following:

- I'll learn to make better decisions.
- I'll learn how to use my time more efficiently.

2. STUDENTS DISCUSS HOW THEY WILL ACQUIRE LIFE SKILLS.

Remind students of the discussion in the previous lesson about the best way to learn a song for a concert. Ask students to recall their conclusions about the best way to develop new skills. (*Students should mention that it's best to learn by doing and practicing.*)

Ask students to review their expectations and to consider how well they'll meet those expectations if they don't practice the skills. Ask students how well they will succeed if they only sit in their seats and listen to you talk and watch others develop these life skills. Encourage discussion.

Conclude by emphasizing that Overcoming Obstacles is a course about life. Explain that you will help every student relate the skills and activities to his or her own life, but it's ultimately up to each student to practice the skills in order to master them.

Part II Building Cooperation (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students demonstrate the benefits of group work and the importance of cooperation to group success.

1. STUDENTS IDENTIFY THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING HOW TO WORK WITH OTHERS.

Ask, “Why is it important for you to be able to work as part of a group?” Point out to students that as young people now and later as adults, they will often be required to work in groups or teams. Explain to students that group activities will be a frequently occurring format in the Overcoming Obstacles course, and that the course will teach them skills that will enable them to function well as part of a team. Tell students that you expect them to work cooperatively.

2. STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN A COOPERATIVE GROUP ACTIVITY.

Divide the class into groups of four or five students. Have students arrange their desks to create an open work space for each group. Distribute 15 sheets of newspaper and three feet of masking tape to each group.

Give the groups the following directions:

- Please don’t start until I tell you to do so.
- Using only the materials I gave out, you will have 10 minutes to build the highest freestanding tower you can.
- The tower cannot be taped to the desks or to the floor. It must stand on its own.

Answer any questions students may have, then instruct them to begin. Circulate the room, observing group interactions and noting conversations and comments. Watch for evidence of both cooperation and dissension.

3. STUDENTS REFLECT ON THE EXPERIENCE.

When 10 minutes have passed, check students’ results and involve all groups in a discussion of the experience. Ask the groups to describe how they built their tower, and why they think they were or weren’t successful. Share your observations, and encourage students to elaborate on what took place. Ask for examples of how all team members contributed. Allow students to discuss, in respectful terms, any tensions that developed.

Give each group two to three minutes to summarize what they learned from the experience. Offer questions such as the following for guidance:

- What is easy about working with others?
- What is difficult?
- Why is cooperation necessary?
- What will your group do differently the next time you work together?

Ask the groups to share their summaries. Have them describe what it is like to work as a team and how to improve cooperation in the future. Record their responses on the board.

Part III Overcoming Obstacles Bill of Rights (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students work together to establish guidelines and expectations for the class.

1. STUDENTS RECALL THEIR EXPECTATIONS FOR THE CLASS.

Point out that so far, students have stated their expectations for the course, and you have stated your expectation of how students will work together cooperatively in groups. Explain that students also have a right to expect certain treatment and behavior from fellow students in this class.

2. STUDENTS DISCUSS THE PURPOSE OF RULES.

Ask students to name some school rules and to suggest reasons why these rules are in place. Affirm that rules are designed not just to stop negative behavior, but to protect the rights of those who behave appropriately.

3. STUDENTS CREATE A CLASSROOM BILL OF RIGHTS.

Have students identify the document that guarantees individual rights in the United States. (*Students should mention the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the Constitution.*)

Distribute copies of the “Bill of Rights” activity sheet (#3). Have students review the document and describe its characteristics. Record student responses on the board. Guide students to focus on the document’s language, format, and structure, as well as on its content. (*Students might respond: the date and place are written at the top of the document, the first sentence tells why Americans need the document, the language is formal.*)

Divide students into pairs. Have them create a bill of rights for this class that’s patterned after this important document. Remind them that their bill of rights should protect the right of every class member to be treated with respect, to voice different opinions, to expect confidentiality when sharing personal experiences, and to be considered a valued member of the group. Guide the class in coming to an agreement on 10 basic rights. Record them on chart paper.

When the list is complete, have students come forward to sign the document. Post the bill of rights on a bulletin board for the duration of the course. Remind students that this document will be referred to frequently in this class. It provides a statement of mutual understandings about respectful behavior that will be expected from all members of the class.

Conclusion (*3 minutes*)

Ask students to explain the relationship between participating in class and learning. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Each student is responsible for giving the most to and getting the most from the content taught in this course.
- Students will work together in groups in this course, so they must know how to cooperate with others.
- The bill of rights will remind students of how they expect to be treated and how others expect to be treated by them.

Questions for Assessment

1. List three advantages and three disadvantages of working with others in a group.
2. List five examples of times when people must work together in a group or as a team.
3. What skills are necessary for people to work well together?

LESSON 1

WHAT IS OVERCOMING OBSTACLES?

A G E N D A

- Starter
- Identifying Obstacles
- A Day in a Life
- A Day in My Life
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

Objectives

Students will identify the specific skills they will learn and practice through the Overcoming Obstacles course.

Students will recognize how they will apply these skills to their everyday lives.

Materials Needed

- One copy of the “Table of Contents” activity sheet (#1) for each student (Parts I–III)
- One copy of the “A Day in a Life” activity sheet (#2) for each student (Parts II and III)
- Slips of paper with job titles students might hold in the future (Part III)
- A hat (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Invite students to make a list of activities they enjoy doing that require practice to do well (e.g., playing a sport or musical instrument, ballet, tap dancing). Read the following scenario out loud:

At band practice, your teacher only talks about the song you're learning, but does so without explaining what he is doing. You're expected to learn by listening and watching. You never play an instrument until the day of the first concert.

Ask students to comment on the effectiveness of this method of learning. Ask students how well they think they'd do when asked to perform without practicing first. (*Students might respond: although you might learn some fundamentals, you can't learn just by watching; you need to practice to improve your technique; you need to know where your skills are weak so you know what to work on.*)

Point out that for many of the most important skills we need in life, we don't always get sufficient practice before we're expected to demonstrate them. Often, they are skills we learn by watching others, which students have determined is not the best way to learn. Invite the class to suggest what some of these life skills might be. If students are unsure, explain that this lesson will help them identify these skills and how they apply to students' lives now and in the future.

Explain to students that the Overcoming Obstacles course will give them an opportunity to learn and to practice skills they need to succeed in school, at home, in their communities, and on the job.

Part I Identifying Obstacles (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students analyze the program title "Overcoming Obstacles" by identifying common obstacles in daily life.

1. STUDENTS DEFINE "OBSTACLE" AND EXPLORE OPTIONS FOR DEALING WITH OBSTACLES.

Write "obstacle" on the board. Ask students to define the word. Relate the word to concrete experiences. Ask students to visualize a time when they were driving, hiking, or riding a bike and came upon something that was an obstacle to continuing on their way. Ask, "What did you do about the obstacle?" Invite students to share their experiences and solutions, such as moving the object, going around it, or finding an alternative route to reach their destination.

Explain to students that while they are likely to encounter such physical obstacles, they are just as likely to experience many "life obstacles," some of which can be very damaging. Brainstorm with students examples of these life obstacles, such as emotional roadblocks that they encounter in their

relationships with friends and family members. For example, have students identify an obstacle that may occur between friends that must be overcome for the friendship to continue. Record their responses on the board.

2. STUDENTS REVIEW THE TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR THE OVERCOMING OBSTACLES CURRICULUM AND DEFINE “LIFE SKILLS.”

Distribute copies of the “Table of Contents” activity sheet (#1) to students, and have them review it. Explain to students that the table of contents lists skills that they will be developing and practicing in this class. Encourage students to comment on what is covered in the curriculum and why these topics are called life skills. Have students define the phrase “life skills.”

3. STUDENTS ANTICIPATE THE BENEFITS OF THE OVERCOMING OBSTACLES COURSE.

Ask students to consider why this course is called Overcoming Obstacles. Refer students to the list of obstacles they’ve identified on the board. Invite volunteers to suggest ways that the particular skills they’ll be learning can help them find ways around life’s obstacles, just as they’d find a way around a fallen tree or a concrete barrier in their path.

Part II A Day in a Life (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students explore the relevance of the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum by analyzing the activities and life skills that are part of a fictional student’s day.

1. STUDENTS REVIEW A FICTIONAL STUDENT’S DAY.

Have students work in pairs. Give each student a copy of the “A Day in a Life” activity sheet (#2). Review the sheet with students to be sure they understand that it is the schedule for a fictional student, Camilla Juarez. Tell students that they will also need the “Table of Contents” activity sheet (#1).

Explain that most of our daily activities are a series of actions and decisions. Waking up in the morning, for example, requires deciding what hour to get up in order to get to school or a job on time and remembering to set the alarm the night before.

2. STUDENTS ANALYZE WHICH LIFE SKILLS ARE USED BY A FICTIONAL CHARACTER.

Ask students to analyze Camilla’s day. Next to each activity, they should list skills from the “Table of Contents” activity sheet that are relevant to that activity. If students are unsure about the specific content of some lessons, have them make their best guess. Suggest that they focus on the skills that may result in more positive outcomes for Camilla.

Ask students to share the specific skills they listed for each of Camilla’s activities. Encourage discussion about the kinds of obstacles Camilla is facing on this

particular day. Have them predict how practicing the skills that Overcoming Obstacles offers could help Camilla overcome her challenges and obstacles.

Part III A Day in My Life (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students explore the relevance of the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum by analyzing how the skills it offers are useful in their own lives.

1. STUDENTS RECOGNIZE HOW THE LIFE SKILLS THEY WILL LEARN THROUGH OVERCOMING OBSTACLES APPLY TO THEIR DAILY ACTIVITIES.

Have students repeat the previous activity, this time working alone and substituting activities in their own lives for Camilla's. Have students list on a sheet of paper 10 activities in their daily schedule. They may include some of the same activities from the "A Day in a Life" activity sheet (#2), but should also include at least two specific issues that they are dealing with at this time (e.g., getting a better grade on the next math test).

Ask students to jot down notes for each activity identifying the skills from the "Table of Contents" activity sheet that they would use to successfully complete it. Have them comment on how applying the skills they will develop through the Overcoming Obstacles course will help them to become more successful.

Invite students to share examples of ways in which the skills they will learn through Overcoming Obstacles apply to their own lives. Suggest that students save their notes and responses to this activity. As they progress through the curriculum, they can return to their notes from this discussion to check how their mastery of the life skills they are learning is deepening.

2. STUDENTS IDENTIFY SKILLS THAT WILL PREPARE THEM FOR POTENTIAL OBSTACLES THAT MAY ARISE ON THE JOB.

Give the class one minute to arrange themselves into small groups of three to five students. Place the slips of paper with the job titles in a hat. Pass the hat around, and have each student draw one slip.

Have students work in their groups to identify the jobs they have drawn, name obstacles they might face in those jobs, and identify life skills they will develop in this class that could help them overcome those obstacles. Encourage students to help each other identify obstacles and relevant life skills.

Conclusion (*2 minutes*)

Ask students to name some of the skills they will learn in this course. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- The Overcoming Obstacles course is about the life skills that are relevant to success at home, at school, with peers, and on the job.
- The Overcoming Obstacles course allows students to learn and practice these skills, helping them to overcome obstacles in their daily lives.
- The Overcoming Obstacles curriculum is relevant to students' lives now and in the future as adults.

Questions for Assessment

1. Describe an obstacle you have faced in your life. What skills helped you overcome this obstacle?
2. What skills would you most like to learn in this course?

COMMUNICATING CONSTRUCTIVELY

A G E N D A

- Starter
- Easy Talk, Tough Talk
- I-Messages
- Controlled Debate
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

Objectives

Students will explore what makes some conversations easy and others difficult.

Students will develop techniques to communicate their feelings and encourage open dialogue in difficult situations.

Students will practice communicating in a constructive manner, even when they disagree.

Materials Needed

- One copy of the “I-Messages” activity sheet (#8) and one copy of the “Vocabulary of Feelings” activity sheet (#9) for each student (Part II)
- One copy of the “Topics for a Controlled Debate” activity sheet (#10) (Part III)
- Activity rules written on the board, a transparency, or a piece of poster paper (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Write the following list on the board or on an overhead transparency: talking on the telephone, joking with friends, conversing with an adult, quarreling with a sibling, asking to borrow money, discussing a homework assignment. Ask students what all of these conversations have in common. (*All require verbal communication.*)

On a scale of one to five, with five being extremely important and one being not important at all, ask students to rank the importance of verbal communication in their daily lives. (*Most students will rank communication high.*)

Ask for a show of hands to check the students' rankings from one to five. Write their rankings on the board or on an overhead transparency.

Explain that verbal communication is very important. Ask whether students believe that some types of verbal communication are more difficult than others. Explain that this lesson will help them make difficult conversations easier and more effective.

Part I Easy Talk, Tough Talk (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students explore what makes some conversations easy while others are more difficult.

1. STUDENTS CLASSIFY CONVERSATIONS AS EASY, AVERAGE, OR DIFFICULT.

Instruct students to take out a piece of paper and fold it into three columns. Have them title the left column "Easy," the middle column "Average," and the right column "Difficult."

Explain that this activity will have them classify different conversations according to their difficulty. Ask them to list, for example, a conversation with a close friend about what to wear to a party (*easy*), a telephone conversation to schedule a dentist appointment (*average*), and a request to a boss for a raise (*difficult*).

Divide the class into pairs. Tell students that they have three minutes to list as many examples of verbal communication in each column as they can think of. Tell them that their goal is to have at least three examples in each column. If needed, prompt students by asking questions such as the following:

- Think about conversations you have had with your parents. Are some more comfortable than others?
- How would you rank conversations with members of the opposite sex?
- Where would you rank confrontations with peers?
- How do you feel about conversations with teachers?

While students are writing, draw the three columns on the board or on an overhead transparency.

When the three minutes are up, ask volunteers to fill in the columns on the

board. Discuss which conversations are easy, which are average, and which are difficult.

2. STUDENTS ANALYZE WHAT MAKES SOME CONVERSATIONS EASY AND OTHERS DIFFICULT.

Ask students to form groups of four to five. Have each group select a note taker/reporter. Tell the groups that their task is to determine what makes certain conversations easy and others difficult. Allow about three minutes for the discussion.

3. STUDENTS RECOGNIZE THAT DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS OFTEN INVOLVE STRONG EMOTIONS.

Call on each group to share its analysis with the rest of the class. Write important points on the board or on an overhead transparency. Reinforce observations that difficult conversations often involve conflict. They may arouse emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, insecurity, and hurt feelings, while easy conversations tend to evoke more positive emotions. There may also be some risk in a difficult conversation, like the possibility of rejection.

Explain that an awareness of each party's emotions can help make a difficult conversation easier.

Part II I-Messages (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students use an activity sheet to develop techniques to communicate their feelings and encourage open dialogue in difficult situations.

1. STUDENTS LEARN THE PURPOSE OF AN I-MESSAGE.

Say, "An I-Message is a technique you can use to express yourself when you are upset or angry that will lead to open discussion and will not escalate conflict. When you use an I-Message, people are more willing to listen to you and respond to your requests without becoming defensive. I-Messages encourage discussion and help reduce friction."

Explain how an I-Message works:

- Tell students that an I-Message begins with a statement of feelings (e.g., "I feel afraid, tense, worried...").
- It is followed by a statement of what the problem is (e.g., "...when you don't take out the garbage, when you are late picking me up, when you skip class...").
- An I-Message ends with your reasons for feeling the way you do. It tells how the observed behavior affects you, and it avoids using the word "you."

Provide students with a sample I-Message. Say, "I feel tense when you ditch English class because I can't ignore your absences, and attending English class is a requirement for graduation."

2. STUDENTS CREATE THEIR OWN I-MESSAGES.

Distribute the “I-Messages” activity sheet (#8) and the “Vocabulary of Feelings” activity sheet (#9) to students.

Tell students that they are going to write their own I-Messages. Explain the proper format for filling out the “I-Messages” activity sheet:

- Line 1: By beginning with “I feel...” students explain their feelings and do not accuse the other person. Though students may feel mad or angry, they should not use “mad,” “angry,” or other aggressive or accusatory words on this line because such words do not encourage dialogue. Students should use the “Vocabulary of Feelings” activity sheet to find words other than “mad” or “angry” to describe how they feel. Remind them to avoid using the word “you.”
- Line 2: This line should be a description of what the other person does that upsets the student. It should describe the other person’s specific action, but not label or accuse the person. For example, students should write “when you don’t return my things” (describes the action). Students should not write “when you are inconsiderate” (broadly labels the person). Lead students to the understanding that when a person acts in a way that seems inconsiderate, it is the specific behavior that is causing the negative feeling; that person is not always inconsiderate.
- Line 3: This line should explain in detail why the student is feeling how he or she is feeling. For example, a student might write “because they are important to me.” This line explains the importance of the action or behavior to the other person.

Instruct students to fill out the remaining I-Messages on their activity sheets.

3. STUDENTS DISCUSS THEIR I-MESSAGES.

When students have completed the activity sheet, ask them to share their I-Messages with the class.

Discuss the value of I-Messages by asking the following questions:

- Why are I-Messages a valuable tool for communication?
- When could you use an I-Message?

Remind students that when their sentences begin with “I,” they are not accusing the other person, and the other person will not become defensive. I-Messages allow students to express how they feel, encourage open discussion, and can help resolve a conflict quickly and easily.

You may wish to tell students that using I-Messages is an important skill that requires practice. It takes a while to get used to wording feelings this way. It is important to understand the technique and practice using it. Over time, using I-Messages will become natural.

Part III Controlled Debate (25 minutes)

Purpose: Students participate in a controlled debate to practice communicating in a constructive manner, even when they disagree.

1. STUDENTS PREPARE THE CLASSROOM FOR THE ACTIVITY.

Have students arrange all of the classroom chairs in two rows that face each other. Students will be moving back and forth between the rows, so make sure that there are no obstacles to block them.

2. STUDENTS CHOOSE THE TOPIC FOR THE CONTROLLED DEBATE.

The debate topic can be an issue discussed in class, or you can choose another topic of interest to students. Consider presenting students with a choice from among four controversial topics that are relevant to their lives, using the “Topics for a Controlled Debate” activity sheet (#10).

Write each topic as a statement on the board or on an overhead transparency. To the right of the statements, create two columns labeled “Agree” and “Disagree.” Record the number of students who agree and disagree with each statement. The best topic for the debate is the topic that has the most even split between those who agree and those who disagree.

3. STUDENTS PREPARE FOR THE DEBATE.

Have all students who agree with the statement sit in one row of chairs and all students who disagree sit in the other row.

Refer students to the rules of the debate that you have previously written on the board, an overhead transparency, or poster paper:

- Only one person may speak at a time.
- Speakers from the two sides will alternate.
- To make a point, raise your hand.
- Do not raise your hand until the person who is speaking is finished.
- If someone on the opposing team makes a point you agree with, get out of your seat and move to the other row. This does not mean that you have changed your mind about the debate topic; it means that you agree with that one point.
- Move back to your original side when someone on your team makes a point with which you agree.

4. STUDENTS ENGAGE IN THE CONTROLLED DEBATE.

Begin the debate by flipping a coin to determine which team begins. Remind students to use the techniques of effective verbal communication (including active listening) that they have learned.

Explain that the debate will last 10 minutes.

The following are some suggestions for facilitating this activity:

- It is important that you act only as a referee and avoid offering your opinion.
- If students stray from the topic, help them bring the discussion back to the debate.
- Enforce the rules, allowing only one student to talk at a time, calling only on students who wait until others finish talking before raising their hands, and encouraging students to change sides when strong points are made by the opposing team.
- Remind students that agreeing with a specific point (and therefore changing sides) does not mean that the student has completely changed his or her mind on the topic. It signifies that he or she is able to see the merit of a point made by the opposing side.
- Ensure that students remain respectful of each other's opinions.

Keep the class apprised of the time remaining in the debate.

5. STUDENTS DISCUSS THE DEBATE EXPERIENCE.

When 10 minutes have passed, have students remain in the rows, and ask them the following questions:

- How was this debate different from disagreements you have in everyday life?
- What was difficult about this activity?
- How did you feel when you wanted to say something but couldn't? How about when you wanted to raise your hand, but someone else was speaking?
- Did you resist switching sides? Why? Did you have all of the information on this topic before the debate? Have any of the points you heard caused you to take a closer look at the issue? Which points did you find most effective?
- How well did you and others use techniques for good listening and good communication?
- What can you apply to "real life" from this debate?

Conclusion (3 minutes)

Have students discuss recent situations that could have been improved through the use of I-Messages. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Effective communication is important in people's lives.
- An awareness of both parties' emotions in a conversation can help make communication more effective.
- An I-Message is a technique that helps people to communicate when they are upset or angry, without escalating conflict.

Questions for Assessment

1. Why are some conversations more difficult than others?
2. Write three angry or accusatory statements, and then rewrite them as I-Messages.
3. List three reasons why I-Messages are often a more effective communication tool than angry or accusatory statements.

LESSON
ESTABLISHING
WHAT'S IMPORTANT **3**

A G E N D A

- Starter
- The Top 10
- Hmm, Let Me Think About That
- “To Thine Own Self Be True”
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

Objectives

Students will examine and determine their personal values.

Students will make decisions based on their values.

Students will practice resisting pressure to make decisions that are not in line with their personal values.

Materials Needed

- One copy of the “Top 10” activity sheet (#3) for each student (Part I)

Starter (3 minutes)

Ask students to identify who George Lucas is. (He is the writer and director who created *Star Wars*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and the sequels to those movies. He is also the owner of Industrial Light and Magic, a computer technology company that creates the special effects for movies like *Iron Man* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*.)

Tell students that Lucas was quoted as saying, “I used to think there was nothing more important in the world than making movies, but there is...raising children is more important.”

From his blockbuster films, we know that George Lucas is an accomplished filmmaker who has invested a great deal of effort in his career. However, it is reported that he also made a decision to take a 16-year break to raise his children as a single father. Point out that this decision would indicate that George Lucas values his family. Explain to students that although most people cannot afford to leave their jobs in order to raise their children as George Lucas did, everyone makes choices about their lifestyle, their values, and the priorities in their lives. This is how we establish what is most important to us.

Part I The Top 10 (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students examine and determine their personal values.

1. STUDENTS IDENTIFY THE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO THEM.

Distribute a copy of the “Top 10” activity sheet (#3) to each student. Explain that these top 10 lists are meant to help them discover who and what is important to them. Direct students to think about what they really feel before they start writing. Tell students to list their top 10 choices for each category.

Allow students 10 minutes to complete the activity sheet.

2. STUDENTS EXAMINE THEIR CHOICES AND DRAW CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THEIR PERSONAL VALUES.

When students have completed the activity sheet, ask the following questions:

- Look at your top 10 list of people. Are they mostly friends or family? Are they people that you’ve known for a long time? Are they people you know well or admire from a distance? What qualities of character, if any, do these people share?
- Look at your top 10 list of things you like to do. Are they things you do with others or alone? Do you mostly use your body, your mind, or both to do them? Can you do them near your home, or must you travel? Do they cost a lot of money, or are they free?
- Look at your top 10 list of places. Are they near or far? Do you like to go

there alone or with other people? Are they all real or are some imaginary? Do they cost a lot of money, or are they free?

- Look at your top 10 list of things you'd like to own. What did you write down? How do these things reflect your values? If, for example, your list is filled with clothes, does this mean that you value looking good?
- Look at your top 10 list of rules to live by. What qualities of character do these rules reflect (e.g., honesty, loyalty, perseverance)?
- Look at your top 10 list of dreams for the future. What did you write? Are these dreams important to you? How will you feel when you accomplish these dreams?

Guide students to conclude that the people, places, and things that are important to us and the rules we live by reflect who we are and what we value. We all have things that we value, and those values affect every choice we make.

Part II Hmm, Let Me Think About That (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students make decisions based on their values.

1. STUDENTS PREPARE FOR THE ACTIVITY.

Explain that you will be presenting students with a series of choices. Students will make a choice and either stand up or remain seated, depending on where you point. Demonstrate how this will work by saying: "For example, I will ask if you would rather have X (point up, meaning stand up) or Y (point down, meaning remain seated)."

2. STUDENTS MAKE SOME CHOICES.

Ask a series of questions like the following, beginning with simple choices and moving to more difficult ones:

- Would you rather dress up or dress down?
- Would you rather be on stage or in the audience?
- Would you rather be an athlete or an artist?
- Would you rather have dinner at home with your family, or go to a fast-food restaurant with friends?
- Would you rather take a long walk by yourself, or be with friends?
- Would you rather be healthy but poor, or sick but very rich?

3. STUDENTS REFLECT ON THE CHOICES THEY MADE.

Ask students if they thought the choices became more difficult toward the end. Encourage them to explain why and tell how they finally made a decision. Explain that the decisions and choices we make are influenced by what is important to us, or what we value. Point out that everyone made

different choices, and that there are as many different sets of values as there are people.

Part III “To Thine Own Self Be True” (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students practice resisting pressure to make decisions that are not compatible with their personal values.

1. STUDENTS PERFORM ROLE PLAYS.

Share the following quote from William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: “To thine own self be true.” Discuss the meaning of this quote. Explain that once we know what’s important to us, we must live by those values, even in the face of pressure.

Divide the class into three groups. Have each group brainstorm one of the following scenarios and act it out for the class:

- You’re at a party with a popular crowd, and someone you like and want to impress is encouraging you to do drugs. What do you do?
- Someone you like has the answers to your midterm exam and is passing them around. You’ve been worried about passing this course—it’s a tough one. There’s little chance of getting caught because almost everyone who’s been approached has taken the answers, so they’re not likely to snitch. What do you do?
- You notice that your friends like to taunt the less-popular students at school. They want you to join in, and they tease you when you don’t. What do you do?

Discuss the difficulty of maintaining your values in the face of pressure to change them. Remind students that self-respect, as well as the respect of others, is strongly tied to our values. Ask students if they think that self-respect is more important than having the respect of others. Point out that self-respect is defined by a person’s own value system, while the respect of others is defined by their value systems. Since another person’s value system may be different from their own, remind students again of the quote, “To thine own self be true.”

2. STUDENTS APPLY WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED.

Have students write a paragraph describing a time when their values conflicted with the values of someone close to them. Ask volunteers to read their paragraphs out loud. Have the rest of the class suggest resolutions to the conflicts.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to name the one thing that is of paramount importance to them. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- The things you value influence everything you do.
- Decide what things you value and make choices based on them.
- Stay true to your beliefs in your actions. Make decisions that are aligned with the rules that you live by.

Questions for Assessment

1. List three values that are important to you. Explain how these values influence your actions.
2. Explain what is meant by the saying "To thine own self be true."
3. On whose values is self-respect based? What about the respect of others?

IDENTIFYING GOALS

A G E N D A

- Starter
- Why Goals?
- Can I Do It?
- Stepping-Stone Goals
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

Objectives

Students will identify the importance of having goals.

Students will recognize that there are realistic and unrealistic goals.

Students will identify goals as short term, medium range, and long term.

Materials Needed

- A dictionary (Part I)
- One copy of the “My Goals” activity sheet (#1) for each student (Parts I and III)
- One copy of the “On Your Way” activity sheet (#2) for each student (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Divide the class into four groups. Tell students that each group will make a certain noise. The members of the first group will rub their hands together. People in the second group will snap their fingers continuously. Students in the third group will hit their thighs with their hands. Members of the fourth group will stomp their feet. On the count of three, have students begin making the noises until you say stop.

After about 30 seconds, stop the game and ask what the purpose of that exercise was. Ask, “Did we accomplish anything during this activity? Did we have a goal?”

Students should respond negatively to these questions. Point out that they made an effort, but didn’t accomplish anything. Explain to students that having a goal can help ensure that they accomplish what is important to them.

Tell students that in the next few lessons, they will be discussing goals and the ways in which goals can help them succeed in life.

Part I Why Goals? (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify the importance of having goals.

1. STUDENTS DEFINE “GOAL.”

Ask students to suggest meanings for the word “goal.” Have a volunteer look up “goal” in the dictionary and read the definition to the class. Have the volunteer write the definition on the board. Have students offer their own definitions, and elicit from them that a goal is something a person wants to accomplish.

2. STUDENTS IDENTIFY THE PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF GOALS.

Tell students that they are now going to repeat the activity in the starter, but this time with the goal of making the sound of a rainstorm. Remind each group of its assigned sound. Tell students that when you point to groups one, two, three, and four, in that order, each group is to begin making its noise and continue doing so. Explain that when you next point, in reverse sequence, to groups four, three, two, and one, each group will stop making its noise.

In other words, point to each group in succession, so that the noise builds and sounds like a rainstorm. Then reverse the order, so it sounds as if the rain is dying down.

Ask students what they accomplished this time. Lead students to recognize that having a goal helped them focus and make sense out of some seemingly disconnected activities. Explain to students that having goals for what they want to accomplish in life can help them stay on track and make sense of the many activities they undertake.

3. STUDENTS IDENTIFY THEIR OWN GOALS.

Distribute the “My Goals” activity sheet (#1) to students. Ask students to brainstorm their goals on the activity sheet. Remind students that a goal is

something a person wants to accomplish. Use prompts to stimulate students' thinking.

4. STUDENTS SHARE THEIR GOALS.

Ask every student to share at least one of his or her goals. Write the goals on the board.

Tell students that goals are indispensable for their success in life. Goals are a guide and a target to work toward. Goals help people to do their best and accomplish what they want.

Part II Can I Do It? (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize that there are realistic and unrealistic goals.

1. STUDENTS RECOGNIZE REALISTIC AND UNREALISTIC GOALS.

Tell students that it is important for their goals to be realistic. Explain to students that if a goal is not realistic, they could become discouraged, but that if it is too easy, they could become bored. Lead students to recognize that a goal should be both achievable and challenging.

2. STUDENTS CLASSIFY THEIR PERSONAL GOALS AS REALISTIC OR UNREALISTIC.

Suggest goals such as the following to students, and ask them to categorize the goals as realistic or unrealistic:

- A 14-year-old girl, interested in science, sets a goal to become a veterinarian.
- A high school senior who hasn't worked or saved any money wants to travel to Europe during the summer after graduating from high school.
- The school principal wants all graduating seniors to go to college.

Ask students why they classified the goals as they did. Direct students to the recognition that the time frame attached to a goal is important. Tell students that each of their long-term goals should always specify a time frame in which the goal will be achieved.

Have students share their personal goals, and classify them as realistic or unrealistic. They should also ensure that their goals are achievable and challenging. Remind students to think carefully about the time frames they establish.

Part III Stepping-Stone Goals (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify goals as short term, medium range, and long term.

1. STUDENTS RECOGNIZE THAT LONG-TERM GOALS CAN BE BROKEN DOWN INTO SHORT-TERM AND MEDIUM-RANGE GOALS.

On the board, write the following: "Eat a good meal. Concentrate on math homework. Pass tests. Graduate. Study for math tests. Pass classes." Explain

to students that the goal here is to graduate from high school. Challenge students to order the events so that this goal can be achieved. Ask students to suggest an order.

Summarize the process:

- You had to eat a good meal in order to concentrate on your homework and study for your tests effectively. These are examples of short-term goals.
- By studying effectively, you were able to pass your tests and therefore pass your classes. These are examples of medium-range goals.
- Achieving those short-term goals and medium-range goals allowed you to graduate. That is a long-term goal.

2. STUDENTS EXAMINE STEPPING-STONE GOALS.

Tell students that the things you have to do now or soon in order to accomplish your goals are stepping-stone goals.

Explain stepping-stone goals as the following:

- **Short-term goals** are objectives that you want to achieve in a short time frame—an hour from now, today, or as far as a month away. Short-term goals can also be things you have to do along the way to reach your medium-range or long-term goals.
- **Medium-range goals** are objectives that you want to achieve that will take more time, between a month or so and a year. Medium-range goals can be achieved on the way to reaching long-term goals.
- **Long-term goals** are objectives that you want to achieve in the future, whether you hope to accomplish them a few years from now or when you are much older.

Explain to students that stepping-stone goals help us to achieve realistic goals in realistic periods of time.

3. STUDENTS SET STEPPING-STONE GOALS FOR THEMSELVES.

Distribute the “On Your Way” activity sheet (#2). Tell students to choose one of the long-term goals that they identified on the “My Goals” activity sheet (#1), and write it in the top box on the “On Your Way” activity sheet.

Allow students to choose a realistic goal for themselves. Circulate the room and ensure that students have chosen appropriate long-term goals. Say to students, “Backtrack, and decide what goal you need to accomplish just before you achieve your long-term goal. Put that in the second box from the top. Continue backtracking until you identify all of the short-term goals necessary to reach the long-term goal.”

Have students complete the activity sheet. Work with students to fill in the entire staircase so that it begins with a simple, easily attainable task.

4. STUDENTS ADD DEADLINES TO THEIR ACTION PLAN.

Point out to students that what they have developed is only the start of an action plan. Most complete action plans include some kind of time line. Tell students that they are now going to revisit their stepping-stone goals and set deadlines. Remind students to be realistic and to work backward, using their time frames for their long-term goals.

Have students add deadlines to their stepping-stone goals. Then, review with students the following steps of an action plan:

- Determine your long-term goal.
- Establish stepping-stone goals (which include short-term and medium-range goals).
- Set deadlines for completing each goal.
- Complete each step on time.
- Continue until you attain your goal.

Conclusion *(2 minutes)*

Ask students to define short-term goals, medium-range goals, and long-term goals. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Set positive and realistic goals.
- Realistic goals are ones that you can achieve. They should not be too easy nor too hard.
- Stepping-stone goals help you to achieve long-term goals.

Questions for Assessment

1. Why is it important to set goals?
2. Explain the difference between a realistic and an unrealistic goal.
3. List a long-term goal different from the one you chose in class.
4. List four short-term and four medium-range goals that you need to achieve in order to meet your long-term goal.

LESSON 3

DEVELOPING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

A G E N D A

- Starter
- Positive's a Plus!
- Let's Be Positive
- See It, Think It
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

Objectives

Students will define “positive attitude.”

Students will identify principles of positive thinking and behavior.

Students will practice developing a positive attitude.

Materials Needed

- Art materials for each group of four students, including poster paper, old newspapers, old magazines, markers, crayons, scissors, and glue (Part I)
- One copy of the “Visualization Techniques” activity sheet (#3) for each student (Part II)
- One copy of the “Affirmation Statement Techniques” activity sheet (#4) for each student (Part II)

Starter (3 minutes)

Tell the class to imagine two runners, both of equal ability. As they get ready to begin a race, one is thinking, “I’ll never win. I feel so sluggish. I can’t believe I’m even in this race. This girl next to me looks so much faster; I bet she’s going to run right past me.” The other runner is thinking, “I feel great—light and fast! This is going to be the best race I’ve ever run. I’m strong, and I’ve been practicing for weeks. I can’t wait to get started.”

Ask students which runner will perform better. Have them defend their answers. Elicit from students other examples of how attitude can affect performance. Lead students to see the connection between attitude and performance.

Tell students that today they are going to learn about the power of positive thinking, and how having a positive attitude can help them achieve their goals.

Part I Positive’s a Plus! (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students define “positive attitude.”

1. STUDENTS DEFINE “ATTITUDE.”

Ask students to suggest definitions for the word “attitude.”

Lead students to understand that “attitude” refers to their outlook on life—a way of thinking about themselves, others, and the world.

2. STUDENTS DISCUSS POSITIVE ATTITUDE.

Divide students into groups of four. Instruct the groups to answer the following questions:

- Describe a positive attitude.
- How do you create a positive attitude?
- How does it feel to have a positive attitude?

Allow the groups about five minutes to discuss their responses.

3. STUDENTS CREATE VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF POSITIVE ATTITUDE.

After five minutes have passed, have groups use the art materials to create visual representations of positive attitude. Encourage students to try to represent their answers to the above questions.

Allow students about 10 minutes to create their posters.

4. STUDENTS LEARN HOW A POSITIVE ATTITUDE CAN HELP THEM ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS.

Have groups share their posters. After the discussion is completed, elicit from students these points to add to the class definition of “positive attitude”:

- Having a positive attitude means being strong and motivated.
- It means focusing on strengths and confidently moving forward.

Refer to the starter, and ask students to suggest reasons why having a positive attitude might lead to goal achievement. Record student responses on the board. Direct students to understand that thinking positively affects our behavior—when we have a positive attitude, we act in a way that reflects that attitude. Lead students to recognize that people who have a positive attitude “bounce back” more quickly from setbacks.

Part II Let's Be Positive (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students learn principles of positive thinking and behavior.

1. STUDENTS RECOGNIZE HOW POSITIVE BEHAVIOR CAN BENEFIT THEM.

Explain to students that when people behave positively, their brains create chemicals called endorphins, which enhance performance. Endorphins can increase physical energy, increase mental alertness, reduce anxiety, and improve problem solving skills.

2. STUDENTS LEARN HOW TO DEVELOP POSITIVE BEHAVIOR.

Ask students to predict how they might develop positive behavior. Record responses on the board.

Offer these steps:

- Positive behavior can be developed by forming positive habits.
- Think of yourself as successful, and have positive expectations for everything you do.
- Remind yourself of your past successes.
- Never dwell on past failures, but learn from and avoid repeating them.
- Surround yourself with positive people and ideas.
- Keep trying until you achieve the results you want. You only fail when you quit trying.

Ask students to share examples of experiences in which having a positive expectation produced positive results. Then, ask them to share times when they experienced negative results because of negative expectations.

Students may want to discuss times when they had negative expectations (such as a time when they thought they would do poorly on a test) and were pleasantly surprised. Suggest to students that they should consider how well they might have done if they had a positive attitude.

3. STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THE TECHNIQUE OF VISUALIZATION.

Explain to students that there are many techniques that promote a positive attitude. One of these techniques is called visualization.

Ask students if they know what visualization is. Ask them to suggest meanings of the word “visualization” based on their knowledge of the root word and the suffixes.

After students have offered definitions, explain that visualization is the technique of purposefully creating a mental picture of a successful performance. Visualization improves performance because the positive picture stimulates the brain to trigger corresponding positive responses that support the mental image.

Continue by explaining that this is the technique used by many athletes to enhance their abilities on the field or court, by entertainers to ensure their best performances, and by successful professionals to achieve their goals.

Distribute the “Visualization Techniques” activity sheet (#3) to each student, and discuss each step.

Tell students that they will have an opportunity to practice visualizing after they learn another technique.

4. STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THE TECHNIQUE OF AFFIRMATION.

Ask students if they have ever heard of the technique of affirmation, which is another way of creating a positive attitude. Ask students to suggest meanings of the word “affirmation” based on their knowledge of the root word and the suffix.

Point out to students that visualization is creating a “mental movie” in which they are the stars. Affirmations are like mental commercials that encourage them to buy into positive images of themselves. Affirmative statements are positive self-reminders that help us strengthen our efforts and achieve our goals.

Distribute the “Affirmation Statement Techniques” activity sheet (#4) to each student, and discuss each step.

Part III See It, Think It (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students practice developing a positive attitude.

1. STUDENTS BRAINSTORM AREAS OF THEIR LIVES IN WHICH HAVING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE COULD HELP THEM.

Tell students that they are now going to consider the areas of their lives in which having a positive attitude might help them. Have students brainstorm situations or activities that might benefit from their having a more positive attitude or using the techniques discussed. Record student responses on the board.

2. STUDENTS CONSIDER SITUATIONS IN THEIR OWN LIVES IN WHICH ATTITUDE PLAYS A ROLE.

Have students think of a current, specific situation in their own lives in which they might have a negative attitude. If students cannot think of anything current, have them consider something that might happen in the future, such as a major test, presentation, or job interview.

Tell students to write about the situation at the top of a piece of paper. Allow them about two minutes to describe their current attitude toward the situation. Then, have students describe the positive attitude they would like to have. Give students about eight minutes to answer the following questions:

- How could visualization help you? Describe a visualization that might be useful.
- What affirmations might be useful?
- How might your behavior change as a result of changing your attitude?

Tell students to keep what they wrote so they can reflect on it when their attitude might be keeping them from their goals.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Close this session by asking students to define “visualization” and “affirmation.” Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- A positive attitude can lead to positive behavior.
- Positive expectations, behaviors, and habits bring positive results.
- Visualization and affirmation are techniques that you can use to promote a positive attitude and help you achieve your goals.

Questions for Assessment

1. Describe someone with a negative attitude and someone with a positive attitude (no names are necessary). Which one do you think will be more successful in life? Why?
2. List three benefits of demonstrating a positive attitude.
3. List three things someone can do to work toward having a positive attitude.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITY SHEET

A DAY IN A LIFE

Camilla Juarez is a high school senior. The following are the activities she has planned for today.

Where	Time	Activity	Related Overcoming Obstacles lessons
Home	6:15 A.M.	1. Wake up.	
	6:20 A.M.	2. Determine whether she or her brother (who leaves at the same time) gets into the shower first.	
	6:25 A.M.	3. Take a shower and get dressed.	
	6:45 A.M.	4. Eat breakfast.	
	6:55 A.M.	5. Get books and papers together for school.	
	7:00 A.M.	6. Leave for school.	
	7:00 P.M.	7. Complete homework.	
	8:00 P.M.	8. Decide how to spend or save her pay-check.	
	8:30 P.M.	9. Try to find a different job.	
School	7:45 A.M.	1. Meet with English teacher to ask him if she can retake a test she failed the first time.	
	9:00 A.M.	2. Take notes in her history class, where they don't have textbooks.	
	11:30 A.M.	3. Talk to her boyfriend at lunch about an argument they had yesterday.	
	1:00 P.M.	4. Complete a science project with her assigned group.	
Work	1:45 P.M.	1. Catch a bus to work.	
	2:00 P.M.	2. Check supplies inventory before her shift starts.	
	5:30 P.M.	3. Speak to her boss about a raise that was promised, but has not yet been received.	

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9. Public Assessment

WORKSHOP ACTIVITY SHEET

ON YOUR WAY

Long-Term Goal

1. Write one of your long-term goals in the top box.
2. Think about the tasks you need to accomplish before you achieve your goal.
3. Work backward from your long-term goal, and fill in the boxes with medium-range goals. These goals should help you reach your long-term goal.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITY SHEET

TOPICS FOR A CONTROLLED DEBATE

1. All students should be required to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Students who get in trouble with the law should be expelled.
3. Healthy people should become organ donors.
4. People should be banned from talking on their cell phones in public places.
5. Honor students should have their own restrooms at school.
6. Animals should live in their natural habitats, not in zoos or circuses.
7. Boys and girls should be allowed to try out for and play on any high school sports team they want, including field hockey and football.
8. Squirt guns, laser pointers, and other toys that look like guns should be banned from schools.
9. Schools should stop teachers from giving homework.
10. All schools should require uniforms.
11. All students should be required to learn a foreign language.
12. Athletes should be required to graduate from college before playing professional sports.
13. Schools named after slave owners should be renamed.
14. Young people who commit crimes should serve embarrassing sentences in public.
15. Student government should have the power to change school policy.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITY SHEET

PASS IT ON!

LESSON OBJECTIVE:

Students use teamwork skills in a race to pass a penny from one end of a line to the other. Students discuss the importance of using these skills in their daily lives.

TIME ESTIMATE: 30 minutes

REQUIRED MATERIALS: Two pennies

PROCEDURE:

- Divide the class into two groups of equal size. Have the groups stand in two lines shoulder-to-shoulder and facing the other team.
- Explain that the groups will be competing to pass a penny from one end of their line to the other. The student at the end of each line will have a penny placed on the back of one hand. Upon a signal, these students will then transfer the penny to their other hand by placing the backs of their hands together and then flipping both hands at once. When the penny is on the back of their other hand, they must pass it to the next player by using the same method. If a penny is dropped, it must be taken back to the beginning and the team must start over.
- Before beginning the race, model the passing technique to make sure the process is clear.
- To start the race, place a penny on the back of the last student's hand at the end of each team line. When both groups are ready, signal for the race to start.
- The first group to complete the penny pass is the winner.

DEBRIEF:

Ask the students:

- What factors helped your group perform the task?
- What factors made the race difficult?
- How does this challenge relate to teamwork in general?

APPENDIX

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

RESULTS & RECOGNITION

Since its founding in 1992, Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Curriculum has been used by over 50,000 educators from around the world and in all fifty states to help more than 15 million students improve their academic achievement, graduate from high school, prepare for college and careers, and more.

In December 2017, a survey was conducted on the effectiveness of the curriculum. Educators teaching Overcoming Obstacles reported:

-
- 99% said they would recommend Overcoming Obstacles to a fellow educator
- 98% said that Overcoming Obstacles benefitted their students overall
- 96% said it helped students cope with stress
- 96% stated Overcoming Obstacles improved student-to-student interaction
- 92% stated Overcoming Obstacles helped with classroom management
- 80% noted Overcoming Obstacles resulted in improved grades

Additional survey information can be obtained by contacting Overcoming Obstacles.

During the 2010–2011 school year, Charleston County School District in South Carolina implemented Overcoming Obstacles in a district-wide high school advisory period. The district reported that Overcoming Obstacles helped students experience many improvements, including stronger leadership skills, increased self-confidence, and better time-management skills. Based on the success of its high school advisory program, Charleston County School District expanded its use of Overcoming Obstacles into its middle schools in 2011. In a 2012 interview with NBC, the superintendent of Charleston County School District named Overcoming Obstacles as one of the primary strategies for bringing positive change to two of the county's priority schools. Because of Charleston County School District's success with Overcoming Obstacles, schools from twelve additional districts in South Carolina began implementing Overcoming Obstacles in 2012.

In 2010, the New York City Department of Education introduced the Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Program to all of its 850 public middle schools and high schools. In a press release issued in 2011, the schools chancellor expressed his gratitude for the Overcoming Obstacles program, praising it for helping New York City's educators address bullying, create supportive learning environments, and prepare their students for college and careers. By 2017, more than seven hundred middle and high schools report implementing Overcoming Obstacles in their classrooms.

In 2008, the Children's Aid Society of New York City reported that academic achievement improved markedly at the Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics as a result of the Overcoming Obstacles program.

RECOGNITION HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

In 2007, the Transitional Road to Attending College (TRAC) program in Jersey City, New Jersey, used Overcoming Obstacles to improve their high school retention. TRAC focused on teaching the city's incoming freshmen the communication, decision making, goal setting, teamwork, and conflict resolution skills they would need to excel in high school. Data on the program's implementation of Overcoming Obstacles was based on students' responses to pre- and post-program tests and sorted by classroom. The following is a sampling of one classroom's results:

- 85% of students reported that they found it easier to keep commitments (an increase of 65% from the time of the pre-program test)
- 76% of students said that they were excited about their studies (an increase of 20% from the time of the pre-program test)
- 86% of students said that they had a clear picture of what they wanted to do in the future (an increase of 19% from the time of the pre-program test)

In 2003, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) listed Overcoming Obstacles as a recommended classroom-based social and emotional learning program in its US Department of Education-funded report, *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs*.

In 2003, Overcoming Obstacles was the recipient of the Superintendent's Conflict Resolution Award for helping Brooklyn and Staten Island high school students succeed academically.

In 2001, the New York City Department of Education reported the following benefits from its implementation of the Overcoming Obstacles program: increased student punctuality, emergence of student leaders, student camaraderie, longer student attention spans, greater work completion, and recognition of self-defeating behaviors.

In 2000, the New York City Department of Education chose Overcoming Obstacles as a leading substance abuse prevention program and recognized it as a leading school-to-career program

In 1998, the California State Senate passed a resolution to commend Overcoming Obstacles for its positive impact on Los Angeles's students. That same year, the mayor of Los Angeles issued a commendation to Overcoming Obstacles for its work.

In 1998, John Muir Middle School in Los Angeles implemented Overcoming Obstacles in its seventh grade English class. Because of the program, 57% of students improved their grades, 42% improved their class attendance, and 57% had less reported tardiness than the previous semester.

RECOGNITION HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

In 1997, Overcoming Obstacles worked with a population of students with severe academic and social deficiencies in the Atlanta Public Schools system. At least 10% were one or more grades below what is normal for their age. Approximately 30—40% read well below the standard for their age, and at least 10% were illiterate. The course focused on job preparedness, résumé writing, and financial planning. After completing the course, 95% of the students were employed with good ratings from their employers and/or were entering programs of higher education. One hundred percent were promoted to the next grade. Because of this work, the Georgia State Department of Labor recognized Overcoming Obstacles as the leading program for breaking the cycle of welfare dependency.

In 1997, Markham Middle School in Los Angeles infused Overcoming Obstacles with an eighth-grade English class. After participating in the program, 68% of the students improved their grades and class attendance, 60% improved their tardiness, and 60% improved their level of cooperation.

In 1997, Elizabeth High School in New Jersey implemented Overcoming Obstacles as a stand-alone class for repeat ninth graders. Low attendance was a significant factor in the poor school performance of these students: over 40% exhibited a history of acute absenteeism. At the conclusion of the class, 80% of the students were promoted to the tenth grade and more than half improved their attendance by over 50%.

In 1995, Overcoming Obstacles received a grant from the Community Development Department in Los Angeles to improve the lives of the city's youth through life skills education. Study of the program's effectiveness included parent interviews and examinations of 266 students' school attendance records, discipline records, grades, police records, and pre- and post-program surveys. Monitoring by the city consistently showed Overcoming Obstacles students moving from high-risk stages classified as "in crisis" and "at risk" to more self-sufficient stages such as "stable," "safe," and "thriving." Overcoming Obstacles students at Manual Arts High School improved their grade point averages by 37%, reduced their use of violence by 75%, reduced their tardiness by 89%, and improved their school and family relationships. Of the programs administered through the grant, Overcoming Obstacles was ranked the highest.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why was the Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Program developed?

The 1992 United States Department of Labor report, *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000*, outlined the skills employees need to succeed in the twenty-first century workforce and how employers and communities could ensure that students learn these skills. In response to this, the Overcoming Obstacles life skills curriculum was developed and, since its inception, it has helped over 46,000 educators across all fifty U.S. states and one hundred additional countries teach more than 15 million young people the communication, decision making, and goal setting skills they need to be successful in life.

2. In which settings can Overcoming Obstacles be taught?

Overcoming Obstacles is taught in a variety of settings, including advisory periods, after-school programs, peer mentoring initiatives, and infusion into core content classes. Educators can contact CEF for assistance with creating implementation plans that meet the needs of their schools and students.

3. What skills and topics are covered in the curriculum?

Beginning with essential communication, decision making, and goal setting skills, Overcoming Obstacles covers 25 additional skills, including:

- Anger management
- Bullying prevention
- Career preparation*
- College preparation*
- Confidence
- Understanding diversity
- Financial management*
- Leadership
- Personal health
- Problem solving
- Responsibility
- Self-esteem
- Service learning
- Stress management
- Study skills
- Time management

4. How much does Overcoming Obstacles cost?

All materials, training, and support provided by Overcoming Obstacles are available through the internet for *free*, now and forever. If preferred, printed copies of the curriculum and handbooks are available at cost.

* Included in the high school level only

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

5. How is Overcoming Obstacles free?

Overcoming Obstacles is a nonprofit US-based organization that receives support from individuals, corporations, and private foundations to fund its activities. In 2010, Overcoming Obstacles introduced the gifting initiative that provided its curricula to new school partners at no cost. In 2014, the board of directors expanded this initiative worldwide so the Overcoming Obstacles curricula, training, and support would be available for free to all educators, schools, and school districts forever.

6. How do I access the curriculum?

All of our materials are available for free as PDF downloads after registering for an account on our website. In addition to the elementary, middle school, and high school materials, a free app is also available for iPads and Android tablets.

7. Can I get a printed copy of the curriculum materials or handbooks?

Printed copies of the curricula and handbooks are available for purchase at cost. To order, please email mail@overcomingobstacles.org.

8. What types of students benefit from Overcoming Obstacles?

Our program will benefit your entire student body, no matter their struggles, talents, or circumstances. Through life skills instruction, all of your students will improve their attendance, behavior, and chances for graduation..

10. What are the differences between the three levels of the curricula?

All levels of the curricula incorporate the same philosophy, pedagogy, and structure. They cover similar topics, such as problem solving, conflict resolution, and stress management, but do so in an age-appropriate manner. The elementary school curriculum is divided into two levels: Kindergarten through 2nd grade and 3rd through 5th grade. Both levels are designed to introduce specific concepts and skills that will be reinforced as the child grows. The middle school curriculum presents skills that are relevant to the needs of younger adolescents. The high school program reinforces and develops the same skills with applications that are relevant to the needs of teenagers, and includes lessons on continuing education, employment, and financial responsibility.

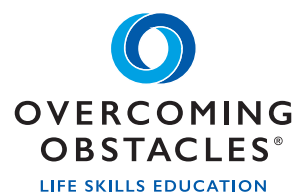
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

12. Does the curriculum have to be taught in a specific order?

With the exception of the *Getting Started* and *Looking to the Future* modules, the modules can be taught in any order and prioritized according to topic.

14. What should I do if a student does not want to participate?

If a student is hesitant to participate in group activities or discussions at first, allow him or her time to sit back and observe, and then offer another invitation to join the group. Like many adults, some students may not feel comfortable talking about themselves in group settings or participating in team activities. If the student still expresses reluctance, let him or her know that everyone's participation in the group is vital and work with him or her to identify solutions. When students realize that the activities are engaging and build on their strengths, they often join in and become enthusiastic participants. Overcoming Obstacles will help students discover a different side of themselves, and it is your role as lesson facilitator to help them start the process.



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