

# Teen Choices Workbook

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**Facilitator Reproducible  
Self-Assessments, Exercises  
& Educational Handouts**

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### **Teen Choices Workbook**

Facilitator Reproducible Self-Assessments,  
Exercises & Educational Handouts

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## Using This Book *(For the professional)*

Life is about making choices. Today's teens live in a far more challenging atmosphere than past generations and they face many important choices that both positively and negatively affect their growth and development. Their success in life is a result of the choices they make as they mature and that they will make in the future.

Choices come in many different forms. Decisions must be made for a wide variety of options:

- *Should I be friends with her?*
- *What should I do if I am offered a cigarette?*
- *Should I go to a party where I know there will be alcohol and drugs?*
- *Should I socialize with people about whom I have an iffy feeling?*
- *Should I engage in extreme sports?*
- *Should I join the French Club in school?*
- *Should I study business or journalism?*
- *Should I go on vacation with my family or stay home with my friends?*
- *What should I do if my friends want me to try illegal drugs?*
- *Should I drop out of school?*
- *Should I be intimate with my boyfriend or girlfriend?*
- *Should I apply for college?*
- *Should I join a gang?*

These can be very difficult questions for teens to answer as they begin to test their boundaries, explore individual autonomy, and begin making decisions for themselves. To help teens become more thoughtful decision-makers, *Teen Choices Workbook* will guide them to act responsibly, reflect on decisions they have made in the past, explore the consequences of those decisions, and take responsibility for future decisions. These reflections and discussions will guide them to be better decision-makers, as well as to confirm their positive past decisions.

During adolescence, making effective independent choices is often a point of contention between teens and adults (parents, teachers, grandparents, etc.). As teens mature, they face increasing demands to learn to make choices more independently and to take more responsibility for their own choices. Choices allow teens to change how they are currently living their lives (if they are not happy where they are) or continue to live responsibly by making even more effective choices.

*(Continued on the next page)*

## Using This Book *(For the professional, continued)*

The *Teen Choices Workbook* is designed to help teens engage in self-reflection, examine personal thoughts and feelings that go into the decisions they have made, and learn valuable tools and techniques for making effective decisions in the future. This book combines three powerful psychological tools for the management of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors: self-assessment and journaling. Role-playing exercises are a third component to enhance empathy and allow adolescents to practice decision-making strategies.

**The *Teen Choices Workbook* contains five separate sections to help participants learn more about choices they have made and choices they have yet to make in their lives:**

- **Teen Action Choices Scale** helps teens analyze the factors that primarily influence the decisions they make and define how effectively they are using their time.
- **Teen Relationship Choices Scale** helps teens examine how they make choices about acquaintances, friends, best friends and dating friends.
- **Teen Cultural Differences Scale** helps teens explore how accepting and receptive they are to people who are different from themselves.
- **Teen “Not-So-Great” Choices Scale** helps teens reconsider the choices they made in the past that were not successful and outline more effective decision-making techniques.
- **Teen Risk-Taking Behavior Scale** helps teens investigate both the positive and the negative risks they have taken and discover ways to choose healthy risks.

### Use Codes for Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a term for any action that preserves the privacy of other people. Because teens completing the activities in this workbook might be asked to answer assessment items and to journal about and explore their relationships, you will need to discuss confidentiality before you begin using the materials in this workbook. Maintaining confidentiality is important because it shows respect for others and allows participants to explore their feelings without hurting anyone’s feelings or fearing gossip, harm or retribution.

In order to maintain confidentiality, explain to the participants that they need to assign a **name code for each person or each group of people** they write about as they complete the various activities in the workbook. For example, a friend named Joey who enjoys going to hockey games might be titled JLHG (Joey Loves Hockey Games) for a particular exercise. In order to protect their friends’ identities, they should not use people’s or groups’ actual names or initials, just name codes.

*(Continued on the next page)*

# Layout of the Book

**The *Teen Choices Workbook* is designed to be used either independently or as part of an integrated curriculum. You may administer one of the assessments and the journaling exercises to an individual or a group with whom you are working, or you may administer a number of the assessments over one or more days.**

**This book includes the following reproducible pages in the first five sections:**

- **Assessment Instruments** – Self-assessment inventories with scoring directions and interpretation materials. Group facilitators can choose one or more of the activities relevant to their participants.
- **Activity Handouts** – Practical questions and activities that prompt self-reflection and promote self-understanding. These questions and activities foster introspection and promote pro-social behaviors.
- **Quotations** – Quotations are used in each section to provide insight and promote reflection. Participants will be asked to select one or more of the quotations and journal about what the quotations mean to them.
- **Reflective Questions for Journaling** – Self-exploration activities and journaling exercises specific to each assessment to enhance self-discovery, learning, and healing.
- **Educational Handouts** – Handouts designed to enhance instruction can be used by individuals or in groups to promote a positive understanding of past choices participants have made and positive decision-making in the future. They can be distributed, scanned and converted into masters for overheads or transparencies, projected or written on boards and/or discussed.

## **Who Should Use This Program?**

This book has been designed as a practical tool to help professionals such as therapists, counselors, psychologists, teachers, group leaders, etc. Depending on the role of the professional using the *Teen Choices Workbook* and the specific group's needs, these sections can be used individually or combined for a more comprehensive approach.

## **Why Use Self-Assessments?**

Self-assessments are important in teaching various anger management skills because they help participants to engage in these ways:

- Become aware of the primary motivators that guide their behavior.
- Explore and learn to “let go” of troublesome habits and behavioral patterns learned in childhood.
- Examine the effects of unconscious childhood messages.
- Gain insight and “a wake-up call” for behavioral change.
- Focus thinking on behavioral goals for change.
- Uncover personal resources that can help them to cope better with problems and difficulties.
- Explore personal characteristics without judgment.
- Identify personal strengths and weaknesses.

**Because the assessments are presented in a straightforward and easy-to-use format, individuals can self-administer, score and interpret each assessment at their own pace.**

## **About the Assessments, Journaling Activities and Educational Handouts**

Materials in the Assessments, Journaling Activities, and Educational Handouts sections in this book are reproducible and can be photocopied for participants' use. Assessments contained in this book focus on self-reported data and thus are similar to ones used by psychologists, counselors, therapists and career consultants. The accuracy and usefulness of the information provided is dependent on the truthful information that each participant provides. By being honest, participants help themselves to learn about unproductive and ineffective patterns in their lives, and to uncover information that might be keeping them from being as happy or as successful as they might be.

An assessment instrument can provide participants with valuable information about themselves; however, these assessments cannot measure or identify everything. The assessments' purpose is not to pigeonhole certain characteristics, but rather to allow participants to consider all of their characteristics. This book contains self-assessments, not tests. Tests measure knowledge or whether something is right or wrong. For the assessments in this book, there are no right or wrong answers. These assessments ask for personal opinions or attitudes about a topic of importance in the participant's life.

When administering the assessments in this workbook, remember that the items are generically written so that they will be applicable to a wide variety of people but will not account for every possible variable for every person. No assessments are specifically tailored to one person. Assessments are structured to help a variety of participants to identify negative themes in their lives and find ways to break the hold of these patterns and their effects.

Advise teen participants taking the assessments that they should not spend too much time trying to analyze the content of the questions; they should think about the questions in general and then spontaneously report how they feel about each one. Whatever the results of the assessment, encourage participants to talk about their findings and their feelings pertaining to what have they discovered about themselves. Talking about issues such as aggression and bullying can be therapeutic and beneficial.

The *Teen Choices Workbook* sections serve as an avenue for individual self-reflection, as well as group experiences revolving around identified topics of importance. Each assessment includes directions for easy administration, scoring and interpretation. In addition, each section includes exploratory activities, reflective journaling activities, insightful quotations and educational handouts to help participants to learn more about the choices they have made, explore their habitual, ineffective methods of making choices, and define new ways for choosing more effective life options.

*(Continued on the next page)*

## **About the Assessments, Journaling Activities and Educational Handouts *(continued)***

The art of self-reflection goes back many centuries and is rooted in many of the world's greatest spiritual and philosophical traditions. Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher, was known to walk the streets engaging the people he met in philosophical reflection and dialogue. He felt that this type of activity was so important in life that he proclaimed, "The unexamined life is not worth living!" The unexamined life is one in which the same routine is continually repeated without ever thinking about its meaning to one's life and how this life really could be lived. However, a structured reflection and examination of beliefs, assumptions, characteristics and patterns can provide a better understanding which can lead to a more satisfying life and career. A greater level of self-understanding about important life skills is often necessary to make positive, self-directed changes in repetitive negative patterns throughout life. The assessments and exercises in this book can help promote this self-understanding. Through involvement with the in-depth activities, each participant claims ownership in the development of positive patterns.

Journaling is an extremely powerful tool for enhancing self-discovery, learning, transcending traditional problems, breaking ineffective life and career habits, and helping people to heal from psychological traumas of the past. From a physical point of view, writing reduces stress and lowers muscle tension, blood pressure and heart rate levels. Psychologically, writing reduces feelings of sadness, depression and general anxiety, and it leads to a greater level of life satisfaction and optimism. Behaviorally, writing leads to enhanced social skills, emotional intelligence and creativity.

By combining reflective assessment and journaling, your participants will engage in a powerful method for helping teens make more effective life choices.

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**Thanks to the following professionals whose input in this book has been invaluable!**

Amy Brodsky, LISW-S

Carol Butler, MS Ed, RN, C

Kathy Khalsa, MAJS, OTR/L

Jay Leutenberg

Kathy Liptak, Ed.D.

Eileen Regen, M.Ed., CJE

# For the Facilitator:

## Enrichment Activities for Each Section

by Carol Butler, MS, Ed, RN,C

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**These options provide interaction and enjoyment for the teens. They can be used as you present a new section, or as a conclusion after participants finish the written exercises.**

### TEEN ACTION CHOICES

#### 1. Collages

- Provide magazines, scissors, glue, and paper or poster board.
- Ask each participant to make a collage showing personal preferences of material possessions and activities.
- Participants show their work, share their “likes” and receive peer feedback.
- List these categories on the board or on a large paper: Creativity, Fitness, Science, Helping, Family, Leadership, Mechanical/Technical and/or Nature.
- Peers identify predominant themes in each other’s collages.

#### 2. What Would You Do?

- List these roles on the board or on a large paper:  
Student, Employee, Child, Friend, Volunteer.
- Ask a participant to read this scenario:

*“You have an unexpected day off from school and work. You have a school project due in two days. Your boss asks you to work an extra shift and you really need the money. Your parents want you to babysit your younger siblings. Your friends invite you to a barbeque which a prospective dating friend will be attending. The library where you volunteer desperately needs your help. What would you do?”*

- The participant (reader) encourages peers to share what they would do, why, which role is most important to them, and how they would compromise or combine roles.
- Examples: Take the young siblings to select books while doing volunteer work at the library in the morning; attend the barbeque in the evening, etc.

*(Continued on the next page)*



# Enrichment Activities for Each Section

(Page 2 of 4)

## TEEN RELATIONSHIP CHOICES

### Role plays

**Place two chairs facing each other in the front of the group and ask volunteers to practice these scenerios:**

- Starting a conversation based on mutual interests, and discussing things in common.
- Asking open-ended questions, then paraphrasing and reflecting the responder's thoughts/feelings.

## TEEN CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

### What Would You Do?

- Ask volunteers to take turns reading the scenarios below. Elicit peer feedback.

*"You are at the lunch table with your friends. A person who is mentally ill or developmentally disabled sits next to you. Your friends move away slightly and ignore the person. What would you do?"*

*"A lonely elderly neighbor starts a conversation with you almost every time you walk outside. You are usually in a hurry. What would you do?"*

*"You really hit it off with a classmate of another race with whom you have many common interests. Your family will not allow that person in your house and forbid you to go places with him/her. What would you do?"*

*(Continued on the next page)*

# Enrichment Activities for Each Section

(Page 3 of 4)

## TEEN “NOT–SO–GREAT” CHOICES

- 1. Dramatization/Scenario: Photocopy the following script. Give each of three volunteer actors a copy of the script. Provide cell phones. Allow the three “actors” to practice a couple of times before the skit. Tell the group they are going to see a skit and will be asked questions afterward.**

**Narrator:** *Jane and Bill have been sitting next to each other in math class, and she has been hoping he would ask her out. Yesterday she was thrilled when he asked for her phone number.*

**Bill:** *Dials a number and Jane answers.*

**Jane:** *Hello.*

**Bill:** *Hey, how are you? This is Bill from math class.*

**Jane:** *Doin' fine.*

**Bill:** *I was wondering if you'd like to hang out on Saturday. Maybe we could go to a movie or to an amusement park?*

**Jane:** *I'd love to!*

**Narrator:** *They went out and had a great time. Jane told her friends the details.*

**Jane:** *I think we have a chance of seeing each other more and dating.*

**Narrator:** *Monday at school, Bill is in class with Jane. After class he approaches her.*

**Bill:** *I really had a good time with you and hope we can get together again.*

**Jane:** *Me too.*

**Narrator:** *That night he calls Jane.*

**Bill:** *Hey Jane, I have a little favor to ask. Since we sit next to each other, during tomorrow's math test, do you think you could let me see your answers? You are so much better in math than I am, and I really need your help.*

**Narrator:** *What are Jane's options?*

**Then . . .**

- Peers share and discuss their opinions.
- Facilitator lists on board or large paper—Critical Thinking, Impulsivity, Peer Pressure, Independence—and asks participants to discuss Jane's possible thoughts/actions regarding critical thinking, impulsivity, peer pressure and/or independence.

- 2. Real Life: Ask participants to share situations they have experienced or may face. Select one that lends itself to the steps below, summarize it on the board or large paper and list these items:**

- Identify the decision to be made.
- Identify the potential choices.
- Identify and compare all possible consequences
- Make a decision based on the information available.
- Act and evaluate the results

**Encourage participants to discuss the above steps related to the summarized situation.**

*(Continued on the next page)*

# Enrichment Activities for Each Section

(Page 4 of 4)

## TEEN RISK-TAKING

### Brainstorming

- List on board or large paper the following categories:  
School, Social, Activities, Family, Friends, Substances, Physical, Criminal, Health.
- Divide the participants into partners or small groups and provide them with one piece of paper and pen per partnership or small group.
- Ask each partnership or small group to select one or a few of the above categories
- Ask each partnership or small group to list at least two positive and two negative risks for each of their selected categories.
- The whole group re-convenes and the partners or small group members take turns going to the front of the room.
- A spokesperson shares their examples and receives feedback from others.
- Note that something that seems to have only negative risks such as “Criminal” can have positive risks. *Example: A friend is shop-lifting. **Positive risk** – Leave the store immediately without the person and risk losing the friendship; **Negative risk** – Stay with the person and risk getting caught.*

### Cut ups

- Photocopy and cut out each phrase below:

<b>Bad Feelings About self</b>	<b>Wanting /Needing Acceptance</b>
<b>Little or No Confidence</b>	<b>Wanting /Needing Popularity</b>
<b>Peer Pressure</b>	<b>Thrill-Seeking</b>
<b>Loneliness</b>	<b>Fear of Family /Friends’ Reactions</b>

- Place the folded cut-ups in a cup or envelope.
- Pass the cup.
- Participants take turns reading the slip of paper they picked and identifying an associated positive and negative risk.
- Peers give feedback and add more positive and negative risks if possible.

# Introduction for the Participant

Beginning right now, and into the future, you will make many significant choices that will affect your life greatly. Choices can have positive and/or negative consequences. Each choice will require careful thought and wise decision-making. As you have grown from childhood into your young adult years, you are expected to be increasingly responsible for the choices you make. The choices you have made have influenced your life, and the choices you will make in the future will largely determine the direction your life.

**Many of your choices will be based on a logical decision-making process related to these factors:**

**Relationships Choices** – You will be making choices about people. Who should you choose as an acquaintance, friend, best friend and person to date?

**Behaving Toward Others** – You will be making choices about how you treat other people, some just like you and others who are different from you.

**Time Choices** – You will be making choices about how to use your time most effectively and efficiently.

**Risks** – You will be making choices about the consequences of taking both positive and negative risks in your life.

**The *Teen Choices Workbook* is designed to help you learn more about how you have made decisions in the past, and explore ways of making future decisions.**

You will be asked to respond to assessments and exercises and to journal about some experiences in your relationships. Everyone has the right to confidentiality, and you need to honor the right of their privacy. Think about it this way – you would not want someone writing things about you that other people could read. Your friends feel this way also.

In order to maintain the confidentiality of your friends, assign code names to people or groups, based on things you know about them. For example, a friend named Sherry who loves to wear purple might be coded as SWP (Sherry Wears Purple). **Do not use any person's or groups' actual name when you are listing people or groups of people – Use only name codes.**

# Teen Choices Workbook

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## My Activity Time

**Young adults make many choices daily about how to spend their time. Considering and choosing how to spend that time effectively is the challenge. Most teens spend a substantial amount of their day in school and doing school work. They also have other responsibilities and still want some time to have fun. Making effective choices about how to spend your time is critical. In the following table describe how you spend your time in each area of your life during a typical week. Then assign an estimated per cent of the time that you spend in the activity areas.**

Activity Areas	Activities I Engage in Each Week	%
<i>Ex: Computer, etc.</i>	<i>Email, Facebook, Twitter, Cell phone, Text, etc.</i>	40%
Computer, cell phones, technological objects		
Working and/or volunteering		
Clubs, house of worship, community groups		
Family/home obligations		
Fun/leisure time activities		
Other responsibilities		