

TEEN
MENTAL HEALTH
AND LIFE SKILLS
WORKBOOK



Teen

Safety

Workbook

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

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Exercises & Educational Handouts

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Using This Book *(For the professional)*

Being a teen has always been challenging, but today teens face issues that have been compounded by a rapidly changing society and a plethora of technology. These changes require new strategies in ways to teach teens to protect themselves from the challenges they will constantly face in school and community, and with their friends and family.

Some of the areas in which teens need to worry about their personal safety include:

- Risks related to violence including bullying, exposure to gangs, and harm from guns and other weapons.
- Online dangers including harassment, cyber-bullying, sexually explicit materials, identity theft and financial theft and scams, and agreeing to meet strangers in person after developing online relationships.
- Victimization of crimes.
- Risks while driving in dangerous ways, including driving after drinking or taking drugs, underestimating dangerous road situations, texting or using cell phones inappropriately and not wearing seat belts.
- Putting themselves in personal danger by pressures to do things they do not want to do such as experimenting with drugs and alcohol, having unprotected sex, going to unsafe places by themselves and engaging in risky behaviors.

For teens, staying safe is a much more difficult task than in the past. To help teens sharpen their awareness of the need and ways to stay safe, the *Teen Safety Workbook* will guide them as they explore situations fraught with danger and face people who may threaten their safety.

During adolescence, teens are eager to press to become more independent from their parents, caregivers or family. They need to learn to be more responsible for their own safety. Regardless of whether they are at home, school, work, or in the community, or online, they must face great safety hazards and need to be aware of them. Teen's judgment levels are still forming; most are not ready to make adult level decisions. It is vital for teens to learn that they have the power to keep themselves safe and to be equipped with the tools to overcome dangerous situations.

The *Teen Safety Workbook* is designed to help teens engage in self-reflection, examine their thoughts and feelings that go into the decisions they make, and learn effective tools and techniques to stay safe in the future. This book combines two powerful psychological tools for the management of unsafe, potentially dangerous thoughts, feelings, and behaviors: self-assessment and journaling.

Enrichment activities at the end of each chapter are a third tool for facilitators of teens from families struggling with substance abuse.

(Continued on the next page)

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

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

Positive Feelings Scale helps teens explore the negative feelings they are experiencing in life and learn effective methods to constructively expressing their emotions.

Scale and activities include stress, anger, low self-esteem, depression.

Healthy Choices Scale helps teens explore how healthy or unhealthy their lifestyle choices are.

Scale includes driving, drugs, alcohol and personal safety. Activities include past safe and unsafe choices, a logical decision-making process, a staying safe pledge, warning signs of drug abuse, facts about drinking.

Social Media Safety Scale helps teens explore safe behaviors while texting, chatting, using social media sites, and surfing the Internet.

Scale includes chatting, instant messaging, social media, identity theft, surfing and sexting, etc.

Activities include benefits and negatives of the information highway, online risks, online predators, social media safety, I Wills and Nevers for staying safe online.

Relationship Safety Scale helps teens explore the safety in their family, friendships, and dating relationships.

Scale includes people I'm dating, people at home/in family, friends, neighbor/co-worker, etc. Activities include dating relationship safety, relationships and sexual safety, family/people at home safety, and friend relationship safety; personal safe and unsafe relationships; quotes to consider and journaling prompts; types of abuse; and a safety plan.

Self-Harm Scale helps teens explore the extent to which they deliberately harm themselves in attempts to cope with intense, overwhelming emotions.

Activities include the person's feelings and emotional pain, reasons the person is acting in certain ways, a conscious search for patterns, awareness of anxious energy, stress management techniques, talk about harming oneself, professional treatment, reasons people self-harm.

Interactive Suggestions for Teens from Families Struggling with Substance Abuse

Teens love to interact with peers. The following options encourage safety-focused thinking, decision-making and behavior, and allow participants to incorporate real life challenges in discussions of these activities: Self Harm Alternatives, Relationships, Positive Feelings, Healthy Choices and Social Media.

At the end of each chapter, following the educational handouts, is a special section for teens from families struggling with substance abuse. The roles teens take in dysfunctional families may lead to unsafe behavior. Teens are encouraged to break the cycle and make healthy and safe changes.

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 they begin using the materials in this workbook. Maintaining confidentiality is important as 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 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 all identities, they should not use people's actual names or initials; they must use name codes.

Mandated Reporting Laws

To be aware of the mandated reporting laws, review the website below:

http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/manda.cfm

Layout of the Book

The *Teen Safety 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.

Reproducible Pages:

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 individually or in groups to promote a positive responsibility for safety at home, in the classroom, and in the community. They can be distributed, scanned and converted into masters for overheads or transparencies, projected or written on boards and/or discussed.
- ❑ **Enrichment Activities** — A special section at the end of each chapter for teens from families struggling with substance abuse.

Who Should Use This Program?

This book has been designed as a practical tool for helping professionals, such as therapists, school counselors, psychologists, teachers, group leaders, etc. Depending on the role of the professional using the *Teen Safety 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 responding to various teen safety issues 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
- Explore the effects of unconscious childhood messages
- Gain insight and “a wake-up call” for behavioral change
- Focus their thinking on behavioral goals for change
- Uncover resources they possess that can help them to cope better with safety
- Explore their personal characteristics without judgment
- Recognize and accept their 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 explore 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, so use the assessments to help participants 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 Safety 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 ways they put themselves in danger, and to learn more effective skills for being responsible for, and assuring, their personal safety.

(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 the negative patterns that keep repeating throughout life. The assessments and exercises in this book can help promote this self-understanding. Through involvement in the in-depth activities, the 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 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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Introduction for the Participant

The teen years are exciting! You are becoming more mature and more independent each year, and you are now able to do new things that you could not do years ago. However, with this new independence also comes greater risk, and with this risk comes greater responsibility in the choices you make. It is critical that you become aware of the various risks that are inherent in society and understand that you have the power to ensure your own safety and that of your friends.

It's sometimes hard for parents or guardians to talk to you about safety, but your safety is their number one priority. However, as you become more independent, you need to take on more responsibility for your own safety in school and in your community, at your work or volunteer place, with your friends, at home and when you are online.

It is time to develop your own safety plan which will include your being aware of the dangers around you.

Some of the areas in which you need to worry about your personal safety:

- Risks related to violence including bullying, exposure to gangs, and harm from guns and other weapons.
- Online dangers including harassment, cyber-bullying, sexually explicit materials, identity theft and financial theft and scams, and agreeing to meet strangers in person after developing online relationships.
- Victimization of crimes.
- Risks while driving in dangerous ways, including driving after drinking or taking drugs, underestimating dangerous road situations, texting or using cell phones inappropriately and not wearing seat belts.
- Putting themselves in personal danger by pressures to do things they do not want to do such as experimenting with drugs and alcohol, having unprotected sex, going to unsafe places by themselves and engaging in risky behaviors.

The *Teen Safety Workbook* is designed to help you learn more about the dangers and risks in your life, and develop ways of coping with these dangers and risks.

CONFIDENTIALITY

You will be asked to respond to assessments and exercises, and to journal about some experiences in your life. Everyone has the right to confidentiality, and you need to honor the right of everyone's 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 people code names 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 actual name when you are listing people – use only name codes.**

Teen Safety Workbook

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What Stresses Me Out?

What types of things stress you out? Identify how you are experiencing stress and how you are dealing with it, either in a good or not-so-good way. Use name codes.

Areas of My Life When, Where, with Whom	How I Am Experiencing This Stress	How I Am Dealing with It – Good or Not-So-Good
<i>Ex: School - SKZ keeps telling me she wants me to smoke with her.</i>	<i>I get a stomach ache every time I see her coming.</i>	<i>I haven't had the courage to say no. I just avoid her.</i>
School		
Family		
Peers / Friends		
Bullying		
Career/Work		
Pressure to fit in		
Pressure to do well		
Changes in my body		
Other		

Stress can drive us to try our best or prevent us from taking appropriate actions. We need to be able to identify whether our stress reactions are having a positive or negative affect on us. It is important to recognize the ways our stress reactions direct our actions so that we can build on our strong positive reactions, but learn to re-direct negative stress reactions.



Tips for Dealing with Stress

Following are some activities you can do to reduce stress. Check the box in front of the items that you already do. The ones that remain are also good ways to manage stress – give them a try!

- Be realistic.
- Do not commit yourself to too many activities or take on activities in which you do not want to participate.
- Do not try to be perfect.
- Eat well-balanced meals regularly, cutting down on fast foods and sugars.
- Get enough hours of sleep each night.
- Play sports or exercise regularly.
- Remember that your attitude and thoughts can influence the way you look at things happening around you. Try to be as optimistic and positive as possible.
- Set realistic goals for yourself.
- Set small steps for large projects.
- Speak with a clergy member, religious or spiritual leader.
- Take control of what you can control and let the rest go.
- Take deep breaths along with positive thoughts
(I can speak easily in front of large groups . . .)
- Take time for hobbies and extra-curricular activities you enjoy.
- Talk to trusted friends, family, instructors or school counselors, to share your feelings.
- Think about change as a normal part of your life.
- Try not to compare yourself to friends or siblings.
- Try relaxing your muscles beginning down at your feet and relaxing all of the muscles in your body.