

Children's Connections Curriculum

Session Topic: Social Skills (Living in the Middle)

Developmental Level: Middle School

Purpose: To explore the benefits of living a “regular” life in the middle, away from extremes.

Materials: None

Description of Session:

1. Brainstorm ideas, impressions, beliefs, feelings that the students have about the future. Write on the board. To the extent possible, normalize feelings of concern, anxiety, questions.
2. Explain that many kids who aren't really sure what the future has for them get caught up in the idea of living on the edge. They get caught up in Penthouse or Prison Thinking. Explain what this is:
 - Prison thinking: I've already been locked up twice and I'm still a teenager. More and more it seems like detention, lock-down, or jail is the only place I fit in. It stinks here, but at least I know the ropes. Anyway, even when I try to stay out of trouble, it seems to follow me around. I just keep screwing up. I guess this is just who I am and where I belong. It's better to be a really bad somebody than a regular nobody.
 - Penthouse thinking: Man I'm sick of living like a nobody. I want to have tons of cash in my pocket, a swimming pool, expensive cars, and the nicest clothes you can buy. I want to be large and have people looking at me thinking to themselves, “That guy/girl really made it.” I want respect and the good life. None of that scrapin' by. No way. I want it all and then some. If I have to risk it all to go out with a bang, I will.
3. Ask if they identify with one or the other. Ask them to generate other thoughts that go along with each mentality. What are the problems with thinking each of those ways?
4. Introduce life in the middle. Brainstorm together things that may be included in 'a regular life'. What are the possible payoffs of a life in the middle?
5. Emphasize that a life in the middle is not a boring life; instead it's one of inner satisfaction. Ask group to explore what the difference is.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you know anyone who lives a life in the middle? Describe that person and a little about their life.
2. Think of one thing in your life, that you already have, that's worth living for. After they have each shared, explain the importance of gratitude and appreciating what we already have.

Reference: Casarjian, B and Casarjian R. (2003). *The Power Source Facilitator's Manual*. Boston, MA: The Lionheart Foundation.