



Runaway Prevention Curriculum For Classroom and Community Educators

1-800-RUNAWAY

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773.880.9860

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www.1800RUNAWAY.org

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Dear Community Educator,

One in every seven youth will run away from home by the age of 18.

That's a pretty daunting statistic. When you think about it, runaway prevention is everyone's concern. Youth who run away have an impact on their community. Prevention is a delicate balance of awareness, resources, communication, stress management and support.

In response to the expressed needs of teachers, this program was developed for you to use in total, in part or to supplement your own prevention curriculum. The content has been revised. On behalf of the National Runaway Switchboard, I am pleased to present this expanded program to you. The National Runaway Prevention Curriculum provides you with easy to use lessons on each prevention component. Included with these lessons are all the materials you will need when teaching your students. And we've also included an additional component for you to use with parents!

As partners in prevention, I would be pleased to hear about your success with presenting this program, or if you have any additional comments regarding its use. As always, please let me know how the National Runaway Switchboard can further support the important prevention work you do in your community. Together we can increase prevention efforts and provide renewed hope for youth and families.

Maureen Blaha
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Runaway Prevention Curriculum

Teacher's Guide

Students and Runaways

Kids on the street

Every day, 1.3 million runaway and homeless youth live on the streets of America. Some will live with friends or relatives; others will live on the street in often-horrific conditions. Each year approximately 5,000 runaway and homeless youth die from assault, illness and suicide.

The National Runaway Switchboard's goal is to get kids off the street into healthy living situations. To do that, the organization reaches out to kids before they leave home (prevention), as well as after they have left home (crisis intervention). One out of seven children will run away from home before the age of 18. How many of your students have run away?

Trouble signs teachers should look for

Teachers may be the first – or the last -- to know when a student is having serious problems. Some runaways still attend school and appear to function quite normally; others may show signs of distress. The student may:

1. Seem “out of sorts,” down, or even manic – extremes of “up” and down, change in weight, be extremely tired
2. Change groups of friends, or disassociate from old friends
3. Appear unwashed or wear clothing that looks like it was slept in
4. Show no signs at all, but your instinct as a caring educator may tell you something is wrong.

What to do – how teachers can help

Sometimes a teacher is the only trusted adult in a student's life. Without realizing it, you may be a very important person in your at-risk student's life.

Here's how you can help an individual student:

1. Cultivate a personal relationship. Make time to check in with them and listen.
2. Don't probe; it may seem judgmental or pushy. Let the student reveal his problems at his own rate.
3. Get him the help he needs before he resorts to running away.
4. Call the National Runaway Switchboard, or have the student call. 1-800-RUNAWAY.
5. Ask him to check out www.1800RUNAWAY.org

Here's how you can help your class or school:

1. Teach critical life skills to your students: listening, communication, problem solving, and safety. These skills are important, especially for runaways. You'll find skill-building lessons and exercises in this folder.
2. Use the Kids Call program in the worksheets package to introduce students to professional help. Your classroom is likely a non-threatening environment from which to experience a first contact.
3. Hand out National Runaway Switchboard wallet cards. Order them on-line at http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org/news_mail.asp.
4. Introduce class to National Runaway Switchboard's website, www.1800RUNAWAY.org.

Overview of what's included in the curriculum

This guide is designed to give you information on runaway prevention that you can customize and package into lesson plans appropriate for your classroom. Included are ideas for structuring lesson plans supported by more in-depth teacher's notes and student worksheets. You'll also find resource lists, evaluation forms and an order form for free materials to use in the classroom or school assembly.



Program Overview

What's the purpose of this program?

The Runaway Prevention Curriculum was created in response to the many calls we have received from teachers asking for a program that helps them teach runaway prevention.

1. *Students.* The objective is to help young people acquire skills that will help them communicate more effectively, learn to seek out trusted adult resources for help, find ways to manage daily stress, and understand what it's like to live on the street. The program is designed to have youth interact with adult service professionals so that in times of crisis, they will feel more comfortable seeking outside help.
2. *Teachers.* In addition to helping teach critical life skills (essential for runaway prevention), the program lets educators know how the National Runaway Switchboard can help them. Teachers can receive help customizing the material with local and state-wide professional resources for no charge, as well as order free materials such as pencils, wallet cards and posters. Teachers with at-risk students can also call 24 hours a day; Switchboard staff will serve as a sounding board for your ideas and questions.

Who sponsors it?

The National Runaway Switchboard created this program for teachers to use with kids in middle and high schools. This national agency operates a non-judgmental, confidential hotline for runaway youth, teens and pre-teens in crisis, as well as concerned friends, adults and family members. All services are free and available 24 hours every day. More than 100,000 calls are handled at the Switchboard every year.

Services include:

1. **Crisis intervention** through anonymous, confidential conversations with trained staff and volunteers that help callers explore options when things get tough
2. **Referrals and conference to community-based resources** such as counseling, support groups, youth shelters, health care and more
3. **Message relay** between runaways and their parent/legal guardian
4. A **"Home Free" program** in partnership with Greyhound Buslines, Inc. to help qualified runaways return home to their families
5. **Website** that offers information and limited crisis intervention for those who do not feel comfortable calling a hotline, www.1800RUNAWAY.org
6. **Education and outreach services** for teachers, students and agencies
7. **Volunteer opportunities** for individuals who want to support this national agency and help build strong families
8. **Free National Runaway Switchboard promotional materials** for distribution at community events, school assemblies, health fairs and other venues

What is the National Runaway Switchboard?

The National Runaway Switchboard is the federally designated national communication system for runaway and homeless youth. The telephone center can be accessed 24 hours a day throughout the United States and its territories, including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

A consortium of Chicago agencies founded the Switchboard in 1971 to fill a need for comprehensive crisis intervention for young people in Chicago. Three years later, the organization received a federal grant to establish a national hotline operation. Today, the National Runaway Switchboard continues to receive funding from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services.

About these copyrighted materials

The National Runaway Switchboard copyrights the material in this curriculum. We want teachers to feel free to copy and customize the material; however, please give the National Runaway Switchboard credit when you do.

Runaway: A youth under the age of 18 who is away from home *without* a parent/legal guardian's permission for more than 24 hours.

Throwaway: A youth under the age of 18 who is away from home *with* a parent/legal guardian's permission for more than 24 hours.



Runaway Prevention Curriculum

Suggested Lesson Plans

Curriculum Overview

Four areas of runaway prevention – for students

Preventing your students from running away from home means teaching them a delicate balance of lifesaving skills. You'll find teaching materials on each prevention component:

1. *Awareness* – what it means to run away and why running away won't solve their problems.
2. *Resources* – how to build a safety net of trusted people and organizations to turn to for help.
3. *Communication* – how to communicate (speak and listen) effectively. Runaways often have poor negotiation skills; rather than talk problems out with their parents, they just get frustrated and run.
4. *Stress Management* – how to reduce or manage stressors in their lives; how to solve problems.

One more – for parents

1. *Youth and Family Support* – here are suggestions for a discussion with parents that your parent-teacher organization might hold. Or, modify and send the materials home with a letter from you. Tell parents that you're teaching runaway prevention, and show them how they can help!

Awareness

Introduction

The first step in preventing runaway behavior is to understand the dynamics of what makes kids leave home. Knowing the facts about runaway youth will dispel myths about runaway teens and their families. It is important to recognize that there is no typical runaway. All youth are at-risk of running away at some point during adolescence and all youth deserve our help and attention.

Teaching Objective

Help students learn the facts about running away from home and life on the street.

Learning Objective

Learn that running away to live on the streets is a big mistake. It's better to find safe, healthy alternatives.

Basic Lesson Plan Structure

- A. Why kids run
- B. What it's like to live on the street
- C. Options – how to prevent or cope with situations that lead to running away



Teacher's Notes, Worksheets and Other Support Materials – (located in a separate section of materials)

1. Kids Call Program and Evaluation Form
2. Runaway Quiz and Answers
3. *Time* Magazine Article, "Running Scared" and Worksheet
4. 10 Questions to Ask Yourself Before You Run Away
5. National Runaway Switchboard Materials (order via the on-line form, www.1800RUNAWAY.org/news_mail.asp)
6. National Runaway Youth Statistics and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): www.1800RUNAWAY.org
7. National Runaway Switchboard video, "On the Street" (order via the on-line form, www.1800RUNAWAY.org/news_mail.asp)

Resources

Introduction

One of the most important prevention strategies is to build resources. Resources are people and things that help create a safety net around a youth. There are many types of resources: formal or informal, anonymous or confidential, local or global. Examples are friends, friends' parents, relatives, teachers, team or club leaders, and social worker/counselors.

Teaching Objective

Help students identify a variety of trustworthy resources they can trust to refer to friends. Let students experience what it's like to interact with professional resources.

Learning Objective

Understand the value of a safety net of trusted friends, adults and professionals.

Basic Lesson Plan Structure

- A. Identify known resources
- B. Brainstorm (and meet) new / professional resources
- C. Build a safety net of resources

Teacher's Notes, Worksheets and Other Support Materials – (located in a separate section of materials)

1. Identify Your Resources
2. Introduce Your Class to New Resources
3. Build a Safety Net
4. Who Can You Turn To?
5. Resources You Should Know
6. My Personal Emergency Card
7. Teens + Stress – Resources=Crisis
8. Kids Call Program and Evaluation Form
9. Problem-Solving Scenarios
10. The Diary of Lisa
11. Website: www.1800RUNAWAY.org
12. National Runaway Switchboard Materials (order via the on-line form, www.1800RUNAWAY.org/news_mail.asp)



Communication

Introduction

Communication is essential to positive and trusting relationships. Modeling and teaching listening skills helps students learn to communicate more effectively at home, school and in public.

Teaching Objective

Teach students how to listen first for understanding, and *then* communicate their opinions.

Learning Objective

The two best ways to have your opinion heard include: listening with your eyes, and making sure the other person feels understood.

Basic Lesson Plan Structure

- A. Identify barriers to communication – why is it so difficult to communicate?
- B. Understand the power of listening
- C. The habit of empathic communication – “Seek first to understand ... then to be understood.”
(Stephen Covey)

Teacher’s Notes, Worksheets and Other Support Materials – (located in a separate section of materials)

1. Listening to Communicate
2. Listening Journals
3. Communicating in Times of Crisis
4. Family Communication Tips
5. Kids Call Program and Evaluation Form
6. Problem-Solving Scenarios – teacher’s notes and worksheet
7. The Diary of Lisa -- teacher’s notes and worksheet
8. Website: www.1800RUNAWAY.org
9. National Runaway Switchboard Materials (use the on-line form to order materials, www.1800RUNAWAY.org/news_mail.asp)
10. *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey, PhD (not included with materials)
11. *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, Sean Covey (not included with materials)

Stress Management

Introduction

The first step in preventing runaway behavior is to understand the dynamics of what makes kids leave home. Knowing the facts about runaway youth will dispel myths about runaway teens and their families. It is important to recognize that there is no typical runaway. All youth are at-risk at some point during adolescence and all youth deserve our help and attention.

Teaching Objective

Help students identify the stressors in their lives and develop an action plan for reducing the stress.



Learning Objective

See how objectivity and a stress management plan can help you solve problems and manage stress.

Basic Lesson Plan Structure

- A. Identify known stressors
- B. Learn problem-solving techniques
- C. Learn to manage stress

Teacher's Notes, Worksheets and Other Support Materials – (located in a separate section of materials)

1. Managing Stress / Problem-Solving
2. Teens + Stress – Resources = Crisis – teacher's notes and worksheet
3. Kids Call Program and Evaluation Form
4. Problem-Solving Scenarios
5. The Diary of Lisa
6. Website: www.1800RUNAWAY.org
7. National Runaway Switchboard Materials (use the on-line form to order materials, www.1800RUNAWAY.org/news_mail.asp)

Youth and Family Support (for parents)

Introduction

The 12-hour workday. Latchkey kids. Demise of the extended family living under one roof. Divorce and remarriage. All of these factors work against family closeness. Help your students by encouraging parent teacher organizations to support their families using the tools in this lesson. Even though this section is intended for use with adults, you may opt to use it in your classroom. If you do, please understand that students with troubled family lives may not be comfortable participating in this lesson.

Teaching Objective

Disseminate family communication tools to bring students' present (or future) families closer together.

Learning Objective

A healthy family culture involves interaction, communication, sharing.

Basic Lesson Plan Structure

- A. Identify barriers to communication – why is it so difficult to communicate?
- B. The traditional family a rarity – why is that? How does that impact communication?
- C. How to improve family communication.

Teacher's Notes, Worksheets and Other Support Materials – (located in a separate section of materials)

1. Support Youth and Families
2. Family Communication Tips
3. Family Communication Contract
4. Our Family Communication Contract
5. The Family Meeting
6. Sample Family Meeting Agenda
7. Family Volunteering
8. Safety Contract
9. Website: www.1800RUNAWAY.org
10. National Runaway Switchboard Materials **use the on-line form to order materials,** www.1800RUNAWAY.org/news_mail.asp



Runaway Prevention Curriculum

Teacher's Notes and Worksheets

Contents

I. Awareness

- A. *Teacher's Notes:* Kids Call Program
- B. *Worksheet:* Kids Call Program Evaluation Form
- C. *Worksheet:* Runaway Quiz
- D. *Worksheet:* Runaway Quiz Answers
- E. *Time* magazine article, "Running Scared"
- F. *Worksheet:* For *Time* magazine article, "Running Scared"
- G. *Worksheet:* 10 Questions to Ask Yourself Before You Run Away

II. Resources

- A. *Teacher's Notes:* Identify Your Resources
- B. *Teacher's Notes:* Introduce Your Class to New Resources
- C. *Teacher's Notes:* Build a Safety Net
- D. *Worksheet:* Who Can You Turn To?
- E. *Worksheet:* Resources You Should Know
- F. *Worksheet:* My Personal Emergency Card
- G. *Teacher's Notes:* Teens + Stress – Resources = *Crisis*
- H. *Worksheet:* Teens + Stress – Resources = *Crisis*
- I. *Teacher's Notes:* Kids Call Program
- J. *Worksheet:* Kids Call Program Evaluation Form
- K. *Teacher's Notes:* Problem-Solving Scenarios
- L. *Worksheet:* Problem-Solving Scenarios
- M. *Teacher's Notes:* The Diary of Lisa
- N. *Worksheet:* The Diary of Lisa

III. Communication

- A. *Teacher's Notes:* Listening to Communicate
- B. *Worksheet:* Listening Journals
- C. *Worksheet:* Communicating in Times of Crisis
- D. *Worksheet:* Family Communication Tips
- E. *Teacher's Notes:* Kids Call Program
- F. *Worksheet:* Kids Call Program Evaluation Form
- G. *Teacher's Notes:* Problem-Solving Scenarios
- H. *Worksheet:* Problem-Solving Scenarios
- I. *Teacher's Notes:* The Diary of Lisa
- J. *Worksheet:* The Diary of Lisa



IV. Stress Management

- A. *Teacher's Notes: Managing Stress / Problem-Solving*
- B. *Teacher's Notes: Teens + Stress – Resources = Crisis*
- C. *Worksheet: Teens + Stress – Resources = Crisis*
- D. *Teacher's Notes: Kids Call Program*
- E. *Worksheet: Kids Call Program Evaluation Form*
- F. *Teacher's Notes: Problem-Solving Scenarios*
- G. *Worksheet: Problem-Solving Scenarios*
- H. *Teacher's Notes: The Diary of Lisa*
- I. *Worksheet: The Diary of Lisa*

V. One more for parents ... Youth and Family Support

- A. *Teacher's Notes: Support Youth and Families*
- B. *Worksheet: Family Communication Tips*
- C. *Worksheet: Family Communication Contract*
- D. *Worksheet: Our Family Communication Contract*
- E. *Worksheet: The Family Meeting*
- F. *Worksheet: Sample Family Meeting Agenda*
- G. *Worksheet: Family Volunteering*
- H. *Worksheet: Safety Contract*



Runaway Prevention Curriculum

Section I: Awareness



Teacher's Notes: Kids Call Program

I-A

Objective:

Let your students see what it's like to talk to people who can help – in the protected environment of your classroom. If trouble strikes, hopefully they will be comfortable calling the National Runaway Switchboard, or referring a friend.

Directions:

Here's how it works. All you need is a telephone / speakerphone. A professional staff person or specially-trained volunteer from the National Runaway Switchboard will call you at a pre-arranged time to speak to your students via speakerphone. Simply call the National Runaway Switchboard at 1-800-RUNAWAY to schedule a time for your call.

If you'd like to hand out pencils, wallet cards, bookmarks or other materials after the call, just ask when you set up the appointment. We'll be happy to send you those materials in advance, free of charge.

READY? Plan the call in advance. Here are some ways you can use the Kids Call program with your runaway prevention curriculum:

☞☞ AWARENESS

Brainstorm questions about runaways with your students, then call the National Runaway Switchboard for answers. *Sample questions:*

- What makes someone run away?
- Why would someone call a hotline?
- How do we know it's really confidential and anonymous?
- What are the most common reasons for calling the National Runaway Switchboard?
- Where do they go?
- Do runaways go to jail?
- How long are runaways gone?
- Do all runaways go home?
- When do they decide to go home?
- How do runaways get home if they don't have any money?

☞☞ RESOURCES

Engage one of your most creative student actors in role-playing someone in distress. Create a scenario in advance so your caller is prepared, or use one of the National Runaway Switchboard's (see problem-solving scenarios).

☞☞ COMMUNICATION

How do the National Runaway Switchboard staff and volunteers help callers? Through good communication skills and a structured conversation. Ask how we do it!

☞☞ STRESS MANAGEMENT / PROBLEM-SOLVING

The National Runaway Switchboard doesn't solve your problems for you – the hotline volunteer or staff person helps you create an action plan to solve your own problems. Talk to the National Runaway Switchboard. You can help yourself or a friend.

SET? When you're ready to begin, feel free to call the National Runaway Switchboard collect on the business line, 1-773-880-9860.

GO! A staff person will call you back right away (your school does not pay for the call). When your call is finished, please complete and send in the Kids Call evaluation.



Worksheet: Kids Call Evaluation Form I-B

Directions: Fill out this form and return it to the National Runaway Switchboard. See contact info at the bottom of the page.

Name and Title: _____

Organization: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____ Fax: (____) _____

Date and Time of Kids Call: _____ Duration of Call: _____

Name of Facilitator / Person Who Took The Call: _____

Please use the following scale to evaluate the Kids Call program:

	5 Strongly Agree	4 Liked	3 Neutral	2 Disliked	1 Strongly Disagree
1. The Kids Call program effectively answered our questions about runaways.	5	4	3	2	1
2. The staff person or volunteer who answered our questions was knowledgeable.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Our audience felt the presentation increased their understanding about runaway issues.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Our audience is likely to call the National Runaway Switchboard in times of trouble.	5	4	3	2	1

Was this your first Kids Call? How did it go?

Any Recommendations For Next Time?

Audience Demographics (Number Please)

Number of Youth _____ Ages _____ Number of Males vs. Females: _____ Males _____ Females
Number of Adults _____

Thank you for your time and participation. Please return this form to:

Kids Call

National Runaway Switchboard
3080 N. Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, IL 60657
773.880.9860
773.929.5150 – fax



Worksheet: National Runaway Switchboard's Runaway Quiz I-C

Directions:

Circle the answers you feel are correct, then use the answer key to check your work.

1.	One in ____ youth will run away from home by the age of 18. A. 7 B. 70 C. 700 D. 7,000 E. 70,000	6.	Which is the most common state for NRS callers to report running from? A. Florida B. California C. New York D. Texas E. Illinois
2.	The number one reason youth call the NRS is: F. Pregnancy G. School problems H. Peer pressure I. Family Dynamics J. Abuse	7.	Which is the most common state for NRS callers to report running to? A. Florida B. California C. New York D. Texas E. Illinois
3.	What is the average age of a runaway caller to the NRS? K. 9 L. 11 M. 13 N. 15 O. 16	8.	What is the average length of time that a youth is on the run before calling the NRS? A. 0-3 days B. 4-7 days C. 1-4 weeks D. 1-6 months E. Over 6 months
4.	Who calls the NRS for help? P. Any youth Q. Runaways R. Parents of runaways S. Police officers T. All of the above	9.	What percentage of NRS runaway callers report crossing state lines? A. 80% B. 60% C. 20% D. 40% E. 10%
5.	Who calls the NRS more often? U. Males V. Females	10.	What percentage of runaway callers have run away before? A. 10% B. 20% C. 35% D. 50% E. 80%



Worksheet: Runaway Quiz Answers

I-D

Directions:

Use this key to check your answers to the runaway quiz.

1. (A) One in seven youth will run away before the age of 18.
2. (D) Family dynamics account for approximately 40% of all calls to the National Runaway Switchboard. This category includes divorce, remarriage, problems with siblings, and conflicts with family rules.
3. (E) The average age of a runaway caller to the National Runaway Switchboard is 16.
4. (E) Anyone who cares about runaway youth can call the National Runaway Switchboard for help.
5. (B) Females outnumber male callers 3:1. This ratio includes youth, adults and professionals (police officers, social workers).
6. (B) California is the most popular reported state that youth run from.
7. (B) California is the most popular reported state that youth run to.
8. (A) Almost 40% of runaway youth who call the National Runaway Switchboard do so within 0-3 days of leaving home. 22% call within 4-7 days. 15% call within 1-4 weeks, 19% call in 1-6 months, and 5% call after being away for over 6 months.
9. (D) 40% of National Runaway Switchboard's runaway youth callers cross state lines.
10. (C) 35% of National Runaway Switchboard's runaway callers report that they have previously run away at least once before.

Have problems? Talk to us.
1-800-RUNAWAY.
National Runaway Switchboard
www.1800RUNAWAY.org



Worksheet: *Time Magazine's "Running Scared" Article I-E*

Link to Time Inc.'s Website

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/archive/1994/941121/941121.society.html>



Worksheet: *Time* Magazine's "Running Scared" Article I-F

Directions:

Let one of America's most respected journalistic publications describe what it's like to live on the street. How many of the following questions can you answer?

1. How many teenagers leave home every day?
2. Do experts believe that runaway youth are getting older or younger?
3. What do you think are some of the reasons for the age change?
4. What are some of the dangers facing runaways on the street?
5. What are some of the top cities for runaway youth to run to?
6. Why do you think these cities attract runaways?
7. What is the name of the abandoned buildings that runaways sleep in?
8. What are the four main ways runaways survive on the street?
9. What are other ways runaways survive?

Have problems? Talk to us.
1-800-RUNAWAY.
National Runaway Switchboard
www.1800RUNAWAY.org



Worksheet: 10 Questions to Ask Yourself Before You Run Away I-G

Directions:

Review the questions below. Can you think of any others you'd like to add to the list?

1. What else can I do to improve my home situation before I leave?
2. What would make me stay at home?
3. How will I survive?
4. Is running away safe?
5. Who can I count on to help me?
6. Am I being realistic?
7. Have I given this enough thought?
8. What are my other options?
9. If I end up in trouble, whom will I call?
10. When I return home, what will happen?

Have problems? Talk to us.
1-800-RUNAWAY.
National Runaway Switchboard
www.1800RUNAWAY.org



Worksheet: **Things to Do Instead of Running Away I-H**

Visit your grandparents . . . **go to the movies** . . . go to the mall . . .
take a writing class . . . take up scuba diving . . . **take up skydiving** . .
. . . learn to swim . . . **learn to line or salsa or clog or tap dance** . . .
learn to speak French or Spanish or Polish or Italian or Swahili . . .
learn to play the trumpet . . . teach someone how to play the banjo . .
. . . **become a nanny** . . . tutor other kids . . . **volunteer at a shelter or a**
hotline or a hospital or a nursing home . . . make a movie with your
friends . . . **keep a journal** . . . write a novel . . . **get to know extended**
family members better . . . take up acting . . . **dye your hair to match**
your favorite outfit . . . go on a picnic . . . **join a community group** . .
organize a neighborhood clean- up . . . **plan your future** . . . get a job . .
. . . **play with your little brother or sister** . . . help dad clean out the
garage . . . **help a neighbor cut the grass or shovel the snow** . . . clean
your room . . . **open a lemonade stand** . . . join a baseball team . . .
join a bowling league . . . read a book . . . **write a book** . . . run a
marathon . . . **train for a marathon** . . . support a marathoner . . .
take a singing class . . . go to a museum . . . **volunteer to be a**
museum guide . . . attend a street fair . . . **become a storyteller at the**
local library . . . train for wrestling or football or track or basketball . .
. . . **join a volleyball team** . . . visit the art institute . . . **take up**
drawing or painting or sculpture . . . go to the zoo . . . **volunteer at**
the zoo . . . get a job at the zoo . . . **spend time with your family** . . .
learn to cook . . . **cook for your family or friends** . . . become a
mentor . . . **seek a mentor for yourself** . . . go to a baseball game . . .
go hiking . . . attend a concert . . . **become a camp counselor** . . . take
up photography . . . **wash the car** . . . learn to sew . . . **teach someone**
how to knit . . . organize a car wash . . . **start a dog walking business**
. . . join the park district . . . **babysit for a neighbor** . . . take up
power walking . . . **talk to your parents about when they were**
teenagers . . . talk to someone – a friend, a teacher, a favorite
relative, your parents, your coach or **1-800-RUNAWAY**.



Runaway Prevention Curriculum

Section II: Resources



Teacher's Notes: Identify Your Resources II-A

Objective:

Help students identify resources that can help them with problem solving.

Directions:

Q. What is a resource? Define and give examples of resources that can be helpful to teens that need to talk about problems.

Resources help get you the information or advice you seek. Examples include:

1. People (friends, relatives, educators, professionals etc.)
2. Books
3. Movies
4. Internet sites

Q. What are the pros/cons of each resource? See "Who Can You Turn To?" worksheet.

Sample resource: Family Members

Advantages

Familiarity
Historical perspective
Close, trusted
Lives in same house
Easy to find and talk to
Knows you
May be experiencing similar problems

Disadvantages

Bias toward other family members
Might be source of the problem
Might tell parents

Q. Who might you turn to for help or advice in the following situations?

1. Friend is suicidal
2. Something is wrong with your eyes
3. Cousin experiments with drugs
4. Mom is depressed
5. Questions about AIDS
6. Having problems with algebra
7. Physically abused at home
8. Best friend drives drunk after parties
9. Brother wants to run away from home
10. Need \$200 to repay a debt
11. Friend having sex with older man (40s)



Teacher's Notes: Introduce Your Class to New Resources II-B

Objective:

Help students understand the wide variety of resources available. Let them become familiar with professional resources by interviewing them.

Directions:

Compile a list of local, state, and national professional resources. (Use our list of "Resources You Should Know" as a start.)

Develop a list of interview questions, such as:

1. *Who are your clients?*
2. *Do you serve males and females?*
3. *Do you serve adults and youth?*
4. *What services do you offer?*
5. *Are your services confidential?*
6. *At what times are your services available?*
7. *Does it cost anything to use your services?*
8. *How many people use your services in one year?*
9. *Does your program use youth volunteers?*
10. *What kind of training is required to do your job?*
11. *Is parental permission/involvement required for clients under 21?*

Assign each participant or each group of students a resource to contact for an interview. Have students present their findings to the class.

Introduce one or more of the resources to the class as guest speakers or use the National Runaway Switchboard's Kids Call program.

Explore the diversity of resources students interviewed and draw conclusions:

1. What different types of technology were represented? Internet? Hotlines?
2. What range of topics/issues was covered?
3. Some programs are only able to serve specific clients or populations. Were there any limitations on the people being served?
4. How many programs were free? What programs cost money to use?
5. Were there any national and local resources that served the same population?
6. Where were there any surprises in the survey?
7. Which of the resources would you most likely use?
8. What would you do if you called a resource and they weren't the "right" one?

Compile a list of resources the participants thought were useful and distribute for future reference. Be sure to share your findings with the National Runaway Switchboard!



Teacher's Notes: Build a Safety Net

II-C

Objective:

Illustrate how resources can keep a youth safe.

Directions:

Step 1: Start with a blank piece of paper.

Step 2: Draw a circle in the middle of the paper and write your name in it.

Step 3: Draw other circles around your circle. Use a pencil or colored markers.

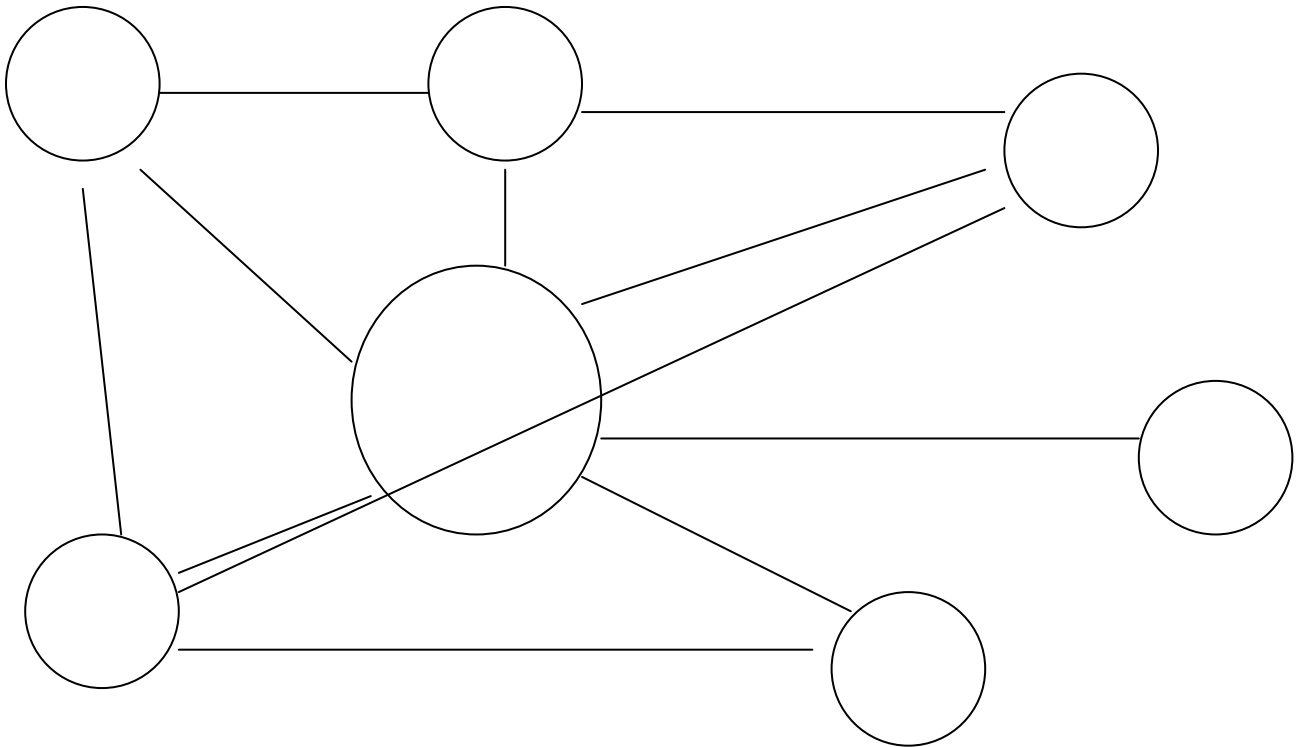
Step 4: In each circle write the name of a resource you trust. Remember, consider known and new resources.

Step 5: Connect each circle to your circle by drawing a line.

Step 6: Draw lines between the circles with names of people who know each other.

Step 7: Consider who is a part of your safety net, and how they can help you. Call them to let them know they're important to you!

Example:





Worksheet: **Who Can You Turn To?**

II-D

Directions:

What are the pros/cons of talking to a resource? Map them out below, then circle the most helpful ones.

	Pros	Cons	<i>When to Use This Resource</i>
Friend			
Friend's Mom			
Relative			
Teacher			
Psychiatrist			
Doctor			
Social Worker			
Hotline			
Internet			
Other			
Other			
Other			

Have problems? Talk to us.
1-800-RUNAWAY.
National Runaway Switchboard
www.1800RUNAWAY.org



Worksheet: **Resources You Should Know** **II-E**

Directions: Review this list. Can you think of other hotlines or websites you'd like to add?

HOTLINES: National Runaway Switchboard 1-800-RUNAWAY

AIDS -- CDC National AIDS Hotline 1-800-342-2437

Al-Anon or AlaTeen Family Group 1-888-4AL-ANON

American Council on Alcoholism (ACA) 1-800-527-5344

Childhelp USA 1-800-4-A-CHILD

Eating Disorders Awareness & Prevention 1-800-931-2237

Girls and Boys Town National Hotline 1-800-448-3000

Job Corps 1-800-733-JOBS

National Center for Victims of Crime 1-800-394-2255

National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233

Planned Parenthood 1-800-230-7526

Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Services Administration 1-800-622-HELP

Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network 1-800-656-HOPE

Trevor Helpline for Gay/Lesbian Youth 1-800-850-8087

WEB SITES: National Runaway Switchboard

What's Driving You

National Youth Gang Center

National Network for Youth

Victim Services

800 Drug Help

Safe Place

Teen Advice

Connect for Kids

www.1800RUNAWAY.org

www.whatsdrivingyou.org

www.iir.com

www.nn4youth.org

www.safehorizon.org

www.drughelp.org/referral/hotline.asp

www.iglou.com/safeplace/index.html

www.teenadvice.org

www.connectforkids.org



Worksheet: My Personal Emergency Card II-F

Directions:

Here's a quick reference card for you to fill out and carry in your wallet or purse. Make sure it's available for you in case you are faced with a crisis. Who can you call in case of emergency? List as many resources as you can.

My resources in case of an emergency:

Emergency Resources Card		
My name: _____		
Address/tel: _____		
My parent(s)/guardian(s)' name(s): _____		
Cellular phone/work phone(s): _____		
Resource Name	Relationship	Phone Number
1. The National Runaway Switchboard	Hotline	1-800-RUNAWAY
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Worksheet: My Personal Emergency Card II-F

Directions:

Here's a quick reference card for you to fill out and carry in your wallet or purse. Make sure it's available for you in case you are faced with a crisis. Who can you call in case of emergency? List as many resources as you can.

My resources in case of an emergency:

Emergency Resources Card		
My name: _____		
Address/tel: _____		
My parent(s)/guardian(s)' name(s): _____		
Cellular phone/work phone(s): _____		
Resource Name	Relationship	Phone Number
1. The National Runaway Switchboard	Hotline	1-800-RUNAWAY
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		



Teacher's Notes: **Teens + Stress - Resources = Crisis II-G**

Objective:

Help students map out their stressors, potential crises, and resources.

Directions:

Use the worksheet on the next page as a worksheet or a blackboard exercise.

Teens run away for a variety of reasons. Usually the decision to run is based on a formula of stress and resources. When stress is overwhelming, and teens don't have the resources to help them cope, a crisis is imminent. Teens may run away from home without thinking.

All teens have stress as well as resources in their lives. The balance of these components is the key. Use this exercise to better understand the relationship of stress/pressures to resources (or lack thereof) and their impact on a teen's decisions and behavior.

Examples of how to fill out the chart:

Teen	Stress	Crisis	Resource
Fights with parents	Divorce	Running away	Friends
Curfew	HIV/AIDS	Depression	Teachers
Wanting more freedom	Blended families	Suicide	School counselors
Driver's education	Being gay or lesbian	Getting arrested	National Runaway Switchboard
First job	Parent remarrying	Gang involvement	Doctors
Dating	Alcoholism	Problems at school	Nurses
Experimenting with drug/alcohol	Parent being unemployed	Dropping out of school	Coaches
Doing chores	Illness or death	Getting expelled	Neighbors
Being independent	Pregnancy/STDs	Drug addiction	Parents
Peer pressure	Learning disability	Trouble with police	Step-parents
Wanting to fit in	Physical abuse	Stealing	Siblings
Having friends	Sexual abuse	Eating disorder	Grandparents
Doing well I school	Domestic violence	Hurting self or others	Therapist
Puberty	Neglect	Moving out	Social workers
	Emotional abuse	Being cut off from family	Police or lawyer



Worksheet: **Teens + Stress - Resources = Crisis II-H**

Directions:

Teens run away for a variety of reasons. Think about whether resources could help you avoid a crisis.

Step 1: Under the Teen category, list events/feelings all teenagers experience.

Step 2: Under the Stress category, list stresses some teenagers experience.

Step 3: Under Crisis, list what can happen when teens are overwhelmed.

Step 4: Under the Resources category, list resources a teenager might rely on for help.

Step 5: Discuss the question. Can resources help teens avert a crisis? How?

Teen Event/Feelings	Stress	Crisis	Resources	Crisis Averted?

Teens + Stress + Resources = Crisis Averted?



Teacher's Notes: Kids Call Program

II-I

Objective:

Let your students see what it's like to talk to people who can help – in the protected environment of your classroom. If trouble strikes, hopefully they will be comfortable calling the National Runaway Switchboard, or referring a friend.

Directions:

Here's how it works. All you need is a telephone / speakerphone. A professional staff person or specially-trained volunteer from the National Runaway Switchboard will call you at a pre-arranged time to speak to your students via speakerphone. Simply call the National Runaway Switchboard at 1-800-RUNAWAY to schedule a time for your call.

If you'd like to hand out pencils, wallet cards, bookmarks or other materials after the call, just ask when you set up the appointment. We'll be happy to send you those materials in advance, free of charge.

READY? Plan the call in advance. Here are some ways you can use the Kids Call program with your runaway prevention curriculum:

☞☞ AWARENESS

Brainstorm questions about runaways with your students, then call the National Runaway Switchboard for answers. *Sample questions:*

- What makes someone run away?
- Why would someone call a hotline?
- How do we know it's really confidential and anonymous?
- What are the most common reasons for calling the National Runaway Switchboard?
- Where do they go?
- Do runaways go to jail?
- How long are runaways gone?
- Do all runaways go home?
- When do they decide to go home?
- How do runaways get home if they don't have any money?

☞☞ RESOURCES

Engage one of your most creative student actors in role-playing someone in distress. Create a scenario in advance so your caller is prepared, or use one of the National Runaway Switchboard's (see problem-solving scenarios).

☞☞ COMMUNICATION

How do the National Runaway Switchboard staff and volunteers help callers? Through good communication skills and a structured conversation. Ask how we do it!

☞☞ STRESS MANAGEMENT / PROBLEM-SOLVING

The National Runaway Switchboard doesn't solve your problems for you – the hotline volunteer or staff person helps you create an action plan to solve your own problems. Talk to the National Runaway Switchboard. You can help yourself or a friend.

SET? When you're ready to begin, feel free to call the National Runaway Switchboard collect on the business line, 1-773-880-9860.

GO! A staff person will call you back right away (your school does not pay for the call). When your call is finished, please complete and send in the Kids Call evaluation.



Worksheet: Kids Call Evaluation Form II-J

Directions: Fill out this form and return it to the National Runaway Switchboard. See contact info at the bottom of the page.

Name and Title: _____

Organization: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____ Fax: (____) _____

Date and Time of Kids Call: _____ Duration of Call: _____

Name of Facilitator / Person Who Took The Call: _____

Please use the following scale to evaluate the Kids Call program:

	5 Strongly Agree	4 Liked	3 Neutral	2 Disliked	1 Strongly Disagree
1. The Kids Call program effectively answered our questions about runaways.	5	4	3	2	1
2. The staff person or volunteer who answered our questions was knowledgeable.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Our audience felt the presentation increased their understanding about runaway issues.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Our audience is likely to call the National Runaway Switchboard in times of trouble.	5	4	3	2	1

Was this your first Kids Call? How did it go?

Any Recommendations For Next Time? _____

Audience Demographics (Number Please) _____

Number of Youth _____ Ages _____ Number of Males vs. Females: _____ Males _____ Females

Number of Adults _____

Thank you for your time and participation. Please return this form to:

Kids Call

National Runaway Switchboard
3080 N. Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, IL 60657
773.880.9860
773.929.5150 – fax



Teacher's Notes: Problem-Solving Scenarios II-K

Objective:

Use real-life situations to examine runaway prevention from all aspects.

Directions:

Divide your class into three groups. Assign each group a scenario. Copy and cut out the scenarios on the worksheet, then hand them out to your students. Have the groups present the highlights of their discussions to the class.

Here are some sample questions to have your class consider:

AWARENESS

- ✍ ✍ Will the youth run? What might happen if he or she runs?
- ✍ ✍ What do you think happens next?

RESOURCES

- ✍ ✍ What resources might help keep him or her from running?

COMMUNICATION

- ✍ ✍ Does communication (or lack of communication) play a role? How?

STRESS MANAGEMENT / PROBLEM SOLVING

- ✍ ✍ How can this person manage their stress?
- ✍ ✍ Develop a problem-solving action plan for this person.
- ✍ ✍ Is this scenario realistic? Could it happen to anyone you know?



Worksheet: Problem-Solving Scenarios

II-L

Directions: Answer the questions your teacher has assigned using your scenario.

A friend in need

Cheryl's best friend Nicole is going to run away and Cheryl is thinking about going with her. Nicole wants to get far, far away from her home. Her dad died a few years ago and now her mom is working two jobs to support the family. Nicole is 15 and the oldest of four children. She has twin sisters that are 8 and a 3 year-old brother. Since her mom is so busy all the time, Nicole has to pick her brother and sisters up after school and take care of them under her mom gets home about 9:00 pm. Nicole has to cook for them, help them with their homework, and make sure they don't get in any trouble. By the time her mom gets home from work, Nicole is exhausted. She does whatever homework she can and falls into bed, just to wake up the next morning and to do it all over again. She has almost no time to hang out with her friends. She even had to drop out of student government because she could never make it to any meetings. Nicole told Cheryl that she's going to run away tonight. She doesn't have specific plans about where to go except that she wants it to be far and that she's going to hitchhike.

☞☞ Cheryl is very worried about her friend's safety and wants to go with her to help protect her. She knows that leaving will worry her parents, but she feels that someone has to help Nicole. She must decide what to do right away.

Directions: Answer the questions your teacher has assigned using your scenario.

Running from an abusive situation

Valerie is 16 and being physically abused at home. Her dad hits her so hard sometimes that she literally goes flying across the room. Her mom also slaps her frequently. Valerie and her dad got into another fight last night and he really hurt her badly. Her ribs are sore from where he kicked her and she has a lump on the back of her head. She just can't take it anymore. She wants to get far away and never wants to come back. She wants to be in a foster home or somewhere she might have parents that really care for her. She tried to talk to a counselor at school about all this, but she felt that the counselor made a bunch of excuses for her parents and didn't want to get involved. Valerie's ready to leave tonight. She wants to get out and find someone that can help her. She doesn't know what will happen, but she knows she's going to leave. She doesn't want to give her parents the opportunity to hit her again tonight.

☞☞ Her friends Robert and Julia stop by as Valerie is packing her bags. They know what's going on and want to help.

Directions: Answer the questions your teacher has assigned using your scenario.

Punished by "past offenders"

Joe thinks he has the worst parents in the whole world. They grew up like hippies, smoking marijuana everyday and wearing tie-dyed t-shirts. What a surprise to be grounded for three months when they found a joint in his coat pocket. He thinks they're hypocrites and totally unfair. Since they did it when they were young, Joe doesn't know why they can't understand that he wants to try it, too. He feels that his drug use isn't that serious because he's only experimenting with pot and sometimes acid. He could see their concern if he were selling it to small children or something. He claims that he just likes to get high every now and then because it makes him feel good and helps him get rid of stress. Joe doesn't think he has a problem and he's very upset with his parents' rules. He's thinking of running away.

☞☞ Joe casually mentioned his problems and plan to run away to a teacher named Bob Rollo, a former hippie himself that students trust. Mr. Rollo and Joe have made plans to talk after school.



Teacher's Notes: The Diary of Lisa

II-M

Objective:

Give students an insight into a fictitious runaway girl's life. Help them use her experiences to explore the four areas of runaway prevention.

Directions:

Have the class read the diary in one day or over the course of five days. Use the diary to explore the four areas of runaway prevention, and how better awareness, resources, communication and stress management / problem solving might have kept her from running, or could help her now that she's come home.

Here are some assignments you can give your class:

✍️✍️ Pretend you're Lisa wrapping up what she's learned from the experience of living on the street. What were Lisa's primary concerns from day to day? How did her concerns at home differ from her concerns on the street? What do you think Lisa has learned from her experience? (Make sure you consider what may have been good and bad about her experience.)

✍️✍️ Write an essay on what you would do if you were Lisa's best friend. How could you have helped Lisa before she left home? What will things be like when she returns? What will change in your relationship with her?

✍️✍️ Write a matching diary for the same five days as if you were Lisa's mother or sister.

✍️✍️ Write a fictitious diary for yourself, as though you were going to run away from home. What might you encounter? How would you escape? Would you go home?



Worksheet: Lisa's Diary

II-N

Day 1

Dear Diary,

I feel like I've been waiting forever. Waiting for things to get better. Waiting for my mom to quit being so horrible to me. Waiting for things to change. Waiting for everything. But things never did change and I got tired of waiting. I left while my mom and sister were out grocery shopping. I'm supposed to be grounded for breaking curfew last weekend. I was already grounded from the time before so I guess it didn't matter if I got grounded again. And now it doesn't matter anyway because I'm never coming home again.

I wonder when she'll realize I'm gone. She'll totally freak. She will lose it. She'll probably call my dad and make him come over. She'll call the cops, she'll call everyone. I kind of wish I could see it. She makes me crazy every day, may she'll know how bad it was for me living there. I'm headed south. Spent \$50 on a train ride and climbed aboard. Home seems really far away. I'm so happy to be gone.

Day 2

Dear Diary,

I talked to this really cool woman for a while on the train but then she got off. Her name is Carley. She gave me 20 bucks which will help. She told me she was worried about me and wished I would go home, but I told her I would never go home. After she left, I got pretty bored just riding so I got off the train too. I ended up in a town way smaller than mine called Mount Nathan or Nathanville or something lame. I got something to eat and it was like nobody even asked me what I was doing or where I was from. They just stared at me but no one said anything. I walked around and sat on a curb in front of a hair salon. I thought about cutting all of my hair off.. My mom always really loved my hair. She said it looked like hers when she was young. I can't even imagine my mom as a kid. She was always telling me what to do and how to act and how not to act. She told me I was a troublemaker and she said I was up to no good all the time. My mom was probably a total reject in high school. She probably never went out and never drank. My mom was always afraid for me. She never let me just be ME!

She didn't understand that things are way different now than they were for her and there was no way I was going to live her pathetic life.

I went into Burgers & More to use the bathroom and wash my face. I stole a roll of toilet paper and stuffed it in my back pack. I feel like I'm on an adventure. I like the fact that no one knows me. I can totally start over. I went back to Burgers & More to eat. There were some other kids there and they looked like a bunch of geeks. Maybe they're all named Nathan.

I think about my sister. She's probably sad that I'm gone. She and I never got along great but sometimes she could be cool.. She 's younger than me but she was always the favorite one. She was smarter and better at everything. Karla is so pretty. Karla has so much potential. Whatever. Karla will probably take over my room. It was the one thing I had that she wanted and now she probably has that too.

I wonder if my dad came over. I wonder if he saved off his mustache by now. I wonder if he's still dating that woman who wore all that gold jewelry. I decide to call my friend Jenny. Jenny's mom answered the phone so I just hung up. I wish I could have talked to her. I waited a while and looked at the pictures I had put in my address book. Jenny is totally crazy and I have this picture of her from the last time she had a party. We got so drunk on this punch her brother made. That's when I got grounded the first time. My mom hates Jenny. I think she's cool and she would totally help me.



The cops came through the parking lot of the liquor store where I was using the phone. They didn't even stop but it kind of made me nervous. I don't think I could handle going to jail or juvee.

I slept on the train last night but I didn't know where to sleep tonight. I went behind an apartment building and hid under the stairs. I stuffed my backpack behind me and now I'm trying to sleep.

Day 3

Dear Diary,

I got woken up by a big ugly dog and it started barking and barking at me. The owner yelled at me and told me to get off of her back porch. I snarled back at her but grabbed by stuff. My back is real sore and I feel gritty. I had just started walking when the guy picked me up at the gas station. He asked me where I was going and I told him nowhere. He said he would give ma ride so I figured I should just go. This town is going nowhere anyway. So now I'm in his truck and we're smoking cigarettes together. Cool. The guy's name is Jerry and he turned out to be a total creep. He started asking me weird questions and looking at me funny. I was getting nervous like he wasn't going to let me out of the car when he started speeding up. I started to cry and I was trying to think of what I could hit him with if he tried to grab me. So I told him to just let me go and he pulled over. I'm so glad he just left. So gross.

It was like 9am when I walked into another town. I found a coffee shop and got a donut and a bottomless cup of coffee. The coffee was bad. It was kind of weak. We used to hang out at this coffee shop called My Friend Jo that's near school. Me and Stevie and JJ and Gamma and everyone. I wish I could hang out with those guys all the time. If I could have just lived at Jo's and not gone home, that would have been fine. When it's just me and my friends it's easy. We all understand each other. We're more like family to each other than my real family.

I feel so gross after that guy in his truck. It kind of makes me sick. I totally could have ended up as just another bad news story. I feel kind of funny. Like I'm tired and my head hurts. I wish I had something for my headache. I need a shower so bad. I never thought about where I was going to shower. I don't have a towel either. I just left all that stuff. I brought some clothes and money and some food. I miss my stereo and the sofa. If I was home I would eat something, take some medicine then lay on the sofa and listen to my music really loud. Then my mom would probably throw something at me and tell me to get a life. Forget it.

It's a school day. I wonder what's going on in school. People are probably talking about me. My mom probably went to Principal Ryan all crying in his office and stuff. They probably busted into my locker but they're not going to find anything. My mom always thought I was on drugs but I never was. I never even tried it. I've seen other people doing it but it's a little too harsh for me. They act so stupid and this one guy used the bathroom in his pants. I smoke cigarettes and I've been drunk but nothing more. I feel a little hung over, actually, but I'm not. But maybe I should try to find some vodka.

It's lunch time and I'm starving. I'm out of money. I can't find the \$20 that the girl gave me on the train. I went back to the coffee shop and talked to the guy in the back in the kitchen. AT the Taco Hut the kitchen guy would sometimes give us the stuff they didn't sell that day. So I tried to ask him for extra stuff but he tells me to get away and slams the door in my face. I can't believe I'm begging for food, but I'm so hungry. I can't even find a water fountain.

Right after school gets out I try to call Jenny again, but she's not home. I don't even know if I'm in another time zone. Maybe I screwed it up. I think about calling my house. I think about calling and laughing at my mom. I think about my sister and how she's doing. I miss my dog. I named her Dog. They don't know their names anyway. I hope they're taking care of her. It's getting dark and I've been walking all day. Just walking. I don't even know where to go. The paper says I'm in North Carolina. I wonder if my picture is in



the paper at home. I wonder if they gave up looking for me. There was this little girl who was lost last summer and they found her body days later in a sewer. Poor thing. I wonder if she was really lost or what.

I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm hungry and tired and I can't even believe it. I just wanted to get away from home. I just wanted to get far, far away. And I guess I am – but I didn't want to live on the streets either. I don't want to be a bum and beg for food. I hate that I don't have somewhere to go. I don't want to go home but I want to go somewhere. I don't have money to go anywhere thought. I'm really freaking out. I decide to call my sister. I know she has money. Maybe she can help me somehow. Maybe she can find a way to send it to me. I am so nervous before I call.

My mom picked up the phone and I didn't know what to do. I was quiet. I had my mouth open but no words came out. She kept saying hello? Hello? Hello? They she was quiet too. I could hear my sister in the background and I was hoping she would hand the phone to her. She came back on and said, "Lisa? Honey?" and I hung up. I've seen all these movies where they trace calls and I didn't want her to know where I was. It was weird to hear her voice. She sounded scared. Good. But I know she must have been a wreck. If I was here it would be really bad to have your kid leave. I know it. I wish none of this had to happen. I went to a dinner and sat at the counter. I told them I was waiting for my mom to pick me up. When the couple in the first booth left, I ran over there and took their left over food before the bus boy came. Then I ran so fast out the door. I went a couple of blocks and sat down in a park. It was so good to eat.

I fell asleep in the park but woke up when I heard this couple on the bench across the walkway. It was dark. They were totally making out. I was so tired. Someone stole my backpack. I can't believe someone ripped it off. Everything but my diary is gone. And my jacket. My stuff was under the bench when I was eating. I don't know what happened. I fell asleep on top of my diary or else I would have lost that, too.

I have never felt so alone. I wish the ground would just open up and swallow me Maybe the inside of the earth is really pretty. Maybe it's a big garden and everything is sunny and there are flowers and birds. And I can sleep somewhere warm and clean and eat a really big bowl of ravioli and watch TV. I wish I had a normal family and I wish I didn't get grounded all the time. I wish my life was different. I wish I could be okay. I don't mean to be a screw up. I don't mean to be a disappointment. It wasn't my fault things got bad. My life is a total sham. Nobody knows me and nobody cares. If I got back now everyone will think I'm just some kid crying for help. It will probably only get worse. It's hopeless. My life is so hopeless.

I called Jenny again and finally got through. Her mom picked up the other line and asked who it was and she said it was Thomas her new boyfriend. I didn't even know she broke up with Matt, but I guess she did. Jenny and I talked and she told me my mom was a mess and everyone in town knew and she thought maybe I was dead. She wanted to know where I was and I told her I wasn't sure. I thought she would think that was kind of cool but she yelled at me and told me to get over it and come home. I was so shocked. She said she was so worried and she was mad at me. She told me I could have gone to her for anything and she thought we were better friends. I felt bad but it was good to talk to her. We were both crying. She told me to call my mom. She said if I came home that it would be a good idea. I don't know if I believe her. Honestly, I kind of what to but I'm scared. I feel like running away was just another screw up. Story of my life.

I start walking again. I'm in some kind of neighborhood. Lots of little houses all with garages on the side. This is nothing like Indy, I think. I wonder how close I am to the ocean if at all. I look at a couple of houses and I try to imagine what is going on inside. Is it perfect or is it a mess like my house. Is everyone sitting down for dinner or are they all just grabbing food and going to their rooms? Are people nice to each other? Are moms and dads together? This lady came down the street with her two dogs. One was a lab and one a collie. They're really cute. I asked her for some money so I could get something to eat. She wanted to know what was wrong and I don't her I couldn't go home.



We talked for a while but then she left. I was just sitting there when the cops pulled up. The stupid lady with the dogs called them on her cell phone. Who carries a cell phone while they're walking dogs? In this stupid place? I didn't even try to run. They weren't rough or anything. The older guy was like, "Just get in and we'll take you to the station." When we got there he bought me a fruit pie out of a vending machine. It was gross but good, too. I sat in an empty room for awhile. This other guy came in and talked to me about "my situation." I told him I was from Indiana and he asked me about the Indiana Pacers. Whatever. He asked for my name and I didn't give it to him. He gave me the same look my mom gives me when she's bad at me.

He said, "Look, it's the end of my shift. I'm tired, you're tired, I'm hungry, you're hungry, and we both know this little vacation of yours is over. So tell me your name and let's just take care of business, shall we?"

Shall we? Like it was a deal! I finally gave him my name and he said he needed to check the computer but he would be back.

I'm sitting in the same room. I didn't want to take my diary out while he was in the room because I didn't want him to take it. I had it tucked in the back of my pants and covered by my shirt. I guess I'm really going home now. This stinks. I feel miserable. I feel like I want to throw up. I'm humiliated and stupid and useless and pathetic. My head still hurts and I really want to shower. I want some clean clothes and I want to brush my hair. At least home has that. Dealing with my mom is going to be horrible. She is going to hate me even more. I'm going to be grounded for life. She'll never let me out. She'll never trust me. Karla is going to love this. She will be the big star. Thank goodness for Karla or we'd have nothing to be proud of. The cop comes back and says he found me in the computer. "No, you found me in the park," I tell him. He doesn't think I'm funny. He takes me to a shelter called Breakthrough. The drive took forever. The lady there tells me that they're actually full but I can sleep on the couch in the living room. It's 3am. She told me the 6am worker would wake me up when she got in and then I would have to call my mom. I use the bathroom, wash my face. I'm still starving but I write in my diary before I sleep. This has been the worst day of my life.

Day 4

Dear Diary,

I feel like I've landed in Oz or something. This place is crazy. Arnold wakes me up at 6:30am and tells me I need to call my mom. I grabbed a piece of toast. They said they didn't have coffee. I miss Jo's. I talk with Arnie for like an hour. He was actually pretty cool. I told him about my mom and how we fight and fight and fight. I told him about how I break curfew and my mom doesn't like my friends and she says I hang out more than I study. I told him how critical she is of me and he said I was critical of her, too.

Whatever. Because I was out of state I was going to need a way to get home. Arnie said they were going to put me on a Greyhound bus and I thought that was fine. I wondered if I would meet up with that lady again somehow. In order to get a free ticket I had to call the National Runaway Switchboard and they would book me a ticket. They stick me on a pay phone in the hall and I call the place. I talked to a guy named Pat and he was cool. I was like, "Don't make me talk about all of this again – it's torture!!? But he was all right. I told him to just send me home but he said he wanted me to stay home too. I didn't really think about that. So we talked about my sister and school and Jenny and what my mom will do when I get home.

Pat put me on hold and called my mom. He was going to be the middle guy for us which was fine by me. I didn't want to call her. I wonder if I'll ever tell her it was me the other night who called then hung up. I saw a girl sneak out of the shelter to have a smoke and I wished I could have one. I would so much rather be having a drag than being on this phone. I thought about dropping the phone and going out there and I thought about just leaving all together. Just dropping the phone and heading out the door but then I



thought I had no where to go. I didn't have any money or clothes or my stuff. So I stayed on the phone. I hate this. I heard this clicking noise and I thought we got hung up on. I was about ready to forget it when I heard my mom. She was pretty calm but she sounded as if she was crying. Pat asked if she was there and she said she was. Then she asked if I was on the phone and I said yeah. Pat wanted me to say something to my mom and my head started spinning and I was breathing like I had just run a marathon. I could feel myself start to cry but I didn't know why so I tried to stop it. Then my mom said my name and she started crying and that was it. We were both crying. I think she was happy crying though and I didn't know what kind of trying I was doing. I wasn't happy because I was really unhappy but I felt real emotional anyway. We talked about everything and she said she was mad but she really, really wanted me to come home. She asked if I had eaten and wanted to know what I wanted for dinner. The thought of eating at my house seemed weird. Last night I stole someone else's dinner. I didn't tell her that. We worked out this plan and she's going to make me go to counseling, but Pat thought maybe we could try it together. I don't know but we'll see. Pay got me a ticket and when another person came in to work, Arnold drove me to the Greyhound station. I wanted to take a shower but there wasn't any time. Arnold gave me a sandwich and an apple and I ate them immediately. Like a piranha. He said I would be hungry the whole way home – it was almost the whole day – but I didn't care.

I'm on the bus now and no one wants to sit next to me. I guess I must stink and I look pretty awful. My eyes are all red from crying and my hair is all over. I haven't brushed my teeth in forever and my breath is probably so bad. I wish I had some gum. I don't have any bags so I just sit and keep writing. We stop in all these towns and people get on and off. I'm real scared of men who look like Jerry.

Day 5

Dear Diary,

I woke up from this freaky dream I was having. More like a nightmare. I dreamt I was in the park and it was daytime and then these dogs were chasing me and I was running and running then I tripped and fell over a cliff. I felt like I was falling and falling. Weird.

I have no idea what time it is. The sun is up and I guess we'll be coming into Indy at some point today. I've been on the bus forever. I am hungry again. I never really understood what people said when they talked about hunger but now I know.

I ask the driver when we get to Indy and it's only 20 minutes. I get kind of in a panic. I know my mom is going to be there and I don't know what it will be like. She was cool on the phone, but she was probably just glad I was alive. She might be mean again. She might not care. She might just tell me to shut up. I wonder if Karla will be there. I wonder what happened while I was gone. I hope she won't make me go to school tomorrow. I don't want to see anybody ever again. I am going crazy right now. When we pulled in to the station, I got off last. I saw her first. She came running up to me and I braced myself. I stand real still. I could feel her just totally hugging me and I feel like I might stop breathing. I said, "mom I'm gross, you don't want to hug me," but she kept doing it. So I hugged her good. Karla was there and she was crying too. She said mom thought she would never see me alive again and it was really awful while I was gone. Grandma had come in from Gary just to help mom because she was so upset. My grandma really gave me a lecture when I got home. She told me I didn't respect my family and it was evil of me to run away. She said no grandchild of hers should ever have run away. I felt like I really disappointed her. That's how I felt the more and more I talked with mom. I never thought I could disappoint her because I thought she didn't care about me. Part of me thought she would be relieved when I was gone, like "good – never come back", but she said she was depressed and missed work. I guess the thing is that I wanted to be somewhere else and so I left. Pat told me to think about how to make my home a different place then I wouldn't have to go somewhere different. It feels different already. I'm glad to be home. I know it could have been much worse. I guess I didn't think I might die. I just needed to get away. It was so awful to have nowhere to go. I didn't realize how many people even cared. I'm still scared. Like I know it won't be instantly better, but I don't think I'll ever run again.



Runaway Prevention Curriculum

Section III: Communication



Teacher's Notes: Listening to Communicate III-A

Objective:

Learn the most important communication skill: listening.

Directions:

Communication is difficult, no matter how old you are and where you're from. Would you agree? Why is it difficult? Think about a conversation you had where you found it difficult to get your point across. What were the barriers to communication? (Note: If you can show a video of people not communicating, such as a television sit-com, it may be easier to do this exercise.)

1. Distractions – room noise
2. They weren't listening
3. Interrupted me
4. Thinking of something else while I was talking
5. Thinking of what they were going to say next while I was talking
6. Not interested in what I was saying

Brainstorm: How do you know that someone IS NOT listening to you?

1. Doesn't maintain eye contact
2. Calls you by the wrong name
3. Asks you something you've already told them
4. Looks away, down, anywhere but at you
5. Body language – yawns, falls asleep, looks at watch
6. Says have to leave
7. Says he/she doesn't have time
8. Makes excuses for not wanting to listen any longer
9. Has to have a radio or TV on

Brainstorm: How do you know that someone REALLY IS listening to you?

1. You have their undivided attention
2. Looks at you
3. Takes notes
4. Pays attention
5. Finds a quiet place to talk
6. Doesn't answer the phone / second line if you're on line 1
7. Asks you the right questions
8. Understands what you're saying
9. Nods head, leans toward you
10. You feel understood

Keep a listening journal. Take notes on the listening skills of the next 5 people you talk to. Then, take notes on your own listening skills (see listening journal worksheet).

Hint: When you feel understood, it's like giving air to a suffocating person. If you want to be listened to, try listening first to the other person.

How do you know if someone feels understood? By asking them. Wait to talk until the other person feels understood. The secret: If the person feels you understand them, they'll try to understand you!

Hint: Stephen Covey, author of the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, suggests building this habit: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood.?

How can students help themselves or their friends in times of need?

Hint: Use the National Runaway Switchboard's adapted crisis intervention model (see worksheet)



Worksheet: Listening Journals

III-B

Directions:

Keep a listening journal of five or more conversations you have over the next few days. Rate their listening skills on a scale of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). Report your findings in class.

	Who	When	Situation	Length of Conversation	Observations	Rating
1.	_____					
2.	_____					
3.	_____					
4.	_____					
5.	_____					

Now, evaluate your own listening skills using the same chart. How can you improve your skills?

	Who	When	Situation	Length of Conversation	Observations	Rating
1.	_____					
2.	_____					
3.	_____					
4.	_____					
5.	_____					



Worksheet: Communicating in Times of Crisis III-C

Directions:

This is an adaptation of the crisis intervention model used at the National Runaway Switchboard to help callers in trouble. Crisis intervention is a model of communication to help people express their feelings and then focus on developing a plan to handle their problems. See if it works for you – use it to help yourself, friends and others.

Establish Rapport

1. Let your friend know he/she can trust you to keep the conversation confidential.
2. Speak with a gentle tone.
3. Support your friend; make sure he/she knows you care and are there to help.

Explore Facts & Feelings

1. Ask closed-ended questions to exact details, i.e., “When did this happen?” “Who was there?”
2. Ask open-ended questions to get a more narrative response, i.e., “Can you tell me about your relationship with your dad?” or “Can you give me an example of the last time you thought your mom was being unfair?”
3. Ask your friend how he/she feels about the situation.
4. Spend most of your time listening. Let your friend do the talking.
5. Paraphrase and clarify to make sure you have a clear idea of your friend’s situation, i.e., “I understand that you feel terrible and like hurting yourself. Your mom threw you out of the house without listening to you. Do I understand how you feel / what happened?”

Focus on the Main Issue(s)

1. Have your friend tell you what he/she wants help with. (Your friend may only want you to listen, not to give any advice.)
2. Make sure that what your friend wants help doing is realistic.

Explore Options

1. Let your friend tell you what he/she would like to do.
2. Help your friend explore what the options are.
3. If you give suggestions, do so without “directing” them or “lecturing.”
4. Go through the pros and cons of each option to find one that is appropriate.

Establish a Plan of Action

1. Have your friend come up with a detailed plan.
2. Discuss alternate plans.
3. Reassure and support your friend. Find out how your friend wants you to help, and then tell your friend what you will do to be supportive.

Have problems? Talk to us.
1-800-RUNAWAY.
National Runaway Switchboard
www.1800RUNAWAY.org



Worksheet: Family Communication Tips

III-D

Directions:

Use these tips to help your family improve their relationships. Post them in a central spot. Can you think of other tips you would add?

1. Set aside time to talk every day.
2. Don't expect your family to read your mind.
3. Be specific about your expectations and requests.
4. Have patience; good communication takes time and effort.
5. Brainstorm ideas before making a final decision.
6. Ask for input from all family members.
7. Write things down; make a list of changes you want to see.
8. Be willing to compromise.
9. Do fun things together.
10. Use community resources when you need help.

Have problems? Talk to us.
1-800-RUNAWAY.
National Runaway Switchboard
www.1800RUNAWAY.org



Teacher's Notes: Kids Call Program

III-E

Objective:

Let your students see what it's like to talk to people who can help – in the protected environment of your classroom. If trouble strikes, hopefully they will be comfortable calling the National Runaway Switchboard, or referring a friend.

Directions:

Here's how it works. All you need is a telephone / speakerphone. A professional staff person or specially-trained volunteer from the National Runaway Switchboard will call you at a pre-arranged time to speak to your students via speakerphone. Simply call the National Runaway Switchboard at 1-800-RUNAWAY to schedule a time for your call.

If you'd like to hand out pencils, wallet cards, bookmarks or other materials after the call, just ask when you set up the appointment. We'll be happy to send you those materials in advance, free of charge.

READY? Plan the call in advance. Here are some ways you can use the Kids Call program with your runaway prevention curriculum:

☞☞ AWARENESS

Brainstorm questions about runaways with your students, then call the National Runaway Switchboard for answers. *Sample questions:*

- What makes someone run away?
- Why would someone call a hotline?
- How do we know it's really confidential and anonymous?
- What are the most common reasons for calling the National Runaway Switchboard?
- Where do they go?
- Do runaways go to jail?
- How long are runaways gone?
- Do all runaways go home?
- When do they decide to go home?
- How do runaways get home if they don't have any money?

☞☞ RESOURCES

Engage one of your most creative student actors in role-playing someone in distress. Create a scenario in advance so your caller is prepared, or use one of the National Runaway Switchboard's (see problem-solving scenarios).

☞☞ COMMUNICATION

How do the National Runaway Switchboard staff and volunteers help callers? Through good communication skills and a structured conversation. Ask how we do it!

☞☞ STRESS MANAGEMENT / PROBLEM-SOLVING

The National Runaway Switchboard doesn't solve your problems for you – the hotline volunteer or staff person helps you create an action plan to solve your own problems. Talk to the National Runaway Switchboard. You can help yourself or a friend.

SET? When you're ready to begin, feel free to call the National Runaway Switchboard collect on the business line, 1-773-880-9860.

GO! A staff person will call you back right away (your school does not pay for the call). When your call is finished, please complete and send in the Kids Call evaluation.



Worksheet: Kids Call Evaluation Form III-F

Directions: Fill out this form and return it to the National Runaway Switchboard. See contact info at the bottom of the page.

Name and Title: _____

Organization: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____ Fax: (____) _____

Date and Time of Kids Call: _____ Duration of Call: _____

Name of Facilitator / Person Who Took The Call: _____

Please use the following scale to evaluate the Kids Call program:

	5 Strongly Agree	4 Liked	3 Neutral	2 Disliked	1 Strongly Disagree
1. The Kids Call program effectively answered our questions about runaways.	5	4	3	2	1
2. The staff person or volunteer who answered our questions was knowledgeable.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Our audience felt the presentation increased their understanding about runaway issues.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Our audience is likely to call the National Runaway Switchboard in times of trouble.	5	4	3	2	1

Was this your first Kids Call? How did it go?

Any Recommendations For Next Time? _____

Audience Demographics (Number Please) _____

Number of Youth _____ Ages _____ Number of Males vs. Females: _____ Males _____ Females
Number of Adults _____

Thank you for your time and participation. Please return this form to:

Kids Call
National Runaway Switchboard
3080 N. Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, IL 60657
773.880.9860
773.929.5150 – fax



Teacher's Notes: **Problem-Solving Scenarios III-G**

Objective:

Use real-life situations to examine runaway prevention from all aspects.

Directions:

Divide your class into three groups. Assign each group a scenario. Copy and cut out the scenarios on the worksheet, then hand them out to your students. Have the groups present the highlights of their discussions to the class.

Here are some sample questions to have your class consider:

AWARENESS

- ✍ ✍ Will the youth run? What might happen if he or she runs?
- ✍ ✍ What do you think happens next?

RESOURCES

- ✍ ✍ What resources might help keep him or her from running?

COMMUNICATION

- ✍ ✍ Does communication (or lack of communication) play a role? How?

STRESS MANAGEMENT / PROBLEM SOLVING

- ✍ ✍ How can this person manage their stress?
- ✍ ✍ Develop a problem-solving action plan for this person.
- ✍ ✍ Is this scenario realistic? Could it happen to anyone you know?



Worksheet: Problem-Solving Scenarios

III-H

Directions: Answer the questions your teacher has assigned using your scenario.

A friend in need

Cheryl's best friend Nicole is going to run away and Cheryl is thinking about going with her. Nicole wants to get far, far away from her home. Her dad died a few years ago and now her mom is working two jobs to support the family. Nicole is 15 and the oldest of four children. She has twin sisters that are 8 and a 3 year-old brother. Since her mom is so busy all the time, Nicole has to pick her brother and sisters up after school and take care of them under her mom gets home about 9:00 pm. Nicole has to cook for them, help them with their homework, and make sure they don't get in any trouble. By the time her mom gets home from work, Nicole is exhausted. She does whatever homework she can and falls into bed, just to wake up the next morning and to do it all over again. She has almost no time to hang out with her friends. She even had to drop out of student government because she could never make it to any meetings. Nicole told Cheryl that she's going to run away tonight. She doesn't have specific plans about where to go except that she wants it to be far and that she's going to hitchhike.

☞☞ Cheryl is very worried about her friend's safety and wants to go with her to help protect her. She knows that leaving will worry her parents, but she feels that someone has to help Nicole. She must decide what to do right away.

Directions: Answer the questions your teacher has assigned using your scenario.

Running from an abusive situation

Valerie is 16 and being physically abused at home. Her dad hits her so hard sometimes that she literally goes flying across the room. Her mom also slaps her frequently. Valerie and her dad got into another fight last night and he really hurt her badly. Her ribs are sore from where he kicked her and she has a lump on the back of her head. She just can't take it anymore. She wants to get far away and never wants to come back. She wants to be in a foster home or somewhere she might have parents that really care for her. She tried to talk to a counselor at school about all this, but she felt that the counselor made a bunch of excuses for her parents and didn't want to get involved. Valerie's ready to leave tonight. She wants to get out and find someone that can help her. She doesn't know what will happen, but she knows she's going to leave. She doesn't want to give her parents the opportunity to hit her again tonight.

☞☞ Her friends Robert and Julia stop by as Valerie is packing her bags. They know what's going on and want to help.

Directions: Answer the questions your teacher has assigned using your scenario.

Punished by "past offenders"

Joe thinks he has the worst parents in the whole world. They grew up like hippies, smoking marijuana everyday and wearing tie-dyed t-shirts. What a surprise to be grounded for three months when they found a joint in his coat pocket. He thinks they're hypocrites and totally unfair. Since they did it when they were young, Joe doesn't know why they can't understand that he wants to try it, too. He feels that his drug use isn't that serious because he's only experimenting with pot and sometimes acid. He could see their concern if he were selling it to small children or something. He claims that he just likes to get high every now and then because it makes him feel good and helps him get rid of stress. Joe doesn't think he has a problem and he's very upset with his parents' rules. He's thinking of running away.

☞☞ Joe casually mentioned his problems and plan to run away to a teacher named Bob Rollo, a former hippie himself that students trust. Mr. Rollo and Joe have made plans to talk after school.



Teacher's Notes: The Diary of Lisa

III-I

Objective:

Give students an insight into a fictitious runaway girl's life. Help them use her experiences to explore the four areas of runaway prevention.

Directions:

Have the class read the diary in one day or over the course of five days. Use the diary to explore the four areas of runaway prevention, and how better awareness, resources, communication and stress management / problem solving might have kept her from running, or could help her now that she's come home.

Here are some assignments you can give your class:

1. Pretend you're Lisa wrapping up what she's learned from the experience of living on the street. What were Lisa's primary concerns from day to day? How did her concerns at home differ from her concerns on the street? What do you think Lisa has learned from her experience? (Make sure you consider what may have been good and bad about her experience.)
2. Write an essay on what you would do if you were Lisa's best friend. How could you have helped Lisa before she left home? What will things be like when she returns? What will change in your relationship with her?
3. Write a matching diary for the same five days as if you were Lisa's mother or sister.
4. Write a fictitious diary for yourself, as though you were going to run away from home. What might you encounter? How would you escape? Would you go home?



Worksheet: Lisa's Diary

III-J

Day 1

Dear Diary,

I feel like I've been waiting forever. Waiting for things to get better. Waiting for my mom to quit being so horrible to me. Waiting for things to change. Waiting for everything. But things never did change and I got tired of waiting. I left while my mom and sister were out grocery shopping. I'm supposed to be grounded for breaking curfew last weekend. I was already grounded from the time before so I guess it didn't matter if I got grounded again. And now it doesn't matter anyway because I'm never coming home again.

I wonder when she'll realize I'm gone. She'll totally freak. She will lose it. She'll probably call my dad and make him come over. She'll call the cops, she'll call everyone. I kind of wish I could see it. She makes me crazy every day, may she'll know how bad it was for me living there. I'm headed south. Spent \$50 on a train ride and climbed aboard. Home seems really far away. I'm so happy to be gone.

Day 2

Dear Diary,

I talked to this really cool woman for a while on the train but then she got off. Her name is Carley. She gave me 20 bucks which will help. She told me she was worried about me and wished I would go home, but I told her I would never go home. After she left, I got pretty bored just riding so I got off the train too. I ended up in a town way smaller than mine called Mount Nathan or Nathanville or something lame. I got something to eat and it was like nobody even asked me what I was doing or where I was from. They just stared at me but no one said anything. I walked around and sat on a curb in front of a hair salon. I thought about cutting all of my hair off.. My mom always really loved my hair. She said it looked like hers when she was young. I can't even imagine my mom as a kid. She was always telling me what to do and how to act and how not to act. She told me I was a troublemaker and she said I was up to no good all the time. My mom was probably a total reject in high school. She probably never went out and never drank. My mom was always afraid for me. She never let me just be ME!

She didn't understand that things are way different now than they were for her and there was no way I was going to live her pathetic life.

I went into Burgers & More to use the bathroom and wash my face. I stole a roll of toilet paper and stuffed it in my back pack. I feel like I'm on an adventure. I like the fact that no one knows me. I can totally start over. I went back to Burgers & More to eat. There were some other kids there and they looked like a bunch of geeks. Maybe they're all named Nathan.

I think about my sister. She's probably sad that I'm gone. She and I never got along great but sometimes she could be cool.. She 's younger than me but she was always the favorite one. She was smarter and better at everything. Karla is so pretty. Karla has so much potential. Whatever. Karla will probably take over my room. It was the one thing I had that she wanted and now she probably has that too.

I wonder if my dad came over. I wonder if he saved off his mustache by now. I wonder if he's still dating that woman who wore all that gold jewelry.

I decide to call my friend Jenny. Jenny's mom answered the phone so I just hung up. I wish I could have talked to her. I waited a while and looked at the pictures I had put in my address book. Jenny is totally crazy and I have this picture of her from the last time she had a party. We got so drunk on this punch her

brother made. That's when I got grounded the first time. My mom hates Jenny. I think she's cool and she would totally help me.



The cops came through the parking lot of the liquor store where I was using the phone. They didn't even stop but it kind of made me nervous. I don't think I could handle going to jail or juvee.

I slept on the train last night but I didn't know where to sleep tonight. I went behind an apartment building and hid under the stairs. I stuffed my backpack behind me and now I'm trying to sleep.

Day 3

Dear Diary,

I got woken up by a big ugly dog and it started barking and barking at me. The owner yelled at me and told me to get off of her back porch. I snarled back at her but grabbed by stuff. My back is real sore and I feel gritty. I had just started walking when the guy picked me up at the gas station. He asked me where I was going and I told him nowhere. He said he would give ma ride so I figured I should just go. This town is going nowhere anyway. So now I'm in his truck and we're smoking cigarettes together. Cool. The guy's name is Jerry and he turned out to be a total creep. He started asking me weird questions and looking at me funny. I was getting nervous like he wasn't going to let me out of the car when he started speeding up. I started to cry and I was trying to think of what I could hit him with if he tried to grab me. So I told him to just let me go and he pulled over. I'm so glad he just left. So gross.

It was like 9am when I walked into another town. I found a coffee shop and got a donut and a bottomless cup of coffee. The coffee was bad. It was kind of weak. We used to hang out at this coffee shop called My Friend Jo that's near school. Me and Stevie and JJ and Gamma and everyone. I wish I could hang out with those guys all the time. If I could have just lived at Jo's and not gone home, that would have been fine. When it's just me and my friends it's easy. We all understand each other. We're more like family to each other than my real family.

I feel so gross after that guy in his truck. It kind of makes me sick. I totally could have ended up as just another bad news story. I feel kind of funny. Like I'm tired and my head hurts. I wish I had something for my headache. I need a shower so bad. I never thought about where I was going to shower. I don't have a towel either. I just left all that stuff. I brought some clothes and money and some food. I miss my stereo and the sofa. If I was home I would eat something, take some medicine then lay on the sofa and listen to my music really loud. Then my mom would probably throw something at me and tell me to get a life. Forget it.

It's a school day. I wonder what's going on in school. People are probably talking about me. My mom probably went to Principal Ryan all crying in his office and stuff. They probably busted into my locker but they're not going to find anything. My mom always thought I was on drugs but I never was. I never even tried it. I've seen other people doing it but it's a little too harsh for me. They act so stupid and this one guy used the bathroom in his pants. I smoke cigarettes and I've been drunk but nothing more. I feel a little hung over, actually, but I'm not. But maybe I should try to find some vodka.

It's lunch time and I'm starving. I'm out of money. I can't find the \$20 that the girl gave me on the train. I went back to the coffee shop and talked to the guy in the back in the kitchen. AT the Taco Hut the kitchen guy would sometimes give us the stuff they didn't sell that day. So I tried to ask him for extra stuff but he tells me to get away and slams the door in my face. I can't believe I'm begging for food, but I'm so hungry. I can't even find a water fountain.

Right after school gets out I try to call Jenny again, but she's not home. I don't even know if I'm in another time zone. Maybe I screwed it up. I think about calling my house. I think about calling and laughing at my mom. I think about my sister and how she's doing. I miss my dog. I named her Dog. They don't know their names anyway. I hope they're taking care of her. It's getting dark and I've been walking all day. Just walking. I don't even know where to go. The paper says I'm in North Carolina. I wonder if my picture is in



the paper at home. I wonder if they gave up looking for me. There was this little girl who was lost last summer and they found her body days later in a sewer. Poor thing. I wonder if she was really lost or what.

I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm hungry and tired and I can't even believe it. I just wanted to get away from home. I just wanted to get far, far away. And I guess I am – but I didn't want to live on the streets either. I don't want to be a bum and beg for food. I hate that I don't have somewhere to go. I don't want to go home but I want to go somewhere. I don't have money to go anywhere thought. I'm really freaking out. I decide to call my sister. I know she has money. Maybe she can help me somehow. Maybe she can find a way to send it to me. I am so nervous before I call.

My mom picked up the phone and I didn't know what to do. I was quiet. I had my mouth open but no words came out. She kept saying hello? Hello? Hello? They she was quiet too. I could hear my sister in the background and I was hoping she would hand the phone to her. She came back on and said, "Lisa? Honey?" and I hung up. I've seen all these movies where they trace calls and I didn't want her to know where I was. It was weird to hear her voice. She sounded scared. Good. But I know she must have been a wreck. If I was here it would be really bad to have your kid leave. I know it. I wish none of this had to happen. I went to a dinner and sat at the counter. I told them I was waiting for my mom to pick me up. When the couple in the first booth left, I ran over there and took their left over food before the bus boy came. Then I ran so fast out the door. I went a couple of blocks and sat down in a park. It was so good to eat.

I fell asleep in the park but woke up when I heard this couple on the bench across the walkway. It was dark. They were totally making out. I was so tired. Someone stole my backpack. I can't believe someone ripped it off. Everything but my diary is gone. And my jacket. My stuff was under the bench when I was eating. I don't know what happened. I fell asleep on top of my diary or else I would have lost that, too.

I have never felt so alone. I wish the ground would just open up and swallow me Maybe the inside of the earth is really pretty. Maybe it's a big garden and everything is sunny and there are flowers and birds. And I can sleep somewhere warm and clean and eat a really big bowl of ravioli and watch TV. I wish I had a normal family and I wish I didn't get grounded all the time. I wish my life was different. I wish I could be okay. I don't mean to be a screw up. I don't mean to be a disappointment. It wasn't my fault things got bad. My life is a total sham. Nobody knows me and nobody cares. If I got back now everyone will think I'm just some kid crying for help. It will probably only get worse. It's hopeless. My life is so hopeless.

I called Jenny again and finally got through. Her mom picked up the other line and asked who it was and she said it was Thomas her new boyfriend. I didn't even know she broke up with Matt, but I guess she did. Jenny and I talked and she told me my mom was a mess and everyone in town knew and she thought maybe I was dead. She wanted to know where I was and I told her I wasn't sure. I thought she would think that was kind of cool but she yelled at me and told me to get over it and come home. I was so shocked. She said she was so worried and she was mad at me. She told me I could have gone to her for anything and she thought we were better friends. I felt bad but it was good to talk to her. We were both crying. She told me to call my mom. She said if I came home that it would be a good idea. I don't know if I believe her. Honestly, I kind of what to but I'm scared. I feel like running away was just another screw up. Story of my life.

I start walking again. I'm in some kind of neighborhood. Lots of little houses all with garages on the side. This is nothing like Indy, I think. I wonder how close I am to the ocean if at all. I look at a couple of houses and I try to imagine what is going on inside. Is it perfect or is it a mess like my house. Is everyone sitting down for dinner or are they all just grabbing food and going to their rooms? Are people nice to each other? Are moms and dads together? This lady came down the street with her two dogs. One was a lab and one a collie. They're really cute. I asked her for some money so I could get something to eat. She wanted to know what was wrong and I don't her I couldn't go home.



We talked for a while but then she left. I was just sitting there when the cops pulled up. The stupid lady with the dogs called them on her cell phone. Who carries a cell phone while they're walking dogs? In this stupid place? I didn't even try to run. They weren't rough or anything. The older guy was like, "Just get in and we'll take you to the station." When we got there he bought me a fruit pie out of a vending machine. It was gross but good, too. I sat in an empty room for awhile. This other guy came in and talked to me about "my situation." I told him I was from Indiana and he asked me about the Indiana Pacers. Whatever. He asked for my name and I didn't give it to him. He gave me the same look my mom gives me when she's bad at me.

He said, "Look, it's the end of my shift. I'm tired, you're tired, I'm hungry, you're hungry, and we both know this little vacation of yours is over. So tell me your name and let's just take care of business, shall we?"

Shall we? Like it was a deal! I finally gave him my name and he said he needed to check the computer but he would be back.

I'm sitting in the same room. I didn't want to take my diary out while he was in the room because I didn't want him to take it. I had it tucked in the back of my pants and covered by my shirt. I guess I'm really going home now. This stinks. I feel miserable. I feel like I want to throw up. I'm humiliated and stupid and useless and pathetic. My head still hurts and I really want to shower. I want some clean clothes and I want to brush my hair. At least home has that. Dealing with my mom is going to be horrible. She is going to hate me even more. I'm going to be grounded for life. She'll never let me out. She'll never trust me. Karla is going to love this. She will be the big star. Thank goodness for Karla or we'd have nothing to be proud of. The cop comes back and says he found me in the computer. "No, you found me in the park," I tell him. He doesn't think I'm funny. He takes me to a shelter called Breakthrough. The drive took forever. The lady there tells me that they're actually full but I can sleep on the couch in the living room. It's 3am. She told me the 6am worker would wake me up when she got in and then I would have to call my mom. I use the bathroom, wash my face. I'm still starving but I write in my diary before I sleep. This has been the worst day of my life.

Day 4

Dear Diary,

I feel like I've landed in Oz or something. This place is crazy. Arnold wakes me up at 6:30am and tells me I need to call my mom. I grabbed a piece of toast. They said they didn't have coffee. I miss Jo's. I talk with Arnie for like an hour. He was actually pretty cool. I told him about my mom and how we fight and fight and fight. I told him about how I break curfew and my mom doesn't like my friends and she says I hang out more than I study. I told him how critical she is of me and he said I was critical of her, too.

Whatever. Because I was out of state I was going to need a way to get home. Arnie said they were going to put me on a Greyhound bus and I thought that was fine. I wondered if I would meet up with that lady again somehow. In order to get a free ticket I had to call the National Runaway Switchboard and they would book me a ticket. They stick me on a pay phone in the hall and I call the place. I talked to a guy named Pat and he was cool. I was like, "Don't make me talk about all of this again – it's torture!!? But he was all right. I told him to just send me home but he said he wanted me to stay home too. I didn't really think about that. So we talked about my sister and school and Jenny and what my mom will do when I get home.

Pat put me on hold and called my mom. He was going to be the middle guy for us which was fine by me. I didn't want to call her. I wonder if I'll ever tell her it was me the other night who called then hung up. I saw a girl sneak out of the shelter to have a smoke and I wished I could have one. I would so much rather be having a drag than being on this phone. I thought about dropping the phone and going out there and I thought about just leaving all together. Just dropping the phone and heading out the door but then I



thought I had no where to go. I didn't have any money or clothes or my stuff. So I stayed on the phone. I hate this. I heard this clicking noise and I thought we got hung up on. I was about ready to forget it when I heard my mom. She was pretty calm but she sounded as if she was crying. Pat asked if she was there and she said she was. Then she asked if I was on the phone and I said yeah. Pat wanted me to say something to my mom and my head started spinning and I was breathing like I had just run a marathon. I could feel myself start to cry but I didn't know why so I tried to stop it. Then my mom said my name and she started crying and that was it. We were both crying. I think she was happy crying though and I didn't know what kind of trying I was doing. I wasn't happy because I was really unhappy but I felt real emotional anyway. We talked about everything and she said she was mad but she really, really wanted me to come home. She asked if I had eaten and wanted to know what I wanted for dinner. The thought of eating at my house seemed weird. Last night I stole someone else's dinner. I didn't tell her that. We worked out this plan and she's going to make me go to counseling, but Pat thought maybe we could try it together. I don't know but we'll see. Pay got me a ticket and when another person came in to work, Arnold drove me to the Greyhound station. I wanted to take a shower but there wasn't any time. Arnold gave me a sandwich and an apple and I ate them immediately. Like a piranha. He said I would be hungry the whole way home – it was almost the whole day – but I didn't care.

I'm on the bus now and no one wants to sit next to me. I guess I must stink and I look pretty awful. My eyes are all red from crying and my hair is all over. I haven't brushed my teeth in forever and my breath is probably so bad. I wish I had some gum. I don't have any bags so I just sit and keep writing. We stop in all these towns and people get on and off. I'm real scared of men who look like Jerry.

Day 5

Dear Diary,

I woke up from this freaky dream I was having. More like a nightmare. I dreamt I was in the park and it was daytime and then these dogs were chasing me and I was running and running then I tripped and fell over a cliff. I felt like I was falling and falling. Weird.

I have no idea what time it is. The sun is up and I guess we'll be coming into Indy at some point today. I've been on the bus forever. I am hungry again. I never really understood what people said when they talked about hunger but now I know.

I ask the driver when we get to Indy and it's only 20 minutes. I get kind of in a panic. I know my mom is going to be there and I don't know what it will be like. She was cool on the phone, but she was probably just glad I was alive. She might be mean again. She might not care. She might just tell me to shut up. I wonder if Karla will be there. I wonder what happened while I was gone. I hope she won't make me go to school tomorrow. I don't want to see anybody ever again. I am going crazy right now. When we pulled in to the station, I got off last. I saw her first. She came running up to me and I braced myself. I stand real still. I could feel her just totally hugging me and I feel like I might stop breathing. I said, "mom I'm gross, you don't want to hug me," but she kept doing it. So I hugged her good. Karla was there and she was crying too. She said mom thought she would never see me alive again and it was really awful while I was gone. Grandma had come in from Gary just to help mom because she was so upset. My grandma really gave me a lecture when I got home. She told me I didn't respect my family and it was evil of me to run away. She said no grandchild of hers should ever have run away. I felt like I really disappointed her. That's how I felt the more and more I talked with mom. I never thought I could disappoint her because I thought she didn't care about me. Part of me thought she would be relieved when I was gone, like "good – never come back", but she said she was depressed and missed work. I guess the thing is that I wanted to be somewhere else and so I left. Pat told me to think about how to make my home a different place then I wouldn't have to go somewhere different. It feels different already. I'm glad to be home. I know it could have been much worse. I guess I didn't think I might die. I just needed to get away. It was so awful to have nowhere to go. I didn't realize how many people even cared. I'm still scared. Like I know it won't be instantly better, but I don't think I'll ever run again.



Runaway Prevention Curriculum

Section IV: Stress Management



Teacher's Notes: **Managing Stress / Problem-Solving IV-A**

Objective:

Help students understand that solid problem-solving and stress management skills can help them manage stress in their lives.

Directions:

Introduce the topic of managing stress. Stress comes from every avenue in a teen's life. Some teens can learn to manage their stress by participating in various activities or learning coping mechanisms. Others can benefit from problem-solving exercises. Order the National Runaway Switchboard's stress and anger management bookmarks on-line, www.1800RUNAWAY.org/news_mail.asp. Hand them out during class. Do you have stress in your life? What are some of those stressors?

Identify Teen Stressors

?? List all the stressors teens face. Use the Teens + Stress – Resources = Crisis worksheet. Examples:

- o Divorce
- o HIV/AIDS
- o Blended families
- o Being gay or lesbian
- o Parent remarrying
- o Alcoholism
- o Parent being unemployed
- o Illness or death
- o Pregnancy/STDs
- o Learning disability
- o Physical abuse
- o Sexual abuse
- o Domestic violence
- o Neglect
- o Emotional abuse

How would you feel if stress was lifted, or reduced?

Would you like to learn two ways to reduce your stress?

1) Problem Solving Skills

?? Learn limits: help students identify what they can control (themselves), what they can only influence (others), and what is outside their power (parent's divorce, etc.).

?? Use the idea of a "decision tree" to map out options and consequences. State the problem at "root" level. For every different way the problem could be resolved, create a "branch." Map out the pros/cons and consequences of each option, using different "branches" connected to the main option. The goal is to see all the options and consequences laid out on one sheet of paper in order to make an educated decision.

?? Use the adapted crisis intervention model from the National Runaway Switchboard to come up with action plans.

2) Stress Management Skills

?? Everyone gets run down. To feel better, students can try activities in one of four areas. These four areas are basic human needs: To Live, To Learn, To Love and To Leave a Legacy. Divide up the class into four groups and have each brainstorm ideas:

- o To Live = Physical Activities
- o To Learn = Mental Activities
- o To Love = Social and Emotional Activities
- o To Leave a Legacy = Spiritual Activities (NOTE: Spiritual does not have to be religious. Some people feel that taking a walk in the woods, or relaxing on a sailboat during the sunset is spiritual.)



Teacher's Notes: **Teens + Stress - Resources = Crisis IV-B**

Objective:

Help students map out their stressors, potential crises, and resources.

Directions:

Use the worksheet on the next page as a worksheet or a blackboard exercise.

Teens run away for a variety of reasons. Usually the decision to run is based on a formula of stress and resources. When stress is overwhelming, and teens don't have the resources to help them cope, a crisis is imminent. Teens may run away from home without thinking.

All teens have stress as well as resources in their lives. The balance of these components is the key. Use this exercise to better understand the relationship of stress/pressures to resources (or lack thereof) and their impact on a teen's decisions and behavior.

Examples of how to fill out the chart:

Teen	Stress	Crisis	Resource
Fights with parents	Divorce	Running away	Friends
Curfew	HIV/AIDS	Depression	Teachers
Wanting more freedom	Blended families	Suicide	School counselors
Driver's education	Being gay or lesbian	Getting arrested	National Runaway Switchboard
First job	Parent remarrying	Gang involvement	Doctors
Dating	Alcoholism	Problems at school	Nurses
Experimenting with drug/alcohol	Parent being unemployed	Dropping out of school	Coaches
Doing chores	Illness or death	Getting expelled	Neighbors
Being independent	Pregnancy/STDs	Drug addiction	Parents
Peer pressure	Learning disability	Trouble with police	Step-parents
Wanting to fit in	Physical abuse	Stealing	Siblings
Having friends	Sexual abuse	Eating disorder	Grandparents
Doing well I school	Domestic violence	Hurting self or others	Therapist
Puberty	Neglect	Moving out	Social workers
	Emotional abuse	Being cut off from family	Police or lawyer



Worksheet: **Teens + Stress - Resources = Crisis IV-C**

Directions:

Teens run away for a variety of reasons. Think about whether resources could help you avoid a crisis.

Step 1: Under the Teen category, list events/feelings all teenagers experience.

Step 2: Under the Stress category, list stresses some teenagers experience.

Step 3: Under Crisis, list what can happen when teens are overwhelmed.

Step 4: Under the Resources category, list resources a teenager might rely on for help.

Step 5: Discuss the question. Can resources help teens avert a crisis? How?

Teen Event/Feelings	Stress	Crisis	Resources	Crisis Averted?

Teens + Stress + Resources = Crisis Averted?



Teacher's Notes: Kids Call Program

IV-D

Objective:

Let your students see what it's like to talk to people who can help – in the protected environment of your classroom. If trouble strikes, hopefully they will be comfortable calling the National Runaway Switchboard, or referring a friend.

Directions:

Here's how it works. All you need is a telephone / speakerphone. A professional staff person or specially-trained volunteer from the National Runaway Switchboard will call you at a pre-arranged time to speak to your students via speakerphone. Simply call the National Runaway Switchboard at 1-800-RUNAWAY to schedule a time for your call.

If you'd like to hand out pencils, wallet cards, bookmarks or other materials after the call, just ask when you set up the appointment. We'll be happy to send you those materials in advance, free of charge.

READY? Plan the call in advance. Here are some ways you can use the Kids Call program with your runaway prevention curriculum:

☞☞ AWARENESS

Brainstorm questions about runaways with your students, then call the National Runaway Switchboard for answers. *Sample questions:*

- What makes someone run away?
- Why would someone call a hotline?
- How do we know it's really confidential and anonymous?
- What are the most common reasons for calling the National Runaway Switchboard?
- Where do they go?
- Do runaways go to jail?
- How long are runaways gone?
- Do all runaways go home?
- When do they decide to go home?
- How do runaways get home if they don't have any money?

☞☞ RESOURCES

Engage one of your most creative student actors in role-playing someone in distress. Create a scenario in advance so your caller is prepared, or use one of the National Runaway Switchboard's (see problem-solving scenarios).

☞☞ COMMUNICATION

How do the National Runaway Switchboard staff and volunteers help callers? Through good communication skills and a structured conversation. Ask how we do it!

☞☞ STRESS MANAGEMENT / PROBLEM-SOLVING

The National Runaway Switchboard doesn't solve your problems for you – the hotline volunteer or staff person helps you create an action plan to solve your own problems. Talk to the National Runaway Switchboard. You can help yourself or a friend.

SET? When you're ready to begin, feel free to call the National Runaway Switchboard collect on the business line, 1-773-880-9860.

GO! A staff person will call you back right away (your school does not pay for the call). When your call is finished, please complete and send in the Kids Call evaluation.



Worksheet: Kids Call Evaluation Form IV-E

Directions: Fill out this form and return it to the National Runaway Switchboard. See contact info at the bottom of the page.

Name and Title: _____

Organization: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____ Fax: (____) _____

Date and Time of Kids Call: _____ Duration of Call: _____

Name of Facilitator / Person Who Took The Call: _____

Please use the following scale to evaluate the Kids Call program:

	5 Strongly Agree	4 Liked	3 Neutral	2 Disliked	1 Strongly Disagree
1. The Kids Call program effectively answered our questions about runaways.					
	5	4	3	2	1
2. The staff person or volunteer who answered our questions was knowledgeable.					
	5	4	3	2	1
3. Our audience felt the presentation increased their understanding about runaway issues.					
	5	4	3	2	1
4. Our audience is likely to call the National Runaway Switchboard in times of trouble.					
	5	4	3	2	1

Was this your first Kids Call? How did it go?

Any Recommendations For Next Time? _____

Audience Demographics (Number Please) _____

Number of Youth _____ Ages _____ Number of Males vs. Females: _____ Males _____ Females
Number of Adults _____

Thank you for your time and participation. Please return this form to:

Kids Call
National Runaway Switchboard
3080 N. Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, IL 60657
773.880.9860
773.929.5150 - fax



Teacher's Notes: Problem-Solving Scenarios IV-F

Objective:

Use real-life situations to examine runaway prevention from all aspects.

Directions:

Divide your class into three groups. Assign each group a scenario. Copy and cut out the scenarios on the worksheet, then hand them out to your students. Have the groups present the highlights of their discussions to the class.

Here are some sample questions to have your class consider:

AWARENESS

- ☞☞ Will the youth run? What might happen if he or she runs?
- ☞☞ What do you think happens next?

RESOURCES

- ☞☞ What resources might help keep him or her from running?

COMMUNICATION

- ☞☞ Does communication (or lack of communication) play a role? How?

STRESS MANAGEMENT / PROBLEM SOLVING

- ☞☞ How can this person manage their stress?
- ☞☞ Develop a problem-solving action plan for this person.
- ☞☞ Is this scenario realistic? Could it happen to anyone you know?



Worksheet: Problem-Solving Scenarios

IV-G

Directions: Answer the questions your teacher has assigned using your scenario.

A friend in need

Cheryl's best friend Nicole is going to run away and Cheryl is thinking about going with her. Nicole wants to get far, far away from her home. Her dad died a few years ago and now her mom is working two jobs to support the family. Nicole is 15 and the oldest of four children. She has twin sisters that are 8 and a 3 year-old brother. Since her mom is so busy all the time, Nicole has to pick her brother and sisters up after school and take care of them under her mom gets home about 9:00 pm. Nicole has to cook for them, help them with their homework, and make sure they don't get in any trouble. By the time her mom gets home from work, Nicole is exhausted. She does whatever homework she can and falls into bed, just to wake up the next morning and to do it all over again. She has almost no time to hang out with her friends. She even had to drop out of student government because she could never make it to any meetings. Nicole told Cheryl that she's going to run away tonight. She doesn't have specific plans about where to go except that she wants it to be far and that she's going to hitchhike.

☞☞ Cheryl is very worried about her friend's safety and wants to go with her to help protect her. She knows that leaving will worry her parents, but she feels that someone has to help Nicole. She must decide what to do right away.

Directions: Answer the questions your teacher has assigned using your scenario.

Running from an abusive situation

Valerie is 16 and being physically abused at home. Her dad hits her so hard sometimes that she literally goes flying across the room. Her mom also slaps her frequently. Valerie and her dad got into another fight last night and he really hurt her badly. Her ribs are sore from where he kicked her and she has a lump on the back of her head. She just can't take it anymore. She wants to get far away and never wants to come back. She wants to be in a foster home or somewhere she might have parents that really care for her. She tried to talk to a counselor at school about all this, but she felt that the counselor made a bunch of excuses for her parents and didn't want to get involved. Valerie's ready to leave tonight. She wants to get out and find someone that can help her. She doesn't know what will happen, but she knows she's going to leave. She doesn't want to give her parents the opportunity to hit her again tonight.

☞☞ Her friends Robert and Julia stop by as Valerie is packing her bags. They know what's going on and want to help.

Directions: Answer the questions your teacher has assigned using your scenario.

Punished by "past offenders"

Joe thinks he has the worst parents in the whole world. They grew up like hippies, smoking marijuana everyday and wearing tie-dyed t-shirts. What a surprise to be grounded for three months when they found a joint in his coat pocket. He thinks they're hypocrites and totally unfair. Since they did it when they were young, Joe doesn't know why they can't understand that he wants to try it, too. He feels that his drug use isn't that serious because he's only experimenting with pot and sometimes acid. He could see their concern if he were selling it to small children or something. He claims that he just likes to get high every now and then because it makes him feel good and helps him get rid of stress. Joe doesn't think he has a problem and he's very upset with his parents' rules. He's thinking of running away.

☞☞ Joe casually mentioned his problems and plan to run away to a teacher named Bob Rollo, a former hippie himself that students trust. Mr. Rollo and Joe have made plans to talk after school.



Teacher's Notes: The Diary of Lisa

IV-H

Objective:

Give students an insight into a fictitious runaway girl's life. Help them use her experiences to explore the four areas of runaway prevention.

Directions:

Have the class read the diary in one day or over the course of five days. Use the diary to explore the four areas of runaway prevention, and how better awareness, resources, communication and stress management / problem solving might have kept her from running, or could help her now that she's come home.

Here are some assignments you can give your class:

✍️✍️ Pretend you're Lisa wrapping up what she's learned from the experience of living on the street. What were Lisa's primary concerns from day to day? How did her concerns at home differ from her concerns on the street? What do you think Lisa has learned from her experience? (Make sure you consider what may have been good and bad about her experience.)

✍️✍️ Write an essay on what you would do if you were Lisa's best friend. How could you have helped Lisa before she left home? What will things be like when she returns? What will change in your relationship with her?

✍️✍️ Write a matching diary for the same five days as if you were Lisa's mother or sister.

✍️✍️ Write a fictitious diary for yourself, as though you were going to run away from home. What might you encounter? How would you escape? Would you go home?



Worksheet: Lisa's Diary

IV-I

Day 1

Dear Diary,

I feel like I've been waiting forever. Waiting for things to get better. Waiting for my mom to quit being so horrible to me. Waiting for things to change. Waiting for everything. But things never did change and I got tired of waiting. I left while my mom and sister were out grocery shopping. I'm supposed to be grounded for breaking curfew last weekend. I was already grounded from the time before so I guess it didn't matter if I got grounded again. And now it doesn't matter anyway because I'm never coming home again.

I wonder when she'll realize I'm gone. She'll totally freak. She will lose it. She'll probably call my dad and make him come over. She'll call the cops, she'll call everyone. I kind of wish I could see it. She makes me crazy every day, may she'll know how bad it was for me living there. I'm headed south. Spent \$50 on a train ride and climbed aboard. Home seems really far away. I'm so happy to be gone.

Day 2

Dear Diary,

I talked to this really cool woman for a while on the train but then she got off. Her name is Carley. She gave me 20 bucks which will help. She told me she was worried about me and wished I would go home, but I told her I would never go home. After she left, I got pretty bored just riding so I got off the train too. I ended up in a town way smaller than mine called Mount Nathan or Nathanville or something lame. I got something to eat and it was like nobody even asked me what I was doing or where I was from. They just stared at me but no one said anything. I walked around and sat on a curb in front of a hair salon. I thought about cutting all of my hair off.. My mom always really loved my hair. She said it looked like hers when she was young. I can't even imagine my mom as a kid. She was always telling me what to do and how to act and how not to act. She told me I was a troublemaker and she said I was up to no good all the time. My mom was probably a total reject in high school. She probably never went out and never drank. My mom was always afraid for me. She never let me just be ME!

She didn't understand that things are way different now than they were for her and there was no way I was going to live her pathetic life.

I went into Burgers & More to use the bathroom and wash my face. I stole a roll of toilet paper and stuffed it in my back pack. I feel like I'm on an adventure. I like the fact that no one knows me. I can totally start over. I went back to Burgers & More to eat. There were some other kids there and they looked like a bunch of geeks. Maybe they're all named Nathan.

I think about my sister. She's probably sad that I'm gone. She and I never got along great but sometimes she could be cool.. She 's younger than me but she was always the favorite one. She was smarter and better at everything. Karla is so pretty. Karla has so much potential. Whatever. Karla will probably take over my room. It was the one thing I had that she wanted and now she probably has that too.

I wonder if my dad came over. I wonder if he saved off his mustache by now. I wonder if he's still dating that woman who wore all that gold jewelry. I decide to call my friend Jenny. Jenny's mom answered the phone so I just hung up. I wish I could have talked to her. I waited a while and looked at the pictures I had put in my address book. Jenny is totally crazy and I have this picture of her from the last time she had a party. We got so drunk on this punch her brother made. That's when I got grounded the first time. My mom hates Jenny. I think she's cool and she would totally help me.

The cops came through the parking lot of the liquor store where I was using the phone. They didn't even stop but it kind of made me nervous. I don't think I could handle going to jail or juvee.



I slept on the train last night but I didn't know where to sleep tonight. I went behind an apartment building and hid under the stairs. I stuffed my backpack behind me and now I'm trying to sleep.

Day 3

Dear Diary,

I got woken up by a big ugly dog and it started barking and barking at me. The owner yelled at me and told me to get off of her back porch. I snarled back at her but grabbed by stuff. My back is real sore and I feel gritty. I had just started walking when the guy picked me up at the gas station. He asked me where I was going and I told him nowhere. He said he would give me a ride so I figured I should just go. This town is going nowhere anyway. So now I'm in his truck and we're smoking cigarettes together. Cool. The guy's name is Jerry and he turned out to be a total creep. He started asking me weird questions and looking at me funny. I was getting nervous like he wasn't going to let me out of the car when he started speeding up. I started to cry and I was trying to think of what I could hit him with if he tried to grab me. So I told him to just let me go and he pulled over. I'm so glad he just left. So gross.

It was like 9am when I walked into another town. I found a coffee shop and got a donut and a bottomless cup of coffee. The coffee was bad. It was kind of weak. We used to hang out at this coffee shop called My Friend Jo that's near school. Me and Stevie and JJ and Gamma and everyone. I wish I could hang out with those guys all the time. If I could have just lived at Jo's and not gone home, that would have been fine. When it's just me and my friends it's easy. We all understand each other. We're more like family to each other than my real family.

I feel so gross after that guy in his truck. It kind of makes me sick. I totally could have ended up as just another bad news story. I feel kind of funny. Like I'm tired and my head hurts. I wish I had something for my headache. I need a shower so bad. I never thought about where I was going to shower. I don't have a towel either. I just left all that stuff. I brought some clothes and money and some food. I miss my stereo and the sofa. If I was home I would eat something, take some medicine then lay on the sofa and listen to my music really loud. Then my mom would probably throw something at me and tell me to get a life. Forget it.

It's a school day. I wonder what's going on in school. People are probably talking about me. My mom probably went to Principal Ryan all crying in his office and stuff. They probably busted into my locker but they're not going to find anything. My mom always thought I was on drugs but I never was. I never even tried it. I've seen other people doing it but it's a little too harsh for me. They act so stupid and this one guy used the bathroom in his pants. I smoke cigarettes and I've been drunk but nothing more. I feel a little hung over, actually, but I'm not. But maybe I should try to find some vodka.

It's lunch time and I'm starving. I'm out of money. I can't find the \$20 that the girl gave me on the train. I went back to the coffee shop and talked to the guy in the back in the kitchen. At the Taco Hut the kitchen guy would sometimes give us the stuff they didn't sell that day. So I tried to ask him for extra stuff but he tells me to get away and slams the door in my face. I can't believe I'm begging for food, but I'm so hungry. I can't even find a water fountain.

Right after school gets out I try to call Jenny again, but she's not home. I don't even know if I'm in another time zone. Maybe I screwed it up. I think about calling my house. I think about calling and laughing at my mom. I think about my sister and how she's doing. I miss my dog. I named her Dog. They don't know their names anyway. I hope they're taking care of her. It's getting dark and I've been walking all day. Just walking. I don't even know where to go. The paper says I'm in North Carolina. I wonder if my picture is in the paper at home. I wonder if they gave up looking for me. There was this little girl who was lost last summer and they found her body days later in a sewer. Poor thing. I wonder if she was really lost or what.



I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm hungry and tired and I can't even believe it. I just wanted to get away from home. I just wanted to get far, far away. And I guess I am – but I didn't want to live on the streets either. I don't want to be a bum and beg for food. I hate that I don't have somewhere to go. I don't want to go home but I want to go somewhere. I don't have money to go anywhere thought. I'm really freaking out. I decide to call my sister. I know she has money. Maybe she can help me somehow. Maybe she can find a way to send it to me. I am so nervous before I call.

My mom picked up the phone and I didn't know what to do. I was quiet. I had my mouth open but no words came out. She kept saying hello? Hello? Hello? They she was quiet too. I could hear my sister in the background and I was hoping she would hand the phone to her. She came back on and said, "Lisa? Honey?" and I hung up. I've seen all these movies where they trace calls and I didn't want her to know where I was. It was weird to hear her voice. She sounded scared. Good.

But I know she must have been a wreck. If I was here it would be really bad to have your kid leave. I know it . I wish none of this had to happen. I went to a dinner and sat at the counter. I told them I was waiting for my mom to pick me up. When the couple in the first booth left, I ran over there and took their left over food before the bus boy came. Then I ran so fast out the door. I went a couple of blocks and sat down in a park. It was so good to eat.

I fell asleep in the park but woke up when I heard this couple on the bench across the walkway. It was dark. They were totally making out. I was so tired. Someone stole my backpack. I can't believe someone ripped it off. Everything but my diary is gone. And my jacket. My stuff was under the bench when I was eating. I don't know what happened. I fell asleep on top of my diary or else I would have lost that, too.

I have never felt so alone. I wish the ground would just open up and swallow me Maybe the inside of the earth is really pretty. Maybe it's a big garden and everything is sunny and there are flowers and birds. And I can sleep somewhere warm and clean and eat a really big bowl of ravioli and watch TV. I wish I had a normal family and I wish I didn't get grounded all the time. I wish my life was different. I wish I could be okay. I don't mean to be a screw up. I don't mean to be a disappointment. It wasn't my fault things got bad. My life is a total sham. Nobody knows me and nobody cares. If I got back now everyone will think I'm just some kid crying for help. It will probably only get worse. It's hopeless. My life is so hopeless.

I called Jenny again and finally got through. Her mom picked up the other line and asked who it was and she said it was Thomas her new boyfriend. I didn't even know she broke up with Matt, but I guess she did. Jenny and I talked and she told me my mom was a mess and everyone in town knew and she thought maybe I was dead. She wanted to know where I was and I told her I wasn't sure. I thought she would think that was kind of cool but she yelled at me and told me to get over it and come home. I was so shocked. She said she was so worried and she was mad at me. She told me I could have gone to her for anything and she thought we were better friends. I felt bad but it was good to talk to her. We were both crying. She told me to call my mom. She said if I came home that it would be a good idea. I don't know if I believe her. Honestly, I kind of what to but I'm scared. I feel like running away was just another screw up. Story of my life.

I start walking again. I'm in some kind of neighborhood. Lots of little houses all with garages on the side. This is nothing like Indy, I think. I wonder how close I am to the ocean if at all. I look at a couple of houses and I try to imagine what is gong on inside. Is it perfect or is it a mess like my house. Is everyone sitting down for dinner or are they all just grabbing food and going to their rooms? Are people nice to each other? Are moms and dads together? This lady came down the street with her two dogs. One was a lab and one a collie. They're really cute. I asked her for some money so I could get something t o eat. She wanted to know what was wrong and I don't her I couldn't go home.

We talked for a while but then she left. I was just sitting there when the cops pulled up. The stupid lady with the dogs called them on her cell phone. Who carries a cell phone while they're walking dogs? In this



stupid place? I didn't even try to run. They weren't rough or anything. The older guy was like, "Just get in and we'll take you to the station." When we got there he bought me a fruit pie out of a vending machine. It was gross but good, too. I sat in an empty room for awhile. This other guy came in and talked to me about "my situation." I told him I was from Indiana and he asked me about the Indiana Pacers. Whatever. He asked for my name and I didn't give it to him. He gave me the same look my mom gives me when she's bad at me.

He said, "Look, it's the end of my shift. I'm tired, you're tired, I'm hungry, you're hungry, and we both know this little vacation of yours is over. So tell me your name and let's just take care of business, shall we?"

Shall we? Like it was a deal! I finally gave him my name and he said he needed to check the computer but he would be back.

I'm sitting in the same room. I didn't want to take my diary out while he was in the room because I didn't want him to take it. I had it tucked in the back of my pants and covered by my shirt. I guess I'm really going home now. This stinks. I feel miserable. I feel like I want to throw up. I'm humiliated and stupid and useless and pathetic. My head still hurts and I really want to shower. I want some clean clothes and I want to brush my hair. At least home has that. Dealing with my mom is going to be horrible. She is going to hate me even more. I'm going to be grounded for life. She'll never let me out. She'll never trust me. Karla is going to love this. She will be the big star. Thank goodness for Karla or we'd have nothing to be proud of. The cop comes back and says he found me in the computer. "No, you found me in the park," I tell him. He doesn't think I'm funny. He takes me to a shelter called Breakthrough. The drive took forever. The lady there tells me that they're actually full but I can sleep on the couch in the living room. It's 3am. She told me the 6am worker would wake me up when she got in and then I would have to call my mom. I use the bathroom, wash my face. I'm still starving but I write in my diary before I sleep. This has been the worst day of my life.

Day 4

Dear Diary,

I feel like I've landed in Oz or something. This place is crazy. Arnold wakes me up at 6:30am and tells me I need to call my mom. I grabbed a piece of toast. They said they didn't have coffee. I miss Jo's. I talk with Arnie for like an hour. He was actually pretty cool. I told him about my mom and how we fight and fight and fight. I told him about how I break curfew and my mom doesn't like my friends and she says I hang out more than I study. I told him how critical she is of me and he said I was critical of her, too.

Whatever. Because I was out of state I was going to need a way to get home. Arnie said they were going to put me on a Greyhound bus and I thought that was fine. I wondered if I would meet up with that lady again somehow. In order to get a free ticket I had to call the National Runaway Switchboard and they would book me a ticket. They stick me on a pay phone in the hall and I call the place. I talked to a guy named Pat and he was cool. I was like, "Don't make me talk about all of this again – it's torture!!? But he was all right. I told him to just send me home but he said he wanted me to stay home too. I didn't really think about that. So we talked about my sister and school and Jenny and what my mom will do when I get home.

Pat put me on hold and called my mom. He was going to be the middle guy for us which was fine by me. I didn't want to call her. I wonder if I'll ever tell her it was me the other night who called then hung up. I saw a girl sneak out of the shelter to have a smoke and I wished I could have one. I would so much rather be having a drag than being on this phone. I thought about dropping the phone and going out there and I thought about just leaving all together. Just dropping the phone and heading out the door but then I thought I had no where to go. I didn't have any money or clothes or my stuff. So I stayed on the phone. I hate this. I heard this clicking noise and I thought we got hung up on. I was about ready to forget it when I heard my mom. She was pretty calm but she sounded as if she was crying. Pat asked if she was there



and she said she was. Then she asked if I was on the phone and I said yeah. Pat wanted me to say something to my mom and my head started spinning and I was breathing like I had just run a marathon. I could feel myself start to cry but I didn't know why so I tried to stop it. Then my mom said my name and she started crying and that was it. We were both crying. I think she was happy crying though and I didn't know what kind of trying I was doing. I wasn't happy because I was really unhappy but I felt real emotional anyway. We talked about everything and she said she was mad but she really, really wanted me to come home. She asked if I had eaten and wanted to know what I wanted for dinner. The thought of eating at my house seemed weird. Last night I stole someone else's dinner. I didn't tell her that. We worked out this plan and she's going to make me go to counseling, but Pat thought maybe we could try it together. I don't know but we'll see. Pay got me a ticket and when another person came in to work, Arnold drove me to the Greyhound station. I wanted to take a shower but there wasn't any time. Arnold gave me a sandwich and an apple and I ate them immediately. Like a piranha. He said I would be hungry the whole way home – it was almost the whole day – but I didn't care.

I'm on the bus now and no one wants to sit next to me. I guess I must stink and I look pretty awful. My eyes are all red from crying and my hair is all over. I haven't brushed my teeth in forever and my breath is probably so bad. I wish I had some gum. I don't have any bags so I just sit and keep writing. We stop in all these towns and people get on and off. I'm real scared of men who look like Jerry.

Day 5

Dear Diary,

I woke up from this freaky dream I was having. More like a nightmare. I dreamt I was in the park and it was daytime and then these dogs were chasing me and I was running and running then I tripped and fell over a cliff. I felt like I was falling and falling. Weird.

I have no idea what time it is. The sun is up and I guess we'll be coming into Indy at some point today. I've been on the bus forever. I am hungry again. I never really understood what people said when they talked about hunger but now I know.

I ask the driver when we get to Indy and it's only 20 minutes. I get kind of in a panic. I know my mom is going to be there and I don't know what it will be like. She was cool on the phone, but she was probably just glad I was alive. She might be mean again. She might not care. She might just tell me to shut up. I wonder if Karla will be there. I wonder what happened while I was gone. I hope she won't make me go to school tomorrow. I don't want to see anybody ever again. I am going crazy right now. When we pulled in to the station, I got off last. I saw her first. She came running up to me and I braced myself. I stand real still. I could feel her just totally hugging me and I feel like I might stop breathing. I said, "mom I'm gross, you don't want to hug me," but she kept doing it. So I hugged her good. Karla was there and she was crying too. She said mom thought she would never see me alive again and it was really awful while I was gone. Grandma had come in from Gary just to help mom because she was so upset. My grandma really gave me a lecture when I got home. She told me I didn't respect my family and it was evil of me to run away. She said no grandchild of hers should ever have run away. I felt like I really disappointed her. That's how I felt the more and more I talked with mom. I never thought I could disappoint her because I thought she didn't care about me. Part of me thought she would be relieved when I was gone, like "good – never come back", but she said she was depressed and missed work. I guess the thing is that I wanted to be somewhere else and so I left. Pat told me to think about how to make my home a different place then I wouldn't have to go somewhere different. It feels different already. I'm glad to be home. I know it could have been much worse. I guess I didn't think I might die. I just needed to get away. It was so awful to have nowhere to go. I didn't realize how many people even cared. I'm still scared. Like I know it won't be instantly better, but I don't think I'll ever run again.



Runaway Prevention Curriculum

Section V: Youth and Family Support *(For parents)*



Teacher's Notes: Support Youth & Families V-A

Objective:

Help empower families. Today's youth and families need our support now more than ever. Complex family structures, long-distance family relationships, and blended families show us there is no typical family. We must empower families to build the skills that will protect them, nurture them and help them to grow.

Directions:

Share these ideas and structured discussions with parents or parent organizations.

What are the barriers to communication today?

(Note: If you can show a video of people not communicating, such as a television sit-com, it may be easier to do this exercise.)

- ✂✂ Distractions – room noise
- ✂✂ They weren't listening
- ✂✂ Interrupted me
- ✂✂ Thinking of something else while I was talking
- ✂✂ Thinking of what they were going to say next while I was talking
- ✂✂ Not interested in what I was saying

Discuss how rare the "traditional" family is today. What are the factors that keep families from being closer?

- ✂✂ Two parents working
- ✂✂ Kids working
- ✂✂ No family meals – eating in front of the TV
- ✂✂ Different schedules
- ✂✂ No longer have extended families living together
- ✂✂ Grandparents, aunts and uncles and their families live far away
- ✂✂ Generation gap

Discuss the following quote: "Families that play together, stay together." What does it mean? In your experience, is it true?

How can you help your family communicate better? Review the following worksheets for ideas:

- ✂✂ Family Communication Tips
- ✂✂ A Family Communication Contract
- ✂✂ The Family Meeting
- ✂✂ Sample Family Meeting Agenda
- ✂✂ Family Volunteering
- ✂✂ Safety Contracts



Worksheet: Family Communication Tips IV-B

Directions:

Use these tips to help your family improve their relationships. Post them in a central spot. Can you think of other tips you would add?

1. Set aside time to talk every day.
2. Don't expect your family to read your mind.
3. Be specific about your expectations and requests.
4. Have patience; good communication takes time and effort.
5. Brainstorm ideas before making a final decision.
6. Ask for input from all family members.
7. Write things down; make a list of changes you want to see.
8. Be willing to compromise.
9. Do fun things together.
10. Use community resources when you need help.

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Worksheet: Family Communication Contract V-C

Directions:

Using this contract, help your family commit to practicing effective communication.

Step 1: Gather the materials you'll need: pen and paper, Family Communication Tips worksheet.

Schedule a time for all of you to get together.

Step 2: Review Family Communication Tips with your family. Give everyone a copy.

Step 3: Appoint a recorder. Give recorder paper and a pen or pencil.

Step 4: Working together, your family should turn each tip into a specific communication strategy.

Use the following as a guide. A blank form is attached. Feel free to add more to it!

Step 5: Have everyone sign and date the contract.

Family Communication Tips	Family Communication Contract
Set aside time to talk every day.	We will talk every night before bedtime for twenty minutes.
Don't expect your family to read your mind.	I will let people know what I'm thinking. I will not expect them to guess my feelings.
Be specific about your expectations and requests.	We will be clear about asking for things. Mom will say, "set the table" instead of "be helpful." And John will ask "I'd like to use the car on Saturday morning," instead of "I need the car this weekend."
Have patience; good communication takes time and effort.	Things will probably not be OK right away, but we will work at this, so that in time, things will be better.
Brainstorm ideas before making a final decision.	Mom and dad will try to include everyone in the decision making process and not just tell everyone how it's going to be (but sometimes they get to make that decision anyway).
Ask for input from all family members.	Everyone gets to say something.
Write things down; make a list of changes you want to see.	Mom wants everyone home by 7pm. Dad would like everyone to get good grades. John would like to get a job. Jenny wants to take driver's ed this summer.
Be willing to compromise.	If you are studying or in sports then you don't have to be home by 7pm.
Do fun things together.	Everyone gets to pick one thing for the whole family to do to every month.
Use community resources when you need help.	Dad has a friend who knows a counselor if we need help.

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Worksheet: Our Family's Communication Contract V-D

Directions:

Create your own family's contract using the guidelines from the Family Communication Contract worksheet.

Tip #1 set aside time to talk every day.

Our contract: We will ...

Tip #2 Don't expect your family to read your mind.

Our contract: We will ...

Tip #3 Be specific about your expectations and requests.

Our contract: We will ...

Tip #4 Have patience; good communication takes time and effort.

Our contract: We will ...

Tip #5 Brainstorm ideas before making a final decision.

Our contract: We will ...

Tip #6 Ask for input from all family members.

Our contract: We will ...



Tip #7 Write things down; make a list of changes you want to see.

Our contract: We will ...

Tip #8 Be willing to compromise.

Our contract: We will ...

Tip #9 Do fun things together.

Our contract: We will ...

Tip #10 Use community resources when you need help.

Our contract: We will ...

Have everyone sign the contract, then post it on a bulletin board for everyone to see!

SIGNED: _____ **DATED:** _____

SIGNED: _____ **DATED:** _____

SIGNED: _____ **DATED:** _____

SIGNED: _____ **DATED:** _____

SIGNED: _____ **DATED:** _____

SIGNED: _____ **DATED:** _____



Worksheet: The Family Meeting

V-E

Directions:

A weekly or bi-weekly family meeting is one good way to encourage communication about any concerns or issues affecting you as a group. Take a look at our sample, then custom design a solution for you. You might want to talk with a local social service provider in your area for more ideas.

Step 1. Why have family meetings? What will we talk about? Discuss with your family.

Step 2: Decide on a convenient meeting time. A regularly scheduled meeting (day and time) is best. The meeting should have a start point and an end point.

Step 3: Set rules for family meetings, such as:

- ✍✍ No shouting.
- ✍✍ Everyone has a chance to speak.
- ✍✍ Be honest. It's okay to have an opinion.
- ✍✍ There are no bad ideas.
- ✍✍ We all try to be patient.

Write down the rules on a piece of paper for safekeeping; post them during meetings. Review them before each meeting starts.

Step 4: Set an agenda for each meeting. Keep a working agenda on the refrigerator. Or set up an "agenda" box so family members can submit agenda items anonymously.

Step 5: Call the meeting to order. Take turns leading each week's meeting.

Step 6: Begin with everyone sharing something positive with the family.

Step 7: As each agenda item gets its turn, try to involve each family member in the discussion.

Step 8: At the end of the meeting, thank everyone for participating and emphasize how important family meetings are to making the family stronger.

Step 9: Reward the family with a movie, ice cream sundaes, or a special meal.

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Worksheet: Sample Family Meeting Agenda V-F

Directions:

Use this sample meeting agenda to create one for your family.

The Lee Family's Meeting Agenda Sunday Dinner, 5 pm

✍✍ Call the Lee family meeting to order

✍✍ Read the Family Meeting Rules and Communications Contract.

✍✍ Share something positive.

✍✍ Agenda items

✍✍ Chores

- With fall approaching, there is more yard work to be done.

✍✍ Pets

- Remember to put the dog in the yard when we leave the house in the morning.

✍✍ Thanksgiving

- Everyone can invite one friend to dinner.

✍✍ Laundry

- Should everyone start doing his or her own laundry?

✍✍ Baby-sitting

- Are we dividing the time to help with the baby evenly?

✍✍ Upcoming agenda items

✍✍ Spring break vacation's coming up – any ideas?

✍✍ Closing

✍✍ Distribute allowances.

✍✍ Thank everyone. Pick the person who gets to select the movie rental for the evening.

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Worksheet: Family Volunteering

V-G

Directions:

Families that “play together, stay together.” Here’s a way to play together, in a way that contributes to your community: volunteer! Here are some suggestions for how to get started:

During a family meeting, discuss the advantages of volunteering. Brainstorm the following questions:

- What are we interested in doing?
- When can we volunteer?
- How much time can we commit to volunteering?
- Which agencies are family-friendly?
- Try to be specific.

Examples:

- Work with animals on Saturday mornings.
- Help senior citizens during weekend evenings doing something outside (painting, raking, cleaning) once a month.

1. Call a local volunteer placement service such as the United Way to learn more about your volunteer options. Appoint one person in charge of doing this. Others can find options on the Internet, at school, the local library, or by talking with other people who volunteer.

2. Set aside time to complete the research and look at all available options. Make sure the agency is the right match for your family. Have them send you literature or ask to attend an orientation session. Discuss your family’s options, and then hold a family vote to pick one agency.

3. Later, reflect on your family’s volunteer experience. Talk with each other about what you’re learning. Start a “Family Volunteer Projects” journal, complete with photos and essays.

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National Runaway Switchboard
www.1800RUNAWAY.org



Worksheet: Safety Contract

V-H

Directions:

Prepare for what to do and where to go if the youth runs away. We recognize that not every youth can be stopped if they decide to run away. If the youth feels like they might run, in spite of the best prevention efforts, it is wise to arrange a safety contract.

Here are some tips:

- Confront the youth honestly and directly. Tell him you are afraid that he is going to run away. Admit that if you cannot prevent him from running, you at least want to know he will be going to a safe location.
- Discuss the importance of a safety contract. If the youth leaves, ask them to agree to let the parent know where they are going and maintain contact with the parent.
- If you have not already done so, identify youth shelters in your area by calling the National Runaway Switchboard at 1-800-RUNAWAY. Talk with a crisis intervention specialist about your options. Ask what would happen if your youth seeks shelter.
- If shelters are not appropriate or available options, pick a trusted friend or relative. An adult friend or relative is a good back-up plan in case a shelter is full or otherwise unable to house your teen. Talk with the friend about your expectations.
- Tell your youth how much you value his safety. Help him see that a safety contract is not a permission slip to leave home but an expression of your commitment to resolve the issues you are facing together.
- Write up a safety contract stating where the youth will go if they leave home. The parent, youth, and friend or relative will sign it. Once the youth arrives at the safe location the parent will be called and the National Runaway Switchboard will be called.
- Talk with your youth about ways you can work together while the youth is still at home. Call the National Runaway Switchboard for assistance.

Sample Contract:

If John Smith feels he is unable to live in our home, he has the permission of his mother, Jenny Smith, to stay at the home of his aunt, Jessica White, temporarily. John and Jessica will call Jenny immediately upon his arrival there. John will continue to have contact with his mother while he lives apart from her. John will continue to attend school. Both John and Jenny will cooperate with family counseling sessions as scheduled. This safety contract represents our mutual concern for safety while working on our problems. We are committed to making our family work.

signed: _____ dated: _____
John Smith

signed: _____ dated: _____
Jenny Smith

signed: _____ dated: _____
Jessica White