

Instructor's Guide

for

Youth Corrections Series for Young Women: Choices, Consequences, and Your Future

Why Am I Here and What's Next?

Overview

Every action we take has a consequence. Many of our actions and behaviors come to us out of habit. They are ingrained into us by parents or peers. Some of our actions are motivated by feelings of anger, sadness, or worthlessness. But if we take the time to step back and think about the consequences of those actions, we see that we *do* have choices in our lives, and some of those choices are better than others.

For most of your students, the first step towards making a positive change is understanding who they are and how they got to this place in their lives. What in their past has influenced their decisions up to this point? What role has their family played in constructing their identity? Only by understanding who they are and why they've made the choices they've made can your students begin to imagine an alternative. Only then can they begin to think about who they would like to *become*—what choices they want to make for their futures.

This video discusses the importance of self understanding, especially as it pertains to choices and their consequences. It provides a basic overview of the kinds of emotions, circumstances, and choices that lead to juvenile corrections in the first place. It also suggests the positive consequences that can come from making the most of one's time there and vowing to make a personal change and become a better, more responsible person.

The video provides opportunities and questions for group discussion. Feel free to follow the cues, pausing for activities and discussion as your own schedule dictates.

Presentation Suggestions

Begin by asking students to think about the choices they have made up to this point in their lives. What were the consequences of those choices? Did they feel they had any other alternatives? Were they acting out of anger or other emotions? Were they acting on instinct? Most importantly, if they were confronted with the same situations again, would they make the same choices? Odds are your students probably have some regrets, but it's most important to get at the underlying causes behind their behaviors. Help them to

understand that their choices are their own—they have to take responsibility for them—but that their behaviors are also influenced by those around them, particularly their family.

When you feel students have begun thinking about these issues, give them the **Anticipation Quiz** to complete prior to watching the video. If you wish, allow the students to state their answers and discuss them.

Show the video. Encourage students to take notes or to make changes to the answers they put down for the Anticipation Quiz while watching the video.

At the conclusion of the video, ask students to discuss any changes they made to their answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of information they learned. Follow up this discussion with the **Activities**.

Use the **Discussion Questions** to request oral or written responses from students or assign the questions as homework essays.

Give the **Quick Quiz** at the conclusion of class and correct the quizzes as a group. Assign the **Homework Option**, if desired.

Anticipation Quiz

Directions: Answer these questions as completely as possible. You may revise your answers as you watch the video.

1. What role do our habits play in our behavior?
2. What role does self-esteem play in your decisions?
3. What can you do to make the best use of your time in the correctional program?
4. True or false: Education is the key to future success?

Answer Key

1. We often react to new situations based on our past experience. People act out of habit—certain behaviors will come naturally because that is what we are taught growing up. However that doesn't mean we can't learn new behaviors.
2. Self-esteem and self-confidence give us the power to make good decisions. They give us the power to say no when confronted with peer pressure or to stand up for what we believe in.
3. Learn about yourself. Continue your education. Talk to others who can help you work through past experiences to make better choices in the future.
4. True. Statistics show that even a high-school diploma can dramatically increase a person's chances of being employed and staying out of prison.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: Choices and Consequences

Format: Individual/Group

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Worksheet, pen

Procedure:

1. Use the worksheet on the last page of this study guide to get students thinking about the choices they've made, both good and bad. Have them list both good choices and bad choices and the consequences of each. Then, in the space provided, have them list an alternative choice they might have made and what they think the consequences of that choice might have been.
2. Come back together as a whole class and have a general discussion about what prompts people to make poor choices and what it takes to stop and make good ones. Consider presenting some hypothetical scenarios to get the discussion started.

Activity #2

Title: Role Models

Format: Individual/Group

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Paper, pen

Procedure:

1. Much of our behavior stems from what we've learned from those around us. Have each student identify one figure who serves or could serve as a positive role model for them. This could be a friend, family member, teacher, historical figure, celebrity, or someone in the community.
2. Have each student write a paragraph listing the positive qualities this role model possesses. What do they admire about her? What can they do to act more like her?
3. When they have finished, encourage your students to write a letter to this role model, telling that person why they admire her.

Discussion Questions

1. What role has your family played in making you who you are today? Does your family have any positive role models? Are there people in your family you don't respect or look up to? Why or why not?
2. What makes you angry? Can you tell when you are about to get angry? How do you express your anger? Are there more positive ways you could express or control your anger? Did your anger or other negative emotion have any influence on the behaviors that lead you to this point in your life?

3. Who do you want to be when you become an adult? What kind of job do you want to have? What kind of lifestyle do you want to live? What steps can you take right now to get you there?

Quick Quiz

Note: You may read these questions out loud, allowing time for students to respond, or copy and hand this out as a written exercise.

Directions: Indicate whether each statement is true or false, according to the video.

1. Your past behaviors have no impact on your present actions.
2. Youth who have committed a crime often lack positive role models.
3. Knowing who you are and where you come from is a first step towards making a positive change in yourself.
4. In order to maintain self-control, you need to be aware of what angers you.
5. Part of making a positive change in your life is deciding on what you would like to do in the future.
6. Your lifestyle is chosen for you by your friends, family, and others around you.
7. Release starts the day you enter the juvenile corrections process.
8. Having a high school diploma will not help you to stay out of prison.
9. It is important to talk to others and find people in your life that will support you.
10. It is often better to be in prison than to have to make one's place in society.

Answer Key

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| 1. False | 6. False |
| 2. True | 7. True |
| 3. True | 8. False |
| 4. True | 9. True |
| 5. True | 10. False |

Homework Option

Have students make a list of their interests and hobbies. Encourage them to think about all of the things they like to do and/or are good at. This could also include things they would be interested in learning more about. Then have them think about three careers that might take advantage of those interests and hobbies.

Choices and Consequences Worksheet

| My Choice | Consequences | Alternative Choice | Alternative Consequences |
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