

Facilitator's Guide for



Real Teens Talk about Using the Slight Edge®

Lessons for Teachers, Youth Workers, and Community Leaders
to Teach Young People the Tools They Need for Success



Facilitator's Guide for



SUCCESS
for **TEENS**™

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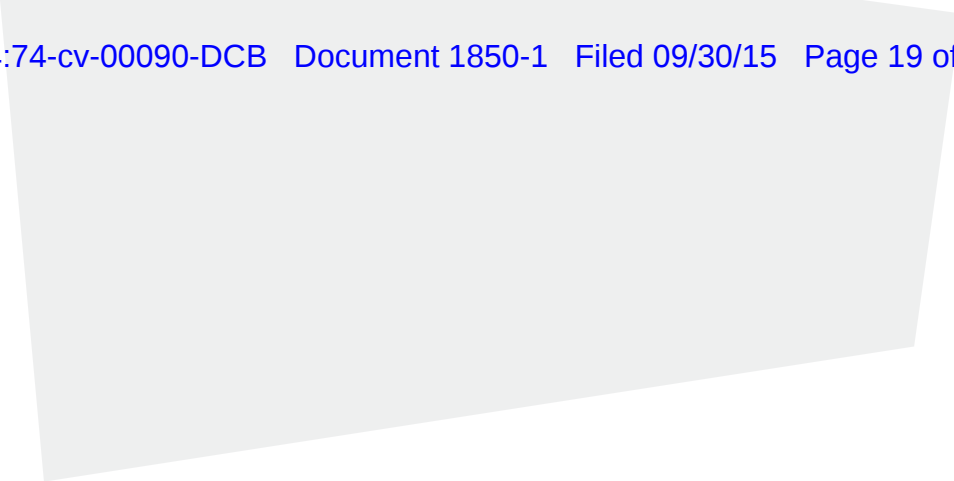
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A Message for Facilitators

Dear Facilitator,

We at the SUCCESS Foundation thank you for the important work you do with teens. Using this guide to reinforce the personal-development philosophies conveyed in *SUCCESS for Teens* can help support you in your efforts to direct teens toward a path that enables them to achieve their goals, pursue careers, and become productive citizens.

SUCCESS for Teens is a personal-development book that will help young people reach their full potential. By reading the book and completing the exercises, teens will learn to make the most of their talents and opportunities, deal with problems in positive ways, and achieve success—however they define it. The core of *SUCCESS for Teens* is a philosophy of self-actualization called the slight edge, developed by the entrepreneur Jeff Olson and adapted for a young audience in this book.

The purpose of this guide is to help you use *SUCCESS for Teens* with young people in school, afterschool and community programs, and other settings. It provides an overview of the book's main points, and then leads you, chapter-by-chapter, through a series of reading, discussion, and writing activities you can use to help teens apply the book's lessons to their lives.

Throughout the book, real teens talk about the many ways they've used and applied the slight edge:

They describe how they discovered what matters most in life, and how that's influenced their decisions and choices in positive ways.

They describe new ways of thinking and acting that will help the young people you work with make wise choices, whether at home, with friends, in school, or in choosing a career.

They give inspiring examples of how teens can overcome difficult obstacles and keep going until they reach their goals.

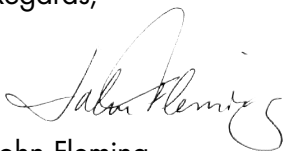
They show how they've used specific tools to achieve success in school, at work, and with family and peers.

Research shows that a great number of young people doubt they can achieve their goals. Many aren't motivated to achieve, don't know how to plan or make decisions, and don't feel a sense of purpose. Too many teens are lacking key tools and skills, such as goal-setting, dream-building, self-motivation, and time management.

That's why Stuart Johnson created the SUCCESS Foundation. He believes young men and women thrive best when they first understand themselves and then apply that knowledge to the world around them. He wanted a way to illustrate the importance of clarifying goals, practicing the small efforts necessary for success, and accepting responsibility for one's destiny.

SUCCESS for Teens is a personal-development resource packed with ideas that have changed the lives of thousands of adults, and it can do the same for youth in your school or community program. Together, we can help make a difference in the lives of our children.

Regards,



John Fleming
Executive Director
The SUCCESS Foundation
www.SUCCESSFoundation.org

INTRODUCTION TO THE SLIGHT EDGE

SUCCESS for Teens is based on the slight edge, a personal-development philosophy created by the entrepreneur Jeff Olson. *SUCCESS for Teens* explains how the slight edge works in ways that teens can relate to and understand, using the real-life experiences of their peers. In a nutshell, the slight edge boils down to this:

You can create any life you want, no matter how difficult it may seem, but only by understanding how small, positive steps make a difference over time. The things you do every single day—things that don't look like such a big deal or like they don't even matter—do matter.

By understanding how small, positive actions compound over time, teens can begin to set priorities, use their strengths, and make tangible changes in their lives.

SUCCESS for Teens is organized into eight chapters, each addressing a main principle of the slight edge philosophy. Throughout, teens tell true stories about how they've used the slight edge in their lives. Your goal is to use the stories in each chapter to engage teens in thinking about how their peers define and achieve success, and how they can do the same in their lives.

Here is an overview of the book's organization:

Chapter 1: **Little Things Matter**

Theme: The little things you do every day, whether positive or negative, will determine the kind of life you lead.

Chapter 2: **Attitude is Everything**

Theme: Your actions are driven by what you most deeply believe about yourself and the world.

Chapter 3: **Use the Moment**

Theme: You can create a better future by spending less time in the past and taking action in the present.

Chapter 4: **Everything Starts with Small Steps**

Theme: Every success in life, large or small, starts and continues with small steps.

Chapter 5: **There's No Such Thing as Failure**

Theme: Success is built on failure because it helps you discover your strengths and creates unexpected opportunities.

Chapter 6: **Habits Are Powerful**

Theme: Positive habits are powerful tools that can help you reach your full potential.

Chapter 7: **You're Always Learning**

Theme: There's no standing still in life, as you always have opportunities to learn something new.

Chapter 8: **You Can Make Your Dreams into Reality**

Theme: By taking small, positive steps over time, your dreams can come true.

In each chapter we explain the main points covered, using examples from teens. We also provide discussion prompts and activities to help young people reflect about what they've read and actually apply it to real-life situations.

We suggest you read and familiarize yourself with *SUCCESS for Teens* and this guide before using the book with teens. Each teen should have a personal copy of the book.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The slight edge is largely explained through the stories, voices, and experiences of teens. These stories range in length, but most consist of short passages that are easy to read and, therefore, suited for reluctant readers. They are also ideal for reading aloud. This flexibility allows you to use the book to best fit the group you're working with. The basic goal of the book is to have teens relate their lives to the stories they read and then use the slight edge.

Below, we offer suggestions for using the stories and exercises. Let's walk through Chapter 1 as an example.

Chapter 1: **Little Things Matter**

Chapter 1 introduces a major theme of the slight edge—the small actions we do (or don't do) every day have a huge impact on how our lives turn out.

In turn, the chapter breaks down this theme into four points that look at specific skills or tools teens can use. For Chapter 1, the four points are:

Point #1: Little Things Matter

Point #2: Knowing What to Do Isn't the Same as Doing It

Point #3: The Ripple Effect

Point #4: Make the Right Choice at the Right Moment

Each point is illustrated with examples from the lives of teens. We provide questions, highlighted in action boxes, to prompt teens to reflect on what they've read and to prompt discussion about how they can apply the slight edge to challenges they face. After each chapter, a section called "Think About It" features exercises to encourage teens to think deeper about what they've read and to explore their thoughts and reactions in writing.

By using a combination of reading, discussion, and action steps, you can teach teens in your group how to understand and apply the slight edge. Let's look at how this works in more detail, using Point #1 of Chapter 1:

Point #1: **Little Things Matter**

Reading

The chapter begins with a story by Ferentz Lafargue, 16, who went to college and achieved success while his equally talented friends ended up involved in crime and drugs. You can read the story silently as a group, or take turns reading it aloud. The point that little things matter is further explored by additional teens, who talk about the small, positive steps they've taken in their lives.

Reflection and Discussion

After reading the teens' stories, use the prompts we provide in this guide to lead a discussion with your group. The prompts for Point #1 encourage teens to reflect on a basic question: Why do some people make the most of their talents while others do not?

Taking Action

The goal of *SUCCESS for Teens* is to have young people actively use what they've learned at home,

school, and work. We provide action steps throughout the book to help shift the discussion from understanding to taking action. For example, here are the action prompts for Point #1 to help start that discussion:

Action Steps

What small steps could you take to reach your goals?

What steps could you start taking today?

Think About It

The “Think About It” section encourages teens to explore their thoughts and reactions in writing. While some young people may be resistant to writing, assure them that their answers do not need to be long. Merely jotting down their thoughts in the workbook sections will prompt reflection and provide good preparation for discussion. If the teens resist writing, you can use the Think About It exercises as discussion prompts.

A note on time

Each point can be covered in about 30-45 minutes, so it will take about two to three hours to cover each chapter. If you want to use the Think About It section, allow for more time.

We encourage you to adapt, change, and deepen the lessons in this guide to best work with your group. In the following pages you’ll find chapter-by-chapter suggestions for teaching the book’s major themes.

Chapter 1: **Little Things Matter**

Chapter Overview: The chapter introduces the foundation of the slight edge: Simple actions, repeated over time, will determine the life you lead. This is the most basic point teens need to remember because it's the starting point for everything else that follows.

Point #1: **Little Things Matter**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: When you face a choice, you can take a simple, positive action, or you can take a simple, negative action. The little choices we make day by day have the power to compound over time and determine the lives we lead.

Reading

Read Ferentz's story on p. 1. It describes how Ferentz's friends made different choices than he did and ended up involved in crime and drugs. They made small choices, day after day, week after week, until they lost their way. The other side is that it's never too late to take small positive changes to turn your life around.

There are other examples of teens making small, positive choices. Read what Mikaela, Octavia, Kyle, and Taylor have to say on pp. 3-6.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Do you know people like Devon, John, and Angel? What kinds of choices did they make?
- Do you agree that little things matter over time? Why or why not?
- How have small choices affected your life?
- Why are small steps so important? Why are they so hard to take?

Make the point with your group that small actions compound over time. For example, if you exercise for an hour a day, you won't see much difference after a couple days or even a week. But after a couple of months, you'll notice a big difference. If you read 10 pages of a good book every day, it might not seem like a lot. But after one year, you'll have read more than two-dozen 150-page books. It's the same with learning to play a new instrument or improving at a sport. A little practice each day will result in huge rewards over time. This is one of the most important lessons of the slight edge.

Action Steps (p. 6)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- What small steps could you take to reach your goals?
- What steps could you start taking today?

Point #2: **Knowing What to Do Isn't the Same as Doing It**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Knowing how to do something positive isn't the same as actually doing it. That's because the little, positive things are also easy not to do, so a lot of people don't do them.

Reading

Read Jesselin Rodriguez's story on p. 7 about how she allowed her peers to influence her to become a poor student, even though she knew that doing well in school was important.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Why did Jesselin change from a good student to a poor one?
- Why did she find it so hard to take positive steps in her life, even though she knew the importance of those steps?
- How does her story relate to your life or to someone you know?

Make the point that it is easy to fall into negative patterns and habits based upon how you think you should behave rather than based on what you truly believe. These negative patterns can then take on a life of their own.

Action Steps (p. 10)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Is there something you know you should be doing that you're not doing?
- What's stopping you from taking that small, positive step?

Point #3: **The Ripple Effect**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

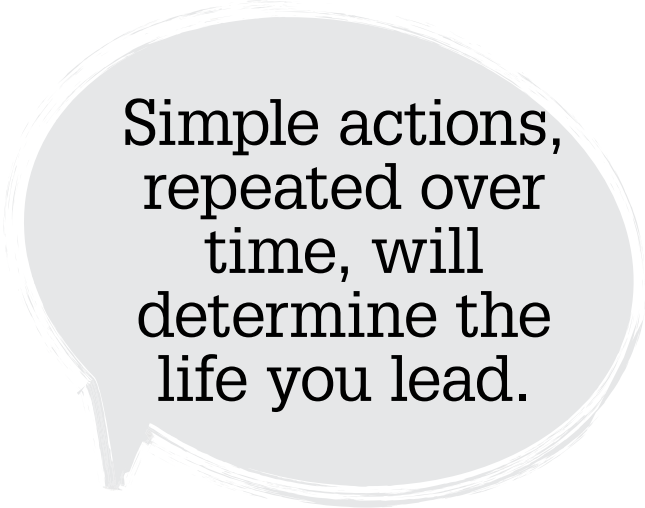
Theme: When you do small, positive things, it increases the chances that other positive things will happen to you. Your smallest actions affect you and the people around you, even when you don't see it or aren't aware of it.

Reading

Read Jordan Schwartz's story on p. 10 about how a small incident in an airport eventually led her to create her own bilingual theater group.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:



Simple actions,
repeated over
time, will
determine the
life you lead.

- How does Jordan define community?
- Why was Jordan successful in starting her theater group?
- How does Jordan's experience relate to your own life?

Make the point that small, positive steps can lead to opportunities and connections you never expected.

Action Steps (p. 12)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Have you seen the ripple effect in your own life?
- Have you ever taken a positive step that led to another positive thing for you?

Point #4: **Make the Right Choice at the Right Moment**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: However you define success, the slight edge basically means doing the right thing at the right moment. That's where it all starts, and that often takes a lot of courage.

Reading

Read Chantel Clark's story on p. 13 about how she reached out to and befriended a girl she once hated.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Chantel and Kim seemed to have so much in common once they got to know one another. Why do you think they became enemies in the first place?
- Do you feel you could have done what Chantel did? Why or why not?
- What does "doing the right thing at the right moment" mean to you?
- Have you had an experience similar to Chantel's?

Make the point that it took courage for Chantel to reach out to Kim. It would have been very easy for Chantel to not take that step, but doing so had a huge and positive impact on the lives of both girls.

Action Steps

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Is there a step you can take that you've been avoiding?
- Is there someone you can reach out to?

Think About It (p. 16)

The Think About It section following Chapter 1 encourages teens to define what success means to them and to identify small steps they can take to achieve success in six areas of their lives. They can write their responses in the spaces provided. Then ask the group to share what they've written.

Chapter 2: **Attitude Is Everything**

Overview: Your attitude determines both your simplest and most complicated actions—from the way you carry yourself to the way you deal with hard times.

Point #1: **Your Philosophy Is the Key**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: The key to how your life turns out is your ability to understand the source of your attitude. And the source of your attitude is your philosophy—the way you see yourself and the way you see the world.

Reading

Read pp. 19-20, which describe the relationship between actions, attitude, and philosophy.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- How would you describe your attitude?
- How would other people describe your attitude?
- Are you pleased with your attitude? What parts do you like? What parts would you like to change?

Action Steps (p. 20)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Have you thought about the source of your attitudes?
- Do you feel you understand them?
- What could you do to better understand your attitudes?

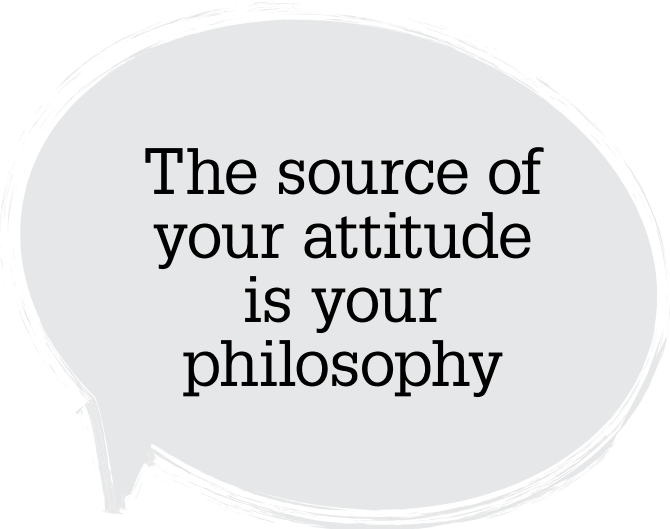
Point #2: **How You View Yourself Creates Your Life**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Everyone has a philosophy, whether they know it or not. All *philosophy* means is your view of life or your picture of how life operates. It means how you see things. Your philosophy is what determines your attitudes and your actions, and your actions create your destiny.

Reading

Read the passages on *philosophy*, attitudes, and actions on p. 21, along with Sage's account of going against his philosophy.



The source of
your attitude
is your
philosophy

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Do you feel you have a philosophy? Why or why not?
- Are there times when you are more aware of your philosophy than others? What are they?
- Can you relate to Sage's story? Why or why not?

Action Steps (p. 22)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Have you ever been faced with a choice that went against your philosophy?
- What happened? Would you make the same choice now?

Point #3: **Change Yourself by Changing Your Philosophy**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: If you want to change what's happening in your life, change your philosophy or how you see things. When you do that, you'll be able to take the steps that will lead you to the answers you need. Changing how you see things is not some huge task, but comes down to taking small steps.

Reading

Read Tamecka Crawford's story, starting on p. 22, about how she did poorly in college until she changed how she viewed herself and her past. When she stopped viewing herself as a victim and took action, her grades improved dramatically.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- How did Tamecka view herself when she first arrived at college?
- How did the way she viewed herself affect her college performance?
- How did Tamecka change the way she viewed herself?
- Have you had an experience similar to Tamecka's?

Also ask your group to read Tonya Groover's description, on p. 25, of how she used aspects of her philosophy in more positive ways.

Action Steps (pp. 25 and 26)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Do you tend to get stuck in the past?
- What can you do in the present to create the future you want?
- What are the most positive parts of your philosophy?
- How could you use those positive parts in better ways?

Point #4: **What You Think Matters, Too**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: In addition to your actions, what you think determines who you are and what happens to you. Your thoughts have the power to determine how you see yourself, other people, and the world. Your thoughts have the power to determine your actions, behavior, and how others respond to you. Your thoughts are directly linked to the type of person you become.

Reading

Read pp. 26-31, paying careful attention to the description of how Tamecka changed her ways of thinking on p. 27, the account of how the brain and subconscious work on p. 28, and the various teen experiences on pp. 30-31.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- What was the main change that Tamecka made in how she viewed herself?
- Do you believe your thoughts determine the life you lead? Why or why not?
- What are dominant thoughts? Why are they so important?
- How do thoughts determine how you will respond to a situation?
- When something goes wrong in your life, how do you respond? What do you say to yourself?

Action Steps (p. 31)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Are your thoughts mostly positive or negative?
- How can you change what you say to yourself?

Think About It (p. 32)

The Think About It section following Chapter 2 encourages teens to examine their philosophy, the way they think, and the connection between the two. They are also prompted to look at parts of their philosophy that work well for them, parts that don't work so well, and what they might want to change. They can write their responses in the spaces provided. Then ask the group to share what they've written.

Chapter 3: **Use the Moment**

Overview: Using the moment means taking control of your life in the moment—right now, today. It means not blaming the past or worrying about the future. The only time you have is the present, because the past is gone and the future hasn't happened yet.

Point #1: **Your Circumstances Aren't You**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Your present circumstances may be affecting you, but they aren't who you are. And they don't determine what you will someday be. There is still an invisible you, the person you will be someday—maybe not tomorrow or next week, but someday.

Reading

Read the passages from Tonya, Kyle, and Jacob on pp. 38-39 about how they don't let their current circumstances or past experiences get them down.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Do you believe circumstances can be overcome? Why or why not?
- What stands in the way of people overcoming them?
- Do you feel your circumstances control your life? In what ways?
- What is the "invisible you" that the book talks about? Do you believe you have one?

Action Steps (p. 39)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- How do you feel about your current situation?
- Do you feel happy with it or stuck in it?
- What would make you feel less stuck?

Point #2: **You Can't Control What Happens, Only Your Reactions**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: You can't control your circumstances. What you can control is how you react to your circumstances and how you feel about yourself.

Reading

On pp. 40-41, Kyle, Tonya, and Pauline talk about the difference between reacting to circumstances, which means getting bogged down in anger or blame or giving up, and acting to try to change them.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- What stood out for you in what these teens said?
- What's the difference between reacting and taking action?
- Why is complaining or blaming a dead end?

Make the point that taking action means taking control of what you can do to change your situation. And you can take action only in the present—not in the past, which is gone, and not in the future, because it hasn't happened yet.

Refer to Pauline's story on p. 41 about how she saved \$20,000 in a year and a half by taking advantage of scholarships, financial aid, and by managing her money carefully. Pauline grew up in poverty and didn't get any easy breaks.

Also remember these two points from p. 42 during the discussion:

- Self-esteem (feeling good about yourself) is not something you're born with or that you automatically either have or don't have—it's something you create.
- And creating a positive self-image is something young people can do in the moment. Your view of yourself is something you build every day.

Action Steps (p. 42)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Do you feel you create your circumstances or your circumstances create you?
- Why do you feel that way?
- What could you do to change the way you see your circumstances?

Point #3: **When You Stop Blaming, You Take Back Your Power**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Teens who are successful tend to take responsibility for who they are, where they are, and everything that happens to them. Taking responsibility for what happens to you—even when it hurts, even when it isn't fair—it one of the most liberating things you can do.

Reading

Read Tonya Groover's account, on p. 43, of how she fell into the habit of making negative choices as a young person. Starting in seventh grade and throughout most of high school, she was in a clique of about 10 girls that got into confrontations with other people. Eventually Tonya realized she was heading toward a dead end.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Why did Tonya decide to break away from the clique?
- Instead of abandoning them completely, what did she do?

- Why is it hard to stop blaming and take responsibility?
- Why is taking responsibility a good thing?
- Are there some things you shouldn't take responsibility for? What are they?

Make the point: When you blame people or circumstances for your situation, you're giving away your power. On the other hand, when you take full responsibility—even when others are wrong, or the situation is downright unfair and you really have been dumped on—you keep your power.

Ask teens to think about their friends for a moment. Engage them in a discussion of the questions on the bottom of p. 44.

- Do you know people who are always angry about what happened to them? How someone cheated them or treated them badly?
- Are they always complaining about what a jerk their ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend is?
- Or how unfair their math teacher was last semester for giving them a bad grade? Or how mean their friends were last year?

Make the point: You might notice two things about this kind of conversation: 1) It's usually about blame and 2) It's usually about things that happened in the past.

Action Steps (p. 45)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Do you have the habit of blaming?
- What could you do to give it up?

Point #4: **Someday Never Comes**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: You can't change the past. You can change the future. But the only place you can change the future is now. Give up the idea of taking action "someday." "Someday" does not exist. It never has and never will.

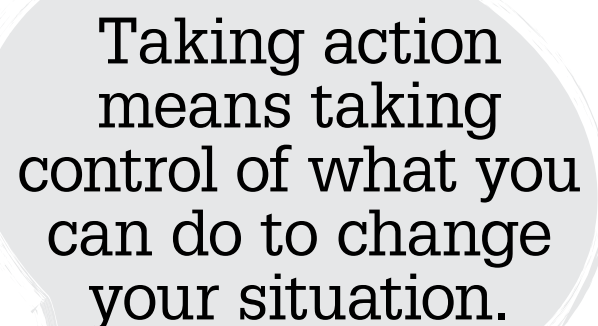
Reading

Read Kesly Coba's story on p. 46 about how a near-fatal auto accident prompted her to take action to break out of her shyness.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Have you ever had an experience similar to Kesly's?
- Why do experiences like that prompt people to make changes?
- Has reading Kesly's story changed the way you view your life? How?



**Taking action
means taking
control of what you
can do to change
your situation.**

Action Steps (p. 47)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- What are you waiting to do?
- How can you stop waiting and take action?

Think About It (p. 48)

The Think About It section following Chapter 3 encourages teens to do a physical exercise that will help them feel the difference between looking back at the past and forward to the future. They are then asked to look at six areas of their lives and, for each, determine if they tend to see themselves as at the mercy of what happens (not taking action), or as in charge of what happens (ready to take action). The point is to help teens identify how they view their situations and where they can take action.

They can write their responses in the spaces provided. Then ask the group to share what they've written.

Chapter 4: **Everything Starts with Small Steps**

Overview: Every achievement, accomplishment, and success starts with a first step. That first step can be hard to take. Yet one small step can lead to results you never imagined.

This concept is illustrated by the story of Rosa Parks on p. 53. Your students may not have heard about her or may be fuzzy about the details. Make sure everyone understands her story after you read it as a group.

Point #1: **The First Step Looks Harder Than It Is**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Some people become afraid and don't take the first step that could lead to success. But they don't chicken out because the first step is too hard—they chicken out because the first step looks like it's too hard.

Reading

Read Brian's story on p. 54 about his attempt to approach a girl he likes.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Would you have done what Brian did? Why or why not?
- Have you ever taken a risk like that? What happened?
- Was Brian a success or failure? In what ways did he fail? In what ways was he a success?

Make the point: Even after he got up the courage to take the first step, Brian still didn't get what he wanted. Or maybe he did—he faced his fears and, by taking that risk, perhaps it will be easier for him the next time and he'll do better. Brian was programming his subconscious—the more you do certain kinds of thing (especially hard and scary things), the more you become comfortable with them, the more they become a positive habit.

Action Steps (p. 55)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- What first step are you afraid to take?
- What would help you take that first step?

Point #2: **There's No Such Thing as a Lucky Break**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Another reason people don't start taking small steps toward their goals is because they're waiting for a lucky break. Teens in your group are probably familiar with someone who's hoping to make it to the NBA or become a rap star, or who has some other unrealistic dream. The point here is not to discourage dreaming, but to do away with the illusion that people achieve their dreams through lucky breaks.

Reading

Read Dallas Crilley's story on p. 56 about how he wrote his own book. That may seem like a completely unrealistic goal for many teens, but look at how Dallas broke the challenge of writing a book into small steps. This principle can be applied to any task.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- What is your reaction to what you just read?
- Why do people wait for lucky breaks?
- Do you believe that people make their breaks, or that breaks come to them? Why?

Action Steps (p. 57)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Are you waiting for a lucky break to happen?
- Is there an opportunity you can take advantage of right now?

Point #3: Make the Steps as Small as You Can

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: When you find it hard to take steps toward a goal, break the task into the smallest possible steps. That way it won't look as scary. For example, if you want to write poetry, play a musical instrument, or learn a new language, you can start by doing it 10 minutes a day. Ten minutes a day of anything can have a huge impact on your life. If you start with small steps, you're more likely to stick with the task than avoid it.

Reading

On p. 58, read how Desiree and Jacob took small steps to achieve their goals.

Discussion and Reflection

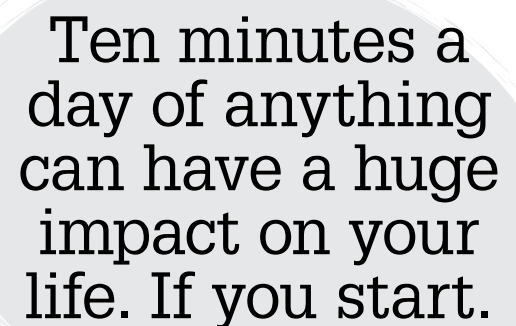
After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Do you relate to what Desiree and Jacob described? Why or why not?
- Have you ever broken a large task into small steps? What happened?
- Why do some projects or goals seem overwhelming? What makes them scary?

Action Steps (p. 59)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Are you having trouble starting or finishing something because it seems too big?
- What's the smallest step you can take to get started?



Ten minutes a day of anything can have a huge impact on your life. If you start.

Point #4: **The Second Step Is Just As Important**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: The first step is key, but the second step is just as important. Lots of people take the first step, don't see any immediate success, and quit. How many people have the strength and courage to take the second step?

Reading

Read the story on p. 60 of Alison, who encountered many challenges in finding and keeping a job, but who faced those challenges by being persistent, resilient, and taking small steps.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

Review the steps on p. 62 that Allison took to be successful:

- She adjusted her course. When she didn't get a paying job at first, she took an unpaid internship. That experience led to a paying job later on.
- She was persistent. Looking for a job is one of the hardest things in life for anyone of any age, but Alison didn't give up.
- She started at the bottom. She took the first job offered to her, even if it was the lowest paid position in the company.
- She put up with difficulty on the job. Her feet were killing her, but she still showed up.
- She created her own luck. By not giving up and taking action, she put herself in the position to take advantage of a better job when it came around.

Ask teens:

- Would you have persisted, like Alison, or given up? Why?
- Have you ever looked for or had a job? How was the experience similar to or different from Alison's?
- What's the main point you learned from her story?

Review the stages of beginning, middle, and mastery on pp. 62-63. The middle part is when you need the most encouragement to stay on the path. No one was cheering for Alison when her feet hurt, in the middle part of her journey. Yet she made it through all the stages:

Beginning: She was looking for job, with no luck.

Middle: She was dead tired, working hard, and her feet were killing her.

Mastery: She was working overtime and making good money.

Make the point that the middle of the journey is the easiest place to give up. But Alison stayed on the right path. It wasn't a question of luck or big breaks, but of putting one foot in front of the other and taking little steps.

Action Steps (p. 62)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following questions:

- Have you ever been afraid to take a second step toward a goal?
- What could help you take it?

Think About It (p. 64)

The Think About It section following Chapter 4 encourages teens to reflect on a big challenge they faced in the past—one that may have seemed impossible at first—and how they accomplished that task by taking small steps. Young people in your group may not be aware of how they have achieved success through small steps.

They are then asked to think of one simple thing they can do in the next 24 hours that would help them reach their goals in six areas of their lives.

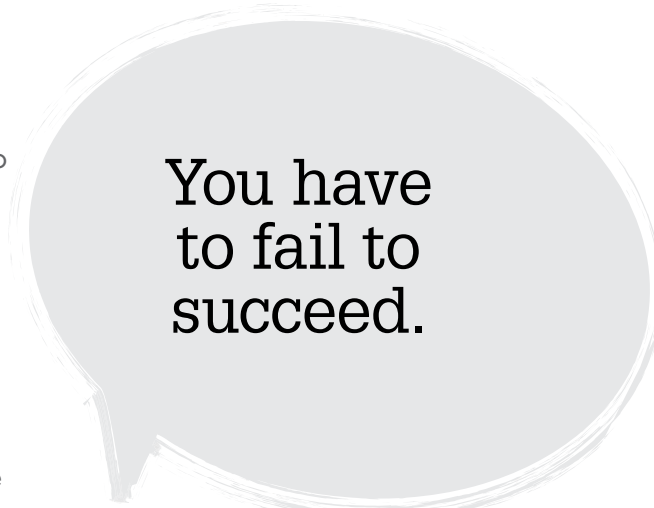
They can write their responses in the spaces provided. Then ask the group to share what they've written.

Chapter 5: **There's No Such Thing As Failure**

Overview: This can be a hard point for teens (or anyone) to understand, but success is built on failure. You have to fail to succeed. But we don't get the message that failure can be a good thing. More likely, we try to avoid it at all costs. And why not? Who likes to fail?

Read the quote from Thomas Watson Sr., a very successful businessman who founded the company IBM:

- The formula for success is quite simple: Double your rate of failure.
- Then, below it, read aloud Desiree Bailey's description of being afraid of failure.
- This is the challenge the chapter presents: Failure is inevitable, even necessary, but we're afraid of it and don't understand it. For most teens, especially from poor, disadvantaged, or at-risk backgrounds, failure can be stigmatizing and demoralizing. Be aware of this and stick to the focus: how we can learn from failure and put it to positive uses.



You have
to fail to
succeed.

Point #1: **Success Is Built on Failure**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Success is a relative term, based on how we perceive and define it.

Reading

Read Lucas' story on p. 68 about his disastrous (but also hilarious) first date.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- What is your reaction to Lucas' story?
- Have you ever had a similar experience (not necessarily in dating)? What was it?
- If you were Lucas, would you have called the girl back?

Make the point: Failure is in our heads. We create it. We interpret what happens to us. We put the labels on everything we do. We're the first ones to use the word *failure*—and usually about ourselves. If Lucas allowed himself to be defeated, he never would have gotten a second date.

Action Steps (p. 69)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Was there a time you thought you failed at something?
- How can you see it in a different way?

Point #2: **It's All in Our Heads**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Failure doesn't really exist, because it's usually a prelude to—even a necessity for—success.

Reading

Read Tonya's view of failure on p. 70, along with accounts of famous, successful people who experienced failure in their lives, such as Abraham Lincoln and William Wilberforce, on pp. 70-72.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- What is your reaction to the famous people who experienced failure?
- What impressed you about Lincoln and Wilberforce?
- Do you have a new definition of failure? What is it?

Action Steps (p. 72)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Think about a time you learned from failing at something.
- What did you learn?
- How have you used what you learned?

Point #3: **Failure Creates Unexpected Opportunities**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Failure can help you discover positive parts of yourself you didn't know about and create new opportunities in your life that you never expected.

Reading

Read Jacob's and Kyle's accounts on pp. 72-73 of how they learned from failure in their lives, and then Michelle Stallworth's account on p. 73 of how she quit her basketball team in frustration before she became a star player (in a wheelchair).

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- What did Jacob learn from his experience?
- What did Kyle learn from his experience?
- What stood out for you in Michelle's story?
- What did these teens discover about themselves?

Action Steps (p. 75)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Have you ever had an experience similar to Michelle's?
- What was it and how did it change you?

Point #4: **Another Word for Learning**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: This section reinforces the point that setbacks in life are normal. Everyone experiences them and has the capacity to learn from them. Failure shouldn't be taken too personally—it's best to view it with a sense of optimism, even humor.

Reading

Read Mark Stumer's humorous account on p. 76 of all the mistakes he and his friends made when they tried to start a business in their high school.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Have you had an experience similar to Mark's? What was it?
- What were the main lessons that Mark learned?
- Instead of seeing himself as a failure, how did Mark view himself?

Action Steps (p. 78)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- After reading this chapter, do you have the same attitude toward failure?
- If you're still afraid of failure, what would help you change your attitude?

Think About It (p. 79)

The Think About It section following Chapter 5 encourages teens to reflect on a time they failed (or think they failed) and to reevaluate it. Was it really a failure? Did they learn something they can use in the future to be successful?

They can write their responses in the spaces provided. Then ask the group to share what they've written.

Chapter 6: **Habits Are Powerful**

Overview: This chapter focuses on habits, the simple things you do over and over again, day after day. We often take habits for granted. After all, they're habits—something you do without thinking. It's very easy to forget you have them. But, for better or worse, they run our lives.

Point #1: **Habits Run Your Life**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Habits have enormous power. In fact, habits are what run your life. Whether the habit is good or bad, you know that to be true.

Reading

Read the passages on pp. 81-83. The basic point is that habits can be changed if you understand where they're coming from. Habits are actions repeated over time. Review with your group where they come from:

- your philosophy → your attitudes
- your attitudes → your actions
- your actions → your life

Habits are the result of the choices made in the moment, which come from your thoughts, attitudes, and your philosophy—the way you see yourself and the world.

So once you're aware of a habit that doesn't serve you well, how do you change it or get rid of it?

Make the point: When you put a lot of energy into focusing on what you don't want, you usually get more of it in your life. Because what you focus on, good or bad, grows. It's better to focus on the positive things you want rather than the negative things you don't want. In other words, start a new and positive habit to replace the old and negative one. Eventually, the old habit will lose its grip.

Read Magda's story on pp. 83-85 about how the boy she loved fell for a friend of hers. Magda got over the disappointment by starting new habits and activities that became just as fulfilling as romance (if not more so). Instead of focusing on being with Mike, which wasn't going to happen, Magda put her focus on new habits she could develop. She still feels sad sometimes, but now she tells herself she can overcome it.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- What might have happened to Magda if she hadn't put her focus on new interests and activities?
- Based on how she reacted and the new habits she developed, how do you think Magda views the world (what's her philosophy)?
- Did you ever have a similar experience? What did you learn?

Action Steps (p. 85)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Do you have habits you'd like to change?
- What new habits would you like to start? Why?

Point #2: **Make Your Habits Serve You**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Habits are tools that can help you grow and develop as a person. Instead of serving your habits, make your habits serve you.

Reading

Read aloud the examples of positive and negative habits on p. 86. Here are two examples:

- Facing difficult feelings serves you well, while avoiding difficult feelings does not. By avoiding difficult feelings, it becomes harder to face them later on. Many people develop bad habits to avoid facing difficult feelings.
- Looking for the best in people serves you well. Expecting their worst doesn't.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- What's the difference between a habit that helps someone grow and a habit that holds someone back? How would you define it?
- What are other examples of positive and negative habits?
- Do you ever think of your habits?
- Have you thought about habits in a new way after reading this?

Action Steps (p. 86)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Do you have a habit that helps you grow? What is it?
- Do you have a habit that holds you back? What is it?

Point #3: **Take Small Steps to Develop Good Habits**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Lots of teens take small steps to replace bad habits with good ones. As you read their suggestions, encourage your group to think of how they can use them in their lives.

Reading

Read the tips from teens on developing good habits, pp. 86-89.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Which one of these suggestions could you relate to the most? Why?
- Which suggestion wasn't helpful? Why?
- Do these tips have something in common? What is it?

Action Steps (p. 89)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Which one of these suggestions could help you?
- How could you use it?

Point #4: **Don't Give Up a Habit—Start a New One**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: It's tough to get rid of a habit you don't want. You can't just wish a habit away.

It's a lot easier to start a new habit. Eventually, the new habit becomes strong and replaces the old habit.

Reading

The first step in changing a habit is to know which one you want to change. One way to find out is to get into the habit of reflection.

Read the story on p. 90 of the teen who used journal writing to reflect on her life when she was going through difficult times.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Why was journal writing important for the writer?
- What does reflection mean to you?
- Why can it help?
- Is reflection part of your life? In what ways? If not, why not?

Make the point: Reflection means looking carefully at yourself and your life on a regular basis to see what you're happy with and what you want to change.

Action Steps (p. 91)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Do you take the time to reflect on your life?
- If so, how do you do it and what do you learn from it?
- If not, how could you begin to reflect on your life?

Second Reading

You can reflect in many ways—through writing or doing art, by taking long walks, by visiting a favorite place, talking to a favorite person, or through a religious or spiritual practice. Physical activity is a good habit, both for reflection and relaxation.

Read Emily Orchier’s story on p. 91 about how walking rejuvenated her and helped lift her depression.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they’ve read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Do you use physical activity or another kind of activity to achieve peace of mind?
- Why is it important for your mental as well as physical health?
- Has Emily’s story inspired you? In what ways?

Action Steps (p. 93)

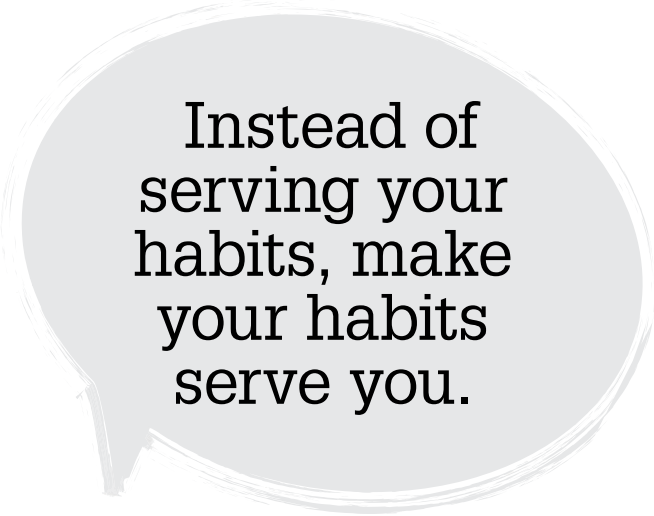
Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following questions:

- Has this chapter given you an idea about starting a new habit?
- What is it?

Think About It (p. 94)

The Think About It section following Chapter 6 encourages teens to identify (without judgment) their current habits and to begin thinking about new habits they’d like to start.

They can write their responses in the spaces provided. Then ask the group to share what they’ve written.



Instead of
serving your
habits, make
your habits
serve you.

Chapter 7: **You're Always Learning**

Overview: In life, no one is ever standing still. That's because the world is constantly changing and so are you. You're always in motion. Your life is always going somewhere. You aren't the same person today that you were yesterday. You won't be the same person tomorrow that you are today. And you're either on the path of continuous learning—or not on the path—whether you realize it or not.

Review with the group what continuous learning means (p. 98):

- You haven't got it all figured out but are open to new possibilities. You're alert to finding opportunities in classes, programs, internships, and jobs.
- You try to develop your talents to the fullest by learning from people who have more experience than you do, usually adults. It means getting a team on your side so you're not setting out on your journey alone.
- Most of all, it means continuously adjusting your course in life as you learn from mistakes and applying what you've learned to new challenges and opportunities.

Point #1: **The Earlier You Invest, the Greater the Reward**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Your teen and young adult years are the time when you can begin molding yourself into the person you want to be, letting time work for you and be on your side. It's not that much different from the principle of compound interest, or how money grows over time.

The world of money is one of the easiest places to see the power of investing early. This chapter will describe how that works with money, and one goal should be to impress upon your group the importance of having a financial plan and building savings.

But financial success is not only about making money. And that's what the story on p. 99, "The Choice," is about.

Reading

Read "The Choice" on p. 99.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- Why did the boy who chose the million dollars end up with less money than the boy who chose the penny?
- What did the boy with the penny understand about life?
- What are the main lessons you learned from this story?

Make the point: The choice the wealthy man offered his two sons is the same choice the world offers you every day—small actions compound over time into big results. The actions you take today, whether they're about money, friendships, or your health, can have a huge impact on your life over time.

The next few pages (pp. 98-105) are devoted to a discussion of building financial wealth through small steps. We discuss how young people can set up an automatic savings plan with as little as \$2 a day.

Make the point: While this is true about money (and knowing how to handle money is a very good thing for teens), early investing is not much different with all the other areas of life. Right now, in your teen years, you have the power and the freedom to invest in where your life will head in the long run. Right now is the best time for setting your life on the right course. Habits, actions, attitudes, and philosophy—you know by now how powerful they are. The earlier you can get on the right track in all of these areas, the better. Putting it off is not the way to go.

Action Steps (p. 105)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Do you have a plan for saving money?
- In what other ways could you invest in your future?

Point #2: **Take Advantage of All Opportunities**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Teens have many opportunities for continuous learning, including internships, jobs, and summer programs.

Reading

Read how Tonya, Desiree, and Andrea took advantage of opportunities to broaden their horizons, create better habits, and learn new skills (pp. 105-107).

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- What stood out for you in these stories?
- What kinds of obstacles did Andrea face in developing her business? How did she deal with them?
- What kinds of ideas did these teens give you for learning new skills?

Action Steps (p. 107)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- What opportunities do you have available to you right now?
- What new opportunities would you like to have?
- How could you go about getting them?

Point #3: **You Need a Team on Your Side**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Everyone needs someone they can confide in, someone they can talk to about whatever mountains they happen to be facing at the time. "Someone you can talk to" might mean a professional counselor, but not necessarily. It might be an uncle, a grandparent, a teacher, a school counselor, or a coach.

Reading

Read Giselle John's story on p. 108 about how she was doing poorly in school until a teacher befriended her. Eventually, Giselle graduated near the very top of her high-school class, which wouldn't have been possible without the teacher's help.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- What did Mrs. Stanford do for Giselle? What was the most important thing she did?
- Have you ever had a similar experience with an adult? What was it?
- Would you like to have an adult mentor? Why or why not?

Make the point: Another way to get support is to find a mentor (pp. 109-110).

There are three ways to learn something new:

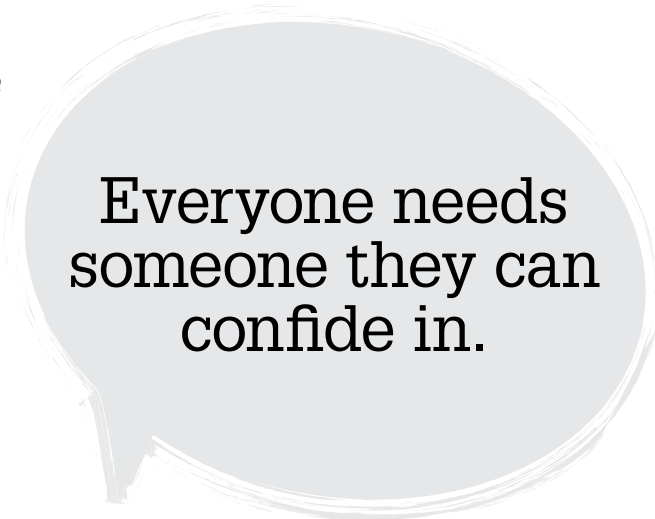
- One is to study how it works and what to do.
- The second is to learn by actually doing it.

But, there is a third and even more powerful way to learn, and that is to find someone else who's already mastered something you want to do. That person, called a mentor, can teach you from his or her experience.

Action Steps (p. 110)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- What kind of support do you need in your life right now?
- Is there an adult who could give you that support?
- How can you find that person?



Everyone needs
someone they can
confide in.

Point #4: **Adjust Your Course Continually**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Theme: Teens may think that being off course—losing sight of their goals and objectives—is something to avoid at all costs. After all, if you're off course, you're failing, right? Not according to the slight edge.

When you drive a car, you're constantly making tiny adjustments, correcting the direction you're heading every moment. Once you've learned to drive, that constant adjustment of the steering wheel becomes so familiar that it's second nature, and you probably never think about it. But if you decided to hold the wheel in one place, you'd be off the road in less than a minute.

The same is true in life.

Reading

Read Desiree's account on p. 111 of how she had to adjust course when she got to college. Then read Samantha's account on p. 112 of how she had to adjust her expectations and behavior when she had her own bank account.

Discussion and Reflection

After your group finishes reading, engage them in a discussion of what they've read, using the following prompts to get started:

- What stood out for you in Desiree and Samantha's stories?
- Why did Desiree and Samantha have to adjust course? How were their expectations different from reality?
- Have you had similar experiences? What were they?

Action Steps (p. 113)

Shift the discussion to action steps teens can take, using the following prompts:

- Are there ways that you need to "adjust course" in your life? Are there ways you need to change the way you see things or do things?
- What are they? What steps could you take to adjust your course?

Think About It (p. 114)

The Think About It section following Chapter 7 encourages teens to identify new skills or new opportunities they would like to have, to think about ways they could work with an adult mentor, and to consider how they might have to adjust their courses to reach their goals.

They can write their responses in the spaces provided. Then ask the group to share what they've written.

Chapter 8: **Make Your Dreams into Reality**

Overview: Teens who achieve what they want in life do it by following a very specific recipe. Perhaps they're not even aware that they've taken specific steps, but everyone who has ever created success in their lives, whether consciously or not, has followed more or less the same process.

The goal of Chapter 8 is for teens in your group to develop specific and tangible plans to achieve success. There are four steps they need to follow. For any goal to come true:

- You must picture it vividly.
- You must look at it every day.
- You must have a plan to start with.
- You can't quit on yourself.

Step #1: **Picture It Vividly**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

The most important skill for creating success in anything is the skill of envisioning. Envisioning means creating a picture of something that hasn't actually happened yet, but making that picture so vivid that it feels real.

The reason this is so crucial is that your subconscious mind—remember, that part that controls 99.99 percent of what unfolds in your life—needs a clear picture of your destination. Once you have a clear, vivid picture imprinted in your mind, you'll find a route to get there.

It doesn't work the other way around—you don't pick out roads that look good and hope they'll take you to the right place. Destination has to come first. To create your dream life, you have to start with some sort of vivid picture of where you're headed. You start with the end in mind.

The workbook section on pp. 120-123 encourages teens to choose five dreams, make them as vivid and as specific as possible, and set a specific time for accomplishing them.

Step #2: **Look At It Every Day**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

Whether you stay on the path you want or get distracted and veer off is a question of how you've programmed your subconscious mind. And one of the best ways to program yourself to stay on the path is through repetition—by showing your subconscious your dreams every day. It's the same reason you want to keep yourself in the company of positive people: You need to avoid the temptations that can lead you astray.

The workbook section on pp. 124-125 encourages teens to make a list of dream declarations that they can say to themselves every day.

Step #3: **Start with a Plan**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

This step is about the necessity of making a plan. Read Xavier Reyes' account on p. 125 about how he set goals and then made plans to reach those goals.

Make the point: A plan gives you a place to begin. You need a plan in the same way you need a dollar to start a bank account. The way you took your first baby step. The way you struggled to sound out the first sentence you ever read. Without that dollar, that first wobbling step, or that first stumbling sentence, your dream—no matter how deeply you want it—will never become reality.

Don't make the mistake of thinking you need a perfect plan. There is no perfect plan. There can't be, because a plan is not the same as getting there—it's only your starting point. If you put too much energy into trying to make your plan perfect, you're more likely to take all the life and joy out of doing it.

The workbook section on pp. 127-128 encourages teens to write out a specific plan for reaching each of their dreams.

Step #4: **Don't Quit on Yourself**

Time: Approx. 30-45 min.

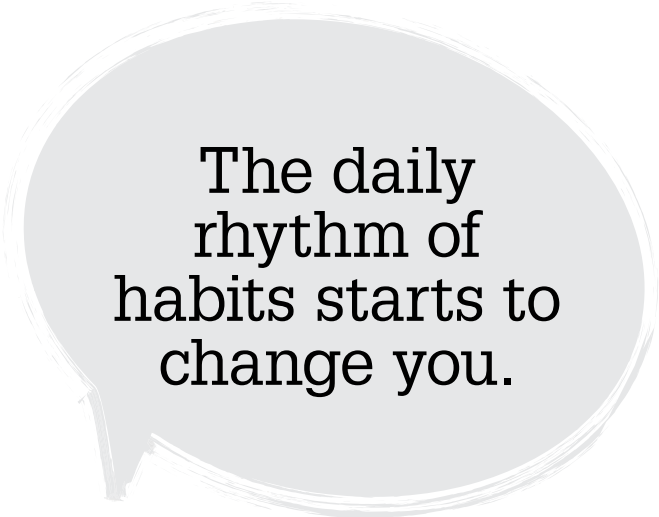
If you work every day toward your goals, it takes less energy to get started every day. And once you've gotten started and you're in a rhythm, it takes a whole lot less energy to keep yourself going.

There's another reason a little every day is far better than a lot once a week. The daily rhythm of habits starts to change you. As it becomes part of your routine, it becomes part of who you are. That doesn't happen with a once-in-a-while, all-out effort.

Steady wins the race.

The final workbook section on pp. 130-131 encourages teens to write out small steps they can take each day to begin making their dreams come true.

Be prepared to spend more time on Chapter 8 than on the previous chapters, returning to it over time to see how the teens in your group are making progress. You may also want to develop additional lessons, activities, and projects to help the teens achieve their dreams and goals.



The daily
rhythm of
habits starts to
change you.

NOTES

Help make a difference in the lives of our youth

Where does the power to succeed originate? Is it instinctive? Can it be developed and nurtured?

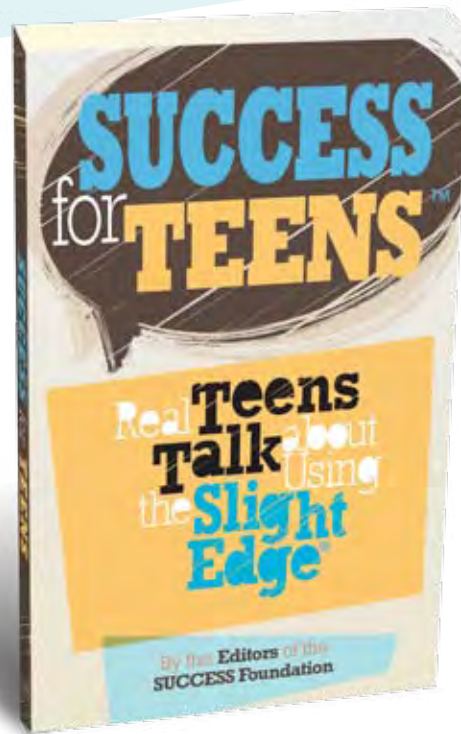
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