# Fostering Self-Determination:



## Activities, Resources, Lessons

Developed by: Kathy Ben, Christine M. Andersen, M.A.T. & James Wiedle, M.S. Self-Determination Project, Anchorage, Alaska
June 1996

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#### Self-Determination Project

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## Introduction



The materials contained in Fostering Self-Determination are a compilation of activities and lesson plans from numerous resources. By no means an exhausted list, our goal in creating this guide has been to provide educators with a basic understanding of the concept of self-determination, and to present a wide variety of sample lessons and curricula designed to enhance self-determination skills.

Some of the activities listed are representative examples of the material we utilized during the first school year ('93-'94) of The Self-Determination Project. In addition, we have included activities that we have not yet attempted, but believe show great promise for use in the classroom. Note that we have also enclosed a compilation of additional resources following the Appendix.

We believe the following topics to be the most important elements of selfdetermination:

- ·Self-Awareness
- ·Interpersonal Communications
- · Assertiveness
- ·Goal-Setting
- ·Creative Problem-Solving
- ·Video-Based Personal Futures Planning
- ·Video Self-Modeling

A brief introduction opens each section, followed by lessons and activities designed to address that particular area of need. We trust you will find this guide useful in your efforts to enhance the self-determination skills of your students.

## What is Self-Determination?



Self-Determination is the process whereby an individual becomes more independent in:

- $\hbox{$\, \cdot$} \text{Understanding personal needs and wants}$
- $\cdot$ Setting goals
- •Planning and following through on action plans to meet goals
- ·Learning problem-solving skills

Self-determined individuals know what they want and how to get it. They advocate for their own needs and interests.

## Self-Awareness



We have realized that in order for students to become self-determined, they must first become more aware of who they are. Students often have a lot of self-discovery to do before they are ready to think beyond the present moment and consider their futures. As they engage in activities to build skills for self-determination, they will gain a greater knowledge of their own preferences, strengths, and beliefs. One key to making decisions for oneself lies in awareness of discrepancies between what is expected and what is happening in reality. It follows that people must be capable of recognizing what they would like to occur before it is possible to set goals. By definition, a goal is the difference between what is wanted or expected. Students cannot assertively make a request or work toward their goals if they have not first determined their actual desires.

The following are a few lesson ideas designed to affect this process of self-awareness.

#### Personal Ads

Students write advertisements describing themselves for the local newspaper, as though they are looking for a new friend. The advertisement can be up to fourteen words only. Encourage students to think about their personal attributes and to begin their advertisement by writing: "I am..." followed by twelve adjectives that they feel describe themselves.

#### Recent and Rad

Go around the room and have each student speak about one "recent and radical" thing that has happened to him/her in the last week. Possible responses might range from "I ate chocolate cake for breakfast!" to "Someone smiled at me while I was waiting for the bus." It may surprise students to become aware of all the neat stuff that they may have overlooked otherwise!

## Getting to Know You

There's a nasty old lady living in the house/apartment next to yours and she is always gruff and yells at you. You and your friends have played tricks on her several times. Then one day, you find out that she used to have a family of her own, a husband and two children, but they were all killed in a fire several years ago. How does this new information make you feel?

- ·It is important to know how to get to know someone.
- ·Have your students generate a list of about 25 questions regarding the information it would take to truly begin to know someone.

Questions may range from: "Did you grow up in the same house your whole life?" to "What's the silliest thing you have ever done?" to "How do you think your parents would describe you as a child?" and to "What is your very first memory of school?" One Way to help the students brainstorm questions is to have them think about what other people should know about them in order to really know them.

The questions may then be used in small groups or between individual students working in pairs.

## What Makes You You?

We are all different. Name five things you are good at and five things you are not so good at. Going around the room, ask each student to share one thing he/she is good at until each student has shared two things.

#### Follow up with discussion questions such as:

- ·How does it make you feel to be good at something?
- ·Do you like to do the things you are good at?
- ·When and where do you do those things you are good at?
- •What happens when you have those feelings?

Repeat the process with things that the students are not so good at with the facilitator being sure to talk about his/her own weak points as well. Discuss how sometimes we still have to do those things we are not good at and what the benefits are of doing so (increased skill level, stamina, risk-taking, tolerance). What can we do to work around some of the things we are not so good at? (Start earlier, ask for help, be creative, team up with someone who can, or even barter...) "Concentrate on what you can do and how that makes you feel." Trying your best at something should make you feel good too!

Go Further: have the students write a poem or story about themselves. Have them approach it from the point of view of a salesman with a very important product: ME!

## Different Places = Different People

Each of us mean different things to different people. Discuss how one woman, at the same time, can be a daughter, a mother, a sister, a wife, a friend, a boss, a coworker, and a subordinate worker. Will she act differently in different situations? How? Is it appropriate for her to act differently? Why?

What different roles do you play?

# Self-Awareness/Self-Esteem: Class Discussion & Role plays

Review self-awareness and self-esteem and discuss the differences and similarities between the two concepts.

Why is having positive self-esteem important? It provides intrinsic motivation, willingness to try new things, and helps you accept yourself for who you are.

After the discussion, role-play different scenarios, including examples of both positive and negative self-esteem. Demonstrate both positive and negative self-talk, illustrating high and low self-esteem.

#### Interests/Abilities

Discuss the differences and similarities between 'interests' and 'abilities' (Interest is something you like to do; ability is something you can do.) How does this relate to planning for the future? Use prepared lists, or have the students generate lists of various interests and abilities. Identifying the students' own interests and abilities from these lists can be done independently, in small groups or as a class, the teacher should be available to offer guidance; since young adults may tend to view themselves as inadequate, point out things they can do!

Another way to have them express their abilities is to draw them. Some students prefer this media and it will create a greater impact for them.

## 20 Things I Love to Do

Have students generate a list of their favorite things to do. \* You can begin with a group brainstorming session in order to get things moving. Allow students to work with partners or in small groups, if appropriate. Have the students highlight five favorite activities and answer additional questions about those five, to aid in values clarification. After completing the activity, some discussion topics may include:

- $\, \cdot \,$  By doing this activity, I learned that I...
- •I was happy to see that I...
- ·I see that I need/want to

# Interpersonal Communication



We all need to be in relationships in order to survive. How does one begin a relationship or initiate friendship? How do we build and nurture these connections? Communication is the key - it happens between at least two people and requires several skills, including active listening and responding. It is important to learn how to present ourselves positively but with conviction and confidence; this requires practice. Our non-verbal communication tells another person a good deal more about us than the words we choose.

In this unit, our goal is to help students become aware of how they are perceived by other people, and to learn how to express themselves more effectively.

## Open House

Have students each develop a list of their varying interests/preferences/likes - especially ones that may be quite original, for example: "peanut butter and pickle sandwiches," or "playing snowshoe softball," etc. Then have the students mingle with each other "open house" style and find out how many others may share the same interests or be excited about exploring the interests of another.

## Where do Values Come From?

Facilitate a student discussion around this topic, keeping it on target. Some thought-provoking questions:

- ·What are values?
- ·How old are you when you develop values?
- ·Do your parents ever discuss values?
- ·Do your friends affect your values?

- ·What does peer pressure have to do with values?
- ·Are your values the same as your friends'?
- ·Can values be taught?
- •What are some outside influences that may affect your values? (TV, newspaper, movies, etc.)

Some sources of values: Family, friends, media, school, religion, extended family, role models, etc.

## Board Game: "LifeStories"

Play a commercial board game called **LifeStories**: \*Follow the directions on the game cards to share thoughts and ideas on different subjects, past experiences, and hopes for the future.

#### Public Interview

- Videotape students answering a variety of questions about themselves that are related to their hobbies, strengths, values, and dreams.
- · Place list of interview questions on the board.
- Students should take turns in roles or interviewer, interviewee, and video camera operator.
- Purpose: get to know one another better, develop listening skills, and acquire camera proficiency.

## Positive Self-Talk

Life Experience Sharing: Mutual self-disclosure develops the trust necessary for students to feel secure enough to take risks. The facilitator models the format: specify an amount of time and share some of your most important life experiences with the group. Each student takes his/her turn while other students show respect. Options may include: breaking up into smaller groups or focusing on particular types of memories.

Success Sharing: In a format similar to the previous activity, have students discuss various successes they had with their experiences, breaking it down by age category (0-10 years old-present, etc.) Some examples of successes may include: learning to walk, talk, spell, swim, sing, play a musical instrument, ride a bicycle, etc. You can reinforce the activity by occasionally asking the students about their greatest successes of the day, week, or month.

\*Available from LifeStories, 701 Decatur Avenue North, Suite 104, Golden Valley, MN 55427

#### Circle Talks

Circle talks create a supportive environment for an honest expression of feelings. Divide the class into groups of five or six students and share the topics for discussion and guidelines for this activity. Some guidelines may be: only the person holding a specified object talks, pass object to left, students have the right to "pass" (no pressure to share),

sharing is a personal choice, and no put downs. Students may sometimes choose topics or a situation in class may prompt a circle talk.

Examples of possible discussion topics may include:

- ·Something I did that helped someone else feel good
- ·Something I appreciate about my parents
- ·What I do when I get very angry
- · A success I had recently
- ·Something I sometimes worry about
- · A person I truly admire and why

## Friendship: "What is a Friend?" - Discussion and Role-plays

Class discussion: Define a true friend. List qualities we look for in a friend, distinguish friends from acquaintances and strangers, give feedback to classmates: "something I like about you," and "something I like about myself that makes me a good friend." Activities may also include role-plays and videotaping of how true friends behave and how they do not behave.

## Assertive Communication



Once students learn more about their own needs, preferences, desires, and how to express themselves effectively, it is then important to discuss and model assertive, aggressive, and passive styles of communication. Passivity as well as aggression can get us into uncomfortable or dangerous situations. Sharpening assertiveness skills may also lead to discussions of self-advocacy (the pursuit of necessary supports).

## Some important aspects of assertive communication include:

- ·Expressing what you feel is best for you.
- ·Standing up for what you believe.
- ·Standing up for your rights.
- •Making sure your message is clear so that people understand your needs and ideas.
- ·Expressing your opinions and feelings in an honest but non-threatening way.
- •Respect other's rights and opinions, even if they are different from yours.
- ·Be a good listener.

## Effective Communication: Discussion and Role-plays

Many difficulties between two people occur because of inadequate or ineffective communication. Use role-plays to show the differences between good (effective) and bad (ineffective) communication. Discuss and create video-taped role play covering the following topics.

Communication is not only what we say; it incorporates both verbal and non-verbal components. This includes tone of voice, volume, intonation, posture, eye contact, and other aspects of body language.

A good communicator is: patient, thorough, determined, polite, and fair.

There are also different styles of communication, such as:

- 1. Assertive: person communicates with strength and respect
- 2. Aggressive: person communicates with aggression and disrespect
- 3. Passive: Person communicates without strength

Barriers to communication may include: not giving enough information, guessing, assuming, interrupting, willingness to listen, making fun of or teasing the speaker.

Further activities may include creating various forms of communication, i.e., posters, newspaper advertisements, invitations, billboards, videos, radio, or TV commercials.

#### What is Assertiveness?

Assertiveness is being able to inform someone of your needs while still respecting the needs of others. Characteristics of assertive communication include: listening to and respecting others, being clear and non-threatening, being ready and willing to compromise.

Assertiveness Skill Building: Present situations for the students to identify aggressive, assertive, and passive behaviors. Discuss the feelings that go along with each type of behavior: feelings the person might have about him/herself and feelings that others might have about him/her. Discuss specific school, work, or personal situations. Produce video-taped role-plays using aggressive, assertive, and passive behaviors. Review the videos and discuss.

## Compliment/Response Appropriateness

Discuss the differences between appropriate and inappropriate responses to compliments.

## Appropriate responses include those that:

- ·Value self
- ·Value others
- ·Say thanks
- Appreciate others' responses

#### Inappropriate responses include those that:

- ·Express arrogance
- · Are insulting
- · Are put-downs of self or others
- Express complaint
- •Express sarcasm

Present situations to students so they learn to identify appropriate responses to compliments. Once they have achieved success in identification, have them generate their own responses to compliments as they role-play with each other while the rest of the group decides whether their responses are appropriate or not.

# Goal-Setting



As students learn about their abilities, strengths, and how to communicate their preferences; it is important to focus on the pursuit of life goals. Here, we help students:

- ·Learn to create a plan with workable steps (i.e.., How to set goals and take necessary steps to achieve goals).
- ·Learn to make realistic choices based upon available options.

## Goal-Setting: Discussion and Role-plays

Class discussion: Why is goal-setting important? How does it fit in with self-determination? Have the class generate a list of reasons for setting goals. Role-play daily living situations both with and without goal-setting.

Here are a few examples of reasons that students have generated for why it is important to set goals:

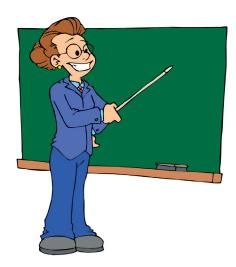
- ·To help you get somewhere else in life
- •To help you have direction, purpose, and meaning in life
- ·To help you get what you want
- ·To help you plan out all the needed details
- To eliminate confusion
- ·To help you in the future
- To be successful
- ·To be actively working toward what you really want
- ·To help you have security
- Happiness!

## Setting Short and Long-Term Personal Goals/ Worksheets

Class discussion: What are short-term and long-term personal goals, and how are they different from each other? Work individually (and in pairs) to complete goal-setting worksheets.\* Then discuss individual examples with the class.

<sup>\*</sup>See worksheets #2 and #3 in Appendix

# Problem-Solving



One important component of self-determination is the area of problem solving.

A problem that for one individual may be easily solved, may appear an insurmountable obstacle to someone else. People fail to make quality decisions when they have not acquired sufficient information on available options. The relationship between choices and their consequences must also be clear. If they are not clear, well-informed decisions cannot be made.

Janis and Mann (1977) produced a comprehensive review on effective decision-making. They compiled seven criteria for high quality decision-making (or diligent information processing). They are:

- 1. Thoroughly review a wide range of available options.
- 2. Survey the full range of objectives to be obtained.
- 3. Carefully weigh the positive and negative consequences of each alternative.
- 4. Search for new information and evaluate the alternatives.
- 5. Accurately assimilate new information.
- 6. Re-examine positive and negative consequences of each alternative given the new information.
- 7. Seek provisions for implementing chosen alternative.

It is important to introduce students to all the steps necessary to evaluate a problem, as well as methods for searching out appropriate alternatives or solutions to the problem.

## Choices: Class Discussion and Worksheets

Define choice and discuss the different kinds of choices we make daily and weekly, contrasting them with major life decision and choices. Complete "Choices in My Life" worksheet,\* and discuss response with the class.

## Choice-making/Consequences: Discussion and Role-plays

Class discussion: how does choice-making enhance self-determination? Define and give examples of informed, uninformed, coerced and uncoerced choices. Role-play precarious situations, identifying choices and the consequences of those choices.

## Problem-Solving: In-Class Discussion Groups

When a difficult issue arises for a particular student, take class time to help the student investigate and find possible solutions for the problem by having round table support network with previously-developed guidelines. These guidelines would be similar to a Circle Talk (see interpersonal Communication), where unless life-threatening, the conversations would remain confidential.

The student with the difficulty would share his/her concern with the class and others would ask clarifying questions. The worksheet "A Guide for Making Decisions" can be utilized at this point.\*\* Once the problem seems clear, fellow students would continue to ask questions to help the student identify his/her own solution at hand (to avoid a shift of focus away from the student with the dilemma).

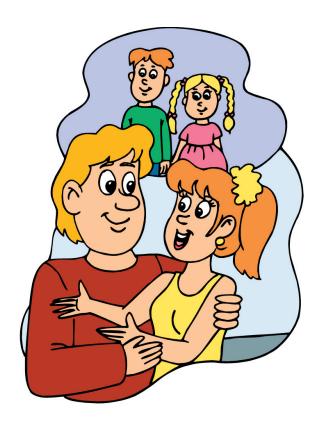
## Problem-Solving/Decision Making

Discuss necessary steps involved in problem-solving. Role-play different problem-solving techniques: skills of negotiation, compromise, and conflict resolution. Work through students' real life problems and videotape the process. Class reviews tape and offers feedback regarding problem-solving skills.

<sup>\*</sup>See Worksheet #4 in Appendix

<sup>\*\*</sup>See Worksheet #5 in Appendix

# Personal Futures Planning



Personal Futures Planning (PFP) helps students and their families create a shared vision of a more desirable future, incorporating the basic philosophy of self-determination. The Personal Futures Planning process brings together the most important people in the student's life to discuss and develop a vision of his or her life after high school. The student is at the center of the whole process. The vision is based on the student's dreams and desires and his or her special gifts and talents - what we often call capacities. The people who participate in these meetings include parents and other family members, friends, teachers, people in the student's life such as religious leaders, neighbors, or club leaders, and a variety of service providers. We call this group the student's circle of support.

Personal Futures Planning can help all members of the circle of support to re-envision what is possible for the student, and to re-evaluate their own roles in attaining that best possible future. The creation of a personal profile, including long-term goals - collaboratively established - will assist individuals and their families to construct a thorough action plan. See Appendix for a sample Personal Futures Planning Guide.

## What is Personal Futures Planning?

The process whereby students develop personal profiles - learning more about themselves, their strengths, and the actual possibilities for their respective futures, including:

#### Personal Futures Planning

- •The identification and collaboration of each student's support network
- ·A consumer-driven planning process all participants are equals
- •Group cooperation toward the discovery of an individual student's gifts, talents, preferences, and dreams
- •The creation of a shared vision for a more desirable future
- · A dynamic problem-solving process
- · A group commitment to build natural supports and expand community connections

## Futures Planning Charts

Classroom activity: students take turns being the focus person. With positive group input, students describe their preferences, places they go, and activities they're involved in. Each student's turn lasts approximately thirty minutes. Use overhead projector and/or flip charts, artwork, karaoke machine and microphones, and group participation.

## Develop "Personal Profile"

Outside of classroom: students meet with project staff individually, and discuss each student's history, present life and future, begin planning process, identify who he/she wants to include in group planning; invite family members, friends and others to coordinate futures planning sessions.

## Personal Futures Planning Session

Group process: usually takes place in student's home; group members collaborate with the student to create a vision for the future that includes the student's hopes and dreams; develop action plan toward achieving goals.

# "Video Futures" Putting Personal Futures Plans On Video



Imagine that you have just gathered together with a large group of people who are interested in your future. The group has assisted you in identifying your wishes, hopes, and dreams for the future. They are going to help you explore this vision for your future. People in the community are contacted and before you know it, you are on your way to a local radio station to participate in something you have always dreamed about - becoming a disk jockey.

You arrive at the radio station and everyone is friendly. While you are asking questions and participating in the management of the station, a person is videotaping you. Surprisingly, the station manager hands you a volunteer application and asks you to fill it out and bring it back. You can't believe it - you're actually going to get to work on the radio! The following week, you receive a videotape of the extraordinary event. You watch it almost every day in anticipation of the day you will begin work at the radio station.

The events described above actually happened. Opportunities for employment, participation, and learning occur regularly when a student's Personal Futures Plan is converted to video!

#### What is Video Futures?

Video Futures is a process of exploration and development. A student's specific hopes and dreams are explored and expressed in detail during Personal Futures Planning. Some elements of the final plan are then chosen to be role-played in the community and placed on videotape.

#### How is it Done?

We work with the student to place his/her dreams onto a 6-10 minute videotape. The tapes are completely individualized and may cover a variety of areas, such as: independent living, employment, recreation, hobbies, interpersonal skills, and transportation.

The magic behind the videotape hinges on creating a visual reresentation of the student's dreams - something that students can look at again and again for inspiration and encouragement. An important aspect of making the videotape is establishing collaboration and participation from businesses and agencies in the community.

## Examples

Video Futures integrated a variety of topics. Several are listed below:

#### Independent Living:

- ·Finding a place to live
- ·Cooking at home
- ·Getting a driver's license
- ·Lifting weights

## Personal Development

- Going to a dance with a girlfriend
- ·Going fishing with friends
- ·Taking a photography class
- ·Playing the guitar

#### Vocational

- ·Working at a grocery store
- ·Being a radio station volunteer
- ·Becoming a computer operator
- Stocking shelves

One Video Futures tape which has become a model for other students' tapes featured a student taking a culinary arts class, working out with weights, bagging groceries at a local store, moving into an apartment of his own, and taking a vaction to Hawaii.

# What is Video Self-Modeling?



Video self-modeling is a supportive tool that can help you teach specific skills. Self-modeling shows a student how he/she can do something and provides a visual image of the action. Self-modeling gives a student control over his or her behavior and allows the student to take an active role in overcoming a challenge.

Video Self-Modeling is a two-step process where people see themselves on videotape performing desired behaviors:

- 1. A person's behavior is recorded on videotape
- 2. The video is edited and presented to the person for viewing

The goal of video self-modeling is to change the frequency or quality of a person's behavior. For example, if Jane is having problems packing a nutritious lunch, we might stage a situation where Jane packs a balanced lunch while being videotaped. This videotape would then be presented to Jane, so she can see herself packing a balanced lunch. After several viewings, Jane would learn - from herself how to pack a balanced lunch. There are two ways to do videotaped self-modeling: video feedforward and positive self-review.

## I. Feedforward Self-Modeling

On occasion, a person will have problems performing a somewhat complex behavior. In situations like this, feedforward self-modeling is helpful. Feedforward self-modeling involves videotaping parts of a behavior and then editing these parts so they show a completed behavior.

#### Example:

Chris may not know how to look for job. Chris may, however, know how to use public transportation, fill out applications, and talk to store employees. We could take these behaviors and group them together on a videotape to show Chris actually looking for a job. The completed video could then be presented to Chris so she could learn from herself how to look for a job.

#### II. Positive Self-Review

A person may not have problems doing or completing a behavior, but may have difficulty performing the behavior at a level that is satisfactory to him/herself. In cases like this, Positive Self-Review is helpful. Positive self-review involves videotaping a person performing the same behavior several times. The best performance captured on videotape is then presented to the person for viewing.

#### Example:

Tony has a weekend job mowing lawns. Sometimes he will forget to mow certain patches of grass in the neighbor's lawn. We could follow Tony around on a weekend with a video camera and videotape him mowing several lawns. We could then show Tony which lawn he did the best job mowing. This method could show Tony how to satisfactorily mow a lawn.

## Why Does Self-Modeling Work?

There are many theories about why self-modeling works. Some people believe that self-modeling works because it shows a person the skills they need in order to perform desired behaviors. Because the person is watching him/herself perform a behavior at a desired skill level, the confidence he/she has in his/her ability to perform that behavior also grows. This is known as self-efficacy.

Other researchers believe that self-modeling works because it provides a person with a correct and precise set of instructions. Because a person is watching him/herself perform the behaviors, he/she obviously understands what he/she is doing and there is little confusion about what it is he/she is being asked to do.

# What Types of Behaviors Will Benefit from Self-Modeling?

Listed below are some examples of behaviors where self-modeling has been used successfully:

#### Daily Living Skills:

- Walking
- Swimming
- Eating
- Dressing
- Reading

#### Communication Skills:

- Assertiveness
- Refusal Skills
- · Sign Language
- · Job Interviews
- Speech

#### Social Skills:

- Peer Interaction
- · Anger Management
- Dating Behavior
- Shyness
- Anxiety

There are very few behaviors that self-modeling cannot change. The only requirement for using self-modeling is a desire for change!

# **Appendix**



Fostering Self-Determination

Worksheets,

PFP Guide,

and

Resource Guide

# My Twenty Favorites

	My Twenty Favorites	Last time you did it?	Alone or with people?	Any risk involved?	Work- related?	Costs money?
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						

#### Short-Term Personal Goal

Short-Term Goal	
In less than one month, I want to	
I will do this by(date).	
	(Signature)

## Long-Term Personal Goal

Long-Term Goal					
I want to					
by	(date).				
·	take to get to that goal are:				
I will do this by	(date).				
I will do this by	(date).				
I will do this by	(date).				

Signature

### Some Choices In my Life

What are some choices I make at HOME?				
What choices do I make at SCHOOL or WORK?				
What choices do I make regarding my FREE TIME?				

Name:	Date:	

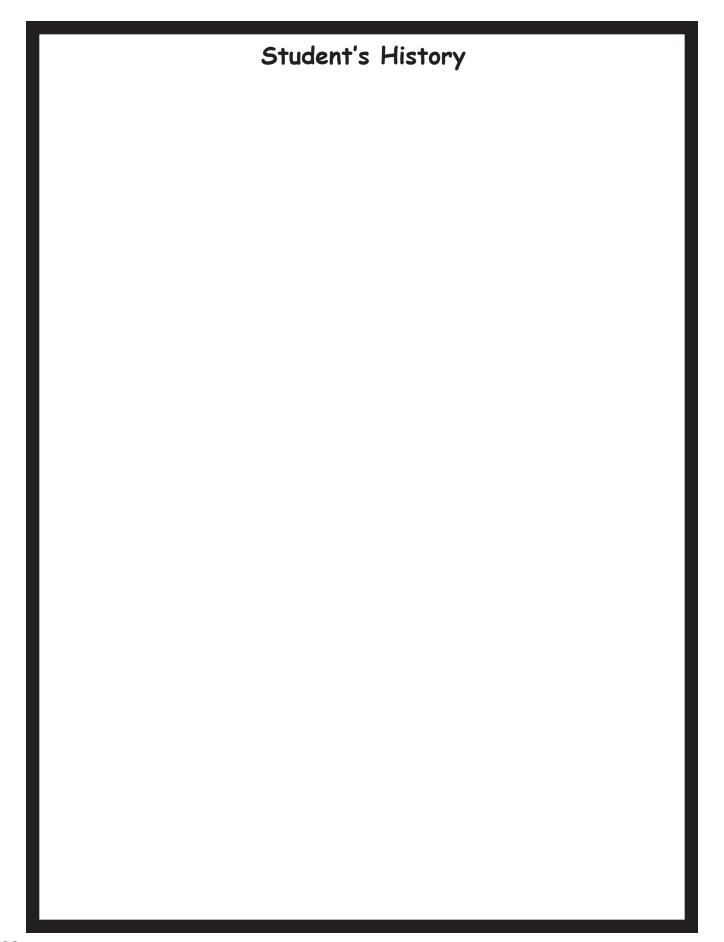
### A Guide for Making Decisions

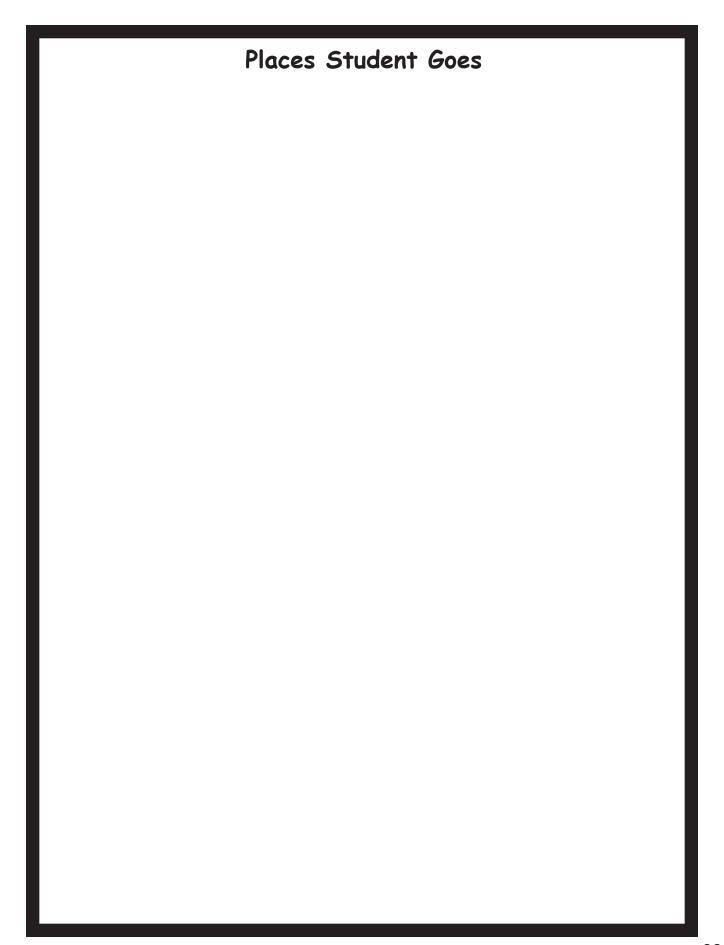
What's the Problem?
What is one way you can solve the problem?
What might some of the consequences be (i.e., what might happen) if you choose this solution?
What is another way you can solve the problem?
What might some of the consequences be (i.e., what might happen) if you choose this solution?
What is one more way you can solve the problem?

What ı	might some of the consequences be (i.e., what might happen) if you choose this
solutio	n?
	Choose the solution you think is best.
-	
-	
	Evaluate the results.

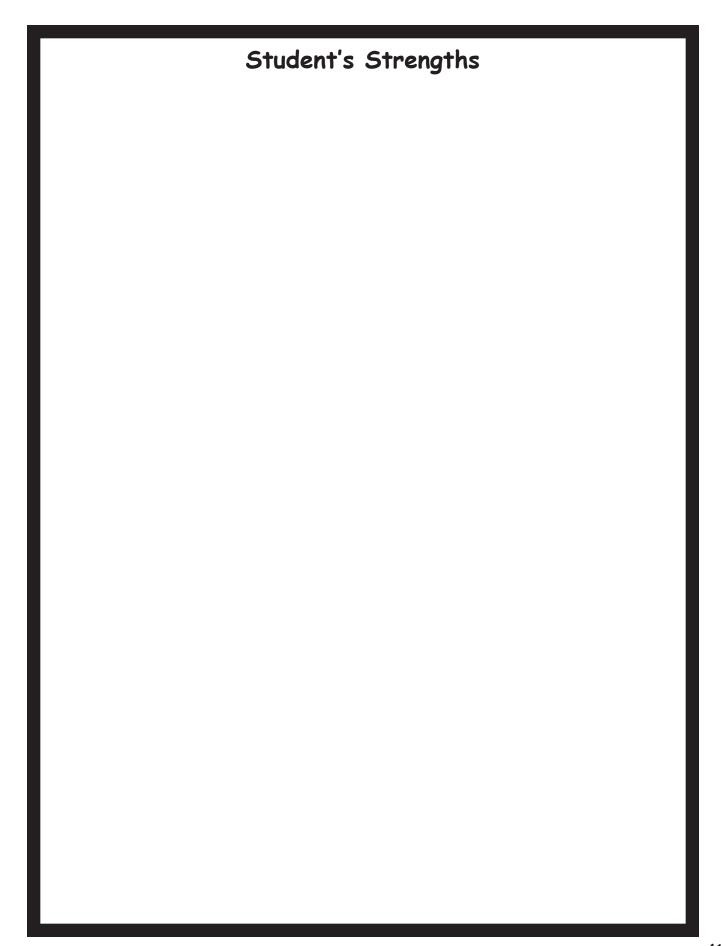
# Personal Futures Planning Charts

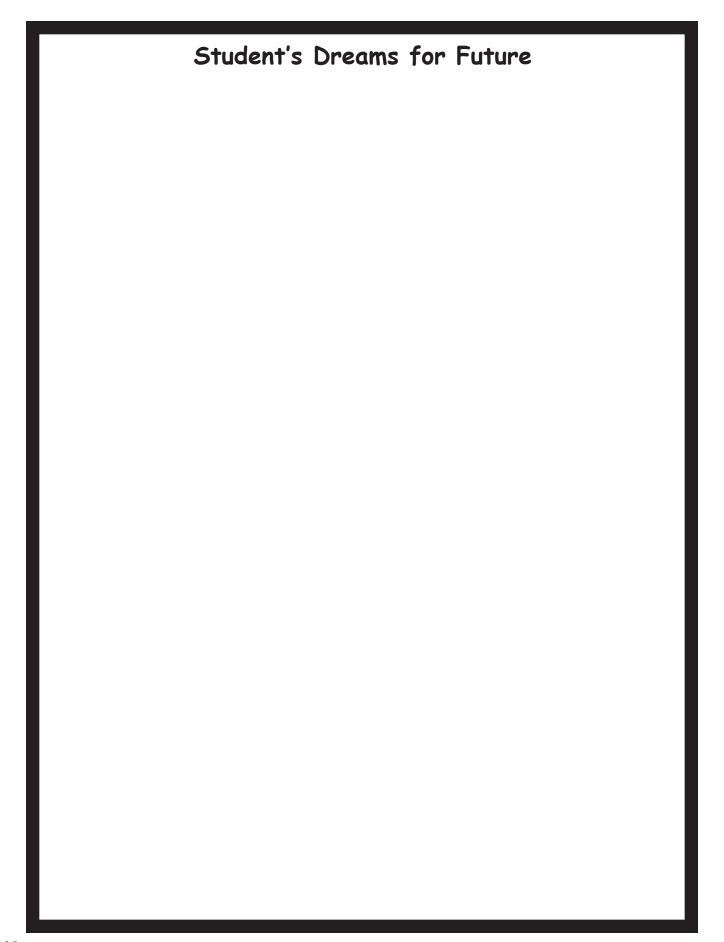
Use the following templates to create personal profiles for your students



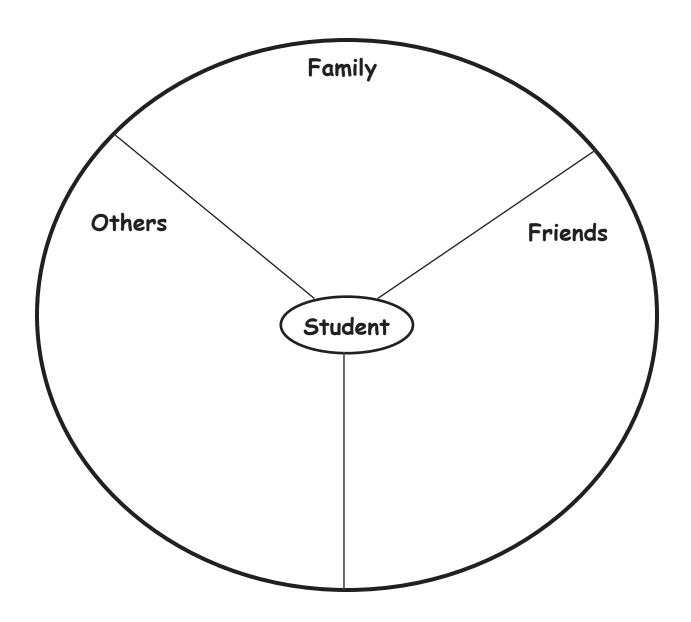


Student's Preferences					
Likes	Dislikes				
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#### Student's Relationships



Student's Personal Futures Action Plan

IEP Application						IEP Application	
Time Frame						Frame	
Person/ People Responsible for or Providina	Assistance					Person/ People Responsible for or Providing Assistance	
Goal		•	•	•	•	60al	•
Short, Medium, or Long Term Goal						Short, Medium, or Long Term Goal	

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