

The Walch Real Life Series

# Walch Real Life Series Guide

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# To the Teacher or Counselor

## The Purpose of This Series

The Walch Real Life Series of activity texts was written expressly for people who are moving into the adult world, toward independence, and all the responsibilities and issues that entails. As these students enter the spheres of work, relationships, and community involvement, they may need guidance to improve their self-esteem, decision-making skills, manners, conversational skills, and so on. These activity texts explore these topics in an interactive, unthreatening way.

Throughout this series, students work to build a positive self-concept based on accomplishment, decision-making skills based on a step-by-step approach, and interpersonal skills based on a practical attitude and on a recognition of the need for both autonomy and interdependence.

We also prod readers to discover and use their own resources—to look to good decisions they've made in the past, to tailor suggestions to their current situations, to uncover and employ their inherent strengths, and to develop new strengths.

We use realistic examples from home, school, work—a range of situations that readers and their friends may be familiar with.

## Motivating Your Students

How can you motivate your students or clients to take these topics seriously, if need be? Throughout the series, we stress the practical application of the concepts. For example, having high integrity makes one more trustworthy, which leads to better job opportunities, and thus to a better lifestyle. Self-interest can be a strong motivator.

The knowledge that the community needs every capable, productive person it can get also may be motivating. Today's young adults are needed to solve tomorrow's problems. Every person who is not participating may be making it more difficult for those who are.

Stress this throughout the program. Help students feel connected to the progress of their community. Help them feel like participants, even shapers, not just the observers that our TV culture has created. Students' healthy self-concept, decision-making skills, and ability to get along with others are all sorely needed.

## Your Role

You, too, are needed. This program is an attempt to provide resources for a real live teacher who will guide students through the process of self-discovery, decision-making, and interpersonal relations. Students will require feedback, clues, and sample answers. Much of that is provided for you in this teacher guide. We also suggest additional activities inside and outside the meeting space that you can assign or lead. And you can use the Ideas for Discussion (quotations) as conversation starters or takeoff points for other exercises you may devise.

Lively group discussion will help reinforce the concepts in the series, but some students will be uncomfortable talking about their own problems and shortcomings. They should not be coerced. Make sure that the group respects individuals' cultural and religious traditions.

The words "teacher" and "student" are used throughout this series guide for convenience. It may make more sense to refer to the people in your group in a different way.

## Special Considerations

The activity texts are written at a predominantly fourth-grade reading level. For ease in conveying sometimes abstract concepts to you, the suggested answers and other material in this teacher guide are at a generally higher level. The best way to relate possible answers and solutions to your students may be to lead the group, through discussion, to possible answers, and then write them, or have the students write them, on the board or flipchart in their own words. Using "peer language" to teach this way can be quite helpful to low-literacy students. They may try harder to understand what a classmate is saying than to decipher an answer read from a teacher guide.

Allowing for different learning styles may also be helpful. Some students learn best by reading about things, some by restating things in their own style, some by hearing another person talk about them, some by working together, some by working alone, some by listening to music while they work, and so on, and some by any conceivable combination of the above. By using a variety of teaching and learning styles throughout the program, you have a better chance of making the program effective.

Encourage different response styles as well. If a student wants to respond to a topic by making a sculpture or painting, writing a rap or poem, performing a skit, writing a story or essay, making a video, or doing a community internship, so much the better.

To get the best results from the activity texts, let students know that penmanship, spelling, and so on are only important from the standpoint of being able to reread their own answers at some future date. Tell them that no one else need ever look at

their responses, and that doing all the exercises will give them the best results. They should concentrate more on giving honest and complete answers than on the appearance of their books.

\* \* \*

No program like this can anticipate every problem young adults might face today or in the near future. But building an awareness of options and learning techniques for overcoming self-imposed limitations will help young adults help themselves.

We welcome your feedback on the volumes in this series and your ideas for other life skills publications. If you would like to write to the author, please do so in care of the publisher, and write Att: Letter to Author on the envelope.

I

*More Power to You:  
Building Confidence and  
Self-Esteem*

## Introduction

If you're administering this course, you probably already know a great deal about self-esteem building. Our aim here is to provide a framework in which students can do some work on their own, with your help and guidance. And work it is. This program is not the feel-good fuzziness lampooned in the media. Learning to find the good in oneself and to talk to oneself in a positive (and productive) manner *are* parts of the process, but they are not the whole.

Those seeking genuine self-esteem, self-trust, or self-confidence—call it what you will—must also build their integrity; work to build competence (however personally defined) in many areas of life; learn to recover from setbacks and to hurdle road-blocks; learn how to present themselves in and connect with “the world”; and find ways to renew themselves regularly.

We can't promise that completing this activity text will deliver all of the above to your students. Attaining these qualities will be a lifelong project. But the activity text may be the start they need. Consciousness-raising is a beginning. As students become aware of their own self-concepts and the possibilities for change, their views of life will expand and they may begin to act on some of those possibilities—perhaps in spite of themselves.

As mentioned in the series introduction, you may have to help meet the needs of the low-literacy students the series was designed for with techniques such as peer language and repetition. Consider also the variety of learning styles you may encounter. Would several students' interests be served by role-playing in addition to writing in their activity texts? Should you repeat things more often, or allow students to work in pairs or groups?

Finally, consider the varying degrees of self-awareness and self-esteem among your students. Some people who are very out of touch with themselves will need to think more about their feelings, and act less rashly. Others may need to think less and do more, if they're paralyzed by endless self-analysis or very low self-worth. Everyone is different. Encourage (but don't force) students to share their problems and discoveries with the class, and they will learn from each other.

### **Chapter 1. Take Time to Take Charge: Set Some Goals**

The first section of this introductory chapter is meant to get students thinking about how they react in various situations, and how those reactions might have something to do with how they feel about themselves. No firm conclusions need be drawn; this is a warm-up section that also will help you get to know the people who will be working through this program.

Also in this chapter, the group will think, write, and talk about what is going well in their lives, and what could use some work. In an *It's a Wonderful Life*-inspired exercise, students will take a brief look at the life of a person who doesn't seem to feel his existence is worth much (despite evidence to the contrary), and will consider their own lives in a similar fashion. Here, the aim is to get them thinking about the contributions they are already making, and their connections to family, friends, coworkers.

### **Everyday Problems (p. 2)**

You should probably indicate how you would like students to respond to the ten situations—that is, to give a gut reaction, and/or to relate a similar incident in their own lives. If you feel students are ready, have them try to come up with specific alternative actions and feelings (general concepts: take action rather than accept despair; speak to oneself encouragingly rather than disparagingly; act sensibly rather than rashly; and so on). What could a person in each situation do to begin to master it? Begin making the link between beliefs (“I’m no good”; “Life isn’t fair”; “Nobody likes me”) and outcomes (giving up easily; failing to get satisfaction; being taken advantage of; getting lower pay; further damaging one’s integrity or self-esteem).

Try to elicit specific suggestions in each case, as many students may not be ready to relate to the situations on an abstract level. As students give responses, write them on the board or flipchart (or have students do so) in the students’ own words (peer language), read them out loud, and discuss them. Some students may wish to keep any personal answers private. If so, accept that. Others will be willing to share.

Again, this exercise can function as a kind of pretest or diagnostic tool so that you can see where students are. You don’t have to go into too much depth yet. These typical problems and situations will be dealt with as case studies throughout this book and the others in the series.

### **It’s a Wonderful Life—Isn’t It? (p. 5)**

If you think it would be helpful, show the movie *It's a Wonderful Life* or explain the plot (or have a student who knows the plot explain it). Encourage discussion of the idea that each person’s life does matter, does make a difference. Try to get students to imagine how other people’s lives would be adversely affected if they weren’t around anymore.

The case study may be less threatening than talking about their own lives first. Here are some possible answers for the questions that begin on page four. (Again, encourage students to share answers, and repeat them and/or write them on the board in their own words.)

Three people who depend on Roberto: his employer, his mother, and his son (or his son’s mother)

What they depend on him for:

employer: for Roberto to show up every day, to replace mufflers correctly, and to treat customers well, all of which he apparently does

his mother: to help maintain their household; also, possibly, for love and respect (though we don't know that, it seems likely)

Roberto's son: for love, parenting, and financial support

the mother of Roberto's son: for financial support and parenting time

If Roberto weren't around anymore:

employer: would have to hire a replacement, which would probably be time-consuming and expensive and might cost him some business. Good employees like Roberto are hard to find. Also, the employer might have a working friendship with Roberto, and would lose that.

mother: might have to rely on other relatives for help, take an extra job, or get public assistance; would lose her dutiful and devoted son.

Roberto's son: would lose his relationship with his father; might not be as well clothed and fed; might become a welfare case.

son's mother: would have more care of child, possibly to the child's detriment if she becomes stressed or has to spend more hours working to support him; might have to go on welfare.

One more person who relies on Roberto: himself. Deep down, Roberto must believe his responsibilities matter, and therefore he matters. By carrying on with his daily activities, he is expressing a sense that his life matters.

Should Roberto feel bad about himself? No. Why not? Roberto is meeting his basic responsibilities. He appears to be a man of integrity, a hard worker, and a caring family member. No one who at least meets these requirements is worthless or unimportant.

Suggestions for Roberto: If Roberto has higher ambitions for himself, he could commit the time for classes or further training. He could seek ways to move up at work. He could try to build his self-confidence so that he could justify his worth to his employer at raise time. Roberto could also begin to become kinder to himself. There is not so much that is really *wrong* with his life now. His main problem seems to be in how he sees it. His pessimistic attitude may actually be holding him back from the growth he would like. He explains his life to himself as being a failure, when in fact it is not. By beginning to refute his pessimistic explanatory style (more on that in Chapter 2) he will be moving in the right direction.

### **Your Wonderful Life (pp. 6–13)**

Encourage students to make their answers as specific as possible throughout this and the following evaluation sections. The purpose of the exercises on pages 6, 7, 8, and 9 is to help students create a list of “good things” about themselves that they can refer to or think about when they need reassurance. The work will help them think of themselves as worthwhile people who have something to contribute. Under “Where Have You Been?” (pp. 9–11), again, urge them to be specific. If there’s a problem with schoolwork, in what subject? What exactly is the difficulty? What’s not going well with physical fitness? Failure to make time for exercise? Overeating? The more specifically the student can define the problem, the easier it will be to start dealing with. This will also avoid creating the perception that a whole area of the student’s life is problematic. It restricts the feeling of “not going OK” to one specific facet that may be fixable, not depressingly overwhelming.

“Where Are You Going?” (pp. 11–12) should get students thinking about goal-setting. The effectiveness of this book and series will be increased if students keep their own short-term goals in mind while doing the work. Then they can relate each section to their own needs. Ask them how likely they would be to get something accomplished if they hadn’t, at some point, at least said silently to themselves, “I need to do this.” Writing down one’s intentions (and a detailed plan for accomplishing them) works even better for most people.

### **Chapter 2. Learn to Steer Your Mind: Become an Optimist**

In this chapter, the emphasis is on developing an optimistic explanatory style, as championed in Dr. Martin E. Seligman’s book *Learned Optimism*. Here we present a simplified version of discoveries in this field. We recommend that you read *Learned Optimism*, especially Chapter 3, “Explaining Misfortune,” which contains a quiz that helps you determine how optimistic or pessimistic you are; Chapter 5, “How You Think, How You Feel”; and Chapter 12, “The Optimistic Life.” Among other wonderful things, Chapter 12 contains techniques for disputing negative beliefs. Changing one’s emphasis from general feelings of failure to specific instances that are open to argument about whether the cause is personal or global seems vital to the development of high self-esteem.

Since the information in the student workbook is of necessity extremely simplified, you should turn to Dr. Seligman’s book, or other sources recommended in the notes at the end of *Learned Optimism*, whenever you are in doubt about whether you or your students are applying the principles correctly.

We would also like to stress that whether a person is optimistic or pessimistic *by nature*, he or she can adopt the qualities of the opposite style when that is called for. We know that all those dour pessimists in our lives need to lighten up on themselves. But sometimes the buoyant optimist needs the caution of the more “realistic” pessi-