

# **Building Blocks to Better Relationships**

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Case Studies, Simulations, and Learning Activities

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# User's Guide to *Walch Reproducible Books*

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## ***BUILDING BLOCKS***

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# Teacher's Guide

## *Introduction*

As teachers prepare students to meet real-life challenges, both present and future, the following skills become essential to success:

- a. Decision-making and problem-solving skills
- b. Ability to analyze situations and predict outcomes
- c. Critical thinking
- d. Cooperative teamwork
- e. Leadership skills
- f. Communication skills
- g. Appreciation of individual differences

*Building Blocks to Better Relationships*, designed for secondary or young adult students, incorporates all of the above skills into a dynamic learning activity that focuses on contemporary relationship issues. This packet features case study situations for 15 personal and family scenarios:

- |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Dating Relationships   | 9. Divorce                       |
| 2. Family Conflict        | 10. Blended Families             |
| 3. Teen Parenthood        | 11. Young Adults and the Elderly |
| 4. Sisters and Brothers   | 12. Roommates                    |
| 5. Success in Marriage    | 13. The Decision to Parent       |
| 6. Strong Families        | 14. Child Care Decisions         |
| 7. Dysfunctional Families | 15. Child Abuse                  |
| 8. Dual Careers           |                                  |

Each case study includes five segments (Blocks):

- **Block 1**—Introduces the main character(s).

- **Block 2**—Introduces another important person or develops the plot.
- **Block 3**—Provides background information or other important details.
- **Block 4**—Provides additional background information about the case study.
- **Block 5**—Introduces a challenge that could cause the situation to change, or creates a problem to solve.

For each of the five Blocks, there are ten different descriptions. Each description interrelates with all the others. Working in cooperative learning groups, students randomly select one of the ten descriptions from each of the first four Blocks to build their own case study scenario. The student groups then analyze the relationships within their case study Blocks. At this point, each group selects their last Block, the challenge. They then discuss the challenge and its impact on the situation. After analyzing the case study, students do one or more follow-up activities; then they present their results to the class. (See Options for Class Presentations on page *viii*.)

Future Scenes for Class Presentations (page *xiii*) provides a focus scene you can assign to your students.

Since *Building Blocks to Better Relationships* has no predictable answers, it is a very dynamic learning activity. The student-centered atmosphere encourages critical thinking, the process of analyzing relationships, and predicting outcomes. Another important feature is that it provides visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning, thereby meeting the needs of a variety of learning styles.

Students can complete each case situation in one or two class periods. Although you can use the activity in a variety of ways, *Building Blocks to Better Relationships* is most effective as an introductory lesson on specific topics. The students are exposed to the problems related to the topic as they complete an enjoyable activity with no predetermined answers. Students then will be able to identify key issues relating to contemporary relationships. You can also use *Building Blocks to Better Relationships* individually to confront students with some of the contemporary issues individuals and families must deal with in today's society.

## ***Educational Objectives***

1. Students will be able to use critical and creative thinking skills as they make decisions and solve problems.
2. Students will be able to analyze the factors involved in building successful relationships with others.

## ***Organizing Materials for Building Blocks***

Before introducing *Building Blocks* to students, you need to complete the following tasks.

1. Read all instructions and background information in this book.
2. Photocopy the case study descriptions and cut them apart, keeping each Block of the case study separate from the others. You could keep the descriptions in envelopes, labeled appropriately.
3. Photocopy the worksheet that relates to the topic you're using (e.g., Dating Relationships, Teen Parenthood). Make one copy for each cooperative learning group. (NOTE: A reproducible page of want ads for apartments is provided on page 170 to use with the Roommates case studies. You may use the want ads if you are covering selection of apartments with the lesson.)
4. Assemble the following materials, which the cooperative learning teams will need for the class presentations.
  - a. Drawing:
    - Drawing paper (at least 12" x 18")
    - Marking pens
  - b. Role play:
    - Props as needed by students
  - c. Story:
    - No materials needed
  - d. Advice Column:
    - Photocopy Building Block Advisor (page xv—one copy for each cooperative learning group).
5. Divide the class into cooperative learning groups. We recommend three or four students per group.
6. Select the method you will use for having the students present their case study to the class. Options include those listed below. You can assign one of these options to all of the cooperative learning groups, or allow each cooperative learning group to select the option they prefer. If the groups will be allowed to choose, prepare an overhead transparency of Options for Class Presentations (page xi). You can use Future Scenes for Class Presentations (page xiii) to give the students a specific focus for their class presentations.

## ***Options for Class Presentations***

- a. **Drawing:**
  - Students draw a picture that shows the group's prediction of the future relationships of the characters in their case study.

**b. Role Play:**

Students act out a typical scene showing the group's prediction of the future relationships of the characters in the case study.

**c. Story:**

Students write a story that further describes the relationships of the characters in this case study or expands on question 5 of the worksheet—What happens next in this story?

**d. Advice Column:**

Using the challenges or problems in the case study, students write a letter outlining the problem and the advice columnist's answer to the letter. They can use the reproducible form on page xv (*Building Block Advisor*) or design one of their own.

## ***Suggested Sequence for Teaching***

1. Present the Building Block topic to the class. Ask students to brainstorm some of the contemporary issues associated with this topic. List these ideas on the board or overhead.
2. Form cooperative learning teams and review the rules for working in teams (if needed). Rules might include:
  - a. Stay seated with your group throughout the activity.
  - b. Be respectful of everyone's ideas. No put-downs.
  - c. Everyone in the group is expected to participate.
  - d. Through discussion, each group will arrive at answers they all agree with.
  - e. Rely on group members to answer questions and solve problems.
3. Explain to the students that this activity is similar to playing a card game. Just as in a card game, when each player draws the cards that make up his or her hand, each cooperative learning team will draw the Blocks that will make up their case study.
4. Distribute the Building Block worksheet to each of the cooperative learning groups and review the questions with the class. (NOTE: An optional activity for the Roommates lesson is to have the students select an apartment for these roommates. We recommend using local newspaper want ads for this, but we have included a reproducible page of apartment ads if you prefer to use them.)
5. Have someone from each cooperative learning group select one of ten descriptions from each of the envelopes assembled for the first four Blocks.

6. Have the teams read over the Blocks they have drawn. At this point, the teacher may want to give students the option of trading one of the Blocks they have drawn with one other team. The Blocks have been carefully designed to interrelate with all of the possible combinations, but occasionally the students may get a combination they feel is unrealistic. If you give students this option, it is important for them to do the trading without discussion or sharing of information.
7. After reading over the Blocks they have drawn, have students complete questions 1–3 on the worksheet.
8. At this point, have one member of the cooperative learning team select Block 5, the challenge.
9. Ask each cooperative learning group to discuss the implications of their challenge on the future relationships of the people in their scenario. Then have them complete questions 4 and 5 on the worksheet.
10. Assign the follow-up activity, which will provide each group with a product to present to the class. If students are being given a choice of follow-up activity, present the options by showing the Options for Class Presentations overhead transparency (page *xi*). In some situations, it may be easier to have all cooperative learning teams complete the same follow-up activity, such as role-playing. Both of these methods have proven effective in our classrooms. We have also provided a list of specific suggested topics for the class presentations (see Future Scenes for Class Presentations on page *xiii*). By giving students a very specific idea to focus on as they summarize the information in the case study, they are more able to think creatively and develop a presentation that is meaningful for the class.
11. Have each cooperative learning team present the important information about their case study to the rest of the class along with their follow-up product (the drawing, role play, story, or advice column).
12. Close the activity by asking the class to respond to the summary question on the Building Blocks worksheet. For example, the summary question relating to Dating Relationships is:

*What factors contribute to a successful dating relationship?*

Students can respond through large-group discussion, in the cooperative learning groups, or individually. Whichever method you use, the summary question is useful as an evaluation activity at the end of the lesson.

# Options for Class Presentations

## 1. Drawing

Draw a picture that shows the group's prediction of the future relationships of the characters in the case study.

## 2. Role Play

Act out a typical scene showing the group's prediction of the future relationships of the characters in the case study.

## 3. Story

Write a story that further describes the relationships of the characters in the case study.

## 4. Advice Column

Using the challenges or problems in the case study, write a letter outlining the problem and the advice columnist's answer to the letter. You can use the Building Block Advisor form or design one of your own.

# Future Scenes for Class Presentations

1. **Dating Relationships**  
A Friday night four weeks from now
2. **Family Conflict**  
A family summer picnic three years from now
3. **Teen Parenthood**  
The former teen celebrating her 21st birthday
4. **Sisters and Brothers**  
A family meal two months from today
5. **Success in Marriage**  
The couple's relationship two years from now
6. **Strong Families**  
Summer vacation five years from now
7. **Dysfunctional Families**  
A family reunion next summer
8. **Dual Careers**  
The family deciding on a major purchase such as a new automobile
9. **Divorce**  
The husband's birthday two years from now
10. **Blended Families**  
The family's most memorable activity during vacation next summer
11. **Young Adults and the Elderly**  
The young adult and the elderly person next Saturday
12. **Roommates**  
The roommates at dinner in three months
13. **The Decision to Parent**  
Family portrait in five years
14. **Child Care Decisions**  
The children reenacting or describing for their parents their favorite activity at child care
15. **Child Abuse**  
The child's living arrangements in one year

# Building Block Advisor

Dear Building Block Advisor,

Sincerely, Troubled

-----  
Dear Troubled,

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(students' names)

Building Block Advisor





# BUILDING BLOCKS

### ***Dating Relationships—The Couple***

Harvey is very good-looking, and he knows it. He doesn't do well academically but is a leader in athletics. Since his parents' divorce five years ago, he has lived with his mother and her parents. Periodically he receives money from his dad, plus he gets a weekly allowance. Last summer he worked as a lifeguard.

Carrie has a younger brother and two foster sisters. Her family has always been close, but for the past few months she has been rebelling against family rules. She earns average grades in school and probably would do better if she quit her after-school job in a day-care center.



### ***Dating Relationships—The Couple***

Tim is from a close family and considers himself really lucky to have a family like his. He participates in athletics and has been told he is a gifted athlete. He does above average academically in school. He works weekends in a movie theater.

Jenny is the youngest of six children and is considered spoiled by almost everyone in the family. She believes school is a waste of time but does intend to graduate. All she has to do is ask and she gets any amount of money she wants.



### ***Dating Relationships—The Couple***

Sergio lives with his dad and has not had contact with his mother for over ten years. At school, he does below average academically except for his vocational classes. He has no interest in school activities or athletics. He works in an uncle's auto shop.

Tonia is from a chemically dependent family and participates in group counseling to help deal with the situation. Recently her grades have been the best she has ever had. This year she is a member of the volleyball, softball, and gymnastic teams. She earns money by occasionally babysitting.



### ***Dating Relationships—The Couple***

Jerrell is from a family that is child-centered. His parents take an interest in everything he does. He does well academically in school and participates in athletics and other activities, including a chorale ensemble. His schedule does not permit him time for a job.

Shanika dates Jerrell because he is popular; she likes the recognition she gets from the relationship. She has been living with her dad and stepmother only since the eighth grade. She has had trouble adjusting to her new school and is doing poorly. She works part-time in a music store.



### ***Dating Relationships—The Couple***

Brian is very academically oriented and does exceptionally well in school. He participates in track and cross-country. He fears his parents are on the verge of separating, because he hears them arguing a lot and his mother finds many reasons to be away from home. He works part-time in a computer store.

Cindy is from a family with a lot of problems. Her older brother attempted suicide last year, and her younger brother is into drugs. Her father is away a lot. Her grades have suffered and she may fail French. She works 30 or more hours a week. Most of her money is given to her mom for household expenses.



### ***Dating Relationships—The Couple***

Lamont was an infant when his father left. His mother moved in with his grandmother, who has had the main responsibility for raising him. He is a below-average student who participates in athletics. He is considered a star athlete and is often featured in news articles about the school team. He receives an allowance because he has little spare time to work.

Felicia is from a close-knit, religious family. She does well academically in school, especially in science, and she has had the lead in several school plays and musicals. Because of school activities, she has had no time for a regular job but occasionally babysits.



### ***Dating Relationships—The Couple***

Antonio is from a large extended family that has lived at the same address for three generations. He enjoys his elective classes but doesn't like English and history, and he has the grades to prove it! He works for an uncle on weekends so his job won't conflict with his sports activities.

Angela is from a single-parent home and does average academic work at school. She works evenings and weekends as a cashier in a discount store. Because of her work schedule, Angela seldom participates in school activities.



### ***Dating Relationships—The Couple***

Mike's father died three years ago, and his mom's boyfriend is currently living with the family. Mike likes school and maintains a B average. He works in a small grocery store after school, and most of his money goes for clothes.

Terry is from a family with a lot of problems, mainly relating to her mother's alcohol dependency. Currently her mother has been sober for eight months, so things seem better. Terry is shy around others and has an average academic record at school. She must take care of her two younger brothers after school, so a job is out of the question.



### ***Dating Relationships—The Couple***

Armon is handsome and enjoys wearing the latest styles. He doesn't have a lot of respect for his mother, and he hasn't seen his dad for many years. He works at an auto parts store after school and on weekends. His pride and joy is his 1967 Mustang, which he is customizing.

Shanna is the oldest of seven, and she is very outspoken. She has worked in three fast-food restaurants but has been fired each time for arguing with customers. She likes to dress in the latest styles and knows all the current dances. She collects shoes and has 67 pairs!



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### ***Dating Relationships—The History***

They met in the library, where both were working on a term paper. After spending most of the day talking instead of working, they decided to write one paper (they had different teachers), and each turned it in as his or her own. Both suffered the same consequences when they were caught—an F. They have been going together since last January. They both are strongly opposed to having sex before marriage.



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### ***Dating Relationships—The Couple***

James is from a close-knit extended family. Both grandmothers live with his family. His parents own a convenience store, where he works for no pay. He is given spending money as needed. He places a high value on education and is ranked second in his class at school.

Julia is shy and quiet. Most of the time she says nothing in her classes, but she does get good grades. Her family is very strict about her social activities—she is not usually allowed to be alone with James. They usually go to youth group activities, and he is allowed to come to her house when other people are present. They've only been on a date alone a few times.



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### ***Dating Relationships—The History***

They met at a party because they were the only two not drinking. They have been going together since last spring and participate in a lot of activities together. They haven't had sex but feel a lot of pressure to do so from their friends.



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## ***Dating Relationships—The History***

They knew each other in biology class, but the relationship got more serious when she asked him to a dance. He wants to have sex and she has strong values against it—this issue is a big area of conflict in the relationship.



## ***Dating Relationships—The History***

They met when their parents made them attend an employees' annual picnic. Neither one wanted to go, but when they met each other, they decided the picnic was just great! They have been going together since July two years ago. They have had sex quite often—once they thought she was pregnant, but luckily she wasn't.

## ***Dating Relationships—The History***

Because they live in neighboring apartments, they wait for the bus at the same place. Their friendly conversations at the bus stop eventually led to a more serious relationship. They have had sex a few times.



## ***Dating Relationships—The History***

They met at a youth center when both were on the decorations committee for a dance. They started going together almost immediately; that was six months ago. They have not had sex but have talked about it. She is more interested in sex than he, because his cousin had to get married when she was 16 and then got divorced at 18.

### ***Dating Relationships—The History***

They met when school started last year because their lockers were in the same area. They believe it was love at first sight. They have been going together for over a year and have been having sex for the last six months. Two months ago they had a scare when she thought she was pregnant.

### ***Dating Relationships—The History***

They have been going together since last summer. They met in biology class two years ago. They have not had sex but have been talking about it.



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### ***Dating Relationships—The History***

His sister is her best friend. He started noticing her when she hung around their home. He reluctantly took both of them to a concert a year ago, but surprisingly he had a good time. They have been going together since then. He wants to have sex but she doesn't feel ready.

### ***Dating Relationships—The History***

A mutual friend introduced them. They didn't like each other at first, but eventually discovered a common interest in 1950's television comedy. After much discussion, they have recently become sexually involved.



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