



Activity: **Better to Give**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **None**

Description:

1. Sitting in a circle, ask teens to think about their favorite toy or possession that was a gift to them and share with the group what it is and who gave it to them.
2. Why did they receive it as a gift? (birthday, Christmas, etc.) How did they feel when they received it?
3. Now ask what gifts or presents they have given to others (Christmas, birthday to parents or siblings, etc.). Did they pick the gift out themselves? How did it feel to give something to someone? Share with the group.
4. Why is it important to give things to people we care about? What is it about giving something away that makes us feel good? Are there other things we can give away or do for others that show we care about them? What are they?
5. This can start with a simple greeting card or coupon book made in arts and crafts. Some things to include in the coupon book:
 - a. Take the trash out.
 - b. Feed the dog.
 - c. Walk the dog.
 - d. Make my bed.
 - e. Put away the dirty clothes.
 - f. Set and clear the dinner table.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Active Caring**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **One 3x5 card, envelope, and stamp for each child**

Description:

1. Have each teen write down on the 3x5 card one thing they are going to do this week to show someone that they care about them.
2. Tell them that at the end of the week you are going to mail the card to their house. The card will serve as a reminder to them if they have forgotten to do what they said they would do.
3. The next week, ask them if they showed that person that they cared about them and how. Why is it important to act on our caring and not just think about it? What are other ways we can act on our caring for the people who are important to us?
4. What are some ways we can show caring to people we don't know? Why is this important too?

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Holiday Baskets**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **Baskets, ribbon, cloth napkins, assorted holiday foods and small gifts.**

Description:

1. Contact a local social service agency for people who would like to receive a holiday basket.
2. With your group, plan the purchase of and/or make the contents of what will go in your baskets. Decide who will get the baskets and will help with what to put in them.
3. Decorate the baskets with cloth linings, ribbon, and other decorations, and arrange the items in the baskets.
4. Deliver the baskets a few days before the holiday, preferably as a group.
5. Basket item ideas include jams, coffee, breads, fruit, canned food, small toys, toothpaste, soap, lotion, etc.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance and Diversity Initiative**



Activity: **Inside/Outside**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **None**

Description:

1. Choose one member of the group (a volunteer is best) to begin as the “outsider.” Instruct the other members of the group to form a circle and keep the “outsider” out of the group.
2. Ask the “outsider” to try to break into the group using whatever tricks they wish.
3. End after a few minutes, even if they have not broken through to the inside.
4. Now switch and make the same “outsider” an “insider” and instruct the group to keep them in the circle. End after a few minutes.
5. Ask a few of these questions, or your own:
 - a. How did it feel being the “outsider”?
 - b. How did it feel trying to keep one of your friends out?
 - c. Did you try harder to keep your friend out or in?
 - d. Is it easier to keep someone out or in?
 - e. Do we ever do this in real life? How? Why?
 - f. Have you ever been an “outsider”/“insider”?

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance and Diversity Initiative**



Activity: **TV Respect**

Ages: **12-16**

Value(s): **Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **A TV, VCR, video of TV show**

Description:

1. This activity can be done either as a group at the YMCA or as an assignment for them to do on their own at home.
2. First discuss the meaning of "respect" and "disrespect." Look it up in the dictionary and have each teen tell what it means to them.
3. Pick a favorite TV show and watch it and look for ways that the characters show respect and disrespect (lack of respect). After the show, talk about examples of both that they saw. (If doing this as a group at the Y, make sure the show you watch is age-appropriate.) In the cases of disrespect, how could the characters have acted differently to show respect?

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance and Diversity Initiative**



Activity: **Letters to the President**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Paper, pens, envelopes, stamps**

Description:

1. Have the students write a letter to the president to tell about the bill they are submitting to the Youth and Government program. The letter would highlight the reasons they have written their bill and why it is important to their state.
2. After they have written the letter, ask them if they still feel that the bill they have written (or are going to write) is as important as they originally felt it to be, and have they been able to explain it well enough in the letter.
3. It may help for them to know that every letter receives a reply. All letters are read by a secretary and referred to the president as seen fit.
4. Write to: The President of the United States, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W., Washington, DC 20500.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance, Teen Action Agenda**



Activity: **Great Paper Auction (Pittsburgh YMCA)**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Trash bags, latex gloves, prizes (T-shirts, water bottles, etc.); park or playground area.**

Description:

1. Divide into teams for trash collection.
2. Choose a leader for each team and review safety tips (no broken glass, sharp metal, etc.)
3. Re-assemble after a designated amount of time with trash collected.
4. Trash is then used to auction for prizes (e.g., 20 smashed pop cans for coffee mug prize, etc.)

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Quiet Time**

Ages: **12-18**

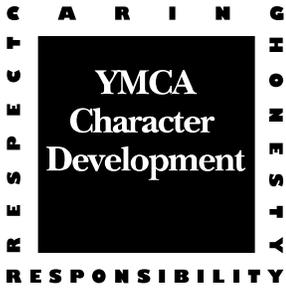
Value(s): **Caring, Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **Board games, cards, sports equipment; gym or multipurpose room**

Description:

1. Pick a period of time (one to two hours) and explain that during that time there will be no spoken communication at all.
2. Provide enough activities for everyone to be involved in something. Doing "nothing" is not an option.
3. Explain that they will have to find other ways than speaking to communicate (writing should also be discouraged) when choosing teams, explaining the rules of the games, etc.
4. After the time is up, discuss with participants how they communicated with one another; was it difficult, frustrating?
5. This can be a good activity during an international theme week because of the many languages in our world, for a first time for a group to be together and break down communication barriers, or for understanding disabilities (e.g., deafness).

Complements: **Diversity Initiative, International Involvement**



Activity: **String Throw**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring, Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **Ball of string**

Description:

1. In a circle, hang on to one end of the string and toss the ball to someone else. You must say one positive thing about that person when you throw the ball.
2. This person then hangs on to the string and throws the ball to someone else, saying one positive thing about them.
3. This continues until everyone has received the string and a positive statement and a spider web has formed. (Everyone should hold the string tightly.)
4. Share how tight the web has become when everyone has shared something positive. Now ask one person to drop the string. Ask another person to drop the string.
5. See how loose the web becomes when only one or two parts are no longer part of a positive group. One by one, drop the string until the entire web falls to the ground.
6. This can be a good activity for a group who is having trouble getting along.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Rent-a-Kid**

Ages: **13-18**

Value(s): **Honesty, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **None**

Description:

1. Publicize with local businesses that your Y will serve as a “clearing house” for simple summer jobs for teens and encourage them to inform you of any openings (e.g., distributing flyers door-to-door, reading to the blind, entertaining children at company picnics or other special events, weeding gardens, etc.)
2. Inform teen participants in your programs of the various opportunities and contact names.
3. Conduct a simple workshop with teens on the importance of following through with a project, interviewing for a job, etc.

Complements: **Teen Action Agenda**



Activity: **Musical Chairs**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Large room and almost as many chairs as people, 3x5 cards**

Description:

1. Prepare the room by placing chairs in a large circle, leaving room for people to move around outside the circle and placing one 3x5 card on each chair.
2. Music is played, and people walk around the room until the music stops. When the music stops, everyone goes to the closest chair. It is okay for more than one person to go to the same chair. No one is "eliminated" from this game.
3. Each person takes the card off the chair, reads the directions, and follows those directions until the music begins again. (Each card has different directions, so many different activities are going on at the same time.)
4. The music is played again, people move, and stop at a new chair when the music stops.
5. Topic examples for 3x5 cards:
 - a. As you move, think about who your idol is.
 - b. Do 10 pushups or situps.
 - c. As you move, talk with another person about how you feel today.
 - d. Do 25 jumping jacks.
 - e. As you move, observe something unique about five different people.
 - f. As you move, whistle a happy tune.
 - g. Hop on one foot.



Activity: **Signing the Alphabet**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring, Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **Poster or pictures of the sign language alphabet**

Description:

1. Teach participants the sign language alphabet and how to sign their name and other words.
2. Sign language posters and pictures can be found at your local library.
3. After learning the alphabet, teach them signs to frequently used words.
4. Maybe the class can make a trip to a local school for the deaf and communicate with them through sign language.

Complements: **Diversity Initiative**



Activity: **Obstacle Course**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring, Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **Wheelchairs, crutches, walkers, blindfolds, canes, multipurpose room or gym**

Description:

1. Borrow the above equipment from a local hospital, pharmacist, or doctor for a day.
2. Explain to participants that this activity will help them appreciate their gifts of good health. You could even invite some people with physical disabilities to help with this activity.
3. Have half of the teens set up an obstacle course (supposedly for the other half) in the room with cones, chairs, etc. Then bring in one or two of the items you gathered. Now have this same group try and maneuver the course with the different equipment. Now have the other half set up a course (thinking that it will be for the same disabilities). Bring in the other items you gathered and have them maneuver the course.
4. Afterwards, discuss what it felt like in each instance (not to be able to walk or have to walk with assistance, or not to be able to see). What other senses or muscles did they rely on or use? How would it be if you had to use this equipment every day as part of your life? Was the second group more sensitive to all possible barriers, or were they just interested in the ones the first group worked with? What could they do in other real settings to be more considerate of those with disabilities?

Complements: **Diversity Initiative**



Activity: **Running a Business**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Honesty, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Depends on project chosen**

Description:

1. If your group has something they want to do but doesn't have enough money, this is a great way to combine a fundraiser with a learning experience.
2. Decide how much money is needed, discuss and agree on a way to raise it, plan a budget (money that will need to be spent before money can be made on things like supplies, marketing, overhead, etc.), and assign teens to specific jobs.
3. Ideas for this project can range from the short-range and simple (bake sale) to the longer and more complex (rummage sale, gardening and selling produce).
4. Once the project is completed, review the experience with participants as to what they learned.
5. Depending on age, adult supervision will be necessary to help with planning, budgeting, etc.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance, Teen Action Agenda**



Activity: **Penpals**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring, Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **Paper, envelopes, stamps, addresses of penpals in another country**

Description:

1. If your YMCA has a partnership or relationship with a YMCA in another country you can use that connection for this activity. If not, this is a great opportunity to start one.
2. Spend some time with participants introducing them to the country and area they will be writing to and a little about the people they will be writing to (age, etc.).
3. Assign each teen a name to write to and let them write their first letter introducing and telling about themselves and asking questions of their penpals.
4. Remember that you may want to address the envelopes due to legibility or send them all together to the YMCA to save on postage.
5. Hopefully, you will receive responses within two to three weeks.
6. This activity is best done when you have a long period of time to write back and forth (i.e., a school year).

Complements: **International Involvement**



Activity: **Key Words**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Sheet with key words on it, pencils**

Description:

1. Give each participant a sheet with the key words on it and a pencil.
2. Instruct them to choose the ones (by circling) they feel are important to their definition of "Christian principles" or values and cross out the others.
3. Then instruct them to note what sort of difference that principle or value has made in their life lately.
4. Finally, have them rank order their lists in terms of importance to them.
5. After completing this exercise, the leader can go through the list with the participants and categorize each word under one of the four character development values. (See list below.)

Key Words

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| Reconciliation | Empathy |
| Forgiveness | Brotherhood |
| Commitment | Uniqueness |
| Patience | Discipline |
| Caring | Honesty |
| Love | Strength |
| Open | Cleanliness |
| Creative | Prayer |
| Helpful | Humility |
| Faith | Respect |
| Kind | Sincere |
| Loyalty | Sharing |
| Peaceful | Fairness |
| Integrity | Acceptance |
| Responsibility | Freedom |
| Salvation | Growth |
| Grace | Mission |

(Taken from Examining Our Faith: A Book of Questions for YMCA Leadership)



Activity: **Character Development Month Tie-Dying (Twinbrook Family YMCA, Schaumburg, IL)**

Ages: **12-16**

Value(s): **Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Four tie-dye colors (red, green, yellow, blue), four buckets, rubber bands, water, vinegar, children provide T-shirts (best done outside)**

Description:

1. During the month, teens are given opportunities to earn the colors they tie-dye their shirt with by demonstrating values.
2. Chart each person's color progress during the month; the goal is to have earned all four colors to tie-dye with.
3. At the end of the month, allow teens to tie-dye their shirts with the colors they have earned.



Activity: **Essay Contest**

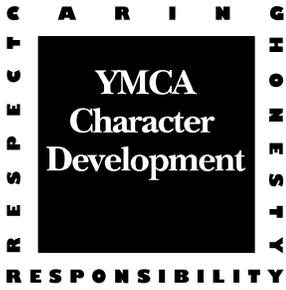
Ages: **13-17**

Value(s): **Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **None**

Description:

1. Promote to your teen camp or teen leader's club an essay contest involving character development.
2. Teens submit a 1,000- to 2,000-word essay on a character development topic (how they exemplify the four values in their life, the person they most respect and why, etc.).
3. Ask several people (staff, members, board members) to be the judges and award first, second and third place.
4. Prizes can be awarded; everything from a T-shirt to a scholarship. Winners can be recognized in the local paper, board meetings, Y newsletter and bulletin boards, etc.



Activity: **Poster Contest**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Posterboard, markers, crayons**

Description:

1. During an activity time, explain that you want each person to design and draw a poster involving the four values.
2. Encourage creativity and provide a color chart for what color represents what value.
3. Hang all posters around the Y and allow members and staff to vote on the top three.
4. Award prizes to the winners.



Activity: **Banner of Values (Pittsburgh YMCA)**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Vinyl or cloth (nylon), sewing tools, glue, fabric paint, felt, etc.**

Description:

1. Work with the group to design a banner depicting the four values for their program area. This could also be a contest to accept different designs from various small groups.
2. After choosing a design, sketch the layout and use various materials to sew the banner together or paint, etc.
3. The banner can be divided into four sections, each depicting a value or separate banners can be made to depict each value.
4. The banner should be displayed in the lobby or exterior of the YMCA for exposure.



Activity: **In Office**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Pencils and paper for each participant**

Description:

1. Give each participant a pencil and paper and explain that each person is a candidate for governor or president (as you choose).
2. Ask them to list their qualifications for office, based on their perceptions so that their campaign managers can begin to prepare their campaigns.
3. After a few minutes, ask them to apply the four character development values to each of their perceived qualifications.
4. Ask some of the following questions or your own:
 - a. Were your qualifications based on values?
 - b. Do you consider that to be important?
 - c. In an important campaign, how much emphasis should be placed on values vs. experience?
 - d. Does the American public agree with you on this issue?
 - e. What do you think it takes to get elected?
 - f. When you begin to vote (if they haven't already) what will you look for in a candidate?



Activity: **Codes of Conduct or Rules to Live By**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Newsprint, markers, sticky notes**

Description:

1. Have rules available for participants to refer to.
2. Use a piece of newsprint for each of the four values, write the value at the top of the paper, and post on the walls.
3. If the group is large (eight or more), divide into smaller groups (of four or five), and have each group go over the rules as presented.
4. Have them put a short version of each rule on an individual sticky note.
5. Have the group decided under which value that rule should go, and put their sticky note on the newsprint wall.
6. After all groups have posted all rules, discuss why they put rules where they did. Why does that rule relate to that value?
7. Now divide the rules among the groups and ask each group to rewrite their rule(s) in a more positive way: "Don't run in the hall" may become "Running can cause injury to you or someone else, please care for others and walk slowly in the halls."
8. Have each group report, discuss, and rewrite, if necessary, until a consensus is reached about the "new" rules or code of conduct.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **M & M Madness**

Ages: **12-18**

Value(s): **Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Bag(s) of M & Ms**

Description:

1. Have the group sit comfortably in a circle.
2. Pour a handful of M & Ms from the bag and distribute several to each person.
3. Do not eat yet!
4. Now if anyone has orange or brown ones, they may eat them.
5. What is left?
6. Explain the values and corresponding colors.
7. Ask who has honesty? How much? If everyone does not have a blue one, can they share so that everyone has some?
8. Do this exercise with the other three values/colors.
9. Wouldn't it be nice if it was that easy to assure that everyone has all of the four values?
10. Discuss how we can help everyone to have and share the four values.