



Activity: **Get Acquainted Activity**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room, camp or participant's home**

Description:

1. Group two or three families together to form a team. Say to the group "Compliments or taking the time to recognize and appreciate someone's accomplishments are just one way of showing someone that we care." Tell each team that there are more than 50 ways to say, "good job, I noticed and I care". Their task in the next five minutes is to brainstorm and record as many of these ways as possible. If they need prompting, try: "excellent," "good job," "you're terrific," "fantastic," "thank you." "good for you," "you're special," "I love you," "I am proud of you," "congratulations," etc.
2. Allow them to complete the task. Make sure that the responses reflect not only what they can say themselves, but what they would like to hear from others. At the end of the five minute period, have each group count up its total responses. The group with the most answers gets to read them quickly to the rest of the groups.
3. Close by saying how important it is that we remember to appreciate and reinforce the people we care about.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Family Quilt**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room, fabric squares, fabric crayons or paints**

Description:

1. Cut out squares of fabric 15"x 15". Pass one to each family. Have fabric crayons or paints available for everyone to use.
2. Ask families to design a quilt square of something their family does together; something that shows they care about one another. Make sure the families sign their squares.
3. Have volunteers quilt them together when all of the squares are complete.
4. Hang the family quilt on a wall in the YMCA under the heading "YMCA Families: The Caring Quilt"

Complements: **Member Involvement**



Activity: **Bird Feeders**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **Family camp, multipurpose room (Family Time event), or participant's home (Y Adventure Guides meeting), pine cones, birdseed, containers**

Description:

1. Have families make bird feeders for their back yards. Select from various designs:
 - a. Cover pine cones with a flour paste. Press on birdseed. Tie a string around the pine cone and hang it from a tree branch.
 - b. Drive four large spikes through a board at equal intervals. Nail this board to the top of a spike to form a T. Stick a corn on the cob on each spike. Post the bird feeder in the ground.
 - c. Decorate a plastic milk jug (with a large portion cut out) with green and brown non toxic paint. Fill the jug with birdseed and hang it from a tree branch.
 - d. Drill several small holes in a log. Fill the holes with melted suet mixed with grains. Attach a screw with an eye to the end of the log and thread a wire through it to hang the log.
2. Have families take home their bird feeders to hang in their trees and show they care about birds that might have a hard time finding food in the winter.



Activity: **Family Coupon Books**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **Family camp, multipurpose room (Family Time event), or participant's home (Y Adventure Guides meeting), paper, pen, pencil, stapler, markers**

Description:

1. There are many inexpensive things that we can do to show people in the family that we care. Instruct children and parents to make a book of coupons to be presented to a member of their family or someone special.
3. The coupons can be for different things that can be done around the house; chores and other helpful things, or something that would cheer somebody up. Examples: hugs, smiles, staying up later on weekends, an offer to wash the car, permission to sleep in on Saturday morning, an agreement to not complain when we go to religious services, promising to do homework cheerfully, a special video, and a trip to the ice cream parlor.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Family Ambassadors**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **YMCA**

Description:

1. Set up a Family Ambassador program. Ask families to sign up in advance to help orient new families to the Y.
2. Pair new family memberships with current YMCA families.
3. Family Ambassadors should arrange to give the new family a tour through the facility, invite them to participate in a family program, and try to answer the questions they have.
4. The objective is to make new families feel comfortable, to feel like they belong, and to get over the hurdle of: "We don't know anyone at the Y; therefore we don't participate in Y family programs."

Complements: **Member Involvement**



Activity: **Family Valentines Day Dance**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **Gym or multipurpose room, decorations, refreshments, stereo system, music**

Description:

1. Invite families to a family Valentine's Day dance. Encourage them to dress up for the occasion.
2. Pairs Decorate the Y with red, white and pink streamers, hearts, and flowers.
3. Hire a disc jockey to provide the music. Make sure there is a variety of music suitable for all family members.
4. Take over the microphone at some point during the evening to discuss Valentine's Day as a day to show members of our families just how much we care.
5. Serve red punch and heart shaped cookies.

Complements: **Diversity Initiative**



Activity: **Family Pen Pals (paper or Internet)**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Caring (developing friendships)**

Facility and Equipment: **Participant's home**

Description:

1. The YMCA is an international organization. Many of the YMCAs in the United States have sister YMCAs. If this is the case, work within the YMCA system to design a family pen pal system. One American family communicates with a family abroad.
2. If language is a barrier, have the family spend time together writing letters and trying to translate them into the appropriate language. Sending and drawing pictures can help to overcome some of the language barriers.
3. The content of the letters should address what the family life is like in the country where the families reside. Include what the family does, who is responsible for what, extended family members, etc.
4. Each member of the family should be involved in the letter writing.
5. This activity can be introduced in a child care program, Y Adventure Guides program, or a Family Time program.
6. If it is tough to link up families within the YMCA, use the internet to put out a request for families overseas who might be interested in a pen pal relationship with an American Family.

Complements: **International Involvement**



Activity: **Family Concert**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **Campfire (family camp), multipurpose room (Family Time event), participant's home (Y Adventure Guides tribal meeting), paper, pencils**

Description:

1. Give families 10 minutes to create a medley of songs with the words "love", "caring", "friends", or other words that depict the value caring. Make sure families have paper and pencils so they can jot down the lines they will use from each song. For example:
 - "I love you, you love me. We're a happy family"
 - "Love, look what they've done to us, never thought I'd fall again so easily"
 - "I can't help loving that man of mine"
 - "The more we get together, together, together. The more we get together the happier we'll be"
 - "Whenever I call you friend..."
 - "That's what friends are for"
2. Have all of the families perform their medleys. Assign a staff person to emcee the event, introduce the families, and stimulate applause.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Holiday Baskets and Pot Luck Dinner**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room**

Description:

1. Invite families to assemble baskets at a holiday pot luck dinner. Let them know in advance that the gifts will be given to families in a domestic abuse shelter or homeless shelter. Ask each family to bring a certain dish (appetizer, main course, dessert, drinks, etc.) and something suitable for a holiday gift basket (food, treats, candles, toiletries or other small gifts)
2. Begin the evening by assembling the baskets. When the project is complete, enjoy the pot luck dinner.
3. Sing holiday carols or enjoy a holiday swim.



Activity: **Storytelling and Discussion**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **Campfire (family camp), multipurpose room, or participant's home (Y Adventure Guides meeting)**

Description:

1. Gather families together in a circle. Tell the story "Little Flying Cloud"
2. Ask families to gather together with another family or two and discuss the following questions:
 - Why didn't the little braves want to play with Little Cloud?
 - How do you think Little Cloud felt?
 - Have you ever been left out from a group you wanted to play with?
 - How did it feel?
 - What happened to make the little braves more interested in playing with Little Cloud?
3. Tell them that everyone has strengths; something that they do well that makes up for some of their shortcomings. Little Cloud couldn't run very fast. That was one of his shortcomings. But he knew how to tame the animals. That was one of his strengths, something he could teach the others. Do you have any shortcomings? What are your strengths? Do you think it's a good idea to focus on people's shortcomings and exclude them?

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Stretching the Truth**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Honesty**

Facility and Equipment: **Campfire (family camp), multipurpose room, or participant's home (Y Adventure Guides meeting)**

Description:

1. Gather families together for a story telling session.
2. Tell the following story:

One night Little Otter rushed into the tepee and said excitedly. "Mother, I just saw a thousand deer." Mother asked, "Are you sure? Did you count them?" "Well it was dark, but I'm sure there were at least 100", Little Otter said. "Are you sure, my son?" asked his mother. "Well I know there were at least 10", he said. Mother asked, "Did you count the deer, how do you know?" Little Otter became impatient and said. "Well I know there were 10 anyway."

The chief of the tribe heard the conversation and said "Little Otter, I want to tell you a story. When I was young, I was in the habit of stretching the truth because I did not know the importance of being totally honest and accurate. In my first tribe I was responsible for keeping track of the food and I would store it all in the ground and cover it. One day, Big Chief came to me and asked me if there was plenty of food for a big ceremony that was coming up. I did not want to take the time to count the number of deer carcasses or any of the other food supplies. Instead without checking the food, I reported to the Chief that we had plenty.

When the day of the big feast came, I was embarrassed because there was not enough food for everyone. Many of the mothers, little braves, babies and even warriors would not have enough to eat. Big Chief was furious, as were many of the braves. Had it not been for the quick thinking of Watosa, everyone would have been disappointed. Watosa got on his pinto horse and galloped away in a cloud of dust. Soon he returned with his arms loaded with food from a nearby tribe, promising to pay it all back. To teach me a lesson, Big Chief made me hunt for many days for deer and other food to pay back the other tribe. From then on, I made up my mind to be accurate and not to exaggerate.

3. Discuss the story. Ask "When did Little Chief exaggerate? Why did he exaggerate or stretch the truth? What were the consequences? People were counting on him. How did he let them down? Who came to the rescue? Did it work out okay in the end? What did the Big Chief make Little Chief do to teach him a lesson?"
4. Ask "Have there ever been times when you were tempted to stretch the truth or times when you did stretch the truth? Tell us about them. Did anyone find out? How did you feel? What were the consequences? What did you learn from your actions?"



Activity: **Gold Rush**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Honesty**

Facility and Equipment: **YMCA sports field, playground, or gym (family camp or any family night or special event), gold painted rocks, a jail sign, coupons for prizes**

Description:

1. Set up a scenario of the Old West. Staff should wear Western attire and a badge. (they can serve as sheriff's deputies. The CEO is the sheriff of course)
2. Spread out the gold nuggets (painted rocks)
3. Set up a bank to exchange the gold for prizes and a jail to house those caught breaking the law
4. Tell the family teams that they can turn in a total of five nuggets collectively, or three nuggets individually for prizes.
5. If a family brings in more than five, or an individual brings in more than three, they get a bonus prize. But if a sheriff deputy catches them, they go to jail. In jail, they are assigned a task to do a good thing for someone else. Families should huddle together to plan or strategize.
6. Play the game. Prizes can be coupons for handshakes, hugs, smiles, having someone do a good deed for you, treats etc.
7. Discuss the consequences of being dishonest. You might outsmart the deputy sheriff and win the game, but victory isn't nearly as sweet when you didn't come upon it honestly.



Activity: **Truth or Dare**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Honesty**

Facility and Equipment: **Gym, campfire (family camp), multipurpose room (Family Time event), participant's home (Y Adventure Guides meeting)**

Description:

1. Divide families into clusters of four to six families.
2. Introduce the game truth or dare. Taking turns, each family has a chance to challenge an opposing family to truth or dare. Prior to asking the question, the family must decide if they will tell the truth or take the dare. (the dare should be something fun and wacky like 18 jumping jacks, parade through the Y quacking etc.). The questions should be tough and maybe a little embarrassing, like "share with us the most embarrassing moment your family has experienced."
3. To help balance the game, give everyone a set number of blue truth cards and orange dare cards. They will have to decide when, how, and with what family (some families may ask tougher questions) they will use their truth or dare cards.
4. When the game is over, discuss how sometimes it is difficult to tell the truth, but honesty really is the best policy.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Board Games**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Honesty**

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room, participant's home, or youth lobby, board games**

Description:

1. Set up board games for families to play. Read the rules and agree as a family to play the game by the rules, no cheating.
2. During or after the game, take some time to discuss feelings, decision making processes, and consequences that result from the following:
 - a. Cheating on tests: You studied hard, but studied the wrong material vs. you blew off the test and didn't study at all.
 - b. Cheating on taxes: You already feel like you've paid more than your fair share, and are frustrated with the tax system vs. you decide to enlarge your deductions or fail to claim all of your income.
 - c. Calling a ball out of bounds when you know it was really in bounds.
 - d. Telling little white lies to spare someone's feelings vs. exaggerating or using flattery to make you look better and get what you want
 - e. Having to confess the truth even though you know you might get in trouble or embarrass yourself.
 - f. Lying to protect a friend of yours, so he or she doesn't get into trouble.
 - g. The store clerk gives you too much change. You're tempted to keep it, after all it is his or her mistake, vs. your conscience would bother you too much if you didn't say something.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Safety Demonstrations**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Honesty (following the rules)**

Facility and Equipment: **Pool (family swim)**

Description:

1. Say "Rules related to safety are important. We need all of our families to be honest, trustworthy, and responsible and to abide by the rules. It is the lifeguard's responsibility to enforce the rules, but we rely on everyone to do what's right and follow the rules even if the lifeguard can't see or doesn't say anything." Demonstrate or share safety tips or rules during family pool time: tips that benefit both parents and children.
2. Use the following list to develop your own: pool rules, rescue skills (reaching and throwing), 911 and what to tell the operator, boating safety skills, selection and proper use of PFDs, beach safety, sun safety, backyard pool safety, and knowing where to swim.

Complements: **Activate America**



Activity: **Ground Rules**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **Ground Rules Poster**

Description:

1. Gather families together. Display the Ground Rules poster. Discuss why these rules are important. They show that we respect one another. Why is that important? How do we feel when others treat us with respect?

Ground Rules:

- a. Listen to each other
- b. Speak for yourself
- c. Avoid put downs
- d. Say what you mean
- e. Be responsible for yourself
- f. Use your words to negotiate and solve problems

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Cultural Diversity Fair**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **Gym, YMCA grounds, or parking lot**

Description:

1. Celebrate diversity. Help families learn to respect and accept cultural differences and appreciate their own uniqueness.
2. Invite families to a cultural diversity fair. Set up booths where families can enjoy diverse art materials, resource and story books, and a cultural snack. Set up a center stage and invite artists, musicians and other guest presenters. Whenever possible, make the performances interactive; teach families new songs, dances and talents.

Complements: **Diversity Initiative**



Activity: **Talking Up and Talking Down**

Ages: **All**

Values(s): **Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **Family night, family camp or Y-Guides Programs meeting, sturdy chair for each to stand on**

Description:

1. Show how physical positions affect communication by giving parents a child's-eye view and children an adult's-eye view of the world.
2. Decide who will be A and B. A should stand on the chair and B should sit on the floor directly in front of A. Try to maintain eye contact. Talk about how this feels. (Allow two minutes)
3. Change places, with B standing on the chair and A sitting down. Talk with each other about how this feels. (Allow two minutes)
4. B should reach down and take A's hand and hold it for a few seconds, then reach down and give A a pat on the head. Talk about how this feels. (Allow time.)
5. Change positions and try the same things: A and B should make hand contact. A should give B's arm a little yank, then reach down and give B a pat on the head.
6. Now sit at the same level, but back-to-back, and carry on a conversation. How does this position feel?
7. Now stand up, but stand about 10 feet apart and talk. Any change in the conversation?
8. Tell them to do what they need to get comfortable and in a good position for talking. Tell them to talk about how they felt during the experience. Tell them to talk about how their bodies feel in the position they are in now. What have they learned about the effect of body position on communication? (Allow two minutes).

Complements: **Diversity Initiative**



Activity: **Let's Switch Roles**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **A take-home activity from a YMCA family night.**

Description:

1. One part of respect is being able to see things from another's point of view and recognizing and appreciating who they are and what they do. With this in mind, suggest the following take-home activity for families.
2. Suggest that families have each member of the family sit in a different place at the dinner table and behave like the family member who usually sits there. Use the following prompts: How do they talk? What facial expressions do they use? What words do they use? What food would they eat or wouldn't eat? Variation: Extend the role reversal beyond the table. Discuss how it feels to take on other roles.



Activity: **Healthy Food Collage**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room, participant's home, or camp, popcorn, various types of pasta and beans, rice, cereal (healthy selection), seeds, glue, heavy paper for each family.**

Description:

1. Give each family a sheet of heavy paper and a glue bottle.
2. Discuss food and the role it plays in keeping us healthy. Say, "Eating the right foods, exercising, and making smart life choices helps to keep us healthy. It shows that we respect our bodies and understand how to keep them in tiptop shape. The foods selected for the collage are all members of the grains and cereals food group. We need 6 to 11 servings of bread, grains, and cereals each day. Look at the variety we have to choose from."
3. Create a healthy food collage by gluing the grains onto the paper.

Complements: **Activate America**



Activity: **Group Discussion**

Ages: **12 and up**

Value(s): **Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room, family camp, or participant's home, paper, pencils**

Description:

1. Introduce the word "respect." Ask the group to think about the value of respect, who we respect, and ways in which respect is earned.
2. Through a guided discussion, define the word "respect." This is especially important if there are young children in the group.
3. Instruct families to list five people they respect. Next to each name, tell them to explain why they respect that person.
4. Share the list with others and discuss.
5. On another sheet of paper, ask them to list five reasons why they want to be respected and things they think they've done to earn respect.
6. Share the list with others when it is completed.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Family Advocacy**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **YMCA, large room, table, pens, pencils, letter writing supplies**

Description:

1. Set up a table to write letters concerning family advocacy. As legislative issues arise that affect families, ask all members of the family to write brief letters to their state or federal representatives. Provide a sample letter to get families started, but encourage them to share their own stories, thoughts, and circumstances. Advocacy is a way of empowering families, helping them to take charge and assume some responsibility for changing policies.

Complements: **Member Involvement, Teen Action Agenda**



Activity: **Triathlons**

Ages: **All**

Facility and Equipment: **Gym, large room or playing field**

Description:

1. Design a family triathlon where each member of the family is responsible for an event or leg in the triathlon (swimming, bicycling, and running). Modify the expectations (length and time) to make it appropriate for the varying age groups and to set everyone up to succeed.
2. Discuss how everyone has a role and that the family depends on each member to pull his or her share.
3. Keep the event non-competitive with the major objectives being teamwork, responsibility, exercise, and fun.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance, Activate America**



Activity: **Adopt A Highway**

Value(s): **Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Gloves, garbage bags, rakes, pointed sticks, safety vests**

Description:

1. Contact the Road Commission for information on adopting a highway near the YMCA.
2. Encourage Y families to sign up and help the initial clean-up.
3. Schedule periodic outings to make sure the highway stays clean and free of litter.

Complements: **Member Involvement**



Activity: **Sponsor a Zoo Animal**

Ages: **All**

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room.**

Description:

1. During a family night, invite the zookeepers to come with a few small animals to do a presentation. When they complete their presentation, have them ask families to become sponsors.
2. Sponsorship involves selecting a zoo animal that the family would like to adopt. The family then is responsible for donating money for food and care. They should visit the animal on a regular basis.
3. Family member should discuss their role in providing for this animal and how it feels to assume responsibility for it.



Activity: **Trust Walk**

Ages: **All**

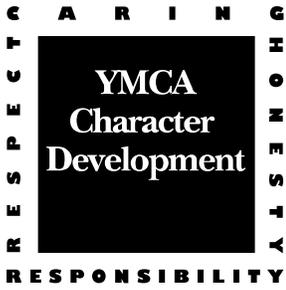
Value(s): **Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Family camp or YMCA grounds with a trust walk course laid out.**

Description:

1. Design a trust walk course: a walking path where the blindfolded family member must walk and maneuver through different obstacles...up, down, around, through, over, etc.
2. Instruct the family to pair up or allow all family members to walk one of them through the trust walk. Tell them that they are responsible for making sure that the blindfolded person gets through the walk unharmed. To make this more challenging, tell them that no one can talk to the blind-folded person. In leading, they must use touch alone. The blindfolded person is counting on them; they are placing all of their trust in those who can see. Therefore, everyone must be responsible and prove their ability to get them through unharmed.
3. Debrief. How did it feel to be blindfolded and have to trust the other family members to get you through? Do you think if there were not members of your own family it would have been easier or more difficult? How did it feel to take on this awesome responsibility?

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



Activity: **Family C.P.R.**

Ages: **12 and up**

Value(s): **Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room**

Description:

1. Schedule a family C.P.R. class. The one stipulation is that a parent must take this course with the child.
2. Talk about how being trained to perform C.P.R. is a responsible thing to do. It makes us feel in control and confident in dealing with emergency situations.



Activity: **Money Mangers**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Family night take-home activity**

Description:

1. To help children understand money, explain the family budget to them. Talk about necessities, savings, and frivolous spending. Encourage children to develop their own budgets from their allowances.
2. Monitor budgets. Discuss how sometimes we're tempted to overspend or to borrow money to get what we want now. That is only a responsible thing to do if we have thought it through and we know that we can pay the money back. It is more responsible to wait until we have saved enough money before we buy anything (except cars and houses).



Activity: **Tug of War**

Ages: **6 and up**

Value(s): **Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Gym or outdoor area, rope**

Description:

1. Begin by discussing the importance of team work. On a team, everyone has some responsibility to the rest of the group. Team members need to try their hardest and come through so they don't disappoint the other team members.
2. Pair two or three families together. Have them tug to win. Winners play winners, losers get a chance to play other losing teams.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



CARING



HONESTY



RESPECT



RESPONSIBILITY

Activity: **Getting It All Together**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Family night, family camp, or participant’s home, newsprint, markers, paper, pencils**

Description:

1. This activity is designed to share information in the group about home responsibilities, to discuss the responsibilities without becoming emotional, and to consider change of flexibility in home responsibilities.
2. Begin with a group discussion of the home responsibilities of both parents and children. List these on newsprint so they are easier to recall in the next steps.
3. Have the group members pair off into parent-child teams. Using the large groups list, ask each team to list their individual home responsibilities in two columns, much like the large group list.
4. Next to each item on the list, note what happens when that responsibility is not carried out. For example: “Mow lawn – grass goes to seed, neighbors complain, insects breed.”
5. Put an “X” by the least favorite responsibilities or the ones that are often forgotten.
6. Discuss the items with an “X.”
7. Are they necessary? How could they be changed? Who else could do them? Could the responsibility for them be rotated within the family?
8. Come to some agreement and plan for action for the “X-ed” items.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **New Year's Eve at the Y**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **YMCA**

Description:

1. Plan a New Year's Eve celebration at the Y.
2. Activities might include swim, gym, games, arts and crafts, dance, etc.
3. One activity should include reflecting back on the previous year and making plans for the New Year. Discuss how people make resolutions. Resolutions are often associated with taking on new responsibilities or being more accountable to old ones. What a family discusses resolutions that each person might want to make, the family gets stronger.



Activity: **Character Development Key Chains**

Ages: **All**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room or participant's home, red, blue, green, and yellow beads, brown pipe cleansers, 1/2" wooden beads with a hold in the middle, hole puncher, key ring, laminated card with the YMCA name and the four values listed in color: red for caring, blue for honesty, etc. Feel free to add a thought for the day related to character.**

Description:

1. Gather families around the table to make key chains. Discuss how when you reach a certain age and are responsible for coming home alone, you get a key to the house. Say, "Today we're going to make character key chains to put those house keys on. Everyone in the family gets to make their own."
2. Give each person pipe cleaners, beads, a key ring, the laminated card, and a wooden bead. Instruct them to draw a face on the wooden bead. (That will be the head.) Using pipe cleaners, create a stick figure. Thread beads up the middle for the torso, down both legs, and across both arms. Twist the ends of the pipe cleaner to secure the beads. Thread beads up the middle for the torso, down both legs, and across both arms. Twist the ends of the pipe cleaner to secure the beads. Thread beads up the middle for the torso, down both legs, and across both arms. Twist the ends of the pipe cleaner to secure the beads. Thread the pipe cleaner that extends up through the torso through the wood bead, add another bead and twist the remaining pipe cleaner around a key ring. Punch a hole through the laminated card with a hole puncher. Add the card and keys to the key ring.



Activity: **Family Night—Character Charades**

Ages: **All**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room**

Description:

1. Play charades with families.
2. Create several charades for families to act out. Give them two to four minutes to prepare their charade. Charade ideas include: family members making their beds, family members praying before a meal, counting out change and realizing it's too much and returning it to the cashier, opening the door for an older person, etc.
3. One at a time, have families present the charade and allow observers to guess what they are doing.



Activity: **Family Shield**

Ages: **All**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room, family camp, or participant's home, poster boards, markers**

Description:

1. At a family event (night, day or picnic), have each family design a family shield.
2. Give each family a piece of poster board and four markers.
3. Draw a shield and divide it into four quadrants.
4. Label them "Caring," "Honesty," "Respect," and "Responsibility."
5. List ways your family can demonstrate these in the future. (Draw pictures of these, when possible.)
6. Choose one idea under each heading and make a family promise to make it happen on a regular basis.
7. Have each family report back to the group.



Activity: **Circle Chat**

Ages: **All**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Gym or large room**

Description:

1. Use this activity in a “get acquainted” session at a family night or family camp. Have participants form two concentric circles. Announce an appropriate subject for the ages represented and have each participant engage in a discussion with his or her nearest neighbor on the chosen topic. When time is up, give a signal and have each participant move to the left a prescribed number of spaces to begin a conversation with a new partner.

Discussion topics might be:

- a. something nice I did for someone in my family
- b. a time I remember being honest when it was a little tough
- c. one responsibility I have that I wish I didn't
- d. somebody that I respect

Complements: **Member Involvement**



Activity: **Family Rap Songs**

Ages: **All**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room, campfire, or participant's home.**

Description:

1. Play a few verses from two or three clean and appropriate rap songs to help get families into the spirit and familiar with rap.
2. Ask families either to work alone or with another family, and write a values-based rap song.
3. Have them perform their values rap tunes.



Activity: **Character Corner or Character Column (newsletter)**

Ages: **Parents**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Newsletter**

Description:

1. Add information on how parents can help develop character or pass values down to their children in YMCA newsletters. Begin with newsletters already in print: Smoke Signals (Y-Adventure Guides Programs Newsletter), child care newsletters, program brochures, and YMCA newsletters. Place your tips in a column called "Character Corner." Make this a regular feature so readers know where to go and what to expect.
2. To gather information for the newsletter, try the Character Development Starter Kit, Chapter Nine of Principles of YMCA Family Programs, Character Counts literature, clippings from magazines and newspapers related to this topic, excerpts from books on how to teach values to children, etc.
3. You may even choose to have a guest writer do the column. Use a credible person from an area church or other agency.



Activity: **Family Volunteer Program**

Ages: **All**

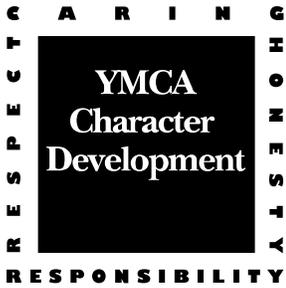
Value(s): **Caring, Respect, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Meeting room**

Description:

1. Design a family volunteer program for your YMCA. Promote the program as an opportunity for families to spend quality time together, to pass on values, and to help others who are less fortunate.
2. Call families together at the YMCA and explain the objectives of the program. Provide the families with options and help them make the contacts needed to fulfill their volunteer commitment. Bring the families back to the YMCA to debrief.
3. Options include: literacy tutoring, working in a soup kitchen, cleaning up the neighborhood, visiting shut-ins, buying a toy for Toys for Tots, teaching a family to swim, Trick of Treating (canned foods) for a food bank, providing transitional housing to a family in need, visiting a nursing home, and participating in a Habitat for Humanity project.

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



Activity: **Character Development Coach**

Ages: **All**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Y-Adventure Guides program meeting or youth sports program**

Description:

1. Assign one parent or family to be the character development coach/mentor. The parent of family is responsible for providing ideas about how to build character. They can read devotions, tell stories that reinforce values, track good deeds, etc.
2. Allow the group to brainstorm possibilities: What else can the character coach do to keep everyone on task and help ensure that the program is values-based?

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Parent Seminar on Character Development, “Values: The Legacy We Pass Down to Our Children”**

Ages: **Parents**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Meeting room**

Description:

1. Use Chapter Nine of *Principles of YMCA Family Programming* to better understand the YMCA role of supporting families in their efforts to pass values down to their children.
2. Design a flyer, slogan, and plan that shows the seminar is relevant and important.
3. Use a number of teaching/training techniques including brainstorming, small groups discussion, role playing, demonstrations, and reading and discussing to process the following:
 - a. Definition of “values.”
 - b. Which values help to make your family function smoothly?
 - c. Which values help make your children contributing members of society?
 - d. How do children learn values?
 - e. Who is responsible for passing on values?
 - f. Parents struggle with so many demands of their time and children’s role models are often inconsistent with the values parents try to teach. How can parents overcome these negative forces and make sure their children are picking up good, sound values?
 - g. Discuss some of your childhood experiences where your parents taught you values, even if you didn’t realize it at the time.
 - h. What can parents do to pass on values to their children?
4. Reading materials:
 - a. “Why Johnny Can’t Tell Right From Wrong,” by William Kilpatrick
 - b. “Teaching Children Values,” by Linda and Richard Eyre
 - c. “The 10 Greatest Gifts I Give My Children,” by Steven Vannoy
 - d. “20 Teachable Virtues,” by Barbara Unell and Jerry Wyckoff

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Every Picture Tells a Story**

Ages: **All**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room or participant's home, magazines**

Description:

1. Families can work together as a family of with one of two other families to sort through magazines. Have each person select a picture that they think depicts one of the four values.
2. Ask each person to make up a story about their picture.
3. Have people share their stories with the group.



Activity: **Family Bible Study**

Ages: **5 and up**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Meeting room**

Description:

1. Once a year, perhaps around Lent, schedule a Family Bible Study series. Invite different religious leaders to lead the group. Make the sessions interactive and hands-on. Tell the religious leaders that your major emphasis is on the four character development values. Ask them to tell bible stories, generate discussion questions, and plan activities to reinforce those values.
2. This series works best if participants help select topics and make recommendation for speakers.



Activity: **Once Upon a Time**

Ages: **All**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Campfire (family camp), multipurpose room (family night), or participant's home (Y-Adventure Programs meeting)**

Description:

1. Use this activity as an ice breaker, energizer, or get acquainted activity. Gather everyone together in a circle.
2. Say, "Today we're going to create a story about character. It begins with, "Once upon a time..." As we go around the circle, everyone adds a few words or a sentence to the story. The first story is about caring. Let's create a story."
3. When the group completes the caring story, begin again with one about honesty, then respect, then responsibility."



Activity: **World Food Rationing**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **Multipurpose room (family night) or dining hall (family camp)**

Description:

1. Invite families to the YMCA for family swim and dinner, or do this activity at family camp. The Y provides dinner. Set up tables for families to eat at. At each table, place a table tent with the name of a country (include wealthy prosperous countries and small third world countries). At each table, place one of the following: plates, silverware, napkins, bread, main dish, dessert, etc.
2. Encourage families to assess how valuable their resource is. For example, the main dish is much more valuable than a dessert or a napkin.
3. Instruct families to negotiate or trade their resources for the resources of the other tables.
4. After 10 minutes, ask everyone to take a seat. Debrief. Do they have everything they need? How did the powerful wealthy countries (main dish) feel? Were plates and silverware valuable? What was the least valuable of all the resources? Was it hard for that table to trade its resources for more valuable resources? Say, "This is much like the world today: Some countries (and some people) are much more dependent than others. How do the words "respect" and "caring" fit into this scenario? We all need to respect one another, appreciate what they have to offer, and be willing to work together to meet everyone's needs and make everyone happy."

