





Activity: **Be Good To a Friend Day**

Ages: **Adult**

Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **None**

**Description:**

1. Designate one day as a free "Be Good to a Friend Day," where members and class participants are encouraged to bring someone to the YMCA for the day. The members show that they care about the health of a friend by having them experience a healthy workout or class with them.

Complements: **Activate America, Member Involvement**





Activity: **YMCA Volunteer for a Day**

Ages: **Adults**

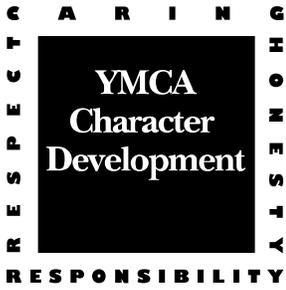
Value(s): **Caring**

Facility and Equipment: **None**

**Description:**

1. Enlist adult exercise class participants to volunteer one day to assist in the YMCA child care program during preschool or after school.
2. Publicize the need for adult volunteers in specific YMCA child care programs.
3. List the different options available for members to sign up for.
4. Hold a short orientation or training session for volunteers.
5. Recognize volunteers with t-shirts or other appropriate gifts, and place their photos in the YMCA lobby.

Complements: **Member Involvement**



Activity: **Towel Amnesty Day**

Ages: **Adult**

Value(s): **Honesty**

Facility and Equipment: **None**

**Description:**

1. Have a day when members can return all towels inadvertently taken from YMCA premises, with no questions asked. On publicity notices, emphasize the need for practicing honesty.



Activity: **It Takes All Kinds**

Ages: **9–15**

Value(s): **Respect**

Facility and Equipment: **None**

**Description:**

1. Discuss different body types and the need for acceptance and respect for all individuals.
2. Discuss that people inherit a number of characteristics from their parents, including what type of body they have.
3. Discuss other influences on their body types (activity, training, and food).
4. Discuss how body types can make it easy or difficult to participate in certain sports. Ask for examples.
5. Discuss the need to respect our own bodies, as well as those of other individuals who may or may not be comfortable with their bodies. Ask for suggestions about how to be more tolerant and accepting of others.

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



Activity: **Peer Pressure**

Ages: **8-15**

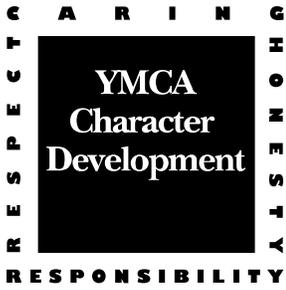
Value(s): **Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Magazines, newspapers**

**Description:**

1. Discuss peer pressure, using examples that youth can relate to.
2. Have them find pictures in magazines that try to use peer pressure to promote something healthy or unhealthy.
3. Discuss how each item uses peer pressure and reinforce the need to be responsible for your own health.

Complements: **Activate America**



Activity: **Volunteer Exercise Leaders**

Ages: **Adult**

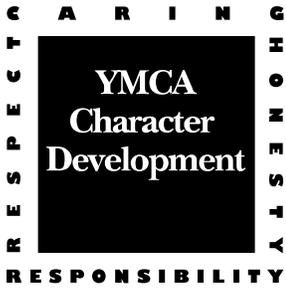
Value(s): **Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **None**

**Description:**

1. Have experienced exercise participants lead one warm-up exercise during each class. The instructor should ask for volunteers in advance, and allow the participants to practice and review the exercise.

Complements: **Activate America, Member Involvement**



Activity: **YMCA Community Clean-up**

Ages: **All**

Value(s): **Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Signs, trash bags, refreshments**

**Description:**

1. Enlist adult members and their families to spend a Saturday or Sunday cleaning up a designated area in the community.
2. Select the site for the clean-up. Start with the grounds around the YMCA, or a school, church, or community center where the YMCA holds programs. Also consider other environmentally-abused community sites (ponds, rivers, and parks) that have been neglected.
3. Set the date for the event.
4. Have instructors recruit volunteers from adult exercise classes and post signs to attract adult members.
5. Coordinate with a refuse company that will agree to pick-up the trash collected.
6. Collaborate with local environmental experts for assistance and guidance.
7. On the day of the event, be at the site early to supply volunteers with bags, instructions, cautions, and refreshments.
8. Recognize volunteers.

Complements: **Member Involvement**



Activity: **Aerobics/Exercise Room House Rules**

Ages: **All**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Signs**

**Description:**

1. Post the following House Rules in the aerobics/exercise room"
  - a. Be Caring: Show courtesy to fellow exercisers. Help people out if they are having difficulty with an exercise or piece of equipment.
  - b. Be Honest: Monitor your workout and stay within safe limits of exercise for your condition. Ask for help when needed.
  - c. Be Respectful: Listen to the instructor. Avoid talking during class so that everyone can hear the instructor and music.
  - d. Be Responsible: Do not abuse the exercise equipment. Return all equipment to its proper place when done.

Complements: **Activate America**



Activity: **Strength Training Center House Rules**

Ages: **All**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Signs**

**Description:**

1. Post the following House Rules in the Strength Training Center:
  - a. Be Caring: Show courtesy to fellow exercisers. Help people out if they are having difficulty with an exercise or piece of equipment.
  - b. Be Honest: Follow the established procedures for use of the equipment. Monitor your workout and stay within safe limits of exercise for your condition. Ask for help when needed.
  - c. Be Respectful: Wipe off equipment after use. Avoid use of abusive language. Listen to the staff on duty. Be courteous of others using the facility.
  - d. Be Responsible: Use equipment correctly; ask for help if needed. Return all weights, equipment, towels, and magazines to their proper places when done.

Complements: **Activate America**



Activity: **“Character Walks” for Fitness Walking Classes**

Ages: **Adults**

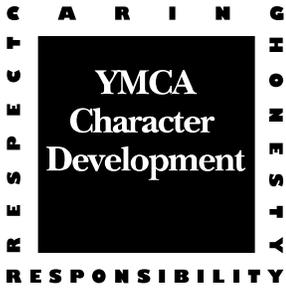
Value(s): **Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **None**

**Description:**

1. Discuss one of the four values on an extended walk.
2. Assign a value for the day.
3. Ask the group to walk with a partner or in small groups. (Groups should be made up of people who walk at the same speed.)
4. Ask them to discuss ways that YMCA programs help them to develop that particular value, and how it might affect other aspects of their lives (home, work, or family.)
5. When the class returns, have them share highlights of their discussions.

Complements: **Activate America, Member Involvement**



Activity: **Community Cause Walk**

Ages: **All**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Walking route, support stations, pledge cards, banners, signs, police support, refreshments**

**Description:**

1. Organize a community walk to raise money for the YMCA's work in low income and impoverished communities.
2. Decide on a community cause to raise funds for: homelessness, hunger, care/support for children, health issues (AIDS, cancer, or other diseases), etc.
3. Collaborate with appropriate community groups.
4. Get support from the local government or police.
5. Enlist members and volunteers to raise pledges for the walk.
6. Select appropriate route, day, and time. Check the community events calendar for possible conflicts.
7. Enlist volunteers to staff the event in these areas: registration, support stations, and finish celebration.
8. Refer to the *YMCA Reebok Instructor Manual* for more detailed information about conducting a special walking event.

Complements: **Activate America, Member Involvement, Strong Community Agenda**



Activity: **Character Circuit Training**

Ages: **Adults**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Hand weights, steps, dyna-bands, music and source**

**Description:**

1. In an adult aerobics class, set up a circuit training workout with four stations, each named for one of the values.
2. Write each value on a sign and post it by each station.
3. Select an exercise for each station (two aerobic and two strength). The two strength stations will use the hand weights and dyna-bands; one aerobic station will use the steps, the other will not require any equipment.
4. Relate a value to each exercise. (Examples: "Be honest in performing each exercise correctly," "Be respectful of fellow exercisers," etc.)
5. Briefly demonstrate each exercise, then divide the class in four groups and assign each group to a station.
6. Conduct a group warm-up for the entire class.
7. Have the group go to their stations and start exercising. After a designated amount of time, have them rotate to the next station.
8. Rotate the groups two or three through the stations.
9. Conduct a group cool down.

Complements: **Activate America**



Activity: **Character Development Signs in Aerobics Studios**

Ages **All**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Signs**

**Description:**

1. Print one value of each of the four signs.
2. Post one sign on each of the four walls of the aerobics studio/room.
3. When giving directional commands, use the name of the value. For example, "Turn to 'respect'."
4. Explain to the participants that these are the values that YMCA programs help to develop, especially in youth.
5. Ask for examples of how this class helps them develop each value.

Complements: **Activate America**



Activity: **Fitness Class Food Donations**

Ages: **Adult**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Food collection bins**

**Description:**

1. On a selected day, perhaps near a holiday such as Thanksgiving or Christmas, ask members to bring a non-perishable food item to class to donate to the needy.
2. Collaborate with a community agency that will distribute the food items to the needy.
3. Post signs and have instructors publicize the cause.
4. On the collection day, have bins at exercise classes for food drop-off. Thank contributors.
5. Distribute food items through a community agency.





Activity: **Character Development Training for Fitness Staff**

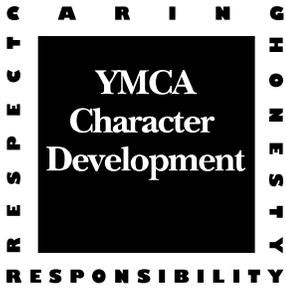
Ages: **Adult**

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

Facility and Equipment: **None**

**Description:**

1. In all training sessions for aerobics instructors, personal trainers, and strength training instructors, discuss each of the four values as related to their daily interactions with members and class participants.
2. Discuss the four character development values of the YMCA, and how they help people develop in spirit, mind, and body.
3. Ask staff for examples of behavior that goes against these values: by staff and members.
4. Ask for suggestions on how the staff can practice each of the values in their relationships with members.



Activity: **Character Development Stories**

Ages: **Adult**

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

Facility and Equipment: **None**

**Description:**

1. Ask members to submit stories of "Character Development in Action at the YMCA," which tell of a personal experience at the YMCA that showed one or more of the values in action. Print the best stories in the YMCA's newsletter.

Complements: **Member Involvement**





Activity: **Character Movement Fun**

Ages: **6-9**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Gym, hoops, ribbons, towels, balls, music**

**Description:**

1. Teach participants to perform different movements with each of four pieces of equipment, where each piece represents one of the four values.
2. Name each piece of equipment after a value, such as "Honesty Hoops," "Respectful ribbons," etc.
3. Teach or demonstrate the movement for one piece of equipment/value, and have participants perform the movement with the equipment.
4. Switch to a different movement for each piece of equipment/value, having participants continually moving with background music playing.

Complements: **Activate America**



Activity: **The Value of Physical Fitness**

Ages: **6-10**

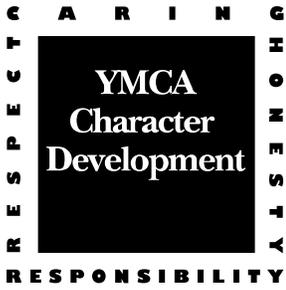
Value(s): **Respect, Responsibility**

Facility and Equipment: **Magazines, scissors, glue, poster board**

**Description:**

1. Teach youth that they have a responsibility to maintain their health through physical activity.
2. Have them find pictures in magazines or newspapers showing fitness activities and fit individuals.
3. Have them cut out the pictures and glue them to poster board.
4. On a separate page, gather pictures of unhealthy activities or unfit individuals.
5. Discuss the important of physical activity and good health habits in maintaining health through-out life.

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



Activity: **Fitness Diary**

Ages: **6-12**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Notebook, pen**

**Description:**

1. Have youth keep a diary of their daily physical fitness activities.
2. In a notebook, have each child write the date, time, type of activity, and length of time spent doing the activity.
4. The instructor can chart all the different activities done by class members on a large poster in the classroom.
5. Review the diaries periodically and write encouraging comments to the children.

Complements: **Activate America**



Activity: **Character Tag**

Ages: **6-10**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Gym or field**

**Description:**

1. Divide the class into four groups of equal size.
2. Name each group for one of the four character development values.
3. Pick one of the values, and all members of that group are "it." They have to try to tag the other groups.
4. After a short time, call out another value, and member of that group will now be "it."
5. Continue rotating among the four groups.





Activity: **Understanding My Heart Rate**

Ages: **6-12**

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

Facility and Equipment: **None**

**Description:**

1. Teach youth how to take and count their own heart rates and how activity affects heart rates.
2. Discuss the role of the heart in supplying energy to muscles for movement.
3. Have children feel their own heart beats: first on their chest, and then on the necks.
4. Have children count their heart beats for 10 seconds; multiply by 6 for their resting heart rate.
5. Have children run around or jump up and down for a few minutes, then retake their heart rates.
6. Five minutes after exercising, measure the heart rates again.

Complements: **Activate America**



Activity: **Healthy Decisions**

Ages: **9-15**

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

Facility and Equipment: **None**

**Description:**

1. Have youth discuss the decisions they make everyday that affect their health and the different influences on the decision-making process.
2. Have a brainstorming session to make a list of decisions they make everyday (consciously or unconsciously), which affect their health. Examples include: deciding what to eat, deciding when to go to bed, deciding whether or not to exercise, and deciding whether or not to smoke.
3. Ask them to think of different factors that influence the decisions that they make: their parents, teachers, friends, television or other media, etc.
4. Have them commit to making at least one new healthy decision tomorrow.

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



Activity: **Healthy Decisions Part II**

Ages: **9-15**

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

Facility and Equipment: **None**

**Description:**

1. Discuss how decisions that youth make can affect others.
2. Ask them to think of ways in which their healthy decisions can help others. Some helpful questions to ask:
  - a. "Do you walk your dog or other pet?"
  - b. "Do you walk to school instead of asking for a ride?"
  - c. "Do you choose to eat healthy foods instead of fatty or sugar snacks?"
3. Discuss that besides taking responsibility for their own health, the decisions they make can also help others.

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



Activity : **Risk Factor Feud**

Ages: **8-12**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Index cards**

**Description:**

1. Write the following health risk factor phrases on index cards:
  - a. being overweight
  - b. eight hours of sleep a night
  - c. avoiding alcohol
  - d. a lean body
  - e. regular vigorous exercise
  - f. using drugs to get high
  - g. breathing polluted air
  - h. getting little exercise
  - i. constant worry (stress)
  - j. avoiding tobacco
  - k. liking yourself
  - l. eating foods low in fat
2. Divide the group into two teams.
3. Have the first player in one group draw a card. The other group must guess if the risk factor can be changed and whether it is inherited or a result of behavior of the environment.
3. If the guess is correct, that team gets on point.
4. The first player on the other team then draws a card, which the first team must answer.
5. Continue having each player draw a card, alternating teams.
6. The team with most correct answers wins.

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



Activity: **Do You Exercise?**

Ages: **8-12**

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

Facility and Equipment: **None**

**Description:**

1. Ask each child to interview an adult regarding the adult's exercise habits. Find out:
  - a. how much exercise the adult's job demands
  - b. whether he or she exercises regularly
  - c. why he or she chooses to exercise (or not)
  - d. what he or she does for exercise
2. Have them ask the adult, "What's one thing that you would do differently regarding your exercise habits?"
3. Have youth report to the group. Chart the different exercise habits of the adults.

Complements: **Activate America**



Activity: **Peer Pressure Part II**

Ages: **8-15**

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

Facility and Equipment: **None**

**Description:**

1. Start by saying that when a peer is pressuring you to do something unhealthy that you don't want to do, there are different ways to say "no."
2. Ask for example of some unhealthy things that peers could try to pressure you into doing. Examples: smoking a cigarette, drinking alcohol, or taking a drug.
3. Suggest or ask for ways to say "no." Some answers might be:
  - a. use your parents as an excuse (they would be mad)
  - b. change the subject
  - c. give a quick "no" (don't hesitate or think about it)
  - d. say "no" and leave
  - e. say, "No, if you're really my friend you will respect my answer.

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



Activity: **My Favorite Physical Activities**

Ages: **6-15**

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

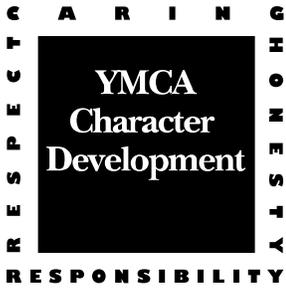
Facility and Equipment: **Paper, pencils**

**Description:**

1. Have each child list his or her 10 favorite physical activities on a sheet of paper.
2. Have them code their list as follows: F for most favorite activity, L for least favorite, B for the activity which they think is best for them, 50 for those activities they think they will be able to do at age 50, and 2 for those activities that take two or more people to do.
3. Have children answer the following questions:
  - a. What do your activity selections tell you about yourself?
  - b. Did you select at least one aerobic exercise?
  - c. How can you improve your physical activity habits?

Complements: **Activate America**





Activity: **If I Were President**

Ages: **9-18**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Paper, pencil**

**Description:**

1. Have youth write a list of 5 or 10 things that they would do if they were president of the United States to help kids be healthier. Post the lists throughout the YMCA of school and send the top entries to the local media.

Complements: **Abundant Assets Alliance**



Activity: **Building Strong Character**

Ages: **6-12**

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

Facility and Equipment: **Gym**

**Description:**

1. Participants perform four exercises, with the number of repetitions being the number of letters in each of the four character development values.
2. Select four exercises: one aerobic, two strength, and one flexibility.
3. The aerobic exercise must be done 14 times (number of letters in "responsibility"), as participants call out a letter for each repetition. For example, if they were doing jumping jacks, one is "r," two is "e," etc.
4. The first strength exercise is done seven times (for "honesty"), calling out a letter for each repetition. The second exercise is done seven times (for "respect"), using the same procedure.
5. The flexibility exercise is performed 6 times (for "caring"), calling out a letter at the beginning of each repetition.