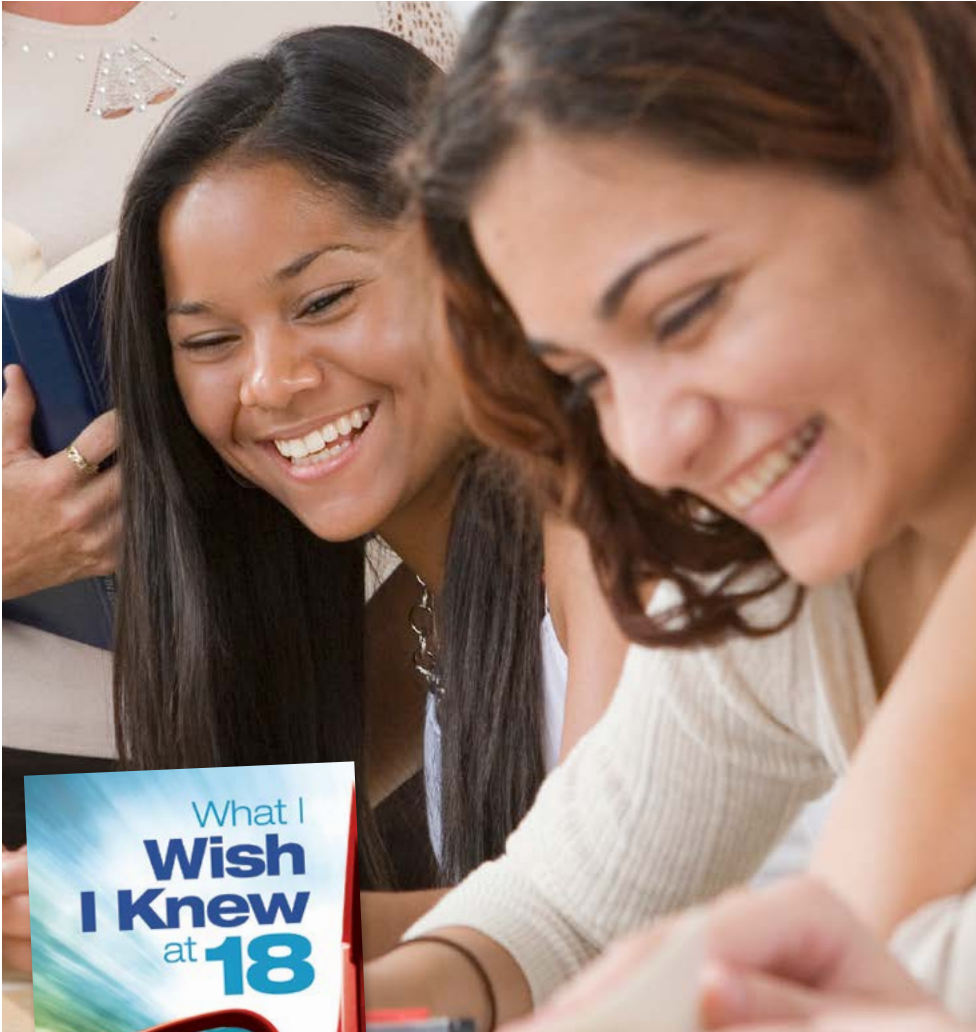


GET CONNECTED!: MAKING AND GROWING GREAT FRIENDSHIPS

Volume 27/Middle School

Developed by Arlyn Lawrence and Dennis Trittin, from the
What I Wish I Knew at 18 Leadership and Life Skills Program, LifeSmart Publishing



National FCS Standards and Competencies –

Interpersonal Relationships:

13.1.1 Analyze processes for building and maintaining interpersonal relationships.

13.2.1 Analyze the effects of personal characteristics on relationships.

13.2.5 Explain the effects of personal standards and behaviors on interpersonal relationships.

Career, Community, and Family Connections:

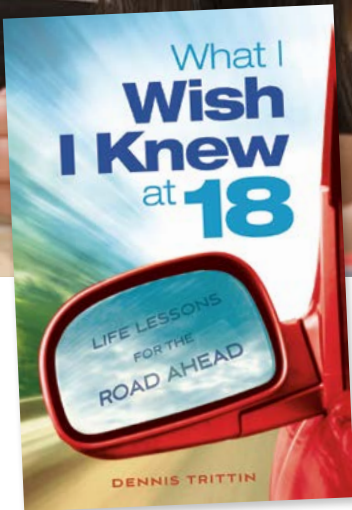
1.2.3 Apply communication skills in school, community, and workplace settings.

1.2.6 Demonstrate leadership skills and abilities in school, workplace, and community settings.

Objectives:

Students will...

- Appreciate the value of healthy, long-term friendships.
- Discover how to connect with positive, like-minded people and how to avoid people who will drag you down.
- Identify the qualities of a good friend.



WA32023

Introduction (5-10 minutes):

Do you have a trusted friend with whom you can share your personal feelings and who has your best interests at heart? Someone who is fun to be with and brings out the best in you? Someone you can turn to when life throws you a curveball? Good friends are an important ingredient of a happy and successful life. In fact, scientific studies show that people with long-time friends live longer and experience less stress. They are more likely to survive cancer. They even contract fewer colds. Seriously! Trusted friends make our life journey smoother (especially when life hands us a lemon!) and our experiences richer. True friendship takes time — getting to know each other, building on shared interests and values, creating a library of memories, weathering conflict and crisis, and more. But, cultivating a great friendship is worth all the effort.

In the large group: Ask students to share about times when they've been the "new person." How did they get to know people? Was there some trial and error involved before they settled on the friends they did? What did they learn from those experiences?

Materials List:

- *What I Wish I Knew at 18: Life Lessons for the Road Ahead* Book (WA32023)
- Student Guide for *What I Wish I Knew at 18: Life Lessons for the Road Ahead* (WA32024)
- Sample Lessons (download from dennistrittin.com/resources/Curriculum_Sample.pdf)



Activity #1 (10-15 minutes):

Finding Good Friends: Divide students into groups of three to five. Have them come up with a list: What are the qualities or attributes to look for in “good friends?” Bring the groups back together to form a large group again. If time allows, have a spokesperson for each group share their answers. Synthesize their list into a master list on the white board for the whole class to see. Point out that some of these qualities might be “must haves” and some might only be “nice to haves.” They will explore this in their follow-up activity.

Activity #2 (10-15 minutes):

Steering Clear of Negative “Friends”: While many people you meet will be good, potential friend-material, you will also encounter people who are negative and potentially destructive. It’s important to recognize the signs of these individuals with whom a close friendship would be unwise. Here are some clues:

- They ridicule your positive values and interests.
- They are involved with pornography, crime, or alcohol/drug use.
- They are critical, negative, and disrespectful—seeing the worst in people.
- They bully, ridicule, or shun other people.
- They look for ways to make trouble or go against the rules.
- They put pressure on you to join in their behavior, even if you say “no.”

If you find yourself in a relationship with someone like this, take steps to distance yourself. Don’t feel like you need to “work it out” and make a destructive relationship better. It may feel difficult, intolerant, or even unloving to end a bad friendship, but continuing in a destructive relationship is ultimately a much worse proposition.

You are the Counselor: Divide the class into pairs. Tell them to think of themselves as peer counselors to a fellow student – James – who comes to them for advice. James has a “friend” who is making choices that are leading him down a bad path. The friend is going to parties on weekends (without parental approval) and is urging James to come along with him. The friend doesn’t care about school, has no vision for his future after high school, and his grades are slipping. He ridicules James for caring about his GPA, staying home to do homework, and for having plans to attend college.

James feels pressured to stay in this friendship. His “friend” has a lot of other friends who could make life difficult for James at school, and James doesn’t know how to get out of the relationship without making his friend angry. What advice would the “counselors” give to their peer? How can James distance himself from this relationship and make some new friends?

Conclusion:

Remind students: No matter what your age, you are in a great place to find and make new friends...each one starting from scratch! Just remember, not everyone is meant to be your friend — and that’s OK. In this process, your ability to start new relationships, maintain existing ones, and remove yourself from ones that aren’t a good fit, will become vitally important skills to master.

Questions to Ponder:

How is leadership connected to the kinds of friends you choose? What kinds of friends should people who want to be leaders look for and why?

Optional Follow-up Activity:

Look over the list your class made of qualities to look for in a friend. Which of them do you consider non-negotiable “must haves” for anyone you would consider to be a good friend? Which are “nice but not necessary?” Which “don’t matter at all?”

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