GRADES 3-7

BUILDING Resiliency

A NON-THEMATIC SMALL-GROUP APPROACH

By
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Building Resiliency: A Non-Thematic Small-Group Approach

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Contents

BUILDING RESILIENCY: INTRODUCTION 9

Understanding Resiliency 10
Building Resiliency Through Small-Group Lessons 12
Reasons To Include A Student In A Resiliency Group 15
Reasons To Offer Resiliency Groups 16
Referrals To Groups 17
Referral To Counselor (reproducible form) 18
Resiliency Group Parent/Guardian Permission (reproducible letter) 19
Parent/Guardian Survey Of Resiliency (reproducible survey) 20

BUILDING RESILIENCY: GROUP SESSIONS 21

Session 1: Resiliency Quiz 22
Teacher Survey Of Resiliency (reproducible survey) 24
Student Resiliency Quiz A (reproducible quiz) 25
Student Resiliency Quiz B (reproducible quiz) 26

Topic #1: Being Healthy 27
ASCA Standards For Being Healthy 28
Resilient Children Are Healthy 29
Activity 1: I Can Be Healthy 30
MyPyramid For Kids (reproducible handout) 31
Exercise Information Page (reproducible handout) 32
Sleep Requirements Information (reproducible handout) 33
I Can Be Healthy (reproducible handout) 34
Activity 2: Plan A Healthy Meal (Option A) 35
Food Cards (reproducible cards) 36
Let's Plan A Healthy Meal (reproducible handout) 42
Activity 2: Plan A Healthy Meal (Option B) 43
Food Diary (reproducible handout) 44
Activity 3: Endurance, Strength, Flexibility 45
Endurance (reproducible poster) 47
Strength (reproducible poster) 48
Flexibility (reproducible poster) 49
Activity 4: Learn About Sleep 50
Sleep Diary (reproducible handout) 51
Activity 5: Make Health A Way Of Life 53
Health Quotation Posters (reproducible posters) 54
Quotations Related To Health (reproducible handout) 57

Topic #2: Goal Setting 59
ASCA Standards For Goal Setting 60
Resilient Children Are Able To Set Goals And Work Toward Their Realization 61
Activity 1: What Is A Goal? 63
Alice In Wonderland Quotation (reproducible handout) 64
Activity 2: Setting Goals 65
How To Set A Clear Goal (reproducible handout) 67
Goal Sheet (reproducible handout) 68
Activity 3: Visualize YOUR Goal 69
Points Graph (reproducible handout) 70

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Activity 4: Make Goal Setting A Way Of Life **71**
Goal Setting Quotation Posters (reproducible posters) 72
Quotations Related To Goals (reproducible handout) 77

Topic #3: Problem Solving **79**
ASCA Standards For Problem Solving 80
Resilient Children Are Able To Solve Problems 81
Activity 1: Can You Decide? **83**
Decision-Maker Die (reproducible handout) 85
Choice Cards (reproducible cards) 86
Activity 2: Teaching Problem Solving **89**
Decision-Making Chart (reproducible handout) 91
Decision-Making Tree (reproducible handout) 92
How To Solve A Problem (reproducible handout) 93
Activity 3: Practice Problem Solving (Option A) **94**
Activity 3: Practice Problem Solving (Option B) **95**
Practice Problem Solving (reproducible handouts) 96
Activity 4: Make Problem Solving A Way Of Life **110**
Problem Solving Quotation Posters (reproducible posters) 111
Quotations Related To Problem Solving (reproducible handout) 114

Topic #4: Understand And Communicate Feelings **115**
ASCA Standards For Understanding And Communicate Feelings 116
Resilient Children Are Able To Understand And Communicate Feelings In Self And Others 117
Activity 1: Identifying Feelings **119**
Feeling Faces Cards (reproducible cards) 120
Activity 2: Identifying Feelings In Others **123**
Activity 3: Building Feelings Vocabulary **124**
Broad Feeling Term Posters (reproducible posters) 125
Activity 4: Feelings Continuum **129**
Mad Words (reproducible handout) 131
Glad Words (reproducible handout) 132
Sad Words (reproducible handout) 133
Scared Words (reproducible handout) 134
Activity 5: Make Feelings Wisdom A Way Of Life **135**
Feelings Quotation Posters (reproducible posters) 136
Quotations Related To Feelings (reproducible handout) 140

Topic #5: Managing Stress **141**
ASCA Standards For Managing Stress 142
Resilient Children Are Able To Identify And Effectively Manage Stress 143
Activity 1: Things That Stress Us Out **144**
Managing Stress (reproducible handout) 146
Activity 2: Stress Order **147**
Activity 3: Handling Stress **148**
Activity 4: Identifying Support **150**
Activity 5: Make Stress Management A Way Of Life **151**
Stress-Management Quotation Posters (reproducible posters) 152
Quotations Related To Managing Stress (reproducible handout) 155

TOPIC #6: Personal Competency **157**
ASCA Standards For Personal Competency 158

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Resilient Children Are Able To Identify Personal Skills And Believe In Their Own Abilities 159
Activity 1: Personal Portfolio 161
My Skills (reproducible handout) 162
Activity 2: Personal Treasure Chest 163
Student Version: Character Traits Of … (reproducible handout) 165
Parent/Teacher Version: Character Traits Of … (reproducible handout) 166
Activity 3: Write A Letter To Yourself 167
Activity 4: Accordion Book—School Skills 168
Activity 5: Make Personal Competency A Way Of Life 169
Confidence Quotation Posters (reproducible posters) 170
Quotations Related To Confidence (reproducible handout) 172

Topic #7: Social Competency 173
ASCA Standards For Social Competency 174
Resilient Children Are Able To Make And Keep Friends; Are Identified By Others As A Friend 175
Activity 1: Who Are My Friends? 177
Friendship Wheel (reproducible handout) 178
Activity 2: Keeping Friends 179
Friendship Problem Cards (reproducible cards) 181
Activity 3: Friendship Pledge 183
Friendship Pledge (reproducible handout) 184
Activity 4: Make Friendship A Way Of Life 185
Friendship Quotation Posters (reproducible posters) 186
Quotations Related To Friendship (reproducible handout) 190

Topic #8: Positive Outlook 191
ASCA Standards For Positive Outlook 192
Resilient Children Are Able To Interpret Events/Circumstances/Situations 193
Activity 1: Look On The Bright Side 194
Situation Cards: Look On The Bright Side (Set 1) (reproducible cards) 195
Activity 2: Sunshine Or A Chance Of Storms? 196
Situation Cards: Look On The Bright Side (Set 2) (reproducible cards) 197
Dark, Stormy Scene (reproducible handout) 198
Bright, Sunny Scene (reproducible handout) 199
Activity 3: Dark And Stormy Or Sunny Side Up 200
Sunny Side Up (reproducible handout) 201
Dark And Stormy (reproducible handout) 202
Activity 4: Make A Positive Outlook A Way Of Life 203
Positive Outlook Quotation Posters (reproducible posters) 204
Quotations Related To Perspective And Outlook (reproducible handout) 209

Final Session, Counselor Data, ASCA Standards Chart 211
Final Session: Reviewing The Skills Of Resiliency 212
Building Blocks Sample (reproducible handout) 215
Building Blocks (reproducible handout) 216
Survey Results (reproducible form) 217
Resiliency Quiz A Resultss (reproducible form) 218
Resiliency Quiz B Results s (reproducible form) 219
Resilience Poster (reproducible poster) 220
ASCA Domains And Competencies Crosswalking Tool 221

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE CD 224

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Building Resiliency Through Small-Group Lessons

The following skills are generally present in individuals who demonstrate resiliency.

Ability to:

- interpret events/circumstances/situations in a positive way
- understand and communicate one's own feelings and those of others
- live a healthy lifestyle that includes exercise, diet, and rest
- identify personal skills and believe in oneself
- make and keep friends; be identified by others as a friend
- identify and effectively manage stress
- solve problems
- set goals and work toward their realization

This book includes research-based activities for each of the following topics. You may present these activities in any sequence, and how many you choose to use will be determined by the number and length of sessions you conduct. An opening and closing session is also included. The topics are:

- Being Healthy (exercise, rest, and diet)
- Goal Setting
- Problem Solving
- Understanding And Communicating Feelings
- Managing Stress (identifying stressors and developing healthy responses)
- Personal Competency (knowing your skills and believing in yourself)
- Social Competency (having friends and being a friend)
- Positive Outlook (looking on the bright side; the power of positive thinking)

General Group Format

Each group session should begin with a discussion of any difficult situations group members have experienced since the last meeting. What did they do to overcome those problems? How successful were they in addressing them? Focus on what went well, rather than on the problems presented. Emphasize whatever positives can be identified.

During sessions following the goal-setting session, devote a few moments to monitoring students' goal-directed progress.

How Many Sessions?

The counselor determines which topics are most important to a particular group of children and decides how many sessions to spend on each topic. Some groups might need to spend several sessions talking about *how to make and keep friends,* for example, but only one session on *being healthy.* If time is limited, you might be able to merge one concept with another, such as combining *introduction to resiliency* with *health.*

A group focusing on resiliency should include at least one session for each of the eight skill areas. To help with your selection, a few formats for delivery are identified on page 13.

Based on sessions lasting a solid 30 minutes, I tend to extend the group to 14–16 sessions and spend two sessions on more complex issues like feelings, stress, and social skills. Having access to students for longer periods might allow you to reduce the number of sessions.

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Activities specially designed for each skill area help group members understand how acquiring a particular skill advances the overall goal of building resiliency. As students discuss ways to become healthy and set goals for improving their own lifestyle habits, for example, ask how doing so will help them become more resilient.

If you choose to present only one session for each skill area, I recommend using the starred selection (see right).

Session 1: Introduction
Explaining Resiliency/Resiliency Quiz (Pre-Test)

Being Healthy
I Can Be Healthy ★
Plan A Healthy Meal (Option A or B)
Endurance, Strength, Flexibility
Learn About Sleep
Make Health A Way Of Life

Goal Setting
What Is A Goal?
Setting Goals ★
Visualize YOUR Goal
Make Goal Setting A Way Of Life

Problem Solving
Can You Decide?
Teaching Problem Solving ★
Practice Problem Solving (Option A or B)
Make Problem Solving A Way Of Life

Understanding And Communicating Feelings
Identifying Feelings ★
Identifying Feelings In Others
Building Feelings Vocabulary
Feelings Continuum
Make Feelings Wisdom A Way Of Life

Managing Stress
Things That Stress Us Out ★
Stress Order
Handling Stress
Identifying Support
Make Stress Management A Way Of Life

Personal Competency
Personal Portfolio ★
Personal Treasure Chest
Write A Letter To Yourself
Accordion Book—School Skills
Make Personal Competency A Way Of Life

Social Competency
Who Are My Friends?
Keeping Friends
Friendship Pledge ★
Make Friendship A Way Of Life

Positive Outlook
Look On The Bright Side ★
Sunshine Or A Chance Of Storms?
Dark And Stormy Or Sunny Side Up
Make A Positive Outlook A Way Of Life

Final Session
Review/Resiliency Quiz (Post-Test)

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Session 1: Resiliency Quiz

ASCA Standards:

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT	
Standard A: Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.	
A:A1	**Improve Academic Self-concept**
A:A1.5	Identify attitudes and behaviors which lead to successful learning
A:A2	**Acquire Skills for Improving Learning**
A:A2.2	Demonstrate how effort and persistence positively affect learning
A:A2.4	Apply knowledge and learning styles to positively influence school performance

Goal:

Students will understand the concept of *resiliency* and rate their own traits of resiliency.

Materials Needed:

For the leader:
- ☐ Large rubber band or *Slinky*® toy
- ☐ Chart paper and marker or board and chalk
- ☐ Copy of *Teacher Survey Of Resiliency* for each teacher who has a student in the group (page 24 or CD)

For each student:
- ☐ Copy of *Resiliency Quiz A* or *B* (page 25 or 26 or CD)
- ☐ Pencil or pen

Pre-Session Preparation:

Copy/print and distribute the *Teacher Survey Of Resiliency* to those involved in direct instruction of group members. This survey can provide interesting information and can be used as a pre- and post-assessment of students' perceived resiliency.

Select the *Resiliency Quiz* you consider most appropriate as a pre- and post-assessment for your students.

Copy/print the selected *Resiliency Quiz* for each student.

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Activity 2: Setting Goals

Goal:

Students will learn to set goals and work to achieve them.

Materials Needed:

For the leader:
- ☐ Chart paper and marker or board and chalk
- ☐ Copy of *Goal Sheet* (page 68 or CD)

For each student:
- ☐ Copy of *How To Set A Clear Goal* (page 67 or CD)
- ☐ Copy of *Goal Sheet* (page 68 or CD)
- ☐ Student's folder
- ☐ Pencil

Pre-Activity Preparation:

Copy/print *How To Set A Clear Goal* and *Goal Sheet* for each student.

Gather the other necessary materials.

Procedure:

Introduction/Discussion:

Give each student a copy of *How To Set A Clear Goal* and *Goal Sheet,* a pencil, and his/her folder.

Read *How To Set A Clear Goal* with the students. Be sure the students understand the basic concepts. Refer to this information as students go through the goal-setting process.

As they work toward their goals, ask:

- *Is your goal specific?* (Be specific.)
- *Is your goal realistic?* (Set realistic goals.)
- *Is this goal something you believe you can achieve?* (Set realistic goals.)
- *Have you identified the steps necessary to reach your goal?* (Develop an action plan.)
- *Have you written your plan down?* (Put it in writing.)
- *Where will you post your plan?* (Post it.)
- *Who can help you reach this goal and how?* (Involve others.)
- *What will you do when one of your steps doesn't work or you encounter problems?* (Believe in yourself. Be flexible.)
- *How will you reward yourself?* (Reward yourself.)

Brainstorm meaningful and realistic goals with the students. Record their suggestions on the board or chart paper. Decide which goals are specific and realistic. Cross out any goals that are not.

Activity:

Each student selects one goal and writes it on his/her *Goal Sheet*. Help the students identify—individually and as a group—the steps necessary to achieve their goals. Refer to the steps on the information sheet. (*Note:* It might be helpful to ask teachers to identify a few appropriate goals for each student. You can offer these ideas to students who have a hard time coming up with meaningful goals. These need not be academic goals, but must be relevant to school.)

Each student writes the steps toward his/her individual goal on the *Goal Sheet*.

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Activity 1: Can You Decide?

Goals:

Students will identify situations in which problem solving is required.

Students will understand the importance of making their own decisions.

Students will practice using a problem-solving model.

Materials Needed:

For the leader:
- ☐ Optional: Sample *Decision-Maker Die*
  - ☐ Dense foam, foam-core board or other sturdy material
  - ☐ Copy of *Decision-Maker Die* (page 85 or CD)
  - ☐ Scissors
  - ☐ Glue stick
  - ☐ Colored markers (optional)
- ☐ Copy of *Choice Cards* (optional, pages 86-87 or CD)
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Chart paper and markers

For each student:
- ☐ Construction paper or manila folder
- ☐ Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- ☐ Copy of *Decision-Maker Die* (page 85 or CD)
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Glue stick
- ☐ Foam-core board or other sturdy material (optional)

Pre-Activity Preparation:

Copy/print *Decision-Maker Die* for each student.

(*Optional:* Make a sample die. Cut a cube-sized piece of dense foam or create a cube from foam-core board or other sturdy material. Glue the *Decision-Maker Die* template to the cube or color each side and write the text on the cube.

(*Optional:* Copy/print the *Choice Cards* and cut them apart.)

Gather the other necessary materials.

Procedure:

Introduction:

Distribute construction paper or manila folders and markers, crayons, or colored pencils. If using construction paper, students fold it in half. Allow students to decorate the cover. Explain that this is their folder for as long as they remain in the group and they will take it home after the final session.

Discussion:

To initiate a discussion on problem solving and choices, ask:

- *What do you usually do when faced with a problem?*
- *What happens if you don't do anything about the problem?*
- *What are some choices or decisions you have to make each day or each week?*

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Resilient Children Are Able To Understand And Communicate Feelings—In Self And Others

RESILIENT STUDENTS display an understanding of emotions, whether by recognizing feelings in others or managing their own. Children's academic success, classroom productivity, teacher relationships, and behavior problems are all affected by their ability to control their emotions. Evidence of the relationship between emotions and academic success underscores the importance of helping children better understand and manage their feelings.

Zambo and Brem (2004) supported the link between emotions and academic success. They investigated the emotional reactions of struggling readers and the influence of emotions on cognition, mood, and self-schemas, then provided suggestions for reading teachers. Of particular importance is their claim that emotions must be thoughtfully considered as integral to the learning process. Educators must work to help children manage their emotions more effectively. Who better to do this than school counselors and what better format than the small group?

In a study of kindergarten children, Paulo Graziano, Rachael Reavis, Susan Kean, and Susan Calkins defined *emotion regulation* as *adaptive functioning facilitated by attempts to temper emotional arousal* and revealed positive associations between emotion regulation and school success. This ability to control emotions predicted academic success and productivity in the classroom and on standardized tests of math and literacy. They also found that students with greater emotional control had better relationships with their teachers and demonstrated fewer behavioral problems.

The same researchers stated that anticipation of going to kindergarten can produce emotional arousal and that a child's ability to cope with those feelings affects his/her transition to kindergarten. They further suggested that children who have difficulty controlling their emotions may become more frustrated when faced with learning new tasks than students who can regulate their emotions. This can lead to incomplete or inaccurate assignments which disrupt learning as well as diminish performance. The researchers believed that emotional control facilitates a child's ability to pay attention to and learn new information.

> Greater emotional understanding characterizes more-focused students who are better able to complete school tasks and happier children who develop more-positive peer and teacher relationships and display fewer behavioral problems.

A study conducted with 3-year-olds supported the link between understanding emotions and early indicators of school success. Esther Leerkes, Matthew John Paradise, Marion O'Brien, Susan Calkins, and Garrett Lange used a four-factor model of emotion and cognition processes: emotional control, emotional understanding, cognitive control, and cognitive understanding. Results indicated that ability to understand and

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Activity 2: Keeping Friends

Goal:

Students will identify ways to solve specific friendship problems or conflicts.

Materials Needed:

For the leader:
- ☐ *Friendship Problem Cards* (pages 181-182 or CD)
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ 4 small paper gift bags or lunch bags
- ☐ Extra blank cards (page 180 or CD) or index cards

For each student:
- ☐ Four or more blank cards (page 180 or CD) or index cards
- ☐ Pencil

Pre-Activity Preparation:

Copy/print the *Friendship Problem Cards,* cut them apart, and stack them.

Optional: Copy/print four or more blank cards for each student.

Label each bag with a way to keep friends (apologize, forgive, communicate, spend time together).

Gather the other necessary materials.

Procedure:

Introduction/Discussion:

Recite:

> *"Make new friends, but keep the old.*
> *One is silver and the other gold."*

Then ask:

- *What do you think the saying means?*
- *Do you think old friends are silver or gold? Why?*
- *Why is it important to keep old friends? What makes them so valuable?*

To initiate a discussion of why friends might stop being friends, ask:

- *What might cause friends to stop liking each other?*
- *What kinds of problems can develop between friends?*
- *Describe a time you had a fight with a friend. What happened? How did you feel? Were you able to remain friends?*

Activity/Discussion:

Give each student four blank cards (or index cards) and a pencil. Have more cards available for students who request them. Students write one friendship problem on each card. Examples could include:

- telling a secret to others
- wanting to spend time with other friends
- developing new interests

Shuffle the student's cards with the *Friendship Problem Cards,* making one stack.

To initiate a discussion on what can be done to solve these friendship problems, ask:

- *What can you do to be sure you keep your friends?*

Lead the discussion toward the idea that there are four basic things friends can do to remain friends:

- *apologize when mistakes are made*
- *forgive when mistakes are made*

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Nothing happens unless first we

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Carl Sandburg

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Decision-Making Tree

PROBLEM

SOLUTION 1	SOLUTION 2	SOLUTION 3
POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES	POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES	POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES
NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES	NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES	NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

SOLUTION CHOSEN

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Managing Stress

	Stressor	What It Feels Like	How I Can Handle It
AT SCHOOL			
WITH FRIENDS			
AT HOME			
IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD			

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Character Traits Of _____

STUDENT'S NAME

Completed by _____

Check the words that describe this student.
You may add additional positive traits in the blank boxes.

☐	Athletic	☐	Nice	☐	Friendly
☐	Confident	☐	Active	☐	Pleasant
☐	Poised	☐	Thoughtful	☐	Neat
☐	Tidy	☐	Responsible	☐	Talented
☐	Assertive	☐	Industrious	☐	Amusing
☐	Dignified	☐	Compassionate	☐	Funny
☐	Calm	☐	Considerate	☐	Witty
☐	Cool	☐	Understanding	☐	Serious
☐	Respectful	☐	Artistic	☐	Attentive
☐	Serene	☐	Sensitive	☐	Enthusiastic
☐	Quiet	☐	Supportive	☐	Tolerant
☐	Strong	☐	Accepting	☐	Energetic
☐	Perceptive	☐	Kindhearted	☐	Diligent
☐	Observant	☐	Likable	☐	Hard-Working
☐	Gentle	☐	Healthy	☐	Secure
☐	Good Sport	☐	Patient	☐	Mellow
☐	Kind	☐	Smart	☐	Conscientious
☐	Insightful	☐	Clever	☐	Intelligent

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Make new friends, but keep the old; one is silver and the other gold.

Traditional Girl Scout song

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Resiliency Quiz B Results: Confidential Counselor Data

DATE _____

Student's Name: _____ Grade:_____

PRE-GROUP		POST-GROUP		
Y	N	Y	N	1. I have people around me whom I trust and who love me, no matter what.
Y	N	Y	N	2. I have people who want me to learn to do things on my own.
Y	N	Y	N	3. I have people who will listen to my problems and worries.
Y	N	Y	N	4. I have people who will talk with me about my ideas and hopes.
Y	N	Y	N	5. I have people who will help me any time I need it.
Y	N	Y	N	6. My teachers think I am important and care about me.
Y	N	Y	N	7. I have people who believe I can be successful.
Y	N	Y	N	8. My teachers think I can be successful.
Y	N	Y	N	9. I am someone people can like and love.
Y	N	Y	N	10. I like to do nice things for others and show my concern.
Y	N	Y	N	11. I am willing to be responsible for what I do.
Y	N	Y	N	12. I get enough sleep.
Y	N	Y	N	13. I eat a healthy diet.
Y	N	Y	N	14. I exercise or play every day.
Y	N	Y	N	15. It's OK if I make mistakes.
Y	N	Y	N	16. I believe that things will turn out OK.
Y	N	Y	N	17. I can find ways to solve the problems I face.
Y	N	Y	N	18. I can control myself when I feel like doing something that is dangerous or not right.
Y	N	Y	N	19. I think I can be successful.
Y	N	Y	N	20. When I have a problem, I know I can work my way through it.
Y	N	Y	N	21. My friends listen to and respect my ideas.
Y	N	Y	N	22. My classmates listen to and respect my ideas.
Y	N	Y	N	23. I listen to and respect my friends.
Y	N	Y	N	24. I can make my own decisions when I am with my friends.
Y	N	Y	N	25. My teachers listen to and respect my ideas.
Y	N	Y	N	26. I know the rules and expectations in my class.
Y	N	Y	N	27. I have a hobby. If yes, what is it?
Y	N	Y	N	28. I enjoy after-school activities. (clubs, Scouts, sports, etc.)
Y	N	Y	N	29. I am friends with most people in my class.
Y	N	Y	N	30. I am friends with many people in my school.

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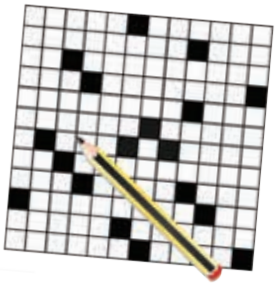
My Skills

CHECK THE THINGS YOU CAN DO.

- ☐ Roller skate
- ☐ Run fast
- ☐ Build things
- ☐ Draw cartoons
- ☐ Be a friend
- ☐ Complete crossword puzzles
- ☐ Make my friends laugh
- ☐ Ride a bike
- ☐ Find places on a map
- ☐ Do a project for school
- ☐ Read
- ☐ Make good grades on tests
- ☐ Sing
- ☐ Color pictures
- ☐ Play piano
- ☐ Play soccer
- ☐ Write neatly
- ☐ Draw anything
- ☐ Solve math problems
- ☐ Paint
- ☐ Solve a mystery
- ☐ Take care of my dog
- ☐ Sit quietly
- ☐ Do a back flip
- ☐ Help my mom/dad with chores
- ☐ Tell jokes
- ☐ Bake a cake



- ☐ Speak Spanish
- ☐ Make cookies
- ☐ Make my bed
- ☐ Keep my stuff organized
- ☐ Draw animals
- ☐ Laugh
- ☐ Play board games
- ☐ Read chapter books
- ☐ Tell a good story
- ☐ Follow directions
- ☐ Write creative stories
- ☐ Clean my room
- ☐ Play computer chess
- ☐ Put puzzles together
- ☐ Take care of myself
- ☐ Wash my clothes
- ☐ Listen to my friends
- ☐ Do cartwheels
- ☐ Stand on my head
- ☐ Take care of my cat
- ☐ Memorize facts
- ☐ Do well on tests
- ☐ Concentrate
- ☐ Stay healthy
- ☐ Tell how I feel
- ☐ Handle stress
- ☐ Dance

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