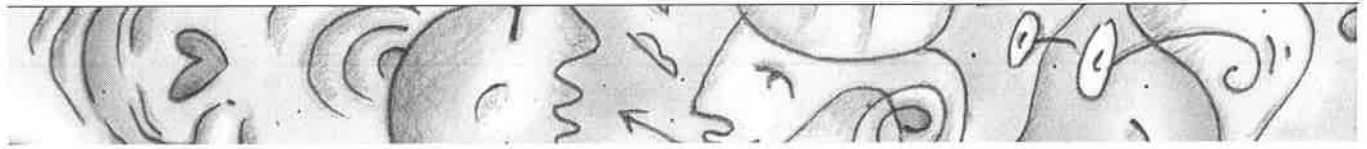


Grade 6



Dear Family,

Wouldn't it be great if there were a way to protect your middle school student from risky behaviors such as bullying, aggression, and substance abuse while improving his or her school success? Fortunately, research shows there is a way to do just that.

This week we begin the Stepping Up program. The program focuses on skills that will help your student succeed in school and in life. These skills include:

- Empathy
- Communication
- Perspective taking
- Respectful disagreement
- Assertiveness
- Emotional management
- Problem solving

You play a vital role in helping your student develop strong social skills. During these next few weeks, the focus of the lessons will be empathy and communication. Ask questions about the skills your student is learning, such as:

- “How do you show someone you’re actively listening to them?”
- “What are some ways you can be an ally to someone?”
- “Why should you try to understand other people’s perspectives?”

If you have any questions about the curriculum, please do not hesitate to contact me for more information. Thank you for supporting your student in learning the skills that lead to success in school and in life.

Sincerely,

P.S. Make sure to join **www.secondstep.org** with the activation key **SSP6 FAMI LY12** to watch videos about the *Second Step* program and get information about what your student is learning.

Name: _____

You are a communication skills inspector. Just as a building inspector makes sure a building is in good working order, you will make sure your communication skills with another person are in good working order.

Today you're going to inspect your communication skills with an adult family member. Think of an activity or chore you can do together where you will need to use communication skills. Take a look at the list of communication skills "inspection items" here before you start. Then get going! When you've completed the activity, go through the checklist and mark all the skills that were in good working order.

Can't think of an activity?

Here are a few ideas: chores, homework, grocery shopping—just about anything you can do where you work cooperatively with another person!

The chore or activity I will be doing with an adult family member is _____.

Communication Skills Inspection List

Active Listening

- ☐ Look at the person.
☐ Don't interrupt.
☐ Show interest.

Respecting

- ☐ Give compliments.
☐ Listen to the adult's ideas.
☐ Be polite.
☐ Don't be judgmental.

Empathy

During the activity, the adult was feeling _____.

My clues were _____,
 and _____.

How would you rate your overall communication skills?

- ☐ Great! ☐ Need some work
☐ Okay

Now show this to the adult, and see if he or she agrees!

This homework assignment was completed on _____ (date)

 [adult] signature

Name: _____

You are a talk show host. Today's guest is an adult in your family. You'll be talking about whether kids should or should not use cell phones at school. As a good talk show host knows, it's important to be able to take the other person's point of view or perspective.

Ask the following questions during your interview. The answers will help you understand the other person's perspective. Write the responses in the spaces below.

Remember!

When you consider another person's perspective, you'll need to find out what feelings, experiences, and needs or wants underlie that perspective.

Today's Topic: Kids Using Cell Phones at School

Question	Response
How do you feel about kids using cell phones at school?	
What's your experience with kids and cell phones?	
What do you want or need to have happen with kids using cell phones at school?	

This homework assignment was completed on _____ (date) _____ [adult] signature

Name: _____

Have you ever watched a TV show where you've heard characters say some surprising things to each other? Why do they say such things? They may do it for higher ratings. But could it also be because they aren't good at taking another person's perspective?

Now you get to take a closer look (and listen). Watch a sitcom, cartoon, or dramatic TV show with an adult family member. Select two characters to focus on for 10 minutes. Listen carefully to the interactions between them. How well do they take the other person's perspective? Fill in your observations below.

What I Observe

Name of Character 1: _____ Name of Character 2: _____

How clearly do they explain their opinion?

Character 1: ☐ great! ☐ okay ☐ not so goodCharacter 2: ☐ great! ☐ okay ☐ not so good

Are they being nonjudgmental?

Character 1: ☐ great! ☐ okay ☐ not so goodCharacter 2: ☐ great! ☐ okay ☐ not so good

Are they respectful of the other person's opinion?

Character 1: ☐ great! ☐ okay ☐ not so goodCharacter 2: ☐ great! ☐ okay ☐ not so good

The best way to describe the communication between these two characters is:

Character 1: ☐ great! ☐ okay ☐ not so goodCharacter 2: ☐ great! ☐ okay ☐ not so good

Being judgmental adds the following to the show (check all that apply):

☐ humor ☐ conflict ☐ interest ☐ nothing

If you were a part of this show, how would this style of communication make you feel (check all that apply)?

☐ happy ☐ angry ☐ frustrated ☐ respected ☐ unsureThis homework assignment was completed on _____ . _____
(date) [adult] signature

Name: _____

Sometimes you “hear” what a person is saying without him or her saying a word. You can often tell a person’s communication style just by looking at his or her facial expressions and body language. A passive communicator might have slumped posture. An aggressive communicator might have glaring, narrow eyes. An assertive communicator holds his or her head up while looking straight at you.

Now try to “hear” different communication styles just by looking at them.

1. Look through magazines or newspapers for people who are using passive, aggressive, and assertive communication.
2. Find one image for each, and glue them in the boxes to the right.
3. Imagine what each person might be saying. Write it in the space below each picture.
4. Now show the pictures and descriptions to an adult. Can he or she guess which style of communication each person is using? Circle their answer.
5. If he or she guessed wrong, go over with him or her the characteristics of different styles of communication. If he or she guessed right—way to go!

This homework assignment was completed on

_____ (date)

_____ [adult] signature

Style:	Passive	Aggressive	Assertive
glue picture here			
What is the person saying?			
Style:	Passive	Aggressive	Assertive
glue picture here			
What is the person saying?			
Style:	Passive	Aggressive	Assertive
glue picture here			
What is the person saying?			



Dear Family,

Middle school is a time when bullying among peers peaks. This week we started a new topic of the Stepping Up program: bullying. Your student is learning to recognize bullying, whether it is happening to the student or to someone else. We are focusing on what students can do about bullying so they can be safe and happy at school.

Here at school, we are creating a safe learning environment. We would like to work with you to make this happen. There are several warning signs that could indicate that your child is experiencing bullying at school. Please be on the alert for:

- Damaged or missing clothing, books, or other belongings
- Unexpected bruises, cuts, or scratches
- Few or no friends to spend time with
- Fear of going to school
- Fear of riding the bus or walking to school
- Taking an illogical or long route home
- An unexpected drop in grades and/or interest
- Unusual moodiness, depression, anxiety, or crying
- Frequent headaches or stomachaches
- Loss of appetite
- Trouble sleeping

If you suspect your student is being bullied, contact _____ at our school for help. If you suspect your student is participating in bullying, please visit www.cfchildren.org/resources to find online resources that can help guide you in talking to your student about bullying.

Ask your student to talk to you about Stepping Up tips for dealing with bullying and the Bystander Power suggestions. Talk about what might work best for your student. Tell your student about your experiences with bullying, either what you remember from your youth or what you have experienced in the workplace. Ask your student about what kinds of bullying he or she sees happening at school.

Together we can help our youth stay safe and develop confidence and empathy during the middle school years.

Sincerely,

P.S. Make sure to join **www.secondstep.org** with the activation key **SSP6 FAMI LY12** to watch videos about the *Second Step* program and get information about what your student is learning.

Name: _____

What does it feel like to be bullied? Many people have experienced some sort of bullying at some point in their lives—even adults! Now it's time to find out how they felt. Ask an adult the following questions about his or her experience with bullying anytime in his or her life. Can you relate to his or her experience?

What's bullying?

Bullying is when one or more people repeatedly harm, harass, intimidate, or exclude others. Bullying is unfair and one-sided.

What's It Like to Be Bullied?

1. Can you describe a time in your life when you or someone you know was bullied?

2. Were there other people around? ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. If you said "Yes," what did you want them to do? (check all that apply)

☐ Nothing ☐ Not watch ☐ Get help ☐ Not laugh☐ Say something to stop the bullying ☐ Other: _____

4. What did you do? (check all that apply)

☐ Told myself that it wasn't my fault☐ Told the person or people who were bullying to stop☐ Ignored it (or tried to ignore it) ☐ Walked away ☐ Asked for help☐ I didn't know what to do ☐ Other: _____

5. How did the bullying make you feel? (check all that apply)

☐ Sad ☐ Angry ☐ Discouraged ☐ Worthless ☐ Hurt ☐ Scared☐ Other: _____

6. What do you wish someone who knew it was happening had done?

This homework assignment was completed on _____
(date) [adult] signature

Name: _____

How can you be part of the solution? Use your Bystander Power! Unlike the powers of superheroes or wizards, Bystander Power can be used by anyone—even you!

But not everyone may be familiar with Bystander Power. Explain what Bystander Power is to an adult family member. Then come up with suggestions and examples for a Bystander Power poster together. Write your suggestions and examples in the spaces to the right.

Don't take part in bullying.

**Offer support.
Be an ally to someone being bullied.**

Take action against bullying.

You can make a difference!

Bystander Power!	

This homework assignment was completed on _____ (date) . _____ [adult] signature



Dear Family,

Have you ever made a decision when you were angry or frustrated that you later regretted? When emotions are intense, it is hard for anyone, especially young adolescents, to think straight. Strong feelings of anger can lead to aggression and violence. Students can also struggle to make good choices when they experience strong feelings of sadness, jealousy, anxiety, or even happiness.

This week we started our Stepping Up lessons about managing emotions. Your student is learning the Steps for Staying in Control of strong emotions. Students are learning that emotions come from one part of their brain, but that they also have a thinking part of their brain that helps them stay in control.

The Steps for Staying in Control are:

Notice. Recognize your physical and mental signs.

Pause. Use your signal.

Think twice. Use your brain.

Calm down if necessary. Use your calming-down strategies.

Reflect. How did you do?

Ask your student about the steps. Help your student remember to pause and think twice before doing something he or she might regret.

The strategies for calming down are useful for anyone, adult or teen. They are:

Doing something physically active

Doing something relaxing

Thinking about something else (like counting to ten)

Using centered breathing

Using positive self-talk

Ask your student to show you how these work!

Staying in control helps students get along with others and focus on their schoolwork. Both of these things help them be more successful in school. Thank you for your support in creating a successful learning environment for your student.

Sincerely,

P.S. Make sure to join www.secondstep.org with the activation key **SSP6 FAMI LY12** to watch videos about the *Second Step* program and get information about what your student is learning.

Name: _____

Something happened between you and your friend. You get angry. You start to lose control. What do you do? You need to talk—to yourself! Instead of just reacting, you can use positive self-talk. It's a great way to start thinking clearly in an emotional situation. It's so great, in fact, that you should tell an adult about it!

Explain the Steps for Staying in Control to an adult family member. Then ask him or her the following questions about what makes him or her angry, how it makes him or her feel, and what things he or she might say to himself or herself to calm down. Then tell the adult how you'd respond to the same questions. Use the space below to record both of your thoughts.

Staying in Control**Notice.** Recognize your physical and mental signs.**Pause.** Use your signal.**Think twice.** Use your brain.**Calm down if necessary.** Use your calming-down strategies.**Reflect.** How did you do?

	Adult	You
When do you get angry?		
How can you tell when you're mad?		
What are some things you might say to yourself to calm down when you're mad? Think of as many things as you can!		

This homework assignment was completed on _____ (date) _____ [adult] signature

Name: _____

You are an emotion coach. Just as an athletic coach teaches skills, encourages, and gives feedback to athletes, you will need to do the same thing with your “emotion athletes.”

The “emotion athlete” you’ll be coaching today is an adult family member. First, explain the Steps for Staying in Control. Use the poster to guide you. Next, ask the questions and go through the checklist here. Make sure you encourage and give feedback to the adult as he or she responds. Remember—you are the coach!

Staying in Control**Notice.** Recognize your physical and mental signs.**Pause.** Use your signal.**Think twice.** Use your brain.**Calm down if necessary.** Use your calming-down strategies.**Reflect.** How did you do?**Describe a situation in which you often feel angry.****When you get angry, what are your physical and mental signs?**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heart beats faster | <input type="checkbox"/> Stomach hurts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breathing gets more rapid | <input type="checkbox"/> Headache |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hard to think straight | <input type="checkbox"/> Muscle tension |

Other: _____

What different things do you do to stay in control when you feel angry? (As a coach, you will have to explain these.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use a signal to pause the action | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Think twice | <input type="checkbox"/> Think about something else |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Positive self-talk | <input type="checkbox"/> Do something relaxing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Centered breathing | |

Other: _____

Write a brief comment on what your athlete knows about managing his or her emotions. Give suggestions if he or she needs more practice!

Comments and suggestions: _____

This homework assignment was completed on _____ (date)

[adult] signature

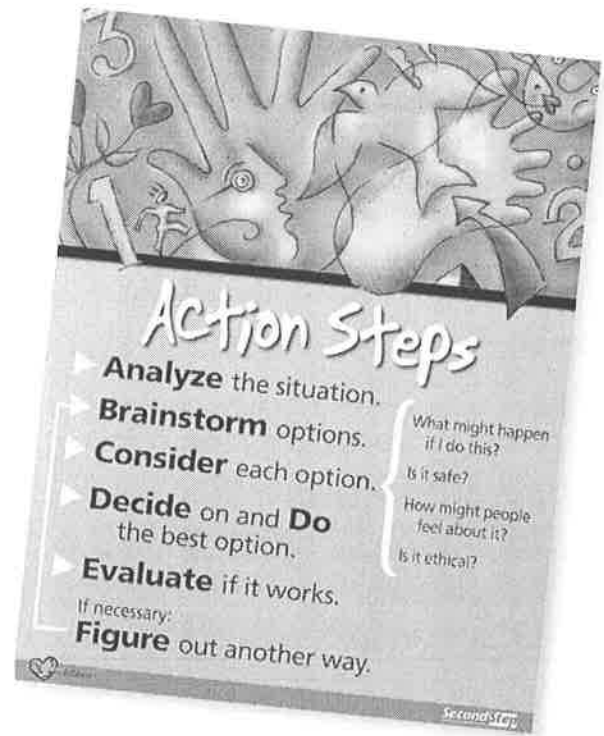


Dear Family,

As young people grow up, they are faced with more complex situations to deal with. Problems can arise with friends, at school, and at home. Addressing problems in a thoughtful way is an important life skill.

The next theme in the Stepping Up program is solving problems in everyday life. These can be any kind of problems, including those involving other people. The students are learning a process for solving problems called the Action Steps. The process has six parts:

- A: Analyze the situation.
- B: Brainstorm options.
- C: Consider each option.
- D: Decide on and Do the best option.
- E: Evaluate if it works.
- If necessary:*
- F: Figure out another way.



When students analyze a situation, they are learning to really think about the other person's perspective—how that person feels and what he or she might need or want. They are realizing that problems often arise when two people see things differently and need or want different things.

The Action Steps help students respectfully solve problems with others. Students who can solve problems in a peaceful way are more successful in school. They can use the Action Steps now in school or later in the workplace.

Try it out at home. Next time you have a problem, ask your student to use the Action Steps with you to solve the problem. The back of this letter has a form you can use that will guide you through the Action Steps.

Sincerely,

P.S. Make sure to join www.secondstep.org with the activation key **SSP6 FAMI LY12** to watch videos about the *Second Step* program and get information about what your student is learning.

Action Steps

Analyze the situation.

What is the problem? _____

How do I feel? _____

What do I need or want? _____

Do I need more information? _____

Brainstorm options (without first judging them as good or bad).

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Consider each option.

What might happen if I do this? _____

Is it safe? _____

How might people feel about it? _____

Is it ethical? _____

Decide on the best option.

The best option is _____

Do the best option. Create a plan.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Evaluate if it works.

If necessary:

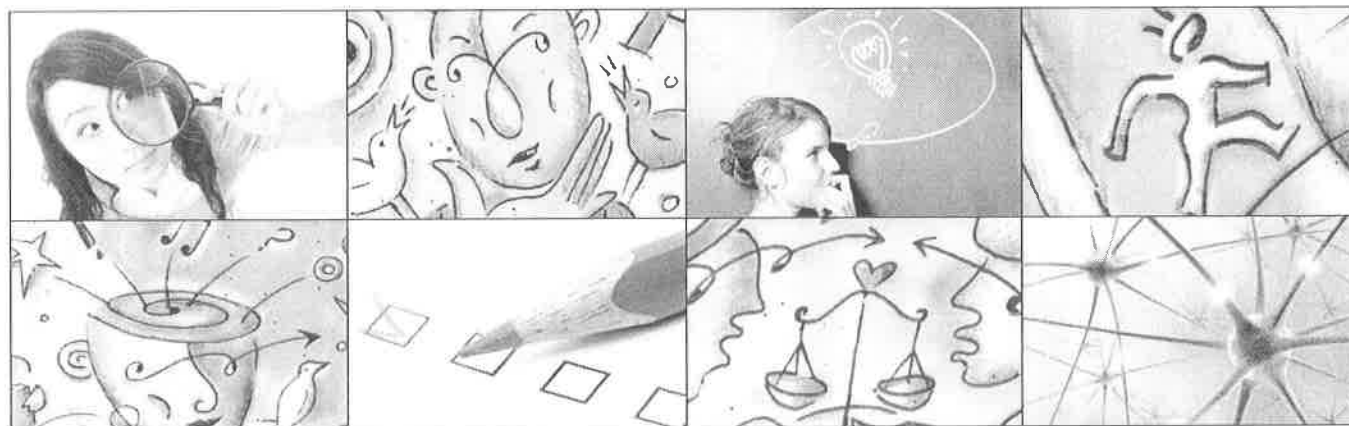
Figure out another way.

Name: _____

When you've got a problem, what do you do? Take Action! Action Steps, that is. What are the Action Steps? They are the steps you learned about in this lesson that help you solve problems calmly. And they work for adults too! Show the Action Steps below to an adult family member. Then cut apart the visuals below and glue the ones you and the adult think best match each Action Step. Are you ready to take action? Go!

<p>Analyze the situation.</p>	<p>Brainstorm options.</p>
<p>Consider each option.</p>	<p>Decide on and Do the best option.</p>

This homework assignment was completed on _____ (date) _____ [adult] signature



Name: _____

Have you ever done something to another person that you regretted? Did you wish you could just take it all back? It may be too late to take it back, but it's not too late to make amends. Making amends is more than saying you're sorry. Making amends is trying to make things better between you and the person you hurt. But like so many other things, learning how to make amends takes practice.

Think of a time when something you said or did hurt a friend or sibling. With an adult family member, figure out a plan to make amends. Analyze the situation and what you can do about it in the space below. When you're done, practice your best option with that family member.

1. Analyze the situation.

What was the problem? _____

How did you feel? _____

How do you think your friend felt? _____

2. Brainstorm options for making amends.

3. Consider each option.

What might happen if I do this? _____

Is it safe? _____

How might people feel about it? _____

Is it ethical? _____

4. Decide on the best option. _____

5. Do the best option. Create a plan.

6. Practice your plan with an adult.

This homework assignment was completed on _____ (date) _____ [adult] signature



Dear Family,

Middle school is often a time when students first hear about using alcohol and other drugs, see it happening, or begin to experiment themselves. To keep your student safe and on track at school, we have started the final topic in the Stepping Up program: substance abuse prevention. When young people use alcohol or other drugs, it gets in the way of school success, and it is linked to increased involvement in violence and other risky behaviors.

New brain studies show that during their teenage years and into their twenties, young people's brains are still developing. These studies show that using alcohol or other drugs at this time has a far more damaging effect than it does on an adult's brain.

The good news is that studies also show that families can play a big role in preventing the use of alcohol and other drugs by young people.

Here are five things you can do to make a difference:

1. Give your student a clear message that it is not okay to drink or use other drugs. Discuss personal, family, social, or religious values that give your student reasons not to use.
2. Arrange for supervision for your student between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Research suggests that these are the peak hours for teen drug and alcohol use.
3. Get to know your student's friends and their families. You can help each other keep your students safe.
4. Help your student make a plan for how he or she might avoid or resist both internal and external pressure to use.
5. Make sure an adult is supervising any party your student attends.

Please be aware that students often get alcohol and other drugs, especially inhalants, from their own homes. See our Web site at www.cfchildren.org/resources for links to information about what household items are most toxic.

Your student will be bringing home fact sheets about the personal, health, and social consequences of using alcohol and other drugs. Please read through these facts with your student. Together we can help keep your student safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

P.S. Make sure to join www.secondstep.org with the activation key **SSP6 FAMI LY12** to watch videos about the *Second Step* program and get information about what your student is learning.

Name: _____

There are many reasons not to use tobacco and marijuana—just take a look at your fact sheets! These are important facts. They're so important that you need to show them to an adult family member.

After reading the tobacco and marijuana fact sheets together, find out what the *adult's* reasons are for *you* not to use tobacco and marijuana. Ask the adult the following questions. Write his or her answers in the spaces below. He or she can use any of the facts from the fact sheets to answer.

1. What are three reasons why you don't want me to use tobacco?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2. Why are these your reasons?

3. What are three reasons why you don't want me to use marijuana?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. Why are these your reasons?

This homework assignment was completed on _____, _____
(date) [adult] signature

Name: _____

You know it's a bad idea to use alcohol and inhalants, and you've got your reasons. But why does your family think it's a bad idea for you to use alcohol and inhalants? Find out!

Read the alcohol and inhalants fact sheets with an adult family member. Then ask the adult the following questions. Write his or her answers in the spaces below. He or she can use any of the facts from the fact sheets to answer.

1. What are three reasons why you don't want me to use alcohol?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2. Why are these your reasons?

3. What are three reasons why you don't want me to use inhalants?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. Why are these your reasons?

This homework assignment was completed on _____ (date) _____ [adult] signature

Name: _____

You have lots of hopes and plans for the future. Some of your plans are short-term—like you want to get through the day without getting angry. Other plans are long-term—like you want to graduate from high school and get a good job. But whatever your plans are, you don't want alcohol and other drugs to get in the way of accomplishing them. And neither do the adults who care about your future.

In the space below, list some of your hopes and plans. Then describe what might happen to those hopes and plans if you use alcohol or other drugs. Next, find out how an adult in your life might feel if alcohol or other drugs interfered with your hopes and plans. Adults have hopes and plans for you, too!

The hope/plan: Before the end of the year, I would like to _____.
If I use alcohol or other drugs, what might happen to this hope/plan?

Ask the adult: How would you feel if my use of alcohol or other drugs interfered with this hope/plan?

The hope/plan: I'm trying to improve _____.
If I use alcohol or other drugs, what might happen to this hope/plan?

Ask the adult: How would you feel if my use of alcohol or other drugs interfered with this hope/plan?

The hope/plan: By the end of middle school, I would like to _____.
If I use alcohol or other drugs, what might happen to this hope/plan?

Ask the adult: How would you feel if my use of alcohol or other drugs interfered with this hope/plan?

Ask the adult: What are your hopes and plans for me?

Ask the adult: If I use alcohol or other drugs, how would it interfere with your hopes and plans for me?

This homework assignment was completed on _____ (date) _____ [adult] signature