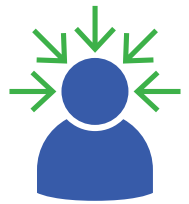


MODULE

4

“let’s talk”

PERSONAL INFLUENCES



LEARNING GOALS

During this module, participants will:

- Identify how personal values, principles, and beliefs affect our decision-making.
- Identify influential people, both positive and negative, and discuss why these people are influential.
- Reflect on the role of influential people in decision-making.

DEFINE THE ISSUE

Who can *you* count on in times of crisis? Who would offer to mediate a difficult conversation between you and your parent/guardian? Who would welcome you into their home at a moment's notice if you were out on the street?

In times of crisis, youth need to feel they can turn to someone—or *something*—for support. Whether it is a friend, a family member, or a hobby, youth must have options that provide comfort, support, and an outlet for difficult emotions. However, the reality is that not everyone in our lives has our best interests in mind.


Module 4 asks participants to identify influential people, both positive and negative, and the role these people play in a decision-making process. Participants will also use the concept of a personal shield to brainstorm methods to strengthen their overall health.

ICONS

For further details, see the Introduction Module.



MODULE ACTIVITIES

	ACTIVITY	TIME	METHODOLOGY
	A. Personal Shield	20 minutes	Activity/Discussion
	B. Who's on Your Bus?	25 minutes	Activity/Discussion
	Total time required: 45 minutes		

MATERIALS

- Poster paper or chalk/dry-erase board
- Markers or chalk
- Blank paper
- Glue or tape
- Scissors
- “Four Qualities of Life” handout
- “Personal Shield” worksheet
- “Who’s on Your Bus?” worksheet



Consider showing the companion film *American Street Kid*.



Contact the NRS Prevention & Youth Engagement Specialist at **773-289-1723** or prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org for support and technical assistance.

ACTIVITY 4A

PERSONAL SHIELD



20 minutes

INTRODUCE the topic of personal shields.

STATE For many, a common way to deal with a difficult situation is to withhold emotion as a way of protecting themselves. This can be expressed figuratively as “to shield an emotion”. In this activity, we’re going to think about these figurative emotional shields as actual, physical ones, and identify the factors that compose your personal shield that build resiliency.

Each person’s shield is unique and created from their life experiences, support systems, and learned coping mechanisms. In this activity, we will focus on four areas that build and strengthen our shields; our physical, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being.

ASK First, let’s talk about physical health. What do you think of when I say “physical health”?

ALLOW 1-2 minutes for responses.

STATE Physical health also includes a combination of many factors, such as nutrition, exercise, prevention of disease, and strength.

ASK In what ways do the other areas of our shield (emotional, spiritual, and social well-being) effect our physical health?

ALLOW 1-2 minutes for responses.

ASK Maintaining our emotional health is just as important as our caring for our physical health. How do you practice care for your emotional health?

ALLOW 1-2 minutes for responses.

STATE Emotional health also includes the capacity to live a full, creative life; the flexibility to deal with life’s stressors and challenges; and the ability to enjoy life and have balance.

ASK How does the way we care for our emotional health and well-being impact other areas of our shield?

ALLOW 1-2 minutes for responses.

ACTIVITY 4A →

STATE Another important part of maintaining a good quality of life is spiritual health. Usually, when people are asked to describe what spirituality means to them, there are a number of different answers. That is because spirituality is a broad term that may have a unique meaning to each individual.

ASK What does spirituality mean to you?

ALLOW 1-2 minutes for responses.

STATE As we can see from our answers, spirituality includes a range of many different beliefs or values that are important to each of us. For example, some define spirituality as a belief in a spirit or higher meaning, this is not always the case and spirituality and religion can be separate. Spirituality can also include what we value in life. For example, finding meaning in life, making sense of situations, and developing a better understanding of who one is as an individual.

ASK Finally, let's talk about social health. What does being socially healthy mean to you?

ALLOW 1-2 minutes for responses.

STATE Social health also includes having access to support and services to maintain positive well-being. Maintaining healthy relationships, such as those with friends, family, and other members of one's community, is also a good way to have social health.

HAND OUT "Four Qualities of Life" handouts and "Personal Shield" worksheets.

READ directions to the worksheet:

Fill in the blanks with four actions you would take to strengthen your personal shield. Do not worry about spelling or complete sentences.

ALLOW 5 minutes for participants to fill out their "Personal Shield" worksheets.

HAVE participants create an individual crest or drawing in the middle of the shield, if time permits.

ASK Would anyone like to share some of the items you listed on your shield?

DISCUSS responses.

ASK Do you have any questions or comments?

DISCUSS responses.

FOUR QUALITIES OF LIFE

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Physical health can include a combination of many factors, such as nutrition, exercise, prevention of disease, sexual health, and strength.

EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Emotional health can include the capacity to live a full, creative life; the flexibility to deal with life's stressors/challenges; and the ability to enjoy life and have balance.

SPIRITUAL HEALTH

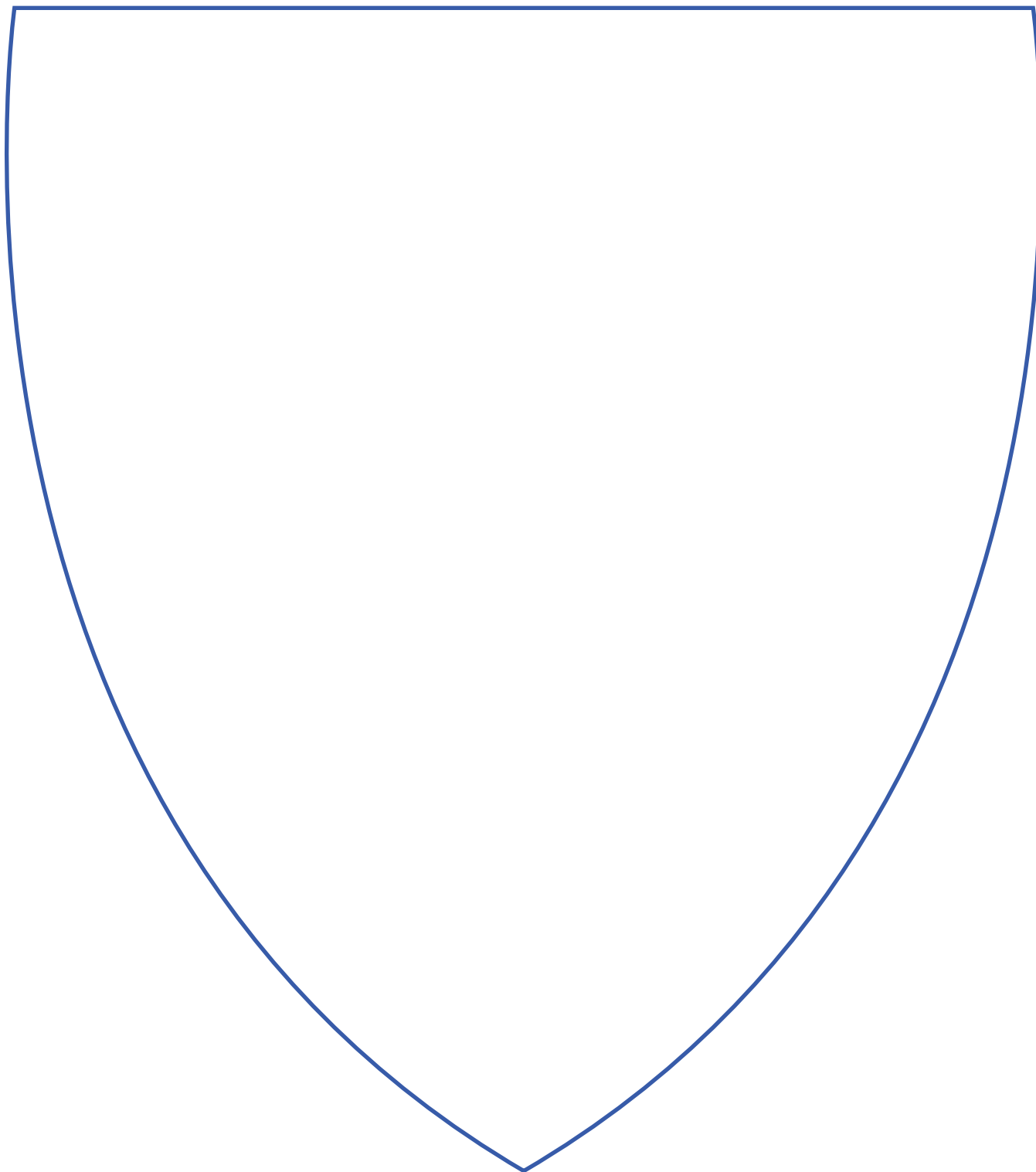
Spiritual health can include a range of many different beliefs or values that are important to each of us. Some define spirituality as a belief in a spirit or higher meaning. Spirituality can also include what we value in life. For example, finding meaning in life, making sense of situations, and developing a better understanding of who one is as an individual.

SOCIAL HEALTH

Social health can include having access to support and services in order to maintain positive well-being. Maintaining healthy relationships, such as with friends, family, and other members of your community, is also a good way to have social health.

PERSONAL SHIELD

What can I do to strengthen my personal shield? Create your own shield.



ACTIVITY 4B

WHO'S ON YOUR BUS?



25 minutes

INTRODUCE the topic of “Who’s on Your Bus?”

STATE In the first activity in this module, we identified aspects of our personal shield that help us be resilient under challenging circumstances. Now we’re going to look more closely at the relationships we hold close to us, and how they impact our lives. The people closest to us have the ability to influence our well-being and decision making in ways that other people in our lives may not. This influence can be positive or negative, supportive or manipulative. It is important to evaluate the influential people in our lives for this reason.

Influential people may include parents, peers, family members, schools, youth groups, faith communities, and dating partners. The people closest to us can impact our ideas, interests, the decisions we make, and how we approach conflict. In this activity, we will think about and identify the people or groups of people who are influential to us, and if their influence is positive or negative to our well-being.

HAND OUT “Who’s on Your Bus?” worksheets.

STATE We are each responsible for the decisions we make and their consequences. In life, you have ability to decide where, what, and who you become. You are in the driver’s seat. Life does not come with a road map, and there will be unexpected turns and stops as we travel our own ways. In this activity we will explore the people in our lives we trust to help us when it is time to make a difficult decision, or we are in a crisis.

HAVE participants write their name on the line beneath the picture of the bus.

ASK If you could fill a bus with the people or groups of people in your life who are most important when it comes to making decisions about your life, who would be on that bus?

ALLOW responses.

STATE Please create more seats if there are others you would like to invite on your bus.

HAVE participants fill in each “bus seat” (represented by the oval) with a person/group that is most important in their lives, such as family, friends, teachers, significant others/partners, etc. Ask participants to include only people (e.g., no pets, inanimate objects).

STATE As always, sharing your work is completely optional. Would anyone like to share who they’ve invited to be on their bus?

ALLOW responses.

ACTIVITY 4B →

ACTIVITY 4B CONTINUED

STATE We are now going to spend some time reflecting on the people we identified as influential to us and explore the dynamics of our relationship with these people. Again, influential people in our lives can have positive or negative, supportive or manipulative impacts on our decision making and personal awareness. It is important to evaluate the influential people in our lives for this reason.

ASK Ask the following questions to the group, and allow for answers.

- Who are the people/groups on your bus?
- Why are they important to you?
- Are there some that have more influence than others?
- Are these people/groups you can count on when you are in trouble or in need?
- Do they help you make good decisions? Always? Most of the time? Sometimes? Never?
- Do you feel good about the decisions they help you make? What does that mean for you?

If you had to list these people/groups (e.g., parents, friends, etc.) in order of importance, who would come first? Second? And so on . . .

STATE We all invited different people/groups to be on our buses. Each of these people/groups plays a different role in helping us make decisions.

If at any time you'd like to talk about a decision you're considering, feel free to contact the National Runaway Safeline at 1-800-RUNAWAY or 1800RUNAWAY.org.

ASK Do you have any questions or comments?

DISCUSS responses.

WHO'S ON YOUR BUS?

Directions: Fill in each “bus seat” (represented by the boxes) with each person/group who is most important in your life, such as family, friends, teachers, and significant others. Please include only people (for example, no pets and inanimate objects). You can create as many “bus seats” as needed.

PHYSICAL

EMOTIONAL



SPIRITUAL

SOCIAL

ACTIVITY 4

SUMMARY

STATE Now I'd like to summarize the key points from this session.

- A shield can be anything that protects us from harm.
- Each person's shield is unique and created from their life experiences, support systems, and learned coping mechanisms. In this module, we focused on four areas that build and strengthen our shields; our physical, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being.
- Our physical, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being impact each other.
- "Influential people" who are most important in our lives may include parents, peers, family members, schools, youth groups, faith communities, and significant others/ partners.
- When we think of people who are influential to us, it is important to examine our relationship with them, and if they are someone who we can count on when we are in trouble or in need, help us make good decisions, or make us feel good about the decisions we make.

HANDOUTS AND WORKSHEETS

- A. Four Qualities of Life
- B. Personal Shield
- C. Who's on Your Bus?

REFERENCES

- Doll, M., Neubauer, L.C., Robles-Schrader, G.M., Gehle, J.L., & Harper, G.W. (2004). *Teen talk: A repeat pregnancy prevention and parenting skills intervention for female adolescents*. Project VIDA and Access Community Health Network.
- Harper G., Neubauer, L., Bangi A., Murphy, A., Crowell, B., Wanjiku E., O'Callahan E., Mburu M., & Mwangi P. (2006, August). *Addressing the HIV prevention needs of rural Kenyan youth: The power of peers*. Poster presented at the XVI International AIDS Conference, Toronto, Canada.
- Harper, G.W., Neubauer, L.C., Murphy, A., Bangi, A.C., & Crowell, B. (2006). *CHAT: Communicating about HIV and AIDS together*. An HIV prevention program for Kenyan youth developed by DePaul University.
- National Runaway Switchboard. (2001). *Runaway prevention curriculum* for classroom and community educators. Chicago, IL: NRS.

RESOURCES

- National Runaway Safeline (NRS), the federally designated national communication system for runaway and homeless youth, provides crisis intervention through its 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline and 1800RUNAWAY.org online services. NRS provides youth and families in crisis with support and access to resources 24 hours a day, 365 days a year (<http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org>).
- The Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, Family and Youth Services Bureau provides positive youth development information (<https://www.rhyttac.net/>).
- The Trauma Informed Care Project offers resources to educate about the impact of trauma (<http://www.traumainformedcareproject.org/resources.php>).