
Young Women's Lives



Building Self-Awareness for Life

A Multi-Session Curriculum for
Young Women, Ages 14–19

From
HAZELDEN



What is *Young Women's Lives*?

Young Women's Lives: Building Self-Awareness for Life is a program for young women ages fourteen to nineteen. It is designed to celebrate and enhance their strength, experience, creativity, and intelligence.

It is a group curriculum for young women working together to curtail destructive behavior, to support one another's successes, and to connect to the ongoing struggles of women in this country for greater equality, opportunity, and social justice. The curriculum is also designed to assist young women in reducing the negative impact of interpersonal and institutional violence.

Working through the sessions will help young women establish lives based on personal strength, self-confidence, connection to others, and involvement in community efforts to diminish violence against women.

The curriculum includes 21, 45 to 50 minute sessions, but shorter programs are also recommended. The *Young Women's Lives* program includes the following components:

Facilitator's Guide

Use this simple, straightforward, and comprehensive manual to get started in implementing a *Young Women's Lives* program. This manual provides background information on the topics covered in the curriculum, implementation ideas, and step-by-step session outlines.

Teen Handbook

This handbook serves as a journal for young women to work through as they participate in the program.

Video

This video examines the social and cultural messages about gender and challenges the ideas about violence, power, and control.

Wallet Cards

Pocket- or purse-sized cards feature an encouraging message and space to write down the names and numbers of supportive people

Posters

These posters reinforce major themes from *Young Women's Lives*: The Ally Pledge, The Anger Pledge, and Celebrate Our Lives

With Whom Would You Use *Young Women's Lives*?

The young women may come from a variety of settings: your school, a recreation program, a treatment program, or a juvenile detention center. They may be youth leaders, “problem” youth, athletes, mothers, survivors of incest, runaways, or part of a girl’s program.

Despite the diversity of their backgrounds, and whether they have been identified as “in trouble” or not, they all have one thing in common—they are young women trying to build their lives in a society that fails to provide adequately for their safety, healing, education, growth, and personal or emotional health.

Drawing on the strength, understanding, and experience of many young women, this curriculum will help the members of your group look at, heal from, and overcome the effects of the hurts, limitations, and abuse that most young women experience.

What Are the Goals of the Program?

Young Women's Lives has two primary goals:

1. To create a safe place for young women to talk, speak for themselves, hear themselves, hear one another, hear the voices of women in the community and in history, and to do so in the presence of at least one adult who is listening with respectful, caring and loving attention.
2. To help young women, both individually and collectively, develop resistance strategies to meet the difficult challenges they face in a society that does not always take their best interests into account.

What Is the Focus of Each Lesson?

Part 1: Foundations

Session 1: Who Are We?

Session 2: Healing the Heart

Session 3: Power, Violence and Allies

Session 4: Getting By: Women, Class and Money

Part 2: Taking Care of Ourselves

Session 5: The Good-Girl Box

Session 6: Different and Beautiful Bodies

Session 7: Reclaiming Our Bodies

Session 8: Feelings

Session 9: Anger

Session 10: Can a Girl or Woman Be a Bully?

Session 11: Becoming Allies to Ourselves

Part 3: Resisting Male Violence

Session 12: Men

Session 13: Dealing with Male Violence

Session 14: Sexual Harassment

Session 15: Sexual Assault

Part 4: Putting It All Together

Session 16: My Future

Session 17: Starting Where You Are

Session 18: Creating Relationships

Session 19: Women Loving Women, Resisting Homophobia

Session 20: Creating Family

Session 21: Saying Goodbye

Curriculum Scope & Sequence

Session Title	Learner Outcomes
	This session will enable young women to:
Session 1: Who Are We?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • begin to establish safety with one another • commit to the agreements • describe and take pride in their ethnic/racial history • identify the strengths and achievements of their foremothers
Session 2: Healing the Heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand that people are born strong and resilient, that they get hurt and suffer consequences, and that they can heal • describe how they have been abused, hurt, or mistreated and how that has affected them • recognize and value a woman or girl who has helped them heal
Session 3: Power, Violence and Allies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the social framework of power and violence • describe the cycle of violence • give examples of group resistance to violence • describe and give examples of what it means to be an ally
Session 4: Getting By: Women, Class and Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand how the class structure operates in this country • find their own place on the Economic Pyramid • understand the impact of economic discrimination on women • understand how women have resisted and created survival strategies • identify strategies for sharing resources and supporting one another • celebrate women’s role in challenging the Economic Pyramid
Session 5: The Good-Girl Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • remember and discuss any negative messages they may have received early on in life about being girls • reclaim their voices and abilities to name what they don’t like about what is expected of them • describe and understand how the “Good-Girl Box” works • recognize how women get blamed and how they may have blamed themselves
Session 6: Different and Beautiful Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the costs of living in the box • understand the pressure to have a “perfect” body • discover and explore the strength in their own bodies • begin to challenge mainstream beauty standards by noticing differences and by affirming their bodies and their beauty

Curriculum Scope & Sequence (continued)

Session Title	Learner Outcomes
	This session will enable young women to:
Session 7: Reclaiming Your Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relate the “Good-Girl Box” to concerns about body image • describe eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia • define and identify “body attacks” • commit to being allies to other women against body attacks • affirm their own bodies in their present forms • identify the reasons for self-destructive behavior in girls and young women
Session 8: Feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the importance of feelings • identify ways to express an intense feeling • begin to express a difficult feeling through drawing • realize that they are neither crazy nor alone in feeling crazy • identify and accept the confusion they feel when their experiences are not validated by others • identify the process through which women are labeled crazy or out of control • discover new non-negative ways of talking about women’s experiences
Session 9: Anger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify how anger works in their lives • recognize the value of anger • recognize the destructive possibility of anger • commit to the first part of the Anger Pledge
Session 10: Can a Girl or Woman Be a Bully?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify basic reasons that people resort to force to get what they need • identify a time they may have been bullies • identify the gains and costs of being a bully • use alternative ways to get what they need
Session 11: Becoming Allies to Ourselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify self-destructive behavior • recognize how people use drugs to numb feelings • understand the effects of substance abuse on individuals • understand the effects of substance abuse on a community • make the connection between substance abuse and vulnerability to violence

Curriculum Scope & Sequence (continued)

Session Title	Learner Outcomes
	This session will enable young women to:
Session 12: Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand how boys are trained to be men • understand the role of violence in men’s lives • describe what they need for men to be their allies
Session 13: Dealing with Male Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the dynamics of relationship violence • understand how women get blamed for violence • begin to prepare to deal with male violence • identify ways in which women can help other women
Session 14: Sexual Harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define and recognize sexual harassment • develop strategies to resist sexual harassment • develop strategies to resist street harassment
Session 15: Sexual Assault	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss and recognize sexual assault • recognize the effects of sexual assault • understand the broader connections between forms of male violence against women • resist blaming themselves and other women for male violence • join other women in fighting to end all forms of male violence • act as allies to women who have been assaulted
Session 16: My Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • think about plans for the future • recognize and value their personal strengths • begin thinking of job and educational possibilities • connect family planning to education and job opportunities
Session 17: Starting Where You Are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the support and safety as well as the obstacles they face in their current situations • decide how to best further their plans • strategize about actions to support young women • recognize and deal with resistance to their success
Session 18: Creating Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify what brings them pleasure • recognize their right to intimacy • understand their personal conditions for intimacy • discuss aspects of women’s sexuality and how it is socially constructed • design healthy conditions for being intimate with another person

Curriculum Scope & Sequence (continued)

Session Title	Learner Outcomes
	This session will enable young women to:
Session 19: Women Loving Women, Resisting Homophobia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the range of human sexual diversity • define homophobia • identify and counter pressure to “keep a man at all costs” and downplay the importance of friendships with women • recognize and acknowledge the ways women support one another • strategize about how to respond to homophobia
Session 20: Creating Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acknowledge the diversity of families in the world • describe characteristics of both supportive and unsupportive families • describe the kind of family they want to create • identify the positive and negative pressures to have children • identify their own reasons for having or not having children
Session 21: Saying Goodbye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe and give examples of what it means to be an ally • commit to the Ally Pledge • begin to take responsibility for being allies to younger sisters • conclude the group experience on a positive note

Meeting National Academic Standards With the *Young Women's Lives* Program**

Using the *Young Women's Lives* program, you will meet the following standards:

Health Education Standards (Grades 7–8):

- understands how peer relationships affect health (e.g., name calling, prejudice)
- understands how various messages from the media, technology, and other sources impact health practices
- knows strategies to manage stress and feelings caused by disappointment, separation, or loss
- knows characteristics and conditions associated with positive self-esteem
- knows appropriate ways to build and maintain positive relationships with peers, parents and other adults
- understands the difference between safe and risky or harmful behaviors in relationships
- knows techniques for seeking help and support through appropriate resources
- knows potential signs of self- and other-directed violence
- knows the various possible causes of conflict among youth in schools and communities, and strategies to prevent conflict in these situations
- knows how refusal and negotiation skills can be used to enhance health
- knows eating disorders that affect health adversely (e.g., anorexia, overeating, bulimia)
- knows conditions that may put people at higher risk for substance abuse problems
- knows factors involved in the development of drug dependency and the early, observable signs and symptoms
- knows the short- and long-term consequences of the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- knows strategies for coping with concerns and stress related to the changes that occur during adolescence.

Health Education Standards (Grades 9–12):

- understands methods to facilitate the transition from the role of a child to the role of an independent adult in the family
- knows skills to communicate effectively with family, friends, and others, and the effects of open and honest communication
- knows strategies for coping with and overcoming feelings of rejection, social isolation, and other forms of stress
- knows possible causes of conflicts in schools, families, and communities, and strategies to prevent conflict in these situations
- knows strategies for solving interpersonal conflicts without harming self or others
- knows how refusal, negotiation, and collaboration skills can be used to avoid potentially harmful situations
- understands the short- and long-term consequences of safe, risky, and harmful behaviors
- knows the short- and long-term effects associated with the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- knows how the abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs often plays a role in dangerous behavior and can have adverse consequences on the community
- understands that alcohol, tobacco, and other drug dependencies are treatable diseases/conditions
- understands how physical, mental, social, and cultural factors influence attitudes and behaviors regarding sexuality

Life Skills Standards (Grades 7–12):

- identifies alternative courses of action and predicts likely consequences of each
- selects the most appropriate strategy or alternative for solving a problem
- examines different alternatives for resolving local problems and compares the possible consequences of each alternative
- challenges group practices that are not working
- demonstrates respect for others in the group
- identifies and deals with causes of conflict in a group
- determines the causes of conflicts
- displays empathy for others
- displays friendliness and politeness with others
- uses emotion appropriately in personal dialogues
- avoids overreacting to criticism

**Standards are taken from Kendall, John S. and Robert J. Marzano, *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education (3rd Edition)*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (MCREL), 2000.