

# Life at the CrossRoads

Curriculum Overview

Life Skills for Character Development: 3rd Edition

Transforming Communities with

Hope | Life | Truth



CrossRoads

# **Life at the CrossRoads Curriculum Overview**

## **Life Skills for Character Development: 3rd Edition**

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# Introduction

This curriculum is a tool for educators and other community-based instructors. It is designed to help students internalize positive values and develop skills that can guide them to become good decision makers, responsible for their personal health and well-being. *Life at the CrossRoads* reinforces what most parents and guardians teach in the home. Since sexual abstinence and fidelity are values consistent with prevailing cultural, religious, and ethical norms on a global level, *Life at the CrossRoads* assists parents and guardians as they guide their young adults through the maze of dangers that face them today—HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and other drug use, and ever-increasing youth violence.

Uniquely designed to foster communication and strengthen relationships between adolescents and adults, the lessons in *Life at the CrossRoads* motivate young people to become persons of character. The curriculum focuses on what it means to be a person of character and how character is essential for a healthy life and fulfilling relationships. The lessons focus on imparting knowledge, fostering proper attitudes, and developing skills that help adolescents stand up against peer pressure and say “no” with confidence and tact. Discussions regarding how to deal with failure, finding courage to move toward success, and planning for the future help young people look at life realistically yet with vision.

*Life at the CrossRoads* facilitates dialog between adolescents and the significant adults in their lives. Both the curriculum and the strategy explore issues that are essential to attitudinal and behavioral change and challenge media ideologies that so profoundly shape youth in the 21st century. The curriculum challenges students to consider making life decisions based on values deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian thought, yet are consistent with “prevailing cultural and religious norms and ethics.”

# Curriculum Overview

## An International Curriculum

*Life at the CrossRoads* was designed to be adapted to different cultural settings. Stories, proverbs, and activities were collected from around the world and are reflected in these pages. The curriculum has been translated into more than sixteen languages and has been introduced in more than 60 countries worldwide. Nearly 4 million students in Central America, South America, Western and Eastern Europe, Africa, and throughout Asia have gone through lessons in the curriculum.

## Target Audience

While the target audience for *Life at the CrossRoads* is 12- to 15-year-old students, the curriculum is in use in just as many senior high/secondary school classrooms. The curriculum has been adapted for use in some university settings where educators have reported successful use of many of the lessons and activities in a higher education setting. Some schools have even taught the lessons to interested parents. Relationships, character, and decision-making skills cut across age groups. Skilled teachers can teach the key concepts while easily adapting the activities and discussions to make them age appropriate for their students.

Younger children can benefit from *Life at the CrossRoads* too. Many teachers have adapted the concepts and used the curriculum with early and late primary school-aged children. Some parents have taught selected lessons to their young children and their friends. Discernment and caution are advised where content may be inappropriate for younger students.

# Curriculum Overview continued

## Content

There are five units in the curriculum: Relationships, The Character Connection, Sex in Perspective, Life Skills, and Navigating Your Future.

### Unit 1: Relationships

Our lives are profoundly affected by our relationships—relationships with parents, siblings, other family members, friends, marriage partners, neighbors. Some relationships are naturally a part of our lives, such as our relationships with parents and siblings. Other relationships are formed as a result of the choices we make, like our friendships and marriage partners. The types of relationships we choose can have a significant impact on the decisions we make for our lives. In this unit, students learn the importance of strong relationships, explore how to carefully choose friends, and discover how to be a friend who supports good decision making.

### Unit 2: The Character Connection

In this unit, students examine the answers to important questions that will help determine the quality of their relationships, such as: Can your friend be trusted to do what he or she says? Can you? Do you show respect for others? Are you responsible? Are you kind? Do you treat others fairly? What contribution are you willing to make to the larger community in which you live and play? Good character and the decision to consistently make good choices are presented as the best foundation for healthy relationships and for making wise choices in difficult situations. Students will learn what it means to act with good character and will discover that the development of good character takes time and courage.

# Curriculum Overview continued

## **Unit 3: Sex in Perspective**

Sex involves the total person—the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of one’s life. Sex in the presence of good character can create a beautiful, unbreakable bond between two people. The absence of good character can have the exact opposite effect—destroying relationships and causing physical, emotional, and spiritual harm. This unit helps adolescents evaluate the purposes of sex and the appropriate context for a sexual relationship. Sexually transmitted infections, especially HIV/AIDS, are addressed in detail. Because strong marriages are an essential element in the fabric of a healthy society, students are encouraged to choose abstinence until marriage and fidelity within marriage. This is the best way to keep relationships and physical bodies strong and to experience the joys of a healthy sexual relationship in the future.

## **Unit 4: Life Skills**

Knowledge is power. The question this unit attempts to answer is: How will you use the power of your knowledge? In the previous units, students learned about healthy relationships and good character and considered how that knowledge applies to their sexuality. Now they are given the skills and opportunity to decide how they will act on what they know, how they will handle difficult situations, and how they will make and follow through on good character-based decisions for their lives.

## **Unit 5: Navigating Your Future**

This unit asks the question: Where will you go from here? Looking toward the future, the unit explores the courage required to act on the new knowledge gained and to follow through on decisions and make a new start. This is a very positive, encouraging unit. Through it, students examine their lives at the crossroads of decision and change, and are given confidence to navigate the future.

## Teacher Preparation

Each of the lessons in the curriculum begins with the Teacher Preparation pages. They include key information that will assist the teacher's planning and delivery of the lesson by focusing on the following elements:

- **Objectives**—specific observable behavior that students should display as a result of experiencing the lesson
- **Key Concepts**—essential information taught in the lesson
- **Key Terms**—definitions of the vocabulary for the lesson
- **Materials**—items needed to conduct the activities for the lesson
- **40-Minute Lesson Suggestions**—ideas to take the standard 50-minute lesson and reduce it to fit into a 40-minute class period
- **Background Information**—general information helpful for lesson preparation; may include additional facts related to the lesson topic or cautions for the teacher while leading the lesson
- **Questions and Answers**—answers questions students may ask during the lesson
- **Famous Quote**—relevant international quotes and proverbs that the teacher may wish to incorporate into the lesson



# Curriculum Overview continued

## Example of a Teacher Preparation



**UNIT ONE** CORE CORE Plus

# Understanding Yourself

## Teacher Preparation

### Objectives

By the end of this lesson, your students will be able to:

1. Identify the five dimensions of a person.
2. State two evidences for why each person is special and valuable.
3. Identify some of the qualities that make them unique by writing a poem about themselves.

### Key Concepts

1. I am special because I am unique.
2. I am special because I am wonderfully made.
3. Human beings are not perfect.
4. I am valuable because I am deeply loved.
5. We need to take care of special things.

### Key Terms

**Unique:** one of a kind  
**Health:** the state of complete mental, physical, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease

**2-1**

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### Materials

- Chalkboard and chalk
- 1 egg and if possible 2 or 3 dyed or decorated eggs
- Bowl
- One object that is special to you

### 40-Minute Lesson Suggestion

Reduce the amount of time given to students to write the "I

### Background Information

Adolescents with a high sense of self-worth are motivated for their future. High esteem enables them to postpone will avoid dangerous behaviors so that they can invest know they are worth the best. They know they are worth quality people.

Adolescents who have a low sense of self-worth see reason to postpone pleasure, to avoid dangerous in their education or health, or to try to change th

Some of your students may undervalue themse more accurate self-assessment. But the task is assessment of their worth that they can use a

In this lesson, we will be discussing the dim and spiritual. This is a critical theme of the discussions. Young people need to see th

### Questions Students May

**Q:** What if no one thinks I'm special?

**A:** Some of you may live in ve neglect. You may have re result, you have a difficu experience has been, yo gives you value, and no one can

**2-2**

# Curriculum Overview continued

## Example of a Lesson Plan



**Teacher's Notes**

- "I'd like to be able to swap one thing I purchased for another later on."
- "We should start with more circles."

If they do not come up with these changes themselves, ask them if they think changing the game in these ways would make it more enjoyable.

that life isn't like that. In r

- You cannot undo
- You cannot pre
- You will alwa
- Everything
- We do

This was it

Wh

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**Personal Activity**

3 minutes

**Teacher's Notes**

**Group Activity**

30 minutes

Distribute the Student Activity and Application pages.

Hold up the papers representing the two items for sale for each of the following pairs of options.

**Beginning the Lesson**

**"Spending Your Life" Game**

Today, we're going to play a game called "Spending Your Life." To begin the game, please turn to your Student Activity and Application page. You will see 10 circles on this page. Each circle represents a part of you—your time, energy, resources, interests, and identity. For the next several minutes, these 10 circles represent all the parts of who you are.

In a moment you will be given a choice to either "spend" or "save" your circles, meaning that you will be spending or saving part of yourself in each situation. Several pairs of items will be up for sale. In each pair, you can buy either item or you can choose to buy neither of the items. You cannot buy both. Of course, when you run out of circles, there is no more of you left so you can no longer buy anything. This is all the information I can give you for this game so please do not ask any questions during this activity.

Are you ready? Here are the first two items up for sale:

OPTION A	OPTION B
A nice apartment or house (1 circle)	A new car (1 circle)

Who would like to purchase one of the first two items? If you would like either item, please mark an X through one circle, and write the item you purchased in that circle.

Our next two items are:

OPTION A	OPTION B
An all-expense-paid, one-month holiday to any place in the world for you and a friend (2 circles)	The guarantee that the person you'd most like to marry right now will definitely marry you in the near future (2 circles)

Write the item you purchased in the 2 circles it cost you.

6-4



## Family Connection Pages

Parents (or aunts and uncles) have traditionally served as the sexuality educators of youth. This curriculum is designed to supplement and enhance the messages youth are receiving. Its intent is not to usurp the authority or responsibility of parents to teach their children. To this end, each lesson contains a Family Connections page that students are encouraged to take home. These pages present the key concepts of the lesson and practical suggestions for parents to enhance their efforts in the home.

As children grow older, they stop asking their parents “Why?” Although this is a normal aspect of child development, adolescents often think their parents are too busy to talk with them or that they are unapproachable. Usually, this is more the teen’s idea about their parents than reality. However, to have a continuing, positive influence on their teen, parents must look for times when their children are receptive to their instruction (sometimes called “teachable moments”) as well as structure times when they can initiate conversations. While “teachable moments” can be influenced by a parent’s interest and availability, they usually happen when a parent least expects them and can catch the parent at a time when she or he is unprepared to answer a question or respond to a child’s comment. The Family Connections page is intended to stimulate the teachable moments between parents and their teens.

Each page contains three main sections:

1. A summary that provides an overview of the lesson
2. The key concepts of the lesson
3. Family discussion activities that help apply classroom learning to individual family experience


# Curriculum Overview continued

## Example of Family Connection Pages



**Family Discussion**

- ▶ Ask your teen to explain what the “fish” and the “log” represented in the lesson.
- ▶ All parents have standards that determine what the family does and doesn’t do, where and when they go certain places, etc. Examples of this might be the time of day a meal is eaten, the books that can or cannot be read, or whether or not family chores must be completed before free time. Discuss with your teen the standards you have in one of these areas of life. Explain why you think your standards are important.
- ▶ Ask your teen to describe the standards he or she would determine in a particular area, such as a curfew, activities he or she is allowed to attend, etc. If your teen’s standards are different than your own, explain why you set your standards. If they are the same, discuss how your standards help your teen mature.



**Family Connections** **LESSON 9**


### Assuming Responsibility

**LESSON SUMMARY**

In this lesson, students explored the character quality of responsibility. They were introduced to five principles that define responsibility and were challenged to consider how ready they are to assume responsibility in each of these areas:

1. I am responsible for everything I do.
2. I am responsible for getting my own education.
3. I am responsible for treating all people with respect and consideration.
4. I am responsible for contributing to the life of my community, nation, and world.
5. I am responsible for treating the earth with care and preserving it for all time.

next four weeks. Students also discussed how acting responsibly is represented in the life of a fish, which must swim against the tide to find food and live a full life. Acting irresponsibly can be depicted by a log, which floats wherever the water will take it, assuming no control over its own destiny. Finally, students heard the story of “The King Who Lost His Supper,” which highlights the importance of personal responsibility in all areas of our lives, in small matters as well as large.



**famous quote**

“I am only one, but still I am one.  
I cannot do everything, but I can do something.  
And because I cannot do everything,  
I will not refuse to do that something I can do.  
What I can do, I ought to do, and what I ought to do,  
with God’s help, I will do.”

Edward Everett Hale

To help them become more aware of the impact of their actions, students were asked to keep a Responsibility Action Record of their responsible actions over the

9-16

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# Curriculum Overview continued

## Example of a Unit Assessment



### Unit Three: Sex in Perspective Assessment—Teacher

1. List four reasons why some people use sex for selfish reasons.  
(For curiosity; for recreation; to feel loved and popular; for expectation; or to have children.)
2. What are the benefits of practicing sexual self-control until marriage?  
(Freedom from disease; freedom from pregnancy; freedom from special love and intimacy, etc.)
3. What types of activities increase a person's chances for acquiring a sexually transmitted infection?  
(Sex with multiple persons, sex with someone who has a sexually transmitted infection involving the exchange of body fluids or infected skin.)
4. Explain why condoms are not the best answer to preventing sexually transmitted infections.  
(There is little scientific evidence showing condoms offer little to no protection against gonorrhea and syphilis; condoms offer little to no protection if they are not used correctly; people use condoms 100 percent of the time.)
5. Who is a "risky" sexual partner?  
(Any person who asks you to have sex; someone who has a sexually transmitted infection.)
6. Exactly what is defined as sexual contact?  
(Any activities between any two persons involving the exchange of body fluids or infected skin in the genital areas.)
7. List the three most common ways individuals become infected with HIV.  
(Sexual activity, intravenous drug use, sharing needles.)
8. Where is HIV found in the body and how does it get into someone else's body?  
(The virus is found in body fluids such as blood, semen, and breast milk. It is transmitted into another person's bloodstream through an exchange of body fluids or infected skin.)
9. What is the difference between a treatment and a cure of AIDS?  
(A treatment reduces or eliminates the symptoms of AIDS but does not eliminate the virus. A cure eliminates the virus that causes AIDS.)

17-30

### Unit Three: Sex in Perspective Assessment—Student Questions

1. List four reasons why some people use sex for selfish reasons.
2. What are the benefits of practicing sexual self-control until marriage?
3. What types of activities increase a person's chances for acquiring a sexually transmitted infection?
4. Explain why condoms are not the best answer to preventing sexually transmitted infections.
5. Who is a "risky" sexual partner?
6. Exactly what is defined as sexual contact?
7. List the three most common ways individuals become infected with HIV.
8. Where is HIV found in the body and how does it get into someone else's body?
9. What is the difference between a treatment and a cure of AIDS?

17-28

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# Testimonials

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"I'm very proud to be associated with CrossRoads because it is so relevant and needed in our communities. It's a very powerful tool to uplift our communities in our declining moral society."

**Dr. Ann Kleynhans**  
**Lead Trainer of Life at the Crossroads, South Africa**

”

“

"My greatest regret is that I didn't come across this curriculum at the beginning of my teaching career"

**Deputy Principal**  
**Large High School in Durbanville, Western Cape, South Africa**

”

“

"over the years, we have attended many, many trainings, but you have transformed us! “

**Teachers in Bucharest**

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