Sessions 9-14

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Session 9
Wellness and Self-Care
Who Is Your Hero?

• Think about someone you look up to as a hero. It could be someone in your personal life, a famous person, or you could even make up an imaginary hero.

• Now let's get to know each other:
  • What is your name?
  • Who is your hero?
  • What qualities does this person have that makes him or her a hero?
  • Name one way in which this hero inspires you to become a better person.
Our Purpose Here...

Why learn about wellness and self care?

- Wellness and health are important life skills.
- You are in transition! Health and mental health become key concerns.

The goals of this course are...

- To increase your knowledge and awareness of physical and mental health, and its importance to your life.
- To increase your access to support and resources.

The supplemental course

- Allows a chance to go into depth with the topics that most concern you.
- Provides more opportunities to lead and shape the course yourselves.
Format of Course

- Interactive
- Youth choice and leadership
- Training not treatment, but we are here to help.
- Involves personal content, so sharing is voluntary.
- A word on how to use and keep track of materials...
California Foster Youth: Wellness and Health Concerns

- Sex
- Mental Health/Illness
- Self-Image, Self-Worth, Body Image
- Stress
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Violence
- Relationships
- Fitness
- Physical Health
- Counseling and Support
- Life in the System

- Finances
- Personal Care and Hygiene
- Emotional Stability and Stress
- Decision Making
- Time Management
- Interpersonal Skills
- Diversity
- The Future
- Legal Issues
- Parenting Issues
- Supporting Each Other

Focus group results, Spring 2013, YESS-ILP program youth
Setting Ground Rules

• Let's make some agreements that will help us feel safe to share in this class.
Key Concepts:
Health & Well-being

• **Health**: A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. (World Health Organization)

• **Well-being**: Preventing illness and raising the quality of life; includes ability to function well in school, career, relationships, etc.
Wellspring Wellness

On a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (optimum), mark your current health level in these seven essential areas:

Social Health
How well do you interact with others? Are you able to maintain long-term friendships? Are you comfortable in new social situations and the company of others?

Mental Health
Are you open to new ideas? Do you seek out new experiences and learn new skills? What is the quality of the information and entertainment you allow into your mind?

Spiritual Health
How connected do you feel to the higher power in your life? Do you enjoy a sense of purpose and peace? Do you regularly study, meditate, pray or worship?

Physical Health
What is your physical condition? Are you receiving good nutrition, drinks plenty of water, getting regular exercise and enjoying the proper weight for your height?

Career Health
Do you like what you do for a living? Does your career reflect and advance your deepest values? Is your work meaningful and suited to your skills and interests?

Financial Health
Are you living within your means? Is your debt within manageable limits? Do you make charitable contributions and save for the future? Are you properly insured?

Family Health
Are you in a loving relationship with shared values? Do you give your family time and attention? Do you have a close connection with children, parents, and relatives?

Adapted from www.wellspringdaily.com
Key Concepts: Disease and Illness

A disordered or incorrectly functioning organ, part, structure, or system of the body resulting from the effect of genetic or developmental errors, infection, poisons, nutritional deficiency or imbalance, toxicity, or unfavorable environmental factors; illness; sickness; ailment (dictionary.com)
Set Your Goals the CHAMP Way

Challenge

*What is the challenge I am facing (what is my goal)?*

Hurdles

*What is stopping me from reaching my goal?*

Achievement

*What do I get for reaching my goal?*

Mentors

*Who can mentor me and help me reach my goal?*

Plan

*What is my plan (the steps I will take to reach my goal)?*

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One Big Thing I Learned Today:

My plans for putting the big thing I learned today into action:

What I will do:

By the following date:

Signed,
How Can We Make This Course Our Own?

• **Question:** If you could walk away from this course knowing more about just one thing, what would it be?

• **Question:** What kinds of activities do you most want to do in this course?

• **Question:** What kind of activities would you like to do, on your own or as a group, outside of class?

• **Question:** What role would you like to play in designing and carrying out these plans?
Take It Home Activities

• Change a Habit for Seven Days
• Assemble your Medical/Mental Health File
Session 10
Wellness and Self-Care
My Favorite Way to Play

• Let's get to know each other a bit better!

• Stand in a circle.

• The first person says his/her name and mimes a motion representing a favorite sport (soccer, gymnastics, basketball) or physical activity (walking, skipping, monkey bars, running, working out, etc.).

• The next person repeats the first person's name and activity, and performs the motion. This person then shares his or her own name and motion.

• The third person repeats what the other two have shared, and adds his or her own name and motion, and so on.
Take It Home Reports

- Has anyone done a “Take It Home” activity since last week?
- Can 1-3 students share what you learned?
  - What did you do? What did you learn?
  - Was it fun, uncomfortable, difficult, boring, or a bit of all of the above?
  - Did it help you learn to take better care of yourself?
Bridging the Gap
(Exercise)

• Call out common stressful situations:
  ○ *What would you do if...?*

• If you have a good answer, take one step.

• If you don't know, ask someone. You may still take a step if you get a good answer.
Wellness Puzzle

• Organize yourselves into these six groups:
  1) Diet/ Nutrition
  2) Lifestyle: Putting it all together
  3) Exercise
  4) Sleep
  5) Personal Hygiene
  6) Accessing Medical Care

• Each group selects an issue to discuss in more detail.
• As a group, complete the corresponding worksheet.
• You are now experts on one piece of a wellness puzzle!
• Share your findings with the rest of the class so we can complete the puzzle!
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<thead>
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<th>Diet and Nutrition</th>
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<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Sleep</th>
<th>Personal Hygiene</th>
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## Double Jeopardy!

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FINAL JEOPARDY!
Winner!
Take It Home Activities

• Change a Habit for Seven Days:
  ○ Learn a new physical activity and try it for seven days. Add one new healthy food to your diet for seven days, while cutting out one food that is not nutritious.

• Assemble your Medical/Mental Health File
Hum This!

• WITHOUT TALKING, walk around and hum your song. Listen for others humming the same song.

• Practice humming your song for a presentation to the entire group (see if they can guess it correctly).

• Option: Put your heads together, choose another song, practice it, then hum it to the group (see if they can guess it).
Key Concept: Stress

**Stress**: The body's reaction to change that requires a physical, mental, or emotional adjustment or response. Stress can come from any situation or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, nervous, or anxious.

-- Angela Morrow, R.N.
Review of Stress Module

• Everyone has stress, but everyone experiences it differently
• Stress adds up
• There are many ways to reduce stress.
  o Eating/sleeping well and exercise are at the top of the list
• If you are able to talk to someone (while feeling safe), it can help reduce stress
• Some stress can be good!
Key Concept: Coping

Coping: Refers to the thoughts and actions we use to deal with stress. In large part, feeling stressed or not depends on whether we believe we have the coping resources to deal with the challenges facing us.

-- Owen Kelly, Ph.D.
What is your definition of STRESS?
Key Concept: Self-Care

**Self-Care:** Refers to decisions and actions that an individual can take to cope with a health problem or to improve his or her health.

-- Gale Encyclopedia of Public Health
Trauma, Development, and Recovery
Key Concept: Trauma

**Trauma**: An experience that is emotionally painful, distressful, or shocking, which [when unhealed] can result in lasting mental and physical effects.

--Psychologytoday.com, Diagnosis Dictionary
Key Concept: Development

Development: The acquisition of skills through integration of experience.

-Denise Johnston, M.D.
“Development is like baking a cake. Some people have had good things go into their cake. Some people have had other things go into their cake.

“If you look like what went into your cake, you are developmentally normal.”
Issues in Brain Development

By Peggy McDermott;
Adapted by
Dustianne North
and Andrea Barrera
Principles of Brain Development

According to Dr. Bruce Perry, M.D., Ph.D. (childtrauma.org):

- The brain is underdeveloped at birth
- The brain organizes from the “bottom up” (brainstem to cortex) and from “the inside out”
- Organization and functional capacity of neural systems is sequential
- Experiences do not have equal influence throughout development (sensitive periods)
The Human Brain

- Neocortex
- Limbic
- Diencephalon
- Brainstem
The Human Brain

- Cortex
- Limbic
- Midbrain or Diencephalon
- Brainstem

- Abstract Thought
- Concrete Thought
- Affiliation
- “Attachment”
- Sexual Behavior
- Emotional Reactivity
- Motor Regulation
- “Arousal”
- Appetite/Satiety
- Sleep
- Blood Pressure
- Heart Rate
- Body Temperature

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B. Perry, MD
Bottom Up Development

The brain develops bottom up and inside out.

- Neocortex
- Limbic
- Diencephalon
- Brainstem

B. Perry, MD
Left and Right Brain Functions

Left-Brain Functions

• Analytic Thought
• Logic
• Language
• Science and math

Right-Brain Functions

• Holistic thought
• Intuition
• Creativity
• Art and music
Fist for a Brain

• Extend both arms with palms open, facing down, and lock your thumbs.

• Curl your fingers to make two fists.

• Turn your fists inward until the knuckles touch.

• While the knuckles are touching, pull toward your chest until you are looking down on your knuckles. This is the approximate size of your brain! The thumbs are crossed to remind us that the left side of the brain controls the right and vice versa. The knuckles and outside part of the hands represents the cerebrum (cortex) or thinking part of the brain.

• Spread your palms apart while keeping the knuckles touching. Look at the tips of your fingers; they represent the limbic or emotional system. Notice how the system is buried deep within the brain and how the fingers are mirror-imaged. This reminds us that most of the structures of the limbic system are duplicated in each hemisphere.

• The wrists are the brainstem where vital body functions (heartbeat, body temperature, blood pressure) are controlled. Rotating your hands shows how the brain can move on top of the spinal cord, which is represented by your forearms.

Amygdala

• Online at birth
• Part of the limbic regulatory system
• Startle response
• Almond shaped
• Most associated with fear and anxiety
• Fight or flight responses/ PTSD
• Emotions come from your limbic region. Handling anger, frustration, and fear comes with repetitive actions and maturity.

• “Flipping your lid” is when the emotions take over your cortex. Young children do not have the capacity yet to control this.
Brain Development  
(Hand Exercise)

- The following concepts and graphics are taken from *Parenting from the Inside Out* by Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. and Mary Hartzell, M.Ed., page 173.
Wrist

- Brain stem
- Involuntary
Place your thumb in the middle of your palm as in this figure.
Now fold your fingers over your thumb as the cortex is folded over the limbic areas of the brain.
The Effect of Trauma on Development

• The state of mind and body when “flipping one’s lid” can become semi-permanent or easily triggered when there is a history of repeated / unhealed trauma.

• This and related problems can have effects on one’s physical body and the ability to think, learn, cope with and control emotions and impulses, as well as on self-esteem and moral development.
Dr. Bruce Perry and the ChildTrauma Academy released these images for reproduction with the condition that the following accurate descriptive text is used as caption.

The following images illustrate the negative impact of neglect on the developing brain. In the CT scan on the left is an image from a healthy three year old with an average head size. The image on the right is from a three year old child suffering from severe sensory-deprivation neglect.

These images are from studies conducted by a team of researchers from the ChildTrauma Academy led by Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D.
Key Concept: Recovery

- The process in which people are able to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities.
- For some, this is the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life despite a disability.
- For others, recovery implies the reduction or complete remission of symptoms.

-President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003
Getting Development Back on Track

The negative effects of trauma on development can be overcome.

Traumatized people need:
• A chance to heal the trauma
• Continual positive influences on development

“You can always add new things to your cake!”

-Dr. Johnston

In other words, you can always benefit from making the effort to recover!
According to Dr. Perry:

• The human brain is very plastic, meaning that it is capable of changing in response to patterned, repetitive activation. But not all parts of the brain are equally plastic.

• The cortex is the most plastic since it is the most complex. For example, even a 90 year old can learn a new phone number.

• The lower parts of the brain, which mediate core regulatory functions, are not very plastic. It would be very destructive for these basic and life-sustaining functions to be easily modified by experience once they were organized.
The Roots of Resilience

“The roots of resilience...are to be found in the sense of being understood by and existing in the mind and heart of a loving, attuned, and self-possessed other.”

—Diana Fosha, 2003
According to “attachment theory,” developed by scientists like John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth:

- The child “feels felt” by another
- The adult responds to what the child needs
- Arousal states are co-regulated (excited-excited: quiet-quiet)
- Allows child to learn to self-soothe and to regulate breath, heart rate, and stress response
Secure Attachment

“In order to develop normally... Somebody’s got to be crazy about this kid. That’s number one. First, Last, and Always.”

—Uri Bronfenbrenner
You can rebuild your ability to attach and get your development back on track!

**Things to work on:**

• **Positive relationships**

Seek healthy people, set boundaries, and learn to trust and be trustworthy.

• **Self-soothing and self-regulating**

Learn to balance your reactions and responses, be kind to yourself, and learn when to breathe and step back.

• **Seek new, mostly positive experiences**

The more different and positive experiences you have, the more positivity you have to build on!

• **Avoid damaging or demeaning experiences.**

Challenging experiences are good too, and not everything works out the way you hope, but can still be a useful experience. Do try to avoid damaging experiences and people who don’t respect you.
Take It Home Activities

**Resources:**

• Brief discussion on handouts on *The Work*, by Byron Katie, and *The Power of Now*, by Eckhart Tolle (Both teachers have a major part of their work that focuses on how to reduce stress)

**Activities:**

• “The Work” worksheet

• “My Eco-Map”

• Find or Create your Own Relaxation Exercise!
Session 12
Stress and Trauma, Coping and Recovery
Take It Home Reports

• Has anyone done a “Take It Home” activity since last week?
• Can 1-3 students share what you learned?
  o What did you do? What did you learn?
  o Was it fun, uncomfortable, difficult, boring, or a bit of all of the above?
  o Did it help you learn to take better care of yourself?
Music That Makes Me Feel Better

Write in your workbook at least three songs or pieces of music that speak to you when you are having a hard day. If you completed the Playlist for my Health activity, you can use some of the songs you identified there.

1. __________________
2. __________________
3. __________________

As we go around in a circle, share with each other one of your songs and try to describe what it is about the song (lyrics, tone, rhythm, mood, etc.) that makes you feel good or helps you process and release negative emotions. A few participants may perhaps play their song for the group, if time and equipment allow.

As you listen and share, jot down some notes about the songs people discuss.

Looking back at the above list of songs, what do they have in common, if anything? What do you think makes them helpful to people?

What does this tell us about our emotions? About the value of music in our lives?
# Strength Finder Exercise

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Obstacle or Negative Experience</th>
<th>Possible Strength (or How to Use This to Your Advantage)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Break up with significant other</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Best friend blows up at you for no reason</td>
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<tr>
<td>• You feel unhealthy and out of shape</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Have feelings of self-doubt and not being worthy</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Abused or neglected as a young child</td>
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Your Group's Quote:
Take It Home Activities

Resources:

• Brief discussion on handouts on *The Work*, by Byron Katie, and *The Power of Now*, by Eckhart Tolle (Both teachers have a major part of their work that focuses on how to reduce stress)

Activities:

• “The Work” worksheet

• “My Eco-Map”

• Find or Create your Own Relaxation Exercise!
Session 13
Empowering Ourselves and the Foster Care Community
Scavenger Hunt!

- Your instructor will read off 15 items, one at a time, for you to find.
- You have thirty seconds to find each item.

Ready?
Set...
GO!
**Key Concept: Empowerment**

**Empowerment:** Both a process and an outcome by which people gain mastery over their own lives and affairs.

Can refer to a psychological or emotional sense of empowerment, as well as actual power and influence.
Key Concept: Self-Advocacy

**Self-Advocacy**: An individual's ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate, or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights.

It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions. (VanReusen et al., 1994)
Scenarios:
How to Talk to a Provider

• Time to practice advocating for yourself with healthcare and mental health professionals.

• We will consider three scenarios in which someone is in need of help.

• Answer the questions for each scenario.

• Anyone ready to try role playing a scenario?

• You can work in groups of three (one playing the person needing help, one playing the provider, and one observer) or we can all work on a scenario as a group.

• Any volunteers?
Scenarios:
How to Talk to a Provider

1. Yesterday, you started getting a strong pain in your lower right abdomen and you know you should check with a healthcare provider about it. You decide to call the urgent care facility near your home. What do you say on the phone?

2. You have been feeling really down. Each day is a struggle. You find it hard to connect with people. You are afraid to tell people and aren’t sure what kind of help you need. But you are starting to feel concerned that it isn’t getting better on its own. A counselor at your school notices that you aren’t your usual self. He asks you how things are going. How do you answer?

3. Several months ago your aunt died and you became very anxious. You were prescribed an anti-anxiety medication. You have since been able to say goodbye to your aunt and are feeling a bit better these days. But you don't really like how life feels on your medication. You don't feel like yourself and your body is having some reactions to the drug. You visit your psychiatrist for a regular visit, and she asks how you are doing. What do you say?
Putting it all Together!
The Steps to Wellness

1. Self-care
2. Self-monitor
3. Seek help and support
4. Self-advocate
5. Provide assistance and work with others for mutual benefit
Walk in These Shoes: Instructions for Scenarios

• How does one actually apply the “steps to wellness” strategies in a real life situation? Let's consider two cases.

• In small groups, read the scenario assigned to you.

• Answer the questions for each scenario.

• Elect a spokesperson to share with the larger group what you all learned from your work together.
Marisol is 17 years old and is getting ready to emancipate from the group home she lives in. She hopes she will graduate high school this year but is behind because she has switched schools a lot over the past three years. She hopes to attend community college in the fall, and she is interested in teaching. She is under a lot of stress. Things are tough at her group home, because she doesn't get along with two of the other girls who live there. She also misses her mother, who was her only family and died when she was 14; this is why she was placed in foster care. She frequently feels anxious, and sometimes it gets really intense and she feels an urge to make herself bleed, or even considers suicide. It is hard to sleep sometimes, and she is easily irritated.
Byron is 20 years old and lives in an apartment with two roommates. He attends community college. He mostly likes his roommates, but they party too much for him, so he is worried he will not succeed in school or will relapse—he did a lot of drugs when he was in his early teens and developed some real problems. He had to go to rehab and has been sober ever since, except that once or twice in the last few months he has had a drink or smoked a joint at parties. He grew up in the system, from when he was too young to remember living with his own family. He is also diabetic, and sometimes he has a hard time controlling his temper. He likes to work out and often uses the college's facilities for this purpose. He is a bit fed up with his medical problems, though, and so he hasn't been to the doctor in some time.
Take It Home Activities

• Resources in My Community
• Envisioning a Social Action
• Turning Your Inner Critic into Your Inner Cheerleader
Session 14
Empowering Ourselves and the Foster Care Community
Set Your Goals the CHAMP Way

Challenge

What is the challenge I am facing (what is my goal)?

Hurdles

What is stopping me from reaching my goal?

Achievement

What do I get for reaching my goal?

Mentors

Who can mentor me and help me reach my goal?

Plan

What is my plan (the steps I will take to reach my goal)?

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What I Like About You

- Sometimes, a smile can make someone's day. Someone with a mental health difficulty may not have any physical signs. When someone receives positive feedback, it can help them to look past the negative thoughts that they have about themselves. Something so simple can make people feel so good!

- **Directions:**
  - Start with a blank paper and pen/pencil for each participant
  - Sit in a circle
  - Write your name on top of the paper
  - Everyone pass the paper to the person on their right
  - Now take turns writing one positive thing about the person whose name appears on the paper
  - Keep passing the papers once you’ve had a chance to write something positive on each one
  - Stop when you have your own paper back
  - If you feel up to it, go ahead and share what your favorite thing to read about you was and why.

How do you feel when you get positive feedback?
Key Concept: Mutual Aid / Assistance

Efforts in which individuals are both recipients and providers of help, in a group or community setting where other people are also providing and receiving support and services, such as sharing information or skills.

--Shulman, 2006; Steinberg, 2004
Key Concept: Social Action

- **Social Action**: A group/collective/organized effort to change social and economic conditions.
  (S. Rengasamy Madurai, Institute of Social Sciences)

- The realization of human responsibility and acting upon it for the betterment of society and the world in whole.
  (Student Volunteer Connections)
What Empowers Me

• **Empowerment Activity**

• **Activity Question #1**
  - Imagine what it feels like when you feel powerful, confident, and masterful over your own life affairs. What situations in your life make you feel this way?
  - Jot down a few notes or pictures...

• **Activity Question #2**
  - Consider a situation in your life where you would like to feel more empowered. Jot down a few notes or draw a picture about what is and is not empowering about the situation.
  - What would it be like if you were more empowered?
What I'd Like to See

• Activity Question #3
  o Consider others in the world who lack empowerment. Who would you like to see more empowered, and how so?

• Activity Question #4
  o In pairs, share what you learned.
  o Are there any overlaps or commonalities? What do you notice about the differences?
Question for the Class:

- What are some ways we could all work together as a class, or as the larger community of people raised or working in foster care, to empower ourselves and each other?
The Action Plan

- Mental Health First Aid teaches a five-step action plan, ALGEE, for individuals to provide help to someone who may be in crisis.
  - Assess for risk of suicide or harm
  - Listen nonjudgmentally
  - Give reassurance and information
  - Encourage appropriate professional help
  - Encourage self-help and other support strategies
Instructions for MHFA Scenarios

• Consider the following scenarios, using what you know from the Mental Health First Aid.
• Answer the questions that follow each scenario.
• Then, using the list below, try to brainstorm some ways you can use mental health first aid to help:
  – **Assess** for risk of suicide or harm
  – **Listen** nonjudgmentally
  – **Give** reassurance and information
  – **Encourage** appropriate professional help
  – **Encourage** self-help and other support strategies
Scenario #1

Ever since Alisa's traumatic car accident in high school, she hasn't been the same. She used to be the class clown, and was a part of your circle of friends. But Alisa isn't cracking jokes anymore. Her body is in pain all the time, so she takes pain medication on a daily basis.

Over time, she has needed more and more pain medication. Lately she has taken to drinking alcohol almost all day, every day. She has stopped returning her friend's calls, including yours.

She posts things on Facebook like, “don't want to be here anymore, the pain is just too much,” and “I'll miss you guys when the day comes.”

One day, you run into Alisa staring at the bottles of alcohol in the grocery store. She looks pale, malnourished, and has some scars on her wrists. She cracks a smile as you walk over to say hello, and as her eyes well up in tears she tells you that she just wants to die.

What do you do or say?
Scenario #2

You are at the hospital with your pal Horatio. You were at home doing some reading when he called. He could barely talk but asked if you could come see him—he said he just came out to his brother, as being gay, and that his brother has been beaten him badly.

Horatio's foster parents are not supportive of him, and they have always treated him badly because they suspected he might be homosexual. He has always been there for you, so you decided to go support him.

At the hospital, Horatio tells you his brother used to molest him when he was little, and that he always teases him about “the ladies”. He says he isn't exactly sure why his response was to tell his brother the truth about his sexuality. He is crying really hard through his swollen eyes, and his bleeding lips and nose.

What do you say to Horatio?
Scenario #3

Josepha is a dance major because she loves dancing. You both became friends in your hip-hop dance class, where she was the one with the slimmest body and sharpest dance moves. She was so good because she practiced so much, spending hours in the dance studio on campus when she wasn't working or in her other classes. You'd sometimes catch her after your last night class coming out of the studio drenched in sweat, ready to go to the gym.

Once in a while, the two of you would take a break together at a local café. You noticed that she would either eat nothing, or eat a whole one-pound burrito in one sitting. Now that you two don't have any classes together, you try to meet up to grab some lunch at least once a week.

Today you have just finished eating at your favorite Mexican food place, and you realize that Josepha has raced to the bathroom after her one pound burrito binge. She's been doing that a lot. Her skin is pale, her fingernails are weak and chipping, and she is getting thinner and thinner, even though she always says she feels fat. She comes back from the bathroom saying she needs to get her “fat butt” to the gym...

What do you do?
Take It Home Activities

- Resources in My Community
- Envisioning a Social Action
- Turning Your Inner Critic into Your Inner Cheerleader