

Lesson Plans – Grades 7-9:

Video Letters from Prison



Subject Areas:
Social Studies • Reading & Language Arts • Native American Studies • Ethnic Studies

Procedural Notes for Educators

Film Synopsis

Video Letters from Prison follows the lives of three Oglala Lakota sisters as they reconnect with their incarcerated father via a series of video letters. The Poor Bear girls are not sure they even want to connect—but their mother, Cindy, helps them overcome reluctance and hurt to participate in the letters. The change in her girls is immediate and beautiful. Connecting life's paths, *Video Letters from Prison* is a road flooded with emotions and spiritual growth.

Cultural Orientation

Background Information for Instructors

The film, *Video Letters from Prison*, features an Oglala Lakota family from the Pine Ridge Reservation. Although the lesson plans emphasize fathers and family, you may want to give some background information on the Oglala (Sioux) Lakota Tribe while you are introducing the film or discuss the many issues that Native people in America face today.

If your community has many ethnic groups, you might want to begin by discussing how some groups of people tend to become marginalized based on race, religion or economic status.

“Marginalized” means that they exist on the edge of mainstream culture with lower economic status and fewer opportunities. While there are many marginalized groups, Indian communities present a different picture. When the first white people came to this continent, there were approximately 50 million people living here in diverse communities all over North America. Today, there are fewer than a million left. The devastating loss of lives, homelands, hunting grounds and cultural lifeways has tumbled through the generations to the present day with many communities suffering from poverty, alcoholism, heart disease, suicide and other issues. Historians and scholars have termed this **“historical trauma.”**



Sensitive Information Warning

This subject can be troubling for students who have a parent incarcerated, a parent missing from the home, or a student who may suffer from anger toward a parent, depression or is experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Teachers, parents and counselors need to be aware of the emotional content of this film and be watchful for any signs of distress of students or children viewing the film. Not recommended for students 6th grade and under.

About The Pine Ridge Reservation

The Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota is the second largest reservation in the country and is home to the Oglala (Sioux) Lakota Nation. Nearly fifty percent of the population of Pine Ridge is under 20-years-old. There are many children growing up without a father or being raised by relatives. To the Lakota People, the family and the culture are two critical keys to recovering from the historical events of the past several hundred years.

The film makes several references to traditional Lakota healing and culture. In Lakota culture, the term used to describe the extended family and kinship group is “**Tiyospaye**.” Another common term is “**tewahe**” which describes the way an extended family is treated as family. For instance, your aunt’s children may be considered your own brothers and sisters.

Although historical events have contributed to the difficult issues facing the Lakota people today, there are many signs of a strong recovery. In the fall of 2009, the Oglala Lakota College had a record enrollment of 1,800 students. Programs such as Lakota Funds work year after year supporting the residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation in starting and growing strong businesses. Efforts are underway to begin early language immersion programs to sustain and strengthen the Lakota language and culture. Where once the Federal government made traditional ceremonies illegal, today there are over 160 Sundances held on the Pine Ridge Reservation each summer, as well as many other healing and spiritual ceremonies.

As an instructor, you may decide how much research or additional information you may want to include based on your course objectives. Links to several articles that may be of interest are provided in the sidebar.

Useful Links and Documents

- www.olc.edu
- www.kiliradio.org
- www.lakotafunds.org
- www.lakotamall.com
- www.pineridgechamber.com
- The American Holocaust: Healing Historical Unresolved Grief (Professional Papers) [http://aianp.uchsc.edu/journal/pdf/8\(2\).pdf#page=64](http://aianp.uchsc.edu/journal/pdf/8(2).pdf#page=64)
- Indigenous People in a Multicultural Society: Unique Issues for Human Services (Article) [http://www.olc.edu/~jolson/socialwork/OnlineLibrary/Weaver%20\(1998\)%20Indigenous%20people%20in%20a%20multicultural%20society%20-%20unique%20issues%20for%20human%20services.pdf](http://www.olc.edu/~jolson/socialwork/OnlineLibrary/Weaver%20(1998)%20Indigenous%20people%20in%20a%20multicultural%20society%20-%20unique%20issues%20for%20human%20services.pdf)

Please report broken links to native@unl.edu.

A Word of Caution

There are many websites that misuse Native issues to scam money from others. Please be sure students who are researching the Oglala Lakota Nation are on sites that are connected to the Oglala Lakota College, the Oglala Sioux Tribe, scholarly research or other reputable information sites.

Objectives and Curriculum Standards

Objectives

These activities are designed to help students better understand about how socioeconomic conditions, cultural expectations and unforeseen circumstances can affect the work of the family. They are designed to enrich communication skills and improve understanding of parenting and families.

Students will...

1. **Learn** about the Native American cultural background of the Lakota Sioux Tribe and some of that Tribe's history.
2. **Explore** community resources available to families.
3. **Analyze** websites chosen by instructor to determine the importance of a father in the family
4. **Apply** knowledge learned by communicating with students of another culture.



"Well Dad, I did it! I hope you are proud of me. I really wish you could have been here, but I understand that you can't and through Milt you are here. And, I'm just really glad that in some kind of way you got to be a part of my graduation and there was a symbol of somebody—of you being there."

— Jovannah Poor Bear, daughter of Marvin Poor Bear and Cindy Wheeler

National Curriculum Standards

Language Arts Standards

Multiple Literacies

Students will research, synthesize, evaluate and communicate information in a variety of media and formats (textual, visual and digital).

Reciprocal Communication

Students will develop, apply and adapt reciprocal communication skills.

- **LA 1.1.1**
Multiple Literacies: Students will research, synthesize, evaluate and communicate information in a variety of media and formats (textual, visual and digital).
- **LA 1.1.2**
Reciprocal Communication: Students will develop, apply and adapt reciprocal communication skills.

Family Consumer Science Standards

- **FCS 6.0**
Evaluate the significance of family and its effects on the well-being of individuals and society.
Competencies
 - **FCS 6.1**
Analyze the effects of family as a system on individuals and society.
 - **FCS 6.1.5**
Analyze the role of family in developing independence, interdependence and commitment of family members.

- **FCS 12.0**
Analyze factors that influence human growth & development.
Competencies
 - **LA 6 12.2.4**
Analyze the effects of life events on individual's physical, intellectual, social, moral and emotional development.

- **FCS 15.0**
Evaluate the effects of parenting roles and responsibilities on strengthening the wellbeing of individuals and families.
Competencies
 - **15.1**
Analyze the effects of life events on individuals' physical, intellectual, social, moral, and emotional development.
 - **15.1.1**
Analyze parenting roles across the life span.
 - **15.1.2**
Analyze expectations and responsibilities of parenting.
 - **15.1.3**
Analyze consequences of parenting practices to the individual, family and society.
 - **15.1.4**
Analyze societal conditions that influence parenting across the lifespan.
 - **15.1.5**
Explain cultural differences in roles and responsibilities of parenting.

National Education Technology Standards for Students

- **Creativity and Innovation**
Students demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology.

- **Communication and Collaboration**
Students use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively, including at a distance, to support individual learning and contribute to the learning of others.

- **Research and Information Fluency**
Students apply digital tools to gather, evaluate and use information.

- **Critical Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making**
Students use critical thinking skills to plan and conduct research, manage projects, solve problems, and make informed decisions using appropriate digital tools and resources.

- **Digital Citizenship**
Students understand human, cultural and societal issues related to technology and practice legal and ethical behavior.

Procedures & Materials/ Resources Needed by Activity

1 Did You Know?

Procedural Steps: Distribute Student Handout.

Objectives: To learn about the culture presented in the film, as well as important historical events of the Tribe(s) referenced in the film.

Materials/Resources Needed: Student Handout.

Estimated Time Required: 10 minutes.



2 Vocabulary

Procedural Steps: Distribute Student Handout. An Answer Key is available at the end of the Lesson Plan for your use.

Objectives: To focus on terms and phrases used in the film that might not be understood by the general public.

Materials/Resources Needed: Student Handout and Pencil/Pen.

Estimated Time Required: 30 minutes.

"When I saw that video, it was like seeing little girls. All of a sudden, they were five-, four-, three-years-old again. You know they were so happy, so elated, they twinkled, you know they really did, and I couldn't believe it...I cried that night, I just cried so hard. I was like, "Why didn't we do this before, why couldn't this have been possible before?"

— Cindy Wheeler,
mother of the three girls,
whose father, Marvin Poor
Bear, is incarcerated

3 Ideas for Action

Procedural Steps: Distribute Student Handout.

Objectives: Questions will require thinking about ways to implement lessons learned from viewing the film into the student's everyday life at home, in the classroom, in the community, with friends or in the future.

Materials/Resources Needed: Student Handout, Notebook Paper and Pencil/Pen. Identifying Community Support Services for Families Resources: www.fcclainc.org.

Estimated Time Required: 1 hour.

4 Writing Exercise

Procedural Steps: View the film in its entirety or clips of the film. Follow up viewing by distributing Student Handout and assigning all or part of the questions provided.

Objectives: Utilized to bring out the emotions and thought process of the student after viewing the film or a clip of the film. To use various forms of writing to celebrate families.

Materials/Resources Needed: Television with DVD player, Student Handout, Notebook Paper, Pencil/Pen, computer with Internet (for Exercises 1 & 2 only) and iMovie software (for Exercise 1 only). Suggested Resource: *Kids Meeting Kids*, 324 West 96th Street, New York, NY, 10025, (212) 663-6368.

Estimated Time Required: 30 minutes.

5 What Would You Do?

Procedural Steps: Distribute Student Handout and lead group discussion after the students have a moment to brainstorm answers.

Objectives: Serves as a group discussion prompt of what you would do if faced with a certain scenario that is posed to the student as it relates to the film. In this particular activity, students will identify job qualities in a mother, a father and a child. Discuss as a class how these qualities must change to adapt to situations where family members are not fulfilling their duties to the fullest.

Note: Use this activity prior to viewing *Video Letters from Prison* in order for students to study and interpret family roles.

Materials/Resources Needed: Student Handout, Notebook Paper, Pencil/Pen, professional job descriptions from newspapers, butcher paper, markers and a copy of the discussion questions in the handout.

Estimated Time Required: 20 minutes.

6 Art Exercise

Procedural Steps: Distribute Student Handout and any needed art supplies.

Objectives: To inspire and motivate the use of artistic expression.



"I can't remember seeing him."

— Jolena Poor Bear,
daughter of Marvin Poor
Bear and Cindy Wheeler

Materials/Resources Needed: Student Handout, Notebook Paper, Pencil/Pen, Children in Group Setting, Adults in Group Setting, Sketch Paper, Magazines and Newspapers. Suggested Reading: *The Relationship Cure* by John M. Gottman, PH.D. and Joan DeClaire.

Estimated Time Required: 1 hour.

7 Digital Exploration

Procedural Steps: View the NAPT online Educational Digital Resources as selected for the activity offerings you select.

Objectives: Utilize NAPT's online Educational Digital Resources for such items as viewable film clips, producer interview podcasts, interactive games, etc. that emphasize the message that is being brought to students from the film. This activity is designed to help develop critical thinking skills in students by analyzing websites for their quality.

Materials/Resources Needed: Computer with Internet access, Notebook Paper and Pencil/Pen. Please note that the websites provided have been reviewed and critiqued by 9th grade students. Also recommend *Inspiration Software* program or the online version available at <http://mywebspiration.com>.

Estimated Time Required: 1 hour.

8 Physical Education Exercise

Procedural Steps: Distribute Student Handout.

Objectives: To build upon teamwork, as well as mental and physical health and/or nutrition.

Materials/Resources Needed: Pencil and Paper.

Estimated Time Required: 25-35 minutes.

9 In Review

Procedural Steps: Distribute Student Handout.

Objectives: Offers takeaway facts that students should have learned and should remember after completing the offered lesson plan activities. These takeaways come full-circle to the outlined Objectives in the Procedural Notes for Educators

Materials/Resources Needed: Student Handout, Note-book Paper and Pencil/Pen.

Estimated Time Required: 15 minutes.



"While my ex-husband was growing up, he would dream about his biological mother—that someday she would come and get him. Someday she would take care of him like a mother should."

— Cindy Wheeler, mother of the Poor Bear girls

Educator Assessment

1. Student Assessment

- Did the students show an understanding of the background and historical events in the life of the Oglala Lakota Sioux Tribe?
- Did the students present their ideas clearly as they researched community resources for families?
- Did the students organize and present their analyses of the websites in a clear manner?
- Did the student communicate with students from another culture?

2. We'd Love to Hear From You

- Please take a moment to complete our Educational Survey online at www.visionmaker.org/edusurvey.

3. Additional Resources to Consider

- Suggested Readings:

The Ten Basic Principles of Good Parenting
Steinberg, Laurence, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004

"*The Ten Basic Principles of Good Parenting* is a map for the journey through parenthood, a book parents can read and then return to whenever they start to lose their way. Concise and authoritative, written with warmth and compassion, it is not only an intelligent guide to raising a happy, healthy child; it is also a guide to becoming a happier, more confident parent." [Book review from http://books.google.com/books?id=IRFk9Ld-oi0C&source=gbs_navlinks_s a]

- Websites

(Please report broken links to native@unl.edu.)

- a. <http://www.familyresource.com/parenting/parent-education/8-essential-parentalresponsibilities>
provides information on the basic responsibilities of parents to be used to research 8-10 roles and responsibilities of parents
- b. <http://www.examiner.com/x-5513-Charlotte-Family-Communication-Examiner~y2009m4d8-What-is-a-parents-role-in-a-childs-life>
provides information on the role of a parent in a child's life and how that role plays an important part of the child's self-esteem and direction as an adult.
- c. <http://parenting.families.com/blog/10-ways-to-be-a-positive-role-model>
a blog written by Theresa McIntyre, a stay-at-home mom of three in Kuna, Idaho. This site encourages parents to be role models for children.
- d. <http://www.articlesnatch.com/Article/A-Parent-s-Role-In-A-Child-s-World/1037881>
An article written by Gen Wright about the role a parent plays in child development.
- e. www.rubistar.4teachers.org
A collection of rubrics for all types of multimedia projects. Also can create an original rubric if so choose.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Video Letters From Prison Activity 1: Did You Know?

About the Pine Ridge Reservation and the Oglala Lakota

The Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota is the second largest reservation in the country and is home to the Oglala (Sioux) Lakota Nation. Nearly fifty percent of the population of Pine Ridge is under 20-years-old. There are many children growing up without a father or being raised by relatives.

To the Lakota People, the family and the culture are two critical keys to recovering from the historical events of the past several hundred years. The film makes several references to traditional Lakota healing and culture.

In Lakota culture, the term used to describe the extended family and kinship group is “**Tiyospaye**.” Another common term is “**tewahe**” which describes the way an extended family is treated as family. For instance, your aunt’s children may be considered your own brothers and sisters.

Although historical events have contributed to the difficult issues facing the Lakota people today, there are many signs of a strong recovery. In the fall of 2009, the Oglala Lakota College had a record enrollment of 1,800 students.

Terms to Remember:

Tiyospaye

Extended family and kinship group

Tewahe

In Lakota culture, the way an extended family is treated as immediate family

Programs such as Lakota Funds work year after year supporting the residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation in starting and growing strong businesses. Efforts are underway to begin early language immersion programs to sustain and strengthen the Lakota language and culture.

Where once the Federal government made traditional ceremonies illegal, today there are over 160 Sundances held on the Pine Ridge Reservation each summer, as well as many other healing and spiritual ceremonies.

Historical Timeline of Major Events

1804	Lewis and Clark encounter the Great Sioux Nation.
1851	The first treaty created to allow The Oregon Trail to cross the plains and the mountains. The treaty was broken by immigrants almost immediately.
Dec. 16, 1862	Thirty-eight Santee (Sioux) Dakota Indian men hanged in Mankato, Minnesota. This was the largest mass hanging in United States history.
1865-1869	Red Cloud's War. Red Cloud led a band of Lakotas and other Tribes and defeated the U.S. Army that was trying to establish a trail across prime hunting grounds (also known as the Bozeman Trail).
1868	The Treaty of 1868 (also known as the Ft. Laramie Treaty). This is the only time in American history that the U.S. Army sued for peace. The Treaty established the boundaries of the great Sioux Nation which included The Black Hills (He'Sapa).
1874	Gold is discovered in the Black Hills and the Treaty of 1868 is annulled.
June 25, 1874	Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse defeat George Armstrong Custer at Little Big Horn, also known as Custer's Last Stand. This was an armed engagement between combined forces of Lakota and Northern Cheyenne against the 7th Cavalry Regiment of the U.S. Army. Custer had been sent to Little Big Horn to try and calm down the Indians over the stealing of their lands.
December 30, 1890	The Wounded Knee Massacre. Over 300 Lakota people including women and children were murdered by the 7th Cavalry. The 7th Cavalry were the soldiers that fought with Custer when he was killed.
June 18, 1934	The Indian Reorganization Act, also known as the Wheeler-Howard Act or informally as the Indian New Deal, was a U.S. Federal legislation which secured certain rights to Native Americans, including Alaska Natives. The Act tried to transform Tribes from a Tiospaye form of government to an elected "representative" government, but in the end, the American Indians were able to return to local, self-government. The net result was that grassroots people were often left out of the decision-making processes and were thrust into poverty that continues today.
Summer, 1964	Olympic runner, Billy Mills, an Oglala Lakota from Pine Ridge Reservation won the 10,000-meter race at the Olympic Games in Tokyo. Mills was the first American to win that race—and he did it in record time.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Video Letters From Prison Activity 2: Vocabulary

Instructions

Prior to viewing the film *Video Letters from Prison*, please take a moment to write a definition for each of the vocabulary words and phrases listed below. Use your prior knowledge to write what you think each word or phrase means.

Active Listening: _____

Character: _____

Communication: _____

Community Support: _____

Compromise: _____

Conflict: _____

Conflict Resolution: _____

Crisis: _____

Cross-Cultural Family Studies: _____

Ethnic Identity: _____

Family Communication: _____

Family Council: _____

Family Counseling Agencies: _____

Feedback: _____

Feelings: _____

Gestures: _____

Historical Trauma: _____

Marginalization: _____

Mediator: _____

Nonverbal Communication: _____

Nuclear Family: _____

Problem: _____

Race: _____

Solution: _____

Support Group: _____

Unity: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Video Letters From Prison Activity 3: Ideas for Action

Instructions

Read through the following descriptions of family crisis situations. Using the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) Planning Process—available at www.fcclaincor.org—identify available community resources that can be contacted.

1

Cherie is having a difficult time dealing with her father’s drinking. She knows that he wants to quit, but the challenge is too great. She is worried that her father will lose his job, or get behind the wheel after drinking. She is also concerned about the effect his drinking is having on other members of the family. Is there help for Cherie?

- **Identify Concerns:** _____
- **Set a Goal:** _____
- **Form a Plan:** _____
- **Act:** _____
- **Follow-Up:** _____

2

Billie, age 14, and his little brother Keith, age 10, are having problems getting along at home. They are verbally abusive to each other, and have no respect for each other’s possessions. Recently, they have started to use physical violence toward each other. Because Billie is often in charge of Keith, the parents need to be sure that they won’t hurt each other when alone. Where do these parents go for help?

- **Identify Concerns:** _____
- **Set a Goal:** _____
- **Form a Plan:** _____
- **Act:** _____
- **Follow-Up:** _____

3

Jyl is your friend. Jyl and her three sisters live in a home that is in need of cleaning and major upkeep. They often come to school with no coats and complain of being hungry. Jyl explains that there is no food at home, and she and her sisters are often left alone. What should you do with this information?

- **Identify Concerns:** _____
- **Set a Goal:** _____
- **Form a Plan:** _____
- **Act:** _____
- **Follow-Up:** _____

4

Shelly's parents are getting a divorce. She has watched them fighting a lot and arguing over who she and her sister will be living with. She feels as if she is the cause of the divorce. Is there something she can do about the feelings she is experiencing?

- **Identify Concerns:** _____
- **Set a Goal:** _____
- **Form a Plan:** _____
- **Act:** _____
- **Follow-Up:** _____

5

Kathy's father died a few months ago. She misses him and often cries when she thinks about it. Her friends try to be there for her, but can't relate to what she is experiencing. It is getting difficult for Kathy to concentrate on her schoolwork. Who should she contact for help?

- **Identify Concerns:** _____
- **Set a Goal:** _____
- **Form a Plan:** _____
- **Act:** _____
- **Follow-Up:** _____

6

Linda is aware that her family is experiencing some financial problems. Her mother got laid off from her job, and the loss of income has made it difficult for them to pay their bills. Due to the stress, Linda's mother yells at her a lot, and the situation at home is getting worse. Is there help for Linda and her family?

- **Identify Concerns:** _____
- **Set a Goal:** _____
- **Form a Plan:** _____
- **Act:** _____
- **Follow-Up:** _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Video Letters From Prison Activity 4: Writing Exercise

Exercise 1

Sit down and visit with, or write a letter to a person from another country, another social class or a different culture/ethnic group.

Discuss the similarities and differences between your family and theirs. This includes such things as attitudes, beliefs, customs, behaviors, etc. Explore the reasons for the differences and similarities.

Using what you have learned, create a musical video using iMovie to celebrate families of all kinds.

Exercise 2

Sign up with Facebook to connect with young writers from *Wordcraft Circle of Native American Writers and Storytellers*.

These students use their writing skills to carry a hopeful message and to preserve the Chumash, Pueblo, Commanche and Huichol traditions and culture of their families. <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=25029496256>

Exercise 3

Write an essay describing your interpretation of the ideal parent for a teenager.

Compare your writing with the writings of others in your class. Note the characteristics most commonly suggested.



Exercise 4

As a class, make up a collection of messages one person might want to convey to another. For each, decide how this message might be changed to communicate it to: an infant, a young child, a teenager and an adult.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Video Letters From Prison Activity 5: What Would You Do?

Wanted: Family Members

A Cooperative Learning Activity

Objective

Prior to viewing the film *Video Letters from Prison*, identify job qualities in a mother, a father and a child. Study and interpret family roles and what they mean. Discuss as a class how these qualities must change to adapt to situations where family members are not fulfilling their duties to the fullest.

Supplies Needed

Professional job descriptions from newspapers, butcher paper, markers, situation cards and a copy of the discussion questions.

Exercise 1: Job Descriptions

Envision that you work for a Human Resources Department at an organization or company. Your responsibility, as a Human Resources employee, is to submit a classified ad for positions that need to be filled within a family.

1. Write a job description for the following three jobs: Father, Mother and Child.
2. Look through newspapers to find professional want ads. Cut out a select few of want ads and notate on notebook paper what the organizations in the want ads are describing as the candidate they are looking to hire.
3. Brainstorm on your own what words you could use to describe a quality family member.
4. Divide into groups of 3-4 students and share your ideas with each other that you have selected to use in your descriptions.
5. As a group, use markers and butcher paper to comprise a job description to advertise for a Mother, for a Father and a Child.
6. Have one member of your group share with the class what your group has written. Discuss similarities and differences amongst the job descriptions the various groups in your class came up with.

Exercise 2: Situations

Divide into groups of 3-4 students. Review the possible situation item below that your instructor has assigned to your group. Discuss how the family roles change when circumstances arise and what can happen if they do not.

Possible Situations

Situation 1: You have advertised for a Father and no one applies.

Situation 2: The position you are hiring for is located on a Native American reservation.

Situation 3: One of the family members is expected to assume the role of two.

Situation 4: Unforeseen circumstances have placed family finances in jeopardy.

Situation 5: There is a need for a new position in the family to assist parents who can not fulfill their job requirements.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Video Letters From Prison Activity 6: Art Exercise

Understanding the Face

In *Video Letters from Prison*, you probably recognized that a person's face is the most suitable part of the body for expressing emotion. For example, the wide-eyed expressions on the faces of the Poor Bear family members as they shared their letters demonstrate just how powerful those emotions are.

There are many reasons why we hold back from expressing how we really feel, especially when we encounter feelings of anger, sadness and fear. We want to prevent ourselves from the hurt that often accompanies these feelings. Just because we try to conceal them, does not mean that our feelings don't show. Facial expressions "don't lie."

Exercise 1

Observe young children in play situations at home, at the park or in school. Note their facial expressions as they interact with their play group or classmates. What do they convey?

Exercise 2

Describe different ways you see children expressing their feelings. For each of these, comment on how this affects the child, other children or the adults.

Explain how the situations witnessed above are handled by the adults or other children and give your own evaluation of their effectiveness.

Exercise 3

Choose one of the emotions that has been discussed. Role-play for the class a situation in which a child, a teenager and an adult might express this emotion. See if your classmates can guess the emotion you are portraying.

Exercise 4

Make simple sketches or clip cartoons or pictures from magazines or newspapers that show various emotions. Discuss what their facial expressions look like, and describe the feelings associated with the pictures.

Exercise 5

Think about a particularly emotional incident you've had with a loved one, or with somebody important in your life. What do you remember about the expressions on the other person's face?

Name: _____

Date: _____

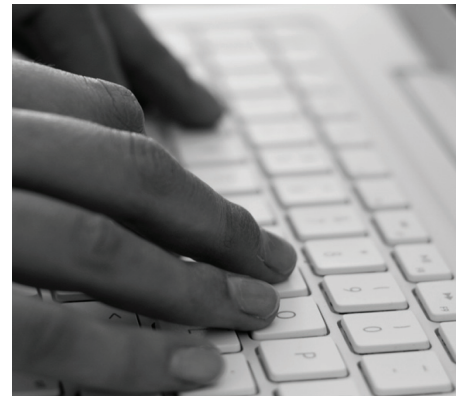
Video Letters From Prison Activity 7: Digital Exploration

Word Web

Instructions

Review the following websites that are written on the subject of “The Importance of Fathers.” As you are viewing the websites listed below, gather ideas, analyze the information and organize your research into a document that you can report back to the class.

If available, use the *Inspiration Software Program* that your educational institution offers or utilize the online version found at <http://mywebspiration.com>. After opening the software program, prioritize information you gathered, analyzed and organized from the following websites.



1. Parenting - The Importance of Being a Father

www.online-parenting.com/father.html

“This is a good website to help better understand just how important fathers are in the lives of their children. It stresses the need for a father to be involved in the life of his child from the moment that he knows that he will be a dad.”

2. Father’s Love - The Importance of a Dad

<http://hubpages.com/hub/Fathers-Love-The-Importance-of-a-Dad>

“This is an excellent hub that tells of the love of a father. It also offers suggestions for what to do for fathers and Father’s Day, and ways to honor your Dad. There should be more hubs written about the importance of a Father.”

3. The Importance of Fathers in a Child's Life

www.crisp-india.org/articles/100.html

“This website discusses the lifetime effects that a father's maltreatment of a child can have. It can affect their psychological, social and physical health.”

Please report broken links to native@unl.edu.

3. The Importance of Father-Child Bonding

www.parentingweekly.com/dads/father_child_bond.htm

“This website talks about how important bonding with a father is. Kids have a good relationship with their fathers when they are more successful and happier. Fathers have to put extra effort into bonding with their child because moms have a bond from day one. Also, it is very important to young girls because it shows them how they should be treated and gives them self-confidence.”

4. Positive Family Communication

www.msuextension.org/publications/HomeHealthandFamily/MT200916HR.pdf

5. Building Strong Single-Parent Families

www.msuextension.org/publications/HomeHealthandFamily/MT200110Hr.pdf

6. The Importance of Fathers

www.msuextension.org/publications/HomeHealthandFamily/MT200008HR.pdf

“This is an excellent site for lots of different subjects that are related to 4H. They provide activities for students, and very useful information for families.”

7. The Importance of the Father-Child Bond

www.mainstreetmom.com/par_father_child.htm

“This is an excellent website that describes the bonding between a father and a child. It explains how important it is for a father to spend time with his children.”

8. The Importance of a Father in a Home

www.cpyu.org/Page.aspx?id=77180

“This story is extremely good, and is a highly recommend reading. It discusses a lot about the relationship between fathers and daughters.”

9. Ron Huxley’s Parenting Toolbox

www.parentingtoolbox.com

“This is a very good site that has lots of articles related to families, parenting, and other subjects that teens can use in FCS classes, student organizations and FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America) projects.”

10. The Importance of Fathers

www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/COLUMNCC/cc060918.html

“This is a good article that examines the difference between helpful and harmful dads. It describes behaviors that can help or hinder a relationship between fathers and their kids.”

11. The Effects of Removing a Father from the Life of a Child

<http://www.childrens-justice.org/fatherlessness1.htm>

“This site explains the research that has been done on children who do not have fathers in their homes.”

Name: _____

Date: _____

Video Letters From Prison Activity 8: Physical Education Exercise

Exercise 1: The Human Knot

The family is a complicated unit. In order to grow strong, we need to learn how to communicate with one another and work together—even when it is difficult. The following exercise is a physical activity designed to encourage both “coming together” and “untangling” ourselves when life gets complicated.

Instructions:

1. Divide into small groups of six to eight people.
2. Each group stands in a tight circle.
3. Place your hands into the center and close your eyes. Each hand must link with another participant’s hand. Once everyone is holding two other hands, you can open your eyes.
3. Now, you have to “untie” yourself as a group from knot without anyone letting go of the hands they are holding.

Source: *Diversityanddialogue.com*

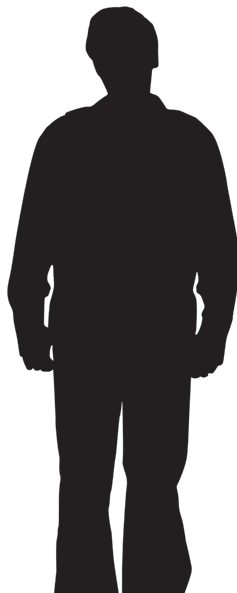


Exercise 2: Reading the Body and Face

It is important in life to become a good observer of others. We can learn a great deal by observing what we see without judging or assuming that certain expressions mean certain things.

Part 1:

1. Choose a partner and stand opposite one another.
2. Choose one student to be the observer and the other to be the one being observed.
3. As the observer, study how the other person is standing, looking and positioning his/her hands, etc.
4. As the observer, take a mental picture of the partner's whole body and face.
5. Next, the observer should close his or her eyes. Your partner should make a very subtle change in their posture.
6. As the observer, open your eyes and try to identify what has changed in your partner's stand, look, etc.
7. Do this several times making more and more subtle changes to challenge the observer.
8. Now switch roles. The observer becomes the one being observed.



Part 2:

It is easy to make assumptions—and sometimes often wrong ones—about what an expression, tone of voice, or posture means when we observe it. In part two of this exercise, you'll need to use only sensory descriptions to describe the changes that your partner is displaying. You are not allowed to label it until after you have reported on what you see. Then you can ask what emotion your partner was displaying.

1. Repeat the above exercise, but this time your partner will intentionally express an emotion such as sadness, fear, anger, etc. with their face or body.
2. As observer, note only what you see in the physical changes of the face or body (color change, muscle changes, eyes or eyebrows, lines, etc.) of your partner.
3. When the observer has finished reporting, the partner can then explain which emotion they were thinking about or attempting to display. Discuss whether the signals that the observer was reading were aligned with the emotion the partner was displaying.



Name: _____

Date: _____

Video Letters From Prison Activity 9: In Review

Top 8 Takeways to Remember

The word “families” has been used to help identify the following key points to take away from *Video Letters from Prison*:

- 1** Family values, culture and historical background are three primary influences on the work of the family.
- 2** Appreciate your family, your history, and its cultural traditions, as they have made you the person that you are.
- 3** Make a point to celebrate both the differences and the similarities between all families, regardless of race or structure.
- 4** Involvement of fathers in the lives of their children is critical to their healthy self-esteem and direction into adulthood.
- 5** Letters can be used as tools to communicate feelings with others that may be too difficult to share verbally.
- 6** Investigate school and community resources that are available to teens and families who are facing difficult challenges.



- 7** Explore interpersonal communication skills that can be used to help overcome problems and strengthen relationships.
- 8** Sit down and visit with, or write a letter to a person from another country, another social class, or a different culture/ethnic group.

Credits

About the Author(s)

Jerlyn Hohnholt teaches Family and Consumer Science at Maxwell Public School in Maxwell, Nebraska, for grades 7-9. She also teaches Child Development for grades 11-12. Hohnholt is an advisor for Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) and received her Bachelor's in Vocational Home Economics from Kearney State College and a Master's in Human Resources and Family Science from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Hohnholt has served as a chapter adviser for 26 years and has been teaching for 30 years. Her students are very involved in the national program known as STAR (Students Taking Action with Recognition) by doing community service and fundraising for local groups in the North Platte and Maxwell communities in Nebraska.

Nancy Barr teaches Family and Consumer Science at Lewiston Consolidated School in Lewiston, Nebraska, for grades 7-12. Barr has been teaching for six years and she received her Bachelor of Science degree from University of Nebraska.

Barr sponsors a local community outreach club at Lewiston called the LCS Club (Leadership, Character and Service Club). The club sponsors three blood drives each year, an annual food drive, provides Valentine's Day balloons to the communities of the Lewiston school district, collects donations for the Make-a-Wish Foundation and provides leadership opportunities for all members.

Jamie Lee, who served as the Writer of *Video Letters for Prison*, is an author and a former instructor at the Oglala Lakota College, where she taught for five years. Lee has a Master's in Human Development and has been a communications trainer and an educator for the past 30 years.

Her stories and articles have appeared in *The South Dakota Review*, *Winds of Change Magazine* and several other anthologies. She has published three non-fiction books along with one novel and a collection of writings from Oglala Lakota College students. Her first novel, *Washaka: The Bear Dreamer*, was a PEN USA finalist in 2007. Lee has written over 70 documentary programs including public radio's landmark 52-part Native music series, *Oyate Ta Olowan: The Songs of the People*.

About the Producer/Director

Milt Lee is a sound and film artist who has worked most of his life to further the interests of Native Americans across the country. He is an enrolled member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

With his wife, Jamie, Milt Lee produced and distributed a 52-part series for PRI and AIROS called *Oyate Ta Olowan: The Songs of the People*. These award-winning documentaries on traditional Native American music were funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), the National Endowment for the Arts and AIROS Audio. In 2007, he was named a Bush Artist Fellow and used the time to produce *Video Letters from Prison*, his first full-length film documentary about three Lakota girls who connect with their incarcerated father via "Video Letters."

About VisionMaker Video

VisionMaker Video, a service of Native American Public Telecommunications, Inc. (NAPT), with major funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) is the premier source for quality Native American educational and home videos. Profits from video sales are invested in new NAPT productions. NAPT shares Native stories with the world through support of the creation, promotion and distribution of Native media.



Answer Key - Activity 2: Vocabulary

Active Listening: The practice of paying close attention to a speaker and asking questions to ensure full comprehension. (Source: www.bing.com/dictionary)

Character: One of the attributes or features that make up and distinguish an individual. The complex of mental and ethical traits marking and often individualizing a person, group or nation. (Source: www.merriamwebster.com)

Communication: An act or instance of transmitting. (Source: www.merriam-webster.com)

Community Support: A wide-range of support from the community that is being served, working in partnership with community leaders, social service agencies, law enforcement and medical facilities in regards to proposed requests for implantation or those currently in use. (Source: www.merriam-webster.com)

Compromise: A settlement of differences by arbitration or by consent reached by mutual concessions. (Source: www.merriam-webster.com)

Conflict: Competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests or persons). (Source: www.merriamwebster.com)

Conflict Resolution: The methods and process of negotiation, arbitration and institution building which promote the peaceful ending of social conflict and war. (Source: www.answers.com/topic/conflictresolution)

Crisis: An emotionally significant event or radical change of status in a person's life. (Source: www.merriam-webster.com)

Cross-Cultural Family Studies: Combining, pertaining to or contrasting two or more cultures or cultural groups and the psychology of what role a family plays in each. (Source: <http://dictionary.infoplease.com/crosscultural>)

Ethnic Identity: The extent to which one identifies with a particular ethnic group(s). Refers to one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership. (Source: www.uky.edu/Classes/FAM/357/fam544/ethnic_identity.htm)

Family Communication: The time that adults and children within the same family or household spend relaying or receiving important information about simple things such as day-to-day activities, important life-changing events or advice, etc. (Source: www.familycommunication.org/)

Family Council: Promoting traditional family values by promoting, protecting and strengthening those values. (Source: www.familycouncil.org)

Family Counseling Agencies: A counseling center that offers advice for circumstances surrounding immediate crisis such as separation, divorce, marital conflict, court mandated counseling, psychotherapy, significant emotional loss, parenting difficulties, alcohol or drug related problems, adjusting in a blended family unit, etc. It is often not the weakness of the individual, but the events and circumstances surrounding his or her life that prompt a need for some professional intervention. (Source: <http://familycounselingagency.org>)

Feedback: The transmission of evaluative or corrective information about an action, event or process to the original or controlling source. (Source: www.merriam-webster.com)

Feelings: An emotional state or reaction. (Source: www.merriam-webster.com)

Gestures: A movement of the limbs or body as a means of expression. Something said or done by way of formality or courtesy, as a symbol or token, or for its effect on the attitudes of others. (Source: www.merriam-webster.com)

Historical Trauma (HT): The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences. The historical trauma response (HTR) is a constellation of features in reaction to this trauma. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_trauma)

Marginalization: Relegate to a lower or outer edge, as of specific groups of people. For example: "We must not marginalize the poor in our society." (Source: <http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=marginalize>)

Answer Key - Exercise 2: Vocabulary

Marginalization (continued)

Often used in an economic or political sense to refer to the rendering of an individual, an ethnic or national group, or a nation-state powerless by a more powerful individual, ethnic or national group, or nation-state. (Source: www.lib.uconn.edu/~mboyer/ms200102glossary)

Mediator: One that mediates between parties at variance. (Source: www.merriam-webster.com)

Nonverbal Communication: Larger, non-spoken context within which all face-to-face communication takes place. Every conscious or subconscious behavior in presence of another is suffused with meaning without which all verbal communication would be ambiguous. (Source: www.businessdictionary.com/definition/nonverbalcommunication.html)

Nuclear Family: A social unit that consists of a mother, a father, and their children. (Source: www.bing.com/dictionary)

Problem: A question raised for inquiry, consideration or solution. (Source: www.merriam-webster.com)

Race: A family, tribe, people or nation belonging to the same stock. A class or kind of people having unified by shared interests, habits or characteristics. (Source: www.merriam-webster.com)

Solution: An action or process of solving a problem. (Source: www.merriam-webster.com)

Support Group: A common interest group. (Source: www.bing.com/dictionary)

Unity: The quality or state of not being multiple. A condition of harmony. Continuity without deviation or change (as in purpose or action). (Source: www.merriam-webster.com)