

Tools for Teaching
Resilience
Strategies for Life's **Ups** and **Downs**



NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
HEALTH INFORMATION NETWORK

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Tools for Teaching Resilience Strategies through Life's Ups and Downs

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with support from the

**U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
Substance Abuse
and
Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Mental Health Services
(#02M009270)**

*and with assistance
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TEACHER'S GUIDE

Introduction:

RESILIENCE. The art of recovering from or adjusting to trauma, loss or misfortune. To be resilient is to “bend without breaking.”



WEIJI. Crises generate opportunities for individuals and communities to develop their capacities for resilience. The following tools have been created specifically for teachers to use to help build the capacity for resilience within children in the elementary grades.

Life can be filled with challenges that require children and their teachers to be resilient in order to succeed at school and beyond. How can teachers help their students be resilient so they continue to progress and succeed even when life's challenges threaten to interfere with learning and achievement?

When young children feel sad, threatened or in danger, they often have a hard time expressing their thoughts and feelings. Young and with relatively little life experience, children may not be as resilient as we would like to think they are. They need a reservoir of coping mechanisms and resilience techniques to draw upon in times of uncertainty, crisis, trauma and loss.

Fortunately, resilience can be taught. We can give children tools that will help them gain insight about their own reactions to life's challenges. We can equip children to make better choices. What works and what doesn't? What's helpful and what's not? What's constructive and what's destructive? We can teach children how to make choices about their reactions. We can help children begin to bounce back.

The following activity sheets are not intended for clinical counseling use. Please be sensitive to students' reactions. Be prepared to contact a school counselor with any concerns or to refer students to counseling should they reveal sensitive information to you during these exercises.

Project Overview:

This booklet presents, in a form suitable for children, much of the same material contained in the NEA HIN pamphlet for adults, DEALING WITH TRAUMA AND LOSS: PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING RESILIENCE. You should read that pamphlet before you present any of these materials to your students, and use it as a reference.

The activity sheets in this booklet parallel, for children, the five points offered to adults in the adult publication. Each activity sheet is suitable for use by students individually, in pairs or small groups, or in a classroom-wide presentation.

How to Use the Activity Sheets:

PAGES 5 (WORD PUZZLE), 6 (SOLUTION)

RIDDLE: How do trees get so tall? (*Recognize that stress “symptoms” can be normal reactions to an abnormal situation.*) An old adage states that “tall trees bend with the breeze.” Children who face taxing situations with a resilient attitude are much more likely to deal with those challenges effectively, much like tall trees during a storm.

Grade Level: 3—5
CURRICULUM EXTENSION AREAS:
● Language Arts
● Science
● Physical Education



SUGGESTION: When working with students, discuss how trees and other plants react to storms and strong winds. Ask what they have witnessed during and after storms. Compare and contrast the plant discussion to what people can do to remain undamaged during stressful times. Ask students to share their ideas about what it means to “bend without breaking.” Ask them to come up with examples.

PAGES 7 (PICTURE/WORD PUZZLE PIECES), 8 (SOLUTION)

Activities help “CUT OUT” stress and make us feel better. (*Create a plan of action for times when there’s more to “process” than your “processor” can handle.*)

Grade Level: 2—5
CURRICULUM EXTENSION AREAS:
● Language Arts
● Social Studies (Health)
● Physical Education



SUGGESTION: Brainstorm a list of other activities that could help children feel relieved from stress. Imagine various everyday stressful situations and how some of these stress-relieving activities could help them to feel reassured and comforted. Ask, “What do you do to ‘take your mind off things?’”

PAGES 9, 10 (MOCK NEWSPAPERS)

Believe It...Or Not! (*Get media wise – choose your news.*) This activity sheet invites student to be “critical consumers” of information, and decide whether they should believe every headline they read or every story they hear on television or radio.

Grade Level: 3—5
CURRICULUM EXTENSION AREAS:
● Language Arts
● Science
● Social Studies



SUGGESTION: Discussion for this activity could be directed toward student’s own responsibilities where media is concerned. Is it wise to watch the news over and over when negative news is presented? How should students decide how to screen what they watch, read, and listen to, especially during stressful times? As a related activity, students could make up their own “believable” and “unbelievable” headlines.

PAGES 11 (GAMEBOARD), PAGES 12–16 (CHALLENGE CARDS)

Getting With The Program (*Give permission to not know all the answers.*)

No one knows all the answers all the time. This activity shows that many outcomes are possible: People often are confronted with situations to which they do not know how to respond. The activity takes the form of a game that can be played by one child or more. Using a dice to determine the number of “jumps” for each turn, players advance from the starting point through a number of different scenarios that involve decisions about resources and behaviors.

Grade Level: 3–5
CURRICULUM EXTENSION AREAS:
● Language Arts
● Math
● Applied Technology
(Computer Lab)



SUGGESTION: Guide a few students through role-playing different scenarios. Ask students to discuss how they would respond, including what they think would be the outcomes resulting from their decisions.

PAGES 17 (STORY), 18 (CONNECT THE DOTS)

Barry, the Saint Bernard Dog (*Be gentle with yourself and others.*)

Many people attempt to deal with stress, trauma or loss by trying to avoid it. For example, some people escape into their work. Unfortunately, people can make things more difficult when they push themselves to keep going when what they really need to do is relax. The St. Bernard is beloved for its dedication to completing difficult tasks during threatening situations, as well as for its loving personality. This activity uses the story of Barry, a famous St. Bernard, to start discussion about how we can know when to be gentle with ourselves and others, and how to develop that skill.

Grade Level: K–2
CURRICULUM EXTENSION AREAS:
● Language Arts
● Social Studies (History)
● Math

SOLUTION

How do trees get so tall?

T H E Y B E N D D U R I N G B A D S T O R M S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 8 15 16 17 18 19 20

TRUST
9 20

SAFETY
5

FEELINGS
11 12

HEART
1

FRIENDS
18 8 15

HELP

JOY
4

HEALTH
14

LOVE
17

HAPPINESS
2

SELF
3

TALKING
16 6

GOALS
13

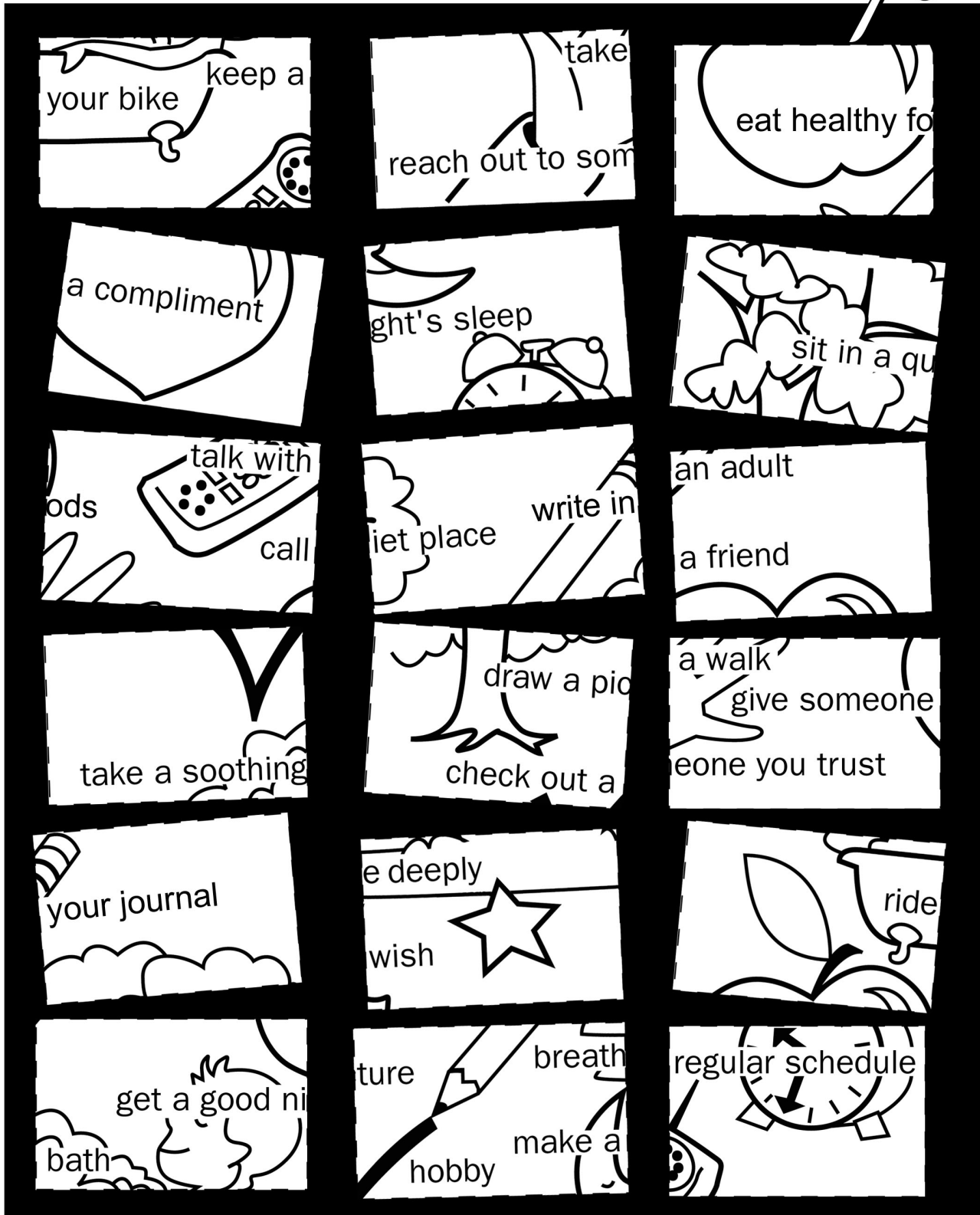
DREAMS
7 10 19

PEACE



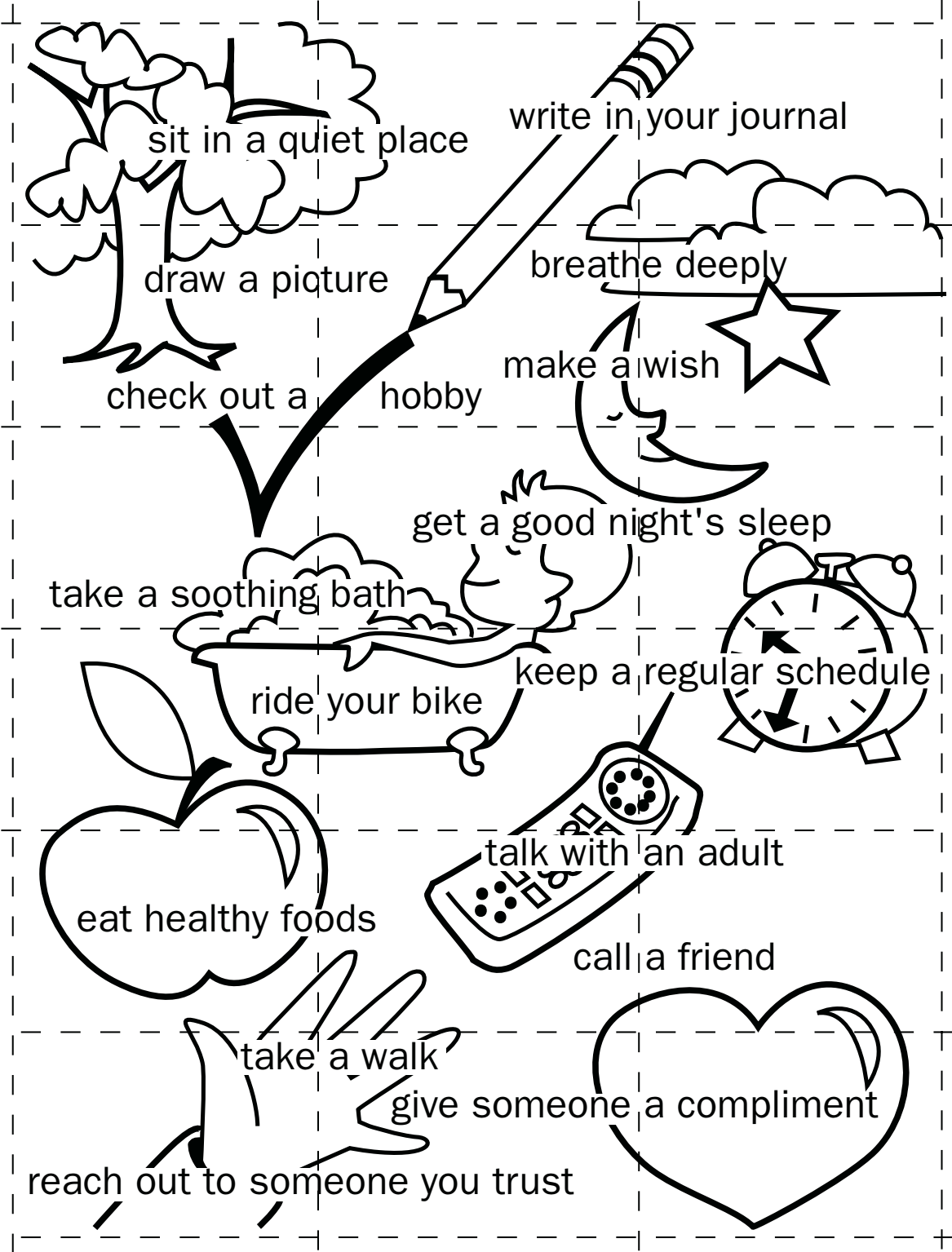
Activities help "CUT OUT" stress and make us feel better

Cut out the blocks below. Match them and the puzzle's picture clues.



SOLUTION

Activities help "CUT OUT" stress and make us feel better



Believe It... Or Not!

You are in charge of how you react to headlines.
Read the ones on this page and ask yourself:
Is it fact or is it fiction?

Weather forecast:
Partly cloudy.
Sunshine in
the afternoon.



NEWS

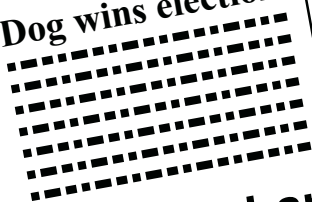
Inside:

- Knowledge is power
- Spelling bee takes flight

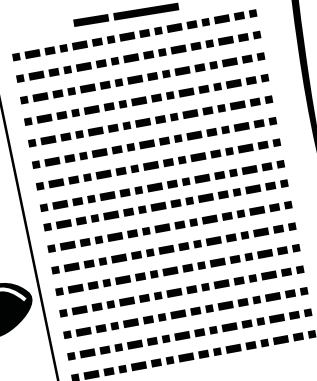
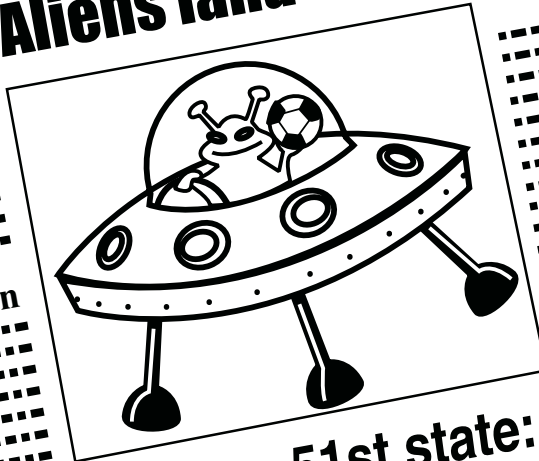
**Learning math adds
to your intelligence**



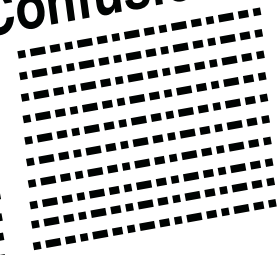
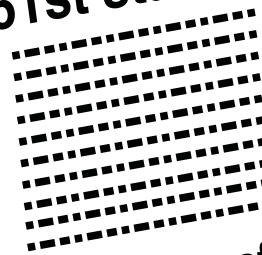
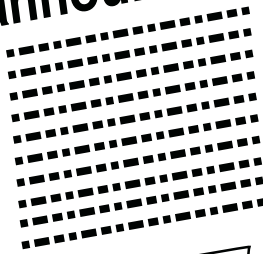
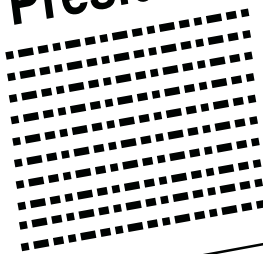
Dog wins election



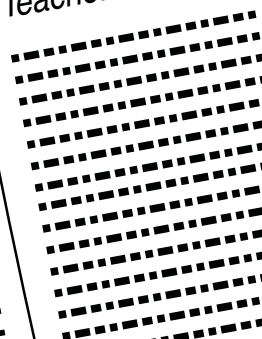
Aliens land on soccer field



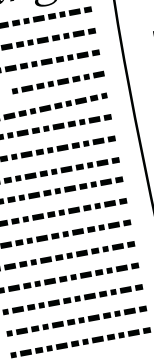
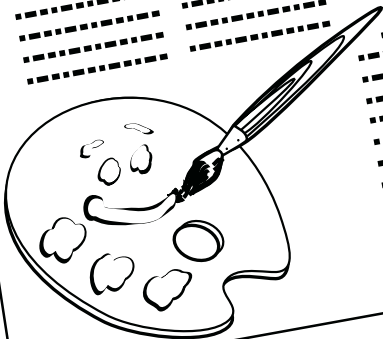
President announces 51st state: Confusion



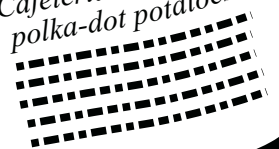
School - a safe place to be
Teachers keep students protected



Art expresses feelings



*Cafeteria serves
polka-dot potatoes*



There's news you can use,
but choose wisely. Circle the headlines
you think are believable.

Believe It... Or Not!

You are in charge of how you react to headlines.
Read the ones on this page and ask yourself:
Is it fact or is it fiction?

Weather forecast:
Sunshine all
the live-long
day!



NEWS

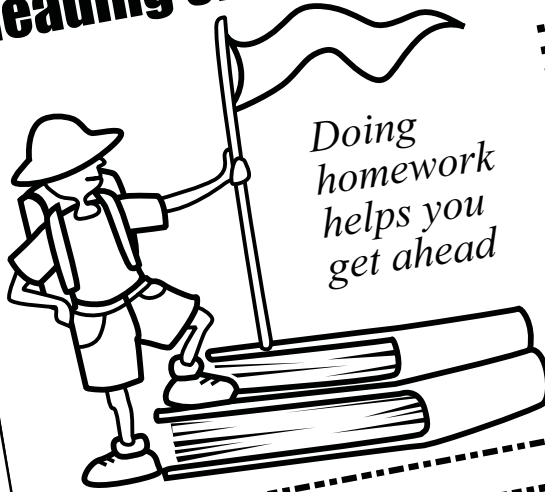
Inside:

- Teachers' high expectations equal faith in students abilities
- Moonbeams give you sunburn

Reading offers great adventures

Bus wheels: still
going round
and round

PE: helps
students stay
physically fit

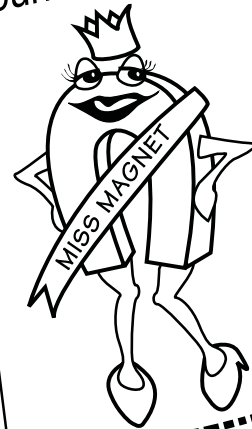


Doing
homework
helps you
get ahead

Traveling elephants
pack their own trunks

Magnets win
beauty contest:
found attractive

New shampoo cures the common cold

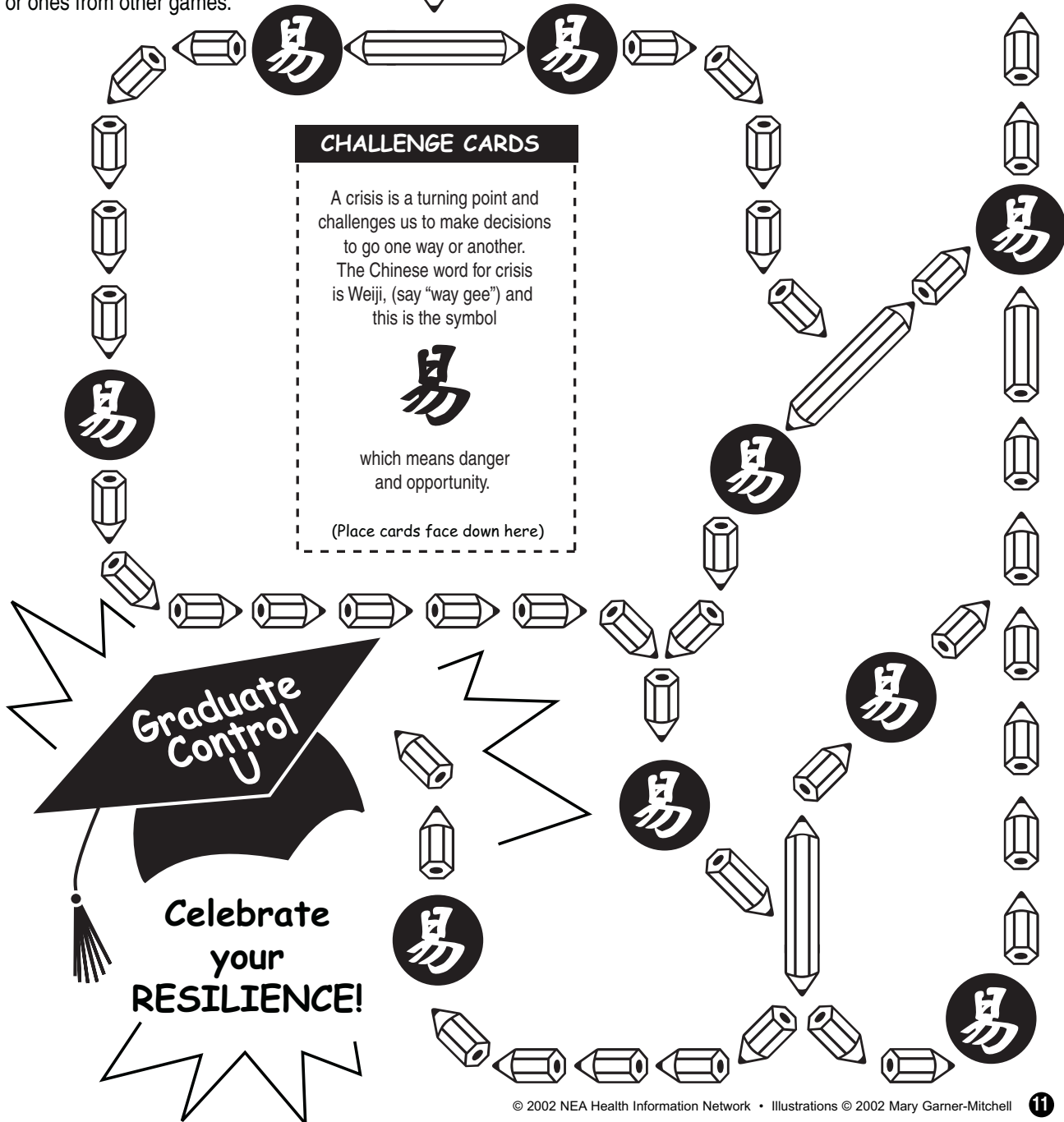
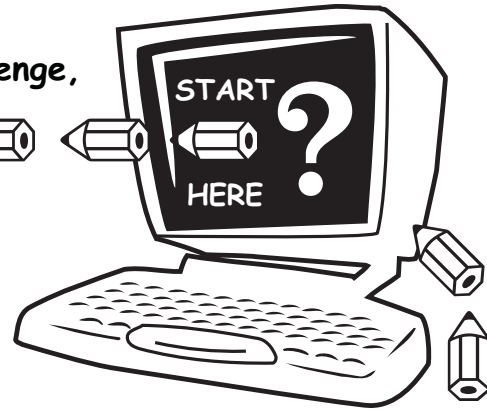


There's news you can use,
but choose wisely. Circle the headlines
you think are believable.


GETTING WITH THE PROGRAM

When faced with a stressful situation or challenge, do you have an answer or know what to do?

Play this game for fun alone or with friends. Take turns rolling dice to advance through the "Program" to "Graduate." If you land on the Chinese "WEIJI" symbol, draw from the deck of "challenge cards." For a token, use a small item like an erasure, coins, buttons, or ones from other games.




Cut out each card along the dotted line. Fold along the solid line in the center to form a "front" and "back" for each card. Tape or paste to secure. Be sure to shuffle the cards to mix the positive challenges and the negative ones. Stack cards on the game board where indicated, face down, with the "Weiji" symbol facing up.




Had a good cry,
which helped get it
out of my
system so I could
go about my day.
Advance 2 spaces.



Enjoyed a warm
bubble bath.
Advance 2 spaces.




Wrote about my
thoughts and
feelings in my
personal journal.
Advance 4 spaces.



Confided in a
friend what's been
worrying or
bothering me.
Advance 4 spaces.




Visited with a
friend to take my
mind off of things
for awhile.
Advance 3 spaces.



Turned to my
mom, dad,
stepmom or
stepdad to
get their
help/support.
Advance 5 spaces.


Cut out each card along the dotted line. Fold along the solid line in the center to form a "front" and "back" for each card. Tape or paste to secure. Be sure to shuffle the cards to mix the positive challenges and the negative ones. Stack cards on the game board where indicated, face down, with the "Weiji" symbol facing up.




Said a prayer or meditated.
Advance 5 spaces.




Invited a kid who's going through a tough time to spend time with me and my friends.
Advance 5 spaces.




Asked somebody I love and trust for a hug.
Advance 3 spaces.



Got a good meal and went to bed on time.
Advance 4 spaces.



Asked my teacher, parent, a friend, or counselor for help.
Advance 5 spaces.



Through sports or play, got some exercise to "let off steam."
Advance 4 spaces.

Cut out each card along the dotted line. Fold along the solid line in the center to form a "front" and "back" for each card. Tape or paste to secure. Be sure to shuffle the cards to mix the positive challenges and the negative ones. Stack cards on the game board where indicated, face down, with the "Weiji" symbol facing up.



Let go of what I was powerless to change and filled that spot by participating in something I could change for the better.
Advance 5 spaces.



Turned lemons into lemonade.
Advance 3 spaces.



Wrote/sent a letter or card to someone I care about.
Advance 2 spaces.



Refused to be a bystander by speaking up, saying, "We don't behave like that here," when I saw a kid bullying another kid.
Advance 10 spaces.




Escaped by watching TV or playing video games all day long.
Go back 4 spaces.




When asked how I'm doing, said "fine" even though that's not true.
Go back 2 spaces.


Cut out each card along the dotted line. Fold along the solid line in the center to form a "front" and "back" for each card. Tape or paste to secure. Be sure to shuffle the cards to mix the positive challenges and the negative ones. Stack cards on the game board where indicated, face down, with the "Weiji" symbol facing up.




Felt worried about what was happening, so I stayed up way past my bedtime to watch repeats of stories on the news.
Go back 2 spaces.




Cried all night and didn't tell anyone who could or would help.
Go back 2 spaces.




Too tired and depressed to brush my teeth before bed, so I don't bother anymore.
Go back 3 spaces (and get to dentist soon).



Skipped breakfast, lunch or dinner today.
Go back 3 spaces.



Have missed a lot of school days because I can't deal with it.
Go back 5 spaces.



Got angry and defensive, yelling, "No! I'll do it myself!" when, in fact, I know I really need some help.
Go back 4 spaces.

CHALLENGE CARDS

GETTING WITH THE PROGRAM

Cut out each card along the dotted line. Fold along the solid line in the center to form a "front" and "back" for each card. Tape or paste to secure. Be sure to shuffle the cards to mix the positive challenges and the negative ones. Stack cards on the game board where indicated, face down, with the "Weiji" symbol facing up.



Screamed,
"Leave me alone!"
when, in fact,
I feel terribly
lonely.
Go back 5 spaces.



Grit my teeth.
Go back 1 space.



Carried a heavy
problem by myself
for so long that
my back began
to hurt.
Go back 4 spaces.



Sucked on lemons
to get myself into
a sour mood.
Go back 3 spaces.



Teased/bullied
a kid at school
or in my
neighborhood.
Go back 7 spaces.



Participated
in starting or
spreading gossip
about a kid
at my school.
Go back 7 spaces.

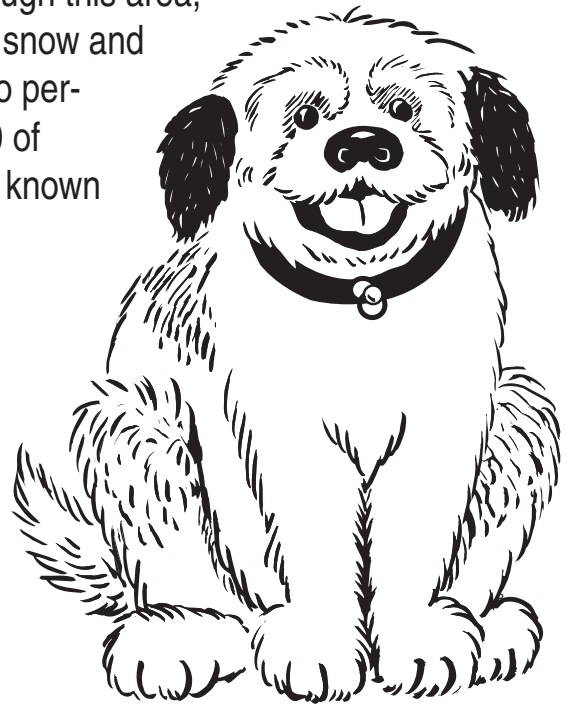
Be gentle with yourself and others



Dogs: “Man’s Best Friend.” When we come home, dogs are always glad to see us. They love us no matter what. There are many breeds of dogs. The breed that’s perhaps best known for its gentle, loving personality and keen sense of bravery is the Saint Bernard.

Barry, one of the most famous Saint Bernards ever, lived more than 200 years ago in the mountains between Italy and Switzerland. Known for narrow, dangerous roads and trails, this region frequently gets fierce snowstorms. So, it’s no surprise that, during his long life, Barry rescued many people who, while traveling through this area, got lost or found themselves trapped because of the snow and rugged terrain. Barry isn’t the only Saint Bernard who performed such wonderful, heroic acts. More than 2,000 of these dogs worked in this part of the Alps that’s now known as “Saint Bernard Pass.”

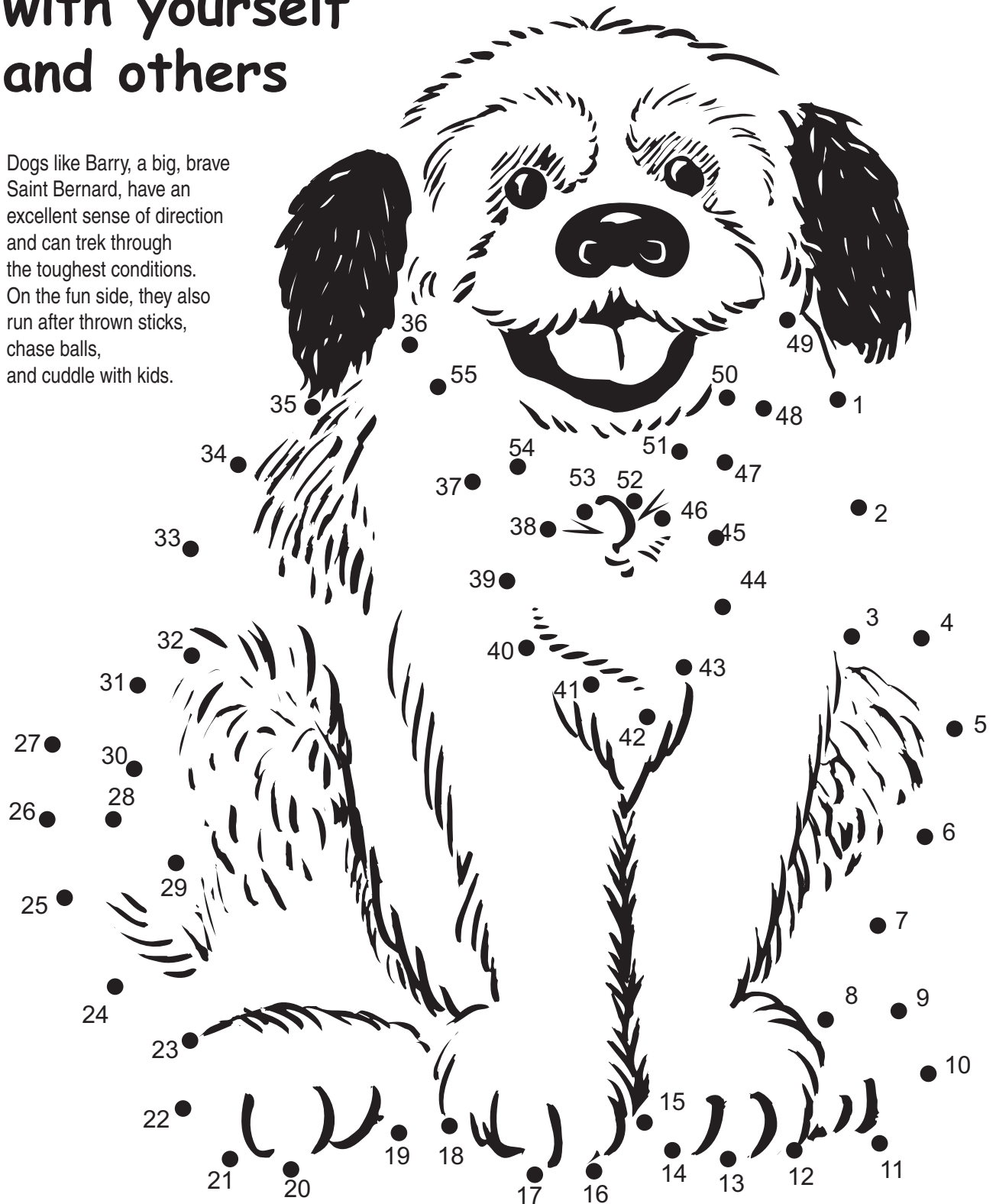
Saint Bernards are known not only for doing brave rescue work but also for being fun friends and loving companions. With their big, broad chests, they are good at clearing pathways and they are strong enough to pull people out of deep snow. Dogs like Barry also have an excellent sense of direction. They can navigate through thick fog and heavy, blinding snowstorms better than most people can. Besides being great rescue dogs, Saint Bernards are also a lot of fun. They enjoy running after thrown sticks, chasing balls, and cuddling with kids.



The point is, Saint Bernards are powerful and skilled yet they are also gentle with themselves and others. When in difficult or scary situations, people rely on Saint Bernards not only for being strong and skilled but also because of their sensitive and gentle manners. And, as “man’s best friend,” dogs like Saint Bernards count on people to be the same in return.

Be gentle with yourself and others

Dogs like Barry, a big, brave Saint Bernard, have an excellent sense of direction and can trek through the toughest conditions. On the fun side, they also run after thrown sticks, chase balls, and cuddle with kids.



About NEA HIN



NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION HEALTH INFORMATION NETWORK

As the non-profit health affiliate of the **National Education Association**, the NEA Health Information Network (NEA HIN) provides health information to 2.7 million educational employees and the more than thirty million students it serves. NEA HIN distributes health education information nationally through NEA's 53 state/territory affiliates as well as 13,000 local education associations. NEA HIN serves as a link between public school employees; local, state, and national health organizations; and government agencies. NEA HIN's mission is to improve health, safety, and student achievement by providing school employees with vital, effective, and timely health information through parent, community, public, and private partnerships.

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