

**RUNAWAY
PREVENTION
HANDBOOK**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-------|
| NATIONAL RUNAWAY SWITCHBOARD INFORMATION..... | 1 |
| WOULD YOU RUN TOO IF IT HAPPENED TO YOU | 2-3 |
| 10 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU RUN AWAY..... | 4 |
| ACTIVE LISTENING..... | 5 |
| COMMUNICATING DURING A CRISIS..... | 6 |
| CRISIS AVERTED WORKSHEET | 7 |
| LIFE GOALS WORKSHEET..... | 8-13 |
| WAYS TO DEAL WITH ANGER | 14-17 |
| FAMILY COMMUNICATION TIPS | 18-19 |
| WHO'S ON YOUR BUS ACTIVITY | 20-21 |

National Runaway Switchboard

What is the National Runaway Switchboard?

The National Runaway Switchboard is a federally-designated national communication system (hotline and website) for runaway and homeless youth. Youth and family members call 24 hours a day to work through problems and find local help from social service agencies and organizations. Some callers just need someone to talk to, others need help finding a shelter, food, medical assistance, or counseling. Some callers are on the streets, others are struggling with other issues, and we work with them to identify options to prevent them from leaving their home, when possible and if appropriate.

How can you contact us?

Website: www.nrscrisisline.org

Toll-free number: 1-800-runaway (800-786-2929)

***KEEPING AMERICA'S RUNAWAY AND AT-RISK YOUTH
SAFE AND OFF THE STREETS***

WOULD YOU RUN TOO IF IT HAPPENED TO YOU? Page 1

Imagine that you've decided to leave the place you're staying. You are 15 years old. You've been living in a group home with eight other kids for about three months now, and you just can't take it anymore!

You miss your parents and your siblings. You used to live with your mom, but she had a drug problem and was found to be "unfit." Now, she stays with your grandma until she can get on her own again. Your dad has a new family of his own, and you have three younger half-siblings - twin sisters who are 4 and a brother who is 8. You miss them so much, but you can't always see them because they live an hour away.

You're still attending the same school you attended before you came to the group home. You're in eighth grade. You pretty much keep to yourself at school. You make C's, with B's in English, and you like the student teacher in that class because she knows you're smart. School's also neat because you get to see your soccer coach, who will sometimes let you play even though you're no longer on the team. You know that, if you run away from the group home, you won't be able to go back to school because school is the first place they'll look for you.

You still attend the same church where you've always gone. Some of the other kids in the group home go there, too, and there's a youth group you're all part of. Pastor Chris and his wife know your situation, and they have been pretty supportive. They even gave you a place to stay once a few years ago when things were rough at home. You know that you can't get in touch with them once you run away because they're bound to tell your caseworker or the youth counselor at the group home.

You don't have many friends. There's this person you were seeing on and off before getting into the home, but that's over. Now, the only thing close to a friendship is a girl at the home who tends to cling to you. She's pretty new and she seems scared, so you stand up for her sometimes. She'll be sad to see you go, but you can't let that hold you back.

The group home has been ok so far. It's not your ideal situation, but people have been supportive and it *is* a safe place to stay with a bed, food, and showers. The thing is, you *really* miss your family. You've tried talking to your caseworker, but he keeps trying to explain how this is the only option right now. You feel like there's gotta be another way, and that's why you've had it. You're ready to leave.



WOULD YOU RUN TOO IF IT HAPPENED TO YOU? Page 2

| Topic | Responses |
|--|-----------|
| <p>Communication Who could you talk to?</p> <p>How might communication have helped or hurt your situation?</p> | |
| <p>Family Roles and Responsibilities How has your family helped/hurt the situation?</p> <p>What roles do you play in your family?</p> <p>Who do you see as your family?</p> | |
| <p>Planning for the Future How might running affect your future?</p> <p>What goals do you have?</p> | |
| <p>Emotions How might you feel about your situation and toward others?</p> | |
| <p>Social Environment What is your social environment like?</p> <p>Who is a part of it?</p> | |
| <p>Identity How do you view yourself?</p> <p>How does that play a role in whether to stay or go?</p> | |



10 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU RUN AWAY

Directions: Review the questions below. Can you think of any other questions to ask yourself before running away?

- What else can I do to improve my home situation before I leave?
- What would make me stay at home?
- How will I survive on my own?
- What makes running away unsafe?
- Who can I count on to help me?
- Am I being realistic?
- Do I have a plan that is well thought out?
- What are my other options?
- If I end up in trouble, whom will I call?
- If I return home, what may happen?

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ACTIVE LISTENING

- ◆ **Closed-ended Questions:** These questions can usually be answered with short, one word responses. They are usually needed to gather factual information. For example: How old are you? Do you live at home?
 - Give me an example of a closed-ended question.
 - When would be a good time to use a close-ended question?

- ◆ **Open-ended Questions:** These questions require a more in-depth answer and allow the other person to expand on what is important to them. For example: How are you feeling right now? What is going on? Tell me about your day at work.
 - Give me an example of your BEST open-ended question.
 - When would be a good time to use an open-ended question?

- ◆ **Paraphrasing/Summarizing:** The goal of paraphrasing is to make sure that you and the person you're communicating with are "on the same page." There are three parts to paraphrasing and summarizing what someone has communicated to you.
 - *First, you must wrap-up (or summarize) all of the things he or she said. For example: "So, Lee, you said that you're really upset with your sister today?"*
 - *Next, you should make sure that you accurately understood what he or she said to you. For example: "So, let me get this straight, you're mad at your sister because she borrowed your new pair of shoes/video game without asking?"*
 - *And last, be ready to move on to options. For example: "How do you think you want to deal with this issue so that your sister knows how you feel?"*

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COMMUNICATING DURING A CRISIS

ESTABLISH RAPPORT:

- Let your friend know he or she can trust you to keep the conversation confidential (as long as it is within reason and your friend is not going to harm him or herself or someone else).
- Speak with a gentle tone.
- Support your friend; make sure he or she knows you care and are there to help.
- Actively listen.

EXPLORE FACTS AND FEELINGS:

- Ask closed-ended questions to extract details. (For example, "When did this happen?" and "Who was there?")
- Ask open-ended questions to get a more narrative response. (For example, "Please tell me about your relationship with your dad?" or "Please give me an example of the last time you thought your mom was being unfair?")
- Ask your friend how he or she feels about the situation.
- Spend most of your time listening. Let your friend do the talking.
- Paraphrase and clarify to make sure you have a clear idea of your friend's situation. (For example, "I understand that you feel terrible. Your mom threw you out of the house without listening to you. Do I understand how you feel/what happened?")

FOCUS ON THE MAIN ISSUE(S):

- Ask your friend to tell you what he or she wants help with. (Your friend may only want you to listen, not to give advice.)
- Make sure that what your friend wants help doing is realistic. It's unfortunate, but he or she cannot change someone else's thoughts/behaviors, only his/her own.

EXPLORE OPTIONS:

- Let your friend tell you what he or she would like to do.
- Help your friend explore what the options are. "What have you tried?," "What has/has not worked?," and/or "Have you thought about...?"
- If you give suggestions, do so without "directing" or "lecturing."
- Go through the pros and cons of each option to find one that is appropriate.

ESTABLISH A PLAN OF ACTION:

- Have your friend come up with a detailed plan, including who, what, when, where, and how.
- Discuss alternate plans.
- Reassure and support your friend. Find out how your friend wants you to help, and then tell your friend what you will do to be supportive.

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Teens + Stress + Resources = Crisis Averted

Teens run away for a variety of reasons.
Think about whether resources could help you avoid a crisis.

Directions:

Step 1: Under the Teen category, list events/feelings all teenagers experience.

Step 2: Under the Stress category, list stresses some teenagers experience.

Step 3: Under Crisis, list what can happen when teens are overwhelmed.

Step 4: Under the Resources/Support category, list resources a teenager might rely on for help.

Step 5: Discuss the question. Can resources help teens avert a crisis? How?

| TEENS | STRESS | CRISIS |
|-------|--------|--------|
| | | |



| |
|--------------------------|
| <u>RESOURCES/SUPPORT</u> |
|--------------------------|

Teens + Stress + Resources = Crisis Averted



LIFE GOALS

In this activity you will identify **3 goals** you would like to **achieve** in the **near future**. Think of 3 goals related to school, home, family, job, life, and travel, basically anything you have dreamed of achieving.

Goal #1:







Goal #2:

Goal #3:

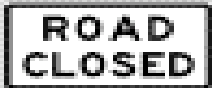







TRAFFIC SIGN DEFINITIONS

Below are the definitions for the traffic signs that you'll be using for your own personal road map.

| | |
|---|--|
|  <p>Straight Ahead (Facilitator):</p> | <p>Choices that get you directly to your goal.</p> |
|  <p>Bridge (Facilitator)</p> | <p>People/Places/Things that help you get from one place in life to another.</p> |
|  <p>Detour Ahead (Facilitator or Barrier)</p> | <p>Having to take another route to reach a goal or any unexpected change of plans. This sign can be perceived positively or negatively depending on the situation.</p> |
|  <p>Yield (Facilitator or Barrier)</p> | <p>A point at which you must allow someone else to take the lead or give them the "right-of-way."</p> |
|  <p>Fork (or "Y") Ahead (Facilitator or Barrier)</p> | <p>A situation where you have to decide without knowing the consequences of either choice.</p> |
|  <p>Baby On Board! (Facilitator or Barrier)</p> | <p>A situation where you have to consider the other people (family, friends, children, etc.) in your life before you make a decision regarding your goals.</p> |















| | |
|---|---|
|  <p>Road Closed (Barrier)</p> | <p>When you make a choice and find out you can't proceed with your decision. You must at this time turn around and choose an alternate route.</p> |
|  <p>Stop (Barrier)</p> | <p>People/Actions/Things that temporarily stop, slow you down, or keep you from achieving your goals.</p> |
|  <p>Railroad Crossing (Facilitator or Barrier)</p> | <p>People/Actions/Things that keep you safe and stop you from being in an accident with a "train."</p> |
|  <p>Curve Ahead (Facilitator or Barrier)</p> | <p>People/Actions/Things that slow you down and make you take on a new perspective.</p> |
|  <p>Road Construction Ahead (Barrier)</p> | <p>People/Actions/Things that slow you down or keep you from achieving your goals.</p> |
|  <p>Seat Belt (Facilitator)</p> | <p>People/Actions/Things that keep you safe and help support a decision or goal.</p> |



ROAD MAP, GOT YOURS?

In this activity, you will identify **3 goals** that you would like to **achieve** in the **near future**. Think of 3 goals related to school, home, family, job, life, and travel, basically anything you have dreamed of achieving. After writing down your 3 goals, think about **barriers**, or people/places/things that may get in the way of achieving your goals. Also, think about your **influential others**, or important people/groups, and what role they will play in helping you achieve your goals.







Use the labels below and spaces underneath to explain the various barriers and influential others you may encounter on your way to achieving your goals.







| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|
|  <p>Facilitator</p> |  <p>Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |
| | | | | | |
|  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Seat Belt (Facilitator)</p> |
| | | | | | |

Goal : _____









Goal #2: _____







| | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|
|  <p>Facilitator</p> |  <p>Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|--|---|
|  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Seat Belt (Facilitator)</p> |
| | | | | | |



Goal #3: _____

| | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|
|  <p>Facilitator</p> |  <p>Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|--|---|
|  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Facilitator or Barrier</p> |  <p>Seat Belt (Facilitator)</p> |
| | | | | | |

After completing the above activity, take the blank sheet of paper titled "Life Goals Map" and begin mapping out a path to your goals that includes each of the road signs. Be creative in putting together your map!



WAYS TO DEAL WITH ANGER

Directions: Some people choose to ignore or bottle up anger, but this approach may actually cause more harm because the root problem is never addressed. Instead, try to manage anger so it can become more positive. Here are some ideas:

RELAX. Breathe deeply from your diaphragm (your belly, not your chest) and slowly repeat a calming word or phrase like “take it easy.” Think of relaxing experiences, such as sitting on a beach or walking through a forest.

THINK POSITIVELY. Remind yourself that the world is not out to get you; you’re just experiencing some of the rough spots of daily life.

PROBLEM-SOLVE. Identify the specific problem causing the anger and approach it head-on—even if the problem does not have a quick solution.

COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS. Angry people tend to jump to conclusions. Slow down and think carefully about what you want to say. Listen carefully to what the other person is saying. At times, criticism may actually be useful to you.

MANAGE STRESS. Make sure to set aside personal time to deal with the daily stresses of school, activities, and family. Ideas include:

- Listening to music
- Writing in a journal
- Exercising
- Meditating
- Talking about your feelings with someone you trust

CHANGE THE SCENE. Maybe a change of environment would help reduce angry feelings. For example, if your friends are angry frequently or make you angry, consider making new friends who may contribute more to your self-confidence and well-being.

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(Taken from National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center’s
Anger Management Fact Sheet for Teens)





WHAT FLIPS YOUR SWITCH?

Page 1

Directions: Answer the questions below to help you understand more about yourself when you're angry.

◆ *What makes you angry? Upset? Frustrated?* _____

◆ *How do you know when you're angry?* _____

• *How do you feel, emotionally and physically?* _____

• *How do you act?* _____

• *What do you say?* _____

• *What do you think about?* _____

◆ *In what ways do you take your anger out on others around you? Who? (For example: slamming a door; being mean to your little sister or brother)* _____

◆ *How does that make you feel?* _____

◆ *Why might you take your anger out on someone else?* _____

◆ *How do you deal with your anger?* _____

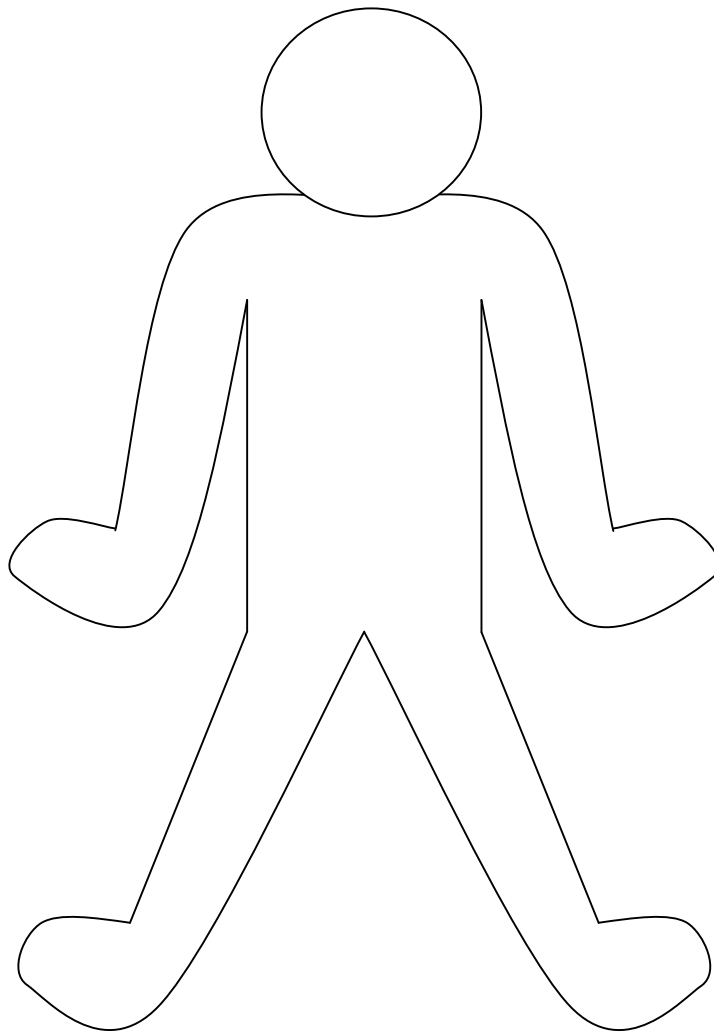




WHAT FLIPS YOUR SWITCH?

Page 2

Directions: On the figure below, draw or color how your body feels when you're angry or upset. Be creative!



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RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

These relaxation exercises are focused breathing techniques which help reduce anxiety and tension. These techniques can be performed with your eyes open or closed. You can also do them at any time and no one will even know.

For all of these exercises, make sure you are breathing from your diaphragm—that means **from your belly, not your chest**. If you're having trouble, try **breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth**. You should feel your stomach rising about an inch as you breathe in and falling about an inch as you breathe out. If this is still difficult, lie on your back or on your stomach; you will be more aware of your breathing pattern. Remember, it is impossible to breathe from your diaphragm if you are holding in your stomach, so relax your stomach muscles.

TECHNIQUE #1:

Count very slowly to yourself from ten down to zero, one number for each breath. With the first breath from your diaphragm, say "ten" to yourself, with the next breath, say "nine," and so on. If you start feeling light-headed or dizzy, count more slowly. When you get to "zero," see how you are feeling. If you are better, great! If not, try it again.

TECHNIQUE #2:

As you inhale, count very slowly up to four; as you exhale, count slowly back down to one. Thus, as you inhale, say to yourself "one, two, three, four;" as you exhale, say "four, three, two, one." Do this several times.

TECHNIQUE #3:

After each time you inhale, pause for a few seconds. After you exhale, pause again for a few seconds. Do this for several breaths.

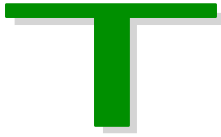
GOOD TIMES TO USE A RELAXATION TECHNIQUE...

While riding in or driving a car (with your eyes open if you're driving!). Before you take a test or exam. When someone says something that bothers you. When waiting for an important phone call. Before going on a date. When you feel overwhelmed by a project or homework. While standing in line. Before an athletic game. Before a presentation, etc.

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Family...



TIMING

Choose an appropriate time to talk with your family. If the family member that you need to talk with has a busy lifestyle, then it might be easier for you to set a meeting time. This way, each person's attention can be focused on the issue.



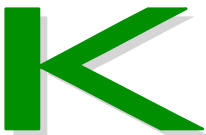
ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Clearly tell your family member how you feel and what you want or need by being honest and direct. Think carefully about your relationship and pay attention to your family member's response. Depending on the specific family member, you might have to address issues differently. Remember to use "I" statements, take deep breaths, keep a reasonable tone, and actively listen to your family member.



LOCATION

Choose a quiet place where you and your family member cannot be interrupted or overheard by others.



KNOW WHAT TO SAY

Think about what you want to say ahead of time by sorting out your own feelings about the issue before talking with your family member. You might find that making a list or writing a letter of your thoughts and feelings can help you focus.

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FAMILY COMMUNICATION TIPS

Directions: Use these tips to help your family improve their relationships. Post them in a central spot. Not all tips will work for everyone. Pick the ones that work for you. What other tips would you add?

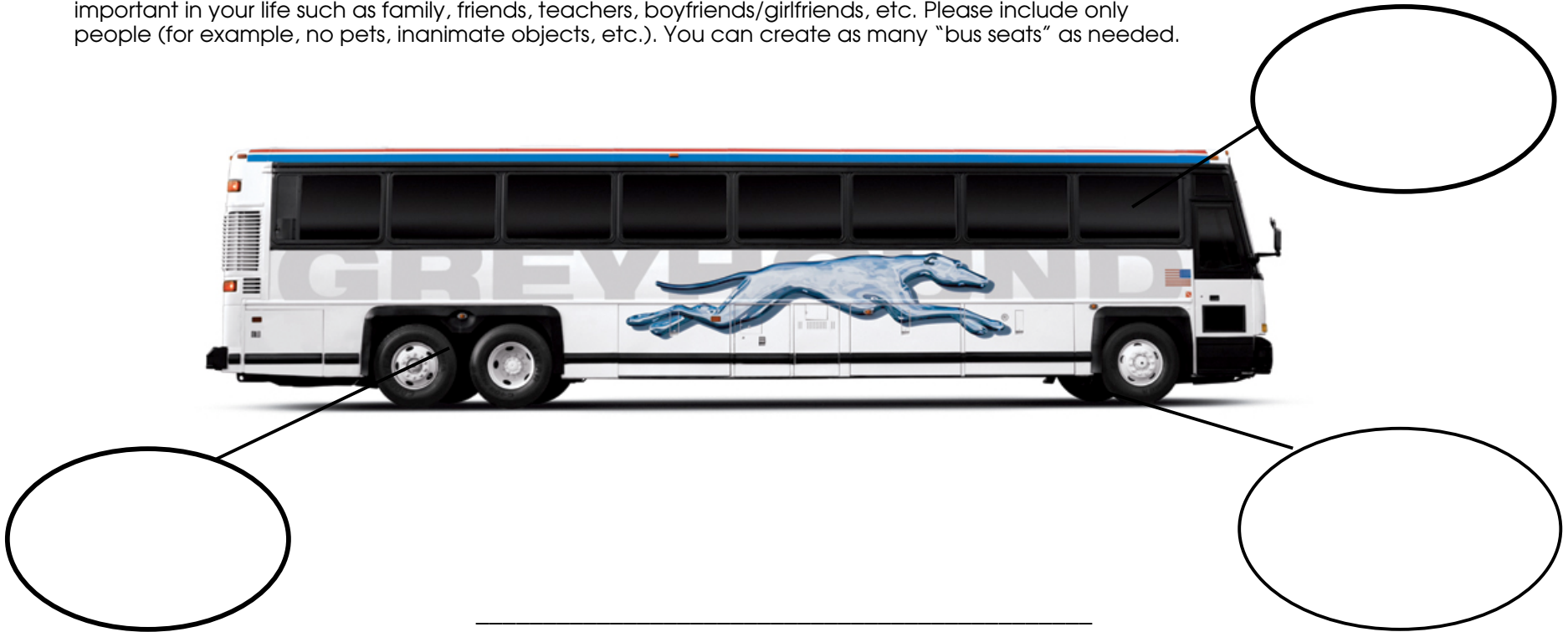
1. Set aside time to talk.
2. Don't expect your family to read your mind.
3. Be specific and realistic about your expectations and requests.
4. Have patience! Good communication takes time and effort.
5. Brainstorm ideas before making a final decision.
6. Ask for input from family members.
7. Write things down; make a list of changes you want to see.
8. Be willing to compromise.
9. Do fun things together.
10. Use community resources when you need help.

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WHO'S ON YOUR BUS?

Directions: Fill in each "bus seat" (represented by the ovals) with each person/group who is most important in your life such as family, friends, teachers, boyfriends/girlfriends, etc. Please include only people (for example, no pets, inanimate objects, etc.). You can create as many "bus seats" as needed.



Bus Image borrowed with permission by Greyhound Lines, Inc. www.greyhound.com, 1-800-231-2222.
Greyhound Lines, Inc. partners with NRS to provide the Home Free program.

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“Who’s On Your Bus?”

- Who are the people on your bus? Who isn’t on your bus?
- Why are they important to you?
- Are there some that have more influence than others?
- Can you count on these people when you are in trouble or in need?
- Do they help you make good decisions? Always? Most of the time? Some times? Never?
- Do you feel good about the decisions they help you make?

