
Contents

<i>Teacher's Guide</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Options for Class Presentations</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Future Scenes for Class Presentations</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Building Block Advisor</i>	<i>xv</i>

BUILDING BLOCKS

Dating Relationships	3
Family Conflict	17
Teen Parenthood	31
Sisters and Brothers	45
Success in Marriage	59
Strong Families	73
Dysfunctional Families	87
Dual Careers	101
Divorce	115
Blended Families	129
Young Adults and the Elderly	143
Roommates	157
The Decision to Parent	172
Child Care Decisions	186
Child Abuse	200



Teacher's Guide

Introduction

As teachers prepare students to meet real-life challenges, both present and future, the following skills become essential to success:

- a. Decision-making and problem-solving skills
- b. Ability to analyze situations and predict outcomes
- c. Critical thinking
- d. Cooperative teamwork
- e. Leadership skills
- f. Communication skills
- g. Appreciation of individual differences

Building Blocks to Better Relationships, designed for secondary or young adult students, incorporates all of the above skills into a dynamic learning activity that focuses on contemporary relationship issues. This packet features case study situations for 15 personal and family scenarios:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Dating Relationships | 9. Divorce |
| 2. Family Conflict | 10. Blended Families |
| 3. Teen Parenthood | 11. Young Adults and the Elderly |
| 4. Sisters and Brothers | 12. Roommates |
| 5. Success in Marriage | 13. The Decision to Parent |
| 6. Strong Families | 14. Child Care Decisions |
| 7. Dysfunctional Families | 15. Child Abuse |
| 8. Dual Careers | |

Each case study includes five segments (Blocks):

- **Block 1**—Introduces the main character(s).

- **Block 2**—Introduces another important person or develops the plot.
- **Block 3**—Provides background information or other important details.
- **Block 4**—Provides additional background information about the case study.
- **Block 5**—Introduces a challenge that could cause the situation to change, or creates a problem to solve.

For each of the five Blocks, there are ten different descriptions. Each description interrelates with all the others. Working in cooperative learning groups, students randomly select one of the ten descriptions from each of the first four Blocks to build their own case study scenario. The student groups then analyze the relationships within their case study Blocks. At this point, each group selects their last Block, the challenge. They then discuss the challenge and its impact on the situation. After analyzing the case study, students do one or more follow-up activities; then they present their results to the class. (See Options for Class Presentations on page *viii*.)

Future Scenes for Class Presentations (page *xiii*) provides a focus scene you can assign to your students.

Since *Building Blocks to Better Relationships* has no predictable answers, it is a very dynamic learning activity. The student-centered atmosphere encourages critical thinking, the process of analyzing relationships, and predicting outcomes. Another important feature is that it provides visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning, thereby meeting the needs of a variety of learning styles.

Students can complete each case situation in one or two class periods. Although you can use the activity in a variety of ways, *Building Blocks to Better Relationships* is most effective as an introductory lesson on specific topics. The students are exposed to the problems related to the topic as they complete an enjoyable activity with no predetermined answers. Students then will be able to identify key issues relating to contemporary relationships. You can also use *Building Blocks to Better Relationships* individually to confront students with some of the contemporary issues individuals and families must deal with in today's society.

Educational Objectives

1. Students will be able to use critical and creative thinking skills as they make decisions and solve problems.
2. Students will be able to analyze the factors involved in building successful relationships with others.

Organizing Materials for Building Blocks

Before introducing *Building Blocks* to students, you need to complete the following tasks.

1. Read all instructions and background information in this book.
2. Photocopy the case study descriptions and cut them apart, keeping each Block of the case study separate from the others. You could keep the descriptions in envelopes, labeled appropriately.
3. Photocopy the worksheet that relates to the topic you're using (e.g., Dating Relationships, Teen Parenthood). Make one copy for each cooperative learning group. (NOTE: A reproducible page of want ads for apartments is provided on page 170 to use with the Roommates case studies. You may use the want ads if you are covering selection of apartments with the lesson.)
4. Assemble the following materials, which the cooperative learning teams will need for the class presentations.
 - a. Drawing:
 - Drawing paper (at least 12" x 18")
 - Marking pens
 - b. Role play:
 - Props as needed by students
 - c. Story:
 - No materials needed
 - d. Advice Column:
 - Photocopy Building Block Advisor (page xv—one copy for each cooperative learning group).
5. Divide the class into cooperative learning groups. We recommend three or four students per group.
6. Select the method you will use for having the students present their case study to the class. Options include those listed below. You can assign one of these options to all of the cooperative learning groups, or allow each cooperative learning group to select the option they prefer. If the groups will be allowed to choose, prepare an overhead transparency of Options for Class Presentations (page xi). You can use Future Scenes for Class Presentations (page xiii) to give the students a specific focus for their class presentations.

Options for Class Presentations

- a. **Drawing:**
 - Students draw a picture that shows the group's prediction of the future relationships of the characters in their case study.

b. Role Play:

Students act out a typical scene showing the group's prediction of the future relationships of the characters in the case study.

c. Story:

Students write a story that further describes the relationships of the characters in this case study or expands on question 5 of the worksheet—What happens next in this story?

d. Advice Column:

Using the challenges or problems in the case study, students write a letter outlining the problem and the advice columnist's answer to the letter. They can use the reproducible form on page xv (*Building Block Advisor*) or design one of their own.

Suggested Sequence for Teaching

1. Present the Building Block topic to the class. Ask students to brainstorm some of the contemporary issues associated with this topic. List these ideas on the board or overhead.
2. Form cooperative learning teams and review the rules for working in teams (if needed). Rules might include:
 - a. Stay seated with your group throughout the activity.
 - b. Be respectful of everyone's ideas. No put-downs.
 - c. Everyone in the group is expected to participate.
 - d. Through discussion, each group will arrive at answers they all agree with.
 - e. Rely on group members to answer questions and solve problems.
3. Explain to the students that this activity is similar to playing a card game. Just as in a card game, when each player draws the cards that make up his or her hand, each cooperative learning team will draw the Blocks that will make up their case study.
4. Distribute the Building Block worksheet to each of the cooperative learning groups and review the questions with the class. (NOTE: An optional activity for the Roommates lesson is to have the students select an apartment for these roommates. We recommend using local newspaper want ads for this, but we have included a reproducible page of apartment ads if you prefer to use them.)
5. Have someone from each cooperative learning group select one of ten descriptions from each of the envelopes assembled for the first four Blocks.

6. Have the teams read over the Blocks they have drawn. At this point, the teacher may want to give students the option of trading one of the Blocks they have drawn with one other team. The Blocks have been carefully designed to interrelate with all of the possible combinations, but occasionally the students may get a combination they feel is unrealistic. If you give students this option, it is important for them to do the trading without discussion or sharing of information.
7. After reading over the Blocks they have drawn, have students complete questions 1–3 on the worksheet.
8. At this point, have one member of the cooperative learning team select Block 5, the challenge.
9. Ask each cooperative learning group to discuss the implications of their challenge on the future relationships of the people in their scenario. Then have them complete questions 4 and 5 on the worksheet.
10. Assign the follow-up activity, which will provide each group with a product to present to the class. If students are being given a choice of follow-up activity, present the options by showing the Options for Class Presentations overhead transparency (page *xi*). In some situations, it may be easier to have all cooperative learning teams complete the same follow-up activity, such as role-playing. Both of these methods have proven effective in our classrooms. We have also provided a list of specific suggested topics for the class presentations (see Future Scenes for Class Presentations on page *xiii*). By giving students a very specific idea to focus on as they summarize the information in the case study, they are more able to think creatively and develop a presentation that is meaningful for the class.
11. Have each cooperative learning team present the important information about their case study to the rest of the class along with their follow-up product (the drawing, role play, story, or advice column).
12. Close the activity by asking the class to respond to the summary question on the Building Blocks worksheet. For example, the summary question relating to Dating Relationships is:

What factors contribute to a successful dating relationship?

Students can respond through large-group discussion, in the cooperative learning groups, or individually. Whichever method you use, the summary question is useful as an evaluation activity at the end of the lesson.

Building Block Advisor

Dear Building Block Advisor,

Sincerely, Troubled

Dear Troubled,

Sincerely,

(students' names)

Building Block Advisor





BUILDING BLOCKS

Dating Relationships—The Couple

Harvey is very good-looking, and he knows it. He doesn't do well academically but is a leader in athletics. Since his parents' divorce five years ago, he has lived with his mother and her parents. Periodically he receives money from his dad, plus he gets a weekly allowance. Last summer he worked as a lifeguard.

Carrie has a younger brother and two foster sisters. Her family has always been close, but for the past few months she has been rebelling against family rules. She earns average grades in school and probably would do better if she quit her after-school job in a day-care center.



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Building Blocks to Better Relationships

Dating Relationships—The Couple

Tim is from a close family and considers himself really lucky to have a family like his. He participates in athletics and has been told he is a gifted athlete. He does above average academically in school. He works weekends in a movie theater.

Jenny is the youngest of six children and is considered spoiled by almost everyone in the family. She believes school is a waste of time but does intend to graduate. All she has to do is ask and she gets any amount of money she wants.



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Dating Relationships—The Couple

Sergio lives with his dad and has not had contact with his mother for over ten years. At school, he does below average academically except for his vocational classes. He has no interest in school activities or athletics. He works in an uncle's auto shop.

Tonia is from a chemically dependent family and participates in group counseling to help deal with the situation. Recently her grades have been the best she has ever had. This year she is a member of the volleyball, softball, and gymnastic teams. She earns money by occasionally babysitting.



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Dating Relationships—The Couple

Jerrell is from a family that is child-centered. His parents take an interest in everything he does. He does well academically in school and participates in athletics and other activities, including a chorale ensemble. His schedule does not permit him time for a job.

Shanika dates Jerrell because he is popular; she likes the recognition she gets from the relationship. She has been living with her dad and stepmother only since the eighth grade. She has had trouble adjusting to her new school and is doing poorly. She works part-time in a music store.



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Dating Relationships—The Couple

Brian is very academically oriented and does exceptionally well in school. He participates in track and cross-country. He fears his parents are on the verge of separating, because he hears them arguing a lot and his mother finds many reasons to be away from home. He works part-time in a computer store.

Cindy is from a family with a lot of problems. Her older brother attempted suicide last year, and her younger brother is into drugs. Her father is away a lot. Her grades have suffered and she may fail French. She works 30 or more hours a week. Most of her money is given to her mom for household expenses.



Dating Relationships—The Couple

Lamont was an infant when his father left. His mother moved in with his grandmother, who has had the main responsibility for raising him. He is a below-average student who participates in athletics. He is considered a star athlete and is often featured in news articles about the school team. He receives an allowance because he has little spare time to work.

Felicia is from a close-knit, religious family. She does well academically in school, especially in science, and she has had the lead in several school plays and musicals. Because of school activities, she has had no time for a regular job but occasionally babysits.



Dating Relationships—The Couple

Antonio is from a large extended family that has lived at the same address for three generations. He enjoys his elective classes but doesn't like English and history, and he has the grades to prove it! He works for an uncle on weekends so his job won't conflict with his sports activities.

Angela is from a single-parent home and does average academic work at school. She works evenings and weekends as a cashier in a discount store. Because of her work schedule, Angela seldom participates in school activities.



Dating Relationships—The Couple

Mike's father died three years ago, and his mom's boyfriend is currently living with the family. Mike likes school and maintains a B average. He works in a small grocery store after school, and most of his money goes for clothes.

Terry is from a family with a lot of problems, mainly relating to her mother's alcohol dependency. Currently her mother has been sober for eight months, so things seem better. Terry is shy around others and has an average academic record at school. She must take care of her two younger brothers after school, so a job is out of the question.



Dating Relationships—The Couple

Armon is handsome and enjoys wearing the latest styles. He doesn't have a lot of respect for his mother, and he hasn't seen his dad for many years. He works at an auto parts store after school and on weekends. His pride and joy is his 1967 Mustang, which he is customizing.

Shanna is the oldest of seven, and she is very outspoken. She has worked in three fast-food restaurants but has been fired each time for arguing with customers. She likes to dress in the latest styles and knows all the current dances. She collects shoes and has 67 pairs!



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Dating Relationships—The History

They met in the library, where both were working on a term paper. After spending most of the day talking instead of working, they decided to write one paper (they had different teachers), and each turned it in as his or her own. Both suffered the same consequences when they were caught—an F. They have been going together since last January. They both are strongly opposed to having sex before marriage.



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Dating Relationships—The Couple

James is from a close-knit extended family. Both grandmothers live with his family. His parents own a convenience store, where he works for no pay. He is given spending money as needed. He places a high value on education and is ranked second in his class at school.

Julia is shy and quiet. Most of the time she says nothing in her classes, but she does get good grades. Her family is very strict about her social activities—she is not usually allowed to be alone with James. They usually go to youth group activities, and he is allowed to come to her house when other people are present. They've only been on a date alone a few times.



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Dating Relationships—The History

They met at a party because they were the only two not drinking. They have been going together since last spring and participate in a lot of activities together. They haven't had sex but feel a lot of pressure to do so from their friends.



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Dating Relationships—The History

They knew each other in biology class, but the relationship got more serious when she asked him to a dance. He wants to have sex and she has strong values against it—this issue is a big area of conflict in the relationship.



Dating Relationships—The History

They met when their parents made them attend an employees' annual picnic. Neither one wanted to go, but when they met each other, they decided the picnic was just great! They have been going together since July two years ago. They have had sex quite often—once they thought she was pregnant, but luckily she wasn't.

Dating Relationships—The History

Because they live in neighboring apartments, they wait for the bus at the same place. Their friendly conversations at the bus stop eventually led to a more serious relationship. They have had sex a few times.



Dating Relationships—The History

They met at a youth center when both were on the decorations committee for a dance. They started going together almost immediately; that was six months ago. They have not had sex but have talked about it. She is more interested in sex than he, because his cousin had to get married when she was 16 and then got divorced at 18.

Dating Relationships—The History

They met when school started last year because their lockers were in the same area. They believe it was love at first sight. They have been going together for over a year and have been having sex for the last six months. Two months ago they had a scare when she thought she was pregnant.

Dating Relationships—The History

They have been going together since last summer. They met in biology class two years ago. They have not had sex but have been talking about it.



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Dating Relationships—The History

His sister is her best friend. He started noticing her when she hung around their home. He reluctantly took both of them to a concert a year ago, but surprisingly he had a good time. They have been going together since then. He wants to have sex but she doesn't feel ready.

Dating Relationships—The History

A mutual friend introduced them. They didn't like each other at first, but eventually discovered a common interest in 1950's television comedy. After much discussion, they have recently become sexually involved.



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**Dating Relationships—
Future Goals**

He: To go to college if he can find the money;
otherwise, he will find a job of some kind.

She: To attend college, but she has no idea what to
major in.

**Dating Relationships—
Future Goals**

He: To go into politics, so he figures he will have
to go to college.

She: To go into the Air Force and be a fighter
pilot.



**Dating Relationships—
Future Goals**

He: To be a teacher.

She: To be a commercial artist.

**Dating Relationships—
Future Goals**

He: To join the Marines.

She: To become a social worker for disadvantaged
children.



***Dating Relationships—
Future Goals***

He: None at the present time.

She: To be a lawyer, because she heard lawyers make a lot of money.

***Dating Relationships—
Future Goals***

He: To work up to management in a fast-food restaurant.

She: No idea of her future beyond the next month.



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***Dating Relationships—
Future Goals***

He: To own a business by age 25.

She: To become a great chef in a fancy restaurant.

***Dating Relationships—
Future Goals***

He: To enlist in the Navy, then go to college.

She: To study drafting at a nearby vocational school.



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Dating Relationships— Future Goals

He: To become a famous author.

She: To become a dentist.

Dating Relationships— Future Goals

He: To become a commercial artist.

She: To work in a retail store owned by her grandfather and eventually manage it.



Dating Relationships— Most Recent Date

They went to a party at a friend's house. No adult was present and there was a lot of drinking. They weren't expecting it to be that kind of party. He didn't drink, but she did. They left when two people began fighting. They spent a long time sitting on a park bench seriously discussing the future of their relationship.

Dating Relationships— Most Recent Date

Believe it or not, it was a study date. Afterwards they went out for pizza, and both were home by 10 P.M.



**Dating Relationships—
Most Recent Date**

This was two weeks ago, and they went to a movie. They couldn't agree on which one to see, but she finally gave in. Since then, family commitments have interfered with their plans to see each other.

**Dating Relationships—
Most Recent Date**

Last weekend they went to a dance sponsored by a religious organization. They had a good time until afterwards, when they argued because she danced with an old boyfriend who is now in the Marine Corps. They were both home an hour before her curfew.



**Dating Relationships—
Most Recent Date**

They went to practice for the school play. Afterwards they went out with the cast. They got home at 11:30 on a school night.

**Dating Relationships—
Most Recent Date**

They fixed dinner at his house, then watched rented movies.



Dating Relationships— Most Recent Date

They went to the prom. Neither had been to one before, and both were shocked at the costs involved. But they really enjoyed themselves.

Dating Relationships— Most Recent Date

They made elaborate plans for a picnic, but the weather didn't cooperate, so they roasted hot dogs in the fireplace and spread out a blanket on the living room floor. They ended up playing a video game.



Dating Relationships— Most Recent Date

Her favorite uncle gave them tickets to a professional sports game. It turned out that their seats were right next to those of her uncle and aunt. They liked it a lot because this was one activity they had never done before on a date. They got home very late, and it was a school night.

Dating Relationships— Most Recent Date

They went to the movie theater, but nothing looked good, so they went to a party in an isolated area of a park. A few minutes after they got there, the police arrived. His aunt came to take them home from the police station.



Dating Relationships— The Challenge

She is interested in another boy she met in her gym class. She is wondering if she wants to end this relationship right now.

Dating Relationships— The Challenge

He is upset because she has a close friend who is a boy. She insists that they are just good friends. He says he isn't jealous, but . . .



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Dating Relationships— The Challenge

They really like each other, but their families are upset about the relationship because they are of different religions.

Dating Relationships— The Challenge

His family feels the relationship is too serious for people of such a young age. His family members are insisting the couple slow down the relationship and date others.



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Dating Relationships— The Challenge

They often double-date with Brad and Lisa, who are dealing with Lisa's unplanned pregnancy. Brad is insisting Lisa terminate the pregnancy and not tell her parents. Lisa thinks she might want to keep the baby. Brad and Lisa have confided in the couple, and each expects support for his or her side.



Dating Relationships— The Challenge

The couple feels they are in love and have become dependent on each other. Yesterday she found out that she will have to move to another state. The move should be taking place at the end of next month.



Dating Relationships— The Challenge

She has become quite interested in both drugs and alcohol and insists he try them.

Dating Relationships— The Challenge

He wants to end the relationship but doesn't know how to tell her, so he has decided to be "too busy" for them to see each other.



***Dating Relationships—
The Challenge***

Her best friend saw him out with another girl.

***Dating Relationships—
The Challenge***

He has become very possessive and insists on knowing her whereabouts every minute. He becomes angry when she spends time with her friends.



Dating Relationships

What factors contribute to a successful dating relationship?

Directions: As a group, review and then discuss each of the Blocks of the case study. Write your group's opinion below.

1. Summarize the case study:
 - the couple
 - the history
 - future goals
 - most recent date
2. How do the couple's individual backgrounds influence this relationship?
3. Predict the future relationship of this couple.
4. Given the circumstances of the challenge in your case study, how will the challenge impact the situation?

What are some alternative ways to resolve this challenge?

5. What happens next in this story?