

“Move Ahead” Activity

Instructions & Supplies List

Objectives

1. To understand the concept that youth interact with, react to, and have an effect upon their families, friends, schools, neighborhoods, and communities, and to apply this understanding in working with youth.
2. To understand how risk and protective factors operate to hinder or help a youth’s development, and to apply this knowledge in working with youth.
3. To identify those events, situations and factors that place a youth’s development at risk and those that serve to protect a child.

Theoretical Framework

This activity is grounded in the Ecological Model of youth development which can be used to understand the influences in a child’s life that affect the process of growth and development. In this approach, ecology is defined as the relationship between living organisms and their environment. The ecology of youth development can be thought of as the relationship between a young person and the environment in which he/she lives. In the Ecological Approach, a youth’s environment includes the individual, family, friends, school, and work & community. Within each level of the environment there are protective and risk factors that can impact a youth’s development.

Protective factors are aspects of a school-age child or teen’s life that can increase his/her ability to withstand negative influences and develop healthy life skills. Risk factors are aspects of a school-age child or teen’s life that can create barriers to the development of healthy life skills and increase susceptibility to negative influences. Protective and risk factors can be present at any of the environmental levels – individual, family, friends, school, and work & community.

Overview of “Move Ahead” Activity

The “Move Ahead” activity uses concentric circles that place the child at the center of the circles (for this activity a volunteer will play the role of the child). The individuals in the circles surrounding the child represent the environmental levels of relationships – family, friends, school, and work & the community. Each circle should represent the same relationship so that there is one circle for family, one for friends, one for school, etc.

Specific roles or labels are assigned to persons at each level, e.g., “Family” might include mom, dad, sister, grandmother, etc. “School” might include teacher, coach, principal, etc. “Community” might include 4-H Leader, doctor, neighbor, etc. Each person in the environmental levels is also given protective factors and risk factors, e.g., a person assigned to the role of a dad might be given a protective factor that indicates he practices consistent parenting, has rules about where the child is to be, sets curfews, etc.

Risk factors for the dad might include: setting unclear rules at home, not attending the child’s school functions, not enforcing rules, etc.



The child also has protective factors that might include good social skills, confidence, polite behavior, etc. The child's risk factors might include rude behavior, poor achievement, poor work habits, etc.

Goal

The goal of the "Move Ahead" activity is for the youth to move from the innermost circle to the outside as quickly as possible having chosen the fewest number of risk factors.

Materials/Supplies Needed

1. Color coded items, such as an arm band for each participant. The volunteer who will perform the role of the youth participant should have one color. All participants within each of the 3 concentric circles should have the same color designation (i.e., Friends and Family will be one color; School will be a second color; Work & Community will be a third color).
2. Name tags or a similar item that will be used to assign roles to each participant (see list at end of this activity).
3. Green and red colored paper that you will use to write or print out protective and risk factors (see lists at end of this activity). Green should be used for protective factors and red should be used for risk factors. Each participant will need one protective factor and 3 risk factors.
4. Small manila envelopes for each participant.
5. A roll of masking tape.

Instructions

The "Move Ahead" activity can be modified based on the number of volunteers participating.

There must be at least one participant serving as the youth. Assign the remaining volunteers to one of three ecological levels; family & friends, school, or work & community. Give each participant in each level a manila envelope containing 1 protective factor (on green construction paper) and 3 risk factors (on red construction paper) (see end of activity for a list of protective and risk factors). The envelopes should be marked on the outside with family & friends, school, or work & community. All participants within the same level should be differentiated by a different color item such as an arm band. Each participant should also be given a name tag that designates his or her role in that level, such as mom/dad for the family level; teacher, for the school level; 4-H leader, for the work & community level, etc (see end of activity for additional roles).

You will also give the participant serving as a youth 1 protective factor and 3 risk factors that will serve as their characteristics, i.e., rude behavior as a risk factor and good social skills as a protective factor. The participant should act out these characteristics, but do not verbally reveal them to the other participants. Also, give this participant a roll of masking tape that will be used to tape the protective and risk factors selected to their clothing.

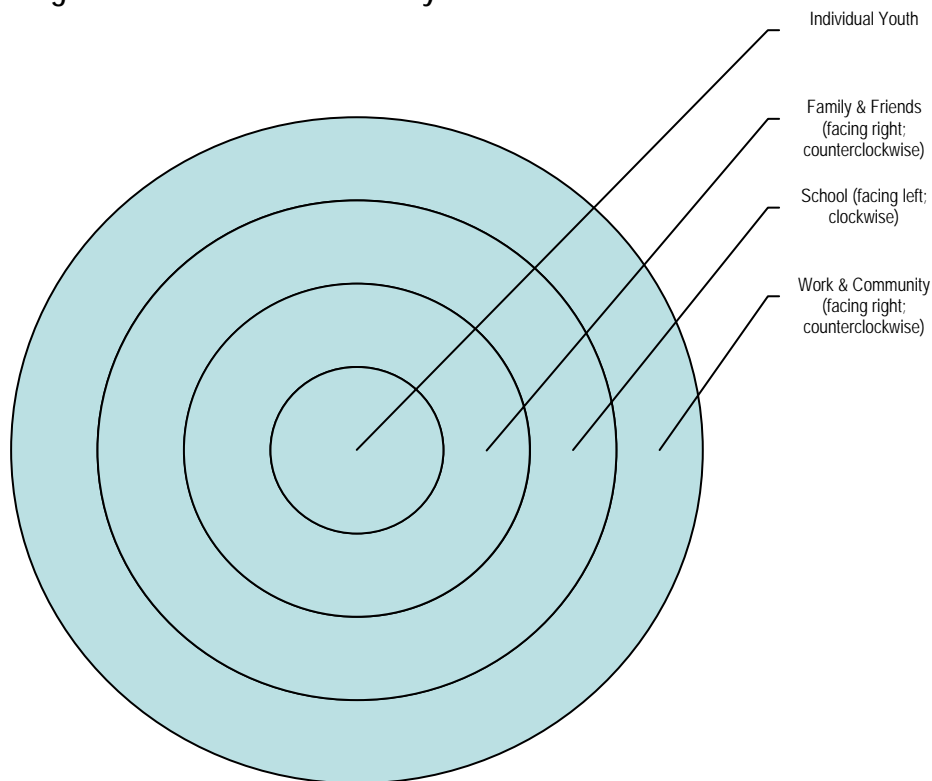
Ask the participant serving as a youth to stand in the center of the room (see "Move Ahead" diagram below). Ask all participants in the family & friends level to form a circle around the youth facing the back of the next person. These participants should be faced toward the right. Participants should be at least an arm's length apart. Ask participants in the next level, school, to form a circle around the first circle. They should be faced toward the left. Participants in the work & community level should then form a circle around the second circle and should be faced toward the right.

The participants in the circles should start to move in the direction they are facing around the youth. The youth should then select a person in the first circle, family & friends, and draw a factor from the envelope that participant is holding and then tape it to their clothing. If the factor they select is a risk factor (red construction paper) the youth must select another person from the family & friends circle and draw again. They must repeat

this process in the family & friends circle until they select a protective factor (green construction paper). Once they select a protective factor, they can move to the next circle. This process is repeated until the youth reaches the outside of all of the circles. When the youth selects a person, the circles stop. When the youth is ready to select another person, the circles start to move again.

The goal of the activity is for the youth to move from the innermost circle to the outside as quickly as possible having chosen the fewest number of risk factors.

Diagram of "Move Ahead" Activity



Suggested Discussion Questions

1. What were some of the risk factors that the youth selected?
2. In real life, how might this impact a child's development?
3. What were some of the protective factors that the youth selected?
4. In real life, how might this impact a child's development?
5. What did you notice about the characteristics of the child?
6. What seemed to be some of the child's protective factors? Risk factors?
7. How can the individual protective or risk factors impact the child's interactions with family & friends, school, or work & community?

NOTE: Information adapted for this activity was used with permission.

Source: Moving Ahead: Preparing the Youth Development Professional (2000). USDA/Army School-Age & Teen Project Session VI, Essential Elements to Support Youth and Create Opportunities for Growth.

Ecological Level Label List
"Move Ahead" Activity

Print the following items to be used to assign roles to each participant.

Family/Friends Level

Mom/Dad
 Sister/Brother
 Stepfather/Stepmother
 Grandmother/Grandfather
 Aunt/Uncle
 Cousin

School Level

Teacher
 Coach
 Girl/Boyfriend
 Counselor
 Classmate
 Principal
 Best Friend
 Bus Driver
 Janitor

Work/Community Level

Co-worker
 Supervisor
 Customer
 Social Worker
 Religious Leader
 Parent of Friend
 4-H Leader
 Doctor
 Police Officer

Family/Friends Level	
Mom/Dad	Sister/Brother
Stepfather/Stepmother	Grandmother/Grandfather
Aunt/Uncle	Cousin
School Level	
Teacher	Coach
Girlfriend/Boyfriend	Counselor

Classmate	Principal
Best Friend	Bus Driver
Janitor	
Work/Community Level	
Co-Worker	Supervisor
Customer	Social Worker
Religious Leader	Parent of Friend
4-H Leader	Doctor
Police Officer	

**Possible Protective/Risk Factors for Youth
"Move Ahead" Activity**

The participant serving as a youth will receive 1 of the following protective factors and 3 risk factors that will serve as their characteristics during the activity. Print the following protective and risk factors on green and red paper. Green should be used for protective factors and red should be used for risk factors.

Youth Risk Factors (red paper)

- Rude behavior
- Poor achievement
- Hyperactive
- Low intelligence
- Chronic health problems
- Poor work habits
- Poor social skills
- Withdrawn from others
- Aggressive towards others

Youth Protective Factors (green paper)

- Physically healthy
- Good social skills
- Good thinking skills
- Normal intelligence
- Polite behavior
- Knows how to please others
- Sense of humor
- Easy going temperament

Youth Risk Factors (red paper)	
Rude behavior	Poor achievement
Hyperactive	Low intelligence
Chronic health problems	Poor work habits
Poor social skills	Withdrawn from others
Aggressive towards others	

Youth Protective Factors (green paper)

Physically healthy	Good social skills
Good thinking skills	Normal intelligence
Polite behavior	Knows how to please others
Sense of humor	Easy going temperament

Suggested Protective/Risk Factors for Family & Friends Level

“Move Ahead” Activity

Print the following protective and risk factors on green and red paper. Green should be used for protective factors and red should be used for risk factors. Each participant in the Family & Friends Level will need one protective factor and 3 risk factors.

Family & Friends Level Protective Factors (green paper)

Parents know friends' parents	Clear rules at home
Friends are good influences	Consistent parenting
Friends are about the same age	Rules fairly enforced
Rules about where youth is to be	Rules consistently enforced
Youth can count on parents	Friends respect authority
Parents are available to youth	Parents know friends
Friends are successful in school	Parents are involved in school
Friends are about the same age	Good relationship with brothers/sisters
Youth has at least one friend to count on	Rules about when youth is to be home
Youth supervised & responsible at home	
Youth lives with at least one caring adult	
Good relationship with at least 1 adult in family	

Family & Friends Level Risk Factors (red paper)

Unclear rules at home	Youth lives alone
Inconsistent parenting	Friends drink alcohol
Parents don't know friends	Friends ignore authority
Rules not always enforced	Friends get bad grades
Friends involved with trouble	Friends all older than youth
No friend the youth can count on	Socially isolated – no friends at all
Rules depend on parent's mood	Parents are unavailable to youth
No rules about where the youth can go	
Parents don't go to school functions	
Home alone a lot without supervision	
Parents don't know parents of friends	
Poor relationships with brothers/sisters	
Poor relationships with all adults in family	
Youth feels parents cannot be counted on	
No rules about when the youth is to be home	

Note: Based on the number of participants, factors can be repeated.

Family & Friends Protective Factors (green paper)	
Parents know friends' parents	Clear rules at home
Friends are good influences	Consistent parenting
Friends are about the same age	Rules fairly enforced
Rules about where youth is to be	Rules consistently enforced
Youth can count on parents	Friends respect authority
Parents are available to youth	Parents know friends
Friends are successful in school	Parents are involved in school
Friends are about the same age	Good relationship with brothers/sisters

Youth has at least one friend to count on	Rules about when youth is to be home
Youth supervised & responsible at home	Youth lives with at least one caring adult
Good relationship with at least 1 adult in family	

Family & Friends Risk Factors (red paper)	
Unclear rules at home	Youth lives alone
Inconsistent parenting	Friends drink alcohol
Parents don't know friends	Friends ignore authority
Rules not always enforced	Friends get bad grades
Friends involved with trouble	Friends all older than youth

No friend the youth can count on	Socially isolated – no friends at all
Rules depend on parent's mood	Parents are unavailable to youth
No rules about where the youth can go	Parents don't go to school functions
Home alone a lot without supervision	Parents don't know parents of friends
Poor relationships with brothers/sisters	Poor relationships with all adults in family
Youth feels parents cannot be counted on	No rules about when the youth is to be home

Suggested Protective/Risk Factors for the School Level "Move Ahead" Activity

Print the following protective and risk factors on green and red paper. Green should be used for protective factors and red should be used for risk factors. Each participant in the School Level will need one protective factor and 3 risk factors.

School Level Protective Factors (green paper)

Discipline is consistent
Learning is a priority at school
Community supports schools
Good home/school communication
One adult at school cares about youth
School has high expectations of students
Adults expect student to learn & graduate
Administrators and teachers support one another
Extracurricular activities are well supported and available
School building, supplies, and equipment are in good shape
Support staff (nurse, counselors, etc.) work with students to meet needs
Meaningful roles for youth are provided in a variety of ways and activities
Volunteers from families, community and businesses work with students to support learning

School Level Risk Factors (red paper)

Youth has changed schools	High teacher turnover
Parents not welcome at school	Youth is a low achiever
No extracurricular activities	Low funding for schools
Uncaring adults at the school	Teacher dislikes youth
Low expectations of students	Low teacher morale
No free/reduced lunch/breakfast	School in poor condition
Community tensions affect school	
Adults expect students to drop out	
Low counselor to student ratio	
Voters do not support funds for schools	
Inconsistent rule enforcement at school	
School books & equipment substandard	
Discipline problems disrupt learning at school	
No communication between home and school	
Lack of meaningful roles for youth beyond class work	
Poor relations between teachers and school administrators	
No way or time for teachers and students to develop quality relationships	
Staff (cafeteria, office, janitorial, etc.) not selected or trained to work with youth	
Few special programs at school for special needs children, including gifted children	
Mismatch between youth ability & interest and programs or classes offered at school	

Note: Based on the number of participants, factors can be repeated.

School Level Protective Factors (green paper)

Discipline is consistent	Learning is a priority at school
Community supports schools	Good home/school communication
One adult at school cares about youth	School has high expectations of students
Adults expect student to learn & graduate	Administrators and teachers support one another
Extracurricular activities are well supported and available	School building, supplies, and equipment are in good shape
Support staff (nurse, counselors, etc.) work with students to meet needs	Meaningful roles for youth are provided in a variety of ways and activities
Volunteers from families, community & businesses work with students to support learning	

School Level Risk Factors (red paper)

Youth has changed schools	High teacher turnover
Parents not welcome at school	No extracurricular activities
Low funding for schools	Uncaring adults at the school
Teacher dislikes youth	Low expectations of students
Low teacher morale	No free/reduced lunch/breakfast
School in poor condition	Community tensions affect school
Adults expect students to drop out	Low counselor to student ratio
Voters do not support funds for schools	Inconsistent rule enforcement at school

School books & equipment substandard	Discipline problems disrupt learning at school
No communication between home and school	Lack of meaningful roles for youth beyond class work
Poor relations between teachers and school administrators	No way or time for teachers and students to develop quality relationships
Staff (cafeteria, office, janitorial, etc.) not selected or trained to work with youth	Few special programs at school for special needs children, including gifted children
Mismatch between youth ability & interest and programs or classes offered at school	Youth is a low achiever

Suggested Protective & Risk Factors for the Work/Community Level "Move Ahead" Activity

Print the following protective and risk factors on green and red paper. Green should be used for protective factors and red should be used for risk factors. Each participant in the Work/Community Level will need one protective factor and 3 risk factors.

Work/Community Level Protective Factors (green paper)

Neighbors know each other
Youth jobs relate to future career
Religious groups support family issues
Youth jobs available
"Sense of community" is apparent in daily life
Recreation for youth readily available in community
Youth services are accessible, of reasonable cost, and good
Youth receive high school credit for working and volunteering
Youth volunteer opportunities are plentiful, meaningful, and stimulating
Police provide opportunities for youth involvement (D.A.R.E. or Explorer program)
Citizen groups (various races, ethnic groups, income levels, etc.) are well integrated and support one another
Good infrastructure of community services such as transportation, crisis intervention, health, day care, etc.

Work/Community Level Risk Factors (red paper)

Lack of public transportation	No youth jobs available
High community unemployment	Voter apathy in community
Neighbors don't know each other	Youth must work to pay for care
No quality day care in community	Youth's job is routine and boring
Police stop young people routinely	No youth services in community
Nothing for youth to do in community	No opportunity for youth volunteerism
No YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, 4-H, etc.	Youth works too many hours per week
Religious groups do not support families	
Employers do not value families of employees	
Local government doesn't support family issues	
Religious organizations not active in community issues	
No opportunities for citizen volunteerism in community	
No sense of "community," rather each person for him/herself	
Groups polarized in community by race, ethnicity, income, age, etc.	
Lack of common vision for youth and families at the community level	
No family or youth crisis services (runaway shelter, food bank, etc.) available	
Lack of community infrastructure to support youth and families (libraries, parks & recreation, health, etc.)	

Note: Based on the number of participants, factors can be repeated.

Work/Community Level Protective Factors (green paper)

Neighbors know each other	Youth jobs relate to future career
Religious groups support family issues	Youth jobs available
"Sense of community" is apparent in daily life	Recreation for youth readily available in community
Youth services are accessible, of reasonable cost, and good	Youth receive high school credit for working and volunteering
Youth volunteer opportunities are plentiful, meaningful, and stimulating	Police provide opportunities for youth involvement (D.A.R.E. or Explorer program)
Citizen groups (various races, ethnic groups, income levels, etc.) are well integrated and support one another	Good infrastructure of community services such as transportation, crisis intervention, health, day care, etc.

Work/Community Level Risk Factors (red paper)

Lack of public transportation	No youth jobs available
High community unemployment	Voter apathy in community
Neighbors don't know each other	Youth must work to pay for care
No quality day care in community	Youth's job is routine and boring
Police stop young people routinely	No youth services in community
Nothing for youth to do in community	No opportunity for youth volunteerism
No YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, 4-H, etc.	Youth works too many hours per week
Religious groups do not support families	Employers do not value families of employees

Local government doesn't support family issues	Religious organizations not active in community issues
No opportunities for citizen volunteerism in community	No sense of "community," rather each person for him/herself
Groups polarized in community by race, ethnicity, income, age, etc.	Lack of common vision for youth and families at the community level
No family or youth crisis services (runaway shelter, food bank, etc.) available	Lack of community infrastructure to support youth and families (libraries, parks & recreation, health, etc.)