



Lighten Up

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Discuss with group how hard it is to balance caring for your own needs as well as the needs of others.
2. Have the group brain storm all the different roles, tasks and worries a typical mom or dad may have in a given day.
3. Write several of these separately on index cards.
4. Ask for a volunteer to help demonstrate how this might affect someone.
5. Go through the list and ask the volunteer if the roles, tasks and worries on the cards seem realistic.
6. Next ask the volunteer to tape the cards onto books that seem the appropriate weight for the role, task or worry. For example, caring for a sick parent might be a big, heavy book; baking cupcakes for the PTA might be a small book.
7. Ask the volunteer to stand up tall with his or her arms out in front of her.
8. Explain that his or her job is to hold the books up, as if these were the roles, tasks and worries in his or her life.
9. Carefully place large books first across the volunteer's arms. As you place each one, announce to the group what each book represents.
10. Instruct the volunteer to let you know when the books are too heavy.

Title: Lighten Up

Group Size: 1 to 50+

Time Needed: 15 minutes or more depending on length of discussion

Goal: To find balance and promote self care as well to illustrate the importance of asking for help

Audience: Parents, Couples, Teens, Children, Singles

Special Considerations: Consider the physical capabilities of the volunteer you pick.

Resources Needed:

- ✓ Index cards
- ✓ Tape
- ✓ Several books of varying weights

11. When the volunteer tells you the books are too heavy, ask how long her or she could stand holding the books up like this.
12. Comment about the volunteer's change in posture since the activity began.
13. Ask the whole group, "How can you get rid of some of these books?"
14. It is nice if - as the group comes up with ideas - you can, one by one, take off some of the books, but make sure you are not harming the volunteer. You may need to unload books sooner than the group can come up with ideas.

Tips for Discussion and Processing:

This activity can be adapted in many different ways. The main point is to get the whole group to discuss the limited supply of energy and time we all have and how we need to choose how to use that energy and time. Unfortunately, many of us don't make conscious choices on our energy resources and we end up burdened and not getting what we want from life.

With couples it is interesting to note how the partner of the volunteer feels about the constant demands being placed on his or her spouse. This can lead to great discussions about how to share the load.